

**TR**  
**YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES M.A. PROGRAMME**

**M.A. THESIS**

**EXPERIENCING TANGO IN ISTANBUL: AN  
ASSESSMENT FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

**MELİS MERİH KILIÇ**

**10728003**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR**

**ASST. PROF. DR. KEREM KARAOSMANOĞLU**

**ISTANBUL**

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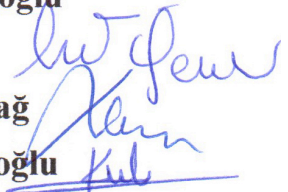
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## ÖZ

### İSTANBUL'DA TANGO DENEYİMİ: TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET PERSPEKTİFİNDEN BİR DEĞERLENDİRME

Melis Merih Kılıç

Ağustos, 2013

Bu tez İstanbul'daki tango dansçılarının 'toplumsal cinsiyet' kavramı algılarını ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Özellikle, dansçıların tangodaki 'kadın' ve 'erkek' rollerine nasıl büründükleri, bu rolleri nasıl yorumladıkları ve bu role geçiş için onları ne tür faktörlerin motive ettiği araştırılmıştır. Tangoda, kadınların normalde kaçındıkları erkeğin boyunduruğu altına girme; erkeklerin ise maço olarak anılmak istemedikleri için kendilerini vazgeçmeye mecbur hissettikleri kadınlara hükmetme rollerine büründükleri varsayımıyla hareket edilmiştir. Bu varsayımı değerlendirmek için katılımcı gözlem ve sezgisel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Dansçıların duygu ve düşüncelerinin derinine inmek için derinlemesine mülakat yönteminden yararlanılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular söylem analiziyle yorumlanmıştır. Tezde, dans tarihi, dans ve kültürel çalışmalar ve dans, beden ve toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkisi ile ilgili çalışmalardan yararlanılmıştır. Ayrıca, tangonun Buenos Aires'ten İstanbul'a kadar uzanan tarihine ve nasıl bir dans türü olduğuna dair bilgilere yer verilmiştir.

Tango cinsiyetçi bir dandır ve dans, içerisindeki cinsiyet rolleri icra edilerek yapılır. 'Toplumsal cinsiyet ve performans' kuramının iddia ettiği gibi gündelik hayatta bize sunulan 'kadınlık' ve 'erkeklik' özelliklerine bağlı olarak 'kadın olma' ve 'erkek olma' halleri icra edildiği gibi, tango içerisinde de 'lider' ve 'takipçi' rolleri üstlenilerek yine bir cinsiyet performansı sergilenmektedir. Araştırma bulgularına göre bu rolleri hakkıyla icra etmek dansçıları açısından bir başarı ölçütü ve mutluluk kaynağı olmuştur. Dansçılar söz konusu 'lider' ve 'takipçi' rollerinin gerekliliklerine cevap verebildikleri sürece başarılı hissetmekte ve talep görmektedirler. İlk etapta adaptasyon sorunu yaşasalar bile, tango dili öğrenildiğinde bu rollere adapte olmak ve iyi bir şekilde gerçekleştirmek için ellerinden geleni yaptıkları tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler :Tango, İstanbul, Türkiye, Arjantin, Buenos Aires, Dans, Sosyal Dans, Cinsiyet, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Danstaki Roller**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **EXPERIENCING TANGO IN ISTANBUL: AN ASSESSMENT FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

**Melis Merih Kılıç**

**August, 2013**

This dissertation is about figuring out the idea of ‘gender’ among tango dancers in Istanbul. Specifically, how individuals move in and out of the female and male roles in tango; the interpretation of these roles and the motivating factors beyond to tailoring of these roles were subject to search. I started with the assumption that in tango women voluntarily accept a role of the obedience to man that they work to avoid in their regular life. Whereas men gain legitimation for the sovereignty of leading a woman that they felt obliged to leave so that they are not labeled as macho. In order to evaluate my assumption, I used participant observation and heuristic research methods. Besides, I applied to in-depth interviews for deep probing of thoughts and feelings of tango dancers. The findings were interpreted by using discourse analysis. Theoretically, I got benefit of studies made in dance history, the relationship between dance and cultural studies, body, and gender. Also, I gave place to researches concerning tango: both its history worldwide, in Turkey and its structure.

Tango is a gendered dance. In fact, doing tango is performing gender roles itself. Likewise a person who personates a ‘woman’ or ‘man’ by choosing some already determined features that fit with her alleged gender as ‘performative gender theory’ suggests; tango dancers also choose and wear on roles that are presented to them in the name of being ‘leader’ or ‘follower’. According to research findings, I could say that performing gender roles in tango became a measure of success. Dancers feel satisfied to the degree they reply the requirements of these roles. In the adaptation phase, there could be some difficulties. However, when they learn to express themselves in the tango language, they try their best in order to fit to these tailored roles.

**Keywords :Tango, Istanbul, Turkey, Argentina, Buenos Aires, Dance, Social Dance, Sex, Gender, Roles in Dance**

## FOREWORD

My tango story started just by coincidence, but now I am doing tango for almost three years. Maybe, I attended hundreds of tango events in Turkey. Moreover, when I went abroad, I danced tango in different countries. I cannot call my tango as ‘hobby’, a ‘social activity’, or just a ‘fun’. My tango is all of these and more. It is a tool for expression of ‘self’. Like the color you like, the way you dress, and the movies you enjoy; how you dance tango also tells something about you. It was for the first time in my life, I confronted with something that has such a high expressive power. It was a shocking and impressive experience for me. Even this experience led me writing a dissertation about it. However, writing a dissertation about tango was a completely different experience from dancing it. Obviously, I was not alone in this difficult process. There were many valuable people around me who, with their worthy supports, made this challenging process enjoyable for me. First of all, I would like to thank to my supervisor Asst. Assoc. Dr. Kerem Karaosmanoğlu for his sincere support and encouragement. His motivating speeches and important academic contributions enabled me to continue writing especially in times when I got depressed. I also owe a big thank to the Head of Humanities and Social Sciences Department, Prof. Dr. M. Sait Özervarlı. He showed a genuine interest to my research subject from the beginning. He was open to any kind of request for help and he spared no effort from me during this process. Also, I would like to thank to all my professors for their valuable contributions. I am grateful to my family, without their love and understanding everything would be much more difficult. Finally, I want to thank to ‘tango’ for entering to my life and being a source of inspiration for my dissertation.

Istanbul, August 2013

Melis Merih Kılıç

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

I am doing Argentinian tango for about three years. This adventure started just by coincidence. At that time, I was working in an advertising agency. The working hours were long and it was a stressful job. I decided to begin a social activity that would allow me to remain calm and focused, but I was unsure what to pursue. It just have easily could be a course in ‘ebru’ art, but my uncle was in need of a partner for a tango course he was about to start and so tango became a part of my life. The offer sounded nice. I have loved dancing since I was a little girl. There were a few tango scenes in my mind, but even I could not quite remember from what movie they came from. Although I had a bit of an idea of what tango was I was not sure what I was getting myself into. I started the course and the rest is history. I saw my uncertainty about the dance evolved into an irresistible desire to learn more about the dance. While my uncle was not interested in attending lectures any more, I found myself drawn to them in order to learn more. I took lectures from different instructors, attended *milongas*<sup>1</sup>, *practicass*<sup>2</sup>, local and international festivals in Istanbul. Also, I joined some *milongas* and festivals in Ankara and Izmir. At this moment I became well aware that tango was more than just a leisure activity, but inseparable part of me. Additionally, when I went abroad and danced tango in different countries I realized that I had actually learned a different language that enabled me to communicate with others and show them who I am. This awareness is crucial because it was really the first time that I thought about dance’s power of conveying thoughts, feelings, or instructions. The mysterious language of dancing body, the values shared by the dancing community, the interaction within the executors, observers, and the dance itself thrilled me immensely. So much so, that I went in quest of writing my dissertation about tango. However, in the beginning of my research, I was uncertain about what question I would address. For some time I

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<sup>1</sup> Milonga is the name given to nights that tango dancers come together and dance tango.

<sup>2</sup> In practicas, tango dancers come together and dance in order to make practice and develop their dances. Practicas are usually held in the day-time.

thought deeply about what element of tango delighted me the most and how I could formulate this element into a solid research question. My first intention was to see the motivation behind dancing tango. There were lots of people around me for whom tango is simply more than just a word, but a lifestyle. They were speaking, thinking, and living tango. After some thought, I realized that what caught my attention about tango was the gender-sensitivity it embodied. This is what I felt and concurrently observed in everything that is related to tango. From the first moment in the first class, you come crashing in the issue of gender roles and sensitivity. Both woman and man feel obliged to reevaluate their gender 'definition' and 'experience' when they started to learn the role of 'leader' (usually rendered by a man) and 'follower' (usually rendered by a woman) in tango. Due to its form and structure, tango naturally makes you doubt 'yourself' and 'your partner' and ask questions as to 'why s/he is doing this, but I am doing that'. The evolution of these strict gender roles is highly interesting and worth investigating. Nevertheless, how these gender roles quicken in the 'tango' of the dancers in Istanbul is a more thrilling and incentive subject for me to search after.

This discovery aroused an overwhelming desire in me to figure out the idea of 'gender' among tango dancers in Istanbul. How do the dancers interpret the female and male roles in tango? Are these roles in harmony with their 'gender' definition in life? Does female or male identity in tango have similarities and/or differences with the ones that we come across in our daily lives? How do the dancers read the interaction between men and women within tango comparing/contrasting with other aspects of social life? These were the types of questions that came to mind and helped me shape the framework of my research. However, the crucial questions that inspired me to pursue this research were based on my observations about how individuals move in and out of the female and male roles in tango; the interpretation of these roles and the factors that motivate the tailoring of these roles. Derived from my own experiences, observations, and conversations, I have been functioning under the assumption that in tango women voluntarily accept a role of the absolute obedience to man that in contrast they work to avoid or eliminate in their regular life. Whereas men gain legitimation for the sovereignty of leading a woman with very little resistance that they are forced or felt obliged to leave so that they are not labeled as macho or looked down on by society. Moreover, despite the growing pains

in the adaption phase, it seems that the success in the performance of these roles brings approval and popularity to the performer (tango dancer). Therefore, in my dissertation, I decided to analyze the endorsement of a return to so-called traditional gender roles in the practice of tango and the balance of them among tango dancers in Istanbul.

## **2. RESEARCHING TANGO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, I will give a brief review of the literature in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the scope of the research, the types of resources that inspired me, and also the previous studies done related to my topic. Information about the methodology I used during my research is also included in this section.

I formed my research based on the hypothesis that I outlined in the introduction section. In order to test the validity of the hypothesis I researched the following: How, why and under which conditions the gender performance in tango is experienced; To what degree do tango dancers in Istanbul practice and reflect it; What impact does it have? In order to conduct this research, I firstly aimed to analyze dance as a social message conveyor, the scholarly studies made in the area of dance, and its relation to body. Additionally, I will specifically focus on dance-gender relationship so as to canvas the tango experience in Istanbul from this perspective. Also, I will touch upon the emergence, formation and development of tango. I will trace the story of tango from its origin and I will present information about how tango was introduced to Turkey. In this way, I intended to form a comprehensive point of view before coming into specific expositions about my main research question. Furthermore, I will indicate some of the resources that I will use during my research in order to provide background information.

### **2.1. Literature Review**

In this section, the sources that I will refer to fall into two main categories. One category deals with dance history, the relationship between dance and cultural studies, body, gender, and feminist studies. The other category concerns tango and both its history worldwide and in Turkey. I will cite key landmark scholar studies in topics such as dance history, dance studies, body, dance, and gender relationships. Studies made in these fields will maintain a theoretical and methodological skeleton

to my dissertation and provide the information in relating to my research question<sup>3</sup>. As stated before, I will briefly introduce some of the resources about tango. This will be preliminary information leading to a comprehensive argument in the following chapter.

### **2.1.1. Dance and Body**

*The dance is the mother of the arts. Music and poetry exist in time; painting and architecture in space. But the dance lives at once in time and space.*

Curt Sachs

Dance, like language, has the power to convey thoughts, feelings, or instructions. The universality of dance stems from its ability to transfer fundamental values, aesthetics and emotional impressions through the mediums of music, choreography, improvisation, apparels, decor, lighting, appliances, and most importantly the human body. Its locality comes from the culture-specific messages it carries like being part of a specific ceremony, explaining a significant ritual, mirroring the tissue of the society that it is borne into (Jonas, 1992, 11). For instance, it may be used to celebrate plant fertility or to gain weaponry skills in preparation for war (Kassing, 2007, 30). On the other hand, dance is not simply an emblem of cultural society. It also reflects clashes within the society. Sometimes it is an expression of religious worship; sometimes it is an expression of resistance against social order and power.

It has been important throughout the history and used as a vehicle to explain human forms. For instance, Plato (427-347 B.C.) thought that every educated man should know how to dance graciously. Dancing was an instrument for achieving a strong body and also a way of unification with Cosmos (Jonas, 1992, 40). The Greeks believed that man took joy in active movement. A person's moral code was defined by the dances s/he performs (Kassing, 2007, 52). However, despite its ancient nature, scholar interest in dance does not have a long history. Dance has a strong connection with society, but sociology is condemned for being late in dealing with dance or other aspects of bodily movement. At first, sociology did not display an interest in dance. Probably, it is because of its positioning as a 'positive' science. It dealt with

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<sup>3</sup> Although scholar studies such as the masculinity issue in classical romantic ballet or life-story of a leading modern dancer are not my direct concerns, in terms of potential usefulness of them considering my research subject I will not ignore such various studies which do not seem directly relevant to my research topic.

the major issues of a 'modern' industrial society and art, specifically dance (dealing with 'body' which is so-called inferior to 'mind'), was sidelined in those times. According to Thomas, compared to other art forms, dance is three-times disadvantaged in this marginalization: "First as an art, second as a practice which places the body at the center of its discourse, and third as an activity which is viewed as predominantly feminine mode of expression and representation" (1995, 11). Anthropology is the first discipline that was headed for dance, but it is not also based on a very ancient history despite the existence of a long tradition to consider dance as the oldest art (Kassing, 2007, 23). Dance anthropology started to develop in the nineteenth century and it studies unwritten sources of dance and ancient traditions and practices (Kassing, 1996, 37). Initially anthropology pertained to dance especially in relation to so-called 'primitive cultures' (assuming that when culture becomes more 'civilized', dance becomes less important); however, it abandoned this approach to dance no later than the early twentieth century (Thomas, 1995, 9). Thomas claims that anthropology's attention towards body and dancing in traditional cultures contributes to sociology's ignorance of dance. Also, she adds that the desolation of dance within sociology reverberated to other fields of the academia (1995, 10). For instance, the philosophy of art, showed deficient attention to dance, mostly limited with theatrical or performance arts. Thomas probes the transient feature of dance as the partial cause of this issue. The lack of solid bearing and universally accepted recording and saving system bestowed the obstacle of forming a fixed dance identity. She concludes that dance's peripheral status in sociology and philosophy reflects its marginal institutional position also within contemporary culture (1995, 11). She gives place to views of Andrew Ward who states that cultural studies' unvoiced commitment to particular forms of rationalism has helped to keep 'dancing in the dark'. Ward supposes that merely after the effects of post structuralism and postmodernism in cultural studies and the theoretical alternates created by the emergence of the fields of gender and race, which grills the canons of rationality, furnish the prospect for dancing out to see the light of scholar interest (1993, taken from Thomas, 1995, 4). The latent interest in dance in cultural studies went hand-in-hand with another recently flourishing field: feminist studies. Since dance is also bound up with the issues of gender roles and identification it gained importance in parallel to feminist studies (Thomas, 1995, 8).

Besides, the critiques about the ignorance of dance by early sociology, there are critiques about ignorance of dance in movement system analyses and in body studies. The body tends to be a veritable field in the academy in 1980s (Thomas, 2003, 11). As previously mentioned, due to the claim of being a scientific discipline: sociology lies upon a strict separation between social and biological factors. So, the classical tradition favors social over physical and supports all kind of dualism such as mind/body, culture/nature, etc. As a result of the dualistic character of classical sociology and favoring of social constructionist approaches, at first, the body has not been focused on as component in the investigation of sociology (Thomas, 2003, 13). Nevertheless, the recent challenges to sociology and the new understanding and cultural changes in the late modernity give rise to emergence of the body project (Thomas, 2003, 15). Despite the rising interest in the body, critiques about the lack of interest to the 'body in motion' have continued. For instance, Turner claims that the sociology of body and dance studies focused on the body in a cultural text, but not on the human performance side until recently. Postmodern readings of the textuality of the body ignored this point. Turner criticized sociologists' blindness about the body-in-movement arguing that a literary theory just considering the textuality of a work and therefore, reading the body solely as a choreographic text, would not be enough to discern the matter of body in motion (Turner, 2005, 8). Desmond is another scholar who aims to draw attention to 'movement'. She states that movement is an important and 'naturalized' symbolic system; a primary social 'text' which gives information about the production of gender, racial, ethnic, class, and national identities whether it is consciously performed or not (Desmond, 1997, 31). And dance, constituting one subset of the larger field of movement study, embodies opportunities to derive socially meaningful knowledge about these issues (Desmond, 1997, 31). She says that much is to be acquired by opening up cultural studies to matters of kinesthetic semiotics and by placing dance research on the agenda of cultural studies. She says that if the analysis of bodily 'text' includes also dancing body; the signalization, formation, and negotiation of social identities through bodily movement will be understood better (Desmond, 1997, 30). The dance scholarship as a significant movement system, from an aesthetic or contextual perspective is a relatively new area of scholarship, but it has been influenced from many other disciplines. As can be seen, the problematic of body in connection with representation and difference has been a key field of research for dance studies

scholars. On the other hand, Thomas states that with the blurring of borders between academic disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and literary theory, the interest in dance has been rising (2003, 2).

### **2.1.2. Dance, Sex, Gender and Tango:**

Sex, gender and their interconnection with dance are so critical that without touching upon this link, all of the analysis that will be made in the following chapters would be without foundation. Since, beyond all functions/roles of dance, its relation to sex and gender is what matters for this research. Whether it is on or off the stage dance has something to do with sex. It is a complex kinesthetic practice that renders sexuality and provides a field for investigating how sexuality is learned, embodied, and displayed (Desmond, 2001, 7). Not only the psychological elements matter for dance, but gender; the roles that are learned about being female and male are critical as well. The speechless act of dance resonates so loudly that the normative and unique codes of sexuality, the orthodox and unorthodox notions about gender can be read from the 'act'. On the other hand, dominant social codes relating to sex also affect how the dance is interpreted. The point is that sexual identity and role are alterable and these alterations as well as the original forms can be reflected through dance.

Sex and thus gender are very crucial in that, we are born into a world where the basic and the more naturally accepted and undisputed segregation starts with the sex, or in other words, the body; i.e. genitals- that we have. Hanna points out the reason for focusing on sex and gender as highlighting their vitality in life (1988, 3). We are born with our sex but as she indicates sex develops over time physically and socio-culturally in terms of gender. It is a way of knowing about oneself and others. Also, sexual difference is one of the important bases for dominance, social inclusion, or exclusion. However, whereas sex refers to a biological phenomenon, "gender denotes their cultural, psychological, and social correlates: the rules, expectations, and behavior appropriate to being male or female within a particular society" (Hanna, 1988, 7). Culture contributes to natural distinctions and continually teaches some set of codes and behaviors to females and some other to males (Hanna, 1988, 8). Dance's significance is highlighted at this point. It is a communication method older than oral language. Human beings have been using their bodies 'to be' someone and 'to transfer' something for millions of years. As one of the forms used for expressing

the human evolution, dance has the potential to send messages about the social identity (Hanna, 1988, 8). Moreover, dance has the capacity to reflect cultural attributes through its form, technique, ceremony, etc. In other words, the movement system is part of cultural reality and it transforms as culture does. Just as language, it also has observable patterns and qualities that are peculiar to some particular cultures and historical periods. That is why we should understand the cultural atmosphere that a dance form flourished in. As well as being a cultural insignia, dance could be stated as one of the forms chosen for expressing human evolution. Additionally, Bull says that dance cannot be understood without considering cultural infrastructure. He states that looking at movement like examining a 'text' can enlighten one about the details and structures of a movement system, but cannot tell how movement is interwoven with other aspects of culture. Thus, one should investigate not only what the movement is, but also the cultural reality that it has been part of (2001, 405).

