

A Performer's Guide for Astor Piazzolla's *María de Buenos Aires*

by

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Dedication

In loving memory of the *tanguero* and embodiment of Duende, Dr. Milton Loayza. This dissertation stands as a tribute to his enduring influence. A luminary in the realm of Hispanic theater scholarship, Dr. Loayza not only studied tango but lived and breathed its essence wherever he went. His profound understanding of the art form infused every facet of his being. Renowned as one of the foremost interpreters of the enigmatic role of Duende, Dr. Loayza's work in numerous productions of *María de Buenos Aires* left an indelible mark, shaping not only my artistic journey but also serving as a profound educational and professional experience. *Que en paz descanse Señor Duende.*

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Abstract

In my extensive experience spanning over a decade and across twenty productions in the United States and Europe, I have had the privilege of performing in Astor Piazzolla's *María de Buenos Aires*, essaying the roles of El Payador and Duende. The work's unique and complex nature became apparent to me during my first encounter with it in 2012. Scored for a chamber orchestra and three characters, the piece delves into the realm of *lunfardo*, an Argentine slang, posing challenges for Spanish speakers from other regions. The libretto, written by Uruguayan poet Horacio Ferrer, embodies an abstract lyricism, offering little in terms of a linear narrative or decipherable plot. Resources for dissecting the score, interpreting the libretto, and grasping Piazzolla's musical style are scarce.

Piazzolla's music, including *María de Buenos Aires*, defies categorization as classical, carving out its own unique genre that melds tango and classical sensibilities. This project aims to address the inquiries performers may have about Astor Piazzolla's music and the narrative of *María de Buenos Aires*. It seeks to offer guidance on approaching and mastering the score, provide insights into Piazzolla's vocal music style, and present a comprehensive libretto featuring literal and colloquial translations, accompanied by a phonetic transcription with Buenos Aires-based pronunciation. Ultimately, this project endeavors to equip future performers with a comprehensive foundation, fostering a more cohesive and collaborative staging process for *María de Buenos Aires*.

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INTRODUCTION

Astor Piazzolla and Horacio Ferrer's *María de Buenos Aires* has been classified as an *operita*, yet an intriguing argument arises, suggesting that its style aligns more closely with contemporary musical theater than the traditional confines of an *operetta* or a "small opera" as it was originally classified. Much like Piazzolla's boundary-pushing Tango compositions that elude straightforward classification, *María de Buenos Aires* transcends conventional labels, residing within the realm of an abstract theatrical masterpiece. While demanding a vocal prowess akin to a combination of operatic, tango and musical theater vocal standards, it blurs the lines between genres, embodying a captivating fusion of artistic expression. The work was born out of the collaboration between two tango titans, Astor Piazzolla and Horacio Ferrer. Over time, the names of these two artists have become more than just names; they have been carved into the stone that is Argentinian culture, not only as artists but as significant historical figures for they have forever left their inimitable mark on the world of tango. Piazzolla, a renowned composer and *bandoneón* player, was distinguished for revolutionizing tango music, infusing it with elements of jazz and classical music, branding a completely new style which would be known as *nuevo tango* (new tango). Ferrer, a poet and lyricist, shared Piazzolla's passion for challenging the boundaries of traditional tango. Their unique collaboration birthed a new era for the genre,

marrying innovative musical elements and poetic storytelling with the passionate embrace of Argentinian music. The two creators would go on to write seventy-five more pieces in twenty years following the premiere of *María de Buenos Aires*, forming a distinctive fusion of abstract poeticism and music that challenged the boundaries of genre in every capacity.¹

María de Buenos Aires premiered on May 8th of 1968 at the Sala Planeta in Buenos Aires with Piazzolla leading a ten-piece orchestra. The singers, Héctor de Rosas and Amelita Baltar were joined by Ferrer as reciter in the role of Duende. Despite initially being considered somewhat of a commercial failure, as innovative pieces often are at the time of their inception, it has become one of the most performed works in Spanish by opera producers all over the world. *María de Buenos Aires* has been produced in houses all over Europe, Asia, and the Americas, received with unparalleled enthusiasm from the general public and critics alike.² The original run of the work was irrefutably a financial disaster. Astor's son Daniel Piazzolla was once quoted in an interview saying, "My father had to sell everything to keep the show going, even his modest Fiat 600 car, in order to pay the carpenters for the scenery."³

¹ *Astor Piazzolla in Portrait*, directed by Michael Dibbs (U.K: Opus Arte 2005), DVD.

² María Susana Azzi and Simon Collier, *Le grand tango: The Life and Music of Astor Piazzolla* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 176.

³ Pablo Zinger, "A Composer Defying Categories," *New York Times*, October 4, 1998. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/10/04/arts/a-composer-defying-categories.html?smid=url-share>

In 1991, *María de Buenos Aires* made its debut in the United States with Houston Grand Opera. However, the company's administrators deemed the piece as originally written to be nonfunctional, believing it would not resonate with their audience. With Piazzolla's and Ferrer's reluctant consent, the administration tasked two Argentinian composers and arrangers, Jacobo Romano and Jorge Zulueta, with adapting the piece into what they imagined would be a more palatable production for their audience members. To accomplish this, Romano and Zulueta were essentially tasked with expanding the sung elements of the piece to reflect a more standard operatic style and subsequently all but remove the recited components, which are substantial and arguably a crucial element of the structure and the cultural essence of the piece. In effect, the US premiere was received well by audiences, but was resultantly condemned by Piazzolla himself. Houston Grand Opera's production was never granted a revival in Houston, or anywhere else for that matter.⁴ One might find it possible to sympathize with HGO's inclination to make an attempt at transforming the piece into a more digestible work for their viewers, but it can be further speculated that removing a portion of the core elements of the piece effectually resulted in stripping the work of its distinctive cultural essence; its mystique, its poetic darkness, its gritty sensuality, and the inexplicable magic which has the capacity to captivate an audience unlike

⁴ Pablo Zinger, "Interview with Mo. Zinger on *María de Buenos Aires*," interview by Luis Orozco, January 25, 2024. <https://youtu.be/UCFzxAyI2T4>

anything else. These intangible elements resonate with the audience on a profound level, transcending mere superficial understanding. While acknowledging that not all audience members may possess the cultural knowledge to fully grasp the performance or its elements, there exists an ephemeral magic in the original form of the piece that communicates something deeply unique and extraordinary, reaching the audience in a way that cannot be replicated. It is significant to note that by consensus, this work was never intended to be fully comprehended or digested over the course of one viewing experience. Through its deliberate ambiguity the piece was designed to stir strong emotions and reactions, but not necessarily to prompt comprehension on an intellectual or academic level.⁵

Since the time of its compositional inception, *María de Buenos Aires* has transcended the boundaries of both traditional theatre and music, becoming a cultural phenomenon in its own right. Its allure lies in its ability to captivate and transport audiences to the vibrant streets of Buenos Aires, immersing them in a dark world of passion, sensuality, and tragedy. The production's profound ability to evoke powerful emotions, driven primarily by its music, allows it to resonate with individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds. This artistic level of accomplishment is a testament to its universal appeal and enduring cultural legacy. It is worth

⁵ Jorge Parodi, "Interview with Mo. Parodi on *María de Buenos Aires*," interview by Luis Orozco, February 12, 2024. <https://youtu.be/kfX5gGoh0Aw>

noting that Latin American opera is itself a rare commodity within the classical music world, so despite the various challenges of producing this complex work, it continues to intrigue opera companies and capture audiences alike. Within both the limited niche of Latin American opera and the broader spectrum of operatic standards, there exists no other work quite like the artistic masterpiece that is *María de Buenos Aires*.

As a professional operatic baritone, I've had the immense privilege of performing this masterful work in twenty different productions worldwide. My journey with this piece began with Cincinnati Opera's production in 2012. During my initial research process, it became evident that resources providing a better understanding of the piece's history, tools for studying the score, and insight into the complex libretto were scarce. This lack of access to necessary tools made learning this work as a performer a significant artistic challenge. One specific challenge, which I will delve into further in this study, is the atypical compositional structure of the piano-vocal score. Singers accustomed to traditional opera piano-vocal scores might even describe their first impression of this piece as "unfinished." Unlike a standard score, the text of the libretto is not written in conjunction with the vocal line, nor is the vocal line clearly indicated for each individual role. At times, the vocal line is intricately woven into the piano accompaniment, making it difficult to identify it as the vocal melody. However, in the majority of cases, the accompaniment is not intended to mirror the melody line but rather to provide a foundation for

any improvisation the singer may introduce to their vocal line. Deciphering how the text is intended to intertwine with the sung lines amidst this musical construction presents a significant and intricate challenge for the singers. Understanding and constructing their role effectively becomes incredibly challenging due to the absence of clear indications on how to precisely align the text within the vocal line as intended by the composer and librettist. This lack of guidance results in a substantial amount of complex and busy work for the performers. Ultimately, experience is indispensable for unraveling the intricacies of the score. Immersing oneself in the music of this genre is crucial in comprehending its unique idioms, which is immensely beneficial for any singers venturing into this piece.

Another challenge embedded within this constructional conundrum is that the libretto for this piece is written in an abstract Argentinian poetic slang which also has its own specific dialect, known as *lunfardo* - a form of Spanish that is not readily accessible to most Spanish speakers outside of Argentina and Uruguay. *Lunfardo* is the slang of tango, of Buenos Aires, and of Montevideo, and its obscurity and abstract nature stems from the incorporation of expressions from the Italian, French, and Portuguese languages that arose in Argentina in the late 19th century as a result of the large influx of European immigrants.⁶ In effect, the libretto virtually

⁶ Adrianna D'Adamo Moosekian, "*Lunfardo* in Argentinian-*Porteño* Communities: Attitudes and Levels of Lexical Recognition," Master of Arts in Spanish thesis, (University of San Diego, 2016).

requires two layers of translation for English speakers, in addition to edification on the specific variations between *lunfardo* and standard Spanish diction. Instead of simply translating the Spanish text into English, one must first decipher the *lunfardo* into standard Spanish before being able to translate the poetry into English. The abstract slang of *lunfardo* is one of the elements of *María de Buenos Aires* that this project aims to demystify. *Lunfardo* heavily draws upon an intricate understanding of Argentina's cultural landscape and is imbued with the surrealist poetry that Ferrer expanded and experimented with, affectionately known as *Ferrerisms*.⁷ This presents an even greater challenge for those unfamiliar with his writing and the cultural foundations surrounding this unique slang and dialect.

The story of *María de Buenos Aires* can hardly be referred to as linear and is bound to confuse anyone that might be expecting an operatic story that possesses a traditional trajectory. Ferrer's poetry brings together the surreal and spiritual symbolism embedded in the slang and blends it with the mystical world of tango, and not without including a number of what can only be described as perverse and blasphemous references to the ritualistic Roman Catholic mass. Ferrer devised a story that was not intended to be told in a linear fashion. The audience is meant to piece the plot together throughout the course of the performance using continuous and occasionally overwhelming imagery and symbolism. This fictitious and sacrilegious story is

⁷ Zinger, "Interview with Mo. Zinger."

most effectively told through a series of vignettes which come together with the intention of leaving the audience with a visceral emotional connection to the essence of tango, Buenos Aires, and to María herself. In order to properly dissect Ferrer's libretto, this project will also discuss sensitive topics related to sexual assault, including descriptions of traumatic experiences. Reader discretion is advised, as the content of the libretto may be triggering or distressing for individuals who have experienced similar traumas or are sensitive to such subject matter.

Mastering *María de Buenos Aires* is no easy feat. Throughout my journey with this piece, I have had the incredible privilege of being in the presence of, and learning from, renowned artists who are considered giants in the tango music genre. These artists encompass dancers, actors, directors, conductors, and several Grammy-nominated musicians such as Daniel Binelli, who was a part of Piazzolla's ensembles. The collective expertise of these artists, combined with my ten years of international experience performing both the roles of Payador and Duende, fills me with great pride as I reflect on my deep understanding of the essence of this piece and my knowledge in preparing these roles. It is something that I hope to pass on to future generations of artists seeking to explore this piece from a performer's perspective. The primary objective of this project is to offer guidance on preparing these roles for those approaching them for the first time. Some of the matters that will be addressed are providing tools for interpreting the abstract poetic nature of the libretto, along with an International Phonetic Transcription, as well as a close word-

for-word translation. There will also be vocal guidance regarding technique and style, direction for musically preparing the score, along with some historical and cultural background on the piece and its creators. My goal is to make the process of undertaking this piece for first time less intimidating for future performers of this work. Over the past decade, this piece has shown no signs of slowing down in regard to its momentum and growing popularity. Atlanta Opera's production opened in 2017 and its audiences requested a remount, which prompted the company to repeat the production only two short years later in 2019. In 2024, successes such as this in operatic programming are not common, and with the Latin American population rapidly growing in the United States, opera companies are desperate to find works to program that might appeal to their Latin American communities. *María de Buenos Aires* continues to be one of the pieces that companies are enthusiastic about programming, with each presentation of this tango *operita* seeming to be even more popular than the last.

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

“Piazzolla's music shocked us with its mixture of brutality, magic, sensuality and humane honesty... the discovery of Piazzolla was like the finding of some exotic and dangerous potency

drug, a drug that could bring with it the double-edged sword of ecstasy and the bitterest of remorse.”⁸

- John Adams

This project will not aim to provide a detailed biography of Astor Piazzolla or Horacio Ferrer, as there are numerous comprehensive biographical resources available that offer extensive insights into the lives of both men. For those seeking a closer look at the life and work of Astor Piazzolla, María Susana Azzi’s *Le Grand Tango* stands out as an exceptional and detailed resource. There is, however, certain biographical information that will be beneficial in understanding Astor Piazzolla’s music and its evolution leading up to the creation of *María de Buenos Aires* in 1968.

Born on March 11, 1921, in Mar del Plata, Argentina, young Astor’s time in his native land was relatively brief. Astor’s father, Vicente Piazzolla, a restless man with an insatiable desire for a better life elsewhere, relocated his wife and only son to the Lower East Side of Manhattan. In pursuit of better opportunities, Vicente and his family heeded the advice of friends and journeyed to New York in 1925, eventually settling at 8 St Mark’s Place.⁹ This area was situated between two predominantly Jewish and Italian neighborhoods. To the east of Little Italy lay one of the largest Jewish communities in the city. As a boy, Astor was known, not pejoratively, as a “shabbos goy,” a term used by Yiddish speakers to describe a non-Jew who assists with tasks prohibited on the Sabbath, as he worked at a synagogue on the weekends. In

⁸ John Adams, “John Adams: Astor Piazzolla: A Note.” Douban Publications, January 29, 2015. https://www.douban.com/note/482360566/?_i=5871891a2aXcG7

⁹ Dibbs, *Astor Piazzolla in Portrait*.

1990 Astor would say in an interview; “my rhythmic accents, 3-3-2 within a 4/4 bar, are similar to those of the Jewish popular music I heard at Jewish weddings as a boy.”¹⁰ This pattern of accents floods Piazzolla’s compositions, but for our purposes perhaps most notably as the perpetual heartbeat of María’s hit tune “Yo soy María.”

At the age of eight, Vicente presented Astor with his first *bandoneón*. The *bandoneón*, an instrument closely related to the harmonium, a reed or pump organ, was invented in Germany in the 1830s and introduced to the *conventillos* (Argentinian ghettos designed to house immigrants) during the massive waves of European immigration in the late 1800’s.¹¹ The *bandoneón* evolved to become the very voice, heart, and soul of tango, presenting an exceptionally demanding challenge for mastery. In an interview, Piazzolla himself once remarked, “It is a truly diabolical instrument, and one must be out of their mind to take it up.”¹² Astor’s initial inclination towards the *bandoneón* and tango itself was tepid, driven mostly by a desire to please his father. However, as Astor traversed his teenage years, the vibrant streets of Harlem kindled his love for jazz, profoundly shaping his musical language. Sneaking into Harlem’s nightclubs with his friends, Piazzolla immersed himself in the captivating performances of Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington, both of whom would wield significant influence over his compositional evolution. Amid the burgeoning musical environment of Piazzolla’s New York upbringing, the serendipitous proximity to Béla Wilda, a Hungarian pianist and protégé of Sergei Rachmaninoff, graced the Piazzolla family.¹³ Astor eventually persuaded his father to allow him to study under

¹⁰ Azzi, *Le Grand Tango*, 18.

¹¹ Azzi, *Le Grand Tango*, 20.

¹² Dibbs, *Astor Piazzolla in Portrait*.

¹³ Azzi, *Le Grand Tango*, 26.

Wilda's guidance, igniting a newfound obsession with the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. The allure of classical music began to rival that of jazz for the young Astor, thereby profoundly shaping his compositional voice during his formative years in New York.

In 1937, despite the objections of sixteen-year-old Astor, the Piazzolla family returned to Mar de Plata, Argentina. Reflecting on this move in a 1987 interview, Piazzolla remarked, "In my head, I had Bach, Schumann, and Mozart, and very little tango."¹⁴ However, for a young bandoneonist in Argentina, the allure of Buenos Aires and its tango scene would prove to be irresistible. In 1939, he secured a significant position with one of the era's tango luminaries, Aníbal Troilo, marking his entry into the world of tango. His role in Troilo's band not only provided a steady income but also established his presence in the tango realm. Being associated with some of tango's leading figures was a direct benefit of Troilo's renown. Entrusted with creating the band's arrangements, Piazzolla's intricate harmonic language and innovative use of counterpoint in tango proved challenging for Troilo. Piazzolla's primary focus lay in crafting music that captivated the ear, with little concern for its danceability, subsequently leading to the end of their collaboration in 1943 due to artistic disparities.¹⁵ After his years with Troilo, he commenced formal musical composition under the tutelage of the esteemed Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera, studying classical compositional technique for six years. This phase led Astor to set aside the *bandoneón* and tango for five years to concentrate on becoming a classical symphonic composer.¹⁶ In 1954, a scholarship opportunity took him to France to study

¹⁴ Astor Piazzolla, interview by Terry Gross, "Interview with Astor Piazzolla," NPR Fresh Air, September 5, 1988.

¹⁵ Azzi, *Le Grand Tango*, 54.

¹⁶ Christopher Nupen, *Homage to Astor Piazzolla*, directed by Christopher Nupen (U.K: Allegro Films 1998,) <https://youtu.be/owJEv-Be5hI?si=tGljmV3DLHslOxqm>

under the renowned pedagogue Nadia Boulanger. Astor arrived in Paris armed with an extensive collection of symphonic compositions, piano concertos, and chamber works, fully prepared to impress his new mentor. However, Boulanger's feedback was unexpected. She expressed, "This is all very well written, but I don't hear Astor Piazzolla in this. Can you tell me who Astor Piazzolla is and what he does? I hear Ravel, Bartok, Hindemith, but I have no idea who Astor Piazzolla is."¹⁷ Reluctantly and with a hint of embarrassment, Piazzolla confessed to being a *bandoneón* player and a tango musician. He then played his tango "Triunfal" for her, to which she exclaimed, "You idiot! Don't you know it? This is Astor Piazzolla! Don't ever leave it!"¹⁸ This period marked a dramatic shift in Piazzolla's artistic trajectory, as the tango-infused compositions he crafted in Paris broke free from the confines of traditional tango. Infusing elements of classical technique and jazz influence, he embarked on a musical revolution, never to be confined by the traditions of old. Piazzolla embarked on a quest to reshape tango, aiming to cultivate a rich and intricate nationalistic sound that would bestow upon Argentina and Buenos Aires a fresh and enduring legacy in the international music scene, giving rise to the *Nuevo Tango* (New Tango). Fellow pupil of Boulanger, composer Daniel Barenboim, eloquently captured Piazzolla's endeavor, stating, "Piazzolla has breathed new life into tango, not by seeking to popularize it, but by organically and naturally evolving and modernizing it harmonically, thus preventing it from becoming a relic of the past."¹⁹ However, this bold innovation led Piazzolla into a relentless storm of criticism from tango purists and traditionalists in Argentina, enduring insults from strangers and, on rare occasions, even facing threats to his

¹⁷ Dibbs, *Piazzolla in Portrait*.

¹⁸ Nupen, *Homage to Astor Piazzolla*.

¹⁹ Dibbs, *Piazzolla in Portrait*.

life.²⁰ The staunch resistance to change and the emergence of New Tango within Argentina presented profound personal and professional challenges for Piazzolla. It wasn't until he delved into composing vocal music and forged a musical partnership with Horacio Ferrer, a significant poet and literary icon synonymous with tango, that a glimmer of acceptance began to emerge. The years 1967-68 marked a pivotal juncture in the composer's musical journey. With the release of Ferrer's inaugural collection of tango-inspired poems in 1967, Piazzolla proposed a musical collaboration. Renting a flat in Parque del Plata, Uruguay, they embarked on the creation of *María de Buenos Aires*, a remarkable feat achieved in a mere 30 days.²¹ The following year, Piazzolla began a seven-year relationship with the singer Amelita Baltar. "According to the woman he was with, is the kind of music he wrote. He was with a singer, so he wrote vocal music," his son Daniel Piazzolla would tell Michael Dibbs in an in a 2004 interview.²² Astor Piazzolla envisioned María's role tailored to Amelita's voice, making her the pioneering interpreter of numerous songs crafted through the collaboration with Ferrer following the inception of *María de Buenos Aires*. Few moments in Astor's career could match the significance of "Balada para un loco," penned in 1969, which garnered fervent acclaim across Argentina. Ironically, to Astor's dismay, this composition, more than any other, unlocked the gates of Argentina for him. It evolved into a quasi-tango anthem, bestowing upon the composer the validation he had longed for, overshadowing the grander works he held in higher esteem.²³ In the contemporary era, *María de Buenos Aires* has enjoyed remarkable success, a success that, regrettably, Maestro Piazzolla did not live long enough to witness. This piece has undergone a

²⁰ Nupen, *Homage to Astor Piazzolla*.

²¹ Zinger, "A Composer Defying Categories."

²² Dibbs, *Piazzolla in Portrait*.

²³ Dibbs, *Piazzolla in Portrait*.

well-deserved global revival, firmly establishing its place within his tango revolution and contributing significantly to the ascendance of Latin American works in the global operatic panorama.

