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**Tango As a Piece Of Life**  
Analysis Of Lunfardo Images  
In Tango Lyrics

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## Introduction

“What is tango for you?” I asked an old *milonguero*<sup>1</sup> El Chino Perico<sup>2</sup> who was dancing for more than 50 years. The answer was simple and very deep at the same time: “Tango is a piece of life...” (El Chino Perico, personal communication, November 9, 2019)

Tango lyrics are the concentration of all the feelings and emotions. The essential tango themes are “the death, the inexorable pass of time, el desarraigo, the search of one’s own identity... unshared love and the nostalgia for a paradise lost” (Conde, 2003) This paradise lost in the case of the Argentinean reality of the end of the 19th beginning of 20th century can be easily understood as a loss of one’s fatherland. Let’s remember Armando Discepolo’s *Stefano*, a tragic grotesque story about an Italian musician who came to Argentina in search of his dream and then got disillusioned. “We were born in a place... (With fervor) Ah Napoli, far away in the time!... in a place where if you just dive into the water from the rock you get out of it with shining skin and a fresh oyster in your hand. ¡What a pleasure! ...At dawn. ..still feeling the warmth of the bed. ..Everything around you was singing; everything was a hope”, was remembering his fatherland a failed genius musician. The immigrants, who were mostly coming from Italy (about 45%), brought with them not only their customs, their culture but also their words. *Lunfardo* (from Italian Romanesque dialect where *lombardo* means “thief”, which is believed to be later on transformed into *lunfardo*), “a regional language of Rio de la Plata” was born together with “development of the marginal urban sectors who came to live to Buenos Aires” (Gottero, 2008, p.7) In the process of their integration to

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<sup>1</sup> *Milonguero* is a person who often goes out to dance the tango.

<sup>2</sup> One of the most famous tango maestros of old school in Buenos Aires.

new society immigrants were enriching the language and the culture of their new fatherland.

Immigration was one of the key elements forming Argentinean culture at the beginning of the XX century. At this period and many decades later it was the leitmotif in the literature, theatre, and cinema. Tango, one of the most beautiful dances in the world with its passionate nature, penetrating music and dramatic deep texts would have never been born or, at least, would not be as we know it if there were no Italian, Spanish, French, Russian and many other immigrants who were coming to another continent in search of a better life.

Both tango lyrics and *lunfardo* pertain to language studies field, both have social character and both are in some way products of immigrants' culture. Moreover, their interconnection cannot be unnoticed. There would not be tango lyrics like we know it if there were not *lunfardo* with its colorful words (*botón* lit.<sup>3</sup> "button", *cana* lit. "gray hair", *abanico* 'just to tell "policeman"). In its turn, *lunfardo* would not be so popular and commonly used without tango. *Lunfardo* words were spreading and occupying their place in Argentines' lexicon thanks to tango which being a part of popular culture was very widespread.

Tango in 2009 was declared as UNESCO cultural heritage and one might think that this field was intensively studied by the specialists in music, dance as well as by the linguists and literature experts. Unfortunately, this is not entirely true. The academic world has always been ignoring tango, so its history was written mainly by newspapers (Conde, 2003). Few researchers have addressed seriously the topic of tango lyrics. If

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<sup>3</sup> The acronym lit. stands for "literally" and will be referred throughout this paper as the standard meaning of the word.

there have not been Gobello, Sierra, Ferrer, Conde tango songs would not have been dealt with in-depth at all.

When there was a meeting with Maria Nieves, one of the most famous tango dancers, who together with Juan Carlos Copes in far 1970s brought tango escenario to Broadway and to the White House, she pronounced a phrase full of sorrow and bitterness “Tango still remains a bad word”. Conde (2003) tells that his curriculum as a tango researcher was welcomed with contempt “as if studying Cadicamo or Fito Paez was less important than studying Ezra Pound or Petrarch” (p. 12). Tango which represents by far the most important part of the Argentinean poetics of the XX century, ironically, has been identified as something which is not worth studying.

Luckily, tango, not appreciated enough in its own country has become a big object of studies in other countries. Conde (2003) lists such cities as: “Toulouse, Utrecht, Maas-tricht and Brujas” (p. 12) where tango is studied at universities. However, the characteristics of tango poetics have not been dealt with in-depth. In literature faculties through all of the world students study Shakespeare, Petrarch, Donne, and other immortal classics, few professors are interested in teaching tango even if this genre is far beyond being simple and unoriginal. Its complexity can be seen in its vocabulary, thematic as well as in its style.

Tango is an inalienable part of Argentinean culture. Since music and poetry have always been used by Argentineans to describe their everyday life it becomes a historical source, which reveals what it was like to be an Argentinean at the time the songs were written. Immigration, poverty, prostitution, criminal life, *los guapos* (lit. “beauti-

ful”, pop.<sup>4</sup> *guapo* is “show-off”), *cana* (lit. “grey hair” lunf. is defined by Gottero (2008) to mean “prison”) and many other realities of the beginning of the XX century.

A strange cross between Musette and Mimi,  
With the caresses of Rodolfo and Schaunard,  
She was the flower of Paris  
That the dream of a novel brought to the arrabal.  
And in the crazy ramblings of the cabaret  
The sweet melody of some tough-guy tango  
Encouraged her illusions:  
She dreamt of Des Grieux,  
She wanted to be Manon. (trans. Poesía de gotán: Poetry of the tango <https://poesiadegotan.com/2011/02/09/griseta-1924/>)

In the abovementioned extract of *Griseta* tango, we can see many allusions to the names of some historical figures. *Griseta* (elev.lang.<sup>5</sup> is defined by Gobello (2008) to mean “young girl living in poverty conditions who practice sexual freedom”) is a French young girl who like many other European young women was brought to an Argentinean *arrabal* (pop. *arrabal* is defined by Gottero (2008) to mean “district where traditionally people sing or dance the tango || Suburb”) to be a prostitute. This song is not an exception; in each tango song, you can see the history of a whole generation, people’s hopes, desires, feelings, and emotions.

Tango now, unfortunately, is beginning to become traditional losing its popular nature. In spite of this, the lyrics themselves would hardly ever be a part of elitarian art. It’s thematic and vocabulary was “a genuine creation of the low class, a hybrid product of immigration waves [...] to Buenos Aires between the end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX centuries” (Gobello, 2003, p. 18). Immigrants enriched Argentinean culture bringing with them not only their customs, habits but also creating their own new

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<sup>4</sup> The acronym pop. stands for “popular” and will be referred throughout this paper as popular Argentinean slang words.

<sup>5</sup> The acronym elev.lang. stands for “elevated language” and will be referred throughout this paper as high life language.

language. This language, or to be more precise, vocabulary<sup>6</sup>, is the object of this study. As was mentioned in the beginning, if one wishes to study tango it is impossible not to mention *lunfardo* and, on the contrary, for a researcher who studies *lunfardo* it would be impossible not to touch upon tango lyrics. As expected, by far the most well-known *lunfardo* investigator José Gobello (1919-2013), the founder of Academia Porteña del *Lunfardo*, has also written a multitude of books on tango. Sierra (1976) in his introduction to Gobello's *Conversando tangos* claims that no one can write about tango with such clarity and awareness as it does Gobello. His younger colleagues Oscar Conde (1961) and Marcelo Oliveri (1966), as well as he, have produced numerous books and publications on both tango and *lunfardo*.

Oscar Conde (2003) points out that not everyone is apt to write about tango. He cites an author who criticizes that in some Argentinean poetry anthologies poetry of high level is mixed with tango songs. "Fortunately, the authors who succeeded this writer were not of the same opinion and Celedonio Flores, Cadicamo, Carlos de la Pua, Atahualpa Yupanqui, Maria Elena Walsh are included into the main anthologies of Argentinean poetry" (p. 19). Remarkably, tango poetry in contrast to other poetry will hardly ever cease to exist. It will always be heard in *milongas* (plural, gen.lang.<sup>7</sup> is defined by Gobello (1978) to mean "dance hall") and it will always accompany the most passionate dance in the world. As proof, Homero Manzi, the author of many famous and precious tangos *Barrio De Tango* (1942), *El Último Organito* (1948), *Malena* (1941), *Ninguna* (1942), *Sur* (1948) and others is considered to be mediocre if we consider his poems (Gobello, 1976). Tango is in a way a guarantee to the immortality of your works.

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<sup>6</sup> It is hardly may be called a language because even having a vast vocabulary it has only one grammatical form.

<sup>7</sup> The acronym gen.lang stands for "general language" and will be referred throughout this paper as words typically used in Argentina.

This paper presents a new approach to tango lyrics research. It focuses on *lunfardo* words in tango songs analyzing different aspects of this phenomenon. A preliminary attempt has been made to provide information on the usage of *lunfardo* and popular Argentinean slang vocabulary in tango lyrics. We undertook this study to demonstrate the undeniable connection of tango lyrics with *lunfardo*. We analyzed *lunfardo* in 101 tango songs from the book *El tango y sus protagonistas* (“Tango and its protagonists”) by Hector Romay.

## I. Literature Review

Since the objects of this study are two, *lunfardo* and tango, this chapter will firstly treat them separately. The final section of this chapter gives an overview of works which examine interconnection between these phenomena.

### 1.1.Literature on tango

There is no general agreement on the quantity of works dedicated to tango. In the literature there are many researchers who admit that tango is a very well studied subject by many researchers. Few researches insist that the tango field still remains underestimated and unstudied enough. However, a considerable amount of researches (Vilariño, 1977; Norese, 2002; Conde, 2003) indicated that a key problem with much of the literature on tango is that it lacks attention to both methods and theory. We classified the existing literature on tango into several categories<sup>8</sup>: gender representations in tango; tango history; tango as a social instrument; immigration and tango; tango vocabulary<sup>9</sup>; others. In the last category we included the studies on not less important but less

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<sup>8</sup> The subject, which we shall refer to as “tango”, is in the present work relate mostly to tango lyrics. Our research interest lies in language study field, so for reason of space we do not deal with literature on tango as music and tango as dance, although we mention them briefly in section “History of tango”.

<sup>9</sup> The category will be dealt in subchapter “Studies about *lunfardo* in tango lyrics”.



presented themes which we will review briefly.

### 1.1.1. *Gender representations in tango*

Tango as a dance represents a relationship between man and woman. The same applies for tango lyrics. Love, passion, betrayal, broken hearts, first love and etc., are probably the most frequent themes in tango lyrics. Consequently the images of man and woman figure prominently in tango.

Many studies have been published on or otherwise touch upon gender and tango (Gasparri, 2011; López, 2010; Dalbosco, 2010a; Armus, 2002; Noguero Jiméneez, 2002; Pelinski, 2000; Ulla, 2014; Dalbosco, 2010b; Barale & Maria, 2006; Do Santos Menezes, 2019; Vilariño, 1977). Gender theme in tango has been gaining much attention in last 20 years due to the growing openness of the scientific society towards gender research.

Most studies have focused on woman representation in tango lyrics (Lopez, 2010; Dalbosco, 2010a; Armus, 2002; Noguero Jiméneez, 2002; Dalbosco, 2010b; Barale, Maria, 2006; Do Santos Menezes, 2019). Type of woman which is presented in tango lyrics is called *milonguera* or *milonguita* (gen.lang, both words have the same meaning and are defined by Gobello (1978) to mean “dancer employed at places of nightlife entertainment”, *milonguita* is an affective form of *milonguera*). In her analysis, Lopez (2010) is not limited to one representation type. She identifies 3 types of woman in tango. The first one is represented in tango *La Morocha*<sup>10</sup> (1905) by Angel Villoldo in which a sweet, tender, simple and kind young woman tells about the love to her “master”. This woman’s main values are her man and her fatherland. Her life is

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<sup>10</sup> *Morocha* is defined in Collins Spanish to English Dictionary as “brunette”.

connected to rural area (“the ranch”, “the village”) However, she is not so simple because she combines both modesty and seductiveness. The second type of woman in tango is presented in *La milonguera* (1915) by Vicente Greco. This young woman is much perkier; there is something boastfully masculine in her tone: “I am *milonguera*, I like tango and I know how to show off in *bailongo* (pop. “dance”<sup>11</sup>)”. The third type of woman is found in *Maldito*<sup>12</sup> *tango* (1916) by Luis Roldán. The protagonist is a woman fascinated and seduced by tango. In her case tango is no more a dance that gives you life as in *La milonguera* who cannot live without tango. The woman in *Maldito tango*, on the contrary, is deceived and seduced by “damned” tango music which leads her from “decent and modest life to prostitution and physical and moral degradation” (p. 4). In the classification of Lopez we can see the changing image of tango woman and of tango tone which with time was getting more moralizing.

The third type of woman in tango lyrics proposed by Lopez is the most associated with *milonguera*, who is commonly referred to by a considerable number of researchers as the “fallen woman” (Dalbosco, 2010a; Armus, 2002; Ulla, 2014; Dalbosco, 2010b; Do Santos Menezes, 2019). Ulla (2014) in his article *Marginalidad y Testimonio en las Letras de Tango* traces the history of *milongueras*. These, generally, French or other nationalities’ women were brought to Buenos Aires and often involved there in prostitution. Ulla cites here a tango written by Luis Rubinstein: “and to the public auction as a cow that goes to the fair/ so you went, poor thing, where a caftan (lunf. “ruffian”) dragged you”. Interestingly, there is a tango which shows the way back from cabaret to home. In *Maleva* the protagonist ends with dishonest life, as the tango

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout this paper we will use translations of *lunfardo* and of Argentinean slang words mostly by Gobello (2003). Other sources of translation will be mentioned where relevant.

<sup>12</sup> *Maldito* is defined in Collins Spanish to English Dictionary as “damned”.

describes it: “you turn back to your previous life and the *milonguera* turns back to be a woman”. Though it is generally accepted that tango lyrics describing a *milonguera* applies mostly to a woman who remains in this condition and expresses a reproach from the part of the man.

If we now turn to the origins of *milonguera* type it will be clear that these women were not exclusively foreign. Dalbosco (2010a) describes as well local born women who left their native *arrabal* (pop. “district”) in search of a better life in the city centre. Dalbosco indicates *Milonga* (same as *milonguera*)  *fina*, a tango by Celedonio Flores, “You declared yourself an astute *milonga*/ when you left the *arrabal*,/ poor percaline clothes,/ and the lace of the apron”. Basically, tangos about *milongueras* tell a story about women who choose rich life and are subject to moral criticism. Transformation of a decent woman into a *milonguera* is described in 3 stages: “change of *milonguera* name; change of her appearance; and the adoption of French linguistic cultural code” (p. 6). Their new names are mainly French: “Tigra, Mamboretá, Margot, Milonga, Francesita, Botija, Muñequita, Ninón, Ivonne” (p. 7). Leaving behind the old creole name symbolizes the desecration of woman’s personality. Changes in her appearance regard her clothes and hair style. Percale in her clothes is replaced by silk and leather. Her hair color is changed to platinum blonde. Even her way of speaking changes and her speech abounds with French idioms. Still, the reproach given to *milongueras* by men is no more than a camouflage which covers “social tension provoked by questioning of traditional masculine and feminine roles” (Dalbosco, 2010b, p.8)

Various studies have been published on men image in tango (Gasparri, 2011; Pelinski, 2000; Dalbosco, 2010c) Dalbosco (2010c) in her *Alteridades masculinas y*

*femeninas en las letras de tango (1917-1945)* proposes 3 types of main male characters in tango: *compadrito* (gen.lang. “young man who imitates the behavior of *compadre*<sup>13</sup>”), *guapo* (pop. “brave, boastful”) and *malevo* (pop. “thug, quarrelsome, arrogant”). In contrast to a structured system of classification, which regards female tango characters, distinction between these 3 types of male characters is not always clear. Dalbosco names most basic differences between the 3 men types in tango: for *guapo* it is his bravery, for *compadrito* it is his dancing skills and his regular attendance of *milongas* and for *malevo* his ability of trouble-making. Three characteristics which they all have in common are: 1) they live in suburbs; 2) their mood swings drastically from bravery to sensibility: sometimes they express the feelings very openly but often they try to hide them 3) their appearance is highly coded. Curiously, in contrast to feminine characters, male characters are rarely exposed to moral judgment. Gasparri (2011) concludes that the most important character in tango is *guapo* and others (*compadritos*, *malevos*) are his satellites. He traces the evolution of *guapo* defining it as a “shift of this ‘marginal’ character to the ‘centre’ of the national masculine image” (p. 180) His position is that tango is a history of *guapo*, so when in 30s this character ceased to exist tango’s mission ended.

### 1.1.2. *Tango history and its origins*

This section is dedicated to tango history and both to history in tango. Almost all the literature on tango in some way mentions tango history. We will concentrate on works dedicated to tango history which reveal its origins and milestones.

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<sup>13</sup> *Compadre* is defined by Gobello (1978) as “gaucho absorbed by the city who maintained independent attitude in his clothing and behavior”.

Borges (1965) calls tango “a sad thought which is danced” (vers. 2016, p.16). Although he at once states that this notion does not correspond to the first tango songs such as *El choclo*, *El entrerriano*, *El apache argentino*, *El Pollito*, *Las siete palabras*, *Noche de garufa*. According to him tango takes its origins in *milonga*<sup>14</sup> and *habanera*<sup>15</sup>, even both words *milonga* and *tango* have African origins. Though, these are too far origins and it cannot be said that all these dances are strictly of this origin.

Gobello (1976), an authority on *lunfardo* and tango studies, claims that tango appeared with the lyrics. While the movements of the dance were purely improvised its lyrics is not an exception to that. For example, the first registered tango lyrics were not created to be put on music. They were just “exclamations of admiration which *compadritos* cried out when one of the chums showed off with his female partner” (p. 102) Sierra (1993) also emphasizes the fact that tango lyrics in its beginning was represented just by “trivial and improvised lyrical poems of picaresque and pornographic style” which were far way different from “tango song” which appeared later (p. 3307). These exclamations, highly vulgar, were quickly transforming into lyrics put on the melodies of polka, mazurka, cuadrilla and milonga. Gobello (1976) cites brothers Bates “The tango lived its childhood... in the very second-rate dance halls... The lyrics did not do more than just reflecting the ambient which gave them life”. (p. 105) In order to illustrate this Gobello (1976, p. 105) puts an example from censored version of one of pro-tango verse:

Por *salir* con una *chica*

Because of going out with a girl

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<sup>14</sup> Here *milonga* means “dance performed at the sound of the music used in country *payada*” (Gobello, 1978, p. 136).

<sup>15</sup> *Habanera* is defined as “slow 2/4 time dance of Cuban origins” (© Real Academia Española, 2020: <https://dle.rae.es/habanero>).

que era muy dicharachera	who was very talkative
me han quedado las <i>orejas</i>	my ears have become
como flor de regadera	like a watering can rose

Conde (2003) cites its original unsoftened version:

Por <i>coger</i> con una <i>mina</i> <sup>16</sup>	To fuck a <i>mina</i> (lunf. “girl”)
que era muy dicharachera	who was very talkative
me han quedado los <i>cojones</i>	my balls have become
como flor de regadera	like a watering can rose

The words of tango just coincided with the place where it was born. Gobello (1976) defines first tango lyrics as ‘brothel’ (p. 106). He notes that we should not be ashamed of that both the tango as a dance and tango lyrics were born in the brothel.

At the same time with these primitive tango verses was evolving another similar genre, pimp poetry (*poesía rufianesca*), a genre that has not still been well-studied. Quesado (as cited in Gobello, 1976) asserts that the most distinguished author of this genre is J. López Franco with his *Los canfinfleros* and *Los amantes del día*. Gobello (1976) calls these poems “defame” (p. 107), according to him they represent ruffraff literature. Conde (2003) defines it as the poetry which main character is “*cafishio* (lunf. “pimp”) who shows off his stylishness, his courage and his dance talents and at the same time boasts of his position as a pimp” (p.22) Some tangos of the beginning of XX century were influenced by this type of poetry. The example of it is *El taita* (1907) by Silvero Manco (Conde, 2003, p. 23):

Y si se trata de alguna mina,	And if it is about some <i>mina</i> (lunf. “girl”),
la meneguina me hago ligar.	I will get her <i>meneguina</i> (lunf. “money”)
Y si resiste en aflojar,	And if she resists to fork out the money,
con cachetiarla me la va a dar.	I will get it by slapping her.

In the history of tango it is generally accepted that the father of tango was Angel

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<sup>16</sup> Censored in a softened version for being *lunfardo* word.

Villoldo. Puccia, the author of his biography (as cited in Del Priore, 1975) ironically notes that if there had been author rights at the time Villoldo lived and his authorship had not been questioned, he would not have lived in difficult economical conditions thanks to his *El choclo*, *El esquinazo* and *El porteñoito*.

His creole tango *El porteñoito* (Dal Priore, 2011, Letra de Villoldo (El criollo falsificado)):

There's no one equal to me

In making women fell in love with me

Others may just seem to be like me

It's just all stories and no more.

And to appear attractive to her

I *fileo* (1<sup>st</sup> pers.sing. from lunf. *afilar* “court, woo, flatter”) all her body

Guaranteeing myself the *puchero* (lit. “pot” pop. “Everyday regular meal”)

With the *vento* (lunf. “Money”) she will give to me.

In this tango we can observe 1<sup>st</sup> person narrative so common to previous Spanish zarzuela; direct indication on protagonist's pimp position; festive, carefree, swagger and immoral character. These characteristics were common for tangos of the first period. Other similar tangos written by Villoldo are *Soy tremendo* and *El torito* which also tell the story of marginal personages or *compadritos*.

*La morocha*, the first tango to cross the Atlantic Ocean and to contribute in spreading of tango throughout the world, was likewise written by Villoldo. No other tango song has maintained its popularity and has been performed in all tango periods as it is *La morocha* (Dal Priore, 2011). *La morocha* was also the first tango to be professionally performed (Gobello as cited in Lopez, 2010):

I am the Morocha

The most graceful,

The most renowned

Of this village.

I'm the one who to the countryman

Very early in the morning

Offers an unsweetened mate (trans. Planet Tango <http://www.planet-tango.com/lyrics/lamoroch.htm>)

Conde (2003) concludes that “neither the contributions of creole song neither those of obscene poems set to music in general terms produced what was going to be one of the main characteristics of tango poetics beginning from Pascual Contursi: the lyrics with argument” (p. 23) Gobello (1976) states that the antecedents of lyrics with a clear theme and argument could sometimes be found in pimp poetry, for example, in *El Plata Folklore*. However, the narrative character of tango songs appeared only later. It was Pascual Contursi who “converted unclear pimp poetry in a moving lyrical effusiveness” (Gobello, 1976, p. 121)

It is no surprise that Contursi is considered by many a revolutionary in tango lyrics. Sierra (1993) calls the period that this songwriter opened with his *Mi noche triste* “tango song” period (p. 3315). The transition to tango song can be traced in *Matasano* (1914) (Conde, 2003, p. 28):

I am *taita* (pop. “Brave and bold man”) from Buenos Aires

The most confident and reveler.

I am the first anywhere

If it comes to *tanguear* (gen.lang “dance tango”),

The one who handles with the knife

With boldness and courage

And in the middle of *malevaje* (pop. “a group of *malevos*”)

I have always been respected.

I was born in Buenos Aires

And the sky has been my roof.

My only comfort was

My mother who bore me.



Since then my destiny  
Draws me to suffer.  
And because of this in the face  
I bring the eternal cheerfulness  
But inside my chest  
I have a hidden pain.

In the first strophe we can see no changes to Villoldo style. Gobello (as cited in Conde, 2003, p. 29) states that the very difference lies in the second and third strophes where “the tango compadrito is joined with the tango sentimental”. Contursi opened a new thematic of suffering, pain and laments. Conde (2003) tells that *compadrito* here is a failure; moreover, he enjoys this, willing to express his suffering and pain. For Contursi tango is “a sentimental expression” (Sierra, 1993, p. 3315).

Lagmanovich (2000) outlines the following chronology of tango (p. 104):

- 1) the decades of the '10 and of the '20 which contain a big part of generally-called the “Gardel epoch” (especially between 1917 and 1930, even though Gardel dies five years after this last date)
- 2) the decade of 1930 which could be called the “Discepolo epoch” owed to the predominance of this modality (once again, even though Enrique Santos Discepolo had already started songwriting before 1930 and died many years later)
- 3) the period which is already totally identified by the critics, the so called “the '40” and, to my view, represented in eminent form, as for the letters, may I repeat, by Homero Manzi.

Negro (as cited in Lagmanovich, 2000) insists that even if before Gardel tango was already being performed, it was not tango which expressed the identity of a fully integrated immigrant. Gardel, an immigrant himself transformed tango leaving behind “*gringo*<sup>17</sup> resisted by creoles” (p.107) period. It is hard to believe that the one who was born in Toulouse in France could have expressed so well what does it mean to be

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<sup>17</sup> Foreigner.

*porteño*<sup>18</sup>. It was Argentina where he decided to change his name, where he had his house and where he turned back after each of his international tours (Romay, 2006). He, as well as many other immigrants, has chosen to be Argentinean.

### 1.1.3. *Immigration and tango*

In the end of the XX century Argentina becomes a modern agroexport country and the lack of work force is a critical issue so the country opens its doors to immigrants from Italy, Spain, France, Russia, Germany and other European countries. Immigration to Argentina of the end of XIX and beginning of XX centuries has always been discussed in the literature dedicated to tango lyrics.

Sain (2018) states that European immigrants together with locals in difficult financial situation were forming conglomerations around Buenos Aires, creating a new social class. They were living in tenements which later became the principal places described in the first tango songs; for the immigrants these places which helped them to identify with the community and to feel like home. This mixture of people contributed to the culture giving birth to tango. It became for them the way of self-identification.

Lago (2001) traces the history of Italian immigration to Argentina. In 1876 about 26 millions of people from Italy were taken to Argentina, and in 1895 from 38 thousand inhabitants of La Boca<sup>19</sup> 14 thousands were Italians. They were people of different professions who had to face a not quite smooth process of integration to a new society. Without willing it they contributed a lot to the creation of *lunfardo* slang which was a principal mode of expression in tango lyrics, especially if it regards its first period

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<sup>18</sup> *Porteño* is defined in SpanishDict as “native of Buenos Aires” (SpanishDict.com: <https://www.spanishdict.com/translate/porteño>)

<sup>19</sup> La Boca is one of the most associated to immigration districts in Buenos Aires.

(1900-1920).

Azzi (1995) affirms that in tango lyrics simple geographical descriptions of the city have emotional significance. According to her “the culture of tango has organized, through its lyrics and music, a kind of way of feeling for immigrants and Argentines alike” (p. 88). It should be noted that even if in the beginning of the XX century there were more and more immigrants, their integration into society was not so easy. Lago (2001) sees the connection between the official recognition of tango lyrics as an existing genre (with *Mi noche triste*) and the presidential elections of 1917 with the triumph of Hipolito Yrigoyen, the son of immigrants. One of the songs which Lago (2001) indicates as an example of representation of immigration theme is *Canzoneta*<sup>20</sup> the only name of which is a metaphor of immigration:

La Boca... Alleyway...  
Vuelta de Rocha...  
Cheap restaurant..Genaro and his accordeon...  
A little grey song of absence,  
a cruel thug with old problems  
hidden in the shadows of the hash-house.  
The pain of life - Oh mother!...  
My head is white,  
and always at this table I am  
wedded to the misery of alcohol.  
When I hear "O sole mio"  
"Without mama and without love",  
I feel a coldness here in my heart  
that fills me with anxiety...  
Will it be the spirit of my mother

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<sup>20</sup> From Italian *canzonetta* which is a diminutive of *canzone* “song”.

whom I left when I was a boy?  
Weep, weep, O sole mio,  
because I too want to weep!  
La Boca... Alleyway...  
Vuelta de Rocha...  
already Genaro and his accordion are going away...

(LyricsTranslate.com:  
<https://lyricstranslate.com/en/canzonetta-short-lively-song.html>)

In his analysis of this song Lago (2001) notes that the song alludes to foreign instrument and mentions a character with Italian name Genaro. This song expresses the nostalgia of the protagonist who left his native country in search of new possibilities and ended up in far Argentina. Now he finds consolation in meeting with his compatriots in the district La Boca which is composed from disillusion and frustrated expectations. The memories of his mother, his mother tongue and parental home never leave his mind. He mentions his gray hair: many years have passed since he left his fatherland. He abuses alcohol to relieve his angst.

If we now turn to Spanish immigration to Buenos Aires the first things to mention are zarzuela and Andalusian tango. Vega (2016) points out that both Spanish zarzuela and tangos arrived to Argentina together with Andalusian immigrants. Even though these songs born in Andalusia were subject to die in this new environment, it was not like that and Spanish tango got rapid diffusion and popularity in Argentina. There was a great amount of Spanish tangos which arrived to Argentina. The author cites several of them, for instance, *Mi suegra me quiere mucho* (p. 112):

My mother-in-law loves me a lot.  
I renounce her love,  
She doesn't leave me a moment  
To be alone with my wife.

My damned mother-in-law,  
Depraved woman  
Who is even afraid  
To be alone.

This song got such popularity that subsequently it was even honored to be recorded. Even for a specialist in music it would not be easy to recognize in it the modified melody of Spanish *zarzuelita La Gran Vía* (Vega, 2016).

Salton (2010) refers to another important issue in immigration to Argentina at the turn of the XX century which is women immigration. The women who were taken to Argentina to satisfy sexual needs of male immigrant population. They contributed to the flourishing of brothels which in their turn facilitated the creation of tango.

Women who undoubtedly were inspirations for many tangos are French prostitutes. Schnabel (2009) points out that French prostitutes at the end of the 19 century were a privilege of high classes. Romay (2006) mentions influence of French culture on Buenos Aires in the first decade of the XX century. The city tries to copy Paris and, subsequently, adopts many of its features, one of them is Cabaret. It becomes the main nightlife entertainment and gathers people of different social classes. The combination of joy and sadness converts this place into the place to dance tango. In the second decade of the XX century many young French women were attracted to Buenos Aires captivated by the richness of high-class men. They conquered young wealthy men in fashionable restaurants and continued the night dancing tango in Cabarets. The dance was an excuse to become closer.

Pelinski (2000) generalizes the impact of immigration on tango “emerging from the immigration and hybridization, the desire of itinerancy, journey, ‘existential’ meeting with peoples and music of other lands allowed it to be considered as a metaphor of the

global nomadism” (p.1) Without the immigration there would not be tango or, even if it would exist, it would be different from the tango such as we all know it.

#### 1.1.4. *Tango as a social instrument*

Tango, being a phenomenon of popular culture with big diffusion, was used a social instrument. Paez (2004) refutes the “general truth” which is expressed by many “specialists” in tango who say that tango poets were not interested in politics. Many tango investigators minimize the protest in Discepolo and Flores production. Although it would be enough to address *Sentencia*, a tango by Flores: “I was born, sir judge, in a suburb,/ sad suburb of a huge pain/ in a social dirt where one night/ the misery settles its ranch” (p.8). It is normal that people are interested in politics so it would be strange if tango was not touching upon this theme. Apart from numerous tangos dedicated to political leaders (for example, Hipólito Yrigoyen by Enrique P. Maroni) there were many of them dedicated to the critics of corruption in politics *Diputrucho*<sup>21</sup> by Héctor Siracusano and Atilio Stampone, when there were introduced the privatization of gas with the help of a vote of a person who was included into the parliament in an illegal way.

Paez (2004) continues that even the most famous tango singer Gardel recorded songs with social criticism themes. For example, *Mentiras criollas* by Oscar Arona which criticizes the deceptive political system, *Pan* which says “if Jesus doesn’t help, let Satan help us” and many other tangos.

Sain (2018) analyzes tango lyrics produced during Infamous Decade<sup>22</sup>, a harsh time

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<sup>21</sup> The name *Diputrucho* is a neologism comprised from *diputado* “deputy” and *trucho* (pop. Defined (2008) by Gottero as “something which is not authentic but false” (p.282)).

<sup>22</sup> Infamous Decade (in Spanish: *Década Infame*) a period from 1930 to 1943 during which country was

for working people in Argentinean history. *Aquaforte* (1932) is one of the protest songs of the period. The action in it takes place in a Cabaret where the protagonist expresses his personal and social concerns (p. 45):

A dirty old man that wastes his money  
Getting Lulu drunk with champagne  
Today he denied raising salary to a poor worker  
Who asked him for one more piece of bread.  
That poor woman who sells flowers  
And was in my times the queen of Montmartre,  
Smiling, offers me some violets  
Wanting, perhaps, to cheer up my loneliness.

In this verse we can see two stories: one of “a dirty old man” who denies raising salary to “a poor worker”, and another, about “poor woman” who was the queen of a cabaret in the Montmartre district. All the personages and situations typical of that period.

The theme of “poor worker” is also traced in earlier tangos. Paez (2004) makes reference to the event of Tragic Week. The Russian revolution produced a wave of working class protests. During the Tragic Week in Buenos Aires many workers were killed by the police and armed forces as a result of the strike at the Vasena metal works. He cites tango Vasena by an anonymous author: “Sir Vasena,/ oh, great sir/ who sucks blood from the worker./ The hour has come without pity/ for the brave lion to be humiliated” (p. 18) Another tango dedicated to labor unions and reclamation is *El pliego*

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under conservative regimes guaranteed by electoral manipulations and exclusion from elections of the radical party. World crisis of 1929, low level of exportations and disregard for working class showed by ruling elite provoked a deep financial crisis and popular discontent. The period ended up with a coup d'état headed by colonel J.D. Peron.

*de condiciones*<sup>23</sup> by Miguel González and Martínez Serrano: “Today it is a normal thing/ under its big reasons,/ the ‘labor movement’/ and the ‘list of conditions’./ Believing it to be authoritarian/ the great capital/ wants to stop in all forms/ the labor movement” (p. 18) It is less tragic and more humoristic example of protest tango. Different type of protest tango is *Puente Alsina* by Benjamín Tagle Lara which expresses the rebellion against modernization (p.18):

Puente Alsina, you used to be my refuge,  
But in one fell swoop the city streets reached you.  
Old bridge, companion and confidante,  
You are the mark left behind  
On the face of progress,  
The rebellious suburb  
Until yesterday protected you (trans. Poesía de gotán: The Poetry of the Tango: <https://poesiadegotan.com/2014/11/18/puente-alsina-1926/>)

The protagonist of this tango reflects on the destruction of his old district by the inevitable wave of modernization.

This freedom of opinion in tango lyrics could not have been unnoticed by the government. Other approach to study the social character of tango songs is expressed by Sued (2015) in his work on censorship of tango lyrics and its correction. The first measure of censorship was introduced in 1933 under the government of Agustín Pedro Justo under the name of Radio Regulations. It included the prohibition of “‘idioms which bastardize the language’; as well as the prohibition of dissemination of ‘gloomy paintings, sensationalist and discouraging stories’” (Fraga as cited in Sued, 2015, p. 33). Although the censorship in the following decade was inefficient and unsystematic. The real censorship began after the military coup d’état in June 1943. The most famous

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<sup>23</sup>*El pliego de condiciones* is Spanish for “list of (working) conditions”.



example of it in tango is song by Homero Manzi even the name of which was censored. *Tal vez será mi alcohol*<sup>24</sup> turned into *Tal vez será su voz*<sup>25</sup>. Some of its verses were changed and bandoneon music substituted by piano. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of July of the same year there appeared Bulletin of Posts and Telegraphs which goal was to control contents of radio programs. It did not explicitly prohibit *lunfardo* but it was evidently out of the cult language allowed by the regulation. Almost always the modifications of tango lyrics were made by the authors themselves. For example, Garcia Jimenez in his refined version of *Farolito de papel* recorded in June 1943 himself changed *grupos* (plural, lit. “groups”, lunf. “lies”) for *cuentos* (plural, standard Spanish for “lies”), *pato* (lit. “duck”, pop. “the one who lacks money”) for *pobre* (standard Spanish for “poor”), *me ensarté* (1<sup>st</sup> pers.sing.past., from pop. *ensartarse* which is defined by Gottero (2008) as “to be mistaken”) for *me engañe* (1<sup>st</sup> pers.sing.past., from *engañarse* “to be mistaken” in standard Spanish).

We are not going to dwell too much on language censorship, while it is apparent that not only the language was the subject of censorship in tango lyrics<sup>26</sup>. Sued (2015) cites *El bulín de la calle Ayacucho*<sup>27</sup> (1925) which will be later called *Mi cuartito*<sup>28</sup> which presents the change of both theme and language. Celedonio Flores had to eliminate the theme of *bulín* a place where many young men found their *marroco* (lunf. “bread”) and *catrera* (pop. “bed”) and were having fun playing in cards and singing. In the modified version he left only the love story: “My little room where always/ I was holding a warm

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<sup>24</sup> Spanish for “Maybe it was my alcohol”.

<sup>25</sup> Spanish for “Maybe it was her voice”.

<sup>26</sup> The theme of language and tango will be reviewed in the subchapter “Studies about *lunfardo* in tango lyrics”.

<sup>27</sup> Spanish for “The *bulín* (lunf. “room”) on the Ayacucho street”.

<sup>28</sup> Spanish for “My little room”.

hand / and a pretty face was putting / with kindness her best smile” (p.42). The original verse was saying: “the *bulín* (lunf. “room”) where many young men, / in their period of *fulera* (pop. “poor”) life, / found *marroco* (lunf. “bread”) and *catrera* (pop. “bed”) / *rechiflado* (past participle from pop. *rechiflar* “to be transformed, to move to another form of being or to another mental state”) seems to be crying” (p. 42).

Tango served as a way of expressing opinions and worries of people on different subjects, starting from love to a woman ending with political issues. Sued (2015) concludes that the censorship period obliging poets to rewrite their songs to comply with requirements has contributed to the changing of tango poetical style.

#### 1.1.5. *Other studies*

Tango is an unalienable part of Argentinean culture and several studies concentrated on tango as an element of culture (De Los Llanos, 1994; Gasparri, 2011; Pelinski, 2000; Gramma, 2011; Sain, 2018; Barale & Maria, 2006; Morel, 2012; Jubany, 2015).

Gasparri (2011), previously mentioned in connection with gender studies in tango, in his *Che, varón Masculinidades en las letras de tango* addresses the production of certain masculinity models in socio-cultural context of tango lyrics. He traces the origins of man image in tango and identifies that the precedent of *guapo* is one of the most famous heroes of Argentinean culture gaucho Juan Moreira<sup>29</sup>.

The cultural value of tango is undeniable. Many researchers (Pelinski, 2000; Morel, 2012; Jubany, 2015; Sain, 2018; Fumagalli, 2018) consider tango lyrics the best account of urban culture of Buenos Aires. Gobello (2009), an authority on tango explained the

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<sup>29</sup> Juan Moreira (1829-1874) was a famous gaucho, a bright example of the injustices which had to suffer Argentinean gauchos. His life became a part of Argentinean folklore and was described in a novel by Eduardo Gutierrez.

cultural value of tango: “The poetry of the tango lyrics inherit [...] the thread of history of Buenos Aires and of all the argentines” (Cover page)

As it was already mentioned in the introduction the academic world has sometimes underestimated the importance of tango as a part of Argentinean culture. Gramma (2011) explains it by brothel origins of tango. Another interesting hypothesis about this was also expressed by Ruiz De Los Llanos (1994) who considers that the problem with tango recognition is that Argentineans feel ashamed “of being exposed as creoles in front of the foreigner cultures” (p. 11) The opinion which is quite doubtful if we consider the importance of immigrants in tango origins.

The certain is that tango was considered as UNESCO heritage in 2009. The decision of the Intergovernmental Committee explains its cultural importance (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/4.COM/13.01>)

Among this mix of European immigrants to the region, descendents of African slaves and the natives of the region known as *criollos*, a wide range of customs, beliefs and rituals were merged and transformed into a distinctive cultural identity. As one of the most recognizable embodiments of that identity, the music, dance and poetry of tango both embodies and encourages diversity and cultural dialogue

A significant amount of literature is dedicated to the analysis of tango songs. The set of analyzed songs is chosen according to different criteria: description of I-speaker in tango (Mertz, 2005); analysis of selected tangos (Del Priore, 1975; Gobello, 1976, 2009); the Argentinean identity in tango lyrics (De Los Llanos; 1994); analysis of selected tango poets’ songs (Conde; 2003); analysis of tango songs written by women poets (Gomez & Lopez, 2019); metaphors about love in tango (García-Olivares, 2007).

Some less common studies on tango lyrics regard the following themes: woman

peronist<sup>30</sup> in tango (Sain, 2018); usage of *vos* (“you” in Rioplatense Spanish) and *tu* (“you” in standard Spanish) in tango lyrics (Verdier, 2015); the image of the house in tango lyrics (Saburgo, 2013); modernism and tango (Lamanovich, 2000); multicultural nature of tango (Salton, 2010); on the connection between Cervantes and tango (Scham, 2016); echo of Ruben Dario poetry in tango lyrics (Barisone, 2016); representations of melancholy in tango (Pereira, 2014). This list is not final and complete, and its function is to give the idea of different approaches used in tango lyrics studies.