Therefore, as a socio-culturally constructed identity, gender reveals its signs in dance as well. Independent from being a native's ritual, a stage performance, or a social event dance has the potential to display the gender roles or constitute an arena to challenge these roles. For instance, as Okot p'Bitek says, among the Acholi people of Uganda women pick out the man they want to be with according to their energy and strength of their dance performance. "A man's manliness is seen in the arena/ You cannot hide anything, / All parts of the body/ Are clearly seen in the arena, / Health and liveliness/ Are shown in the arena," (1966, 33, taken from Hanna, 1988, 4). As manifested above, dance may be a tool for foreplay. At the same time, the everyday movements of the body could be culturally shaped and disciplined via dance. Kassing says that in the fifteenth century social dancing was a tool for teaching appropriate social behaviors to ladies and gentlemen. In this way, they could conduct their lives with a manner of gracility (2007, 72). There exists an implied link among sex, gender, and dance that cannot be overlooked. It is not only about the physical control over the body, but reflecting the ideals and social tendencies of the time. There is a link between sex, gender, and dance that is to be discovered and the body is the medium for displaying these.

Assuming dance is a comprehensive communication method the dancer could be seen as a decoder conveying thoughts and feelings through body and kinesthesia. Bodies are vehicles for this transmission.

“...Bodies always gesture towards other fields of meaning, but at the same time instantiate both physical mobility and articulability. Bodies don't only pass meaning along but they pass it along in their uniquely responsive way. They develop choreographies of signs through which they discourse: they run (or lurch, or bound...) from premise to conclusion; they turn (or pivot, or twist...) through the process of reasoning; they confer with (or rub up against, or bump into...) one another in narrating their own physical fate” (Foster, 1996, xi).

Foster states that the anthropological and historical concern in non-documented human activities and the feminist problematic concept of gender draws attention to biological and cultural building of body (1996, xii). She says that bodily disciplining to appropriation; colonization to mobilization has begun to be focus of theoretical debates done in the field of body politics (Foster, 1996, xii). The flourishing interest in body and the conceptualization of ‘gender’ intersects in dance studies. In this context, dance has been feted intrinsically since it has a wordless arena where the body speaks for itself, on behalf of others, or for others. Foster also highlights body's state of being a cultural enterprise through which cultural change is both registered and accomplished and adds it provides a rich source for any study of embodiment (Foster, 1996, xiii).

In the West, the body's pleasurable presence and erotic heritage in the theatric arts was considered a disgrace after industrial revolution. As a result of Puritan morals and the changing production structure, the body was seen as something that should be devoted to continual economic production (Hanna, 1988, 150). Despite all, the interconnection between body, dance, and sexuality is never broken. How one moves and how one moves in relation to others, constitutes a public legislation of sexuality and gender. As Desmond says dance, with its linkage to sex, sexiness, and sexuality, provides a dense field for investigating how sexualities are graced, learned, supplied, and continually denoted through bodily actions (2001, 7). Perceptions of such enactments are always calculated in relation to the perceived biological sex of the mover in relation to the dominant codes for such signs. Norms of subcultural groups, and racial, age, and class differences, inflect these kinesthetic renderings. These renderings are especially critical in understanding sexualities because sexualities are not immediately readable from the biological body as categories of gender and race are most often presumed to be, yet they are tightly tied to notions of physicality or of what one does with one's body. Sexualities must be rendered visible through the performance markers of speech, movement, fashion, or subcultural cues. They must, in a sense, be declared. This declaration can be made or rendered mute through dance as an embodied practice. The ‘swish’ of a male wrist or the strong strides of a female

can, in certain contexts and for certain viewers, becomes kinesthetic ‘speech-acts’ that declare unorthodox sexuality (Desmond, 2001, 6).

However, likewise the inadequacy of evaluating dance without perceiving the cultural setting; deriving gender-related meanings from the dancing body ‘text’ without considering the biases that we carry and the denotations that we already apply will be misleading. In couple-dances, a male-female encounter could be seen as a game in which male and female are pitted against each other. It is important to note that one should remain alert to the possibilities of deriving multiple meanings from the same ‘text’: dancing gendered bodies. This meaning derivation firstly affected by those whose body we are observing. Our perception about the body displayed depends on whether it is a female or male body. “(The) meaning of gender movement appears in spheres of conveying meaning in dance” (Hanna, 1988, 161). Therefore, different patterns of sexuality lay out in dancing body that enables explorers to face with various realities about it.

Besides mentioning the relationship between dance, sex, gender, and body, I would like to emphasize social dance because the analysis in the next chapter will focus on tango as a social dance, not as a stage performance. First of all, social dance is a tool for socialization. It is a tool for fun and relaxation. Nevertheless, it can be also used as a means of social control over people. It is a practice that affirms, conflicts, or restructures the social relations or dichotomies that are given to us. Social dance and ballroom dances play an active role in transferring some codes of behavior for gaining social approval. Irene Castle who is a performer and teacher says that: “It (social dance) teaches rhythm; it keeps her in tune with life; it gives her a graceful swinging walk; it shows her how to hold her head, and how to use her hands, and, what is more, how to use her feet” (Castle, 1975, 152, taken from Malnig, 2001, 273-274). The passage clearly shows that even if one dances just for pleasure, social dancing teaches the dancer proper behavior for current society, gender-specific attitudes, transmitting group values to the others or importing values from other societies (Jonas, 1998, 109). For example, one of Cook Islands’ inhabitant explains: “Cook Island men maintain their masculinity by dancing the way a man should dance, and the women maintain their femininity by dancing the way a woman should dance here in the Cook Islands,” (Jonas, 1998, 112). This may constitute a good example of how gender specific behaviors are transmitted through dance. The

interesting thing, you are initially motivated in the name or receiving pleasure from the activity. Social values integrated in the dances are often relayed inexplicitly, but teaching how to be a man or woman in a particular social dance could be indicated as one of the main aims of dance classes (Jonas, 1998, 122). Couple dancing necessitates a continuous communication, the idea of how to act in synchronization in an effort to prevent one couple from bumping into another. One of partners should lead and the other should follow. Definitely, the leading role falls to the man (Jonas, 1998, 126). Probably, this role division is the moment when appropriate codes for dancing partners are determined and each is expected to act in a proper manner ascertaining the accepted codes. Desmond says that analysis about the historical and theoretical investigations of dance should take dancing as an embodied social practice (2001, 13). To sum up, I could say that it is explicit that dance is a conveyor, a reflector and sometimes a transformer of gender codes. For me, not only seeing a dancing body beyond a detectable 'text', but also interpreting the acts of a 'body' waiting for a dance request or deciphering the ambiance's effect on a couple are also significant for taking a complete snapshot of the event and investigating specific dance-gender relationship.

The following gives a brief amount of information regarding the literature in three sections and gives examples for each of them. In the first section, I will make reference to sources about dance and the history of dance in general. In the second section, I will concentrate on resources that specifically relate to the relationship between dance, the body, and gender. In the final section, I will remark to books that take on tango as subject.

There are books that mention the history of dance following a Western-oriented chronological order. They exemplify dances that belong to various cultures such as tribal dance, and/or they give information mostly about types of ballet and modern dance. Literature about contemporary dance is mostly focused on stage dance. All things considered, it seems that studies about social dances have not been that popular among dance scholars. For instance, in the *History of Dance*, Kassing approaches dance as an art form and examines it from the Ancient times to the twentieth century. In the *Moving History Dancing Cultures* Dils and Albright edited and categorized essays creating a broad introduction to the study of dance history. Although they emphasized that their focus is on modern dance and its more

contemporary offspring, the most inspiring essays for me are the ones that have been written about or touched on social dance. In *Dancing, the Pleasure, Power and Art of Movement*, Gerald Jonas examines dance while considering cultural perspective in a historical context and giving examples that enable the reader to feel as if s/he is one of the dancers. Jonas also wrote about social dance and stated that until the second half of the seventeenth century there was little distinction in Europe between theatrical and social dancing.

It can be noted that past academic studies made about dance, body and gender rely directly upon the rising interest in sociology and cultural studies towards dancing body. Most of the reputable resources continue to be critical about the ongoing ignorance of the dancing body and the importance of kinesthetic knowledge derived from the dancing body. Feminist theories seem to be prominent in the studies made in this field. In *Corporealities*, Susan Leigh Foster focuses on dancing as a cultural practice that breeds disciplined and expressive bodies and indicates the body as a plentiful resource for any study of embodiment. The essays Foster collects are written at the crossroads of dance studies and cultural studies of the body and display dance's contribution to the study of meaning-filled physicality. The moving-body-object and its ignored story is the main focus of these essays. Also, Foster tells that the recent scholar interest in body derives out of anthropological and historical interest in non-written texts, as well as from the feminist interest in the problematic treatment of the nature of gender that compels a transmission between biological and cultural bodily constructions. In *The Male Dancer*, Ramsay Burt seeks to identify what is wrong with regards to the male dancer from the twentieth century onwards. He interrogates the masculinity concept within this notion and concludes with the claim that since gender is an attribute of body, and dance is a key area through which gendered identities are revealed, dancing male bodies became sites for resistance to the 'modern' ideology about masculine social behavior. *Dancing Women* tells the story of Western theatrical dancing from a woman-centered perspective. Sally Banes analyzes how representations of women are constructed in major works of theatrical dance. By giving examples from early romantic ballet to modern dance, Banes displays that the images created by women are shaped by -and to some degree shape- society's continuing debate about sexuality and female identity.

The articles about dance that I examined could be mainly categorized in two groups. The first one being generally about dance anthropology, dance studies, and dance culture relationship such as, *“Why Do We Dance?” “Transnationalities, Body and Power: Dancing Across Different Worlds”*, *“Global Breakdancing and Intercultural Body”*. For instance, in *“The Politics and Poetics of Dance”*, it is written that anthropologists have played a critical role in this new dance scholarship contributing comparative analysis and situating dance and movement within broader framework of embodiment and the politics of culture. This article highlights ethnographic and historical studies that foreground dance and other structured movement systems in the making of colonial cultures, the constitution of gender, ethnic, and national identities. The second selection of articles focuses primarily on the dance, gender, and culture relationship such as; *“Gender Relations in Intuit Drum Dancers”*, *“The Performance of Softer Masculinities on the University Dance Floor”*, *“Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”*, *“The Politics of Gender: Feminist Implication of Gender Inversions from M. Butterfly”*, *“How Does She Do That? Belly Dancing and the Horror of a Flexible Woman”*, *“The Choreography of Gender: Masculinity, Femininity, and the Complex Dance of Identity in the Ballroom”*, *“Dancing Masculinity: Defining the Male Image Onstage in Twentieth Century America and Beyond”*, *“Light Women Dancing Tango: Gender Images as Allegories of Heterosexual Relationships”*. For instance, in the article *“Female Exotic Dancers: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Perspectives”*, the researchers aim to explore and understand the various intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics associated with the lives of female exotic dancers from an essentialist, social constructionist critical perspective. The article *“Behind the Veil: An In-Depth Exploration of Egyptian Muslim Women’s Lives Through Dance”* proposes to communicate the implicit, non-verbal, visual, and non-quantitative aspects of Muslim women’s experiences in their bodies.

The literature about tango is dominated by authors who are personally acquainted with tango and who decided to write a book about it after spending considerable time in acquaintance with the dance. Most of the books give information related to the milestones of tango history. In addition, there are books focusing on colonialism, exoticism, or Argentinian history through the use of tango as a metaphor. There are articles mostly relating to the examination of tango lyrics and the gender issue. The

Turkish literature written about tango is very limited. The only Turkish books written about tango mostly deal with the music of tango such as Fehmi Akgün's book. Additionally, I benefited from the contemporary work of Melin Levent Yuna and the article in which she talks about tango as modern woman's leisure time activity. Also, I had difficulty in locating a variety of reliable sources that present tango history in Turkey. Therefore, I mostly relied on web based secondary sources and primary sources such as informal interviews and oral transmission. In order to exemplify the literature about tango, I have mentioned some of the books and articles I used during my research.

In the book *Creation of a Cultural Icon Tango*, Jo Baim aims to give a picture of the early world of the tango. In order to document the early history of tango; she touches on the issues such as the path tango has taken in various countries, the meanings that are woven into it or kept apart from it by all parties. Virginia Gift is another name associated with the search for the roots of tango. Gift explains how tango has been transformed and diversified throughout history and during the global renaissance the dance experienced. In her book, *Tango a History of Obsession*, she also gave brief amount information about tango's current situation in different countries, including Turkey. In *The Meaning of Tango the Story of the Argentinian Dance*, Christine Denniston shares that her tango story started with her wish to dance better. By her own experience in Buenos Aires, she tells that in tango she met lots of different people who spoke the same language: tango, but in an extraordinary richness and variety. Marta Savigliano undertakes the issue of commodification of tango. In her book *Tango Political Economy of Passion*, she defines tango history as a history of exiles. According to her racial, ethnic, class-based, and erotic exiles again and again developed it from its real roots. As a Latin American scholar she defines tango as her womb, language, a fence where she could resist the colonial evocations of globalization, a variable, and an outstanding source for her identity. Savigliano undertakes the understanding of tango as a commodity enabling an emotion and impact transfer and due to this imperialist rooming of emotions, a new emotional capital; passion. This passion that Savigliano mentions has accumulated in the form of exotic culture, renamed and consumed, aroused. Savigliano investigates and interpretes tango that developed into an exotic commodity within the political economy of passion.

There are articles that mention the female figure and the class-gender conflict in tango. “*Neither Virgins, nor Whores, Stepping out of Bonds: The Tragedy of the Milonguita in the Tango Song*”, “Tango Renovacion: On the Use of Music History in Post-Crises Argentina”, “*Whiny Ruffians: Tango as a Spectacle*” are some of those articles. For instance, in the article “*Notes on Tango as Queer Commodity*,” Savigliano says that tango is a gendered dance and tango lyrics reflect those gender differences and sexual orientation. Males are warned about women being uncanny, adulteresses. She emphasizes that there is a male-male tango, but it is straight and tango is in the macho form. Although there has been a female-female tango, it is discouraged since the leading function is assumed to belong to a male. The article “*Amarrado al recuerdo’ the Memory Dimension in Classical Tango Lyrics*” outlines the ways in which tango songs construct a past and maintain memory patterns that they have contained since the classical period (1880-1955). Betrayal, fame, glory, loneliness, working class, pimps, and feelings of desertion are some of the themes mentioned in these lyrics.

There are articles about or related to tango history such as: “*How Traumatized Societies Remember?*” “*Globalization and the Tango, Tango Renovacion: On the Uses of Music History*”, “*Tango: Theme of Class and Nation*”. For example, in the article “*Between the Gaucho and the Tango: Popular Songs and the Shifting Landscape of Modern Argentine Identity, 1895-1915*”, it is stated that despite the foreign influences and emulating European high culture, by 1900 the gaucho and the tango had both begun to emerge as alternative symbols to the nation.

## **2.2. Methodology**

As I mentioned before, in my dissertation, I aim to reveal the gender notion in tango and how tango is perceived and experienced by people dancing it in Istanbul. I looked for the answer in the inspection of their everyday routine in their interpretation of the tango. Therefore, I employed the inductive procedure and qualitative methodological approaches to gather the data from the field. After data gathering, I synthesized it with theory and derived argumentations by reverting to cited resources.

Participant observation and in-depth interviews are the qualitative methods that I utilized during fieldwork. Furthermore, I used the heuristic method for referring to

my own observations and impressions about the research topic. Since I am a part of the research group, I intended to reflect on my experience as an insider and the information that I am able to gather due to my position and convert it to valuable utilizable data. This is the diversity that I aim to reflect in my dissertation. Discourse analysis was another method that I adopted in the interpretation part of my data. In the section that follows I will explain in detail all the methods I used.

### **2.2.1. Participant Observation and Heuristic Research:**

I chose participant observation because it is a useful research method for me from various perspectives. First of all, it allows me to check for nonverbal expression of feelings that is crucial in dance. Dance itself is a nonverbal communication; it is gone when it is performed. Therefore, drawing the unspoken knowledge of dancing body, conceiving the codes embedded in looks, steps, mimics, and gestures; and ultimately transforming those into suggestive and meaningful research findings necessitate long and repetitious observations. As well as the interpretation of dancing body, participant observation also helps me to detect who interacts with whom, in which way, and how these interactions change form throughout the time. Also, it is a supportive methodology in terms of figuring out the elements that informants may be unable or unwilling to share during interviews. In other words, it enables me to shed a light on interviews' blurred parts or to fill in the blanks in interviewees' expressions.

When it comes to how I conducted research, I can say that having the chance of participating and observing tango community in Istanbul in its natural environment is real advantage for me. Since I am already a social tango dancer, I have never been confronted with the difficulties that a foreign observer may have been. Also I think my being a natural part of the group helped me to avoid the observer effect -where the behavior of those under study may alter due to the presence of the other-. I took notes to record what I have seen for not letting feelings or too much involvement to influence my objectivity. I paid attention to physical environment, participants in detail, verbal and non-verbal conversations, interactions among participants, taught and transferred rules, regulations, and rituals. On the other hand, I did not only observe what is going around me; rather I aimed to add depth to my research through personal involvement with research subjects. The case of 'being one of them' was not only a technical issue for me, but at the same time it was an ethical concern. As a

natural part of the group, most of the times I have an innate advantage in accessing the group, and observations have not been made from a distanced position. Since some of the group members are my friends, they already had an idea about my research project, but this information did not make any of them cautious. For them I was not an observer participating in the activities of the group, rather I was one of them (a tango lover) who were interested in tango scholarly as well. Therefore, the process was not an 'artificial' involvement to the group, but rather wearing on researcher glasses and looking through different lenses.

Besides participant observation, I embodied heuristic method to share my personal experiences in tango as valid research findings. In heuristic research method, researcher's life experiences about the subject of study are also a primary focus. As a social tango dancer who has been in classes, *milongas*, *practicas*, festivals, workshops, and friend-meetings where I see, smell, do, and feel tango more than three years, I have developed an inherent knowledge about tango in Istanbul. This accumulated apprehension enables me to reach a more heartfelt and concrete interpretation related to the findings of other research methods. Therefore, as a researcher, I was not subject to talk as an outsider voice, rather I had a chance to amplify findings and state them with an internal tone. I was also able to entrench my tango-lifetime experiences in my research.

### **2.2.2. In-Depth Interviews:**

In-depth interviews also constitute a significant part of the data gathering process. I chose in-depth interviews as a research method since they provide an opportunity to gain insight into the inner thoughts and feelings of the respondents. This is crucial for me because in my research project a complete picture of the conceptualization of tango and schematization of gender in it could only be derived through deep probing of thoughts and feelings. One-on-one interviews conducted with tango dancers enabled me to reach invaluable information that could not be gathered otherwise.

In the interviewing process, I followed a semi-structured format. I had a questionnaire form, but during the interviews I allowed the questions to flow naturally based on the information provided by the interviewee. When necessary I was able to probe deeper into a response in order to increase the richness of the data being obtained. Additionally, this provided me with the opportunity to encourage

deeper responses and obtain a desired level of information. For example, if I needed to hear more information, I asked: "Could you say something more about that?" after the initial response. I asked clear, single questions at a time, followed funneling and added follow-up questions to clarify the issue. I used an audio-tape to record interviews. I preferred not to take notes in an effort to catch the gestures and mimics of the interviewee. I aimed to establish a good rapport with the respondents by listening attentively and displaying my interest and respect for what they had to say.

While choosing the subjects for in-depth interviews my main regard was to form diversity. I was careful to choose interviewees among people from many various occupations, cultural, and educational background. Most of them were composed of social dancers, but there are professional tango dancers, tango instructors, and tango organizers as well. Moreover, I selected interviewees with varying degrees of tango experience in order to be able to better reflect the perception of tango and the possible revisions in this perception.

Some brief information regarding the profile of my interviewees is listed below:

- #of interviewees: 20
- # of women: 9, # of men: 11
- Age scale: 23 - 77
- Education level: Min. High school, Max. PhD
- Occupation: Student, tango instructor, engineer, web designer, financial advisor, retired, real estate agent, company owner, journalist, academician, manager assistant, dental technician, chess coach, architect, musician, etc.
- #of years dancing tango: 3 months to 13 years
- #of professional tango dancers: 5

### **2.2.3. Discourse Analysis:**

I will apply discourse analysis while analyzing and commentating on in-depth interview results and field notes. From a sociological standpoint discourse is defined as any practice by which individuals instill reality with meaning. Indeed, any social practice from a dance show to a piece of music or myth can be analyzed discursively. In my research, I will both analyze induced discourse (in-depth interviews) and spontaneous discourses (dancing bodies, dialogues in milonga, etc.). Paying specific attention to analyzing the spontaneous discourses, not only the individual subjects,

but also the collective subjects among them matters for me. For instance, I will assess whether there are shared meanings constructed by people in their interaction such as the preferences of women about the use of adornments during the dance. Discourse analysis is significant both in terms of verifying and deepening the findings gathered through participant observation and heuristic research. Also it will be a tool for depiction of interviews and constitute basis for harmonization of theory and practice.

