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The Quintessential Kalastajatorppa: A Cinematic Journey into a Time and a Space

Matti Itkonen

By Way of Introduction

A space can open or close. So a space may, through its own opening, close itself. Or, indeed, the reverse is possible: a closed space may have the appearance of an open space. It is here that a human being comes face to face with the poetry of lived space. When a particular place feels snug and comfy or like home, the space has allowed that person to step into its essence. Then the person also arrives next to himself, contiguously close. He doesn't think or feel that he owns the space: his existence is not about owning but about being. When a person then forgets the being way of being, it is owning that determines his worldly self-fulfilment. He becomes a vagrant, a beggar, in the midst of his being in the world. Simultaneously then, perhaps he also actually stops being.

Helsinki, Munkkiniemi, the Kalastajatorppa restaurant and the film *Kuollut mies kummittelee* (The Ghost of the Dead Man Walks) directed by Jorma Nortimo: a fresh breeze of internationalism wafts across Finland. The war is over and a period of vigorous reconstruction is in the offing. The beautiful Armi Kuusela is crowned Miss Finland and Miss Universe. The long awaited and wished for Helsinki Summer Olympics take place. The year is 1952. Why does narrative use the present tense and not the past? The answer is simple: because I, the philosophical time-traveller, am reporting things and the sequence of events from here, on the spot. As a narrator, then, am I reliable or unreliable? I am at least unashamedly omniscient. Very few things escape my notice. So I notice things. But I take notice of things in my own unnoticeable way. This is something I should bring to the notice of my audience. At this stage I have nothing further to say.

A Preliminary Itinerary

Who plays the lead? Joel Rinne, Colonel Sarmo¹ or Inspector Palmu²? Or is the title role played by Itkonen, the formal creator of the text? Or is it, after all, the writer's omniscient narrator's voice that is the crucial figure in this description of a journey? And what about the potential reader, does he or she have a place in the story at all?

Could the script possibly mean we are following hard on the heels of the Dead Man and Inspector Palmu on their way to Kalastajatorppa? If the answer to the previous questions is positive, then why isn't there any mention at all of the 1960s in the introduction? The answer is simple: "As an omniscient narrator I can act as I see best. There's nothing whatsoever anybody can do to me."

Or it could be that the somewhat supercilious assertion made in the previous paragraph doesn't tell the whole truth. Inside the narrative, i.e., a cinematic journey, I am able to be omniscient and omnipotent. However, there also exists a reality outside the narrative which the reader controls. It is possible for him to treat me as rudely as he wishes: leaving my text totally unread. For him, if he so decides, I have no existence whatsoever. So, I suppose we also have to talk about the omniscient reader.

What is needed in addition to verbliness is pictoriality, pictures as well as words. It has to be possible to reach across from the exterior to the interior: from the non-cinematic to the cinematic. To make transitions and change angles of view we have to construct a door which, when opened, allows us to enter into film reality. This leap means that we become part of the film, part of its narrative and the flow of events.

Things are set in motion in 1939 when the portents of the impending great war are already visible. Nevertheless the inviolability of being still prevails: the unbroken chain of days of peace. It is this changing time and space that sees the early beginnings of our national journey, a time when the Finnish 'we' spirit is also tinged with shades of internationalism. At this stage the key factors taking shape are the perceptions of the 'we' spirit; in other words, of the collectivity of national sentiment, the essential character of the age and the importance of place. By examining these it is possible to penetrate into the very core of those lived moments. After all, the goal of these investigations is to find the answer to the question of what Kalastajatorppa is, what it's like, this place of fleeting events and episodes. (For cultural philosophy, see also e.g., Itkonen 2009; 2012a; 2012b; 2015.)

Theoretical Basis

In his *The Fate of Our Intellectual Culture* (Henkisen kulttuurimme kohtalo, 1948), Dr. Eino Krohn writes illuminatingly about national sense of community and the relationship of the private individual to the community. His thought-provoking ideas create the fundamental theoretical basis for an analysis of these matters: "Relationships between the individual and the collective community are marked by considerable nuances and variations and it is precisely these relationships that largely determine the character and level of intellectual culture. This derives from the fact that the

individual and the collectivity cannot be placed in opposition, as entities independent of each other. The individual has grown out of the soil of the collectivity and he has inherited not only specific individual tendencies and talents, but also an enormous number of ways of living and modes of being that have arisen and developed in society: ideals and aspirations, relational attitudes, which are in fact simultaneously the property of the collective consciousness. Furthermore, a collectivity is not constituted from individuals in the sense that they are atomic parts of it, their sum total. Individuals are, as (J. E.) Salomaa observes, the more or less organic members of a collectivity through which collective awareness functions and who themselves affect the contents and direction of this collective awareness." (Krohn 1948, 58–59.)