ISSUES WITH THE PLOT

In my discussions with numerous colleagues and experts of Piazzolla and *María de Buenos Aires* about their interpretations of the plot, I have encountered a multitude of responses. It's not that these experts lack knowledge; rather, the work is intended to be highly interpretive. One could argue that the piece wasn't crafted to be fully comprehended. There exist various potential explanations for the piece's abstract nature, and one of the primary reasons why Ferrer and Piazzolla didn't focus on creating a linearly designed or narratively clear theatrical piece is that it wasn't initially intended for the stage. As Maestro Pablo Zinger aptly notes, "*María de Buenos Aires* is labeled as an '*operita Porteña*,' but this label is somewhat of a misnomer. Its original performance was as a concert piece, not an opera. Piazzolla never envisioned it as an opera. In traditional operas the characters drive the plot forward, *María de Buenos Aires* sees the characters narrating a story through poetic recitation and perhaps a more accurate label is a poetic musical *oratorio*.²⁴ The premiere at the Sala Planeta in Buenos Aires, featuring Piazzolla on the *bandoneón* and Ferrer creating and reciting the role of Duende, was presented as a captivating concert piece. Tango singer Amelita Baltar, portrayed María, while Héctor De Rosas portrayed the role of Payador, both standing in front of the band, presenting the piece as a tango *oratorio*. However, the allure of this creation hasn't escaped the notice of opera companies

²⁴ Zinger "Interview with Mo. Zinger."

worldwide, who recognized its potential for production, a decision that has certainly stood the test of time. This opus boasts a storied legacy across Europe and has graced numerous stages in the United States over the last few decades. The clamor for this work to be showcased in operatic spaces has led to its reclassification as an “opera,” a transformation that diverges from its original conception. Therefore, it falls on producers, directors, and singing actors to present a piece that is digestible for theater audiences. However, as Maestro Zinger rightfully underscores, this work stands alone as an unparalleled gem in the world of music and performance art. “There is nothing like *María de Buenos Aires*, it is truly one of a kind.”²⁵ Maestro Jorge Parodi, a seasoned veteran of the piece on the podium, emphasizes that despite its abstract and surreal nature, it never fails to captivate audiences due to Piazzolla’s exhilarating, enthralling, and vibrant score. “This score has an undeniable allure that resonates with every audience, no matter how unconventional the storyline or perplexing the text translation may be. The surreal text engulfs the audience with a series of evocative images, with the music serving as the primary vehicle to evoke a myriad of emotions among the spectators.”²⁶ The correlation between the text and music is what elevates *María de Buenos Aires* to the status of a masterpiece, forging a magnetic connection with audiences and prompting opera companies worldwide to include it in their programming. Similar to the greatest composers of the operatic genre, the music in this piece aids in illustrating the text and serving its interpretation. However, due to the abstract nature of the text, Piazzolla’s musical genius is pivotal to its success. Staging this *operita* poses a significant challenge; directors must find a way to convey the true essence of the piece, whether in a linear fashion or not, in order to narrate the story effectively.

²⁵ Zinger, “Interview with Mo. Zinger.”

²⁶ Parodi, “Interview with Mo. Parodi.”

Director John Hoomes from the Nashville Opera recalls his experience of preparing to direct the work in 2017, where he immersed himself in the original Piazzolla/Ferrer recording while paying meticulous attention to the emotions and messages conveyed by the music. Hoomes notes, “if the composer is great, there is so much in the music that tells you what is going on or what should be going on plot wise.”²⁷ Despite not being fluent in Spanish or having prior experience with Piazzolla or Ferrer’s work, his production proved successful and effective, beautifully accomplishing the daunting task of selecting the story to be told amidst the symbolism and imagery, while preserving its enigmatic essence.

Many individuals often succumb to the temptation of apologizing for the surrealism of the work when telling the story of *María*. However, as Maestro Parodi eloquently articulates, “the unexpected and often incomprehensible text and syntax were deliberately crafted, signifying a departure from a linear story to a profound process. The characters do not undergo a conventional narrative or simply tell a story; instead, they go through a process from one state of being to different mental and emotional states.”²⁸ This, he emphasizes, encapsulates the very essence of the piece. Mo. Zinger adds, “that many people try to fix *María de Buenos Aires* because they don’t understand it. When you understand it, you realize that it is a true masterpiece.”²⁹ Renowned pianist and composer Pablo Ziegler, who has conducted the piece in 30 productions during his illustrious career and was a close collaborator of Piazzolla, also highlights the historical context of *María de Buenos Aires*. Ziegler reminds us that Ferrer and

²⁷ John Hoomes, “Interview with Stage Director John Hoomes on *María de Buenos Aires*,” interview by Luis Orozco, January 25, 2024.

²⁸ Parodi, “Interview with Mo. Parodi.”

²⁹ Zinger, “Interview with Mo. Zinger.”

Piazzolla crafted this piece amidst the backdrop of the hippie culture in Buenos Aires. He further comments that Ferrer's "hyper-*lunfardo*" is infused with elements of hippie language, all the while paying tribute to the literary style of magic realism, thus shedding light on the abstract nature of the libretto.³⁰

Actors and directors are constantly tasked with the challenge of presenting this abstract imagery in a manner that conveys a compelling narrative, particularly when the work is adapted for the theatrical stage. Fortunately, there are experts who contend that the piece possesses more storyline than some may argue. Soprano Catalina Cuervo, renowned for her portrayal of María, argues that the story harbors certain plot points that, despite its surreal nature, form the basis of a somewhat linear narrative. Cuervo's extensive experience with the piece spans over a decade, and she fondly recalls her inaugural performance as a uniquely enlightening experience. This production was a part of the Chicago Latin American Music Festival, curated by Uruguayan composer Elbio Barilari, who assembled a group of musicians with profound personal and musical connections to Piazzolla. Conductor Gerardo Moreira, who had performed *María de Buenos Aires* with Piazzolla as his cellist, was entrusted with conducting Cuervo's debut performance, while the illustrious *bandoneón* maestro Raul Jaurena headlined the orchestra. The wealth of musical and dramatic expertise these luminaries brought to the production rendered Cuervo's initiation into the role an immensely educational journey. Cuervo also had the opportunity to interview Ferrer, gaining insights into the plot and the distinctive *Ferrer-isms* in the text, which enrich but can further confuse the *lunfardo* dialect. While acknowledging the surrealism of the piece, Cuervo argues that the linear, or rather cyclically linear, storyline is

³⁰ Pablo Ziegler, "Interview with Mo. Ziegler on *María de Buenos Aires*," Phone interview by Luis Orozco, February 15, 2024.

intricately interwoven within its abstract fabric.³¹ Cuervo summarized her interpretation of the plot after conversing with Ferrer in an enlightening manner; “María embodies the essence of tango. She symbolizes the cyclical evolution that tango has undergone in Buenos Aires. Both tango and María experience a birth and a phase of pristine purity, followed by a feverish surge in popularity. Subsequently, they both endure a period of decline or insignificance, only to undergo a process of introspection and emerge anew.”³² This rebirth of María symbolically reflects Piazzolla’s revolutionary impact on the genre, propelling it to newfound international acclaim and restoring its popularity. These parallels, coupled with agreed-upon plot points, form the foundation of a linear narrative when applied to María’s character. Cuervo delineates some of these pivotal plot points, stating, “María is born into a challenging and abusive environment, likely involving sexual abuse. As a teenager, she migrates to Buenos Aires, where she enters the realm of sex work, leveraging her sexuality for empowerment. Tragically, she meets a violent end, a fate shared by numerous individuals in the sex work industry. Her demise is attributed to two conflicting forces vying for control over her — symbolically represented by Ferrer versus Piazzolla, music versus poetry. This conflict is often staged through a poetic and musical duel between the Duende and the *bandoneón* player in the 7th vignette, ‘Tocata Rea.’ Subsequently, her soul roams the streets of Buenos Aires, compelled to confront and process her anguish and trauma, ultimately culminating in her rebirth at the story’s conclusion.” According to Cuervo’s perspective, this rebirth resembles the concept of reincarnation found in Indian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, signifying that María’s soul endures beyond her physical

³¹ Catalina Cuervo, “Interview with Soprano Catalina Cuervo on *María de Buenos Aires*,” Interview by Luis Orozco, January 22, 2024. <https://youtu.be/L2VEKjj5SDc>

³² Cuervo, “Interview with Cuervo.”

existence, while her posthumous wanderings in the streets of Buenos Aires are linked to the Catholic concept of purgatory.³³

The interpretation shares similarities with John Hoomes' production in Nashville Opera. In his cyclical interpretation, the Duende acts as a guide ensnared in a layer of hell alongside María's soul. At the opera's outset, young María is lured by the tango dance performed by two dancers, leading her through a phase of empowerment and sexual awakening, aligning with Cuervo's portrayal of María as a sex worker in Buenos Aires. María combats memories of Payador's affection that seek to pull her away from tango, embracing the dance's darkness — an art form ultimately responsible for her violent assault and murder, or more precisely, a poignant reminder of her deceased state and entrapment in hell in Hoomes' rendition. Throughout the opera, demons, angels, and figments of her imagination, including the Duende and the roles enacted by Payador, guide her on a path of self-discovery until the rebirth process at the conclusion, leaving us pondering María's decision and new fate post-reincarnation. In his book, *Teatro Completo: María de Buenos Aires y Otras Obras*, Ferrer seems to align with Hoomes and hints at the possibility of the Duende, along with the other characters, emanating from María's spirit, as she is their creator. Ferrer articulates, "These characters are borne from María's all-powerful, stylistically poignant, and visionary spirit. María herself proclaims to be the embodiment of Buenos Aires — its architect, its voice, and its essence." Additionally, Ferrer sheds light on the Duende, describing it as a nocturnal spirit compelled to be part of María's narrative and recount it to the audience. This tale has unfolded repeatedly, and it is the Duende's duty to captivate the audience with it. The Duende is the lover of her spirit, and as a spirit himself, he alone comprehends and adores her completely. "From that adoration, another María

³³ Cuervo, "Interview with Cuervo."

emerges; is it the same María? Perhaps a new, future iteration, or an ancient one? A matriarchal figure, both suicidal and resurrection herself.”³⁴ The concept of María embodying the city is akin to her embodiment of tango. Buenos Aires is indelibly intertwined with tango, not solely as a dance but as a fundamental aspect of its cultural identity, a connection that will endure indefinitely. However conceptual these character comparisons may be, they can aid us in crafting a coherent narrative. Cuervo contends that a clearer narrative can be established by leveraging the surrealism of the text to preserve the essence of the piece while still conveying a compelling storyline.³⁵

Crafting a linear or disjointed story across these 16 vignettes, even with plot points as guides, presents its own set of challenges. The vignettes between these plot points can be extensive, encompassing weighty dialogue, scenes, and instrumental music. Creating a roadmap for the cast to follow demands considerable creativity. Director John De Los Santos, with whom I have collaborated on this piece, has fashioned a captivating world that has garnered success in productions at esteemed companies such as San Diego Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Arizona Opera, and others. De Los Santos focused on selecting plot moments that resonated with him dramatically to craft the story, he envisioned. In the interstices of these plot points, he delved into the ludicrous and abstract nature of surreal imagery, not only to preserve the essence of Ferrer’s poetry but also to enrich the narrative he had conceived. In an interview, De los Santos expounded on incorporating stereotypical aspects from Argentina, such as tango, Fernet, beef, Sunday afternoon soccer on television, and Catholicism, and parodying them in an irreverent

³⁴ Horacio Ferrer, *Teatro completo María de Buenos Aires y otras obras, Volumen 1* (University of Michigan: Ediciones del Soñador, 2007), 102-103.

³⁵ Cuervo, “Interview with Cuervo.”

manner.³⁶ This astute use of irreverence aligns with Ferrer’s intention to challenge societal norms and perceptions, encompassing culture, religion, human relationships, pain, love, sex, life, and death.³⁷ De los Santos views the irreverence of these stereotypes and cultural identities serving as connective tissue between narrative plot points. In the pursuit of narrative integrity, this production makes bold creative decisions that diverge from the traditional interpretations prevalent in opera companies today. Heightened scenes depicting stereotypical construction workers, juxtaposed with brothels and catcalling passersby, male tango dancers dancing together to impress a crowd of women — tango was originally done in this fashion — unhealthy family dynamics, mundane everyday settings, blasphemous settings of the Catholic mass, demons, angels, and funeral processions all coexist and serve to bridge the gaps between the discussed main plot points. Narratively, this production retains the original seduction by tango, a poignant portrayal of a painful childhood marked by poverty and sexual abuse, a compelling force drawing the protagonist to Buenos Aires, her experience as a sex worker fraught with physical and sexual violence, her subsequent transformation into a spirit and eventual rebirth — or the birth of a child who may be another entity or an embodiment of herself. The intervals between these pivotal moments abound with vivid imagery and intricate details, providing the actors with the necessary tools to bring De los Santos’ vision to life and deliver a powerful rendition of the work.

His deliberate use of the six-member ensemble significantly contributes to the creation of a vibrant world. A key distinction lies in the casting choice of a female-presenting individual as

³⁶ John de los Santos, “Interview with Director John de los Santos on *María de Buenos Aires*,” Interview by Luis Orozco, February 13, 2024. <https://youtu.be/52-qQLQ2YpM>

³⁷ Ziegler, “Interview with Mo. Ziegler.”

the Duende, and the transformation of the character into the primary antagonistic force against María. According to de los Santos, the term *Duende* embodies a spiritual force rather than a specific individual, representing the essence of something or an emotion.³⁸ While Ferrer's concept of Duende is rooted in adoration, de los Santos' interpretation depicts Duende as an irreverent spiritual force intrinsically tied to María. In de los Santos' rendition, Duende serves as a guide throughout María's journey, assuming the role of an unholy puppet master, orchestrating her life from birth to an ultimate attempt to seize and reclaim her soul. In de los Santos' interpretation, the Duende embodies the corruptible facets of society, encompassing politics, the church, the streets, and the myriad elements that seek to undermine its essence, including the interplay of sex and drugs.³⁹ De los Santos' use of the Payador is also distinct, as the character consistently embodies a force for good, remaining a steadfast presence throughout María's journey. His unwavering love for her mirrors the biblical concept of God's unconditional love for humanity, adding a profound layer of symbolism to the narrative. Often in productions serving as the linchpin that seamlessly ties scenes together, the Payador's chameleon-like nature allows for a portrayal of contrasting emotions towards María, from love and lust to hate, jealousy, and desire for power. In this production however, the Payador is depicted as a force combatting evil with pure and unwavering love, evoking Christ-like qualities that can resonate with an audience on a deeply human level. De los Santos emphasizes the importance of infusing the story with a sense of hope, opting for a more human and redemptive interpretation that speaks to the human experience.⁴⁰ By portraying María's resilience and eventual triumph over

³⁸ De los Santos, "Interview with Director de los Santos."

³⁹ De los Santos, "Interview with Director de los Santos."

⁴⁰ De los Santos, "Interview with Director de los Santos."

the darkness and violence she faces, the production delivers a compelling and uplifting conclusion, underscoring the strength and fortitude of the human spirit.

The use of supertitles in De los Santos' production of *María de Buenos Aires* is also quite unique. Instead of providing a direct word for word translation, varying sentences are displayed for each of the sixteen vignettes, aiming to offer the audience a brief idea of the scene's essence or the emotion it seeks to evoke. This approach effectively draws the audience's attention to the intricate visual detail of the production, enriching their experience by encouraging them to immerse themselves in the visual storytelling. I have always found this method to be quite effective and complimentary to this specific production. However, Maestro Parodi presents a compelling counter argument, emphasizing the importance of experiencing the translated poetry to fully grasp the essence of the production. As previously discussed, he acknowledges that the text is not meant to create a linear story, but rather a series of images designed to evoke specific emotions. Parodi suggests that while it may be impossible to understand every image the translation depicts, the audience should engage with the supertitles and pause to connect with the images unfolding on the titles and the stage.⁴¹ This interactive approach encourages the audience to introspect and ask themselves if the emotions they feel align with the narrative and stage portrayal. The differing perspectives on the use of supertitles in *María de Buenos Aires* raise thought-provoking questions about the audience's experience and the performers' interpretation of the libretto. It underscores the multi-faceted nature of theatrical experiences and invites audiences to engage with the production in diverse and meaningful ways. Parodi acknowledges the challenge that most audiences, when attending the theater, crave a deep understanding of what unfolds on stage. He recognizes that embracing the discomfort of not fully comprehending

⁴¹ Parodi, "Interview with Mo. Parodi."

a piece can be daunting. However, Parodi confidently assures us that the fusion of Ferrer and Piazzolla's masterpiece will offer a uniquely profound experience, rendering full comprehension somewhat irrelevant. Furthermore, Parodi advocates for the necessity of a pre-show discussion to prepare the audience for the journey that awaits them. Rather than striving for intellectual mastery, he emphasizes the significance of experiencing the poetic cadences and musical nuances similar to strolling through an art exhibition. Parodi compares the experience to navigating a gallery, where individuals meander through diverse paintings until they encounter one that deeply resonates, prompting them to pause and immerse themselves in its essence.⁴² In this manner, Parodi guides us to embrace *María de Buenos Aires* as a captivating gallery of images, each awaiting discovery and contemplation.

Addressing the religious references in the text presents another challenge in interpreting the piece. Despite the heavily discussed abstract nature of the text, Ferrer was remarkably deliberate in combining straightforward language, magical realism, and what may appear at first glance as random text. Maestro Ziegler emphasizes, "the references are meticulous, not random, albeit seemingly ridiculous."⁴³ Thus, it becomes evident that all the references to Catholicism are highly intentional. To Maestro Zinger, a self-proclaimed atheist Jew, *María de Buenos Aires* simply narrates the story of Mary and Jesus, drawing concrete proof from the numerous references to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible to support his interpretation.⁴⁴ Professor Carolina Molina Fernández describes the *operita's* literary essence as the overlay of a profound religious imprint on the world of the ordinary; "even the name of the girl seems to resonate with

⁴² Parodi, "Interview with Mo. Parodi."

⁴³ Ziegler, "Interview with Mo. Ziegler."

⁴⁴ Zinger, "Interview with Mo. Zinger."

that of Jesus of Nazareth. María epitomizes the female appellation of the Catholic tradition, an icon of virtue and purity in Western iconology. However, this *femme fatale* thrives through sensuality: thus, we encounter a subversive tango gospel, a narrative of life and death that seeks to challenge established religious *cliché* through an unconventional redeemer.”⁴⁵ As Prof. Molina Fernández observes, the sixteen vignettes are structured to mirror the biblical order. The initial seven vignettes, excluding “Yo soy María” — not originally part of the libretto — all directly reference the Old Testament. “These invocations to religious themes are reaffirmed and multiplied in the literary text. *María de Buenos Aires* is organized as a secular journey through the most relevant biblical episodes in our worldview. A first reference to Cain in ‘Alevare’ serves for the third scene, ‘Balada para un organito loco’ to detail the birth of the girl with elements related to certain characters of the Old Testament. Like Moses, María is also rescued from a river journey.”⁴⁶ María is rescued from the stream by two shabby looking and aimless celestial creatures, described by the Duende as “raros palomos... con alas de lata” (Two strange stallions with tin can wings). She is born into abject poverty “orilla ñata... de arena y de frío... allá donde el río se junta a la nada” (Shabby corner, of sand and coldness, where the river meets nothingness).⁴⁷ The text depicts a somber setting where desolation prevails in the cold uncertainty, alongside weeping angels. If we view the first seven vignettes as María’s irreverent tale of the world’s creation, vignette number eight, “Miserere canyengue,” initiates our references to the New Testament, drawing parallels between María and Jesus’ birth to their eventual demise

⁴⁵ Carolina Molina Fernández “Música y palabra. La poética del tango en *María de Buenos Aires*,” PHD diss., (Universidad de la Extremadura, 2003).

⁴⁶ Molina Fernández “Música y palabra,” 259-260.

⁴⁷ Astor Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires* (Darmstadt, Germany: Tonos Publishing, 1999), 74.

in the “Milonga a la anunciación,” “Miserere canyengue,” and “Tangus dei.” Ferrer deliberately places all these blasphemous references to the Catholic mass in order to draw these parallels.

The challenge lies in how to seamlessly integrate all these references into the narrative. In the United States, the arts, including opera, operate within a corporate and donor-based financial system, which can often come with its own distinct connections and identifications within the Christian religion, and sometimes a desire to steer away from the overly controversial. However, it would be a disservice to stage this *operita* without acknowledging its irreverence towards religion. The reasons behind these references and parallels to the Christian story are not entirely clear, but there is no denying their intentionality. This may be attributed to the popularity of agnosticism in Latin America despite its cultural Catholic roots. Catholicism is deeply embedded in Argentina’s culture, yet it is a country where many residents identify with agnostic or other spiritual beliefs, as noted by Mo. Parodi. Latin America perhaps allows for a certain freedom in not always treating Catholicism with sacred reverence, albeit often in artistic circles, as it is more of a feature of cultural identity rather than strictly a religious belief. As Parodi would explain, “we may be predominantly Catholic, but we are not devoutly religious; many of us never attend church. However, culturally, we have a profound understanding of Catholicism, its beliefs, traditions, and history, and many in the Latin American community have a complex relationship with the Catholic Church, characterized by both love and hate.” While there are numerous religious elements in the story of *María de Buenos Aires*, it is not liturgical and is not intended to be a Passion. It holds cultural religious significance due to its references, albeit irreverent, but it is not a religious ceremony.⁴⁸ Ferrer’s aim according to Parodi, was not to create a piece that was anti-religion. Instead, some of that irreverence towards Catholic traditions is already ingrained in

⁴⁸ Parodi, “Interview with Mo. Parodi.”

the culture and would have been part of his reality during the height of the hippie culture in Buenos Aires. Ferrer was keen on using references and imagery despite their abstractness, to convey a sense of cultural familiarity. De los Santos is in agreement with this view of the piece, refraining from staging the work as a Passion and instead emphasizing the weighty references of irreverence for the church in his interpretation. In his production, Duende assumes the role of an antagonistic force to María, rather than a supportive or reverent spectator in her journey. This concept materialized for him while listening to the score and discerning a quality Duende's music possessed that resonated as an antithesis to María. In his production, Duende's primary motivation throughout the piece is the demise of the protagonist. The Duende is determined to destroy her current essence and spirit, intending to thwart her future self by stealing her child, assuming the form of some form of a demonic force. While most scenes in the piece harmonize musically with this version of the Duende, the "Romanza del Duende" presents somewhat of a challenge to De los Santos' vision. In this segment, the character expresses love and grief for the death of our protagonist and would-be savior. The music exudes profound sorrow, and the Duende's delivery of text almost implores the actor to weep and succumb to the demands of Piazzolla's music. Set as a duet with the piano, Mo. Pablo Ziegler notes that the actor should convey a deep sense of loss and grief over the darkness of the world depicted in the story through the tragic life and demise of María.⁴⁹ De los Santos, however, takes a different approach in playing against the beauty of the music and highlighting the irreverent nature of the work. His vision for the scene is designed to emphasize the corruption and abuse of power attached to the church in its recent history. One could say that De los Santos employs the same formula Ferrer uses in other scenes, shocking the listener with imagery and challenging the conventions of

⁴⁹ Ziegler, "Interview with Mo. Ziegler."

drama against musical scoring. For this highly emotional and musically stunning scene De los Santos stages a blasphemous setting of the Sunday mass, where the Duende is dressed as the pope, offering Fernet (a bitter Italian liqueur) as communion wine, while his bishops and priests are being massaged by nuns in the background, all underlining the ridicule for Catholicism and its traditions. Although his staging has sparked controversy among patrons and producers, De los Santos points out that the blasphemous elements are already deeply embedded in the libretto. In the beginning of the *operita*, Ferrer illustrates that “María was born on the day when God was drunk.”⁵⁰ Therefore, in response to calls to change the staging for the “Romanza del Duende,” De los Santos highlights that doing so would not only contradict his vision for the piece but also the clear intentions of the librettist.⁵¹

As one can probably discern by now, the interpretation of the story of *María de Buenos Aires* can vary widely. My hope is that I have presented a case for the deliberate surrealistic nature of the libretto, and some starting points for its interpretation. In my view, Ferrer and Piazzolla intended this abstract work to evoke intense emotions and thought, challenging our perception of humanity and society. It is quite possible that an actor may not fully grasp the libretto at the start of rehearsals, or even at the end of production. However, it’s crucial to bring forth ideas based on a meticulous study and intentional interpretation of the text and story. Kelly Guerra, a singer-actress and interpreter of the role of María, advises that taking on any of the roles in this piece requires embarking on an extensive research project. One cannot impose their own ideas of character interpretation without thoroughly studying Argentinian culture, art and

⁵⁰ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 74.

