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Political economy of passion: Tango, exoticism, and decolonization

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University of Hawaii, 1991

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POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PASSION:
TANGO, EXOTICISM, AND DECOLONIZATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

POLITICAL SCIENCE

AUGUST 1991

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My purpose is to contribute to the historical account of Capitalism by adding a new dimension to the marxist and neomarxist depictions of its development. A political economy of Passion has been occurring, juxtaposed to and intertwined with the economies usually described on materialist and ideological grounds. Paralleling the extraction of material goods and labor from the Third World-periphery, and paralleling the imposition of colonial bureaucratic state apparatuses and ideological devices, the core countries of the capitalist world system have systematically appropriated emotional and affective practices. This emotional capital has been accumulated, recoded, and consumed in the form of Exotic culture.

The Exotic is not an exclusive item for the delight of the Imperial West; it is in turn exported, in its new colonized-westernized package to the Rest (including the very colonies from which the "raw" emotionality was extracted in the first place). When exported to the (neo) colonies of origin, practices of auto-exoticism develop conflictively as a means of both adjusting to and resisting (neo) colonialism. Through complex practices of auto-exoticization carried out in the periphery's internal political settings, the exotic/exoticized representations become symbols of national identity.

The scandalous tour of the Tango in the early twentieth century from Argentina to Paris, London, New York, and its final rage in Japan surrounding World War II is an example of the complex practices involved in the world economy of Passion. However, Tango is not a mere
mirror image of more relevant or decisive economic and political realities nor a reflection of necessary social functions. Tango has resisted the incorporation into the world political economy of passion as an exotic raw material and has simultaneously promoted its co-option by conforming to various tastes regarding music and dance. These episodes, at different times and places, have situated the Tango within an intricate process of the construction of the *Argentina* national identity. Gender, class, and racial issues have been at stake in shaping the desire for and resistance to the inclusion within the parameters of identity established by an imperial world political economy, systematically giving contradictory results.
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No sudamericano would have asked me this question. But I am somewhere else. And precisely because today I am living somehow in some kind of exile—a transient’s exile—the question came: "But, Marta, what is Tango?"

I sat uncomfortably on that chair in that office. Caught again. I had the distasteful hunch that I would do better talking about something else. What do I know? I could give the "exotic" version of the Tango. I know that one well. Perform exoticism. After being away from
home for a while, I know how to do that. But would I please decolonize this self?

Tango and exile (in the sense of "being away from home" for whatever reason) are intimately associated.⁴ On a personal level, it is more than common for any argentino living abroad to connect the experience of longing and nostalgia to the Tango. It is a recurrent pattern, even for those of us who do not consider ourselves connoisseurs or fans of the Tango, to be affected by the Tango syndrome after a while of deprivation from our argentino "environment." The Tango syndrome can affect one in various degrees: paying attention to the word "Tango" whenever it is mentioned; reading whatever pops up about Tango in newspapers, magazines, and posters; attending every Tango performance we possibly can; recalling some fragments of lyrics in order to name puzzling situations we go through; viewing ourselves in the same shoes as some of the characters in old Tango movies; and in some extreme cases, like my own, deciding to learn about it in a more or less systematic way. And we keep on telling ourselves, "I wouldn't be doing this if I were at home ..."

Actually when I left Argentina, friends and relatives warned me about this disease: "I hope the Tango doesn't get you too soon ..."; "Don't even tell me when you catch the Tango, I don't want to know about it ..." And here I am, embarrassed, writing a whole dissertation about the Tango.

Tango is my womb and my tongue, a trench where I can shelter and resist the colonial invitations to "universalism," a warm, sad place in a "happy" space flooded by maniac denial, a stubborn fatalist mood
when technocrats and theorists offer optimistic and seriously revised versions of "alternatives" for the Third World, an opportunistic metaphor to talk about myself and my stories as a "success" of the civilization-development-colonization of América Latina, and a strategy to figure out through the history of the Tango a hooked-up story of people like myself. Tango is my changing, resourceful source of identity. And because I am where I am--outside, Tango hurts and comforts me: "Tango is a sad thought that is danced to ..." (Discépolo).5

The history of Tango is a history of exiles. The Sociedades de Negros, to which the origins of the Tango are associated in the Rio de la Plata region, recreated the rhythms and ombligadas of the African enslaved exiles; the criollos were moving out from the rural areas, holding a guitar in one hand and a knife in the other so as to make space for themselves in the prosperous harbor-city; the Spanish and Italian immigrants, mostly economic exiles, who populated the suburban slums of Buenos Aires danced in the streets to the precarious Tango-times of the organ grinder. Tango expressed exile, and it created it as well. The talented but poor Tango musicians and dancers moved from Buenos Aires to Paris and New York, exiles in a reverse direction, in search of better luck; young French women followed argentino "dandies" and "beef barons" back from Paris to Buenos Aires and ended up exiled, as professional tangueras and "hostesses" of the newly opened cabarets. The music, the lyrics, and the dance are witnesses to this process of simultaneous deterritorializations and have been strongly tinged with these intrusive and transgressive features. Race, class, and gender exiles cut the Tango through and through from its very beginning.
Tango crassly confirms the existence of the Other, and the particulars of her Otherness. It expresses, performs, and produces exiles and Otherness. Tango is simultaneously a ritual and a spectacle of traumatic encounters (one goes through them and the other shows them). Exile provokes both dramatic separations and encounters. Tango is more radically associated with the latter. The history of the Tango is a story of the encounter of those who should not have ever met or of those that having met will remain forever disencountered. Perhaps a stubborn story of impossible but fatal encounters, like the matching of pieces or mating of species that just cannot fit but still stick together. And the Tango is both product and promoter of these hybrid events. Black and white, rich and poor, men and women, colonizer and colonized are brought much too close to each other; the Tango embrace is dangerously tight. It proposes the violation of critical distances in such a way that the experience of tension and conflict becomes unavoidable.

Such is a story of Tango. Such is my story--the story of this dissertation: a stubborn story, to be sure, with many pieces which should not fit together, but will not come apart. The experience has been fraught with tension. I have embraced conflicts even as I have avoided them; I have fled one conflict only to rush headlong into another. These pages are the result of my tangoing in and out confrontations, widening and closing critical distances. Academic prose here, _ficciones femininas allá_. Too much rhyme and too many reasons. There are many I should never have encountered, but true to Tango, I did. Some, _gracias a las diosas_, will be forever disencountered, while others, _ojalá_, will
remain close, even over great distances. These are the cariños
entrañables who made this experience of homelessness worthwhile to
tango through.

My interest in Tango was born out of disillusion, pain, rage, and
hunger to understand my role as a latina woman intellectual while
studying for a doctoral degree in Hawai’i--a U.S. colony/state. Hawaiian
politics have given me the opportunity to grasp the complexities of
colonialism in an exploding, expansive way often blurred for me while
closely entangled in the everyday political strings of Argentina.
Moreover, Hawai’i has given me the chance to meet Hawaiian women,
local ("non-white") women, and Third World women with whom to share
colonized entanglements and with whom rebellion against nationalized
identities, internationalized stereotyping (on the basis of race, ethnicity,
religion, and all sorts of "mores and customs") and universalized
categorizations (of gender and class) proved to be strengthening. What
was agonistic and fatalist for each of us individually turned to be
legitimate and promising when honestly shared. "Native" patriarchies
have been our allies while facing "colonizers" patriarchies and vice-
versa.

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INTRODUCTION

(on the micro-politics of introducing)

I took some bad advice. I think I should blame my foot for it; for putting myself in this. Anyway, now I'm stuck. Open the music-box: "There is a story I want to tell,/ a story with two or three tales (tails?)./ It doesn't start 'Once upon a time'/ because this story is up to date and mine." Close the music-box. I'll try to tell my story, scattered in pieces. Each piece is a tale, a "tail" with sketchy morals of its own. But there are some points in common, rather some dots or, better said, some rebellious stains. Alright. Imprecise points of repetition. Open the music-box: "My foot, the wise one, this time said:/ Could you please try to decolonize yourself?" Close the music-box. I wonder, why would you bother going through these pages? Some of you have no choice, I know. And I am sorry for putting you in such situation; but as you often tell me, it is part of "your job." Anyway, I know you did not expect me to address you like this. What kind of introduction is this? I can already hear some indignation. I lower my voice and answer slowly: i'm trying to decolonize myself. I am tempted to apologize, to erase the whole thing and start all over again. Sorry for putting you in the spot, in my point, in the dot, in these stains.

An introduction should go like this:
Introduction

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the historical account of Capitalism by adding a new dimension to the currently well known marxist and neomarxist depictions of its development. My hypothesis is that a political economy of Passion has been occurring, juxtaposed to and intertwined with the economies usually described on materialist and ideological grounds. Paralleling the extraction of material goods and labor from the Third World-periphery, and paralleling the imposition of colonial bureaucratic state apparatuses and ideological devices, the core countries of the capitalist world system have been systematically appropriating emotional and affective practices. This emotional capital has been accumulated, recoded and consumed in the form of Exotic culture: "mystery," untamed "wilderness," the "primitive," as well as raw "passion." The non-West's emotional/expressive practices have been isolated, categorized and transformed into curious "cultural" patterns of behavior. The catalogue is vast and the specialties proliferate: entries by "topic" (economy, kinship and marriage, religion, art, customs, etc.), entries by "continent" (Southeast Asia, North Africa, Iberoamerica, the French Pacific, etc.), following carefully a systematic logic of representation. Thus "exotic" objects have been constituted by applying an homogenizing practice of exoticization; a system of exotic representation that commoditized the non-West in order to suit Western consumption. In other words, peripheral-"exotic" Passion is molded in the shape of Western unfulfillable Desire. The colonizing (neo- and post-as well) West constitutes its own "progressive" identity--Civilization, Enlightenment, Democracy--on the basis of this confrontation with
exotic, colonized, uncivilized, Others. And the cycle of production, distribution, and consumption, including its "cyclic crises," continues: exotic Passion, by (Western) definition, is untamable and inexhaustible. Conversely, to the colonized-exotic-Other, this very allocating of passionateness provides both a locus of identity and a source of resistance vis-a-vis the colonizing-civilized-Western Desire--the Desire of the One.

The Exotic is not an item exclusively for the delight of the Imperial West; it is in turn exported, in its new colonized-westernized package to the Rest (including the very colonies from which the "raw" emotionality was extracted in the first place). When exported to the (neo) colonies of "origin," practices of auto-exoticism develop conflictively as a means of both adjusting to and resisting (neo) colonialism. Through these complex practices of auto-exoticization carried out in the periphery's internal political settings, the exotic/exoticized representations end up becoming symbols of national identity. Such is the case of the Tango argentino. Gender, class, and racial politics are the main dimensions mobilized in the struggle to build independent yet colonized peripheral national identities: "exotic" in/dependent identities. The national-ness of the peripheral countries is simultaneously the product of the core/Western demand for international, legitimate, relations and the source for claims to substantive independence and self-determination. "Independent" nationalities are urged by the metropolitan powers when the need for an international market arises. International recognition is extended beyond statehood to economic, political, and cultural independence. In terms of identity, the Passion of exotic Others confirms the shape of the
Western One, but it overflows the borders of the One's Desire; conversely, Western Desire legitimates the passionateness of the Other and naturalizes the Other's rebelliousness. Hence the Other is "primitive" and "barbarian," condemned to a second-class identity, an "uncivilized," incomplete, identity in process of "development" compared to the bold, superior, fully shaped Identity of the One. But the capitalist production and consumption of the Exotic (exotic Passion) does not affect only those directly involved in hierarchical exchanges of cultural/emotional capital. Exoticism is an industry that requires distribution and marketing. Thus, the practice of exoticism is also reproduced and amplified by the exotics among themselves, practicing exotic reciprocities as they look through core/Western lenses: "latinos," "orientals," "blacks," "tropical islanders," "asians," etc. relate to each other in already Western exoticized terms.

Exotic natives and exotic exiles/migrants/travelers meet at the West and in Westernized (neo) colonial settings, their representations already shaped by the mediation of a Western mirror. The imperialist West shapes the relations between the peripheral Rest into relationships among exotic Others, generating a new series of complex identity negotiations and struggles for relative positioning in the world vis-a-vis the core.

The scandalous tour of the Tango in the early twentieth century from Argentina to Paris, London, New York and its final rage in Japan about the time of the Second World War is an example of the complex practices involved in the world economy of Passion. However, Tango--like other popular music/dance-forms--is not a mere mirror image of more relevant or decisive economic and political realities nor a reflection
of necessary social functions. Tango has resisted the incorporation into
the world political economy of passion as an exotic raw material and has
simultaneously promoted its co-option by conforming to various tastes
regarding music and dance. These episodes, at different times and
places, have situated the Tango within an intricate process of the
construction of the *argentina* national identity--a process which should
be traced within the musical/danceable dimension itself as well as at
local and global levels of the world political economy.

The world political economy is not a force imposed from "above"
upon totally deprived individuals and groups. Rather, it is a
complex set of institutions, social relationships and economic
practices that are socially and historically mediated and that are
the object of multiple differentiated actualizations by individuals
and groups within their respective environment (Martin-Barbero

The desire for and resistance to the inclusion within the parameters of
identity established by an imperial world political economy has
systematically given contradictory results. Tango is so much a part of
the *argentina* people that attempts at assimilation seem to be
continuously challenged by the activities of underground cultural
guerrillas (see Wallis and Malm 1984).

(on the micro-politics of re-introducing)

How am I doing? Now, that looks better, says my colonizer. My
colonized self agrees with relief.

Note (and protest): Tango is not an example; it is the main
ingredient in this exercise of decolonization.
Re-Introductions

In writing this dissertation I have dealt with many conflicting voices: academized and orderly, poetic and chaotic, male-hegemonic and female-subversive, collective and personal, totalizing and specific, white and mestizo, in English and in Spanish, of the colonizer and of the colonized. These colonizing and colonized voices are my own internal dispute, but far from being a product of my delirious imagination, these voices speak to me as representatives of actually different audiences of a mixed colonizer/colonized nature. I have not been able to avoid these conflicts by simply privileging one audience over another, following my personal preferences, by pretending to address an outworldly homogenous audience, or by bowing to the hegemonic power of the academic audience in my project--given that it is "submitted" in "partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy." This is due to the nature of the topic I have chosen and to my position as a "Third World" female intellectual. Tango is a strong symbol of argentina national identity, a patriarchal and hegemonic representative of my country in that it privileges the popular culture of Buenos Aires over the rest of the provinces and the protagonist role of men over women. Class, racial, and generational issues, intertwined with the above-mentioned aspects, further complicate Tango’s legitimacy to represent Argentina as a people. However, this controversy over national representation can not be dealt with in the same ways "at home" and "abroad." Although national identity is a historical matter of obsessive disputes among argentinos, the nature of the dispute changes dramatically when engaged in on non-argentino terrain. This shift is
informed by a change of perspective that displaces internal, local contradictions in the presence of external, global threats to *argentina* identity as a whole/nation. Hence, *argentinos*, situated in an international arena, adopt Tango as a shield against identity dissolution. Tango represents a particular sector of *argentinos* at home, but it assumes national representation abroad. The international context pressures Tango into representing a seemingly homogenous national identity. Argentina becomes a nation and Tango its symbol when the question of identity is at stake due to international negotiations involving issues of representation, legitimacy and sovereignty (self-determination). Thus Tango shapes and mobilizes *argentina*-ness when confronted with imperialist maneuvers, and is activated as a national representation as it crosses over lines of identity formation. Tango as a symbol of nationality has no space of its own, except as an unbalanced, tense position in between independence and dependency or, in the terms I use throughout this dissertation, the colonized and the colonizer. This unsolved dispute is played out through Tango, claimed by the colonized as "authentic" vis-à-vis the colonizer's appropriations of Tango as "exotic." Tango's suitability to these manipulative operations resides in its dual malleability as a "popular" and "cultural" product. "Popular culture," as that which convokes and represents people collectively through commonality, is a fertile environment for highly politicized contestations. Authorship and property of "popular culture" are inherently hard to establish and the content itself of what constitutes "popular culture" is incessantly recreated. Disputes over "popular culture" point precisely at what "popular culture" is all about: identity; the demarcation of
differences carried out through struggles to establish for which "people" and in the name of what "culture" "popular culture" is practiced. Tango, as popular culture, is thus the battlefield/dance-floor and weapon/dance-step in and by which *argentina* identity is continuously redefined. Who the Tango dancers are, where they dance, following what Tango style in front of which Tango audience, etc. raises questions of gender, race, and class. It is in these dancing terms, tracing detailed specificities, in which I have tried to understand the constitution of colonized and colonizer identities. Through Tango I have dealt with my own questionings as an *argentina* living transitorily abroad, exposed to an intellectual training that urged me into reshaping my own identity. Tangoing to myself, I have tried to resist intellectual colonialism. Following Tango's negotiations between the colonizer and the colonized, I recognized my own. Reflecting on the disciplining/promotion to which I was subjecting myself in academia, I saw Tango's process of disciplining/promotion in the hands of dance masters and spectacle entrepreneurs. Looking at Tango's endless search for origins and authenticity, I came to understand the colonized nature of this attempt. Amazed at Tango's colonizing appropriation through exoticism, I found myself transformed into an exotic object and colonized. Even more stunned by Tango's achievements at home as a result of playing the exotic game, I put into question my own auto-exoticism. And here I am, with the Tango, attempting to decolonize myself. This is the nature of this text—a text in the world, populated by so many audiences that my fear could only be overcome by my rush to finish: the *argentino* patriarchal audience, the one that knows and is emotionally invested in
Tango; the North American academic audience worried about the scholarly relevance of the project; the Third World audience, hungry for anti-imperialist insights; the audience of all those whose fields and specialties I have transgressed; the audience of those who inspired me and I have forgotten; and the factions within each of these audiences, more or less receptive to my concerns, more or less merciless and for contradictory reasons. I have not been able to choose one audience over another—despite all well-intentioned advice—so as to formulate in my mind an homogenous audience-type to address. For this reason I speak in bursts, splashes, and puddles, opening windows to what I have expected to be major controversial knots engendered in my putting together Tango and decolonization. The thread that underlies the whole "thing" is this controversy of putting together that which I cannot resolve, sunk, as I am, in the conflicts themselves.

In Chapter One, the windows are responses to what I expect to be major disagreements regarding my method, my decolonization project, and, related to this, my identification/representation of Argentina as a colony.

In Chapter Two I try to disturb the stereotype of an exclusively sexual/eroticized image of Tango by introducing class and race into the erotic game. The context is Argentina in the late nineteenth century, under rapid urbanization, massive migratory movements and definite incorporation into Western imperialism as a neo-colony with a latino tinge.

Chapter Three is a depiction of the operation of colonialism through "exoticism," the exoticization of the Other, both Thirdworlders
and women. I attempt to historicize exoticism, and thus to denaturalize the exotic identities attributed to peasants, urban poor, and foreign Others. I see exoticism also as part of a display of imperial power among nationalities disputing hegemony at the core. The context is Europe, the main contenders France and England, the rise of the U.S. is merely insinuated since I concentrate on a period of time ending around World War I. The purpose is to situate Tango among other exotic music and dance productions, and to understand the specific ways of operation of the dance disciplining/promotion industry.

Chapter Four is concerned with "auto-exoticism." Tango's popularity in the main capitals of the world and its acceptance, primarily by the foreign elites as a modern "exotic" product, generates local scandals. I analyze the Tango scandal in Argentina in terms of a complex dispute between different local sectors over the legitimate representation of the nation. The participation of "respectable" women in an up-to-then immoral dance, due to the Parisian stylization of Tango, is a turning point in Tango's local history. The argentino tangueros face a paradox as they enjoy the benefits of foreign and local exoticism while they resist Tango's appropriation and exotic disfigurations. Tango histories and systematic studies emerge in this context, as an attempt to recover origins and authenticity and thus define argentina-ness in anticolonial terms.

Chapter Five depicts the encounter of exotic Others, Japanese and argentinos, through the Tango. I give a detailed account of the different currents through which Tango arrived in Japan, represented by already exoticized Tango styles. I analyze the ways in which these competing
French, English, and _argentino_ Tangos have been appropriated by the Japanese themselves, as markers of internal social distinctions. Questions of identity are again at stake in this chapter, as I reflect on the presence of historically established Western parameters of exoticism always mediating between exoticized peripherals. The case of Japan is particularly controversial in this regard, given Japan's own history of imperialism and its current economic position at the core of world power.

Chapter Six is a series of Tangos in prose--confessions, protests, laments, and morals--offered as concluding reflections. Third World women intellectuals and Tango are drawn into mismatching analogies bridged by the presence of Imperialism and Patriarchy in both the academic and the popular dance and music spheres. Decolonization is depicted as a process of "unlearning" the exotic positions allocated to Third World women within recently developed intellectual practices. Tango, in this context, has proven to be a resourceful _compañero_, not in its patriarchal tone, but in its teachings on how to resist within the imperial dance. I conclude with a protesting hope. I'm thinking about going home with my degree, and I question my future role as an intellectual woman in that setting. Appropriating the tools of the colonizer, representing the colonized--the ones with whom I can identify and who might identify with me--moving into a place where Tango has strong male owners, where the search for "whiteness" and discrimination from other Thirdworlders has not ended and where my "exoticism" will turn into rebellious marginality. I can only hope that, in the arms of my _familia_ and friends, a less self-destructive and more rewarding, empowering road will open up.
There is more than one thread to follow along these pages; colored threads caught in embroidery. But none of these threads lacks the vestiges of having pinched my fingers, of having been cut by my teeth and, hesitantly, inserted back into the needle's eye. There is no thread without that little knot that stubbornly reappears each time I forget that my grandmothers said that the thread shouldn't be so long ... so ambitious. Perhaps I could have followed a rope more easily. But then I would have had to walk on it, suspended in mid-air, in the abstract. And I am not a good acrobat. So, tired of stitching, I imagined myself following tracks, closer to earth--on dusty feet, in sneakers, and in high-heels, according to where they took me. I could say I encountered a labyrinth, but it wouldn't be true. A labyrinth has a monster, a god, or bait waiting for you somewhere. Sometimes I felt that colonialism plays all these parts. But labyrinths are too artificial. They are not part of the world. Either in a laboratory or in an mythical island, you know when you get into them and they are self-consciously sought to demonstrate courage, capacity, strength of will. I have been lured, like a mouse? No, I am not that innocent. So, abandon the labyrinth idea. These are worldly roads, worldly paths, everyday walks of which I have become aware, by merely walking. But I did something else: snooping. This is what each chapter, and each section of each chapter is about. I have walked down the streets and snooped into the windows. I have crawled into the rooms which attracted me and looked around at the objects in them. I was always driven to the closed boxes and I opened them. I opened all kinds of boxes: music-boxes, retables, jumping-jacks, boxes full of treasured letters, photographs, and diaries, boxes with miniature
dolls ... They played and danced for me and I danced back, interrogating and interrogated. Exhausted, I turned around looking for fresh air, and driven by my snoopiness, instead of going back to the window through which I had entered, I was attracted to the curtains. Over there. And in pulling them I sometimes found a scenery opened up to me, like the world economy of passion; and sometimes, a puppet theater where, behind the curtains, a sensual couple of marionettes was dancing a Tango. And suddenly, I could hear the roar and smell the bubbles, and I found myself in Paris in a cabaret, in the middle of a midnight Champagne-Tango party. And once, I was asked by exotics to do my own exotic Tango, in black and white, and I was an exotic among exotics, and it was Tokyo. And then, I knew it was time for me to leave. To write about all these adventures, and I rebelled against my writing, because I knew that I had to go home. And because I couldn’t grasp it all. And because my points just couldn’t be made. And finally, I tried to get ready for what is coming next.

Some could read this dissertation as a battle of a "Third-World" woman intellectual between good and evil; "evil" being colonialism (in all its updated versions such as imperialism, advanced imperialism, neo-colonialism, postcoloniality), and "good" being to get rid of it through decolonization. So what would then be left or what could then be found? The temptation is to point at the essence of the colonized; at what we were before colonialism or what we are in spite of colonialism. In Chapter Four I try to establish the colonized nature of this search for origins and authenticity, which takes us into auto-exoticism and further colonization. Our incompleteness, hybridity, and struggles among
internal factions for establishing homogeneous national identities comes back, bouncing against the colonial encounter. I trace our complicity--the one of the colonized--with colonialism. Through this search for Identity, the colonized can only reflect an incomplete image of the colonizer, never finding an identity of her own. Decolonization means to reject the search for the origins and authenticity of the colonized in order to concentrate on the specific, original, and authentic ways in which imperialism operates. This is what has led me to historicize Exoticism (in Chapter Three). The "exoticism" maneuver is not unlike the "civilization-progress" maneuver, but it is more persuasive and pervasive. Civilization and Progress can be reached through "development," the colonized are told. But "exoticism" is always there, to remind us of the difference between the old, really "civilized" ones and the ones which are only recently, incompletely brought into civilization--the colonized who can never fully overcome the fact of carrying "primitiveness" in their blood. Exoticism is the hook that cannot be unhooked. It is the key to the Western constitution of the Other--since the West has constituted the Other, in capital letters, through world-wide imperialism. I am not saying that the West is the only one who exoticizes and constructs otherness. I am saying that the West has had the power to make it come true internationally--that the West has been successful in imposing it, in making Others really so. Thus Western imperialism is what I am interested in. In Chapter Two I try to expose the actual meat (bodies-people) processed by the Western exoticism machinery, to describe the voraciousness imbedded in manufacturing the exotic--all it goes over and through. It is not to be read as a "return" to the origins or to the
"authentic" before it was commoditized/exoticized, but a reminder of the elements that were at stake--socio-economically and ideologically--at the time when exoticism is refurbished through Tango. It is passion, the erotic of the exotic. What I wish to convey is that there is no place to go back to in Tango that is not already colonized. This does not mean cutting roots, or erasing home. It means understanding roots-and-home in its complex, painful constitution, and distinguishing the differences among the colonized themselves: race/class/gender--important differences and their interplays and struggles (micro-politics) viewed through Tango. This is of extreme importance since Western discourse/machinery of the Exotic did not pick the powerful's europeanized manners to set identity among the neo-colonized; it chose the ways of the oppressed within the colonized, dressed in frock-coat. I see it as an imperialist maneuver to incorporate those sectors of the colonized less touched and culturally co-opted, but also as a way to keep the dominant among the colonized in their place--as subalterns to the Western empire, which they were forgetting to acknowledge. I believe Third World women intellectuals are caught today in a similar paradoxical interstice.
TANGO, METHOD AND THEORY

Tango, My Tango

The Tango I invoke in these pages is nothing but my own version of Tango. It is an appropriated Tango (to which I feel entitled) which disrespectfully challenges many existent legitimate versions. The distance from home (Argentina)—not the distance of objectivity or even of insightfulness, but the distance that allows trickery and distortion—has given me the courage to borrow the Tango without permission from my patriarchal culture and to disfigure and misrepresent it through my newly situated interpretations. This is as much an exercise about Tango as a series of Tangos of my own. The power of patriarchy and the power of colonialism are overwhelming and paralyzing when taken stripped of their own contradictions. I have tried to tango them—exaggerating bien canyengue their disencounters, shaking off my fears.

Tango is associated with a male-oriented (sub)culture, in which women did and still do actively participate. Tango has been an important locus of identification for me, as any argentina woman, ever since I moved outside my culture. It would have probably never occurred to me to use Tango as a tool for resistance in my own country—not so much because of its macho connotations but rather because of the generational distance. Tango’s last popular boom was in the 1940s and more recently, it has survived and coexisted with North American popular music, rock nacional and other argentino and latino musical
genres (some folkloric and some "American" oriented) as a more intellectualized, refined and/or ghettoized musical taste. However, in the 1980s a battered generation took hold of Tango, as an expression of the recent experiences of political terror and exile lived during the most recent military government (1976-1983). As a result, Tango went through a revival in Europe and some sensitive argentino artists and acute impresarios launched successful shows in the U.S., Japan and Buenos Aires. In addition, several movies were produced by both argentino and foreign directors where Tango was at the core of their symbolism. These events brought the Tango back to the interest of a generation (my generation) for whom it had been not lost but dormant—living in the memories of our grandparents and parents. (See Pintos 1990.)

It is far from my intentions to prescribe Tango as a universal tool against colonialism and oppression. This is not only out of respect for cultural specificities and self-determination, but also due to the absurdity of proclaiming Tango as essentially liberating even within the argentino context. Tangos do not squarely fit into the category of protest songs or revolutionary music. Tango lyrics mostly expose and sometimes denounce the miseries of everyday life encountered by a marginalized sector of argentinos and uruguayos in the course of this century, but they seldom point out alternatives or take sides with particular political projects. Analyses of Tango politics have much more frequently been focused on Tango lyrics and, to some extent, Tango music, than on the dance. I attempt to draw attention to the patterns of the dance because of the dance’s resistance to intellectualization, the
powerful messages of the bodies in movement, the scandals and attempts at domestication the dance provoked at home and abroad, and because the dance has been the key to Tango’s popularity. (See Salas 1986.)

My interpretations of the Tango dance are ambitious, controversial and too far-reaching. It was precisely this vulnerability/potential for interpretation that seemed promising to me. Untamable interpretations (in the sense that they are hard to prove in a positivistic sense) of untamable bodies in movement, despite all the efforts invested in domesticating both, are good signs for a decolonization project.

The intertextuality already present in the Tango provides a richness of resources for resistance and insurgency. What is sung (said) in a Tango is not necessarily what is danced (done), and the music can dispense with both. Submissiveness and confrontation, silence and noise, quiet torsos and relentlessly moving legs play episodes of power, simultaneously, in displaced dimensions. In my tangoing interpretations (about Tango and stemming from it) I intend to learn these resourceful strategies suitable to decolonization for the ones already colonized, like myself.

**Tango As Decolonization**

I want my voice to be harsh, I don't want it to be beautiful, I don't want it to be pure, I don’t want it to have all dimensions. I want it to be torn through and through, I don’t want it to be enticing, for I am speaking of man and his refusal, of the day-to-day rottenness of man, of his dreadful failure (Fanon 1964: 49).
In this research I have been more concerned about "political implications" than about methods or theories. I have had bad experiences with methods and theories. Simply stated, these so-called tools tend to alienate methodical workers from their work, from their creative pleasures, from their complex identities of race, gender, class, and culture, from their honesty and from their power for insurgency. Intellectuals produce their own tools, as do other workers, and all workers, including intellectuals, become alienated from their tools. The fact is that these research tools, like most means of production in this capitalist world, do not belong to the researchers/workers, but to those who control academic capital. Methods and theories are also enabling, and so are all production tools under ideal conditions. But free intellectuals' labor is subject to the laws of supply and demand of the academic market, and their ideas are subject to speculations over credibility, as in the financial market. Methods and theories are the packaging/shaping of intellectual products; schools of thought are the brands. For an intellectual situated at the core of the world economy this might all seem clean, clear and fair, and more or less polite competition takes over their working lives. Third World intellectuals as well as minority, marginalized intellectuals tend to live this situation differently.

For a latina woman intellectual, methods and theories are a question of politics and not the other way around. Intellectual competition and access to the academic market soon turn out to be a trap. "To be civilized and destitute," says Branislaw Malinowski while
pondering the problems of educated colonized people, "often means to be revolutionary and unreliable."

He may go as far as a European or American university; receive such academic degrees as become a member of a highly skilled profession. But when he returns to his own country, he will have to go through a dramatic experience. He will discover that the status of equality, or even equivalence, in matters legal, economic, political, and social, is denied him. [...] We may call it the Line of Integral Rebuff from total assimilation. [...] If, from the outset, it were possible to make quite clear in preaching the gospel of civilization that no full identity can ever be reached; that what are being given to the Africans [and other colonized people] are new conditions of existence better adapted to their needs but always in harmony with European requirements, the smaller would be the chances of a strong reaction (Malinowski 1945).

Malinowski's acute observations went unheard, not because of bad will on the part of the administrators but because of the unmanageability of the colonial contradictions. Decades later, the colonized "she"s joined the "he"s, and it became explosively clear that applied anthropology and other developmentalist theories and methods, did not give us "new conditions of existence better adapted to our needs."

To date, the theory of applied anthropology has been one of the items imported into the underdeveloped countries--an imported item, as many others. We receive from producing countries (such as the United States, England, France and other European nations) many well-elaborated theoretical postulates, some of them perfectly adjusted to our reality and our needs; but others are infused with a different spirit, foreign to our interest and on occasions, decidedly contrary to them (Bonfil Batalla 1966).

When neo-marxism, feminist theory, post-structuralism, deconstructive methods, world systemic theory and postcoloniality writings (all of which I use in my writing) demand consistency/exclusivity/royalties, they stop serving me. Instead of being liberating, they become confining. Critical
theories and methods promise "total assimilation" to the academic market, but the "Line of Integral Rebuff" is never crossed.

When a question cannot be asked, theories or methods are in the way, in my political way. They are the wrong strategy. My main question is the one asked by the music-box: Would I please decolonize myself? I am talking about my intellectual colonization. It is personal and political. Not because anything that is personal is necessarily political but because of the politics in which I am personally involved. I am trying to get a Ph.D. from a Yankee University and to go back to Argentina. My whole family shouts at me: It doesn't make sense. Everybody is dreaming of leaving before the ship hits bottom and I, the one who could easily be saved from the catastrophe, I am choosing to return? And I am scared, scared of my own fear, the fear of the colonized. Will I be able to get a job? What kind of upbringing will this be for my children? What if my friends have already left? What about the violence in the streets, the riots, the strikes, the food lootings, the anger, the frustration, the uncertainty, the betrayals, the cynicism, the decadence, the melancholy, the apathy, the stagnation ... the Tango? Because I am fearfully thoroughly colonized, I tango. Because I have no answers to my questions, I tango. I tango because I have to move in the midst of these uncertainties. And because I need to show myself and others that I can still move. Tango is my way of resisting a colonized paralysis.\textsuperscript{5}

Tango is the most solid tool in my project of decolonization. It is solid because it is the only place in which I feel comfortable; restless but
at home. My first steps in Tango taught me about both, overwhelming domination and stubborn resistance.

In my Introduction I wrote that Tango would be used as an example to describe the operation of a political economy of passion. But I resist giving this place to Tango: "Tango is not an example; it is the main ingredient in this project." Tango is my tongue and my changing, resourceful source of identity. This dissertation does not follow a clear-cut method or theory. It has a strong purpose: Decolonization. It is a political stand. The rest is pure strategizing. An exercise of anger and hope. I am not interested in proving the validity of any theory or the strength of any method in particular. I am interested in decolonization, in trying out multiple tactics for the purpose of decolonization. I am not invested in methodological consistency; quite to the contrary, I am convinced that a coherent method would only reproduce my colonization. There are no methods leading to decolonization, only successful experiences of resistance. Methods are the smooth ways of the ones attempting to secure positions of power that they already enjoy; for the ones in resistance there are only strategies. Inconsistent strategies, movements that cannot be easily foreseen or predicted, improvisation, the power of the unexpected. Unexpected and outrageous even for our colonized selves. And this is not a Machiavellian formula of using any means to achieve a desired end, because in the process of decolonization the end in itself shifts unexpectedly as well. Decolonization is a purpose in process, a search for self-determination, a process of liberation. Decolonization is endless. Moreover, decolonization is not a question of
ends, it is a question of loyalties. Loyalty towards those for whom your life makes a difference and whose life makes a difference for you.


Tango is the main ingredient in my project of decolonization because I have no choice. It is the stereotype of the culture to which I belong. If I reject my stereotype I fall, caught in nowhere. Caught in endless explanations of what I am not and justifications of what I am. Caught in comparisons with the colonizer. By assuming the Tango attitude and taking it seriously, I can work at expanding its meaning and its power. My power, actively tango. Tango is my strategic language, a way of talking about, understanding, exercising decolonization.

Sometimes I talk about Tango, i.e. about my way of talking. Other times, I apply it to the understanding of something else, such as postmodernism. When I focus on Tango itself, its process of exoticization and self-exoticization, I am attempting a genealogy of a cultural strategy of resistance and insurgency. Tango is a strategy with multiple faces: music, dance, lyrics, performance, philosophy ... None of these aspects exactly reproduces or reinforces the others. The dance stops when the music pulls; the lyrics challenge the dance; the male and female of the couple follow and resist each other's movements; the music, syncopated, surprisingly halts. Starts again. Tango is recognizable in these contrasts and the tension that they generate. And
the tension itself is dramatized in a melodramatic way, a melodrama of stereotypes on the move, unstable stereotypes, stereotypes of the unpredictable.

Tango is a practice already ready for struggle. It knows of taking sides, positions, risks. It has the experience of domination/resistance from within. Tango, stretching the colonized stereotypes of the latino-macho-catholic-fatalism, is a language of decolonization.

My method is unmethodical except in its purpose. It is counter-hegemonic and critical of old and new colonizing views, of scholarly exercises which alienate, immobilize and justify nonsensical politics by logically-rationally-academically making sense. And still I have to pick and choose avoiding getting caught; I have no other choice but to use the tools of the colonizer, which are already my own, and and to stir them up with creativity and resolution.

El Tango del Che

There is a dance that night, and the friends decide to go. It's a bustling crowd, and the couples seem to multiply on the dance floor. Ernesto ["Che" Guevara] approaches his friend and tells him in a low voice, "Runt, listen well. I'm going to dance, but you know ..." Alberto [Granados] doesn't need any kind of explanation to know that his friend is incapable of distinguishing a military march from a milonga. "When they play a tango," Ernesto requests, "kick me, then I'll know what it is. Agreed?"

More or less every other piece played by the improvised band is a tango, but for some reason they suddenly play a Brazilian shoro entitled "Delicado." Granados remembers the song was popular at the time his friend began to court Chichina, and wishing to remind him of that time, taps him with his foot.

Ernesto takes a young woman out to dance. The tempo of the shoro is quick, but he doesn't hear it. He dances to the beat of a tango, marking off his steps with mathematical precision.
Alberto watches him and can't hold back his laughter. [...] Ernesto doesn't worry about it: he himself laughs at his lack of talent as a dancer (Cabrera Alvarez 1987: 77).

As a latina, trying to decolonize, I have found more inspiration in revolutionary struggles than in academic disputations. In América Latina, violence is always just around the corner. Panamá and Grenada do not fade from our memory, rather they join a long history of North American military force. We try not to think about it. But ultimately, decolonization from the United States is a military struggle, even though we try to avoid it. At times, U.S. force is overt, as in Panamá and Grenada. But the marines don't have to land for us to know the stakes. Decolonization has been and is bloody and bodily. Latinoamericano history is filled with U.S. invasions: Yankee-financed, -backed, -planned, and -orchestrated, as well as the straight-forward Marines. The chilenos learned the lesson of electing Allende, as we all did. In Argentina, we know that "Marxism" is not a theory, and that decolonization is not a discourse, an intellectual hobby, or a hip course taught at the University.

The tactics of my compatriot, Che Guevara, are far more relevant to my decolonizing strategies than are the methods and theories taught as "Political Science." Like Che, I have chosen to avoid any consistent, or generalizable approach.

A fundamental characteristic of the guerrilla soldier is his flexibility, his ability to adapt himself to all circumstances, and to convert to his service all of the accidents of the action. Against the rigidity of classical methods of fighting, the guerrilla invents his own tactics at every minute of the fight and constantly surprises the enemy (Guevara 1985).
My project follows the same course in that it is entirely situational. I try
to address the specific problem at hand, rather than remain loyal to an
academic program. My strategy changes as often as necessary, which is
the greatest advantage I have over those confined by "the rigidity of
classical methods." I place myself under no compulsion to "stick to the
subject," to be "consistent," or to "follow the argument to its logical
conclusion." Rather, I cherish the ability to flee in the face of
overwhelming force, to "trick-back" the colonizing discourse.

The fundamental characteristic of a guerrilla band is mobility.
This permits it in a few minutes to move far from a specific theater
and in a few hours far even from the region, if that becomes
necessary; permits it constantly to change front and avoid any
type of encirclement. [...] Characteristic of this war of mobility is
the so-called minuet, named from analogy with the dance: the
guerrilla bands encircle an enemy position, an advancing column,
for example; they encircle it completely from the four points of the
compass, with five or six men in each place, far enough away to
avoid being encircled themselves; the fight is started at any one of
the points, and the army moves toward it; the guerrilla band
retreats, always maintaining visual contact, and initiates its attack
from another point (Guevara 1985).

This is my strategy, too, to "hit and run," as it suits me, to avoid being
encircled by academic pedantries. I know that decolonization is no more
"honorable" than it is "scholarly." "There is in all this, it would appear, a
negative quality, an attitude of retreat, of avoiding frontal fights"
(Guevara 1985). But my purpose is not to develop a method or theory.
Like Che, I avow that the purpose is to win, to decolonize.

Che used an analogy to dance (the minuet) to explain his
decolonizing strategy, and I borrow a tactic from his Guerrilla Warfare to
explain mine. I can no more fight a war than Che could dance the
Tango. The parallel is not perfect, nor need it be. Balance is not a
requirement. The lesson is to use what is available, and damn the lady-like niceties. Che's decolonization struggle inspires and informs my own, and if Che is not normally included in the pantheon of academic methodologists, I believe it to be a loss. The classification of "Guevara" as a "guerrilla" is just as delimiting as is the classification of "Foucault" as an "author." Doing and saying are thus neatly severed; the elements remain unmixed and inert. The romance of "El Che" ensures that he will be studied as an example, but not as an authority. He is constituted as a doer, not as a sayer, and anything he said is understood only in terms of what he did. "Foucault," as an "author" is read and appreciated apart from his biography, but not so Guevara.

"Guevarismo" has become exactly what Guevara cautioned against: an -ism. And even (especially?) guerrillas succumb to the cult-phenomena—to the codification of Che's teachings. For example, is "Guevarismo" essentially "foquismo," or is it equally essentially political vanguardism? Such have been the debates among the guevarists (e.g. Hodges 1977). Even (especially?) Che seems to have fallen victim to "Guevarismo." Was he reading/following his old revolution--enmeshed in the specificities of Cuba--instead of writing/leading a new one--in Bolivia?

Yes. One might say, if it were not so foolish to pass judgement at this point on a giant like Che, that to some extent Che suffered the consequences of his own experience, without intending to ... (interview with a leader of Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias [of Argentina], 1970, quoted in Hodges 1977).

"Guevarismo" can be fatal, and fatalistic for those who confound Guevara with "Guevarismo" and conclude that it does not work. Che is thereby
reduced to the position of a "guerilla," and is excluded from the position of "author." His texts do not matter, but only that he ended in "failure." Yet I am mobilized by Che's campaigns and by his texts, which is not to say that I am determined to follow in his footsteps. My Tango steps arise out of a different place, at a different time. Bolivia, 1967 was not Cuba, 1958, and neither is Hawai'i 1991. (We cordobeses get around.) My method is my own, and I would no more offer it as a rule book than Che offered his.

All these recommendations are flexible; there are based upon an experience in a certain place and are conditioned by its geography and history; they will be modified in different geographical, historical, and social situations (Guevarra 1985).

Thus he fought, and thus I tango. And thus neither one of us is prescriptive or methodical about our methods. The purpose is not to theorize, to generalize, or to totalize. The purpose is to decolonize. 6

Argentina and "Decolonization"

Decolonization? Argentina? Writing in Hawai'i, this state-not-colony, about Argentina, this nation-not-colony, raises certain questions: Why do I speak of decolonization, when Argentina won its independence 181 years ago (and Hawai'i won its statehood 32 years past)? On the surface the term "decolonization" could be dismissed as imprecise. "Colonialism" and "decolonization" have been sloppily extended beyond their technical referents. I could explain that Argentina is not really still a colony, and that my project is not really decolonization. But I do not use these terms sloppily, loosely, or imprecisely. The technical terms
and rhetorical strategies are a substantive part of the politics of every intellectual. The naming of the problems that an intellectual is trying to address situates both the intellectual and the problem in an already politicized context. The text that comes out of the intellectual exercise talks to other texts—the intertextual. More importantly, it talks in a political/politicized world where the intellectual and the text are already conditioned to play a part and fit into certain slots (Said 1983).

In the practice of writing, the arguments are conditioned by the naming of the problems addressed (as in my case, where I name the problem "colonialism"). This is an internal, textual, discursive happening; but in terms of the audience—the worldliness in which the text speaks—the naming or labelling already sets a tone and a position—a political position—predisposing the readers in locations as supporters or critics of the politics of the text.

Writing in late capitalism—a society of massive, intensive and hyper-rapid consumerism—has augmented these features; the name of the problem has become a crucial signifier for a political identification. The proliferation of writing and the superficiality of reading are escalating at a high pace. Writing has always been a seductive practice, but today it is more blatant, overt, scandalous. This is a time of "stand-up" reading, like eating hors d'oeuvre. "One should wander through the bookstore aimlessly; it's a matter of suddenly recognizing which book is sending out a signal to you, and picking it up."

If you perceive that [signal] and you get the book, then it's the same as already having read it. You don't have to read the whole thing from cover to cover—I think it's all right just to put it by your pillow (Asada as read/consumed by Ivy 1988a).
This is a time when Foucault's desire to slip imperceptibly into discourse (1971) should no longer apply. The problem is no longer how to slip in, but how to jump out. At least this is my political concern. How do I get someone to listen to me? How can I draw your attention? How can I make a point? How can I move you?

Colonialism. Yes, Argentina and Colonialism. Almost two centuries of formal independence, of statehood and still Colonialism. Third World, underdeveloped, dependent and unevenly underdeveloped, semi-periphery, south of the North.... Sure, but still Colonialism. A new stage of colonialism, neocolonial, of course. But colonial nevertheless. Stubbornly, colonial. Incomprehensible. I agree. And this is one of the basic problems for us argentinos: we can't believe it ourselves. The underdeveloping process, the experience of becoming less and less "developed," more dependent, increasingly poor, more harshly exploited, economically and politically more polarized, of losing dignity, of compromising unnegotiable values is hard to admit. It is not a crisis; it is not an obstacle in the road to progress; it is not a temporary regression; it is not a break until we gather new breath and start pushing ahead once again. For the vast majority of the people it resembles a bottomless bottom. It is colonialism. I need a stop word, a definite stand. A harsh concept that would recall a turning point. A reaction that can't be calmed down by false promises. I talk about colonialism because I am already setting up the context for a project of decolonization.

When I choose to name the latinoamericano "problem" as colonial, I am joining the decolonization struggles; decolonization authors, texts,
attitudes, skills, strategies and decisions. I am attempting a decolonized understanding and a decolonizing practice. *Latino* intellectuals have been too confused for too long. We cannot afford it. We cannot enjoy the scientific, technocratic luxuries of the imperially located academics anymore. It's over. Our protected niches within the research centers have shrunk, the crumbs and leftovers are scarce .... *Latino* intellectuals flee like rats towards the core of the empire. They call it "the brain drain"; it reminds me of the colonial administrators hurrying back home in the midst of the anti-colonial struggles. At this state of emergency we are forced to figure out where we belong.

Capital has no nationality anymore. This is the time of the multinational corporations, of a process of transnationalization ... Fine. But the headquarters move to the *latinoamericano* continent only to celebrate the carnaval. Imperialism now carries a double life: like a flashy exhibitionist, the current imperialist exposes his power in the safe dark alleys of the world and hurries back to his formal business suit, private airplane and portable phone. A cross-national imperialist class maybe, but still imperialist. An imperial technology that hides its power from itself, disguised in transnational cloaks and manners. Whom does the complexity, specificity and precision oriented analysis benefit?

For a *latinoamericano* intellectual aiming at decolonization, it is essential to produce counter-narratives, rhetorical strategies, resistances to colonial discourse. My decolonizing narrative begins with the assertion that colonialism did not end with our so-called "independence." Furthermore, our colonization started before our incorporation into capitalism. Colonialism is neither a political nor an economic category
strictu sensu. Colonialism is a set of practices, encompassing formalized institutions all the way through personalized attitudes, through which domination/exploitation/extermination of the many in the hands of a few is reproduced. Racism, classism and sexism are integral parts of the technology of colonialism. Colonialism operates through a careful detection and fixation of differences, and inoculates the fear, guilt and anger of not being one and the same—the same as the colonizer. Colonialism, moreover, writes epic narratives about these occurrences and praises itself for developing a precise, meticulous description, either theological, philosophical or technological. Narratives of self-justification.

A decolonizing project must state that colonization does not end with so-called "independence" and the point should be made obvious.

We have stated that political sovereignty and economic independence go hand in hand. If there is no national economy, if the economy is penetrated by foreign capital, one is not free from the tutelage of the country on which one depends (Guevara 1969).