An important factor, in addition to the cultural dimension, is also time: lived time and the spirit of the time. Then it would be possible to regard Krohn's characterizations above as the existential partners of temporality, which describe the spirit of place and the actualised idea of lived space. To further clarify this matter we require two perhaps somewhat surprising works. The first is Martti Rapola's 1959 novel *Grandad's Landscape* (*Vaarin maisema*). Its subheading is "an elegiac story". It is also the concluding part of the *Tavast Trilogy* (*Hämäläinen trilogia*). Rapola reflects on the topic philosophically and poetically: "Time does exist after all. Every year it grows a layer on top of the previous layer. Just a moment ago he saw the time of his childhood spruce. If he were a better naturalist, he would be able to examine the thickest plants and distinguish the lines marking spring and autumn. Surely the annual growth rings can't have been laid down in jerks and jolts like the hands of huge clocks, which leap forward a minute at a time. If we could look at time through a magnifying glass, an astonishing experience would await us: how time speeds on and on, how a tree grows and grows. Somewhere, no doubt in a fairy tale, we're told how a boy presses his ear to the ground and hears the grass growing." (Rapola 1959/1971, 27–28.)

Rapola goes on to give an accurate and compact summary of the relationship between time and the Experiencing I: "Time hasn't ceased to exist. It walks with Grandad. It's part of the landscape, even a vitally important part. This is new for Grandad. Back in the old days he had no understanding of the landscape's time. Because he hadn't even noted the time flowing through his own consciousness, and forming layers." (Ibid. 28.)

A second important work at this point is art historian Göran Schildt's travel book *A Dream Journey* (*Toivematka*). The book appeared in its original Swedish version in 1949 and the Finnish translation was published already in the following year. The journey through post-war Europe and France can also be seen as a symbolic transition between two periods: it is like the passage from hate to love and from war to peace. For some of the time Schildt was accompanied on his travels by his good friend George Henrik von Wright. Disembarking from the yacht *Daphne*, von Wright then travelled on to Cambridge University where he had been appointed professor of philosophy and the successor to the famous Ludwig Wittgenstein. The young doctoral duo carry on an interesting dialogue about time, the present and eternity: "I (Schildt) was trying to express these musings of mine to Georg Henrik. 'It's right that we are capable of

living outside the present moment to a far greater extent than present-day man imagines in his own mind', he (von Wright) replied. 'According to our way of looking at things time is constructed from the sum of all present moments, whereas in contrast for Cistercians it was obviously made up of small fragments of eternity. There are two different ideals involved, which give rise to two very different ways of living. One of them reaps entire harvests out of the blink of an eye: 'nobody can deprive me of the happiness I enjoy', whereas the other accommodates itself to eternity: 'a sin expiated is a sin expunged'.'" (Schildt 1952, 182.)

Now is the right moment to begin the actual journey to investigate the essence of Kalastajatorppa as well as of Finnishness and of the particular time period. Changing viewpoints will ensure the investigation is carried out with sufficient thoughtfulness and profundity. First, we must travel from the outside inwards, and after that return from the inside out. In this way the observant gaze will circle the object, examine it from all sides and see into its very core. Perhaps in this way the result will also be an overall understanding of the subject and how things stand. At least, we must regard this as our unequivocal goal.

From Outside In

Here I stand, all those long years of war still with me and alongside me. I am an individual but at the same time also a part of some greater community. I have memories of my own and memories of a collective nation. I press my ear against the film poster for *The Ghost of a Dead Man Walks*. I hear the bygone: suddenly I'm with the *Architect* magazine photographer standing next to the brand-new Kalastajatorppa. I hear the past and in its murmur there are voices from 1939 and 1940. Existence as an individual has all but vanished, replaced by existence as an undivided nation. The quality of intellectual culture and everyday life are coloured by the ideals of tenacity, steadfastness and working together. You don't abandon another person who's in trouble. Everybody who needs help is helped. Following Krohn we could perhaps also be talking about the Finnish collective consciousness. And so it is possible to regard the individual as inheriting the community. In other words, he could not be an individual without the community.