After giving background information about literature and mentioning to methodology that I employed, in the next chapter, I will continue by noting the story of tango as a means of preparation to discuss the Istanbul specific findings about tango and its gendered dimensions.

### 3. THE JOURNEY OF TANGO FROM BUENOS AIRES TO ISTANBUL

*The history of tango is a story of encounters between those who should have never met.*

*Marta E. Savigliano*

In this chapter I will discuss the story of tango. Where, when and under which conditions it was born, how it was similar to the steps it took during its journey over continents and throughout the history. The purpose of this is to introduce the reader to the world that will be discussed in the following sections. I believe that getting acquainted with the ‘big story’ is key to being able to understand the nuances of the individual stories of both womanhood and manhood of tango dancers in Istanbul. In order to understand their stories, we should first know about the core of these numerous stories and be able to define what tango is. Therefore, this chapter is designed to be a preparatory chapter for establishing more concrete and similar links between reader and interviewees’ thoughts and feelings and also those of my own observations. In *Paper Tangos*, Julie Taylor mentioned the difficulty of conveying the bodily knowledge of tango into words (1998, xv). If one attempts to narrate the dance they will find it impossible since there are no exact words that match the indicated step. Similarly, I also faced difficulties while attempting to put into words a state of emotion aroused from a kinesthetic energy and a bodily interaction that I felt, observed, and listened to during the research process. Considering the inescapable inefficiency of scriptural transmission of this bodily experience and mental mood, I aimed to equip the reader by giving information about tango and so facilitating his/her job while trying to imagine what *tangueros*<sup>4</sup> and *tangueras*<sup>5</sup> were talking about when they start to explain what tango is for them.

While outlining the story about tango at no point of time did I claim that there is only one ‘tango’. This is said to indicate that this chapter does not aim to provide documentary evidence. Rather, it aims to give my short sketch of the tango’s journey

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<sup>4</sup> Male tango dancers. *Milonguera* or *milonguita* is also used as a term.

<sup>5</sup> Female tango dancers. *Milonguera* or *milonguita* is also used as a term.

from its roots up to the present day. There are commonly accepted stories about the origin and phases of tango, but this does not mean that there are no other stories that are out there that may have been overlooked or lost over time. For instance, even though tango lyrics are generally known by their sad themes that focus mostly on betrayal and discrepancy, there are lots of cheerful tango songs. As Baim indicates: “A completely different aspect of tango history emerges in the various answers to the question, whose tango is it?” (2007, 2). Therefore, I would like to establish that this chapter is about the story of tango as seen from my eyes and edited through my selections.

The chapter will begin with the history of tango, its emergence and transformation over the years as well as the development of the music related to tango. Later, I will cover tango’s introduction to Turkey and the milestones of this meeting. Tango, as a dance type, will be the topic of next chapter.

### **3.1. Roots: The Colonial Period (16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

There is no consensus on the etymologic roots of the word ‘tango’. This word has existed in Spain since 1803 and means ‘anklebone’. Hess mentioned that Enrique Corominas in his *Diccionario Etimologico* claimed that this word was used for describing an Argentinian dance in 1836 (2007, 11). Jose Gobello comments that at the beginning of nineteenth century the houses that black people organized festivities in were called tango. According to Horacio Salas tango is possibly a Portuguese-originated word that arrived to Spain. There is a slave-trading relation to this Portuguese-origination claim such as Portuguese was used in one of the islands from where African slaves were picked up and carried to Argentina with the slave ships (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 41). According to Uruguayan sociologist Daniel Vidart tango was probably derived from the word tambo (drum) in the African language, or tangir/ tocar (touch, play an instrument) (Hess, 2007, 11). There are also additional arguments supporting this claim. For instance, Argentinian historian Ricardo Rodriguez Molas also believes that the origin of the word ‘tango’ comes from ‘tambor’ and with linguistically adaptations finally became ‘tango’ (Poosson, 2004, 91). He notes that tango means ‘closed place’ or ‘reserved ground’ (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 41). In many parts of the Spanish-speaking world, as in Argentina, tango referred to a place where African slaves or free blacks gather to

dance. Also, it was used to refer to Black dances in general (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 41). In 1889, the Spanish Royal Academy Dictionary accepted tango as a word meaning a type of dance and music. Although it's difficult to have an exact idea about the origin of the word, it is understood that it has varied usage and meaning. What UNESCO Courier Luis Bocaz said could be a good summary: "The intermingling of its African and *mestizo*<sup>6</sup> ancestors, together with other local and European strains, gave birth, in the space of a few decades, to one of the most distinctive cultural creations of the American continent," (Gift, 2008, 165).

Toward the end of 1880's European and Middle Eastern immigrants were drifting to the new continent. New York and Buenos Aires were two of the most popular destinations. After the year 1880 Argentina experienced a significant evolution. The federalization law, opening of pampas<sup>7</sup> for ranching and agriculture, growing need for beef and cereals in Europe, the arrival of modern communication and transfer vehicles such as steamships, telegraphs, establishing of railways throughout the country, the pouring of foreign capital converted Argentina into one of the richest nations of the early 1920s. Buenos Aires was the shining star and centre of all these developments. It attracted people toward the remote continents to find the path that would bring them closer to their dreams (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 21). However, there was a difference between the type of immigrants' preferences toward either New York or Buenos Aires. The ones arriving in New York were mostly composed of families who were trying to keep alive their customs while integrating into the city. In contrast, the ones who preferred Buenos Aires or Rio de la Plata region<sup>8</sup> in wider terms were mostly composed of single men who dreamed of returning back home after making money (Gift, 2008, 165). These immigrants settled in dark airless tenements called *conventillos*<sup>9</sup> (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 35). Their neighbors

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<sup>6</sup> Mestizo is a term traditionally used in Spain, and the Spanish-speaking Latin America to mean a person whose ancestors were both European and American Indians only (Wikipedia, [12.06.2013]).

<sup>7</sup> Pampas were the natural habitat for independent, nomadic gauchos, the fierce horsemen of the plains, whose harsh way of life had grown up on the edge of organized society (Collier & oth., 1997, 19).

<sup>8</sup> Including the mouth of the Rio de la Plata in Montevideo, Uruguay.

<sup>9</sup> The overcrowded tenements-some purpose built, some abdicated by upper-class families-where dwellers chocked up into narrow rooms surrounding a central patio.

were nomadic *gauchos*<sup>10</sup>, who were driven away from pampas when ranchers seized these lands with the help of government's development policy that supported the Indians who stayed just a handful after the assimilation process during the colonial period, accommodated former Black slaves who couldn't find a place to themselves in white community, attracted descendants of Spanish colonists who could not become part of the new face of Argentina, drew off-duty soldiers from the near Army barracks, saw the influx of sailors on leave from docked ships, and other rural immigrants (Gift, 2008, 166). These *arrabales*<sup>11</sup> had a bad reputation for being petty crooks, supporting crime, pimping and creating turbulence to human dynamics (Gift, 2008, 167). This was a male-dominated society rich with poverty and supported a feeling of alienation. There was no common language or a consolidative culture that may bring these people together. Music and dance became the key and the tango that they created became the language of their own providing a branch for these young men to cling to in the lonely world. That is why it may not be wrong to say that tango is not a national dance but a product of the hybrid lives in the Buenos Aires' slums.

The arduous living conditions of those men forced them to look for relief on the streets. The misery they lived caused them to gamble, fight, or drink. The only thing that they could do is to familiarize themselves with the few musical instruments they had. The barrios, which are a few square miles of the tiny areas of the port cities of Montevideo and Buenos Aires, witnessed the *mélange* of musical cultures that clashed and fused among each other (Gift, 2008, 202). The poorer southern side of the Buenos Aires is where the Sunday gatherings under trees, in simple dance-halls, in and around the brothels, and the academies were the places where the tango's gloomy prehistory was lived out (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 47). It can be said that: "The true home of tango was the patio of a tenement block, where working class Argentineans and recent immigrants from other countries met, mixed, played and danced together" (Denniston, 2007, 60). The dance these brothers-in-fate did in the streets while vamping up the music evolved to plant the seeds of tango. When we

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<sup>10</sup> Gauchos are mixed Spanish and Indian or black people living in the pampas, roaming the countryside to follow the enormous herds of wild cattle. They were proud of their independence and saw themselves as masters of the land. They were earning their life by selling beef, hides, and tallow to the domestic market. When the whites began taking over the pampas for their enormous ranches in the mid-1800s, the gauchos had little choice but to move to the suburbs of Buenos Aires since their only means of making a living gone (Martin, Collier & oth., 1997, 179).

<sup>11</sup> Suburban fringes of the city.

look at primitive tango music we are confronted with repetitive tunes played using a guitar, including both the cheerful and grief melodies of the Indians, gauchos, and peasants. The blacks' *candombe*<sup>12</sup> drum, early Spanish arrivals' waltz and polka, European immigrant salon dances, opera, popular and classical music, and also the musical literacy of Italians were important influences on the early tango music (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 40). It is evident that tango music is a synthesis which melted and combined various types of music and used them as stepping stones.

The first tango orchestras that were established before 1900 were composed of one guitar, one violin, and one flute. Around the 1900's, the use of the tango piano began to spread and became one of the major instruments in the orchestra (Hess, 2007, 69). When *bandoneon*<sup>13</sup> of Fermans was introduced to the arrabales, music transformed into a new version reflecting the sadness of European immigrants. From that moment, tango was identified with bandoneon and it became the signature sound of tango music. It can even be said that: "One could not think of tango without the sound of a bandoneon" (Gift, 2008, 208). With the introduction of bandoneon, tango gained a sentimental identity and remained primarily as music that reflected grief and was vocalized mostly by male singers (Hess, 2007, 84). Because of tango's association with slums, both middle and upper class society adopted a condescending attitude toward the art and therefore it initially could not go beyond those neighborhoods. However, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, tango had begun to make inroads into the city's center with the help of technological advances and the esteemed position it gained throughout Europe, specifically in Paris.

### **3.2. The Growth of Tango: 1870s to World War I**

By the 1890's tango music was starting to gain popularity and was being played by bands. When it moved off the streets and into bars and cafes, it changed form and the instruments diversified. During these times, the Italians made significant contributions to tango music. Italian originated composers, musicians, and arrangers were responsible for opening up the musical path of tango. In contrast to the subject

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<sup>12</sup> "Candombe dances were integral parts of African rituals consisting of chanting, prayers, and jerky dance movements imitating warriors or certain animals. They served as a basis for community identity as well as for entertainment and recreation" (Gift, 2008, 89).

<sup>13</sup> An accordeon-like instrument which was arrived from Germany in 1886.

matter of tango songs, the tone was always light-hearted (Denniston, 2007, 65). As previously mentioned, 1900 was the year in which first tango orchestras, '*orquestras típicas*', appeared (Gift, 2008, 212). *Orquestras típicas* played at luxurious cabarets and made tango visible to the upper class, although visibility did not mean it had acquired any type of approval yet. The other two important developments in the second half of the 1910's came from the appearance of the standard tango sextet orchestra and the tango songs gaining popularity (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 62). Although the complete tango songs did not fully come out until the 1920's, words had begun to be applied to tango melodies (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 63).

As it was mentioned, *Lunfardo*<sup>14</sup>, the slang of the arrabales, were the main source of first tango lyrics. Tango lyrics from those time carried social messages that reflected concepts involving the love of an altruistic mother, tears being shed because of the abandonment of a lover, homesickness and loneliness. Some tango lyrics included a warning to young women not to fall into the trap of rich men who would hoodwink them with presents. While some others were even advising young girls not to be a tango dancer (Denniston, 2007, 63). In these early tangos, milonguitas are not explicitly accused of being sex workers, but tango's unspoken ideas suggest that they will be finally drawn into exchanging sexual advantages for material gains including clothes, jewelry, and money (Viladrich, 2006, 276). These tangos penalize females for being swept into a perverted path, but also seek their protection by warning others not to follow the corrupted life style (Viladrich, 2006, 277). Savigliano says that the complaining of the lower-class male in tango songs serves two important purposes; winning the favor of audiences and informing the upper-class women about the illegitimate love affairs of upper-class men (1998, 61, taken from Feldman, 2006, 2). These men became the social metaphor for the ongoing gender and class tensions being performed through dancing, music, and poetry (Viladrich, 2006, 275). It seems that besides reflecting the cries of lower-class male, they are also an explicit challenge to man's power. It is important to note that by 'informing' the women about the 'end of the story'; in fact, these men have confessed their vulnerability and desperation in the face of the possibility of women taking the 'lead' in their destiny.

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<sup>14</sup> It was born in the underworld slums of Buenos Aires during the last part of the nineteenth century, created by the invasion of the words from the myriad of languages introduced by primarily Italian males (Gift, 2008, 262). Lunfardo was primary language spoken in the conventillos of the slums. That's it is famous with being a tango language during the origin of tango.

However, as tango began to evolve, the lyrics became more romantic and nostalgic (Gift, 2008, 213). When tango songs began to rise in popularity, serious musicians and poets became interested in this style of music. As time passed and also with the aid of technological inventions like the phonograph and the radio, tango moved to the center of the city and was embraced by the middle-class. It would take until 1907 for upper-class society to accept tango and only after its rise in popularity in Paris (Gift, 2008, 214). Tango teachers opened tango schools in Buenos Aires. While elegant dresses and more gentle movements were encouraged, lunfardo was discouraged.

During the 1880's tango was dominated by the older, stronger men of the barrios, who were mostly Italian (Gift, 2008, 219). They represented three categories of dancers; *compadres*, *compadritos*, and *malevos*. *Compadres*<sup>15</sup> were a type of urban gaucho. Tango was a way of gaining identity for them. *Compadritos*<sup>16</sup> were the next generation of young men in arrabales who were trying to imitate older *compadres*, but were unable to gain the reputation they had since they did not follow the customs of *compadres* (Gift, 2008, 222). They could be labeled as the children of underworld of Buenos Aires and the represented and inseparable part of the myth of tango (Taylor, 1976, 275-276). The other macho type of barrio men who danced tango obsessively were the *malevos*. They were rude and not friendly like their counterparts the *compadres* and *compadritos*. They strove to become excellent dancers in an effort to gain respect, but even though they danced greatly they were mostly looked down upon as still possessing the undesirable qualities of *malevos* (Gift, 2008, 224).

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<sup>15</sup> They were employed in herding cattle from the pampa to the slaughterhouse or in driving carts (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 37). *Compadres* perpetuated gaucho tradition of helping others and caring newcomers and disadvantaged ones in the neighborhoods. They also wore special customs similar to the ones gauchos wore on and carried the knives like them (Gift, 2008, 220). They carried the extreme independence and masculine pride which were definite gaucho attitudes (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 37). In the barrios, these *compadres* danced with each other because of the shortage of women. These men danced in the streets for days and nights, spent their hours practicing with each other. They checked out for new steps and competed for each other. These guys' obsession for tango did not arise just because of their interest in dance. Tango enabled these poor men of the barrios to be 'someone'. The winner of the 'dance duels' gained reputation and good dancers overawed through their skills in dance (Gift, 2008, 221).

<sup>16</sup> They spent their nights drinking alcohol and fighting, they were proud and arrogant (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 38). As Gift said: "The image of *compadrito* lounging against a street lamp, hands in pockets, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, is still an iconic symbol of tango today," (2008, 223). Tango man image is identified with *compadrito* image. The *compadrito*'s special type of walking became known as the 'tango walk'. These *compadritos* were capturing attraction and appreciation with their outstanding dance skills (Gift, 2008, 223).

Apart from these there were “soldiers from the nearby barracks, sailors enjoying shore-leave, enterprising immigrant artisans, factory hands, slaughterhouse workers, herdsmen, simple vagrants” who constituted much of the human world of the arrabals of Buenos Aires (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 38). It can be ascertained that it was a world where men always outnumbered the women. Since tango was born in a womanless immigrant community, men had to practice tango among each other so as to dance with a small number of very good women dancers who rejected clumsiness (Hess, 2007, 19). Women from the lower-class, who were living in the barrios, had already begun to dance tango with men in the bars and cafes. However, when tango made its way to the middle- class, these middle-class women had to practice it at home with their aunts, uncles, brothers, etc. Only after some time did some families allow their girls to embark on training and then go to well chaperoned public dance halls (Gift, 2008, 225).

Once tango began to invade the city center of Buenos Aires, both cabarets and music halls started to expand. Additionally there were *academias*<sup>17</sup> visited by all working class men where they could meet, play music, dance and try out new ideas among each other (Gift, 2008, 225). In these *academias* only two things were expected from a female partner; she needed to be talented and dance well. Being beautiful was not required (Hess, 2007, 20). Since asking a woman to dance was only a luxury after you were considered a capable dancer, men practiced at *academias* with the younger men until they were considered as good enough to dance with a woman. Often it took several years of practice to become a skilled enough dancer to dance with the most desirable women. Also there were *Casas de Bailes* (dance houses) where respectable women could attend since it was not advisable for them to go to cabarets (Gift, 2008, 228). Since 1907 people started to dance tango in saloons and theaters. In 1913, after the success tango gained in Paris, cafes and luxurious cabarets were established in Buenos Aires (Hess, 2007, 22). The practice of being prepared and the extensive effort that a man must afford before being ready to propose a dance to a woman is one aspect that I find interesting. In those times asking for a dance was a job taken seriously. Dancing well enough to be able to ask for a dance was a testament of ‘masculinity’. However, among contemporary tango dancers in Istanbul, this ritual has not been observed. There is not a preparation period for men before going to a

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<sup>17</sup> Dance academy

milonga. It is irrational to expect a man to practice with another man before dancing with a woman. Yet women can be easily annoyed at the unrealistic courage of some beginner level male dancers who feel confident enough to ask a professional tango dancer to dance while they must wait until they are 'worth dancing with'. I think that in those old times tango was done with woman, but it was also done for woman.

Going back to the story, it is seen that after 1900 the tango was in an upward trend. Although it was not totally accepted by the upper class, it was no more only in the reserve of *compadritos*, it was being danced in the venues around the city. Some well-run dance salons were opened. Talented musicians started to join tango bands. Music moderately became much more fertile and elegant. Dance started to lose its original fierce, erotic character. This tradition reached its top point in the 1920s, after tango's introduction in Paris. This was the onset of the Golden Age of tango, where tango historians cite as '*Guardia Vieja*' or 'Old Guard' (Collier, Collier & oth., 1997, 57). During the first decade of the nineteenth century tango leaped across to Europe and gained a successful acceptance in the salons of aristocratic society in Europe. Paris was one of the main destinations. Tango landed in Paris in about 1907. The first ones arrived Paris were musicians. They preferred to go Paris to make records; Paris was convenient for musicians with its advanced recording technologies and easy working environment (Cooper, Collier & oth., 1997, 67). The tango was first done in a Parisian theatrical appraisal in 1908 (Cooper, Collier & oth., 1997, 68). However, the big breakout occurred in the salons of upper-class Paris in 1910. As being located at the top point of cultural hierarchy Paris carried a special importance for Argentinians. As Gift states: "Since Paris was the uncontested center of the cultural world for European society, the acceptance of tango there guaranteed attention throughout Europe" (2008, 234). In 1911, the tango craze, called 'tangomania', had taken over not only fashionable Paris but emanated throughout Europe. During the tangomania time one can see tango everywhere: cocktails, desserts, high fashion clothing, perfume, post cards, medicine, etc. (Gift, 2008, 240). For instance, there was a perfume advertisement such as: "All the women who dance tango are familiar with a strange fascination; those who smell the perfume "Tokalon-tango" find the same intense and unforgettable charm... The tango is an entirely different dance and this perfume is equally mysterious and unforgettable," (Gift, 2008, 241). Before World War I, tango had been dancing in all big cities of world, and from New York

to Tokyo it was rash (Denniston, 2007, 82). Thus, tango, differently from the previous widely danced social dances waltz and polka, allowed the couples to improvise different things to the same music. The kind of physical intimacy it requires and the endless opportunity of creation charmed dance lovers and triggered a beauty that they did not encounter before (Denniston, 2007, 83). Tango affected the tastes, preferences, and social life of European tango lovers. Women's dressing was adapted according to tango. For instance, waists of dresses moved higher, to give more length and freedom of mobility for leg movements (Gift, 2008, 242). Therefore, it can be said that tango may seem 'macho' considering its figures; on the other hand, it liberated women's lives from many perspectives. From dressing up to going out at nights, it caused social codes to be reorganized.