After the "independence" from Spain in 1898, and after the revolutionary victory in 1959, Cuba remained a colony. The problem was not "underdevelopment." The problem was colonialism. The answer is prefigured in the question, the solution in the problem. If the problem is underdevelopment, the solution is development. "Underdeveloped," like "pre-capitalist" and "primitive," implies a direction. If Argentina is taken to be "independent" but "underdeveloped," what we need is more development. But if the problem is colonialism, then the solution is
decolonization. My purpose is decolonization, so, for me, the issue is colonialism. And this is not a mere question of semantics.

In my view, our "dependency" is intact. It is complex, intricate, culturally, economically and politically specific. It has moments of development and of regression. Still Argentina is dependent and colonized. Many critiques of the "dependency theories" here missed the point that the dependentistas latinoamericanos were more invested in politics than in scholarship (Larrain 1989). The discourse of dependencia was a strategy of anti-imperialist mobilization. By naming the problem "colonialism," I am attempting to contribute to the recreation of that political space and thrust.

Argentina and Colonialism

I am rushed by the present in trying to explain the past. I see layers of colonialism: Spanish conquest and colonialism; independence from Spain and British neo-colonialism; time for the empire to change hats, American imperialism; time for a re-alignment of the world, North-south imperialism; time for modernizing the obsolete international division of labor, multinational colonialism, transnational colonialism, post-colonial colonialism .... Some of the waves of imperialism benefitted América Latina more than others. True. Argentina in particular received a considerable share of wealth a couple of times during this century.

Between 1869 (first national population census) and 1914 the population of the country generously triples. The two million hectares of cultivated land in 1880 become twelve in 1905, that is, it multiplies six times in twenty five years. The 24,114 industrial
establishments that the country had in 1895 become 724 [thousand] towards 1910. The 2,313 kilometers of railroad tracks in the 80s are 19,430 in 1904. These data reveal a fantastic growth without parallel in the world (Montergous 1985: 7-8, based on Jose L. Romero's Las ideas politicas en la Argentina, my translation).

Some authors offer even more impressive evidence of the "boom."

Tulchin, interpreting Carlos Diaz Alejandro's research, asserts that in half a century (1860-1910), the area under cultivation was increased from 580,000 hectares to 24 million hectares; the railroad network had grown from 10 kilometers to nearly 34,000. In addition, by 1909, Argentina was exporting more grain than any other nation in the world. By 1910, it had the highest per-capita international trade in the world (90% of which came from the agricultural sector). And in the fifty years before the centennial of Argentina's "independence," the number of ships stopping in the Buenos Aires harbor had risen from less than a thousand to nearly ten thousand, second only to New York in the continent (Tulchin 1990).

Perhaps the first of the NICs, argentinos did not understand that this situation was ephemeral. Argentina was inaugurating a new form of not being independent.

Argentino development, which during the fifty years previous to the First World War was one of the most rapid in world's economic history, [...] ultimately was the result of the symbiotic relationship, commercial as well as financial, with Great Britain. The (asymmetric) interdependency between both countries was such that not only was Great Britain Argentina's main buyer; in several years, Argentina was the main provider for Great Britain, excluding the United States, but including all the other members of the Empire (Escudé 1988: 3, my translation).
Argentina, independent from Spain, was enjoying a development "boom" due to neo-colonial dependency on Great Britain. However, the change of imperial hats was not so flourishing for all argentinos:

The May revolution attempted to break the Spanish system according to which we could only buy and sell at the Cadiz harbor. With the years it seems as though Argentineans would want to impose among ourselves the obligation to buy and sell exclusively at the Liverpool harbor. [...] If this colonality meant an approach between people seeking to compensate for economic needs, we would oppose it on grounds of the principle of freedom, but we would see that tolerance in the struggle would be a necessity. But since it brings attached to it hunger, decadence and exploitation for the masses, we feel that we must be unbending (Homero Manzi, "¿Qué es FORJA?" quoted in Ford 1986: 16, my translation).

Homero Manzi, a prominent Tango lyricist and political activist, was clearly sensing in 1936 the traps of our British-dependent development. In Fernández Retamar's words, "there was simply no way an eventual Argentine bourgeoisie could develop. Latinamerica was a late arrival to that fiesta." And Mariategui explained:

The time of free competition in the capitalist economy has come to an end, in all areas and in every aspect. We are now in an era of monopolies, of empires. The Latin-American countries are experiencing a belated entry into competitive capitalism. The dominant positions are already well established. The fate of such countries, within the capitalist order, is that of simple colonies (quoted in Fernández Retamar 1989: 28).

The illusion of arriving to the fiesta on time is precisely one of the features of the privileged among the colonized. Argentino elites were convinced that "Argentina had material conditions superior to the United States of America, and would some day be greater than that nation" (Alois E. Flies' address to the Sociedad Rural Argentina quoted in
Tulchin 1990: 17). And messages from abroad reinforced Argentina's hopes.

What started as a naïve belief in the possibility of catching-up ended in a detached defense of genocides, exploitation and repression. All in the name of Civilización y Progreso! No. The process of colonization does not stop with formal independence. Colonization colonizes; colonization reproduces itself; a successful colonization is one that is internalized by the colonized (Deleuze and Guattari 1983).

We need to replace our citizens with others more able to profit from liberty. But we need to do this without giving up our racial character, or, much less, our political control. Should we, perhaps, bring in more enlightened conquerors than the Spaniards? South America has an army for this purpose, its beautiful and amiable women of Andalusian origin and improved under the splendid sky of the New World. Remove the immoral impediments that sterilize the power of [South] America's fair sex and you will have effected the change in our race without losing our language or our racial character (Juan B. Alberdi quoted in Sommer 1990: 87).

After the independence from the illegitimate Spanish conquerors, the challenge was to purify the racially irrational and lazy population of América Latina. Domingo F. Sarmiento, another argentino "development" fighter, interpreted Alberdi's message this way:

Many difficulties will be presented by the occupation of so extensive a country; but there will be no advantage comparable to that gained by the extinction of the savage tribes. [...] It may be very unjust to exterminate savages, suffocate rising civilizations, conquer peoples who are in possession of a privileged piece of land. But thanks to this injustice, [South] America, instead of remaining abandoned to the savages, incapable of progress, is today occupied by the Caucasian race—the most perfect, the most intelligent, the most beautiful and most progressive of those that people the earth. Thanks to these injustices, Oceania is filled with civilized peoples, Asia begins to move under the European impulse, Africa sees the times of Carthage and the glorious days of
Egypt reborn on her coasts. Thus, the population of the world is subject to revolutions that recognize immutable laws; the strong races exterminate the weak ones and the civilized peoples supplant the savages in the possession of the earth (Sarmiento in Fernández Retamar 1989: 24).

The language, the tongue of the colonizer spitting through the teeth of the colonized. Alberdi was writing Las Bases para la Organización Política de la República Argentina (1852) and Sarmiento would soon become a Presidente ...? Latinoamerica's history is the history of the gigantic costs of this confusion.

The immeasurable violence and pain of our history are the result of age-old inequities and untold bitterness, and not a conspiracy plotted three thousand mils from our homes. [...] The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary (García Márquez [1982] quoted in Galeano 1987: 262-263).

A "culture of dependency" (Corradi 1979) carried along in successive layers of colonialism: neo-, multi-, trans-, post- as well as plain. A culture devastated by the experience of colonialism, not by catholicism or iberianism although these might have helped to pave the way. The "cultural bomb" of colonialism (Ngugi's words, 1986) which taught us how to hate ourselves, how to look at ourselves as if we were an other, how to hope for ourselves the worst in order to attain the colonizer's best. "It is the final triumph of a system of domination when the dominated start singing its virtue" (Ngugi 1986: 20).

Tulchin blames the argentino oligarchy for not adopting a more aggressive expansionist policy at the turn of the century:

A policy that would place Argentina among the civilized, imperialistic nations of the world on the same terms as the United
States was being accepted and was participating in world affairs. [...] Argentines did not want the responsibilities of world power. They did not want to take up the white man's burden in Africa or Asia. Quite a few appeared willing to shoulder it in South America. [...] The oligarchy constructed the relations of dependency that would distort their nation's development for the next century (Tulchin 1990: 26-27).

In my opinion, our oligarchies lacked neither arrogance nor grandiose ambition. Alberdi and Sarmiento are witnesses to this fact. They did not lack will to international power either, as Tulchin argues only to contradict himself by quoting Estanislao Zeballos saying "somewhat testily" that Argentina was destined to be "the colossus of the Southern continent," and that an article in La Prensa (1896) asserted that "This powerful land is destined to undertake in the Southern continent a democratic humanitarian mission as great as that of the country of Washington" (Tulchin 1990: 18). The argentino elite was a profoundly colonized elite and, hence, cared about and was more preoccupied with becoming one of the civilized nations in the world, participating through trade in the march towards progress. Again playing Tulchin's quotes against himself, La Nación (1889) publishes an article stating that:

The Argentine Republic now has an established personality in the civilized world. From this moment forward one may say that Argentina will be highly esteemed because we have made known the rich products of our soil, of our industry and of our intelligence.

These pathetic assertions show that Argentina's elite had to prove its whiteness before it could take "the white man's burden." Argentina's burden was not the white man's but the burden of "whitening"; it was and is the burden of colonialism. Layers of colonialism. A mixed-up
series of colonial narratives where the aboriginal savages ended up lumped together with immoral, irrational Spaniards, the sweaty African slaves, the curiously brave criollo knife-fighters of the pampas, the miserable Italian immigrants ... one by one entering into the category of the "native" or "latino" or "hispanic"; one by one bearing the scars of the colonized. For argentinos the burden of colonialism has been translated in endless efforts to reaffirm our whiteness, our "europoid"--a rough draft of the European (Lipschutz’s term quoted in Fernández Retamar)--difference from the Rest and a mixture of melancholy and rage for not being able to fit into the West. Our colonization is complete when we forget that we are colonized. The colonizer's greatest move is to enforce upon us "free-trade," either by blackmail or violence, blaming us subsequently for our own "underdevelopment."

Much has been written about the "miracle of Argentina's underdevelopment." No explanations are satisfactory (Larrain 1989; Escudé 1988) Dependency theories cannot fully explain Argentina's successful development until the 1940s and those focusing on the internal sociopolitical dynamics often distort argentino history through "culturalism" (the wrong Iberian-catholic roots) or "personalism" (like the Perón-phobia). For those aiming at the salvation of the myth of development within world capitalism, the answer is that the timing of Argentina's insertion into the international market was wrong, or that the speed was too overwhelming for any right political decisions to be made. More recently, scholars have been trying to understand the irrational behavior of the argentino elite and their stubborn resistance to U.S. imperialism. The elite's lack of realism and failure to accept their
position would be the answer to Argentina’s self-destructiveness.

*Argentinos* did not know how to change imperial masters in time (Tulchin 1990 and Escudé 1988).

The war in Europe would demonstrate painfully the limits of such a policy by exposing the extent of Argentine dependence within the international market, the new power of the United States, and the considerable costs of confronting the US in a situation in which the colossus of the north was disposed to use its overwhelming power (Tulchin 1990: 27).

Argentina criticized the aggressive intervention of the U.S. in the Venezuelan boundary dispute (1895) and in Cuba (1895-98). Argentina boycotted the U.S. efforts to create a Pan-American Union (1882), aimed at ensuring U.S. hegemony over América Latina by securing the greatest portion of trade and a military alliance. In 1909, when O’Brien, U.S. minister to Argentina, expressed his interest in improving U.S.-Argentina trade, the *argentino* minister of agriculture responded: "If the U.S. wants to improve relations, all it has to do is to buy more from Argentina" (Tulchin 1990). It is worth quoting at length a document released to the public in recent years, in which the British Foreign Office gives opinionated information about Argentina’s reactions to the U.S. pressures.

For forty years or more, Argentina has been a thorn in the flesh of the successive North American governments in that it has continuously offered to lead the *latinoamericano* resistance to United States hegemony in the Western hemisphere, a fact which almost all North American citizens consider a necessity as well as a right. [...] *Argentino* liberals, like Dr. Saavedra Lamas, to no less a degree than *argentino* nationalists and militarists have exasperated the men of the North American state with their pretensions of being the voice of Latin America against "yankee" domination or the "dollar diplomacy." In recent years their exasperation has been accompanied by the uncomfortable
knowledge that Argentina represents more than a transient challenge, and that other latinoamericano countries, although prone to dislike Argentina because of its arrogant opportunism, nevertheless consider this nation a welcome spearhead against the penetration of the United States (Lord Iverchapel, Feb. 1947 communication from Washington to the Foreign Office, quoted in Escudé 1988: 29, my translation).

After succeeding in maintaining Argentina as a British neo-colony up to the Second World War, Great Britain had given in to US world leadership. Argentinos (governments and people) did not. Some persisted in the idea of a European dependent development, whose glorious days they could not forget. Others aimed at a national development, as autonomous as possible. For Escudé, Argentina's resistance to US imperialism was a sign of irrationality.

Argentina could not afford the luxury of irritating the U.S. colossus, regardless of any ideas of justice and rights. Argentina fell into what could be called a "syndrome of irrationality" in its political decision-making process (Escudé 1988: 25, my translation).

In Escudé's opinion, responsible peripheral nations should be able to realize that the favor or disfavor of the powerful affects their development possibilities; and that the "weakest part" should swallow its pride and move "with a more pragmatic conscious of the cost-benefit calculations."

His reasons for this are that national pride, in peripheral countries, is usually an excuse for self-destructive confrontations and another manifestation of inequity within society. "National pride is an elitist product," and it often "feeds the egos of the elite" while sinking "the general population even further into poverty" (Escudé 1988, my translation).
Although I fully agree with Escudé's analysis of the unequal distribution of the "benefits" and "costs" of national pride, I do not understand how the situation would change without it. If the "rational" road to development means opportunistic subserviency to the international powers that be (and he as well as others have the Brazilian economic "boom" in mind), there is still a price to pay--beyond the national pride--and the elite will certainly not pay that either. I gather that the same "general population" would, and without the symbolic and emotional "benefits" of national pride. I do not think these are problems of political "culture," or "syndromes of irrationality." These crazy, schizophrenic, no-win situations are a syndrome of colonialism.

In the midst of Argentina's celebrations of the development glory, the Centennial commemoration of the independence from Spain (1910) was challenged by serious social disturbances ... followed by serious repression. Labor unions had been organizing already for decades to protest the uneven distribution of prosperity. Low salaries, cyclic unemployment, unbearable working and housing conditions, detentions and deportations of activists were all protested through sectorial and general strikes. Prosperity was there, but out of reach for the many. The argentino government did actively intervene in trying to create internal conditions for development.

Through direct investments, credits, legislation and the creation of administrative units in charge of production and services, the State offered security to individuals, goods and transactions, facilitated conditions for the establishment of an internal market, extended the benefits of education and health services, and contributed to the population of the territory and used extra-economic coercion so as to guarantee the employment of the often
scarce labor force. (Oscar Oszlak quoted by Suriano 1988: 2, my translation).

However, the dynamic of an agro-export dependent economy conditioned these efforts and multiplied the confrontations between the have and have-nots. Rather than taking the so-called "social question" for what it was, the political/economic elites engaged in developing repressive legislation and maneuvers. The Social Defense Law (1910) aimed at detecting and deporting deviant and perverse individuals expelled from their own countries, where "misery and alcoholism perturb the functions of the brain" (Meyer Gonzalez quoted by Suriano 1988: 19, my translation). These were the immigrant socialist and anarchist "agitators." In addition, elite "nationalist" gangs would spend their leisure time setting fire to labor union buildings, popular libraries and social clubs, the print shops for La Vanguardia and La Protesta, and the Jewish and working-class neighborhoods. The social problems would only be read, once again, in terms of race-class; this time, pertaining to the immigrants. The dominant colonized discourse repeated that all social inequalities would be eliminated through the workings of the marketplace; argentinos only needed to allow time for the marvelous healing process of growth to occur. The nation's golden future was guaranteed by the exports of meat, grains and wool, and by universal and free education .... A traditional trickle down theory of development.

Tango lyrics of that period confirm that the idea of "allowing time for the miracle to work" was not so easy to digest. They portray misery, prostitution, unemployment, unwanted family dissolutions, unwelcomed relocalizations, unbearable promiscuity and loneliness. They also
showed, in challenging weeps and alcoholic cynicism, the lack of faith in the development project as well as the lack of good faith of the oligarchy. While in Europe the cliche was "as rich as an Argentine"--in reference to the beef barons traveling abroad--Tangos sang and danced the dark side of development. The ones in power were not ready to hear: the native oligarchy condemned the Tango to the margins, where they enjoyed hunting the demimonde; the Europeans didn't understand the words and thought that these "natives" were charming.
CHAPTER TWO

TANGO AS A SPECTACLE OF SEX, RACE, AND CLASS

Tango and the "Macho" Cult

Probably the best known Tangos are those which emphasize blatant expressions of machismo or male chauvinism. In this regard two well-known contemporary argentino writers offer stunning examples:

Commenting on the decadence of tango lyrics, which even then went in for "loud self-pity" among sentimental compadritos betrayed by their broads, Paredes remarked dryly, "Any man who thinks five minutes straight about a woman is no man, he's a queer." Love among such people was obviously ruled out; I knew that their real passion would be (male) friendship (Borges 1970: 278).

It was not [sex], that the lonely man of Buenos Aires was worried about; nor what his nostalgic, and even many times cruel songs evoked. It was precisely the contrary: nostalgia for love and communion, the longing for a woman, and not the presence of an instrument of his lust: "In my life I had many, many minas [broad or easy catches],/ but never a woman." Tango expresses an erotic resentment and a tortuous manifestation of the inferiority complex of the argentino, since sex is one of the primary shapes of power. Machismo is a very peculiar phenomenon of the porteños. [...] He feels obliged to behave as a male to the second or third power. [...] The guy observes carefully his behavior in front of others and he feels judged and potentially ridiculed by his [male] peers (Sábato 1963b: 14-15, my translation).

It seems that the enhancement of male dominance is so crassly stated and obvious, that any denouncing commentary would be merely redundant. Moreover, interpretations of the male/female relationships in Tango such as those quoted above, insisting on the centrality of male bonds or the existence of a male society, only add a new layer of
credibility to the *macho* perspective. Are there any alternative ways to talk about *machismo*? Moreover, is it worth it investing any effort in trying to do so?

*Machismo* is a cult of maleness and, as such, perhaps it should be left in the hands of its devotees. This has been the position of most women interested in Tango. And I clearly see the point. Take for example the preoccupations of Tulio Carella, trying to solve a typical Tango debate on the question of manliness. Martínez Estrada, a Tango detractor, had argued that Tango "is a humiliating dance for women." His reasons for this were that, in Tango, women are obliged "to follow men who cannot lead them, who do not impose on them their will. The man is as passive as she is" (quoted in Carella 1956: 51, my translation). To these remarks Carella, a Tango defender, responds that "Whoever engages in a profound knowledge of Tango's choreography will verify exactly the opposite" (Carella, ibid.). And in order to strengthen his argument Carella quotes Vicente Rossi, a Tango erudite, saying:

> Added to [Tango's] aforementioned stress for their [women's] imagination, the strong shaking to which they were subjected should be taken into account; they were led backwards, pushed back and forth, sometimes led to sit on the thigh of their partner, sometimes led to bend and lean back (Rossi in Carella 1956: 52, my translation.)

Do you follow my thoughts? There is so much *macho* pride (and so much *macho* history) invested in these misogynist remarks, that one is tempted to leave it to die on its own. The problem is that it might not do so.
In Carella's debate with Martínez Estrada, as well as in Borges and Sábato’s contrasting but complementary remarks, there is something telling about machismo. Although women are at the center of the polemics, they do not play a central role. Women are, so to speak, the exhibited signifiers. The misogynistic remarks are, in their rejection of women, manipulations among men. Male-bonding, male society—maleness is what is at stake. And it is a power play between men.

These men debating maleness in Tango are not just men insecure in their maleness (as Sábato seems to suggest). There is no such thing as pure, stable maleness that could be attained either through profound individual reflection or exceptional childrearing conditions. Maleness, and its counterpart, the unmale (not the female) are a gendered version of class and racial struggles as well as a struggle over the ghostly question of national identity. And these uncanny struggles, needless to say, have severe consequences for women.

Machismo has a history. It has an internal dynamic to it, and a macro-political dimension. At both of these levels of analysis, men and women play their asymmetric parts. And they struggle. But these struggles are not restricted to questions of gender, although they have been rendered in gendered terms. On a micro-political level, men of different racial/class ascriptions struggle over women of different class and race. It is a struggle for male supremacy waged between men but carried out through women. The race/class conflicts are gendered in themselves. Gender is at the center of the conflict and out of the question, simultaneously. Whoever gets to the top at a certain point, gets to define what maleness is all about. Maleness will be the reason
given for being at the top, so as to render the victory "natural" and uncontestable. But the victory is one of men of a certain race/class over other race/class men. This position of supreme maleness will be permanently contested and put in jeopardy by both, men and women, who are not beneficaries of such a definition of maleness.

From a macro-political perspective, maleness and national identity go hand in hand.° Machismo, in particular, is an outcome of international struggles over manliness. "Macho" is the Spanish word for "male," adapted in English, French, and other languages/cultures to refer to a "wrong" kind of maleness--to unmanly maleness. Manliness is here contrasted with maleness. Macho men are not so much unmale as they are unmanly. Machismo is a synonym for barbaric, uncivilized "virility" attributed to latinos. It is used not for the purposes of destabilizing the category of maleness as a whole, but rather to contribute, by way of contrast, to the consolidation of manliness--a "civilized" bourgeois maleness which is universally supremacist over all other class/race/nation of men and women around the globe. Modern imperialist manliness is a new kind of maleness which, unlike the old-fashioned machismo, has promised to distribute its privileges among women of its own kind (with the right kind of womanliness). And this manliness foresaw the possibility of a trickle-down of such privileges to other more or less macho (uncivilized) cultures of the world, as soon as they became assimilated to this progressive and "respectable" brand of manly (Western) maleness. Bourgeois manliness and modern imperialism were one and the same ideology; and one and the same practice. Colonialism, in its different stages, born of the competition
with other races/classes/nations of men, feminized and turned unmanly the peripheral world.

Tango is one among many other expressions of this conflict over maleness, caught up in both, internal and international wars. Tango, as popular culture has been immersed in debates about maleness/femaleness, responding and challenging the modern bourgeois constructs of gender identity which were being imported from Europe. The class/race gendered conflicts revealed in an early stage of Tango become more "universally" gendered with the promise of class mobility brought about by Argentina's incorporation into global capitalism. These two epochs of Tango which I call "ruffianesque" and "romantic" are traced through popular theater, lyrics and choreographic changes. However, rather than focusing on a typification of "stages" in Tango development, I have chosen to wonder about the social tensions playing "in-between." To my understanding, both stages became identified as Tango once the bourgeois ideas of morality, respectability and civility started to dominate the argentino social horizon. As a result, Tango "ruffianesque" and "romantic" are both an outcome of conflicts between "civilized" and "barbaric" definitions of maleness.

The first part of this chapter is a descriptive warming-up for the second part. Male struggles over race and class associated with the emergence of Tango led to a micro-political close-up on the male/female characters of the Tango ruffianesque. These characters (el compadrito and la milonguita)—unsettling for the bourgeois patriarchal fixation with stable gender roles and respectability—will be seen in a tragicomic quest for social mobility. The Tango itself—as popular dance and music—and
the Tango characters—el compadrito and la milonguita—were strongly
invested in this goal of "moving up." I retain this intricacy as much as I
can.

I have also tried to grasp women's participation in Tango both as
characters (representations of femaleness) and as audience. Tango has
resisted giving any straight answers about either one, perhaps because
women were/are seen as the pawns of the tangueros male wars.
However, Tango's mixture of male whiny confessions over female
trickeries and cruel admonitions for their female betrayers have led me
to question the hegemony of the macho message which is usually
attributed to them. I read the whininess and the admonitions as
evidence of women's rebellion. Without such resistance, the whiny
confessions would have no referents, and the admonitions would have
no purpose.

Estela dos Santos says: "As a typical example of a macho society,
the Tango--created, administered and dominated by males--has had at
its center a marginal zone inhabited by women who sang it and danced
it" (1978: 2225, my translation).² In Tango, the marginals are at the
core. Women's presence in the plots of the Tango lyrics is crucial,
women singers have been at least as famous as their male counterparts--
with the exception of Carlos Gardel--and the female audience of Tango
has overwhelmingly outnumbered its male counterpart (ibid.: 2226-
2227).³ Are these women just the objects of male domination? I am
reluctant to accept a thesis that would explain these facts simply by
stressing men's ability to manipulate women so as to perpetuate
patriarchal power. I have no doubts about their intention of doing so;
my questions are rather about the echoed declaration of their complete success. Women have never been just "docile bodies" or "passive objects." Tango, both in its lyrics and choreographies, has recorded women's strategies of resistance. This is not to say that women succeeded either; rather, what I wish to emphasize is that in adopting an approach of winners and loosers, the relevance of the power struggle which pervades all Tango stories is dismissed. In taking the endings of the stories for the end of the struggle, the actual operation of power in the heterosexual relationships is neglected. A reading of Tango oblivious to the strategies of the weak--the active presence of women as subjects of resistance--contributes to rush into frozen images the definition of a continuing battle. Women have been victimized by the Tango ruffians, in the most cruelly and patronizing ways, but they gave their men a hell of a lot of trouble. And I believe that despite the threatening outcomes of the Tango plots, overwhelmingly favorable to men, women followers of the Tango cult rejoiced over the female characters' abilities as troublemakers. Women were receiving a useful knowledge.

**Docile Bodies in Rebellion**

True, women in Tango do not have a global revolutionary project in mind; they display a series of concrete subversive moves tempered by their interests in survival. In doing so, they reproduced the female stereotypes: prostitutes, mistresses, wives .... But, perhaps the copies are not perfect; subverted reproductions? They aimed at improving their embodied lives, which in that context meant a more rewarding exploitation and, this was not a minor endeavor. They discovered there
was something they could do; they could move from the accepted poverty of one territory--the outskirts--to the questionable flashy lights of the downtown cabarets. Move. They were passionate objects not passive ones. Objects that have, if not a say, at least a move in the power game.

Women in Tango are part object, part subject. Paraphrasing Baudrillard, the stratagems of the milonguita have the ironic thrust of a subjectivity in the process of being grasped (1984a: 134, my translation).

Power is thick, dense, heavy; its nature is viscous ... it's sticky. The movements of resistance carry along old traces, recombine old stereotypes with new territories; rejected identities stick to new desires. Are these stratagems, these resistances that only work imperfectly, so easily co-opted by the "macho" system? How can one define when the resistance ceases to play within the lax rules of the patriarchal game and actually starts to distort its very shape and limits? By lax rules I mean here the capacity of the ones in power to adjust and manipulate a challenging situation so as to preserve the status quo or the myth of a status quo. I believe that in addressing women's resistance merely as complicitist or as meek moves within the dictates of machismo, the myth of a stable system is being reinforced and this contributes to a politics of paralysis. An account of the practices of victimization, resistance, and subversion enlightens the actual dynamics of power in a way which the crystallized image of a victim cannot convey. A less powerful existence, even when the degree of inequality is dramatic, is quite different from a powerless one. This is not to minimize the abuses of male power to which women are submitted in Tango: women are prostituted, exploited and sexually abused by pimps and clients, beaten up and even
murdered. However, I insist on the importance of distinguishing between the experience of victimization and the attribution of an identity as a victim. The practice of victimization needs to be constantly reactualized in order to prevent the practices of resistance from becoming challenges to macho hegemonic power. Victims, as a fixed identity in the experience of powerlessness, are only those who have literally lost their lives. My mother says: "No está muerto quien pelea."

The operation of power--both in its imposition and resistance strategies--permanently reproduces subjection and rebellion. At least as long as the subjected ones are present and alive. Is resistance only another manipulation of the dominant "discourse"? In Joan Cocks (1989) words, is it possible to "retain the notion of a phallocentric culture that is hegemonic but not totalitarian"? Or to put it in Tango tongue, are these lively milonguitas just making fools of themselves when they try to cheat their pimps and ruffians? No doubt they are according to the Tango narrators' morals. But who believes that his morals are the actual end of the story? At this point, I wish to invite the Tango audience into the picture. If the female audience believed in the premonition of a bleak future for the "self-destructive heroines," they would be paralyzed. These women would never attempt any escape from their legitimate territory. If in addition their men and the whole "state apparatus," if you will, adhered to this belief, they/it would come to a restful status quo. The whole discipline and control apparatus would become unnecessary. Such a situation, besides leaving a whole lot of people jobless, would favor the re-emergence of resistance. Obviously, despite the popularity of Tango in Argentina, only a few must have
believed the tale. The popularity has to do, at least to me, with the depiction of the endless conflict between oppressors and oppressed: rich and poor, whitened and colored, "civilized" and "barbaric." The popularity, among women in particular, resides in the blatant exposure of strategies of insurgency on the part of the victimized heroines. The milonguitas where a role-model, even a caricature, but so were the bourgeois morals. And if the Tango men and the bourgeois men and women believed in the defeated or self-destructive end of the milonguita, so much the better!

The Tango Embrace

Tango started as a dance, a tense dance, in which a male/female embrace tried to heal the racial and class displacements provoked by urbanization and war. But the seductive, sexual healing was never to be complete, and the tensions resurfaced and reproduced, transforming the Tango. Tango encounters where a catalyst for further racial and class tensions augmented with the European migration avalanche. Tango helped to provoke these encounters and, at the same time, expressed their occurrence.

Black men and women probably initiated the first Tango steps in the Rio de la Plata: flirtatious ombligadas and culeadas, bodies alternately coming close to each other and apart. Their displays of eroticism scandalized and created distance/difference, racial and class difference with their masters and exploiters (Assunção 1984, Natale 1984, Salas 1986). But they did not embrace. They did not need to hold tight; their color held them together.
The Tango embrace was probably created by the internal wars following the independence from Spain, which lasted for over forty years: Tight and failed embraces of prostitutes (soldaderas and cuarteleras) following the armies of mixed poor mestizos and pardos. After the unification of the country, forced into a new national identity by the interests of Buenos Aires--the harbor city, looking at Europe--Tango's embrace became a must. Racial and class displacements where intersected by rural-urban movements. The harbor city demanded new laboring flesh to get the beefy flesh ready for export. Buenos Aires was changing from a big village into a city; the criollos and mulatos herding the cattle to the city and working at the slaughterhouses and saladeros, were lonely, angry and frustrated men. Their immediate world was changing at a pace for which their own nomadism as former gauchos and soldiers was unsuited. They needed to embrace even tighter; no matter who or where. And they would fight for the opportunity. This is the story of the guapo or compadrito, those men of different shades of skin but the same dark shade of fate which cultivated courage--courage as a skill and as a value. In Borges' words, these guapos where specialists in progressive intimidation, "veterans in winning without having to fight." With a few knife-fights over questions of honor, few words but plenty of bad attitude, they established a reputation and territory for themselves on the outskirts of the city. And they struggled for some maleness fighting over women--women who were scarce, in fact and in their imaginations. Urbanization and industrialization had left their women behind; and these civilizing projects were being instigated by other men. Urbanization and industrialization had a face, the faces
of those wealthy men that looked lasciviously at their poor women. These wealthy men paid to embrace poor women, being unable to touch the women of their own kind without commitment. Whether the guapos cared or not about their women it is hard to tell; they learned to look tough, to despise life, and to disdain women. Perhaps they disdained women defensively, since they where unattainable or difficult to keep. Perhaps they came to despise life from fighting over women in order to keep on being men, despite their class. The macho identity is born in this contradiction. Women's identities, which carry no specific names but those of there color and class, were born out of this competition among men. Macho men of different color and class pulling at women from different directions shaped women's nameless identities.

None of these tensions were resolved, and the European immigrants, a new labor army, were already there. No time for healing. More exiles, more distress, and again, few women. How tight could Tango's embrace get? The stiff torsos of the black dances became stiffer; the swaying hips (quebradas) and the sharp interruptions of the dancing march (cortes) lost their joyful fluidity and became grave; and so did the faces, concentrated in displaying filigrees of footwork (figuras) for an attentive audience of pardas and chinas, themselves escaped from domestic services in the houses of the rich to become near-prostitutes for the poor and rich. Whose embrace was the Tango embrace? Tango's choreography emerged out of mutual admiration and scornful disdain among the different races, classes and ethnicities lumped together in the city. The lighter colored ones imitated the skillful movements of the blacks and, self-conscious of their shortcomings, ended up caricaturing
them. The darker ones, in trying to rub on some fashionable white
elegance but knowing that this would bring them no more respect,
mocked the loose embrace of the quadrilles, mazurkas, habaneras and
waltzes, tingeing it with bodily proximity and sweat. The Tango dance
emerged from these racial and class conflicts, competing for a place of its
own among the dances which were being already danced--black, mestizo
and white dances. Men's and women's bodies displayed tensions of the
"correct" and the "incorrect," of the "civilized" and the "primitive," of the
"authentic" and the "parody"; and all these tensions were sexualized.

**Rioplatense Roots**

Digging into the "origins" of Tango shares the dangers and,
fascination of most archaeologies. In Tango's case, the recovery of black
roots (initiated by Vicente Rossi ([1926] 1958) and heftily debated
thereafter) has entailed a difficult paradox. On the one hand, it has
provided the necessary acknowledgement of the importance of Black
participation in the creation of rioplatense popular culture—a fact which
has been carefully neglected and erased. On the other, its positioning in
the "beginnings" has not been able to destabilize a racist association
with "primitiveness," no matter how important the Black contribution is
considered. **Figure 2.1**, a sketch of the black Tango dance presumably
produced "at its time" and **Figure 2.2**, Guibert's drawing from the
1970s, offer an example for these concerns. The author of **Figure 2.1**
seems to be drawing the viewers to associate the black dancers of the
primitive Tango with the primitiveness of blacks. Their postures are
emphasized as resembling ape-like movements (notice the position of the
Figure 2.1: "El Tango," 1882. Anonymous drawing published in La Ilustración Argentina nr. 33, 1882 (Matamoro 1976: 65).

hands, especially in the woman) and the articulation of the head with the spine (especially in the male partner), as well as the curve of the spine itself. In addition, the heads and bodies are exaggeratedly disproportioned, so as to recall the ape-likeness and primitivism in the origins of humankind and of Tango, through the black race association. Blacks depicted as ape-shaped and as infantile (infants sharing the same "disproportionate" proportions), relate the blackness of Tango roots back to a primitiveness of blacks and of Tango. In Figure 2.2, produced
many decades later, the black roots of Tango (candombe) challenge the infantile, ape-like body movements of the previous one. Guibert’s dancing blacks are humanized and adult, but in compensation, they are loaded with lascivious sensuality. Thus a new resemblance is being reproduced that draws blackness to "strong instincts," original primitive instincts that, although shared by all human adults, are untamable in blacks.
Ayestarán already pointed out in 1953 that the black African slaves' contribution to American culture is "one of the most profound and complex problems to be faced by American musicology." And he wisely noticed that there is a widespread confusion between the African accents (rhythm in music and dance) that are a cultural development and the accent attributed to the pigment of the black race.

It is curious how spirits which are unprejudiced regarding the racial or social problems of blacks, become dangerously racist or utterly reactionary when it comes to music [and dance]. [...] The black brings to America a culture that crashes against the culture of the environment and, in many cases, is absorbed by it, since [unlike cross-cultural or cultural exchange phenomenon] he [or she] does not come as dominator but as dominated (Ayestarán [1953] quoted in Matamoro 1976: 75, my translation and aggregates).

For these dangerous reasons, almost unavoidable if one is to focus on the "origins" and evolution of the Tango, whether of a unilinear or multilinear type (depicted in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, respectively), I have chosen to join those who emphasized hybridization at the origins; and within those, the ones who, far from portraying easy blends or gives-and-takes, point out to a kind of hybridization which retains the conflicts and tensions involved in the process—sexualized class, race, and gender conflicts. And despite/because of these tensions, the Tango embrace occurs. It is the embrace of dominators and dominated (class, race and genderwise), struggling with and clinging to each other; trying to hold each other in place while dancing displacements.

The *rioplatense* popular theater of the time offers evidence of these sexualized tensions present in the emerging Tango. In *Justicia Criolla* (Creole Justice), first performed in 1897 by a Spanish troupe, a newly
arrived Spanish immigrant questions the black Benito about his relationship with Juanita, a white beautiful woman.

How is it possible that Juanita, who is a beautiful woman, white like a page of high quality paper [...] and eyes as black as the conscience of an attorney; how is it possible, I say, that such a woman could fall in love with a man of color, with a moreno? (Scene 1).

Benito protests that black skin is a question of fate and that white faces frequently hide dark, sinful, souls. After a chorus of women ironers invites him to a celebration in which a soft guitar will guide quadrilles and Tangos--breaking the waist (quebradas)--Benito the black narrates how he seduced the charming Juanita.

It was a Carnaval sunday/ and I went dancing at the Pasatiempo./ I asked Juanita to dance a scottish/ and I decided to elicit her love./ I poured laments into her ears,/ I was so tender and talked so much/ that she was moved/ by my thousand promises of eternal love./ I told the broad about my courage [...] She was silent and so I/ showed off prodigiously,/ and then in a Tango I was so skillful/ that I seduced her with pure cortes (Scene 9).

When interrogated about the qualities of Juanita, Benito remembers his emotions while dancing Tango with her.

Hmm ... it was so good! (Closes his fist.) When dancing a Tango with her (mimics Tango steps while he talks), I secure her on my hip and I let the music's rhythm carry me away and I submerge myself in her dark eyes and she bends her head into my chest and in making a turn comes the quebrada ... oh, brother! It relieves, it relieves ... my bad mood (Scene 14) (Natale 1984: 164-167, my translations.).

Juanita, the white beauty, rejects Benito in the end and he starts, immediately courting another woman. Justicia Criolla is the first record of a Tango orillero or arrabalero--a Tango from the city's suburban
slums. The Tango sexually relieves, for a brief moment, the racial, class and ethnic tensions.

In *Ensalada Criolla* (Creole Salad), first performed in 1898 by an all *rioplatense* troupe, the social tensions are displayed even further as the Tango competes for a legitimate place among the existent dances. Three low class men of different colors (Pichinango the blonde, Zipitriá the dark, and Pantaleón the black) present themselves as famous knife-fighters who, in addition, have three impressive *criollas* (not immigrants) as sweethearts. They compete with each other in *cortes* and *quebradas* making fun of each others' skills and finally they recognize the dancing superiority of the black. They invite anyone to compete, blacks and whites, in dancing and fighting when their sweethearts arrive: Aniceta, the blond—who "wants no acquaintance with blacks"; Tongorí, the *parda*; and María, the *morena*. They fight among themselves over the exclusive possession of the men, and end up shedding their tears in the arms of their appropriate partners, performing a Tango with plenty of *quebradas* (Natale 1984: 168-170). Here the Tango is once again the occasion for displaying the racial and ethnic mixture (salad) that never blends; but it provides a fair opportunity for showing "real" values--courage and seduction as opposed to race/class discrimination. Again, the social tensions are shown as embedded in gender relationships. And they were. In the micro-politics of Tango, all social tensions are simmered in the sexual cooking pot.
Positions for the Lady\textsuperscript{12}

At first glance, Tangos seem to offer women two positions; they can be either the object of male disputes or the trigger of a man’s reflection. In both cases, it is hard for women to overcome the status of a piece of passional inventory. The difference is that in the first position the woman is conceived as an inert object of passion while in the second she is a living one.\textsuperscript{13} The Tango poet selects one position or the other by establishing his distance from the plot. Passional Tango plots go like this:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{Un patio de conventillo...} & \textit{A patio in the slums...} \\
\textit{Una percanta, un vivillo;} & \textit{A chick, an abuser;} \\
\textit{dos malevos de cuchillo,} & \textit{two knife-wielding ruffians,} \\
\textit{un chamuyo, una pasión,} & \textit{seduction, passion,} \\
\textit{choque, celos, discusión;} & \textit{crash, jealousy, discussion,} \\
\textit{desafíos, puñaladas;} & \textit{challenges, stabs,} \\
\textit{espanto, disparadas;} & \textit{confusion, runaways,} \\
\textit{auxilio, cana... Telon!} & \textit{help, cops... Curtain!} \\
\end{tabular}

"Tu Cuna Fue Un Conventillo" (Your Cradle Was A Slum) by Alberto Vacarezza (Sábado 1963: 84).

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{No batió ni Salute! como estaba cabrera.} & \textit{She didn’t say a word! as she} \\
\textit{hizo un lio de pilchas, secóse un lagrimón.} & \textit{was angry} \\
\textit{Se miró en el espejo,} & \textit{she bundled up her clothes,} \\
\textit{campaneo la catrera} & \textit{sobbed a big tear,} \\
\textit{y taqueando apurada los patios pasó.} & \textit{she looked in the mirror,} \\
\textit{[...]} & \textit{glanced at the bed,} \\
\textit{Cuando estuvo en la puerta dijo:} & \textit{and hurried her steps across} \\
\textit{De todos modos} & \textit{the patios.} \\
\textit{donde quiera que vaya estaré mejor.} & \textit{[...]} \\
\textit{Llegó el coso cansado del laburo y haciendo} & \textit{When she was at the door she} \\
\textit{un esfuerzo inaudito en un papel leyó:} & \textit{said:} \\
& \textit{Any way} \\
& \textit{Wherever I choose to go I’ll be} \\
& \textit{better off.} \\
& \textit{The guy arrived tired from his} \\
& \textit{job and making} \\
& \textit{a tremendous effort, on the paper he read:}
\end{tabular}
"Porque estoy hasta el tope de vivir padeciendo, me decidí dejarte. Perdóname. Margo."

Fue tan seca la biaba que la mente turbada como herido de muerte al momento quedó. Reaccionó de repente, iba a ir a buscarla, más como era canchero, el impulso ahogo. Es la historia de siempre: una mina perdida y una pobre esperanza conservada en alcohol.

"Because I'm sick and tired of living in pain, I decided to leave you. Forgive me. Margo."

The blow was so strong that his confused mind instantly stopped as if deadly wounded. Suddenly he reacted, he was going to get hold of her, but being a streetwise guy, he checked the impulse. It's always the same story: a lost broad and a poor hope preserved in alcohol.

"La Historia de siempre" (Always the same story)
Lyrics by Celedonio E. Flores
Music by Pacifico V. Lambertucci

Vacareza's version ("Tu cuna fue un conventillo"--Your cradle was a slum) is the one of an outsider, voyeur of the Tango drama. The woman (a chick) is clearly depicted as an object of dispute between the men (the seducer and the ruffians). All the action is centered in the knife fight and a probable murder. The actual victim of death is imprecise. Male characters in Tango need to display their anger, violence and courage, and the victim of such outbursts might be another man, the unfaithful woman, or both. In any case, the avenger ultimately has to deal with the police, either as a fugitive or in prison. The male bond is reinforced through the isolated, trapped image of the woman, constituted as his prey. From an outsiders' point of view, the public world into which this woman dared to enter, is violent and male.

I take Celedonio Flores' depiction in "La Historia de Siempre" (Always the same story) as a close-up and an expansion of Vacareza's
single line on "seduction, passion." Flores' account of Tango plots is focused on intimacy; an insider's point of view. The relationship of the heterosexual couple is at the center, as well as their power displays. The woman is able to plan an escape, choosing the right moment (when she can avoid facing the man) and even writing a letter where she states her reasons: "I'm sick and tired of living in pain ...." The guy is hit by the news ("as if deadly wounded ..."), he even thinks of revenge but decides it is worthless. She is a mina after all. The ending in this account is crucial for understanding the morals of Tango. He goes on to lead the life of an alcoholic (which he probably already was), trying to forget her. And her hope is "anyway, wherever I go, I'll be better off." However, the (male) author's premonitory conclusion is that she is a "lost woman." A woman lost in the male outside jungle. Where was she to go? Most frequently Tango lyrics suggest that, once gone from their original maternal household, women could only go from one man to another, in an endless and damaging ambitious search. From a distance, in Vacarezza's account--as well as in many feminist interpretations--the Tango woman is a victim; from a close-up, Flores' account, the Tango woman rebels against her victimization but, ultimately (zooming back to the distance), she has no chance. The threat of prostitution and danger invade all her attempts at mobility.

Tango went for quite a while through a stage of "forbidden music" (Tallón's words, 1964). Tango-dancing was restricted to low-class and red-light districts,16 and to the garçoniers.17 The first lyrics were openly pornographic. The "illnesses of development" had infested the
city of Buenos Aires: too many men, fast and unstable money making, and prostitution (Tallón 1964).

Former [municipal] regulations authorized the establishment of one brothel per block, and additionally, a tavern, inn or hotel where prostitutes could live and would ply their trade. [Those hotels] are the places where clandestine prostitution is fomented. (Manuel Galvez, White Slave Traffic, doctoral thesis presented in 1905, quoted by Salas 1986:46).

In his study of White slave traffic, Albert Londres (1928) likens Buenos Aires to Babel—with its multiplicity of corruptions and languages. He narrates how he was taken by the French pimps to the knot of their business--Buenos Aires--where they competed with Polish, Italian, and criollo pimps to keep hold of "their" women. These women, indistinctly prostitutes and Tango-dancers, mediated through their bodies the relationships between men of all classes, races and ethnicities: Paulina la tana (Italian), la china Joaquina (creole), la rubia Mireya (blond uruguaya), la parda Flora (uruguaya mulata), María la vasca (Spanish Basque), etc. (Salas 1986). They were identified by their color and ethnicity. Many of these women have been immortalized in Tangos through male evocations, but little is known about how they lived and about what their relationships with men were like. Sebastián Tallón offers one of the few extensive portraits of one of them: La Moreira (the Moorish-like)—her name was Luciana Acosta—and her relationship with her criollo pimp, El Cívico (the Civic). I quote it at length as an homage to those first women Tango-dancers and because of my frustration at not being able to know more about them.
In the years 1905, 6, 7, and 8, El Civico, between twenty five and twenty eight years old, lived in room number 15 of El Sarandi, a tenement house located on the street of the same name. His profession was that of exploiting his woman, La Moreira [...]. He was of South Italian ancestry (Albanian); she was the daughter of Andalusian gypsies. It is unnecessary to depict El Civico as an extremely good looking guy, because the key to his success, as we all know, lay in his seductive ways [...]. The second key was his astute cleverness, his hidden criminal coldness, his art with the dagger, his courage. The third key was his "congeniality," his wealthy manners, his refined sociability, his skill at dance and his talking abilities.

Tallón continues by describing the room where he lived (he does not say "they" or "she"): tidy and shiny "like a jewelry shop" (he does not mention who did the cleaning); his Louis XIV furniture, dolls and bows, and the cushions decorated by his friends at the prison; the knife under the pillow; and his great collection of perfumes and make-up utensils, mostly for his hair and moustache.

At dusk, La Moreira would go with other women to the "bar" of La Pichona [...] where she "worked" as a prostitute, as a lancera, as a go-between [for clients and other prostitutes], and as a dancer. As a lancera because she stole wallets from the drunk distracted clients and from the immigrants who had money; as a go-between because she was associated with her "husband" in that business of deceiving poor souls and selling them as "novelties"; as a dancer, because she was a great one and because La Pichona's "bar" was one of the places that helped to give the Tango its fame and its association with prostitution. At night, she was a Tango-woman. Brave gypsy blood ran through her veins, and, even though she was apparently very feminine and quite beautiful, in her dark endeavors she showed great "courage" in throwing the dagger, and that is where her name comes from. She usually carried a knife; but when she had to wander alone in the nights at the outskirts or in dealing with "difficult" business--just think of the resentment of the less successful ruffians, lazy and cowardly, but nonetheless dangerous, whose women she took away--she wore high boots, almost up to her knee, and in the right one she carried a dagger or saber. Do not forget that the suburbs saw times of violent madness and lust. Her looks: not too tall, perfect forms, sensual voice, like her face; like her walking. [...] Blue or red silk blouse with white polka-dots. [...] She closed her blouse from the neck to the bosom with a silk ribbon. [...] The collar of
lace completely covered her neck. Her waist was held by a contoured corset, armed with whalebone. The skirt was pleated and of a grey or light green color, and its exaggerated width displayed the *frou-frou* of her starched petticoats. [...] Her hairdo, a roundlet at the nape of her neck, held by turtle-shell clips and combs, big golden earrings—the size of a glass rim—and from the necklace dangled a portrait-holder. Well, the portrait-holder carried a portrait of *El Civico*. [...] And he loved his woman. The most dreadful thing about this arrogant subject was his love for his woman. That professional prostitute who every afternoon kissed him good-bye on her way to the brothel. *El Civico* loved her. *La Moreira* was truly his beloved, his everlasting companion. [...] His political indifference, among many other indifferences, gives evidence of that obsession. [...] The endurance of their relationship was dependent in this case not on the marriage contract but on his morbid loving, on his continuously renewed attractiveness, on being a consecrated artist of sex. Free of bourgeois commitments, without distractions, without physical or mental absences, in private life all of him was a refined and continuous caress, attuned to the sensitivity of his woman, and he knew how to be her sorcerer even asleep. [...] When he hit her, she would let him do it, even though she was able to fight back like a *guapo*, because he did not punish her with the brutality of those who could not master their whores, but with the demands of a pretty master or jealous lover. If she would have left him, he would have tracked her down to kill her; or perhaps he would have sought forgetfulness in alcohol. [...] The Tango lyrics do not lie when they insist, since Contursi, on moving the *argentina* people with the laments of the abandoned *canjilero* [ruffian/pimp] (Tallon, *Intimidad de El Civico y La Moreira* [1959] 1964: 37-54, my translation.)