This 1952 film poster is also a time-door or time-gate through which it is possible to move back and forth from one present moment to another. This whirling hum of bygone days had ac-



Photograph 1. Poster for the film *The Ghost of the Dead Man Walks*.

tually made me close my eyes and, in my imagination, leap back into a present moment from over a decade ago. And yet I've still got to become a concrete part of the existential roar that I hear. Then I could be both behind the film and at the centre of the film's flow of events. This will work only by going inside Kalastajatorppa. I step through the poster door and its dark green glow and enter a summer landscape with its all-pervading perfumes. In front to my right there is a restaurant building, beautiful and ample in its form language.

As I set off and walk towards the steps, I can feel time growing, in the same way as the grandad narrator in Rapola's novel: with each pace forwards I hear the years laying themselves down on top of each other to form a stratified experiential landscape. And even more than that, the scent of the pines and the land signifies memory of the land. The land can be fruitful and abundant, but also productive in a figurative sense. The quintessential manifestation of its symbolism is probably food, through which it is possible to reach into the very core of being. It seems justified as well to talk about the tastes or flavours of a period. They, too, are a core component of the collective consciousness mentioned by Krohn. Are humans capable, then, of tasting time in their food as well, time-food?

An idyllic peacefulness surrounds Kalastajatorppa. And yet, in my inner being, I feel the weight of existence: my insides are being gnawed away by the disappointment caused by the Olympic Games that never arrived, as well as the fears and sorrows created by the wars. I am an individual but nevertheless I carry with me the pain shared by the community. Within the rotundity of Kalastajatorppa are hidden the vintages of lived time, the rings of moments. Moments of happiness and sorrow are hollowed out in those twisting threads of temporality. What kind of taste, then, does this actual present moment have? Perhaps in this context I might make playful use of the expression 'mealtime taste'.

As I climb the steps and enter the building, the words of the *Muonituslotan käsikirja* (Provisioning Lotta's Handbook) well up in my mind. They link up with the question of mealtime taste which I have posed and have been thinking about. The book had originally been published as long ago as 1928. The fifth impression appeared in 1939. How we present or provide a person with the opportunity for mealtime taste is no small matter: "Food fulfils its purpose only when during its eating it is capable of awakening and sustaining the appetite. It is by no means the case that only food that



Photograph 2. Once, in the summer, at Kalastajatorppa.

tastes good can achieve this, but something else is also required. Food must always be served neatly and pleasingly so that even the simplest preparations feel like delicacies. Good results can be achieved using simple means: the table on which the food is served must be covered with bright, clean greaseproof paper and oil-cloth runners, the serving dishes clean and well-arranged, and the Lottas themselves should have clean hands, a clean apron and their head scarf should be properly tied up.” (Malmgren 1939, 58.)

I’m standing inside Kalastajatorppa and looking out on a scene of simply breathtaking elegance: a fenestral work of art. Seeing harmony arouses the feel-



Photograph 3. Fenestral art.

ing that existence is flawless. At precisely this point the individual and the community must be a single undivided unit. There is no other way of explaining the character of this moment. There behind the window are the years of war, slowly receding. The whole of time – with its stacked and interlocking layers – is present in this window view. It’s as if the zenith, the moment of the highest day, is presenting itself: shadowlessness when the great hands of humanity are precisely aligned one on top of the other. Perhaps somebody properly immersed and concentrating might find it possible to hear temporality and the decades evolving. Time lives and breathes alongside me, and I am part of this Kalastajatorppa magic window time. Before me an appetizing time-meal is spread out: life has constructed an existential food totality that is both delicious in taste but also simply attractive in appearance. Flowers, trees and water make up the sparkingly clean service table and cleanliness of living hands mentioned by Elli Malmgren. This is the right moment for the happy years to arrive. After all, one period of darkness never leads to another, but rather into light – the dawning of a new day.

Gradually I’m beginning to approach the period of reconstruction. The existential ideals of these years are diligence, modesty and forthrightness. This is a period of uncompromising hard work and an unshakeable belief in the future. On the horizon there is a lingering image of the vanishing days of war, reflected in the straightforward advice given in the Farming Women’s *Keitto-opas* (Cooking Guide): “Healthy, varied and cheap food – those are the nutritional and economic watchwords of the modern-day wife. Whether food is healthy or not is determined primarily by the correct choice and handling of the ingredients. The wife can add the necessary variety to a meal by using all the products suitable for household use offered by economic self-sufficiency and by nature. The question of cheapness is most advantageously solved in each situation if the wife gives pride of place in her household to nutritious, cheap, homely products and handles all the ingredients carefully and sparingly.” (Maatalousnaiset 1944, 7.)