It should be noted that the tango danced at that time was not directly copied from the slums of Buenos Aires. However tango was responsible for the re-evaluation of moral values. Unfortunately, Europeans crippled tango in order to make it proper with their culture. Inevitably, the legitimization of tango became distorted from its Argentinean format (Hess, 2007, 23). The craggy and provocative figures of tango and the interaction with other social dances were mollified and made harmonious with European salons' delicacy. During the period of 'tangomania' in Europe, the tango danced in France was usually accepted as the reference point for development. For Hess, the first tango that spread out from France was prosaic and betrayed the anticipation and improvisation features of true tango (2007, 51).

However, not all French and Europeans were eager to dance the tango. This lack of acceptance was seen when the high-society Argentinians confronted their Parisian counterparts and made efforts to convince them that the dance that they were so ashamed of had nothing to do with Argentine identity. For example; Enrique Larreta, the Argentine ambassador in France, was an active member of anti-tango campaign. In 1914 he was asked about tango and he replied: "No. Ah, no! Not in my house, no! There is in Paris at least one salon where the Argentine Tango will not be danced and that is in the Argentine legation," (Gift, 2008, 243). In addition to the Paris-settled Argentines, some French also questioned the acceptance of the tango and were not satisfied with the ongoing situation. For example, the poet Leopoldo Lugenes addressed the tango as "a reptile from the brothel to the salons of Paris" (Gift, 2008, 244). Furthermore, there were some anti-tango campaigns in the United States. The

reason for all these condemnations is directly traceable to tango's association with immorality and the drifting of women to indecency (Gift, 2008, 245).

Despite all the negative reactions, the interest in tango was snowballing and even tangomaniac Europeans led a change in tango's destiny in Argentina. Since Paris was the cultural reference point for Argentinians and everything there was closely watched by upper class of Argentinians, the intense interest of Paris' high society to the sanitized and filtered version of *arrabales*' language, tango was a really shocking symptom. For instance, an Argentine magazine P.B.T. wrote: "In Paris they are dancing tango. Where? In the most aristocratic homes. Who is dancing it? The most distinguished and elegant women and men," (Gifts, 2008, 248). The magazine aimed to highlight that Argentina had put the wrong foot forward and would be remembered as a nation associated with something to be ashamed of. However, it was not a reference for Buenos Aires society that takes Paris as supreme authority in social and cultural life. Moreover, the tango that returned to Buenos Aires with the return of Argentine exiles was very different from the one that had left when they were going to abroad. It was softened for ease of adaptation to the sensitivities of European high society. Even Argentines called this tango as '*tango a la Francesca*' (Gift, 2008, 249). These exiles formed an exclusive social club for themselves and arranged tango contests, private mansion balls, and large balls that facilitated the diffusion of tango among the upper class of Buenos Aires. After 1910s, tango almost lost its bad reputation. Even Argentines began to be enchanted and proud to have international recognition for tango (Gift, 2008, 251).

### **3.3. Tangomania: 1920s and 1930s and the Golden Age of Tango**

The 1920's were the years that tango gained acceptance at almost all levels of Argentinean society. Concurrently, tango music began to follow a similar path (Azzi, Collier & oth., 1997, 114). The supporters of the Old Guard were interested in upholding the tango that was played until 1920, with the beat as central element. However, the supporters of the New Guard<sup>18</sup> were after trying new harmonies, new

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<sup>18</sup> The years 1925-1948 is called 'New Guard' in tango. Tango experienced a flourishing period during these years. Large orchestras, important singers and important lyrics writers emerged in this period. Tango made development in music, dance, and lyrics (Akgün, 1993, 62).

techniques of interpretation and lyricism. The piano became an important instrument in tango orchestras.

In the early tango, lyrics held little or no importance and there was no attempt to arrange the words appropriately with music and to tell a story. *Lunfardo* was the main source for generating lyrics. However, during this time tango was composed with the concept of lyrics set properly with the music and with the aim to tell a story and describe the emotions of underprivileged urban people (Gift, 2008, 261). These were different from the preceding ones made with improvised, blithesome words that conveyed the feelings of writers and highlighted the troubles of unfortunate people. By the mid-1930's orchestras began to integrate permanent singers into their orchestras. By the 1940s, it can be asserted that singers became an important part of the orchestra. Even the success of some orchestras was directly linked to the singer. Beginning in 1910 and continuing through the 1930's, records, phonograph, radio, and films facilitated the wind of tango and it was blowing everywhere. During this period Argentina was experiencing their most fertile and inventive period which can be referred to as 'The Golden Age' (Gift, 2008, 302). Most radio programmes were playing tango; magazines were full of tango lyrics and articles about the dance. Furthermore cinema production that included the tango was quite popular in those days (Azzi, Collier & oth., 1997, 150).

The advent of dance spurred the rise in popularity of the tango in the 1940's and innovations in the dance and the experimentation of the various choreographic possibilities of dance rose. The tango started to take a new form. With the rise in popularity tango floors became too crowded forcing couples to make shorter steps to avoid crashing into other couples and this led to a more subtle, close embrace style of dancing (Gift, 2008, 304). Besides the change in the dance style, the dance itself also continued to evolve. Denniston agreed that the striking thing that makes the Golden Era is tango's merging of all the elements to create one entity (Denniston, 2007, 72). It was the case encountered not only in Argentina, but in Paris as well. Andre Warnod highlighted the tango reality of Paris with his column in 'Les Bals de Paris':

"One could say that right after the war, Paris thought of nothing but the dance... tango was king. In other times it was danced for those watching, but at present one dances for one's own pleasure. With the tango, the dance has become essentially an egotistical pleasure" (Gifts, 2008, 269).

During the 1940s, strict codes for dress and dance floor etiquette developed. Both women and men paid closer attention to what they were wearing, highlighting smartness and freedom of movement were critical. Also, personal behavior codes evolved (Gift, 2008, 309). Still, men were not permitted to dance in the milongas before they had proven that they were good enough. For men, this was not just about dancing; rather it was a matter of reputation. As Mingo Pugliese declared: “Men took their dancing very seriously as it could affect their standing in the community with both men and women,” (Gift, 2008, 311). Also, the rules of dance floor were rigorously followed. For instance, as Carlos Gavito recalled: “... if a woman did a *boleo*<sup>19</sup> or the man led his partner in a *gancho*<sup>20</sup>, the couple would be asked to leave the hall. Likewise, if a couple bumped another couple or did not follow the line of dance, they would have to leave immediately,” (Gift, 2008, 311). As previously stated while discussing the social roles of dancing; tango could be considered as a tool for the parameters of social behavior.

The music and orchestras during the Golden Era were varied from the ones in tango’s early times. Most importantly, tango music furthered its popularity among non-dancers through gramophone recordings, radio, and film. The professionalism of tango musicians increased. They both created music for the dance floor and improved their arrangements that in turn fuelled the creativity of dancers (Denniston, 2007, 73). This era starting from late thirties to early fifties is known as the era of the songs and orchestras which are currently designated as the most popular ones to dance to in any milonga. The number of orchestras almost tripled. Every orchestra developed its unique style of making music and dancers also adopted their dance styles according to their favorite orchestra. In other words, music and dance created a reciprocal interaction. During the 1940’s music was sophisticated. Likewise the evolution of music and in turn tango lyrics also underwent a change. Rather than disappointed ambitions and family miseries there was a shift towards themes of

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<sup>19</sup> A boleó happens when the leader leads the extension of a turning back step and then reverses the direction, leading the follower to bring the same leg round into a turning forwards step. If this is done slowly the follower’s foot will slide along the floor, producing a soft and sensuous movement. If the movement is done with more speed the follower’s foot will be lifted from the floor (Denniston, 2007, 156).

<sup>20</sup> Gancho means hook. A gancho is any movement where one dancer hooks a leg around the leg of the other dancer. ... Typically the leader leads the follower to do a gancho by interrupting the transfer of a turning back step. The leader introduces a soft, bent leg into the space between the follower’s legs when the follower has extended the leg (Denniston, 2007, 161).

social injustice and rebellion against an insensitive society. As a result of the shift in lyrical content, the need for vocalists increased. During the 1940's vocalists became an essential part of the orchestra. Moreover, most of the tango vocalists developed dramatic and theatrical gestures that used their facial and bodily expressions to transfer passions and pains. They were careful about "staying within the music as a means of intensifying the emotional content of their performance" (Denniston, 2007, 73). Also, during these years, tango singers were objects of great attention similar to the statues afforded movie stars today (Gift, 2008, 322).

Besides the cultural atmosphere and Parisian wind of change, the political atmosphere of those times supported the development of tango. In 1944 Juan Peron, who is famous with his leftism, became Vice President. After his marriage with Eva Duarte, the famous Evita<sup>21</sup> of Argentina, they made a valuable and effective team working together publicly and become known for their fight against poverty. For them, tango was the social glue that combined the various and separate ethnic groups of Argentina. Naming tango as 'the dance of people', they encouraged the positive promotion of it (Gift, 2008, 306). However, after Evita's death in 1950, tango lost a valuable, loyal supporter. Moreover, in post World War II, the new technology that brought expensive radios and televisions to Argentina enabled the youth to become acquainted with the Beatles, rock and roll, and the twist. As a result, the general population began to regard tango as something old-fashioned and lost interest in the dance of their grandparents. Additionally, in 1955 General Aramburu's ascension to the head of the government through a military junta was a strong stroke against tango. Since, tango was assumed to be a cause for inspiring nationalistic feelings and gathering crowds, it was seen as dangerous and was treated like a 'persona non grata'. Tango competitions were prohibited and tango dancing was discouraged by the government. Undoubtedly, this brought the end of the Golden Era and the tango went underground (Gift, 2008, 336).

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<sup>21</sup> Evita came from a poor family in the provinces. During his presidency, Evita enthusiastically accompanied Peron, became a popular speaker and advocate for him. Their aim was to provide a 'society of social justice' and they promoted tango for assimilating the diverse ethnic groups of Argentina and to help the rural migrants moved to urban areas. They joined dances, tango festivals and be in connection with important tango figures (Gift, 2008, 306).

### **3.4. From Underground to Revival**

As mentioned before, the Peronist government actively encouraged tango since they felt tango as identifiably Argentinean. Also, tango was a product of the working class culture which also supported the Peronist movement. For the new anti-Peronist junta, tango was something alien and many tango artists were either imprisoned, exiled, or blacklisted for their Peronist connections (Denniston, 2007, 77). The new coup government was intolerant of tango. The imposition of the government discouraged people. For instance, private meetings between more than three people were prohibited and police descended to tango halls to check people's identity papers. There was a systematic intimidation policy towards musicians, dancers, and composers even though it was not made explicitly. The ones who were thought to be against the government were arrested. There were assassinations, mass murders and institutionalized torture. People were depressed and scared. These repressive tactics stopped people from dancing in public places, but some people continued to dance tango privately in homes. Although the dance never completely stopped, new comers were not able to learn it properly. There were open milongas but they were difficult to find (Denniston, 2007, 77). Peron gained the Vice Presidency in 1973 after returning from exile but he died in 1974. The military junta again seized power in 1976. Between 1976 and 1983 Argentina experienced the most violent times of its history. Thousands of people disappeared. Many tango musicians and performers migrated to Paris and U.S. (Gift, 2008, 343). Meetings with more than three people were prohibited. Mingo Pugliese told that: "To give a party or to celebrate a wedding you had to have a police permit, so eventually people stopped dancing everything. Tango, rock and roll, boogie woogie, etc.," (Gift, 2008, 342). There were arrests without any solid suspicion. Assassinations and mass murders were common place. Listening or dancing tango became risky. As a result of the the military junta tango was marginalized.

There were also social reasons for the decline of tango. The Golden Era fulfilled the mission of the Peron's by bringing the splintered nationalities together. So, tango was no longer needed as glue. Moreover, the militarist government favored folk music rather than tango in the name of cultural protectionism. So tango bands were

recorded less and radios played fewer tango songs. Also, the international decline of tango after the late 1930's started to affect Argentina in the post war period. Since the migration caused by economic factors brought many single men to Argentina in the second half of the nineteenth century had ended, men no longer outnumbered the women and so the social forces that created the *practica* ended. This caused one of the important traditional ways of passing on the tango to diminish (Denniston, 2007, 95). In schools training activities in ballet and modern dance were favored. Also, the rebellious youth of sixties began to fight with tango as a disgraceful reminder of their proletarian past and tried to destroy it as a symbol of tradition (Gift, 2008, 346).

During the military governance the economy was also badly affected. People became poor and even if tango was still alive it would be difficult for people to find money to enter dance halls or take tango lessons (Gift, 2008, 347). Tango became something luxurious. Therefore, the tango industry was badly damaged (Gift, 2008, 348). It can be observed that the economic crises eradicated not only the money in people's pockets, but also the spirit of tango. Since most of the people left the country, the remaining ones had a feeble voice. The almost dead tango music was said to have experienced a revival back with the endeavor of evolutionists in the 1980s, especially at the hands of Astor Piazzola. At first, this new style was not appreciated by many Argentines. Even traditionalists did not accept it as tango. Conversely, it found more and more supporters in Europe and in the U.S. Piazzola's entrance to Paris generated a fresh wave of excitement (Gift, 2008, 359). Even amidst the doubt of those who did not accept Piazzola's music, he was recognized as the groundbreaking musician who changed the fate of tango music. As a direct result, dance evolved with the changing music.

In 1983, the last Argentinian dictatorship vanished. This brought pith to Argentine's cultural life and encouraged Argentinian expats to return back to the country (Gift, 2008, 350). However, tango was in ruin. There was a generation who was brought up without tango and there were not any places to live tango in the same way previous generations had enjoyed it. Thanks to the international enthusiasm for tango, it rose from the ashes. Paris was the cornerstone for the resurgence of the tango renaissance. The spark that ignited the tango fire was the 1984 theater production of *Tango Argentino* (Gift, 2008, 363). This modest show with its low-budget created an enormous interest in tango. People fell in love with the relationship between dancers,

their elegance and style. The show was not only displayed in Paris but it travelled to various parts of the world and gained success wherever it went. A vast number of people started to dance tango after seeing show. Some even travelled to Buenos Aires searching for the instructors from Golden Age (Denniston, 2007, 94). During this period, one key difference from the first international tango wave was that foreigners wanted to learn tango the way it was danced in Buenos Aires (Gift, 2008, 371). The aim was not to soften it to accommodate European ballrooms, but to dance it in its original glory. This led to a demand for tango teachers, shows and recordings throughout Europe, the U.S. and Japan (Denniston, 2007, 94).

### **3.5. Global Renaissance: 1985 to Present**

After the initial revival, tango has continued its expansion. In the 1990's, there were numerous opportunities for young dancers and the 1990's were encouraging times to be a tango dancer (Denniston, 2007, 98). Despite the times it went underground. Tango maintained an unbroken descent over one-hundred and fifty years as a social dance. No other social dance had gained the capacity of universal form of expression tango has done. It travelled all around the world. Many tango schools opened from Japan to Finland, from Turkey to Lebanon, and from Ukraine to Canada. Tango was even listed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in year 2009 due to its embodiment and encouragement of heterogeneity and cultural dialogue<sup>22</sup>. As a result of this recognition Argentinian and European maestros are travelling all around, giving classes, and performing shows. Tango dancers are meeting at international festivals or going to a local milonga at least once during their oversea journey. Today, tango has carried on its key quality of being a connective factor that acrosses seas, colors, and religions in proper with its hybrid roots.

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<sup>22</sup> Decision 4.COM 13.01

The Committee decides that tango satisfies the criteria for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since, it is a musical genre that includes dance, music, poetry and singing. It is also seen as one of the main significations of identity for the inhabitants of the Río de la Plata region (UNESCO, [11.07.2013]).

### 3.6. The Past of Tango in Turkey

*And so the tango, born of the poor streets of a distance time and place,  
finds a new frontier for growth, and begins to leave its origins behind,  
in speaking deeply to the larger world. Those of us who have loved it,  
and whose lives have been altered by it, trust that its emerging journey  
will carry this hypnotic dance, which has now flowered in three  
centuries, through the new century and beyond*

*Jef Anderson*

Tango's entrance to Turkey goes back to first years of the young republic. Turkey was introduced to tango in the years when the whole world was living 'tangomania'. This trend also affected Turkey which had newly established the convenient conditions for the acceptance and popularization of tango. Together with the foundation of the Republic in Turkey, as all else in life, great changes occurred in the fields of culture, arts, and entertainment in an attempt to keep up with the West. Tango was one of the things that became popular in 1920's due to the young republic's interest in European lifestyle. With the import of tango records and gramophones, Turkish people welcomed tango music. Also, tango as a dance style entered Turkey's ballrooms. "There are photographs of President Atatürk dancing tango with his adopted daughter at her wedding" (Gift, 2008, 418).

At first, it gained popularity in urban areas and inherently it appealed to the elite segment. As the direct result of state support, tango became one of the fastest spreading fashions. The interest in tango began to rise when tango music reached masses through radio. Before composing Turkish tangos, the tangos played in Turkey were European tangos. Argentine tangos would be discovered by its aficionados later on (Akgün, 1993, 110). 'Mazi', the first Turkish tango song, with lyrics that Necip Celal<sup>23</sup> wrote in 1928 was recorded as an LP in 1932 (Gift, 2008, 419). The other famous Turkish tango was 'Mehtaplı Bir Gecede' composed by Fehmi Ege<sup>24</sup> (Akgün, 1993, 110). Seyyan is the first popular tango singer. The song 'Mazi' came to life with her voice. The tango composed in Turkey was different from local tango

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<sup>23</sup> The songwriting period starting with Necip Celal Andel, continued with Fehmi Ege and Necdet Koyutürk.

<sup>24</sup> Kadri Cerrahoğlu, Ziyaettin Sarıkartal, Halit Bedii Akçay, Nusret Rıfkı were other important tango composers of those days. During 1940s Necdet Koyutürk was the distinguished composer and conductor (Akgün, 1993, 114).

music. Gift states that it was orientalist and influenced with Arabic music and dance (2008, 419). Also, Turkish tangos were traditionally oral. There were almost no instrumental tangos. Tango lyrics were mostly written by either composers or amateur poets<sup>25</sup> (Akgün, 1993, 110). The lyrics were mostly about love. In addition to love, the other themes of Turkish tango lyrics were: disappointment, passion, nostalgia, separation, and men confiding in their mothers (Gift, 2008, 420). As well as tender lyrics, melodies were appropriate with the musical appreciation of people. Therefore, Turkish tangos, with the recordings of first tango singers, spreaded all over Turkey and entered Turkish households. The remarkable point is that tango's acceptance and raise in popularity in Turkey occurs in sync with movement in Europe. In other words, the tango movement that was blowing through Turkey was a result of the winds of change that were taking place simultaneously in Paris ballrooms. The technique, music, executors, and supporters had nothing to do with the slums of Buenos Aires where tango emerged. Rather, in this first phase, the Turkish tango had been carrying the traces of a European style.

The interest in tango, which began to rise in the 1930's and lived its Golden Age, declined when other musical forms became popular in the West during the 1960's. Necdet Koyutürk made a remarkable entrance onto the music scene in the 1940s with his orchestra. Additionally, he gave voice to many tangos in the programs he made on Istanbul Radio during the 1940's. Seyyan's first tango album 'Mazi' was also the first record made in Turkey. Eduardo Bianco's orchestra gave concerts in Turkey between 1938 and 1951. The Istanbul Park Hotel Orchestra and its bandoneonist Tapia Colman, who was a member of this orchestra, provided the platform for the endearment of the Argentine Tango in Istanbul. Many amateur orchestras, whose members were mostly university students, started to be established (Akgün, 1993, 120). Previously there was an association called the 'Association Friends of Tango' which arranged tango concerts, nights and tried to gather together tango lovers. Istanbul Radio Tango Orchestra (İstanbul Radyosu Tango Orkestrası) was promoting its records in TRT Radio 1 (Akgün, 1993, 117). Conductor and organizer Orhan Afşar, who lived in Buenos Aires during his youth, was the only bandoneon player in

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<sup>25</sup> Mrs. Seyyan, Mrs. Mahmure, Mrs. Birsen, Seyyide Poroy, Celal İnce, Saime Şengil, Bedriye Tüzün, Nezahat Onaner, Şecaattin Tanyerli, Yaşar Güvenir, Necla İz, Aydın Esen, Mefaret Atalay, Ayla Büyükataman, Tülin Yakarçelik could be listed among important tango singers (Akgün, 1993, 116).