⁵¹ De los Santos, “Interview with Director de los Santos.”

poetry, tango, Ferrer, and Piazzolla.⁵² Additionally, due to its surreal nature, collaborative effort is essential. The merging of ideas and interpretations will ideally result organically from thorough preparation and openness to the visions of the ensemble. This is vital in order to convey a compelling story and create the unique dramatic and musical experience that the *operita* was meant to deliver.

PAYADOR/ BARITONE OR TENOR SINGING ROLE

This section will offer musical stylistic suggestions, provide context for the music of the character Payador, and clarify any potentially confusing sections of the piano-vocal score. Keep in mind that the orchestral score does offer more clarity in certain places, however, the orchestral score is not always available for purchase or download. In different parts of the world, this particular role can go by various names. The character's name changes as the scenes shift, and I have seen it referred to as "The Tenor" in some European cities. The role doesn't necessarily demand a tenor's vocal range; in fact, baritone voices are often favored for this part. However, a tenor comfortable with touching an A2 note in registration could also suit the role well. The lower part could almost be spoken and it's worth noting that the role is intended for microphone-assisted singing. Additionally, the lower parts of the role are not prolonged. While operatic producers generally lean towards casting baritone singers, the role wasn't initially crafted for an operatic singer. Rather, it was envisioned for a tango singer, making the traditional vocal classification less relevant. The *tessitura* (the range within which most notes of a vocal part fall),

⁵² Kelly Guerra, "Interview with Mezzo-soprano Kelly Guerra on *María de Buenos Aires*," Interview by Luis Orozco, January 23, 2024. <https://youtu.be/WRuoPOvKlno>

was specifically designed with a tango singer in mind, leaving it to operatic producers to cast the role based on their preferred vocal color. *Grand Théâtre de Genève* produced an all-female presenting cast in the fall of 2023 where Payador was portrayed by Argentinian tango singer Inés Cuello, showing the versatility of *fach* this piece can possess. Cuello is a masterful tango interpreter and vocal technician, able to sing the entire role with a lovely mix and back and forth of head to chest voice, maintaining seamless transitions throughout her *passaggi*.

Additional monikers for this role include Payador (most commonly used), *La voz de un Payador*, *Porteño Gorrión con Sueño*, *Ladron Antiguo Mayor*, *Analista Primero*, and *Una voz de ese Domingo*.⁵³ These titles are used for the same role in the piano-vocal and orchestral scores, which can be perplexing at first glance. However, for consistency, I will refer to the role as Payador in this project. Similar to the character of María, this role wasn't intended for an operatic voice. Nevertheless, unlike María, Payador is more compatible with classical technique. It predominantly resides in the middle register of a baritone voice and the middle to lower register of a tenor voice. Hence, a chest dominant voice incorporating classical technique is perfectly fitting for portraying this role. Considering this, adherence to specific vocal tango traditions is imperative, regardless of whether a singer adopts classical technique, a popular music approach or a mixture of the two in their vocal interpretation. Central to Piazzolla's music and tango in general is the pivotal concept of *fraseo* (phrasing). *Fraseso* involves the performer freely interpreting a series of evenly notated durations, such as eighth or quarter notes, into a relaxed triplet or a syncopated group. This concept bears resemblance to the notion of "swing" in jazz, contributing to the creation of a fluid and adaptable melodic line that transcends the steady

⁵³ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*.

beat. Renowned Piazzolla expert, Mo. Zinger, advocates for the use of *fraseo* to always complement the poetic language. Any rhythmic adjustments should invariably align with the emphasis of the lyrical phrase.⁵⁴ A vocalist should be empowered to emphasize various aspects of the phrase in accordance with their own interpretation of the language and poetry. Figures 1 and 2 exemplify my personal phrasing on the entrance of Payador’s second musical piece, “Milonga carriaguera.” Figure 1 represents the notation in the piano vocal-score, while figure 2 illustrates my rhythmic interpretation. It's important to note that this rendition is solely my perspective on the phrase, and ultimately, the performer has the liberty to adjust any rhythm within the piece to align with their individual preference.

Fig. 1 “Milonga Carriaguera”⁵⁵



Fig. 2 “Milonga Carriaguera” with slight *fraseo*



⁵⁴ Zinger, “Interview with Mo. Pablo Zinger.”

⁵⁵ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 18.

This is just a small example of the rhythmic liberties that can be taken, and as one's execution fits the poetic language, the possibilities are vast.

Tango, in its essence, represents an Argentinean genre that intertwines musical elements and traditions from diverse cultures. As Fernando Gonzalez aptly notes, “tango is a music of paradoxes originating in Buenos Aires, where African, European, and Indigenous influences intertwine.”⁵⁶ Payador's music is full of tango rhythms and traditions emerging from this cultural clash. Piazzolla pays homage to the old tango traditions by drawing upon a multitude of culturally significant musical references that encapsulate the essence of tango.

Balada para un organito loco

El Payador's initial piece, “Balada para un organito loco” (ballad of a crazy small organ), pulsates with the driving force of the tango prevalent Cuban *habanera* rhythm, evoking an unwavering heartbeat, while offering abundant opportunities for the performer to embellish the melody with *fraseo*. The rhythmic framework allows for elongation, seamlessly accommodating the melodic line within its harmonic structure, owing to the steadfast pulse of the *habanera* rhythm. In the piano-vocal score the vocal line is distinctly denoted as *canto* or *cantado*, with each vocal segment clearly notated. Noteworthy are mm. 183-186, where the phrase “la zapada de la muerte, punteaba en su soledad,” is originally notated to commence on an *E4*, yet it's frequently sung an octave lower, beginning on an *E3*, making it more accessible for the baritone voice. Similarly, mm. 239-243 commence on an *F4* for the line “Maria de Agorería tendrás dos tangos por cruz,” are often sung an octave down to achieve the intended vocal color. This piece

⁵⁶ Natalio Gorín and Fernando Gonzalez, *Astor Piazzolla: A Memoir* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 2001), 28.

can be a bit more classically sung and the use of vibrato is justified due to where it sits in the voice and the orchestration constantly growing in dynamics. Furthermore, in m. 276, the vocal line pertains to Payador, while the text above belongs to Duende, reciting over Payador' line, mirroring the Catholic ritual of a cantor and a priest reciting the Hail Mary during mass. However, diverging from the traditional prayer, the words honoring María are morphed into "Sad María, forgotten are thou amongst all women."

Milonga carriequera

Milonga music finds its roots in the fusion of the Cuban *habanera*, polka, and the earlier Argentine style of singing known as *payada de contrapunto*, an improvised song duel heavy in its use of call and response often accompanied by guitar. Distinguishing itself from traditional *habanera* however, the *milonga* stresses all four beats in the measure, with the fourth beat being somewhat subdued. Additionally, the *milonga's* tempo is typically doubled, contributing to its distinct character. Some historians propose that this acceleration in tempo may be linked to the surge in popularity of European polka in Argentina during the mid-19th century.⁵⁷ The rhythmic foundation of the *milonga* is firmly established in a brisk 2/4 tempo, which, however, if slowed down, it yields a much more romantic and subtle character of the traditional *milonga*. "Milonga carriequera," is an example of a slow *milonga*, paving the way for a larger canvas for *fraseo*. *Milonga*, originating from impromptu gatherings where people strummed guitars and sang with uninhibited flair, beckons for expressive embellishments, making the use of *fraseo* not just

⁵⁷ Kacey Link and Kristin Wendland. *Tracing Tangueros: Argentine Tango and Instrumental Music* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2016), 28.

welcomed, but anticipated. Akin to a tender lullaby, this piece calls for a delicate vocal touch, complemented by a subtle and understated orchestration, evoking a mellower and more dulcet vocal timbre. Embracing a mixed or “off the voice” singing style fits flawlessly with the emotive tapestry of this musical gem.

This particular piece presents several clarity concerns in the piano vocal score that warrant attention. At m. 68, the coda signifies a return to m. 5; however, the text for the second verse is not written beneath the vocal melody. Regrettably, without access to the orchestral score, the only recourse for aligning the text with the vocal melody is to reference the original recording and manually insert the words for the second verse. Additionally, a crucial point of clarification pertains to the *tarareado* section at m. 57. *Tararear*, the act of wordless singing on a random syllable like /la/, typically calls for the singer to improvise a melody. This section does however have a melody to follow which should employ a piano dynamic or falsetto to complement María’s written melody. The intended sung melody is notated in the right hand of the piano accompaniment, as depicted in figure 3. It is not only permissible but also expected for the singer to infuse personal phrasing and nuances into this line, deviating from the written rhythms as long as it fits the harmonic structure.

Fig. 3 “Milonga carriegera,” *tarareado* m. 57⁵⁸



Miserere Canyengue

In the tapestry of musical numbers within *María de Buenos Aires*, the “Miserere canyengue” stands as a somewhat blasphemous and provocative homage to the traditions of the Catholic mass, bearing the deliberate touch of Ferrer and Piazzolla’s irreverent artistic vision. As Maestro Zinger reminds us, this piece was originally envisioned as an oratorio rather than a staged production, accentuating the intentional subversion of Catholic mass references intertwined with the narrative of Mary and Jesus.⁵⁹ Ferrer references Allegri’s (c.1630) composition, “Miserere Mei Deus,” which was based on Psalm 51, and was traditionally employed to commence the Liturgy of the Hours, a series of Catholic prayers marking the canonical hours of the church. The Psalm’s first half beseeches for deliverance from sin and its repercussions, while the latter half yearns for closeness to God. The plea, “Do not cast me away from your presence and do not take your holy spirit from me,” steers the Psalm toward a hopeful

⁵⁸ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 20.

⁵⁹ Zinger, “Interview with Mo. Zinger.”

outlook, emphasizing mercy and a promising future in God.⁶⁰ Within *María de Buenos Aires*, religious allusions frequently undergo a distorted and inverted metamorphosis, often cloaked in blasphemous nuances. María is cast into the depths of hell and her soul bears the weight of the world's malevolence, yet the cantor's closing line, "her heart refuses to worsen," embodies a poignant duality — a glimmer of hope for the protagonist or a stark commentary on the overwhelming burden she carries, a repository of anguish and malevolence beyond exacerbation.⁶¹ Ferrer's textual narrative deviates from the redemptive essence of a traditional *Miserere*, instead adopting an accusatory tone. María's arrival is heralded by a *Pascua canyengue*, signifying a distorted, irreverent Easter unlike the sanctity associated with Jesus' resurrection. She bears a scarlet mark on her forehead, subjected to insult, accusation, and ultimately, demise. The nature of this demise, whether symbolic or physical, hinges largely on the production and the director's interpretation. However, one certainty emerges, there exists no avenue for redemption for María. The name of the singing character in this number is named the "Ladrón Antiguo Mayor," (Chief Ancient Thief) possibly embodying the role of the accuser or a Lucifer-like figure.

The textual evocative ambiance of this scene, coupled with Piazzolla's musical backdrop, provide ample room for a diverse range of vocal color shifts. Both the initial and concluding segments, presented in recitative form and accompanied by guitar, beckon for a liberating approach akin to interpreting a Mozartian recitative. The singer wields absolute authority to change the fundamental rhythmic framework established by Piazzolla. Instead, the emphasis lies

⁶⁰ Luke Doherty, "Dominican Friars of England Wales and Scotland/ Psalm 51 *Miserere Mei Deus*," *The English Province of the Order*, February 4, 2017. <https://www.english.op.org/godzdogz/psalm-51-miserere-mei-deus>

⁶¹ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 35.

on aligning the vocal line with the natural cadence of the language, transcending the constraints of the basic written notation. Subsequent sections unfurl opportunities for expressive phrasing and a tapestry of hues, enriched by the burgeoning orchestration and intensified textual delivery. It's noteworthy that mm. 83-92 reintroduce a segment warranting recitative treatment, with the piano serving as a supportive backdrop to guide the vocal trajectory. Mastery of language is indispensable for infusing these recitative passages with purpose and fluidity. The Maestro then sets the *a tempo* at m. 92 to synchronize with the orchestra, yet the singer's task remains rooted in shaping the line in harmony with the language, rather than adhering rigidly to the notated rhythmic values.

Here, the piano vocal score necessitates some clarification. Measures 14-31 encompass the vocal melody, yet the vocal line and text are missing entirely. While m. 14 indicates the commencement of singing with a snippet of the first sentence above the piano accompaniment, the vocal line is not clearly notated. The ensuing melodic vocal line corresponds to the upper right hand in the piano, as partially depicted in figure 4. As seen in previous sections of the score, referencing the original recording and libretto is imperative to notate the text beneath the vocal line accurately. The Greek chorus, denoted as "coro," interweaves spoken lines with the vocal line marked "canto," necessitating coordination with the conductor to seamlessly fit within the designated measures. While the text and vocal line are specified for the middle sections of the piece, the final recitative section commencing at m. 134 lacks textual notation. However, this time, we do receive the vocal line from the first section, which should be phrased in accordance with the text. "Miserere canyengue" stands as a captivating showcase intended to demonstrate the diverse vocal palette of the singer while remaining vocally accessible.

Fig. 4 “Miserere Canyengue” m.14 ⁶²

Aria de los Analistas

In a 2005 World Health Organization study, Argentina ranked as the global frontrunner in psychologists per capita, with a count of 106 psychologists per 100,000 habitants. Remarkably, these figures do not encompass psychiatrists. Furthermore, a subsequent study in 2012 revealed a surge to 202 psychologists per 100,000 inhabitants. By contrast, in 2012, the Bureau of Labor Statistics disclosed an average of 33 clinical psychologists per 100,000 residents in the United States.⁶³ Therapy has increasingly become a standard practice for Argentinian residents, and the popularity of psychotherapy aligns chronologically with the inception of *María de Buenos Aires*. In the mid-1950s, the landscape of higher education saw a surge in psychology courses, partly attributed to the *Revolución Libertadora*, a military coup that toppled the *Peronista* government. The regime change directly impacted the academic environment in favor of the use of scientific knowledge for the modernization and advancement of the nation. Psychology, sociology, and

⁶² Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 31.

⁶³ Elizabeth Landau, “In therapy? In Argentina, it’s the norm,” *CNN Health*, April 28, 2013. <https://www.cnn.com/2013/04/28/health/argentina-psychology-therapists/index.html>

other disciplines were envisioned as integral contributors to Argentina’s modernization efforts. These newly introduced courses aimed to equip psychologists to address the social development of the country’s inhabitants with a focus on education, industry, and clinical psychology.⁶⁴ The reference to clinical psychology in the scene is not meant to be metaphorical but a direct commentary on the frenzied popularity of clinical therapy at the time in Argentina. The frenzy is skillfully set to music, evoking a sensation that seems right at home in a circus. Renowned psychoanalyst and best-selling author Gabriel Rolon articulated in a CNN interview, “The people who created Argentina fled from war, hunger, ideological or religious persecution. Everyone had left something behind — relatives, friends, language, land — and so they brought with them a certain sadness and nostalgia.”⁶⁵ This same nostalgia permeates tango and the tale of *María de Buenos Aires*, making the psychoanalysis of María’s ghost an intriguing and peculiar theatrical moment in the show.

In my opinion, this has forever stood as the dramatic zenith of the piece. Here, we uncover the most crucial details about our protagonist. The stage is set with a chorus of circus-like psychoanalysts, whimsically laying the foundation for the *analista primero* (primary psychoanalyst) to pose four pivotal questions to Maria. The initial dramatic and musical frenzy of the scene abruptly ends as the *analista primero* makes his entrance, ushering in a spellbinding display of some of the most exquisite poetry and music of the entire piece. The four probing questions are poised to unravel and comprehend María’s odyssey from her formative years to her eventual spiritual demise. Each question is meticulously crafted to evoke memories, many of

⁶⁴ Hugo Klappenbach, “The Beginnings of Psychologist Profession in Argentina: Science, Institutional Context and Society,” *Spriner Link*, March 17, 2023. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-24910-5_9

⁶⁵ Landau, “In therapy?”

which are deeply poignant, unearthing the origins of her resilience and downfall. These recollections are intended to decode the enigmatic nature of María, characterized by Ferrer as “a force of nature, a force of the humanity of nature, with its enigmatic destiny, tragic, timeless, triumphant over her suffering or her joy, and above any external human or God-like judgement.”⁶⁶ The questions, “are those your mother’s tears? Are those your father’s hands? Was that your first kiss? Is your heart still crying out?” elicit María’s agonizing memories of physical and sexual violence, abuse, and profound emotional anguish that have shaped her present plight.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, these memories also reveal the indomitable spirit of a shadow or ghost that, despite her dire fate, refuses to be extinguished, steadfastly destined to transcend the anguish and malevolence that have befallen her.

Unsurprisingly, this represents the vocal climax of the role, allowing for the purest form of operatic singing from the character of Payador. The whimsical prelude provides an avenue to explore the brighter and lighter tonal qualities of the voice. However, as the *analista primero* initiates his line of questioning, the music provides an opportunity to vocally illustrate with Puccini-esque colors and dynamics that crescendo from question to question, culminating in the apex of the piece at m. 223. It is customary to prolong the note on the downbeat of m. 224 and alter the pitch to an *E-natural* instead of an *A-natural*. An additional optional high note could be an elongated *F-sharp* at the downbeat of 228 instead of a *B-natural*. *Fraseo* is just as vital here as in the rest of the composition, and should mirror the cadence of the language, while also delivering exquisite legato and Puccini-like fluidity.

⁶⁶ Ferrer, *Teatro completo María de Buenos Aires*, 102.

⁶⁷ Piazzolla *María de Buenos Aires*, 51.

Certain sections of the score in this aria require clarification, starting with the necessity to align the text with the notated vocal line from m. 40 following the *glissando*. We are left to notate the text in mm. 44-47. Measures 83-87 pose the challenge of lacking clear text or a defined vocal line to follow. I will delineate the basic notes and rhythms that harmonize the vocal line syllabically from m. 79-87 in figure 5 depicted below. Fortunately, the vocal line is distinctly notated in the *lento* at m. 118; however, reintroducing the text from the libretto is necessary here, as is the case for each subsequent vocal entry in this musical number. Each vocal entry is denoted by the word *canto*, with the initial few words of every line transcribed, while the remainder of each line is excerpted from the libretto.

Fig. 5 “Aria de Los Analistas” mm. 79 - 87 ⁶⁸



Tangus Dei

“Tangus Dei” stands as close to a true transposition of the Nativity episode as we can get in Ferrer and Piazzolla’s world. It is fitting that the birth of the new María will occur in a manger

⁶⁸ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 49.

made of concrete and she will be adored by Masonic Magi. Her parents, a maid and a carpenter who squanders his earnings in brothels, bring about María's resurrection, marking the culmination of her journey through the rise, passion, and demise of the tango-woman. The convergence of religious elements and tango finds its natural crescendo in this final scene, where Duende leads a mass or prayer for the resurrection and arrival of the future María. The scene unfolds as a mass setting, with Duende as the priest, Payador as the cantor, and the chorus as the congregation. Duende's priestly ritual, structured in four stanzas, presents the most surrealistic text yet in the entire piece, defying any expectation of a tidy resolution and potentially perplexing the audience even further. The vocabulary of the two intertwining microcosms of sacred, and mundane in the first stanza exemplifies this juxtaposition of opposing worlds.

“Hoy es Domingo. Laurel con leche, Desde el badajo de su cuchara de un capuchino tres campanadas; tras los misales, pican motetes las derrotadas y alegres nalgas de las matronas: Laurel con ajo.”⁶⁹ (Today is Sunday, a day dressed in laurel and steeped in milk. The cappuccino mug chimes like the sacred bells of missals echoing three times to the rhythmic sound of a spoon's clapper. In this Sunday the defeated midwives, with exhausted and jubilant buttocks, grind out motets. The aroma of garlic and laurel are infused in the air on this Sunday.)

The Duende's embrace of ecclesiastical solemnity, entwined with the sanctity of Sunday that opens each of the four stanzas of his mass, infuses the text with references to laurel, steeped in Greek and Roman folklore and integral to ancient religious purification rites, along with mentions of Catholic rites such as motets and missals. Sacred language blends with the

⁶⁹ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 67.

vocabulary of Buenos Aires cafes, (often associated with tango culture) such as “su cuchara da un capuchino” (the spoon of a cappuccino), juxtaposed with “tres campanadas” (monks ringing three bells in a monastery). The stark contrast between the sacred and the profane is evident, as seen in this first stanza with the juxtaposition of the sexual connotations of the midwife’s buttocks in brothels, alongside the solemnity of religious terms. Ferrer’s deliberate fusion of these disparate worlds serves to usher in the bizarre finale of his tango Christmas.

The correlation between the *Agnus Dei* meaning the Lamb of God, representing the savior of the world coming to take the sins of the world, the *Tangus Dei*, María’s portrayal of an imperfect and irreverent portrayal of the Madonna is the vehicle for the ending of the piece. María unlike the Madonna is not blessed among all women, rather she bound to be eternally and cyclically forgotten among all women. Interestingly, but not unexpectedly, Ferrer’s references to biblical structures and traditions undergo a transformation. The biblical trinity finds representation through the repetition of the text three times in Latin: *Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.* This rendition features two pleas for mercy and a final entreaty for peace in God’s absolution of the sins of the world.⁷⁰ Ferrer’s arrangement unfolds in sets of four, seemingly introducing another layer to the narrative of the world, one that risks being forgotten; the tale of the underworld, the tale of the Tango María. The text is structured into four stanzas delivered by the Duende and accompanied by the Payador and the chorus, culminating in the Payador and the Duende trading lines in the final prayer: “Sad María of Buenos Aires, forgotten are you amongst all women.” If we interpret Duende’s text as a

⁷⁰ Dr. Glenn Byer, “Agnus Dei, Lamb of God,” *Oregon Catholic Press*, March 23, 2018. <https://www.ocp.org/en-us/blog/entry/agnus-dei-lamb-of-god>

melting pot of the sacred and the profane, of reverence and irreverence, it suggests that Payador's verses — or in this final vignette, the cantor's role simply titled as *Una voz de un Domingo* (a voice of a Sunday) — might follow a similar path. The sung text however, is equally abstract and perhaps less reverent towards *niña María*, almost as if the cantor's duty was to captivate the congregation with stories of everyday life in Buenos Aires on an unusual and somewhat lazy and mystical day, set against the backdrop of the unconventional nativity. Peculiar descriptions of people making pasta, commuting on the bus, waking up hungover, kids playing soccer, all form the backdrop of María's birth. Just as Jesus' birth was ordinary, the cantor is there to provide the ordinary backdrop in which María is born. Once more, the cantor's verses may initially seem haphazard, but it might be beneficial to perceive them as a portrayal of the sounds, scents, and sights that one might convey to others familiar with a specific place. These auditory elements can mentally transport the listener to the envisioned setting, evoking their understanding of that place. Assuming María represents Buenos Aires, whether tangibly or in an abstract sense, it is fitting to depict the everyday essence of a day in Buenos Aires as the ideal backdrop for the conception of the child. Ferrer himself links this correlation, stating, "Linguistically, Buenos Aires is grammatically masculine, yet to me, the city embodies a very distinct femininity — ambitious, alluring, occasionally vain, beguiling, flirtatious, provocative, intuitive, frivolous yet mesmerizing, and above all, unforgettable. This is what inspired my character of María."⁷¹ It remains ambiguous whether Ferrer intends for the character to be interpreted as a symbol of Buenos Aires and tango, a common interpretation of the story, or not, but we should not disregard the connection between the two. Therefore, it is apt for the narrative to portray the city along with its mundane elements as the child is reintroduced to the world.