The present moment is now the beginning of the 1950s. The war years have receded into invisibility. Of course, they continue to come back as memories. And then the Olympics finally take place as well. They are undoubtedly as big a celebration now for the whole nation as they would have been 12 years earlier. The Farming Women's practical advice is just as necessary in this changed situation: healthiness, homeliness, variety, affordability, thriftiness and attentiveness are key issues when hosting and catering for Olympic guests. Perhaps the concluding words of the official guide welcoming visitors to the Olympic Games can be regarded as a concrete demonstration of this being everybody's business and of the idea of collective consciousness raised by Krohn: "We hope you'll take a walk round our city and look at everything that interests you. Every citizen of Helsinki is ready to give you their assistance, help you find your way and offer guidance if you have any problems." (Helsinki 1952, 5.)

From Inside Out

I lean on the railing and look down from up here. I really have to nod my head in agreement and accept that the presentation in the Olympics guidebook is correct. The description it gives is exactly right: "Kalastajatorppa, Finland's most beautiful restaurant amidst the picturesque scenery of Munkkiniemi. Dancing every evening." (Helsinki 1952, 166.) The whole of the Fazer advertisement is elegant and quite simply lures you into making a visit.

The circular dance floor is like a metaphor for life's circles where each passing decade has left its groove. That symbolic disc of being also includes Kalastajatorppa's cinema age or its cinematic period. That time is in no way vanishing, rather it is there in the light, nimble steps of all those generations of dancers, present and future.



Photograph 4. A time of life's rings.

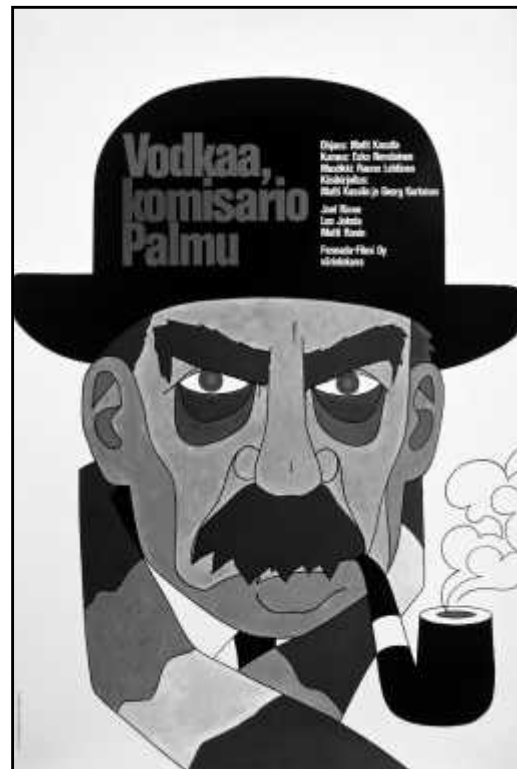
In the film *The Ghost of a Dead Man Walks* there is a time telephone which makes it possible to phone the future. In Kalastajatorppa cinematic time something quintessential happens on the stroke of 36.42. It is then that viewers are introduced to the time telephone kiosk. Can a human being really make a call from one film to another, talk with his own self waiting ahead of him in decades as yet unraveled? Perhaps Colonel Sarmo does indeed phone from 1952 and reaches Inspector Palmu in 1969 and gives him some helpful advice on constructing the character role stylishly and convincingly. Since Joel Rinne is both Sarmo and Palmu, would the phone call then mean that he is talking to himself or with himself? This is something that merits deeper deliberation.

cause it is then that the elegant and modern main entrance makes its appearance. This scene, too, is about some kind of time door, whose meaning becomes clear later. Nevertheless, what is more central to the two aforementioned moments is the knowledge of the time phone and the audio link between two asynchronous ongoing moments. When Palmu answers the phone in the future, he hears the buzz of a bygone era in Sarmo's voice. During the call the whole of time is present in both presents. Sarmo can also hear the hubbub of the future in Palmu's voice. What is present is the time landscape of Kalastajatorppa, of Finnishness and of the cinematic. It courses through Joel Rinne and builds up in layers, forming rings of life on the dance floor. The parquet blocks are moments recorded into existence: the essential ingredients of a shared national memory. Then suddenly the time door opens for a second time.