Turkey when he returned. With the ‘Typical Orchestra’ founded on Istanbul Radio, he was the only representative of the type of Argentine Tango practiced in Turkey<sup>26</sup>.

In the 1970’s there was some expansion in tango. For instance, tango again became popular with the albums of Esin Engin. The sons of Necdet Koyutürk, Özdener and Erdener Koyutürk made some records by reinterpreting their fathers tango songs and creating new compositions and arrangements (Akgün, 1993, 118). From the 1980’s to today, some famous singers reinterpret old tangos and included them on their albums alongside the popular songs, or composed new ones<sup>27</sup>.

When considering the tango dance, it can be said that the first Turkish tango was a very innocent dance which did not exceed a mutual hold. Practices took place in community centres (‘halkevleri’) and during Argentine tango dance rehearsals (Akgün, 1963, 120). However, it was not like the tango that we know today. Although the couple Eser-Engin Noyan captured the attention of the Turkish population, Ümit İris and Seval were the only tango dancers to create their own interpretations of the dance (Akgün, 1963, 118). The tango’s rebirth in Turkey occurred with Metin Yazır’s<sup>28</sup> entrance to Turkey. He started learning tango in Germany and he became a significant name in the tango world after studying with world famous Argentinian maestros. When he returned back to Turkey in 1999, he planted the seeds for a new generation of tango in Istanbul. This time tango did not aim or inclined to appeal to the elite segment<sup>29</sup>. The milongas of those times no more resembled the famous Cumhuriyet Balls and I can say that this understanding still continues considering the profiles of the contemporary tango dancers in Turkey. Metin Yazır is accepted as the father of current tango movement in Turkey and the instructor of the first tango trainers, most of whom are founders of important tango schools and/or hosts of reputable tango organizations. From 1999 to now it can be said that the tango movement has not decelerated. On the contrary, it grows in popularity daily and is gaining significant recognition. In 2013, a new association

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<sup>26</sup> (Türkiye Tango Tarihçesi, [17.10.2010])

<sup>27</sup> For instance Sezen Aksu’ interpretation of Ben Her Bahar Aşık Olurum, Nilüfer’s interpretation of ‘Dinle Sevgili’, Nil Karaibrahimgil’s own composition Resmen Aşığım.

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.bailatango.com/?page\\_id=12](http://www.bailatango.com/?page_id=12)

<sup>29</sup> Metin Yazır is known with his approach to reach tango to wide masses. He says that he always prefers young people to come and dance tango rather than having bad habits.

called Association of Tango Instructors and Organizers<sup>30</sup> was founded. Its aim is to spread tango all around Turkey, make it familiar and increase its popularity. Today, tango is quite favourable in Turkey and Istanbul is famous with its milongas every night of the week (Gift, 2008, 420). Many international and local festivals<sup>31</sup>, workshops, and tango marathons are held throughout the year, and Turkey welcomes significant instructors and notable amount of visiting social dancers. Moreover, Turkish dancers are well known with their dancing excellence (Gift, 2008, 420). Especially Istanbul, thanks to its beautiful tango places, reputable festivals, high quality milongas, dancers, and profound instructors, is a shining star among international tango community and naturally deserves of praise.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://teob.org>

<sup>31</sup> International Istanbul Tango Festival <http://portal.istanbultangofestival.com/english/>

TanGOTO Istanbul <http://www.tangotoistanbul.com/>

International Ankara TANGO Festival <http://www.ankaratangofestival.com/en/>

Ankara Tango Carnaval <http://www.tangocarnaval.com/>

Tango Ski Fest Bursa

Adana Tango Week <http://www.adanatangohaftasi.com/index.php/demo/80-slayt/98-atolye-calismalari>

19 Mayıs Samsun Tango Festival A few example

#### 4. WOMANHOOD AND MANHOOD STANCES AMONG TANGO DANCERS IN ISTANBUL

*Tango chooses you. When it does, it gives you a glimpse, but as always, it was, it is and it will be surrounded by a halo of impregnable mystery.*

*Anibal Troilo Bandoneonist, arranger, composer*

This chapter's main focus is on the interpretation of in-depth interviews and participant observation results combined with my intuitive discoveries. In the second chapter, I briefly mentioned about how dance acts as an agent for communication as well as dance's interaction with the body, sex, and gender. In this chapter, I will be by adding to the story of tango that I began in the previous chapter. This time, the theme of the story will highlight the analysis of tango as a dance type. I will explain what tango is and how it is done; its styles, form, and technique. In the coming section, I will interpret the findings of in-depth interviews, participant observation and also what I diagnosed through my 'existence' in tango. The analysis will be done in four sections. In the first section, I will mainly introduce what tango translates to in these people's lives. How they evaluate tango? What do they understand from tango? In the second section, I will discuss the relation between man and dance, man in tango, and specifically Istanbul male tango dancers. In the third section, the emphasis is placed on dance and the woman and also the 'tango woman'. In the final section, I will explore the role allocation in tango. What does it mean to be a 'leader' and to be a 'follower' in tango? How could these be associated with the concepts of femininity and masculinity in our mind? Do we 'put on' a 'tango woman/man' role, that is, if there are defined roles, while we are dancing? To what extent do we adapt or not adapt to this role? Do we sometimes resist to this role? Do we ignore what we discover, undergo, and generate in tango to revert to the roles we have in our real lives? Answers to these types of inquiries will form the backbone of this section. I will definitely provide some explanations regarding the findings, but at the same time I want the reader to filter through the research presented and form their own conclusion to the presented argument.

#### **4.1. Tango: The First Step and the Rest**

The most widely recognized tango position places the leader (who is usually a man) and the follower (who is usually a woman) standing slightly to the one side of each other causing their bodies to resemble a V shape. The leader's upper right arm becomes an extension of the leader's shoulders and the follower is placed in the space opened by the leader's bent right arm (Denniston, 2007, 108). The tango position in close embrace seems to be a display of intimacy and sensuality. Obviously there are some who claim tango is very sexual. On the other hand, tango historians like Carlos Vega and Alvaro Lafinur claim that tango is a never sinful choreography. Bodies closely touching does not carry the purpose of lust (Akgün, 1993, 34). The goal behind this intimate embrace is not to make the other fall in love with you, but to make it possible to dance better.

Considering its form, tango is basically a walking dance. It is frequently stated that anyone who can walk can also dance tango. Although there are some figures that cannot be done from the first moment such as 'followers' walking backwards without losing her balance. One could improve his/her tango with some training and practice (Denniston, 2007, 105). Tango involves straight lines, circular moves, and pivots all of which are done in proper time with music. There are three main distinct rhythms in tango music: tango '4/4', milonga '2/4', and the tango waltz '3/4'. The tango is the slowest of all. It allows pauses during the dance and it allows you to keep with the music's mood during any change. Milongas are usually danced with short and fast steps and milongas are usually light-hearted and lively songs. The tango waltz is faster than the ordinary Viennese waltz. There are no obligatory steps; however, some steps are more suitable with waltz and frequently used. It is possible for the rhythm to change according to the type of tango music. Moreover, the footwork and adornment depends on the creativity and imagination of the dancers. In short, tango is a play, a movement. It is a dance set upon a relationship that has diversified over time. However, I do not mean that the play is all about technique or footwork. That would not be a true representation of where tango starts. As Denniston states, apart from all techniques and rules tango took place on the level of the hearts, not on the level of the floor. The movement of the feet was a symptom of the movement of the hearts (2007, 38).

Tango is not only distinct from other ballroom dances with its embrace but there are many aspects that set it apart from those types of dances. For instance, Carlos Vega who first examined the Argentine tango from a scientific perspective named tango as a ‘discovery’ due to the elements of ‘postponement of movement’ within the dance (2007, 23). In nineteenth century, dominant couple dances always necessitated movement; so, while dancing they had to add rhythmic steps or turns to each other continually. The creators of tango included ‘postponement of movement’ to dance. The couple can immediately calm down or when one is moving, the other stays motionless (Hess, 2007, 25).

Also, the other important thing is tango’s independence from choreography. Tango is by definition improvised movements. As Tulio Carella says: “The only unchangeable rule is continuous improvisation,” (Hess, 2007, 26). There are no regular movements rendering foresight as impossible because simple figures, full series, and the whole dance are created while dancing. The key element of this continual improvisation is ‘listening’. As Blackman emphasizes, the improvisation that characterizes Argentine tango requires one to knowingly listen, perceiving minimal bodily movements and reacting before perceptions are registered at the level of conscious cognition (2009, 137). This is something unique and genuine to tango. It is the process which leads to pure improvisation resulting in the creation of spontaneous figures. Since the interpretation of the music depends wholly on the feelings, ability, directing of leader and replying of follower; it could be said that each tango is unique. Even if it is done by two separate people and with the same song; no two tangos will be the same. When considering tango’s uniqueness Olszewski focuses on the divergence between performance (such as ballet and modern) dances and social (such as swing, ballroom, salsa and tango) dances (2008, 65). Olszewski says that:

“...due to the social, improvised and intimate nature of the dance, tango -more so than other social or performance dances- withstands artistic degradation and retains an authentic and auratic character, despite the global wayfaring and hybridization the dance continues to experience. The kinetic connection -the passionate, musical and dynamic relationship between leader and follower- sustains this vitality. The intimacy of tango is a product of the kinetic connection, music, culture and history of the dance. Together, these facets accentuate the tango’s distinctively sensual nature” (2008, 64).

Olszewski claims that ‘performance dance’ is inclined to use the body expressively in a public display meant to pass on meaning, identity, and artistic concepts. On the contrary, ‘social dancing’ concentrates less on performance and representation, and

more on the subservient use of the body in order to connect the partners somatically, kinetically, and musically. Thus, social dancing places more emphasis on interpersonal communication than on artistic substance. Olszewski does not intend to say that social tango lacks performance value or that it is devoid of artistic expression, rather he says that these are not the focal points (2008, 65). In my opinion, Olszewski's claim about social tango is accurate when considering tango dancers in Istanbul. Up until today the social dancers that I have confronted share the view that a good social dancer is the one who focuses on her partner and their 'creation' (dance), rather than her appearance or the gazes/approvals of outsiders.

At this point, I would like to refer back to the concept of 'postponement of movement' in tango. Admitting that this is a distinctive aspect of tango, Hess undertakes the moments of 'waiting' and 'listening' in relation to gender roles. Hess states that mostly the female partner, who is in the role of follower, experiences physically this moment of waiting. A good female partner does not repeat a previously known step, rather she waits open to all possibilities. Her tango is about waiting for her moment to realize a movement's potential. The only thing that partners can be sure about is the first perception (2007, 33). Movement starts and then the rest comes. That is why to start stance of being in line is important. There is no definite starting moment. When the music begins, the male partner cues and indicates the direction of movement. Each moment of dance is in a continuum and steps can be defined as continual perception. Consequently, the man's role is to lead and to suggest the alternations of movements and figures. Man designs the figures according to the reactions of his partner. A good leader negotiates between his ability to predict the music and the music's recommendation. He should listen to the music and incorporate his postponements and figures into a musical dynamic. Theoretically, even the male partner who leads the dance does not know what will happen in the coming second. At any point during the dance countless unforeseeable circumstances can occur (Hess, 2007, 28). However, independent from one's gender, 'listening' stands in the forefront as a tool for a fluent and continuous dance. Manning underlines this case as follows:

"Tango is an exchange that depends on the closeness of two bodies willing to engage with one-another. It is a pact for three minutes, a sensual encounter that guarantees nothing but a listening. And this listening must happen on both sides, for a lead is meaningless if it does not convey a response from a follower" (2007, 4, taken from Blackman, 2009, 137).

Tango stipulates both partners actively cooperate in dance making improvisation possible. I also agree that the 'able to listen actively' or 'listening from heart' is an indicator of being a good dancer. When you mature in tango you understand that it is not about kicks or leaps but listening 'openly'. Active listening shows that you hold yourself in esteem, revere your partner's dance and honor what you are sharing in those moments. As a result of the conversations and observations that I made, I am able to say that if one is fully concentrating while dancing s/he is praised for this quality and tribute is paid.

Beyond the private relationship between the dancing couple in tango, there are different styles which necessitate various embraces and dancing techniques. The dance styles in tango are so numerous that there is a famous maxim saying: 'five dancers discussing Argentine tango will have fifteen opinions.' However, there is no single authority dictating what should be danced in a certain way or defining one style as superior to other. Moreover, most of the dancers do not follow a single style but prefer to change their style according to each piece of music and the energy transferred between them. The three basic styles among these are: the milonguero style, the salon style, and the fantasy-stage tango style.

Milonguero (club) style is the one probably which has special fans. Its adherents claim that it is the 'true tango' of Buenos Aires. In the milonguero style, there is a close embrace in which the partners' torsos meet at an angle or touch directly head on and there are relatively short, tight, steps (Gift, 2008, 71). All rhythms are made in a very significant and fairly rapid way in which men and women are in a very cramped situation (Gift, 2008, 72). Though, today, it has been danced by a relatively small portion of dancers outside Argentina where dance floors are roomy. Salon (elegancia or compas) style could be noted as the most popular style outside the Argentina. It is a very subtle, gentle, and intimate style. The initial walk forms the basis and seems simple; however, when studied for a long time one can see its decorative and beautiful aspect. Contemporary salon style is preferred outside Argentina since the separation of torsos enables a wide range of movement and provides dancers the opportunities to demonstrate their skill. The last style, fantasy/stage tango, is not suitable to be danced in milongas because it includes exaggerated steps and figures that require a lot of space and could be dangerous if applied out of stage environment. Conveyance, fall, and apostate follow each other

making almost anything possible in this dance (Gift, 2008, 74). This style is mostly used in shows which are usually elaborately choreographed. Although on stage it makes dance look ‘big’, some tango teachers and dancers totally disapprove this style claiming that it has nothing to do with tango. For the afore mentioned styles the same terminology is used in Istanbul. Although there is a possibility of some minor differences in the jargon and teaching styles of instructors, the basic characteristics of each style is the same as the ones explained above. In verification of Gift’s argument I feel confident in commenting that salon tango is the most popular style in Istanbul.

Along with dance styles there are some customs and rituals that are peculiar to tango and have helped tango preserve its authentic characteristics for hundreds of years. In my opinion, the invitation to dance is a significant ritual that deserves further investigation. It could be said that traditionally the dance invitation comes from the man. This custom is still adhered to, but usually there is no public taboo against women asking men. This universal case is valid in Istanbul as well. Men ask women to dance. Although there are some who do not approve of women inviting dance (especially if she is insistent in her invitation despite the low quality of her dance), this scene is common in any of the milongas. Olszewski mentioned two ways of asking someone to dance in tango:

“(1) One can ask in a straightforward verbal fashion, i.e. ‘Would you like to dance?’ or (2) one can employ the *cabezeo*. The *cabezeo* is a silent, more refined way of asking someone to dance. This is accomplished by first meeting someone’s eyes intentionally, than making a movement of the head like a nod or shrug of the eyebrows. If, after testing the waters, one’s potential partner appears agreeable, you can stand up and walk towards the person. Reciprocating any of the above gestures usually suggests to a dancer that the advances are greeted warmly, and that the potential partner would also like to dance. Breaking or avoiding eye contact and walking away all suggest the opposite” (2008, 76).

*Cabezeo* is the original and still the primary way of asking for a dance in Argentina. However, outside of Argentina both *cabezeo* and the verbal invitation are used. In Istanbul, although dancers are well aware of *cabezeo* and know its rules, in practice it is not widely accepted. If it is done, usually a verbal invitation follows. This is mostly because of the Turkish dancers’ ineptitude at meeting someone’s eyes. Especially, women could find it quite difficult to catch the gaze of a man’s eyes. Most of the female dancers that I personally know start to look away when a male dancer stares at them with the intent of invitation for a dance. If those two dancers already know each other, *cabezeo* becomes easier. However, if they are foreign to each other the woman usually displays resistance in responding to *cabezeo*. I think

this is a direct result of the cultural background of Turkish women. Generally, Turkish girls are encouraged to avoid making eye contact with foreign men under any conditions. This attitude or ingrained social pressure reveals itself in tango as well. Therefore, the *cabezeo* culture does not work well in Istanbul milongas.

Another ritual is about choosing dancing partners in a *milonga*. Since tango is a social dance, dancers are presumed to dance with different dancers in the milongas. This is not a law, but this is what happens or what is expected to happen in *milongas*. This is inherent in tango. Also in Istanbul, dancers go to *milongas* to dance with many different partners and to taste various energies. Therefore, while changing partners is considered normal, insisting on dancing with the same person for a long time may attract attention. Certainly, for those dancing partners that have a personal relationship this could be more understandable, but still if they only dance with each other they open themselves up for criticism. Participants might disapprovingly say: “If you won’t dance with anyone else, why bother coming to a milonga?” In management of changing partners there is a timing that is incisively engraved within the social fabric of a tango community. The prescribed order of changing partners occurs as follows. In a *milonga*, the played music is composed of a combination of sequential tandas. *Tandas*<sup>32</sup> are selections of tango music, sets of three to five songs. These tandas are separated by *cortinas*<sup>33</sup>, short musical interludes that break up the flow of one tango after another. *Cortinas* provide dancers time to change partners, get a drink or chat for a few seconds between songs. Therefore, playing songs in *tandas* is essential for tango. Since it is a dance in which parties stand physically close to one another and all partners have different energies, it takes one or two songs to get used to a new partner. The expectation is that partners dance with each other for at least a full tanda. Aborting the partnership prior to the end of a *tanda* is something unfavorable (Olszewski, 2008, 77). This ritual is completely valid in Istanbul milongas. Terminating the dance without waiting for the end of *tanda*, or leaving your partner and selecting a new one without waiting for a *cortina* is

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<sup>32</sup> These songs are similar in some way: they are usually of similar style (the main styles being tangos, waltzes, and milongas or quick tangos), and sometimes from the same orchestra (such as Di Sarli, Pugliese, etc.) (Denniston, 2007, 204).

<sup>33</sup> Cortina is the term used for a piece of non-dance music used to separate the tandas at a milonga. It is the signal for all the couples on the dance floor to return to their places as one kind of music ends and another kind begins (Denniston, 2007, 195).

perceived as exceptional, intolerable act unless there is not a valid excuse. Nevertheless, in Istanbul unlike in Buenos Aires, people are not expected to change partners after the end of each *tanda*. When a man or woman thanks the other after the first *tanda*, generally it is thought that s/he did not like the other's dance. In Istanbul milongas, seeing a couple dancing three *tandas* consecutively is highly probable. Although it is quite rare for partners to dance four or five *tandas* consecutively, sometimes it occurs. At the end of the dance, partners plainly say, 'Thank you!' to each other. This means that you are done dancing with someone and you would like to either sit down or look for a new partner to dance with (Olszewski, 2008, 77). This conversation is universal on tango dance floors. Normally a man is expected to accompany woman to her seat and not to leave her in the middle of the dance floor, but this does not always happen. Sometimes both parties thank to each other, hug each other and leave while they are both in the dance floor. On other occasions, a man follows the ritual. Although the ratio of preferences changes, one can come across any variable of them all around the world. In Istanbul, the ritual of accompanying a woman is not strictly followed. As with the invitation ritual, acknowledgement also changes form according to the level of relationship the dancers possess. For instance, if they are close friends hugging each other, making comments about the dance they did, and thanking in an informal way are all well accepted. However, if they do not know each other or if they are not that chatty then a strict application of ritual is expected and slipshod thanking could be considered impolite. In relation to universally accepted practices, all rituals and applications are generally taught in the first few beginner classes in Istanbul. Conscious instructors inform their students about how to behave in milongas and awaken them to accepted practices of tango. It is also possible to see the social circle in the tango community undertaking this mission for the very beginners.