There exist other numerous studies on tango as music and tango as dance, however, the focus of our study is tango lyrics and for reason of space we do not deal with this type of literature.

## **1.2.Literature on *lunfardo***

Royal Spanish Academy (in Spanish: Real Academia Española) defines *lunfardo* as follows: “jargon originally used by the people from lower class of Buenos Aires, part of the words and expressions of which were subsequently introduced in the popular Spanish of Argentina and Uruguay” (© Real Academia Española, 2020: <https://dle.rae.es/lunfardo>). This definition is not enough to have a complete idea about *lunfardo*. In this subchapter we will review the literature concerning *lunfardo* origins and history; etymology and formulation of *lunfardo*; usage of *lunfardo* in literature; dictionaries of *lunfardo*; other studies.

### *1.2.1. Lunfardo origins and history*

*Lunfardo* according to its definition is a creation of lower class and there is a tendency to extend the definition of this social class giving it a negative connotation.

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<sup>30</sup> The main political movement in the XX century in Argentina

Conde (2003) notes that *lunfardo* is sometimes mistakenly perceived as a product of criminal world although, in essence, it is “a vocabulary formed with popular terms and expressions used in open opposition to standard Spanish” (p. 18). We will later discuss several studies on modern state of *lunfardo* which proves the fact that it is not a criminal jargon of the past. Now we will address the origins of *lunfardo*.

Gottero (2008) states that many factors gave life to this linguistic phenomenon of Rio de la Plata. Immigration in the end of XIX and beginning of XX centuries, development of criminal sectors, the uprooting and many other factors combined to create *lunfardo*. This language<sup>31</sup> is based on everyday communication between creoles and immigrants, criminals and policemen.

*Lunfardo* vocabulary originated from two main sources: Spanish, as a base language, and Italian dialects. According to Gottero (2008) the main dialects which ‘nourished’ *lunfardo* were: “Genoese (Genua); Lombard (Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Mantua, Milano, Pavia, Sondrio, Varese); Piemontese (Turino); Venetian (Venice)” (p.12-13)

Lorenzino (2016) claims that half of the words in first *lunfardo* dictionaries were of Genoese origins. The Genoese immigration had wide impact in Argentina between 1980s and 1920s, La Boca, an antique district was even nicknamed “little Genoa”.

Not any of the abovementioned dialects would have been the source for *lunfardo* if there were no immigration to Argentina in the beginning of XIX century<sup>32</sup>. In a typical

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<sup>31</sup> In the literature *lunfardo* often tends to be called a language, even though from a linguistic point of view it is a jargon.

<sup>32</sup> The theme of immigration theme has already been discussed in previous subchapter therefore we mention it briefly.

conversation of that period Spanish was mixed with Italian. The peculiarity was that in their native language Italians were using dialects. The words which seemed strange to local people were being progressively incorporated to their culture. They were used like jokes to imitate the immigrants' speech before they could fully take root in everyday vocabulary of natives of Buenos Aires.

*Lunfardo*, apart from, Italian dialects had another sources of vocabulary. More specifically the following jargons influenced on *lunfardo*: French argot; criminal Spanish argot *germania*; *Caló* language spoken by Spanish and Portuguese Romani; Portuguese slang (Conde as cited in Lorenzino, 2016).

Conde (2013) divides *lunfardo* words of French origins in two groups: (1) borrowings from standard French and (2) borrowings from French argot. The latter group includes mainly pimp slang words. Some of the examples from both groups are the following (pp. 93-94):

(1) *doublé* (“false precious stone”); *fané* (“ruined”, participle from *se fane* “to fade”); *marote* (“head”, from *marotte* “head from paper or wood used to exhibit wigs or hats”);

(2) *cocó* (“cocaine”); *mishé* (“mature man who pays favors of a young woman”); *partusa* (“orgy”, from *partouse*); etc.

Portuguese borrowings are divided by Conde (2013) into *lunfardo* (1) words taken from standard Portuguese and (2) from Brazilian Portuguese (p. 94):

(1) *chumbo* (“revolver”, from *chumbo* “lead”, by synecdoche); *descangallar* (“damage”, from *descangalhar* “to mess up”); *pispear* (“to spy”, from *bispar* “to watch from afar”);

(2) *fulo* (“angry”); *mango* (“peso” (as money)); *bondi* (“autobus”, from *bonde* “railway”); *curtir* (“to take drugs”); etc.

Immigration to Argentina in the end of XIX and beginning of XX centuries is not limited by West Europeans so words from other languages have as well participated in creation of *lunfardo*. Specifically such words as: “Polish *papjerusa* which gives origin

to *papirusa* “a beautiful woman; german *kaputt* “broken” was adopted like *caput* “finished”, “dead”; *caften* “owner of a brothel” proceeds from Turkish *kaften* “type of male clothing”” (p.94)

Spanish immigration has also contributed to *lunfardo* vocabulary. Conde (2013) argues that the major part of immigrants from Spain were from Galicia therefore they brought some Galician language words: “*barullo* “drum” (from *barullo* “uproar”); *chantar* “to say to face” (from *chantar* “talk rudely”); *grela* “woman” (from *garela* “shameless woman”)” (p.94).

Some borrowings from other languages were internal, that is to say, from the languages, other from Spanish, spoken on Argentina territory. Gottero (2008) states that additional source of *lunfardo* is local gauchesque language<sup>33</sup> elaborated by gauchos, creoles residing in pampas, who were moving to urban area in search of work and better life. *Lunfardo* terms taken from gauchesque language have quechua and African languages etymology. The second category includes words brought by African slaves who arrived to Argentina in the second half of the XVIII century. In the last two decades of the XVII century 40% of Argentinean population was of these origins but due to bad living conditions this quantity declined sharply in the next centuries. A significant part of population had mixed origins. Conde (2013) gives several examples of such words: “*capanga* (“jefe”, taken from quimbundo *kappanga* “bodyguard”); *marimba* (“beating”, from quimbundo *marimba* “drum”); *quilombo* (“brothel”, “disorder”, from quimbundo *quilombo* “union”, which in Brazil in the XVIII century was a name for settlements of escaped slaves)” (p.94) Some examples of quechua origins words are the following: “*cache* “pretending in vain to be beautiful and refined” (from *k’acha* “beautiful”, by

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<sup>33</sup> World ‘language’ is used in a figurative way [please look up footnote 31].

antiphrasis); *china* “woman” (from *china* “female animal”); *chusas* “long hair”(from *chúhcha* “hair”); *guacho* “sexually attractive young person”” (p.95).

*Lunfardo* also accounts for some borrowings from English (Conde, 2013): *naiife* (from ‘knife’ with the same meaning); *dequera* (from ‘take care’ with the same meaning); *espiche* “tirade” (from ‘speech’)” (p.94).

As it was mentioned by many authors (Conde, 2003; Gottero, 2008; Lorenzini, 2016) it is incorrect to narrow the definition of *lunfardo* as a criminal jargon. However, Gottero (2008) points out that it is inadequate to separate completely *lunfardo* from criminal jargon. Specifically, she reminds that first *lunfardo* dictionaries were written by policemen who were familiar with criminal world. The first *lunfardo* dictionary by an anonymous writer was named “The dialect of the thieves”. It is published in a newspaper *Prensa* on the 6<sup>th</sup> July of 1878. In the presentation there was written that all the data for its compilation was provided by a commissar of Federal Police<sup>34</sup>. The list included 29 words, among them *marroca* (lunf. “Any object of value except for the money.// Watch chain. // Handcuffs which are used to tie the detainees’ hands”), *bobo* (lunf. “Watch. // Heart”), *mina* (lunf. “Woman in general terms. More precisely it is referred to man’s mistress”) and etc<sup>35</sup>. First *lunfardo* dictionaries were written by policemen in order that the knowledge of this criminal jargon becomes massive.

Conde (2013) describes another early dictionary of *lunfardo* written by a criminal lawyer Antonio Dellepiane in 1894. The problem with this and with many following dictionaries is that they do not distinguish from professional jargon and sociolect (a

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<sup>34</sup> In the following section of this subchapter we will discuss police role in the compilation of *lunfardo* dictionaries.

<sup>35</sup> The definitions taken from Gottero’s (2008) *Diccionario de lunfardo*.



language spoken by a certain social group) of lower class of Buenos Aires. It is true that thieves had their own professional jargon but it is also true that this was a very limited vocabulary. The major part of the words included in first *lunfardo* (at that period defined as vocabulary used by criminal world) dictionaries were used by common people as well.

Conde (2017) in his «*Novísimo diccionario lunfardo*» en la página de policiales de *Crítica* (1913-1915). *Un folletín a pura literatura* discusses the weak points of a more recent *lunfardo* dictionary. *Novísimo diccionario lunfardo* written by Ruben Fastras in 1913 and published by *Crítica* newspaper in a series of articles dedicated to criminality. The definition of the word *fastrás* “Your servant who, because of the modesty, does not write autobiography. It is also said of the punches” (Fastras, as cited in Conde, 2017, p. 183) gives an idea of unserious and humorous tone of the author. His real name is José Antonio Salidas, a young journalist and a future dramaturgic was 22 years old at the moment of the dictionary writing. It is not difficult to note that the books which he cited in his work to illustrate the words’ usage, such as *Clásicos lunfardos*, *Biografías de arrabal* and *Cantares lunfas* were inexistent.

In his dictionary he violates the most basic rules of scientific writing. The first violated rule is defining *lunfardo* terms using another *lunfardo* terms, as for example: “*bagré*. m. Is used to name skinny and *mistongo* [‘of a few value’] *percanterío* [‘a group of women’]” (Fastras, as cited in Conde, 2017, p. 184).

The second omission are mistakes in the class of terms: “*lisamente*. adv. The one who *chamuya* [‘talks’] with sweetness, the *emberretinador* [‘deceiver’] of *garabas* [‘women’]” (Fastras as cited in Conde, 2017, p. 185).

The third violated rule is the use of subjectivisms in definitions: “*basurear*. v. act.

(Very active) *Florearse* [‘stand out] at *laburo* [‘work] because of *fajar* [‘beat’] a sucker y *ligarle* [‘give him’] to round off with a good stab which will stop him from sharing his life with all of us” (Fastras as cited in Conde, 2017, p. 185).

The fourth rule violation is inclusion of several standard Spanish words defined in *lunfardo* terms or in a humoristic way: “*alma*<sup>36</sup>. f. Something completely unnecessary if one wants to live peacefully and to progress in this world. Pejorative if it is referred to a person.” (Fastras as cited in Conde, 2017, p. 185).

The last flaw is the incorporation of some real figures into the dictionary: “Bocha. m. Famous rantifuso [‘criminal subject] who was nicknamed like this because he wore closely cropped hair. This person had an enormous political role and being *guapo* [‘quarrelsome subject’] and good looking was stabbed to death dancing with *ranas* [‘cunning’] young men and hooligans.”(Fastras as cited in Conde, 2017, p. 185).

Conde (2017) defines this “feuilleton” as a particular way of thinking the world, perceiving the reality, an imaginary subjected to creole tradition influence and to the different cultural concepts brought with immigration” (p. 188) The value of this dictionary is that of serving as an account of culture, traditions, prejudices of people of that time.

### 1.2.2. Linguistic characteristics of *lunfardo*

*Lunfardo* has a vast vocabulary of words on various thematic. It is peculiar that it was not only borrowing words from other languages but also transforming them, creating new words and expressions. In this subchapter we will review different ways of word formation in *lunfardo*.

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<sup>36</sup> “Soul” in standard Spanish.

Conde (2013) divides processes of word formation in *lunfardo* in (1) semantic processes which involve change of word meaning, and (2) formal processes which involve production of new words or modifications to existing terms.

If we talk about the first group it includes originally Spanish words which underwent relexification. Verbs underwent changes in meaning of three types (Conde, 2013, p. 95):

(1) intransitive verbs transformed into transitive: *gozar* (“make fun of” from “enjoy oneself”); *boxear* (“to hit” from “to box”);

(2) transitive verbs transformed into intransitive: *rascar* (“to get aroused by kisses and caresses” from “to scratch”);

(3) transitive verbs which require a direct animate complement: *cepillar* (“to hit” from “to brush”); *aguantar* (“to wait for” from “to bear”).

Some terms of this group acquired new meanings. Conde (2013) demonstrates 3 ways of their formation (pp. 95-96):

(1) Narrowing of the meaning: *rebotar* (“to reject someone who has a plan of amorous conquest”, the narrowing of standard Spanish “reject”);

(2) Widening of the meaning: *asfalto* (“city” and “experience” is the widening of standard Spanish “pavement”);

(3) Displacement of the meaning: (a) synecdoche: *caño* (“firearm” from “pipe”); (b) metonymy: *gorra* (“policeman” from “cap”); (c) metaphors: *camión* (“buxom woman” from “truck”);

(4) Specialization with kind of object change: *careta* (“shameless” or “somebody who does not take drugs or consume alcohol” from “mask”).

Formal processes in *lunfardo* formation are based on different types of language game. Conde (2013) distinguishes 5 types of word formation of this type (p. 96):

(1) Euphemisms: *peludo* “big hairy armadillo<sup>37</sup>” for *pedo* “drunkenness”;

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<sup>37</sup> A mammal living in South America.

(2) Antiphrasis: *papa* “an advantageous thing” transforms to name “cancer” or “AIDS”;

(3) Lexicalization of brand names: *flit* “insecticide”; *geniol* “aspirin”; *puloil* “cleaning powder”;

(4) Cross between two words: *chusmear* “to investigate, to pry into” from lunfardism *chusma* “gossipy, nosy” and *chismear* “to gossip”;

(5) Paronomasia (exploitation of two phonetically similar words with different meanings): *champú* “shampoo” means *champán* “champagne”; *gaita* “flute” means *gallego* “Galician”;

(6) Paronomasia of surnames: *seguro* for *seguro* “safe”; *escasani* for *escaso* “scarce”.

By far the most influential type of formal word formation in *lunfardo* is *vesré*. As indicated by its very name (*vesré* is a word formed by the inversion of syllables of the word *revés* “inverted order”), the main principal of new word creation is the inversion of syllables. The examples of similar word formation exist in other countries as well. For instance, French *verlan*, *vesré* in Chile, Cockney in London, Mexican *caló* and etc.

Gobello (1978) in his *Diccionario Lunfardo* explains (1)12 types of *vesré* mechanisms (pp. 222 - 223):

- 1) Successive transposition of syllables from the end to the beginning: *colo* (loco “crazy”); *choma* (*macho*);
- 2) Successive transposition of syllables from the end to the beginning with moving of the accent: *camba* (*bacán* lunf. “One who keeps a mistress”);
- 3) Transposition of the syllables at the end of the word while the initial one do not move: *ajoba* (*abajo* “down”); *congomi* (*conmigo* “with me”);
- 4) Transposition of the last syllable of the word while the others do not move: *jotraba* (*trabajo* “work”); *tacuaeren* (*cuarenta* “fourty”);
- 5) Successive transposition of syllables from the end to the beginning with vocal change at the end: *telangive* (*vigilante* “vigilant”), and not *telangivi*;
- 6) Direct and successive transposition of syllables from the end to the beginning with loss of a consonant: *ortiba* (*batidor* “beater”), and not *dortiba*;
- 7) Successive transposition of syllables from the end to the beginning with epenthesis<sup>38</sup> and final vocal change: *colimba* (*milico* “soldier”), and not *colimi*;
- 8) Transposition with diphthong breaking and syllables adding: *jaevi* (*vieja*)

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<sup>38</sup> Epenthesis is the insertion of a sound or letter into a word (Collins Dictionary 2020: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/epenthesis>).

“old”), alternates with *javie*;

9) Transposition with syncope<sup>39</sup>: *yolipar* (*apoliyar* “to eat holes in”); *yompa* (*pabeyón* “pavilion”), alternates with *beyompa*;

10) Transposition with coupling: *tegenaité* (*gente* “people”), alternates with *tegén*;

11) Anagram (mutation of letters order): *celmán* (*almacén* “warehouse”); *codemi* (*medico* “medic”);

12) In case of verbs, transposition with adding of verbal ending, possibly with a consonant loss and in some cases with conjugation change: *garpar* (*pagar* “pay”), and not *garpa*;

13) Derivation: *bramaje* (“female flock” from *brame* a vesric<sup>40</sup> form of “female”);

14) Pluralization of singular vesric form: *viongas* (*gaviones* pop. “Don Juan, libertine who seduces women”), and not *nesvioga*;

15) Augmentative or diminutive of a vesric form of the positive: *chomazo* (*machazo* “big macho” formed from *choma*); *chomita* (*machito* “little macho” formed from *choma*).

Conde (2013) explains that this method cannot be applied to every Spanish or *lunfardo* word due to phonetic factor. For example: “*guaa* from *agua* “water” and *lojre* from *reloj* “watch”” (p. 99) would be inappropriate because of the inconvenient pronunciation.

Castilla (2010) identifies 50 semantic groups by the analysis of 1300 *lunfardo* terms (p. 6-7):

- 1) Jobs
- 2) Love
- 3) Understanding, observation
- 4) Delinquency
- 5) Insults
- 6) Excellency
- 7) Food, appetite
- 8) Death, assassination
- 9) Joke
- 10) Sex
- 11) Conflicts, fights
- 12) Fear, cowardice, caution
- 13) Armaments
- 14) Party
- 15) Carriers
- 16) Brothel
- 17) Crazy
- 18) Drugs, alcohol, vices
- 19) Expelling, throwing out
- 20) Running away, leaving, escape
- 21) Tavern
- 22) Music, tango, dances
- 23) Disturbing
- 24) Money, quantity
- 25) Drinks
- 26) Woman
- 27) Body parts
- 28) Seduction
- 29) Time
- 30) Deceit, lie, falsity
- 31) Dream, tiredness, laziness, annoying
- 32) Badness
- 33) Ugliness
- 34) Rage, anger
- 35) Clothing
- 36) Cleverness, skills
- 37) Man
- 38) Nationality, demonyms, religion, ethnicity
- 39) Black people
- 40) Jail
- 41) Politics
- 42) Poverty, decline
- 43) Dirtiness
- 44) Family
- 45) Bravery, courage, impulsiveness, strength
- 46) Luck, bad luck
- 47) Disorder, disaster

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<sup>39</sup> Syncope is the omission of one or more sounds or letters from the middle of a word (Collins Dictionary 2020: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/syncope>).

<sup>40</sup> Related to *vesré*.

confusion 48) Language, thinking 49) Grabbing, taking, grasping  
50) Cars, means of transport.

Conde (2013) identifies and exemplifies several semantic fields of *lunfardo* expressions: (pp. 100-101):

(1) Erotic field: *tirar los galgos* (lit. “to throw the greyhounds”) “try to seduce”; *dar bola* (lit “give ball”) “to show interes”;

(2) Sexual field: (a) used to mean “to copulate” for male subject: *bajar la caña* (lit. “put down the rod”); *dar masa* (lit. “give dough”); *dar masita* (lit. “give little dough”); (b) used to mean “to copulate” for both male and female subjects: *darla* (lit. “give it”); *dársela* (lit. “give it to him/her”); (c) used to mean both “to copulate” and “to beat”: *darle para que tenga* (lit. “give him/her so that he/she has (it)”); *darle para que tenga y para que guarde* (lit. “give him/her so that he/she has (it) and keeps it”); (d) used to mean “to copulate” for male homosexual subject: *cargar carne por popa* (lit. “load meat through bottom”); *comerse la bala* (lit. “eat the ball”); *comerse la masita* (lit. “to eat the little dough”); *tragarse la bala* (lit. “to swallow the ball”);

(3) “To beat”: *cagar a trampadas* (lit. “to shit with punches”);

(4) “To lie”: *meter el perro* “put the dog”; *hacer el cuento del tío* “make the story of the uncle”;

(5) “To harm”: *arruinar el estofado* (lit. “to spoil the stew”);

(6) “To laze around”: *hacer huevo* (lit. “to make ball”);

(7) “To calm down”: *quedarse en el molde* (lit. “to stay at the mold”);

(8) “To get angry”: *levantarse cruzado* (lit. “to wake up crossed”);

(9) “Good knowledge of something”: *saberla lunga*<sup>41</sup> (lit. “to know it long”);

(10) Ability, experience field: *tener asfalto*<sup>42</sup> (lit. “have experience”).

As we can see the common fields in both classifications are: (1) sex, eroticism and seduction; (2) conflicts, fights; (3) lie; (4) laziness; (5) anger; (6) skills, knowledge. This standard set of semantic fields are connected to human’s feelings, qualities and

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<sup>41</sup> Lunf. “long”.

<sup>42</sup> Lunf. “experience”.

communication is another proof of *lunfardo* being a popular jargon rather than secret language of criminals.

### 1.2.3. *Lunfardo and cocoliche*

The major influence on the creation of *lunfardo* vocabulary undoubtedly had Italian language. Many works are dedicated to the role of Italian and *cocoliche*, the mixture of Italian and Spanish spoken by the immigrants (Simon Casas, 1991; Conde, 2009; Le Bihan, 2011). Gobello and Olivieri (2005) characterized *cocoliche* as the first effort of Italian immigrants to be understood while the second effort the one of their children derived in *lunfardo*. Ability to speak Spanish meant for immigrants to have better job opportunities and to be more accepted by the society.

Conde (2009) compares four definitions of *cocoliche* and finds the most complete and appropriate the following one: “a transitional language which was majorly used by Italian immigrants who arrived to Rio de la Plata, and who were mixing Spanish with their mother tongues both lexically and phonetically and, sometimes even syntactically” (p. 10) This definition reflects all of the aspects of language mixing.

Gottero (2008) explains the origins of the word *cocoliche*. In 1890 during the setting of *Martín Fierro* by Jose Hernandez there was a laborer in the troupe who was speaking as a recently arrived Italian immigrant. His name was Antonio Cuccoliccio. His funny way of talking inspired one of the directors of the troupe to introduce a new character into the play, Franceso Cocoliche (phonetic deformation of Cuccoliccio), *agucho* who was expressing himself in the same funny way mixing Italian and Spanish as it was doing Antonio Cuccoliccio.

Afterwards the name *cocoliche* became and was used to call both the Italian immigrants and their way of speaking. Le Bihan (2011) distinguishes *cocoliche* as a

mixture of Spanish and Italian in real people's speech and caricatured *cocoliche* used in theatrical genres. Real *cocoliche* is nothing more than just a lack of knowledge of a new language and mixing it with the native one because of their lexical and grammatical similarity. The same thing could have happened to an Argentinean who tries to speak Italian without a good preparation. Norwegian and Swedish people also find themselves in a similar situation. If a Norwegian comes to Sweden or a Sweden comes to Norway they will probably be mixing two languages. This "Nordic *cocoliche*" is called *Svorsk*, a hybrid language which contains both Swedish and Norwegian terms.

Conde (2009) provides examples of Italianisms in *lunfardo* distributing them among numerous dialectal groups of Italian. For example, a very well known *lunfardo* word, *laburar* (lunf. "to work"), according to his classification has roots in Calabrian *lavurarë* which has the same meaning. Such a meticulous approach is criticized by many authors (Teruggi, 1974; Le Bihan, 2011; Simon Casas, 1991). Teruggi (as cited in Le Bihan, 2011, p.81) claims that "it is more convenient to attribute the *lunfardisms* imported from Italy directly to standard Italian and not to one of its dialects". Thus, the abovementioned *laburar* derives from standard Italian *lavorare*. Undoubtedly, there are some words which origins lay in dialectal Italian terms, however, in many cases it is about the phonetic changes which the Italian words endured in Argentina.

Usage of *cocoliche* was very popular in Argentinean literature during many decades. In earlier literature it was serving to mock the particular way of speaking of an Italian immigrant. While later it only reflected the origins of a character and often a longing for remote fatherland and native language. The first type of description is presented mainly



by creole sainete<sup>43</sup>, and the second by creole grotesque<sup>44</sup>.

We will review two studies of the literature containing cocoliche (Le Bihan, 2011; Conde, 2009).

Conde (2009) states that typical cocoliche speaking personages of sainets were called Bachicha or Cocoliche. They appeared in many Argentinean plays among which *Bohemia criolla* (1902) by Enrique de María and *Los disfrazados* (1906) by Carlos Mauricio Pacheco. Curiously, cocoliche artificially created by dramaturges which was, in contrast to real cocoliche, more or less uniformed, served as a model to the Italian origins audience.

Le Bihan (2011) analyzes sainete in several plays: *El Guarda 323* (1920) by Discépolo y De Rosa, *LAS QUINIÉLAS* (1924) by Alberto Vacarezza, *Cuentos* (1906) by Fray Mocho, and others.

In several sainetes cocoliche is a mixture between Spanish and Italian dialects, in particular Neapolitan dialect and Genoese. Gennaro in *A' Festa de Sant'Angela* (1933) by Julio C. Traversa talks in a Neapolitan manner: *¡Mamma! Fachite vedé a sta yente, qué sangue avete ancora... ¡Chiapariello! Vamos. Vene acá... Baila .con mamma...* (“Mom! Make this people see what blood you still have. Chiaparello! Let’s go, come here. Dance with mother”) in standard Italian: *Mamma. Fate vedere a questa gente che sangue avete ancora. Chiapariello! Andiamo, vieni qui. Balla con mamma.* It is interesting to note that Gennaro uses 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural as a respect form instead of 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular as it is used in standard Italian, a peculiarity of the southern part of Italy.

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<sup>43</sup> A short comic play concentrated mainly on an amorous conflict which end is always happy and humoristic.

<sup>44</sup> A play which mixes tragic and comic and is concentrated on a serious conflict between the protagonist and society.

Genoese dialect is used in *Noiatrí zeinexi semmo cosci* (1924) by Alberto Y. Weisbach and Raul Doblás. It can be noticed in the very name *Noiatrí zeinexi semmo cosci* (“We Genoese are like this”) (Le Bihan, 2011).

Difficulties in pronunciation are another peculiarity of cocoliche reflected in sainets. The protagonist of *Los disfrazados* (1905) de Carlos Mauricio Pacheco struggles without success with Spanish sound *j*, therefore *gente* becomes *quente*. In *El payo roqué* (1927) by Alberto Novión Rebagliatti instead of *nacionalidad* (“nationality”) says *nacionalidá* and instead of *indignación* (“indignation”) says *indignacione* due to the fact that in Italian words never end with a consonant. It is interesting that in *Gaitano Cantalessa* (1928) de Julio C. Traversa Soy Yennaro Benedetto (I am Gennaro Benedetto) the standard Italian name Gennaro is written with *ye* instead of Italian *ge* (Le Bihan, 2011).

In some sainets we can see Italians who already speak good Spanish but cannot eliminate from their speech the most common and basic Italian words. The protagonist of *Los disfrazados* (1905) by Carlos Mauricio Pacheco uses *stúpido* (“stupid”) instead of *tonto*, *disgraziato* (“unfortunate”) instead of *desafortunado*. Many words from standard Italian are used by Gamberoni in *La Rival De Greta Garbo* (1932) J.O. Sosa Cordero y M.A. Meaños: *naturalmente* (“of course”) for *por supuesto*, *tutti* (“everybody”) for *todos*, *preparato* (“ready”) for *listo*, *per* (“for”) for *por*, *manifestazione* (“expression”) for *expresión*, *bene* (“good”) for *bien* and etc. In *Noiatrí zeinexi semmo cosci* by Alberto Y. Weisbach y Raul Doblás (1924) appear two words which later made part of *lunfardo*: *manyar* (“eat”) instead of *comer* and *pelandrún* (“lazy”) instead of *perezoso* (Le Bihan, 2011).

The figure of Italian immigrant is a classics of genre for creole sainete writers.

According to Le Bihan (2011) they use *cocoliche* in order to create a caricature ridiculous image of an Italian immigrant of lower class.

Le Bihan (2011) analyzes *cocoliche* in grotesques of a renowned Argentinean writer Armando Discepolo: *El movimiento continuo* (1916), *Mustafá* (1921), *Mateo* (1923) and *Babilonia* (1925).

*Mateo* (1923) is a play by Armando Discepolo the main characters of which are Italians Miguel and Severino who speak *cocoliche*. Le Bihan (2011) analyzes the usage and functions of *cocoliche* in this creole grotesque. The personages use mainly Spanish words add to them Italian endings or Italianize them in some other way: ¡*Déjame salire!* (Let me go out!). Original Spanish verb *salir* adds typical Italian verbal ending *e*. Sometimes characters use in their speech unchanged Italian words: *addio* (“goodbye”); *figli* (“children”); *poveretta* (“poor thing”). Other times the Italian words have their phonetics changed because of Spanish influence: *achido* (“kill”) from Italian *uccido*; ¡*Iddio ci aiuti!* (“God save us!”); ¡*Vérgine Santa!* (“Holy Virgin”). Unchanged Italian dialectal phrases are used as well: *u patre di figli tui é un vile* (“the father of your children is a vile (person)”) in Standard Italian: *il padre dei tuoi figli è un vile*. Other southern dialectal peculiarity often used in this grotesque is changing the definite feminine article *una* for *na*.

Sanhueza-Carvajal (as cited in Le Bihan, 2011) identifies four goals of *cocoliche* using in sainete: realistic representation of immigrants; intensifying of characters’ ridiculous characteristics; pointing out difficulties of integration of Italians into Spanish society; demonstrating generational rift between immigrants and their children.

The aim of *cocoliche* in literature from a ridiculous caricature developed into a more serious vision of immigration issue. *Cocoliche* as a transitional language gradually

ceased to exist but left impressive literature heritage and had contributed to *lunfardo* vocabulary.

#### 1.2.4. *Lunfardo in literature and in modern life*

*Lunfardo* in the beginning of the XX century was wrongly considered by many as the language of criminals which originated exclusively in thieves. It was not an easy task for a jargon with such a reputation to get into serious literature.

First poems with lunfardisms began appearing in the second half of the XX century (Teruggi, as cited in van Mourik, 2011). They were largely criticized because *lunfardo* was considered something alien and the poets were accused of not having anything native and in their verses. However, *lunfardo* has rich history and it is indispensable for describing Argentinean culture. The first poets to be officially accepted were Carlos de la Púa (1898 – 1950) and nicknamed *Yacaré* Felipe H. Fernández (1889 – 1929). The analysis of Yacaré's *Versos Rantifusos* (1916) showed that the author used 672 *lunfardo* terms in his poems (Gobello, as cited in van Mourik, 2011).

Mourik (2011) states that Carlos de la Púa was, probably, the most *lunfardo* poet of Argentina. His poetry expresses deceit, sadness, sexual desire in the society of lower class and poverty and expectations of immigrants.

In the second decade of the XX century *lunfardo* becomes open to mass public. Conde (2010) explains that *lunfardo* for the first time became appearing in *El Mundo* and *Crítica*<sup>45</sup>. It was featured in humor and crime sections. In 1925 an Uruguayan writer and journalist writing mainly about horse racing, Máximo Teodoro Sáenz (nickname

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<sup>45</sup> Both *El Mundo* and *La Crítica* were the most popular everyday newspapers in the second quarter of the XX century.

Last Reason), published a volume with some of his notes named *A rienda suelta* which abounded with *lunfardo* terms.

Conde (2010) cites another *lunfardo* writer, Miguel Ángel Bavio Esquiú, whose imaginary character was describing in a witty way life of 1940s and 1950s. *Andanzas de Juan Mondiola (1947) y Juan Mondiola (1954)* were published in magazines *Rico Tipo y Avivato*. His style was a bit familiar and his speech sprinkled with common *lunfardisms* of the epoch (p. 254):

... excessive work harms me. For that reason, already for various seasons that I *me la rebusco* (pop. “manage”) in some way to go as tourist in Mar de Plata. Then that's two problems solved: I run away from Buenos Aires when arrives the wave of hotness; and, ... I put a prudent distance between my organism and that manyorejas (lunf. “flatterers”) from the laburo (lunf. “work”),...

Alberto Vaccarezza, the most prominent author of sainete genre was a genius in depicting the life of lower class. Only his first play *El juzgado* (1903) was a product of purely standard Spanish, his numerous works that followed were abounding with *lunfardo* common to ordinary people. Conde (2010) gives an example of *lunfardo* usage in Vaccarezza's *Tu cuna fue un conventillo*, where a creole Aberastury teaches an Italian Don Antonio how to seduce a woman (p. 235)

ABERASTURY: La *cata* a ella...  
o no bien la vea pasar  
le *bate* de esta manera...  
¡Che, *fulana*, parate ahí!...  
Y en cuanto ella se detenga,  
usté se le acerca  
y le hace este *chamuyo* a la oreja...  
Papurusa, yo te «*roequi*».

DON ANTONIO: ¿Yo te qué?..

ABERASTURY: ¡No sea *palmera*!

ABERASTURY: You *look* at her ...  
or as soon as she goes by  
*talk* to her in this manner...  
Hey! *what's-your-name*, stop there.  
And as soon as she stops,  
you get close  
and whisper in her ear  
Baby, I '*velo*' you."

DON ANTONIO: I what?

ABERASTURY: Don't be such a *stiff*!

Yo te «roequi» es yo te quiero al revés... I "velo" you is "I love you" in reverse  
(trans. In Ana Cara-Walker, 1987)<sup>46</sup>

In prose *lunfardo* is mostly presented by Roberto Arlt, Jorje Luis Borges and Leopoldo Marechal. There is a vast amount of literature on *lunfardo* and literature works of these writers (Conde, 2010; Carisoma, 2005; Pitkowski, 2008; Brunet Campeni, 2015).

Roberto Arlt (1900-1942) was writer and journalist. His main concern was to describe the life of popular sectors in Buenos Aires of 1930s modernized by immigration. Arlt expresses heterogeneous nature of Buenos Aires society of that period: a part of it is deprived of knowledge, money and power, which has another part. A growing tendency of language purification in that period was ignored by Arlt whose characters spoke *lunfardo* and living language of the street. An illustrative example of it is an episode from *Los siete locos* (1929) with its famous phrase *rajá, turrito, rajá*. In this scene Erdosain, drowning in debts were asking the pharmacist to borrow him money: (Pitkowski, 2008)

El farmacéutico se levantó,	The pharmacist stood up,
extendió el brazo y haciendo	stretched his hand and
chasquear la yema de los dedos,	snapping his fingers,
exclamó ante el mozo del café	exclaimed in the café waiter's presence
que miraba asombrado la escena:	who astonished was watching the scene
– <i>Rajá, turrito, rajá</i> .	- <i>Go away, duffer, go away</i> .
Erdosain, rojo de vergüenza, se alejó.	Erdosain, red with embarrassment, left.

Poet and writer Leopoldo Marechal (1900-1970) was famous for his irony and metaphysical style. Gobello (as cited in Conde, 2010) in his novel *Adán Buenosayres* (1948) found 99 *lunfardo* terms among which: *atorrantear* (“to laze about”), *biabazo*

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<sup>46</sup> We have put *lunfardo* terms and their translation in italics.

(“violent assault”), *cachuzo*<sup>47</sup> (“worn out”), *cajetiya*<sup>48</sup> (“dandy”), *catrera*<sup>49</sup> (“bed”), *chumbar*<sup>50</sup> (“set the dogs on somebody”), *estrecho*<sup>51</sup> (“affected”), *farabute* (“sly person”) and etc (p. 242).

Jorge Luis Borges (1899'-1986) the most famous Argentinean writer in spite of his skeptical attitude towards *lunfardo*, which according to him did not exist, however, used it quite actively and successfully in his works. Pitkowski (2008) analyzed Borges' *Hombre de esquina rosada* and *la Historia de Rosendo Juárez*. The writer uses *lunfardo* to make his stories more realistic, to show the atmosphere of the most disadvantaged districts of Buenos Aires. The following is an example from *Historia de Rosendo Juárez* where the protagonist tells about his childhood: “I have grown like a yuyos (pop. “weed”). I have learned to vistear (pop. “simulate a fight”) with others, with a tiznado (“black”) stick” (p. 115). Interestingly the stories are connected to each other and the changing of the protagonist Rosendo Juarez, common for both stories is reflected even on the language level: in his youth he was speaking standard Spanish and in his older age he was mainly using *lunfardo*.

Pitkowski (2008) points out the difference between Arlts' and Borges in usage of *lunfardo*. Borges used *lunfardo* only in two short periods of his life: in the beginning of his career as a writer and in 1970s, while Arlts' works were immersed into *lunfardo* and his protagonists were living suburban stories from inside

The acceptance of *lunfardo* by eminent authors meant its acceptance by mass public.

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<sup>47</sup> Marked in Gobello's dictionary (1978) as gen. lang.

<sup>48</sup> Marked in Gobello's dictionary (1978) as gen. lang.

<sup>49</sup> Marked in Gobello's dictionary (1978) as pop.

<sup>50</sup> Marked in Gobello's dictionary (1978) as pop

<sup>51</sup> Marked in Gobello's dictionary (1978) as pop

Nowadays *lunfardo* is used by people of all ages. Younger generations as well use a great amount of *lunfardisms* without even knowing and noticing it. Many studies are conducted to analyze the usage of *lunfardo* in modern speech and to check the recognition of *lunfardo* terms by Argentineans (Iribarren Castilla, 2010; Gonzalez, 2016; Lorenzino, 2016)... For reasons of space we do not deal with literature on this theme in the present study, since our study concerns a definite period and a definite sphere of usage of this jargon.

### **1.3.Literature on tango and *lunfardo***

Tango and *lunfardo* have many features in common: common origins, history, multiculturalism and stereotypes. Tango by many was until recent times considered something immoral and typical only of lower classes. *Lunfardo* was subject to the same type of persecution. Both of them are essentially important parts of Argentinean culture and identity. Nowadays, the situation is changing and more and more researchers address tango lyrics and *lunfardo* (André, 2017; Caprile, 2011; Bihan, 2011; Porta, 2015; Fraga, 2006; Mourik, 2011). In this subchapter we will review several studies on tango lyrics and *lunfardo*.

Tango, unaccepted until the big success of Carlos Gardel, facilitated the legitimization of *lunfardo*. Fraga (2006) states that “costumbrista popular writers as well as tango lyrics writers were the ones who by gathering together *lunfardo* vocabulary of the epoch, gave the consistence to this language. This permitted its usage in the popular literature, plays and sainets...” (p. 30). The first tango song which included *lunfardo* vocabulary was *Mi noche triste* (1916) by Pascual Contursi. Before 1930 *lunfardo* in tango was used to describe life in poor suburbs while later it reflected the society altered by world economic crisis. To quote Fraga (2006, p.29)



the economic crisis, the unemployment, the corruption, the immoral values in the world which is transformed, inspired a pessimist philosophy starting from such authors as Enrique Santos Discépolo and Ivo Pelay made from *lunfardo* and from the songs an instrument generating conscience and social critics.

Le Bihan (2011) analyzed Italianisms in 18 tango songs. These Italianisms are *lunfardo* terms as well. *Amurrado* (1927) by José De Grandis contains *campanear* (“watch with attention”), *bagayo* (“luggage”); *amurrado* (“abandoned”), *berretín* (“caprice”). *¡Atenti, pebeta!* (1929) by Celedonio Esteban Flores contains *bacán/bacanazo* (“a wealthy person”), *citrulo* (“stupid”); *deshavar* (“open, confess, make someone confess”), *manyar* (“know, understand, eat”), *atenti* (“attention”), *pebeta* (“young girl”). In total 27 Italianisms were found in the analyzed songs.

Porta (2017) in her *Del Tango A La Rae: El Lunfardo En Los Diccionarios De La Lengua Española* analyzed 100 tango songs dated from 1897 to 1935, the period in which the country was still in pre-industrialization period meaning that *lunfardo* vocabulary was intensively used by popular masses. She chose 30 most representative and commonly used in normal speech *lunfardo* words which appear in the selected tango songs. The chosen vocabulary belongs to 6 semantic fields: man, woman, crime, tango, love and work. Some of the analyzed terms are: *bacán* (“one who keeps a mistress”); *bagayo* (“clumsy woman”); *afanar* (pop. “steal”); *metejón* (pop. “falling in love”); *laburar* (“to work”). For each term Andre tried to find definitions from 4 types of sources: dictionaries of *lunfardo*; standard Spanish dictionaries; *Diccionario Académico de Americanismos* (Academic Dictionary of Latin American Terms) and *Real Academia Española (RAE)* dictionaries. She concludes that (1) not all *lunfardo* terms are included to standard Spanish dictionaries; (2) various dictionaries start to include *lunfardo* terms in 1917 which is, probably, connected to Gardel’s success and internationalization of tango; (3) in 2001 the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of *RAE* dictionary numerous

Latin American terms, consequently, 60% of *lunfardo* words almost with identical meanings were added to RAE dictionary; (4) published in 2010 *Diccionario Académico de Americanismos* includes all of the 30 analyzed terms with correspondent meanings; (5) 23<sup>rd</sup> RAE dictionary edition expected to provide more definitions to *lunfardo* terms, however, only 6 of 30 analyzed terms have definitions in the newest edition, the fact that calls into question the official acceptance of Rioplatense terms by the academic world.