Obviously this text says as much about its author as about the characters portrayed in it. Tallón is concerned with gender and with class distinctions within gender. His description of the "intimacy" of *El Civico* and *La Moreira* is made in constant contrast to what a "man" and a "woman" should be like and how they should relate, according to a bourgeois patriarchal scale of gender identities. The reason for his worry is the misfitness and the instability found in both characters' gender identities. And to his eyes—bourgeois patriarchal eyes—the whole problem is a question of morality. Starting with the end of his
El Civico is accused of being unmanly and effeminate because of his manners; among them, his loving manners, which distort the image of a tough ruffian/pimp by adding to it the lures of a gigolo.\textsuperscript{19} The pimp/gigolo is not only incapable of self-sustenance but, in addition, he whines over the loss of a woman. Aside from the easily justifiable fact that the pimp had plenty to cry over when his source of living left him (either in the arms of another ruffian or those of a richer man), what--in Tallón's opinion--is going wrong? Tallón's condemnation is based on the compadrito's effeminate ways--sensuality and devotion to women--and, simultaneously, his dishonorable exploitation of women, all of which--in Tallón's view--is equally unmanly. La Moreira, unlike her male partner, does not deserve any "soul searching." We are left without knowing about her feelings ... but we do know, quite precisely, about her looks, her erotic display increased by the dagger she carried, and her good-bye kiss at dusk. And one more thing--discovered through the pimp/gigolo's exposed frailty: she could deceive and betray. She was the one living a double life--with the man she loved and provided for (her pimp), and with her clients. She is the active one; El Civico is criticized and accused of being unmanly precisely because of his passivity. He was courageous, but so was she. He was a ruffian (courageous), a pimp (passive exploiter) and a gigolo (passive production-wise but an active lover). His transgressive gender identity was deeply problematic for Tallón, and these were the characteristics condemned in criollo men by bourgeois morals, repeated in the stereotype of the Latin lover. This is the man behind the "Latin" male confessions of the ruffianesque Tangos: an unmanly man.
La Moreira's gender identity is equally complex and transgressive: prostitute (two-timer and provider), courageous (strong and aggressive), deceiver and betrayer (passive aggressive); the stereotype of the Latin woman. Both ruffianesque characters are more threatening to the elite/bourgeois man than to the elite woman. For one thing: he dealt with them, she did not. The elite man was the one who carried on a double life and provided for his family, just like La Moreira (although she was more than that, and precisely this difference created her attractiveness): she was an unfeminine woman. Both, La Moreira and El Civico were unstable in their gender identities and both were great dancers of the transgressive Tango. The Tango of a strong, even violent, whining ruffian and of a potentially betraying, rebellious, courageous, but too ambitious broad. The ruffianesque Tango lyrics exploit these passional unstable relationships of unstable gender identities (Tallon explains that there was no marriage contract, only constant seduction) frequently through the dramatic but predictable time of a rupture. She betrays him and he confesses his frailty.

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Percanta que me amuraste}\\
\textit{en lo mejor de mi vida}\\
\textit{dejándome el alma herida}\\
\textit{y espina en el corazón}\\
[...]\\
\textit{para mi ya no hay consuelo}\\
\textit{y por eso me encurde}\\
\textit{pa' olvidarme de tu amor.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Broad, you who abandoned me\\
at the height of my life\\
leaving my soul wounded\\
and a thorn in my heart\\
[...]\\
There is still no comfort for me\\
and so I get drunk\\
in order to forget your love.
\end{quote}

"Mi Noche Triste" (My Sad Night) (1917)\\
Lyrics by Pascual Contursi\\
Music by Samuel Castriota
Her betrayal is caused by ambition, triggered directly or indirectly by the presence of richer men. (The frequent plot of the young woman who leaves her poor barrio to go to the city would be an indirect case of rich men's presence). The wealthy man who takes La Moreira away from her compadrito is a "real" man: a provider and two-timer. His stable male-identity draws her into a stable female identity: Moreira the mistress (economically dependent and faithful). In addition, her racial instability (gypsy, moorish-like) will be stabilized by the whitening miracles of wealth.20

Pebeta de mi barrio, papa,
papusa,  
que andás paseando en auto  
con un bacán,  
que te has cortado el pelo  
como se usa  
y que te lo has teñido color  
champán,  
Que en los peringundines de  
frac y fueille  
bailás luciendo cortes de  
cotillón  

[...]  
Pensá pobre pebeta, papa,  
papusa,  
que tu belleza un día se  
esfumará  

[...]  
y entonces como tantas flores  
de fango  
trás por esas calles a  
mendigar.  
Pensás en aristocracias!  
Ya verás que tus locuras  

fueron pompas de jabón!

Babe of my neighborhood,  
beautiful gal,  
you who drives by in a car  
with an big shot,  
who has her hair fashionably cut  
and has dyed it the color of  
champagne.  
You who dances flashy  
[Tango] figures  
in the elegant cabarets

[...]  
Think, you poor babe,  
beautiful gal,  
about how your beauty one  
day will disappear  

[...]  
and then, like so many  
flowers of mud  
you will go begging in the  
streets.  
You think of aristocrats!  
You'll see that your crazy  
dreams  
have been soap bubbles!

"Pompas de Jabón" (Soap bubbles) (1925)  
Lyrics by Enrique Cadicamo  
Music by Roberto Goyeneche
La Moreira, now called pebeta, papusa, flor de fango, mina, percanta, milonguita, is inscribed into a broader narrative, which can explain her behavior (gender/class displacements). She is looked at from a distance. From a distance, the *femme fatale* of the ruffianesque Tango lyrics is nothing but a poor deceived young girl, tempted by the "lights of the city," who is not wise or strong enough to resist the fall. She is Eve, she is Little Red Riding Hood, she is the *costurerita que dió el mal paso* (little seamstress who took a misstep) or the *musa de la mala pata* (bad luck muse) all of whom Evaristo Carriego (Borges 1984), a Tango poet, writes, and to whom so many Tango lyrics make reference. And from a distance, she will pay for it (either for her sin or for her naiveté) as soon as her beauty and sexual attraction disappear—and they will. From a distance, her years of pleasure and wealth (upward social mobility) will be no more than a dream, and she will age alone, remorseful and declassé. From the distance, her rebellion—of class and gender—was aimless and frustrated. This is what the Tango poets tell her, in male confessions sung both by male and female singers for an equally mixed audience. *La Moreira* in a chain of permutations through the *milonguita, papusa*, and *flor de fango* has been softened, feminized, and stabilized in her femaleness. Her stage of gender displacement is a parenthesis between her female origins and her female fate. *La Moreira* does not have a voice. The distance that I have been repeatedly requesting is the distance of the patriarchal gaze (the one in control of establishing the distance). Both men and women reproduce this distance: the settling morals of the ruffianesque Tango. Perhaps taking a closer look (challenging that Distance), *La Moreira*, now *milonguita* has something to
say? Under two per cent of Tangos have been written by women, and under four per cent (including those written by men) put Tango’s words in female lips.²¹ Tangos are male confessions, and they talk overwhelmingly about women. Teary-eyed men talk about how women treated them. Women’s cynicism:

Planta de aquí, no vuelvas en tu vida,
No puedo más pasarla sin comida

[...]
Ni oirte así decir tanta pavada

[...]
Te crees que al mundo lo vás a arreglar vos?
Lo que hace falta es empacar mucha moneda
vender el alma, rifar el corazón,
tirar la poca decencia que te queda
plata, plata y plata... plata otra vez

[...]
El verdadero amor se ahogó en la sopa,
la panza es reina y el dinero Dios.

Pero no ves gilito embanderado,
que la razón la tiene el de más guita?
Que a la honradez la venden al contado
y a la moral la dan por moneditas?

[...]

"¿Qué Vachache?" (Watchya Gonna Do?)
Lyrics & music by Enrique S. Discepolo
Women’s trickery:

Tengo un coso al mercado que me mira, 
que es un tano engrupido e'criojo; 
yo le pongo lo'ojo p’arriba, 
y endemientra le pieno un repoyo ...
Me llaman la Pipistrela, y yo me dejo llamar, 
mas vale pasar por gila, si una es viva de verdad

"La Pipistrela" (The Goofy Girl)
Lyrics by Fernando Ochoa
Music by Juan Canaro

Women’s class betrayal, plagiarized over and over again, from Tango to Tango:

Se acabaron esas minas que siempre se conformaban.
Hoy sólo quieren vestido y riquísimas alhajas, 
coche de capota baja pa' pasear por la ciudad.
Nadie quiere conventillo, ni ser pobre costurera, 
y que tenga mucho vento, que alquile departamento 
y que la lleve al Pigalle.

"Champán Tango" (Champagne Tango)
Lyrics: Pascual Contursi
Music: Manuel Aróztegui

From a different distance, I see these women struggling to survive. I see them falling from the secluded space of their miserable class to the secluded space of the cabarets in the hands of other men--this time,
wealthy men. The passage from one class/men to the other is always through the Tango, "Maldito Tango" (Cursed Tango), that deprives them of their former class identity only to lure them into a false identity with a higher class.

La culpa fue de aquel maldito tango
que mi galán enseñóme a bailar
y que después hundiéndome en el fango.

It was the fault of that cursed Tango
that my lover taught me how to dance
and which later sunk me in the mud.

"Maldito Tango" (Cursed Tango)
Lyrics: Luis Roldán
Music: Osmán Perez Freyre

However, taking a different closer look--a look more challenging to the patriarchal discourse--a whole array of manipulative stratagems, deceptive behavior and strategies for subversion are allocated in Tango-women’s hands. Some ruffianesque Tangos even recognize the effectiveness of these practices, giving their women credit for becoming stable mistresses, marrying, and even running away with the money of their rich catch. Rosita Quiroga has composed music in such a celebratory mood.

Las luces de la milonga
jamás mis ojos cerraron
y el tango, el bendito tango,
a quien canté con amor
en vez de ser mi desdicha
como muchas lo culparon,
fue mi palabra de aleito
para luchar con honor.

The lights of the dance hall never blinded my eyes and the Tango, that blessed Tango, to whom I sang with love instead of being my misfortune as many have blamed him for was my word of encouragement to struggle with honor.
Perhaps it is not a coincidence that this famous tanguera (tango-woman) composed the music to a defense of the Tango, whose words Méndez puts in female lips. Her reference to Tango as "encouragement to struggle" confirms my own perceptions of Tango's capacity for women's subversion. Her reference to "honor" involved in the struggle, seems to be marking a moral distinction either with other milongueras' behavior or other opinions on what "honor" means as a whole. As an idolized Tango practitioner, Rosita Quiroga leaves us with ambiguity. What is certain is that the Tango provided a means of survival for her and for many other lower class women at the time, in more or less honorable ways. For some it also meant a door to social mobility, not a universal value but rather a strong craving introduced with urbanization, industrialization, and the incorporation into the bourgeois civilized world.

In Tango lyrics, women are the brokers between men; frequently, class brokers. Moving upwards in the social scale seems more feasible for them than for their male partners in class. As erotic currency, however, Tango women's circulation is restricted to secluded places (brothels, cabarets, dance "academies"), not so different from the condition of private, honorable wives of the middle and high classes. They can move socially but not erotically. More precisely, by offering erotic services to higher-up men, they can move closer to wealth but they cannot move up in social status. Their eroticism is usually spent in an illegitimate transaction (unlike the marriage contract) and hence, their
full integration into the upper class remains questionable. Status and wealth, as components of class, play against each other, conditioning her access to social mobility. Tangos' morals warn the milonguitas precisely about this fact: the precariousness of their social ascent.

Che, Madam que parlás en francés
y tirás ventolín a dos manos,
que cenás con champán bien frappé
y en el tango enredás tu ilusión ...

[...]
Sos del Trianón, del Trianón de Villa Crespo,
Che, vampiresa ... juguete de ocasión ...
Muñeca brava, bien cotizada ...
Milonguerita ...
Tenes un camba que te hace gustos
y veinte abriles que son diqueros,
y muy repleto tu monedero
pa' patinarlo de Norte a Sud.
Te baten todos Muñeca Brava

porque a los giles mareás sin grupo
pa' mi sos siempre la que no supo
guardar un cacho de amor y juventud.
Campanéa que la vida se va
y enfundá tu silueta sin rango ...

[...]
uñeca brava, flor de pecado ...

Cuando llegués al final de tu carrera,
tus primaveras verás languidecer.

You, Madam who "parlays" in French
and throws around big bucks,
you dine with champagne,
well "frappe"
and your illusion has gotten entangled in Tango

[...]
You are from Trianón,
Trianón of Villa Crespo,
You, vamp ... toy for the occasion...
Wild doll
very costly ...
Miònquerita ...
You have a rich guy who spoils you
and twenty Aprils during which you are attractive
and an overflowing purse
to go shopping all over.
Everybody knows you, Wild Doll
because you beguile every fool
to me, you'll always be the one who didn't know
how to keep a bit of love and youth.
Beware of how life passes by
and sheathe your silhouette without rank ...

[...]
wild doll, flower of sin ...

When you arrive at the end of your career,
you will see your Springs fade away.
"Muñeca Brava" (Wild Doll) (1928)
Lyrics by Enrique Cadicamo
Music by Luis Visca

From this point of view (yet another distance), the "wild doll" (the rebellious broad) is reminded of her low-class origins ("Villa Crespo") as a marker of the social status that no "parlay' in French" and "overflowing purse" (education or wealth) could fully overcome. Her illusions of social mobility are "entangled in Tango." She can beguile rich men for a while (trick them with refinement and whiteness, both provided by her French "champagne frappé" manners), but as a "flower of sin" (illegitimate erotic encounters), she will eventually fade. No matter how close she gets to wealth, milonguita carries a "silhouette without rank." Translated into Tango choreography these milonguitas could provoke the dance, tempting the class/race status quo into movements, but they would never lead. They could challenge the leadership with footwork, resist strategically, they could even leave their dancing partner in the midst of a piece (running away with a better catch), but they could not lead the Tango or put the system under their control (except in those exceptional cases when they dance with other women, and this, again, is for the pleasure of male spectators). The same currency which enabled her to rise socially, prevented her from attaining a stable higher position: eroticism. And this because her eroticism circulated illegally, in illegitimate encounters of sex and class. In Tango, women's subjection seems to be more bodily than class-wise, but it is the intricate combination of class, sex and race that put tangueras where they are. Their position is not of full subjection, nor is it of stable upper mobility
(though their mobility is admittedly glamorous). In ruffianesque Tangos women are in a difficult position of struggle.

There are many women (perhaps a majority) who are missing from these Tangos and from my accounts: the women of the middle- and high-classes. In ruffianesque Tangos, they are absent from the scene. I will search for their silence, perhaps a telling silence, in the voice of the whining ruffians.

**Positions for the Gentleman**

Tangos are spectacular confessions. They are public displays of intimate miseries, exhibitions of shameful behaviors and of unjustifiable attitudes. In Tango, intimate confessions are the occasion for a spectacle. Unlike private diaries, letters, or journals, Tangos are attempts to make a popular hit out of privacy. Hence, Tangos are expressions of the private, personal world addressed to the public world. In Tango, the personal is made political in a way quite different from that which the radical feminist slogan intends to convey. Tangos are written having the public in mind--the audience, the social system--and in exposing intimacy, a slot in the existing public space is expected. In the feminist version of the "private is political," women moved by both private and public experiences of oppression attempt to reach and transform the public sphere, their private lives, and the boundaries between the two. Tango authors expose their privacy in public without putting at risk their identity and without challenging the status quo. As public confessions, Tangos turn intimacy into a sentimental banality.
How is this made possible? Tangos are male (whether practiced by men or women).

As an popular *argentino* saying states: "Man is the creator of the Tango dance because he conceives it on the woman's body" (Sábato 1963: 33). Tangos are male because their intimate confessions are mediated through the exposure of female bodies, and the display of female eroticism helps to draw attention away from male intimacy, and because they are overwhelmingly written by men. Tangos are male confessions, intimate but not private. They are both personal and detached; the voice of a whining ruffian. This is one:

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!*
*Contáme tu condena,*
decime tu fracaso ...
*Y hablámé simplemente*
de *aquel amor ausente*
tras un retazo
de olvido ...
*Y busca en un licor ...*
*la curda que al final*
termina la función
corriéndele un telón
al corazón!

I already know. *Don't tell me.*
*You're right!*
*Life is an absurd wound,*
and *everything, everything is so fleeting*
that a bender, nothing more!
is my confession!
Tell me about your condemnation,
tell me your defeat ...
And speak simply about
that love absent
behind a piece of forgetfulness ...
And seek in a bottle
the bender that at last
will end the performance
closing the curtain
to the heart!

"La Última Curda" (The Last Bender) (1956)
Lyrics by Cátulo Castillo
Music by Aníbal Troilo
Tangos are male confessions of weaknesses in terms of sex and class; but the class issues are interpreted as a sex problem. So, despite their clear awareness of class inequalities, the Tango authors choose to blame their women for their unfaithful adventures with wealthy men. Women are accused of lacking class loyalty, and are assured a decadent and lonely end. Sexual infidelity and class disloyalty are the meat of the ruffians' confessions. And these class/sex betrayals are so enmeshed that his confessions express dramatic impotence. Impotence with indignation and rage; impotence with power. They sentence their sexual female partners to the end of a class exile. Thus Tangos, with few exceptions, show no mercy for their women, enticed by displays of wealth by more powerful men--more powerful because of their class, more powerful because they are men with access to two classes of women. However, when the compadrito addresses wealthier males, he might mock their fancy looks and laugh at their naïveté, but he never dares to offer advice or to predict for them a blackened future. This is reserved for the rebellious milonguitas of the Tango. There is a certain respect to be kept between males; especially when the male in question is a more powerful one. Tango males, both rich and poor, are rejoined through erotic games with poor women but, avoiding essentialist interpretations, this closeness generates further class asymmetries.

The brothels and cabarets are at the center of the ruffianesque Tango stories, the out-worldly space where the ruffian/pimp made a living and the niño bien escaped from the restrictions of his class. But it is a fleeting, conflictive encounter. The fights that often ended the evening of pleasure expose in themselves the markers of distinction:
ruffians with knives; *niños bien* boxing with their fists. Actually rather than ending the pleasure, these confrontations—measurements of power—prolonged the pleasure. Tango and fights over *milonguitas* were one and the same. Dancing Tango did not only mean enjoying a female company; it also meant competing with other men over dancing skills, i.e. capacity for seduction. This is where the men from higher social classes looked for a further distinction from the men of the low class. Wealth overpowering was not enough. The dominant class male had to prove his sexual supremacy in addition, and not just by having the necessary wealth to buy women. This was precisely the weak point of his class; the sexual point. And the *compadritos* knew it. In the class/sex Tango competition between men of different classes, sex was the unstable ingredient. Sexual supremacy and class domination did not necessarily coincide. Purchased sex clearly went along with wealth and status (the components of class), but sex by seduction—true conquest sex—remained unstable, subject to dispute. However, the balance was in favor of the higher-class men: seduction by status and wealth and seduction by sexual attractiveness were hard to distinguish. The *compadrito* was loosing terrain on all accounts ... and so, he confessed. But he confessed his weakness, not his powerlessness.

The ruffians of Tango confessed strategically. They confessed in public; they whined aloud. In confessing their defeats—which they did ambiguously—they were engaging the class/sex struggle from a different angle. Their angle was pain and anger. Who was the audience of these ruffianesque confessions? Whoever could share their pain and anger. Wealthy men proved their access to two kinds of women: rich and poor;
ruffians/pimps were either dispossessed of the ones they had or left with access only to the ones they already had. The difference in this class/sex struggle was in the hands of those wealthier women to whom they had no access. Through their confessions it was these women's sympathy that they were attempting to reach.

Through their tearful confessions (and I do not doubt their truthfulness), the compadritos expressed their pain and exposed publicly the private undertakings of everybody else. The exposure of the ruffian's intimate feelings carried a vengeance. In order to explain his pain, he spread the rumor of the illicit adventures undertaken by rich men and the milonguitas. And once made public, the class alliances between the sexes were in jeopardy. It was not that the higher-class women ignored the occurrence of these transgressions ... but the ruffians, through their confessions, exposed more than that. For example, their whining (which provoked the indignation of most males), was proof of the sensitivity, the "humanness," the loving capacity of the ruffian/pimp. And by enlightening these other women, he moved them. For example, he sought to demonstrate that the milonguitas were not mere victims of the ruffians' exploitation. In his confessions, the compadrito would never tire of listing their strategies and manipulations, and would never tire of whining over them. In addition, he was revealing that the whole situation was at least as much a problem of double-standard morality as a problem of class inequality. The ruffianesque Tango confession were a whiny, loud claim to power: the power to become socially mobile.

Through these confessions the Tango ruffian was showing that he had changed. The class and gender alliances of the higher-class women
were challenged: true, they were abandoned by the men of their own class, just like the tanguero; true, these milonguitas were not such victims after all. The unstable gender identities of the Tango characters were put in the move; the class alliances, destabilized; the class inequity, questioned. And the ruffians' social mobility opened through and to love. At this point, however, he was not a ruffian anymore. He was a symbol of the past and so was the ruffianesque Tango.

Once confessed, the tanguero's weakness becomes his success. (How else could women forgive him for his past?) And, in doing so, he becomes romantic. Romanticized, Tangos reached the middle-classes, all kinds (classes) of women, and it literally became "popular" ... and the tangueros made millions. A new kind of love conquered women of, up to then, inaccessible classes and it produced wealth. The ruffian, no longer a ruffian, attained social mobility. The Tango produced new members for the middle-class and expressed the feelings of both the already-middle-classes and the newcomers.

Carlos Gardel, the "immortal" idol of Tango, is a telling example. His success at upward social mobility is shown in his wide smile, venerated by all his followers. His bow-ties and tuxedos, always present in his popular movies, stand out as signifiers of the new status/wealth he had attained (Ulla 1982). His lustrous hair, combed tightly backwards, suggests his readiness for a dive into the waters of glory; and, simultaneously, shows a careful oily preparation for a smooth slip, an inadvertent or welcomed penetration into a higher class. His social mobility is loaded with eroticism. Gardel is celebrated for singing "El Dia Que Me Quieres" ("The Day You Love Me), a romantic song (not a Tango
Figure 2.3: Portrait of Carlos Gardel (Ferrer 1980b: 459).

Figure 2.4: Gardel and Margarita in "El Dia Que Me Quieras," 1935, directed by John Reinhardt (Ferrer 1980a: 348).
by any means, but "tangoized" because it was the Tango idol who sang it). He is a wealthy young man, madly in love with Margarita. She is a low class woman who, although also in love with him, insists that class barriers stand between them. He promises that, despite all inconveniences, they will get married in the name of love. She cries, and with her, the audience. Love can (and should) overcome all social restrictions. Gardel and Margarita, (a plot repeated innumerable times) are lost in each others' gaze; gazes as open to the future as they are closed to outsiders' opposition. Their intimacy is their power. What is interesting to me about this Gardelian message is the operation of substitutions that it involves. Actually, Gardel was low-class himself, and everybody was well aware of this. Thus he was referred to as "el Morocho de Abasto" (the dark one of Abasto--Buenos Aires' Central Market). He had painfully fought his way up. But here, Margarita, in a role reversal, is the one waiting to be rescued from above. One possible interpretation is that he was hiding his past behind hers, and that for a man to save a woman from poverty is the bourgeois way these things should be done. Another interpretation (which I would juxtapose rather than substitute for the former), is that his actual past was also playing a part. He demonstrated to his viewers on two accounts--his "real" life and his impersonation--that moving up was possible. And that once upward mobility was attained, men could pull low-class women up with them. For the milonguitas the message was: "wait until men of your own kind make it." For higher-class women the message was that his coarse poor past was in the past, fully overcome. And that rather than being an
impediment for love across class, it strengthened attraction and romanticism.

Figure 2.5: Carlos Gardel in gaucho costume. Compare the troubled expression here to smile in Figure 2.3 (Ferrer 1980b: 470).

The ruffian never completely disappeared. He and his broad, one whining and the other rebelling, remained through his romanticized confessions as milestones of an uncivilized past. A barbaric past, plagued by ruffianism, of the times when Argentina was not yet assimilated to the West. Gardel's impersonations of a gaucho, poor and bent by fate, run parallel to his presentations of tuxedoed success (see figure 2.5). As such, their stubborn presence was proof that social mobility was possible, and that Argentina could actually develop as it was progressively—in both senses of "progress," "advance" and "on
happen all at once, and precisely this ambivalence, this mixed nature of *arrabalero* and romantic, was the secret for faith in social mobility and in national progress. The ruffianesque/romantic lyrics were made popular through the *sainete* (popular theater), and the *compadritos*, dressed in tail-coats and drinking champagne, performed ruffianism on the cabaret scene. The first time one of these Tangos was presented to the general public, in the play *Los Dientes del Perro* (1918), the Tango "Mi Noche Triste" (My sad night) was sung by a woman--Manolita Poli--so as to buffer even further the potential shock of the ruffianesque lyrics (a pimp abandoned by his prostitute/lover) (Salas 1986: 130). Obviously, the Parisian influence was already there; Tango’s boom in Paris had occurred before the First World War. As a result, by the time the ruffianesque/romantic lyrics proliferated in Argentina, the ruffians had been already sentimentalized and exoticized. Regarding the music, its sentimentalization (from a 2x4 to a 4x8 musical time, that turned it slower and languid) had been happening in a parallel way at the request first of the *argentino* male elite (and some authors also mention of the Italian and French female dancers of the Buenos Aires cabarets), and of the Parisian elite in general. The purpose—as I already tried to explain—was to make of Tango a more "accessible" dance-style in sexual and class terms. But it was not a smooth process; it was a struggle loaded with complex social tensions. And, as in the lyrics, the *canyengue* or *arrabalero*, "exaggerated" choreography both resisted the bland Tango dance-style and remained, staged, as an exotic proof of the promise of Civilization.
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CHAPTER THREE:

TANGO AND THE COLONIZING GAZE

The Erotic and the Exotic Steps

Tango expresses, performs, and produces Otherness and exoticism. It is simultaneously a ritual and a spectacle of traumatic encounters; and of course "it takes two": two parties to produce Otherness, two places to produce the exotic, two people to dance Tango. In thinking about two and Tango it is the male/female couple who rush in, dancing Otherness and exoticism. But it actually takes three to tango: a male to master the dance and confess his sorrows; a female to seduce, resist seduction, and be seduced; and a gaze to watch. The male/female couple performs the ritual, and the gaze constitutes the spectacle. Two performers, but three participants make a Tango. The gaze can substitute for the male dancer, but then the Tango is another Tango. The gaze can double itself and dance instead of the Tango couple. When that happens, it is hardly a Tango that is being danced anymore. The gaze and the Tango performers can change places, but they cannot exchange roles. The original Tango couple, whether dancing or looking back at the gaze which usurps their steps, is fixed in a "down-up" relationship with the gaze. Conversely, the gaze—a spectator by nature—will always be placed "up-down."

When Tango performers and spectators no longer shared a common race, class and/or culture, Tango became exotic for the ones "up" who were looking "down." When those situated "up" in the power
hierarchy were drawn, for a variety of reasons, to perform the Tango themselves, Tango became exoticized; its choreography and music changed. Some of the reasons for these occurrences, and some processes through which they might have occurred have been analyzed in the previous chapter. There, I focused mainly on the *argentino* internal dynamics of the political economy of passion. The gaze, third participant in the Tango, was mostly that of the male elite intruding and transforming the Buenos Aires' underworld. When the elite men, fighting the *compadritos* for an active place in the dance, started to do the Tango with the *milonguitas*, the Tango changed. When the middle-class took over the place of the ruffianesque dancers, the Tango was so bland that it was hardly recognizable anymore. But the lyrics, romanticized ruffianesque stories, were there to remind them that they could look "up-down" at the barbaric past and "down-up" at social mobility and civilization. However, these elite and middle-class *argentina* gazes did not have the power to exoticize on their own. They were dependent looks, and carried dependent hopes and desires. The gaze with the power to exoticize is the colonial gaze, and this is the gaze through which local admirers see Tango.

In this chapter, I deal with the process of exoticism. Exoticism and auto-exoticism (the process which I will address in the next chapter) are interrelated outcomes of the colonial encounter, an encounter asymmetric in terms of power. And they contribute to the further establishment of imperialism. Perhaps exoticism is one of the most pervasive imperialist maneuvers. The promises of incorporation into Civilization through Progress can produce a stumbling development,
filled with economic fits and starts. Middle classes, previously non-existent, can emerge from massive pits of poverty and enjoy, now and then, crumbs of wealth. The promise of development is a bourgeois, modern imperialist drug. But without exoticism, the hooking up would not be complete. Exoticism creates the need for Identity and assures that it cannot be attained: it is the imperialist hook that cannot be unhooked. Exoticism creates the abstract, unfulfillable desire for completeness in the colonized while extracting his/her bodily passion. Exoticism is the colonial erotic game which is played between unequal partners.

In Tango, the latina or latina-like couple dances for the Western bourgeois colonial gaze. The colonizer has been key in shaping the scandalous meaning of the Tango steps. Fascinated with the erotic male/female plays of the colonized, the colonizer saw a spectacle in miniature of its own plays with the colonized: the colonized female dancing in co-operative/resistant movements with the colonizer male, held tight in his imperial arms, following his lead. But the reverse is probably even more true. The colonizer dumped on the Tango his own representation of the imperial erotic relationship with the colonized. In addition, the colonizing gaze would extract Tango’s passion to nurture its bourgeois, respectable but voracious desire—the colonizer’s male, insatiable desire for conquest and domination. The colonizer dominates with desire, the colonized resists with passion. Tango scandalously fit the secret, dark, exploitative side of the imperial promises of civility and civilization.
Tango's erotic and exotic steps are hard to distinguish in this colonial context. For the purpose of drawing a parallel between the role of the colonized in the imperial dance and the female role in Tango, I will isolate briefly the erotic component of the Tango steps. However it should be clearly understood that the erotic and the exotic moves are performed at the same time and in unison; and that the exotic component ultimately gives full meaning to the erotic.

The erotic step: Just walk. Walk together. Walk as close as necessary. So close that, at a certain point, the differences between the two of you will become essential. The need to master the other is irresistible. The resistance to being engulfed is hysterical. Keep on walking. You can not give up. It is beyond your control. Just try to make it beautiful. Perform. Do not hide your fear, just give it some style. Move together but split. Split your roles. Split them once and for all. One should master, the other should resist. And forget that you know what the other is going through.

No matter how hard I try to isolate the Tango couple from the gaze, the colonizer's viewpoint (either impersonated by himself or by admirers of colonialism) slips into the dancers' intimate scene. The sexual politics of Tango cannot be split from the presence of the spectator, a male/colonizing spectator (even when the audience is a mixed male/female one). But I will try again.

In the Tango-dancing couple, the role of the Other is performed by the Ather (female Other). This Ather is guilty of Otherness or, to put it differently, is accused of being an Ather in that she lacks and exceeds in "something" compared to the male. Her excessive passion and her lack
of control over it beg for the male's embrace and leadership. She will be dragged into the dance, be led through it, and be held while performing unstable/excessive footwork. Her "instinctive" passion can never be
Figure 3.2: The *sentada* figure depicted by Sábat. *Tapa folleto* in Montes 1977.

totally subdued, and she passionately resists and is comforted by the male embrace/control. But her passion is aroused by the male desire. He instigates her passionate outbursts by that thigh of his, insistingly searching to slip between her legs, along the whole time-span of the
Figure 3.3: Cover of Astor Piazzolla's "Take Me Dancing" (Ferrer 1980a: 591).

music piece. She resists with her hips disjointingly moving back and forth, her smooth satin-like skirt easing both his way in and her way out. Her high-heels unbalance her own resistance; or it could--and usually is--interpreted the other way around: it is precisely her suggestive hips and footwork that provoke his desire for sexual conquest. The dancing couple will not clarify the issue. Ambivalence in these erotic matters is the key for perpetuating the ritual. Their torsos show agreement, their faces, fatalism, tied up in their tightly held hairs. But from their waists down, struggle. The Erotic step is developed in this context, heavily focused in the presence--the body--of the Ather. The male imposes his reassurance, confirming his Identity by sitting her,
even though briefly, on his lap (sentada is the name given to this figure).
She, the Ather, has helped him to define his masculine self: the movements of the Ather, her display of resistance/difference, provokes and constantly reshapes his Identity. Her own identity, as she falls back on her feet, remains unsettled, incomplete, on the move, in those transitions between accepting and resisting subordination to his Identity. Hers is a colonized identity born to be unfulfilled. Although this is the knot in which she is caught, it is not a problem rooted in her "essence" or in female "nature." Her incompleteness is rooted in the erotic power game that establishes as a rule the search for a stable, totalizing Identity. In the intimacy of Tango's erotic step the male dancer
Figure 3.5: Gloria and Eduardo (from the cover of their video, "El Tango Argentino").

and the colonizing spectator become allies, almost O/one and the same, hiding from each other their asymmetries in power and hiding their power over the Ather altogether. The Ather should repeatedly resist, give in and resist, confirming simultaneously his Identity and the colonizer's
supremacy. The female dancer's role is one of legitimizing the need for external intervention and leadership.¹ A phrase to keep in mind:

One’s sense of self is always mediated by the image one has of the other. (I have asked myself at times whether a superficial knowledge of the other, in terms of some stereotype, is not a way of preserving a superficial image of oneself) (Crapanzano in Minh-ha 1989b: 144).

The exotic step: in the exotic component of the Tango dance, the latina couple, as a whole, is the focus of Otherness (difference, distance, and inequality). The male/female erotic tensions (their intimate sexual politics) are consumed by the expectant desire of the colonizer’s gaze. The couple, not the female anymore, is the passionate source for the reassurance of the colonizer’s Identity. The latina "nature," primitive and close to human instincts, demands a civilized control while providing passionate defiance. The gaze of the colonizing spectator is now the single interpreter of the scene. The struggle between femaleness and maleness has moved a step back on the social evolutionary scale on which bourgeois imperial civilization reigns at the top. The latina couple has been exoticized. It stands there, before the colonizer’s eyes, as a symbol of a primitive past. And the distance, the difference attained, is pleasurable.

In the performance of the exotic step, another dimension of Otherness is exploited: the ambivalent attraction and repulsion that the Other provokes in the One. Fascination. The exotic threatens the colonizer (the One) through her passionate displays. The exotic is the passionate haunting past at the margins of the imperial civilized world. For the Other to become an Exotic, this threat needs to be tamed, tilted
towards the side of the pleasurable, the disturbingly enjoyable: the erotic. However, the dangerousness should be retained, evoked again and again, as a proof of the necessity of colonial civilized domination. Exotic places, persons and things often display the amiable side of the Other: plants, perfumes, clothing, jewelry, food and spices, art, courtship, songs and dances. The threatening side, equally exoticized, remains in the background, a haunting violence: dictators, volcanos, diseases, polygamy, poverty. The femaleness of the Exotic is identified precisely in this ambivalence. The exuberance, sumptuousness, danger, and sensuality of the Exotic are, again, a result of measuring the Other (as she is constituted) with the imperial bourgeois morality of the colonizer's stick. The exotic Other always comes out of this operation as an oddity: lacking something--rationality, control, decorum, propriety--and exceeding in something else--violence, sensuality, passion.

The exotic Tango steps are the yet immoral steps of a latina couple as seen by the colonizer's gaze on the stages or the screens of the theater of Civilization. Western imperial stages and screens are set up to pass judgement, to frame, and to present the exotic as such. These imperial bourgeois settings constitute the exotic. "Civilized" theaters (Western and bourgeois in their moral standards), whether actually located in the West or in the Rest of the World, stage and project exoticism as the return of the colonially repressed.

The latina couple of the exotic Tango performs passion in the Imperial or imperialized courts of the world without compassion, compatibility, empathy, or any other sort of reciprocal passionate response on the part of the colonizing gaze. The Tango couple falls into
the abyss of the colonizer’s Desire. Exotic Otherness is precisely this condition of incompatibility (no shared pathos, no passion in common, no feeling together) that opens the necessary space for exploitation to develop.

The specific ways in which Tango was incorporated into the world economy of passion, among other exotic dances, will be discussed in the following sections. Tango is presented as an episode in a long history of colonial manufacturing of the Exotic. I offer my version of the process highlighting some particular events regarding both, recurrent practices of exoticism and changes in the subjects/objects of exoticism, from the late seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. In this chapter I try to understand the ways in which Tango "fit" and was colonially tailored to fit into the colonizer's Desire to consume passion. As my narrative comes closer to the time of the Tango rage in Paris (1900s), details increase, rendering a picture of the social ambiance that was so receptive to this new exotic dance. In general, this chapter is a long prelude to the Tango craze in the main capitals of the world, through the description of the exoticism machinery, followed by a depiction of the Tango craze itself. In my view, the Tango scandal was a set-up of colonial exoticism; the tangueros bought into it, as they were being offered the most "distinguished" among the exotic positions at the time.

Manufacturing Exoticism

Colonialism is not only economic expansion and domination, it is cultural domination and ethnocentrism as well. Colonialism believes in only one culture [...] although the imperial perspective is not a simple denial of the others. The diversity of the world is
"charming," tasteful for the colonialism of 1900. [...] It is kept in an illusory and mythical way in the imperial consciousness. Such is the function of exoticism (Leclercq 1972: 44-45, my translation).

Tango entered the realm of the Exotics at the beginning of the twentieth century. By that time, the rules of exoticism were fully defined and developed, several centuries of colonial experience having been accumulated. We could loosely affirm that the history of the hegemonic centers of exoticization coincides with that of the centers of "style"; and that these in turn have followed the avatars of imperialism. Venice, regarded as the capital of "good taste" in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was displaced by España—-a sign of its political claw in the New World. And France seems to have finally reached the rank of expert in the production of exoticism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Braudel 1981). Although contested by other world powers, at that time as well as in the following centuries, France has not yet been replaced from this expertise in taste.

The production of luxury went hand in hand with the manufacturing of exoticism: variety was precious and denoted mastery over the World. As Ewen observes, "by the sixteenth century, Western European markets were filled with refined and delicate goods: silks and woolen cloths, fine pottery, spices, rare woods for inlaying furniture. These and other items contributed to an increasingly affluent life-style for those capable of purchasing it" (1988: 31). Detailed inventories of the possession of exotic goods and the hierarchical ordering of their correct combination were established in categories from cuisine up to ballet-opéra. For example:
Among these diverse parts constituting the dinner of a gourmet, the principal parts, such as butchered meat, poultry, fruits, come from France; others, such as beefsteak, welch-rabbit, punch, and so on, imitate English cuisine; and still other parts are from all over: from Germany come sauerkraut, hamburger, Black Forest filets; from Spain, olla podrida, chick-peas, dry raisins from Málaga, the peppered hams of Jerica, and cordials; from Italy, macaroni, Parmesan, Bologna sausages, polenta, ices, liqueurs; from Russia, dried meats, smoked eels, caviar; from Holland, cod, cheeses, peck herring, curaçao, anisette; from Asia, Indian rice, sago, karri, soy sauce, the wine of Shiraz, coffee; from Africa, the wine of the Cape; finally, from America, potatoes, yams, pineapple, chocolate, vanilla, sugar, etc. ... Which is sufficient proof of the statement that we have made elsewhere, namely, that a meal such as one can eat in Paris is a cosmopolitan whole in which every part of the world makes its appearance by way of its products (Brillat-Savarin [1826] 1972: 315).

But the appropriation of goods collected from the "four corners of the world" was only a starting point. (It is worth noting the political implications of the successive hierarchies established among the countries which provide the "principal parts," "other parts," "still other parts," and finally the ingredients provided by continents-colonies.) The next necessary step consisted in reshaping the raw and primitive so as to make it fit for the Imperial taste (rebaptized "International" and/or "Cosmopolitan" after the French Revolution). Thus Revel argues that French haute cuisine is "international in the sense that it has the capacity to integrate, to adapt, to rethink, I will say almost to rewrite the recipes of all countries and all regions" (1982: 213). Moreover, Ewen notes that during the reign of Louis XIV, France managed to establish itself at the center of the market of style. Wisely advised by Colbert, the king developed an ingenious strategy: "With our taste let us make war on Europe, and through fashion conquer the world."
Central to his notion of taste was the promotion of the French style industries, industries marked by an ability to construct and communicate an aristocratic veneer. Since that time the predominance of French haute couture has been legendary (Ewen 1988: 30).

The history of the spectacles of entertainment available to the European elites follows the same path delineated for cuisine and haute couture. The exotics (among les étrangers) where almost de rigeur in the political opéra-ballets organized under the surveillance of Louis XIV. The foreigners, like the foreign foods, were carefully classified according to the roles they could fill in the plays, and the modes of representation regarding their temperaments and clothing were rigidly prescribed.

The Greeks wear a round cap with several feathers around its rim. The Persian coiffure is quite similar. The Moorish wear short, curly hair, black faces and hands, uncovered heads unless you use a string of pearls as a diadem. They should wear earrings; the Turks and the Saracens should be dressed with a doliman, their heads covered with a turban and a tuft of feathers. The Americans wear a bonnet of feathers of diverse colors, a skirt of the same kind covering up their nudity; they always wear a collar made of the same feathers from which they take out a bouquet for each hand when they dance. The Japanese wear a big tuft of hair on the back of their heads (Menestrier [1682] in Paquot 1933: 192, my translation).

La Mesnardiére, in his Poétique published in 1639, after giving detailed recommendations on the temperaments that each representative of a nation should exhibit in the plays, explains that although the typology is not meant to be completely rigid, some situations should be strictly avoided:

Do not ever make a warrior out of an Asian, a faithful of an African, an impious of a Persian, a truthful of a Greek, a subtle of
a German, a modest of a Spaniard, nor an uncivilized of a French
(in Paquot 1933: 195, my translation).

The illustrious servants to the courts of the Luises were obviously not
shy when it came to stereotyping exotics, neighbor rivals, or themselves.
The politics of representation were taken very seriously so that every
exotic would confirm the right to mastery of the civilized.

Orientalism, or in Paquot's words the "revelation of the Orient" (to
the West) seems to have set the ground for the machinery of exoticism to
develop. The practices of appropriation and reshaping of the Oriental for
the consumption of the Western European elites were further applied,
with small adjustments, to the rest of the candidates for the Exotic
condition. One particular aspect of this process is especially relevant to
the Tango: the question of passion.

For the purposes of the "world of spectacle," i.e. making a
spectacle of the world, towards the beginning of the eighteenth century,
l'Académie de Musique recommended incorporating the "fabulous system
of the Orient" into the French opéra, so that the new characters would
provide "the variety that has become very necessary."

The ardent sentiments and the extremely amoureuse passions,
such as we conceive them in Asia, could become a suggestive
theme in the modulations of the music. The Orient is par
excellence a matter of the opera (Pierre Martin in Paquot 1933:
184, my translation).

In this way, Paquot continues, Turks, Assyrians, Persians, Chinese,
Indians, and Tartares started singing and dancing "le ballet." And les
Américains joined les Asiatiques, based on the chronicles that narrated
their "completely and very free loving practices." The genre of the Ballet Herôïque, composed during the time of the French imperialist efforts in the Oriental Indies, such as "Indes Galantes" (1735) and "Sauvages" (1736), contributed to create in the minds of the public a strong association of Asia and America, based on commingled erotic fantasies. The plots are an exotic version of the impossible, contradicted, and/or betrayed love theme. The wars among the Europeans drive some gentle character into the colonies in search of the pleasures to be found in the mild climates. Pirates and the Indian Ocean are usually present, and a love/rescue story touches a special slave. Suddenly the scene changes and a volcano and/or earthquake situates the audience in Perú, where some Inca princess falls in love with an español conqueror. A group of Caribs, Amazonians, or Tupinambas witnesses and approves of the situation with their offerings and bon sauvage good spirits and some odalisks perform an Oriental dance. At this point, some intrigue occurs and the story ends with some sort of forgiveness (Paquot 1933: 185-6).

The morals of these opera stories are quite clear: first, exotics can be piled up, mixed and homogenized under a few traits; second, the pleasure and passions that they enjoy are closely related to their "natural" as opposed to "civilized" geographical and cultural environments; third, "nature" and the "savages" are loaded with both pleasant and threatening promises; fourth, the "civilized" European heroes are prone to the fascination provoked by the exuberance of the exotics (and especially the exotic women); and fifth, a strong piece of advice: although the seduction of the exotic might be unavoidable, the passion is incompatible and unresolvable conflicts will arise sooner or
later--usually sooner. The encounter with the exotic is impossible, it will remain forever a disencounter, unless--of course--the exotic becomes tamed by Civilization.

España, the former utmost colonial power, had been aggressively displaying its control of the "world" before the noses of its imperial rivals since the seventeenth Century. Toward this end, the españoles had

Figure 3.6: Flamenco dancers (Buckman 1978: 261).

accumulated exotic "cultural diversity" as well as gold from her colonies. Along with other exotic goods, exotic music and dances from the exotic American lands were introduced to Europe. Such music and dance was performed by those exotic people born out of an exotic mixture of indigenous and black slave bloods. Such were the zarabanda and the chacona, fandangos, zambapalo (or samba), kalinga, and Tango
(Carpentier 1981). When the imperial table of world power turned around, the español exoticizers ended up exoticized, lumped together with their passionate colonial subjects in their common provocative untamable sensualness (or, to put it other words, their shared lack of civilized bourgeois capitalism). (See Figure 3.6.)

We are accustomed to think of dancing as a movement of the feet, but the Spanish dance is more than that. In Spain they dance with movements of the hands as in India, Java, and Japan, they dance with the hips, with movements of the body as in Africa and Arabia, and the feet serve less for the locomotion of the dancer than as the physical expression of his emotions (Sachs 1963: 349).

Sachs also offers some remarks on the question of passion in the male/female relationship which are almost identical to those attributed to the scandalous Tango (the Tango Rioplatense) one and a half centuries later.

The Spanish dance is fundamentally different [from the European duet dances]. Its charm lies in the spectacle, not in the contact [of the bodies]. [...] It symbolizes sensual receptivity and sensual power. Indeed, the most remarkable thing about it is the strongly marked symbolism of rejection. It is much oftener a dance of coldnes than of ardor. In love as in the dance resistance and coldness are the best means of enticing men and driving them to madness (Sachs ibid.).

The difference with the Tango, which came straight from Sudamérica in the 1900s, was that the embrace and proximity between the dancers' bodies were added. As a result, the fascination of the colonizers was updated; that is, the discourse of exoticism did not change, it was refurbished. Another parallel between the exotic española dances and the exotics who came from the newly in/dependent American nations can be traced through the erotic role of their exotic women.
But aside from its aim of exciting the onlooker, the Spanish dance has still another goal--and that is self-excitation. The dancer fascinates the spectators and dances herself into a state of ecstasy. The motion of the hips, the *zarandéo* [high flapping of the skirts], with which it is possible to express every degree and shade of sensuality from lasciviousness to the magic flame of ecstasy, is of incredible suggestive power. One might say that in this movement lies the magic of sex (Sachs ibid.)

In order to redeem this temptress (whom Sachs equates with Eve), the "natural decency of the Spaniard" was brought forth. Sachs is obviously referring here to Catholicism. But he finally feels obliged to admit that, luckily, "all unpleasant and repulsive qualities" of these "semi-exotic" *española* dances have been "freed" as they were "adapted to the conventions of the bourgeois home" (Sachs 1963: 350). The Others, genuinely exotic, were to come to the rescue of European neighbors. Obviously, there were hierarchies of exotics to be kept.