⁷¹ Ferrer, *Teatro Completo María de Buenos Aires*, 102.

This piece is undeniably interpretive, and its plot can yield varying meanings based on the production's interpretation. However, regardless of the vision, one aspect remains evident: there is a cyclical quality to the work. Director Octavio Cardenas, with 5 productions under his belt, reflects on the cyclical nature of "Tangus Dei," illustrating how it marks the beginning of a cycle for María or whatever she embodies. This cyclical finale paints a picture in which María's flaws as a character, perhaps symbolically as a representation of the world and humanity, are destined to recur. "Whether she experiences a rebirth bound for the same ill-fated conclusion, or whether she gives birth to a daughter or another María destined to inherit her pain and trauma, remains unclear. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: the pain and flaws of humanity are destined to be perpetuated," Cardenas asserts.⁷²

The piece commences with an *ostinato* played by the piano's left hand and the bass using *pizzicato* for four measures, followed by the *bandoneón* introducing a melody above it. The cantor is encouraged to treat the initial four stanzas freely as a Gregorian chant, intensifying in dynamics with each stanza. The orchestration significantly assists with the required *crescendo* of intensity in every phrase. The score requires several clarifications here, which will provide the most commonly performed version of this number, one that has consistently succeeded in productions I have participated in. However, achieving the desired outcome for this piece necessitates coordination between the chorus, the Duende, the Payador, and the Maestro to fit everything into the allocated musical measures. The score is also vague regarding the pitch at which the chant should be sung across the different stanzas. Ideally, the chant should always be sung on the pitch of *B2-natural*. If the singer is of a higher *fach* and uncomfortable sustaining a

⁷² Octavio Cardenas, "Interview with Director Octavio Cardenas on *María de Buenos Aires*," Interview by Luis Orozco, February 11, 2024. <https://youtu.be/H2pbwJiy-rM>

B2, a *B3* can be sung, as long as it is performed in the style of Gregorian chant. As usual, only the first sentence of the text is provided, so the remainder of the text must be added from the libretto, treating it as a chant without requiring rhythmic values, always following the cadence of the language. The starting points for the first six vocal entrances for the Payador are not indicated in the most effective places. While there is no definitive wrong answer, the vocal entrances for the cantor depicted below in table 1 seem to be the most effective entrances in order to fit the text in the allotted musical measures.

Table 1 “Tangus Dei”⁷³

“Hoy es Domingo y al día lo sacan del Domingario...”	m. 9-downbeat
“Hoy es Domingo y las brujas se espiran...”	m. 27-downbeat
“Hoy es Domingo y un coro de mil Domingos...”	m. 45-downbeat
“Hoy es Domingo y atorran hasta los séptimos...”	m. 60-downbeat
“Hoy es Domingo y me han dicho...”	m. 77-downbeat
“Hoy es Domingo y a punta de diente...”	m. 93-downbeat

The coordination with the conductor for the entrances of both the Duende and the chorus, to ensure alignment, will likely take place during the first musical rehearsal. These entrances are reliable for the cantor and tend to allow everyone involved ample time to deliver their lines. The subsequent entrances for the Payador are clearly indicated, and by now, the absence of text under

⁷³ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 67.

the vocal line should be familiar. Nonetheless, the vocal line is provided, and the melody, as well as its treatment and phrasing, should mirror or even surpass the freedom found in the earlier “Milonga Carriegera.” An illustration of this freedom is the flexibility to alter the notes in the section spanning mm. 191-198. I will suggest a potential option in figure 6, but there is liberty to adapt that phrase to personal preference. One final aspect to note is the *tarareado* (singing pitches on a syllable) section, commencing at m. 205, pertains to the Payador and may extend until m. 218, with María initiating her own melody at m. 209. Alternatively, María might take the melody by herself at m. 209 and improvise a solo line, in which case the Payador would drop out on m. 209 and rejoin at m. 218 with the text “Nuestra María...”

Fig. 6 “Tangus Dei,” m. 191 ⁷⁴

♩=97

En los o - jos de la ni - ña el tiem-po es - tá bien ro - ba - do

5

por a-yer y por ma-ña na Ma - rí - a la han bau - ti - za - do

⁷⁴ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 71.

MARÍA

Similar to the exploration of the character of Payador, this section offers stylistic insights, delves into the vocal range of the role of María, and seeks to unravel any enigmatic sections in the score. The casting for the role of María presents a formidable challenge for opera producers globally. While experienced singers in this role are highly sought after, the limited pool of performers with the required experience in the United States perpetually drives companies to search for new talent capable of embracing the vocal and stylistic demands of the role. Unlike the role of Payador, which has the potential to lean more towards classical technique, María necessitates a deep understanding of the tango vocal style and the ability to navigate the role's vocal range within that style. Spanning from *F3* to *B5*, the role's vocal range poses a conundrum for classical singers in determining the intended *fach*. Notably, the sounded pitch of *F3* is notated as an *F4* in the song "A los árboles y las chimeneas," yet the originator of the role, Amelita Baltar, sings this number an octave lower than written, a practice that has become standard. Discussing the role of María without mentioning its originator, Amelita Baltar, would be incomplete. Piazzolla wrote the part of María with her in mind, despite her not being a trained classical or tango singer. Her musical career began as a folk singer, yet she found herself at the center of a new musical and poetic vortex created by Ferrer and Piazzolla. Baltar's vocal limitations had to be considered in the writing of the part, as her vocal range was more suited for music with folk sensibilities.⁷⁵ Mezzo-soprano Solange Merdinian, a seasoned interpreter of the

⁷⁵ José Pedro Aresi, "Semblanzas: Amelita Baltar," *Todo Tango*, Accessed February 28, 2024. <https://www.todotango.com/creadores/biografia/817/Amelita-Baltar/>

role of María, suggests that the role seems to have been tailored more for an actor than a singer. According to Merdinian, the range was not meant to pose a significant challenge. While Baltar's voice tended towards the lower end, most of the role could be delivered with a speech-like quality, especially since it was intended to be sung with amplification. Merdinian further delves into the early days of tango, where female singers seemed to be expected to carve out a distinct sound separate from the male-dominated, chest-dominant voices. The male tango singer seems to have been revered as the preferred sound during this era, a sentiment that possibly carried over into the creation of *María de Buenos Aires*.⁷⁶ Consequently, it comes as no surprise to Merdinian that the lines for Payador exude a more robust and traditionally singable quality in alignment with classical sensibilities. She points out an intentional lack of refinement and at times, raw qualities in female tango singing, which are woven into the vocal composition for María. In Argentina, the epitome of tango singing is intertwined with the legacy of Carlos Gardel, renowned for the beauty and elegance of his sound. Therefore, it's unsurprising to her that the vocal composition for Payador exudes a more elegant sound.⁷⁷ However, for the role of María, great interpreters like Merdinian and Catalina Cuervo, advocate steering clear of an operatic sound.⁷⁸ They believe that the raw and occasionally edgier qualities of tango sound resonate more authentically with the role's performance history and dramatic intent of the work. Merdinian emphasizes that this is her perspective and not a reflection of a lack of respect for female tango singers in Argentina. She does, however, believe that the expectations for the

⁷⁶ Solange Merdinian, "Interview with Mezzo-soprano Solange Merdinian on *María de Buenos Aires*," Interview by Luis Orozco, February 4, 2024. https://youtu.be/0a_FCIEBLPg

⁷⁷ Merdinian, "Interview with Merdinian."

⁷⁸ Cuervo, "Interview with Cuervo."

sounds of individuals of different genders differ in Argentina. These remarkable interpreters of the role don't perceive this piece as an *operita*, but rather as a theatrical work where the characters occasionally sing in a manner not unlike a musical. Merdinian approaches the vocalism of the role the same way she might approach singing in a popular genre, while acknowledging that her classical training will always influence her delivery to some extent. However, she emphasizes the importance of not getting too caught up in the technicalities of singing in order to preserve the raw and edgy essence of the character.⁷⁹ Cuervo concurs with Merdinian's assessment and goes on to emphasize that apart from the classical singer's foundational support, this role should not be thought of too technically and should transcend any traditional operatic classification. She suggests that producers ought to seek out singers capable of predominantly employing chest voice rather than a head dominated mix throughout most of the role. Lyric soprano Cuervo, whose voice resides in a higher *tessitura* in her classical repertoire, takes a different approach to the vocalism of the role by infusing more chest voice into her interpretation. This vocal approach is Cuervo's means of achieving the same dramatic pathos mentioned earlier. While she employs a head voice approach in select sections of the music to convey a different emotional color that she deems fitting for the character, these instances are infrequent.⁸⁰ Approaching this character from a dramatic perspective has significantly contributed to the success of the productions involving these two exceptional actors. They offer contrasting interpretations of the character, showcasing distinct vocal colors and dramatic choices, yet their performances share a common foundation in the nuanced delivery both vocally and dramatically.

⁷⁹ Merdinian, "Interview with Merdinian."

⁸⁰ Cuervo, "Interview with Cuervo."

Balancing María's vocal and dramatic demands can pose a challenge, as it can be equally demanding to establish a universally fitting character arc that fits across a multitude of productions. While María presents several dramatic pitfalls, mezzo-soprano Kelly Guerra emphasizes the significance of empowering the character with the depth provided by Ferrer's poetry. Guerra has sought to defy the character's reduction to a one-dimensional, narrow depiction of a mere sex symbol, or a victim solely defined by her circumstances. Instead, Guerra astutely focuses on the character's resilience, the wisdom borne from pain, and acknowledges her sexuality as a crucial and beautiful aspect, but not her defining trait.⁸¹ Succumbing to the Latin American stereotype of a woman in a red dress exuding sexuality at a tango bar is an easy trap, yet the character of María transcends this *cliché*. The only vignette that could potentially hint at this stereotype is "Yo soy María," and it's important to note that this number was not part of the original score and performance but was added later. Therefore, even if it is a facet of the character, it constitutes a very small part. One could argue that her use of sexuality is far more deliberate and empowering than the portrayal commonly adopted by most U.S. production companies when marketing and producing the work. The character seemingly reclaims ownership of her sexuality to process past trauma, leveraging it to wield power over those around her. Her sexuality becomes a tool of empowerment, rather than a defining characteristic, aiding her in regaining control and ensuring survival in her current environment. The character goes through a defiant transformation and emerges victorious although not unscathed in a world that has been aligned against her since the moment she was born. Her strength and determination to survive beyond a physical or symbolic death in order to rise from the ashes and experience newness is nothing short of a miracle. Therefore, any interpretation of the role in any production

⁸¹ Guerra, "Interview with Guerra."

no matter how abstract, must find ways to give the character its due power and strength in order to capture its true essence. Ferrer's comparison of María to the city of Buenos Aires stems not so much from cultural identity, but rather from the resilience shared by these two entities; "In the realm of the mystical, a dark and celestial *Eros* intertwines with María and Shadow María, merging into a harmonious union. She embodies both the carnal and the spiritual, fully embracing her essence only after the stroke of midnight. Buenos Aires, influenced by the dual nature of Gemini, in direct contrast to its daytime persona as an anti-romantic and mega-rational city, transforms into a bohemian, meditative, and vibrant city that comes alive and dreams at night. María is fatally and endearingly feminine, a true *porteña*, distinctive, *tanguera*, and nocturnal."⁸²

Singers portraying the role of María are also expected to adhere to the musical concept of *fraseo*. Given the role's departure from a vocally classical approach, the mastery of text and the skillful use of *fraseo* become even more crucial. Additionally, the role involves significantly more spoken dialogue compared to the Payador, underscoring the importance of proper interpretation of the *lunfardo* and mastery over the Río de la Plata dialect. The element of dance plays a crucial role in carrying the narrative during the instrumental segments of the piece. While the intricate art form of tango dance is not discussed in detail in this study, it undeniably serves as a pivotal element in staging the work. Drawing from his own dance background, De los Santos emphasizes the deliberate use of dance in his staged production to drive the narrative, create evocative stage imagery, and incorporate important cultural references.⁸³ Mastering tango dance is not necessary for the three principal performers, as most producers recognize the

⁸² Ferrer, *Teatro completo María de Buenos Aires*, 100.

⁸³ De los Santos, "Interview with Director de los Santos."

importance of involving professional tango or modern dancers to do justice to the work. Notably, María is often staged dancing alongside the professional dancers in the production. While becoming a dance expert is not a prerequisite for this role, gaining proficiency in the fundamental elements of tango dance is recommended for anyone undertaking the character of María. The following section will dissect the score and shed light on any sections that require additional clarity.

Tema de María

The introduction of the main character, “Tema de María,” is predominantly an instrumental piece in which María engages in a duet with the guitar at the start of the scene. She later joins the full orchestra to repeat a more embellished version of what will eventually be recognized as her calling card, a sort of *leitmotif*, throughout the *operita*. The piano vocal score provides suggestions for syllabification of the *leitmotif*, which the singer may consider. However, deviation from the suggestions to the singer’s preferred syllabification is appropriate. *Fraseso* is expected, and coordination with the guitarist in this section is crucial in the creation of a back-and-forth exchange where the guitar passes control of the melodic material to the singer, and viceversa. This vignette almost serves as a coda to the “Alevare,” or as a continuation of the overture, and thematically points to material that will be heard throughout the piece. It is often staged to represent our protagonist’s initial seduction by the tango. Therefore, it is not uncommon for there to be some dancing involved, starting at m. 43, when the character is no longer singing. By the time the flute hands over the theme again at m. 96, the embellishments and thicker orchestration are intended to represent the successful seduction of the tango. The notes and suggested rhythmic values (not to be taken literally), are clearly marked in the score

and do not require clarification. However, it is worth noting that in m. 104, there is a direction to sing the remainder of the melody with a closed mouth. While this direction can certainly be observed, it is not a requirement. The vignette ends, foreshadowing her descent into hell at m. 108. This descending scale mirrors the same chord structure that is used in the “Miserere Canyengue” representing the descent of her soul.⁸⁴

Yo soy María

“Yo soy María” is undoubtedly the show-stopping piece of the *operita*, yet it was not part of the original performance or recording. The music for “Yo soy María” was extracted from the penultimate vignette of the piece “Milonga de la anunciación.” Regrettably, the lyrics for this number are not included in the libretto provided at the end of the piano-vocal score. However, the lyrics can be found in numerous online sources, and the piece has been recorded in every subsequent recording after the original. While there are online sheet music sites offering accurate arrangements for purchase, the simplest solution is to obtain the lyrics online and write them under the provided vocal line in “Milonga de la anunciación,” as the two numbers are musically identical. According to Maestro Zinger, this piece was added during the first staged productions of the work to create a clearer dramatic connection to the character and to introduce a hit tune for the title role.⁸⁵ The dramatic backdrop for the number sets the stage for María’s inaugural encounter with the city and the brothels of Buenos Aires in her newfound identity. This number exudes the power, sensuality, and unyielding spirit of the character, providing crucial context despite its absence in the original performance. Musically, “Yo soy María” tends to embrace a

⁸⁴ Molina Fernández, “Música y palabra.”

⁸⁵ Zinger, “Interview with Mo. Zinger.”

different tempo to set itself apart from “Milonga de la anunciación,” mirroring the character’s varied emotional states. The character’s confidence is reflected in the free and deliberate use of *fraseo*, while a slower tempo can imbue the piece with a more seductive allure. Meanwhile, the orchestra upholds the hallmark 3-3-2 rhythmic accents within a 4/4 bar, mentioned previously as a distinctive feature prevalent in many of Piazzolla’s celebrated compositions such as the *Libertango*. Mo. Zinger asserts, “There is nothing more inherently Jewish in music than this rhythmic feature.”⁸⁶ Cautioning against the underutilization of *fraseo* and swing in this piece, Zinger emphasizes the perils of predictability and stylistic deviation. Advocating for rhythmic diversity, Zinger stresses the importance of avoiding uniformity in the phrasing, urging for dynamic rhythmic fluctuations that resonate with the language’s cadence. Zinger recommends adhering to the written rhythm only to synchronize with the orchestral deviation from the 3-3-2 rhythmic pattern, specifically from mm. 13 to the downbeat of 17. While the repetition of this rhythmic pattern from mm. 69 to the downbeat of 73 is permissible, Zinger encourages a more unrestricted approach throughout the rest of the piece.⁸⁷

In addition to incorporating the text, there are a few issues to clarify in the piano-vocal score. Fortunately, most of the vocal line is clearly marked with the exception of mm. 53 to 60, yet we can seamlessly integrate the identical 8 measures from 13 to 20 as the vocal line for that segment. It is essential to highlight that the *tarareado* (singing pitches on a single syllable) section, spanning from m. 77 to 84, is attributed to María, extending up to the downbeat of m. 85. Furthermore, in mm. 113 and 114, a more conventional melody deviates slightly from the notation in the piano-vocal score. The specifics of mm. 113-117 are illustrated in figure 7 below.

⁸⁶ Zinger, “Interview with Mo. Zinger.”

⁸⁷ Zinger, “Interview with Mo. Zinger.”

Measure 114 commonly remains unaccompanied, affording the singer ample freedom to execute the desired *rallentando*. The conductor typically omits the piano and orchestral scoring for that measure, awaiting the singer’s pick-up cue to m. 115.

Fig. 7 “Yo soy María,” mm. 113-117 ⁸⁸



Poema Valseado

The *vals criollo*, or Creole waltz, found its expression woven into the fabric of tango during the mid-19th century, contributing to the infusion of rich influences from German waltzes, African candombe, Cuban habaneras, and polkas into the Argentine tango. This serves as a testament to the vibrant cultural melting pot that characterized 19th century Buenos Aires. Also known as the tango waltz, this captivating dance form became a staple of the tango, owing its prominence to the convergence of German immigrants and working-class Spanish immigrants with an Afro background in Argentina. Setting itself apart from the Viennese waltz, the tango waltz is distinguished by its faster tempo, adding an electrifying dimension to the dance.⁸⁹ Piazzolla’s “Poema Valseado” pays homage to the *vals criollo*, much like the earlier number

⁸⁸ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 66.

⁸⁹ Anita Flejter, “Tango Vals: on Viennese Waltz and Argentine Tango,” *Ultimate Tango*, October 19, 2023. <https://www.ultimatetango.com/blog/tango-vals-on-viennese-waltz-and-argentine-tango>

“Balada para un organito loco” paying homage to the Cuban *habanera*, and the “Aria de los Analistas” paying homage to the German polka. Unlike the conventional *vals criollo*, “Poema valseado” unveils itself as a languid waltz adorned with deliberate rhythmic complexities, embracing syncopation, especially on beats 2 and 3, infusing the piece with a freer feel. The singer must eschew the rigid 3/4 rhythm notated in the piano vocal score and alter each phrase according to the rhythm of the poetry.⁹⁰ For reference, figure 8 gives an approximate example of Amelita Baltar’s interpretation and phrasing of her opening line.

Fig. 8 “Poema valseado,” mm. 20-27 ⁹¹

24 un ban - do - neón que mi tris - te - za tie - ne/es cri ta

hoy dos tem - blo - res me/ha mez - cla - do en/la gar - gan - ta

The piece is often interpreted as a poignant love letter from María to the *bandoneón* and the essence of tango itself. There’s a profound sense of self-awareness in the character,

⁹⁰ Zinger, “Interview with Mo. Zinger.”

⁹¹ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 25

acknowledging that succumbing to this seduction could ultimately lead to her downfall and demise. Despite facing the stark reality of her future, the protagonist's unwavering strength and determination to embrace the life she has chosen in Buenos Aires remains unshaken. She confronts the ominous future with phrases like "I will be sadder, more exploited and a more forsaken soul than the desolate tango nobody desires," yet in the face of death, despite feeling drained and lifeless, she asserts her ability to stand before God and offer a hundred stronger versions of herself.⁹² The seductive nature of the music juxtaposed against the darkness of the text prompts within the character a blend of resilience and defiance. Embracing her mortality grants her the liberty to lead a life meant for the present, devoid of significant regrets.

While the vocal melody is clearly notated, as previously discussed, it needs more fluid phrasing. Two of the three sung verses have the text written beneath the vocal line, yet inexplicably, the third verse requires us to fill in the text from the libretto. Another noteworthy aspect of this piece is that the entrance cues in mm. 40, 75, and 107 are all intended for spoken text. The notated values in the vocal line within those measures actually belong to the flute, and the text in those sections is meant to be delivered in recitation.

A los arboles y a las chimeneas

While "Poema valseado" unfolds as a slow, seductive waltz, "A los arboles y a las chimeneas" exudes a languidness that embodies the character's complete exhaustion in the second act. In this waltz, beats two and three are approached with less syncopation and more fluid, lazy back-phrasing reminiscent of a jazz ballad. This vignette vividly portrays a lost and

⁹² Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 27

bewildered shadow of María navigating the streets of Buenos Aires, grieving both her life and her passing, and grappling with the pain that accompanies both. Amelita Baltar opens this musical vignette with the waltz sung in a square manner, infused with a subtle behind-the-beat feeling. However, as the song reaches its languid vocal climax at measure 66, the lines become markedly more drawn out, disregarding the need to align with the orchestra's downbeats. In her phrasing, there's a perpetual dance, stretching the words to either linger just behind the beat or gracefully tiptoe ahead of it, imbuing each line with a captivating sense of fluidity. This intensifies the overwhelming sense of exhaustion that the character is enduring. The piece features a significant amount of recitation, delivered with a palpable sense of bewildered desperation to unravel the mystery behind her current state, ultimately culminating in a resigned and exhausted conclusion.

As previously discussed, this piece poses a significant *tessitura* challenge. On paper, it may seem easily manageable, but it becomes apparent that the notated pitches differ from the traditional sung pitches. Typically, every pitch in this excerpt is sung an octave lower than written, except for the final phrase at m. 136, which is sung in the notated octave, starting on a *C4-sharp*. The rest of the piece is sung one octave lower, with the lowest sung pitch being an *F3*, demanding the singer to maintain a chest-dominated belt-like mix throughout. This *tessitura* can be problematic for performers taking on the role, leading to the question of whether it's acceptable to sing the notes in the written octave. The answer to this question is not straightforward and largely depends on the preference of the musical team. Maestro Zinger insists on the performer interpreting it down an octave, following Baltar's rendition.⁹³ However, Catalina Cuervo, a seasoned performer of the role, chose to interpret the initial phrase in her

⁹³ Zinger, "Interview with Mo. Zinger."