Balderston (1989) analyzes Celedonio Flores's parody of the same name on Ruben Dario's *Sonatina*. Flores transports the story of a princess and her fairy godmothers told by Dario to Buenos Aires where the protagonist is not a princess but a prostitute with her less romantic dreams and preoccupations. Following are the parallel stanzas of Dario and Flores poem (p. 125):

Dario's *Sonatina*

¿Piensa, acaso, en el príncipe  
de Golconda o de China,  
o en el que ha detenido  
su carroza argentina  
para ver de sus ojos la dulzura de luz?  
¿O en el rey de las islas  
de las rosas fragantes,  
o en el que es soberano  
de los claros diamantes,  
o en el dueño orgulloso  
de las perlas de Ormuz?

Maybe, she is thinking of a prince  
of Golconda or of China,  
or of the one who stopped  
his silver carriage  
to see the sweet light of her eyes?  
Or of the king of the islands  
of fragrant roses,  
or of the one who is sovereign  
of the crystal diamonds,  
or of the proud owner  
of the pearls of Ormuz?

Flores' *Sonatina*

¿Piensa acaso en el *coso*  
que la espera en la esquina?  
¿En aquel que le dijo

Maybe, she's thinking of *whatshisname*  
who is waiting at the corner?  
Of the one who he told her

que era muy bailarina	that she was a very good dancer
con <i>tapín</i> de mafioso,	Who <i>looks like</i> Mafioso
<i>compadrito</i> y <i>ranún</i> ?	<i>compadrito</i> and a <i>rascal</i> ?
¿En aquel que una noche	Of the one who one night
le propuso el <i>espiente</i> ?	proposed her an <i>escape</i> ?
¿En aquel <i>cajetilla</i> ,	Of that <i>dandy</i>
entallao de elegante?	elegantly tailored?
¿O en aquel <i>caferata</i>	Or of that <i>pimp</i>
que es un gran <i>pelandrún</i> ?	who is a big <i>sluggard</i> <sup>52</sup> .

Flores transforms a fairytale prince into the one closer to reality. This stanza abounds in *lunfardo* terms. Balderston (1989) notes that *lunfardo*, as many others Spanish slangs, has a vast vocabulary naming pimps and prostitutes. Interestingly Flores echoes the sound ‘u’ in Dario’s *la dulzura de luz* (“sweetness of the light”) in the words *pelandrún* (“rascal”) and *ranún* (“sluggard”). This parody shows a popular trend among Latin American writers: not to dream about ‘far and impossible countries’ but to show the reality which happens here and now.

Conde (2010) provides another example of rewriting in *lunfardo* of a classic poem. Enrique Cadícamo wrote his tango *Ella se reía* basing on romantic Heinrich Heine’s *Ella* (p. 238):

Eya era una hermosa <i>nami</i> del arroyo,	She was a beautiful <i>girl</i> from the gutter
él era un <i>troesma</i> pa’ usar la ganzúa.	he was a <i>master</i> of picklock.
Por eso es que cuando de <i>afanar</i> volvía	So when he was turning after a <i>robbery</i>
ella en la <i>catrera</i> contenta reía,	she was laughing happily in the <i>bed</i> ,
contenta de echarse un <i>dorima</i> tan <i>púa</i>	happy to have such a <i>smart husband</i>

Caprile (2011) analyzed tango song *Pinta Brava* (1927) by Mario Battistella. As a criterion of analysis she proposed etymological origin of *lunfardo* words presented in

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<sup>52</sup> Here in all of the following examples we put *lunfardo* terms and their translation in italics.

the song. She divided the words in 4 main groups according to their etymology and evolution: (1) new meanings; (2) morphological changes; (3) borrowings; (4) jargon phrases. Following are some examples.

In the first group only one term was included: *patinar* (pop. “to spend money”). The first meaning of this verb is “to slide, slip”. The *lunfardo* meaning is acquired by association of a quick movement of slipping with a quick flow of money bills when you spend them (Caprile, 2011).

The second group is divided on two groups. (2.1) Metaplasm is a changing of the word by adding or elimination of a letter or a syllable. Metaplasm obtained by adding a syllable to the word is *catrera* (pop. “bed”). It derived from Portuguese *catre* “single bed”, therefore, other modification of this word is getting a new meaning. Another example is *feite* (“scar from an injury on the face”) which is a shortening and adding a new meaning from *afeitar* (pop. “shave”). (2.2) Anagram, or *vesré*<sup>53</sup>, is characterized by changing of the syllables order. Generally, the last syllable becomes the first, the penultimate follows and etc. There were three examples of it: *raca* from *cara* (“face”), *dormia* from *marido* (“husband”), *ñorse* from *señor* (“sir”)<sup>54</sup> (Caprile, 2011).

The third group of *lunfardisms* observed in *Pinta Brava* is comprised by (3) borrowings from different languages. (3.1) A borrowing from standard Spanish is the verb *junar* (“to look at”) which originally was a verb from *caló*, the language of gypsies. Its meaning in peninsular Spanish was “to hear/to listen/to pay attention” while in *lunfardo* it means “to look at, to observe attentively”. This transformation of meaning is

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<sup>53</sup> This type of word formation is one of the most productive in *lunfardo*, it was discussed in the previous subchapter.

<sup>54</sup> All the meanings are equal to the original words.

explained by the fact that Spanish people who were coming to Argentina were using this verb to call somebody's attention so natives of Buenos Aires, probably, perceived it as "pay attention/watch out" which finally passed to mean "to look at". Another meaning of this word in *lunfardo* is "to figure out the intentions/to realize". The largest group among borrowings is (3.2) Italianisms. Verb *manyar* has two meanings in *lunfardo*: "to eat" and "to understand". The first meaning is thought to derive from standard Italian *mangiare* ("to eat") and the second from Genoese *mangia* ("to understand"). *Lunfardism engrupido* ("vain, spoiled") derives from another *lunfardo* term *grupo* ("deceit/fraud/lie") and Genoese *gruppo* "bundle, package". *Lunfardo* verb *engrupir* means "to lie, to trick" and in its transitive form "to become vain/arrogant". *Chitrulo* ("stupid") derives from Neapolitan *citruillo* having the same meaning. *Pelandrún* ("lazy") originates from Genoese *pelandruno* with the same meaning. *Embrocar* ("mirar") comes from Italian jargon *imbroccare* "to hit the target". (3.3) Galisisms. *Lunfardo* term *escracho* had very different meanings. Originally it meant "false lottery ticket used in confidence tricks<sup>55</sup>" or "photograph". Later from the second definition it passed to mean "face" especially "ugly face". (3.4) Ruralisms. These are internal borrowings brought to the cities by *gauchos* arriving from rural areas. An example of it in Pinta Brava is *lechucear* ("to bring somebody bad luck, especially if one participates in a game") (Caprile, 2011).

The last group of *lunfardisms* identified by Caprile (2011) is (4) jargon phrases. *Meter la mula* (lit. "put the mule") is a very popular phrase meaning "to deceive, to trick". It is thought to originate from deceitful practice of woodcutters in the province of Chaco who while weighting the wood learned to put the mule's back legs on the scale to

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<sup>55</sup> In Wikipedia confidence trick is defined as "an attempt to defraud a person or group after first gaining their trust" (Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confidence\\_trick](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confidence_trick)).

increase the weight. Another hypothesis on the phrase's origin is an Andalusian legend of a mule which was put in a circus-tent and announced as the 8<sup>th</sup> miracle of the world. Another one is *al cuete* (lit. "at the fireworks") which means "in vain".

Caprile (2011) concludes that *lunfardo* words have various origins. Some words in their evolution pass through different meanings and are subject to several types of word formation.

Gascon (2009) analyzed phonetico phonological, morphosyntactical and lexical features in tango *Che, Bartolo* (1928) by Enrique Cadicamo. For the sake of simplicity we will present only the lexical analysis of his study. This analysis was based on the explaining of etymology of *lunfardo* terms presented in the tango. The definitions were taken from various types of dictionaries.

Gascon (2009) divides *lunfardo* terms in *Che, Baratolo* into two groups: (1) *lunfardo* terms derived from linguistic contacts and (2) *lunfardo* terms derived from speaker's preference. The first group include borrowings from (1.1) Italian language, (1.2) Gypsy language and (1.3) African languages. Among (1.1) Italianisms there are several groups of dialectal borrowings. Genoese borrowings include: *engrupir* ("to deceit, to make believe in a lie"); *bacán* ("a person who lives without deprivations, enjoying pleasures and luxury of his well-off position"); *deschavarse* ("to tell or to confess something, especially kept secret"); *misho* ("false, not having value/not having money"). Piedmontese or Ligurian origins has the word *brillo* ("anillo"). Interesting origins have the word *aspamento* (pop. "exaggeration in feelings expression"). It is a cross between vulgar Spanish *aspaviento* ("affected demonstration of terror") and Italian Meridional dialectal *spamentu* ("fright"). (1.2) Gypsy language highly used in Spanish criminal slang produced: *curdela* ("drunk"); *chorro* ("thief"); *debute* ("good, of a goof quality");

*gil* (“simple, stupid”). (1.3) African origin word found in *Che, Bartolo* is *candombero* (“a person very interested in dance”), derived, probably, from *candombe* “an African dance popular in Buenos Aires in the beginning of the XX century” (pp. 156-159)

Gascon (2009) divides the second group of lunfardisms on (2.1) semantic changes and (2.2) own creations of *lunfardo* jargon. (2.1) Semantic changes are characterized by metaphorical reconstruction of the lexis. Such words found in *Che, Bartolo* are *relojear* (“to observe trying not to be noticed”); *reo* (“antisocial, person with a messy look who speaks vulgarly/lazy or careless”); some other terms used not only in Argentina or Uruguay but also in other countries of Latin America. (2.2) Own creations of *lunfardo* include words composed by *vesré*, for example *colo for loco* (“crazy”) and some other words exclusive of *lunfardo*: *batir* (“to denounce/to whisper/to talk”) and *mersa* (“group of lower class people, having bad taste and unrefined manners”) (pp. 159-161).

Conde (2010) states that *lunfardo* in 1920s started to be an essential element of tango lyrics. He cited an example of some tango songs of that period. Only one year after the triumph of *Mi noche triste*, the first tango song<sup>56</sup> other tango poets start using *lunfardo* vocabulary. A following is the starting lines from *El cafiso* (approx. 1918) by Juan Canavese (p.236):

Ya me tiene más <i>robreca</i>	I am already more <i>angry</i>
que <i>canfli</i> sin <i>ventolina</i>	than a <i>pimp</i> without <i>money</i>
y <i>palpito</i> que la <i>mina</i>	and I <i>feel</i> that the <i>girl</i>
la <i>liga</i> por la <i>buseca</i> .	<i>gets</i> the <i>tripe</i> with <i>potatoes</i> .

Conde (2010) points out that during 1920s – 1930s *lunfardo* was highly used by tango poets. More than a half of tango songs of that decades contained 3 - 4 or more

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<sup>56</sup> I.e. the first song with argument, this is explained in details in the chapter Literature on tango, subchapter Tango history and its origins.

*lunfardo* terms. In *Mano a mano* (1920) by Celedonio Flores uses *lunfardo* to describe the past and the present of a woman who betrayed him (p. 237):

Se dio el juego de <i>remanye</i>	Then came the game of recognition,
cuando vos, pobre <i>percanta</i> ,	when you poor woman,
<i>gambeteabas</i> la pobreza	were dodging the poverty
en la casa de pensión.	in the pension home.
Hoy sos toda	Today you are a whole
una <i>bacana</i> ,	rich woman,
la vida te ríe y canta,	life laughs and sings of you,
los <i>morlacos</i> del <i>otario</i>	you gamble away
los tirás <i>a la marchanta</i>	the fool's money
como juega el gato maula	like the cowardly cat plays
con el mísero ratón	with the miserable mouse.
	(trans. In Bivona, 2009)

Conde (2010) concludes that:

tango lyrics takes the position equal to canonical poetry. Rejecting cult language while giving the way and legitimizing *lunfardo*, tango defined and affirmed itself, at the same time converting itself in the most appropriate environment for *lunfardo* to grow in its expressive abilities (p.236).

Tango and *lunfardo* represent a symbiotic union of colloquial live language and high poetry.

### *Conclusions*

In this chapter we reviewed the existing literature on tango, *lunfardo* as well as the literature which studies the connection between both phenomena. We have found many common characteristics of tango lyrics and *lunfardo*.

Tango has two protagonists man and woman. The common type of men presented in tango lyrics are *compadrito*, *guapo* and *malevo*. Common characteristics of these characters are: they all live in suburbs; their mood may alter from bravery to sensibility



and their appearance is highly coded. Gasparri (2006) claims that the main male character is *guapo*, and others are his satellites. The main female protagonist of tango songs is *milonguera* or *milonguita*, a synonym for “a fallen woman”. These mainly foreigner women were involved in prostitution or were choosing prosperous life far from their homes finding *bacán* ready to pay for all of caprices of his mistress.

Tango history had different milestones in its history. In the beginning tango was represented by “trivial and improvised lyrical poems of picaresque and pornographic style” (Sierra, 1993). Next stage was the descriptive tango with its most representative poet Villoldo and songs *La Morocha*, *El choclo* and etc. Pascual Contursi with his *Mi noche triste* (1917) opened a new period in tango, “tango song”. Lagmanovich (2000) proposes a timeline of tango lyrics after Contursi which includes: Gardel period comprising the decades of 1910s and 1920s; Enrique Santos Discepolo period, 1930s; and Homero Manzi period, 1940s.

Tango, as well as *lunfardo*, is the product of multiculturalism and immigration. Tango was a “way of feeling for immigrants and Argentines alike”, while *lunfardo* was their way of communication. Both the phenomena were ignored by mass public: tango, for its brothel origins, *lunfardo*, for being a so called “language of thieves”. Underestimated in its own country, tango got a great popularity in 1920s owing to Gardel’s triumph in Europe. International recognition in Europe helped tango in addition to restore its own reputation, give back the legitimacy to *lunfardo*, previously erroneously perceived as the language of criminal world while it was just a popular slang of lower class.

*Lunfardo* is a jargon created by immigrants and creoles who were assimilating new words used by immigrants. The major part of the borrowings in *lunfardo* has Italian

origins. Many other languages also contributed to *lunfardo* vocabulary: Spanish, French, English, Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese and etc.

## II. Methodological Design

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology for this mixed-methods study regarding how tango lyrics are connected to *lunfardo*. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the *lunfardo* role in tango and provided a way to systematize the key images created by *lunfardo* in tango. The applicability of mixed-methods research design and an inductive approach for this study are discussed in-depth in this chapter. The research plan, including the methodology, procedures, analysis method are also primary components of this chapter.

### 2.1. Basic Concepts

This study is based on two main concepts: *lunfardo* and tango. *Lunfardo* is understood as jargon of Rio de la Plata region. *Lunfardo* terms in narrow definition are only the ones which are exclusive of *lunfardo*<sup>57</sup>. *Lunfardo*'s wider definition includes as well popular slang<sup>58</sup> terms. Tango in this study is attributed only to tango lyrics, excluding tango as music and tango as dance.

### 2.2. Research Questions

This study sought to answer to the following research questions:

RQ<sup>59</sup>1: How tango lyrics are connected to *lunfardo*?

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<sup>57</sup> Marked *lunf.* in the dictionaries.

<sup>58</sup> Marked *pop.* in the dictionaries.

<sup>59</sup> RQ stands for Research Question.

RQ2: What images does *lunfardo* create in tango lyrics?

### **2.3.Methodology Selected**

As a result of understanding the aims and objective of this study and exploring previous research similar to this topic, I feel using a mixed method of data collection would be most suitable. Quantitative research refers to research doing numbers needed to establish generalizable facts. From this information, this method of data collection would be suitable for this study as it hopes to discover the level of usage of *lunfardo* in tango lyrics. For example it will provide information relating to the percentage of songs which contain *lunfardo* terms. Once these figures have been gathered, it will then allow opportunities for comparing the differences and similarities between the number of *lunfardo* words used in a particular epoch or by a particular tango poet. Overall, the use of numbers and percentages is quite useful for obtaining information for this topic. The method of qualitative research this study focused on, in order to explore new ideas on tango lyrics and *lunfardo*. It also allows us to interpret the usage of *lunfardo* words in tango, which helps to understand the images presented by them. Qualitative methods involves rich and complex understanding of semantic groups of *lunfardo* terms presented in tango lyrics. Mixed methods research design allows us both to have a hypothesis what is common to quantitative research, and to use inductive approach characterizing qualitative method.

### **2.4.Languages**

Both the subjects of this study, *lunfardo* and tango, are the products of Argentinean culture. *Lunfardo* is a jargon and tango lyrics are texts. The importance of language for this study is indispensable. In order to make this research accessible to those who do not speak Spanish, all the tango songs extracts and the key information given in Spanish

was translated in English. Some translations of the songs were taken from Internet.

## **2.5.The Researcher**

The researcher has been studying Spanish for 5 years and holds a Bachelor of Linguistics with specialization in translation and interpreting<sup>60</sup>. The researcher has a direct contact to the tango world because she dances tango herself. Furthermore, the researcher has been in Argentina for 6 months on an exchange program, where she had the opportunity to absorb Argentinean culture and to get the necessary background knowledge. The researcher took there the course of contemporary Argentinean history (1816 - 2001) and the History of Argentinean theatre and its personages.

## **2.6.Data Collection Procedures**

Our study corpus consists of 101 songs taken from the book *El tango y sus protagonistas* (“Tango and its protagonists”) by Hector Romay. The last part of this book presents a collection of unforgettable tangos, which according to the author of collection represent the soul of the country (2006). These songs were composed from 1917 to 1965. The major part of them was written in 1920s and 1930s. *Lunfardo* in tango was legitimized, in 1917 by Conrursi’s *Mi noche triste*. According to Conde (2010) more than a half of the songs written in the second and third decade of the XX century contained more than three *lunfardo* terms. The following period of 1940s introduced censorship by Peron’s government which consequently changed tango poetics style (Sued, 2015). Choosing classic songs of different authors makes the study results more objective.

The corpus of *lunfardo* definitions is presented in our research by two main sources:

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<sup>60</sup> Language pairs: English – Russian; Spanish – Russian; Italian – Russian.

*Diccionario Lunfardo* by Jose Gobello and *Diccionario de lunfardo* by Laura Gottero.

For each song<sup>61</sup> there was made a list of *lunfardo* terms it contains. *Lunfardo* terms found were counted and grouped by semantic fields. Tango songs were ranked on the basis of *lunfardo* terms number, and *lunfardo* words were ranked on the basis of its frequency in the songs<sup>62</sup>. The computer based analysis was used to count the total percentage of *lunfardo* terms in the narrowed corpus<sup>63</sup>.

## **2.7.Data Analysis**

In the present research discourse analysis is used to examine how the language, more precisely jargon, works in tango lyrics and what meanings it creates. By this it is also possible to identify the social groups created in tango and compare them to the existing at those times. The information obtained during the data collection procedure was interpreted based on the details of the material itself and on the background knowledge. We related the groups of words and the images created by *lunfardo* terms with the historical reality of 1920s – 1930s. This was done in order to reveal the functions of *lunfardo* vocabulary in tango. For this purpose, the inductive approach was used to explain the identified patterns.

## **2.8.Summary**

The goal of this chapter was to outline the research method used to answer the research questions. A discussion of data collection, data analysis and methodology selected outlined the specifics of how the study was conducted and who participated in

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<sup>61</sup> I.e. each song having *lunfardo* terms.

<sup>62</sup> We did not take into account the repetitions of the same word in one song.

<sup>63</sup> The subject, which we shall call ‘narrowed corpus’, is presented by the songs which contain at least one *lunfardo* term.

the study. Mixed methods research design was used to develop understand the *lunfardo* role in tango and to provide a way to systematize the key images created by *lunfardo* in tango. The information obtained during the data collection procedure was interpreted based on the details of the material itself and on the background knowledge. The goal of Chapter IV is to provide the study results and demonstrate that the methodology described in Chapter III was followed.

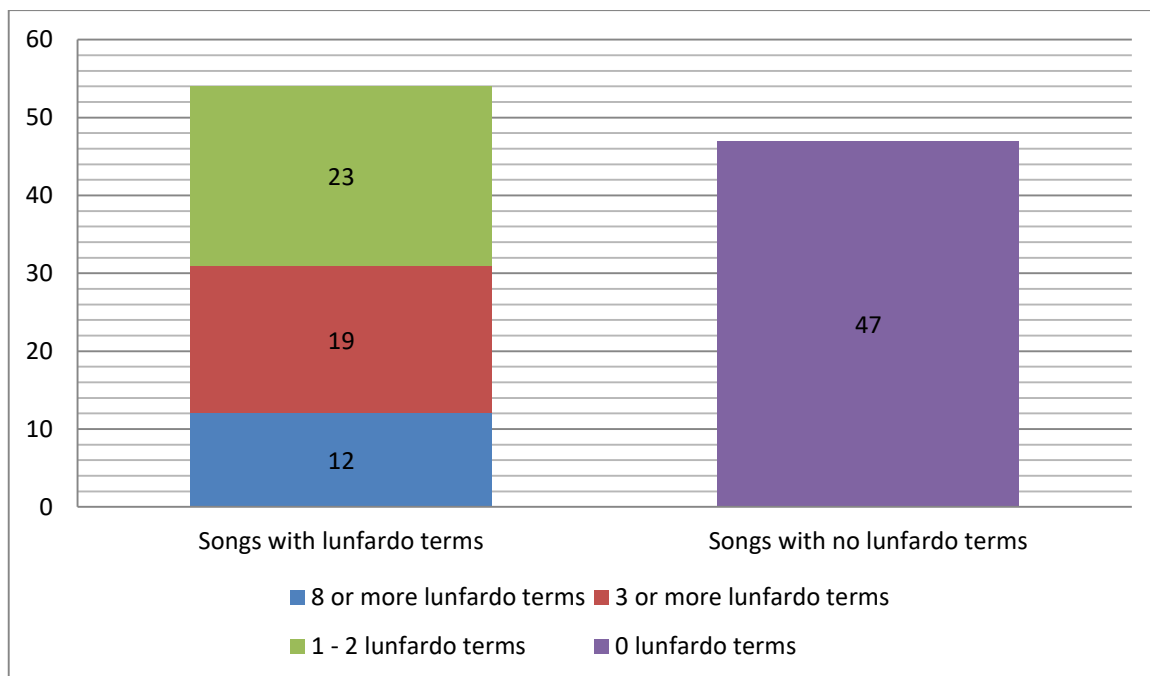
### **III. Results**

In this Chapter, all the study results from the tango songs corpus methods of analysis outlined in Chapter III are presented and examined in detail. The complete analysis data may be found in Appendix A.

#### **3.1. General overview of lunfardo terms in the corpus**

The first step in our analysis was to find out in how many songs there occurred at least one *lunfardo* term. Graph 1 proves that the major part of the corpus shows at least one *lunfardo* term. Counting them we did not take into account the repetitions of a term within a song. It can be apparent from the Graph 1 the total number of songs with at least one *lunfardo* term (54) is higher than the number of songs without any *lunfardo* term (47). There is a significant difference between the number of songs with more than 9 *lunfardo* terms and with one or two *lunfardo* terms. The results of the analysis (Graph 1) present the general picture on *lunfardo* terms in the analyzed 101 songs without concentrating on the type of *lunfardo* terms used.

Graph 1 *The results of songs with lunfardo terms number analysis*



The hypothesis on the considerable amount of exclusively *lunfardo* terms was tested by counting the number of *lunfardo* terms in the analyzed the narrowed corpus of 54 songs. We did not take into account the repetitions of a term in different songs. The results of the analysis (see Table 1) show that the song texts have a considerable amount of *lunfardo* terms. We showed that the number of popular slang terms is a quarter higher than the number of exclusively *lunfardo* terms (84 and 67 respectively).

Table 1: Results of the *lunfardo* terms number analysis

Number of <i>lunfardo</i> terms in the songs	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	67
	Popular slang terms	84
Total number of <i>lunfardo</i> terms in the songs		151

The next step of the analysis was aimed at counting the *lunfardo* terms occurrences

in each song of the narrowed corpus<sup>64</sup>. Closer inspection of Table 2 shows that the number of popular slang terms is a third higher than the number of exclusively *lunfardo* terms.

Table 2: *Results of the lunfardo terms occurrences in the narrowed corpus*

Number of <i>lunfardo</i> terms in the songs	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	106
	Popular slang terms	145
Total number of <i>lunfardo</i> terms in the songs		251

The comparison of Table 1 and Table 2 shows that some *lunfardo* terms are repeated in different songs. What is interesting about the data in these tables is that popular slang terms are more repeated in different songs than exclusively *lunfardo* terms. It is showed by the higher difference between exclusively *lunfardo* and popular slang terms in Table 2. Both the tables illustrate considerable use of *lunfardo* terms in the corps.

To assess the percentage of *lunfardo* terms used in the songs with 1 or more *lunfardo* term we analyzed the texts of the songs with the program MAXQDA 2020. In the stoplist of the analysis process we included articles, prepositions, conjunctions, forms of the verb *ser* (“to be”) and etc. Therefore, only content words<sup>65</sup> were included into the testing process. Table 3 compares the percentage of 10 most used content words in the analyzed corps of 54 songs with *lunfardo* terms with the percentage of *lunfardo* terms used in it. The results of this comparison (Table 3) show that the proportion of *lunfardo* terms is greater than the weight of 10 most important content words.

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<sup>64</sup> Here we identified all the *lunfardo* words in each song without taking into account the repetitions within one song.

<sup>65</sup> “Content words are words that have a culturally shared meaning in labeling an object or action. Content words are absolutely necessary to convey an idea to someone else” (Pennebaker, 2011, p. 22)



Table 3 *The results of comparison between 10 most used content words and lunfardo terms*

The percentage of 10 most used content words	The percentage of <i>lunfardo</i> terms
6,32%	7,12%

Simple counting was used to identify most used *lunfardo* terms and. Table 4 lists the most used exclusively *lunfardo* terms and popular slang terms.

Table 4 *The most used lunfardo terms in the narrowed corpus*

<i>Lunfardo</i> term	No. of occurrences	Type of <i>lunfardo</i>
Bacán/a (“rich man/woman”)	9	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i>
Malevo (“malicious”)	8	Popular slang
Arrabal (“suburb”)	8	Popular slang
Pebeta (“young woman”)	7	Popular slang
Mina (“woman”)	5	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i>
Cotorro/-ito (“poor room”)	5	Popular slang
Gil (“fool”)	4	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i>
Otario (“fool”)	4	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i>
Metejón/-dura (“falling in love”)	4	Popular slang
Rana/-nún (“cunning”)	4	Popular slang

From these results (Table 4) it is clear that the most used *lunfardo* expressions are both exclusively *lunfardo* and popular slang terms. However, as it can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2 the overall number of popular slang words is higher than the number of exclusively *lunfardo* terms.

Let us now turn to 12 songs with the highest number of *lunfardo* words in the narrowed corpus. As shown in Table 5, the authors who used more often *lunfardo* terms

in their songs are Celedonio Flores (4 songs); Enrique Santos Discepolo (3 songs); Enrique Cadícamo (2 songs). Closer inspection of the Table shows that more than a half of these tangos were written in the second decade of the XX century. The most interesting aspect of Table 5 is that the number of exclusively *lunfardo* words is equal to the number of popular slang words. These findings are in contrast with the general overview of all tango songs with *lunfardo* terms presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 5 *Information on 12 songs with the highest number of lunfardo terms*

Song name	Year	Author	No. of <i>lunfardo</i> terms		
			Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	Popular slang terms	Total No. of terms
El bulín de la calle Ayacucho	1925	Celedonio Flores	8	8	16
Che papusa oí	1927	Enrique Cadícamo	10	6	16
Margot	1921	Celedonio Flores	9	6	15
Mano a mano	1923	Celedonio Flores	8	6	14
El choclo	1947	Enrique Santos Discepolo	7	6	13
Viejo smoking	1930	Celedonio Flores	3	8	11
Muñeca brava	1929	Enrique Cadícamo	9	1	10
Yira... yira	1930	Enrique Santos Discepolo	6	4	10
Melodía de arrabal	1932	Alfredo Le Pera	2	8	10
Como abrazado a un rencor	1930	Antonio Podestá	4	5	9
Esta noche me emborracho	1928	Enrique Santos Discepolo	1	8	9
Garufa	1927	Roberto Fontaina	5	3	8
Total number of <i>lunfardo</i> words			70	70	140

Together the results of analysis show strong evidence of *lunfardo* usage in the corpus. 54 out of 101 songs contain at least one *lunfardo* term. The number of songs with 9 or more *lunfardo* terms is half that the number of the songs with 1 or 2 *lunfardo* words (12 and 22 respectively). The comparison between the number of *lunfardo* of the terms counted in the narrowed corpus as a whole and their occurrences per each song<sup>66</sup> showed that popular slang words are often repeated in different songs. 10 most used *lunfardo* terms include both exclusively *lunfardo* and popular slang terms, however, when comparing the usage of these groups of *lunfardo* terms in whole the narrowed corpus it must be pointed out that popular slang terms is a third higher. From the last table we can see that the poets who used more *lunfardo* terms are Celedonio Flores, Enrique Santos Discepolo and Enrique Cadicamo. The major part of the songs with highest number of *lunfardo* terms was written in 1920s, and the content of exclusively *lunfardo* and popular slang in them is almost equal.

### **3.2.Semantic fields of *lunfardo* terms in the narrowed corpus, themes and images in tango**

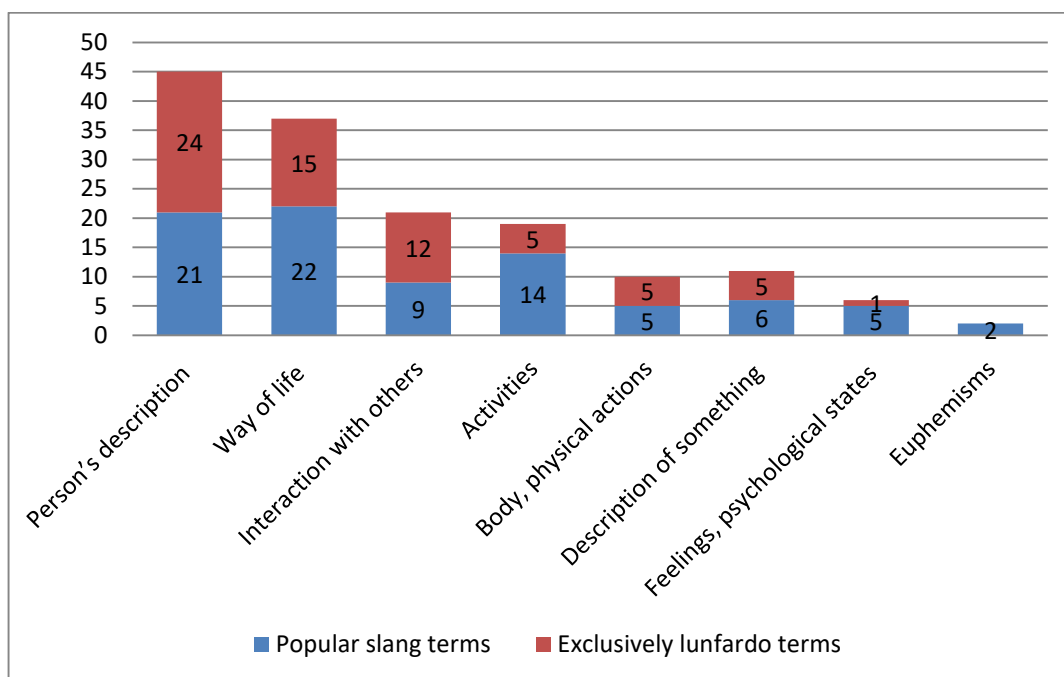
As was reported in the previous subchapter, 151 *lunfardo* terms are presented in the narrowed corpus. In order to understand the images and themes which they create we distributed the terms into semantic fields. The classification of semantic fields were proposed by us. Graph 2 shows the number of the terms per each semantic field. Two most active fields, which together account for almost two thirds of the analyzed corpus, are Person's description (46 *lunfardo* terms) and Way of life (37 *lunfardo* terms). Other two fields with identical number of terms are Interaction with others and Activities (20

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<sup>66</sup> Without taking into account the repetitions within one song.

*lunfardo* terms each). Body, physical actions and Description of something have equal number of *lunfardo* terms (10). Minor semantic fields are Feelings, psychological states (6 *lunfardo* terms) and Euphemisms (2 *lunfardo* terms). Further, we will see each field in details.

Graph 2 Number of *lunfardo* terms for each semantic field



The field Person's description field (Table 6) is presented by 45 terms, 24 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* terms and 21 are popular slang terms. The field is subdivided into 5 subfields. General descriptions subfield is presented by 20 terms, 10 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* and 10 are popular slang terms. Woman subfield is presented by 9 terms, 6 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* and 3 are popular slang terms. Man subfield is presented by 8 terms, 3 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* and 5 are popular slang terms. Descriptions by person's activity subfield is presented by 5 terms, 4 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* and 1 is popular slang term. Groups of people subfield is presented by 3 terms, 1 of which is exclusively *lunfardo* and 2 are popular slang terms.

Table 6 *Person's description semantic field*

Subfield name	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	Popular slang terms
General descriptions	Bacán(a) (“wealthy person”); gil (“stupid”); otario (“fool”); pelandrún (“lazy”); diquero (“boastful”); piantao (“crazy”); chiqué (“pretending”); abacanado (“the one who pretends to be wealthy”); linyera (“homeless”); garufa (“party animal”)	Rana(nún) (“cunning”); reo (“homeless”); pechador (“scrounger”); breva (“beautiful”); descolado (“ailing”); cachivache (“old”); tano (“Italian”); papa(usa) (“beautiful”); fané (“worn”); descangayado (“worn out”)
Woman	Mina (“woman”); percanta (“beloved woman”); grela (“woman”); griseta (“young poor woman who practices sexual liberty”); garaba (“young woman”); piba (“girlfriend”)	Pebeta (“young woman”); paica (“young woman”); mueble (“woman”)
Man	Shusheta (“dandy”); pibe (“child”); gigoló (“young man maintained by a mature woman”);	Guapo (“show-off”); taura (“brave man”); gavión (“Don Juan”); taita (“brave man”); purrete (“child”)
Description by person's activity	Chorro (“thief”); cafishio (“pimp”); cumparsita (“a little group of people at carnival in same costume ”); cana (“police”)	Botón (“policeman”)
Groups of people	Piberío (“group of children”)	Barra (“group of friends”); malevaje (“group of thugs”)

The second semantic field Way of life (Table 7) is presented by 37 terms, 15 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* terms and 22 are popular slang terms. The field is subdivided into 7 subfields. Consumption subfield is presented by 10 terms, 7 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* and 3 are popular slang terms. Living conditions subfield is presented by 8 terms, 2 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* and 7 are popular slang terms. Money, financial state subfield is presented by 7 terms, 3 of which are exclusively

*lunfardo* and 4 are popular slang terms. Personal objects subfield is presented by 3 popular slang terms. Weapon subfield is presented by 3 popular slang terms. Death subfield is presented by 2 terms, 1 of which is exclusively *lunfardo* and 1 is popular slang term. Other terms are 1 exclusively *lunfardo* and 1 popular slang terms.

Table 7 *Way of life semantic field*

Subfield name	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	Popular slang terms
Consumption	Marroco (“bread”); morfar (“eat”); curda (“drunkness”); encurdelarse (“to get drunk”); escabiar (“drink alcohol”); cocó (“cocaine”); prissé (“inch of cocaine”)	Cimarrón (“unsweetened mate <sup>67</sup> ”); mamar(se) (“to get drunk”); pucho (“cigarette”)
Living conditions	Bulín (“room”); cambalache (“second hand shop”)	Tapera (“abandoned house”); catrera (“bed”); cotorro(-ito) (“single room”); arrabal (“suburb/district where danced tango”); fondín (“cheap tavern”); yuyo (“weed”); boliche (“small bar”)
Money, financial state	Vento(-lín) (“money”); mango (“peso”); mishiadura (“poverty”)	Morlaco (“peso”); patinar (“spend money”); parar la olla (“earn the bread for the day”); a la marchanta (“to throw away money”)
Personal objects		Pilcha (“garment”); tamango (“shoe”); gomina (“brillantine”)
Weapon		Daga (“big knife”); púa (“improvised bladed weapon”); chairar (“sharpen”)
Death	Guadaña (“death”)	Cajón (“coffin”)
Others	Gambetear (“to dodge”); chata (“cargo cart”)	Barrilete (“kite”)

<sup>67</sup> Mate is a traditional tea in Rio de la Plata.

The third semantic field Interaction with others (Table 8) is presented by 21 terms, 12 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* terms and 9 are popular slang terms.

Table 8 *Interaction with others semantic field*

Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	Popular slang terms
Afilar (“to court”); acamarlar (“maintain”); amurar (“to abandon”); engrupir (“to deceit”); grupo (“a deceit”); chamuya (“conversation”); chamuyar (“to talk”); remanye (“seeing through”); parlar (“speak”); parla (speech); mangar (“ask”); batir (“say”)	Esquinazo (“lurch”); bronca (“an argument”); entrevero (“an argument”); largar (“to hand”); largar parao (“to abandon”); fayar (“breach a promise”); metejón(dura) (“falling in love”); guapear (“show off”); embretao (“entrapped”)

The fourth semantic field Activities (Table 9) is presented by 19 terms, 5 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* terms and 14 are popular slang terms. The field is subdivided into 5 subfields. Dance, music subfield is presented by 8 terms, 2 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* and 6 are popular slang terms. Risk, azart subfield is presented by 4 popular slang terms. Horse rides is presented by 3 popular slang terms. Crime subfield is presented by 2 terms, 1 of which is exclusively *lunfardo* and 1 is popular slang terms. Work subfield is presented by 2 *lunfardo* terms.

Table 9 *Activities semantic field*

Subfield name	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	Popular slang terms
Dance, music	Gotán (“tango”); carancanfún(fa) (“tango type”)	Fandango (“dance party”); canyengue (“suburban tango type”); bailongo (“dance”); sentada (“a tango figure”); corte (“a tango figure”); fueye (“bandoneon”)
Risk, azart		Darse juego de pileta (“to risk”); jugarse entero (“to risk”); timbear (“gamble”); timba (“gambling”)

Horse rides		Vareador (“horse trainer”); pingo (“horse”); fija (“horse predicted to win”)
Crime	Campanear (“be the lookout during a robbery”)	Afanar (“steal”)
Work	Laburar (“to work”); laburo (“work”)	

The fifth semantic field Body, physical actions (Table 10) is presented by 10 terms, 5 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* terms and 5 are popular slang terms. The field is subdivided into 3 subfields. Movement subfield is presented by 4 terms, 2 of which are exclusively *lunfardo* and 2 are popular slang terms. Body parts subfield is presented by 4 terms, 1 of which is exclusively *lunfardo* and 3 are popular slang terms. Vision subfield is presented by 2 popular slang terms.

Table 10 *Body, physical actions subfield*

Subfield name	Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	Popular slang terms
Movement	Yirar (“wander the streets”); piantarse (“run away”)	Cinchar (“to struggle/use force to carry smth”); cortarse (“to leave”)
Body parts	Zabeca (“head”)	Coco (“head”); ñata (“nose”); de la zurda (“heart”)
Vision	Embrocarse (“to be looked at”); manyar (“see”)	

The sixth semantic field Description of something (Table 11) is presented by 11 terms, 5 of which is exclusively *lunfardo* terms and 6 are popular slang terms.

Table 11 *Description of something*

Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	Popular slang terms



Rante (“humble”); de mi flor (“excelent”); posta (“excelent”); mistongo (“humble”); camba (“luxury”)	Estar en orsay (“inappropriately positioned”); fulero (“ugly/bad/poor”); afranchutado (“imitating French language or lifestyle”); orillero (“suburban”); de meta y ponga (“continuously”); malevo (“malicious”)
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The seventh semantic field Feelings, psychological states (Table 12) is presented by 6 terms, 1 of which is exclusively *lunfardo* term and 5 are popular slang terms.

Table 12 *Feelings, psychological states semantic field*

Exclusively <i>lunfardo</i> terms	Popular slang terms
Berretín (“caprice/craving”)	Embala(d)o (“dedicated to”); rechiflado (“had mental state transformed/angry”); envenenao (“pessimistic”); hocicar (“give up”); merengue (“mess”)

The eighth semantic field Euphemisms (Table 13) is presented only by 2 popular slang terms.