Acosta and Sachs, (a musicologist and a dance specialist, respectively) have attempted to explain the successive waves of hunger for exotic cultural goods suffered by the Europeans. Coming from opposite ideological positions, they share the conclusion of a need for renovation, for spicy flavoring, for true undegenerate emotions: for passion. The decadence, the exhaustion of the European "culture" is taken as a given. Stressing the analogy with an aging, sickly body, Sachs believes that exoticism is a must for keeping European expressiveness in shape, having lost touch with their "natural" human souls through the hardships of the capitalist life. The return to the "primitive" emotions through the emotions of the "primitives" was always a solution (Sachs 1963). Acosta adopts a less naturalistic understanding. In his *Música y Descolonización*, published in Cuba in...
1982, the appropriation of indigenous American and Afro rhythms by imperialism is paramount. However, Acosta argues that the imperial decadence, brought about by capitalism's alienation, and the need to bring new products to the musical market explain, in their combination, the craving for the exotic (Acosta 1982). The difference between these two positions is that while Sachs believes in the "naturalness" of the need for "new blood" (cross-breeding), Acosta emphasizes the historical exploitative needs created by the capitalist market economy. Although I agree with Acosta's position, I believe that a parallel ideological process has been occurring, intertwined with the material economic parasitic demands of the musical market. Without the manufacturing of exoticism and the constitution of exotic subjects and cultures, the bourgeois consumerist societies--either located at the core or periphery of the empires--would not have had a sense of their own lacks, or of their own "decadence." The contrast created with the passionate exotics made the need for strong "feelings," "emotions," and "body sensations" natural. The difference established in terms of passion between the "civilized" and the "primitives" allowed consumerism to become a true fulfillment of "needs." Capitalism did in fact massively alienate the workers, but the existence of the sensual exotics (also turned into such by imperialism) "reminded" them of what they had lost and now could buy. Exotics--non-bourgeois-assimilated peoples--were there for the civilized to consume and thus to overcome their afflicted "decadence." This disease of the civilized respectable bodies would be permanently actualized and made into a chronic "desire." Desire for the "passion" of the Other, the exotic uncivilized and not yet contaminated barbarians.
And the passion of the uncivilized colonized peoples also became true, as they resisted and/or impersonated exoticism, struggling for a better role as they were incorporated into the civilized imperial "world."

Europe's "romantic" and convulsive epoch was a crisis of awareness of the evils of Civilization, and this awareness was brought about by the presence of the exotics. The happiness and fulfillment attributed to the less civilized peoples (peasants, marginals and "primitives" of some kind) by the romantic colonizers were not there anymore for them to find. As "primitives," "savages," and "barbarians" were being constituted into exotics (incorporated into the imperial capitalist world), they were losing precisely what the romantics longed for. Colonized bodies and cultural expressions were being assimilated into the "world system" to play exotic "passion" while their anger, frustration and shame (their feelings) were being neglected. The Desire of the colonizer could not be satiated by his own doings: his desire for dominating/mastering the Other's passion (self-determination) and his desire for consuming the Other's "passion" (as he had dreamed it in "exoticizing" undertakings) were incompatible. However, the civilized colonizer searched to escape from his own trap by "discovering" new exotics, exotics of all kinds and with different angles of exoticism to them. Conclusion: the burden of the capitalist civilized disease would/should be carried by the colonized exotics.

Big changes occurred during these Romantic times at the "core" of the world. The French Revolution with its message of Universal freedom and equality; the American Revolution calling for the empire of Democracy; the Industrial Revolution running at full steam. The
bourgeoisie and Capitalism were now at the front. Accordingly, the sources of exoticism, the consumers of the exotic and the techniques of exoticization went through a parallel process of "universalization," "popularization," and technological "modernization."

A Romantic period of ballet-mania took hold of the Opera houses between the 1820s and the 1860s. Many of the so-called "classic" ballets still staged today ("Giselle," "La Shylphide," etc.) are creations of that time. Major changes were taking place regarding both the performers and the audiences of dance spectacles. Women, who had first appeared on European stages in the seventeenth century, had now totally displaced male performers. Choreographers would frequently promote the parallel stardom of two talented danseuses who, through their contrasting styles, would represent conflictive images of the feminine. The ethereal, outworldly, nymph or fairy, danced on recently invented toe-slippers so as to emphasize spirituality; while the earthy, voluptuous, gypsy-like temptress set the stage aflame playing her castanets in "twisted, bewitching gestures." As the ballet spectacle was projecting more complex feminine/exotic images, the audience was changing class and gender-wise. On the one hand, bourgeois prudery imposed on the ballerinas the use of longer skirts "so as not to inflame the male spectators." On the other hand, ballet devotees admittedly went to the performances to ogle and choose the most attractive danseuse for their next love affair (Anderson 1974). Although ballet as a spectacular genre started decaying in the 1850s, the Romantic image of woman (half melancholic virgin, half passionate temptress) survived for a long time. However, as spectacles were becoming more popular in terms
of class, they were simultaneously turning increasingly male-oriented. Class intermingling in public spaces produced gender segregation especially in the middle and bourgeois classes. And the male audience demanded (female) "legs" and body exposure. Towards the end of the century, music-halls and cabarets were to replace this ballet-mania. But there were some exceptions.

A spectacle produced by Luigi Manzotti at La Scala Theater of Milan in 1881 was soon transferred to Paris where it ran for a whole year. The masterpiece (in six parts and twelve scenes) was "Excelsior"; the plot was the rise of Civilization "represented by technology struggling against the dark forces of Ignorance." Fonteyn describes the scenography of "Excelsior" (see Figure 3.7).

A colossal cast of five hundred depicted the invention of the steamship and the iron bridge [upper right part], the construction of the Suez Canal in Egypt [upper left, together with the telegraph] and the Mont Cenis Tunnel through the Alps, and the discovery of electricity [center up, illuminating the world as a torch] (Fonteyn 1979: 83-86).

Now, the politically oriented spectacles were opened to the general public (of Europe), and the carefully chosen allegories of progress contrasted with the exotic "dark forces of Ignorance." The exotics (bottom left) resisted Civilization (bottom right, including priests and military officers). The ballerinas (center of the stage) danced "an apotheosis of enlightenment and peace," while the mural in front of the stage shows battle scenes. It is hard to tell if the Egyptian-like sphinxes (both sides of the stage's front) denote the appropriation of the ancient technological advances as a part of the genealogy of Western civilization, or if
Figure 3.7: "Excelsior," 1881, produced by Luigi Manzotti (Fonteyn 1979: 85).
Ignorance and Civilization were scenographically located contrasting the front (as in "the beginnings") with the rear (civilized end) of the stage.

On a vertical reading of Excelsior's scenography, it is clear that Ignorance is positioned below Civilization (the dark clouds from which the illuminated world emerges); while on a horizontal reading, they are located on the far left (exotic costumes) and far right (Western costumes) sides of the stage. This careful positioning in space of the world's forces in struggle, and the reiteration of the message in several dimensions and through a diversity of media, was the secret of Excelsior's success. It was a monumental tribute to Western Progress. However, knowing the weaknesses of his time, Manzotti was careful to include some
spectacular semi-exotic, semi-"enlightened" costumes through which the prima ballerina could exhibit her pretty legs. (See Figure 3.8.)

The "general public" of the great European Opera Houses did not include the poor, of course. These, rather than contemplating breathtaking "Excelsiors," worked heavily in the factories of Civilization both in the Old and New Worlds. And they had also been contributing for a long time to consolidate and entertain the elites. In this case, class was the key to exoticism. The social practices of the poor--again food, fashion, music and dance--were "borrowed" and "refined" for the pleasure of those who could afford them. Social dances are a telling example for, after the abolition of the aristocratic minuet, counter-dances and the waltz inspired in "popular" dances--dances of the peasants and urban poor--entered into the ballrooms of the bourgeoisie (Franks 1963; Leppert 1988). Exotic, this time because of poverty and ruralness. Exoticized because of the Romantic quest for "authentic" national roots that would give the European nations under formation a unified base for struggling against each other over shares of power at the "core" of the imperial world.

This so-called Romantic period (1820s-1880s) in which the bourgeoisie was starting to enjoy its triumphs over the former ruling elite and over the uncivilized at home and abroad, was not so romantic for everyone (Sorell 1981: 253). Urbanization and industrialization were putting together a working class that soon realized who was paying for the bulk of bourgeois progress. They set up barricades to resist the barriers against their own aspirations. Revolts led by socialists, anarchists and other politically active groups challenged the European
bourgeois for the rights of the new (low and middle) classes to a share in power. The anti-bourgeois conservatives looked at these reactions sympathetically: they proved how unrealistic the bourgeois democratic dreams were, and promised a strengthening of their own reactionary faction. Insurrections and suppressions had been alternating since the 1810s, the former conducted by secret organizations such as Young Italy and its counterpart Young Germany—romantic young intellectuals and artists who opposed the bourgeois order from left and right. (See Bronner and Kellner 1983.) In 1848, the "Year of Revolutions." insurgencies swept all over Europe as a result of what some historians have called "the Hungry Forties": Berlin, Bavaria, Vienna, Paris. But the new European elites had a strong card to play against the dangers that these internal insurrections meant to their respective hegemonies: nationalism. The nationalist spirit shifted the focus on internal sectorial disputes to an overriding major dispute over a new distribution of the world—former and new colonies. The romantic pursuit of the "authentic" national roots in the customs of peasants and poor at home, and the pursuit for a cure to Capitalist "decadence" in foreign exotics of the colonies, went hand-in-hand. The capitalist "division of labor" recipe was being contested at all levels and everywhere: workers and owners in the factories; colonies and colonial centers in the world; weak national powers and strong national powers at the "core." And all these confrontations fed each other. Britain (the "great") came out of these contests as the "workshop of the world" and Paris as the world center of luxury and pleasure. Each of these nations displayed its respective masteries and mutual antagonism through their International Fairs and Exhibitions.
Dance Masters and Spectacle Entrepreneurs

While the International Fairs in London displayed the technological treasures of their empire (Indian Howdahs--decorated elephants included--Pyramids from Egypt, Tunisian bazaars, Canadian birch-bark canoes, etc.), the Paris Exhibitions showed the pleasurable treasures (Oriental belly-dancers, gypsies, Loango villages and Kabyl tents, Angkor pagodas, etc.) (Burchell 1966; Rearick 1985). Goncourt, a famous dance critic of the time writes that what he found most

Figure 3.9: Moulin Rouge summer garden, 1890 (Laver 1966: 227).
extraordinary in the belly-dancers was a woman who "when people applauded her, with her body completely immobile, seemed to make little salutations with her navel." He also regretted not having the opportunity to observe her dancing naked, so as to analyze her muscular mastery ... (in Rearick 1985: 139). Although some found the almeys monotonous and coarse, most responded with fascination to the sensuality and exoticism of the movements. The dance became such a rage that Goncourt was "persuaded that three-fourths of the women in Paris were secretly working on the dance" (in Rearick ibid.). In 1890 the Moulin Rouge, not yet a music-hall but a dance hall with a pleasure garden, set up (for the enjoyment of its fashionable international clientele) an elephant (stuffed, of course), containing a small stage where a belly-dancer performed (Rearick 1985: 77). (See Figure 3.9.) The contrasting images of the two worlds (again, the world of Civilization and the world of Ignorance) are put side by side, as a reminder of progress and of who should dominate/guide who. The "elephant-stage" reflects the heavy, strong powers of darkness that have, nevertheless, been conquered by the lace-like French stage, inhabited by ethereal ballerinas. These delicate, fairy-like women represent the modesty and propriety of bourgeois Western morality: Civilization wins not because of strength or out of misleading seduction (like the belly-dancer), but because it is rational and the right/correct evolutionary thing to be. Female bodies in movement depicted the contrasts.

Dancing--bourgeois social dancing at ballrooms and theaters, workers rowdy dancing at taverns and low class districts, as well as mixed class dancing celebrating national festivities--was in full swing.
For the elites, it was a display of gaiety and renewed faith in progress. For the less privileged, it was an occasion to show aggressive cynicism towards bourgeois working ethics and prudery. The national roots and the complementary masteries over the world were danced to, and so were the frustrations (Sorell 1981; Laver 1966). Moreover, these dancing drives themselves became contested, co-opted and promoted by two old rivals in the dancing business: the dance masters and the spectacle entrepreneurs. The pleasure of dancing one's own body was being systematically segregated from the pleasure of watching dancing bodies on a stage.¹⁰ The dangerous bringing together of different classes and of different national and exotic trends were defining and refining the disciplining machinery over dancing bodies.

Orientalism and Hispanolism were preparing the way for Tango. So was the romantic "re-discovery" of European nationalist roots through the exoticization of peasant dances (many of which were of slavic origin). In addition, the poor urban rowdy dancing manners were being staged as a spectacle for the rich--exotic because of class. All the above-mentioned dances caused reactions of rage and indignation, including prohibitions, of which they were a target. Practically every "new" dance--music and choreography--tinged, at first by rural, and later by urban low-class origins, as well as the "true" exotic ones, provoked scandals and fascinations of wide proportions. The scandalized ones were not struck by the existence of poverty, of barbarian indecency or of rural impropriety as such; the aberration resided in purposefully adopting traits and manners of the poor, peasants and barbarians. The poor themselves, just like the colonized, had no (public) word in it and
eventually the market of leisure and distinction would use these scandals for its own benefit as advertisement (as defined by Braudel 1981). Scandalous dances were staged in a further scandalized way and, simultaneously, they were tamed of scandalous features for the purposes of social dancing. Exaggeration and taming were not restricted to choreography. Fashion—what the moving bodies wore—participated equally in the shaping of moral and immoral bodies. Some dances, however, resisted this two-fold co-option and were usually left in the hands of one of the dance disciplining specialists (spectacle entrepreneur or dance master) and the corresponding fashion designer. When the two-way system did work, the results were not only successful from the point of view of contributing to maintain bourgeois morality paramount, but bourgeois capitalist gains were also at stake. Staged dances, and especially their scandalous connotations, remained in the spectators’ fantasies. At least some of them would feel compelled to revive those emotions by imitating the movements and costumes seen on stage.¹¹ Dance masters would then instruct their clients on how to control the expression of their "bodily instincts" while keeping the scandalous staged version in mind. Both, some of the ones who went and who did not go to dance academies, would purchase the allegoric costume at fashion shops. And the system could also work the other way around. (New fashion inspired in dancing spectacles would refer some of its clients to the theaters and/or dance masters.) The spectators/pupils would spend their leisure time and money enjoyably bouncing between dance-halls, cabarets, music-halls, and dance academies. And they would "demand" from the attentive fashion industry to dress them accordingly, whether
they danced, enjoyed dance spectacles or simply wanted to look "dancely" fashionable. In late nineteenth-century capitalism, the dance complex disciplined the movements of the bodies, the way in which the moving bodies looked/dressed and the ways to spend whatever money was kept in the pockets of those dresses carried by the moving bodies. Although this whole dancing business affected the class spectrum in various ways, it is worth noticing that women's bodies were more directly implicated in these processes. Men participated widely, but mostly in the roles of spectators and partners, or framers of women's movements (spectacle impresarios, choreographers and dance masters) and shapers of women's bodies (fashion designers).12

Waltz, polka, can-can, apache, Tango, to name only a few of the dance scandals, went through this disciplining process where morality and profits were at stake. Over a century of successive (and successful) breaking up and making up rules for expressive bodies in movement. The fascination with dancing resided in the belief that pure movements, without the interference of verbal expressions, were closer to the "truth" (Ritter 1989: 41). It was said that dancing bodies could hardly lie. For this very reason, dancing was also dangerous. Dance masters and the spectacle impresarios both took advantage of these qualities of dancing and each maneuvered within the restrictions demanded by bourgeois morality. Disciplining dancing was a challenge that promised high rewards. Rules of distinction (by class, by race, by gender, by nationality, by degree of civilization) were permanently under menace in the bourgeois cities of the end of the nineteenth century. These distinctions were kept in place, to a certain degree, by splitting social
dancing from staged dances. Scandalous dances were staged in produced, scandalous forms, framed clearly as spectacles. Thus, bourgeois moral bodies kept the protective distance of the gaze between the scandal and themselves. The body of the spectator, the viewer, remained unpolluted, disengaged and under control. The dance masters did their job scrupulously, starting from the point at which the promoter of spectacle left the bodies inspired and loose: social dancing. Dance masters and their widely read (by those who could read) manuals, some of them real treatises, had been ruling bodies for a long time. Their favorite words were "decor," "good taste," and "education"; their favorite nasty words, "sloppiness" and "frivolity"; their main obsessions, the posture and the movements of every single part of the body in space and time; their purpose, to provide healthy and correct skills for sociability. At the center of the problem was the basic question of "who should be a mate for whom and how?" as performed in public spaces. Bodies should practice morality, and morality was a sign of bourgeois distinction. The bodies in movement, and especially when the movement involved sexually different bodies, were intrinsically under suspicion. No wonder dance masters were so defensive and scrupulous about their task (Franks 1963; Leppert 1988; Buckman 1978; Fonteyn 1979).

Dance masters and their manuals proliferated all over Europe, but the French were the experts. France continued concentrating cultural capital in this respect and, in ruling over the movements of the body and its social displays, hegemonized the power of "expertise" in love, passion and all sorts of erotic affairs. The French became internationally famous for knowing all the secrets of l'amour, which they were actually
creating, and French wording for erotic matters was widely distributed to
different languages. Every popular dance, i.e. not created by les
professeurs or their disciples, obviously trespassed their disciplinary
codes. The posture, the holding or embracing attitude, the speed of the
movements, etc. were classified as correct or incorrect; but some dance-
masters qualified the rights and wrongs with a key word: class. All
these efforts at marking distinctions developed with the
"democratization" of leisure.

Monmarte. Fin de Siécle

Within the already suspicious nature of the world’s capital of
pleasure (Paris was the center of unruly encounters between members of
the elite of different nations, and between these and the *demi-monde* of irresistible *cocottes*, Montmartre was the heart of the deepest, most underworldly, reprehensible social/sexual encounters—and the most glamorous. Illegitimate relationships were concentrated here in the transgressive encounters across class, race, and nationality and they all had sexual connotations. It was the locus of transgressive pleasures in that a diversity of understandings of pleasure invaded each other's class territoriality. At Montmartre, *fin-de-siécle*, marginals of all sorts and classes congregated to display anti-bourgeois sentiments. Satirists, singers, and dancers staged aggressive, coarse, defiant shows attacking members of the church, politicians, and the military. But there was yet another audience that dropped in once in a while "to sample lowlife."16

"It is well known that the height of refinement for *mondains* is to come mix themselves in these popular amusements," wrote a journalist of the time (in Rearick 1985: 91). For these *mondains*—French and international elites—both the stage and the audience of rebellious *habitués* constituted the spectacle. The cafés and cabarets of Montmartre were the territory of artists, prostitutes, models, students, *flanéurs*, *grissettes*, *lorettes*, *cocottes*, homosexuals, "dandies," radicals, rascals, the unemployed, *gigolós*, *femme fatales*, lesbians, etc., and all combinations thereof.17 In the eyes of the bourgeois elite they all amounted to a spectacle of the *mal de siècle*, a restless and hardly threatening marginality whose knowledge gave elite men an aura of distinction. Montmartre was a place of combative enjoyment, where pleasure was a weapon used against bourgeois order and morality. Most performers (singers, satirists, dancers) were not engaged in any
particular political organization, but they chose as their targets the privileged and the exploiters. Although informally connected, artists, writers and students shared a mix of disdain and rebellion against "the armies of Suffering." They demanded "the right to license and enjoyment" in response to the institutions and personalities that imposed an ethic of sacrifice and work (Paul Adam [1896] in Rearick 1985: 47). In addition, living in an era of strong national rivalries, the promoters of La Belle Époque spirit proclaimed gaiety as a natural French capacity inherited from the Gauls.

The French had only to return to their own sources and to expel foreign poisons such as repressive Christian morality, the German pessimism fashionably represented by Shopenhauer, Anglo-Saxon prudery, and English humor. To laugh was now considered not so much a characteristic of humanity as an endangered and essentially French trait (Rearick 1985: 36).

The Tango was first performed in this fin-de-siècle environment, dance-wise hegemonized by the can-can. Can-can was the primary Parisian symbol of gaiety, of revolt, and of national character. (See Figures 3.11 and 3.12.)

Identified with the lower classes since the revolutionary times, the dance [can-can] both attracted and disturbed other classes, whose governments and police tried to restrain its irreverent kick from going too high (Rearick 1985: 49).

Can-can or chahut (one emphasizing the lifting of the skirts, and the other, the high-kicking of the legs) was one of the favorite spectacles of both the bohemian and the touristic Paris. It was a dance of "magnificent vulgarity" by which, in "showing the most," the female performers stirred up the male audience (Sorell 1981: 302-3). Gaiety
Figure 3.11: Can-can at a Parisian café-concert, late nineteenth century (Perrot 1990: 668).
Figure 3.12: French can-can dancer (Fonteyn 1979: 237).
and pessimism went hand-in-hand in La Belle Époque, and they were present in can-can. Bohemian revolutionaries shared "a lively feeling for the degradation of our era of transition," and for this reason artists chose to represent "the pleasures of decadence: balls, kick-choruses, circuses. (Paul Signac [1891] quoted in Bade 1985: 224). However, for art critiques of a rival nationality, can-can was the last kick of a race (the "Latin race") in irreversible decadence.

France, the lovely, unlucky land, is today like a ruined ballroom in which the vilest crimes and the most heroic deeds are carried out side by side, by almost the same men. Already the ballroom burns on all sides and inside it, the muse of Lautrec dances with brilliant contortions, the last diabolical can-can (Meier-Graefe [1899] quoted in Bade 1985: 230).

Racial interpretations of national cultures, taken as different species competing for the survival of the fittest, were not rare in the late nineteenth century. And gender had also a place in these social-darwinist informed interpretations. The French, being tinged by the latina race, were said to show "sickly effeminacy" in their manners, arts and customs compared to the "healthy virility" of their powerful German and English counterparts (Bade 1985). Unified and stable national identities were being sought by drawing on racial and gender "natures."

Women were the stars of the French can-can; can-can denoted French gaiety; French gaiety was the last outburst of a decadent age; decadence was a symptom of either latina race degeneration or of the Capitalist system's defeat. If the problem were the latina race, the name of the disease was effeminacy and the solution, more virility. If the problem was Capitalism, the cause was overwork with no compensation
(often interpreted as sexual repression), and the solution was more pleasure. Although pleasure was thought as unmanly by the promoters of virility (and hardwork), pleasure was a man's undertaking for the "decedents" who enjoyed watching women doing the can-can (see Mosse 1985). Somehow, the different interpretations of the mal de siècle affecting Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century intersected in women who were seen as having the power to bring about decadence (the feminine invading manliness produced effeminacy) or to provide the necessary pleasure to disrupt the system (see Birken 1988). Women were obviously the objects of these male-centered speculations. In dance spectacles, visual arts, fashion and literature of the time, the increasing obsession with women and the female body is notorious. And so is the power attributed to women, sometimes only traceable through the efforts invested in controlling women's looks, movements, instincts and passions. It is difficult if not impossible to establish what this prevailing male-focus-on-women meant for those women in everyday life. I am thinking about women subjects seeing/living themselves taken as powerful objects by men, while simultaneously being advised not only to accept, but also to look for male protection (from other men) and control (from their own female powers).

In the Parisian music-halls of the turn of the century, women were the special feature, performing their enigmatic power while doing the can-can, belly-dancing, a Victorian-like strip-tease (in which removing layer under layer of petticoats and lingerie exhausted the show before nudity was ever to be revealed) and even boxing matches. This display of dancing temptresses inspired fear and adoration. Dancing revealed
the instinctual nature of women, the truth of her self communicated by physical means. In novels, operas and pictorial works of the time, the romantic *femme fragile* is also being replaced by the imagery of the *femme fatale*. One only needs to think of Carmen (Merimee's novel 1846; Bizet's opera 1875); Delilah (Saint-Saens' opera 1877); Lulu (present in several of Widekind's works 1892-1905); Salome (Moreau, Breadsley, and others); and Electra (Hofmannsthal 1903); as well as the paintings of the Symbolists to trace the recurrence of women's enigmatic powers exposed through the dance (Ritter 1989). The aerial, supernatural nymphs and sylphides--who were not totally innocent either since they often drew their enraptured human lovers to their outworldly domains--were being displaced by these mostly exotic counterparts, half human and half animal, free and unrestrained by bourgeois mores. Although it has often been said that the major characteristic of the *femme fatale* is the irresistible attraction she exerts over men, I believe that her power resides in that her own body has become erotic, sensual and that she knows it (Allen 1983). She is no longer the ethereal romantic woman who, through her purity and lack of erotic understanding, drives her lover to suicide. The *femme fatale* has eroticism in herself. She is passionate and displays sensuality, she involves men erotically both willingly and unwillingly, and she takes pleasure in it.\(^{20}\) In can-can as well as in belly-dancing, both popular on late nineteenth-century stages, women danced alone or in female choruses, provocatively displaying their own eroticism and their power; and they enjoyed it. Whenever men accompanied them as dancing partners for example La Goulue--The Glutton--and Valentin at the
Moulin Rouge), through their movements and gestures they showed the male audiences the power of these women's erotic exhibitions—as in letting their hats be kicked off their heads. With Tango, the next dance boom of the early twentieth century, the *femme fatale* would not disappear. But the rôle of the male partner framed her eroticism in a different way. The *femme fatale* would be faced with a fatal man.

I have not found any record of a famous can-can dancer of the turn of the century dancing Tangos in the beginning of the twentieth century. But there were spectators who certainly attended both. Mistinguett, a famous *revue danseuse* at Eldorado, the Moulin Rouge, and Scala was probably the first star to perform a Tango in Paris, and she recalls one of her famous followers Edward VII as an attentive spectator of both Mistinguett 1954). However, while looking at Figure 3.vii an anonymous can-can dancer), I kept wondering how it would have been for her to move from the world of the rowdy can-can to the world of the Tango. The result is in Plumette’s Diary.

**Plumette’s Diary**

August 1897:

I woke up this morning knowing that I would kick high, higher than ever, higher than it has ever been kicked before. And then, every man will hold his breath, and I will do the deep split. All hearts in Paris will pound to the beat of my kicks. My rowdiness will nurture the revolt of pleasure. My skirts, up and down, up and down, will cut the air and choke the audience. Everyone will toast to the liberation of the senses. Wine and beer will spill on my ruffles attempting to wet me down, to
soak my feathers, to prevent my flight. But no one can stop my cascade of lace. *Madames et monsieurs! Je suis Plumette!* Boots and sticks cannot arrest my long striped legs from rising and falling. I am the queen of *Le Chahut*. Each kick of mine is a gust of encouragement and an inspiration to rebellion.

March 1898:

I twisted my ankle, I tore my petticoat. This drunken painter is making me sick, visiting every night with the same excuse ... That roaring bunch of bums is leaving me deaf. I wish I could stop playing the revolutionary *danseuse* ... My joints are aching!

July 1911:

No one was shouting at me tonight. Perhaps my age is finally showing. Or maybe, this time, the audience could easily tell that I would not be listening. I would not even be looking at them, raptured, as I was, in following my partner’s will. My soul was reaching at them with every step, asking for reassurance. Remember me, Plumette? My kicks of freedom, my ruffles of provocation? My body is now confined to a tight satin dress, confined to a tarnished embrace, confined to a varnished stage. Everyone seems relieved from the kicking rowdiness of my former can-can, myself included.

It must be this music ... It all happened so suddenly! "From now on--the manager said--each performance will include *Le Tango*." "It’s good business," he said. "*Le Tango* attracts the best clients, those who can afford to drown their nights in champagne. And as if by some magic
trick, I was wrapped up in black; my rage, hopes, tenderness, all.
Wrapped up. My legs have been put back to earth. Trapped in his legs, they have lost their flight. No more frou-frous to play, display concealment. My legs permanently denuded under the tight, slitted skirt, immobilized my power. But my arrest seems to fuel silent, expectant passions. Deplumed Plumette. Nocturnal shackles around my waist. Indecently following a man, in public. His presence on the stage is my embarrassment. As if I would need him so as not to get lost; so that my emotions become clearly directed. So that I do not spread my kicks around in unfocused arousal. It must be the music ... How else could I have accepted that there were only two of us? How else could I have come to accept that I am not a whole, a firecracker, on my own? It must be this music that promises bitterness and feeds on my surrender.

October 1915:

I should not be writing this, but I am so excited! They came to the club tonight, a whole bunch of them. Their uniforms dishevelled. I love those drunken moustaches crawling out from under their forward-tilted caps. And they are so needy, so needy of us. They want to forget the war in our arms. They want to believe that the splashing blood is a bad dream, and that our making love is the real world ... I'd better get the girls ready for the next show ... Their skirts will be short tonight. Cloth has become so expensive! And besides, our clients have no time to spend dreaming about those legs hidden in drapery. C'est la vie, c'est la guerre.
Plumette’s diary was sealed by a diamond rusted tear.) Through this story I have tried to show some of the changes that might have occurred to a dancing *femme fatale* around the turn of the century.\(^{21}\) The transformations I wish to point out are focused on her legs, the primary female erotogenic zone at that time.\(^{22}\) Plumette of the can-can is a dancer who, although an object of male’s desire, was in control of her erotic powers. She had, literally in her hands, the capacity to show and conceal her arousing legs from beneath her petticoats. Plumette of the can-can was actually a romantic-style *femme fatale*. She was childish and aerial, displaying the flights of her legs through the ruffles of her petticoats. When she chose to do a spectacular split, she suddenly became earthly, fallen down as deep as one can get to the ground. This fall—the sin—was self-induced. She mischievously combined her flight and sin and the exposure and concealment of her legs to arouse—at her will—the male audience. But Plumette of the can-can, in order to keep her power active, had to display herself in dancing motion beyond her own body’s limits of exhaustion. Plumette of the Tango is the image of a totally grounded *femme fatale*. She is attached to the earth through her gliding steps, caught in a tight skirt. She has no control over the exposure or concealment of her legs. It is literally not in her hands anymore, since her arms are permanently clinging to her male partner. Her legs, permanently insinuating under her glossy, long, slitted skirt, are confronting other legs. The legs of the fatal man who guides and traps her steps. This man, holding her tight on stage, is far from playing childish games. His legs that lead and interfere in her way are threatening. This is a different erotic game. It is seduction.
The fatal man, half dandy and half ruffian, has learnt how to play with her eroticism. He plays it back on her, femme fatale, a disguised prostitute after all. In the last entry of Plumette's diary, the stumbling femme fatale is faced with the fatality of war. A war among those fatal men who search to reassert their power in showing total violence, open aggression towards each other. This ritual of virility has pushed the femme fatale back-stage. Plumette helps to dress the girls for the clandestine shows. The "girls" are hardly femmes fatales anymore. They are sensual, but more comforting than disturbing. Their legs are immediately available to the male gaze under those short skirts.

Women's power has been minimized, trivialized through a settled exhibition. Seduction is a banal struggle, a hardly threatening game when confronted with the "real" battle: The cruel war between men where power is measured in terms of life and death.

**Tango in the World’s Capital of Pleasure**

Tango arrived in Paris in the early 1900s. Argentino beef-barons, together with some adventurous Tango musicians, introduced it into La Belle Époque elite circles, cabarets, and music-halls. The world's capital of pleasure, however, was not the exclusive hostess of Tango in France; Marseille was another French port of entry for Tango. Marseille's world-wandering sailors and white-slave traffickers were Tango's other--declassé--introducers. Tango arrived in Paris by way of both, the top and the bottom of the social scale. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Tango provoked such divisive responses in La Belle
Epoque social milieu. Tango was scandalous and fascinating. But the differences in opinion did not strictly follow a class division. Tango was resisted by bourgeois moralists and by a sector of Parisians who, far from being scandalized, were opposed to the distinguished, classy tinge of this too-civilized exotic dance (Assunção 1984). Thus, the Tango, a hybrid in terms of race and class in its original setting, generated mixed feelings of acceptance and rejection at both extremes of the Parisian class structure. These mixed reactions at multiple class levels were signs of the simultaneous operation of class, race and nationality markers in European society, markers that contradicted each other when facing exotics. The reactions to Tango are showcases of these complex social tensions. Tango played this role because it was being constituted as a new kind of exotic—a "distinguished" and demi-monde, urbane exotic from the recently independent colonial world. Tango was an exotic suited to the complex modern imperial bourgeois ordering of the world. All contradictory alignments were played out through Tango in terms of the erotic.

The Tango was originally poor but moving upwards, urban with some traces of ruralness, white with some traces of color, colonized with some traces of native barbarian in the process of being civilized. It was a perfect candidate for the modern capitalist condition of the exotic. It was an exotic on the move, unlike previous versions of crystallized exoticism. It was also a new kind of eroticism. Through eroticism, Tango transgressed all socially established barriers. In Tango, eroticism was controlled and suggestive. Tango did not display "instinctive" sensuality like the dances of the "primitives"; it did not display rowdy excitement
like the dances of the peasants; it did not display overt lack of decorum, cynicism, and defiant aggression towards the upper classes, like the dances of the urban marginals; and it did not focus solely on the erotic powers of the female body, like other "traditional" exotic dances. Tango's sexual politics were centered in the process of seduction. A fatal man and a femme fatale who, despite their proximity, kept their erotic impulses under control, measuring each others' powers. Their mutual attraction and repulsion were prolonged into an unbearable, endless tension. And everything took place under male control. In addition, the Tango couple did not exhibit a clear-cut class, nor a clean race. At times, the fatal man would resemble a distinguished dandy and suddenly he would behave like a ruffian/pimp. The femme fatale would alternately seduce and reject her partner, and it was hard to tell if she was a skillful prostitute or a sensual lady. Tango was a newly developed exotic/erotic hybrid. As such, it had entrenched in itself the capacity to perform through a dancing couple the major characteristics of the bourgeois colonizer's Desire. And this prolonged, unfulfillable, male controlled Desire was performed passionately. Tango was a mirror representation of the bourgeois colonizer's Desire, performed with the passion of the neo-colonized. In Tango, the gaze of the colonizer could take a look at itself, through the tense, passionate, dramatic steps of the colonized molded in the colonizer's cast. Tango understood the colonizer's Desire from within. Tango could be clothed in tails and satins. But it could also be put in its place: the place of the colonized in the process of being civilized. Tango then would wear its gaucho costumes: the robes of exotic passion, of the freedom and loose
wilderness of the sudamericano pampas. Tango was a versatile, hybrid, new kind of exotic that could adopt the manners of the colonizer while retaining the passion of the colonized, both at heart and on the surface.

Tango opened a place for itself among les dances brunes the Afro-American cake-walk and the Brazilian maxixe) and the apache. It is easy to guess the exotic "nature" of the first two--cake-walk and maxixe--

Figure 3.13: Apache (Fonteyn 1979: 24).

because of their racial distance. The apache, however, is another curiosity in the making of exoticism. Apache was a dance performed by the French canaille--the ruffians of the Parisian prostitution underworld some of Marseillaise origin), who adopted for themselves Apache pseudonymys after the names of publicized brave North American Native
Indian chiefs Salas 1986). The apache dance was brought into and highly exaggerated by) the cabarets, where a squalid looking prostitute, dressed in rags, would fight for her life in the arms of a violent pimp/aggressor. In the end, he would throw her to the floor, and attempt to kill her with his knife. At that very moment, the lights were turned down as the police were called, and the spectacle came to an end (García Jiménez in Assunção 1984: 245). In going through the Parisian discipline and production of new exotic dances, the Tango, in its stage version, adopted some of the striking moves of the Apache for example, the figure by which the women's legs were set in the air).

Searching for an explanation to the puzzling question of Tango's "triumph" in Europe, José María Salaverria writes:

For the public of Paris or London, Tango is no more than a vaguely sinful exotic dance, and they dance it because of its sensual, perverse elements and because it is somewhat barbarian in Carella quoted by Assunção 1984: 242, my translation).

Assunção, in his El Tango y sus Circunstancias, adds to Salaverria's insightful and cynical remarks some background on the Parisian social environment before the First World War. After mentioning the major changes that were taking place in art and literature, characterized by a "subjective, tortured trend closer to the oneiric world than to the real," he refers to the crisis of individualism suffered by an agonizing generation that was "facing an increasing enmassment because of the consumerist society." Tango fit this scenario, he continues, because its embrace was a healing practice of intimacy and because
[Tango] has a more than proletarian origin, almost marginal, currish, base, linked to brothels, to the flesh; it is the product of the encounter and disencounter of the European culture itself, in the context of a new América, exotic, reiterative and unknown, but which, more than anything, is looked at as a land of hope (Assunção 1984: 243, my translation).

Tango, this exotic hybrid coming from the Southern end of the neo-colonial world, carried promises of both identification and rejection on the part of every social sector of European society. It was an exotic dance that could be easily stretched into various directions and the spectacle impresarios, dance masters and fashion designers did not waste their time.

**Tango, World Scandal, and Fascination**

Scandal and fascination are separated by a very thin line. Both attitudes are born out of the attention devoted to a common matter/event. Both point straight at the attraction exerted by a powerful object of dispute. Actually, in their confrontation, scandal and fascination create the power of the object. Exotics, dances, women's bodies, all have fallen into this objectifying and empowering trap. Usually transgressions are associated with the objects/occurrences in themselves, as if they were immoral *per se*. Actually what makes certain events unusually erotic is the debate. The tension created between scandalized and fascinated reactions eroticizes the object of dispute. Scandal and fascination are a question of power. Tango was an object of these power struggles from the very beginning, and it became erotically charged. In the Río de la Plata region, both reactions, scandal and fascination, were hardly more than a low-key rumor until the dispute
was picked up in Europe. The debates over the Tango in Europe immediately amplified the Tango "erotic problem" at home. Scandal and fascination are also subject to colonial relationships within a global economy of passion.

If the playings of imperialism and exoticism are not taken into account, it is difficult to respond to the puzzle created by a class analysis of Tango's acceptance. Tango specialists frequently point out that the Parisian elite--and the European aristocracy in general--accepted the Tango more readily than any of the other social classes. The contrasting response on the part of the Native elites is equally well known. Exoticism, as Salaverria and Assunção argue, is the clue. From a bourgeois imperialist point of view, exotics, whether of a low or high class origin, remain exotic; that is, they are easy to assimilate into an imperial hierarchization of the world within which class is a matter of further details. Imperialist exoticism allows for the indiscriminate discrimination of outsiders/colonized. Take, for example, Lucio V. Mansillas' comments about his visit to Paris in the 1850s, as related by Montergous.

The marquis de La Grange organized a party to exhibit him, as if he were "an [native American] Indian or the son of a nabob." [...] The ladies said: "comme il doit être beau avec ses plumes!" [He must look beautiful with his feathers!] Montergous 1985: 45, my translation).

At the time of the Parisian elite's fascination with Tango, similar comments were made regarding "native" aristocrats. Maharadjas, Hungarian princesses, Russian dukes, very wealthy Syrians, millionaires of "different horizons." and French cocottes of high category joined the
French elite in their private parties to "dance until late at night one Tango after another" Humbert 1988: 8). It seems as though the Parisian aristocracy enjoyed exotic dances in the company of exotic aristocrats and their fancy lovers. How many more layers of spicy, innocuous amusement could they get? Around 1910, the elites of the imperial colonial powers belonged to a class that no other class or classification in the world could threaten. Moreover such categorizations were so unthreatening that they did not need to worry about the low-class associations of the exotic practices they enjoyed, or even about the precise national origins of such practices. After enjoying a Tango evening at a fashionable Parisian hotel, Roberto Cunninghame Graham referred to the enthusiastic exclamations of the audience.

"Charming!" "Marvelous!" "How graceful!" "Vivent les espagnoles!"

 [...] It is so Spanish, so free from conventions; it combines all the aesthetic movements of those images that appear in Etrusque vases with the strange grace of the Hungarian gypsies quoted in Assunção 1984: 252-3, my translation).

Tango detractors also relied on exotic analogies to denounce its dangers.

The Tango is a pseudo-dance that should be censored! It is truly impossible to describe with precision what one is seeing in Paris. However it could be said that the Tango resembles a double belly-dance, where lasciviousness is accented through exaggerated contortions. One believes oneself to be watching a Mahometan couple under the effects of opium Rivera quoted in Humbert 1988: 74, my translation).

The "diabolic" influence of the Tango and the ways in which it took hold of the naïve, like an exotic drug were, also emphasized.

Inconsequent young man, imprudent young woman, you should know that starting from the very moment in which you try the first
of the six steps, by which the method teaches us the principles of Tango, right from that moment, your spirits will have only one thought; to dance the Tango, and the different evolutions of the Tango will be imposed on your limbs as if they were reflex movements Nohain quoted in Humbert 1988: 74, my translation).

The Tango opposition grew in Paris around 1913. Articles, columns and enquêtes of several personalities were published in widely read newspapers and magazines. And the church intervened through the Archbishop of Paris, whose verdict was appealed to the Pope.²⁸

Reactions of high authorities appeared all over Europe. Ludwig of Bavaria, in a personal letter addressed to the heads of his army wrote that "the dance of the Tango is absurd, and moreover, unbecoming to those who wear honorable military uniforms" Sabato 1963: 91, my translation). In England, the aristocracy strongly resisted the practice of the Tango, but in Paris, 1913, the poet Jean Richepin chose Tango as the topic of his presentation at the annual meeting of the French Academy of Arts:

"Tango has been strongly slandered. We have been told that this dance emerged from the argentina underworld and that it is improper for the practice of distinguished ladies and gentlemen. True; but is there a dance whose origins are not associated with the people? It has also been said that the Tango is dishonest, that it takes indecent postures ... The tango is honest or dishonest according to the one who dances it. I am not only bringing the Tango to the Academy on occasion of its annual opening, but also taking it to the theater in a play that I have written in collaboration with my wife Novati and Cuello 1980: 39, my translation).

In order to give further legitimacy to his defense, this member of L'Academie added to his presentation an interesting twist: he linked the origins of the Tango to ancestral Hellenic dances. Richepin's defense
was joined by a myriad of passionate Tango followers. They based their arguments on the lack of knowledge and the misrepresentations displayed by Tango detractors. They tried to minimize the phenomenon; and they cried out for some joy and pleasure for the young in those years of despair. Perhaps the most remarkable defense was launched by Pierre Handrey, poet, under the title of "Le Médicine et le Tango" 1913). He argues that the School of Medicine recommends the practice of Le Tango for health reasons. "Dance the Tango, youngsters! [...] and the progress of our race will be the work of the Tango" quoted by Humbert 1988: 82, my translation). And some astute dance professeurs, such as M. Andre de Fouquieres, defended the practice of the Tango among Parisians by emphasizing the healing, nurturing powers of the exotic.

Tango is a subtle and voluptuous dance. It was born in the slums and it was refined in the salons. Tango is sad, caressing, suggestive. It gave us a lesson in musical psychology, and we have invented for this argentina dance a literary choreography. Our life is hectic, restless ... Tango serves us as a relief and comfort for the spirit. It is like a discrete return to the primitive instincts. [...] With Tango, classic memories resuscitate. In some myrrhic vases, in the attitudes of some bacchanal dancers whose blue veils undulate with the wind, we find it's rhythm Fouquieres quoted in Rossi [1926] 1958: 164).

Scandal and fascination were in full swing. Music-hall and cabaret owners, dance professeurs and fashion designers joined efforts for further scandalizing, tranquilizing and tailoring the Tango. The Tango that Richepin and others took to defend was the Tango introduced by professional "dance demonstrators" especially invited to present dance novelties at fashionable locales. See Figures 3.14, 3.15, and 3.16.) The detractors, although worried about the young and especially
Figure 3.14: Dance demonstrators: (a) at the Olympia, Paris, 1914 (G. Jiménez 1964: 67); (b) unidentified (Fonteyn 1979: 25); (c) Marguirite and Frank Gill, London, 1914 (McDonagh 1979: 35).
Figure 3.15: Vernon and Irene Castle, New York, 1914 (Buckman 1978: 31).
women among the middle classes, had in their minds the scandalous images of the Tango as performed by the artists of the luxurious French revue: spectacular, extravagant, exotic. Defenders and detractors alike were referring to two different choreographic variations of Tango, recently developed in Europe for stage and ballroom purposes. The original choreography had been stylized into glamorous almost ballet-like steps, rough apache-like figures and marching walks in between. Thus basic continental Tango choreography was glamorized on the stage and tamed in the dance halls. The music, although phonographic recordings and sheet-music from Argentina were available, was especially composed so
as to be exotically and languid, while retaining only some of its rhythm. Argentino dancers and musicians could not find a job very easily in the midst of the Tango rage. And if they did, they had to give in to auto-exoticism, performing the Tango French-style, or wearing "gaucho costumes".29

Paris was certainly the "manager" of the Tango, reshaping it in style and promoting it to the rest of the world as an exotic symbol of heterosexual courtship. The dramatically insinuating, languid Tango was a Parisian product practiced mostly by the elites before the First World War and further popularized after the war see Figure 3.17).
The Tango which first appeared in France between 1904 and 1907, enjoyed its greatest vogue there during the first half of the 1920s, just at the time when the revue was at the height of its popularity. The most esteemed dance at the popular dances, it was welcomed by song writers and composers [...] However, the revue assigned it a place in genre tableaux, where it served as a musical embellishment to representations of luxury [...] In defining the latter as mark of the exotic, it also contributed to its fixation as something external and other Klein 1985: 179).

The glittering stage version of Tango reminded the social dancers who performed a bland version of it under the supervision of the dance professeurs) of its inspiring "naughty" connotations. "Primitiveness" in the Tango form of instinctual passion was a healing dance practice for the "decadent," "civilized" Europeans. See Figure 3.18; notice the gaucho costumes of the argentino couple.) While glamorizing "instinct"
Figure 3.19: Tango choreography according to André de Fouquieres, 1913, "les danses nouvelles: le tango" (Humbert 1988: 26).
Figure 3.20: Gladys Beattie Crozier's Tango manual, London, 1913, *The Tango and How to do It*: (a) *La Promenade*, (b) The Dip, and (c) *Pas Oriental à la Gauche* (Franks 1963: 179).

for the stage in order to suit the colonizer's taste and stereotyping of the exotic, Tango's instinctual passion was subdued to fit the shy bodies of
the bourgeois commoners see Figure 3.19). The dance masters simplified the improvised characteristics of the Tango into a morally acceptable and physically affordable set sequence of steps. They wrote Tango manuals and took the dance to their congresses so as to order and normalize the choreography. See Figures 3.20 and 3.21.) Some of the dance experts would identify seventy-two Tango "attitudes," while others recommended the adoption of nine to twelve set movements (Otterbach 1980: 278-9). Both the ballroom and the music-hall versions were stylized, regimented, produced. And the different social spaces for
which they were developed were enclosed, restricted and in no way interchangeable. The fantastic exotic style of the stage could not be the same as that applied to the quotidian social dance. But they certainly fed on each other.

The fashion industry also joined in the Tango business shaping bodies and promoting a new morality while selling Tango articles. A Tango color was promoted in the red-orange spectrum, a color akin to sensual ignition. A variety of Tango cocktail-dresses were especially

Figure 3.22: The Tango skirt by Bakst, executed by Paquin, 1912 (Carter 1975).
designed to attend to Tango-teas and midnight Champagne-Tango encounters. These evening gowns carried a slit in the front to facilitate the dance glides, and they usually included an Oriental item: the harem trouser-skirt *jupe-culotte*. The special Tango make-up had Oriental touches such as the Kohl bordering the eye rims and dark red lipstick. Tango attitudes included the use of long, Oriental cigar holders; and walking *à la Tango* implied tight, delicate steps, reminiscent of Salome's movements constrained by jewelled anklets Carter 1975). A new kind of footwear was designed, the Tango slipper, which wrapped wide straps around the ankles. The slippers were a complement to the Tango gowns, since these were shorter than the usual length and allowed the feet to be exposed particularly during the dance. But the most revolutionary and contested Tango fashion innovation was probably the Tango corset.

Perhaps more than any other single factor, the popularity of the tango and similar dances led many women to abandon orthodox corsetry in 1913 and 1914. Some corset advertisements complained that, "at balls one sees a number of women who affect an excessive lack of constraint [and] have abandoned all support; the bust undulates to the rhythm of the dance in a loose fashion." Other advertisements—such as one on "Chiffons and Tango"—bowed to the trend and promoted short elastic corsets, maintaining that they "prevent muscle fatigue," so "dancers prefer them." Indeed, one "all elastic" model that slipped on over the head was called "the Tango" Steele 1985: 229).