2014 performance with Syracuse Opera in the written octave, mixing in a heavier use of head voice and making the lowest note in the phrase an *F4* instead of an *F3*. In the section from m. 66 to m. 112, where the *tessitura* becomes more manageable, Cuervo reverts to the traditional interpretation, singing below the octave, and like Baltar, back to the notated octave in the final phrase in m. 136.⁹⁴ In subsequent productions, Cuervo has, perhaps at the behest of the musical director, opted to interpret the opening phrase in the conventional lower octave, demonstrating her ease with the lower *tessitura*. For aspiring performers considering the role, it's crucial to closely examine this section. If it poses a challenge, it is advisable to communicate with the musical director and inquire about the potential for flexibility in vocal interpretation.

Visually, and in terms of clarity, this section leaves a lot to be desired, yet it doesn't introduce any unfamiliar issues at this stage. Most entrances are indicated by just the first sentence of the assigned text, requiring the performer to refer back to the libretto. The piece alternates between recitation and singing. The initial entrance, traditionally executed a bit later than the marked cue at m. 10, is typically recommended to start at m. 14 to avoid excessive silence before the first sung line in m. 24 due to the brevity of the text in that section. The vocal line is not notated in its own staff, but rather as the highest voice in the right hand of the piano, as partially depicted in figure 9. The same applies to the final phrase from m. 136 to m. 144. The second recitation beginning with the text "todo pasó como sabrán..." is correctly marked beginning at m. 40 and allows ample time to deliver the text before the next sung vocal entrance after the *glissando* at m. 66.⁹⁵ This middle section clearly indicates the vocal line on its own musical staff and only requires the text to be written in manually. It's important to note that the

⁹⁴ Catalina Cuervo, "A los arboles y a las chimeneas," YouTube video, 3:33, June 1, 2014. <https://youtu.be/L5goQ0yfkLs?si=9gOTWh0cf-1ES5L8>

tied dotted half note from m. 100 to the downbeat of m. 140 is not sustained for that entire duration, but only for one measure, ending on the downbeat of m. 101. The same applies to m. 108, where the dotted half should be cut off at the downbeat of m. 109. The subsequent recited section lacks an entrance cue entirely, with the text “Queridos árboles y armadas chimeneas...” starting at m.112 and continuing until the next sung entrance on m. 136 with the words “nos dolía al principio y no al fin...”⁹⁶ The delivery and tempo of the spoken text will require some practice in order to fit it all in before m. 136. An important correction in the piano-vocal score is the miscued sung entrance at m. 128. The text “nada más, no hay adiós que el adiós,” is still part of the recitation that begins on m. 112 and is not meant to be sung. This an error in the piano-vocal score.⁹⁷

Fig. 9 “A Los arboles y a las chimeneas,” mm. 24-28.⁹⁸



Milonga a la anunciación

The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 1:26-38, commonly referred to as “The Annunciation,” declare; “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called

⁹⁶ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 44.

⁹⁷ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 46.

⁹⁸ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 44.

Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'"⁹⁹ This biblical narrative serves as the backdrop for María's final aria, symbolizing a twisted annunciation of the tango spirit within her. This climactic moment in the *operita* represents the zenith of her character, marked by profound pain, yet accompanied by newfound knowledge, strength and empowerment. While the revelation may not be immediately transparent to the audience, it signifies a pivotal point for María. Is the character metaphorically giving birth, or is she giving birth to a child? This vignette offers a myriad of interpretations that are dependent on the vision of the production. Regardless, the laborious and painful process underscores María's resilience and unwavering determination to overcome her tumultuous past and trauma. Like the Virgin Mary, María's inner turmoil once perplexed her, yet now she has discovered the strength to confront the adversities that have besieged her. In the haunting company of the three twisted marionettes, dispatched by the Duende as harbingers of an irreverent immaculate conception, María discovers the strength to bring forth, perhaps, the birth of her own spirit — a reimagined version of herself, heralding a fresh start free from the torment that has haunted her.

⁹⁹ Luke 1:26-34 (English Standard Version).

The musical interpretation of this reprise should starkly contrast its act one counterpart. The emotional demeanor of the character in “Yo soy María” stands in complete opposition to this tango birth announcement. Achieving this stark contrast is commonly accomplished through a quicker tempo and a more pronounced use of dynamics by both the singer and the orchestra. “Milonga a la anunciación” possesses an unapologetically unsubtle text, affording the conductor and interpreter the liberty to employ louder dynamics and fully unleash the expressive range of the voice. This enables the performance to vividly portray the pain, distress, and unwavering fortitude encapsulated within this aria.¹⁰⁰ As this serves as a replica of “Yo soy María,” there are no concerns regarding the clarity of the piano-vocal score that we have not already addressed. However, Maestro Pablo Ziegler highlights the need for a less fluid and languid use of *fraseo* in this piece, favoring a more forceful and almost aggressive approach to the phrasing of the text. The closing stanza, as indicated by Maestro Ziegler, epitomizes defiance. The lyrics, “trapped inside of her there is a tenderness that is big enough to birth God himself, and if God or anyone else refuses to be born from her, she will give birth to a shoe,” may seem enigmatic to many of us interpreting the script. Yet, for Maestro Ziegler, it is unequivocal; it signifies her resilience and endurance, enabling her to defiantly reject being cast aside, having endured so much.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Cuervo, “Interview with Cuervo.”

¹⁰¹ Ziegler, “Interview with Mo. Ziegler.”

DUENDE

In the realm of tango culture, *duende* or *tener duende* (to have *duende*) embodies the essence of possessing soul, an effortless or compelling urge for artistic expression. Translating to “goblin” in literal terms, the term holds significance in Latin American culture as a spirit of evocation. When it comes to human emotion, experiencing *duende* is what ignites laughter, smiles, tears, and the sensation of being on the brink of overflowing with pure, unbridled emotion.¹⁰² The concept of goblins, originating in literature during the fourteenth century, has captivated writers immersing themselves in the realm of fiction and folklore. These mythical creatures, associated with mischief, were depicted in European culture with negative and malicious connotations. Initially perceived as supernatural beings, goblins evolved into a depiction of humanity’s fixation on both good and evil¹⁰³ Fascinatingly, goblins experienced a metamorphosis within flamenco culture prior to their influence in Latin American mythology. The concept of goblins as spirits of evocation transcended their traditional symbolism, extending to represent the summoning of the human spirit and soul. The invocation of María at the onset of the *operita*, captured by the evocative phrase “Por un poro de este asfalto, yo habré de conjurar tu voz” (through the pores of these streets, I shall conjure up your voice), embodies the Duende’s pivotal role in the opera. Entrusted with the task of summoning María’s essence, the Duende’s

¹⁰² Daniel Ward, “In Search of Duende,” *Language Magazine*, Accessed February 19, 2024. <https://www.languagemagazine.com/in-search-of-duende/>

¹⁰³ Annliya Shaijan, “Goblin Mythology: A Brief Study of the Archetype, tracing the Explications in English Literature,” *Global Journals Inc.* Vol 19. Issue 4 (2019): 4 – 5, Accessed February 19, 2024. https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume19/2-Goblin-Mythology-A-Brief-Study.pdf

responsibility lies in awakening the audience to partake in an elevated emotional journey, one that can only be fully embraced through the prism of the Goblin. The utilization of *duende* in flamenco culture stands as a precursor to its adoption in Argentinian tango culture. The renowned Spanish poet, Federico García Lorca, an icon of flamenco and Spanish literature, beautifully encapsulates this sentiment with his romantic description;

“The *duende*, then, is a power, not a work. It is a struggle, not a thought. I have heard an old maestro of the guitar say, ‘The *duende* is not in the throat; the *duende* climbs up inside you, from the soles of the feet.’ Meaning this: it is not a question of ability, but of true, living style, of blood, of the most ancient culture, of spontaneous creation. Everything that has dark sounds in it has *duende* (i.e., emotional depth). This mysterious power which everyone senses, and no philosopher explains is, in sum, the spirit of the earth. All arts are capable of *duende*, but where it finds greatest range, naturally, is in music, dance, and spoken poetry, for these arts require a living body to interpret them, being forms that are born, die, and open their contours against an exact present.”¹⁰⁴

Hence, it comes as no surprise that in the culture of tango, a culture rooted in the intricacies of the human experience and the vast spectrum of human emotion, a term like *duende* adopts a similar significance. Within our *operita*, while the narrative revolves around María, it is filtered through the perspective of the Duende. In the most conventional interpretations of Ferrer’s text, this essence embodies a figure with divine power, capable of summoning María’s spirit and orchestrating the immaculate conception of her shadow. Horacio Ferrer, through his poetic prowess, conjures the surreal world of *María de Buenos Aires*, much akin to how the Duende breathes life into the spirit of María. As the progenitor of this realm, Horacio Ferrer naturally assumes the role of its originator, for he is the very essence that birthed this captivating world.

In *María de Buenos Aires*, the Duende has always been a monumental challenge for opera producers to cast. It requires a theater actor of the utmost skill, capable of conveying the

¹⁰⁴ Ward, “In search of Duende.”

same depth of emotion that Ferrer expressed in the original recording, which is no small feat. As we've touched upon, mastering every single word of the libretto is nearly impossible. The beauty of Ferrer's text lies in the imagery it conveys through its poetry, inviting individual interpretation based on the actor's own life experiences. Thus, it's not the literal understanding of each word that's crucial, but rather the actor's ability to capture and interpret the imagery to narrate the most compelling story. While this narrative must align with the production team's vision, there's ample room for varied interpretations of these images in most staged productions. Carrying the weight of Horacio Ferrer's text is an immense and formidable undertaking. According to Maestro Pablo Ziegler, in the numerous productions he has been involved in, it's the actors who can deliver the text operatically that have the power to evoke deep emotions and create truly impactful moments. Ziegler astutely highlights that the text is meant to be recited in a manner that feels like the actor is singing, ranging from the most grandiose aria to the most delicate lullaby. As Ziegler points out, "Ferrer himself is poetry, he's *lunfardo*, and yet he was also a *tanguero*, (devoted to tango) therefore the text itself demands to be incredibly musical."¹⁰⁵ Stage director Octavio Cardenas, who has helmed the production multiple times and even portrayed the Duende himself, offers valuable insights into his approach to the text. Cardenas highlights that during his preparation, he encountered many phrases that initially eluded him, prompting him to recite the text without the musical accompaniment, even if its full meaning wasn't immediately clear. Like Maestro Ziegler, Cardenas emphasizes the musicality of the text and recalls how the rhythm of the words often conveyed the intended emotions. He discovered that the text possesses its own inherent musicality, and Ferrer's pure language serves as a guide for evoking the appropriate emotions. Drawing from his own experience in the role, Cardenas agrees that a

¹⁰⁵ Ziegler, "Interview with Mo. Ziegler."

complete understanding of every detail of the six-minute monologue, “Romanza del Duende,” isn’t necessary to convey the character’s grief over María’s loss.¹⁰⁶ The text inherently carries a sense of sorrow and nostalgia. Maestro Ziegler underscores the importance of the actor delivering the words in a manner that resonates with the audience, evoking the profound pain expressed in “Romanza del Duende.” The rhythm of each sentence, as Ziegler points out, echoes with grief, creating a truly moving performance.¹⁰⁷

Unearthing the rhythmic musicality within the language may pose a challenge for non-Spanish speakers. While it’s not a requirement for the actor portraying the Duende to be a fluent Spanish speaker, possessing a foundational understanding of Spanish greatly aids in grasping the rhythmic cadence of *lunfardo*. Numerous productions have successfully cast non-Spanish speaking actors for the role, yet it necessitates a more substantial level of preparation. The intricacies of the text can easily evade those unfamiliar with the language’s nuances. One of the remarkable aspects of the work lies in its ability to transport audiences to a world shaped by the complexity of sound. Audiences consistently marvel at the production, even when they don’t fully comprehend the story’s meaning or symbolism. The actor depicting the Duende shoulders a significant responsibility in drawing the audience into Piazzolla and Ferrer’s world through the use of their voice and manipulation of text. The allure of the music and the enigmatic, melodic cadence of the poetry possess the power to transport the audience to an ethereal realm. While being a musician or having the ability to read music is not mandatory for taking on the role, it undeniably facilitates the learning process and greatly streamlines rehearsals. Some of the most remarkable Duendes I’ve worked with lacked the ability to read music, yet delivered astounding

¹⁰⁶ Cardenas, “Interview with Director Cardenas.”

¹⁰⁷ Ziegler, “Interview with Mo. Ziegler.”

performances. Nonetheless, navigating the rehearsal period posed numerous stressful learning curves, necessitating a conductor adept at determining the timings for the appropriate entrance cues to synchronize the spoken dialogue with Piazzolla's underscoring.

While subject to debate among experts, the gender of the role, in my view, holds no relevance. Considering the Duende as a spirit or essence, gender truly becomes inconsequential. In his production, director John de los Santos introduces a female-presenting Duende, dynamically transforming the character into different forms as the narrative unfolds. De los Santos skillfully integrates elements of drag culture to underscore the ethereal nature of the Duende, emphasizing its transcendence of gender boundaries.¹⁰⁸ Aligning the character with European and Asian folklore traits, De los Santos portrays the Duende as the epitome of malevolence.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, director John Hoomes envisions his Duende ensnared in a time loop within a hellish realm, compelling the spirit to endlessly recount the tragic tale of María, symbolizing the perpetual doom of humanity. For Hoomes, the hapless narrator is bound to relay the desolate story of the human condition through the plight of María.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, in the Atlanta Opera production, directed by Tomer Zvulun, a more traditional portrayal unfolds, portraying the Duende as a God-like spirit and the creator of María. Similar to Ferrer's role in crafting María's world, the Duende has fashioned her with love, yet within a broken, sorrowful world, where she endures the suffering of humanity and becomes a sacrificial figure for the sins of tango.

¹⁰⁸ De los Santos, "Interview with Director De los Santos."

¹⁰⁹ Ward, "In Search of Duende."

¹¹⁰ Hoomes, "Interview, with Director Hoomes."

Actor Milton Loayza, with whom I had the privilege of sharing the stage and witnessing his remarkable portrayal of the Duende, graced Zvulun's production and subsequent remounts until his passing in April 2019. While I regrettably never had the opportunity to formally sit down with Loayza and capture his insights for this study, I had the honor of collaborating with him for a decade on this piece, gaining a wealth of wisdom from observing his craft. I distinctly remember asking him about his approach to memorizing extensive, seemingly nonsensical text, to which he generously offered an esoteric yet profound response: "there is no nonsensical element; every word, pause, and sound in the text holds meaning and purpose." The true essence of the text unfolds as one is immersed in tango culture. Learning to dance tango, listening to its music, and completely enveloping oneself in its world transmutes the seemingly nonsensical imagery into something intimate and familiar, Loayza claimed. While I cannot attest to the validity of this statement, I can attest to Loayza's mastery and his ability to convey the emotive language in a manner that was deeply impactful to everyone in the many rehearsal rooms and theaters. Like the Duende, Loayza possessed the extraordinary capacity to elicit powerful emotions from those fortunate enough to witness his performances. His untimely departure dealt a significant blow to the production of *María de Buenos Aires* in the United States, as he had become the go-to actor for producers. My aspiration is that this study may alleviate some of the intimidation surrounding the role of the Duende by furnishing a word-for-word translation, an interpretation of that translation, the context of the story and its diverse renditions, and a pronunciation guide. It's important to note that the interpretation provided is my own, shaped by the extensive experience I've accumulated with the work throughout the years. The following section will delve into the musical numbers featuring the Duende and will attempt to resolve any

potential issues of clarity. I will proceed with the understanding that the reader possesses the requisite music reading skills to interpret the piano vocal-score.

Alevare

The overture's title is derived from the Italian term *allevare* meaning "to breed" or "to alleviate," a deliberate choice by its creators as the Duende evokes and uplifts the spirit of María. This opening vignette encapsulates the entirety of *María de Buenos Aires*, in harmony with operatic tradition where the overture outlines the diverse musical and literary themes of the work. The text unfolds in ten stanzas, each a triad of verses, painting a portrait of a world marred by hardship and fracture, the very backdrop against which the child María comes into being. Through evocative imagery, her voice is portrayed as a vessel, carrying within it the ancient wounds of God, "hate to its left and tenderness to its right," symbolizing the intricate tapestry of broken human emotion and experience.¹¹¹ Much like Christ, María enters a fractured world destined to endure suffering and retribution for its brokenness. This vignette not only narrates the circumstances of our protagonist's conception but also serves as a forewarning of her anguished existence, one that culminates in her ascent and eventual downfall.

Each stanza is crafted to fit within eight bars of music, making it crucial to master the pacing of the text. The amount of text in each stanza seamlessly aligns with the allocated eight bars, eliminating the need to rush the text. However, practicing the rhythm to establish a tempo is essential. The piano-vocal score exhibits inconsistencies in its entrances, necessitating thorough clarification. As a solution, I will list the first line of each stanza alongside its corresponding

¹¹¹ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 6.

measure numbers in table 2. Since the text for the number is not provided in the piano-vocal score, it must be sourced from the libretto supplied at the end of the score. Therefore, it is advisable to incorporate the full text into the music to visualize the starting and stopping points clearly. It is recommended to disregard the text in the vocal cues provided in the piano-vocal score due to some errors in the printed cues. Furthermore, it is worth noting that although the tempo of the text may feel like it is speeding up starting in m. 147, it remains steady. The number of bars of rest between the stanzas is eliminated, causing the text to run continuously. Lastly, the final sentence of the text, “Ahora, que es tu hora, María de Buenos Aires,” is stretched out over the final four bars of the music, commencing at the *morendo* in bar 163.

Table 2 “Alevare”¹¹²

“Ahora que es la hora y que un rumor de yerba mora...”	mm. 63-70
“Ahora que ya has muerto para siempre...”	mm. 75-82
“Ahora que tu amor de fué a baraja...”	mm. 87-94
“Ahora que en la sórdida tensión filibustera...”	mm. 99-106
“Ahora que el rencor, con rabia y pólvora...”	mm. 111-118
“Ahora que ya estás de nunca más...”	mm. 123-130
“Con borra de recuerdos fiato negro y carraspera...”	mm. 131-138
“He de traer tu canto oscuro...”	mm. 139-146
“Y al duro y dulce son fantasma de sus ecos...”	mm. 147-154

¹¹² Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 1.

“Ahora que es la hora, humo zaino y yerba mora...”	mm. 155-162
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Balada para un organito loco

Having explored this vignette in the Payador section, our focus now shifts primarily to the entrance cues for the Duende. It’s intriguing to observe the distinct wisdom embodied by the character of the Duende in this section, a wisdom that contrasts with the altered state in which the Payador seems to immerse himself. As the Payador sings, his delivery exudes a sense of urgency, vividly portraying the weight and despair that will permeate María’s life. His music is driven by the frantic pace of a *habanera*, while the music accompanying the Duende’s text comes to a standstill, moving to a slow-paced waltz. The contrasting musical styles beautifully capture the ancient wisdom that seems to emanate from the spirit of the Duende. Furthermore, in this vignette where Ferrer narrates the early origins of María’s life, Piazzolla pays homage to the birth of tango by referencing the European waltz and the Cuban *habanera*, both direct influences on the genesis of tango. This clever fusion of musical elements adds depth and richness to the narrative, painting a vivid picture of the cultural tapestry from which the story of *María de Buenos Aires* unfolds. Table 3 will outline when Duende’s lines begin and end in this section. The final line for Duende at m. 276, “de olvido eres entre todas las mujeres” (forgotten are you amongst all women), offers a blasphemous twist on the Hail Mary prayer, replacing the line “blessed art thou among all women.”¹¹³ This subtle alteration adds yet another irreverent layer to the Christ compared narrative.

¹¹³ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 17.

Table 3 “Balada para un organito loco”¹¹⁴

“Ella vino desde esa dimensión... Una ramera un almacén.”	mm. 63-70
“Y dos angelotes de la guarda... María creció en siete días.”	mm. 125-156
“Como esta ciudad... Su parte de abismo, su parte de pan.”	D.S. m. 9-40
“Pero aquellos hombres... Y no existen todavía.”	mm. 244-275

Tocata Rea

In this captivating scene, the age-old operatic debate between the supremacy of words and music unfolds dramatically. The clash between the Duende and the *bandoneón* embodies a struggle between justice and fate.¹¹⁵ In traditional staging, the Duende typically stands as a force for good, vehemently seeking justice for María’s tragic demise, while the *bandoneón*, an intrusive instrument that has become the hallmark and soul of tango, symbolizes the character’s impending doom and demise. In the preceding vignette, María is both seduced by and seductive towards the tango, fully aware of its potential consequences on her life. In the previous vignette “Poema Valseado,” where the *bandoneón* interestingly remains silent, María takes the lead in captivating the instrument, revealing her fearlessness and determination. However, in “Tocata Rea,” the *bandoneón* takes center stage, having orchestrated the protagonist’s downfall. The Duende then joins in, offering a somber portrayal of the instrument and its deceitful nature, juxtaposed with the *bandoneón*’s evocative, romantic tones. The traditional and more

¹¹⁴ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 11.

¹¹⁵ Cuervo, “Interview with Cuervo.”

recognizable influences of tango observed in previous vignettes fade away, making room for an essential, newly introduced element in the genesis of tango.¹¹⁶ The African rhythms, referenced here by the Duende, are the heartbeat supporting the *bandoneón*'s melodies, pulsating to the captivating beats of *macumba*. Originating from the estimated 5.5 million African individuals forcibly brought to South America through the Brazilian slave trade as early as the 1500s, *macumba* emerged as an instrument and a bearer of quintessential African rhythms that not only shaped Brazilian music but also left an indelible mark on the music of all South America, including the tango.¹¹⁷ Not just an instrument, *macumba* also embodies a term referencing rituals stemming from various adapted African religions, encompassing Spiritism, voodoo, and sorcery.¹¹⁸ In their origins, these rituals sometimes involved sacrificial offerings, aiming to forge connections between humans and spirits, fostering emotional, financial, and personal advancement. These rituals stood in contrast to Catholic and Protestant traditions, challenging the notion of achieving grace through obedience.¹¹⁹ Ferrer and Piazzolla purposefully leverage the ritualistic connotations of *macumba* to depict the sacrificial toll exacted by the *bandoneón*, culminating in a rhythmically pulsating crescendo leading to a pivotal musical silence, underscoring the climactic confrontation between the two entities. As the "Tocata Rea" reaches its final moments, dissonances and *glissandos* converge, foreshadowing the impending shift in the tone of the second part of the *operita*. In the final stanza, the resonating percussion of the

¹¹⁶ Molina Fernández, "Música y palabra."