Table 13 *Euphemisms semantic field*

Popular slang term	Euphemism for	Translation
canejo	carajo	Exclam. <sup>68</sup> “fuck”
pucha	puta	Exclam. “hell” (lit. “whore”)

The abovementioned classification of semantic fields of 151 *lunfardo* terms found in the narrowed corpus provides important insights into the images created in tango lyrics

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<sup>68</sup> Exclam. stands for “exclamation”.

by *lunfardo* vocabulary. Two most active semantic fields are Person's description and Way of life (45 and 36 *lunfardo* terms respectively) which demonstrates the social character of tango. Other important semantic fields are Interaction with others and Activities (21 and 19 *lunfardo* terms respectively). Less presented semantic fields are Body, physical actions and Description of something (10 *lunfardo* terms each). The lowest number of words is in Feelings, psychological states and Euphemisms semantic fields (6 and 1 respectively). Interestingly, the fields with prevailing of exclusively *lunfardo* terms are Person's description (23 *lunfardo* and 22 popular slang terms) and Interaction with others (12 *lunfardo* and 9 popular slang) while the opposite situation is seen in Way of life (14 *lunfardo* and 22 popular slang) and Activities (5 *lunfardo* and 15 popular slang) semantic fields. This might point out to an emphasis of exclusively *lunfardo* vocabulary on the person's figure and its interaction with others. Popular slang terms, probably, concern everyday life and people's activities. There are many words in different semantic groups which sometimes are, or can be combined with each other in order to create complete images. This will be discussed in Chapter V.

### 3.3. Key content words comparison in songs with *lunfardo* terms and without them

In the first subchapter we mentioned the statistics on the percentage of 10 most used content words in the narrowed corpus. This subchapter is dedicated to the analysis of content words in songs with *lunfardo* terms (54) and without them (47).

Most used content words in the songs with *lunfardo* terms are presented in Table 14.

Table 14 *10 most used content words in the songs with lunfardo terms*

Content word	Repeated, times	Percentage (from 4801 content words)

Amor (“love”)	51	1,06%
Corazón (“heart”)	44	0,92%
Tango	36	0,75%
Vida (“life”)	32	0,67%
Noche (“night”)	28	0,58%
Hoy (“today”)	23	0,48%
Vos (“you” <sup>69</sup> )	23	0,48%
Alma (“soul”)	21	0,44%
Bandoneón	20	0,42%
Barrio (“district”)	20	0,42%

Words repeated in the songs with *lunfardo* terms 6 times and more are presented in Word cloud 1. As we can see from this Word cloud other important concepts are Buenos Aires; llorar (“to cry”); canción (“song”); recuerdo (“memory”); pobre (“poor”); adios (“goodbye”); milonga (“tango type”)

These words are connected to dance, songs and expression of emotions.

Word cloud 1 *Most used content words in the songs with lunfardo terms*

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<sup>69</sup> Even though “you” is not a content word we include *vos* because it is Rioplatensian variant of “you”.





## IV. Discussion

In this chapter, we will discuss the results of *lunfardo* vocabulary analysis in the corpus. Our results demonstrated that the *lunfardo* terms found in the narrowed corpus belong to different semantic fields connected to people and their activity. *Lunfardo* vocabulary creates different images in tango songs. This chapter summarizes findings and illustrates the images created by *lunfardo* in tango lyrics.

In the eight semantic fields identified by us many words are connected between each other and in sum give the important, if not the main images in tango lyrics of the studied period. We will now discuss five images created by *lunfardo* vocabulary in tango lyrics: *bacán(a)* (“wealthy man/woman”); *milonguera*<sup>70</sup> (“fallen woman”); *mishiadura* (“poverty”); *gotán* (“tango”); *percanta* (“beloved woman”) and *meteión* (“falling in love”).

### 4.1. *Bacán(a)* (“wealthy man/woman”) and *milonguera* (“fallen woman”)

According to Gobello’s *Diccionario de lunfardo* *bacán* has different meanings (p.25):

lunf. One who has a lover || Woman’s owner, pimp || Man who maintains a woman || Wealthy person or who seems to be so || Very rich, luxury  
From gen.<sup>71</sup> *baccan*: the boss of the place.  
Fem.<sup>72</sup> *bacana* has all the meanings corresponding to the masc.<sup>73</sup> (inclusive of the ‘one who has a lover’ meaning).  
Aum.<sup>74</sup> *bacanazo*. Vesric<sup>75</sup> form: *camba*.

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<sup>70</sup> Lit. *milonguera* is defined by Gobello (1978) as “dancer employed at places of nightlife entertainment”, *milonguita* is an affective form of *milonguera*. “Fallen woman” therefore is not a direct translation but rather an interpretation of this figure which was explained in detail in Chapter II, Subchapter 1, Section Gender representations in tango.

<sup>71</sup> Gen. here and hereinafter stands for ‘Genoese’.

<sup>72</sup> Fem. here and hereinafter stands for ‘feminine’.

<sup>73</sup> Masc. here and hereinafter stands for ‘masculine’.

<sup>74</sup> Aum. here and hereinafter stands for ‘augmentative’.

<sup>75</sup> See footnote No. 40.

The meanings which we will consider in our image of both wealthy man and wealthy woman description are the fourth, the fifth, and partially the third.

Milonguera is included in *lunfardo* dictionaries although it is not a *lunfardo* term, but a general language term. We did not include it into our analysis, however, we decided to choose it to name the image of a fallen woman. As we discussed before in the literature review, *milonguera* is by far the main female image in tango. Gobello (1978) defines *milonguera* as a “female dancer employed at places of nightlife entertainment (this term gave, by regression, *milonga* and its affective *milonguita*: morally corrupted woman)” (p.138).

We will analyze these two images together because of their interconnection which we have already mentioned in the Conclusions of the Literature Review. In the following examples, we will show how exactly are they interconnected in tango lyrics, and, consequently in the life of Buenos Aires of that period.

Other *lunfardo* words related to these images are *gigoló* (“young man maintained by a mature woman”); *parlar* (“speak”); *camba* (“luxury”); *diquero* (“boastful”); *patinar* (“spend money”); *a la marchanta* (“throw away money”); *afilar* (“to court”); *acamalar* (“maintain”); *shusheta* (“dandy”); *morlaco* (“peso”); *chiqué* (“pretending”); *abacanado* (“the one who pretends to be wealthy”); *batir* (“say”); *embrocarse* (“to be looked at”); *posta* (“excellent”); *griseta* (“young poor woman who practices sexual liberty”); *largar* (“to hand”); *berretín* (“caprice/craving”), etc.

Let us now examine several examples from our corpus which can demonstrate the connection between these words which, in sum, create the image of a wealthy man/woman in tango lyrics.

In tango *Mano a mano* (1923) by Celedonio Flores we can see a story of a woman who preferred rich life with *bacán* to the real love of a simple poor young man.

Se dio el juego de *remanye*  
cuando vos, pobre *percanta*,  
*gambeteabas* la pobreza  
en la casa de pensión.  
Hoy sos toda una *bacana*,  
la vida te ríe y canta,  
los *morlacos* del *otario*  
los tirás *a la marchanta*  
como juega el gato maula  
con el mísero ratón

Then came the game of *recognition*,  
when you poor *woman*,  
were *dodging* the poverty  
in the pension home.  
Today you are a whole *rich woman*,  
life laughs and sings of you,  
you *gamble away*  
the *fool's money*  
like the cowardly cat plays  
with the miserable mouse.  
(trans. in Bivona, 2009)

This translation sometimes generalizes or misses some meanings of *lunfardo* words in the song. We will explain some terms referring to this woman and the narrator's attitude to her. Firstly, the *lunfardo* term used to describe this woman is *percanta*. Gobello (1978) defines it as "pop. woman, regarded from the love point of view" (p. 164). The narrator is talking about his beloved woman. He tells about her past using *gambetear*. This verb is found in Rodriguez's *Diccionario lunfardo* (1988) where it has several definitions. The one which matches our context is: "to dodge situations, to avoid commitments" (TodoTango: <https://www.todotango.com/comunidad/lunfardo/termino.aspx?p=gambetear>). The young woman dodging her poor life in the pension home, dissatisfied by her position, becomes a wealthy *bacana* in the third meaning of this term.<sup>76</sup> Now she has an *otario*. Interestingly this word has two meanings both of which could be applied to the context "crim. lang.<sup>77</sup> the ingenuous, fool who is chosen to be a victim of a con || fool" (Gobello, 1978, p. 151). The second meaning is used literally in the song, while the first is used metaphorically. This wealthy man is used by the woman to gamble away his mon-

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<sup>76</sup> See the definition of *bacana* on the previous page.

<sup>77</sup> Crim. lang. stands for 'criminal language'. Terms from this register were referred by us to as exclusively *lunfardo*.



ey. The terms used to describe this con are *morlacos* (“pop. pesos”) and *a la marchanta* (“pop. to throw away money, to give up. It is used to be found frequently in the expression *tirar todo a la marchanta*”). This is the almost exact expression used in the verse: *tirar a la marchanta*<sup>78</sup>, lacks only *todo* (“everything”). The narrator since the beginning already knew what would have been the girl’s destiny. His *remanye* “lunf. the act and the effect of seeing through, of knowing the qualities and intentions of somebody” (Gobello, 1978, p. 131) has happened when his beloved was still in the pension house. In this short description, 7 *lunfardo* terms are used.

The identical situation is found in *Muñeca brava* (1929) tango by Enrique Cadícamo. A narrator is a young man who since his childhood loved the female protagonist whose name is unknown but who is referred to as *muñeca brava* (“wild doll”). It is the narrator’s reproach to this 20 years old girl who becomes a *milonguera* and is surrounded by wealthy men. The narrator assumes that she is beautiful and that everyone would like to be with her, however, she, choosing the frivolous way of life, loses the ability to love as well as her youth.

Tenés un *camba* que te hace gustos  
y veinte abril  
que son *diqueros*,  
y muy repleto tu monedero  
pa’ *patinarlo* de Norte a Sud...  
Te llaman<sup>79</sup> todos Muñeca Brava  
porque a los *giles* mareás sin *grupo*,  
pa’ mi sos siempre  
la que no supo  
guardar un cacho  
de amor y juventud.

You have a *rich guy* who spoils you  
and twenty Aprils  
during which you *are in demand*,  
and your purse is overflowing  
to *go shopping* all over town.  
Everybody has you pegged, Wild Doll,  
because you *beguile* every *fool*.  
To me, you’ll always be  
the one who didn’t know  
How to keep aside  
a bit of love and youth. (trans.  
in Savigliano, 2018, p. 59)

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<sup>78</sup> Both standard Spanish *tirar* and *a la marchanta* (lit. “to the dealer”) have the meaning of “throwing out”, therefore to avoid the excessiveness the whole expression *tirar a la marchanta* is translated as “to throw away money”.

<sup>79</sup> In other versions instead of *llamar* (“to call”) the verb *batir* (lunf. “to say”). In the English version, we can see the translation of *batir*.

This translation, even, being quite far from literal, gives the main idea of the stanza. A young charming and beautiful woman turns the heads of wealthy fools. The protagonist reproaches her for not being able to stay simple young girl capable of having real feelings. To describe this situation Cadicamo uses 4 exclusively *lunfardo* and 1 popular slang term. *Camba* as we can see in Gobello's *Diccionario de lunfardo* is a vesic form of *bacán* which preserves the meaning of the original word. The word *diquero* which is used to describe the woman's young age is defined as "lunf. boastful, smug, vain" (Gobello, 1978, p. 72). When she is still young and beautiful, she knows her price and shows an excessive pride in it, which explains the translator's decision that "you are in demand". Being young and attractive helps the girl to have her purse so full that she can *patinar* ("pop. waste something, to squander" (Gobello, 1978, p. 160)) all over the North and the South. How does Cadicamo describes the way *muñeca brava* gets money and explains why do people call her in that way? This girl has an extraordinary ability to turn the heads of the wealthy *giles* (pl. from *gil* "lunf. fool" (Gobello, 1978, p. 98)) without *grupo* (lunf. "deceit, lie" (Gobello, 1978, p. 101)).

In the song *Margot* (1919) by Celedonio Flores we can see the same theme and the same situation as in the previous songs: a woman grown in poverty of the tenement wants to get a better life using men and leading irregular life:

<p>Son macanas, no fue un <i>guapo</i> haragán ni prepotente, Ni un <i>cafishio</i> de averías el que al vicio te <i>largó</i>... Vos rodaste por tu culpa y no fue inocentemente... ¡<i>Berretines</i> de <i>bacana</i> que tenías en la mente desde el día que un magnate cajetilla te <i>afiló</i>!</p>	<p>It's rubbish, it was not an arrogant <i>layabout</i> Nor a <i>ruffian</i> scrounger the one that <i>introduced</i> you to vice... You rolled into vice for your fault and it was not innocently... They were <i>caprices</i> of <i>money</i> that you had in mind Since the day that rich man <i>seduced</i> you. (trans. in Tabares, 2014, p. 44)</p>
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In this stanza, the protagonist explains how the young woman was introduced "to vice".

Here we can see 2 popular slang and 4 exclusively *lunfardo* terms used to describe the

girl's moral fall. It was not a mistake of a young girl who fell in love with a *guapo*. *Guapo*, one of the main protagonists of the tango, is defined by Gobello (1978) as "pop. Brave, arrogant || Resistant for work" (p. 101). Evidently, in this context, the word is used in its first meaning because this *guapo* is described as *haragán* ("lazy"). The girl was seduced neither by a *cafishio*. This term is found in Gobello's *Diccionario de lunfardo* in the definition of *canfinflero*:

lunf. a pimp who exploits only one woman. Proceeds from already lost *cafifero* and it, in its turn, from the expression *tirar el cafife*, which seems to correspond to Venetian *tirar il calesse*<sup>80</sup>: be a pimp... By paronomasia with gen. *stocchefisce*: Percophidae<sup>81</sup>, produced *cafisho*: pimp.

*Largar* is the verb used to describe the process of the young woman's introduction to vice. Gobello (1978) gives 4 definitions of this verb: "To hand || To say goodbye, distance oneself from somebody || To release, to set free a detained or a prisoner || In the horse rides, the start of the horses" (p. 119) The meaning used in this context is the first one. In the following two lines we can see an explanation of the young woman's moral fall: it has happened by her fault and her own choice. Her head was full of *berretines* of *bacana*. *Berretín* (*berretines* is the plural form) is an exclusively *lunfardo* term defined as "Caprice, an intention, which one forms without reason. || Craving. || Illusion, hope cherished without a rational foundation. || Falsified object...." (Gobello, 1978, p. 30). All of the meanings except for the last one might have been used in this context. Being a wealthy person was the girl's craving, caprice, and illusion which do not have a rational foundation but might be explained by her youth, levity, and

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<sup>80</sup> *Tirar il calesse* means "to pull the carriage".

<sup>81</sup> A type of fish.

poor conditions of her previous life. Under the previous life, we understand life before she was seduced by a rich man and had an opportunity to see *dolce vita*. The seduction is described by the verb *afilar* (*afiló* is 3rd pers., past) defined as “To court, to woo, to flirt with. || To have an amorous talk. || To sweet-talk, to flatter.... ” (Gobello, p. 16). Although the verb does not have explicit meanings of sexual intercourse, we will agree with the translator’s “seduced”. It is unlikely that a *magnate cajetilla* (literally: dandy tycoon) would be happy on little and would not use the opportunity to get the young pretty woman to bed. *Cajetilla* “dandy” (Gobello, 1978, p. 39) is a term that can also be found in Gobello’s *Diccionario Lunfardo*, however, it is not presented in our analysis because it is a general slang term. The leitmotif of this as well as of the female protagonists of *Mano a mano* and *Muñeca brava* is money and the pursuit of a better life.

Enrique Cadícamo was already mentioned in this section with his *Muñeca brava* (1929). The song which it is followed by both thematically and lexically is *Che, papusa oí* (1927). Both tangos are dedicated to young women who sell their youth and beauty to rich mature men. Both dance tango, both are in some way exude an air of foreignness. In the case of *Muñeca brava*, it is a touch of Frenchness which is displayed not only on a narrative level but also on a lexical one. On a narrative level it is expressed in the following line: *Che, madam, que parlás en francés* (“You, madam who speaks French”), although the poet ironically reveals false French woman: *¡Sos del Tiranón... del Tiranón de Villa Crespo...* (“You are from Tiranon... from Tiranon in Villa Crespo”). The irony of this line is that the girl is from Villa Crespo, a poor district which emphasizes the fact that she only pretends to be a French wealthy lady, while allusion to Tiranón is ironical because Tiranons were residences built by the French kings Louis XIV and Louis XVI for their mistresses (Dalbosco, 2010c; Savigliano, 1993). Interestingly, Caneva & Miller (2015) note that Tiranón was also the name of a café in Villa Crespo. On a lexical level,

the author uses the following words of French origin: *madame*, *frappé*, *gigoló* (“dis. life sl.<sup>82</sup> a man, generally young who is maintained by a woman, generally mature) (Gobello, 1978, p. 230) In the case of *Muñeca brava* the protagonist quite probably has Spanish origins which are evident from the phonetic peculiarity of her speech (speaks with *zeta*). The narrative structure of the songs is similar but it has some differences. In both *Che, papusa, oí* (1927), and *Muñeca brava* (1929) the major part of the song is dedicated to the woman’s description: past and background; appearance; behavior with men. Common features are modest origins of the woman; young age; beauty; ability to charm men; the presence of a sugar daddy; pursuit of money and luxury life. Another narrative element common for both the songs is a reproach. In *Che, papusa, oí* it is expressed in *Si entre el lujo del ambiente/ hoy te arrastra la corriente,/ mañana te quiero ver...* (“If in a luxury atmosphere/ today you are dragged in the flow,/ I’d like to see what happens to you tomorrow”). The same idea is conveyed in *Muñeca brava* in *pero algún día volverás desengañada y sin fe/ y entonces seré yo quien te diga:/ che, muñeca brava, ¿Qué haces?* (“but one day you’ll be back disillusioned and faithless/ and then I’ll be the one to tell you:/ and now, wild doll, How are you?”). In both the songs we see that the male protagonist is sure that the happiness of the young woman will not last for a long time and she soon will be disillusioned and thrown away because she is *juguete de ocasión* (“toy of opportunity”, from *Muñeca brava*). *Muñeca brava*, in contrast to *Che papusa oí*, has other elements in its structure. For example, an expression of personal attitude, in particular, the feeling of affection towards the female protagonist: *Siempre soñé con tu cariño* (“I have always dreamt about your love”) and implicit sympathy: *pa’ mi sos siempre la que no supo/ guardar un cacho de amor y ju-*

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<sup>82</sup> Classified by us as exclusively *lunfardo* term.

ventud (“to me, you’ll always be the one who didn’t know/ how to keep aside a bit of love and youth” (trans. in Savigliano, 2018, p. 59)). These two elements make this song’s structure more sophisticated, which is quite logical for a song being written two years later than the first one. Let us now return to *Che papusa oí* and take a closer look at its first lines and analyze *lunfardo* terms used in the creation of *milonguerita* image:

<p>Muñeca, muñequita que hablás con zeta y que con gracia posta batís mishé; que con tus aspavientos de pandereta sos la milonguerita de más chiqué; trajeada de bacana, bailás con corte y por raro snobismo tomás prissé, y que en auto cambia, de sur a norte, paseás como una dama de gran cachet.</p>	<p>Doll, little doll who speaks with <i>zeta</i><sup>83</sup> and who with excellent <i>grace</i> <i>tells</i> about her <i>sugar daddy</i>; who with her panther-like passion you are of the most <i>pretending milonguerita</i>, you are dressed like a <i>wealthy woman</i> you dance with <i>corte</i> and with an awkward snobbery take <i>cocaine</i>, and who in a <i>luxury car</i>, from the South to the North, goes for a ride like a grand lady.</p>
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In this stanza 6 exclusively *lunfardo* and 1 popular slang term are used. As it can be seen in this description of the young woman’s behavior she is more than satisfied with her position of rich man’s concubine. Grace with which she boasts about her sugar daddy is characterized as *posta*. *Posta* is an exclusively *lunfardo* term defined by Gobello (1978) as: “Good, excellent, optimal || Exact || True (especially, in the expression *batir la posta*: to tell the truth) || Optimally, exactly, truly.” (pp. 173-174). Both the first and the third meanings might be conveyed in the usage of this word to characterize the grace. The third meaning’s relevance is also supported by the fact that *posta* is followed by the verb *batir*, although the relation between these two words is not the same as it is in the set phrase *batir la posta* (*posta* is direct object, while in the song the direct object

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<sup>83</sup> Phonetic difference between Peninsular Spanish and other varieties of Spanish is in pronunciation of the letters z (zeta) / s (ese), which in Peninsular Spanish are pronounced /θ/ and /s/ respectively. In all other variants of Spanish, there is no phonetic difference between these sounds, therefore both are pronounced as /s/. The fact that the female protagonist speaks differentiating between two sounds points out that she is an immigrant from Spain.

is *mishé* and *posta* is the object of preposition). The verb *batir* (*batís* is 3rd pers., pres.) is also an exclusively *lunfardo* term which has two meanings: “To say, to tell || To denounce, to reveal to the authorities a crime blaming the offender ” (Gobello, 1978, p. 29). The first meaning is the most suitable for the context: the girl tells with excellent grace about her sugar daddy. Though, the second meaning of the verb is partially expressed in the song: that of revealing. The female protagonist is characterized as *milonguerita*, one of the most *chiqué* (“lunf. pretending” (Gobello, 1978, p. 63)). Why pretending? The explanation may be seen in the fact that although she is dressed like a *bacana* she still shows the characteristics of her poor, simple origins. She dances with *corte* (“lunf. A figure of tango....”<sup>84</sup> (Gobello, 1978, p. 53)). *Corte* is one of the first and authentic figures of tango which appeared at the times when it was danced by *compadritos* and it was still unthinkable that one day tango would arrive in Paris salons to become a refined dance loved by aristocrats. Dancing with *corte* shows that the young woman is a simple girl from a poor district, no matter her clothes and appearance. Even if she tries to look snobbish taking drugs it all looks unnatural and awkward. To tell “drugs” Cadicamo uses the word *prissé* which is an exclusively *lunfardo* term (in particular, dis. life sl.) defined by Gobello (1978) as “an inch of cocaine” (p. 174). Despite her origins at the moment the young woman enjoys rich and carefree life, going for a ride in *camba* (vesric form of lunf. *bacán*, “luxury”) car, pretending to be “a grand lady”.

Two main *lunfardo* words used to name a rich man who financially supports a *milonguerita* are *bacán* and *otario* (“fool”): *que el bacán que te acamala tenga pesos duraderos* “that the rich man who maintains you have lasting money” (*Mano a*

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<sup>84</sup> This term has other definitions as well but we will not discuss them due to their irrelevance (criminal slang) and lack of space.

*mano*); *Ahora vas con los otarios a pasarla de bacana/ a un lujoso reservado del Petit o del Julien* “Now you go with fools to spend time like a real wealthy woman/ to a luxury restaurant Petit or Julien” (*Margot*); *los morlacos del otario los tirás a la marchanta* “you gamble away the fool’s money” (trans. in Bivona, 2009) (*Mano a mano*).

Interestingly, there is nothing in *otario*’s definition pointing out to richness. The difference could be seen between the usage of *otario* and *gil*: both the words mean “fool”, however, the first one is almost always used to describe a rich fool, while the second is always used to describe a poor fool. To verify this personal observation our corpus was not sufficient enough, therefore, a little investigation was conducted by putting, firstly, *otario* and, secondly, *gil*, as a keyword<sup>85</sup> to be searched on <http://todotango.com/musica/><sup>86</sup> website section with a huge collection of tango lyrics. Our expectations were confirmed: among 356 songs with the term *otario* only in 2 songs this word is used to describe a poor fool. On the contrary, all the 195 songs mentioning the term *gil* describe a poor fool. This curiosity cannot be explained by the terms’ etymology, consequently, it should be investigated more closely. For reasons of space and time, further etymology and usage analysis are not addressed in this study.

In this section, we showed that the image of milonguera and her *bacán* are described with the active usage of exclusively *lunfardo* and popular slang terms. The structure of such songs has two main elements: the young woman’s description and the male protagonist’s reproach of her new life. Different words are used to describe *bacán*’s money which is thoughtlessly spent by a young woman: *vento(-lín)* (“money”); *mango* (“peso”); *morlaco* (“peso”). Two main words to describe the

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<sup>85</sup> *Morfar* is only an infinitive form of the verb, however, this small sample helps to have the general idea on its usage.

<sup>86</sup> Site declared of National Interest which has a huge anthology of tango lyrics, online Diccionario lunfardo by Rodríguez, and other information dedicated to tango.



rich sponsor are *bacán* (“wealthy man”) and *otario* (“fool”). An interesting conclusion was made about the words *otario* and *gil*, both of which mean “fool” but the former describes a rich fool, and the latter, a poor fool. Cadicamo in his tangos *Che, papusa, oí* (1927), and *Muñeca brava* (1929) creates the images of women influenced by foreign culture. In *Che, papusa, oí* it is a young woman whose speech’s phonetic peculiarity points out that she is an immigrant from Spain and not a native of Argentina. In *Muñeca brava* not only the female protagonists speak French but also some *lunfardo* words of French origins are used by the poet to emphasize the Frenchness of the woman (*madame, frappé, gigoló*), however, it is ironically noted that she is from Villa Crespo, which is an authentic poor district of Buenos Aires. It should be noted that there is no direct reference in songs about *milonguera* and *bacán* to their sexual intercourse. It can be seen, for example in *Margot* (1919) by Celedonio Flores: *que un magnate cajetilla te afiló* “that rich man seduced you” (trans. in Tabares, 2014, p. 44). The verb *afilar* was translated as “to seduce”, even if there are no such definitions in the dictionary. This translator’s decision may be justified by common sense: *milonguera* is an established in tango image of a young fallen woman seduced by a rich man.

#### **4.2. *Mishiadura* (“poverty”)**

Important image created in tango lyrics by *lunfardo* terms is *mishiadura*. In Gobello’s (1978) *Diccionario lunfardo* this term is included in the definition of *mishio* “lunf. poor. From gen. *miscio*: deprived of money. *Mishiadura*: poverty” (p. 137).

The words which are connected to this image in the analyzed corpus are *morfar* (“eat”); *mangar* (“ask”); *linyera* (“homeless”); *reo* (“homeless”); *pechador* (“scrounger”); *cotorro* (“poor room”); *fondín* (“cheap tavern”); *arrabal* (“suburb”); *yuyo* (“weed”); *mango* (“money”); *parar la olla* (“earn the bread for the day”); *tamango* (“shoe”); *fulero* (“bad”); *bulín* (“room”) and etc.

Tango *Yira...Yira..* (1930) by Enrique Santos Discepolo expresses the narrator's disillusion in life and in humanity. Hernandez Arregui (as cited in Gobello, 1976) calls this tango the highest expression of sadness of Buenos Aires citizens which they started to feel in 1930 after the military coup of Urubury and the beginning of his presidency. At that period Argentines were beginning to realize that they were victims of a big lie and that the richness of the country did not belong to its people. We will cite a stanza which describes the narrator's striving with poverty. The translation is quite poetic; it is given to give a non-Spanish speaker the main idea of the stanza. All the *lunfardo* vocabulary analysis will follow.

cuando no tengas ni fe,  
ni yerba de ayer  
secándose al sol;  
cuando rajés los *tamangos*  
buscando ese *mango*  
que te haga *morfar*...  
la indiferencia del mundo  
-que es sordo y es mudo-  
recién sentirás.

When you have neither faith,  
nor yesterday's yerba mate  
drying off in the sun...  
When you tore off the soles of your shoes  
looking for that dough  
that would have calmed your hunger...  
You will only feel  
the indifference of the world  
which is just deaf and dumb. (trans. in  
LyricsTranslate.com:  
<https://lyricstranslate.com/it/yira...-yira-search-search.html>)

The narrator explains using *lunfardo* terms that it is not an easy thing to earn one's living. While looking for a *mango* (lunf. "peso") which will provide you with something to *morfar*, a verb which apart from "eat" has other meanings presented in Gobello's (1978) *Dccionario lunfardo*: "lunf. To eat || To violate || To suffer, to endure || To kill" (p. 139). The first meaning appears to be the most used in tango. We conducted a little investigation by putting *morfar* as a keyword<sup>87</sup> to be searched on <http://todotango.com/musica/><sup>88</sup>. Among 28 songs with this word, not in any of them this

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<sup>87</sup> *Morfar* is only an infinitive form of the verb, however, this small sample helps to have the general idea on its usage.

<sup>88</sup> Analysis identical to that of *otario* and *gil* in previous Section.

word is used in meaning different from “to eat”. Interestingly, in the major part of these songs this verb is connected to the description of a poor rather than a rich person and of lack of food rather than of its abundance. We will give several examples of *morfar* verb usage in tango lyrics:

¡Cuántas veces a mate amargo  
 el estomago *engrupía*  
 y pasaban muchos días  
 sin tener para *morfar!* (*Champagne tango*)  
 Los tiempos cómo cambian,  
 hace unos meses,  
 hacías malabares  
 para *morfar*.  
 Y ahora que te *armaste*,  
 sos *amarrete*,  
 que no le das un *mango*,  
 ni a tu papá. (*Machete*)  
 Esas *minas* veteranas  
 que nunca la protestaban,  
 sin *morfar* se conformaban  
 aunque picara el *buyón* (*Amores viejos*)  
 Dale bola al *laburo*  
 o al *afano*,  
*amurá* el *berretín*:  
 la poesía  
 nunca te hará *morfar* (*El consejo*)  
 Para *morfar*,  
 hurgás en la basura,  
 esperanza sin premura  
 en hambre urgente (*Hijo de perra*)

So many times bitter mate  
 Was *lying* to the stomach<sup>89</sup>,  
 And they were passing many days  
 Without having anything to *eat!*  
 Look how times change,  
 some months ago  
 You were juggling  
 to get money to *eat*  
 And now when you *got rich*,  
 you *scrooge*,  
 You do not even give a *peso*  
 to your father.  
 Those seasoned *girls*  
 Who have never protested  
 Were satisfied without *eating*  
 Even having itchy *stomach*  
 Pay attention to the *work*  
 or to the *stealing*,  
*Forget* about your *caprice*:  
 the poetry  
 Will never give you money to *eat*  
 To *eat*  
 you dig around in garbage bins,  
 Hope without haste  
 But the hunger is urgent

As we have seen from these examples, *morfar* is often connected to poverty and the

lack of food. Another interesting observation is that in songs where this word is used many other exclusively *lunfardo* or popular slang terms are used as well. This probably means that *morfar* is one of the most authentic exclusively *lunfardo* terms. Let us take a look at the following example from *Muñequita de lujo* (1921) by Pedro Numa Córdoba which prove our guess:

Que te has refinado en todo

That you are more refined in everything

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<sup>89</sup> Argentinean mate is a traditional drink which is considered to be able to satisfy the hunger.

y ya no decís: “morfar”,	Now you wouldn’t say “morfar”,
y pa’ decir: “hasta luego”	And to say “hasta luego”
ahora batís: “au revoir”	Now you’d say “au revoir”

This song is similar to tango lyrics analyzed in previous section. Its female protagonist, *muñequita de lujo* (“luxury doll”) is identical to those of Cadicamo’s *Muñeca brava*, *Che*, *papusa oí* and Flores’s *Margot*. Poor porteño girl who one day becomes rich because of dancing in cabaret and because of wealthy *otarios* who now make her company. At that period French fashion and culture were very popular in the circles of rich people, therefore young women of humble origins who wanted to enter these circles needed to create themselves an image of French women. Everything that was connected to their porteño origins must have been forgotten because it was considered as vulgar and common. *Lunfardo* as an important part of porteño spirit and culture had to be eliminated from speech of fashionable young lady. Morfar in these lines is showed as a typical characteristic of porteño speech.

Returning to the analysis of *Yira...yira* tango it is important to mention another *lunfardo*, or, to be exact popular slang term *tamango* (“shoe”). This term has two very similar meanings: “Rustic ankle boot or shoe || Ankle boot or shoe in general. From portugese *tamancos*: clogs” (Gobello, 1978, p. 204). In the analyzed song it is used in the second meaning: *cuando rajés los tamangos* (“when you tore off the soles of your shoes”) (trans. in LyricsTranslate.com: <https://lyricstranslate.com/it/yira...-yira-search-search.html>) to find some money to eat. Here we are talking about any type of shoes.

Another song which touches upon the theme of poverty, however, in a different context is *Aquel tapado de armiño* (1929) by Manuel Romero. This tango is about a man who was in love with a young woman who in the end betrayed his love choosing to be with a pimp and to dance in cabaret. The main conflict of the song is happening because of ermine fur coat. When the woman was still in love with the man she was obsessed with the idea of ermine fur coat which she saw in a shop window. The male

protagonist, evidently, simple and not a rich man was so deeply in love with the female protagonist that through many sacrifices he managed to buy the ermine fur coat to his beloved woman. The problem is that the young woman's love did not last long and soon she preferred a rich pimp and cabaret life to the poor and simple man who was ready to do everything for her. As the last lines of the song say: *Aquel tapado de armiño... que tu cuerpito abrigaba // Me resultó, al fin y al cabo, // más durable que tu amor: // el tapado lo estoy pagando // y tu amor ya se apagó* ("That ermine fur coat... which was covering your body // All in all, resulted to be, // more durable than your love: // I'm still paying for the fur coat // while your love has already ended"). Let us take a look at some *lunfardo* words used in the description of poverty in this song:

¿Te acordás?, era el momento  
culminante del cariño;  
me encontraba yo sin *vento*,  
vos amabas el armiño.  
Cuántas veces tiritando,  
los dos junto a la vidriera,  
me decías suspirando:  
¡Ay, amor, si vos pudieras!  
Y yo con mil sacrificios  
te lo pude al fin comprar,  
*mangué* a amigos  
y usureros  
y estuve un mes sin fumar.

Do you remember? It was  
The culmination of my love;  
I did not have *money*,  
While you loved ermine.  
So many times you, shivering,  
-both of us close to the shop window-  
Were saying to me with a sigh:  
Oh, my love, if you just could!  
And I, doing thousands of sacrifices,  
Managed to buy it to you,  
I *asked* my friends  
and loan sharks for money  
And I didn't smoke for one month

In this extract from the song we can see two exclusively *lunfardo* terms: *vento* ("money") and *mangar* ("ask"). Both of them here are needed to describe the situation in which found himself the male protagonist. He, who didn't have money had to borrow from his friends and from loan sharks to satisfy his beloved woman. *Vento* is an exclusively *lunfardo* term: "Money. From vulgar Genovese *vento*: money. *Ventolín*, *ventolina*: money (by cross with Spanish *ventolina*: light and changing wind). *Ventudo*: wealthy" (Gobello, 1978, p. 221). As we can see this word and its variants have interesting etymology. The characteristics of wind are compared to the characteristics of money: both the weather and the financial situation are always unstable and tend to

change quickly. *Lunfardo* has many different terms to mean money: *mango* (“peso”), *vento* (“money”), *morlaco* (“peso”) and etc.

*Mangar* (“ask”) is the verb used here to talk about the money:

Ask for, request. From caló *mangar*: ask, beg. Changed version *manguear*. *Manga*: request, application; habit of asking for. *Mangazo*: augmentative of the previous word. *Manguero*: scrounger. *Tirar la manga*: ask for (in the formation of which must have influenced both the verb *mangar* and the habit of the beggars to stop the passersby asking them for the money) (Gobello, 1978, p. 130)

As we can see from the definition, the verb *mangar* and its derivational forms are all connected to asking for the money and the activity of the beggars. Interestingly, this word has origins in caló, the language of Spanish gypsies, and as it is known many representatives of these people do their living by begging.

It might be thought that the verb *mangar*, which has the connection with the money in its definition, is etymologically connected to another exclusively *lunfardo* term *mango* (“peso”). However, it is not like this: “Peso, monetary unit. From Portuguese provincialism *mango*: thousand reals” (Gobello, 1978, p. 130). *Mango* is derived from Brazilian Portuguese.

The situation described in *Aquel tapado de armiño* is a classical one. The poverty of the man is produced by the fault of the woman who was asking for the costly material benefits. In the end the man is abandoned by his beloved woman and is drowning in the poverty. Similar situation can be found in other tangos from the analyzed corpus: *Esta noche me emborracho* (1928) (Que quedé sin un amigo, // que viví de mala fe, // que me tuvo de rodillas, // sin moral, hecho un mendigo, // cuando se fue “That I was left by all of my friends, // that I lived in bad faith, // that she had me on my knees, // without moral, like a real beggar”), *Por una cabeza* (1935) (Por una cabeza, // si ella me olvida // qué importa perderme // mil veces la vida, // para qué vivir “if she forgets about me // I will not care // about losing my life, even thousand times, // I will not have the reason to live”), and etc.

Now let us take a look at recently mentioned *Esta noche me emborracho* (1929) by Enrique Santos Discepolo. It is a tragic love story which shows some grotesque characteristics as well. As Conde (2003) puts it, this song represents:

a mercilessly sarcastic description of striptease girl does not only express her failure and decadence, but also emphatically puts in close-up the moral ruin of the protagonist, determined by the girl's abandoning him. The lamentation reveals the decadence of both.

The male protagonist was charmed by the beauty of a young woman. She made him spend a lot of money for her and provoked his moral and financial decadence. Now, 10 years after he sees her, in a miserable physical state, half naked, going out of the cabaret, and does not understand how he could have ruined his own life for such a lowlife. In the following lines we can see a *lunfardo* term which describes the poverty of the man:

que chiflao por su belleza	so that crazy for her beauty
le quité el pan a la vieja,	I stole the bread from my mother,
me hice ruin y <i>pechador</i> ...	I became a miserly and a <i>scrounge</i>

*Pechador* is a popular slang term. The entry which mentions this term is dedicated to the verb *pechar*: "Ask for, scrounge money. In this meaning it is also found in criminal slang. *Pechador*: Scrounger. *Pechazo*: Scrounging." (Gobello, 1978, p. 162). If we recall the analysis of the previous song, we will see that *pechar* is equal to *mangar*, and in both songs these two words used in connection to the same type of situation: the male protagonists who needs money to satisfy his beloved woman becomes a scrounger.

The theme of poverty and decadence can also be found in *Viejo smoking* (1930) by Celedonio Flores. This song as well as the previous ones is divided into two parts: "before" and "now". The past is always seen as something positive while the present reveals all the mistakes of the past which seemed perfect at that time. The protagonist of *Viejo smoking* is a man who in his youth used to be a dandy and was very popular among the women. However, now, when the years have passed together with his wealth and beauty, he is left all alone in his poor small room and his old smoking is his only

consolation because it makes him remember the times of his carefree youth. The description of him and his room is the following:

*Campaneá* cómo el *cotorro*  
va quedando despoblado  
todo el lujo es la *catrera*  
compadreado sin colchón  
y mirá este pobre mozo  
cómo ha perdido el estado,  
amargado, pobre y flaco  
como perro de *botón*.

Look how the *poor room*  
is being abandoned  
All its luxury is the bed  
Showing off without a mattress  
And look at this poor guy  
Who degaded a lot  
Embittered, poor and skinny  
Like a *cop's* dog

In these lines the only *lunfardo* word directly connected to the theme of poverty is *cotorro* (“poor room”), however, we will analyze other *lunfardo* terms used here: *campanear* (“be the lookout during the robbery”) and *botón* (“policeman”).

*Cotorro* is defined by Gobello as “Lodgings, room, especially if it is of a single person. From Spanish *cotarro*: night shelter for poor and homeless, from the expression *alborotar el cotarro* (“to stir up trouble”) and by cross with Spanish *cotorra* (“chatterbox”)” (Gobello, 1978, p. 54) In another dictionary of *lunfardo* we can see a more direct allusion to poverty: “Poor room” (Que-significa: <https://que-significa.com/significado.php?termino=cotorro>). We will see this word in other songs analyzed in our corpus: *Cumparsita* (1916), *Mi noche triste* (1917) and *Milonguita* (1920), and in all of them we can see that *cotorro* is characterized as poor, half-abandoned room. In prove us that the room described in the song is very poor: the only its luxury is a bed which do not even has a mattress.

Bed is described by word *catrera*: “Bed. Witty deformation of Spanish *catre* (“folding bed”)” (Gobello, 1978, p. 46). It should be noted that the origins of the word also add to the atmosphere of poverty. Folding bed cannot be considered as something luxury, on the contrary, it may be a sign of poverty. Both *cotorro* and *catrera* work together to create an image of small poor room in a bad condition.

The protagonist is also described in a negative way: embittered, poor and skinny.