These notorious changes in fashion, together with the display of sensual movements in the dance, have led Humbert to assert that the Tango was a true "detonator" of a new morality in France. She believes that, unlike in its original *sudamericano* setting, it promoted women's liberation in Europe at the beginning of the century 1988: 69). I am not convinced of either statement. Dance-wise, I believe that in France can-can allowed a
freedom of movements and display of eroticism for the female that the Tango constrained in the arms of the leading man. Regarding her opinion about Tango's impact on rioplatense women, I have already discussed my views in Chapter Two.

In the 1910s Tango shared staged exoticism with other musical genres: "tropical" and especially Cuban music, flamenco, Russian and Hawaiian dances, and, a little later, with Northamerican jazz. It was the time of the first World War; the maps where changing and the world was expanding. People's bodies were uneasy, they wanted to move. Soldiers concentrated in the big cities, moving their bodies to the rhythms of exotic musics, waiting to move on to the war over exotic lands/colonies.
The latest fashion: "Pour Passer le Temps."

Figure 3.24: Tango-tea in London, 1913; drawing by F. Matania (Carter 1975).
In the production of exotic dances, France was hegemonic but not without contenders. France's struggles with the English codes of social dancing are a well documented skirmish in their long-lasting battle for economic, political and cultural imperialism Leppert 1988). This competition was clearly understood by the argentinos themselves, who attentively followed the French-English disputes to establish the steps and postures of the "authentic" Tango. From Paris the Tango made its way to New York, repeating the same, now familiar story: scandal, dance-masters, and manuals, and a version for the stage. In the U.S., however, Tango was awaited by two special hostesses: ragtime and the movie screen Buckman 1979; Roberts 1979).

At some point surrounding World War I the competition over the Tango carried out among the major world powers turned into a distribution of "specialties." London and Paris, for example, became rather complementary in their tasks of promoting the Tango, respectively, as a social dance and as a stage diva. Paris, the capital of pleasure, developed the spectacular scenarios of the revue and music-halls Moulin Rouge, Folies Bergere, Olympia, Casino de Paris, etc.), where entertainers and dancers from every part of the world dreamed of having a consecratory debut. Mistinguett, the undisputed queen of the French music-halls for about twenty years, introduced the Tango into elaborate stage productions as a part of her Vals Challoupée. See Figure 3.25.) London, the creator of the music-hall genre, soon devoted its efforts to the social dance industry. Assuming the role of the "workshop" of the world. English dance masters and their codified manuals aggressively promoted the sport of dancing, including the periodical
organization of dance matches--International Dance Competitions--were rules and regulations followed closely the model of quasi-Olympic games. Tango, after hard debates, was incorporated into the category of "modern" dancing, from which more exuberant "latin" rhythms were excluded. The U.S., as I have already mentioned, participated enthusiastically in all branches of the dancing disciplining and promotion business. Vernon and Irene Castle, a famous "exhibition dance" couple professional dancers who demonstrated new fashionable social dances) picked up the Tango during their incursions in Paris before World War I see Figure 3.15). They developed their own manual,
including dances of their own creation, and toured all over the country with great success. But the "specialty" of the U.S. was the movie-screen,
Figure 3.27: Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn performing exotic dances (Fonteyn 1979: 109).
that soon proved to displace, to some extent, all other dancing business branches. After the First World War, popular movie stars were exoticized with the help of Tango like Rudolf Valentino in the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"), and Tango stars like Carlos Gardel) were internationally promoted through the Paramount aura see Figures 2.4 and 3.26). In addition, the U.S. rejuvenated and popularized ballet by introducing modern dance choreographies. Perhaps the most famous American live performer of exotic dances--including Tangos--was Ruth St. Denis see Figure 3.27). Following the sketched tendencies towards specialization, she attained international fame by performing successfully in Parisian theaters. The major source of inspiration for her and her partners'--Ted Shawn--stunningly exotic choreographies was the 1912 volume of National Geographic Magazine Sherman 1979). Exoticism and the newly industrialized dancing complex collaborated closely in the creation of new passionate products and new markets ready for consuming passion.
Tango Back Home

Although Tango originated in the Rio de la Plata region (ca. 1880), it was only after it achieved success in the main capitals of the world (ca. 1913 and again, in the 1920s after the First World War) that it gained full popularity in its original setting. The practices of pleasure as developed through bodily dancing movements proved to be dependent on external and superior judges (the "civilized" imperial societies), who allowed or prohibited local dancing practices. But more, the fact is that the very concepts of pleasure as related to dancing--such as the focus on sensuality--followed the dictates of those recognized as culturally more civilized. Who, when, how, what and where to dance, as well as what feelings should be identified and developed while moving with the music, were as culturally dependent on the colonizer as were the economic and political fates of the neo-colonized nations. This does not mean, however, that local developments were nonexistent or that resisting dancing practices were inexorably co-opted. The Tango dancing practice in the Rio de la Plata followed its own conflictive ways linked to local political struggles, including different positions on the question of dependency and colonialism. Locally established class distinctions (dependent on, but not fully determined by the relations with imperialist powers), translated into moral codes (again, subordinated to bourgeois imperialist codifications, but not without specific local contradictions).
had prevented vast sectors of the local high and middle classes from practicing the Tango. But they had not prevented marginal, hybrid local sectors from creating and practicing the Tango. Within the higher classes (the ones more conforming to the moral prohibitions) there were important exceptions following gender distinctions; a fact that turns any solely or primordially class analysis into a paradox. Exceptions to the rule of avoiding the Tango ambiance were frequently practiced by elite and middle-class men. But their adventurous moves across class/moral boundaries did not question the boundaries per se; rather they made use of the set distinctions for reassuring class, race and gender superiority. The transgressions of the wealthier, whiter, males into the Tango world were more of a stepping over rigid boundaries—a challenging trespass—than a breaking up of the moral/class divisions established in local society. Women were constituted as the bourgeois bastions of morality, and were segregated into one social space or the other, standing as markers of naturalized social boundaries and, simultaneously, as the aims for male comings and goings between the two worlds. As a result, males were lured by two classes of women displaying two complementary erotic powers. The defiant eroticism of lower class, racially impure, tangueras tugged men into leaving the class/moral places were they legitimately belonged; the comforting eroticism of the non-Tango-women of their own kind, drew them back into their legitimate social place. For this reason, Tango could not be said to have actually crossed local social barriers until women located in opposite classes/moralities shared the dancing practice of the Tango. This is what hardly occurred before Tango's popularization in Paris.
The acceptance of the Tango in Europe affected the class/moral identification of the Tango in its local setting. It affected the cultural codes of distinction among the men and women of the different local classes and generated new distinctions in the Tango itself, so as to reproduce social distinctions. The European acceptance affected the hegemonic power of national representation based in economic/political/moral superiority enjoyed up to then by the local elites in that a locally denigrated cultural expression was being empowered, as a competitive marker of national identity, by foreign/superior recognition. This complex external intervention into *Argentina* national politics through the Tango is no more than an episode of cultural imperialism within a broader and long-standing struggle between formal independence and substantive self-determination. Cultural, economic and state/institutional politics do not necessarily follow the same roads, but they certainly intersect and affect each other in a political way. In addition, none of these dimensions exclusively determines, expresses or exhausts the others. Tango, for example, stemmed from a particular social situation (within which economic, political, moral, class, racial, gender dimensions can be specifically analyzed) and provoked events that affected this social situation, which in turn had not remained static (nor congruent in all its dimensions). And Tango adjusted to the newly developed local social situation (i.e. was changed by it), partly expressing those changes and partly challenging further realignments. What I believe to be particularly interesting to analyze is the way in which external imperial interventions, through the process of exoticization of the Tango, affected the local reception of
Tango and how Tango intervened in the local and foreign debates concerning the shape of Argentina's national identity. For this purpose the specific characteristics of the Tango scandal/fascination dynamics will be locally analyzed, including references to the local strategies of disciplining/promotion of the Tango. In addition, I will discuss the emergence of lay and scholarly interests in producing a history of Tango, establishing national roots and authentic features, as a part of the colonized's restless and contradictory quest for national identity.

In dealing with exoticism and national identity through the Tango, a tension will constantly re-emerge in my written thoughts. That is, the empowering effects of the process of exoticization, by which certain social sectors and their practices gain local recognition, and the co-opting effects of the exotic manipulations by which the empowered practices remain entangled to new exoticisms (reifications/fetishism), that require continued strategic shifts on the part of the resistors. These complex questions are unevenly delineated and not even nearly exhausted in these pages. I fully engage contradictory interpretations, tangoing too close to opposite positions, repelled from one specific struggle to another, finding myself endangered--with no clear-cut answers--while searching for decolonizing moves. Resistance is so pragmatically specific, stubborn and resilient in its powerlessness, cruel and wise in its lack of Reason but plagued by justifications, that I have been often tempted to step aside--theorize, ideologize--to find comfort under a colonizing/paralyzing shade. My own resulting Tango/identity remains incomplete and in struggle.
Local Scandals and Fascinations

The controversy unleashed by the Tango is actually one of the most remarkable issues ever as discussed in mundane circles. It is an issue that agitates London, New York, Paris, Berlin, and Rome at the same time. The monarchs proscribe the Tango, the priests disapprove it, and, in the meantime, "tea-Tangos," "Tango-suppers" and "Tango-contests" swarm everywhere (cited by Rossi 1958: 160 from a London press article published in 1913, my translation).

The "Tango controversy" in which the personalities of the major world powers engaged was equally remarkable among the argentinos. As a matter of fact, much of the debate over the moral connotations of Tango was fueled by the first reactions of some key foreign representatives of the government. Enrique Rodríguez Larreta--minister in Paris--as well as other high ranked members of argentina delegations, denounced publicly the ill-famed origins and practice of the Tango dance in their native land. They attempted to enlighten the "international elite," and especially the honorable ladies, about the "pornographic spectacle" that they were naively performing. Consider these warnings, circa 1913:

In Buenos Aires Tango is a distinctive dance of the ill-famed locals and of the taverns of worst repute. It is never danced in tasteful salons or among distinguished people (Larreta quoted by Gobello 1980: 112, my translation).

The purpose of the Tango is to describe the obscene. [...] It summarizes the choreography of the brothels, and its fundamental task is the pornographic spectacle. [...] When the ladies of the twentieth century dance Tango, they know or they ought know that they are behaving like prostitutes (Lugones cited in Novati and Cuello 1980: 40, my translation).
Tango, they advised, will inadvertently contaminate noble reputations.

But Lugones also added the following:

The name "Tango" should not serve as a label for this practice of marginals. [...] Tango is not a national dance, nor is the prostitution that conceives it. [...] For this reason, the proscription of this indecency is not only honest and distinguished but also patriotic (Lugones ibid.).

Larreta, Lugones, and other argentino detractors of Tango stated their accusations with noticeable indignation. Something extremely crucial was at stake in the Tango controversy, far beyond the decency of the foreign elites. The indignation of the argentina elite was the bitter reaction of a betrayed dignified class. Their problem was the banality and insensitivity of imperialism in dealing with class and national identities.

When we were all almost convinced that Europe was not considering us anymore as "savage" and that the wheat, corn and the frozen meats were in the old continent undisputed proofs and the best examples of our civilization and astonishing progress, we received--several years ago by now--the unexpected news that in Paris they were suddenly aware of our existence, not through the valuable products of the soil [...] but through the Tango. [...] Moreover, it cannot be superfluous to make here an important remark: the Tango, as it is danced in Paris has little to do with ours except for the name and the music (El Diario December 1912 cited by Novati and Cuello 1980: 36, my translation).

Tango, a practice close to the identity of a different/inferior class of argentinos, was questioning the elite's legitimacy to represent the nation. In addition, the journalist states grudgingly, if Tango--already a poor representation (in both senses of the term, as a class and as a bad copy) of the national being--was going to stand for Argentina, the Europeans could at least respect the authentic argentina practice. Argentina, by
way of the Tango, was being doubly misrepresented. Argentina identity was being doubly manipulated through the projection of a "popular" image of culture—that challenged the "civilized" image projected by the Argentina elite—and by the simultaneous appropriation and distortion of the Argentina popular practice (through which the elite was being mistakenly represented). Hence the elite’s representativeness was being questioned, and the popular culture was being misrepresented. Both strategies of re-representation undertaken by the main world powers affected, in their combination, Argentina’s national identity. The journalist seems to be pointing out two bourgeois/positivistic rules of representation that had been transgressed. The first rule would be the one which establishes that legitimate representatives of a nation can be discriminated from illegitimate ones, that the morally superior sectors should represent the morally inferior ones and that, usually, this means that the more civilized/wealthier ones legitimately represent the more uncivilized/poor ones. The second bourgeois/positivistic rule in jeopardy would be the one specifying that representations should be accurate in that they should respect the shape of the original. However, placed in an imperialist context, these rules of representation not only could be transgressed, but the transgression itself would be necessary and legitimate. The colonizer, in reference to the first rule, has the power to reverse the "natural" hierarchy of representations established at the colony; what might be taken for legitimate representatives in the colony is not necessarily what represents the colony more accurately in the colonizer’s view. Hence, the imperial powers, a step above in the hierarchy of morality/civilization/wealth, could choose to represent the
colonial nations through whichever sector (the most powerful or the most powerless) they wished. Regarding the accuracy of the representation of the colony, the only accuracy that counts for the colonizer is the one that is faithful to his own stereotyping of what colonies are like. It is for this very reason that the representative of the colony should be the most "uncivilized," the most "primitive"-like, the most distinguishable/different from the colonizer--and hence, most easily suitable to manipulate into the image that the colonizer has constructed of the colonized. Regarding the inaccuracy of the representation of the original Tango, the journalist had misunderstood the intentions of the colonizer. The "cultures" of the colonized are a source of enjoyment, of pleasure: not a serious exercise of representation involving questions of legitimacy, or truthfulness. In addition, the colonized should not pretend that the "civilized" colonizer will replicate her "barbarian" manners. As a matter of fact, the colonized should be grateful for both, being chosen as a source of enjoyment--which implies recognition--and for being subjected to a civilized refinement--a benefit that the colonized could enjoy and, in doing so, improve her resemblance to the civilized colonizer. The colonizer follows a colonial purpose of representation; colonizing understandings of rules of representation; and colonialist strategies of representation within a colonial hierarchy of representativeness. Hence, the colonizer identifies and represents the colony (Argentina, in this case) in order to reaffirm his position as colonizer and her position as colonized. The colonizer had no interest, to the bitter regret of Argentina's arrogant elite, in recognizing the legitimate identity of an independent nation in the terms
established by either sector of the colonized. In addition, the colonizer's distortion of the cultural practices of the colonized was, in the colonizer's view, positive and legitimate, since his misrepresentations are naturally more "civilized" and hence cultivate the coarse culture of the colonized for the benefit of both—colonizers and colonized. Thus exoticism was rendered as a desirable and legitimate civilizing practice undertaken by the colonizer and his colonized allies. The offended sector of the *argentina* elite was being a victim of those same practices that they had previously accepted and applied, in order to keep other sectors of their own nation in subordinate positions. The fate of imperialist trickery had turned them unexpectedly into "natives" and generated in them "nationalist" reactions.

The Western bourgeois colonizers' fascination with Tango affected the internal struggles for national representation among the colonized. For these members of the conservative *argentina* elite, the problem was a class struggle over representations of national identity—representations which had been affected by the exoticizing interventions of the civilized imperialists. Through Tango, the terrain of disputes over national identity had shifted from an internal dispute controlled by the colonized elite to an international terrain controlled by imperial powers. However, the responses of the *argentina* elite were not monolithic. There were those, the "liberals," who saw themselves positioned so close to the European elite that they claimed to share the joys of exoticism regardless of the nationality of the object. Tango was a part of the culture of their native land (the "popular" part) by which their identity could not be threatened. Actually, this "open-minded" sector of the *argentina* elite
had been exercising the consumption of Tango for a long time. They were the frequent visitors to the brothels where the Tango was danced by women, in couples, so as to create a stimulating environment for their clients; the ones who actively participated in the street carnavales, mocking the Tangos performed by the black comparsas; the members of the gangs that invaded the bars of the poor and marginals, looking for some spice and violence ... This part of the argentina elite was precisely the one that contributed to the promotion of the Tango in Paris through their frequent trips. The opponent sector was made up of those who despised being thrown by the "international elite" into the same bag together with blacks, pimps and prostitutes, dock workers and servants, etc. They felt that the class boundaries so well known in their home territory were difficult to distinguish at European distance and hence, their identity as argentinos was being threatened. In both cases, the argentina elite aspired to the rank of the "civilized," i.e. to be pairs and part of the Western Culture, but their strategies of representation/identification were different. The argentina elite, not unlike the foreign elites, expressed two different opinions in the face of the Tango question, according to the positions they assumed within the world economy of passion. But for the argentina elite this positioning was more fragile given that they were a colonized elite (an elite susceptible to being exoticized together with the Tango). To accept the Tango as representative of the argentina national identity potentially affected both, their class identity and their power as legitimate representatives of Argentina. In Argentina's internal politics, Tango had been representing the elite's antagonistic class for a long time. Within
Argentina's politics, Tango had been precisely one of the markers of social distinction. The foreign exoticization of Tango could (and would) affect the shape of Argentina's national identity, putting the arrogant elite sector of the neo-colonized back into its place: "distinguished natives." The ambiguous message of the bourgeois neo-colonizer was misleading: although a fair amount of economic development, of whiteness and of refinement (i.e. incorporation into imperialist capitalist economy) should be praised and encouraged, this was not a sufficient reason for attaining a "civilized" identity—and it would never be, precisely because Argentina's development and civilization were dependent on the colonizer's interests and judgements.

However, other sectors of argentinos benefitted from Tango's acceptance abroad. Namely, that sector that the worried faction of the elite feared to privilege through Tango's association with national identity. The original Tango fans and performers were empowered by the neo-colonizers' exoticization of the Tango. After Tango's acknowledgement by the "international elite" (although under the condition of "exotic"), the existence of the argentina "popular" class from Buenos Aires (porteños) was finally recognized by their own national ("native") elite. And the tangueros responded ironically and pragmatically to this newly opened opportunity. Whoever had the chance moved to Europe and, latter on, to the US searching for job opportunities as dance professors, dance exhibitors and musicians. In the meantime, the national question was kept in mind. The Bates brothers, writing in the 1930s, asked themselves: "who is conquering whom?"
Every exotic thing, anything extravagant and unknown, was adopted by the Parisian society, expecting new sensations in order to exhibit them before the astonished eyes of its tourists. [But] Paris was far from knowing that, instead of being the conqueror, it would end up conquered by our popular dance (Bates and Bates 1936: 60, my translation).

They were addressing exoticism's negative connotations by reversing the usual terms of the colonizer/colonized power asymmetry. However, by acknowledging this result as unexpected and by reminding their readers of the "pacific and unpretentious" nature of Tango's "invasion," the Bates brothers were careful not to brag too much. After all "in its own home [country] it [Tango] had never achieved more than absolute prohibitions" (Bates and Bates ibid.). Argentina's internal class struggle was kept in mind, and the foreign intervention, although tinged with exoticism, had favored the less privileged nationals. Rossi, writing in 1924, poked fun at the elite for losing control of Argentina's representation in Europe. Moreover, he clearly connects these events with class competition for the legitimate representation of the nation.

It would be unfair to deny that Tango, the great current delirium of all Europe, has had a remarkable educational influence; in the last six months the public has gotten to know the name and the geographical position of the República Argentina better than after years and years of information about railroads and crops (cited by Rossi 1958: 159 from a British correspondent's article dated 1914).

Argentina was finally becoming recognized as a place in the world, thanks to the Tango. And although "Tango's argentinidad [argentin-a-ness] had its objectors," continues Rossi, "it had been logically established by the nationality of its [Tango's] introducers." It was clear to the followers of the Tango-national identity debate at that time that
"objectors" were members of the Argentina elite and "introducers" were the musicians and dancers from Argentina's "popular" classes to whom the elite denied the legitimacy of representing the nation. Thanks to the Tango, and to the quasi-fortuitous fact of having been "chosen" among many other possible exotics, the popular sectors were representing the nation—despite the reactions of the Argentina elite. But that Tango—the world-seducing, "peaceful conqueror"—had little to do with the Tango as practiced by the popular sectors in Argentina. Tango had been exoticized—identified and changed—by the enraptured neo-colonizers. The dancers and musicians who were aggressively spreading the Tango at the world's "core," were obliged to perform exotically so as to adjust to the colonizers' expectations. The tangueros who had shaken a local class segregation barrier thanks to the intervention of the colonizer, were now facing an international mark of distinction: exoticism, the mark of imperialism. With Tango, sectors marginalized up to then from representing the nation gained the power to do it; but it had a price. Exoticism, an imperial manipulation, would also put them back with the rest of their nationals (both friends and foes) in the place of the colonized. Moreover, the very enthusiasm with which the colonizer associated Tango and Argentina national identity was suspicious. The colonizer, sharing the racist/classist prejudices of the colonized elite, used the "sensual primitiveness" associations of the Tango to tinge Argentina's identity as a whole with uncivilized connotations—a reminder of Argentina's colonized condition. Exoticism is a potent tool when in the hands of imperialists. Exoticism allows the colonizers to handle paradoxical colonial situations, which are precisely the material out of
which imperialist power reproduces and sustains itself in power. Exoticism seduces both, the colonizer and the colonized, as the tangueros clearly foresaw. The counterpart to the colonizer’s fascination is the colonized’s taste of empowerment. For the colonized, exoticization often means being recognized, noticed, identified. But this glamorous recognition is also objectifying and binding. In order to perpetuate the exotically attained identity, the colonized must permanently practice auto-exoticism; if she fails to do so, recognition/identity are withdrawn. Exoticism’s mutually seducing game implies an uneven distribution of risks among the colonizer and the colonized.

Once exoticized--i.e. transformed into an enjoyable and exciting practice, through a careful screening of "indecent" features as well as through the establishment of a distance/difference between the ways of the "primitive" and the ways in which "primitiveness" can be appropriated by the "civilized"--Tango was accepted by the argentina elite as a legitimate practice. Although Tango had been practiced by elite men before the Parisian verdict, dancing Tango was a somewhat clandestine undertaking, shared with lower class women. After the Parisian Tango boom, women of their own class would do the Tango in a "civilized," stylized fashion.

I saw the famous Tango [...] for the first time--precisely that summer before the Big War--on board of the magnificent transatlantic ship, "La France." [...] I must confess that the Tango danced on "La France"--undulating with the waves of the North Sea--scandalized me... and afterwards, I loved it thanks to seeing it danced in Paris and everywhere else (Elvira A. de Diaz cited in Ulla 1982: 26).
In Argentina, Tango was not only sinful because it was danced in clandestine sexual places; it was also culpable for being danced in the streets and in the patios of the miserable tenement houses. The public space of the arrabales (suburban slums), especially those street corners where the few street lamps stood, and the sidewalks illuminated by shop windows (see Figure 4.1), were the gathering places of the Tango characters (García Jiménez 1965). Transgressive practices took place in the streets, like men dancing with each other. Among the poor, no private space was large enough for dancing, except when the workers associations or popular social clubs (associations of immigrants) organized dancing festivities. However, with the exception of the streets, the dancing of Tango was strictly under surveillance in most social locales: warnings were displayed prohibiting cortes and quebradas (see Figure 4.2 and 4.3). In addition, these public dances were open to
people of all shades and colors. The street-Tango was synonymous with indecency, with poverty and with promiscuity; a promiscuity that would flood the streets, trespassing the borders of the proper. The improper,
incorrect street dancing challenged the propriety/property of the public space, denouncing their lack of property/propriety. The street Tango was a multiple sin. The scandalized responses to the Tango were morally concerned with sex, race, and class. In order to overcome the scandalous Tango connotations, argentina women such as Elvira Aldao de Díaz had to be reassured of the propriety of the cultured colonizer.

Manuals and professeurs from Europe (or at least tinged by a Europeanized experience) started proliferating on argentino soil (Bates and Bates 1936; see Figure 4.4). The disciplinary/promotive capitalist machinery developed at the imperialist "core" in order to rule and profit over dancing bodies started operating successfully, with the necessary adjustments, at home. Elite women, such as Doña Elvira, as well as middle class women, had to overcome the argentina version of the Tango scandal. Argentina people from middle and high classes demanded refined styles, not only different from the style of the rough ruffians' but also distinguishable from the exoticized versions developed in Paris, London and New York. Again, class identity and national identity were at stake. The dancing silhouettes which illustrate the cover of the "Alma Porteña" music-sheet (1923; see Figure 4.5), show basic choreographic postures of local Tango styles. Distinctions can be traced by the distance maintained between the bodies of the dancers, by the stretched or retracted disposition of the torsos, by the amplitude of the movements of the arms and legs, and by what the dancers wear. In general, the silhouettes on the right, represent a more refined style (closer to à la française) than do the ones on the left. The refined postures entail wider distance between the dancers, more extended arm movements, and
Figure 4.4: Professor Carlos Herrera teaching Tango de salón, 1913. Published in "Caras y Caretas" (Novati and Cuello 1980: 93).
stretched legs avoiding knee and thigh entanglements between the members of the couple. The silhouettes at the bottom correspond to two clearly contrasting styles. On the left, the tango criollo—the one that mimics the underworldly movements of ruffians and prostitutes—in which bodies and heads are held close to each other, arms and legs describe tight movements, and the gentleman wears a short jacket and (a revealing detail) also wears his hat while dancing (a clear sign of "bad"
manners, and a common *compradito* challenge). On the left, the embrace is looser but the arms stretch out more rigidly, the torsos do not tend to lean towards each other, the legs are extended in opposite directions, the lady's head is facing backwards, and the gentleman wears a tail-coat. Although these postures do not comprise the development of the choreography where the postures change along the dance trajectory, in Tango there are paradigmatic postures--those performed at the moment of the *corte* (when the displacement is abruptly stopped, and a special *figura* takes place). At that moment, it can be generally stated that in *Tango criollo* the bodies of the dancers are balanced towards each other while in more "refined" (European-like) styles, the bodies are balanced away from each other.

Both ruffianesque and refined Tango styles were combined in the local *Tango de salón* (social dance Tango) and *Tango de espectáculo* (stage Tango). The accent on morally defiant or conforming movements depended on the social occasion and the locale where Tango was danced, but it also depended on the music. *Tango-milonga* (a fast, jumpy Tango) begs for more challenging figures and displacements than the languid, "sensual" Tango music developed after Tango's popularization in Europe and at home. *Tango-milongas*, Tangos in 2x4 and in 4x8, and waltzed or fox-trotted Tangos enjoyed periods of greater or lesser popularity, but the newer ones never completely displaced the others from formal dances, familiar settings, or stages. The contrasts enriched the pleasure of dancing and of exhibiting mastery over the Tango. (See Figures 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8.) The impact of exotic Tango versions was thus being mitigated by local practices of re-appropriation, including two combined
Figure 4.6: Casimiro Aín and Edith Peggy, 1913 (Ferrer 1980a: 119).
strategies of auto-exoticism: the substitution of exaggerated *gringo* features for local, *criollo* features within each dancing piece, and the
symbolic maintenance of criollo, canyengue pieces within the repertory of Tango styles which were a part of almost every Tango dancing occasion. As a result, artists, elites and middle classes engaged in both, exoticization and national self-affirmation, through auto-exoticism: exoticism under local control. The Tango de espectáculo combined the choreography of the tango criollo with some traces of the glittering sensualness of the Parisian revue, and in this sense, differed from the European exotic stage version. In the Tango de salón, a similar process took place. The argentino academies and dance-masters taught a "refined" and banalized Tango, based on European codifications but
exempt from tip-toed steps and minuet-like arms and torsos. The low-middle classes, more "popular" than the marginals of the original tango criollo, developed a Tango liso (simple, bland), lacking fancy steps, for the enjoyment of all the bodies who could not afford the rest.4

Different Tango choreographic styles emerged for stages, ballrooms, and family settings; new kinds of locales were inaugurated for the purpose of performing these different styles; new jobs were created in order to service these locales and to promote the different choreographic industries; new musical creations arose out of the demand of these different sectors. New technologies, such as recordings and the radio, aided in establishing the distance between the original Tango underworldish performers and the new Tango practitioners. And the resulting popularization/taming of Tango generated both enthusiasm and defensiveness in the old tanguero milieu. The promotion of Tango through imperial exoticism and through "civilized" appropriations generated such a diversity of Tango practices that the need to establish an "authentic" Tango became a must. And this was not an exercise of banality. It was a question of recognition, of legitimacy, of representation, of identity. The popularity of Tango, in Argentina as well as abroad, did not mean that the Tango (turned into a powerful symbol precisely because of its massive reception) lacked specific roots and authorship linked to class and anticolonial struggles. The diversity of Tango styles, appropriated by colonizers and by different sectors of the colonized should not wash out the dark origins of the Tango—origins of exploited people—nor silence the Tango history of race/class/colonial confrontations which had developed this multiple hybrid cultural
expression. Tango was a universal representation of love and seduction avatars. Tango offered the erotic gender conflict as a vehicle for universal identification, but Tango was much more complex than that. Perhaps Tango, in its lyrics and choreography, exploited the gender conflict far more than any of its other disencounters. Race, class and imperialist tensions were somewhat lost in a sea of male/female presence, up to the point where these tensions became gendered in themselves. True: Tango did not perform overtly black/white, rich/poor, French/argentino conflicts. It played, sang and danced about mulatas and "dandies"; French prostitutes and criollo pimps; Malena from the suburbs and a sentimental ruffian; the nouveau riche lady in a fox coat, driving her limousine by her former lover, now a homeless street beggar ... i.e. gendered class, gendered race, gendered colonialism asystematically combined. The gendering/eroticizing strategy had been central to Tango; it offered, so to speak, a relieving consistency from the chaos of exploitation's multiplicity. The scandalous colonial, racial, and classist histories of Tango had been pacified under the exaggeration of its erotic display. In Tangos, gender had been regarded, so to speak, as the "main contradiction." But this complex history was endangered by Tango's popularization and diversification that entailed forgetfulness. Many tangueros reacted to this threatening side of exoticism by ridiculing the recently emerged Tango variations, and by recovering the origins--the history of Tango--and an "authentic" Tango choreographic and musical style, different from its exotic and classist variations. It was a search for identity, an identity based in resistance to imperialist and "liberal" nationalist colonization. This search for Tango origins and
authenticity leads to a different set of complex practices of internal discrimination, related to the question of national identity--a question soaked in colonialism.

**Originating Tango**

Tango was born in the dirt streets of the slums ... No. Tango was a practice of the brothels ... No. Tango is a stylization of the knife-fighters ... No. The Tango was performed by the blacks in their secret societies ... How dare you! Tango obviously has its origins in Andalusia ... Sure. But that Tango was inspired by the Cuban *habanera* ... And what about the *milonga* played by the lonesome inhabitants of our *pampas*? ... There is some of that, but the Tango is undoubtedly urban and it resembles the arrogant walking of the *compadritos* (ruffians) who had some trouble coping with the uneven suburban streets on high-heel boots ... Let's be serious. The word Tango comes from "Tambo," and the Tambos were the places where the liberated blacks met in the Rio de la Plata during the nineteenth century. Here is the evidence ... Sorry. But that is not the real Tango. The Tango-Tango is the one of the overpopulated tenement houses where the newly arrived immigrants met the *criollos* ....

I have been struck by the very existence and magnitude of the controversy over the origins of Tango. No other aspect of Tango has received nearly as much local attention. The controversy goes on and on, escalating up to points of delirium. Delirium over "origins," delirium over "authenticity," over roots and belongings, over identity. What started with Rossi, the Bates brothers, Cadícamo, and others as an
anticolonial exercise with the task of recuperating the memory of a
difficult but successful episode of argentina popular culture, ended up
loosing its power. Repetitious and precision-oriented never-ending
searches for authentic origins and original authenticities switched the
focus from memoirs and eye-witnesses’ anecdotes to an enamouredness
with scientificity. Science, a close partner of exoticism in its tendency to
objectify its chosen subjects, has empowered popular musics such as
the Tango by accommodating them in the pantheon of objects deserving
of careful analysis. As a backlash, poetic and inspiring open-ended
creations have been pushed to the side.

Carlos Vega and his followers among musicologists and dance
specialists have tried to put some systematic scientific order into the
Tango. The story goes like this: In Cuba the African slaves developed
new music and dances intermingling their traditional rhythmic sounds
with a variety of the French contre-dance already appropriated by the
Spaniards; the resulting so-called habanera (from Havanna) made its
way into Europe and simultaneously into other New World colonies
where it intermingled with local styles; the tango andaluz (Andalusian
tango), the Brazilian maxixe and the tango rioplatense (from the Rio de la
Plata region--Argentina and Uruguay) are the off-springs of this process;
the latter in particular was nurtured by the milonga, a product itself of a
certain Spanish troubadour style. When the milonga carried by the
gauchos moved to the developing urban harbors (Buenos Aires and
Montevideo), it collided with the tangos de negros (tangos of the blacks)
and the tango andaluz (Andalusian Tango) performed by the Spanish
theater companies on tour in South America (Novati and Cuello 1980).
This complex, exhaustive and exhausting narrative of the Tango "origins" leads finally up to a moment of apotheosis when The Tango, the "authentic" Tango argentino, appears on the scene. Despite the confusing background narrative, at some point it happened. Just like tracing down the origins of fire ... No matter how it went, eventually it started to burn. After endless debates, connections have been established with every sector that, at one point or the other, claimed authorship and legitimate input into the Tango. No wonder the poor immigrants who arrived in the past century have been the last to be incorporated into the story (and even then, reluctantly). And no wonder no reference is made to the possible presence of aboriginal native music or themes, buried perhaps under the chords of the gauchos' criolla guitar. Establishing origins has carried the risk of reproducing divisiveness and discrimination. Science is a shy tool, incapable of overcoming ideological mandates.

The musicologists and scholars of native dances decided to face the difficult task of grasping the essentials of the "authentic" Tango. Again, this endeavor has its pros and cons. Scientific, knowledge-totalizing, pretensions often forget their political implications. An "authentic" Tango, when defined to reassure the legitimacy of a popular production of the colonized, at risk because of the exoticizing appropriations of the colonizer, is an empowering task. The risk arises when the so-defined "authentic" version turns into a crystallized, opaque, dead object of reference, suitable to be used in discriminating among its own popular offsprings.
The Tango was a new outcome in terms of rhythm, structure and melody. [...] The essential element is the total rhythm, a result of the constant rhythmic interaction between melody and accompaniment: these two orders become no longer distinguishable and, once established, it repeats itself incessantly (Novati and Cuello 1980, my translation).

However--the musicologists continue--a series of small resources such as silences, syncopes, displacements of accents, and acephalous phrases intervene and transform the rhythm into a characteristic ritmo quebrado (broken rhythm). Moreover the way in which these resources intervene is unique: "they are used without ever becoming something permanent. Most of the time they constitute rhythmic "unpredictabilities" (Novati and Cuello 1980: 23, my translation).

Regarding the dance, the distinctive choreographic elements of the Tango have been reduced to: (a) a tight and flexible embrace, (b) quebrada (cleave), the movement of the hips, (c) corte (coupe), a halt or interruption of the dancing trajectory, and (d) figura (figure), a relatively stable combination of movements led by the legs, recognizable by a name (eight, double-eight, short race, half-moon, hook, etc.). The combination of the tight embrace and the figuraturas generates choreographic novelties such as sudden changes in the steps and in the direction of the dancing trajectory as well as in the articulation of different steps within the couple itself. In addition, the sequence of marcha (walk) and figuraturas (figures) is left to improvisation and adjusted by the dancing couple to the musical stimulation (Novati and Cuello 1980; Assunção 1984).

According to these scholars, the essential features isolated in their descriptions correspond to the tango criollo (creole Tango) "given that it is the most antique and the one that through subsequent transformations,
gives birth to the rest." However, "the proposed Tango model [...] is a product of the analysis of the materials currently available" and "the reconstructive work faces serious obstacles" (Novati and Cuello 1980: 94 my translation and emphasis).

The risk of falling into unpoliticized deliriums over the Tango "origins" has been matched by the risk of rising into unpoliticized obsessions over "authenticity." The result: a politically risky obsessive delirium. And the Tango remains untamed. The "obstacles" faced by the "reconstructive work" will not disappear with the emergence of unknown sources of information .... They will grow, fatten, burst. Take for example the tango criollo reference, considered to be the most "antique," the closest to the original, the one from which the rest generated. Criollo--taken for granted as the "native," as the closest to the roots of the argentino "essence"--already has in itself our history of mestizaje, cross-breeding, hybridity. Criollo in Argentina (the use of this term in other colonies has been different) meant both the offspring of old, conquistador's-time Spanish born in the colony and mestizo (the mixture of Spanish and indigenous located in the colony). Criollo was defined as a counterpart to the spanishness in Spain; to the people, attitudes, beliefs and other cultural practices that were pro-Spanish, pro-colonial. Even a Spanish-born person was considered criollo/a if s/he sided with the colonized and shared their rejection, their perception of difference, with the metropolitan center of the empire. Criollo, in addition, had connotations of parochiality, unsophistication and ruralness. Criollos were closely associated with the "interior" of the country, i.e. the whole territory except for the sophisticated harbor capital city.
In Argentina there is nothing more criollo than the gaucho. Tango, however, is clearly an urban phenomenon, a product of the harbor capital with a painful parasitic history of denial for the "uncivilized" inhabitants of the interior of the country. Tango is related to the rapid emergence of a huge harbor-city, after the British took over the Spanish empire through neo-colonialism. The up-to-then criollos were flooded by successive waves of European immigrants (mainly Italian and Spanish but also many others from both the rest of Western and Eastern Europe and the Middle East, plus a few Asians). It was in this newly re-hybridized milieu of Buenos Aires and Montevideo that the Tango emerged as a paramount popular practice. Under these same circumstances (rapid urbanization and massive immigration), "criollo" started to take a different meaning. The oligarchy of Buenos Aires started to redeem the up-to-then despised gaucho and to practice "nativism" against the new malón blanco (white savage invaders) who were--in a racist slip of their minds--as threatening to those settled in power as the indian malón attacking the criollo populations at the frontier. Criollo in this urban, identity-under-siege, setting was a claim to authenticity--legitimacy in power--in the face of the immigrant hordes. Moreover, criollo was defensively applied by both, the old-money landed oligarchy whose white hegemony felt threatened, and the old no-money landless poor whose labor and housing opportunities were being disputed.
Tango and the National Identity

Buenos Aires, 1890, looked like this:

High-class people sleep in two-or-three-story French palaces in the North barrio. [...] The top people decorate their lineage, or manufacture it, with torrents of pearls and initials engraven on silver tea sets, and show off Saxony or Sevres or Limoges porcelains, Waterford crystal, Lyons tapestries, and Brussels tablecloths. From the secluded life of the [colonial] Big Village they have moved on to the frenetic exhibitionism of the Paris of America.

In the south [of the city] are huddled the beaten-down of the earth. In abandoned three-patioed colonial mansions, or in specially built tenements, the workers newly arrived from Naples or Vigo or Bessarabia sleep by turns. Never cold are the scarce beds in the nonspace invaded by braziers and wash basins and chests which serve as cradles. Fights are frequent in the long queues at the door to the only latrine, and silence is an impossible luxury. But sometimes, on party nights, the accordion or mandolin or bagpipes bring back lost voices to these washerwomen and dressmakers, servants of rich bosses and husbands, and ease the loneliness of these men who from sun to sun tan hides, pack meat, saw wood, sweep streets, tote loads, raise and paint walls, roll cigarettes, grind wheat, and bake bread while their children shine shoes and call out the crime of the day (Galeano 1987: 230).

I wonder why so many Tango specialists have systematically forgotten to include these poor immigrants in their analysis. Wouldn't these Italians, second-hand Spanish, Polish, French, Russians, English, Armenians, etc. also contribute some rhythms and steps of their own ancestry to the over-encompassing Tango? The reconstruction of the origins is certainly selective. Regarding the aristocrats, how could any history of Tango forget to mention their gang incursions into the Buenos Aires demi-monde where they learnt in a single stroke to "become men," tango and do violence? Assunção (1984) clearly states that the Tango origins cannot be circumscribed to a single class ... of men, but they are...
associated to low class/low morals women. Race, class and sex played on women’s bodies. Every kind of man tangoed, whether openly or in secret, over some kind of women: immigrants, criollas—in the old (negative/non-white) sense—or mulatas. A new identity was engendering.

The modification of Buenos Aires was also perceived as a changing feminine landscape. Julián Martel sorrowfully states in his novel La Bolsa (1889):

It is possible to observe how a variety of types, product of an overriding cosmopolitanism, have spoiled the argentina woman, taking away from her that Andalusian and spicy mark that she used to hold as a precious heritage of the Spanish blood. There are as many blondes as brunettes ... (quoted in Rodríguez Molas 1988: 5, my translation).

Why then a tango criollo? What was the Tango reasserting and denying through this newly refurbished criollismo? Within the new international re-alignment of power, the ex-Spanish colonized, "independent," and neo-colonized settings like Argentina, immersed in a new wave of dependency, were urged, provoked into developing a national identity. Criollo was not enough, was out-dated. Although some, like Martel, believed that the answer was in the recreation of the "good old times" of the hispano-criollo tradition (and blood), others adopted a modern nationalist solution that emphasized the white homogenization of the country or a more moderate assimilation under "whiteness."

I will explain myself: the soil is rich, the climate is admirable, people are not bad, the [genetic] selection is carried out pretty well; at least I see in the streets some mixed women that would drive crazy the most sensible man, brunettes with blue eyes and hair

The aggressive racist nationalist type is well represented by Estanislao Zeballos:

It is worth remembering the favorable circumstance that [in Argentina] the inferior races, Indians and Blacks, practically extinguished during the first century [after the 1810 independence]; the homogeneousness of the White race is one of the reasons, joined to the character of the institutions and to the gifts of nature, for the extraordinary cultural transformation and prosperity of the República Argentina (1923 Conference at Harvard University quoted by Rodríguez Molas 1988: 6).

Nationalism was boiling over in Argentina between the 1880s and the 1910s and so was the Tango. A reaction was underway against the potential changes that the newly arrived immigrants ("degenerative elements") could bring about, changes in the established power and wealth arrangements. It was a reaction against the liberal internationalist policies of the 1850s which were now showing their effects. The brand of racism promoted by Sarmiento and Alberdi since the 1830s, with a blind faith in Argentina's integration with the greatest of the world through the cultivation of European-ness/whiteness, was now a nightmare come true. In 1878 the Campaign of the Desert, led by General Roca, had finally integrated the last portion of significant Indian territory; both Indians and Blacks had died in great numbers while fighting on opposite sides (as well as many criollos). They were all defeated by whiteness, not by nationalism. In addition, the White European immigrants were arriving in masses--although not of the Swiss and German quality that was expected. The racist nationalists reacted
against this last failure of the nation's building plan with a more sophisticated racism, capable of distinguishing between Whites and White-trash. The language was not ready for it, for racist discourse only offered shades of color. And following that discourse, many in the dominant established class looked darker than the poor newly arrived: criollo nativism was the answer. But it was born to fail in the hands of the Tango.

The criollo identity was a product of the confrontation with the Spanish empire, it was obsolete. Although strengthened during the war of independence against Spain, it was not suitable to the next layer of dependency on the British nor to the subsequent dependency on the U.S. The identity of an "independent" country should be a "national" identity; an identity as argentino (or as the British say, "Argentine").

And so--my story goes--the exotic Tango was added to the exotic criollo. The gaucho of the pampas, under extinction by British railroads and fences, turned out to be as suitable to "nativist" manipulations as the Tango of the brothels and tenements of Buenos Aires was to the "nationalist" manipulations. As with the "nativists," who celebrated the slaughter of natives, the Buenos Aires' centered "nationalists" celebrated the birth of a dependent nation. Nationalism was coming from abroad (see Anderson 1990). Argentina: rich in dependency and because of dependency. Tango, not criollo, was to be the symbol of the nation regardless of its people--who tangoed, among other native dances, and organized strikes against Buenos Aires' hegemonic "nationalists" and "liberals" (internationalists) alike.
Identifying the Colonized

The *argentina* national identity was identified by the neo-colonizers. Britain deferred to Paris in this task, since Paris was the center of the empire of taste. Paris detected the Tango within its own cabarets frequented by "Argentine beef-barons" nostalgic for some *porteño* pleasures. The Parisians, the English and, to a lesser extent, the Northamericans got carried away. And the elites became scandalized; scandalized at not being identified as a powerful and respectable nation, scandalized at being identified with the poor and the marginals of their nation--the ones whose women tangoed shamefully with them. In the end, the elites opted for co-opting the Tango; for dressing the Tango in tuxedos and glittering night-gowns, for accepting and nurturing the Parisian exotic version of the Tango, of Argentina and themselves. The exotic-to-the-West became the national symbol. The Argentine neo-colonial identity--"national" identity--was assigned by the empire: Tango. Except for Buenos Aires, little else counted legitimately as the nation.

The need for a hegemonic national identity was a requirement of the neo-colonial empire; "independent" nations were to replace the obsolete colonies. Colonies such as the Spanish were less suitable to "free-market" manipulations; the "independent" nations could be more easily played one against the other in competing for metropolitan favors. But for nations to come into existence a hegemonic national narrative should be provided, exalted, enriched (Bhabha 1990a). And sound narratives have need of a beginning, of origins. Hence, the roots should be dug up. National narratives should be unique, original, authentic so
as to trace the difference, distance, and potential competition with other nations. Moreover, dependent nations, colonized nations, should cultivate a national narrative exuberant in cultural traits, in exoticism, perhaps to compensate for hard-core dependency and lack of self-determination. The colonized, not being able to provide a sound account of their nationality/independence, are caught in an endless search for an identity of their own. The search for the origins and the authentic within the in/dependent nations is a painful sequence of self-destructive episodes: the national politics of the in/dependent nations.

By situating Tango at this time and place, I am not pretending to join the polemics on the origins, on authenticity or even attempting to identify a moment of invention preceded by painful experimentation. Mine is a counter-narrative, and hence also a story, but a story that disbelieves in the stories that tie up and down. I do not intend to fill in the gaps of a hegemonic nationalist narrative that makes sense to the colonizers. The Western obsession with the origins and authenticity is a way of delegitimizing the other, the colonized; the other never is ... the other is always a reflection, an illusion, a deflection of the one, of the colonizer.

No perspective critical of imperialism can turn the other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolutely other into a domesticated other that consolidates the imperialist self (Spivak 1989b: 186).

On the other hand, the colonizer is never an other; not even to the colonized. The colonizer asserts his identity in confrontation with the colonized; the colonized can not ever attain an identity in this
asymmetrical power relationship. At least not an Identity in the same terms of stability, of rootedness, of the solid state of control of the conqueror (the One). The other, the colonized, never is; for this reason the colonized permanently tracks back her origins, and describes obsessively her coming into being only to find layer over layer of hybridization. Since there is no clear-cut answer, no self to which to return, no pure nationality to discriminate ourselves from our neighbors, the colonized in her search for origins and authenticity is condemned to a lack of Identity. The identity of the colonized bounces against the event of the colonial encounter and deflects fragments, hybrids, others. The colonized is "made to stand outside itself to look at itself," as if one were another self. The colonized is exposed to images of her world as mirrored in the discourse of the colonizer (Ngugi 1986).

The national identity is that of a permanent search for Identity. The Tango saga displays this process and its protagonists: criollos, chinas, mulatos, pardos, mestizos, franchutas, gaitas, tanos, rusitas, turcos, polaquitas, cabecitas negras ... immigrants, exiles ... a nation of hybrids and border-liners with an identity in permanent displacement, longing for the Identity--the right to dignity. My maternal grandmother, a criolla herself, would defiantly proclaim her india (Native sudamericano) roots in resistance to the "nativism" of the romanticizers of creolism, who had robbed and trivialized her provincial identity; my paternal grandmother mentioned her white immigrant ancestry only when asked, and searched for identity in the Gath and Chavez British-style department store. Their husbands enjoyed politics and Tango, and disputed over the pro-European or populist nationalist developmental
models; one was from the capital, the other from the interior. They tangoed in sinful places with suspect women, suspected because of class, color, and morals, until Paris (not the Pope) said it was alright to tango with their wives. They all lived in restless company with each other and with themselves. Argentinos have a colonized identity; a colonized identity in resistance, like Tango's female docile bodies in rebellion. The in/dependent nations are the feminine--legitimate and illegitimate--partners in the imperial dance.