After giving information about tango as a dance style and establishing its rituals, the following sections will discuss and analyze my research findings. This research does not claim to represent all tango dancers in Istanbul. Rather, I am after deciphering the adaptation process of gender coding in tango, how the 'leader' and 'follower' roles are internalized and how people react to the process in the research that was carried out during the field-work I conducted in the tango community of Istanbul.

#### 4.2. The Tango of ‘Milongueros y Milongueras’ in Istanbul

As was stated in the previous section the partner’s posture, embrace, and the freedom of moving together comprise the skeleton of tango. Tango is the synergy that arises from the embrace and form of two bodies relationship to each other and to the music. Olszewski also underlines the kinetic component of tango and puts forward that the ephemeral relationship of any two dancers is largely a product of the way their bodies fit and move together. This fit is kinetic, musical, psychological, and emotional (2008, 69). In my opinion, what makes all these movements and steps ‘tango’ is the embrace. The embrace of the tango creates a deep, multi-faceted, and tentative relationship between souls. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be different any kind of physical sport that requires sweat and endurance. It defiantly is not possible to live this feeling in each dance you do. However, according to my experiences and observations I can easily say that it is this feeling that makes me and other tango dancers in Istanbul to say: “Ahhh, tango...”

In the previous sections, I pointed out the vast nature of tango. This Argentinian-originated dance is more than just a dance for its executors. It is rich and generous in diversity and versatility that makes it such an intensely authentic experience where all can find something appealing in it. There are various reasons for people to participate in the tango. Some do tango to find who they are, some do tango to be who they desire to be, while some are there to relieve their hunger for what they lack. Everyone has her/his own reasons for being in a tango class, although tango is more than just that one element. In order to understand tango better, I think it would be beneficial to look at why people started to do it and what they found when they did it. Below, I will write down a few of the statements interviewees made about their causes to start tango:

*I-1: “Do you know Al Pacino’s movie ‘Scent of a Woman’. When I watched it, I told to myself: “Woovv, I should dance tango!”*

*I-2: “I am dabbler in photography. Once, we went out with friends from photography course that I was attending. It’s a very funny night. My friends’re dancing in the dance floor, but I already had my seat. I didn’t dance. At those times I was a heavy dude! I sit all the night. One of my female friends to whom I respect much came and told me: “A gentleman should know at least one ballroom dance.” She’s a very impressive woman for me. To hear these words from her mouth made me feel bad. I immediately decided to take tango lessons. In fact, before tango I went Latin dances classes for about six months, but it sucks! There is no soul in Latin dances, but tango... Is it like that? I could never give it up. Probably, I am condemned to dance tango for the rest of my life.”*

*I-3: "You know Ahmet right? He is my high-school friend. One day, he called me and said that the tango school he works as assistant needs a new website. He was asking for help. I was interested in the offer and for a few times I went to this tango school's studio to make business meeting. These meetings were held during milongas and practicas. Naturally, I had the chance to observe the ambiance: people were happy; they were drinking, having conversation, dancing, etc. For about two weeks after these meetings Ahmet suggested me to start tango in his new beginning class. He said that he would arrange me a partner too. This is how I started to tango. It was almost by chance, but I've already started..."*

As I said before, it is possible to find at least a hundred different reasons to start tango. Either by chance or with great enthusiasm, people all have their own reasons to start. However, a poignant example of one's dedication to tango can be found in the fact that whether a dancer takes a voluntary or involuntary break from the dance, they never completely give it up. Tango performer and teacher Miguel Angel Zotto stated that: "Tango is not a fashion but an addiction, a drug and as such the more you are exposed to it the more you become an addict," (Gift, 2008, 3). Although, some of the dancers, including me, display or at least try to display even-tempered attitude towards tango, for some others tango is like a milestone in their life. For instance, one of the interviewees gave up his occupation (engineering) and became a tango instructor.

*"At first, I was going to milongas, but just had a drink and watched around. By the time, things began to change... I felt myself precious in tango. I took good feedbacks from the women I danced with. People around me advised me to handle tango as a business. They put it in my mind and then one of my friends and I opened a tango school. (After 5 years). However, I've always thought about that, it wasn't my choice. I didn't choose tango; tango chose me" (I-4).*

For me, the understanding of what attracts people up in tango was not what I found intriguing about tango, but rather what holds them to the dance is far more interesting. I did not make a point of categorizing Turkish or 'Istanbulish' tango dancers. The discovering the 'meeting and falling in love' stories of dancers was more attractive for me than classifying and categorizing. This situation brought to mind a question: what did those people find in tango?

As you may guess, there is not one, but many answers to this question. Tango means, 'love', 'fun and pleasure', 'a strong feeling of freedom', 'satisfaction of the ego', 'passion', 'getting high', 'something not possible to breathe without' etc. for these people. For those who share similar feelings there could be commonalities in what they found in tango. Nevertheless, no matter how much they resemble each other, I believe that each of these stories is unique. Yet they are all united in their heartfelt commitment to tango.

I-2: *"After fifteen minutes dancing, there is nothing left in my mind about work stress. Even I suffer from a stomachache due to stress, but when I go to dancing; nothing remains from the stomachache, because stress disappears. These kinds of thoughts such as how I will make her move, is my foot placement right, etc. invade my mind, and they sweep away the work stress."*

I-9: *"First of all, it's a great pleasure; it's a color in my life. It's more than dance. I mention about it everyone in my life. Most of my friends want to start tango. At the same time, it's a philosophy for me. I think we can adapt tango to our bilateral relationships."*

I-8: *"Tango means the same thing for me as it had been from the first day; listening to music, dancing with your partner in harmony, and socializing. But as an instructor, I think that we give people a tool for getting their unwanted properties dull."*

I-10: *"My tango embodies infinite possibilities. In my tango you can share something with a person you don't know; even you don't have to know his language. You learn what your partner is feeling. It's a shocking and annihilating experience. My tango enables me to share something with someone."*

As can be seen in the responses, each individual is able to justify what they find in tango. First of all, it is a way of relaxing and recharging their drained batteries. Likewise, 27 years-old chess coach, web-designer and also a new generation tango DJ I-3 commented:

*"Firstly, I focus to music, besides I'm not only responsible from myself: I'm also responsible from my partner. This makes me to concentrate on dance and the sorrows and preoccupations of daily life are left outside. Actually, you can't be half-hearted while doing tango."*

Since virtual communication is very popular nowadays spurring a lack of physical and emotional investment in relationships, tango could compensate for this shortfall of physical and emotional contact in human relations. I-16, a 43 years-old electronic engineer who was divorced and has been living with her two children also thinks that tango meets this need:

*"When you look at other people: they love you, you love them. This love is very human. There isn't a physical love; there is a humane love. Up to day, hugging, contact from breasts, contact of skin were things that we have to abstain even if there isn't a sexual counter. Now, we hug each other and after this hug there remains a big love, a big friendship. We learned hugging with sincere love. It's love give-and-take. In an increasingly alienated world, these moments of sheer connection are important."*

The social dimension of tango provides an atmosphere that is conducive to physical contact such as touching and hugs. Dancers can satisfy their emotional need for physical contact while dancing. It can help meet both physical and psychological human needs, e.g. feeling secure, having a good opinion of oneself, obtaining higher self-esteem, and feeling recognition. Moreover, tango has a therapeutic function in terms of overcoming personal hardships or stresses. Dental technician, tango DJ and instructor I-6 with regard to his nine years tango experience said that:

*“Tango when it’s done well, something that mediates people. Since people get relaxed and feel good, they want to go to tango again and again. People need relaxing, need fun, need rest. And they want to satisfy those needs in someone else’s armful. Because normally when we sorrow or be happy, we share our feelings with somebody else.”*

Thus, dance can help to regulate the chaotic structure of social relations in late modernity and supports one in overcoming crises or failures of everyday life (Pusnik and Sicherl, 2010, 120).

Besides, milongas, practicas, and tango classes are meeting and socializing places for people. 60 years-old, import company owner I-7 explained:

*“I found social intercourse in tango. Instead of ‘kahvehane’, we go to milongas. You cannot join women’s golden days. Men like me don’t go to kahvehane. Our kahvehane, your golden days are milongas.”*

Also, tango provides opportunities to meet and network with new people. Normally, everyday life situations do not often provide the opportunity to meet new people. However in tango you are able to simply approach someone who you do not know and ask for a dance (Pusnik and Sicherl, 2010, 118). That is what senior engineering student I-11 also thinks:

*“First of all, it enables me to meet lots of new people and so to come across with different things. Of course I do have friends, but now I have an opportunity to meet new people every day... This is something that keeps me in tango.”*

Similarly, Viladrich claims that tango as a social field enables its practitioners to reach precious social assets and this juncture causes tango’s social reproduction. In order to conceptualize this, Viladrich states in the theory of social capital that we can acquire social resources in the manner (defined as access to resources via social relationships) (2005, 535). The social capital theory indicates the notion of ‘social network’ and ‘social support’ as signals in the measurement of social capital, which is not compromised via investment in people or goods, but in social relationships among people. For instance, among the interviews that I conducted, there are views justifying Viladrich’s statement. A Boğaziçi University graduate, 25 year-old tango instructor, I-12 who won third-place in a world class tango contest held in the year 2012 said that: *“... some comes to tango for business, he tries to find customer or want to make new business arrangements. Everyone is in a search.”* Similarly, a 35 years-old automotive engineer who is interested in tai-chi and lectures at Boğaziçi University added:

*“In milongas, in tango environment, you meet with various people that you cannot meet in school or business environment, even you are impressed from them. You become more open-minded.” (I-17)*

It seems that the time a dancer spent in tango is as a way of making a social investment in the forms of relationships, contacts, etc. Dancers are well aware of these benefits.

I attempted to put into words the thoughts and feelings that the interviewees shared about tango; however, I believe my attempt to capture the depth of their feelings is insufficient. Behavioral psychologist Dave Witter says a similar thing for tango maestros: “Doers are not always ‘thinkers’. Some of the finest tango maestros I know don’t have much profound to say about the dance: their explanation of it is simply their dance,” (Gift, 2008, 16). I think the same situation is valid for the tango dancers I spoke with. As much as I tried to narrate their comments they fall short of the understanding that is gained by watching them dance. How far I attempt to narrate what they told, the only real explanation is their dance.

#### **4.3. Male Dancer and Masculinity in Tango**

Before assessing the nature of masculinity specifically as it applies to tango, I will make an evaluation about the role of male dancer in general. Parallel to the general tendency in dance studies, the research made about the male dancer also focuses on theatre and performance dancing. Nevertheless, I think that revising the studies made in these fields will generate valuable insights for further evaluation. I will concentrate on Ramsay Butler’s<sup>34</sup> studies that constitute an important portion of study in this field. In his studies, Butler traces the role of the male dancer from its early roots up to the twentieth century. He focuses on how male dancers are perceived by others. Are not they masculine enough? Or does the displayed masculinity fit with the spectator’s class, race, or other types of identity association? (Burt, 2007, 9). Despite the enlightened view of the eighteenth century that rejects the Aristotelian ideas about the metaphysical inferiority of women, much of the literature about gender ideologies in the nineteenth century compares stoic masculinity with feminine sensitivity (Franklin, 2001, 37). Male dancers in the West confronted accusations that questioned their gender and sexuality. There was an attitude towards the male body and male social behavior and it was thought that a dancing male body does not fit with the average middle-class ‘male’ image. The idea

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<sup>34</sup> Ramsay Burt: Professor of Dance History at De Montfort University.

that dancing as a practice effeminizes the male body is taken as a threat towards a normative male prototype. As the literary critic Lee Edelman claims: “a masculinity subject to questioning is no masculinity at all,” (1994, 164, taken from Franklin, 2001, 36). In other words, dancing was seen as risking a man’s sexual claim merely by association. It is also related to the notion of the ‘culture of separate spheres’ that placed middle-class men in public place of work and women in the private place of home. These concepts relate to the idea that women are inappropriate for serious work; therefore, they were seen as appropriate for dance since it was perceived as ‘soft’. In the twentieth century, dancers, teachers, and the dance world in general were mainly composed of women. Ballet and modern dance in U.S. and Britain were in the hegemony of women. Therefore, the men interested in dance were not surprisingly projected as ‘effeminate’ (Burt, 2007, 9). According to Burt, this results in a hyper-masculine display; naturalization of aggression and anger in men’s dance to contrast through demonstration that they are not effeminate as ‘effeminate’ tends to stand for homosexuality (Burt, 2007, 11). It was from this time that the socially and culturally generated parameters of male behavior were expressed and questioned in representations of masculinity in theatre dance. Burt mentions that prejudice towards the dancing male body is the result of Victorian gender ideologies; the socially yielding parameters of boundaries in male behavior are seen in representations of masculinity in theatre dance (2001, 46). Male dancers were almost dismissed from the stages of western European theatres during the period of Romantic ballet (in the second quarter of the nineteenth century) (2007, 13). Although the Romantic idea of male artistic self-expression highlighted the popularity of male genius in sculpture, painting, and the implicit/explicit disposition of male artists in these areas have been acceptable, dancing of ballet movements did not gain acceptance in the nineteenth century theatre dance context. Male dancers have been fighting to overcome this for the last hundred years (Burt, 2001, 48).

Burt also mentions about the binary view of dancing bodies as such that male dancing body promises action, whereas the female body invites musing and fascination (Burt, 2007, 14). Not just in dancing, in all types of European visual arts, it is assumed that: ‘Men act, women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at’ (Burt, 2007, 14). The ideal spectator is always presumed to be male and the image of woman is designed to complement him. A comment

about of one of Edouard de Beaumont's lithographs of the scenes at the Paris Opera in the nineteenth century reveals it clearly: "The unpleasant thing about a danseuse is that she sometimes brings along a male dancer," (Burt, 2001, 44). The mainstream narrative that women are constantly under investigation is understandable; however, man being on the stage and making his body visible to audience created a cultural anxiety and was evaluated as a threat to 'universal male dominance over others'. Burt claims that the 'modern' attitude towards body and gender brought the idea that to look at male body is not 'natural' and it creates a conflict for men to enjoy looking at dancing men (2001, 47). Since gender is an attribute of body, and dance is a key area through which gendered identities are revealed, the dancing male bodies became sites for resistance to the dominant ideology about masculine social behavior.

At this point, Burt refers to Judith Butler's arguments about 'body' (2007, 16). Butler argues that sex and gender are attributes of one's body which is fundamental to one's sense of identity, but the norms that give meaning to this sense come from outside. So, dance comes out as an arena that displays the social and cultural discourses that feed gender and sexuality. Performing one's gender is like performing a play. Butler explains it as designating body in public sphere as both dependent and independent from one's own self. In other words, she claims that body is socially constructed and one can only later claim ownership over it (Butler, 1990b, 277, taken from Burt, 2007,16). Butler sees gender as an act that individual actors perform which enables it to reproduce itself through this performance. Likewise, in order to cite the cultural norms that shape the gender role Burt gives place to Paul Hoch words who says: "Art, as an emotional (and therefore feminine) representation of inner life became even further estranged from science, the representative mode of thought in the cruel, emotionless masculine world 'outside'," (1979, 140, taken from Burt, 2007, 17). Burt is aware of the fact that the socially constructed gender identity is not stable and changes according to the meanings attributed to sexual difference in order to maintain the changing face of dominant social circumstances and norms. Dance, without doubt, is the one area where the images of men in cultural forms and also the gaps in the construction of this identity display itself. This 'male dancer problem' still continues on even though it has experience a certain degree of decline. In his article Gard talks about a boy who is taking dancing classes in a contemporary dance school and playing rugby just to seem to be a straight, tough man (Gard, 2003, 111).

It is a challenge for him to join rugby team and display masculine attitudes just to offset his interest in dance. As Gard says, movement always carries a meaning: “Movement is never just movement; it is never just a matter of ‘flesh-on-the-world’ and his experiences as a mover always seem to be mediated by their discursive context” (2003, 115). Although there seems to be a tolerance in social dancing, men in classical ballet or modern dance can be still regarded as half-men. Franklin says: “Despite their muscularity and athleticism, male ballet dancers often raised eyebrows as they raised their legs” (2001, 60). Needless to say, this attempt at credibility in the eyes of the spectator is a defensive reaction on the part of the male dancer. It remains necessary that we should question why one means of using the body is considered more acceptable than another use of the same body.

The point of interest for me lies in the perception of male tango dancer. The ‘effeminate’ labeling applied to male dancers in theatre dance does not reverberate in tango. Contrary to the effeminate perception of Western theatre dance performers of the early nineteenth century, in tango, the perception of the male dancer is strongly masculine. When we look at tango, which was born around these times, there are no traces that indicate a doubt about tango dancers’ masculinity. As Taylor says:

“The traditional tanguero’s schemes demonstrate that he is a man of the world- that he is neither stupid nor naïve. In the dance the dancer acts as though he has none of the fears he cannot show- again, providing that he is not a girl. He refers to an experience of total control over the woman, the situation, the world- an experience that can allow him to vent his resentment and express his bitterness against a destiny that denied him this control” (1998, 11).

Throughout the history of tango, the man in tango displays a masculine attitude, not because he intends to demonstrate how tough he is, but just because he is. Olszewski gives place to Adams’ views in comparison with the male ballet dancer and male tango dancer:

“Male dancers tend to be ubiquitously viewed as weak and ‘unmasculine’, if not explicitly and flamboyantly homosexual. This view of the effeminate male dancer is in part predicated upon men using their bodies expressively and performatively. Tango is quite the opposite: men use their bodies instrumentally to lead a woman, and, in almost all cases, tango is danced socially and not for performance or exhibition’s sake. The tanguero, or male tango dancer, leads confidently with a large, inflated chest, making the erectness of the stance definitively masculine, or even ‘macho’, as opposed to the ‘prancing’ erectness of male ballet dancers (Adams, 2005).

Further, the social and exotic nature of tango perpetuates the stereotype of a ladies’ man of sorts. One who is artistic but also explicitly heterosexual and revels in the attention given to him by members of the opposite sex (2010, 75). Considering

dancers in Istanbul, I can say that the historical judgment about the male tango dancer is valid among tango dancers in Istanbul. Aside from dealing with the concern of the doubt of masculinity, in general male dancers think that tango provides them the opportunity to feel excessive masculinity. Often this is something that they are unable to reach in other aspects of life.

*“Woman’ll do whatever man asks her to do, and she’ll do how much man asks her to do. For instance, she’ll do boleó, she will lift her leg up according to the energy I give. I am the leader, I am the king. In other words, while I’m dancing tango, I feel my masculinity at the summit. I am the ruler; I’m the commander (he fisted his hand and hit on the table). Normally, you can never say: “Come here! Go there! Come that much!” I can make all of them happen and this makes me feel like I’m the sovereign.” (I-2)*

As I said, I did not confront an explicit or implicit doubt about the status of masculinity. However, I know that some of the male dancers feel a prejudice about a man dancing. Many commented that previously they were of the opinion that men interested in dance were: “doing silly things”. And made remarks such as: “he isn’t interested in a man’s job like football”; “he’s a man, but not that much enough”. However, the point is that these views were not alien to tango, but reflected attitudes towards all types of dance. I even know male tango dancers who still find Latin dances not proper for men, but continue coming to milongas even when there is an important football game. On the other hand, women do not seem to demonstrate such a prejudice in thought either before or after starting tango. Even, some question the extreme level of masculinity immediately after they start tango, as they perceive it to be an overdose of maleness that is portrayed in a way they are not accustomed to. Consequently, I could say that the tango experience in Istanbul is lived away from all scholarly debates related to the male dancer’s doubted masculinity.

#### **4.4. Female Dancer and Femininity in Tango**

The role of the male dancer is a highly critical issue in dance studies, but the counter part of the dancing woman has a significant amount more to say and is more readily accepted. Women may not be confronted with stunned looks saying: ‘Dancing women?’ in the same manner as their male colleagues do; however, the positioning of the female dancer in dance is the subject of some debate. John Berger touches upon the placement of women in Western visual culture and tells:

*“Women are depicted in a quite different way from men- not because the feminine is different from the masculine- but because the ideal spectator is always assumed to*

be male and the image of woman is designed to flatter him” (1972, 64, taken from Burt, 2007, 31).