Flores used an interesting comparison to describe him: like a cop's dog. The word used here to say cop (policeman) is *botón*. In our translation we preferred word "cop" to "policeman" to show the same difference which exists between the words "*botón*" and "*policía*". In standard Spanish "*botón*" means "button", so as we might guess *lunfardo* meaning of the word in *lunfardo* was formed by means of metonymy. Let us take a look at the definitions and origins of this *lunfardo* popular slang term:

Police agent. From Spanish *botón*: a small disc or knob sewn on to a garment, made for the purpose or for decoration. [It is a meaning which appeared during the Revolution of 1890, when the rebels were shooting from the corners, aiming at the buttons of the police uniforms; at that period the people would say *tirar a los botones* ("to shoot at the buttons"), from then this noun began to name policemen]. || Criminal lang. Snitch. *Botonear*: To snitch. *Al botón, al divino botón, al gran botón, al santísimo botón*: Uselessly. It is frequent in vesic form tomo (Gobello, 1978, p. 34)

This popular slang term has interesting story. It is quite clear because of the word's origins that it is more likely to be used in pejorative meaning. In *Viejo smoking* even the dog of *botón* is seen as a miserable creature.

Even though two last mentioned terms are not directly connected with the theme of poverty they play an important role in the song because they help to create the image of miserable existence lead by the protagonist.

In this subsection we analyzed three tango songs from our corpus: *Yira... yira, Aquel tapado de armiño* and *Viejo smoking*. All of them are in a certain way connected to the theme of poverty. During our analysis we found several words directly connected to the poverty, such as *mangar* ("scrounge"), *pechador* ("scrounger"), *cotorro* ("poor room"), and words which are not directly connected to the theme of poverty but which help in the creation of this atmosphere: *tamango* ("shoe"), *mango* ("peso"), *morfar* ("eat"). We found out that sometimes man's poverty in tango lyrics may be provoked by a woman. Interesting conclusion was made about the verb *morfar* ("eat"). This verb apart from its main meaning "to eat" has other meanings, such as "to violate", "to suffer" and "to

kill”, however, in tango lyrics containing this verb is almost always used in its first meaning and often treats with the theme of poverty and lack of food.

### 4.3. *Gotán* (“tango”)

Curiously, a very important and clearly stated image in tango lyrics is tango itself. Many songs are dedicated to tango: *Barrio de tango* (1942), *Alguien le dice al tango* (1965), *Así es el tango* (1936); *Así se baila el tango* (1942); *Tango* (1942); *Tango argentino* (1929) and many others. It should be noted that in our comparison of the most used content words in songs with *lunfardo* terms and without them, the first group showed the word “tango” in its top ten words. Tango songs with no *lunfardo* terms use this word many times less: 3 repetitions against 36 in songs with *lunfardo* terms. This gives us another evidence of the opposition of tango with its brothel origins to the standard language and consequently to the decent life.

The word *gotán* is nothing more than *vesré* form of the word tango. This type of word formation indicates that it is exclusively *lunfardo* term.

Other *lunfardo* terms connected to tango image are *orillero* (“suburban”); *arrabal* (“district where it is danced tango”); *caracanfún(fa)* (“tango type”); *fandango* (“dance party”); *canyengue* (“suburban tango type”); *bailongo* (“dance”); *sentada* (“a tango figure”); *corte* (“a tango figure”); *fueye* (“bandoneon”); *rana(-ún)* (“cunning”); *vareador* (“horse trainer”); *estar en orsay* (“inappropriately positioned”); *de meta y ponga* (“continuously”); *mistongo* (“humble”) and etc.

*Melodía de arrabal* (1932) by Adolfo Le Pera is a nostalgic tango. The narrator yearns for his suburban district, for its nightlife with tango dancing and the melodies of bandoneon. He recalls his first beloved women and accompanies his memories with the sounds of bandoneon and of people dancing tango. The district (*arrabal*) is described as having “anxious soul”. For the protagonist *arrabal* is a place where he lived all the best

moments of his life and the song is full of nostalgic for this district.

Barrio plateado por la luna,  
rumores de milonga  
es toda su fortuna.  
Hay un *fueye* que rezonga  
en la cortada *mistonga*, [...]   
¡esto todo el barrio *malevo*  
melodía de *arrabal*!  
Barrio... barrio...  
perdoná si al evocarte  
*se me pianta* un lagrimón

District, silvered by the moon,  
noises of dance  
in all its fortune.  
There is a *bandoneon* moaning  
in a *humble* blind alley, [...]   
all this is the *malicious* district  
Melody of *suburb*!  
District... district...  
Forgive me if when I recall you  
tears *run down* my face

In this nostalgic recalling we can see 5 *lunfardo* terms. *Fueye*<sup>90</sup> which has two meanings: “pop. Bandoneon || Lung” (Gobello, 1978, p. 93) Conde (2011) explains the etymology of this word: “in both cases, by allusion to standard Spanish *fuella*: instrument used to gather the air and to throw it in a determined direction” (p. 104). If we stick to Conde’s classification of word formation this would be a semantic process involving displacement of the meaning, particularly, metaphor. Blacksmith tool is compared in the first case to a musical instrument and in the second to an organ. *Mistongo* in *Diccionario lunfardo* by Gobello (1978) is defined as “lunf. Humble, insignificant, poor” (p. 138). *Malevo* has two definitions “pop. Wicked, malicious || Thug, troublemaker, tough” (Gobello, 1978, p. 129). The second definition is used to refer to people while the first is used for inanimate objects as well. These epithets create the gloomy and humble but at the same time incredibly romantic image of an *arrabal*, “pop. district where tango is traditionally sang or danced || suburb” (Gottero, 2008, p. 62) The song was written in 1932 when Buenos Aires was not like it was in the beginning of XX century, by 1930s it transformed into a modern city and the atmosphere created by the immigrants, extreme poverty and *compadritos* arriving from Pampa did not exist anymore.

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<sup>90</sup> Another less used graphic variant of this term is *fuella*.

The narrator is nostalgic about the past with its tango music and when he recalls it he cannot refrain from tears. Tears literally “run away” from his eyes. Let us take a closer look at the verb used to describe this process. *Piantarse* is found in Gobello’s Diccionario *lunfardo* in the definition of the exclusively *lunfardo* verb *espiantar*:

Escape, run away in a hurry || Dismiss, expel || Steal || Rob, take away something from somebody || Take away surreptitiously. Represents a cross between Italian term *piantare*: abandon somebody and *spiantare*: to ruin. *Espiante*: escape, departure, action of leaving one place to get to another; expulsion; type of theft; robbery. *Tocar espiente* (“to touch *espiente*”) and *tocar la polca del espiente* (“to touch the polca of *espiente*”): go away (related to the Spanish fare *il ballo del piantone* (“dance of the guard”): to stand somebody up). *Espiante de arrebatado*: type of theft in which the criminal snatches an object which the victim carries with him/her. *Espiantador*: thief who practices *espiente*. *Espiantado*: crazy, the one who is not right in the head. Respectively equal forms created by apheresis<sup>91</sup> are *piantar*, *piante*, *piantado* (Gobello, 1976, p. 81).

As it can be seen this verb has a lot of different meanings. The one which is relevant to the context of the analyzed song is the first. In other song of our corpus we can see the word *piantao* (version of *piantado* with the omission of “d”). The name of this song, *Balada para un loco* (“Ballad for a crazy man”), speaks for itself. Ya sé que estoy *piantao, piantao, piantao...* (“I know that I am crazy, crazy, crazy”).

Tango is connected to nostalgic memories about the past in other song called *El patio de la morocha* (1952) by Catulo Castillo. Tango music here is like a magic ball which allows to see the past:

Con el recuerdo de este tango  
vuelvo a verla.  
Con el recuerdo de este tango  
juguetón  
que me habla de ella.

With the memory of this tango  
I see her again.  
With the memory of this  
playful tango  
Which talks to me about her.

Tango makes the protagonist remember his beloved woman, the *morocha* (“brunette”). However, the lines which interest us more are those which describe tango with the usage of popular slang term:

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<sup>91</sup> Apheresis is “the omission of a letter or syllable at the beginning of a word” (Collins Dictionary 2020: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/apheresis>)

¡Muchacha criolla  
del tiempo aquel!  
Tango dulzón y *orillero*  
que al corazón  
le reprocha, cruel,  
la ausencia de la morocha  
y el viejo patio que quiero...

Oh, creole girl  
Of that times!  
Sweet and *suburbial* tango  
Which cruelly  
Reproaches the heart  
For the absence of the brunette  
And of the old yard which I love...

Tango is described as suburban, in the same way as it is called “melody of suburb” in previously analyzed *Melodia de arrabal*. Let us take a look at the definition of the term *orillero*. The entry which mentions this term is *oriya* (the same as *orilla*): “Suburb: any of extreme places of the town. From Spanish *orilla*: boarder, extreme or the end of a surface extension of a thing. Used also in plural. *Oriyero*: suburban, inhabitant of the *oriya*” (Gobello, 1976, p. 151). As we can see from this definition, *oriya* is a synonym of *arrabal*, therefore both tango songs emphasize the suburban character of tango.

Another song of the analyzed corpus which calls tango *orillero* is *La calesita* (1962) by the same author, Catulo Castillo. Two main inanimate protagonists of this tango are carousel (*calesita*) and tango itself. The sounds of both of them make the male protagonist remember the old times: his friends of youth, his first love. These memories hurt the protagonist because the years have passed and the life has changed: the boys and girls have become old while tango and carousel are still the same as many years ago, however, now their sound bring not joy as it was before, but pain and nostalgia:

Llora la calesita  
de la esquinita sombría,  
y hace sangrar las cosas  
que fueron rosas un día.  
Mozos de punta y hacha  
y una muchacha que me quería.  
Tango varón y entero  
más *orillero* que el alma mía.  
Sigue llorando el tango  
y en la esquinita palpita  
con su dolor de fango  
la calesita...

The carousel of the gloomy little corner  
Is crying  
And makes bleed the things  
Which were roses one day.  
Strong and skilled guys  
And a girl who loved me.  
Tango is masculine and upright  
It is more *suburban* than my soul  
Tango continues crying  
And in the little corner the carousel  
Is palpitating  
With the pain in its soul

In this tango song, apart from *orillero*, we can find other *lunfardo* terms, some of which are related to tango.

*Carancanfún... vuelvo a bailar  
y al recordar una sentada  
soy el ranún que en la parada  
de tu enagua almidonada  
te grito: ¡Carancanfún!*

*Carancanfún... I dance again  
And I remember in one sentada  
I was the sly one who in parada  
Of your starched underskirt  
Cried you "Carancanfún"*

These verses are not easy to understand even for an Argentinean person. *Lunfardo* terms used in these lines are not familiar to modern people. The one who dances tango would understand the meaning of the figures but other words would need explanation for everyone. *Carancanfún* may seem a non-word, however, it has two meanings: it is a type of tango danced with *cortes* (a type of tango figures) or a person who dances such tango. Etymologically this word seems to be a kind of onomatopoeia<sup>92</sup> (it is thought to imitate the sound made by male dancers of such type of tango by the heels of their shoes before the beginning of the dance). (Gobello, 2005, p. 40). Therefore it would be impossible to guess the meaning of this exclusively *lunfardo* term even for those who dance it because tango has changed a lot since the beginning of its history. Another *lunfardo* term directly connected to tango is *sentada*: "A figure of tango dance" (Gobello, 1976, p. 195). *Parada* is also one of the tango figures but it is not included into *lunfardo* dictionaries. The last *lunfardo* term found in this short passage is *ranún*. This popular slang term is found in the entry *rana*, which is the initial form of this word:

Clever and cunning person || Rascal, naughty By antiphrasis of Spanish *rana*: stupid. It admits an augmentative: *ranún* (with Genovese interference). *Ranada*: cunning action aimed at getting a benefit (Gobello, 1976, p. 184).

As we can see from the definition, the protagonist of *La calesita* is a very cunning person and is proud of it. Interestingly, we can find this word in other songs connected to tango. For example in *Garufa* (1927) by Roberto Fontaina and Víctor Soliño. It is a description of the protagonist's life: during the week he works hard and the weekends he

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<sup>92</sup> "Onomatopoeia refers to the use of words which sound like the noise they refer to. 'Hiss', 'buzz', and 'rat-a-tat-tat' are examples of onomatopoeia" (Collins Dictionary 2020: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/onomatopoeia>).

spends dancing tango:

Caés a la milonga  
en cuanto empieza  
y sos para las *minas*  
el *vareador*;  
sos capaz de bailarte la Marsellesa,  
la Marcha a Garibaldi  
y El Trovador.  
Con un café con leche  
y una ensaimada  
rematás esa noche de bacanal  
y al volver a tu casa, de madrugada,  
decís: "Yo soy un *rana fenomenal*".

You arrive at milonga  
as soon as it starts  
And for *women*  
you're like a *jockey for horses*  
You can even dance Marsellesa,  
La Marcha a Garibaldi  
and El Trovador.  
With a coffee with milk  
and an ensaimada  
You finish this bachanalian night  
And when you turn home at dawn  
You say: "Oh, the *sly* one I am!"

Here *rana* is used with the adjective *fenomenal* ("phenomenal"), which means

something "so great or good that it is very unusual indeed" (Collins Dictionary 2020:

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/phenomenal#:~:text=Something%20that%20is%20phenomenal%20is,it%20is%20very%20unusual%20indeed.&text=Exp%20orts%20are%20growing%20at%20a,performances%20have%20been%20absolutely%20phenomenal.>). The protagonist, by saying that he is a *rana fenomenal* gives a very

positive characteristic of himself. Slyness is connected to his dance abilities. Another *lunfardo* terms used to describe his characteristics of a good dancer is *vareador*. We have found the entry on the popular slang verb *varear* and made a conclusion that *vareador* is a noun derived from this term. The definition and etymology of *varear* are the following:

To train a horse || To train somebody || To walk or to take somebody on tour. From Spanish *vara*: thin branch which is used to punish the animals (used sometimes to tame colts; since the dressage included a ride, the idea of ride prevailed on that of punishment). *Vareo*: act and effect of *varear* (Gobello, 1976, p. 220).

The overall style of the song makes us think that it was the first meaning of the term *varear* which is used in *Garufa*. The comparison of the protagonist with jockey and the women with horses brings a humorous tone in this tango. The word used to say "woman" is an exclusively *lunfardo* term *mina*: "woman. It is Italian slang *mina*: woman. Admits the affective *minusa*. *Mino*: one who keeps a mistress; passive pederast;

man, in general. *Ministro*: passive pederast (by paronomasia)” (Gobello, 1976, p. 136). This word is still widely used in modern Argentina.

It would be a mistake not to mention *El choclo* (1947), one of the most famous and, probably, the most studied tangos with the oldest music (1903). It is a tango by Enrique Santos Discepolo, dedicated to tango itself and to its connection with *lunfardo*. As we have already showed in our previous quantitative part of analysis, Discepolo was one of the poets who used the *lunfardo* the most.

<p><i>Carancanfunfa</i> se hizo al mar con tu bandera y en un perno mezcló a París con Puente Alsina. fuiste compadre del <i>gavión</i> y de la <i>mina</i> y hasta comadre del <i>bacán</i> y la <i>pebeta</i>. Por vos <i>shusheta</i>, <i>cana</i>, <i>reo</i> y <i>mishiadura</i> se hicieron voces al nacer con tu destino... ¡Misas de falda, querosén, tajo y cuchillo, que ardió en los conventillos y ardió en mi corazón.</p>	<p><i>Carancanfunfa</i> crossed the sea under your flag and in a pivot it mixed Paris with Puente Alsina. You were friend with <i>gavión</i> and <i>mina</i> and even godmother of <i>bacán</i> and <i>pebeta</i>.. Because of you <i>shusheta</i>, <i>cana</i>, <i>reo</i> and <i>mishiadura</i> became voices to be born with your destiny, A mass of skirts, kerosene, slashes and knives, that burned in the tenements and burned in my heart.</p>
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In these lines we can see an abundance of *lunfardo* terms, some of them are new, some we have already analyzed. We decided not to pay attention to their translation because it is not relevant. What is important in this song is the idea that tango, here addressed to as *Carancanfun*, (a type of tango, as we have previously seen) is presented as a person and is thought to be the one who gave voice to *lunfardo* terms.

In conclusion it needs to be said that tango, both as music and as dance, are powerful images in tango lyrics. It is associated with the careless youth, and is often framed into nostalgic memories about gone merry times. Some songs underline the suburban (*orillero*) character of tango. The ability of dancing tango is something which is praised in the men. A good tango dancer is called *rana* or *ranún* (“sly one”), he is characterized



by the ability to manage well the women. There is a quite clear machismo expressed in such tango songs. Tango is seen as a leisure activity the way in which working people spend their weekends. Some lyrics mention tango figures (*perno, sentada, parada, corte* and etc.) which complicate the understanding of the lyrics for somebody who does not dance tango. *Carancanfún(fa)* is a type of tango with *cortes* which is often mentioned in tango lyrics. What is the most relevant for our research is that tango is called the reason of success and popularity of *lunfardo*. For example, *El Choclo* written by Enrique Santos Discepolo basically presents a list of some *lunfardo* terms which were given life by tango songs. Discepolo was not the only one who made this observation as we could have already seen in the theoretical part of our research.

#### **4.4. *Percanta* (“beloved woman”) and *metejón* (“falling in love”)**

Love is a fundamental theme in tango lyrics and the image of a beloved woman is present in the major part of the songs.

*Percanta*'s definition was already discussed in previous section<sup>93</sup>. The word *metejón* has different versions and meanings: “pop. *Metedura, metejón, metida*: falling in love; enthusiasm; spirit's elation produced by the admiration; indebtedness, particularly, produced by gambling” (Gobello, 1978, p.136). Out of these four meanings relevant for our analysis are the first and the third. Another version of the word found in the narrowed corpus is *metedura*.

Other words connected to the image of beloved woman and falling in love are *mina* (“woman”); *grela* (“woman”); *piba* (“girlfriend”); *amurar* (“to abandon”); *esquinazo* (“lurch”); *fayar* (“breach promise”); *largar parao* (“to abandon”); *embretao* (“entrapped”); *encurdelarse* (“get drunk”) and etc.

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<sup>93</sup> I.e. in the section *bacán(a)* (“wealthy man/woman”) and *milonguera* (“fallen woman”).

The topic of *Mi noche triste* (1917) by Pascual Contursi, the tango which gave life to *lunfardo* vocabulary in tango, is the abandonment of the narrator by his beloved woman. This song is a reproachful dialog with a woman who was the narrator's muse and who by leaving has deprived him of all the joys of life.

*Percanta que me amuraste  
 en lo mejor de mi vida,  
 dejándome el alma herida  
 y espina en el corazón,  
 sabiendo que te quería,  
 que vos eras mi alegría  
 y mi sueño abrasador,  
 para mí ya no hay consuelo  
 y por eso me encurdelo  
 pa'olvidarme de tu amor.*

*Woman, you dumped me  
 at the prime of my life  
 leaving my soul wounded  
 and dullness in my heart,  
 knowing that I loved you,  
 that you were my joy  
 and my burning dream...  
 There is no solace for me,  
 that is why I'm getting drunk  
 to forget about you love.*

The act of abandonment is described with the verb *amurar*. The peculiarity of this exclusively *lunfardo* term is that it has very different and sometimes opposite meanings:

To pawn, to give something as a pledge of a loan || To imprison, to lock up in the jail || To abandon || To rip off, to deceit someone damaging him/her || To close, to close down || To get married. From gen. *amurrá*: to run aground, to beach and fig.<sup>94</sup> to paralyze (Gobello, 1978, p. 19).

Sometimes this verb may mean the depriving of freedom, as in the second and in the sixth definitions. On the contrary the third definition implies liberation from somebody. In the cited stanza *amurar* refers to the third meaning and partially to the fourth because the woman not only left him but also deceived his hopes. Such a disillusion provokes a deep grief in protagonist. This woman was the best in the protagonist's life, and meant so much to the protagonist that her betrayal makes it very hard to find a solace. The only effective way to forget about that woman is to get drunk. This action is described with the verb *encurdelarse*. This verb is found in the entry of *curda*: "drunkenness || A drunk. From caló *curda*: drunkness. *Encurdar(se)*: to get drunk. *En curda*: drunk" (Gobello, 1976, p. 57). Curiously, as in case of other word of the same origins found in our

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<sup>94</sup> Fig. here and hereinafter stands for 'figuratively'.

analysis, *mangar* (“ask, beg”), this word too has a negative connotation. Both of them are connected to the typical negative image of Gypsies: lazy beggars who walkabout and abuse alcohol. It is a daring theory to explain the presence of these particular words by the stereotyped image of the community which speaks this language, however, it might be an interesting topic of analysis for the following studies.

Even more tragic situation has happened to the protagonist of *El bulín de la calle Ayacucho* (1925) by Celedonio Flores. His house used to be full of love, warmth and happiness, his friends loved coming there because there they could always find a shelter, something to eat and mate, although, this was not even a house, but a room (*bulín*). One day happens something which turned this welcoming place into a somber and lonely one:

*Cotorrito mistongo, tirado  
en el fondo de aquel conventillo,  
sin alfombras, sin lujo y sin brillo,  
¡cuántos días felices pasé,  
al calor del querer de una piba  
que fue mía, mimosa y sincera ...  
¡Y una noche de invierno, fulera,  
en un vuelo hacia el cielo se fue!*

*Little humble room stranded  
In the back of that tenement,  
Without carpets, luxury and shine,  
How many happy days I passed  
Being warmed by love of my girl  
Who was mine, sweet and sincere  
And one malicious winter night  
She went up in the sky*

In this description of man’s life after the death of his beloved woman we can see two words which we have already analyzed: *cotorro* (“poor room”, *cotorrito* is a diminutive form) and *mistongo* (“humble”). Other two *lunfardo* terms are *piba* (“girl”) and *fulero* (“ugly”). The word which interests us most is *piba* because it is used to name the beloved woman. Let us see the definition of this word, which is found in the entry of the word *pibe* (male form):

Child. From Genovese *pivetto*: child (which derives from Italian slang *pivello*: niño). It is applied affectively to people of any age. It may mean young man, piece of wood attached to the cart, wagon or carriage pole, on which the vehicle leans when it is not moving. Feminine *piba* may mean girlfriend. *Piberío*: a gathering of *pibes* (Gobello, 1976, p. 167)

As it can be seen from the definition, *piba* may also mean girlfriend, which is exactly the case in our song. The night the beloved *piba* passed away is described as *fulera*. The

dictionary gives several definitions of this word:

Bad, the one that lacks goodness which he/she/it should have by their nature and destiny || False, the one that maliciously imitates something genuine || Poor || Cheap, economic || Irritated. From Spanish popular *fulero*: useless (and this one from *caló ful*: false) but the last meaning involves a cross with *fulo*. There is an apocope *fule*. *Fulería*: wickedness, quality of being bad; something faked; poverty; ugliness, something at a low price; anger, irritation (Gobello, 1976, p.94). Evidently in *El bulín de la calle Ayacucho* this word is used in its first meaning. The

night which has stolen the beloved woman is characterized as bad, malicious. This song is full of bitterness about the loss of the protagonist's love.

More similar to *Mi noche triste*, tango *El esquinazo* (1937) by Carlos Pesce and Antonio Polito treats the same theme of betrayal and abandonment. The desperation made the protagonist lose the direction in life. The woman who was swearing in her love to him was false and insincere, for a man in love there cannot be a bigger pain than that.

Nada me importa de tu amor, golpeá nomás... el corazón me dijo, que tu amor fue una falsía, aunque juraste y juraste que eras mía. No llames más, no insistas más, yo te daré... el libro del recuerdo, para que guardes las flores del olvido porque vos lo has querido el <i>esquinazo</i> yo te doy.	I don't care anymore about your love My heart told me That your love was false Although you swore you were my Don't call me, don't insist, I'll give you A memory book For you to keep the flowers of oblivion It was you who wanted that So I leave you in the <i>lurch</i> <sup>95</sup>
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However, the reaction of the protagonist on what happened in *El esquinazo* is different from that of *Mi noche triste*. Here the protagonist wants to keep his dignity, he turns the situation in that way that it is not he who was abandoned but the woman. It is expressed by the popular slang term *esquinazo*: "Act of dumping of somebody, leaving

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<sup>95</sup> "Leave someone in the lurch: Leave someone abruptly and without assistance or support when they are in a difficult situation" (Lexico: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/lurch>).

somebody mocked or abandoned” (Gobello, 1976, p. 82). To translate the expression *dar el esquinazo* (“give the esquinazo”) used in the song we used the idiom “to leave in the lurch” which means “to leave in an uncomfortable or desperate situation; desert in time of trouble” (Dictionary.com: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/leave--in--the--lurch>). The man fights back, he knows that this woman does not deserve to be forgiven, and puts a definite stop in their relationships.

*Yira... yira* (1930) by Enrique Santos Discepolo which we have already analyzed in the subsection dedicated to poverty in its very beginning presents an interesting comparison of women’s behavior with luck:

<p>Cuando la suerte qu' es <i>grela</i>,  <i>fayando y fayando</i>  te <i>largue parao</i></p>	<p>When the luck which is like a <i>woman</i>,  Who <i>lets down</i> all the way  Abandons you</p>
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In this short passage we can find three *lunfardo* terms which is not a surprise knowing Discepolo’s commitment to *lunfardo*. *Grela* is defined as “Woman. Of unclear etymology. *Grela*: man. *Grelún*: stupid” (Gobello, 1976, p. 100) Oscar Conde (2011) analyzed different opinions on the etymology and meaning of this word:

One of few authors who understands that *grela* is a specific type of woman is Juan Carlos Guarnieri who in his *El habla del boliche* defines it as “woman exploited by a pimp”. In the famous tango by Ferrer and Piazzola “*La última grela*” the woman indeed appears as a prostitute in decadence. Teruggi affirms that in Galician *grela* means “female rabbit” and adds that by extension it may also mean “baby machine”; later the same author unfolds the second, more convincing hypothesis. Galician also has a term *garaela* which means “shameless woman”. Indeed, in *Diccionario enciclopédico gallego-castellano* by Eladio Rodríguez González it can be seen that *grela* in its first meaning is the synonym of *coella* “female rabbit”, and in the second meaning “it is said about a very fertile woman”. What about *garaela*, for Rodríguez González it is “partridge in heat”, and later he notes that “According to Pérez Ballesteros it means shameless and cheeky young woman” (Conde, 2011, p. 167).

Discepolo also seems to use this word to give negative characteristics of both women and luck. Both of them keep letting you down as it is described by the popular slang verb *fayar*: “To breach the given promise, the commitment made or the created expectation. Extension of the meaning of Spanish *fallar*: to get frustrated by something”

(Gobello, 1976, p. 88). As we have seen in previously analyzed tangos women often disappoint the expectations and breach promises causing the men's frustration and decadence. The final point in the relationships between man and woman and man and his luck is described by the phrase *largar parado* (*parao* is the same as *parao*). It is found in the entry of the popular slang verb *largar* which we have already analyzed in previous subsection. There is a definition of the following expressions: "*Largar durazno, largar duro, largar parado, largar por baranda*: leave somebody to his own luck; leave somebody without payment or recompense" (Gobello, 1976, p. 119). Such a comparison of luck with women points at the protagonist disillusion with life and with women. Let us take a look at the following lines which describe better this disenchantment:

Verás que todo es mentira,	You'll see that everything is lie,
verás que nada es amor,	You'll see that love doesn't exist
que al mundo nada le importa...	That the world doesn't care about you

According to Discepolo love does not exist, everybody lies and people do not give

any importance to your problems and pains.

Another tango by Discepolo called *Malevaje* (1929) also treats the theme of women. Here the protagonist is entrapped by his love to a woman. This love turned him out of a hooligan into a weak man:

Decí, por Dios, ¿qué me has dao,	Tell, by God, what has you done to me,
que estoy tan cambiao,	That I have changed so much
no sé más quien soy?	That I don't even know who I am?
El <i>malevaje</i> extrañado,	<i>Thugs</i> wierded out
me mira sin comprender...	Look at me without understanding...
Me ve perdiendo el cartel	They see that I'm losing the reputation
de <i>guapo</i> que ayer	Of a <i>show-off</i> who yesterday
brillaba en la acción...	Was standing out...
¿No ves que estoy <i>embretao</i> ,	Can't you see that I'm entrapped,
vencido y maneo	Won and caught
en tu corazón?	By your heart?

Here we can see three *lunfardo* terms. The one more connected to our theme of women is *embretao* ("entrapped") which is a past participle from the verb *embretar*, a

popular slang verb defined as follows: “To put somebody in a chute<sup>96</sup> or in stocks || To put somebody in an awkward situation or in difficulty. From Spanish *brete*: chute” (Gobello, 1976, p. 76). As it can be seen *embretao en tu corzón* is used as a metaphor “entrapped by your heart”. This metaphor underlines the power of women over men. The protagonist’s friends are shocked by the way he changed and look at him without understanding what has happened to this previously show-off guy. This situation is described with the usage of two popular slang terms: *malevaje* (“thugs”) and *guapo* (“a show-off”). The definition of *malevaje* can be found in the entry on *malevo*: “*Malevaje*: group of *malevos*” (Gobello, 1976, p. 129). The term *malevo* has already been analyzed in previous sub-section and as we saw, if it refers to people it means “Thug, troublemaker, tough” (Gobello, 1976, p. 129). *Guapo* has also been analyzed before and the meaning of this popular slang term is “arrogant”. This song shows the moral transformation of the protagonist caused by his love to a woman.

To conclude it should be repeated that the relationships between men and women are an important theme in tango lyrics. Image of a beloved woman is created by the usage of *percanta*, *grela*, *piba*. All of these words used, basically, to say “woman” but having different shades. Actions connected to the relationships between a man and a woman are described with the following verbs, nouns and past participles: *amurar* (“abandon”), *largar parao* (“abandon”), *fayar* (“let down”), *esquinazo* (“lurch”), *embretao* (“entrapped”), *encurdelarse* (“get drunk”). We observed that a man may suffer because of his beloved woman for the several reasons: the woman does not love him, and subsequently abandons him; the woman dies; the woman does not want to stay with the

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<sup>96</sup> Chute is “a narrow metal enclosure for holding or restraining livestock, in which an animal may be vaccinated, branded, etc.” (Lexico: <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/chute>).

man. All the enlisted situations makes men hurt. Unhappy love may make a man turn from boastful and confident to disappointed and helpless. It is so hard for a man to forget about the woman whom he loved and who betrayed him that he had to get drunk to stop thinking about her. The house which loses a woman becomes soon miserable, gloomy and lonesome. All in all, women are given a great power and an important role in men's life: absence of their love may provoke a deep decadence in men.

### **Conclusions**

This research aimed to identify the connection between tango lyrics and *lunfardo* and the main images created by *lunfardo* in tango lyrics. Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of 101 tango songs, it can be concluded that *lunfardo* terms are important factors to consider when analyzing tango lyrics.

Our work has led us to the conclusion that there is strong evidence of *lunfardo* usage in tango lyrics. The results indicate that 54 out of 101 tango songs contain at least one *lunfardo* term. The number of songs with 9 or more *lunfardo* terms is half that the number of songs with 1 or 2 *lunfardo* words (12 and 22 respectively). The evidence from this study suggests that popular slang words are often repeated in different songs. 10 most used *lunfardo* terms include both exclusively *lunfardo* and popular slang terms, however, when comparing the usage of these groups of *lunfardo* terms in whole the narrowed corpus it must be pointed out that popular slang terms are third higher. The poets who used more *lunfardo* terms are Celedonio Flores, Enrique Santos Discepolo, and Enrique Cadicamo. The findings of this study indicate that the major part of the songs with the highest number of *lunfardo* terms was written in the 1920s, and the content of exclusively *lunfardo* and popular slang in them is almost equal.

We have described the semantic fields of *lunfardo* terms presented in the narrowed



corpus. 151 *lunfardo* term found in the narrowed corpus provides important insights into the images created in tango lyrics by *lunfardo* vocabulary. The two most active semantic fields are Person's description and Way of life (45 and 36 *lunfardo* terms respectively) which demonstrates the social character of tango. Other important semantic fields are Interaction with others and Activities (21 and 19 *lunfardo* terms respectively). Less presented semantic fields are Body, physical actions, and Description of something (10 *lunfardo* terms each). The lowest number of words is in Feelings, psychological states, and Euphemisms semantic fields (6 and 1 respectively). Interestingly, the fields with prevailing of exclusively *lunfardo* terms are Person's description (23 *lunfardo* and 22 popular slang terms) and Interaction with others (12 *lunfardo* and 9 popular slang) while the opposite situation is seen in Way of life (14 *lunfardo* and 22 popular slang) and Activities (5 *lunfardo* and 15 popular slang) semantic fields. The evidence from this study points towards the idea of an emphasis of exclusively *lunfardo* vocabulary on the person's figure and its interaction with others. There are many words in different semantic groups which sometimes are, or can be combined to create complete images.

This paper has given an account of the most used content words in 54 songs with and 47 songs without *lunfardo* terms. The findings of this study indicate that *amor* ("love"); *corazón* ("heart"); *vida* ("life"); *noche* ("night") and *alma* ("soul") are present in the top lists of both groups of songs. The most used content words of the songs with *lunfardo* terms include as well *tango*, *hoy* ("today"); *vos* ("you"); *bandoneon*, and *barrio* ("district"). The most used content words of the songs with no *lunfardo* terms include as well *quiero* ("I want"); *nunca* ("never"); *dolor* ("pain"); *triste* ("sad"); *flor* ("flower"). There were identified some differences in other most repeated content words.

This paper has investigated five images created by *lunfardo* vocabulary in tango lyrics: *bacán(a)* (“wealthy man/woman”); *milonguera* (“fallen woman”); *mishiadura* (“poverty”); *gotán* (“tango”); *percanta* (“beloved woman”) and *meteión* (“falling in love”). All of these images show active usage of both popular slang and exclusively *lunfardo* terms.

The structure of songs about *bacán(a)* (“wealthy man/woman”) and *milonguera* (“fallen woman”) has two main elements: the young woman’s description and the male protagonist’s reproach of her new life. These songs revealed that different words are used to describe *bacán*’s money thoughtlessly spent by a young woman: *vento(-lín)* (“money”); *mango* (“peso”); *morlaco* (“peso”). Two main words to describe the rich sponsor are *bacán* (“wealthy man”) and *otario* (“fool”). An interesting conclusion was made about the words *otario* and *gil*, both of which mean “fool” but the former describes a rich fool, and the latter, a poor fool. It should be noted that there is no direct reference in songs about *milonguera* and *bacán* to their sexual intercourse.

Analysis of *mishiadura* (“poverty”) image showed that there are several words directly connected to the poverty, such as *mangar* (“scrounge”), *pechador* (“scrounger”), *cotorro* (“poor room”), and words which are not directly connected to the theme of poverty but which help in the creation of this atmosphere: *tamango* (“shoe”), *mango* (“peso”), *morfar* (“eat”). We found out that sometimes man’s poverty in tango lyrics may be provoked by a woman. An interesting conclusion was made about the verb *morfar* (“eat”). This verb apart from its main meaning “to eat” has other meanings, such as “to violate”, “to suffer” and “to kill”, however, in tango lyrics containing this verb is almost always used in its first meaning and often treats with the theme of poverty and lack of food.

The evidence from this study implies that tango, both as music and as dance, are powerful images in tango lyrics. It is associated with the careless youth, and is often framed into nostalgic memories about gone merry times. Some songs underline the suburban (*orillero*) character of tango. The ability of dancing tango is something which is praised in the men, and a good tango dancer is called *rana* or *ranún* (“sly one”), he is characterized by the ability to manage well the women. There is a quite clear machismo expressed in such tango songs. Tango is seen as a leisure activity, the way how working people spend their weekends. Some lyrics mention tango figures (*perno, sentada, parada, corte*, etc.) which complicate the understanding of the lyrics for somebody who does not dance tango. *Carancanfún(fa)* is a type of tango with *cortes* which is often mentioned in tango lyrics. What is the most relevant for our research is that tango is called the reason of the success and popularity of *lunfardo*. For example, *El Choclo* (1947) written by Enrique Santos Discepolo presents a list of some *lunfardo* terms which were given life by tango songs. In sum, Discepolo was not the only one who made this observation.

Analysis of the images of *percanta* (“beloved woman”) and *metejón* (“falling in love”) show that relationships between men and women are an important theme in tango lyrics. Image of a beloved woman is created by the usage of *percanta, grela, piba*. All of these words used to say “woman” but having different shades. Actions connected to the relationships between a man and a woman are described with the following verbs, nouns and past participles: *amurar* (“abandon”), *largar parao* (“abandon”), *fayar* (“let down”), *esquinazo* (“lurch”), *embretao* (“entrapped”), *encurdelarse* (“get drunk”). We have outlined the situations in which man may suffer because of his beloved woman: the woman does not love him, and subsequently abandons him; the woman dies; the woman does not want to stay with the man. Surprisingly, unhappy love may make a

man turn from boastful and confident to disappointed and helpless. It is so hard for a man to forget about the woman whom he loved and who betrayed him that he had to get drunk to stop thinking about her. The house which loses a woman becomes soon miserable, gloomy, and lonesome. All in all, women are given great power and an important role in men's life: absence of their love may provoke a deep decadence in men.

Based on these conclusions, tango lyrics researchers should consider the importance of *lunfardo* in the creation of the main tango images. Future studies could address other images created by *lunfardo* terms in tango songs. It would be also interesting to compare the images in tango lyrics with *lunfardo* terms and without them because the difference between them was showed by the content word analysis.

We have managed to illustrate the connection between tango lyrics and *lunfardo*, and to highlight the most important tango images created by *lunfardo* terms. By counting the number and frequency of *lunfardo* words used in tango songs we underlined the fact that *lunfardo* is an unalienable part of tango lyrics. We have found an innovative way of analyzing tango songs and its vocabulary, in particular, *lunfardo* terms. These findings add to a growing body of literature on the connection between tango and *lunfardo*.

As was mentioned in the Introduction, both tango and *lunfardo* are phenomena of language, products of immigration and are endowed with a social character. An important problem to resolve in future studies is to study tango and *lunfardo* taking into account their social character and their history, without drawing a precise line between the disciplines (history, literature studies, sociology, psychology, etc.) which can be applied to analyze them. We called our work "Tango is a piece of life" because we think that it should be studied in all its complexity.