The history of Tango is an episode within a long history of exiled, illegitimate people in search of an identity, for recognition of their existence, for dignity. Through imperialist exoticism, Tango, among many others, was exiled from the possibility of attaining a full identity, an Identity in terms of the definition elaborated by the "civilized" bourgeois colonizer. Argentina's national identity dependent on the identification, the recognition of the main world powers, is subjected to a permanent, unfulfillable search for confirmation from the "civilized," "developed" ones, the colonizers. It has pushed us into exoticizing ourselves, into establishing uniqueness and unity, drawing distinctions among the colonized so as to attain a more "distinguished" exotic position in relation to less privileged, more "primitive," exotics--following the fickle judgements of the colonizer. Tango inherited the painful paradox of asserting our national identity while falling into the trap of establishing stable, full, homogenous, "civilized," bourgeois identities. Identities inundated of forgetfulness, ashamed of monumental treasons, justifying an endless chain of injustices on account of a complex of scarcity, complex of immigrants and exiles, fed by the hand of the
colonizer's Desire. As a result, the search for Tango roots and the authentic Tango has consumed trustful loyalties, the source of creative passion. Some tangueros have turned themselves into exotics, lost in a romanticized past, debating what is and what is not Tango. Meanwhile, the struggles for national identity, for resisting a totalitarian/totalizing identity, undertaken by other argentinos excluded from the legitimate representation of our national identity, have passed Tango by. Folkloric creations from the "interior" of our country, the "rock nacional" and argentina "women's music," Piazzolla's sophisticated Tango versions, Horacio Ferrer's ambitious Tango incursions into opera and Solanas' revindications of the Tangos of recently exiled argentinos, among others, all amount to the multifacetic, unstructured identity of the argentinos. All these manifestations are a part of a single history, of which many of us have lost sight, immersed as we have been in self-destructive internal marginalizations. Argentina's internal politics of bloody sectorial antagonisms, our economic "miraculous" undevelopment, and our cultural fascism are all part of a consistent denial of our colonized condition--an understandable but dangerous fatalist acceptance of our dependency from the colonizer, a bitter resignation and "naturalization" of (post)coloniality. We have been missing the imperialist point of our long-standing history. And we have come instead to accept our irrational, violent, macho, lazy, corrupt latino stereotyping out of despair. Tango, and all our other hybrid productions are our spring-board to resist, to answer back to colonialism from an angry colonized position struggling for decolonization in ourselves as well as in internal and global politics. We, argentinos, should recover our ambition and
defiance in order to pull together our strength. We, and all the A/Others who have rooted reasons should not be trapped by enlightened Rationality.
CHAPTER FIVE:

EXOTIC ENCOUNTERS

Redistributing the Exotic

Exoticism is a way of establishing order in an unknown world through fantasy; a daydream guided by pleasurable self-reassurance and expansionism. It is the seemingly harmless side of exploitation, cloaked as it is in playfulness and delirium; a legitimate practice of discrimination, where otherwise secretive fantasies can be shared aloud. Exoticism is a practice of representation through which identities are established. It is also a will to power over the unknown, indiscriminately combining fragments, crumbs of knowledge and fantasy, in disrespectful sweeping gestures justified by harmless banality. Perhaps all peoples have practiced exoticism of one kind or another, but Western exoticism accompanied by world-wide imperialism has had the power to establish eurocentric exoticism as a universally applicable paradigm. With these thoughts in mind, I will address questions of representation and identity among exotics—peoples exoticized in eurocentric colonialist discourse, who reproduce and subvert Western stereotyping as they relate to each other. Exotics-to-the-West will be seen as consumers and recreators of exoticism, communicating through a world capitalist web of exoticizing representations where each uncivilized/non-Western being fits, however uncomfortably, into a slot.

Passion plays a major role in the production of exoticism. Western cartographies of exoticism rely heavily on categories of passion in order
to classify and map exotics. Exotics are identified in terms of the qualities of passion they offer to the agent of exoticism. But the passion of the exotics is molded by the exoticizer's Desire; it is neither an essence nor a drive. In dealing with each Other, those identified as exotics refer to the very categorizations that keep them bound, and struggle to expand their identities through exotic reappropriations. Exotics negotiate their status as passionate objects so as to gain self-determination over their passionateness. Passion is the currency through which exotics negotiate their identity with other exotics and with exoticizers. In doing so, qualities of passion are at stake. The dynamics of exoticism are historically determined; thus, exotics and exoticizers change in relative power positions and reshape the meanings of passionateness and of Desire.

Tango in Japan is a case of double exoticism. Argentino and Japanese tangueros have been equally involved in reproducing and re-appropriating Western exotic practices of representation. But Japan has moved from a situation of world economic/political peripherality to a position at the "core." Thus I will address the question of how relative world power in terms of wealth corresponds--and does not correspond--with the path of "cultural" hegemony, as seen through a Tango perspective.

Exotic Reciprocities

Japanese-argentino international relations are quite uneventful and irrelevant when looked at from the point of view of traditional political science: few treaties, little economic exchange, no conflicts,
small migratory movements, and scattered diplomatic courtesies, hardly worth mentioning. However there is a parallel story of Japanese-argentino contact, loaded with complex emotions, and widely recognized in shared accounts of popular culture. This is the story of the Tango in Japan.

Argentinos tend to produce a magnified, overdone, and simplified version of this story by stressing the popularity of the Tango in Japan. Seldom do argentinos present a broader picture so as to show how the Japanese enjoy and practice not just Tango, but also other popular and classical music from almost everywhere in the world. This lack of perspective is probably due more to a hunger for acknowledgment than to ignorance; argentinos need to be reassured that we occupy a special place in the globe and that we deserve recognition. For us, the Tango is a strong symbol of national identity. Japan's acceptance and valorization of the Tango legitimates our existence as a nation, culture, and people. But it is more than that. Japan is, to argentinos, the Far East, far away, over there. The Tango in Japan means that our Tango is even there. It is the thrilling, flattering, empowering culmination of a most ambitious and unlikely cultural conquest.

Argentino journalists, writing in the 1930s, reported on Tango's reception in Japan making use of militaristic metaphors, such as "battle," "conquest," and "invasion." Thus the first Tango competition held in Japan (see Figure 5.1), was extensively publicized by argentino newspapers and magazines under such headings as: "In far away JAPAN our Tango wins another battle" (In Rivarola and Rivarola 1987: 135). Or, "His majesty 'The Tango' has trespassed the walls of the impenetrable!
Figure 5.1: Winners of the first Tango competition held in Japan, 1930s (Rivarola 1987: 134).

Defeating the stubborn resistance of the Japanese spirit to all kinds of invasion, Tango conquered with no other weapons than its music" (article on Tango in Japan published in Sintonia 16 December 1934; see Figure 5.2). In their articles, argentino journalists alluded to the fearless courage demonstrated by the Japanese as a model of "resistance to all kinds of foreign" penetration. They evoked the "stubborn samurai spirit" with admiration, exalting Japan's nationalism, all the while setting a dramatic scene for Tango's harmless conquest of Japan.

Tango, according to these journalists, had trespassed Japanese barriers "with no other weapons than its music" (Ferrer 1980a). Far from being a mere ironic remark, questions of argentino nationalism were at stake. However, Argentina's pride was not based in winning a battle with Japan, as these newspaper headings might suggest. Tango's battle was
with jazz (the music that represented Argentina's "enemy to the North"), and Japan was just a battlefield. Thus one newspaper article of the time declared "Tango wins another battle [...] while jazz has been banished by the Japanese" (Rivarola and Rivarola 1987: 135). In a similar spirit, the Bates brothers, in the concluding chapter of their Historia del Tango (Bates and Bates 1936), under the heading of "Tango in the Orient," set themselves to "complete the series of conquests [achieved] by our Tango." They assure their readers that "no region on this planet has failed to feel its [Tango's] triumphant presence" (Bates and Bates 1936: 73). After citing Tango's seductive intrusions into the "depopulated harems" of Constantinople--facilitated by the governmental prohibition of "ancient Oriental dances"--and Tango's incredible reception in Japan, the Bates

**Figure 5.2**: The first Tango contest in Tokyo, December 16, 1934. Notice the trophies at the bottom (Ferrer 1980a: 255).
stress the uneven conditions under which Tango has competed with other rhythms. Backed by strong "capital investments and interests," they say, North Americans successfully introduced music such as the fox trot "into their colonies." Tango, in the argentinos' opinion, had never enjoyed such support. Thus, Tango's "conquests" abroad were referred to in terms of miracles. On the one hand, Tango's "triumph" was inexplicable and, on the other, this miraculous happening was a source of hope for Argentina's battered national pride.

Far from offering an explanation in terms of sheer luck, or an explanation stressing exclusively the geopolitical circumstances of Tango's popularity in the "Orient," the Bates (and many tangueros after them) rely on exotic and empowering representations so as to score points on behalf of Tango, i.e. Argentina.

What kind of suggestive power emanates from its [Tango's] notes, its rhythm and melody, for having gained a diffusion not comparable to any other dance of its time? [...] What strange seduction [did Tango exert] over those fragile wooden houses facing mount Fujiyama? What kind of enchantment emerges from the melancholic notes of "Milonguita" played by the semisen in the delicious hands of the geishas? [...] Those ample kimonos cleaving as they perform a cortada figure; those high hairdresses held by enormous combs, dreamy yellow faces under the spell of "El Entrerriano." [...] It seems impossible to believe! However, there, as well as here, a harakiri must have ended a tormented existence accompanied by the final notes of "No Me Escribas" (Bates and Bates 1936: 73, my translation).

The Bates posited their questions and answers following the exotic paths by which Argentina was being represented as a nation from which a powerful, irresistible Tango emerged so as to seduce even such "mysterious" people as the Japanese. Japan's exoticism is evoked through the ambivalence of the imagery: geishas and samurai--fragility,
delicacy, and beauty, along with the tragic but courageous practice of *harakiri*. The final bonding between the nations is provided by the exotic passionate practices of suicide ("there, as well as here, a *harakiri* must have ended a tormented existence") provoked by the "notes of "No Me Escribas" [Don't write to me]. Male honor, permanently menaced by female betrayal, provided the final identification between the exotic nations.

Think of it: Our Tango in exotic Japan. A conquest of charm and seduction. Tango's seductive powers must be so overwhelming that even the enigmatic, mysterious Japanese fell into its trap. (We smile, puzzled, immersed in mixed waves of guilt and gratefulness.) *Argentinos*, following the Bates' path, make an epic tale out of Tango's popularity in Japan. It goes something like this:

The Japanese interest in the Tango has been steadily growing to the point that Tokyo is its second capital. This is quite unlike what happened to the Tango in the West, where after it was all the rage between the wars, it slowly disappeared into American ragtime.² In contrast, Tango in Japan shared the postwar Western music market with jazz and "tropical" sounds. *Tanguerías* proliferated in Tokyo and Osaka; Japanese Tango orchestras played in large ballrooms; Victor-Japan and Columbia-Japan edited and reissued recordings of famous *argentino* Tango orchestras and singers; *argentino* films based on typical Tango plots reached the Japanese theaters; *argentino* singers and dancers performed Tango on Japanese stages; several books on the history, choreography and lyrics of Tango were published by Japanese authors and in 1952 a monthly publication (*Musica Iberoamericana*),
90% of which was addressed to Tango, was launched by Kanematsu Yoji. Since renamed Latina, its circulation is now over eleven thousand. There are about thirty Tango clubs still operating in Japan, and several Tango shows appear in the major Tokyo theaters each year; Tango records continue to be released almost simultaneously in Tokyo and Buenos Aires, and in the Japanese social dancing competitions, Tango still holds a prominent position.³

In contrast to the almost apotheotic and unilinear story presented above, my own story will complicate the overall picture. A variety of Tangos have co-existed in Japan from the 1920s to the present, and the "argentino-ness" of these Tangos has been affected on two accounts: First, Europeans and North Americans have intervened as active translators and mediators in the distribution of Tango around the world, and second, Japanese have re-appropriated these Westernized Tangos along with Tangos imported directly from Argentina. In Japan, much as in Europe or in Argentina, different Tango styles, have served as markers of social distinctions. And as the positions of Argentina and Japan shifted radically in terms of relative power within global politics, Tango went through changing phases of exoticism in Japanese representations.

Argentinos usually refer to the history of the Tango in Japan in bilateral, Argentino-Japanese, terms. In doing so, the influence of the international market of popular dance and music has been minimized. The hegemonic control of the "core" powers over the peripheral nations is thereby contested, as they choose to stress the independent and direct musical connections between Japan and Argentina. Numerous specific episodes, anecdotes and visits are recounted as testimonies of the
linkages established directly between Japan and Argentina through Tango. Thus, Tango symbolized successful subversiveness from the world musical order controlled by the capitalists at the Western "core." However, in order to exalt their respective national characters and to demonstrate to the world their unmediated/subversive encounters, Japanese and argentino tangueros made a spectacle of themselves and of their contacts. Argentinos and Japanese performed Tangos for each other as exotics, in exoticized circumstances.

Figure 5.3: Juan Canaro's orchestra at dinner in Japan, 1954 (Ferrer 1980b: 502).

For example, in the 1950s the first argentina Tango orchestras arrived in Japan, and the musicians portrayed themselves with their hostesses: the exotic geishas, small, shy, in the back, like delicate ornaments silently testifying to the argentinos' visit to the Far East. (See Figures 5.3 and 5.4). Meanwhile, all-Japanese Tango orchestras identified themselves with names such as "Orquesta Típica Porteña"
(Typical *Porteña* Orchestra) and "Orquesta Típica San Telmo" (San Telmo is the old, colonial *barrio* of Buenos Aires), and they appeared on Japanese stages frequently dressed in traditional *gauchito argentino* attire. (See Figure 5.5.) In 1953 Ranko Fujisawa, the "queen of the Tango" in Japan, first faced Argentina's public in the Discépolo theater of Buenos Aires. A famous *argentino* musician and composer introduced her, saying, "With something of Malena and Estercita, she brings to Buenos Aires her oriental emotions so as to let us know that over there, far away, under the pagoda-clad moon of the Orient, our sweet thing is breathed" (Alposta 1987: 72, my translation). Similarly, the cover of
Ranko Fujisawa's popular Tango records show her dressed in kimono, with the city of Buenos Aires in the background. (See Figure 5.6.)

Figure 5.5: Ikeda Mitsuo's "Orquesta Tipica San Telmo," 1950. Notice the Japanese musicians performing in traditional argentino gaucho attire (Asahi Graph 1987: 90).

Figures 5.3 to 5.6 show how exoticism was not only a way of expressing the uniqueness of their reciprocal national characters, but also their respective exotic conditions. In addition, both argentinos and Japanese marketed the Tango situating each other within the community of exotics. Some drawings of early Tango music-sheets display the exotic Orient, Africa, and Japan, through the Odalisk (see Figure 5.7), the Tribal King, and the geisha (see Figure 5.8). The satirical tone of these depictions is related to the fact that the men dressed in exotic costumes are famous argentino politicians. And to
reinforce the sense of ridicule, transvestism is added to exoticism. The Japanese recirculated Tango’s immersion among other world exotics. For example, in 1935 a concert was organized at the Insurance Association of Tokyo where Japanese orchestras played Hawaiian music and Tangos. The Honolulu Blue Hawaiians (an all Japanese band) played *argentino* Tangos such as "Don Juan," "Poema-tango," "Yira-Yira," and "Confesión" for a Japanese audience eager for multiple exotic mixtures (Alposta 1987: 57-8).

Argentina and Japan could not escape from framing their Tango exchanges within a series of exotic reciprocities, immersed as they were in exotic parameters of representation imposed over the world by way of a Western hegemonic music/dance industry. According to the "civilized" mapping of the world, Argentina and Japan belonged to the exotic lands,
Figure 5.7: Cover of Ranko Fujisawa's record "Tango in Kimono."

populated by exotic peoples carrying exotic manners. The popular music/dance industry followed and expanded this cartography by detecting new musical/danceable exotic commodities for a world market which was aggressively incorporating new exotic consumers. The Western imperialist discourse of exoticism had already mapped the world in such universal/hegemonic terms that the very exotics themselves could hardly find ways to identify themselves or other exotics outside of that discourse. The Western parameters of exoticism had been imposed universally--over other discourses of exoticism and imperial practices--through world-wide imperialist hegemonic power. Exotics of different latitudes and statuses would relate to each other guided, so to speak, by the same Western map of civilization/progress. A Western-centered
compass of exoticism would serve to identify representations among exotics; shades, sounds, odors, gestures were all measured on "universalist" scales of passion. The presence of the manufacturers of the device was irrelevant. The owners of the device could change, as could those who applied the measurements of exoticism. The interpretations of the readings of the exoticism-detecting device could be contested, but could not be ignored.

In the 1910s, when the Tango appeared on the world scene, Japan was in the midst of a frenzied era of importing Western manners. Self-Otherness tensions escalated in this context. Japan had long been an Oriental, Far East exotic to the West. Japanese wood-prints had a
tremendous impact on Parisian society at the end of the nineteenth century (Rhys 1971; Oberthur on Le Divan Japonais 1984). Regarding specifically dance, Japanese characters are typified, among other exotics, in Menestrier's recommendations for a very needed revitalization of Louis XIV's *ballet-opéra* through orientalism. More recent appropriations of Japanese traits by the Western/colonial performance industry emerge after Commodore Perry's incursion provoking Japan's opening to the "world" (1853). David Belasco's play, "Madame Butterfly," was produced in 1900 with enormous success. Louise Fuller, the Chicago-born but Paris-acclaimed dancer, performed at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900 where she presented Japanese actors and dancers of the Hanako company headed by Sada Yacco. The Hanako troupe, probably the first Noh-tradition performers to set foot in the West, inspired further exoticism. Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, as well as some of their students, choreographed Japanese courtesans and goddesses (O-Mika and Kwanon, 1913), a Japanese spear dance and their own version of a Kabuki play adapted to modern dance (*Momiji-Gari*; see Figure 3.27). The Denishawns performed these and many other exotic dances—including Tangos—for European, Northamerican, and even Asian audiences in the 1920s. The major source of their entire repertory was the 1912 volume of the *National Geographic* magazine (Sherman 1979; Sorell 1981; Morini 1978; and Hastings 1978). During this period Japan became increasingly self-conscious, aware of its "self" as contact with the West incremented in conjunction with Japan's incorporation into the system of Western worldliness (Sakai 1988).
Japanese practices of auto-exoticism--of looking for identity through the Western mirror--have been addressed by several authors, playfully and conflictively dragged like myself by the currents of postmodernism (Ivy 1988a, 1988b; Kondo n.d.; Asada 1988; Sakai 1988; Tobin n.d.; Mitsuhiro 1989). I reached Japan chasing the Tango through books and magazines. I found myself puzzled, surprised, smiling as I read the words of *argentino* writers who have written about the Tango in Japan in a similar mood. Who was the eccentric who first brought the Tango to Japan? Why do the Japanese not only dance but also sing and write Tangos? And finally and most importantly, why are *argentinos* more puzzled by Tango's popularity in Japan than by the Tango rage in Paris or New York?

Japan and Argentina are Others to each other; exotics facing other exotics, fascinated by our processes of auto-exoticism, carried away into re-exoticizing the already Exotic Other. The Tango in Japan is an exotic among exotics, but the key to mutual exoticism is kept in the West. Baudelaire reminds us:

> The promise was formerly in the East; the light marched toward the South and now springs from the West. France, it is true, by her central location in the civilized world, seems to be called to gather all the notions and all the poetries from around her and to return them to other peoples marvelously worked and fashioned (quoted in Miller 1985: 92).

In Miller's own words "this is poetic mercantilism, if not colonialism." Japan is one of those "other peoples" to whom the West, and France in particular, has been delivering "marvelously fashioned" notions and poetries such as the Tango, gathered from all over the colonial world.
But France's hegemonic role in the production of exotic dances was disputed by other Western nations who developed musical/danceable products in their particular styles, competitive marketing strategies, and new categories of consumers both at the "core" and in the world's "periphery." The history of Tango in Japan shows the specific, complex ways in which this happened.

**Tango "a lo Megata" and the "Shako Dansu" Masters**

In 1926, after several years spent at leisure in the main capitals of Europe, Baron Megata Tsunumi was called home by his ill father to take care of the family business. He carried back to Japan, among other things, a handful of records of Tango argentino and a thriving knowledge of the dance. Megata writes of himself in 1956:

> In those days, soon after the First World War, dancing the Tango argentino was the rage in Paris. One afternoon a friend asked me to go to El Garrón [...] where I saw for the first time an authentic argentino band. I was captivated by the music and decided right then to learn the Tango. For three years my professor was master Pradìr, in those days the most famous on the European continent (quoted in Alposta 1987, my translation).

Later on Megata visited London where he took lessons with master Victor Silvester. But in his opinion "the Tango is danced in a much more beautiful way in Paris than in London." Back in Tokyo, Megata started a dance academy where he taught his fellow Japanese aristocrats how to tango. His classes were free and addressed to friends and acquaintances, but he undertook his role as a dance master very seriously. He would not only train his disciples in the nuances of the music, he would also encourage them to dress, behave and even eat
properly (i.e. à la française). "Among other things, he would advise his students to avoid eating Japanese sauces before dancing, since these would provoke an abundant and 'strong' perspiration not recommended for coming close to the ladies" (Alposta 1987: 38, my translation).

Obviously, Megata had picked up not only the Tango steps, but also the disciplinary ways of the European dance masters. In addition, he had picked up the necessary quota of exoticism, as practiced by the French: on the occasion of one of his birthday celebrations in the 1930s, Megata danced the Tango "Sentimiento Gaucho" (Gaucho Feeling) in Dancing Florida--a tangueria in Tokyo. Megata’s Tango celebrated the Western embellishment of "native" (gaucho) sensuality.

According to Megata’s followers, the Tango did not face a scandalous reception in Japan. The public was ready for it--the aristocratic public that is. The Japanese aristocracy was doing its best to acquire the Western social skills which would allow them to mingle comfortably with foreign diplomats both at home and abroad. They wanted to be able to participate without embarrassment in the parties and social dances of international high society (Yoneyama 1990, interview). At any rate, Megata could get away with almost anything, including the Tango, thanks to his aristocratic status (Kobayashi 1990, interview).

Megata introduced a particularly stylized Tango to his exclusive circle: the Tango a lo Megata. He taught this version of the Tango and other social dances popular in Europe at that time. Eiko Yoneyama, who learned the Tango from Megata thirty years ago, explains in detail
Megata's method as well as the circumstances which accompanied his success among the Japanese aristocracy.

Megata offered private dance classes to the young girls and boys of the aristocracy. Our parents thought that it was important for us to behave properly in Western high circles. There were some young British dance masters around, but our parents didn't trust them. They didn't know them and they were foreigners. Dancing could be tricky, especially for young girls... So Megata was a perfect choice. His hour-long coaching usually started with fox-trots, then moved on to the waltz and finally came the Tango. I wanted to dance only Tangos, but he wouldn't let me. He would say that in order to perform the Tango correctly our bodies had to be relaxed, soft, ready (Yoneyama 1990, interview).

Moreover, Megata would whisper into his students ears some basic instructions on what dancing--Western dancing--was all about:

"Whenever you dance remember you should feel as though you are in love with your partner, even if you have just met him" (Yoneyama 1990, interview).

To dance the Tango *a la Megata* meant to display elegance and style. The steps should not be too long (so that the ladies could wear fashionably tight cocktail dresses); the dance should be led through chest to chest contact, the male's right hand gently holding the female's back, without grabbing or pushing. The woman's left hand should rest relaxed on the man's shoulder; their faces should be close to each other so as to allow eye contact and conversation. Megata's golden rule for the Tango was to dance it beautifully. He would instruct his male students to take care of the appearance of their partners. "The women should look beautiful, stylized, elegant." For this reason, all abrupt movements had to be avoided so as not to "distort the female figure" (Yoneyama 1990, interview). Through such instructions, Megata was confronting
his contenders: the British dance-masters. In Europe, Megata had been exposed in Europe to the French-English Tango war and he had taken a side; the Tango *a lo Megata* was definitely a French-style Tango—a Tango preoccupied with elegance and distinction. But British dance-masters arrived in Japan to teach the large foreign community in Kobe.
Some Japanese, who were acquainted with the foreigners, had access to these social dance (shako dansu) classes and many others got a hold of manuals and handbooks. The Tango, British-style, was taught as one of a series of "modern" ballroom dances presented as sportive, competitive activities. (See Figure 5.9.)

**Figure 5.10:** A shako dansu manual. Notice the English wording for the steps and sequences (Wakahayashi 1983).

The Tango of the British dance masters was strictly codified into rigid movements: the faces of the partners should point clearly in opposite directions or, when facing the same direction, be turned all the
Figure 5.11: A Japanese *shako dansu* couple, performing the Tango "over-sway" figure (Wakahayashi 1983).
way, parallel to the right or left shoulder. The position of the hands helped to reaffirm distance and disengagement between the partners: the ladies' left hand, with the palm turned down, must touch the gentlemen's shoulder perpendicularly as if in a military salute to the flag. (See Figures 5.10, 5.11, 5.12, and 5.13.) The steps should follow a carefully developed sequence of "walks," "promenades," "sways," "swivels," "reverse turns," "chases," etc., paying attention to a "Slow, Quick-Quick, Slow and Slow and Slow-Slow" rhythmic pattern. (The figures and pace were referred to by their English names).

This English Tango version is currently the most widely practiced in Japan. Some Japanese shako dansu masters I interviewed are convinced that it is the English influence--not Megata's high status--which helped the Tango escape a scandalous reputation in Japan. The straight and stiff Tango encouraged by the British school imposes detachment; "it is a style suited to dance partners who do not know each other, or who behave that way ..." (Ogata interview 1990). The North American occupation provided a context which helped to popularize and legitimize the British-tamed Tango. Among the latino dances taught by shako dansu masters, Tango is considered by some to be the most suited to the Japanese. (See epigraph for Figure 5.12.) Other dances, such as cha-cha, rumba, mambo, and samba, seem less at home in Japan. But the Tango "comes closer to the Japanese spirit." "Tango does not require a physical expression of passion through movements. The passionate feelings can be kept inside. Japanese people are not drawn to show affection like the latinos; we don't hug, kiss, and agitate like you guys" (Sugi 1990, interview). Hence, according to the Japanese
Figure 5.12: "Passionate Tango: the back-open promenade and the oversway are well liked and used even by high class people. Together they create a big movement" (Shinoda 1989, translated by Raj Pandey).
Figure 5.13: Basic positions for the Tango as presented by a shako dansu manual. Notice the correct positions indicated for heads and hands (Kaneko 1990).
shako dansu masters, Japanese people accepted the Tango—one in a series of Western ballroom dances—with the purpose of practicing some innocuous form of exercise. This is far from Megata's aesthetic preoccupations and his efforts to spread Western social skills among the Japanese aristocrats. Moreover, as Yoneyama points out, no matter how detached and disciplined the British dance masters appeared, they were not to be fully trusted.

Mori Junzaburo, one of Megata's disciples, expressed his admiration towards his teacher in these terms: "Baron Megata is the only person who knows how to dance the Tango in an authentic way since he studied it in Paris" (Mori [1933] quoted in Alposta 1987: 40, my translation and emphasis). Mori, converted by Megata into a fanatic student of the French Tango argentino, was the author of the first books on Tango published in Japan: Tango (1930) and The Argentino Dance; Tango Dance Method (1933). In one of his many articles devoted to Tango he writes:

The main reason for the popularization of argentina music has been the social dance craze, and especially the fact that in those days the Tango enjoyed England's general acceptance [...] After receiving the name of "standard dancing" in England, [Japanese] people started to dance it more and more, the result of which was an actual boom of the so called "authentic English school." The general opinion was that since the dance method was an English one, the music should also be played the English way; the argentino style was out of the question. In 1932 when the Dancing Florida of Tokyo invited some French musicians to play [...] the taste for the latino style started to develop. In this sense, we highly appreciate the efforts of its general manager, Mr. Tsuda, since the French musicians opened up the path for those who would play the bandoneón, among them Mr Kogure from Mitsukoshi, an authentic forerunner who had studied it in Paris. On the other hand, taking Baron Megata as the central figure, the group of 'fans' of the French style, i.e. latino style, grew both in quantity and quality. One of those was the young Tadao

Mori reflects in this paragraph the impact and complexity of the colonial project, in this case, musical colonialism. "Tango argentinno" was a raw material and an exotic label; the "French" or "French-latino style" Tango was an exotic product of the "empire of taste" inaugurated by his majesty Louis XIV; and the "authentic English style" was another competitive exotic Tango product, aggressively launched into the dancing-musical market. As a result, the "authentic" Tangos were either the French or the English; the "argentino style" was a raw material--an underdeveloped product, "out of the question" or not ready to be consumed as an exotic product until it had undergone the necessary processing in the colonial factories of exoticism. The "authentic" Tango was not the one danced in the places of origin but the one that had emerged as an elaborate product of the manufacturers of exoticism. "Tango argentinno" was a label, not a brand; Exotics provide enticing, suggestive labels but they rarely are able to market their own brands. Japan received a Tango produced and exoticized in the (North) West and, at the same time, it imported the European strategies for appropriating, producing, and marketing the Exotics.

Yoneyama’s and the shako dansu masters' remarks suggest that the French Tango or Tango a lo Megata was a handcrafted exotic product suited to the Japanese aristocracy while the British-style Tango was a serialized exotic version targeted to the Japanese middle classes. Megata’s dance lessons were highly personalized and sophisticated, and his Tango steps were taught to the rhythms of argentino Tango records.
His obsession was quality and taste. Whereas Megata never charged for his classes and taught almost exclusively within his aristocratic circle, the British-style dance masters were launching a business--the social dance industry in Japan; they sold classes and manuals and arranged competitions aimed at opening up a new popular market. The two enterprises shared the common goal of Westernizing Japan, and both relied on the Tango as one of the exotic ingredients to achieve it. But the Japanese aristocrats were adept at making subtle distinctions: Western dancing and ballroom dances of all varieties were fashionable, but the Tango was a spicy exotic specimen among them. The Tango was a passionate latinoamericano dance, exoticized, tamed, Westernized into French and British styles. The Tango à la français, the Japanese version of which was a lo Megata, had that special continental tinge that meant distinction and (high) class among Westerners themselves--the powerful Westerners of the North. However, the very existence of a Tango a lo Megata suggests a Japanese domestication of the French-style Tango, i.e. a Japanization of the (North) Westernized Tango. Similarly, the shako dansu masters who popularized the British-style Tango in Japan make a clear distinction between the Tango and other rowdy latina dances. According to their social dance codes, Tango is included within the category of "modern" dances (together with waltz and fox-trot) while the mambo, rumba and cha-cha belong to a separate "latino" cluster. This distinction suggests the success of Tango’s (North) Westernization (to the degree of receiving the "modern" nomination) and its consequent appeal for the Japanese attempting to domesticate the West.\(^5\) In questioning the essentialist assumption that Tango’s popularity in Japan
is owed to its affinity with the tragic Japanese spirit, one starts to wonder how much of the efforts invested by the Japanese at domesticating the West have been triggered by an overwhelming worldwide imposition of (North) Westernization.

Megata and the Japanese dance masters were dealing with parallel processes of Westernization, each one in its particular style, for a particular class, mirroring an international division of class by national/cultural identity. France represented to the Japanese the aristocratic center of the empire of taste; the British and, later on, the Americans (an ex-British colony), represented the core of the industrialized world--including the music/dance industry. One center of world power never completely succeeded in displacing the other; they have been conflictively negotiating over the control of particular kinds of productions and products for increasingly differentiated kinds of consumers. In addition, Megata and the shako dansu masters were "japanizing" Western practices of exoticism in that the Tango trends that they followed were Western exoticized products--exotic latino passion successfully transformed into (North) Western pleasure. The danceable Tangos which were coming to Japan were not Western but Western appropriations of exotic representations.

**Tango Argentino in Japan**

Two other members of the international elite helped to introduce the Tango to Japan. One of them was the cultural attaché to the Japanese Embassy at Paris, who like Megata, had participated first-hand in the post-First World War Tango rage; the other was an argentino
diplomat in Tokyo, Arturo Montenegro. He imported records from Argentina (recorded by a subsidiary of the Victor Co.), gave Tango lessons, and, in 1934, organized Japan's first Tango dancing contests (Ferrer 1980a). These contests were similar to the international social dance competitions which were being promoted at that time by the British-style dance masters. However, the promotion of dance contests exclusively for Tango and organized by an argentino, added a new dimension to the story.

Argentina Tango music was available in Japan through recordings, and pretty soon Japanese musicians were playing the tunes. These Japanese instrumentalists and singers made clear distinctions between the "continental" Tango and the original Tango Argentino. The most prestigious Japanese Tango interpreters were those able to attempt argentino Tangos in Spanish, complete with lunfardo (the slang of Buenos Aires). The challenge was not only one of pronunciation but also of feeling. The first Japanese Tango singers studied with Tango fans who had a sensitive ear for the Tango even if they could not sing themselves (Abo 1990, interview).

Most of the Japanese tangueros whom I interviewed suggested that a major political decision helped to promote the Tango Argentino in Japan: with the outbreak of the Second World War, U.S. popular music was banned, and the only foreign music allowed was German and Italian classics and the Tango. During the war years, the Tango provided a substitute for the banned West. At the same time, Argentina was clearly differentiated from Japan's Western enemies.
Montenegro, the *argentino* diplomat in Japan, recalls that the Japanese often employed the word *shibui* to describe the Tango: "The word has no translation, but it means something like the bitter appearance of that which is positively beautiful" (quoted in Ferrer 1980a: 254-255, my translation). I am not qualified to discuss the accuracy of Montenegro’s translation of the term into Spanish; my intention is to emphasize here how the *argentino* diplomat chose to characterize the Japanese perception of the Tango. To most *argentinos*, Montenegro’s explanation of *shibui* as applied to the Tango confirms the exoticism of the Japanese people and hence the exotic distance between *argentina* and Japanese cultures. Montenegro’s account of the Japanese perception of the Tango displays the enigmatic, inscrutable features attributed to the Japanese by (North) Western exoticism production. His answer to the enigma of Tango’s popularity in Japan is given through what, to most *argentinos*, is an exotic Japanese poetic puzzle.

Conversely, most of the Japanese *tangueros* I interviewed in Tokyo during my short visit (November, 1990), when asked about why the Japanese like Tangos--in an over-encompassing, general way--emphasized the compatibility of both cultures rather than the potential attraction of the exotic or the radically different. Kyotani Kohji, a remarkable *bandoneón* player and Tango composer says:

Tangos are basically sentimental as are we Japanese. We [Japanese *tangueros*] try to communicate [to the public] the similarity of our feelings [with those of the *argentinos*] rather than the contrasts between the *latino* and the Japanese; it is more what we have in common rather than the attraction of the exotic. It is the sentimental, the sadness.
Yamazaki Mieko, a Tango singer, explains:

The Tango is attractive to me because of the contrast between the rhythm and the strongly sentimental melody. This is a challenging combination; a challenge for a singer. The Japanese women who sing Tango understand these complexities because we are *shitamachi*—real city-girls connoisseurs of the *demi-monde*.

Abo Ikuo, a Tango singer who has recorded with several *argentinos* as well as with Japanese Tango orchestras, establishes a strong connection between the *argentino* Tango lyrics and the ones of the *enka* (Japanese popular music):

*Enka* and Tango share melodramatic themes, themes of love; especially "lost-love" [in English] and betrayals. Things that make people cry. There are important differences. In *enka* it is mostly women who moan the absence of their lovers while in Tangos, those betrayed are mostly men. But the emotions are similar. By listening to Hibari Misora [a renowned Enka singer], Japanese Tango singers learn how to express the Tango. Although the rhythms are very different, the feelings of sadness, separation, and forlorn-ness are shared; and these are embedded in life experience.

Abo has recently composed a Tango in which he attempts to express this deep kinship. The lyrics (written by the *argentino* Hector Negro) establish the common fate of the Japanese and *argentina* souls by pointing out that the most famous *argentino* Tango singer (Carlos Gardel) and the most recognized Enka singer (Hibari Misora) each were referred to by birds names, and that they died on the same date. A romantic touch is added to the whole picture by stressing the fact that, although they never met in life, death has brought them together as a couple in heaven.⁷
Alposta, puzzled by similar questions regarding the Japanese-argentino Tango connection, was also given counter-exotic answers by the Japanese Tango artists he interviewed:

[1951 interview with Koga Masao, Japanese Tango composer, in Argentina:]

Alposta: Why is argentino popular music so liked in Japan?
Koga.: "Because our musical feelings are convergent and the topics are extraordinarily similar [...]"

Alposta: Do you also sing about love and betrayal?
Koga: "Yes. We like to whine over the women who have abandoned us, just like the old Tangos. Twenty-three years ago, one of the first waltzes I wrote was called Rage or Shitaite, which means: Longing for the one who left. Almost all the Tangos that are popular in Argentina are sung in Japan" (Alposta 1987: 101, my translation).

[1978 interview with Kanematsu Yoji in Tokyo, then president of the Society for the Study of Iberoamerican Music--Chunambei Ongaku Kenkyukai:]

Alposta: Why do the Japanese like Tango so much?
Kanematsu: "Because your music reaches our hearts very easily" (Alposta 1987: 89, my translation).

The opinions of Japanese Tango artists who cultivate Tango argentino contradict those of the Japanese shako dansu masters in that they emphasize the familiar aspect of the Tango argentino over its exoticism. Shako dansu masters believe that Europeanized Tango has been a more readily marketable product in Japan because the sensuality of the original Tango argentino was successfully subdued. In contrast, the Japanese followers of the Tango argentino stress the sentimental affinities of Japanese and argentinos as a unique spiritual kinship
between seemingly alien cultures. Likewise, they establish clear differences between the original Tango argentino and Westernized, unauthentic Tangos (Oiwa 1990, interview).

The familiarity between Tango argentino and Japanese sentimental culture is stressed by a small group of Tango connoisseurs who seek to distinguish themselves from the massive Japanese consumers of shako dansu. Their defense of Tango argentino is a more recent Japanese practice of distinction from both the aristocratic French-style Tango practitioners and the middle-class, uneducated consumers of the caricatured shako dansu Tango style. Tango from Argentina gained distinctive recognition from the Westernized Tangos when Argentina adopted an independent position from that of the Western allies during World War II. However, the Tango argentino Japanese followers are not monolithic. In the 1980s, specifically in the dancing aspect of Tango, a newly exoticized version for the stage was introduced by argentinos to Japan, via Broadway. This spectacular style of Tango Argentino, developed by argentinos for export, has created a new wave of passionate displays available for consumption in the contemporary capitals of the "developed" world. And Tokyo is now one of them. As a result, Japanese fans of Broadway-styled Tango Argentino have developed a taste for exotic passion, reminiscent of the first incursions of the Tango in France. The distance between the exotic argentinos and the exotic Japanese has widened, as Japan has moved to the "core," despite the fact that argentino-Japanese relations through the Tango are now more direct. The asymmetric power positions of Argentina and Japan vis-a-vis the Western "core" have affected the exotic encounter. The Japanese public
is increasingly reproducing Western practices of exoticism towards less privileged exotics; the argentino Tango performers offer themselves to the Japanese as passionate products which have achieved success in the West.

The Erotic Incompatibilities of Some Exotics

"Anyone who has felt this passionate rhythm [of Tango] running through her veins can never forget it" (Ranko Fujisawa in Alposta 1987: 75, my translation).

Passion, as the erotic component of the exotic, has a history in the Japanese-argentino relations through Tango. Far from being an instinct or drive displayed in Tango, this passionate "nature" of Tango is a product of the history of exotic representations. The Japanese have responded to Tango's passion in different ways, as the representations of Japan and of Argentina have modified their positions within the world of the exotics. The shako dansu masters say that Tango's passion was subdued in Japan, except for in the realm of fantasy: "Perhaps the dancing couples have in their minds the sensuality of a Rudolf Valentino movie, but they don't show it in their movements" (Ogata 1990, interview). The Japanese social dance teachers I interviewed took pains to clarify that no Tango argentino was performed at their dance hall (the Odeon of Kabuki-cho, Tokyo). By Tango Argentino they meant ashi no karami (legs intertwined), suggesting an inappropriate display of sensuality. In their opinion Japanese people know of the Tango Argentino from TV shows, but most of them consider it embarrassing or even dangerous (Ogata 1990, interview). Obviously shako dansu
professors have in mind Broadway-style Tango Argentino, popularized in Japan in the 1980s. In their opinion, this Tango Argentino is so exotically erotic that, for the Japanese, it would only be proper to watch it from afar, as a voyeuristic pleasure. As in Europe, the U.S. and even in the Rio de la Plata, the dancing industry in Japan disciplines the moving bodies by providing contrasting Tango versions for the stage and for the ballrooms. The Japanese shako dansu masters promote their own business by establishing essential differences between argentinos (latinos) and Japanese in their performance and reception of erotically charged movements.

Passion seems to be the toughest hurdle when trying to establish the connection between Japanese and latino souls. According to the Western continuum of world exoticism/eroticism, Japanese and latinos are polar opposites. Anyone (who has sufficiently internalized the logic of Western exoticism) can tell the difference: Japanese people are cold, detached, and controlled; latinos, including argentinos, are expressive, passionate, and sensual. Japanese and argentinos each use this Western map of passion to discuss the strange case of the Tango in Japan. Both, argentinos and Japanese, show defensive strategies to justify connections and, at the same time, reproduce icons of exotic, irremediable distance. They all wonder: How can such a famously passionate dance as the Tango argentino be practiced and enjoyed by such famously repressed people as the Japanese?

Some Japanese Tango Argentino dance students have answers to this conundrum which challenge the assumptions of the shako dansu masters:
The idea that Japanese people are cold is all *tatamæ* (surface, public appearance); Japanese people are passionate* (M. Takahashi 1990, interview).

Japanese people are very passionate, that is why politeness, etiquette and control are necessary (T. Takahashi 1990, interview).

To me, Tango is very much like the *noh* dancing: it is stylized, but the same kind of feeling is very strong in both Tango and *noh* if you know where to look. I have never done any other Western-style dances. They don't appeal to me. But something about the Tango is beautiful and passionate; as in *noh*, you hold the back very stiff and the movements of the legs are controlled, yet exquisitely expressive in their gestures (Takashima 1990, interview).

Eguchi Yuko, one of the very few Japanese dancers who teaches and performs *Tango Argentino* (as opposed to British or French-style Tango) explains:

> Japanese aren't scandalized or offended by males and females dancing together. The concern is rather with the young ones, doing *tachu dansu* or *bodi kontaku* dance. Japanese are not puritans; they don't have a Church, like in the West, telling them that things are evil. It's a question of propriety, not morality. That is why young people dance disco but not the lambada (Eguchi 1990, interview).

Eguchi and Kobayashi Taihei are the leading Japanese proponents of *Tango Argentino*—a version of Tango where passion and sensuality are clearly displayed. (See Figure 5.14.) They have launched a *Tango Argentino* campaign through an association aimed at popularizing the performance of the authentic passionate *argentino* Tango in Japan. Ironically, this enterprise was inspired by showing the Broadway show, *Tango Argentino*, on Japanese TV. Captivated by the style, they went to Argentina in order to train with Gloria and Eduardo, a famous professional Tango dancing couple. Challenging the notion of an
Figure 5.14: Japanese Tango Argentino theater bill (1990): "Kobayashi Taihei and Eguchi Yuko learned directly in Argentina, the birth place of Tango, from Gloria and Eduardo."
intrinsically dispassionate Japanese-ness is central to their task, and their explanations (and those of their students) of this inaccurate perception are quite convincing.

Kobayashi's Tango Argentino school is tackling the hard core of exoticism, that is eroticism. According to the world economy of passion-ruled by Western patterns of eroticism--Japanese erotica has been fixed and confined to the practices of geishas and their clients as represented in the wood-prints that fascinated the Parisian artists when they were discovered during La Belle Époque (Sorell 1981; Morini 1978). Conversely, the "authentic" Tango Argentino is believed to consist precisely in exhibiting erotic seduction to such extent that the manager of Mistinguett, the famous femme fatale of the French music-hall, advised her to perform it "only when you have a bed near by ..." (Mistinguett 1954: 60).

Kobayashi has 300 students. And the Tango Argentino that they teach is a magnificent Tango, based on the Tango produced by argentinos primarily for the stages of the Western world. Still, for Western observers, something does not quite work. When Japanese perform the Tango argentino, incorporating all the techniques of seduction learned from the argentino performers (who developed them successfully for the New York stage), they still look "Japanese." And this is not due to a lack of "feeling" on the part of the Japanese dancers, but to the power of exoticism. The Western mirror stubbornly reflects Otherness. Maeda Bibari (a Japanese Tango Argentino dancer) and Itzuki Hiroiuki (a Japanese Tango connoisseur), in a dialogue published in Tokyo in 1987 (the year of the Tango Argentino Broadway show),
educate their Japanese readers on how to appreciate, judge, and perform passionate "feelings" through the exotic Tango.

Itzuki Hiroiuki: Japan since the Meiji period has been trying to make its own the culture of other places. But there is still a long way to go.

Maeda Bibari: When I started dancing, I wanted to do Tango but people would tell me that it was as ridiculous and silly as when foreigners try to perform kabuki.

I.H.: You said on TV that finally the age of adulthood had come to Japan. Tango, you said, is the culture, the heart of adults. The Japanese world of culture is still extremely childish. For example, in Tango, when a man tries to make a woman his dancing partner, unless he is a real adult male, it just will not do ... it will not work in the full meaning of the term. It is not only a question of dancing technique, it is the solidity, even the thickness of the bodies that is important. Like the fact that the stomach should protrude a little like in an adult, established man.

M.B.: Yes, in Tango you should show the age you carry on your back. I learned Tango from an argentino teacher who said he had come to Japan to bring the culture from his country. I thought at first that I could do a Tango in my concert but then I felt that it would not be appropriate.

I.H.: Yes, because argentina people are quite something ...

M.B.: Yes, they are so passionate and serious about what they do.

I.H.: Yes, they are passionate and perhaps, should I say patriotic? Or maybe I should say that they have this special love for their people, their folk.

M.B.: So I thought of going to Argentina for the summer. There I learned that Tango was born out of the mixing of blood of different people. I realized that it was born out of pain, the pain of being away from your country and not being able to go back home. The ones who created the Tango were inhabitants of port cities who in order to chase a woman for the night, in order to impress her and show what a special man he was, developed these steps.

I.H.: These stories stir one's blood, don't they? I come from a generation for whom Tango is synonymous with dance. Tango is a dance in which when the man sticks his knee between the woman's legs it is not rude, although it is the opposite of refinement and courtesy. This dance, to put it in extreme words, is a combat in which the woman provokes the man's sword
[laughs]. The man's knee cap intrudes between the woman's thighs.

M.B.: Tango is different from other dance forms because the feelings do not rise in the course of the dance. The dance begins from a high pitch, from the combat itself, from the moment of heightened passion.

I.H.: And it ends like a cut. It never slows down. That is what is so magnificent about it. The ending in Tango is like the cut of a knife. Tango music is like a cut in early Spring and that is its fate. Classic Western music developed a status, money, names, but the Tango, despite its great potential, lost its life by being cut in early Spring. People who lamented this fact continued singing this music, treasured it, and so the torch of Tango was carried in their hearts. It never extinguished. Now Tango has taken on new bodies. There is no other dance like Tango for expressing yourself through the body. Tango is the dance in which men and women are locked together, intimately. In waltz there was still a separation that is only overcome in the Tango. The warmth of the bodies, the exchange of breaths ... everything communicates. Bathed in sweat, you are caught together in this degree of contact. Under these circumstances the humanness of your partner cannot help but communicate itself to you. Leaving aside for a moment the skill of the dance, the warmth of the body makes you think that your partner is a magnificent person. As a dance, Tango makes you feel things like this. When it ends, you separate and it is like fireworks. It was interesting to see those men and women looking heavy, not attractive or really beautiful, making beauty together as soon as they danced. [...]

M.B.: Tango is called the dance of the feet, but the facial expression is very important. You never face the public fully. Your feelings should show that you are the best woman in the world even if you have been born with a painful fate. That same thing happens with the man. Unless you can show dignity through your expressions, you cannot do the Tango.