Suddenly, there in front of me, are the 1960s, saturated in all their dazzling colour. I am aboard a helicopter. We are approaching Kalastajatorppa. The cinematic clock shows 1.29,59. The helicopter is landing on the shore at Kalastajatorppa. Everywhere there is the lush green of summer. The roundness of the building's design conceals the days of yesteryear within its depths. The cone-shaped roof is reminiscent of a castle whose very being and existence has had time recorded into it. At 1.30 the helicopter has landed. A reporter reaches out his hand with a microphone in front of Inspector Palmu and enquires whether he would like to say something to the viewers. Through the medium of television, Palmu asks his wife to warm up the sauna. In reality, though, Inspector Palmu is making a time call to Colonel Sarmo and to the year 1952. At 1.31,24 the helicopter takes off and we are given a bird's eye view of Kalastajatorppa's rotundity. Palmu leaves with the helicopter. Perhaps he is indeed on his way to meet Sarmo and his own past self. In the cinematic time of Kalastajatorppa nothing is impossible.

By Way of Conclusion

The idea of coming full circle is also connected with the structure of this essayistic cinematographic journey: at the end we return to the beginning. In other words, at the end there is the beginning, and at the beginning the end. Yet it is not a matter of a space closing and the endless repetition of the same beginning. Rather the question is about an existence of being, not an existence of owning. For this reason there is no basis for



Photograph 5. 1960's poster for the film *Vodka, Inspector Palmu*.

assuming that this circular movement indicates the possibility of a vicious circle and its never-ending rotation. Each completed cycle adds something new to the totality. This is why a more precise expression in this context would indeed be an antivicious circle: a non-cycle of existence, i.e., a *circulus antiviciosus*. (For more, see Itkonen 1993, 36–39.)

I have once again passed through a time door and arrived in an outdoor space that is verdant, leafy and filled with the scent of pine. I am at the intersection of time levels. What we have is a moment of tastes, tastes of epoch-making periods and turning points. The thoughts about eternity expressed in the work *Dream Journey* befit an examination of this stratified present. Is the time of tastes the sum of all present moments, then, or a totality constructed of tiny fragments of eternity? Are we capable of somehow expiating the evil events of wartime and expunging them? And can we think that nobody can deprive me of this jackpot of taste that marks this age? Is Kalastajatorppa time concave or convex in character?



Photograph 6. Back to the beginning.

It is easy to begin answering these questions by unambiguously stating: “Kalastajatorppa time is both concave and convex.” Pictures four and six, which are like mirror images of each other, are suitable expressions of this fact. Picture four indicates a concave interior view into time. There again, picture six is a convex exterior view into time. From the perspective of the person experiencing it, the experiencer, Kalastajatorppa time – and cinematographic time as part of it – means both of these: the experiencer will reap, to use the words of von Wright, “entire harvests out of the blink of an eye”. When, for example, the experiencer has received the taste of the age and made it part of his experiential property, it is impossible for anybody to take that away from him. At this turning point where I now am, the end points of the linear timeline bend into a bow and join together. Inside the fold or bend so produced are heard the constantly resounding words of 1950s and 1960s cinematic time tastes. There the expert descriptions in Vera Tornérhielm's book *Tiny Treats* have an everlasting impact on her listeners: “Among the tiny treats that make up the most traditional smörgåsbord are cold and warm dishes made with Baltic herring and anchovy, even if they perhaps involve using slightly unusual ingredients. There are also many marinated and *au gratin* dishes, as well as chargrilled meat and fish. If you're someone who doesn't consider fish liver or roe as delicacies, then use this booklet to try out these relatively inexpensive foods. And it's not just *gratins* and *croquettes* that help conjure

up something new from leftovers, you can do the same with butter pastries.” (Törnérhielm 1952, 3–4.)

The 1960s have added nuances of straightforwardness and practicality to cinematic time taste vocabulary. The instructions given in *The Home Cook's Sandwich Table* can clearly be heard within this fold of time even now: “We can divide sandwiches into sandwiches for snacks, decorated sandwiches and warm sandwiches. Snack sandwiches are for eating in school, at work and on outings; decorated sandwiches are served with tea and coffee or as an hors d’oeuvre at lunch, dinner or supper. Warm sandwiches are served at lunch, at supper, as an accompaniment to broth and with tea.” (Kodin neuvokki 1967, 6.) I am simultaneously playing the role of both omniscient narrator and time travel guide. As part of concave Kalastajatorppa time I am in the midst of the flow of events and existence. In convex time I am outside the flow of existence and yet I am aware of what is happening in concave time. As a time travel guide I would like to try and accompany my prospective guest customers and offer them precisely this kind of Kalastajatorppa experience. Only in this way can you get a glimpse into the essence of Kalastajatorppa.