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## Appendix A

Table 16 *Results of content words analysis of the songs without lunfardo by MAXQDA 2020 program, words repeated 10 times and more (out of total 3764 content words)*

<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
amor	67	1,78
vida	58	1,54
corazón	38	1,01
quiero	34	0,90
nunca	33	0,88
dolor	27	0,72
noche	23	0,61
triste	23	0,61
flor	20	0,53
alma	19	0,50
tanto	18	0,48
voz	18	0,48
ilusión	17	0,45
ojos	17	0,45
pasado	17	0,45
día	16	0,42
hoy	16	0,42
siempre	16	0,42
nada	15	0,40
tarde	15	0,40
ella	14	0,37
llorar	14	0,37
percal	14	0,37
besos	13	0,35
rencor	13	0,35
vivir	13	0,35
ayer	12	0,32
copa	12	0,32
viejo	12	0,32
dios	11	0,29
dulce	11	0,29
silencio	11	0,29
sólo	11	0,29
cruel	10	0,27
gris	10	0,27
igual	10	0,27
juventud	10	0,27
lado	10	0,27
olvido	10	0,27
puede	10	0,27

Table 16 *Results of content words analysis of the songs with lunfardo by MAXQDA 2020 program, words repeated 7 times and more (out of total 4811 content words)*

<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
amor	51	1,06
corazón	44	0,92
tango	36	0,75
vida	32	0,67
noche	28	0,58
hoy	23	0,48
vos	23	0,48
alma	21	0,44
bandoneón	20	0,42
barrio	20	0,42
buenosaires	19	0,40
voy	19	0,40
nunca	18	0,37
recuerdo	17	0,35
adiós	16	0,33
flor	16	0,33
llorar	16	0,33
siempre	16	0,33
canción	15	0,31
día	15	0,31
sólo	14	0,29
bajo	13	0,27
olvido	13	0,27
pobre	13	0,27
quiero	13	0,27
vieja	13	0,27
viejo	13	0,27
voz	13	0,27
cielo	12	0,25
luna	12	0,25
pena	12	0,25
piantao	12	0,25
querer	12	0,25
dos	11	0,23
luz	11	0,23
milonga	11	0,23
mismo	11	0,23
triste	11	0,23
arrabal	10	0,21
cariño	10	0,21
che	10	0,21
nada	10	0,21
querida	10	0,21

querido	10	0,21
ver	10	0,21
años	9	0,19
ayer	9	0,19
bien	9	0,19
calle	9	0,19
canto	9	0,19
ella	9	0,19
esquina	9	0,19
hecho	9	0,19
mano	9	0,19
muchachos	9	0,19
sol	9	0,19
sur	9	0,19
tanto	9	0,19
bacán	8	0,17
cabeza	8	0,17
cosas	8	0,17
frío	8	0,17
linda	8	0,17
loco	8	0,17
malena	8	0,17
morocha	8	0,17
nadie	8	0,17
ojos	8	0,17
otros	8	0,17
pebeta	8	0,17
sueño	8	0,17
tiempos	8	0,17
veces	8	0,17
ves	8	0,17
ausencia	7	0,15
buena	7	0,15
callejón	7	0,15
dolor	7	0,15
dulce	7	0,15
emoción	7	0,15
hacer	7	0,15
media	7	0,15
mientras	7	0,15
mirar	7	0,15
mujer	7	0,15
mundo	7	0,15
noches	7	0,15
pecho	7	0,15
penas	7	0,15

Number of exclusively lunfardo and popular slang terms per each song. Songs are divided into groups according to the number of lunfardo terms. Number of exclusively lunfardo terms is highlighted in bold and put in italics

#### The most “lunfa” songs

1. El bulín de la calle Ayacucho: **8** + 8 = 16
2. Margot: ***10*** + 5 = 15
3. Che papusa oí: ***10*** + 5 = 15
4. Mano a mano: **9** + 5 = 14
5. El choclo: **7** + 6 = 13
6. Melodía de arrabal: **2** + 9 = 11
7. Viejo smoking: **2** + 9 = 11

Total number of lunfardo words: 48

Total number of slang words: 47

#### “Lunfa” songs

8. Muñeca brava: **8** + 2 = 10
9. Yira... yira: **7** + 4 = 11
10. Como abrazado a un rencor: **4** + 5 = 9
11. Garufa: **6** + 3 = 9
12. Esta noche me emborracho: **1** + 9 = 10
13. Mi noche triste: **5** + 1 = 6
14. Cambalache: **4** + 2 = 6
15. Malevaje: 6

Total number of lunfardo words: 35

Total number of slang words: 32

#### Songs including some lunfardo and popular slang vocabulary

16. Che, bandoneon: 5
17. Tinta roja: 5
18. Por una cabeza: 5
19. Buenos Aires: **3** + 1 = 4
20. Tiempos viejos: **2** + 2 = 4
21. Milonguita: **2** + 2 = 4
22. La calesita: **1** + 4 = 5
23. Si soy así: **1** + 3 = 4

Total number of lunfardo words: 9

Total number of slang words: 27

#### Songs occasionally including some lunfardo and popular slang words

24. Aquel tapado de armiño: **2** + 1 = 3
25. Griseta: **2** + 1 = 3
26. Chiquilín de Bachín: **2** + 1 = 3
27. La cumparsita: **2** + 1 = 3
28. La última curda: **1** + 2 = 3
29. Mi Buenos Aires querido: 3
30. Balada para un loco: 3
31. Milonga sentimental: 3

Total number of lunfardo words: 9

Total number of slang words: 15

**Songs with less than 3 lunfardo or popular slang words**

32. A media luz: 2
33. La mariposa: 2
34. Garúa: 2
35. Cafetín de Buenos Aires: 2
36. Sueño de Barrilete: 2
37. Tomo y obligo: 2
38. Cordón: 2
39. El último organito: 2
40. Cafe “La Humedad”: 2
41. La morocha: 1
42. El esquinazo: 1
43. Adios, Pampa mia: 1
44. Canción de Buenos Aires: 1
45. Malena: 1
46. Adios, muchachos: 1
47. El patio de la morocha: 1
48. Barrio de tango: 1
49. Sur: 1
50. Golondrinas: 1
51. El corazón al sur: *1*
52. Rubias de Nueva York: 1
53. Yuyo verde: 1
54. Madreselva: 1

Total number of lunfardo words: 3

Total number of slang words: 29

**Songs with no lunfardo or popular slang words**

55. Caminito
56. Desde el alma
57. Alma de bohemio
58. Sentimiento gaucho
59. La última copa
60. El día que me quieras
61. Volvio una noche
62. Los mareados
63. La casita de mis viejos
64. Nostalgias
65. La pulpera de Santa Lucia
66. Rencor
67. Vida mia
68. Besos brujos
69. Ninguna
70. Romance de barrio
71. Percal

72. Pequeña
73. Clavel del aire
74. Volver
75. Niebla del Riachuelo
76. Gricel
77. Afiches
78. Porque la quise tanto
79. El último café
80. Nuestro balance
81. Moriré en Buenos Aires
82. Jacinto Chiclana
83. Cuesta abajo
84. Cuartito azul
85. Uno
86. Naranja en flor
87. María
88. Cristal
89. Desencuentro
90. Quedemonos aquí
91. Canción desesperada
92. Fuimos
93. Nada
94. Cada vez que me recuerdes
95. En esta tarde gris
96. Quiero verte una vez más
97. Desencanto
98. Silencio
99. El pañuelito
100. La copa del olvido
101. Alguien le dice al tango

### **The most used exclusively lunfardo and popular slang words**

Exclusively lunfardo terms are written in capital letters

- |     |                       |   |
|-----|-----------------------|---|
| 1.  | BACÁN(-A)             | 9 |
| 2.  | ABACANADA             | 1 |
| 3.  | Malevo                | 8 |
| 4.  | Malevaje              | 1 |
| 5.  | Arrabal               | 8 |
| 6.  | Pebeta                | 7 |
| 7.  | MINA                  | 5 |
| 8.  | Cotorro(-ito)         | 5 |
| 9.  | GIL                   | 4 |
| 10. | OTARIO                | 4 |
| 11. | Metejón(-dura)        | 4 |
| 12. | Rana(-ún)             | 4 |
| 13. | Botón                 | 4 |
| 14. | ENGRUPIR(derivations) | 3 |

15. GRUPO	1
16. PERCANTA	3
17. COCÓ	3
18. BERRETÍN	3
19. Fueye	3
20. Barra	4
21. Yuyo	3
22. Catrera	2
23. Papa(-usa)	3
24. Gigoló	3
25. (Re)chifla(d)o	3
26. CHAMUYO	2
27. CHAMUYARTE	1
28. GRELA	2
29. CARANCANFÚN(-FA)	2
30. DE MI FLOR	2
31. CURDA	2
32. CAFISHO	2
33. GOTÁN	2
34. CAMPANEAR (derivations)	2
35. BULÍN	2
36. YIRA	2
37. RAJAR (derivations)	2
38. VENTO(-LÍN)	2
39. CAMBA	2
40. Paica	2
41. Canyenge	2
42. Gavión	2
43. Reo	2
44. Embala(d)o	2
45. Cinchar(-ndo)	2
46. Tapera	2
47. Cortar(se)	2
48. Fulero	2
49. Pucho	2
50. Timba	2
51. Boliche	2
52. Orillero	2
53. LABURA	1
54. LABURO	1
55. PIANTAO	1
56. SE PIANTA	1
57. CUMPARSITA	1
58. SHUSHETA	1
59. CANA	1
60. MISHIADURA	1
61. SE (TE) EMBROCA	1
62. PELANDRUNA	1
63. AFILÓ	1
64. REMANYE	1



65. GAMBETEABAS	1
66. ACAMALA	1
67. AMURASTE	1
68. ME ENCURDELO	1
69. CAMBALACHE	1
70. CHORROS	1
71. MANGO	1
72. MORFAR	1
73. MANYÉS	1
74. GARABA	1
75. PARLÁS	1
76. ESCABÍAS	1
77. DIQUEROS	1
78. MARROCO	1
79. MISTONGO	1
80. RANTE	1
81. GRISETA	1
82. MANGUÉ	1
83. LINYERA	1
84. CHATAS	1
85. GARUFA	1
86. POSTA	1
87. BATÍS	1
88. CHIQUÉ	1
89. GUADAÑA	1
90. ZABECA	1
91. PIBA	1
92. PIBE	1
93. Cimarrón	1
94. Guapo	1
95. Guapear	1
96. afranchutada	1
97. parar la olla	1
98. Esquinazo	1
99. Bailongo	1
100. de meta y ponga	1
101. a la marchanta	1
102. Fandango	1
103. Estar en orsay	1
104. Gomina	1
105. Pilchas	1
106. Largó	1
107. Largue parao	1
108. Morlacos	1
109. Descolado	1
110. Mueble	1
111. Daga	1
112. Merengue	1
113. Afana	1
114. Fayando	1

115.	Tamangos	1
116.	Se dió juego de pileta	1
117.	Taitas	1
118.	Sentada	1
119.	Patinarlo	1
120.	Púas	1
121.	Timbear	1
122.	Fondín	1
123.	Tano	1
124.	Embretao	1
125.	Coco	1
126.	Ñata	1
127.	De la zurda	1
128.	Barrilete	1
129.	Purrete	1
130.	PIBERÍO	1
131.	Hocicar	1
132.	Canejo	1
133.	Tauras	1
134.	Broncas	1
135.	Entreveros	1
136.	Fané	1
137.	Descangayada	1
138.	Pechador	1
139.	Cachivache	1
140.	Envenenao	1
141.	Me mamo	1
142.	Pingo	1
143.	Fija	1
144.	Me juego entero	1
145.	Pucha	1
146.	Vareador	1
147.	Corte	1
148.	Breva	1
149.	Chaira	1
150.	Cajón	1

## Appendix B

Analyzed songs from the book *El tango y sus protagonistas* (“Tango and its protagonists”) by Hector Romay

1. La morocha  
Yo soy la morocha,  
la más agraciada,

la más renombrada  
de esta población.  
Soy la que al paisano  
muy de madrugada  
brinda un cimarrón.

Yo, con dulce acento,  
junto a mi ranchito,  
canto un estilito  
con tierna pasión,  
mientras que mi dueño  
sale al trotecito  
en su redomón.

Soy la morocha argentina,  
la que no siente pesares  
y alegre pasa la vida  
con sus cantares.  
Soy la gentil compañera  
del noble gaucho porteño,  
la que conserva el cariño  
para su dueño.

Yo soy la morocha  
de mirar ardiente,  
la que en su alma siente  
el fuego de amor.  
Soy la que al criollito  
más noble y valiente  
ama con ardor.

En mi amado rancho,  
bajo la enramada,  
en noche plateada,  
con dulce emoción,  
le canto al pampero,  
a mi patria amada  
y a mi fiel amor.

Soy la morocha argentina,  
la que no siente pesares  
y alegre pasa la vida  
con sus cantares.  
Soy la gentil compañera  
del noble gaucho porteño,  
la que conserva el cariño  
para su dueño.

## 2. La cumparsita

Si supieras,  
que aún dentro de mi alma,  
conservo aquel cariño  
que tuve para ti...  
Quién sabe si supieras  
que nunca te he olvidado,  
volviendo a tu pasado  
te acordarás de mí...

Los amigos ya no vienen  
ni siquiera a visitarme,  
nadie quiere consolarme  
en mi aflicción...  
Desde el día que te fuiste  
siento angustias en mi pecho,  
decí, percanta, ¿qué has hecho  
de mi pobre corazón?

Sin embargo,  
yo siempre te recuerdo  
con el cariño santo  
que tuve para ti.  
Y estás dentro de mi alma,  
pedazo de mi vida,  
en la ilusión querida  
que nunca olvidaré.

Al cotorro abandonado  
ya ni el sol de la mañana  
asoma por la ventana  
como cuando estabas vos.  
Y aquel perrito compañero,  
que por tu ausencia no comía,  
al verme solo el otro día  
también se me fue.  
CUMPARSITA

3. El esquinazo  
Nada me importa de tu amor, golpeá nomás...  
el corazón me dijo,  
que tu amor fue una falsía,  
aunque juraste y juraste que eras mía.  
No llares más, no insistas más, yo te daré...  
el libro del recuerdo,  
para que guardes las flores del olvido  
porque vos lo has querido  
el esquinazo yo te doy.

Fue por tu culpa que he tomado otros caminos  
sin tino... Vidita mía.

Jamás pensé que llegaría este momento  
que siento,  
la más terrible realidad...  
Tu ingratitud me ha hecho sufrir un desencanto  
si tanto... te quería.  
Mas no te creas que por esto guardo encono  
Perdono  
tu más injusta falsedad.

#### 4. El choclo

Con este tango que es burlón y compadrito  
se ató dos alas la ambición de mi suburbio;  
con este tango nació el tango, y como un grito  
salió del sórdido barrial buscando el cielo;  
conjuro extraño de un amor hecho cadencia  
que abrió caminos sin más ley que la esperanza,  
mezcla de rabia, de dolor, de fe, de ausencia  
llorando en la inocencia de un ritmo jugueteón.

Por tu milagro de notas agoreras  
nacieron, sin pensarlo, las paicas y las grelas,  
luna de charcos, canyengue en las caderas  
y un ansia fiera en la manera de querer...

Al evocarte, tango querido,  
siento que tiemblan las baldosas de un bailongo  
y oigo el rezongo de mi pasado...  
Hoy, que no tengo más a mi madre,  
siento que llega en punta 'e pie para besarme  
cuando tu canto nace al son de un bandoneón.

Carancanfunfa se hizo al mar con tu bandera  
y en un perno mezcló a París con Puente Alsina.  
fuiste compadre del gavión y de la mina  
y hasta comadre del bacán y la pebeta.  
Por vos shusheta, cana, reo y mishiadura  
se hicieron voces al nacer con tu destino...  
¡Misas de falda, querosén, tajo y cuchillo,  
que ardió en los conventillos y ardió en mi corazón.

#### 5. Caminito

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

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

Desde que se fue

triste vivo yo,  
caminito amigo,  
yo también me voy...

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

Caminito que todas las tardes  
feliz recorría cantando mi amor,  
no le digas, si vuelve a pasar,  
que mi llanto tu suelo regó.  
Caminito cubierto de cardos,  
la mano del tiempo tu huella borró...  
Yo a tu lado quisiera caer  
y que el tiempo nos mate a los dos.

#### 6. Che, bandoneon

El duende de tu son, che bandoneón,  
se apiada del dolor de los demás,  
y al estrujar tu fueye dormilón  
se arrima al corazón que sufre más.  
Esthercita y Mimí como Ninón,  
dejando sus destinos de percal  
vistieron al final mortajas de rayón,  
al eco funeral de tu canción.

Bandoneón,  
hoy es noche de fandango  
y puedo confesarte la verdad,  
copa a copa, pena a pena, tango a tango,  
embalado en la locura  
del alcohol y la amargura.  
Bandoneón,  
para qué nombrarla tanto,  
no ves que está de olvido el corazón  
y ella vuelve noche a noche como un canto  
en las gotas de tu llanto,  
¡che bandoneón!

Tu canto es el amor que no se dio  
y el cielo que soñamos una vez,  
y el fraternal amigo que se hundió  
cinchando en la tormenta de un querer.  
Y esas ganas tremendas de llorar  
que a veces nos inundan sin razón,  
y el trago de licor que obliga a recordar  
si el alma está en orsay, che bandoneón.

7. Desde el alma  
Alma, si tanto te han querido,  
¿por qué te niegas al olvido?  
¿Por qué prefieres  
llorar lo que has perdido,  
buscar lo que has querido,  
llamar lo que murió?

Vives inútilmente triste  
y sé que nunca mereciste  
pagar con penas  
la culpa de ser buena,  
tan buena como fuiste  
por amor.

Fue lo que empezó una vez,  
lo que después dejó de ser.  
Lo que al final  
por culpa de un error  
fue noche amarga del corazón.

¡Deja esas cartas!  
¡Vuelve a tu antigua ilusión!  
Junto al dolor  
que abre una herida  
llega la vida  
trayendo otro amor.

Alma, no entornes tu ventana  
al sol feliz de la mañana.  
No desesperes,  
que el sueño más querido  
es el que más nos hiere,  
es el que duele más.

Vives inútilmente triste  
y sé que nunca mereciste  
pagar con penas  
la culpa de ser buena,  
tan buena como fuiste  
por amor.

8. Alma de bohemio  
Peregrino y soñador,  
cantar  
quiero mi fantasía  
y la loca poesía  
que hay en mi corazón,  
y lleno de amor y de alegría,  
volcaré mi canción.

Siempre sentí  
la dulce ilusión,  
de estar viviendo  
mi pasión...  
Si es que vivo lo que sueño,  
yo sueño todo lo que canto,  
por eso mi encanto  
es el amor.  
Mi pobre alma de bohemio  
quiere acariciar  
y como una flor  
perfumar.

En mis noches de dolor,  
a hablar  
me voy con las estrellas  
y las cosas más bellas,  
despierto he de soñar,  
porque le confío a ellas  
toda mi sed de amar.

Siempre sentí  
la dulce ilusión,  
de estar viviendo  
mi pasión.  
Yo busco en los ojos celestes  
y renegridas cabelleras,  
pasiones sinceras,  
dulce emoción.  
Y en mi triste vida errante  
llena de ilusión,  
quiero dar todo  
mi corazón.

9. A media luz  
Corrientes 3, 4, 8,  
segundo piso, ascensor.  
No hay porteros ni vecinos.  
Adentro, cocktail y amor.  
Pisito que puso Maple:  
piano, estera y velador,  
un teléfono que contesta,  
una victrola que llora  
viejos tangos de mi flor  
y un gato de porcelana  
pa' que no maulle al amor.

Y todo a media luz,  
que es un brujo el amor,



a media luz los besos,  
a media luz los dos.  
Y todo a media luz  
crepúsculo interior.  
¡Qué suave terciopelo  
la media luz de amor!

Juncal 12, 24  
Telefoneá sin temor.  
De tarde, té con masitas;  
de noche, tango y cantar.  
Los domingos, tés danzantes;  
los lunes, desolación,  
Hay de todo en la casita:  
almohadones y divanes;  
come en botica, cocó;  
alfombras que no hacen ruido  
y mesa puesta al amor.

10. Sentimiento gaucho  
En un viejo almacén del Paseo Colón  
donde van los que tienen perdida la fe,  
todo sucio, harapiento, una tarde encontré  
a un borracho sentado en oscuro rincón.  
Al mirarle sentí una profunda emoción  
porque en su alma un dolor secreto adiviné  
y, sentándome cerca, a su lado, le hablé,  
y él, entonces, me hizo esta cruel confesión.  
Ponga, amigo, atención.

Sabe que es condición de varón el sufrir.  
La mujer que yo quería con todo mi corazón  
se me ha ido con un hombre que la supo seducir  
y, aunque al irse mi alegría tras de ella se llevó,  
no quisiera verla nunca... Que en la vida sea feliz  
con el hombre que la tiene pa' su bien... o qué sé yo.  
Porque todo aquel amor que por ella yo sentí  
lo cortó de un solo tajo con el filo'e su traición...

Pero inútil... No puedo, aunque quiera, olvidar  
el recuerdo de la que fue mi único amor.  
Para ella ha de ser como el trébol de olor  
que perfuma al que la vida le va a arrancar.  
Y, si acaso algún día quisiera volver  
a mi lado otra vez, yo la he de perdonar.  
Si por celos a un hombre se puede matar  
se perdona cuando habla muy fuerte el querer  
a cualquiera mujer.

11. La última copa

Eche amigo, nomás, écheme y llene  
hasta el borde la copa de champán,  
que esta noche de farra y de alegría  
el dolor que hay en mi alma quiero ahogar.  
Es la última farra de mi vida,  
de mi vida, muchachos, que se va...  
mejor dicho, se ha ido tras de aquella  
que no supo mi amor nunca apreciar.

Yo la quise, muchachos, y la quiero  
y jamás yo la podré olvidar;  
yo me emborracho por ella  
y ella quién sabe qué hará.  
Eche, mozo, más champán,  
que todo mi dolor,  
bebiendo lo he de ahogar;  
y si la ven,  
muchachos, díganle  
que ha sido por su amor  
que mi vida ya se fue.

Y brindemos, nomás, la última copa,  
que tal vez también ella ahora estará  
ofreciendo en algún brindis su boca  
y otra boca feliz la besará.  
Eche, amigo, nomás, écheme y llene  
hasta el borde la copa de champán,  
que mi vida se ha ido tras de aquella  
que no supo mi amor nunca apreciar.

## 12. Tiempos viejos

¿Te acordás, hermano? ¡Qué tiempos aquéllos!  
Eran otros hombres más hombres los nuestros.  
No se conocían cocó ni morfina,  
los muchachos de antes no usaban gomina.  
¿Te acordás, hermano? ¡Qué tiempos aquéllos!  
¡Veinticinco abriles que no volverán!  
Veinticinco abriles, volver a tenerlos,  
si cuando me acuerdo me pongo a llorar.

¿Dónde están los muchachos de entonces?  
Barra antigua de ayer ¿dónde está?  
Yo y vos solos quedamos, hermano,  
yo y vos solos para recordar...  
¿Dónde están las mujeres aquéllas,  
minas fieles, de gran corazón,  
que en los bailes de Laura peleaban  
cada cual defendiendo su amor?

¿Te acordás, hermano, la rubia Mireya,

que quité en lo de Hansen al loco Cepeda?  
Casi me suicido una noche por ella  
y hoy es una pobre mendiga harapienta.  
¿Te acordás, hermano, lo linda que era?  
Se formaba rueda pa' verla bailar...  
Cuando por la calle la veo tan vieja  
doy vuelta la cara y me pongo a llorar.  
COCÓ  
MINAS

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

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

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

14. Margot  
Se te embroca desde lejos, pelandruna abacanada,  
que has nacido en la miseria de un convento de arrabal...  
Porque hay algo que te vende, yo no sé si es la mirada,  
la manera de sentarte, de mirar, de estar parada  
o ese cuerpo acostumbrado a las pilchas de percal.  
Ese cuerpo que hoy te marca los compases tentadores  
del canyengue de algún tango en los brazos de algún gil,

mientras triunfa tu silueta y tu traje de colores,  
entre el humo de los puros y el champán de Armenonville.

Son macanas, no fue un guapo haragán ni prepotente  
ni un cafisho de averías el que al vicio te largó...  
Vos rodaste por tu culpa y no fue inocentemente...  
¡berretines de bacana que tenías en la mente  
desde el día que un magnate cajetilla te afiló!

Yo recuerdo, no tenías casi nada que ponerte,  
hoy usas ajuar de seda con rositas rococó,  
¡me revienta tu presencia... pagaría por no verte...  
si hasta el nombre te han cambiado como has cambiado de suerte:  
ya no sos mi Margarita, ahora te llaman Margot!

Ahora vas con los otarios a pasarla de bacana  
a un lujoso reservado del Petit o del Julien,  
y tu vieja, ¡pobre vieja! lava toda la semana  
pa' poder parar la olla, con pobreza franciscana,  
en el triste conventillo alumbrado a kerosén.

#### 15. Mano a mano

Rechiflado en mi tristeza, te evoco y veo que has sido  
en mi pobre vida paria sólo una buena mujer.  
Tu presencia de bacana puso calor en mi nido,  
fuiste buena, consecuente, y yo sé que me has querido  
como no quisiste a nadie, como no podrás querer.  
Se dio el juego de remanye cuando vos, pobre percanta,  
gambeteabas la pobreza en la casa de pensión.  
Hoy sos toda una bacana, la vida te ríe y canta,  
los morlacos del otario los jugás a la marchanta  
como juega el gato maula con el mísero ratón.  
Hoy tenés el mate lleno de infelices ilusiones,  
te engrupieron los otarios, las amigas y el gavión;  
la milonga, entre magnates, con sus locas tentaciones,  
donde triunfan y claudican milongueras pretensiones,  
se te ha entrado muy adentro en tu pobre corazón.  
Nada debo agradecerte, mano a mano hemos quedado;  
no me importa lo que has hecho, lo que hacés ni lo que harás...  
Los favores recibidos creo habértelos pagado  
y, si alguna deuda chica sin querer se me ha olvidado,  
en la cuenta del otario que tenés se la cargás.  
Mientras tanto, que tus triunfos, pobres triunfos pasajeros,  
sean una larga fila de riquezas y placer;  
que el bacán que te acamala tenga pesos duraderos,  
que te abrás de las paradas con cafishios milongueros  
y que digan los muchachos: Es una buena mujer.  
Y mañana, cuando seas descolado mueble viejo  
y no tengas esperanzas en tu pobre corazón,  
si precisás una ayuda, si te hace falta un consejo,  
acordate de este amigo que ha de jugarse el pellejo

pa'ayudarte en lo que pueda cuando llegue la ocasión.

16. Mi Buenos Aires Querido

Mi Buenos Aires querido  
cuando yo te vuelva a ver,  
no habrás más penas ni olvido.

El farolito de la calle en que nací  
fue el centinela de mis promesas de amor,  
bajo su quieta lucecita yo la vi  
a mi pebeta, luminosa como un sol.  
Hoy que la suerte quiere que te vuelva a ver,  
ciudad porteña de mi único querer,  
y oigo la queja  
de un bandoneón,  
dentro del pecho pide rienda el corazón.

Mi Buenos Aires  
tierra florida  
donde mi vida  
terminaré.  
Bajo tu amparo  
no hay desengaños,  
vuelan los años,  
se olvida el dolor.  
En caravana  
los recuerdos pasan,  
con una estela  
dulce de emoción.  
Quiero que sepas  
que al evocarte,  
se van las penas  
de mi corazón.

La ventanita de mi calle de arrabal.  
donde sonrío una muchachita en flor,  
quiero de nuevo yo volver a contemplar  
aquellos ojos que acarician al mirar.  
En la cortada más maleva una canción  
dice su ruego de coraje y de pasión,  
una promesa  
y un suspirar,  
borró una lágrima de pena aquel cantar.

Mi Buenos Aires querido,  
cuando yo te vuelva a ver,  
no habrá más penas ni olvido.

17. El día que me quieras  
Acaricia mi ensueño  
el suave murmullo de tu suspirar,

¡como ríe la vida  
si tus ojos negros me quieren mirar!  
Y si es mío el amparo  
de tu risa leve que es como un cantar,  
ella aquieta mi herida,  
¡todo, todo se olvida..!

El día que me quieras  
la rosa que engalana  
se vestirá de fiesta  
con su mejor color.  
Al viento las campanas  
dirán que ya eres mía  
y locas las fontanas  
me contarán tu amor.  
La noche que me quieras  
desde el azul del cielo,  
las estrellas celosas  
nos mirarán pasar  
y un rayo misterioso  
hará nido en tu pelo,  
luciérnaga curiosa  
que verá... ¡que eres mi consuelo..!

Recitado:

El día que me quieras  
no habrá más que armonías,  
será clara la aurora  
y alegre el manantial.  
Traerá quieta la brisa  
rumor de melodías  
y nos darán las fuentes  
su canto de cristal.  
El día que me quieras  
endulzará sus cuerdas  
el pájaro cantor,  
florecerá la vida,  
no existirá el dolor...

La noche que me quieras  
desde el azul del cielo,  
las estrellas celosas  
nos mirarán pasar  
y un rayo misterioso  
hará nido en tu pelo,  
luciérnaga curiosa  
que verá... ¡que eres mi consuelo!

18. Volvió una noche  
Volvio una noche, no la esperaba,

había en su rostro tanta ansiedad  
que tuve pena de recordarle  
su felonía y su crueldad.  
Me dijo humilde: "Si me perdonas,  
el tiempo viejo otra vez vendrá.  
La primavera es nuestra vida,  
verás que todo nos sonreirá"

Mentira, mentira, yo quise decirle,  
las horas que pasan ya no vuelven más.  
Y así mi cariño al tuyo enlazado  
es sólo una mueca del viejo pasado  
que ya no se puede resucitar.  
Callé mi amargura y tuve piedad.  
Sus ojos azules, muy grandes se abrieron,  
mi pena inaudita pronto comprendieron  
y con una mueca de mujer vencida  
me dijo: "Es la vida". Y no la vi más.

Volvió esa noche, nunca la olvido,  
con la mirada triste y sin luz.  
Y tuve miedo de aquel espectro  
que fue locura en mi juventud.  
Se fue en silencio, sin un reproche,  
busqué un espejo y me quise mirar.  
Había en mi frente tantos inviernos  
que también ella tuvo piedad.

#### 19. Los mareados

Rara..  
como encendida  
te hallé bebiendo  
linda y fatal...  
Bebías  
y en el fragor del champán,  
loca, reías por no llorar...  
Pena  
Me dio encontrarte  
pues al mirarte  
yo vi brillar  
tus ojos  
con un eléctrico ardor,  
tus bellos ojos que tanto adoré...

Esta noche, amiga mía,  
el alcohol nos ha embriagado...  
¡Qué importa que se rían  
y nos llamen los mareados!  
Cada cual tiene sus penas  
y nosotros las tenemos...

Esta noche beberemos  
porque ya no volveremos  
a vernos más...

Hoy vas a entrar en mi pasado,  
en el pasado de mi vida...  
Tres cosas lleva mi alma herida:  
amor... pesar... dolor...  
Hoy vas a entrar en mi pasado  
y hoy nuevas sendas tomaremos...  
¡Qué grande ha sido nuestro amor!...  
Y, sin embargo, ¡ay!,  
mirá lo que quedó...

20. La casita de mis viejos  
Barrio tranquilo de mi ayer,  
como un triste atardecer,  
a tu esquina vuelvo viejo...  
Vuelvo más viejo,  
la vida me ha cambiado...  
en mi cabeza un poco de plata  
me ha dejado.  
Yo fui viajero del dolor  
y en mi andar de soñador  
comprendí mi mal de vida,  
y cada beso lo borré con una copa,  
las mujeres siempre son las que matan la ilusión.  
(en un juego de ilusión repartí mi corazón.)

Vuelvo vencido a la casita de mis viejos,  
cada cosa es un recuerdo que se agita en mi memoria,  
mis veinte abriles me llevaron lejos...  
locuras juveniles, la falta de consejo.  
Hay en la casa un hondo y cruel silencio huraño,  
y al golpear, como un extraño,  
me recibe el viejo criado...  
Habré cambiado totalmente, que el anciano por la voz  
tan sólo me reconoció.

Pobre viejita la encontré  
enfermita; yo le hablé  
y me miró con unos ojos...  
Con esos ojos  
nublados por el llanto  
como diciéndome porqué tardaste tanto...  
Ya nunca más he de partir  
y a tu lado he de sentir  
el calor de un gran cariño...  
Sólo una madre nos perdona en esta vida,  
es la única verdad,



es mentira lo demás.

#### 21. Nostalgias

Quiero emborrachar mi corazón  
para apagar un loco amor  
que más que amor es un sufrir...  
Y aquí vengo para eso,  
a borrar antiguos besos  
en los besos de otras bocas...  
Si su amor fue "flor de un día"  
¿porqué causa es siempre mía  
esa cruel preocupación?  
Quiero por los dos mi copa alzar  
para olvidar mi obstinación  
y más la vuelvo a recordar.

#### Nostalgias

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

Gime, bandoneón, tu tango gris,  
quizá a ti te hiera igual  
algún amor sentimental...  
Llora mi alma de fantoche  
sola y triste en esta noche,  
noche negra y sin estrellas...  
Si las copas traen consuelo  
aquí estoy con mi desvelo  
para ahogarlos de una vez...  
Quiero emborrachar mi corazón  
para después poder brindar  
"por los fracasos del amor"

#### 22. La pulpera de Santa Lucía

Era rubia y sus ojos celestes  
reflejaban la gloria del día  
y cantaba como una calandria  
la pulpera de Santa Lucía.

Era flor de la vieja parroquia.  
¿Quién fue el gaucho que no la quería?

Los soldados de cuatro cuarteles  
suspiraban en la pulpería.

Le cantó el payador mazorquero  
con un dulce gemir de vihuelas  
en la reja que olía a jazmines,  
en el patio que olía a diamelas.

"Con el alma te quiero, pulpera,  
y algún día tendrás que ser mía,  
mientras llenan las noches del barrio  
las guitarras de Santa Lucía".

La llevó un payador de Lavalle  
cuando el año cuarenta moría;  
ya no alumbran sus ojos celestes  
la parroquia de Santa Lucía.

No volvieron los trompas de Rosas  
a cantarle vidalas y cielos.  
En la reja de la pulpería  
los jazmines lloraban de celos.

Y volvió el payador mazorquero  
a cantar en el patio vacío  
la doliente y postrer serenata  
que llevábase el viento del río:

¿Dónde estás con tus ojos celestes,  
oh pulpera que no fuiste mía?"  
¡Cómo lloran por ti las guitarras,  
las guitarras de Santa Lucía!

### 23. La mariposa

No es que esté arrepentido  
de haberte querido tanto;  
lo que me apena es tu olvido  
y tu traición  
me sume en amargo llanto.  
¡Si vieras! Estoy tan triste  
que canto por no llorar...  
Si para tu bien te fuiste  
para tu bien  
te tengo que perdonar.

Aquella tarde que te vi  
tu estampa me gustó,  
pebeta de arrabal,  
y sin saber por qué yo te seguí  
y el corazón te di

y fue tan sólo por mi mal.  
Mirá si fue sincero mi querer  
que nunca imaginé  
la hiel de tu traición...

¡Qué solo y triste me quedé,  
sin amor y sin fe  
y derrotado el corazón!

Después de libar traidora  
en el rosal de mi amor  
te marchas, engañadora,  
para buscar  
el encanto de otra flor...  
Y buscando la más pura,  
la de más lindo color,  
la ciegas con tu hermosura

para después  
engañarla con tu amor.

Ten cuidado, mariposa,  
de los sentidos amores...  
No te cieguen los fulgores  
de alguna falsa pasión  
porque entonces pagarás  
toda tu traición,  
toda tu maldad.

#### 24. Rencor

Rencor, mi viejo rencor,  
dejáme olvidar  
la cobarde traición.  
¡No ves que no puedo más,  
que ya me he secado  
de tanto llorar!  
Dejá que viva otra vez  
y olvide el dolor  
que ayer me cacheteó...  
Rencor, yo quiero volver  
a ser lo que fui...  
Yo quiero vivir...

Este odio maldito  
que llevo en las venas  
me amarga la vida  
como una condena.  
El mal que me han hecho  
es herida abierta  
que me inunda el pecho  
de rabia y de hiel.

La odian mis ojos  
porque la miraron.  
Mis labios la odian  
porque la besaron.  
La odio con toda  
la fuerza de mi alma  
y es tan fuerte mi odio  
como fue mi amor.

Rencor, mi viejo rencor,  
no quiero sufrir  
esta pena sin fin...  
Si ya me has muerto una vez  
¿por qué llevaré  
la muerte en mi ser?  
Ya sé que no tiene perdón...  
Ya sé que fue vil  
y fue cruel su traición...  
Por eso, viejo rencor,  
dejáme vivir  
por lo que sufrí.

Dios quiera que un día  
la encuentre en la vida  
llorando vencida  
su triste pasado  
pa' escupirle encima  
todo este desprecio  
que babea mi vida  
de amargo rencor.  
La odio por el daño  
de mi amor deshecho  
y por una duda  
que me escarba el pecho.  
No repitas nunca  
lo que vi' a decirte:  
rencor, tengo miedo  
de que seas amor.

25. Vida mía  
Siempre igual es el camino  
que ilumina y dora el sol...  
Si parece que el destino  
más lo alarga  
para mi dolor.

Y este verde suelo,  
donde crece el cardo,  
lejos toca el cielo  
cerca de mi amor...

Y de cuando en cuando un nido  
para que lo envidie yo.

Vida mía, lejos más te quiero.  
Vida mía, piensa en mi regreso,  
Sé que el oro  
no tendrá tus besos  
Y es por eso que te quiero más.  
Vida mía,  
hasta apuro el aliento  
acercando el momento  
de acariciar felicidad.  
Sos mi vida  
y quisiera llevarte  
a mi lado prendida  
y así ahogar mi soledad.

Vida mía  
yo quisiera llevarte  
a mi lado prendida  
y así ahogar mi soledad.

26. Canción de Buenos Aires  
Buenos Aires, cuando lejos te vi  
sólo hallaba consuelo  
en las notas de un tango dulzón  
que lloraba el bandoneón.  
Buenos Aires, suspirando por ti  
bajo el sol de otro cielo,  
cuando lloró mi corazón  
escuchando tu nostálgica canción.

Canción maleva, canción de Buenos Aires,  
hay algo en tus entrañas que vive y que perdura,  
canción maleva, lamento de amargura,  
sonrisa de esperanza, sollozo de pasión.  
Este es el tango, canción de Buenos Aires,  
nacido en el suburbio, que hoy reina en todo el mundo;  
este es el tango que llevo muy profundo,  
clavado en lo más hondo del criollo corazón.

Buenos Aires, donde el tango nació,  
tierra mía querida,  
yo quisiera poderte ofrendar  
toda el alma en mi cantar.  
Y le pido a mi destino el favor  
de que al fin de mi vida  
oiga el llorar del bandoneón,  
entonando tu nostálgica canción.

27. Besos brujos

¡Déjame, no quiero que me beses!  
Por tu culpa estoy sufriendo  
la tortura de mis penas...  
¡Déjame, no quiero que me toques!  
Me lastiman esas manos,  
me lastiman y me queman  
No prolongues más mi desventura,  
si eres hombre bueno así lo harás.  
Deja que prosiga mi camino,  
te lo pido a tu conciencia,  
no te puedo amar.

Besos brujos, besos brujos  
que son una cadena  
de desdicha y de dolor.  
Besos brujos...  
yo no quiero que mi boca maldecida  
traiga más desesperanzas  
en mi alma... en mi vida...  
Besos brujos...  
¡Ah, si pudiera arrancarme  
de los labios esta maldición!

¡Déjame, no quiero que me beses!  
Yo no quiero que me toques,  
lo que quiero es libertarme...  
Nuevas esperanzas en tu vida  
te traerán el dulce olvido,  
pues tienes que olvidarme.  
Deja que prosiga mi camino,  
que es la salvación para los dos...  
¿Que ha de ser tu vida al lado mío?  
¡El infierno y el vacío!  
Tu amor sin mi amor.

#### 28. Milonguita

¿Te acordás, Milonguita? Vos eras  
la pebeta más linda 'e Chiclana;  
la pollera cortona y las trenzas,  
y en las trenzas un beso de sol.  
Y en aquellas noches de verano,  
¿qué soñaba tu almita, mujer,  
al oír en la esquina algún tango  
chamuyarte bajito de amor?

Estercita,  
hoy te llaman Milonguita,  
flor de noche y de placer,  
flor de lujo y cabaret.  
Milonguita,

los hombres te han hecho mal  
y hoy darías toda tu alma  
por vestirme de percal.

Cuando sales por la madrugada,  
Milonguita, de aquel cabaret,  
toda tu alma temblando de frío  
dices: ¡Ay, si pudiera querer!...  
Y entre el vino y el último tango  
p'al cotorro te saca un bacán...  
¡Ay, qué sola, Estercita, te sientes!  
Si llorás...¡dicen que es el champán!

#### 29. Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires la Reina del Plata,  
Buenos Aires mi tierra querida;  
escuchá mi canción  
que con ella va mi vida.

En mis horas de fiebre y orgía,  
harto ya de placer y locura,  
en ti pienso patria mía  
para calmar mi amargura.

Noches porteñas, bajo tu manto  
dichas y llanto muy juntos van.  
Risas y besos, farra corrida,  
todo se olvida con el champán.

Y a la salida de la milonga  
se oye a una nena pidiendo pan,  
por algo es que en el gotán  
siempre solloza una pena.

Y al compás rezongón de los fueyes  
un bacán a la mina la embrolla,  
y el llorar del violín va  
pintando el alma criolla.

Buenos Aires, cual a una querida  
si estás lejos mejor hay que amarte,  
y decir toda la vida  
antes morir que olvidarte.

#### 30. Milonga sentimental

Milonga pa' recordarte,  
milonga sentimental.  
Otros se quejan llorando,  
yo canto por no llorar.  
Tu amor se secó de golpe,  
nunca dijiste por qué.  
Yo me consuelo pensando

que fue traición de mujer.

Varón, pa' quererte mucho,  
varón, pa' desearte el bien,  
varón, pa' olvidar agravios  
porque ya te perdoné.  
Tal vez no lo sepas nunca,  
tal vez no lo puedas creer,  
¡tal vez te provoque risa  
verme tirao a tus pies!

Es fácil pegar un tajo  
pa' cobrar una traición,  
o jugar en una daga  
la suerte de una pasión.  
Pero no es fácil cortarse  
los tientos de un metejón,  
cuando están bien amarrados  
al palo del corazón.

Milonga que hizo tu ausencia.  
Milonga de evocación.  
Milonga para que nunca  
la canten en tu balcón.  
Pa' que vuelvas con la noche  
y te vayas con el sol.  
Pa' decirte que sí a veces  
o pa' gritarte que no.