This view is very similar to the ‘male gaze theory’ first brought forward by feminist film scholar Laura Mulvey in 1975 (Burt, 2007, 31). The theory, with its further developments, primarily states that in a heterosexual, patriarchal society the male body cannot be marked explicitly as the erotic object of another male’s scrutiny. In other words, the erotic component of the performance should be repressed since the spectator is assumed to be a white, heterosexual male. When considering the female spectators, the feminist account of spectatorship claims that the female spectator tends to identify with the female dancer and inevitably she is confronted by the indirect objectification and commodification through the dancing female body that is represented as a consumable object (Burt, 2007, 32). Karayanni addresses and interprets the male gaze theory in a different manner by stating that it serves to solidify the woman’s image in heterosexual man’s mind:

“Those women perform merely for the pleasure of the male gaze remains a popular, male chauvinistic notion intended to regulate both female movement, by keeping it within the socially accepted confines, and male desire by fixing it onto the female body. Men have to desire women only, while women can only dance for men, weaving a choreography not as integral subjects with social and cultural agency but as mere objects of the male heterosexual gaze” (Karayanni, 2006, 255).

O’Connor claims that since women’s bodies are seen as dangerous and a threat to patriarchal order, consciously they were pitied in order to elude this danger. Women were displayed as childlike, vulnerable and easily seduced, but also as having moral responsibility for men’s proper conduct (2005, 92). In this way, they were thought both as a source of authority and a condemnation at the same time. The conversion of the woman’s body into innocuous, controllable thing seeks to find reciprocity in division of roles. “While the female body was constructed, albeit implicitly, as centrally occupying the dance floor space, the male body was represented, in contrast, as being either ‘around’/ ‘outside’ or ‘above’ that space” (O’Connor, 2005, 101). Cowan also touches upon the ambiguity regarding the contradictory attitudes towards the dancing woman. They are fostered in their exhibition of their beauty, energy, skill, sexuality, and even seductiveness, while simultaneously viewed with suspicion for drawing too much attention to themselves (Cowan 1990, taken from Reed, 1998, 517).

Nevertheless, the status of women did not endure as it was set in ballet or theater dance. The early modern dancers exemplify rebellion to the existing choreographical

boundaries and social expectations (Banes, 1998, 66). In the early twentieth century, women began to take the stage not only as dancers but also as choreographers and producers. In other words, they became the leaders of all that was happening on the stage. The image of the women both on the stage and in the audience desks changes the image of women at that time. The Victorian shadows of nineteenth century and the biologically deterministic opinion of gender began to crackle with the high-art composition of women such as Ruth St. Deniz, Fuller and Isadora Duncan. Both of whom can be referred to as the mothers of modern dance. From the beginning, modern dance preserves its uniqueness as an art form that is almost entirely dominated by women (Banes, 1998, 66). They removed their corsets, tights and Duncan even danced barefoot in loose clothing. There is a contrast between physical tension and its release with different parts of body simultaneously moving in different directions, a rebel against the artificial limitation of female body in ballet was shocking, but certainly modern dance is not the only field where the perception and curtailment of female body is disputed.

As can be seen from the above discussion, although sex and gender are separable, their interrelationship seems relevant at some points. Martin Stokes realized that gender typifies social and political order and the control of gender behavior provides the regulation of cultural and social practices. Gender boundaries project an intensely 'naturalized' way of domination, which provides basic metaphors for others about what to do and signals for the social practices proper for men and women (22, taken from Karayanni, 2006, 256). The point I want to draw attention to here is the 'performance' side of gender. "Gender is constituted by the individual's conscious or subconscious act of going to a place in memory-individual or cultural collective- to retrieve acts that may create or recreate gendered selves," (Bailey, 2010, 121). Bailey highlights the transgressive potential of performance and how gendered-selves evolve. Gender in dance, as well as in daily life, has a performance aspect. Whether dancing on or off-stage, dancers wear their womanliness or manliness they possess in compliance with 'act'ions. Stage dances, in which dancers move within a choreography, it seems that they are obliged to perform their given gender roles. Burt says that, in performance arts like dance, individuals have no other chance, but to perform the given normative gender ideologies. For instance, in classic ballet performances, even if men are not in action, the male image is still preserved through

the body pose, etc. (2007, 39). On the other hand, despite its liberal outlook (since it is independent from a choreography), in social dances such as tango there are some explicit or hidden prescriptions about gender roles. For instance, Taylor remarks about a woman's role in tango by referring to a surprising anecdote from a tango class. Teacher, addressing a female student, tells to her: "And you. A docile body is not a submissive body. In the tango the woman's body needs to adjust itself - *adecuarse*- to the man," (1998, 109).

I can say that women of tango in Istanbul were not strictly adhering to the mentioned expectations of dancing women. Even if they did not know it before, they recognize the attributes embellished by dancing woman, the expectations from them, and the results that will come up according to the degree of responsiveness to these expectations. I-5 said that:

*"According to me, all woman dancers will turn into real woman. Anyway, if they couldn't turn into a real woman, they'll sit down and wait for dance invitation all the night. For receiving a dance invitation, she has to turn into a real woman. This real woman is hmm feminine. I mean when a man looks at her he should say that in normal conditions I could want this woman, if he could say that he would ask for a dance. I think all of the women are feminine, but some could show it and some other couldn't in daily life. Tango asks you to show it."*

However, they are not distressed by the fear of condemnation due to level of femininity displayed within the limits of tango's expectation. Although too much low-cut clothing or excessive seductive attitudes being displayed are frequently the subject of criticism. This is something associated mostly with the personal preferences of the individual woman, not the 'dancing woman'. Rather, the source of conflict originates by questioning the discriminative sides of these roles. Women could be attempting to search for reason in the image of tango rather than in what she determines to be appropriate for herself. In the next chapter, I will further develop this topic and discuss more about these blurred lines of expectation and various theoretical and practical perspectives in relation to that.

#### **4.5. Gender Practise and Gender Play Among Tango Dancers**

One of the important elements of the dancing body is what we are able to understand about gender by decoding its movement and actions. For instance, classical ballet techniques differ greatly for women and men. While female ballerinas are expected to move with grace in their pointe shoes, male ballerinas are expected to display

warrior like jumps with aggressive strength. The female, calculated small-step walk, arm gestures, detail, perfect positions, and turnout reflect ‘feminine instincts’ of posture (Crump, 2003, 161). Sexuality is a fact of biology and gender is about a code learned from family and society as to what it means to be a ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Dance; behaviors, gestures, postures, clothing, speech patterns, etc. all have the potential to speak to gender. Although gender is referred to as ‘labeling’, when we dance we are all firstly men and women. Crump states that many of the folk dances reveal the dualisms of the masculinity and femininity via traditional partnering techniques (2003, 166). Tango is maybe the most recognizing dance in which gender difference reveals itself. Especially, in the original tango there is an implied machismo and the underlying exploitation of women while still supporting a female resistance. For Savigliano, the roots of macho behavior in tango lay deep in the roots of its origin. She claims that the macho identity in the dance emerged due to tension among those men who were stuck between class struggles and women who were flung in different directions as a result of variations in the world of men (1996, 203). Besides, she thinks that the eroticism in tango fed the gender marks:

“In tango eroticism was controlled and suggestive. Tango did not perform ‘instinctive’ sensuality like the dancers of ‘primitives’; it did not perform rowdy excitement like the dances of the peasants; it did not perform 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 other’s powers. Their mutual attraction and repulsion were prolonged into an unbearable, endless tension. And everything took place under male control” (Savigliano, 1996, 221-222).

It seems, the perceptions of interviewees about the ‘man’ in tango and the ‘woman’ in tango are in line with what have been living for the past hundred years. It seems that tango’s form and authentic structure subsume these dancers in similar cognitive and emotional ways of life. This has been deliberated for years among the poor in the Buenos Aires for years.

*I-5: “Arrr... I think tango changes the men. They became naughtier. Especially if they’re dancing well... They became like spoilt children.”*

*I-12: “What man finds in tango is woman. They’re looking for a ‘woman’. Leading a woman, dominating women. They’re after that. They can hug, make happy, satisfy and then leave a woman to whom they cannot approach in their daily life. I don’t think that men’s search is so innocent. I think this is what lays in their unconscious minds.”*

*I-10: “Maybe it’s about taking a grip on woman. There’s a saying of Mustafa, he says that: “Welcome the only place that you could lead women without condition.” It’s still a lie (hahaha). Maybe being leader in the dance enables man to feel himself*

*important. A good leader gets more attention than a good follower. I'm sorry for saying that, but even if he looks like my ass, when he dances well, he becomes something incredible!"*

Tango turns into a field that man could be emancipated from the repressed, primitive manly behavior. A ballet dancer and choreographer, Youskevitch notes that: "Civilization does not change basic masculine nature; it develops progressive images of the man-hero. A man must keep in this dance the seeds of this heroic nature," (1969, 18, taken from Hanna, 1988, 170). I-2's explanation also certifies this:

*"Tango could be an arena for man where he rasps his will to meet with women; where he interacts with women. He could dance with a woman that he never talked to before. This tames men. Also, I think that women socialize men, they help men's superego to develop. Otherwise, men would fight with each other all the time due to instinctual motives that come from id. In tango, man communicates to woman in a way that this communication domesticates man."*

Considering the structure of tango that was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter and phases that I encountered throughout my research, I feel that tango permits men to rule as sovereigns, even if it does only last for a tanda.

Namely, the male dancer becomes popular only to the degree that he is able to master the 'leader's responsibilities. The better he fulfills these responsibilities, the more masculine he feels and is perceived. Thus, the way communication is set (as the primary responsibility of leader) and how successfully it is conducted became a measure for assessing masculinity. For instance, I-4 evaluates woman's happiness as his success.

*"Maybe the emotional side of tango is similar to having sex. While having sex if your woman's happy, you become happy too. This is the same in tango. I feel the same thing in tango. When I realize the pleasure she feels while dancing with me, it makes me high. You feel yourself strong, absolutely! Even in presence of outsiders' gaze. They watch you enthusiastically."*

Moreover, there are some methods for appraisal which indicate man's success in dance. For example, a clear lead is associated with decisiveness; an obvious energy is associated with being audacious; following the rondo and not crashing into other dancers is associated with being studious and caring towards women and when all of them are observed in dancing body, this dancer is appreciated. Knowing what to do and executing it well in the best way possible are important criteria in the evaluation of a male dancer. Being able to justifying a certain step is a necessity for a male dancer. Almost all of the woman dancers that I spoke with mentioned that they look for and admire a man who can command his steps and movements in a decisive manner. However, women do not desire this because it contributes to a man

sovereignty, but rather they ask this to be executed in a caring way that enables them to feel safe and valued. Siegman explains this point clearly with the following: “Nothing is more attractive than a man who does not constantly have to prove he is one. In my surrender to him as a woman, he is free to be a man: protective, demonstrative, decisive. In his surrender to me as a man, he is also understanding, caring, and supportive” (2000, 73). Therefore, solely being a ‘man’ is not enough for a male dancer to experience pride in his masculinity in the tango. He can only be awarded this satisfaction only if he carries out the requirements of being a good leader. On the other hand, despite the flaunted masculinity in tango, there is not an unquestioning femininity, as it might be believed so at first glance. However, the female resistance in tango (which is rendered technically and observed practically) eventuates not in an absolute declination of the portrayal of femininity in tango, but rather a dignified and esteemed existence within the rules of the game. Thus, before proceeding with the details of female existence and/or resistance in tango it is beneficial to identify the stereotype of the ideal tango woman. As previously mentioned, tango’s rituals and dance techniques portray a woman whose feminine qualities come to fore front of her actions. Most of the women I talked to mentioned the importance of femininity. Specifically, the importance of feeling, acting, and dancing ‘feminine’. They concurred that tango’s structure compels them to be constantly reminded of their own femininity and to be actively aware of their attempts to display it during the dance. What does this ‘femininity’ refer to? Sometimes it refers to the sexuality that is being displayed as the result of tango’s so-called seductive character. Wearing of sexy costumes or acting in flirtatious manner might come to mind when discussing sexuality. On the other hand, tango has nothing to do with vulgarity. In milongas it is possible to wear eye-catching dresses. The ambiance is appropriate for low-cut dressing, but it is not a necessity to wear such fashions. In one of the milongas, a woman with a low-cut dress may attract more attention than other and could receive dance offers just because of her attire. However, in the long run this will not be a matter of preference for experienced male dancers. Both tangueros and tangueras in Istanbul know that nothing satisfies a dancer more than a qualified dancing partner. In fact, the essence of the ‘femininity’ theme in tango is related to the attitudes and behavior that are associated with being a good ‘follower’ and, in turn, being a ‘woman’. For instance, while male energy is designated as directive and active, female energy is designated as reactive and

responsive. To clarify, by permitting a man to run the dance, being open to his leading, not moving by yourself, following him and responding to his routing in time, and changing steps in harmony with music are the properties expected from a good follower. In summary, what is meant by femininity is allowing the man to be a real leader and in turn a real ‘man’.

*“I think the ideal woman in tango is the one who respects man. There are some female instructors or good social dancers that make you feel like you’re in an examination while dancing. It should not be the case. This is valid for men also. Some try to do lots of figures as if he is making a show. Don’t do that! Don’t try to show others what you can do! Tango is about moving together, it is about reciprocal communication, it’s about displaying respect to each other; it’s about sharing these moments...” (I-11).*

However, to be ‘ideal tango woman’ is not something that can be achieved the first moment you step onto the dance floor. Most of the female tango dancers, myself included, cannot give up thinking about how a lead could be done better or how a man should do his step in a different way that would be better. Especially at the beginning level, women suffer from this habit.

*“We have a deficiency in bowing the will of man; especially Turkish women. You have to surrender to man, at least a little. As a female, you have to trust him. We have some difficulties in doing this. We’re very used to be on vigilance. For instance, in boleó class, instructor said to me: “Please leave your leg free, so that your partner could give you the right energy.” I couldn’t do this. This comes from our traditions. We’re grown up like that.*

...

*I am leading three-five construction yards, more than three thousand men are reporting to me and when it comes to tango a man will lead me? (Asking this with a daze on her face). I can’t forget a memory of mine. When we were trying to make a figure in the class, my partner told me that: “I am not your worker, you cannot behave me like that.” I was so sorry and I apologized. You cannot separate your business face from your personal face or tango face. They’re all interwoven one way or another” (I-9).*

‘Controlmania’ seems to be a syndrome of the modern woman. Melin Yuna gives a portrait of this woman in her article, which is about the issue of how contemporary women live in Istanbul. She took tango as a ‘symbol’ and analyzed its use as a leisure time activity (2013, 162). Yuna describes this woman as secular, belongs to middle or upper-middle class, rational, ambitious, and professional in the workplace. She has a life-style preference and wants to express her in various activities (2013, 171). The activities that she chooses to spend her leisure time on reflect a standard of consumption and a way of identity construction/expression (2013, 174). This description of a contemporary woman makes the reader imagine a woman who is

perfectly in control (or has to be in control) of everything and this habit is reflected in her tango through her need to attempt to ‘take the lead’. There are two points where I do not agree with Yuna. First of all, tango women do not comprise solely the women that fit with Yuna’s description. Still, they could display behaviors in tango similar to women that fit with Yuna’s ‘contemporary women’ definition. Secondly, I observe that tango in Istanbul is more than a leisure time activity for most of its participants, including men. Although it may start it as a leisure time activity, in order to keep doing it they consciously devote time to tango. With regards to the concept of ‘controlmania’, in contrast to what Yuna mentions, this element of keeping woman from completely giving themselves over tango is not only about modern life conditions or peculiar to contemporary middle or upper-middle class women. I think this is a part of women’s muliebrity and to some degree can be seen in every (Turkish) woman. The impulse of building and organizing, trying to keep the balance among components of life naturally motivates women to control the things going on around them in order to prevent any event from spoiling the order. On the other hand, when it comes to tango, women start to hear (or is obliged to hear) the voice of suppressed feelings. They rediscover the pleasure of letting men do things for them. The ‘I can do everything by myself!’ superhero woman begins to grapple with the traditional woman.

*“I think woman can be more woman and man can be more man in tango. In fact they can be themselves. Arrrr women are much more relaxed. They gave up being control freak. We try to teach this. Let the man lead you; let him feel good! (hahaha). In fact women rule the roost everywhere, in dance men feel more masculine, they come closer to the role they go in for. In real life, time-to-time we dominate men; I think they are much happier in tango. For instance, most of my students are men” (I-16).*

I think ‘letting a man lead’ has nothing to do with adequacy or being subordinate. Although there are contrary views to academia some of which I already mentioned and some of which I will refer soon. Once one is able to grasp the mathematics of tango, she is able to understand it as a source of relief and pleasure. This idea is a reminder of what many feel about the dark side of femininity. In her book, Siegmann talks about her feelings after she completed her first tango class:

*“In that first hour, I knew my life had changed, though, I could not understand why or how. For the first time in my life, I felt supremely feminine yet awesomely powerful, feelings that until that moment I had never experienced simultaneously. I was profoundly sensual yet sexually aloof. I actually experienced the intense joy of being a woman and never once felt the need to apologize for it” (2000, 3).*

I have mentioned about the featured femininity and how it is associated with being a good follower in tango. Nevertheless, being ‘obedient’ does not mean being ‘passive’ or feeble in tango. If a woman does not listen to the man and concentrate on his energy, the dance they do will not be tango any more. However, if she does not represent herself in the dance it also is not a tango anymore.

*“In tango, man gives an energy to woman this is for leading woman, for repositioning her; to say I want you to come here, to say I want you to be there. To be honest, tango is a macho dance. I mean ultimately man leads the woman, but after leading he should have to take follower position. Woman answers this lead. I mean, to some degree, she is free to go in this direction. But for this dance to be tango she has to obey this rule, but she determines how to go there. In tango, are man and woman equal? Why women don’t lead? Let two women dance together... These are nothing, but bare nonsense. For me, tango is a gendered-dance. It needs a man and a woman. Woman could make adornment, she could make the figure with her style, but there is something distasteful in contemporary women dancers. They can go somewhere before men, they can take position before men. Always before man, before man... Or they are shaking and pushing the man. It’s like putting an annotation to man’s lead. Man is the one who gives the movement. Woman follows the movement. Man has to give the lead; dance cannot be two-headed. In general, woman’s role is to follow man. But I don’t say that man’s job ends when he gives the lead, he should take over the flag and follow the woman” (I-6).*

As I-6 indicates, it is explicit that a man’s sovereignty is possible only in case of woman’s active listening and perfect internalization of the ‘following’ customs. A man’s lead does not mean anything if there is no woman able to respond to him. Additionally, a man who is unable to respond to the feedback his partner proves and acts more empathetically cannot be called ‘leader’ at all.

Siegmann mentions that there are two types of energies in dance: male energy and female energy. They have different features but this does not indicate one’s superiority over the other, rather we need both to create the absolute. Leading is designated as male energy and following is designated as female energy. Each party acts according to the dominant energy it embodies. She says that in the context of the natural balance of our energies, the dominant energy means the major portion. In the context of tango, there is an energy shift. When man leads a woman follows. On the other hand, while the woman is completing the step the man waits. So, the male and female energy interchanges between parties during the dance (Siegmann, 2000, 12).

Savigliano also never sees a one-way relationship between a macho culture and women’s exploitation in tango. Although tango has been traditionally created, controlled and dominated by the male figure, women have never been just ‘docile bodies’. Rather, the songs, choreographies and the entire story of tango are connected to the women’s ability to subvert and direct the flow (Thomas, 2003, 154). Even,

male dancers ask for women's active participation in dance and also continue training and practice for the improvement of dance quality.