I.H.: You have got that, so I say you can dance the Tango. [...] Tango in Japan is not a boom, should not be a fad. Japan has a special mission to accomplish. [...] Japan, in the Far East, is the country chosen by Tango. Just like once those different strains of people met in Buenos Aires, coming from foreign countries and became Tango. Japan is the one country in the whole world which has continued preserving the light, the torch, of the Tango. You have been chosen by Tango. (Fragments from "Pasión por el Tango" published in Asahi Graph 1987: 52-55, freely translated by Raj Pandey).
I have cited this dialogue at length because I believe it to be a precious document regarding the ways in which passionate feelings are currently read in an exotic *argentina* dance, and simultaneously taught/promoted among potential exotic Japanese dancers, in a suggestive, provocative, quasi-ritualistic way, where Tango is invoked as a mission, a pagan religion, that, with a will of its own, signals its victims/initiates. Itzuki and Maeda discuss the latest version of the Tango in Japan (with the exception of some "punk" Japanese Tango creations), and the boom they refer to is the tremendous impact of the *Tango Argentino* Broadway show. Maeda and Itzuki's publicly released conversation on intimate, passionate matters, is also a modern Japanese perspective on the representation of Japanese and *argentino* national positions in the world's political economy. Contemporary Japan exoticizes other less privileged exotics, appropriating passion; but it does it *à la* Western.


**Figure 5.15** was included in the same issue of *Asahi Graph* (1987) devoted to Tango Argentino, in which Maeda and Itzuki's dialogue was published. The text reads as follows: "*Tango Argentino* Preview--The Fragrance of Eroticism. The musical *Tango Argentino* was an enormous success in Europe and America and lead to a worldwide Tango boom.
Figure 5.15: "Tango Argentino preview--The Fragrance of Eroticism [...] On this stage you will get everything of the Tango: men and women; the flavor or eroticism, and numerous famous songs with history" (Asahi Graph 1987).
On this stage you will get everything of the Tango: men and women, the flavor of eroticism, and numerous famous songs with history" (translated by Raj Pandey).

Japan bears the burden of (North) Western exoticism regardless of its current economic power. Japan has entered the world's core of wealth and power, but it has not completely replaced or displaced former hegemonic Western centers. Japan is rather a new contender, juxtaposing its web of power with that of the (North) Westerners. Japan tensely co-exists with the U.S., Germany, France, England, and others. The tensions become more clear when considering the control over different kinds of products and markets among the countries at the core, and the simultaneous circulation of different currencies--some of which are not strictly reducible to the monetary.

Continental Tango, Tango British-style, Tango argentino, and Broadway-style Tango Argentine are different versions of an exotic product consumed by Japanese audiences, who mark their social distinctions through the parallel use of several qualities of passion. Japanese aristocrats socially distinguish themselves through taste, and the world's legitimate center of the empire of taste is still in Paris and/or with the French. Hence, Tango a lo Megata is a Japanese domestication of the French-style Tango, and it cultivated subtle "sensualness" and beauty. The shako dansu participants carry the banner of the popular, middle-class social marker and, thus, practice a British/Northamerican Tango massively produced and consumed by masses. The core of the entertainment industry for the masses remains under the legitimate control of the Anglos, even when their economic control has been
drastically challenged. *Shako dansu* followers try to develop active, sportive bodies through their Tangos. Tango *argentino*, as a marker of connoisseurship sought by those Japanese who perform social distinction from both Japanese aristocrats and Japanese middle-class masses, is a phenomenon tinged by nationalistic (anti-Western) feelings. Japanese connoisseurs of Tango *argentino* challenge previous Western mediations among Exotics and rescue the authentic Tango from its original *argentino* setting, while emphasizing the sentimental kinship between *argentinos* and Japanese. A kinship, an alliance, cemented in anti-Western attitudes during World War II. The Japanese followers of Tango *Argentino* (Broadway-style) cultivate a different relationship with *argentinos*. Like the Tango *argentino* connoisseurs, they search for an affinity between the two cultures, but it is focused on passion. They are defiant of Western exotic stereotyping, in that they wish to demonstrate the passionateness of the Japanese. In doing so, they work at developing passionate "skills" with the assistance of *argentinos*—the emblems of passionate exoticism to the Western core.¹⁰

Exoticism reproduces itself. When challenged on one end (the Japanese) it grows on the other (the *argentino*). And *argentinos* actively participate in the task. For *argentinos*, exoticism *à la* Broadway is nowadays a living. In dealing with the West, Japanese people have had to cope both with Westernization imposed on them (and on others, such as the *argentinos*) and with the domestication of Western and Westernized products (like the Broadway-styled Tango *Argentino*). Japanizing the West, when looked at from the perspective of a world
economy of passion, means facing the subtleties of exoticism imposed by Western imperialism on non-Western Others.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Figure 5.16:} Cover of \textit{Tango Argentino} theater bill, Tokyo, 1989.

\textbf{Figures 5.16 and 5.17} are taken from a theater bill of the \textit{Tango Argentino} show staged in 1989. Notice the lay-out of \textbf{Figure 5.17}, in which we are invited to "peek" into the intimacy of the couples and of a
thoughtful, intense but contained *latino* musician. How much of these images of the Tango come from those of Rudolf Valentino? It is interesting to note that, in Figure 5.16, the "oriental" tiara wore by the
female dancer has strong reminiscences of the one wore by Valentino in *The Sheik*. But he did not perform tangos in that movie; his famous tango was performed in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, dressed in a *gauchito* costume. Fragments and crumbs of Exotics blended and loosely combined into newly produced exoticisms. Exoticism pervasively sweeps the world like a powerful whirlwind, collecting mismatching oddities. Oddities that, nevertheless, follow a logic: the logic of exoticism. The Western core reflects exoticism in its eyes, like a mirror of passion. The mirror through which the Others see each other and themselves.

*Argentinos* have also reacted with counter-exotic practices to the Japanese appropriations of the Tango. Luis Alposta, who has written a book on the Tango in Japan, chose for the cover of his book a painting by Sigfredo Pastor (an *argentino* artist who has based many of his paintings on the Tango theme). (See Figure 5.18). Pastor represents the Tango in Japan by a male in "traditional" Japanese costume and coiffeur, playing the *bandoneón*--symbolic of the Tango music--half-squatting, so as to further "japanize" the scene. He seems to be telling us: "Yes, Tango in JAPAN! Isn't that amazing?" Japanese *tangueros* smile with resignation at this *argentina* representation of themselves. No matter how hard they work at overcoming exoticism through expertise, they continue to be represented as enigmatic Japanese.

Oiwa Yoshihiro, journalist and president of Porteña Ongaku Dokokai (Association of Porteña Music) expressed his lack of satisfaction with both Japanese attempts at performing Tango and *argentino* Tango creations addressed to suit the Japanese:
Figure 5.18: Cover of Luis Alposta's *El Tango en Japón*; drawing by Sigfredo Pastor (Alposta 1987).
I don't like to listen to Japanese Tango singers or to watch Japanese Tango Argentino performers. We Japanese talk and move differently, no matter what. I don't enjoy the Tangos written by argentinos inspired by Japanese themes either. They lose their original passion and become too mental, too intellectual (Oiwa interview, 1990).

The "authentic" Tango argentino as created and performed by argentino musicians, lyricists, singers, and dancers, retains the prestige of the original; but the original is permanently haunted by exoticism and becomes originally exoticized by the Western core.

In 1932, Castilla, an argentino writer, gave a much simpler answer, although not less ambitious than mine, to the puzzling question of the Tango in Japan:

The word Tango is Japanese. A city and a region of the Empire of the Rising Sun are called liked this. One of the five popular celebrations of this country takes this name. [...] But there were a lot of Japanese in Cuba since the mid-eighteenth century. And it was precisely in Cuba where the Tango was danced for the first time (Eduardo S. Castilla [1932] quoted in Lara and Roncetti de Panti 1961: 294-5).

Tango's Travels

In this section I give a last overview of Tango's adventures around the globe, inspired in the title of Wallis and Malm's book Big Sounds from Small Peoples (1984). The result is a parody of Gulliver's Travels.

Tango, as a musical/danceable commodity, has been produced, distributed and consumed within a capitalist market economy hegemonized by "core" powers. As a commodity, Tango has been packaged into different competitive styles/products addressed to a variety of markets. As Tango manufacturers proliferated at the "core,"
producing competitive Tango products, new markets for the consumption of those different Tango products were opened both at the "core" and in the world's "periphery." As a result, Tangos (in different versions) were traded between the competitive Tango producers, located mainly in Europe and the U.S., and those peripheral nations, like Argentina and Uruguay, which provided both—the "raw"/"original" Tango rhythms and choreographies and peripheral, sensitized, consumers for the new core-refined Tango products. However, the increasing competitiveness of Tango refinement and the ambition of the manufacturers demanded the opening of new markets. Thus, other peripheral nations were incorporated into the Tango circuit of distribution. Two examples of successful incorporation into the Tango circuit through this marketing strategy have been Turkey and Japan.\textsuperscript{12}

From the point of view of a political economy of popular music/dance, the production and consumption of "noise"\textsuperscript{13} and movement have followed the path of what Wallis and Malm call "big sounds" (to which I add "big dance steps") originated by "small peoples" (1984). However, it is important to notice that those sounds and steps would not have been "big" without the intervention of "big peoples" who were interested in developing the popular music/dance industry of "small peoples." Tango was one of those rhythmic sounds and steps of "small people" which "big people" turned into "big sounds and steps" for consumption by their own "big peoples," by the "small people" from whom the "big sounds and steps" originated, and by still other "small peoples" who were incorporated into the market of "big sounds/steps" originated by "small
peoples." "Small peoples" often became connected to each other only through these markets which were dominated by "big peoples."

In the previous chapters I have tried to analyze how Tango, an originally "small sound/steps" complex turned "big," through the process of exoticism. Rather than focusing on the technological and marketing aspects of the music industry, I chose to look at the politics of representation involved in the process. I have been interested in understanding how the identities of the "small peoples" (identities of gender, race, class, nation) have been affected as "big peoples" incorporated the Tango sounds/steps into the capitalist market economy. In doing so, I have tried to explain how through the process of imperialism, some peoples have come to be "small"; how their sounds and steps could be made "big"; how this aggrandizing process of exoticism has affected "small peoples" attempting to negotiate their identity, who ask themselves at this point "are we small or big?"; and how the "big" among the "small" (the privileged among the colonized) resisted this reshaping of their national identity, while the "small" among the "small" (the less privileged among the colonized) benefitted from it. I have also tried to describe how "big peoples" who intervened in this process were far from homogenous, having class, racial, gender, and nationalistic disputes among themselves which produced different receptions of the "small sounds/steps" coming from their own small peoples (peasants, urban marginals) and from foreign small peoples (the colonized). This process of representation and re-representation of the "big" and "small" peoples (with subsequent "big" and "small" internal confrontations), involved complex negotiations in terms of identity that
are difficult to capture when viewed from the perspective of a dry market economy of music/dance, which does not incorporate the dimension of pleasure (negotiations in terms of Desire and passion). Shifting the focus to the analysis of a parallel (although not independent) world economy of passion has allowed me to move tentatively in this direction, where exoticism and the constitution of identities are paramount. Rather than following a "model," I have been pushed into sketchily generating this alternative framework following the Tango avatars around the globe. In doing so, I have seen a constant process of re-mapping the world, like a sophisticated Atlas in which imperceptible people redrew, through their steps, the contours of the continental masses so painfully traced by earlier cartographers. Mapping the Tango travels has drawn me into associations with the routes of spices and other exotic goods, and has made me realize that this traffic has never been interrupted. The geography of pleasure and the spatial economy of capitalist production/consumption are strongly intertwined. What is pleasurable/valuable, for whom and how is what I have tried to understand immersing Tango in the traffic of the exotic. The manufacture of exotic sounds/steps and the promotion of markets receptive to these exoticized/pleasurable trends has been analyzed in the context of "core"/colonizer and "periphery"/colonized relationships, in which the problems of representing and identifying the providers of pleasurable experiences for the colonizer have been negotiated within a "libidinal economy." I have tried to show how Desire and passion have been constructed and located and qualified, through the process of exoticism, in different cultural/geographical spaces ruled by imperialist
understandings of who should provide "raw," "primitive" emotionality (passion) for the enjoyment and satisfaction of "civilized" Desire. In comparing Tango with other exotic music/dance products (for example, Oriental belly-dancing or French can-can), a categorization and hierarchization of exotics suitable to the particular historical cravings of the colonizer has become evident. Tango was constituted as a sophisticated, "new world," exotic providing a kind of passion that had the thrill of mirroring the process of "civilization" in its dance/struggle among the male impersonator of Desire and the female impersonator of passion. But the spectacle as a whole was viewed from the distance of the colonizer's gaze.\textsuperscript{16} Exotic products (goods from the colonies turned into exotic and into marketable products by capitalist colonizers) have been marketed (including the creation of the "need" for them) among "civilized," "barbarians" and different types of "barbarians" in different stages of "civilization," alike.
CHAPTER SIX

DECOLONIZATION AS INTELLECTUAL "UNLEARNING"

(on the micro-politics of concluding)

This chapter contains a story, a counter-spell, a protest and a series of reflections on the intellectual practices of "Third World" women. As a whole it is an exercise of active unwinding, a practice of "unlearning," an act of coming closer to the ground, to my language, and to my home. In these pages my colonizer will be concluding and my colonized will gain decolonizing terrain.

"First Steps in Tango" is a story about Tango that can be read as a feminist/poststructuralist critique of Tango; "Postmodern Uses of Passion" is a counter-spell against poststructuralist, deconstructionist and Lacanian psychoanalytic "phalologocentric" occultisms, carried through a melodramatic Tango mood; "Feminist Uses of 'Third World' Women" is a voiced protest against imperialist deafness within feminism; "Female Intellectual Cannibals" and "Female Intellectual Invaders" are reflections which encompass and expand the previous readings concerning some dilemmas faced by female intellectuals searching for decolonization.

First Steps in Tango

Don Beto was a cheap womanizer (chinitero, as they used to say) and, eventually, my paternal grandfather. He taught me how to dance the Tango. Twenty five years later, twenty after his death, I came to
realize what those gazes and complicitist smiles dazzled across the festive living-room meant. The women of my family shared a secret. Don Beto, now "el abuelo Alberto" to his grandchildren, was once un arrabalero: an expert in Buenos Aires' underworld. The Tango as he danced it could have only been learned through systematic nightlong practicing at brothels and cabarets. I was benefitting from a skill my grandfather had acquired embracing prostitutes and milonguitas (cabaret Tango dancers). El abuelo Alberto did not participate in the chuckling ambiance; when we danced Tango, he was serious. So was I. Only now do I understand that through our Tango I was being initiated into the spectacle of sex, class, and power of everyday life.

Don Beto, my abuelo Alberto, was a trespasser, not a transgressor. Like many argentino men of his generation, his nomadic steps were drawn to the crossing of boundaries. He wandered from the protected walls of his family life to the excitement of the cabaret underworld. The signals for his moves were natural: sunrise, sunset. He never questioned the boundaries themselves; household and cabaret were as natural as the paths of the sun. So was the existence of the women confined in both places. Mothers and wives were to be found over here; prostitutes and "milonguitas" over there. Two worlds inhabited by different social classes as well, but he never needed to ask why. It was a fact. Don Beto tanguaba (tangoed) in and out, crossing over, never overtly challenging territories. Indirect, tense, comfortably uptight in his irony, like the Tango. He had power. A viscous power nurtured by two races of women. A solid bridge of eroticism tailored to his desire. My grandmother, here, washing and perfuming the shirts he wore to the
cabaret. Mireya or Margot, there, returning him to his home, invigorated by skillful pleasures. All women were blank pages for him, on which to write his story. He wrote his story on those feminine bodies: immobilized, restricted in space like pages, equally confined in a household or a cabaret. Honorably privatized or publicly blamed, they were all owned by someone: the same men they were devoted to, the men they loved. The tangueros, like Don Beto, were invested with this viscous power: a power product of simmered erotic passion. So what was he so serious about?

Don Beto's Tango was pure tension, cyclic struggle in its steps, frozen conflict at the moment of the resolution. He led, I followed. My eyes on the floor, attentive to the intricacy of the footwork. Tight embrace, straight torsos, never leaning on each other. Our gazes never met, nor should they. A slow run, walking in between each others' feet, facing directly towards one angle of the room, stop. Abruptly. This was the moment of the fancy figures with no displacement: the "eight," "double eight," the "hooks," the "backwards crossings" ... A sharp turn. A tense stillness. A new diagonal runaway, another bundling of legs. Every movement was contrasting in itself and with the next. Carefully entangled and incommunicatively connected from the first to the last musical time ... Suddenly the singer was louder; it was mother, reading my thoughts as usual.

Quién sos, que no puedo salvarme,  
muñeca maldita castigo de Dios ...  
Por vos se ha cambiado mi vida  
Who are you, that I can't be saved from you,  
cursed doll, a divine punishment ...  
Because of you my life has turned
en un bárbaro horror de problemas
que ahora mis venas y enturbia mi honor.

[...]
No puedo reaccionar,
ni puedo comprender,
perdido en la tormenta
de tu voz que me embrujó...
la seda de tu piel que me estremece
y al latir florece, con mi
perdición.

"Secreto" (Secret)
Lyrics and Music by Enrique S. Discépolo

The records kept on falling, piling up on the record player:

Decí, por Dios, que me has dado
que estoy tan cambiado...
No sé más quien soy...

El malevaje extraño me mira sin comprender.

[...]
Te vi pasar tanguando antanera,
con un compás tan hondo y sensual,
que no fue más que verte y perder
la fe, el coraje, el ansia e'guapear...
No me has dejado ni el pucho en la oreja
de aquel paso malo y jerezo.
Ya no me falta pa' completar
más que ir a misa e hincarme a rezar.

Tell me, for Christ's sake,
what have you given me
that I've changed so much!...
I don't know anymore who I am!...
The gang looks at me, puzzled
they can't understand.

[...] I saw you pass by tangoing,
arrogant
at such a deep and sensual pace,
that just to see you was to lose
faith, courage, the ardor to be tough...
You haven't even left me the cigarette behind my ear
of that ferocious past as a ruffian.
To complete the picture, the only thing I'm lacking/
is to go to church and pray on my knees.

"Malevaje" (Gang of Ruffians)
Lyrics by Enrique S. Discépolo
Music by Juan D. D. Filiberto
The lyrics kept on repeating the same story; plagiarizing again and again the same plot:

_Percanta que me amuraste_
En lo mejor de mi vida
_dejándome el alma herida [...]_
_Para mi ya no hay consuelo._

Girl, you abandoned me
During the peak of my life
leaving my soul wounded [...] 
There is no comfort for me.

"Mi Noche Triste" (My sad night)
Lyrics by Pascual Contursi
Music by S. Castriota

No smiles. Tangos are male confessions of failure and defeat; a recognition that their sources of empowerment are also the causes of their misery. Women, mysteriously, have the capacity to use the same things that imprison them--including men--to fight back. Tangos report repeated female attempts at evasion, the permanent danger of betrayal. The strategy consists basically in seducing men, making them feel powerful and safe by acting as loyal subordinates, and in the midst of their enchantment of total control the tamed female escapes. The viscous power crystallizes. The _tanguero_ watches, horrified, as the blank inert pages where he was writing his story grow an irregular thickness of their own. Female bodies are, actually, docile bodies in rebellion. This is the tension of the Tango, the struggle condensed in the dance. Don Beto doesn't talk about it. If you are doing the Tango properly, conversations are sacrilegious. The lyrics say everything that needs to be said. So listen.

_No te dejes engañar, corazón,
por su querer, por su mentir._

Heart, don't fool yourself about her caring, about her lies.
No te vayas a olvidar que es mujer,
y que al nacer del engaño hizo un sentir

Falsa pasión, Corazón.

Don't forget that she is a woman,
and that it's inborn, for her to deceive

Nuevo Te Engañes, Corazón" (Heart, Don't Fool Yourself)
Lyrics and music by R. Sciamarella

Y pensar que hace diez años
fue mi locura!
Que chiflao por su belleza
le quite el pan a la vieja...

me hice ruin y pechador...

Que quedé sin un amigo,
que viví de mala fe,
sin moral, hecho un mendigo,
cuando se fue.

And to think that ten years ago
I was crazy about her!
That crazed by her beauty
I took away my mother's bread ...

I turned mean and demanding...
I was left without a friend,
I lived in bad faith,
she had me on my knees,
without dignity, turned into a beggar,
when she left.

"Esta Noche Me Emborracho Bien"
(Tonight I'll get completely drunk)
Lyrics and Music by Enrique S. Discépolo

No es que esté arrepentido
de haberte querido tanto;
lo que me apena es tu olvido

y tu traiición
me sume en amargo llanto.

Aquella tarde que te vi

tu estampa me gustó,
pebeta de arrabal,
y sin saber porque yo te seguí

y el corazón te di
y fue tan sólo por mi mal.

It's not that I regret
having loved you so much;
what saddens me is your forgetfulness
and your betrayal
it sinks me in bitter tears.

That afternoon when I saw you
I liked your form,
woman of the outskirts,
and without knowing I followed you
and I gave you my heart
and it was only worth my ruin.
Mira si fue sincero mi querer
que nunca imaginé
la hiel de tu traición
Que solo y triste me quedé,
sin amor y sin fe
y derrotado el corazón!

See if my love was true
that I never imagined
the bitterness of your betrayal
that I was left sad and lonely,
without love and without faith
my heart defeated!

"La Mariposa" (The Butterfly)
Lyrics by Celedonio E. Flores
Music by Pedro Maffia

The dance continues. No harmony between the bodies, just the rhythm holding us together; the rhythm of fate. He leads, I follow. Tight embrace; no leaning on each other. Don Beto prepares the stand; we are at the critical angle. Torsos stiff, feet in vertigo. My legs cut the air in all directions. He leads, no one follows now.

The voices of my brothers around the dinner table are suddenly audible; so are the kitchen noises. The family party is at its peak. Don Beto starts muttering "Yira, yira," the Tango treatise of philosophy. He picks up his hat and leaves.

Cuando la suerte que es grela,
fayando y fayando
té largue parao
[...]
La indiferencia del mundo
--que es sordo y es mudo--
recién sentirás!
Verás que todo es mentira,

Verás que nada es amor,
que al mundo nada le importa...
Yira! ... Yira! ...

When lady luck,
failing and failing
leaves you standing there
[...]
The indifference of the world
--who is deaf and mute--
you will feel only then!
You'll see that everything is a lie,

You'll see that nothing is love,
that the world doesn't care
about anything.../
(It just) Turns!... Turns!...)

"Yira ... Yira..." (Turns ... Turns...)
Lyrics and music by Enrique S. Discépolo.
Don Beto is not worried. He knows this is what life is all about. Sooner or later, I would be caught in another Tango. New embraces and infinite rebellions. He had done his job.

**Latest Steps in Tango: Postmodern Uses of Passion**

The purpose of this essay is to offer some "picture-thoughts" of postmodernism as perceived by an Ather--female Third-World Other. It is the product of an intense although unintended incursion into the postmodern university world: a small world of fantasy rendered in the genre of horror-fiction. My intention is to trick back rather than to unmask postmodernism. This is a strongly prejudiced interpretation, a move to join into what Artaud has called "the right to lie" (quoted by Escobar 1988: 133), since it responds to a provocation. And as an Ather, I read challenge in the postmodern attitude: a passionless invitation to perform Otherness passionately.

One of postmodernism's most elaborated stratagems is that of intellectual seduction. This "fatal stratagem," to put it in Baudrillard's words, seems to be the rule and the limit of the postmodern game. Passion is the necessary thrust for intellectual play. Illusory and embodied participants become interchangeable gamblers. In the guts of a postmodern, outbursts of committed passion are futile; what counts is the tension involved in seducing.

Postmodernism is the delirious political enterprise of meticulous actors, both thinkers and unthinkers; busy burrowers attempting to reveal the simultaneity of all mysteries only to leave them half bitten, exposed to erosion. First, its members think of themselves as
endangered, as survivors of the modern world driven into a chaotic vertigo provoked by their own arrogance. Second, postmoderns reproduce the cult of instrumentality and efficiency, even though they disbelieve in human agency and its outcomes faced with the powers of chance. Third, the inhabitants of postmodernism question the possibility of a true self and worship an Other within a fragmented oneness. Fourth, in the eyes of a postmodernist, life is a perpetual homesickness in a disharmonious world where desire for that which is impossible maintains the necessary tension to keep on living. Fifth, the postmodern world is ruled by Discourse, a powerful divinity—although not supranatural—that controls and normalizes humans by exerting untraceable bureaucratic violence on their bodies; the subjects of Discourse are accomplices in this process by way of practicing techniques of self-formation or "subjectification." Sixth, postmodernists are prone to look at the world as a text, to rewrite what has been written, practicing a meticulous unwriting process named deconstruction, and are haunted by an unwritten volume whose author and title are, nevertheless, well known: The History of Bodies by Michel Foucault. Seventh, postmodern intellectuals apply a genealogical and archeological method for analyzing their own history, since they equally mistrust their own interpretation of past events on the basis of exploring silences, repetitions, and difference and the more traditional narratives and storytelling.

Needles to say, the list could be expanded. But my intention is to point out the proliferation of unsettling paradoxes present in the postmodern "ethos." Paradoxes are dramatized through images and
scenarios of black mysticism. The occultist postmodern metaphors (Bataille's exhibition of curses, sacrifice, and the ecstasied vertigos of mysticism and eroticism; Baudrillard's explorations in panic of the seductive power of obscene exuberant signs; Derrida's frenzy for erosion, chasing difference and crypts; Foucault's invitations to ritualized transgressions and to the contemplation of bodily horrors; Lacan's impossible discoveries of cosmic terror such as the constitutive wound/split of the self, the impossibility of communication and the nonexistence of women; to name a few) can only be survived with passion and trust in the power of passion.

Passion is one of those feelings of impossible conceptual definition, but strong experiential presence. Baudrillard qualifies passion as a "malignant genius" of which everything could be said and yet, we do not know what to say (1984a: 103).

The great opposition between two philosophies of passion occurred even before the (moral and juridical) notion of subject was born. The one, apparently more condescending (Aristotelé), considers passion as an element of the normal human being and of his praxis; the other, more rigid at the surface (Plato, the Stoics), in creating such a distance between reason and passion is driven to acknowledge with urgency the limits of the power of the one over the other (Lebrun 1987: 28, my translation).

This dual understanding of passion is constitutive of the ambivalence according to which passions are lived in the contemporary Western world. The tension between the acceptance and rejection of passion has been strong enough to align traditional philosophical foes. Hegel and Nietzsche, for example, shared a profound admiration for passions' capacity to actualize excess:
Nothing truly great could be accomplished without passion" (Hegel, Aesthetik, in Lebrun 1987: 23, my translation).

[Passion ...] is the least equitable state of spirit that there is on earth, shortsighted, unjust toward the past, blind to advice, a small turmoil of life in the core of a sea of forgetfulness [...] the greatest acts are accomplished out of such excess of love" (Nietzsche, Unzeitgemaße Betrachtungen, in Lebrun 1987: 24, my translation).

Agnes Heller, in her Theory of Feelings, states that the need for a "unified evaluation of passions [...] belongs to the realm of problems of bourgeois society" and that every passion comprises, at the same time, a "grandeur"—something significant—and a problematic aspect. The greatness dwells in the intensity of the involvement—commitment—provoked by passions; the danger, in pushing aside or extinguishing other emotions—the "wealth of feelings" (Heller 1979: 107ff).

Interestingly, postmodern authors have chosen instead to scrutinize the wound of "nothingness:" that state of exhaustion and perplexity in between one outburst of passion and the next, the indifferent soft stone out of which events are carved. The melancholic longing of Sartre has finally been resolved in the stubborn lack of Lacan. Passion and excess are there, only to flush humans—whether in a state of ecstasy or bored to death—down the flowing abyss. This unavoidable postmodern "drive" is called Desire.

Having said this, I risk giving a name to the unnameable mythical postmodern object of Desire—the ungraspable desire that circulates, unqualified like the breath of a phantom, through every postmodern text, speech and life... desire for the desire of the Other, desire for other's Desire. This longing, this lack, this vacuum that keeps the
world stumbling rather than illusively going is the fearful desire for passion.

Translated into tango-tongue, the postmodern desire would be something like a fearful passion, and the postmodern attitude, a "sentimental education" in passion for fear.¹⁸

[... ] Fear of soft talk from the enemy, but even much more fear of the unexpected dagger jumping into the recently befriended hand, piercing our open breast or annihilating us from the back. And then, who knows, in that "fear that sterilizes embraces" we might discover that it is neither this nor that, something or someone that we fear, only fear of fearfulness. Scare, dread, fright. Anguish, metaphysical fear without object, everything and nothing serves it to self-consummation until it reaches the apex: fear of fear[... ] The saddest among the sad passions[... ] Anyone who has felt it, knows" (Chauí 1987: 39, my translation).

But the postmodern version of fear is anxiety.¹⁹ Destruction, death and betrayal are no surprise and pain is awaited. God and Man are dead, but Evil is still alive and kicking.²⁰ Its doings are no longer the doings of a blasphemous creature but are human doings; the doings of A/Others, but the A/Other is now also within the self.²¹ "The anonymous other that is always 'within' splits the subject, leaving it 'cracked'" (Taylor 1987: 81, paraphrasing Merleau-Ponty). The paranoid delirium of the postmodern soul is nourished by this anxiety. How long will it take until the next stroke of panic occurs? Who will I be after my next transgression? From where will the next blow come? Postmodern words of wisdom respond: "It is all on the surface; watch the play of surfaces." Moreover, Bataille recommends adopting the laughter of the idiot and Foucault's advice is to cultivate stupidity (Foucault 1977a: 107-109). Irony and cynicism are passé since they retain the conceit of
some wisdom. The stupid one gets in trouble without knowing it; the idiot commits cruelties irresponsibly. Postmodern words of wisdom indicate unawareness before and after the catastrophe: the outburst of passion.

Postmodernism is neither an epoch nor an attitude. It is a skill. Fear has become a passion; the anticipation of fear, an obsession; the domestication of fear, passionlessness. In Todd Gitlin's words, postmodernism is the passionate pursuit of passionlessness (1989: 347).

Apathy does not mean insensitivity; it is rather a biopsy of passion. But the postmodern version of asceticism is a perverse skill: on the one hand, an intensified awareness of the dangerousness of passion; on the other, the desperate amplification of the search for passionate experiences. In short, postmoderns attempt to master passion--to develop apathy--both through panic and obscenity: the multiplication of passion to the limit of the impossible, and the sacrifice, the annihilation of that which was purposefully multiplied.

The trick by which the postmodern "ascetic" piles up the passionate material to be burnt in sacrifice consists in another skill: the proliferation of Otherness.

Passion is always provoked by the presence or image of something that leads us to react, in general unexpectedly. It is a sign of one's permanent dependency on the Other. An autocratic being would not have passions (Lebrun 1987: 18, my translation).

The postmodernist nurtures his/her passion by the presence or image of A/Others--A/Others who define the self, reassuring identity. But the postmodern identity does not rely on sameness, it is unstable,
permanently reshaped by the proliferation of A/Others, an A/Other even within the self.

A passion. And, as in "jouissance" (enjoyment), where the object of desire, known as object "a," bursts with the shattered mirror where the ego gives up its image in order to look at oneself in the Other, there is neither objective nor objectal in the abject. It is simply a boundary, a repulsive gift that the Other [...] allows to fall so that the "I" does not disappear but finds in it, in this sublime alienation, a fallen existence [Kristeva 1982: 9, 17].

The A/Other is a provocateur of the floating Self and a provider of passion. The A/Other must provide the necessary excitement for the postmodern playing of the Self.

The Ather's voice is my mother tongue, a Tango-tongue. And I choose to quote a postmodern artist to explain what this means.

For the so-called First World the art and culture of the so-called Third World is the art and culture of the exotic (in Nietzsche's words, not only those who are on the outside but, contrary to the esoterics, those who look from "down-up") and in the best cases, it is the object of the true fascination with the unknown and the Other. The Tango is one of such art forms, in it there is aggression and seduction, drama and form, passion and control. An image that may have seduced [...] as a symbolic link between the European predominantly logocentric mentality and the 'natural' surreality of Latin America (Escobar 1988: 125).

But this is a postmodernist version of Tango. And the tangueros are invited to perform on the postmodern stage on these terms: as passionate "exotic" spectacles of themselves.

Tango is a dramatic expression (dance, music, lyrics and performance) originated in the Rio de la Plata region (Argentina/Uruguay) towards the end of the nineteenth century. The worldwide popularity of the Tango has been associated with that of
scandal: the public display of passion performed by a heterosexual couple, the symbol of which is a tight embrace and suggestive intricate footwork. As a powerful representation of the male/female courtship, stressing the tension involved in the process of seduction, the Tango performance has gone through successive adjustments as it was adopted and legitimized by higher classes and Western hegemonic cultures. Tango was "polished" and accepted by the wealthy and powerful as it made its way from the slums and brothels of the South American harbors to the cabarets and ballrooms of Paris, London, and New York. By the 1920s it had become clear that the sin of Tango was related to its racial/class origins rather than to its erotic content. When appropriated by the "high society," and especially the European one, dancing the scandalous Tango became an enjoyable, spicy entertainment. As a performance of exotic passion, like many other exotic products, Tango was promptly packaged and distributed by the show business industry: records, dance handbooks, films, fashion, stars. Tango in its new Western version was readdressed to the world market, including those Third World nations where it originated.

Tango emerged as a symbolic expression and ended up as a status-marker. As an "exotic" good, Tango entered into the Political Economy of Passion: appropriation, repackaging, commercialization and consumption of the wealth of exotic feelings, i.e. the passion of the A/Other. And the passion of the A/Other is being permanently recycled: sacrificed and recreated through new real or imagined A/Others. The postmodernist, a newly refined version of the Enlightenment colonialist, is an incorrigible "voyeur," an untamed predator and a skillful ascetic.
Postmodernism is a corroding skill, like a fakir who learns to chew on blades, to swallow fire and to sleep on beds of nails—a luxurious exploration in the realm of pain carried out by those who see pain from the distance, who never admit the experience of pain as an unavoidable stroke on their lives. For those for whom both pain and feeling, in the sense of "getting involved in something," is a choice. Colonialists and postmodernists write the history of the winners and reserve for themselves the leading role.

A 'true' postmodernist is a strategist; her/his passion is to feel above and beyond the miseries of the world—in postmodernistic jargon, the world is a text; imperialist strategists assume the world is a map; in the courts of Louis XIV, the world was a ballet-opera; in Disneyland, the world is a bunch of singing dolls—fueled by the passion of passionlessness: the sacrifice of imported passion. The A/Others are invoked and invited to participate in the postmodern duel—any A/Other detected as a potential provider of the 'real' passion still available on the planet. Fiesta, women, Tango, tortures, lotus blossoms, guerrillas, palm trees and tropical beaches, desaparecidos, flamenco, more women, Blacks, Panama, some dictators, women of color, et cetera.

But there is something stronger than passion: illusion. Stronger than sex or happiness: the passion of illusion. Seducing, always seducing. Breaking the erotic power with the furious strength of the gambling and the stratagem—building in the same vertigo some traps, and continuing to endure mastery of the ironic paths of hell in the seventh heaven—this is seduction, the shape of the illusion, the malignant genius of passion (Baudrillard 1984a: 119, my translation).
While the Athers face the precariousness of passion, postmoderns playfully thicken every wound. Postmodernism enters into politics unexpectedly, making a spectacular use of Athers' passion. Cultivating apathy postmoderns join the power game by coming out of the trap-door.

Female Intellectual Cannibals

Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language--today he has no other--to curse him, to wish that the "red plague" would fall on him? (Fernández Retamar 1989).

"First Steps in Tango" and "Postmodern uses of Passion" are the marrow of this dissertation, my "motives" all along. Both are autobiographical fictions, in the sense that they offer a personal interpretation of certain events in my life that have become significant for contextual/political reasons. "Postmodern Uses of Passion" is actually a counter-spell for my latest steps in Tango and the present experience from which I look at my first ones, in the past. I am not concerned about how "objectively" true or false these accounts are; I am rather concerned about the points, political points, I am trying to make. I don't want my voice to have all dimensions. I want it to be harsh (Fanon 1964). My voice has been lost in a multiplicity of dimensions for too long. None of those dimensions proved to be mine. Thus both, the story and the counter-spell, have the purpose of advancing some insights within a project of decolonization, starting with the decolonization of myself. They are attempts at unlearning.
Both the First and the Latest Steps in Tango share a common plot; they describe rituals of initiation and focus on the protagonist's (first person, myself) experience of passing through these rituals. The First Steps depict my initiation into the male world (Patriarchy); the latest Steps, into a particular kind of academic discourse--post-structuralism/deconstructionism/Lacanian psychoanalysis--that promised liberation but proved to be paralyzing (Colonialist). The fact that I have isolated these particular moments as rituals of passage does not mean that experiences of patriarchy and/or colonialism are reduced to that first Tango or this latest academic discourse. The pin-pointing is rather my reconstruction of episodes of awareness, of breaking-through Patriarchy and Colonialism.

In addition, by labelling the Tango as patriarchal and postmodernism as colonial I do not wish to imply that the Tango lacks colonizing features, nor that postmodernism is free of patriarchal shades. Precisely for these reasons is it that I attempt to analyze Tango within a colonial process of exoticization and to immerse post-structuralism, et al, into a setting of passion--female passion in opposition to male desire.24

Since I have been exposed to both patriarchy and colonialism--the rituals of initiation testify to these facts--and thus been trained in Tango and postmodernism, I have tried to reveal a sequence of reinforcement between the two as well as their rupture by using one against the other. On the one hand, the Latest Steps are a new round of the First Steps, a repetition of an experience of subjection that had been foreseen in the First Steps. ("Always the same story ... Don Beto was not worried. He
knew that sooner or later I would fall into new embraces and endless rebellions.

This repetition confirms the fatalism that I have internalized through both Tango and postmodernism. On the other hand, the rupture of this repetition is performed by using one against the other: Tango to jump on postmodernism and poststructuralist-deconstructive-postfeminist strategies to question the Tango. For this purpose, I do not follow the political agenda of either one. I apply some of their strategies; strategies that, by the way, are extremely similar. Compare the following teachings:

When lady luck, failing and failing, drops you standing there, the indifference of the world—who is deaf and mute—you will only feel then! You'll see that everything is a lie, you'll see that nothing is love, that the world doesn't care about anything ... it just turns ... turns ... (Discépolo 1977: "Yira ... Yira ... ").

We should not imagine that the world presents us with a legible face, leaving us merely to decipher it; it does not work hand in glove with what we already know; there is no prediscursive fate disposing the world in our favor (Foucault 1971).

It's the same to be straight or crooked ... ignorant, wise or a thief, generous or chiseling! ... All is equal! None is better! A donkey's the same as a chaired professor! There are no rankings nor losers, the immoral have made us all equal ... It's the same if you're a priest, mattress-stuffer, the king of clubs, poker-faced or a stowaway (Discépolo 1977: "Cambalache").

Stupidity says ... "Here or there, it's always the same thing ... It's all so senseless--life, women, death! How ridiculous this stupidity!" But in concentrating on this boundless monotony, we find the sudden illumination of multiplicity itself—with nothing at its center, at its highest point, or beyond it (Foucault 1977a).

In addition, the choreography of the Tango emphasizes movements that resemble very closely the deconstructive/poststructuralist writing
strategies: splitting, inversion, displacement, decentering, juxtaposition, transposition, silence ... (Derrida 1976). And in both cases, what gives particular character to them is the combination of the dancing/writing steps so as to generate tension, conflict, a play of domination and resistance that never ends. Tango and poststructuralism, et al, also share a focus on marginality, one coming from the fringes of society and the other looking at the margins of the text and the silences surrounding discourse (Certeau 1986).

Poststructuralism refreshed my memories of Tango and provided me a scholarly discourse to write about it; at the same time, Tango allowed me to perform poststructuralist strategies quite comfortably—with the sense of ownership, of dancing the Tango—and it pushed me into a critique of the multivocal, multilayered game. Postmodern uses of Passion is actually a Tango about Postmodernism; a Tango in prose, melodramatic like the Tango. It is a Tango account of Postmodernism, as the First Steps are a poststructuralist/feminist account of Tango (caricatures, representations suited to what I wish to emphasize, both ways). Postmodernism is a universalizing, naturalizing and totalizing version of the cynicism and fatalism displayed by the Tango. This is what I have tried to express in the Latest Steps in Tango.

My "attack" on Postmodernism is an attack on an imperial attitude. The promise of liberation offered by poststructuralism, et al, is a dispassionate academic exercise practiced with no awareness of the existence of a world beyond texts.
In faithful conformity to poststructuralist linguistic theory, the past as "referent" finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts (Jameson 1984).

Focusing exclusively on strategies of deconstruction with no moorings, no history, it contributes to the status quo and to the discourse of scientificity: no goals, no values, no passion, no purpose. It gets lost, narcissistically, in its strategic practices. The free play of differences for the sake of exposing multiple voices is a liberation flaw for those whose voices are weak.

If the postmodernist emphasis on multivocality leads to a denial of the continued existence of a hierarchy of discourse, the material and historical links between cultures can be ignored, with all voices becoming equal, each telling only an individualized story. Then the history of the colonial, for example, can be read as independent of that of the colonizer. Such readings ignore or obscure exploitation and power differentials and, therefore, offer no ground to fight oppression and effect change (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 1990).

This project of freedom does not offer anything different from the liberatory promises of the "free-market" development proposal. Technocratically speaking, a "free-market" economy should work fairly and for the mutual benefit of all participants; historically speaking, this is an impossibility. For some this might mean that the "model" has some problems, while they continue accumulating capital and power; for the others it means continued economic regression and dependency. The poststructuralist "model" of power in continuous flow disputed among controlling discourses and pockets of resistance provokes a similar effect: a sense of total disempowerment for the ones in resistance.
Foucault often writes as if power constitutes the very individuals upon whom it operates. [...] If individuals were wholly constituted by the power-knowledge regime Foucault describes, it would make no sense to speak of resistance to discipline at all. Foucault seems on the verge of depriving us of a vocabulary in which to conceptualize the nature and meaning of those periodic refusals of control that, just as much as the imposition of control, mark the course of human history (Bartky 1988).

The postmodern discourse cannot take sides, lost in its loyalty to the consistency of inconsistency, *diffrance*, multivocality, relativity. Postmodernism is a borderline discourse in that it destabilizes power and provokes the outrage of the rationalist conservatives. But to show the instability is not the same as destabilizing. It is a discourse of liberal dissidents, of loosening-up. But it is not a discourse of liberation. It does not take the necessary risks in favor of the ones in resistance.²⁵ The problematic outcome of an exercise of unmasking power, of showing it's weak points, without going any further--taking risks--is that it contributes to the awareness of the powerful. Radicalizing Academia is not the same as putting intellectual skills to work for decolonization. Postmodernism is a crude description of late capitalism, an account of a capitalist crisis. As such, in Jameson’s words, postmodernism performs an "abolition of critical distance" where the culture and its criticism are one and the same. "To engage within postmodernism even in the form of a detached survey or of a negative critique, however hostile, is to become part of it" (Connor 1989).

Postmodernism is too caught up in the flow of power controlled by the ones in power. It produces and "inflation of discourse" that accumulates obscurity in self-validating spirals (Newman quoted in Connor 1989). Cultural critique is replaced with critical culture--hence
postmodernism as the "cultural dominant" (Jameson 1984) or as "intellectual fashion" (Mitsuhiro 1989). Those who would decenter authority, center authority in their own authorship.

For all their rhetoric of "transgression," "subversion," and the "exploding" of realist categories and conventions, few postmodernists have been so reflexive as to examine the institutional advantages that their decenteredness confers [...] I suspect that adopting a radically "reflexive," postmodernist stance has itself become a kind of orthodoxy or at least institutionally legitimate in many leading departments (Sangren 1988).

When all is said, and not done, postmodernism is a successful academic movement. As such, it reproduces and supports the politics of patriarchy and colonialism.

For an Ather (female, "Third Worlder," other) like myself, the politics of poststructuralism, et al, are dangerously paralyzing; and paralysis for the ones in resistance--marginals, oppressed, subalterns--means further regression. For intellectual wanderers of the textual world, Foucault's account of the "heterotopia," the centerless universe, the situation of "pure difference" is a radical proposal (see Foucault 1970 (preface) and 1977b). For the rest, and especially the Third Worlders such as the protagonists of Cambalache (Discepolo 1977 quoted above) it is no novelty. A sophisticated scholarly description of the mess and the mud we are in, does not provide us with insights for liberation. It rather confirms our pessimism and our oppression by turning it into something universal and natural--discursively natural. Naturally colonial and patriarchal. (Lacan makes his contribution to the latter.)

Hartstock suggests that the postmodern view that truth and knowledge are contingent and multiple may be seen to act as a
truth claim itself, a claim that undermines the ontological status of the subject at the very time when women and non-Western peoples have begun to claim themselves as subject (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 1990).

In the "free-market" of textual politics an Ather can be either ignored or can participate as an "exotic." Following Escobar (1988), exotics are "not only those who are on the outside but, contrary to the esoterics, those who look from 'down-up'"; those who provide the feminine passion that keeps the imperial world going in spiralized waves of male desire. The free flow of power occurs in a patriarchal and imperialist world where the flow is rather arrested and quite clearly under male and Western control.

Postmodernism has recreated the hopes in a "radical intellectualism" already questioned in latinoamericano forums in the 1960s (e.g. Gunder Frank 1968). The insightful outcomes of these debates on the social responsibilities of intellectuals were burnt up by the Military Juntas of the 1970s and forgotten/denied by the intellectuals of the "politics of fear and silence" (Corradi 1979). I have had access to these documents in a U.S. university and in English. Is it enough to apply a postmodern reading of these events and conclude that the dominant discourse, the technology of power, has silenced these voices and that they operate on multiple levels including self-subjectification? To me it is more important to know that the empire keeps our history, dictates our history, prevents us from having access to it and threatens us if we remember. The feminine and feminized "exotics" perform on imperial stages ...

Postmodernism reminded me of the Tango, of my place in it as the "milonguita," this time as an exotic "milonguita" exiled in an imperial
academic cabaret. Now I rebel against the identity of a docile body
dancing Tangos on the imperial stages of the world. I rebel against both
my subordination as a "milonguita" and as an "exotic," I turn one against
the other, I resist.

The danger for feminists is that "in deconstructing categories of
meaning, we deconstruct not only patriarchal definitions of
"womanhood" and "truth" but also the very categories of our own
analysis--"women" and "feminism" and "oppression" (Nancy Cott

I refuse to deconstruct oppression (female, colonial, racial, or classist).

My present explains my past. The milonguita is already a product
of Colonialism. Even the most "authentic" one is just like the Tango that
did not get to be "authentic" before Paris retrieved it from the brothels of
the Rio de la Plata. The colonization of the milonguita adopts the shape
of patriarchal colonialism exerted by both colonized and colonial male
partners. My decolonizing steps are the kickings in the midst of that
patriarchal and colonial dance. There are no other dances available for
me.26

Athers are both, the "exotics" of the colonial discourse--including
Academia and its new postmodern offsprings--and the milonguita of the
Tangos. I have learnt both languages; and using them--I have no other
ones left--I curse them back. Just like Caliban ... No. Like the women
of his tribe, the cannibal females that Shakespeare and Retamar forget
to identify, I am decolonizing myself by biting my own head.
Feminist Uses of Third World Women

Every feminist who deserves the title has gone through the ritual of watching at least one documentary on Third World women's subordination to some kind of native patriarchy. In an efficient time span of twenty minutes, the spectators are flown from the Bolivian highlands to the deserts of Arabia with some stop-overs in African villages, Brazilian brothels, and Central American war scenes. Third World women's lives are briefly but effectively displayed in a dramatic fast-paced sequence, exhibiting a collection of "barbaric" traditions. Female bodies and souls are shown as subjected to the very thresholds of inhumanity. Blatant macho practices, veiling, infibulation, prostitution, and violence parade hastily before the eyes of an increasingly indignant audience. As an epilogue, the room remains in silent tension loaded with shared undercurrents of rage and guilt. The ritual is over.

After going through this experience on several occasions, and realizing that it is not restricted to films but, to the contrary, is frequently reproduced in books, courses, conferences and research projects on Third World women, I have seriously wondered about the meaning of this feminist practice. Some would say that it is related to feminine masochism, and the discussion moves on to whether this is an innate characteristic or the result of socialization. Others would argue that it is a painful but necessary step on the road to self-awareness—the awareness of women's universal subordination—or a part of the process of consciousness-raising towards global feminism. Unsatisfied with
these overencompassing and seemingly clean-cut explanations, I remain wondering whom this exercise is supposed to benefit, and at what cost.