31. Mi noche triste  
Percanta que me amuraste  
en lo mejor de mi vida,  
dejándome el alma herida  
y espina en el corazón,  
sabiendo que te quería,  
que vos eras mi alegría  
y mi sueño abrasador,  
para mí ya no hay consuelo  
y por eso me encurdelo  
pa'olvidarme de tu amor.

Cuando voy a mi cotorro  
y lo veo desarreglado,  
todo triste, abandonado,  
me dan ganas de llorar;  
me detengo largo rato  
campaneando tu retrato  
pa poderme consolar.

Ya no hay en el bulín



aquellos lindos frasquitos,  
arreglados con moñitos  
todos del mismo color.  
El espejo está empañado  
y parece que ha llorado  
por la ausencia de tu amor.

La guitarra, en el ropero  
todavía está colgada:  
nadie en ella canta nada  
ni hace sus cuerdas vibrar.  
Y la lámpara del cuarto  
también tu ausencia ha sentido  
porque su luz no ha querido  
mi noche triste alumbrar.

### 32. Cambalache

Que el mundo fue y será una porquería  
ya lo sé...  
(¡En el quinientos seis  
y en el dos mil también!).  
Que siempre ha habido chorros,  
maquiavelos y estafaos,  
contentos y amargaos,  
valores y dublé...  
Pero que el siglo veinte  
es un despliegue  
de maldá insolente,  
ya no hay quien lo niegue.  
Vivimos revolcaos  
en un merengue  
y en un mismo lodo  
todos manoseaos...

¡Hoy resulta que es lo mismo  
ser derecho que traidor!...  
¡Ignorante, sabio o chorro,  
generoso o estafador!  
¡Todo es igual!  
¡Nada es mejor!  
¡Lo mismo un burro  
que un gran profesor!  
No hay aplazaos  
ni escalafón,  
los inmorales  
nos han igualao.  
Si uno vive en la impostura  
y otro roba en su ambición,  
¡da lo mismo que sea cura,  
colchonero, rey de bastos,

caradura o polizón!...

¡Qué falta de respeto, qué atropello  
a la razón!  
¡Cualquiera es un señor!  
¡Cualquiera es un ladrón!  
Mezclao con Stavisky va Don Bosco  
y "La Mignón",  
Don Chicho y Napoleón,  
Carnera y San Martín...  
Igual que en la vidriera irrespetuosa  
de los cambalaches  
se ha mezclao la vida,  
y herida por un sable sin remaches  
ves llorar la Biblia  
contra un calefón...

¡Siglo veinte, cambalache  
problemático y febril!...  
El que no llora no mama  
y el que no afana es un gil!  
¡Dale nomás!  
¡Dale que va!  
¡Que allá en el horno  
nos vamo a encontrar!  
¡No pienses más,  
sentate a un lao,  
que a nadie importa  
si naciste honrao!  
Es lo mismo el que labura  
noche y día como un buey,  
que el que vive de los otros,  
que el que mata, que el que cura  
o está fuera de la ley...

### 33. Malena

Malena canta el tango como ninguna  
y en cada verso pone su corazón.  
A yuyo del suburbio su voz perfuma,  
Malena tiene pena de bandoneón.  
Tal vez allá en la infancia su voz de alondra  
tomó ese tono oscuro de callejón,  
o acaso aquel romance que sólo nombra  
cuando se pone triste con el alcohol.  
Malena canta el tango con voz de sombra,  
Malena tiene pena de bandoneón.

Tu canción  
tiene el frío del último encuentro.  
Tu canción  
se hace amarga en la sal del recuerdo.

Yo no sé  
si tu voz es la flor de una pena,  
sólo sé que al rumor de tus tangos, Malena,  
te siento más buena,  
más buena que yo.

Tus ojos son oscuros como el olvido,  
tus labios apretados como el rencor,  
tus manos dos palomas que sienten frío,  
tus venas tienen sangre de bandoneón.  
Tus tangos son criaturas abandonadas  
que cruzan sobre el barro del callejón,  
cuando todas las puertas están cerradas  
y ladran los fantasmas de la canción.  
Malena canta el tango con voz quebrada,  
Malena tiene pena de bandoneón.

34. Adios, muchachos  
Adiós, muchachos, compañeros de mi vida,  
barra querida de aquellos tiempos.  
Me toca a mí hoy emprender la retirada,  
debo alejarme de mi buena muchachada.  
Adiós, muchachos. Ya me voy y me resigno...  
Contra el destino nadie la talla...  
Se terminaron para mí todas las farras,  
mi cuerpo enfermo no resiste más...

Acuden a mi mente  
recuerdos de otros tiempos,  
de los bellos momentos  
que antaño disfruté  
cerquita de mi madre,  
santa viejita,  
y de mi noviecita  
que tanto idolatré...  
¿Se acuerdan que era hermosa,  
más bella que una diosa  
y que ebrio yo de amor,  
le di mi corazón,  
mas el Señor, celoso  
de sus encantos,  
hundiéndome en el llanto  
me la llevó?

Es Dios el juez supremo.  
No hay quien se le resista.  
Ya estoy acostumbrado  
su ley a respetar,  
pues mi vida deshizo  
con sus mandatos  
al robarme a mi madre

y a mi novia también.  
Dos lágrimas sinceras  
derramo en mi partida  
por la barra querida  
que nunca me olvidó  
y al darles, mis amigos,  
mi adiós postrero,  
les doy con toda mi alma  
mi bendición...

35. Yira... Yira...

Cuando la suerte qu' es grela,  
fayando y fayando  
te largue parao;  
cuando estés bien en la vía,  
sin rumbo, desesperao;  
cuando no tengas ni fe,  
ni yerba de ayer  
secándose al sol;  
cuando rajés los tamangos  
buscando ese mango  
que te haga morfar...  
la indiferencia del mundo  
-que es sordo y es mudo-  
recién sentirás.

Verás que todo es mentira,  
verás que nada es amor,  
que al mundo nada le importa...  
¡Yira!... ¡Yira!...  
Aunque te quiebre la vida,  
aunque te muerda un dolor,  
no esperes nunca una ayuda,  
ni una mano, ni un favor.

Cuando estén secas las pilas  
de todos los timbres  
que vos apretás,  
buscando un pecho fraterno  
para morir abrazao...  
Cuando te dejen tirao  
después de cinchar  
lo mismo que a mí.  
Cuando manyés que a tu lado  
se prueban la ropa  
que vas a dejar...  
Te acordarás de este otario  
que un día, cansado,  
¡se puso a ladrar!

36. Viejo Smoking

Campaneá cómo el cotorro va quedando despoblado

todo el lujo es la catrera compadreando sin colchón  
y mirá este pobre mozo cómo ha perdido el estado,  
amargado, pobre y flaco como perro de botón.

Poco a poco todo ha ido de cabeza p'al empeño  
se dio juego de pileta y hubo que echarse a nadar...  
Sólo vos te vas salvando porque pa' mí sos un sueño  
del que quiera Dios que nunca me vengan a despertar.

Viejo smocking de los tiempos  
en que yo también tallaba...  
¡Cuánta papusa garaba  
en tus solapas lloró!  
Solapas que con su brillo  
parece que encandilaban  
y que donde iba sentaban  
mi fama de gigoló.

Yo no siento la tristeza de saberme derrotado  
y no me amarga el recuerdo de mi pasado esplendor;  
no me arrepiento del viento ni los años que he tirado,  
pero lloro al verme solo, sin amigos, sin amor;

sin una mano que venga a llevarme una parada,  
sin una mujer que alegre el resto de mi vivir...  
¡Vas a ver que un día de éstos te voy a poner de almohada  
y, tirao en la catrera, me voy a dejar morir!

Viejo smocking, cuántas veces  
la milonguera más papa  
el brillo de tu solapa  
de estuque y carmín manchó  
y en mis desplantes de guapo  
¡cuántos llantos te mojaron!  
¡cuántos taitas envidiaron  
mi fama de gigoló!

### 37. Ninguna

Esta puerta se abrió para tu paso.  
Este piano tembló con tu canción.  
Esta mesa, este espejo y estos cuadros  
guardan ecos del eco de tu voz.  
Es tan triste vivir entre recuerdos...  
Cansa tanto escuchar ese rumor  
de la lluvia sutil que llora el tiempo  
sobre aquello que quiso el corazón.

No habrá ninguna igual, no habrá ninguna,  
ninguna con tu piel ni con tu voz.  
Tu piel, magnolia que mojó la luna.  
Tu voz, murmullo que entibió el amor.

No habrá ninguna igual, todas murieron  
en el momento que dijiste adiós.

Cuando quiero alejarme del pasado,  
es inútil... me dice el corazón.  
Ese piano, esa mesa y esos cuadros  
guardan ecos del eco de tu voz.  
En un álbum azul están los versos  
que tu ausencia cubrió de soledad.  
Es la triste ceniza del recuerdo  
nada más que ceniza, nada más...

38. El patio de la morocha  
Patio de la morocha que allá en el tiempo  
tuvo frescor de sombras como el alero.  
Sobre tu piso pobre ladrillos viejos,  
junto a mi pecho triste sus ojos negros  
diciendo adiós,  
diciendo adiós ...

Con el recuerdo de este tango vuelvo a verla.  
Con el recuerdo de este tango jugueteón  
que me habla de ella.  
Tal vez el patio y el cedrón que me llamaba  
y su carita de ilusión que se asomaba.  
Y en el jirón de alguna  
linda medialuna,  
su cara bruna  
que me miraba...

Feliz paisaje de vida  
que duele como una herida.  
Pobre retazo de sueño  
que acaso no tenga dueño.  
Si estaba el alma en pedazos,  
cómo ingratos sus ojazos  
cuanto más amor pidieron  
se me fueron...

¡Muchacha criolla  
del tiempo aquel!  
Tango dulzón y orillero  
que al corazón  
le reprocha, cruel,  
la ausencia de la morocha  
y el viejo patio que quiero...

Sobre tu piso pobre,  
ladrillos viejos.  
Junto a mi pecho triste,  
sus ojos negros

diciendo adiós,  
diciendo adiós...

### 39. La calesita

Llora la calesita  
de la esquinita sombría,  
y hace sangrar las cosas  
que fueron rosas un día.  
Mozos de punta y hacha  
y una muchacha que me quería.  
Tango varón y entero  
más orillero que el alma mía.  
Sigue llorando el tango  
y en la esquinita palpita  
con su dolor de fango  
la calesita...

Carancanfún... vuelvo a bailar  
y al recordar una sentada  
soy el ranún que en la parada  
de tu enagua almidonada  
te grito: ¡Carancanfún!  
Y el taconear  
y la "lustrada"  
sobre el pantalón  
cuando a tu lado, tirado,  
tuve mi corazón.

Grita la calesita  
su larga cuita maleva...  
Cita que por la acera  
de Balvanera  
nos lleva.  
Vamos de nuevo, amiga,  
para que siga  
con vos bailando,  
vamos que en su rutina  
la vieja esquina  
me está llamando...  
Vamos, que nos espera  
con tu pollera marchita  
esta canción que rueda  
la calesita...

### 40. Muñeca brava

Recitado  
Che, madám que parlás en francés  
ahora te causa risa mi chamuyo de revés  
pero algún día volverás desengañada y sin fe  
y entonces seré yo quien te diga:  
che, muñeca brava, ¿Qué haces?

Che madam que parlás en francés  
y tirás ventolín a dos manos,  
que escabiás copetín bien frappé  
y tenés gigoló bién bacán...  
Sos un biscuit  
de pestañas muy arqueadas...  
Muñeca brava  
bien cotizada.  
¡Sos del Trianón...  
del Trianón de Villa Crespo...  
Milonguerita,  
juguete de ocasión...

Tenés un camba que te hace gustos  
y veinte abriles que son diqueros,  
y muy repleto tu monedero  
pa' patinarlo de Norte a Sud...  
Te llaman todos Muñeca Brava  
porque a los giles mareás sin grupo,  
pa' mi sos siempre la que no supo  
guardar un cacho de amor y juventud.

De mi que siempre soñé con tu cariño  
que allá en el barrio te amé de niño  
pero pa' que voy a decirte cosas viejas  
si ya cambiaste muñeca el corazón.

#### 41. Barrio de tango

Un pedazo de barrio, allá en Pompeya,  
durmiéndose al costado del terraplén.  
Un farol balanceando en la barrera  
y el misterio de adiós que siembra el tren.  
Un ladrido de perros a la luna.  
El amor escondido en un portón.  
Y los sapos redoblando en la laguna  
y a lo lejos la voz del bandoneón.

Barrio de tango, luna y misterio,  
calles lejanas, ¡cómo estarán!  
Viejos amigos que hoy ni recuerdo,  
¡qué se habrán hecho, dónde estarán!  
Barrio de tango, qué fue de aquella,  
Juana, la rubia, que tanto amé.  
¡Sabrá que sufro, pensando en ella,  
desde la tarde que la dejé!  
Barrio de tango, luna y misterio,  
¡desde el recuerdo te vuelvo a ver!

Así evoco tus noches, barrio 'e tango,  
con las chatas entrando al corralón  
y la luna chapaleando sobre el fango



y a lo lejos la voz del bandoneón.

42. Garúa

¡Qué noche llena de hastío y de frío!

El viento trae un extraño lamento.

¡Parece un pozo de sombras la noche

y yo en la sombra camino muy lento.!

Mientras tanto la garúa

se acentúa

con sus púas

en mi corazón...

En esta noche tan fría y tan mía

pensando siempre en lo mismo me abismo

y aunque quiera arrancarla,

desecharla

y olvidarla

la recuerdo más.

¡Garúa!

Solo y triste por la acera

va este corazón transido

con tristeza de tapera.

Sintiendo tu hielo,

porque aquella, con su olvido,

hoy le ha abierto una gotera.

¡Perdido!

Como un duende que en la sombra

más la busca y más la nombra...

Garúa... tristeza...

¡Hasta el cielo se ha puesto a llorar!

¡Qué noche llena de hastío y de frío!

No se ve a nadie cruzar por la esquina.

Sobre la calle, la hilera de focos  
lustra el asfalto con luz mortecina.  
Y yo voy, como un descarte,  
siempre solo,  
siempre aparte,  
recordándote.

Las gotas caen en el charco de mi alma  
hasta los huesos calados y helados  
y humillando este tormento  
todavía pasa el viento  
empujándome.

43. Romance de barrio  
Primero la cita lejana de abril,  
tu oscuro balcón, tu antiguo jardín.  
Más tarde las cartas de pulso febril  
mintiendo que no, jurando que sí.

Romance de barrio tu amor y mi amor.  
Primero un querer, después un dolor,  
por culpas que nunca tuvimos,  
por culpas que debimos sufrir los dos.

Hoy vivirás  
despreciándome, tal vez sin soñar  
que lamento al no poderte tener  
el dolor de no saber olvidar.  
Hoy estarás  
como nunca lejos mío,  
lejos de tanto llorar.  
Fue porque sí,  
que el despecho te cegó como a mí,  
sin mirar que en el rencor del adiós

castigabas con crueldad tu corazón.

Fue porque sí  
que de pronto no supimos pensar,  
que es más fácil renegar y partir  
que vivir sin olvidar.

Ceniza del tiempo la cita de abril,  
tu oscuro balcón, tu antiguo jardín  
las cartas trazadas con mano febril  
mintiendo que no, jurando que sí.  
Retornan vencidas tu voz y mi voz  
trayendo al volver con tonos de horror,  
las culpas que nunca tuvimos  
las culpas que debimos pagar los dos.

44. Sur  
San Juan y Boedo antigua, y todo el cielo,  
Pompeya y más allá la inundación.  
Tu melena de novia en el recuerdo  
y tu nombre florando en el adiós.  
La esquina del herrero, barro y pampa,  
tu casa, tu vereda y el zanjón,  
y un perfume de yuyos y de alfalfa  
que me llena de nuevo el corazón.

Sur,  
paredón y después...  
Sur,  
una luz de almacén...  
Ya nunca me verás como me vieras,  
recostado en la vidriera  
y esperándote.  
Ya nunca alumbraré con las estrellas

nuestra marcha sin querellas  
por las noches de Pompeya...  
Las calles y las lunas suburbanas,  
y mi amor y tu ventana  
todo ha muerto, ya lo sé...

San Juan y Boedo antiguo, cielo perdido,  
Pompeya y al llegar al terraplén,  
tus veinte años temblando de cariño  
bajo el beso que entonces te robé.  
Nostalgias de las cosas que han pasado,  
arena que la vida se llevó  
pesadumbre de barrios que han cambiado  
y amargura del sueño que murió.

45. El bulín de la calle Ayacucho  
El bulín de la calle Ayacucho,  
que en mis tiempos de rana alquilaba,  
el bulín que la barra buscaba  
pa caer por la noche a timbear,  
el bulín donde tantos muchachos,  
en su racha de vida fulera,  
encontraron marroco y catrera  
rechiflado, parece llorar.

El primus no me fallaba  
con su carga de aguardiente  
y habiendo agua caliente  
el mate era allí señor.  
No faltaba la guitarra  
bien encordada y lustrosa  
ni el bacán de voz gangosa  
con berretín de cantor.

El bulín de la calle Ayacucho  
ha quedado mistongo y fulero:  
ya no se oye el cantor milonguero,  
engrupido, su musa entonar.  
Y en el primus no bulle la pava  
que a la barra contenta reunía  
y el bacán de la rante alegría  
está seco de tanto llorar.

Cada cosa era un recuerdo  
que la vida me amargaba:  
por eso me la pasaba  
fulero, rante y tristón.

Los muchachos se cortaron  
al verme tan afligido  
y yo me quedé en el nido  
empollando mi aflicción.

Cotorrito mistongo, tirado  
en el fondo de aquel conventillo,  
sin alfombras, sin lujo y sin brillo,  
¡cuántos días felices pasé,  
al calor del querer de una piba  
que fue mía, mimosa y sincera ...  
¡Y una noche de invierno, fulera,  
en un vuelo hacia el cielo se fue!

46. Tinta roja  
Paredón,  
tinta roja en el gris  
del ayer...

Tu emoción  
de ladrillo feliz  
sobre mi callejón  
con un borrón  
pintó la esquina...

Y al botón  
que en el ancho de la noche  
puso el filo de la ronda  
como un broche...

Y aquel buzón carmín,  
y aquel fondín  
donde lloraba el tano  
su rubio amor lejano  
que mojaba con bon vin.

¿Dónde estará mi arrabal?  
¿Quién se robó mi niñez?  
¿En qué rincón, luna mía,  
volcás como entonces  
tu clara alegría?

Veredas que yo pisé,  
malevos que ya no son,  
bajo tu cielo de raso  
trasnocha un pedazo  
de mi corazón.

Paredón  
tinta roja en el gris

del ayer...

Borbotón

de mi sangre infeliz  
que vertí en el malvón  
de aquel balcón  
que la escondía...

Yo no sé

si fue negro de mis penas  
o fue rojo de tus venas  
mi sangría...

Por qué llegó y se fue  
tras del carmín  
y el gris,  
fondín lejano  
donde lloraba un tano  
sus nostalgias de bon vin.

47. Percal  
Percal...

¿Te acuerdas del percal?  
Tenias quince abriles,  
anhelos de sufrir y amar,  
de ir al centro, triunfar  
y olvidar el percal.

Percal...

Camino del percal,  
te fuiste de tu casa...

Tal vez nos enteramos mal.

Solo se que al final  
te olvidaste el percal.

La juventud se fue...  
Tu casa ya no está...  
Y en el ayer tirados  
se han quedado  
acobardados  
tu percal y mi pasado.  
La juventud se fue...  
Yo ya no espero más...  
Mejor dejar perdidos  
los anhelos que no han sido  
y el vestido de percal.

Llorar...  
¿Por qué vas a llorar?...  
¿Acaso no has vivido,  
acaso no aprendiste a amar,  
a sufrir, a esperar,  
y también a callar?  
Percal...  
Son cosas del percal...  
Saber que estás sufriendo  
saber que sufrirás aún más  
y saber que al final  
no olvidaste el percal.  
Percal...  
Tristezas del percal.

48. Pequeña  
Donde el río se queda y la luna se va  
donde nadie ha llegado ni puede llegar,  
donde juegan conmigo los versos en flor  
tengo un nido de plumas y un canto de amor.



Tú, que tienes los ojos mojados de luz  
y empapadas las manos de tanta inquietud,  
con las alas de tu fantasía  
me has vuelto a los días  
de mi juventud...

Pequeña  
te digo pequeña  
te llamo pequeña  
con toda mi voz.  
Mi sueño  
que tanto te sueña  
te espera, pequeña,  
con esta canción.

La luna,  
¡qué sabe la luna  
la dulce fortuna  
de amar como yo!

Mi sueño  
que tanto te sueña  
te espera, pequeña  
de mi corazón.

Hace mucho que espero, y hará mucho más,  
porque tanto te quiero que habrás de llegar,  
no es posible que tenga la luna y la flor  
y no tenga conmigo tus besos de amor.  
Donde el río se queda y la luna se va  
donde nadie ha llegado ni puede llegar  
con las alas de tu fantasía  
serás la alegría de mi soledad.

49. Griseta

Mezcla rara de Museta y de Mimí  
con caricias de Rodolfo y de Schaunard,  
era la flor de París  
que un sueño de novela trajo al arrabal...  
Y en el loco divagar del cabaret,  
al arrullo de algún tango compadrón,  
alentaba una ilusión:  
soñaba con Des Grieux,  
quería ser Manon.

Francesita,  
que trajiste, pizpireta,  
sentimental y coqueta  
la poesía del quartier,  
¿quién diría  
que tu poema de griseta  
sólo una estrofa tendría:  
la silenciosa agonía  
de Margarita Gauthier?

Mas la fría sordidez del arrabal.  
agostando la pureza de su fe,  
sin hallar a su Duval,  
secó su corazón lo mismo que un muguet.  
Y una noche de champán y de cocó,  
al arrullo funeral de un bandoneón,  
pobrecita, se durmió,  
lo mismo que Mimí,  
lo mismo que Manón.

50. Aquel tapado de armiño  
Aquel tapado de armiño,  
todo forrado en lamé,

que tu cuerpito abrigaba  
al salir del cabaret.  
Cuando pasaste a mi lado,  
prendida a aquel gigoló,  
aquel tapado de armiño  
¡cuánta pena me causó!

¿Te acordás?, era el momento  
culminante del cariño;  
me encontraba yo sin vento,  
vos amabas el armiño.  
Cuántas veces tiritando,  
los dos junto a la vidriera,  
me decías suspirando:  
¡Ay, amor, si vos pudieras!  
Y yo con mil sacrificios  
te lo pude al fin comprar,  
mangué a amigos y usureros  
y estuve un mes sin fumar.

Aquel tapado de armiño  
todo forrado en lamé,  
que tu cuerpito abrigaba  
al salir del cabaret.  
Me resultó, al fin y al cabo,  
más durable que tu amor:  
el tapado lo estoy pagando  
y tu amor ya se apagó.

51. Malevaje  
Decí, por Dios, ¿qué me has dao,  
que estoy tan cambiao,  
no sé más quien soy?

El malevaje extrañao,  
me mira sin comprender...  
Me ve perdiendo el cartel  
de guapo que ayer  
brillaba en la acción...  
¿No ves que estoy embretao,  
vencido y maneao  
en tu corazón?

Te vi pasar tanguendo altanera  
con un compás tan hondo y sensual  
que no fue más que verte y perder  
la fe, el coraje,  
el ansia 'e guapear.  
No me has dejao ni el pucho en la oreja  
de aquel pasao malevo y feroz...  
¡Ya no me falta pa' completar  
más que ir a misa e hincarme a rezar!

Ayer, de miedo a matar,  
en vez de pelear  
me puse a correr...  
Me vi a la sombra o finao;  
pensé en no verte y temblé...  
¡Si yo, -que nunca aflojé-  
de noche angustiao  
me encierro a yorar!...  
Decí, por Dios, ¿qué me has dao,  
que estoy tan cambiao,  
no sé más quien soy?

Como el clavel del aire,  
así era ella,  
igual que la flor  
prendida en mi corazón.  
¡Oh, cuánto lloré  
porque me dejó!  
Como el clavel del aire,  
así era ella,  
igual que la flor.

En esta región,  
igual que un ombú  
solito y sin flor,  
así era yo;  
y presa del dolor  
los años viví,  
igual que un ombú  
en esta región.

Y mi ramazón  
secándose iba,  
cuando ella una tarde  
mi sombra buscó.  
Un ave cantó  
en mi ramazón,  
y el árbol sin flores  
tuvo su flor.

Mas un feliz viajero  
—viajero maldito—  
el pago cruzó;  
en brazos de él se me fue

y yo me quedé  
de nuevo sin flor.  
El que cruzó fue el viento,  
el viento pampero  
que se la llevó.

53. Si soy así  
Si soy así,  
¿qué voy a hacer?  
Nací buen mozo  
y embalao para querer.  
Si soy así  
¿qué voy a hacer?  
Con las mujeres  
no me puedo contener.  
Por eso tengo  
la esperanza que algún día  
me toqués la sinfonía  
de que ha muerto tu ilusión.  
Si soy así  
¿qué voy a hacer?  
Es el destino  
que me arrastra a serte infiel.

Donde veo unas polleras  
no me fijo en el color...  
Las viuditas, las casadas y solteras  
para mí todas son peras  
en el árbol del amor.  
Y si las miro coqueteando por la calle  
con sus ojos tan porteños y su talle cimbreador,  
le acomodo el camouflage

de un piropo de mi flor.

Si soy así

¿qué voy a hacer?

Pa' mí la vida

tiene forma de mujer.

Si soy así,

¿qué voy a hacer?

Es Juan Tenorio

que hoy ha vuelto a renacer.

Por eso, nena,

no sufrás por este loco

que no asienta más el coco

y olvidá tu metejón.

Si soy así,

¿qué voy a hacer?

Tengo una esponja

donde el cuore hay que tener.

#### 54. Golondrinas

Golondrinas de un solo verano

con ansias constantes de cielos lejanos.

Alma criolla, errante y viajera,

querer detenerla es una quimera...

Golondrinas con fiebre en las alas

peregrinas borrachas de emoción...

Siempre sueña con otros caminos

la brújula loca de tu corazón...

Criollita de mi pueblo,

pebeta de mi barrio,

la golondrina un día

su vuelo detendrá;

no habrá nube en sus ojos  
de vagas lejanías  
y en tus brazos amantes  
su nido construirá.  
Su anhelo de distancias  
se aquietará en tu boca  
con la dulce fragancia  
de tu viejo querer...  
Criollita de mi pueblo,  
pebeta de mi barrio,  
con las alas plegadas  
también yo he de volver.

En tus rutas que cruzan los mares  
florece una estela azul de cantares  
y al conjuro de nuevos paisajes  
suena intensamente tu claro cordaje.  
Con tu eterno sembrar de armonías  
Tierras lejanas te vieron pasar;  
otras lunas siguieron tus huellas,  
tu solo destino es siempre volar.

55. Volver  
Yo adivino el parpadeo  
de las luces que a lo lejos,  
van marcando mi retorno.  
Son las mismas que alumbraron,  
con sus pálidos reflejos,  
hondas horas de dolor.  
Y aunque no quise el regreso,  
siempre se vuelve al primer amor.  
La quieta calle donde el eco dijo:



"Tuya es su vida, tuyo es su querer",  
bajo el burlón mirar de las estrellas  
que con indiferencia hoy me ven volver.

Volver,  
con la frente marchita,  
las nieves del tiempo  
platearon mi sien.  
Sentir, que es un soplo la vida,  
que veinte años no es nada,  
que febril la mirada  
errante en las sombras  
te busca y te nombra.

Vivir,  
con el alma aferrada  
a un dulce recuerdo,  
que lloro otra vez.

Tengo miedo del encuentro  
con el pasado que vuelve  
a enfrentarse con mi vida.  
Tengo miedo de las noches  
que, pobladas de recuerdos,  
encadenen mi soñar.  
Pero el viajero que huye,  
tarde o temprano detiene su andar.  
Y aunque el olvido que todo destruye,  
haya matado mi vieja ilusión,  
guarda escondida una esperanza humilde,  
que es toda la fortuna de mi corazón.

56. Niebla del Riachuelo  
Turbio fondeadero donde van a recalar,

barcos que en el muelle para siempre han de quedar...  
Sombras que se alargan en la noche del dolor;  
náufragos del mundo que han perdido el corazón...  
Puentes y cordajes donde el viento viene a aullar,  
barcos carboneros que jamás han de zarpar...  
Torvo cementerio de las naves que al morir,  
sueñan sin embargo que hacia el mar han de partir...

¡Niebla del Riachuelo!..  
Amarrado al recuerdo  
yo sigo esperando...  
¡Niebla del Riachuelo!...  
De ese amor, para siempre,  
me vas alejando...  
Nunca más volvió,  
nunca más la vi,  
nunca más su voz nombró mi nombre junto a mí...  
esa misma voz que dijo: "¡Adiós!".

Sueña, marinero, con tu viejo bergantín,  
bebe tus nostalgias en el sordo cafetín...  
Llueve sobre el puerto, mientras tanto mi canción;  
llueve lentamente sobre tu desolación...  
Anclas que ya nunca, nunca más, han de levar,  
bordas de lanchones sin amarras que soltar...  
Triste caravana sin destino ni ilusión,  
como un barco preso en la "botella del figón"...

#### 57. Gricel

No debí pensar jamás  
en lograr tu corazón  
y sin embargo te busqué  
hasta que un día te encontré  
y con mis besos te aturdí  
sin importarme que eras buena...  
Tu ilusión fue de cristal,  
se rompió cuando partí  
pues nunca, nunca más volví...  
¡Qué amarga fue tu pena!

No te olvides de mí,  
de tu Gricel,  
me dijiste al besar  
el Cristo aquel  
y hoy que vivo enloquecido  
porque no te olvidé  
ni te acuerdas de mí...  
¡Gricel! ¡Gricel!

Me faltó después tu voz

y el calor de tu mirar  
y como un loco te busqué  
pero ya nunca te encontré  
y en otros besos me aturdí...  
¡Mi vida toda fue un engaño!  
¿Qué será, Gricel, de mí?  
Se cumplió la ley de Dios  
porque sus culpas ya pagó  
quien te hizo tanto daño.

58. Cafetín de Buenos Aires  
De chiquilín te miraba de afuera  
como a esas cosas que nunca se alcanzan...  
La ñata contra el vidrio,  
en un azul de frío,  
que sólo fue después viviendo  
igual al mío...  
Como una escuela de todas las cosas,  
ya de muchacho me diste entre asombros:  
el cigarrillo,  
la fe en mis sueños  
y una esperanza de amor.

Cómo olvidarte en esta queja,  
cafetín de Buenos Aires,  
si sos lo único en la vida  
que se pareció a mi vieja...  
En tu mezcla milagrosa  
de sabihondos y suicidas,  
yo aprendí filosofía... dados... timba...  
y la poesía cruel  
de no pensar más en mí.

Me diste en oro un puñado de amigos,  
que son los mismos que alientan mis horas:  
(José, el de la quimera...  
Marcial, que aún cree y espera...  
y el flaco Abel que se nos fue  
pero aún me guía...).

Sobre tus mesas que nunca preguntan  
lloré una tarde el primer desengaño,  
nacé a las penas,  
bebí mis años  
y me entregué sin luchar.

59. Afiches  
Cruel en el cartel,  
la propaganda manda cruel en el cartel,  
y en el fetiche de un afiche de papel  
se vende la ilusión,  
se rifa el corazón...

Y apareces tú  
vendiendo el último jirón de juventud,  
cargándome otra vez la cruz.  
¡Cruel en el cartel, te ríes, corazón!  
¡Dan ganas de balearse en un rincón!

Ya da la noche a la cancel  
su piel de ojera...  
Ya moja el aire su pincel  
y hace con él la primavera...  
¿Pero qué?  
si están tus cosas pero tú no estás,  
porque eres algo para todos,  
como un desnudo de vidriera...  
¡Luché a tu lado, para ti,  
por Dios, y te perdí!

Yo te di un hogar...  
¡Siempre fui pobre, pero yo te di un hogar!  
Se me gastaron las sonrisas de luchar,  
luchando para ti,  
sangrando para ti...  
Luego la verdad,  
que es restregarse con arena el paladar  
y ahogarse sin poder gritar.  
Yo te di un hogar...  
-¡fue culpa del amor!-  
¡Dan ganas de balearse en un rincón!

Ya da la noche a la cancel  
su piel de ojera...  
Ya moja el aire su pincel  
y hace con él la primavera...  
¿Pero qué?  
si están tus cosas pero tú no estás,  
porque eres algo para todos,  
como un desnudo de vidriera...  
¡Luché a tu lado, para ti,  
por Dios, y te perdí!

60. La última curda  
Lastima bandoneón, mi corazón  
Tu ronca maldición maleva  
Tu lagrima de ron me lleva  
Hacia el hondo bajo fondo  
Donde el barro se subleva  
Ya sé, no me digas tenes razón  
La vida es una herida absurda  
Y es todo, todo tan fugaz  
Que es una curda, nada más

Mi confesión  
Contame tu condena  
Decime tu fracaso  
No ves la pena que me ha herido?  
Y háblame simplemente  
De aquel amor ausente  
Tras un retazo del olvido  
Ya sé que me hace daño  
Yo sé que te lastimó  
Llorando mi sermón de vino  
Pero es el viejo amor  
Que tiembla, bandoneón  
Y busca en el licor que aturda  
La curda que al final  
Termine la función  
Corriéndole un telón  
Al corazón  
Un poco de recuerdo y sinsabor  
Gotea tu rezongo lerdo  
Marea tu licor y arrea  
La tropilla de la zurda  
Al volcar la ultima curda  
Cerrame el ventanal, que arrastra el sol  
Su lento caracol de sueño  
No ves que vengo de un país  
Que esta de olvido siempre gris  
Tras el alcohol  
Contame tu condena  
Decime tu fracaso  
No ves la pena que me ha herido?  
Y háblame simplemente  
De aquel amor ausente  
Tras un retazo del olvido  
Ya sé que me hace daño  
Yo sé que te lastimó  
Llorando mi sermón de vino  
Pero es el viejo amor  
Que tiembla, bandoneón  
Y busca en el licor que aturda  
La curda que al final  
Termine la función  
Corriéndole un telón  
Al corazón

61. Sueño de Barrilete

Desde chico ya tenía en el mirar  
esa loca fantasía de soñar,  
fue mi sueño de purrete  
ser igual que un barrilete  
que elevándose entre nubes  
con un viento de esperanza, sube y sube.

Y crecí en ese mundo de ilusión,  
y escuché sólo a mi propio corazón,  
mas la vida no es juguete  
y el lirismo es un billete sin valor.

Yo quise ser un barrilete  
buscando altura en mi ideal,  
tratando de explicarme que la vida es algo más  
que darlo todo por comida.  
Y he sido igual que un barrilete,  
al que un mal viento puso fin,  
no sé si me falló la fe, la voluntad,  
o acaso fue que me faltó piolín.

En amores sólo tuve decepción,  
regalé por no vender mi corazón,  
hice versos olvidando  
que la vida es sólo prosa dolorida  
que va ahogando lo mejor  
y abriendo heridas, ¡ay!, la vida.  
Hoy me aterra este cansancio sin final,  
hice trizas mi sonrisa de cristal,  
cuando miro un barrilete  
me pregunto: ¿aquel purrete donde está?

62. Por qué la quise tanto  
Remotos acordeones  
despliegan en la noche  
sus pájaros de brumas  
y un coro de fantasmas  
que gritan en las sombras  
preguntan y preguntan,  
preguntan por qué lloro,  
preguntan por qué canto,  
por qué no la maldigo,  
por qué la quise tanto... tanto...

Yo sólo sé que fue el remanso de mi vida gris,  
que en el calvario de mis días fue una tibia luz,  
que bendigo esta negra cruz,  
que está aquí... y está ausente...  
y sangra en mis labios desesperadamente.

Las sombras implacables  
jugando con mi angustia  
me acosan y preguntan,  
preguntan por qué en vano  
la espero todavía;  
por qué vivo soñando  
que alguna vez fue mía... mía...

63. El último café

Llega tu recuerdo en torbellino,  
vuelve en el otoño a atardecer  
miro la garúa, y mientras miro,  
gira la cuchara de café.

Del último café  
que tus labios con frío,  
pidieron esa vez  
con la voz de un suspiro.

Recuerdo tu desdén,  
te evoco sin razón,  
te escucho sin que estés.  
"Lo nuestro terminó",  
dijiste en un adiós  
de azúcar y de hiel...

¡Lo mismo que el café,  
que el amor, que el olvido!  
Que el vértigo final  
de un rencor sin porqué...

Y allí, con tu impiedad,  
me vi morir de pie,  
medí tu vanidad  
y entonces comprendí mi soledad  
sin para qué...

Llovía y te ofrecí, ¡el último café!

64. Alguien le dice al tango

Tango que he visto bailar  
contra un ocaso amarillo  
por quienes eran capaces  
de otro baile, el del cuchillo.  
Tango de aquel Maldonado  
con menos agua que barro,  
tango silbado al pasar  
desde el pescante del carro.

Despreocupado y zafado,  
siempre mirabas de frente.  
Tango que fuiste la dicha  
de ser hombre y ser valiente.  
Tango que fuiste feliz,  
como yo también lo he sido,  
según me cuenta el recuerdo;  
el recuerdo fue el olvido.

Desde ese ayer, ¡cuántas cosas  
a los dos nos han pasado!  
Las partidas y el pesar  
de amar y no ser amado.  
Yo habré muerto y seguirás  
orillando nuestra vida.  
Buenos Aires no te olvida,  
tango que fuiste y serás.

65. Nuestro balance

Sentémonos un rato en este bar  
a conversar  
serenamente.  
Echemos un vistazo desde aquí  
a todo aquello que pudimos rescatar.  
Hagamos un balance del pasado  
como socios arruinados  
sin rencor,  
hablemos sin culparnos a los dos  
porque al final salvamos lo mejor.

Ha pasado sólo un año  
y el adiós abrió su herida,  
un año nada más,  
un año gris  
que en nuestro amor duro una vida.  
Lentamente fue creciendo  
la visión de la caída.  
La sombra del ayer  
nos envolvió  
y no atinamos a luchar...

¡No ves!...  
Estoy gritando sin querer  
porque no puedo contener  
esta amargura que me ahoga.  
Perdona, no lo puedo remediar,  
mi corazón se abrió de par en par.

66. Chiquilín de Bachín

Por las noches, cara sucia  
de angelito con bluyín,  
vende rosas por las mesas  
del boliche de Bachín.

Si la luna brilla  
sobre la parrilla,  
come luna y pan de hollín.

Cada día en su tristeza  
que no quiere amanecer,  
lo madruga un seis de enero



con la estrella del revés,  
y tres reyes gatos  
roban sus zapatos,  
uno izquierdo y el otro ¡también!

Chiquilín,  
dame un ramo de voz,  
así salgo a vender  
mis vergüenzas en flor.  
Baleáme con tres rosas  
que duelan a cuenta  
del hambre que no te entendí,  
Chiquilín.

Cuando el sol pone a los pibes  
delantales de aprender,  
él aprende cuánto cero  
le quedaba por saber.  
Y a su madre mira,  
yira que te yira,  
pero no la quiere ver.

Cada aurora, en la basura,  
con un pan y un tallarín,  
se fabrica un barrilete  
para irse ¡y sigue aquí!  
Es un hombre extraño,  
niño de mil años,  
que por dentro le enreda el piolín.

Chiquilín,  
dame un ramo de voz,  
así salgo a vender  
mis vergüenzas en flor.  
Baleáme con tres rosas  
que duelan a cuenta  
del hambre que no te entendí,  
Chiquilín.

67. Moriré en Buenos Aires

Morire en Buenos Aires  
Sera de madrugada  
Guardare, mansamente, las cosas de vivir  
Mi pequeña poesia de adioses y de balas  
Mi tabaco, mi tango, mi puñado de splin  
Me pondre por los hombros, de abrigo  
Todo el alba  
Mi penúltimo whisky quedara sin beber  
Llegara tangamente, mi muete enamorada  
Yo estare muerto, en punto, cuando sean las seis

Hoy que dios me deja soñar  
A mi olvido ire por santa fe  
Se que en nuestra esquina vos ya estas  
Toda de tristeza hasta los pies!  
Abrazame fuerte que por dentro  
Oigo muertes, viejas muertes  
Agrediendo lo que ame  
Alma mia vamos yendo  
Llega el dia no lloreas!

Morire en Buenos Aires. Sera de  
Madrugada  
Que es la hora en que mueren los que  
Saben morir  
Flotará en mi silencio la mufla perfumada  
De aquel verso que nunca te pude decir.  
Andare tantas cuabras y alla en la  
Plaza Francia  
Como sombras fugadas de un cansado  
Ballet  
Repitiendo tu nombre por una calle blanca  
Se me iran los recuerdos en puntitas de pie.