¹¹⁷ Princeton University, "Racialized Frontiers: Slaves and Settlers in Modernizing Brazil," Accessed March 1, 2024. https://brazillab.princeton.edu/research/racialized_frontiers

¹¹⁸ Janete Santos, "Instrumentos musicais," You Tube video, 5:07, March 13, 2020. https://youtu.be/Gzx1kcCLRas?si=qmtTauJ_KKtvLcYg

¹¹⁹ Warren Hoge, "Macumba," *NY Times*, August 21, 1983. <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/08/21/magazine/macumba.html>

timpani makes its debut, supporting the untamed and enigmatic ambiance that permeates the scene.

The musical score contains more music than text, resulting in significant gaps between stanzas. Most of the written cues in the score do not align with the text, and following these cues would create awkwardly long pauses. However, the entrance cues in table 4 help compress these gaps, allowing the text to be timed to extend until the final measure of the piece, albeit with some space remaining between stanzas.

Table 4 “Tocata Rea”¹²⁰

“Goteaba un absorto prestigio... gimiendo en el calvario.”	mm. 8 (end of solo)-16
“Yo sé que entre tus voces... de horteras y cabrones.”	mm. 35-48
“Yo he visto a tu patota... A punto de <i>macumba</i> .”	mm. 49-52
“Y allá en los trascartones... Me cache.”	mm. 55-62
“Si ella era el poco... que vos nos has matado.”	mm. 63-70
“Ahora y en la hora... lo perdido.”	mm. 80-105

Contramilonga a la funerala

This somber piece portrays María’s funeral and serves as the opening for the second part or act of the *operita*. It is noteworthy that the *bandoneón* introduces the Duende, bringing them

¹²⁰ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 28.

together once more in a more solemn setting. The Duende’s monologue exudes raw anguish as it eloquently describes the profound sorrow stemming from the María’s loss, harmonized by some of the most exquisite music found in the score. Table 5 will provide suggested entrance cues for this number.

Table 5 “Contramilonga a la funerala” ¹²¹

“María de Buenos Aires murió... puñal y un cascabel.”	mm. 13-20
“Y el alba se atoró... de morir y el frío puestos.”	mm. 30-38
“Y en la esquina donde aún tejen... le enseñaron a morir.”	mm. 40-45
“Misterio allá, misereteando... de un Cristito temulento.”	mm. 47-54
“Por las fábricas... y una orquídea de percal.”	mm. 59-68
“Por el escote le salía una neblina... misterioso de sus twistes.”	mm. 71-78
“Se murió tanto la niña... no cesaba de parir.”	mm. 79-83
“Que cosa, nuestra María... en la borra de un express.”	mm. 91-98
“Pero en su sola catamufa... lloró por primera vez.”	mm. 99-106

Romanza del Duende

This ethereal and captivating drunken love letter from the Duende to María’s shadow is infused with a melancholic and jazzy duet between the poetry and the piano that perfectly crafts

¹²¹ Piazzolla *María de Buenos Aires*, 36.

the atmospheric essence of the setting. The interplay between the Duende and the piano evokes the ambiance of a dimly lit jazz bar, where the Duende, on the brink of tears, drunkenly professes his love through poetry. As Maestro Ziegler emphasizes, this composition should exude nostalgia, and the Duende's recitation should be as operatic as possible, vividly portraying the character's emotional unraveling.¹²² This piece is scored for the Duende's recitation alongside a spoken chorus of three inebriated marionettes, serving as his sorrowful disciples. These marionettes are tasked with seeking María's lost shadow and conveying Duende's words to infuse her with a revitalizing spirit, aiding in her rebirth. The mystique of the Duende is showcased in this surreal scene, demonstrating his ability to bring about immaculate conception through his words. The intoxicated and melancholic Duende exudes love for the shadow through some of the most abstract verses in the composition. Given the numerous additions to the already abstract *lunfardo* slang through Ferrer's invented *Ferrer-isms*, liberties in interpreting the text are necessary.¹²³ These fabricated words contribute to the imagery intended by the poet, though deciphering them can pose a challenge. Thankfully, there are several narrative anchors provided by the marionettes, offering guidance through the whimsical and abstract poesy of the Duende. Comprehension of every word of the poetry in this piece is not imperative. Piazzolla's music can be very helpful in capturing the emotions and direction of the scene and the character. When uncertain about the significance of a particular phrase, turning to Piazzolla's score can assist in conveying the intended essence of the scene. Thankfully, all the vocal entrances for both the Duende and the marionettes in the piano-vocal score are clearly indicated. It is important to note, however, that being familiar with the piano part in this vignette is crucial when portraying the

¹²² Ziegler, "Interview with Mo. Ziegler."

¹²³ Zinger, "Interview with Mo. Zinger."

role of the Duende. This duet involves significant tempo variations, and understanding the phrasing of the piano part can assist the actor in determining the tempo for their delivery. It is probable that the piano may reach the cadence before the text for each stanza concludes. In such instances, the pianist will often extend the end of the phrase, or the Duende may conclude their stanza in the silence preceding the orchestral interludes brought in by the conductor. The production’s conductor will play a pivotal role in coordinating the entrances for all the involved parties.

Tangus Dei

As we have already discussed the intricacies of this number in the section belonging to the character of Payador, table 6 will focus on the suggested entrance cues for Duende in the conclusion of our *operita*.

Table 6 “Tangus Dei”¹²⁴

“Hoy es Domingo, Laurel con leche... Laurel con ajo.”	mm. 13-22
“Hoy es Domingo, Laurel con fiaca... Laurel caliente.”	mm. 31-40
“Hoy es Domingo, Laurel y azares... Laurel del aire.”	mm. 65-73
“Hoy es Domingo Laurel servido... Laurel con hembra.”	mm. 81-91
“Cuánta cosa... del vientre, setenta clavos.”	mm. 105-120
“Dos angelotes parteros... zafra de partos, tu parto.”	mm. 125-152
“Pero aquellos hombres, los rudos... y no existen todavía.”	mm. 199-211

¹²⁴ Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 67.

“De olvido eres entre todas las mujeres.”	m. 219 (1 st Time)
“Presagio eres entre todas las mujeres.”	m. 223 (1 st Time)
“De olvido eres entre todas las mujeres.”	m. 227 (2 nd Time)
“Presagio eres entre todas las mujeres.”	m. 229 (2 nd Time)
“De olvido eres entre todas las mujeres.”	m. 331 (3 rd Time)

LUNFARDO

In its simplest form, *Lunfardo* is a slang of Spanish found mainly in the Río de Plata region of Argentina and dates back to the 1870's. *Lunfardo* has become part of the linguistic identity of *porteño/as*, meaning residents of Buenos Aires. The slang is sometimes referred to as *Porteño* Spanish. The spread of *lunfardo* through Buenos Aires, and eventually; Montevideo Uruguay, and other bordering provinces of Buenos Aires like Santa Fe, La Pampa, Córdoba, and others, is accredited to the region's history of European immigration at the end of the 19th century.¹²⁵ As previously mentioned, most of the borrowed elements come predominantly from the Italian language, but idioms are also borrowed from Portuguese, French, and African immigrants from different regions, while retaining Spanish as its base language. *Lunfardo* is largely tied to Italian language and culture thanks to two massive waves of Italian immigrants to the ports of Buenos Aires from approximately 1880-1930. These waves were caused in large part due to the Industrial Revolution, World War I, and the rise of Mussolini and its Fascist party. A large part of these immigrants came from more humble Italian provinces and brought with them

¹²⁵ D'Adamo Moosekian, “*Lunfardo* in Argentinian-Porteño Communities.”

regional dialects like Genovese, Piemontese, Napolitano, Siciliano, and Milanese. These dialects had a large influence on the region and its multi-dialectalism.¹²⁶ The significant arrival of lower-class European immigrants led to their displacement to *conventillos* (harsh and impoverished communal living quarters). The *conventillos* played a crucial role in blending a diverse mix of European and African musical influences, giving rise to the genre and dance of tango.¹²⁷ The emergence of tango is intricately linked with the development of *lunfardo*, with the two becoming deeply intertwined, forming a rich tapestry of Argentine identity. However, the association of tango and *lunfardo* as a form of cultural identity was not always regarded with pride in Argentine society, their origins in the *conventillos* led to the dialect being linked with lower-class residents and criminal behavior, resulting in a lasting stigma that proved difficult to shake off. Over the centuries, it has transcended being solely the language of the *porteños* in Buenos Aires, seamlessly integrating itself into the city's culture, encompassing its music, literature, theater, and film.¹²⁸ This integration has endowed the dialect with a sense of artistic legitimacy. In literature, esteemed writers such as Horacio Ferrer, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, and many others embraced *lunfardo* as a means to encapsulate the essence of Argentine identity and imbue their storytelling with profound depth.

Ferrer creates the text of *María de Buenos Aires*, as a ritualistic tribute to the origins of *lunfardo*. In describing Ferrer, tango singer Susana Rinaldi states “Horacio Ferrer was poetry himself. To speak of Horacio is to defend language — no more no less — it is to defend the

¹²⁶ Santiago Van Dam, “*Lunfardo* Argentino Ep. 1 – “*El Lunfardo* de Ayer y Hoy,” You Tube video, 26:00, April 30, 2019. https://youtu.be/6DH7BtuVyDQ?si=-p2_f_EfV57zUrST

¹²⁷ D’Adamo Moosekian, “*Lunfardo* in Argentinian-Porteño Communities.”

¹²⁸ Gregory Antono, “*El Lunfardo*,” *Unravel Magazine* Issue 13, July 27, 2018. <https://unravellingmag.com/articles/el-lunfardo/>

possibility of describing our realities and our circumstances within a level that is not in the slightest bit common.”¹²⁹ *María de Buenos Aires* is a work that revels in embracing the slang no matter the stigma, with due reverence, while elevating it simultaneously and showing us how powerful and flexible the use of language can be. “*Lunfardo* no nos habla del pasado sino de la vida cotidiana. Nos cuenta cómo somos, porque no hay mejor manera de conocer a una sociedad sino por las palabras que elige” (*Lunfardo* does not speak only to our past, it also speaks to our everyday life, it tells the story of who we are and why we are. There is no better way of truly knowing a society than through the language it chooses).¹³⁰ As we delve into the text, digging into the origins of *lunfardo* becomes crucial, for it shapes the imagery, abstract poetry, and the very essence of the story *María de Buenos Aires* seeks to convey. Nevertheless, we mustn’t overlook the artistry embedded in Ferrer’s poetic elevation of the slang.

During the genesis of the slang, it was on rare occasion utilized for dubious purposes, such as deceiving and evading law enforcement. Referred to as “El dialecto de ladrones” (the dialect of thieves) by the media and law enforcement, it served as a coded means of communication for criminals, employing a secretive set of expressions and words. There are, however, plenty of people in Argentina that have pushed back against the negative connotations attached to this dialect and who have been instrumental within its study. José Gobello, a prominent figure renowned for scholarly works and his academic nonprofit organization dedicated to demystifying *lunfardo* terminology, stands as a leading advocate in reshaping societal perceptions of this dialect. Familiarizing oneself with his studies is crucial when

¹²⁹ Roberto Long, “Qué es el tango para Horacio Ferrer,” You Tube video, 6:15, October 23, 2014, <https://youtu.be/48aqCZfnRXw?si=-23fzeDf4EPsdyVz>

¹³⁰ Van Dam, “Lunfardo Argentó”

exploring the works of Ferrer and Piazzolla, particularly through the utilization of his specialized *lunfardo* dictionary, *Nuevo Diccionario Lunfardo*. Additionally, Oscar Conde's *Diccionario Etimologico del Lunfardo* serves as another invaluable resource for translating *lunfardo*. While there are numerous other resources available for further exploration, these two serve as excellent starting points.

Before discussing the differences between the *lunfardo* slang pronunciation and traditional Spanish pronunciation, it is essential to understand its treatment of vowels for singing. The good news is that the vowels are pronounced the same way in both *lunfardo* and Spanish. The /a/ vowel is simply treated as a bright [a], while the vowels /i/ and /u/ are both close and transcribed phonetically as [i] and [u]. However, the /o/ and /e/ vowels require a bit of clarification. The /o/ vowel is not as close as a German or a French [o] but resembles the Italian language treatment of a close [o]. Similarly, the /e/ vowel in Spanish is closest to the treatment of the open [ɛ] in Italian. There are no variations to the Spanish vowel sounds previously mentioned, and those five vowels will serve you well when speaking with an Argentinian dialect.

It is important to touch on some of the phonetic features of *lunfardo* that will be useful during the study of *María de Buenos Aires* and other texts that utilize the slang. There are some differences when it compares to standard Spanish. The use of soft consonants is important in most dialects of Spanish but absolutely necessary in Argentinian dialects. Some crucial phonemes to address are /d/, /v/, and /b/, which may pose a challenge for non-Spanish speakers. The pronunciation of the letter /d/ in Spanish differs from its English counterpart; it entails a softer sound where the tongue doesn't touch the roof of the mouth but moves forward to make contact with the top front teeth, producing a gently voiced dental fricative. The closest equivalent in English would be the "th" sound in a word like *mother*, bearing in mind its softness, and is

represented by the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbol [ð]. The exception to this pronunciation would be if the letter /d/ follows the letter /n/ in which case it would be phonetically transcribed as a [d]. The letters /b/ and /v/ are not quite the same as the English /b/ and /v/ either. In fact, in Spanish, they are the same and are represented phonetically in IPA with the [β] symbol. You could envision them as being midway between the English /b/ and /v/ sounds, with your lips barely touching together. The letter /g/ exhibits three distinct sounds based on its placement within a word. It resonates as a robust /g/ like the word “good” in English when it is found at the start of a word preceding an /a/, /o/, or /u/ vowel. When /g/ precedes an /i/ or an /e/ vowel at the word’s outset, it adopts the resonant German *ach-laut* represented by the IPA symbol [x]. However, a prevalent third pronunciation softens the /g/ to a more delicate partial sound. To produce this correct sound, keep your mouth more open and refrain from fully connecting your tongue to the roof of your mouth. This sound is transcribed with the [ɣ] IPA symbol.

For English speakers not experienced with singing in Italian or Spanish, it’s important to note that the unvoiced plosive consonants /t/, /p/, and /k/, as well as the previously mentioned voiced plosives or “soft consonants,” are not plosive in Spanish. Instead, they should be treated like Italian occlusive consonants, which are produced with a temporary occlusion or interruption of the air as the sound exits the mouth. To achieve the correct sound in Spanish, these consonants must be devoid of aspiration. Additionally, the consonant /n/ before the bilabial consonants /b/ and /p/ will be phonetically assimilated into an [m] sound, similar to spoken Italian. Assimilation is less common in Italian singing, particularly when singing phrases that are prolonged and expansive, but can often occur when singing quicker passages or *secco recitativo*. In Spanish, and in the *lunfardo* slang this concept can be applied more frequently. Assimilation presents itself

frequently in *lunfardo*; for instance, *un poco* is phonetically transcribed as [um po-ko].

Furthermore an /n/ consonant in Spanish will also assimilate when preceding the labiodental /f/ consonant as in the word *lunfardo* which can be transcribed as [lum-far-ðo].¹³¹

Another important thing to remember is that in Spanish there is no use of glottal, and when a word ends with a vowel and the following word begins with the vowel, an elision is necessary. There are some rules however, that are left to personal preference like the aspiration of the letter /s/ in certain cases, or the omission of final consonants in other instances. The aspiration of the letter /s/ is affected by phrasing and is dependent on where an actor or singer decides to breathe and break up the sentence. The letter /s/ in the middle of a word before a consonant, or at the end of the word in the middle of a phrase can be aspirated, but it is never aspirated when it is the initial letter of a word or is found intervocalically. Let us use the following line from the libretto as an example “Y al duro y dulce son fantasma de sus ecos, las futuras Marías.”¹³² If the actor decides to take a breath after the word *ecos*, the final /s/ would be pronounced and not aspirated resulting in the following IPA transcription; [i al 'duro i 'dulse son fan'tahma de sus 'ɛkos - lah fu'turah mar'i-as]. However, if the actor chooses to do it all in one breath the /s/ of *ecos* would also be aspirated resulting in the following transcription: [i al 'duro i 'dulse son fan'tahma de sus 'ɛkoh lah fu'turah ma'ri-as]. Two things to notice here are that the final /s/ in *Marías* is pronounced because it is the end of the sentence, and the first /s/ in *fantasmas* is aspirated because it precedes a consonant in the middle of a word. Please be aware that the IPA transcription included in this document reflects my interpretation of phrasing and preferences regarding sentence structure. It should not be regarded as the sole definitive

¹³¹ David Adams, *A Handbook of Diction for Singers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 61-62.

¹³² Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*, 78.

phrasing. I have conscientiously taken into account rhythmic values and note lengths, making adjustments as necessary. In instances where an excessively long note could sound unnatural when aspirated, I have opted to transcribe it using the letter /s/. The concept of aspiration in the Río de la Plata accent likely originated to enhance the flow and smoothness of the language, often occurring in phrases with quicker rhythms. Consequently, I have opted to transcribe phrases with a slower tempo using an /s/ instead of an aspirated sound. Anyone using this document as a guide should feel free to phrase in a manner suitable to them and adjust this concept to said phrasing. It should also be noted that the aspiration of the letter /s/ is not something that most conductors, coaches or directors would ask for during a production, or even a coaching, yet it can make a difference in the flow of the *porteño* poetic language if done effectively. In a recent production with *Opéra National de Lyon*, we were provided with a dialect coach from Buenos Aires who had a strong preference for this diction characteristic of the Argentinian dialect. Truth be told Horacio Ferrer who voiced the original Duende and is native to Montevideo Uruguay, does not observe this concept in the original recording, and I have encountered Argentinian colleagues, who would strongly prefer that every /s/ is pronounced. Maestro Parodi advocates for singers in his productions to enunciate every /s/ and to abstain from attempting the aspirated sound unless it naturally resonates with the singer. He elucidates that the issue with the aspiration of the letter /s/ has the potential to appear contrived and disruptive, thus detracting from the performance. It is his strong preference that singers refrain from adopting this articulation. While he acknowledges this is part of the Río de la Plata regional accent, he firmly believes it is not a diction rule and should not be emulated by singers and actors who are not native to that region.¹³³ In my experience it is easier to eliminate the aspiration rather

¹³³ Parodi, "Interview with Mo. Parodi."

than adding it in a short rehearsal period. It is likely that unless you are from a region of Latin America where aspiration is a feature of the dialect or speak with an Andalusian Spanish dialect, this will not come naturally but could become more natural overtime. Crucially, I cannot overstate the significance of flexibility in this regard. If a performer initially learns the score with an aspirated sound, it is essential to be ready to transition to a pronounced /s/ if the conductor or director prefers it, or if it flows more naturally. If a singer feels hesitant about making this switch during rehearsals, my recommendation would be to articulate every /s/ and disregard the aspirated sounds in the IPA transcription provided in the Appendix.

Another aspect to consider in the Argentinian dialect is the treatment of the letters /y/ and /ll/. Specifically in Buenos Aires, the IPA symbol [ʎ] is used to replace these letters. In different parts of Latin America, these same letters are pronounced with a [j] glide or the voiced [ʒ], depending on the specific dialect. It's important to note that there is no uniform pronunciation of this sound across Argentina. In Buenos Aires and in *lunfardo*, the phoneme [ʎ] is used for words containing /y/ and /ll/, while in other regions of Argentina, a voiced [ʒ] may be used instead. For example, in the first line of María's first song, I have heard it sung as [ʒo soi Mar'ia] and [ʎo soi Ma'ria]. Both of these pronunciations are acceptable, but for the purposes of this study, I will utilize the symbol [ʎ] as it aligns more closely with the pronunciation used by *porteños* in Buenos Aires today.

Care should be taken when encountering words in *lunfardo* that closely resemble their Italian counterparts, as they often exhibit subtle changes in pronunciation that straddle the line between Spanish and Italian. For instance, *lunfardo* words like *fiaca*, meaning laziness, derive from the Italian word *fiacca*, which means weariness. It's important to note that *lunfardo* retains the Spanish pronunciation by omitting the double consonant, as doubling consonants is not a

feature of Spanish. Another subtle difference in pronunciation can be observed in words like *manyar*, which comes from the Italian word *mangiare*, both meaning “to eat.” In Italian, the word is pronounced with the sound [dʒ], while in *lunfardo*, the sound softens to [man 'jar].

For Spanish speakers, one of the major challenges is that a word in Spanish can have a completely different meaning in *lunfardo*. The creation of words in *lunfardo* often involves narrowing down the Spanish language. For instance, the Spanish word *engomar*, which translates to “glue” or “adhere,” actually means “to close” in *lunfardo*, and can be applied to various scenarios where the verb “to close” is needed. Additionally, Spanish can be expanded to create *lunfardo* words like *bronca*. In Spanish, *bronca* means “dispute,” whereas in *lunfardo*, it is expanded to mean “anger” or “ire.” Furthermore, *lunfardo* often involves the use of metaphor, synecdoche, or metonymy.¹³⁴ For example, the word *espárragos*, which translates to “asparagus,” is used to refer to fingers, while *altillo*, which means “attic,” is used to mean “head.” An example of synecdoche is the use of the *lunfardo* word *cráneo* (skull) to describe a “smart man,” and in metonymy, the word *gorra* (hat) is used to refer to a “policeman.” All these linguistic shifts make translating *lunfardo* extremely challenging for Spanish speakers. When translating any *lunfardo* text, it is important to always look up a word, even if it seems familiar from the Spanish language. The more familiar one becomes with the slang, the more one can apply context clues to make the task a bit easier.

It is my genuine aspiration that the poetic and precise word-for-word translation of the script, complemented by the IPA transcription and the collective expertise of the diverse participating experts in this study, will alleviate the daunting task of learning *María de Buenos Aires* for any performer. This truly remarkable work is a masterpiece in every sense. Astor

¹³⁴ D’Adamo Moosekian, “*Lunfardo* in Argentinian-Porteño Communities.”

Piazzolla, a composer like no other, carved out a distinctive niche in the world of music, creating a sound that defies comparison to any other classical, jazz, or tango composer. Just as the city of Buenos Aires is a cultural melting pot, so too is the experience of encountering Astor Piazzolla's unique musical legacy.

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APPENDIX

ALEVARE

(The Beginning of Tango)

Ahora que es la hora y que un rumor de yerbamora
 a_ 'o-ra kɛ:h la_ 'o-ra_i kɛ_un ru-'mor ðɛ ʃɛɪβa-'mora
Now that is the hour and a rumor of nightshade

Trasnocha en tu silencio, por un poro de este asfalto
 trah-'notʃa_en tu si-'lɛn-sio por um 'po-ro dɛ:htɛ_ah-'fal-to
Gaunt in your silence through a pore in this pavement

Yo habré de conjurar tu voz... ahora que es la hora.
 ʃo_a-'βrɛ ðɛ koŋ-xu-'rar tu βos a_ 'o-ra kɛ:h la_ 'o-ra
I shall conjure up your voice... Now that is the hour

(As the hour strikes and a *lethal, venomous rumor pervades your eerie silence, I shall summon forth your voice through the pores and the essence of these streets.)