In the name of consciousness-raising of a shared subordination, feminism has been caught up in the practice of reproducing Third World women's reification as exotic objects. The intentions are different, but Third World women are often represented the same way in Women Studies courses as in National Geographic. The willingness to help Third World women overcome local patriarchies has ended up reinforcing stereotypes of Third World uncivilized traditions and of Third World women's passivity and ignorance.

Third World women are addressed by Western or Westernized feminists full of good intentions, offering their sisterly hands to fight universal subordination. But in the same move we see ourselves depicted as victims of backwardness, barbarism and underdevelopment who need to be enlightened about these very facts so that we can join in global feminist reaction. Thus we are trapped in a double bind, and our indignation and frustrations become doubled. We become obsessively suspicious--paranoid. We smell betrayal and violence behind misrepresentations and insensitivity. Global feminism starts looking like a new trick of Western imperialism. And we resist. We resist being converted to a faith--feminist consciousness--because to do so would mean risking further alienation.

This does not mean that we do not recognize our subordination as women; we have suffered it for a long time. But why should we join other abused women who use our "exotic," caricatured pain to raise their own consciousness? Why do Western feminists avoid dwelling on their own
victimization and feel the urge to inappropriately stir the wounds of others? We can show our wounds to each other, we can even share healing practices, but to use someone else's pain to cover up one's own is sick and abusive; to undermine our complex rebellions by rejecting or attempting to co-opt our efforts is a long way from sisterhood.

Some of us Third World women have started to voice our discontent with both Western feminism and native patriarchy. But the necessary ears seem not to be ready to hear us. We are found guilty of treason on both counts. Local patriarchies accuse us of selling out to Western imperialism while Western feminists accuse us of misleadingly representing Third World women. The Western feminists find their own stereotypes about Third World women more compelling than the scenarios presented by Third World women themselves. Vocal Third World women are dismissed and marginalized on the grounds of using Western feminist tools to attack local patriarchies, of belonging to privileged elites within the Third World, and of exploiting their exoticism by constituting themselves as scholarly divas who unfairly compete with Western feminists for scarce academic resources. Thus Third World women, who speak up for a brand of feminism that challenges imperialist practices embedded in Western feminism, are chastised and judged as sleazy exploiters of both, the rest of the Third World women whom they claim to represent and of Western feminists whose teachings have helped them to confront native patriarchies.

There are no ears ready for Third World women's voices. We continue to be carefully inspected as untrustworthy candidates for feminism and for our own cultures. Is she brown enough? Is she poor
enough? Is she Thirdworldish enough for her voice to be legitimate, her words to be taken seriously, her claims to deserve respect? Either too exotic or not exotic enough, too Westernized or not Westernized enough, there seems to be no legitimate place for our conflictive unfit protests.

**Female Intellectual Invaders**

We (*latinoamericano* intellectuals) have been so thoroughly steeped in colonialism that we read with real respect only those anticolonialist authors disseminated from the metropolis (*Fernández Retamar 1989: 18*).

*Fernández Retamar,* whom I shamefully read in English in a recent edition foreworded by Jameson, is one of the most powerful contemporary authors on decolonization because of his clarity. More than a revolutionary writer, Retamar is writing from within a revolution. He is an intellectual in Cuba; an intellectual engaged in an ongoing decolonizing process among many other revolutionaries working in the many dimensions that such a process takes. He has the strength of the ones that although in power today, clearly remember that it has not always been so, and that their power is fragile; the strength of ambition without arrogance; but perhaps more than that the helpful reminder of the U.S. imperial power eyes piercing his back.

For an intellectual in the location of Retamar, using the tools of the colonizer and representing the colonized are more a challenge than a dilemma. These are questions to be faced and acted upon on a daily basis in the practice of an intellectual counter-hegemony. The question is not whether to use or avoid using the tools of the colonizer, whether to represent the colonized or leave them alone. The colonized have been
and are continuously being represented, homogenized, stereotyped and appropriated by the colonizers. The tools of the colonizer are already tools of our own. Both colonizers and colonized know about the significance of these facts. "The white man had the anguish that I was escaping from him, and that I was taking something with me" (Fanon 1952). The colonized take the tools of the colonizer, breaks them into pieces, inquisitive to find the source of his power. The colonized discards some parts, overlooks others, she puts something else together—not a tool, an attitude. The question is how to develop an anti-colonial attitude, a subversive questioning of these very questions, a "complicitous criticism" (Mario Benedetti's terms, see notes in Fernández Retamar 1989).

A "Third World" intellectual is a colonized intellectual. "Third World," colonized intellectuals are not necessarily anti-colonial. An anti-colonial intellectual is an already colonized intellectual struggling for decolonization. Colonized but stubbornly anti-colonial, these intellectuals shake up their own colonialism in order to constantly reshape a decolonizing practice. Sometimes anti-colonialism takes the shape of searching for the roots, the origins, the pre-colonial; but history has been already colonized and the roots have been fixed, crystallized, exoticized in the colonial memory (Fanon 1961). Other times the anti-colonial search leads to the shaping of an ideal future, and finds itself contaminated by either the "development" or the "proletarian community" colonial dreams. In the search for decolonization, the anti-colonial colonized intellectual cannot ignore the borders of the colonial discourse, she bounces against them, attempts to devour them, falls
back frequently, bruised and intoxicated. Not only the problem of both "using the tools of the colonizer" and "claiming to represent the colonized," but also the problem of using the tools of the colonizer that represent the colonized. It is not a dilemma but a fact.

The colonial tools already represent the colonized; colonialism goes hand in hand with the practice of representation; representation is a tool of colonialism in itself. A conquest for the benefit of the natives; civilization for the good of the barbarians; development as aid for the poor; revolution in the name of peasants and workers; global feminism for the awareness of "Third World" women; postmodernism for the enlightenment of the postcolonials, etc. Colonialism counts always on a vanguard and in the vanguard, intellectuals find their place. Thus Edward Said, in his devastating critique of Western anthropologists' representation/appropriation of the colonized cannot escape assuming the representation of the colonized whose self-determination he so vehemently defends (Said 1989). Fernández Retamar, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Jose Martí, Eduardo Galeano, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ernesto Guevara and many other anti-colonial intellectuals could be found guilty of these same flaws, namely of representing with colonial tools the colonized, and hence, reproducing colonialism. **Stop.** This is in itself a colonial, totalizing interpretation. An interpretation not capable of recognizing purposes, audiences, locations, specificities. The represented themselves can often tell the difference between a pro-colonial and an anti-colonial representation and the acceptance or rejection of being represented is based on this fact. I do not mind, and quite to the contrary, am extremely grateful whenever an intellectual
succeeds in giving me back some dignity, some control over my life; whenever a claim to power is made in my name. I am all ready for it. These kind of representations, anti-colonial representations, are actually strategies of counter-representation: representations that challenge the colonial representation/appropriation to which I am always already subjected. All kinds of challenges to that representation are welcome, including counter-representations. I know the rules of the game, in this case of the need for a "critical mass" in order to make an argument sound. I cannot completely redefine the game, I cannot avoid playing it either; hence, I aim for a better position from which I can challenge more. And I hope that my language does not convey the impression that I am talking about personal preferences. I am talking about colonialism.

Paraphrasing Said, I am talking about the constant reinforcement of "the dreadful secondariness of people, colonized people, fixed in zones of dependency and peripherality, stigmatized in the designation of underdeveloped, less-developed, developing states, ruled by a superior, developed, or metropolitan colonizer. A world divided into betters and lessers, where the category of lesser beings has expanded, where the colonized are a great many different, but inferior things, in many different places, at many different times" (quoted and paraphrased from Said 1989: 207).

For the colonized or "Third World" people, the problem is not that one of representation but rather of not having enough anti-colonial representatives, strong anti-colonial voices, and among these, intellectuals with anti-colonial commitments.
James Petras, in a recent and very depressing article, addresses the decadence of the latino intellectuals. He describes the impact of the increasing economic recession and dependency of the region on the politics in which the intellectuals have engaged. Intellectual work in América Latina is becoming increasingly co-opted by international development funding and, as a consequence, the kind of research—including topics and methodologies—has become more and more alienated from the popular movements and alienating for the intellectuals themselves. In order to make his point, Petras offers a simplified typology of the intellectuals' possible roles: "organic intellectual" versus "institutional" or "research-institute-oriented" intellectuals. (The latter is an adaptation of Gramsci's notion of "traditional intellectual" to the current latino circumstances.) The "organic intellectuals" of the 1960s, in the midst of self-financing and self-sustaining hardships, managed to integrate their work with the social struggles of their countries. The "institutional intellectuals" of the 1980s "live and work in an externally dependent world, sheltered by payments in hard currency and income derived independently of local economic circumstances" (Petras 1990a: 106). Having started my university studies in Argentina in the beginning of the 1970s, I can corroborate Petras appreciation of this turning point in intellectuals' roles and lives. However, perhaps his disappointment and certainly his decision to unmask the intellectual entrepreneurs of today, precludes him from carefully analyzing the turning point in itself: the military regimes, the slashing and burning repression, the "politics of silence" (term borrowed from Corradi 1979). True, latino intellectuals have been
lured by the development industry and the academic multinationals, but at least some have also been refugees, exiles, and survivors, and all have been victims of the military terror. (A Symposium on Fear and its politico-socio-psychological consequences was held in São Paulo in the mid 1980s to analyze the devastating effects of what is considered one of the undisputable victories of the military rules in América Latina.)

The problems and issues that in the course of development in some central countries have been dealt with discursively appear, in the context of peripheral development, as unacceptable challenges to the status quo. [...] The discursive regression here characterized as the "politics of silence" is more extreme in countries where the dismantlement has not been followed by sustained accumulation. Here cultural destruction is but a chapter in a process of national disintegration from which some might never re-emerge (Corradi 1979: 73-74).

Of course, the politics of fear and silence was not directed exclusively towards the intellectuals. Everyone was wounded to a greater or lesser degree. As a consequence, the potentially "organic intellectuals" of the redemocratization period, on top of coping with their own internalized censorship regarding openly anti-colonial and revolutionary attitudes, had to face the fear, mistrust, and apathy of the people, of immobilized "social movements."

Petras is right in pointing out the political exhaustion of the latino "institutional" intellectuals and their reconciliation with the pro-development, technocratic scientificity demanded by the overseas funding agencies. But his idealization of the popular movements misses the tragic fact of the impact of the socio-economic regression and of political repression on the rest of the latino people. Everyone has been dollarized; everyone has to deal with a cynical fatalist attitude towards
politics. In this sense, intellectuals are always "organic." This is not to say that the current intellectual entrepreneurs should not be held responsible for their financial manipulations, especially when in order to receive funds from overseas they promise enlightenment and relief for "women," "natives," and the "poorest of the poor." Rather my opinion is that too much has been invested in intellectuals; the magnitude of both hopes and disappointments are a sign of a belief in a "vanguardism" of which I am suspicious. Intellectuals in the sense of enlightened vanguards are a colonial creation, a tool of the colonizer; a tool of the colonizer that has come to represent the colonized.

A "Third World" intellectual is not necessarily anticolonial, and a vanguard might be thoroughly colonized into "vanguardism." In addition, an anti-colonial vanguard is not necessarily or exclusively or mainly made up of intellectuals. Pro-colonial intellectuals may have co-opted the revolutionary vanguard's role. Being a part of the vanguard, of the masses, or of the stragglers is a question of strategy. In situations of emergency, like the ones of América Latina, we need a clear anti-colonial mind. This might not be the mind of the intellectuals. (As Gunder Frank (1968) observes, "revolutionary intellectuals" are not the same as "intellectual revolutionaries;" the former are not, in fact, revolutionaries at all.)

If the goal is decolonization and you want to push for it, the fact of participating as an intellectual or not is irrelevant. Intellectuals must come to understand how "organic" they already are. No matter how much they try to distinguish themselves from the rest of the people, they share with them the daily problems of colonialism, the fearful fact of
being already colonized, of reproducing colonialism, and the responsibility of struggling against it. Intellectuals do have specific responsibilities: voicing the position of particular sectors of their society; analyzing the specific conditions under which particular social projects can develop; providing arguments that articulate effectively specific demands with values and actions. All of these responsibilities are political, whether undertaken in the "real" world, in the world of texts, or in both. Political positioning is embedded in the role of the intellectuals for intellectuals always represent, by their own choice or by the use that others make of them, a dominant or a subaltern sector/project. Intellectuals are privileged pawns of the knowledge/power struggle. But intellectuals are not more enlightened than anyone else; those ghostly lights are the signals of colonialism. And the anti-colonial intellectual should constantly question her/his homage to intellectuality, and her/his intellectualizing practices. Remember, these are the tools of the colonizer; they shouldn't represent us (those whom I am representing, since I know they share my anti-colonial concerns).

Us, silenced but not mute, speaking louder and louder, rumor or roar, so thick, so full, so pouring rain and tormenta. We don't ask each other anymore "can the subaltern speak?" Now we wonder with hunger who will listen to us. Deaf world of unwriting writers, not daring to look the hybrid "invaders" in the eye. First World flooded by mojados; existential nightmare of postmodern property holders, their identities under threat by the proliferation of this A/Otherness, the passionate "exotics" of their own creation; legal and illegal immigrants supposed to do your dirty work, thinking or sweeping streets your way and in silence.
Trespassing your borders, your identity at the "core;" installing ourselves in you up to a point where you believe that there is an Other in every self. A/Others that you can no longer control and now you wish to join. Apologizing for your dark thoughts, still attributed to us--women on each side of the male borders of the world. To our hair, threaded in the hair of how many women? How many "Third World" women, how many women speaking thirdworldish in colors, how many, moving rebelliously following untamable thoughts?

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the "third-world women" caught between tradition and modernization (Spivak 19989a: 306).

Resisting through how many bodies, how many, in one single woman? Stretching her blood through so many lives carried by one body that seems to reproduce itself infinitely, mothering with the same belly that dances for the pleasure of her beloved lover, Farideh, of the imperial gaze and of herself. One life and so many bodies, Salome, Raj, so many, dragging ourselves from one continent to another, by our own feet, so fast, that we can hardly feel the ocean wetting our toes, Lehua. How many bodies, can you tell me? Surviving with the same blood inexplicable violence, layer over layer from the ancestral to the present, only because you know exactly where you are going. Mary, Nahua. Gerry, never lost except when you leave your wise thoughts in pidgin, battered pidgin and still wise of yours, moving with that only body hooked to so many lives by our transgressive bloods, Adella, dropping from your fairy-tales into my Tango-tales, our bodies almost adrift in the
forest where we find our way only when it gets dark. *Saba*. And your
gauze scarfs, wild in the air, entangling all these brown bodies, rescued
together. Female bodies. How many? In color reciprocity, *Dawna*,
struggling in a shaded, clear voice to join a mismatching skin, *Susan*.
How many women, *Jeanne*, and how many bodies? *Beth*, count them for
us aloud, in your singing voice; are there as many as the dishes piling­
up every day in the kitchen sink? *Aixa*, you, glancing at female beauty
through your fintertips, re-making how many of us, again, out of clay?
How many lives? How many bodies? *Pam*, you must know! Your lips,
so readily red, awaiting to speak in friendly ears. *Vidhu*, and your sister
and all our other sisters, carved in your plays of moaning, screaming
women with so many bodies and how many lives. *Petra*, searching up
there for all the life that is right here in your rowdy, trustworthy blood.
Passionate blood, *Cherrie*.

But what of passion? I hunger to ask. There's got to be
something more than hand-to-mouth survival. [...] The right to
*passion* expressed in our own cultural tongue and movements
(*Moraga 1983: 136*).

Knowing, like you say, through persistent hunches that there is no
betrayal in *la familia*. It's in our memory, kept in our blood through so
many lives, in so many bodies, in *la familia*. The ritual of kissing every
time we come and go, finding *familia*, blood ties, with loyal friends in
suffering and celebration, *Cindy*. Sharing contagious words, coming out
of colonized mouths, confused by our skins. Contagious bodies, shaken
through dances of common blood. *Mambo, jambo, hula, Tango*. I can
hardly wait to get home, *para decirle a la Cris, a Moni, a Elena, a Analia,*
a la Nue y a las demás lo que acabo de descubrir y que no nos para nadie. Nadie. Tantas mujeres, peleando, como nosotras, como con cuerpo latino, contagiadas, como en malón.
Preface

1. I have committed the double sin of excerpting fragments from Tango lyrics and of translating them. Jeff Tobin has kindly done the editing. Much of the lunfardo (slang of Buenos Aires) has been lost and the result is a tamed version of the originals.

2. "Vuelvo al Sur," written in the 1980s, is an homage to the young generation of argentinos whose personal and political consciousness, desires, and hopes the military dictatorship (1976-1983) attempted to exterminate.

3. Refer to the Glossary for all Spanish terms and phrases.

4. I use the term exile to designate the up-rootedness experienced by over two and a half million argentinos (of a total population of thirty-two million) for political and economic reasons. I acknowledge with respect the important differences between cases of voluntary migration and those by implicit or explicit imposition under life threat. However, I claim (with due clarification) the importance of extending the meaning of exile to encompass those displaced from their land and culture due to the playings of the global political economy, for whom marginality, deterritorialization and being/longing turned into an unsolvable questioning; and this, whether at home or abroad. (See Parcero 1985).

5. In this description of Tango I have not taken into account the different stages of its historical evolution, according to which in a first period, the Tango was gay like the milonga and only became saddened after the introduction of the bandoneón and its sounds of lament. The Tango-canción genre, where the focus on the lyrics displaced the emphasis previously given to the dance, might have also contributed to this effect. For a careful analysis of these and other distinctions see Assunção (1984) and Salas (1986).

Chapter One

1. For example, Bertolucci’s Last Tango in Paris; and Solanas’ Tangos: The Exile of Gardel and South.

2. For an interesting discussion of this subject, carried through the analysis of particular Tango authors, see Ulla (1986), Romano (1986), Rivera (1986), Ford (1986), and Matamoro (1986).

3. Horacio Ferrer believes that the survival of the Tango has to do precisely with this commitment on the part of the artists to maintain their political militancy separate from the Tango poetry. Although many
Tango artists were well known for their political positions, they have seldom let their political positions transpire into their creations (Ferrer, personal communication, January 1991).

4. Horacio Ferrer does a magnificent job of clarifying the convergence of four arts in the Tango: music, dance, lyrics and poetry (Ferrer 1980a).

5. Tango has gone through dramatic changes from its emergence in the 1880s to the present, participating—as popular culture does—in major argentino and global developments. It is nonsensical to speak of one Tango or of a consistent Tango, free of contradictions. However, there is an ironic, sensual, sentimental, pessimistic, nostalgic, melodramatic tone to it (each of these emphasized in different periods) that bounces, rhythmically/aggressively, between defiance and conformism.

6. Feminists have made analogous observations regarding theory and resistance. See, for example, Cixous (1976) and Kristeva (1984).

7. For a contemporary version of these political positions, where the calls for extermination of the indigenous people is replaced by the "assimilation of the indigenous culture," see Mario Vargas Llosa—a recent candidate to the presidency of Perú—(1990).

8. For an interpretation of Argentina’s political culture and its problem of instability in which these terms appear in a reversed order of importance see Calvert and Calvert (1989).

Chapter Two

1. For an insightful analysis of the emergence of modern nationalism and fixed notions of manliness in Europe (Germany and Great Britain in particular) see Mosse (1985).

2. Noemí Ulla in her "Tango, rebelion y nostalgia" also devotes a couple of pages to the topic of machismo in Tango lyrics, although her concern seems to be that of comforting and calming down those male critiques worried about the belittling of the male image in view of the proliferation of the "abandoned ruffian" plot in the lyrics (1967: 75-76).

3. Estela dos Santos establishes a rough figure of 80% to 20% taking into account the audience of the Tango shows at the theaters and radio studios of Buenos Aires, before the popularization of the TV (early 1960s). Julie Taylor, on the basis of her field-work in Argentina, states a contrasting opinion: "Active interest in the (Tango) dance complex appears to be entirely male; women develop an interest in Tango only if they develop interest in an hombre tanguero" (1976: 289). I do not wish to discuss her ethnographic authority, but just point out that this might be true at the time she carried-out her research during the 1960s and her particular interest in Tango clubs.
4. I "resist" those interpretations that claim to the universal truth of a feminine sado-masochistic complex in order to explain the violence inflicted on our bodies. Such interpretations are in themselves, one more violence to be resisted.

5. See Mazziotti (1989) and Sarlo (1985) on women viewers of latino-style soap operas and readers of latinoamericano versions of harlequin romances.

6. The dynamics of power are actually the reverse of those we have been taught by physics. It is never a line, it never runs straight. It is neither transparent nor consistent. Perhaps "power" is the wrong metaphor altogether to address the kind of struggle that I am talking about. Perhaps "power," as an image, contributes to cover-up the operation of violence and the experiences of embodied pain and search for healing.

7. Consider Raymond Williams' troubling observation: "It can be persuasively argued that all or nearly all initiatives and contributions, even when they take on manifestly alternative or oppositional forms, are in practice tied to the hegemonic: that the dominant culture, so to say, at once produces and limits its own forms of counter-culture" (excerpted in Marcus 1990: 393). I would add that "it can be persuasively argued," but that does not make it true.

8. For a comprehensive description of the hectic, convulsive times lived at the Rio de la Plata when the "birth" of Tango occurs see Assunção (1984).

9. After almost fifty years of inter-provincial wars since the independence from Spain, the unification of the country was established in 1852. The federal alliance of provinces was brought into the hegemony of Buenos Aires (declared federal capital) in the 1880s, under the pressure of political leaders allied to British economic interests (Justo 1989).

10. In defining scarcity one is always faced with the problem of how the needs are created. Horacio Salas reports that during this period (1860s-1890s), the city of Buenos Aires had from 60,000 to a 100,000 less women than men. This demographic unbalance might have allocated a precious value to women turned into a "scarce resource" as these men sensed that they could not hope to hold on ("embrace") to anything else than women. (See Salas 1986).

11. For an exhaustive compilation of the debates on "who" (race/class) introduced "what" into the Tango choreography see Natale (1984).

12. Tango lyrics do not deal exclusively with love relationships and women in Tango are not exclusively lovers. I have chosen to deal with passional plots and women as lovers because these Tango themes are, in my view, more closely related to the stakes of the dance and its displays of sensuality. For a comprehensive analysis of Tango themes see Villarino (1965); for a very interesting analysis of women's roles in
Tango, pivoting around the figure of the mother, see Ulla (1982 and 1986).

13. Jean Franco together with other feminist critics believes that this difference (between being a dead and a living object) is superfluous. In analyzing both male and female Latin American authors and the different shades of mobility or creative existence that they allow to their women characters, Franco's conclusion is that in the best of (literary) worlds, women are allowed at the most to make a spectacle or parody of themselves (Franco 1984). According to this approach, the dominant "discourse" on women is so complete and pervasive, that all attempts at resistance end up feeding the monster as in a double bind or sadomasochistic relationship. Even oversimplified, as I am presenting it here, this account makes a strong good point. However, I am reluctant to buy into single tailed endings. The operation of power--both in its imposition and resistance strategies--permanently reproduces subjection and rebellion. At least as long as the subjected ones are present and alive. To me, this makes the difference between a dead and a living object.

14. Vacarezza, through these lines, attempted to provide a recipe for a successful saínete (a popular local theater genre), in which local characters and scenes should be taken into account. Popular theater plays included Tango choreographies and music before Tango lyrics developed on their own account as Tango-canción (Tango songs) (Salas 1986; Ordaz 1977).

15. This same perspective is reproduced by Jorge Luis Borges in his short stories "The Intruder," "Streetcorner Man," and "Rosendo's Tale." Women are speechless, and the reader never gets to know about their thoughts or feelings. In reference to "The Intruder" (La Intrusa), Borges himself remarks in a commentary in the English edition that the story has actually only two characters though the plot apparently calls for three (1970: 278). These are the two brothers who struggle over the possession of Julia's body and murder her in the end. Furthermore, in his "History of the Tango," Borges refers extensively to the male bonding focus in the Tango genre. He chooses the concept of an epic of courage to synthesize the spirit of the Tango, and tracks down through Western history the roots of "the belief that a fight may be a celebration" (1984: 104).

16. For a detailed description of these bars, dancing "academies," "cafes," etc., see Assunção (1984) and Novati and Cuello (1980).

17. Garçonneries where the apartments usually shared by single young wealthy men devoted to parties with prostitutes, mistresses and lovers. They did not reside permanently there.

18. Pascual Contursi (1917) was the lyricist who inaugurated the followed topic of the whining abandoned ruffian/pimp in Tango.
19. Albert Londres writes about the seductive practices of the criollo pimps, so successful that they managed to take away from the French cajfans and from the polish prostitution network their best (most remunerating) prostitutes. Criollo pimps were considered astute, effeminate and sleazy even by the pimps of other nationalities, since they got hold of women to provide for their living without risking in the white slave traffic and without paying for their transference from the hands of their former pimps. Pimps of all nationalities aimed at "running" four women to make a "decent" living (Londres 1928).

20. References to racial differences fade in Tango lyrics at some point, but far from showing the disappearance of racial tensions, they communicate their displacement by, equally racist, ethnic tensions. Milonguitas are shown working hard at acquiring French looks and manners, more refined and "whiter" than the ones of their own mixed (darkened) ethnicities. There are more references in ruffianesque Tango lyrics to French women dancers/prostitutes than to women of any other ethnicity and culture. The sexual/sensual stigma of the "dark" women was being contested by this equally prejudiced attribute attached to the French. But it was a contest (a new tension) and not a replacement; French/whiter sensual women were more distinguished and more expensive ("White slaves") milongueras than any of the rest. This better market-price of female Frenchness in the sexual market generated imitation on the part of the darker/non-French ones.

21. This is an extremely rough calculation I have made over 500 Tango lyrics. It is by necessity inexact due to the fact that no exhaustive compilation has yet been made. The recently opened (July 1990) Academia Nacional del Tango has collected 35,000 titles only in Argentina and Uruguay (Horacio Ferrer, personal communication, January 1991).


23. See the reference in the cabaret scene of Los dientes del perro in Horacio Ferrer (1980a).

24. The choreography of the Tango dance and the Tango "fashion" (low cut black dresses, tight skirts with deep slits, etc.) create this atmosphere. In order to make this idea more striking, some modern Tango choreographers have included scenes suggestive of rape (Graciela Daniele and Jim Lewis quoted in Bilderback 1989). The motives, experiences, feelings, all the intimate or private world of the rapist is pushed aside by focusing on the potential provocation of the women or, in the best of cases, in what happened to the woman's body. Women's intimacy is more "powerful" than that of men because it is displayed on the surface, on their bodies. Women in the Tango show their bodies and their intimacy, men talk about it. Women's intimacy is more appealing, more intimate if you will. Pornography is another good example: women's eroticism is more erotic; female nudity is more arousing. This is not an essentialist statement but a description of how a macho culture operates.
25. For an analysis of the role of the prostitute as a class "broker" see Peter Brooks' article (1980) in which he establishes interesting connections between sexuality, money, and storytelling.

Chapter Three

1. In this analysis I have been following loosely as well as confronting unorthodoxally the Lacanian fmdings of Mulvey (1988a; 1988b), Doane (1987; 1988), Silvermann (1986; 1989), Owens (1983), and others.

2. For a similar understanding of the "exotic" see Rousseau and Porter (1990).

   The noble savage--a beautiful image for the white man's collective guilt--was exalted in many ways, as Turks, Incas and Persians were indiscriminately thrown into one opéra-ballet. [...] What finally made this opéra-ballet a historic event was not only Rameau's new style of music, but also the dancing, with its accent on sensuous excitement.

4. For a similar, although less radical, analysis of the capitalist/consumerist appropriation of Third World rhythms see Wallis and Malm (1984).

5. The minuet had been developed in the Imperial Court of Louis XIV and, as such, was regarded as a reactionary, anti-bourgeois practice after the French Revolution. For the political implications of the minuet see Leppert (1988).

6. For a brilliant analysis of the different factions/interests playing in the anti-bourgeois reactions at this time in European history see Raymond Williams (1989).

7. For a detailed description of these events from the point of view of social history see Laver (1966).

8. For a description of national consolidation in Europe from the point of view of the mastery of technological progress and mastery over the Rest of the world see Burchell (1966).

9. The British published a variety of travel guides to Paris, focusing in its luxurious and lustful dissipations. For a detailed account of their contents see Rearick (1985).

10. For an analysis of the spectacles in nineteenth century Europe (from the point of view of the entertainers), connected to the process of urbanization and the constitution of crowds, where purely visual relations start taking precedence over the other senses see Ritter (1989).

12. Silverman (1986), Steele (1985; 1989), and others have suggested strong implications between clothing and the constitution of gender identity. They also establish a major turning point in the mid eighteenth century, when the attention radically shifted from male to female fashion. I wish to add that regarding dance in the West, the same trend followed slightly later and that performers and spectators also split in this regard along gender lines. Since then, female bodies/clothing/movement seem to be the locus of female identity, dependent on the male gaze. Male identity would have been detached from male bodies, becoming more dependent on the capacity to produce wealth and to exhibit women partners before the eyes of other men.

13. For a brilliant description/interpretation of the techniques ruling over bodies in Europe from the Renaissance to court society see Vigarello (1989). In court society in the end, it is dance that sets up models aimed at excellence and distinction. It was to be the foundation for an art of controlled, developed and privileged performance. [...] Dancing was to be practiced with a great deal of caution, as it threatened to become "dirty and immodest, and to go beyond all degrees of propriety." Dancing must be [...] the restrainer of passions [fear, melancholia, rage and joy]. [...] From that point on, dance inevitably appeared full of contradictions (ibid: 179-81).


15. For a description of the transformations of erotic imagery in France since the 1860s, and the emergence of seduction and flirt within a new amorous code, parallel to the elaboration of a new sciencia sexualis, see Perrot (1990).

16. Sorell (1981) and Laver (1966) mention that the dance-halls and, later on, the music-halls offered an opportunity for intermingling between the higher and lower strata of society. More precisely, telling from the characters they describe, the ones that got together were elite young men and working class women of "loose moral standards." The female dancers who performed for and with the audience were usually nonprofessional, and worked in low pay jobs during the day time. The more famous these dancers got, the more they could charge for "sexual favors." Although Paris was the epicenter of these happenings, both authors comment on the existence of these places and practices in every great capital of Europe at the time. For an extremely interesting interpretation of the connection between this new type of prostitution and the changing sexual/love practices in the bourgeois family in France see Perrot (1990).

17. For a detailed description of the locales, artists, and the publications issued by the cafes and cabarets of Montmartre see Oberthur (1984).
18. Paul Lafargue was one of the main promoters of "the right to be lazy" (1883). His teachings were followed by other revolutionary intellectuals like Georges Chevrier who demanded "the right to integral passion" and "the liberty of the body" (1885). These Belle Époque intellectuals were reacting, using the same rhetoric of rights of the French revolutionaries of 1789, against those rights of man that had actually ensured "capitalist domination". The rights to work, to property and freedom of commerce meant, in their opinion, the workers' "rights to misery." Lafargue (Karl Marx’s son in law) was fostering a revolutionary idea of freedom by which the workers liberation would be attained in leisurely releasing their "joys and passions" (Rearick 1986: 34; Galeano 1987: 219). Happy and sensual natives/primitives, whose natural instincts had not been yet corrupted by capitalism, "its prudery and hypocritical moral standards," where his major examples for liberation.

19. Schor claims that in French literature "representation in its paradigmatic nineteenth century form depends on the bondage of woman" (Breaking the Chain: Women. Theory and French Realist Fiction 1985: 142 quoted in Bernheimer 1986: 373). Linda Nochlin shows graphically in her Women as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art 1730-1970 that "since the nineteenth century, the woman's body has been presented for the man's erotic pleasure, rarely the man's body for the woman's" (Caws 1986: 268). Both in literature and visual representations Ritter states that "the latter half of the nineteenth century [could be labeled] as the heyday of the fatal woman"; that "the femme fatale dominates the imagery of the Symbolists and others of the fin de siècle"; and that "the femme fatale, expressed in literature written mainly by men, characterizes a male view of women" where "woman as a product [are] designed to meet the needs of male sexuality" (1989: 108-109). Steele (1985) emphasizes the fact that since the mid-eighteen century and specially the nineteenth century "men seem to have renounced fashion in favor of a drab uniform, while women's fashion seemed to change more rapidly and dramatically, and to be adopted by increasing numbers of women of all classes" (1985: 9). Steele analyzes the relationship between fashion and female ideals of beauty. Silverman (1986) departing from the same historically situated premises, focuses on fashion's implications in the constitution of gender identity. In dance, Sorell (1981), Anderson (1974), and others mention the displacement of men from the stages, and the choreographic undertakings pivoting around female dancers since the mid-eighteen century. Ritter establishes important connections between the modern version of the femme fatale and the dancer towards the fin de siècle in German, French, and English literature (1989). It is important to remark that the generic feminist literature cited in this note deals in a sophisticated manner with the ambivalent consequences for women of the male attention/devotion exhibited since (roughly) the mid-eighteenth century. The on-going debate is centered on the question of women as objects and/or subjects, and their consequent strategies of resistance through subservience as well as rebellion. Are women suffering male manipulations? Are they enjoying them? Are they participating in them? Are they remanipulating male manipulations? Are women empowering themselves despite and/or because of their objectification
(which never reaches a complete subjectification)? These are the major questions.

20. Michelle Perrot writes about this mutation of the erotic imagination in which women deliberately arouse desire contrary to the sighs and diaphanous gowns of the romantics. She relates these changes to the bourgeois expansion of the private life (1990).

21. For an interesting analysis of literary portraits of *femme fatale* dancers in European literature at the end of the nineteenth century, see Meltzer (1987).

22. On the changing nature of erotogenic female zones (bosom, rear, neck, legs, etc.) and the telling contrast respect to the stability of male's erotogenic zone as seen through the evolution of fashion since the eighteenth century see Flugel (1930). See also Steele (1985) and Silverman (1986) for insightful and critical follow-ups of the same theme.

23. For a detailed description of the ways in which these "clandestine" dance locales operated in Paris see Humbert (1988).

24. In this analysis, specifically in "making" messages embodied in leg/foot movements, I have been inspired by the polemics between Birdwhistle (1974) (on "multi-channel redundancy") and Ekman and Friesen (1974) (on "non-verbal leakages and clues to deception"). Briefly, the debate is about the possibility of reiterating or contradicting verbal expressions through non-verbal behavior.

25. Several diaries and letters of these distinguished *argentino* travelers, relating their leisurely and morally dissipated lives in *Belle Époque* Paris have been collected in Jitrik (1969). Regarding the first Tango musicians in Europe, see Humbert (1988), Cadicamo (1975), and others.

26. Buenos Aires was one of the main "consumers" of European prostitutes at that time. See Labraña and Sebastián (1988).

27. See Perniola (1989) on the concept of eroticism as transit.

28. For an extensive treatment of these events see Humbert (1988).

29. *Gauchos* are the rural characters associated to the *argentina* plains (*pampas*). It would be something similar to impose a cowboy costume on a charleston dancer. But both *gauchos* and Tango were identified as "argentíne," abroad as well as at home. Some authors point out that the "native" or "folkloric" costume was an imposition of the French Association of Actors and not of the owners of the locales.
Chapter Four

1. As an old Jewish joke goes: "The food in this place is terrible." "Yea. And the portions are so small."

2. Reported by Cadicamo who, like many other Tango musicians before the "legitimation" of Tango, played the piano at the brothels (Cadicamo 1976).

3. This analysis has been based on the descriptions of different local elite responses to the Tango rendered by Ferrer (1980a), Cadicamo (1976), Matamoro (1971), Novatí and Cuello (1980), Ulla (1982), Romano (1983), and others.

4. This classification of Tango styles as developed in Argentina after the Parisian rage has been based on Ferrer (1980) and Novatí and Cuello (1980), but I have modified some of their interpretations in an important way.


6. Oscar Bozzarelli has recently published a succinct article in which he believes "to have put together the puzzle" after endless polemics. The rhythm and the melody of Tango have different origins. The former is African and the latter, European. "The melodic roots of Tango are Latin: the one comes from the Spanish counterdance, through the Europe-Montevideo-Buenos Aires route, originating the candombe or Tango of the Rio de la Plata blacks; the other is French and Spanish and arrives through the Europe-Cuba-Montevideo-Buenos Aires route, and constitutes the remote origin of the milonga and Tango melody" (Bozzarelli 1989).

7. In twenty-four years (1869-1895) the population of Buenos Aires grew from 187,000 to 664,000 inhabitants, 345,000 (over 50%) of which were foreign immigrants (Assunção 1984). Between 1850 and 1890 Argentina's demographic growth was proportionally superior to the one of the US (Rodriguez Molas 1988).

8. Some important exceptions to this xenophobic trend of forgetfulness are Assunção (1984), Pujol (1989), Salas (1986), and Labraña and Sebastián (1988).

9. José Hernández wrote the adventures of the gaucho Martín Fierro in 1878, inaugurating the reification of the criollo argentino male.
10. My analysis of the "criollo" identity has been inspired by Fernández Retamar's (1989) examination of "Our Mestizo America"--a concept developed by José Martí.

11. For a very contrasting interpretation of argentino nationalism and political culture see Susan and Peter Calvert (1989). These authors argue that Argentina's pride (born of Iberian individualism, egotism, racism, and lack of self-criticism) and "the view that Argentina's potential greatness has been blocked by external factors have made dependency easy to accept as an explanation of national failure" (ibid.: 240).

    Pessimism was not the result of a simple transfer of Hispanic values [...] rather those values were reinforced by national history [...] The harsh isolated frontier experience [in Argentina's case as a geophysical and psychological frontier of the world] could offer reinforcement to such beliefs, just as in North America it served to reinforce the opposite. [...] The Northamerican example is a slap in the face for Argentine pride. [...] Blaming those external forces which gave once, but failed to maintain, the perception of national economic greatness is understandable, if unconstructive (ibid.: 246).

And lastly, Fatalism may not be entirely negative in its effects. [...] It has been suggested that the positive, optimistic appeal of gambling makes revolutions, which are tantamount to political lotteries, attractive to Latin Americans. This emphasizes the wrong aspect of fatalism as a contributory factor to political instability. It is rather the negative aspect, "la pereza criolla" (the creole laziness) in Bunge's terminology, which is important (ibid.: 247).

12. For a different interpretation of the gaucho and Tango as symbols of national integration in Argentina see Julie Taylor (1976).

13. In this discussion I have been following Fanon's (1952) critique of Mannoni (1956), Bhabha's (1990) critique of Fanon, my own critique of Bhabha, and Ngugi (1986). In general, it is a contra-Lacanian analysis.

Chapter Five

1. Two events are usually mentioned as highlights in the Japanese-argentina diplomatic life. The first one was in 1905, when the argentina Navy ceded to Japan two war vessels that were being built at an Italian shipyard, recognizing the emergency that Japan was undergoing on the occasion of the Russian-Japanese conflict. The second one was the shipping of two argentino cargos full of wheat towards the end of the Second World War, aimed at alleviating the food crisis that the Japanese people were suffering.

2. For an interesting account of the influence of Tango rhythms in early American jazz see Roberts (1979).
3. This account is based on Ferrer (1980a; 1980b), Alposta (1987), and Cadicamo (1976).

4. Some of his students believe that he never had a chance to see argentinos dance Tango the true argentino canyengue style, but others avow that having had this opportunity he confirmed the dance's improvement in the French capital.

5. On the Japanese active pursuit of Western learning, see Wakabayashi (1986), Iwao (1964), and Shively (1971).

6. Argentina remained neutral for almost the entire war period.

7. Excerpt from "El Zorzal y La Calandria" (1990), music by Ikuo Abo, lyrics by Héctor Negro.

    Un zorzal,
en Buenos Aires se largo a cantar. 
    Y su voz 
    abrio las alas y se echo a volar.
    Fue Gardel (...)
    Japon...
    Donde otro pajaro nacio..., crecio.
    Mujer...
    Y fue calandria que canto. (...)
    El cielo abrazara 
    calandria con zorzal (...)
    Del Plata hasta el Japon,
    el canto se alzara.
    Ya no habra muerte ni silencio 
    que podra...


9. I appreciate Yoshihiro and Chizuko Oiwa's comments on the Japanese "Tango Argentino" that helped me to figure this out.

10. Some Japanese Tango Argentino fans travel regularly to Argentina to keep-up with the latest "authentic" Tango developments, own some of the world's most complete collections of Tango records and of Tango publications. In addition, the importation of AA bandoneones (concertinas of an old German make whose production has been interrupted) from Argentina to Japan has affected argentino musicians' possibilities of access to this precious Tango musical instrument (Dragone 1990, interview; and Nishimura 1990, interview).

11. Some postmodernists believe that this is a simple task that can be engaged playfully, and that the Japanese have precisely that postmodern "nature" that allows them to do so ... But isn't this interpretation an exoticizing practice in itself? (I am grateful to Jeff Tobin for this suggestion).
12. As early as 1936, the Bates brothers include in their Historia del Tango a brief section on "Tango in the Orient" where they ask themselves, in awe, about the "powers" of the Tango, given its capacity to "penetrate" in such foreign and secluded cultures as the ones of Japan and Turkey (Bates and Bates 1936: 73-4).


14. For vehement calls to incorporate political dimensions into the analysis of music see McClary (1987), Frith (1987), and Wolff (1987). For the need of contemplating the dimension of pleasure in the analysis of popular music see McClary and Walser (1990), and Shepherd (1987). For stressing the importance of connecting sounds and dance in the understanding of popular music see Frith and McRobbie (1990) and Dyer (1990).

15. As used by Lyotard (1990), from whom I borrow the term and with whom I share the purpose of "tracing passion in economics and economics in passion", but not his understanding of the dynamics. See also Smith (1989).


Chapter Six

1. Term borrowed from Hélène Cixous (1976).

2. Horacio Ferrer, Blas Matamoro, Noemí Ulla, Ernesto Sábatoo, and practically every author who has written on Tango establishes, sooner or later, the connection between the origins of the Tango and the brothels and cabarets of the Río de la Plata region.

3. In reference to this Blas Matamoro writes: "The social world of the Tango was static: there are rich and poor, but nobody knows why." (1971: 89, my translation).

4. For an insightful discussion of women's confinement and the uses of women by male authors in hispanoamericana literature see Franco (1984). I have benefitted largely from her contribution.

5. Tango choreographies are improvised on a combination of traditionally set figures. This description is based on the dance style of Gloria and Eduardo, one of the few couples of professional Tango dancers that have been recorded on video. I appreciate the crucial help of Judy Van Zile in the analysis of the dance movements.


8. At this point my interpretation of sexual politics in Tango departs from the Foucauldian account of "docile bodies" (although I borrow this term throughout the essay), as well as from Franco's conclusions heavily influenced by Lacan. For further discussion, refer to chapter one of this dissertation.

9. Julie Taylor synthesized the question of the isolation of the Tango dancers in the following sentence: "They dance together in order to relive their disillusion alone" (1976: 290).

10. For an apotheosical depiction of the embrace in Tango and its original impact in ballroom dancing all over the world see Ferrer (1980a: 46-55).


18. The term "sentimental education" has been borrowed from the title of Flaubert's famous volume.


20. The death of God and Man have been repeatedly addressed by Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, etc. My point here is that the Devil has been resurrected by postmodern thinkers, although rather than in supernatural proportions--like in premodernism--this time on a human scale.


24. That is, Lacan's and his followers understanding of desire as an outcome of the impossible quest for refurbishing the stubborn and abstract "lack"; or the need to suture the "split" by which identity is constituted, threatened, and, in the same move, enabled to develop (Lacan 1977; 1981).


26. See Spivak "The space I occupy might be explained by my history. It is a position into which I have been written. I am not privileging it, but I do want to use it. I can't fully construct a position that is different from the one I am in" (1990).

27. For a powerful critique of Petras' homogenization of latinoamericano intellectuals see Vilas (1990).

GLOSSARY

Abuelo/a: grandfather/grandmother.

Argentinidad: argentinean-ness; of Argentinean nature or identity.

Argentino/a: Argentinean.

Arrabalero: from the suburban slums.

Bandoneón: musical instrument similar to the concertina.

Barrio: neighborhood; city quarter.

Cabecita negra: mestizo person from the interior of the country.

Canfinflero: pimp.

Canyengue: a pronounced movement of the hips considered to be distinctive of the Tango criollo, as danced by the lower classes.

Cariños entrañables: most beloved ones.

Civilización y progreso: civilization and progress.

Compadrito: defiant, courageous male of the Tango environment, usually also a pimp.

Comparsas: groups of people that danced and played music together during the Carnival. Traditionally this was one of the main activities of the Sociedades de Negros; but in the late 1800s, some young males of the argentina elite started imitating them, their faces painted in black, their movements mocking the Tangos de Negros. This entertainment of the young elite often derived into fights and violence, which increased their fun. If someone was to be penalized by the authorities, it was certainly not them.

Cordobes/a: from Córdoba, Argentina.

Cortes y quebradas: halt or interruption (coupe) of the dancing trajectory and disjointed movement of the hips (cleave).

Costurita que dió el mal peso: little seamstress who took a misstep.

Criollo/a: persons born in American colonies of parents foreign to America; of the "land" (of the interior and rural areas); often extended to mixed Spanish-Indigenous origins.

Chileno/a: Chilean.
China, chinita: mestiza woman; woman from the interior of the country.

Chinitero: womanizer.

Dependencia: Dependency theory.

Dependentistas: Dependency theorists.

Desaparecidos: disappeared, missing people; particularly those who were killed during the military junta in Argentina (1976-1983).

Familia, la: family.

Ficciones femeninas: feminine fictions.

Figuras: complex dancing footwork.

Flor de fango: flower of mud.

Franchutes/as: French.

Gaita: Spanish.

Gaucho: rural characters associated to the argentino plains (pampas).

Gracias a las diosas: thanks to the goddesses.

Guapo: courageous and world-wise male.

Lancera/o: thief specialized in pick-pocketing.

Latinoamericano/a: Latin American.

Lunfardo: slang of Buenos Aires.

Machismo: male chauvinism.

Malón blanco: the savage white horde.

Mestizaje: cross-breeding, hybridity.

Mestizo/a: mixed Indigenous/Spanish blood.

Milonguita, Milonguera, Milonguerita: female dancer in Tango locales, or woman of the Tango environment.

Mina: broad.

Mojados: "wetbacks," illegal immigrants.

Moreno/a: dark skin and complexion.
Morocho/a: literally, Moorish-like, meaning dark complexion.

Musa de la mala pata: bad luck muse.

No está muerto quien peléa: s/he who fights back is not dead.

Niño bien: naughty boys from wealthy families.

Ojalá: hopefully.

Ombligadas y culeadas: pronounced pelvic movements while walking back and forth. Ombligadas describe the displacement by which the members of the dancing couple approximate each other with their abdomens, and culeadas, with their rears.

Orillero: from the margins, suburbs.

Pampa(s): South American plains.

Para decirle a la Cris ... etc. (page 302-303): to tell Cris, Moni, Elena, Analía, Nue and the rest what I have just discovered and that nobody can stop us. Nobody. So many women, fighting, as we fight, with a latino body, contagious, as in a savage horde.

Pardo/a: dark skin.

Papusa: gal.

Pebeta: babe.

Percanta: broad.

Polaco, polaquito/a: Polish.

Porteño/a: from the port of Buenos Aires.

Rioplatense: from the Río de la Plata region (Argentina/Uruguay).

Rubia/α: blond.

Rusos, rusitos/as: Jewish people.

Sainete: popular theater.

Saladeros: meat salting places.

Sentada: Tango figure characterized by a deep dip.

Sociedades de Negros: Associations of Blacks. Since at least 1820, the black population of Argentina and Uruguay organized into self-help associations by nation or tribe of African origin. These
associations were extremely active in the Carnival parades and patriotic feasts. The earliest records of the Tango as a dance have been found in documents issued by the Municipal Council of Montevideo, forbidding its practice in public spaces (Novati & Cuello 1980:3).

Soldaderas y cuarteleras: women who followed soldiers in battle as logistic support--among other services they acted as prostitutes.

Sudamericano/a: South American.

Tango de espectáculo: staged Tango.

Tango de salón: social dance Tango.

Tango liso: simple, bland Tango.

Tangueaba: past imperfect of "to tango."

Tanguería: Tango club.

Tanguero/a: related to the Tango (musicians, dancers, poets, fans.)

Tano/a: Italian.

Tormenta: storm.

Turco/a: Middle-eastern people.

Uruguayo/a: Uruguayan.

Vasco/a: Basque.

Zarandéo: flapping of skirts during dance.
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