Morire en Buenos Aires  
Sera de madrugada  
Guardare, mansamente, las cosas de vivir  
Mi pequeña poesia de adioses y de balas  
Mi tabaco, mi tango, mi puñado de splin  
Me pondre por los hombros, de abrigo  
Todo el alba  
Mi penúltimo whisky quedara sin beber  
Llegara tangamente, mi muete enamorada  
Yo estare muerto, en punto, cuando sean  
Las seis  
Cuando sean las seis  
Cuando sean las seis

#### 68. Balada para un loco

Las tardecitas de Buenos Aires tienen ese qué sé yo, ¿viste? Salís de tu casa, por Arenales. Lo de siempre: en la calle y en vos. . . Cuando, de repente, de atrás de un árbol, me aparezco yo. Mezcla rara de penúltimo linyera y de primer polizón en el viaje a Venus: medio melón en la cabeza, las rayas de la camisa pintadas en la piel, dos medias suelas clavadas en los pies, y una banderita de taxi libre levantada en cada mano. ¡Te reís!... Pero sólo vos me ves: porque los maniqués me guiñan; los semáforos me dan tres luces celestes, y las naranjas del frutero de la esquina me tiran azahares. ¡Vení!, que así, medio bailando y medio volando, me saco el melón para saludarte, te regalo una banderita, y te digo...

(Cantado)

Ya sé que estoy piantao, piantao, piantao...

No ves que va la luna rodando por Callao;  
que un corso de astronautas y niños, con un vals,  
me baila alrededor... ¡Bailá! ¡Vení! ¡Volá!

Ya sé que estoy piantao, piantao, piantao...  
Yo miro a Buenos Aires del nido de un gorrión;  
y a vos te vi tan triste... ¡Vení! ¡Volá! ¡Sentí!...  
el loco berretín que tengo para vos:

¡Loco! ¡Loco! ¡Loco!  
Cuando anochezca en tu porteña soledad,  
por la ribera de tu sábana vendré  
con un poema y un trombón  
a desvelarte el corazón.

¡Loco! ¡Loco! ¡Loco!  
Como un acróbata demente saltaré,  
sobre el abismo de tu escote hasta sentir  
que enloquecí tu corazón de libertad...  
¡Ya vas a ver!

(Recitado)

Salgamos a volar, querida mía;  
subite a mi ilusión super-sport,  
y vamos a correr por las cornisas  
¡con una golondrina en el motor!

De Vieytes nos aplauden: "¡Viva! ¡Viva!",  
los locos que inventaron el Amor;  
y un ángel y un soldado y una niña  
nos dan un valsecito bailador.

Nos sale a saludar la gente linda...  
Y loco, pero tuyo, ¡qué sé yo!:  
provoco campanarios con la risa,  
y al fin, te miro, y canto a media voz:

(Cantado)

Quereme así, piantao, piantao, piantao...  
Trepate a esta ternura de locos que hay en mí,  
ponete esta peluca de alondras, ¡y volá!  
¡Volá conmigo ya! ¡Vení, volá, vení!

Quereme así, piantao, piantao, piantao...  
Abrite los amores que vamos a intentar  
la mágica locura total de revivir...  
¡Vení, volá, vení! ¡Trai-lai-la-lará!

(Gritado)

¡Viva! ¡Viva! ¡Viva!  
Loca ella y loco yo...  
¡Locos! ¡Locos! ¡Locos!  
¡Loca ella y loco yo!

69. Café "La Humedad"

Humedad...  
Llovizna y frío...  
Mi aliento empaña  
el vidrio azul del viejo bar.  
No me pregunten si hace mucho que la espero:  
un café que ya está frío y hace varios ceniceros.  
Aunque sé que nunca llega  
siempre que llueve voy corriendo hasta el café,  
y sólo cuento con la compañía de un gato  
que al cordón de mi zapato lo destroza con placer.

Café La Humedad, billar y reunión...  
Sábado con trampas... ¡Qué linda función!  
Yo solamente necesito agradecerte  
la enseñanza de tus noches  
que me alejan de la muerte.  
Café La Humedad, billar y reunión...  
Sábado con trampas. ¡Qué linda función!  
Yo simplemente te agradezco las poesías  
que la escuela de tus noches  
le enseñaron a mis días.

Soledad de soltería... Son treinta  
abriles ya cansados de soñar.  
Por eso vuelvo hasta la esquina del boliche  
a buscar la barra eterna de Gaona y Boyacá.  
¡Ya son pocos los que quedan!  
Vamos, muchachos, esta noche a recordar  
una por una las hazañas de otros tiempos  
y el recuerdo del boliche que llamamos La Humedad.

70. El Corazón al Sur

Nací en un barrio donde el lujo fue un albur,  
por eso tengo el corazón mirando al sur.  
Mi viejo fue una abeja en la colmena,  
las manos limpias, el alma buena...  
Y en esa infancia, la templanza me forjó,  
después la vida mil caminos me tendió,  
y supe del magnate y del tahúr,  
por eso tengo el corazón mirando al sur.

Mi barrio fue una planta de jazmín,  
la sombra de mi vieja en el jardín,  
la dulce fiesta de las cosas más sencillas

y la paz en la gramilla de cara al sol.  
Mi barrio fue mi gente que no está,  
las cosas que ya nunca volverán,  
si desde el día en que me fui  
con la emoción y con la cruz,  
¡yo sé que tengo el corazón mirando al sur!

La geografía de mi barrio llevo en mí,  
será por eso que del todo no me fui:  
la esquina, el almacén, el piberío...  
lo reconozco... son algo mío...  
Ahora sé que la distancia no es real  
y me descubro en ese punto cardinal,  
volviendo a la niñez desde la luz  
teniendo siempre el corazón mirando al sur.  
PIBERÍO

71. Jacinto Chiclana

Me acuerdo, fue en Balvanera,  
en una noche lejana,  
que alguien dejó caer el nombre  
de un tal Jacinto Chiclana.  
Algo se dijo también  
de una esquina y un cuchillo.  
Los años no dejan ver  
el entrevero y el brillo.

¡Quién sabe por qué razón  
me anda buscando ese nombre!  
Me gustaría saber  
cómo habrá sido aquel hombre.  
Alto lo veo y cabal,  
con el alma comedida;  
capaz de no alzar la voz  
y de jugarse la vida.

(Recitado)

Nadie con paso más firme  
habrá pisado la tierra.  
Nadie habrá habido como él  
en el amor y en la guerra.  
Sobre la huerta y el patio  
las torres de Balvanera  
y aquella muerte casual  
en una esquina cualquiera.

Sólo Dios puede saber  
la laya fiel de aquel hombre.  
Señores, yo estoy cantando  
lo que se cifra en el nombre.  
Siempre el coraje es mejor.

La esperanza nunca es vana.  
Vaya, pues, esta milonga  
para Jacinto Chiclana.

72. Tomo y obligo

Tomo y obligo, mándese un trago,  
que hoy necesito el recuerdo matar;  
sin un amigo lejos del pago  
quiero en su pecho mi pena volcar.  
Beba conmigo, y si se empaña  
de vez en cuando mi voz al cantar,  
no es que la llore porque me engaña,  
yo sé que un hombre no debe llorar.

Si los pastos conversaran, esta pampa le diría  
de qué modo la quería, con qué fiebre la adoré.  
Cuántas veces de rodillas, tembloroso, yo me he hincado  
bajo el árbol deshojado donde un día la besé.  
Y hoy al verla envilecida y a otros brazos entregada,  
fue para mí una puñalada y de celos me cegué,  
y le juro, todavía no consigo convencerme  
como pude contenerme y ahí nomás no la maté.

Tomo y obligo, mándese un trago;  
de las mujeres mejor no hay que hablar,  
todas, amigo, dan muy mal pago  
y hoy mi experiencia lo puede afirmar.  
Siga un consejo, no se enamore  
y si una vuelta le toca hocicar,  
fuerza, canejo, sufra y no llore  
que un hombre macho no debe llorar.

73. Melodía de arrabal

Barrio plateado por la luna,  
rumores de milonga  
es toda su fortuna.  
Hay un fueye que rezonga  
en la cortada mistonga,  
mientras que una pebeta,  
linda como una flor,  
espera coqueta  
bajo la quieta  
luz de un farol.

Barrio... barrio..  
que tenés el alma inquieta  
de un gorrión sentimental.  
Penas...ruego...  
¡esto todo el barrio malevo  
melodía de arrabal!  
Barrio... barrio...  
perdoná si al evocarte

se me piana un lagrimón,  
que al rodar en tu empedrao  
es un beso prolongao  
que te da mi corazón.

Cuna de tauras y cantores,  
de broncas y entreveros,  
de todos mis amores.  
En tus muros con mi acero  
yo grabé nombres que quiero.  
Rosa, "la milonguita",  
era rubia Margot,  
en la primer cita,  
la paica Rita  
me dio su amor.

74. Cuesta abajo  
Si arrastré por este mundo  
la vergüenza de haber sido  
y el dolor de ya no ser.  
Bajo el ala del sombrero  
cuantas veces, embozada,  
una lágrima asomada  
yo no pude contener...  
Si crucé por los caminos  
como un paria que el destino  
se empeñó en deshacer;  
si fui flojo, si fui ciego,  
sólo quiero que hoy comprendan  
el valor que representa  
el coraje de querer.

Era, para mí, la vida entera,  
como un sol de primavera,  
mi esperanza y mi pasión.  
Sabía que en el mundo no cabía  
toda la humilde alegría  
de mi pobre corazón.  
Ahora, cuesta abajo en mi rodada,  
las ilusiones pasadas  
yo no las puedo arrancar.  
Sueño con el pasado que añoro,  
el tiempo viejo que lloro  
y que nunca volverá.

Por seguir tras de su huella  
yo bebí incansablemente  
en mi copa de dolor,  
pero nadie comprendía  
que, si todo yo lo daba  
en cada vuelta dejaba

pedazos de corazón.  
Ahora, triste, en la pendiente,  
solitario y ya vencido  
yo me quiero confesar:  
si aquella boca mentía  
el amor que me ofrecía,  
por aquellos ojos brujos  
yo habría dado siempre más.

75. Cuartito azul

Cuartito azul, dulce morada de mi vida,  
fiel testigo de mi tierna juventud,  
llegó la hora de la triste despedida,  
ya lo ves, todo en el mundo es inquietud.  
Ya no soy más aquel muchacho oscuro;  
todo un señor desde esta tarde soy.  
Sin embargo, cuartito, te lo juro,  
nunca estuve tan triste como hoy.

Cuartito azul  
de mi primera pasión,  
vos guardarás  
todo mi corazón.  
Si alguna vez  
volviera la que amé  
vos le dirás  
que nunca la olvidé.  
Cuartito azul,  
hoy te canto mi adiós.  
Ya no abriré  
tu puerta y tu balcón.

Aquí viví toda mi ardiente fantasía  
y al amor con alegría le canté;  
aquí fue donde sollozó la amada mía  
recitándome los versos de Chénier.  
Quizá tendré para enorgullecerme  
gloria y honor como nadie alcanzó,  
pero nada podrá ya parecerme  
tan lindo y tan sincero  
como vos.

76. Uno

Uno, busca lleno de esperanzas  
el camino que los sueños  
prometieron a sus ansias...  
Sabe que la lucha es cruel  
y es mucha, pero lucha y se desangra  
por la fe que lo empecina...  
Uno va arrastrándose entre espinas  
y en su afán de dar su amor,  
sufre y se destroza hasta entender:



que uno se ha quedao sin corazón...  
Precio de castigo que uno entrega  
por un beso que no llega  
a un amor que lo engañó...  
¡Vacío ya de amar y de llorar  
tanta traición!

Si yo tuviera el corazón...  
(¡El corazón que di!...)  
Si yo pudiera como ayer  
querer sin presentir...  
Es posible que a tus ojos  
que me gritan tu cariño  
los cerrara con mis besos...  
Sin pensar que eran como esos  
otros ojos, los perversos,  
los que hundieron mi vivir.  
Si yo tuviera el corazón...  
(¡El mismo que perdí!...)  
Si olvidara a la que ayer  
lo destrozó y... pudiera amarte..  
me abrazaría a tu ilusión  
para llorar tu amor...

Pero, Dios, te trajo a mi destino  
sin pensar que ya es muy tarde  
y no sabré cómo quererte...  
Déjame que lllore  
como aquel que sufre en vida  
la tortura de llorar su propia muerte...  
Pura como sos, habrías salvado  
mi esperanza con tu amor...  
Uno está tan solo en su dolor...  
Uno está tan ciego en su penar...  
Pero un frío cruel  
que es peor que el odio  
-punto muerto de las almas-  
tumba horrenda de mi amor,  
¡maldijo para siempre y me robó...  
toda ilusión!...

77. Naranja en flor  
Era más blanda que el agua,  
que el agua blanda,  
era más fresca que el río,  
naranja en flor.  
Y en esa calle de estío,  
calle perdida,  
dejó un pedazo de vida  
y se marchó...

Primero hay que saber sufrir,  
después amar, después partir  
y al fin andar sin pensamiento...  
Perfume de naranjo en flor,  
promesas vanas de un amor  
que se escaparon con el viento.  
Después...¿qué importa el después?  
Toda mi vida es el ayer  
que me detiene en el pasado,  
eterna y vieja juventud  
que me ha dejado acobardado  
como un pájaro sin luz.

¿Qué le habrán hecho mis manos?  
¿Qué le habrán hecho  
para dejarme en el pecho  
tanto dolor?  
Dolor de vieja arboleda,  
canción de esquina  
con un pedazo de vida,  
naranjo en flor.

78. María

Acaso te llamaras solamente María..!  
No sé si eras el eco de una vieja canción,  
pero hace mucho, mucho, fuiste hondamente mía  
sobre un paisaje triste, desmayado de amor...

El Otoño te trajo, mojando de agonía,  
tu sombrero pobre y el tapado marrón...  
Eras como la calle de la Melancolía,  
que llovía...llovía sobre mi corazón..!

María..!  
En las sombras de mi pieza  
es tu paso el que regresa...

María..!  
Y es tu voz, pequeña y triste,  
la del día en que dijiste:  
"Ya no hay nada entre los dos.."

María..!  
La más mía..! La Lejana..!  
Si volviera otra mañana  
por las calles del adiós..!

Tus ojos eran puertos que guardaban ausentes,  
su horizonte de sueños y un silencio de flor...  
Pero tus manos buenas, regresaban presentes,  
para curar mi fiebre, desteñidas de amor...

Un Otoño te trajo..! Tu nombre era María,  
y nunca supe nada de tu rumbo infeliz...  
Si eras como el paisaje de la Melancolía,  
que llovía...llovía, sobre la calle gris...

#### 79. Cristal

Tengo el corazón hecho pedazos,  
rota mi emoción en este día...  
Noches y más noches sin descanso  
y esta desazón del alma mía...  
¡Cuántos, cuántos años han pasado,  
grises mis cabellos y mi vida!  
Loco... casi muerto... destrozado,  
con mi espíritu amarrado  
a nuestra juventud.

Más frágil que el cristal  
fue mi amor  
junto a ti...  
Cristal tu corazón, tu mirar, tu reír...  
Tus sueños y mi voz  
y nuestra timidez  
temblando suavemente en tu balcón...  
Y ahora sólo se  
que todo se perdió  
la tarde de mi ausencia.  
Ya nunca volveré, lo se, lo se bien, ¡nunca más!  
Tal vez me esperarás, junto a Dios, ¡más allá!

Todo para mi se ha terminado,  
todo para mi se torna olvido.  
¡Trágica enseñanza me dejaron  
esas horas negras que he vivido!  
¡Cuántos, cuántos años han pasado,  
grises mis cabellos y mi vida!  
Solo, siempre solo y olvidado,  
con mi espíritu amarrado  
a nuestra juventud...

#### 80. Desencuentro

Estás desorientado y no sabés  
qué "trole" hay que tomar para seguir.  
Y en este desencuentro con la fe  
querés cruzar el mar y no podés.  
La araña que salvaste te picó  
-¡qué vas a hacer!-  
y el hombre que ayudaste te hizo mal  
-¡dale nomás!-  
Y todo el carnaval  
gritando pisoteó  
la mano fraternal

que Dios te dio.

¡Qué desencuentro!  
¡Si hasta Dios está lejano!  
Llorás por dentro,  
todo es cuento, todo es vil.

En el corso a contramano  
un grupí trampeó a Jesús...  
No te fíes ni de tu hermano,  
se te cuelgan de la cruz...

Quisiste con ternura, y el amor  
te devoró de atrás hasta el riñón.  
Se rieron de tu abrazo y ahí nomás  
te hundieron con rencor todo el arpón

Amargo desencuentro, porque ves  
que es al revés...  
Creíste en la honradez  
y en la moral...  
¡qué estupidez!

Por eso en tu total  
fracaso de vivir,  
ni el tiro del final  
te va a salir.

#### 81. Cordón

Duro, como el alma de un frontón  
sos un penal, de curdas y mosquitos,  
largo y pisoteado cinturón  
de una ciudad, que va creciendo a gritos.  
Si te habrás mamado de alquitrán,  
de pucho y celofán, de correntadas,  
panteón de rata enamorada  
que cruza sin mirar, el callejón.

Sobre el almanaque de tu piel  
corrió la miel, de trompos y monedas  
viejo cordón de mi vereda,  
la luna y el hollín te hicieron gris.

Contame un poco más, del tiempo aquél,  
en que el tranvía te afeitaba  
cuando la noche era un festín,  
de taco y de carmín, en la enramada.  
Hablame del zaguán, el verso aquél  
que se llevó la alcantarilla  
si en este mundo sin orillas  
el único peatón sos vos.

(recitado)

Viejo cordón de mi vereda...  
Paredón de suelas, tropezón de amor.  
Mientras nadie habla de vos  
mientras nadie te recuerda  
sos el costado que encierra,  
por derecha y por izquierda,  
un siglo de procesión.  
Sos la escolta sin barullo  
de un barrendero y su orgullo,  
de un trasnochado botón.

82. Rubias de Nueva York  
Peggy, Betty, July, Mary,  
rubias de New York,  
cabecitas adoradas  
que mienten amor.  
Dan envidia a las estrellas,  
yo no se vivir sin ellas.  
Betty, July, Mary, Peggy,  
de labios en flor.

Es como el cristal  
la risa loca de July,  
es como el cantar  
de un manantial.  
Turba mi soñar  
el dulce hechizo de Peggy,  
su mirar azul  
hondo como el mar.

Deliciosas criaturas perfumadas,  
quiero el beso de sus boquitas pintadas.  
Frágiles muñecas  
del olvido y del placer;  
ríen su alegría,  
como un cascabel.

Rubio cocktail que emborracha,  
así es Mary.  
Tu melena que es de plata  
quiero para mí.  
Si el amor que me ofrecías  
sólo dura un breve día,  
tiene el fuego de una brasa  
tu pasión, Betty.

Deliciosas criaturas perfumadas,  
quiero el beso de sus boquitas pintadas.  
Frágiles muñecas  
del olvido y del placer,

ríen su alegría,  
como un cascabel.

83. Esta noche me emborracho  
Sola, fané, descangayada,  
la vi esta madrugada  
salir de un cabaret;  
flaca, dos cuartas de cogote  
y una percha en el escote  
bajo la nuez;  
chueca, vestida de pebeta,  
teñida y coqueteando  
su desnudez...  
Parecía un gallo desplumao,  
mostrando al compadrear  
el cuero picoteao...  
Yo que sé cuando no aguanto más  
al verla, así, rajé,  
pa' no yorar.

¡Y pensar que hace diez años,  
fue mi locura!  
¡Que llegué hasta la traición  
por su hermosura!...  
Que esto que hoy es un casajo  
fue la dulce metedura  
donde yo perdí el honor;  
que chiflao por su belleza  
le quité el pan a la vieja,  
me hice ruin y pechador...  
Que quedé sin un amigo,  
que viví de mala fe,  
que me tuvo de rodillas,  
sin moral, hecho un mendigo,  
cuando se fue.

Nunca soñé que la vería  
en un "requiscat in pace"  
tan cruel como el de hoy.  
¡Mire, si no es pa' suicidarse  
que por ese cachivache  
sea lo que soy!...  
Fiera venganza la del tiempo,  
que le hace ver deshecho  
lo que uno amó...  
Este encuentro me ha hecho tanto mal,  
que si lo pienso más  
termino envenenao.  
Esta noche me emborracho bien,  
me mamo, ¡bien mamao!,  
pa' no pensar.

#### 84. El ultimo organito

Las ruedas embarradas del último organito  
vendrán desde la tarde buscando el arrabal,  
con un caballo flaco y un rengo y un monito  
y un coro de muchachas vestidas de percal.

Con pasos apagados elegirá la esquina  
donde se mezclan luces de luna y almacén  
para que bailen vales detrás de la hornacina  
la pálida marquesa y el pálido marqués.

El último organito irá de puerta en puerta  
hasta encontrar la casa de la vecina muerta,  
de la vecina aquella que se cansó de amar;  
y allí molerá tangos para que llore el ciego,  
el ciego inconsolable del verso de Carriego,  
que fuma, fuma y fuma sentado en el umbral.

Tendrá una caja blanca el último organito  
y el asma del otoño sacudirá su son,  
y adornarán sus tablas cabezas de angelitos  
y el eco de su piano será como un adiós.

Saludarán su ausencia las novias encerradas  
abriendo las persianas detrás de su canción,  
y el último organito se perderá en la nada  
y el alma del suburbio se quedará sin voz.

#### 85. Quedemonos aquí

¡Amor, la vida se nos va,  
quedémonos aquí, ya es hora de llegar!  
¡Amor, quedémonos aquí!  
¿Por qué sin compasión rodar?  
¡Amor, la flor se ha vuelto a abrir  
y hay gusto a soledad, quedémonos aquí!  
Nuestro cansancio es un poema sin final  
que aquí podemos terminar.

¡Abre tu vida sin ventanas!  
¡Mira lo lindo que está el río!  
Se despierta la mañana y tengo ganas  
de juntarte un ramillete de rocío.  
¡Basta de noches y de olvidos,  
basta de alcohol sin esperanzas,  
deja todo lo que ha sido  
desangrarse en ese ayer sin fe!

Tal vez  
de tanto usar el gris  
te ciegues con el sol...  
¡pero eso tiene fin!

¡Después verás todo el color,  
amor, quedémonos aquí!  
¡Amor, asómate a la flor  
y entiende la verdad que llaman corazón!  
¡Deja el pasado acobardado en el fangal  
que aquí podemos empezar!

¡Abre tu vida sin ventanas!  
¡Mira lo lindo que está el río!  
Se despierta la mañana y tengo ganas  
de juntarte un ramillete de rocío.  
¡Basta de noches y de olvidos,  
basta de alcohol sin esperanzas,  
deja todo lo que ha sido  
desangrarse en ese ayer sin fe!

86. Canción desesperada

¡Soy una canción desesperada...!  
¡Hoja enloquecida en el turbión..!  
Por tu amor, mi fe desorientada  
se hundió, destrozando mi corazón.  
Dentro de mí mismo me he perdido,  
ciego de llorar una ilusión...  
¡Soy una pregunta empecinada,  
que grita su dolor y tu traición..!

¿Porqué  
me enseñaron a amar,  
si es volcar sin sentido  
los sueños al mar?  
Si el amor,  
es un viejo enemigo  
y enciende castigos  
y enseña a llorar...  
Yo pregunto: ¿porqué?  
¡Sí!, ¿porqué me enseñaron a amar,  
si al amarte mataba mi amor?  
Burla atroz de dar todo por nada  
y al fin de un adiós, despertar  
¡llorando!...

¿Dónde estaba Dios cuando te fuiste?  
¿Dónde estaba el sol que no te vio?  
¿Cómo una mujer no entiende nunca  
que un hombre da todo, dando su amor?  
¿Quién les hace creer otros destinos?  
¿Quién deshace así tanta ilusión?  
¡Soy una canción desesperada  
que grita su dolor y su traición...!

87. Fuimos

Fui como una lluvia de cenizas y fatigas



en las horas resignadas de tu vida...  
Gota de vinagre derramada,  
fatalmente derramada, sobre todas tus heridas.  
Fuiste por mi culpa golondrina entre la nieve  
rosa marchitada por la nube que no llueve.  
Fuimos la esperanza que no llega, que no alcanza  
que no puede vislumbrar su tarde mansa.  
Fuimos el viajero que no implora, que no reza,  
que no llora, que se echó a morir.

¡Vete...!  
¿No comprendes que te estás matando?  
¿No comprendes que te estoy llamando?  
¡Vete...!  
No me beses que te estoy llorando  
¡Y quisiera no llorarte más!  
¿No ves?,  
es mejor que mi dolor  
quede tirado con tu amor  
librado de mi amor final  
¡Vete!,  
¿No comprendes que te estoy salvando?  
¿No comprendes que te estoy amando?  
¡No me sigas, ni me llames, ni me beses  
ni me llores, ni me quieras más!

Fuimos abrazados a la angustia de un presagio  
por la noche de un camino sin salidas,  
pálidos despojos de un naufragio  
sacudidos por las olas del amor y de la vida.  
Fuimos empujados en un viento desolado...  
sombras de una sombra que tornaba del pasado.  
Fuimos la esperanza que no llega, que no alcanza,  
que no puede vislumbrar su tarde mansa.  
Fuimos el viajero que no implora, que no reza,  
que no llora, que se echó a morir.

88. Nada

He llegado hasta tu casa...  
¡Yo no sé cómo he podido!  
Si me han dicho que no estás,  
que ya nunca volverás...  
¡Si me han dicho que te has ido!  
¡Cuánta nieve hay en mi alma!  
¡Qué silencio hay en tu puerta!  
Al llegar hasta el umbral,  
un candado de dolor  
me detuvo el corazón.

Nada, nada queda en tu casa natal...  
Sólo telarañas que teje el yuyal.

El rosal tampoco existe  
y es seguro que se ha muerto al irte tú...  
¡Todo es una cruz!  
Nada, nada más que tristeza y quietud.  
Nadie que me diga si vives aún...  
¿Dónde estás, para decirte  
que hoy he vuelto arrepentido a buscar tu amor?

Ya me alejo de tu casa  
y me voy ya ni sé donde...  
Sin querer te digo adiós  
y hasta el eco de tu voz  
de la nada me responde.  
En la cruz de tu candado  
por tu pena yo he rezado  
y ha rodado en tu portón  
una lágrima hecha flor  
de mi pobre corazón.

89. Yuyo verde  
Callejón... callejón...  
lejano... lejano...  
íbamos perdidos de la mano  
bajo un cielo de verano  
soñando en vano...  
Un farol... un portón...  
-igual que en un tango-  
y los dos perdidos de la mano  
bajo el cielo de verano  
que partió...

Déjame que llore crudamente  
con el llanto viejo adiós...  
adonde el callejón se pierde  
brotó ese yuyo verde  
del perdón...  
Déjame que llore y te recuerde  
-trenzas que me anudan al portón-  
De tu país ya no se vuelve  
ni con el yuyo verde  
del perdón...

¿Dónde estás?... ¿Dónde estás?...  
¿Adónde te has ido?...  
¿Dónde están las plumas de mi nido,  
la emoción de haber vivido  
y aquel cariño?...  
Un farol... un portón...  
-igual que un tango-  
y este llanto mío entre mis manos  
y ese cielo de verano

que partió...

90. Cada vez que me recuerdes  
Como un fantasma gris llegó el hastío  
hasta tu corazón, que aún era mío,  
y poco a poco te fue envolviendo  
y poco a poco te fuiste yendo...  
Si grande fue tu amor cuando viniste  
más grande fue el dolor cuando te fuiste...  
Triste tañido de las campanas  
doblando en mi soledad...

Cada vez que me recuerdes  
la noche amiga me lo dirá  
y donde el cielo y el mar se pierden  
¡cuántas estrellas me alumbrarán!  
Cada vez que me recuerdes  
tu pensamiento me besaré  
y cuando el fin de tu vida llegue  
junto a tu vida me sentirás...

Mi corazón se fue tras de tus pasos...  
¡El pobre estaba ya hecho pedazos!  
Y entre mis manos, mis manos yertas,  
las esperanzas quedaron muertas...  
Si hay algo que jamás yo te perdono  
es que olvidaste aquí, con tu abandono,  
eso tan tuyo, ese algo tuyo  
que envuelve todo mi ser...

91. En esta tarde gris  
¡Qué ganas de llorar en esta tarde gris!  
En su repiquetear la lluvia habla de ti...  
Remordimiento de saber  
que por mi culpa, nunca,  
vida, nunca te veré.  
Mis ojos al cerrar te ven igual que ayer,  
temblando, al implorar de nuevo mi querer...  
¡Y hoy es tu voz que vuelve a mí  
en esta tarde gris!

Ven  
—triste me decías—,  
que en esta soledad  
no puede más el alma mía...

Ven  
y apiádate de mi dolor,  
que estoy cansada de llorarte,  
sufrir y esperarte  
y hablar siempre a solas  
con mi corazón.

Ven,

pues te quiero tanto,  
que si no vienes hoy  
voy a quedar ahogada en llanto...  
No,  
no puede ser que viva así,  
con este amor clavado en mí  
como una maldición.

No supe comprender tu desesperación  
y alegre me alejé en alas de otro amor...  
¡Qué solo y triste me encontré  
cuando me vi tan lejos  
y mi engaño comprobé!  
Mis ojos al cerrar te ven igual que ayer,  
temblando, al implorar de nuevo mi querer...  
¡Y hoy es tu voz que sangra en mí,  
en esta tarde gris!

92. Quiero verte una vez más  
Tarde que me invita a conversar  
con los recuerdos,  
pena de esperarte y de llorar  
en este encierro...  
Tanto en mi amargura te busqué  
sin encontrarte...  
¿Cuándo, cuándo, vida, moriré  
para olvidarte?

Quiero verte una vez más,  
amada mía,  
y extasiarme en el mirar  
de tus pupilas;  
quiero verte una vez más  
aunque me digas  
que ya todo terminó  
y es inútil remover  
las cenizas de un amor...  
Quiero verte una vez más  
¡Estoy tan triste  
y no puedo recordar  
por qué te fuiste!  
Quiero verte una vez más  
y en mi agonía  
un alivio sentiré  
y olvidado en mi rincón  
más tranquilo moriré.

Noche que consigues envolver  
mis pensamientos...  
Quejas que buscando nuestro ayer  
las lleva el viento...

Sangre que ha vertido el corazón  
al evocarte...

Fiebre que me abrasa la razón  
sin olvidarte...

93. Desencanto

¡Qué desencanto más hondo,  
qué desencanto brutal!  
¡Qué ganas de hecharse en el suelo  
y ponerse a llorar!

Cansao de ver la vida,  
que siempre se burla  
y hace pedazos  
mi canto y mi fe.

La vida es tumba de ensueños  
con cruces que, abiertas,  
preguntan... ¿pa' qué?

Y pensar que en mi niñez  
tanto ambicioné, que al soñar  
forjé tanta ilusión;  
oigo a mi madre aún,  
la oigo engañándome,  
porque la vida me negó  
las esperanzas que en la cuna  
me cantó.

De lo ansia, sólo  
alcancé su amor,  
y, cuando lo alcancé,  
me traicionó.

Yo hubiera dado la vida  
para salvar la ilusión.  
Fue el único sol de esperanza  
que tuvo mi fe, mi amor.

Dulce consuelo  
del que nada alcanza.  
Sueño bendito  
que me hizo traición.

Yo vivo muerto hace mucho,  
no siento ni escucho  
ni a mi corazón.

94. Por una cabeza

Por una cabeza  
de un noble potrillo

que justo en la raya  
afloja al llegar,  
y que al regresar  
parece decir:  
No olvidés, hermano,  
vos sabés, no hay que jugar.  
Por una cabeza,  
metejón de un día  
de aquella coqueta  
y burlona mujer,  
que al jurar sonriendo  
el amor que está mintiendo,  
quema en una hoguera  
todo mi querer.

Por una cabeza,  
todas las locuras.  
Su boca que besa,  
borra la tristeza,  
calma la amargura.  
Por una cabeza,  
si ella me olvida  
qué importa perderme  
mil veces la vida,  
para qué vivir.

Cuántos desengaños,  
por una cabeza.  
Yo juré mil veces,  
no vuelvo a insistir.  
Pero si un mirar  
me hiere al pasar,  
sus labios de fuego  
otra vez quiero besar.  
Basta de carreras,  
se acabó la timba.  
¡Un final reñido  
ya no vuelvo a ver!  
Pero si algún pingo  
llega a ser fija el domingo,  
yo me juego entero.  
¡Qué le voy a hacer..!

95. Silencio  
Silencio en la noche.  
Ya todo está en calma.  
El músculo duerme.  
La ambición descansa.

Meciendo una cuna,  
una madre canta

un canto querido  
que llega hasta el alma,  
porque en esa cuna,  
está su esperanza.

Eran cinco hermanos.  
Ella era una santa.  
Eran cinco besos  
que cada mañana  
rozaban muy tiernos  
las hebras de plata  
de esa viejecita  
de canas muy blancas.  
Eran cinco hijos  
que al taller marchaban.

Silencio en la noche.  
Ya todo está en calma.  
El músculo duerme,  
la ambición trabaja.

Un clarín se oye.  
Peligra la Patria.  
Y al grito de guerra  
los hombres se matan  
cubriendo de sangre  
los campos de Francia.

Hoy todo ha pasado.  
Renacen las plantas.  
Un himno a la vida  
los arados cantan.  
Y la viejecita  
de canas muy blancas  
se quedó muy sola,  
con cinco medallas  
que por cinco héroes  
la premió la Patria.

Silencio en la noche.  
Ya todo está en calma.  
El músculo duerme,  
la ambición descansa...

Un coro lejano  
de madres que cantan  
mecen en sus cunas,  
nuevas esperanzas.  
Silencio en la noche.  
Silencio en las almas...

96. Garufa

Del barrio La Mondiola sos el más rana  
y te llaman Garufa por lo bacán;  
tenés más pretensiones que bataclana  
que hubiera hecho suceso con un gotán.  
Durante la semana, meta laburo,  
y el sábado a la noche sos un doctor:  
te encajás las polainas y el cuello duro  
y te venís p'al centro de rompedor.

Garufa,  
¡pucha que sos divertido!  
Garufa,  
ya sos un caso perdido;  
tu vieja  
dice que sos un bandido  
porque supo que te vieron  
la otra noche  
en el Parque Japonés.

Caés a la milonga en cuanto empieza  
y sos para las minas el vareador;  
sos capaz de bailarte la Marsellesa,  
la Marcha a Garibaldi y El Trovador.  
Con un café con leche y una ensaimada  
rematás esa noche de bacanal  
y al volver a tu casa, de madrugada,  
decís: "Yo soy un rana fenomenal".

97. El pañuelito

El pañuelito blanco  
que te ofrecí,  
bordado con mi pelo,  
fue para ti;  
lo has despreciado  
y en llanto empapado  
lo tengo ante mí.

Lejos cantaba un ave,  
mi dulce bien,  
cuando me abandonaste  
no sé por quién,  
y hasta el pañuelo  
rodó por el suelo  
de ver tu desdén.

Con este pañuelo sufrió el corazón,  
con este pañuelo perdí una ilusión,  
con este pañuelo llegó el día cruel  
que tú me dejaste gimiendo con él.  
el fiel pañuelito conmigo sufrió,



El fiel pañuelito conmigo quedó,  
el fiel pañuelito conmigo ha de ir  
el día que acabe mi lento sufrir.

Este pañuelito fue  
compañero de dolor;  
cuántas veces lo besé  
por aquel perdido amor.  
Bordado en él tu nombre está  
y lo llevo siempre aquí  
cuánta pena que me da  
recordándome de ti.

La tarde estaba triste  
cuando te vi  
y cuando de tu boca  
temblando oí  
que no me amabas  
y que te alejabas  
por siempre de mí.

El noble pañuelito  
en mi penar  
ha sido confidente  
de mi pesar  
y acaso impida  
que nunca en la vida  
te pueda olvidar.

98. La copa del olvido  
¡Mozo! Traiga otra copa  
y sírvase de algo el que quiera tomar,  
que ando muy solo y estoy muy triste  
desde que supe la cruel verdad.  
¡Mozo! Traiga otra copa  
que anoche, juntos, los vi a los dos...  
Quise vengarme, matarla quise,  
pero un impulso me serenó.

Salí a la calle desconcertado,  
sin saber cómo hasta aquí llegué  
a preguntar a los hombres sabios,  
a preguntarles qué debo hacer...  
Olvide, amigo—dirán algunos—,  
pero olvidarla no puede ser...  
Y si la mato, vivir sin ella,  
vivir sin ella nunca podré.

¡Mozo! Traiga otra copa  
y sírvase de algo el que quiera tomar...  
Quiero alegrarme con este vino

a ver si el vino me hace olvidar.  
¡Mozo! Traiga otra copa  
y sírvase de algo el que quiera tomar.

99. Che papusa oí  
Muñeca, muñequita que hablás con zeta  
y que con gracia posta batís mishé;  
que con tus aspavientos de pandereta  
sos la milonguerita de más chiqué;  
trajeada de bacana, bailás con corte  
y por raro snobismo tomás prissé,  
y que en auto cambia, de sur a norte,  
paseás como una dama de gran cachet.

Che papusa, oí  
los acordes melodiosos que modula el bandoneón;  
Che papusa, oí  
los latidos angustiosos de tu pobre corazón;  
Che papusa, oí  
cómo surgen de este tango los pasajes de tu ayer...  
Si entre el lujo del ambiente  
hoy te arrastra la corriente,  
mañana te quiero ver...

Milonguerita linda, papusa y breva,  
con ojos picarescos de peppermint,  
de parla afranchutada, pinta maleva  
y boca pecadora color carmín,  
engrupen tus alhajas en la milonga  
con regio faroleo brillanteril  
y al bailar esos tangos de meta y ponga  
volvés otario al vivo y al rana gil.

100.  
"Está listo", sentenciaron las comadres y el varón,  
ya difunto en el presagio, en el último momento  
de su pobre vida rea, dejó al mundo el testamento  
de estas amargas palabras, piantadas de su rencor...

Como abrazado a un rencor

Esta noche para siempre terminaron mis hazañas  
un chamuyo misterioso me acorralla el corazón,  
alguien chaira en los rincones el rigor de la guadaña  
y anda un algo cerca 'el catre olfateándome el cajón.  
Los recuerdos más fuleros me destrozan la zabeca:  
una infancia sin juguetes, un pasado sin honor,  
el dolor de unas cadenas que me queman las muñecas  
y una mina que arrodilla mis arrestos de varón.

Yo quiero morir conmigo,  
sin confesión y sin Dios,  
crucifícao en mis penas

como abrazao a un rencor.  
Nada le debo a la vida,  
nada le debo al amor:  
aquélla me dio amargura  
y el amor, una traición.

Yo no quiero la comedia de las lágrimas sinceras,  
ni palabras de consuelo, no ando en busca de un perdón;  
no pretendo sacramentos ni palabras funebresas:  
me le entrego mansamente como me entregué al botón.  
Sólo a usted, mama lejana, si viviese, le daría  
el derecho de encenderle cuatro velas a mi adiós,  
de volcar todo su pecho sobre mi hereje agonía,  
de llorar sobre mis manos y pedirme el corazón...

101.

Madreselva

Vieja pared  
del arrabal,  
tu sombra fue  
mi compañera.  
De mi niñez  
sin esplendor  
la amiga fue  
tu madreselva.  
Cuando temblando  
mi amor primero  
con esperanzas  
besaba mi alma,  
yo junto a vos,  
pura y feliz,  
cantaba así  
mi primera confesión.

Madreselvas en flor  
que me vieron nacer  
y en la vieja pared  
sorprendieron mi amor,  
tu humilde caricia  
es como el cariño  
primero y querido  
que siento por él.  
Madreselvas en flor  
que trepándose van  
es tu abrazo tenaz  
y dulzón como aquel,  
si todos los años  
tus flores renacen,  
hacé que no muera  
mi primer amor...  
Pasaron los años  
y mis desengaños

yo vengo a contarte,  
mi vieja pared...

Así aprendí  
que hay que fingir  
para vivir  
decentemente;  
que amor y fe  
mentiras son  
y del dolor  
se ríe la gente...  
Hoy que la vida  
me ha castigado  
y me ha enseñado  
su credo amargo,  
vieja pared,  
con emoción  
me acerco a vos  
y te digo como ayer.

Madreselvas en flor  
que me vieron nacer  
y en la vieja pared  
sorpndieron mi amor,  
tu humilde caricia  
es como el cariño  
primero y querido  
que nunca olvidé.  
Madreselvas en flor  
que trepándose van,  
es tu abrazo tenaz  
y dulzón como aquel...  
Si todos los años  
tus flores renacen,  
¿por qué ya no vuelve  
mi primer amor?