Ahora que ya has muerto para siempre y van de asalto,
 a_ 'o-ra kɛ ʃah 'mɛr-to 'pa-ra 'sjɛm-prɛ_i βan dɛ_a-'sal-to
Now that you have died forever ... and go to attack

Por vos, mis brujas rubias a tanguear misas calientes
 por βos mih 'bru-xah ru-'bjas a taŋ-gɛ-'ar 'mi-sah ka-'ljɛn-tɛs
You my witches blondes while dancing masses hot

Al alba, con sus lerdas putañías de contraltos;
 al_ 'al-βa kon suh 'lɛr-ðah pu-ta-'ɲi-as ðɛ kon- 'tral-tos
At dawn with their lazy whorish low voices

(Now that you have died forever, my blonde witches attack your memory with their low sultry and enticing voices as they dance to masses on a hot evening.)

Ahora que tu amor se fue a baraja y, zurdamente,
 a_ 'o-ra kɛ tu_a 'mor se 'fwɛ_a βa-'ra-xa_i sur-ðə-'mɛn-te
Now that your love has folded, and your left hand

Con una extraña arcada canallesca en cada ojera,
 kon 'una_eks-tra-na:r-ka-ða ka-na-ʃeh-ka_εη ka-ða_o-'xe-ra
With a strange ark of misdeed under the bags of each eye

Te ardió una cruz de vino en la tiniebla de la frente;
 tε_ar-ðjo_ 'u-na kruh ðε βi-no_εn la ti-ηje-βla ðε la 'frε-nte
It burned a cross of wine in the darkness of your brow

(Now that you have given up your love through misdeeds, on your forehead there is a drunken cross – representing the duality in the good and evil in her – below the darkness of your brows.)

Ahora que en la sórdida tensión filibustera
 a_ 'o-ra ke:n la 'sor-ði-ða ten-'sjon fi-li-βuh-ʔε-ra
Now that in the seedy tension obstructed

De un clave bien trampeado tocan tangos con tus huesos
 ðε_uη 'kla-βε βjen tram-pe 'a-ðo 'to-kan 'taη-goh kon tus_ 'we-sos
Of a clavichord very broken play tangos with your bones

Las manos desveladas de un Caín y una trotera.
 lah 'ma-nos ðeh-βε-'la-ðah ðε_uη ka-'in i_ 'u-na tro-ʔε-ra
The hands sleep deprived of Cain and a prostitute

(Now that through a seedy and palpable tension, Cain and a prostitute play tangos with your bones on a broken clavichord.)

Ahora que el rencor, con rabia y pólvora de un peso gatilla,
 a_ 'o-ra ke:l reη-kor kon ra-βja i pol-βo-ra ðε um pe-so ga-ti-ʃa
Now that the spite with rage and gunpowder worth a dime (cocks) the trigger

En su plegado bandoneón, la hechicería
 εn su ple- 'ya-ðo βan-do-ne 'on la_ε-tʃi-se-'ri-a
In its crumpled up bandoneon, the witchcraft

De un golpe en Ay Menor para el costado de tus besos;
 ðε_uη 'gol-pe:n 'ai me-'nor pa-ra_εl koh-ta-ðo ðε tuh βε-sos
Of a hit in A minor to the side of your kisses

(Now with rage and spite, the *bandoneon* plays a mystical and painful minor chord to kiss the side of your lips.)

Ahora que ya estas de nunca más, Niña María,
 a_ 'o-ra ke ʃa_εh-tah ðε 'nuη-ka mas 'ni-ηa ma-'ri-a
Now that you are never more girl María

Yo mezclaré un puñado de esa voz bandoneonera,
 fo meh-kla-'re_ um pu-ɲa-ðo 'ðe:sa βoh βan-do-neo-'ne-ra
I will mix a handful of that voice bandoneonera

Que aún quema en tu garganta, con un poco de la mía,
 ke_a_ 'uŋ 'ke-ma_ en tu gar-ɣan-ta kon um 'po-ko ðe la 'mi-a
That still burns in your throat with a bit of mine

(Now that you have departed, child María, I shall intertwine my voice with the burning melodies of the *bandoneón*, resonating within your throat.)

Con borra de recuerdos, fiato negro y carraspera tordilla de un bordón.
 kom βo-ra ðe re-'kwɛr-ðoh 'fja-to 'ne-ɣro_ i ka-rah-'pe-ra tor-ði-ʃa ðe_ um βor-ðon
With useless memories a dark breath and a hoarse stain of a voice

Así, del íntimo extramuro porteño de tu adiós,
 a-'si ðel 'in-ti-mo_ eks-tra-'mu-ro por-'te-ɲo ðe tu_ a-ðjos
Like this the intimate outside porteño of your voice

Atravesando las fronteras sencillas de la muerte,
 a-tra-βe-san-do lah fron-'te-ras sen-'si-ʃah ðe la 'mwɛr-te
Crossing the borders simple of death

He de traer tu canto oscuro. Tendrá la edad de Dios
 ε ðe tra-'ɛr tu 'kan-to:h-ku-ro ten-'ðra la_ ε-ðað ðe ðjos
I will bring your dark singing it will have the age of God

Y dos antiguas mataduras: Un odio a diestra;
 i ðos an-'ti-ɣwas ma-ta-'ðu-ras un 'o-ðjo_a 'ðjeh-tra
And two ancient wounds: Hate to the right

Y, a zurda, una ternura.
 i_a 'sur-ða_ 'u-na ter-'nu-ra
And to the left tenderness

(Your goodbye from Buenos Aires is full of empty words that are spoken in a dark and hoarse voice transcending the borders of death. I shall conjure up your dark song, which will be as old as God and will have two ancient wounds in it; to its left, hate, and to its right, tenderness.)

Y al duro y dulce son fantasma de sus ecos,
 i_al ðu-ro_ i 'ðul-se son fan-'tah-ma ðe sus 'e-kos
And to the hard and sweet ghost of their echoes

Las futuras Marías, repechando Santa Fe
 lah fu-tu-rah ma-ri-as rɛ-pe-tʃan-do 'san-ta fe
The future Marías traveling uphill to Santa Fe

Rumbo a otra aurora, se apurarán temblando
 rum-βo_a_ 'o-tra:u-ro-ra se_a-pu-ra-'ran tɛm-βlan-ðo
Towards another dawn, they will hurry shaking

Sin saber por qué se apuran....
 sin sa-βɛr por kɛ se_a-pu-ran
Without knowing why they hurry

Ahora que es la hora humo zaino y yerba mora...
 a_ 'o-ra kɛ:h la_ 'o-ra_ 'u-mo 'sai-no_ i_ 'fɛr-βa 'mo-ra
Now that is the hour, smoke false and nightshade

Penacho de relente, ya tu voz -maríamente-
 pɛ-'na-tʃo ðɛ rɛ-lɛn-tɛ ʃa tu βoh ma-ri-a-mɛn-tɛ
Feathers through the fog, yet your voice - Maríamente -

Vendrá con tu memoria, aquí, pequeña y una, ahora.
 βɛn-'dra kon tu mɛ-'mo-rja: 'ki pɛ-kɛ-ɲa_ i_ 'u-na:_ 'o-ra
Will come with your memory here small and one now

Ahora que es tu hora: María de Buenos Aires.
 a_ 'o-ra kɛ:h tu_ 'o-ra ma-ri-a ðɛ βwɛ-nos 'ai-rɛs
Now that is your hour: María of Buenos Aires

(And with the harsh and sweet song of their echoes, the future Marías traveling to Santa Fe towards a new dawn. They will hurry trembling not knowing why they hurry. Now that it is time, a feather like toxic fog appears with your María like voice - small and alone. Now that it's your time: María of Buenos Aires.)

*Nightshade can be poisonous and toxic.

BALADA RENGÁ PARA UN ORGANITO LOCO (Lame Ballad for a Crazy Barrel Organ)

LA VOZ DE UN PAYADOR
 (The voice of a payador)

Pianito de mala racha que muele cuentos... a ver!
 Pja-ni-to ðɛ 'ma-la 'ra-tʃa kɛ 'mwɛ-lɛ 'kwɛn-tos a βɛr
Piano of bad luck that grinds stories... Let's see

Si muestra el rengo en la hilacha de su valse,
 si mwe-htra_el rɛŋ-go_en la_i-la-tʃa ðe su βal-se
It shows the lame man in the routine of his dance

A la muchacha, la que nadie quiere ver!
 a la mu-tʃa-tʃa la kɛ 'na-ðje kje-rɛ βɛr
To the young woman who no one wants to see

(Luckless little piano which grinds out tales... Let's see if the lame man shows the routine of his dance to the young woman who no one wants to see.)

VOCES DE LOS HOMBRES QUE VOLVIERON DEL MISTERIO
 (Voices of the men who returned from mystery)

Que moje el Diablo en garnacha su renga pata al moler.
 kɛ 'mo-xe:l ðja- βlo_ɛŋ gar-na-tʃa su rɛŋ-ga 'pa-ta:l mo-lɛr
That wets the devil in Garnacha its lame foot as he grinds

(As he grinds out tales, the devil soaks his lame foot in wine.)

LA VOZ DE UN PAYADOR

El tiempo muestra la hilacha,
 el tjem-po mweh-tra la_i-la-tʃa
Time shows its nature

Y nadie la quiere ver!
 i 'na-ðje la kje-rɛ βɛr
And no one wants to see her

DUENDE

Ella vino desde aquella dimensión transbarrioter
 'ɛ-fa βi-no ðɛh-ðɛ_a-kɛ-ʃa ði-mɛn-'sjɔn trans-βa-rjo-ʔɛ-ra
She came from that other dimension past the neighborhood

Donde alcanza, a la esperanza, una barrera y un camino;
 ðon-de_al-kan-sa: la ɛh-pɛ-'ran-sa_u-na βa-'rɛ-ra_i_uŋ ka-'mi-no
Where it reaches hope a fence and a road

La campana, tres estrellas, una ojera en el balcón sombroso,
 la kam-pa-na tres ɛh-trɛ-ʃas u-na_o-'xɛ-ra_en el βal-kon som-bro-so
The bell three stars bags under the eye in a shady balcony

Un gol, la plaza...El sol sin prisa de una misa con mañanas
 uŋ gol la 'pla-sa_εl sol sim 'pri-sa ðε_ 'u-na 'mi-sa kon ma-ɲa-nas
A goal the town square the sun without hurry of a mass with mornings

Y vecinos y torcazas; algunos mozos que le dén a las polleras;
 i βε-'si-nos i tor-ka-sas al-'ɣu-noh 'mo-soh kε le ðen a lah po-'ʃε-ras
And neighbors and doves; some waiters that give to the skirts;

Y un andén, con otro humo y otra pena y otro tren para la espera.
 i_un an-'den kon 'o-tro_ 'u-mo_i_ 'o-tra 'pε-na_i_ 'o-tro tren 'pa-ra la_εh-'pε-ra
And a platform with smoke and another sorrow and another train for the wait

Una novena una ramera, un almacén.
 'u-na no-βε-na_ 'u-na ra-'mε-ra_un al-ma-'sen
An eve a prostitute and a corner shop

***This section describes everyday life in María's hometown.**

(She came from another dimension past the confines of her suburb, where hope reaches the road she traveled. There is a bell, you can only see three stars, always someone with bags under their eyes standing on a shady balcony, kids playing soccer on the town square... Some waiters staring at women wearing skirts, and a train station platform where you see sorrowful smoke from the idle train. In the evenings you can usually find a sex worker by the corner shop.)

LA VOZ DE UN PAYADOR

La pequeña nació un día que estaba borracho Dios:
 La pε-kε-ɲa na-'sjo_un 'di-a kε:h-'ta-βa βo-'ra-tʃo ðjos
The girl was born on a day when God was drunk

Por eso, en su voz, dolían tres clavos zurdos...
 por 'ε-so_en su βoh ðo-'li-an treh 'kla-βos 'sur-ðos
That is why in her voice painfully three crooked nails

Nacía con un insulto en la voz!
 na-'si-a kon un in-'sul-to_en la βos
She was born like an insult in the voice

(Her voice sounded painful and insulting, as if there were three crooked nails in her throat.)

VOCES DE LOS HOMBRES QUE VOLVIERON DEL MISTERIO

Tres clavos chuecos...Un día que estaba mufado Dios.
 trɛh kla-βoh tʃwɛ-kos un 'di-a keh-'ta-βa mu-'fa-ðo ðjos
Three nails crooked a day that was angry God

LA VOZ DE UN PAYADOR

Tres clavos negros...Un día que estaba de estaño Dios.
 trɛh kla-βoh nɛ-ɣros un 'di-a ke:h-'ta-βa ðɛ:h-'ta-ɲo ðjos
Three nails black... One day that was experienced God.

(Three crooked nails on the day that God was drunk. Three black nails on the day that God was angry.)

DUENDE

Y dos angelotes de la guarda parda, dos raros palomos
 i ðos aɲ-xɛ-'lo-tɛh ðɛ la 'gwar-ða par-ða ðoh 'ra-roh pa-'lo-mos
And two angels of the guarding dark two strange white horses

Que andaban de trote por la orilla ñata,
 ke_an-'da-βan ðɛ tro-tɛ por la_o-'ri-fa ɲa-ta
That were trotting on the edge of death

Trajeron llorando a la Niña en el lomo.
 tra-xɛ-ron ʃo-'ran-do_a la 'ni-ɲa_en el 'lo-mo
Brought crying the girl on their backs

En la cal mulata del último muro,
 en la kal mu-'la-ta ðɛl 'ul-ti-mo 'mu-ro
On the rendering dark of the last wall

Plegando de pena las alas de lata, grabaron su nombre:
 plɛ-ɣan-do ðɛ 'pɛ-na las 'a-lah ðɛ 'la-ta gra-'βa-ron su 'nom-βɛ
Folding with shame their tin can wings recorded her name

María, con balas morenas.
 ma-'ri-a kom βa-lah mo-'ɾɛ-nas
María with bullets dark

(And two guarding angels of the night on two strange white horses trotted along the edge of death, carrying the crying child on their back. Near the last dark wall they flapped their tin can wings, painfully and shamefully, announcing her name; María of black bullets.)

De arena y de frío le hicieron los días, tan duros!

ðe_a-'re-na_i ðe 'fri-o le_i-'sje-ron loh 'ði-ah tan 'du-ros

On sand and in the cold they made her days very difficult

Y, a espaldas del río, allá donde el río se junta a la nada,

i_a_ẽh-'pal-ðah ðel ri-o_a-'fa ðon-dẽ:l ri-o se 'xun-ta: la 'na-ða

And to the back of the river there where the river meets nothingness

La Niña María creció en siete días.

la ni-ña ma-'ri-a kre-'sjo_en 'sje-te 'ði-as

The child María grew up in seven days

(On the cold sand she laid, and her days were full of hardship. There where the river meets nothingness, the child María grew up in 7 days.)

LA VOZ DE UN PAYADOR

Zapada de contrasuerte, Milonga a suerte y verdad,

sa-'pa-ða ðe kon-tra-'swẽr-te mi-'lon-ga: 'swẽr-te_i ße-'ðað

Restless dance of bad luck Milonga to luck and truth

Que un bordón de mala muerte

ke_um ßor-ðon de 'ma-la 'mwẽr-te

That a low string of bad death

Sin llorarte ni quererte fraseaba en tu soledad...

sin fo-'rar-te ni ke-'rer-te fra-'sea-ßa_en tu so-le-'ðað

Without crying or loving sang in your solitude...

(*Restless ill-fated dance, trying her luck and truth at a *Milonga* while the low strings of a guitar play a deadly melody that neither cries nor loves, but sings over your solitude.)

VOCES DE LOS HOMBRES QUE VOLVIERON DEL MISTERIO

Pequeña... Qué inversa suerte saber toda la verdad!

pe-'ke-ña ke_im-ße-'sa 'swẽr-te sa-ße-'to-ða la ße-'ðað

Child...What twisted luck to know the whole truth

LA VOZ DE UN PAYADOR

La Zapada de la muerte punteaba en su soledad.

la sa-'pa-ða ðe la 'mwẽr-te pun-'tea-ßa_en su so-le-'ðað

The dance of death played in her solitude

EL DUENDE

Como esta ciudad, de duelo y de fiesta, robada a las brujas
 ko-mo_ 'eh-ta sju-ðað ðe ðwe-lo_i ðe 'fjeh-ta ro-βa-ða: lah 'βru-xas
Like this city of duels and of festivities, stolen to the witches

Terrajas y en celo que empujan la vida,
 tɛ-ra-xas i_ en 'sɛ-lo kɛ:m-'pu-xan la 'βi-ða
Prostitutes and in a jealousy that pushes life forward

María fue un poco del loco desvelo de cada baraja suicida
 ma-ri-a fwe_ um 'po-ko ðel lo-ko ðeh-βɛ-lo ðe ka-ða βa-'ra-xa swi-'si-ða
María was a bit of that crazy sleepless night of each suicidal deck

Y vacía jugada a la apuesta perdida de la soledad.
 i βa-'si-a xu-ɣa-ða: la:'pweh-ta pɛr-ði-ða ðe la so-le-ðað
And empty and played to betting lost in her solitude

(This city of strife, crime, and festivities - stolen by witches and sex workers - is brought to life by jealousy. María and her emptiness were embedded in it like a suicidal deck of cards. She was lost in solitude; dealt, played, and paid for, and sold into prostitution.)

Fue el verso de antojo broncao en la puerta del primer fracaso
 fwe:l 'βɛr-so ðe_an-'to-xo βroŋ-ka-o_ en la 'pwe-ta ðel pri-'mɛr fra-'ka-so
It was the verse of craving furiously at the door of a first failure

Y la rosa tuerta de un payaso cojo.
 i la-ro-sa 'twɛr-ta ðe_ um pa-'ʃa-so 'ko-xo
And the rose one eyed of a clown lame

Diosa y atorranta, del cielo y del hampa fue trampa lo mismo.
 ðjo-sa_i a-to-ran-ta ðel 'sje-lo_i ðel 'am-pa fwe 'tram-pa lo 'mih-mo
Goddess and prostitute of the sky, and the mafia, she became a trap herself

Y atados de un pelo por el alba van, su parte de abismo,
 i_a-'ta-ðoh ðe_ um 'pɛ-lo por el 'al-βa βan su 'par-tɛ ðe_a-βih-mo
And tied with a hair at dawn they go, her part in the abyss

Su parte de pan.
 Su 'par-tɛ ðe pan.
Her part of bread.

(She was the inspiration of a furious craving at the door of a first failure; it was as laughable as a lame clown with a tattered rose. She was Goddess and prostitute, heavenly and criminal, she became a trap of ridicule and harm to herself. Hanging by a thread she enters into the abyss of night and emerges into the dawn with her reward.)

LA VOZ DE UN PAYADOR

Y en el barrio, las arpías viejas de negro capuz
 i_ɛn el βa-rjo las ar-ˈpi-as βjɛ-xah ðɛ ˈnɛ-γro ka-ˈpus
And in the neighborhood the harpees with black hoods

Como en una eucaristía mugrentera,
 ko-mo_ɛn ˈu-na_eu-ka-rih-ˈti-a mu-γren-ˈte-ra
Like a Eucharist that's filthy

Por María rezan lunfardos en cruz.
 por ma-ˈri-a ˈrɛ-san lum-ˈfar-ðos ɛn krus
For María pray lunfardos with a cross

(And in the neighborhood the harpees - meaning witches or women with ill intentions – wearing a black hood, holding a filthy Eucharist and a cross, pray blasphemies over you.)

VOCES DE LOS HOMBRES QUE VOLVIERON DEL MISTERIO

Allá en el barrio, María, le han puesto nombre a tu cruz!
 a-ˈfa_ɛn el βa-rjo ma-ˈri-a lɛ_ɛm ˈpwe-hto ˈnom-βɾɛ_a tu krus
There in the neighborhood María they have put a name to your cross

(There in the neighborhood María, they have declared you all but dead.)

LA VOZ DE UN PAYADOR

María de Agorería, tendrás dos tangos por cruz...
 ma-ˈri-a ðɛ_a-go-rɛ-ˈri-a ten-ˈdrah ðoh ˈtaŋ-goh por krus
María of deceitful divination you will have two tangos on your cross

(María of divination and deceit, you will reap what you have sowed.)

EL DUENDE

Pero aquellos hombres, los rudos maestros de mi tristería,
 ˈpɛ-ro_a-kɛ-ˈfos ˈom-βɾɛs loh ˈru-ðoh ma-ˈɛh-troh ðɛ mi trih-tɛ-ˈri-a
But those men the rough masters of my sadness

Que saben del mudo arremango que cabe a ese nombre,
 kɛ ˈsa-βɛn dɛl ˈmu-ðo_a-rɛ-ˈmaŋ-go kɛ ˈka-βɛ_a_ˈɛ-sɛ ˈnom-βɾɛ
That know of the mute decision that fits in that name

Y han vuelto a su modo tan lerdos, tan serios
 i_an βwɛl-to_a su 'mo-ðo tan 'lɛr-ðoh tan 'sɛ-rjoh
And have returned in their way so slow so solemn

De todos los nuestros misterios,
 ðɛ 'to-ðoh loh 'nwɛ-htroh mih-'tɛ-rjos
From all our mysteries

Cuando hay pena llena canyengueando el aire de las curderías,
 kwan-do_ai 'pɛ-na 'ʃɛ-na kan-ʃɛŋ-'gɛan-ðo_el 'ai-rɛ ðɛ lah kur-ðɛ-'ri-as
When there is pain complete dancing with an air of drunkenness

Lo nombran -apenas- ladrando a su recuerdo
 lo 'nom-βran a-'pɛ-nah la-ðran-do_a su rɛ-'kwɛr-ðo
They name it barely barking at its memory

La sombra de los tangos que ya fueron y no existen todavía.
 la 'som- βra ðɛ loh 'taŋ-goh kɛ ʃa 'fwɛ-ron i no_ek-'sih-tɛn to-ða-βi-a
The shadow of the tangos that have been and don't exist yet

(But those rough men; the masters of my sorrow who know of the unspoken decision that is synonymous with her name - María becoming Buenos Aires, or tango - have returned slowly and solemnly from our mysteries, when there is complete pain to be had, to dance a broken tango. They name the pain howling at its memory in the shadows of the tangos that have been and don't yet exist.)

LA VOZ DE UN PAYADOR
 Triste María de Buenos Aires....
 'trih-tɛ ma-'ri-a ðɛ βwɛ-nos 'ai-rɛs
Sad María of Buenos Aires

EL DUENDE

De olvido eres entre todas las mujeres.
 ðɛ_ol-'βi-ðo_ 'ɛ-rɛs 'ɛn-trɛ 'to-ðah lah mu-'xɛ-rɛs
Forgotten you are among all women

*** Zapada is a dance with no intervals or rest. The term is used to describe a dance that feels endless.**

**** Milonga are tango dancing gatherings.**

YO SOY MARÍA
(I am María)

Yo soy María de Buenos Aires
 ʃo soi ma-'ri-a ðe βwε-nos 'ai-res
I am María from Buenos Aires

De Buenos Aires María ¿no ven quién soy yo?
 ðe βwε-nos 'ai-res ma-'ri-a no βen kjen soi ʃo
From Buenos Aires María Don't you see who I am?