*I-13: "Women should be more involved in the dance. How can I say, arrrr they should be active follower. They have to cogitate about the mathematics of dance. Being follower doesn't mean that, man does the entire thing. While you are at home, at work, think about the movement, how you can do it. Think about tango! This isn't only man's job."*

*I-14: "I and my wife always practise tango at our home. I love dancing with my wife not only because she's my wife, but because she's trying develop her tango. I see that most of the women take classes for a few months, than she thinks that she could develop her dance in the milongas. No! Milongas aren't the places for practise. You should be already prepared for milongas. Yes, I'm leading, but woman's physical capacity and technical knowledge should be ready for this."*

As two of my male interviewees, who are also interested in Tango DJing, implied in the interviews that men feel a significant amount of responsibility for the quality of the dance. Maybe, it comes from their 'leader' role. The male dancer needs a good female dancer to bring out his full potential and vice versa. In order to increase the pleasure derived from the dance it is necessary to raise the level of technical capability. Whether male or female, the one who has more dancing capacity displays a self-confident stance in the dance, which also serves for gaining the respect of the other dancer. However, considering a dance in which a man decides whether to listen to the rhythm or melody in the songs, whether to select an open or closed embrace, whether to dance smoothly or make lots of figures, etc., it will not be easy to diagnose the identity of woman or the way she differs from others in the dance. To the tango woman it is obvious that tango never asks for a 'docile body'. For them it is important to find ways in which to reflect their character in their tango. Taylor says a woman can show her entity through ornaments and embellishments that she fuses into the steps and figures (1998, 111). Yuna also supports a similar view (2013, 176). According to Yuna, contemporary woman transformed tango into a tool and where she can gain satisfaction by improving on her individual character, feel free to reflect her true identity and come closer to man in the terms of ruling (2013, 176). Yuna implies that adornments and footwork patters are used as devices of women 'to be themselves'. She says that there are some free moments during the dance and what a woman does in these free moments determines what kind of identity and entity this woman defines for herself (2013, 178). Whether she chats with the man during the dance or not, whether she is open to communication or not, whether she reacts in case of crushing another couple in the dance floor, whether this reaction is severe or not, whether she completely leaves the management of rondo to man or she

uses her skill in track management, etc. are all examples of a woman's choices she is able to make in tango. The effort of setting up a balance between male-dominated dance structure and individual creativity continues while dancing. The female dancer's identity and entity construction in the dance is based on acting in compliance with customs and individual creativity (Yuna, 2013, 179). The contemporary woman wants to act in compliance with the traditional leading function of the man on the one hand, while on the other hand she wants to put forth something more than the man's leading. In this way she is able to prove her difference from other followers. Thus, the effort of the female dancer to demonstrate their individuality manifests in trying to change the embrace if she does not like it, making ornaments during the free moments, or by trying to slow down the tempo of dance by resisting the body (Yuna, 2013, 179). This could be either interpreted as intervention to the relationship or time (as in the last example) attempting to change the relationship. I agree with Yuna's findings regarding women's identity construction and displaying methods. Also, I agree that it should not only be interpreted that women are attempting to discover their identity in tango. Besides learning from my conversations, I, myself, took lessons from various instructors (both male and female) who teach women how to say 'I'm here!' Anyhow, it is a reality that tango has some rules; in the first place 'leading' and 'following', but in any case women can find or create opportunities to demonstrate their uniqueness and individuality.

Up until now, I discussed the structure of tango and the interpretations made with regard to the gender roles in tango. Furthermore, I shared how tango dancers in Istanbul feel about tango and how they evaluate and react to the gender roles in tango. It is seen that after the initial interaction and acquisition process, there occurs an adaptation to these given gender roles. Everyone tries to keep these roles with her body and to justify his/her behavior by juxtaposing various experiences. Following, I will discuss the motives behind this adaptation process. Moreover, I will explain this adjustment by applying Judith Butler's 'performative gender theory'. Before, starting performative gender theory discourse, I would like to talk about the modeling theory. Hanna subscribes to Albert Bandura's modeling theory while trying to answer how dance conveys concepts of sex and gender question (1988, 10). This theory suggests that an individual is inclined to create attitudes, acts, and emotions exhibited by an

observed model. The model may be cognitively copied or just remain in the subconscious memory until the appropriate situation arises to activate it. Without doubt, the art offers models as well. Hanna mentions the role of dance as preserving models about sexuality and gender as follows: reinforcing existing models, obtaining new responses, weakening or strengthening restraints over patterns in a person's repertoire, and alleviating performance of previously learned behavior (Hanna, 1988, 12). Tango also causes its participants to strengthen or challenge the gender model they have in their mind. In addition, it is possible for one to imitate some other and to reflect on the role he/she plays. Generally, in the initial acquisition phase of tango the participants try to walk, sit, or embrace someone he/she likes as a tango character. Differentiation arises over time. Here, imitation of an advanced dancer makes the basis on which the assuming of gender roles is built.

On the other hand, Butler's performative theory is not about imitating but the performing of gender roles that one has to choose among. Before evaluating deeply, it will be beneficial to look at how Butler defines gender. Butler says that gender is applied as 'a mark' of "biological, linguistic, and/or cultural difference. ... a signification that an (already) sexually differentiated body assumes, but even then that signification exists only in relation to another, opposing signification" (Butler, 1999, 13). She says that applying heterosexual parameters of desire necessitates discrete and asymmetrical resentments between 'feminine' and 'masculine', where these are understood as expressive attitudes of 'male' and 'female' (Butler, 1999, 23). For Butler, as a result of naturalized heterosexuality, regulations of binary femininity and masculinity are required. In this regard, gender is not a set up of already existing features but rather internalization and then performing of a given set of features. Butler says gender is not a set of free-floating attributes; rather it is performativity produced and induced by the regulatory practices of gender consonance. In this regard, it is always a doing but the subject might not be seen as the active determiner of the action. "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1999, 33). Butler adds that gender performance realizes within some key constraints. In order to talk about the performance of gender one always needs the reference base of the other gender. It is beyond oneself and it starts outside of the 'self' (Butler, 2004a, 1). In summary, the

role that in which you cast yourself becomes meaningful only with in the existence of other. Another crucial point made by Butler is the reality that we are born into a gendered world. Since, bodies are not independent from culture or discourse, we are then unable to discuss the ‘natural body’ without recognizing all the factors (Butler, 2004b, 91).

As Butler does, so do I think that the notion of a truly ‘natural body’ should be criticized. If you are born as a man, you are raised according to male expectations and if you are born as a woman you are raised with that set of expectations. Gender-based categorization is inescapable because it is universal, but what varies as per cultures is what we understand as the accepted norms for both female and male behavior. A person’s ‘man does this’ or ‘woman does that’ perception could evolve with time, but it cannot evolve independent from the external environment. There is some given set of characteristics specified to each gender. How many of these does one adapt to herself and to what degree she adapts mark the rate of change. The individual is only able critique this regenerating of gender through performance. I think that the gender roles in tango also reproduce themselves through the tango executors’ performance. What I observed is, tango dancers are exposed to both direct and indirect information in the orientation of gender roles in tango from the beginning. They are informed of the rules of tango through various channels. Instructors, friends, milonga, festival organizers, professional dancers, books, magazines, movies, lyrics, tango rumors, smoking corners, or bar tables in the milonga places all can be the vehicle of this type of information transfer. Sometimes they even learned by chance after making an improper act and were warned about it: such as crushing other couples on the dance floor and not caring about the safety of woman. I could say that almost all tango dancers in Istanbul pass a similar filter of training. When dancers are confronted with such informative circumstances, they sooner or later feel obliged to act according to this set of characteristics not to be ‘left out of the game’ or in their words ‘to be a good tango dancer’. As a result of my observations and in-depth interviews, I could say that there is awareness about acting properly with these gender roles. However, I am unable to say whether or not this roles fall under the pretext of a ‘performance’. What I consider is, rather than paying attention entering in a new ‘performance hall’, they interpret this situation as a discovery or empowerment of already existing gender roles: revival of what is

known as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’. For instance, I-5 interpreted tango as a tool that permits her to be what she already was:

*“For me tango is a dance that makes woman feels like a ‘woman’ and makes a man feel like a ‘man’. In tango everyone plays her own role, no one plays the other’s role. The first time I met with tango, I suffered a lot, because I had to play a man’s role in real life (since she divorced from her husband and had to carry the whole responsibility of her children, besides being obliged to manage the family business due to her husband’s illness and indifference.) It wasn’t my choice. One of my reasons to come here is expecting tango to teach me being a woman again, and it did.”*

The tango instructor I-8 who has been doing tango for thirteen years and owns one of the biggest tango schools in Istanbul with her husband was also of the same opinion.

*“I always say this in my lectures: tango enables one to be who s/he is. If you are a woman, you could be more emotional, more innocent, more glib, and more low-necked. Whatever it is. These are the things that are uploaded to you since your childhood; it enables us to be all these... It is the same for men. They could be more ‘macho’. He goes and asks for a dance: then he thanks for the dance and let her take the seat again. He gave himself airs (hahaha). I mean in real life both men and women forget all these things, like sexes interpenetrated as if we’re all going to one sex. In tango, it isn’t the case. I think it’s a nice thing.”*

However, I think that this discovery is not something that one always enjoys. As I said before, one of the reasons for this ‘voluntary performance’ is declared as living one’s own presence while balancing the unspoken need of the fear of exclusion. Since, despite the fact that it is not a written rule in tango, dancers face this challenge in each encounter they make. Butler points out that people who fail to ‘do’ their gender correctly, or who do it in ways which emphasizes its genealogy and construction, are penalized by cultures (2004b, 93). Likewise, dancers who are unable to perform the expectations of ‘tango’ should stay out of the game. In other words, they cannot be ‘popular’ or ‘reputable’ tango dancers. These gender codes in tango acts like an invisible regulatory system which manipulates people’s behavior. For instance, if the one who is not an experienced performer is a woman, waiting for a long time to get a dance proposal could become something usual for her. If the same situation is applied to a man, women may seek a place to escape when they see him. For example, while talking about the role allocation in tango, I-3 refers to this performance issue:

*“I think man in tango is the same that you see in streets. I mean there is no difference, but I don’t think the same for woman. In real life, if woman doesn’t want to tolerate a man, she abandons him or she chooses a man that she could control. However, this isn’t the case in tango. If woman tries to do the same thing in tango, she couldn’t dance.”*

On the other side I-8 thinks that there are roles allocated to each party and both of them are responsible to perform it:

*“As a woman if I carry out the role that society ascribed on me, I expect the same from man. If I do myself up, sit and wait for someone by giving the glad eye then you’ve to do yours. Care for me, respect to me, show kindness to me even if it’s fake (hahaha). I mean they have to perform their role even if it is eyewash.”*

In both of the examples, we can see that gender acts as a regulatory mechanism over people’s actions and system (the rules and rituals of tango) influence people to act in the intended manner.

In the next section, I will summarize what I have included in the previous sections and conclude by mentioning my final remarks about the ‘gender performance’ among tango dancers in Istanbul. I want to once again stress that my findings and interpretations do not aim or claim to reflect the whole tango community in Istanbul. Rather, I aim to open the doors and cast a light upon the tango experience in Istanbul, highlighting its unique performances through the gender roles.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In my dissertation, my intent was to reveal the idea of ‘gender’ among tango dancers in Istanbul, address their views about the gender roles in tango, and discuss the methods or rationales they put forth in order to perform these roles. The specific cases of resistance or acceptances during this process were of particular interest to me. Throughout the dissertation, I tried to answer the questions that I stated in the introduction part by deriving arguments from my research findings and related scholarly studies. Also, I discussed the journey of tango from Buenos Aires to Istanbul. In this final part, I will organize my final sentences in the form of a brief summary.

As was stated many times, tango is a gendered dance. The expectations from each party are clear and the allocations of roles are definite. The role of ‘leader,’ which is allocated to the man and the role of ‘follower’ which is allocated to the woman, and the performance of these roles via the ‘energy transfer’, gestures, mimics, and attitudes while dancing and also within the time/space in which tango is executed constitute the backbone of the tango. Tango was a vehicle for the people of Buenos Aires to talk about their loneliness, hopes, angers, and happiness. The existence of a ‘man’ and a ‘woman’ and the acts each party plays comprises an important part of the ‘speech’. Although the form and technique modified to some degree throughout time, the ‘speech’ does not lose anything from its enchantment in revealing gender paradigms. Whether in the ballrooms of Paris in 1910, or in the milongas of Istanbul in 2010, tango denotes ‘womanhood’ or ‘manhood’ profiles via the roles that it assigns to each party. Likewise a person who impersonates a ‘woman’ or ‘man’ by choosing some already determined features that fit with the alleged gender; tango dancers also choose and wear these roles that they are presented with. In accordance with my research, I have come to the conclusion that while performing tango, dancers also perform the given ‘man’ and ‘woman’ stances that preexist according to the subject. There is not a natural body in the tango that has been lived in Istanbul. A tango dancer could not act independently from these ritualistic constraints.

Certainly, there are possibilities about how to perform these roles<sup>35</sup>. Some of them are affected by an impersonal factor such as the application of the *cabezeo* ritual in Istanbul milongas. While some others could be affected by personal preferences such as deciding how to prop your head to man's in the close embrace position. However, in general I can say that, through the observation of the 'tango' of dancers in Istanbul one could designate the existence of a systematic application, experimentation, and transmission of currently accepted gender roles.

In the beginning of my dissertation, I specified that I have been carrying an assumption about the willingness of tango dancers in Istanbul to perform the gender roles prescribed by tango. I also mentioned that women seem to accept what they are likely to disdain in their daily life (man's unquestioned leadership), while men find opportunity to live the thing that they are unable to find the opportunity to experience in their own life (leading woman without almost any resistance). According to the research findings, I can say that performing gender roles in tango became a measure of success. They feel happy, successful, and comfortable with the degree to which they apply the requirements of this role. I observed that in the adaptation phase there could be some difficulties. In general, women experience more difficulty compared to men. The most significant symptom of this appears as "not being able to let her lead by male dancer". However, when they discover the areas in tango where they can demonstrate their identity (i.e. adornments) or in other words; when they learn to express themselves in the tango language, women become relaxed and try to do their best to fit into this tailored role. On the other hand, male dancers seem to be much more eager to accept the roles assigned to them. In either way, dancers attend classes, join workshops, practice, and go to milongas to perform what they are expected to. In fact, dancing tango is performing gender roles itself. The dance itself is both a means and a display of this gender performance.

Without considering the emotional side and just by looking from a theoretical perspective (and considering the early experiences of beginner tango dancers), this performance issue may seem a solemn imposition. However, what I saw in these people was their ability to perform what they wanted in the way they wanted. Either

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<sup>35</sup> These performative varieties could show themselves in differences between body positions, movement styles, gestures, or in the behaviors that are performed in tango space/time i.e. while waiting for dance request.

they have wanted it from the beginning, or they have learned to want it after internalization the soul of tango. In addition to the reputation and gratification the dance affords its participants, spiritual satisfaction is another significant aspect of a well performed dance. Tango is set up as a balance in which each party displays their presence and significance. It is about the representation of the male and female energies in each of us. Its essence is not about the subjugation of one party. It is about communication and reciprocal 'energy transfer'. The intensity and motivation may change, but at the end there should be a harmonic dialogue between couples. In tango we watch the movement of couple, not individuals. We can only talk about 'tango' in its relation to the existence of harmony and the ability of the dancers to achieve that desired state through the beautiful balance of the role of both the 'leader' and the 'follower'. Therefore, the combination of well performed 'leader' and 'follower' roles enable dancers to reach a mental and spiritual status that cause them to transfer all these meanings discussed throughout the thesis to tango. I think it is like a secret that cannot be seen with the naked eye. Therefore, based on my research that I conducted among the Istanbul tango community, I can say that those who keep dancing tango are in cohesion with the way they exist in tango.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

<p><b>Birth Date and Place:</b> 13.12.1981 / Rize</p> <p><b>Address:</b> Barbaros Mah. Dereboyu Cad. Ihlamur Sk. UpHill Court B-5 Blok K:5 D:34 Batı Ataşehir</p> <p>İstanbul/Türkiye</p> <p><b>Tel:</b> +90 216 688 19 63</p> <p><b>Mobil:</b> +90 533 424 92 14</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:mkilic@itu.edu.tr">mkilic@itu.edu.tr</a> <a href="mailto:meliskilic@mynet.com">meliskilic@mynet.com</a></p>	
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### EDUCATION

2010 - 2013	<b>Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul</b> <b>Faculty of Arts and Sciences</b> <i>M.A., Humanities and Social Sciences</i> GPA: 3,94 /4,00
2007 - 2009	<b>Sabancı University, Istanbul</b> <b>School of Management</b> <i>MBA</i> 1/2 Scholarship Research Assistant High Honor Degree GPA: 3,68/4,00
2008 - Summer	<b>Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark</b> <b>International Summer School Programme'08</b> Exchange Scholarship
2008 - Winter	<b>ALBA Business School, Athens, Greece</b> <b>Student Exchange Programme</b> Exchange Scholarship
1999 - 2003	<b>Bilkent University, Ankara</b> <b>Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences</b> <i>Economics</i>

Honor Degree  
GPA: 3,06/ 4,00

1992 - 1999

**Rize Anatolian High School, Rize**

## WORK EXPERIENCE

**2012**

*December '12 –*

**Istanbul Technical University (ITU) Faculty of Arts and Sciences**  
**Humanities and Social Sciences Department**  
Research Assistant

To accomplish the responsibilities given according to the assignment of duties within the department, to assist and control the workflow of departmental tasks such as being invigilator, arranging the content of courses, being teaching assistant for 'Gender Studies' lecture

**2009**

*July. '09 – June '10*

**M.A.R.K.A. Communications**  
Account Executive

Designating the marketing and communication needs of customers  
Managing image and sales campaigns  
Coordinating the workflow and contact among customers, agency, and third parties

**2008**

*Oct. '08 – May '09*

**Johnson & Johnson Company**  
Company Action Projects-Project Responsible  
Doing market research and preparing product launch campaign about a totally new product to Turkish consumer market

*Aug. '08 – Sept. '08*

**ÇEKÜL, Çevre ve Kültür Değerlerini Koruma ve Tanıtma Vakfı**  
**Foundation of Preserving and Promoting Environment and the Cultural Values**  
Trainee in fund raising department within a voluntary working programme

*Oct. '08 – June '08*

**Sabancı University School of Management**  
Research Assistant, Asst. Prof. Dr., Özge Türüt

*Oct. '07 – June '08*

**Sabancı University School of Management**

Research Assistant, Asst. Prof. Dr., Mahmut Bayazıt  
Research Assistant, Dean, Prof. Dr. Nakiye Boyacıgiller

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**2007**

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*Jan. '06 – April '07*

**Garanti Bank, Housing Finance Department, Istanbul**  
Assistant Manager

Conducting marketing activities in order to increase housing loans volume in parallel to bank's targets  
Being an active participant of the restructuring process of bank due to the introduction of mortgage system in Turkey

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**2006**

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*Sept. '05 – Jan. '06*

**Garanti Bank, Retail Banking Department, Istanbul**  
Assistant Manager

Conducting marketing activities in order to increase housing loans volume in parallel to bank's targets

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**2005**

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*May '05 – Sept. '05*

**Garanti Bank, Ankara Bahçelievler Branch, Ankara**  
Sales Manager

Increasing customer efficiency and loyalty and augmenting portfolio profitability by providing credit, investment products, and other banking services to customers  
As being team leader, motivating bank tellers to reach their sales targets and being responsible from their sales performance  
Being responsible for the selling of the bank's products and services to customers in the target segment

*April '04 – May '05*

**Garanti Bank, Ankara Bahçelievler Branch, Ankara**  
Customer Relations Representative

Increasing customer' profitability and efficiency by providing credit, investment products, and other banking services to retail bankig customers  
Managing relationships with existing customers in a way to increase penetration and customer loyalty

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**2004**

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*Dec. '03 – April '04*

**Garanti Bankası, Ankara Bahçelievler Branch, Ankara**  
Management Trainee Training Programme

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**2003**

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*Sept. '03 – Dec. '03*

**Garanti Bankası, Istanbul**  
Management Trainee

## CERTIFICATES & CONFERENCES

### Certificates

2010	Communication with Life, Defne Sarısoy/M-GEN
2006	Presentation Techniques, Sinerji Training and Counseling
2006	Project Finance, Garanti Bank
2006	Planning and Time Management, Turuncu Training and Management Counseling
2006	Project Management, Ebru Özen Gündoğdu
2006	Excellence in Personal Development, AS Training and Counseling
2006	Relationship Management, MCT
2004	Codes of Sales, MCT-Garanti Bank
2004	Dialog Diction and Speech Course

### Conferences

2012 May	8th European Feminist Research Conference, CEU, Budapest, Hungary
	Presentation in the Student's Day (Grant received)
	Analysis of 'Ayşe Paşalı' Murder Case with Foucault's Genealogy
2012 Feb.	<i>The Congress on Research in Dance, Michigan University, Ann Arbor, USA</i>
	<i>Special Topics Conferences</i>
	Meanings and Components of Queer Dance
	Participant

## SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS

Foreign Language	English (Fluent, TOEFL IBT: 109) Spanish (Basic-continuing)
Computer	Microsoft Office

## MEMBERSHIPS & INTERESTS

Memberships	Sabancı University Alumni Association, SU MBA Club, BILMED-Bilkent University Alumni Association, MBA Forum 2009
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Committee, WWF-Turkey, Nature Association, Slow Food Organization

**Interests**

Argentine tango, trekking, nature and cultural trips, cooking, writing poems, attending personal development workshops, attending breathing coach training