A cultured visitor is capable of hearing the timeless cultural language of Kalastajatorppa: the tales he tells make him part of the place’s existential narrative. Sophistication can be heard in the rhythm with which the tale is told, the cadence of Kalastajatorppa. This is also precisely what is meant by a cinematic journey into a time and a space. The author of the novel *Grandad's Landscape*, professor Rapola, succeeds in expressing something fundamental in his essay “The Language of Culture” contained in his work *The Field Remains Behind*: “Taking a scornful attitude to what stays behind is nevertheless a curtailed form of thinking, it is unthinkingness. The bygone has not ceased to exist because its most conspicuous manifestations have become buried under those of today. Once the light of a shooting star is extinguished, we can once again affirm that Mars and Venus pursue their unwavering trajectories close to us. Culture is always about the long term. The name itself says that time, the temporal element of depth, belongs to the essence of the matter, that a tree has not grown without soil and roots. For as long as we have had knowledge, the Latin *cultura* has meant and still means tilling and turning the soil, cultivating, developing, processing. If we remove these semantic components from the concept of culture, then we lose the concept itself. In culture there always lives something which has existed in an earlier cultivation, as itself or as a seed: in a field as basic soil, in language as original root vocabulary, in art as a rhythm and as stylistic markers of times past. Without this it is not culture.” (Rapola 1965, 19.)

A whole hundred years or more of today: it is precisely these things – an awareness of its roots, vigorous participation in new modernities and an indefatigable reaching out into the future – that define the historical and cultural essence of Kalastajatorppa. For this reason it also means a profound philosophy of hospitality. In the spirit of

such a place there resides the feeling of being at home. Which is why it is always safe to return there.

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(English translation by Glyn Hughes)

Comments and Notes

1. The name Colonel Sarmo (Rtd.) refers to the 1952 film *The Ghost of a Dead Man Walks* directed by Jorma Nortimo. Joel Rinne appeared in the role of Rainer Sarmo in the three Dead Man films. The first two, *A Dead Man Falls in Love* and *A Dead Man Gets Angry*, were completed during the Continuation War, in 1942 and 1944. The underlying inspiration for all three films was provided by the writings of Simo Penttilä. The moniker "Dead Man" came about because Sarmo was called "Döttman" abroad, i.e., dead man. In this, the last of the series of films, the other roles were played by Reino Valkama, Hilikka Helinä and Mai-Britt Heljo. The director of the first two films was Ilmari Unho. The production company for *The Ghost of a Dead Man Walks* was Suomen Filmitöollisuus SF Ltd. (For more on the topic, see especially <http://www.elonet.fi/fi/elokuva/123173>; http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuollut_mies_kummittelee; for Joel Rinne, see also Itkonen, V. 1944. *Hiljaisuus – kuvaus – kamerat. Suomalaisia elokuvanäyttelijöitä sanoin ja kuvin*. [Lights, camera, action. Finnish film actors in words and pictures]. Helsinki: Tammi, 125–129.)

2. Joel Rinne is probably best known for his portrayal of Detective Inspector Frans J. Palmu, although he is most often referred to simply as Inspector Palmu. *Vodka, Inspector Palmu* was the fourth and final film in the Palmu series. It premiered in 1969. The first three parts, *Inspector Palmu's Mistake*, *Gas, Inspector Palmu!* and *The Stars Will Tell, Inspector Palmu* appeared in 1960, 1961 and 1962. The first three films are based on novels by Mika Waltari. The concluding film was made without Waltari and the screenplay was by Matti Kassila and Georg Korkman. Kassila also directed all four films. Other leading roles were played by Leo Jokela and Matti Ranin. The production company for *Vodka, Inspector Palmu* was Fennada-Filmi Ltd. (For more on the topic, see especially <http://www.elonet.fi/fi/elokuva/117781>; http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vodka,_komisario_Palmu; for Joel Rinne, see also Itkonen, V. 1944. *Hiljaisuus – kuvaus – kamerat. Suomalaisia elokuvanäyttelijöitä sanoin*. [Lights, camera, action. Finnish film actors in words and pictures]. Helsinki: Tammi, 125–129.)

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Photograph 1. Jorma Nortimo: Kuollut mies kummittelee 1952 © KAVI / Suomen Filmiteollisuus SF Oy.

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Photograph 5. Film poster for the film *Vodkaa, komisario Palmu*, produced by Fennada-Filmi Oy, 1969.