María, tango, María del arrabal
 ma-'ri-a 'taŋ-go ma-'ri-a ðel a-ra-βal
María tango, María from the slums

María noche, María pasión fatal
 ma-'ri-a 'no-tʃε ma-'ri-a pa-'sjon fa-'tal
María night, María deadly passion

María del amor, de Buenos Aires soy yo
 ma-'ri-a ðel a-'mor ðe βwε-nos 'ai-res soi ʃo
María of love, from Buenos Aires I am

Yo soy María de Buenos Aires.
 ʃo soi ma-'ri-a ðe βwε-nos 'ai-res
I am María from Buenos Aires

Si en este barrio la gente pregunta ¿Quién soy?
 sjen 'eh-te βa-rjo la 'xen-te pɾe-γun-ta kjen soi
If in this neighborhood the people ask who I am

Pronto muy bien lo sabrán las hembras que me envidiarán.
 'pron-to mui βjen lo sa-βran las 'em-βrah ke mɛm-βi-ðja-'ran
Soon very well they'll know the women who will envy me

Y cada macho a mis pies como un ratón en mi trampa ha de caer.
 i 'ka-ða ma-tʃo a mih pjes 'ko-mo un ra-'ton en mi 'tram-pa: ðe ka-'εr
And every man to my feet like a mouse in my trap will fall

Yo soy María de Buenos Aires
 ʃo soi ma-'ri-a ðe βwε-nos 'ai-res
I am María from Buenos Aires

Soy la mas bruja cantando y amando también.
 soi la mah βru-xa kan-tan-ðo i a-man-ðo tam-βjen
I am the most admired singing and loving as well

Si el bandoneón me provoca... ¡Tiará, ta ta!
 sʃel βan-do-ne 'on me pro-βo-ka tja-'ra ta ta
If the bandoneón tempts me... Tiará ta ta!

Le muerdo fuerte en la boca... ¡Tiará, ta ta!
 le 'mwɛr-ðo 'fwɛr-tɛ:n la βo-ka tja-'ra ta ta
I bite it hard in its mouth Tiará ta ta!

Con diez espasmos en flor que yo tengo en mi ser
 kon djɛs ɛh-pah-mos ɛn flor ke ʃo 'tɛŋ-go_ɛn mi sɛr
With ten flowering spasms that I have in my being

(I am best at singing and having sex. If the bandoneón with its tango tempts me, with my mouth I savor it, on the verge of ten orgasms.)

Siempre me digo “¡Dale María!”
 'sjɛm-prɛ me 'ði-ɣo ða-lɛ ma-'ri-a
I always tell myself “Let’s go María!”

Cuando un misterio me viene trepando en la voz!
 kwan-do_un miɥ-tɛ-rjo me βje-ne tre-'pan-do ɛn la βos
When a mystery comes to me creeping in my voice

Y canto un tango que nadie jamás cantó,
 i 'kan-to_un taŋ-go ke 'na-ðje xa-'mah kan-'to
And I sing a tango that no one has ever sung

Y sueño un sueño que nadie jamás soñó,
 i 'swɛ-ŋo_un 'swɛ-ŋo ke 'na-ðje xa-'mas so-'ŋo
And I dream a dream that no one has ever dreamt

Porque el mañana es hoy con el ayer después, che!
 por-ke_ɛl ma-'ɲa-na_ɛs oi kon el a-'ʃɛr ðɛh-'pwɛs tʃɛ
For the tomorrow is today with the yesterday then, Che!

(There is only today and right now, *Che!)

Yo soy María de Buenos Aires
 ʃo soi ma-'ri-a ðɛ βwɛ-nos 'ai-rɛs
I am María from Buenos Aires

De Buenos Aires María! Yo soy mi ciudad!
 ðɛ βwɛ-nos 'ai-rɛs ma-'ri-a ʃo soi mi sju-'ðað
From Buenos Aires María, I am my city!

María, tango, María del arrabal
 ma-'ri-a 'taŋ-go ma-'ri-a ðel a-ra-βal
María tango, María from the slums

María noche, María pasión fatal
 ma-'ri-a 'no-tʃɛ ma-'ri-a pa-'sjon fa-'tal
María night, María deadly passion

María del amor, de Buenos Aires soy yo!
 ma-'ri-a ðel a-'mor ðe βwɛ-nos 'ai-rɛs soi jo
María of love, from Buenos Aires I am!

***Che is an Argentinian expression to call someone's attention mainly like "mate" or "buddy," but can also be used as a filler word like "right" or "so."**

MILONGA CARRIEGUERA
(Milonga of a warning for María)

PORTEÑO GORRIÓN CON SUEÑO
(Buenos Aires sleepy sparrow)

En los ojos de mi niña, contra compás de otros llantos,
 en los 'o-xos ðe mi 'ni-ɲa 'kon-tra kom-'pas ðɛ_ 'o-troh 'ʃan-tos
In the eyes of my girl offbeat to other cries

Anda una oscura nostalgia de cosas que aún no han pasado.
 'an-da_ 'u-na_ os-'ku-ra noh-'tal-xja ðe 'ko-sas ke_ a-'un no_ an pa-'sa-ðo
Goes a dark nostalgia of things that have not yet happened

La calle le echó los naipes de odiar recontramarcados.
 la ka-'fɛ lɛ:-'tʃo loh 'nai-pɛs ðɛ_ o-'ðjar rɛ-kon-tra-'mar-ka-ðos
The street dealt her cards of hate which were marked

La madre; hilaba perezas y el padre; arriaba fracasos
 la ma-ðrɛ_ i-'la-βa pɛ-'rɛ-sas i_ el pa-ðrɛ_ a-'tja-βa fra-ka-sos
The mother wove laziness and the father carried failures

(In the eyes of my girl, there is a dark sadness in her cries. The street dealt her marked cards of hate. Her mother and her father were absent in her upbringing.)

La vieja tristonjería del Blues de los lunfardarios,
 la βjɛ-xa trih-ton-ɟɛ-'ri-a ðel βlus ðe loh lum-far-'ða-rjos
The old blues bar of the criminals

Da un qué sé yo a mi María y otro al lomo de su gato.

ða_uŋ ke se fo_a mi ma-'ri-a_i_ 'o-tro_al 'lo-mo ðe su 'ga-to

Gives a what do I know to my María and something else to the back of her cat

(That old dicey blues bar frequented by *criminals, gave María and her sharp **switch blade that *je ne sais quoi*.)

Zaina la voz, la cadera, la crencha, y los pechos zainos,

'sai-na la βos la ka-ðe-ra la 'kren-tʃa_i loh 'pe-tʃos 'sai-nos

Fake is her voice, her hips, her parted hair, and her fake breasts

Le van de furca en la espalda las ganas de veinte machos.

le βan de 'fur-ka_en la_ɛh-'pal-ða lah 'ga-nah ðe βein-te 'ma-tʃos

She is assaulted and pinned from behind (by) the cravings of twenty men

De renоче quando llueve siempre igual siempre en su patio

ðe rɛ-'no-tʃɛ kwan-do 'ʃwɛ-βɛ 'sjɛm-prɛ_i-'ɣwal 'sjɛm-prɛ:n su 'pa-tjo

Late at night when it rains always the same always in her backyard

Le cuentan tangos de hadas, las bocas del subterráneo.

le 'kwɛn-tan 'taŋ-goh ðɛ_ 'a-ðas lah 'βo-kas ðɛl suβ-tɛ-'ra-nɛo

They tell her tango fairy tales the mouths from the underground

Setenta veces los siete vientos del sur, la han alzado;

se-'tɛn-ta βɛ-sɛs los 'sjɛ-tɛ 'βjɛn-tos ðɛl sur la:n al-'sa-ðo

Seventy times seven winds from the south have lifted her

Sólo a mi voz ella entorna su piel su rosa y sus años

'so-lo_a mi βos 'ɛ-ʃa_ɛn-'tor-na su pjeɫ su 'ro-sa_i sus 'a-ɲos

Only to my voice she returns her skin her rose and her years

(It rains sadness on her every night, as voices from the underworld regale her with tango fairy tales alluring her into the city with promises of good fortune. †Seventy times seven, ††southern winds have forgiven her. Only to the sound of my voice, she becomes herself again.)

MARÍA

Porteño Gorrión con Sueño, vos nunca me alcanzarás.

por-'tɛno go-'rjon kon 'swɛ-ɲo βos 'nuŋ-ka mɛ_al-kan-sa-'ras

Buenos Aires sparrow with sleepiness you will never reach me

Soy rosa de un, “no te quiero.” Ya nunca me alcanzarás

soi ro-sa ðɛ_un no tɛ 'kje-ro ʃa 'nuŋ-ka mɛ_al-kan-sa-'ras

I am a rose of an “I don’t love you” you will never reach me

PORTEÑO GORRIÓN CON SUEÑO

Mi voz en todas las voces para siempre sentirás
 mi βos en 'to-ðas lah 'βo-ses 'pa-ra 'sjem-pre sen-ti-'ras
My voice among all voices you will forever hear

(Sleepy Buenos Aires Sparrow, you will never reach me for I no longer love you.)

PORTEÑO GORRIÓN CON SUEÑO

Te irás de noche María de este cantón porteñado,
 te_i-'ras ðe 'no-tʃe ma-'ri-a ðe:h-te kan-'ton por-te-'ña-to
You will leave tonight María from this Buenos Aires home

Con la trenza destrenzada y el sueño desabrochado.
 kon la 'tren-sa ðeh-tren-'sa-ða_i_el 'swe-ɲo ðe-sa-βro-'tʃa-ðo
With your unbraided braids and your dream undone

Y los pardos camioneros que estivan bronca al mercado
 i loh 'par-ðos ka-mjo-'ne-ros ke:h-ti-βan 'βron-ka:l mer-'ka-ðo
And the rough truck drivers that flaunt their anger at the market

Te harán un ramo de grelos y un coro de navajazos
 te_a-'ran un 'ra-mo ðe 'gre-los i_uɲ 'ko-ro ðe na-βa-'xa-sos
They will make you a bouquet of men, and a choir of knife wounds

(You will leave Buenos Aires María disheveled and with a twisted dream. Truck drivers and drunks will take out their anger on you with sex and violence.)

Mas allá, en los masalláses nocheteros y enwhiskados,
 mas a-'fa en los mas-a-'fa-ses no-tʃe-'te-ros i_en-wis-'ka-ðos
There beyond in the far beyond night owls and drunkards

Dos hippies de barba zurda la insultarán con milagros.
 ðos 'çi-pis ðe 'βar-βa 'sur-ða la_in-sul-ta-'ran kon mi-'la-ɣros
Two hippies of beard leftists will insult her with a miracle

(Out there in the world, drunks, in the night, and unsheltered people will humiliate her.)

Las rubias madragoneras de un zodiaco mulato,
 lah ru-βjas man-dra-ɣo-'ne-ras ðe un so-ðja-ko mu-'la-to
The blonde mandrakes of a zodiac mixed

Le harán trece mordeduras en las líneas de la mano
 le_a-ran 'tre-se mor-ðe-ðu-ras en las 'li-neas ðe la 'ma-no
Will give her thirteen bites in the lines of the hand

(§ The yellow mandrakes from a dark mystical world will pierce the lines in her palms.)

Y su beso que era un poco de azafrán y de desgano
 i su 'βε-so kε:-ra_um 'po-ko ðe_a-sa-'fran i ðe ðes-'γα-no
And her kiss that was a little of saffron and apathy

Se sabrá a nueve columnas como si fuera un atraco
 se sa-βra: 'nwε-βε ko-lum-nas ko-mo si 'fwe-ra_un a-tra-ko
It will be known to nine columns as if it were a stick up

Setenta veces los siete asombros le habrán robado,
 se-'ten-ta βε-ses los 'sjε-te_a-'som-βros le_a-βran ro-βa-ðo
Seventy times seven her wonder they will steal,

Le quedarán tres: el mío y los ojos de su gato.
 le kε-ða-ran tres el 'mi-o_i los 'o-xos ðe su 'ga-to
There will be three left: mine and her cat's eyes

(And her saffron kiss will be meaningless and will be as known by everyone like a stickup is known on the front page of the news paper. Seventy times seven they will steal her sense of wonder, and her humanity. She will have three memories left, me and the §§eyes of her cat.)

***Gato** is typically translated as “cat,” but can also be used to refer to a thief, a prostitute, or someone who partakes in illicit activities.

****Lomo** is regularly translated as “back,” but can also be used to refer to a sharp switch blade in lunfardo.

†Seventy times seven refers to the times Jesus says you should forgive others.

††Southern winds represent revival, peace, calmness, and a spiritual path to emotional healing.

§Mandrakes are in the same family as nightshade and are also poisonous. However, in medieval times they were also believed to be good luck charms and were meant to bring wealth and power to control one's destiny. An interpretation in this context could be a charm that brings some good fortune for most but is poisonous for María. This could also be a Biblical reference. In the Bible, mandrakes are mentioned in the story of Rachel and Leah. Rachel, who was struggling with infertility, sought the mandrakes that Leah's son Reuben had found in the hope of finding a remedy. This occurrence is intertwined with the complex relationship dynamics between Jacob, Rachel, and Leah. When Rachel approached Leah for the mandrakes, Leah's response reflected the underlying tensions, as

she expressed, “You have taken my husband, and now you seek my son’s mandrakes as well?”

§§Cat’s eyes can be representative of a talisman that wards off evil.

POEMA VALSEADO
(Waltzed Poem)

MARÍA

Un bandoneón que mi tristeza tiene escrita,
um βan-do-ne 'on ke mi trih- te-sa tje-ne:h-kri-ta
A bandoneón that in my sadness has written

Hoy dos temblores me ha mezclado en la garganta
oi ðoh tem-βlo-rɛs me_a meh-kla-ðo_en la gar-γan-ta
Today two tremors it has mixed in my throat

Con gusto a sur, me dió el temblor de Milonguita,
kon 'guh-to_a sur me ðjo_el tem-βlor ðe mi-lon-'gi-ta
With taste of the south it gave me a tremor of *milonga*

Y otro peor que sabe a Norte y nadie canta!
i_ 'o-tro pe-or ke 'sa-βε_a 'nor-te_i 'na-ðje kan-ta
And another worse that tastes of North and no one sings

**(A bandoneón which has kept a record of my sadness, has infused two spasms in my throat.
With a taste of the South, it gave me a spasm to make me dance at the *milongas*, and the
other is worse, tastes of the North and no one sings it!)**

Del bandoneón, que huele a sombra de macroses,
ðel βan-do-ne 'on ke 'we-le_a 'som-βra ðe ma-kro-sɛs
From the bandoneón it smells a shadow of pimps

Oigo el arcángel de la prostibulería,
'oi-γo_el ar-kaŋ-xel ðe la proh-ti-βu-le-'ri-a
I hear the archangel of the brothel

Frasear su acorde canallesco en siete voces
fra-se-'ar su_a-kor-ðe ka-na-'fɛh-ko_en 'sje-te βo-sɛs
Phrase his chord rotten in seven voices

Y son siempre la mía.
i son 'sjem-prɛ la 'mi-a
Which are always mine

(As the haunting melody of the *bandoneón* fills the air, the scent of pimps' shadows lingers, and amidst the darkness I perceive the presence of an archangel in the midst of a brothel - even archangels are corruptible in the streets of Buenos Aires. The *bandoneón* weaves a dissonant chord giving voice to seven unseen echoes that all resonate within me.)

Si hasta el abrazo de morir me siento en celo,
 si_ 'ah-ta_ el a-βra-so ðe mo-'rir me 'sjen-to_ en 'se-lo
If even at the embrace of death I feel in heat

Y me lo arranco un poco en cada gatería,
 i me lo_ a-'rañ-ko_ um 'po-ko_ eη ka-ða ga-te-'ri-a
And I rip away from it a bit in each cunning (act)

Que duelo habrá que ya no alcance a ser mi duelo!
 ke 'ðwe-lo_ a-βra ke ja no_ al-'kan-se_ a ser mi 'ðwe-lo
What pain will be that won't reach to be my pain

Que parda trampa que no pueda ser ya mía!
 ke 'par-ða 'tram-pa ke no 'pwe-ða ser ja 'mi-a
What a dark ploy that cannot yet be mine!

(Even as I teeter on death's threshold, I sense the allure of seduction, yet I deftly break free from its grasp. What pain could possibly remain unfamiliar to me? What scheme could be plotted against me that I haven't already confronted?)

Y seré un resto de ceniza entanguencida;
 i se-'re_ un 'reh-to ðe se-'ni-sa_ en-taη-geη-'si-ða
I will be the rest of ashes of tango

Y el medio amor, desde el final, me hará su guiño,
 i_ el me-ðjo_ a-'mor 'ðeh-ðe:l fi-'nal me_ a-'ra su 'gi-ño
And the half of love, from the end will give me a wink

Y aún arderé por dos monedas, otra vida,
 i_ a-'un ar-ðe-'re por ðoh mo-'ne-ðas 'o-tra 'βi-ða
And yet I will burn for two coins, another life

Sobre un lunático repliegue del corpiño.
 'so-βre_ un lu-'na-ti-ko re-'plje-ye ðel kor-'pi-ño
Over a crazed fold of my bra

(I will linger as a trace of tango amidst ashes, and in my final moments, cheap love will mockingly glance my way, and yet I will continue to burn for two cents in the afterlife, as someone recklessly unclasps my brassiere.)

Seré más triste más descarte, mas robada
 se-'re mah 'trih-te mah ðeh-'kar-te mah ro-'βa-ða
I will be sadder, more discarded, more stolen

Que el tango atroz que nadie ha sido todavía
 kɛ:l 'taŋ-go_a-'tros kɛ 'na-ðjɛ_a 'si-ðo to-ða-βi-a
Than the tango horrible that no one has been yet

Y Dios daré, muerta de trote hacia la nada,
 i ðjoh ða-'re 'mwɛr-ta ðɛ 'tro-te_a-sja la 'na-ða
And God I will give, dead from running towards nothingness

El espasmódico temblor de cien Marías...
 el eh-pah-'mo-ði-ko tɛm-'βlor ðɛ sjen ma-'ri-as
The trembling spasms of a hundred Marías

(I will be a sadder, more exploited, and a more forsaken soul than the desolate tango that nobody desires. Yet drained and lifeless from chasing after emptiness, I will offer God the trembling strength of a hundred Marías.)

Un nuevo viento de la rosa de los vientos
 un 'nwɛ-βo βjen-to ðɛ la 'ro-sa ðɛ loh 'βjen-tos
A new wind from the rose of the winds

Remueve el son de un bandoneón en mi retiro.
 re-'mwɛ-βɛ el son ðɛ_un βan-do-nɛ 'on ɛn mi rɛ-'ti-ro
Removes the song of a bandoneón at my retreat

Y el bandoneón tiene una bala en el aliento
 i_el βan-do-nɛ 'on 'tjɛ-nɛ_u-na βa-la_ɛn el a-'ljɛn-to
And the bandoneón has a bullet in its breath

Para gritar mi muerte al son de un solo tiro...
 'pa-ra gri-'tar mi 'mwɛr-te al son de_un 'so-lo 'ti-ro
To scream my death at the sound of a single shot

(As I depart a new wind from a compass rose sweeps away the haunting song of the tango, and the bandoneón holds a bullet in its breath, destined to seal my fate with the echo of a solitary shot.)

TOCATA REA

Goteaban un absorto prestigio de glicinas las llagas de tu fuelle.
 go-'tɛa-βan un aβ-'sor-to prɛh-'ti-xjo ðɛ γli-'si-nas lah 'fa-γah ðɛ tu 'fwɛ-ʃɛ
Dripped an absorbed admiration of wisteria the wounds of your bellows

Y el eco de un Rosario tanguedo eran tus plieges,
 i_ɛl 'e-ko ðɛ_un ro-'sa-rjo taŋ-'gɛa-ðo_ 'ɛ-ran tuh 'plje-γɛs
And the echoes of a rosary (of) tango were your bends

Cinchando en la barcina ternura de un milagro...
 sin-tʃan-do_ɛn la βar-'si-na tɛr-'nu-ra ðɛ_un mi-'la-γro
Straining in the heavy/grey tenderness of a miracle

Qué estafa esas espinas que un día nos vendiste gimiendo en el calvario!
 kɛ:h-'ta-fa_ 'ɛ-sas ɛh-'pi-nas kɛ_un 'di-a noh βɛn-'dih-tɛ xi-'mjɛn-do_ɛn ɛl kal-'βa-rjo
What a scam those thorns that one day you sold us moaning at the calvary

(A mesmerizing and intoxicating fixation of *wisterias oozed from your bellows, as you in your bending, coaxed out the melodies of a tangled rosary, weaving through the weighty tenderness of a somber miracle. What a deceit those thorns were, sold to us with mournful strains echoing from the Calvary.)

Yo sé que entre tus voces, secreto y arbitrario te chaira las lengüetas el diablo
 jo sɛ 'kɛ:n-tre tuh βo-'sɛs sɛ-'krɛ-to_ i_ar-'βi-'tra-rjo tɛ 'ʃai-ra lah lɛŋ-'gwɛ-tas ɛl 'dja-βlo
I know that among your voices, secret and arbitrary sharpens your tongues the devil

Y que tus sonos son gritos afanados del óleo perdulario
 i kɛ tus 'so-nes soŋ 'gri-tos a-fa-'na-ðoh ðɛl 'o-leo pɛr-'ðu-' la-rjo
And that your songs are screams anxious of the oil shameless

Que un Goya cajonesco pintó contra un sudario,
 kɛ_un 'go-ʃa ka-xo-'neh-ko pin-'to 'kon-tra_un su-'ða-rjo
That a Goya in a coffin painted against a shroud

Con lágrimas de Judas, de horteras y cabrones.
 kon 'la-γri-mah- ðɛ 'xu-das ðɛ_or-'tɛ-ras i ka-'βro-nes
With tears of Judas, of vulgarities and pimps.

(I know that in your voice, the devil covertly sharpens tongues with arbitrary malice, while your melodies resemble the restless wailing of Judas and the sordidness of pimps immortalized with forlorn oils on a shroud by the soul of a departed Goya.)

Yo he visto a tu patota de sardos bandoneones batir las negras alas
 jo_ɛ βih-to_a tu pa-'to-ta ðɛ 'sar-ðoh βan-do-ne 'o-nes βa-'tir lah 'ne-γras 'a-las
I have seen your gang of watchful bandoneons beat the black wings

Y arder las botoneras a punto de Macumba.
 i_ar-ðɛr lah βo-'to-'ne-ras a 'pun-to ðɛ ma-'kum-βa
And scorch their button panels at the point of a Macumba

Y allá en los trascartones del mal, sangrar del turbio marfil de los botones,
 i_a-ʃa en loh trah-kar-'to-nēs ðel mal saŋ-'grar ðel 'tur-βjo mar-'fil ðe loh βo-'to-nēs
And there in the immediacy of evil, bled the opaque ivory of the buttons

La voz de la pequeña con todo el beso afuera.
 la βoh- ðe la pε-kε-ɲa kon 'to-ðo_el βe-so_a-fwε-ra
The voice of the girl with all of her kiss exposed

(I've witnessed your troupe of vigilant bandoneóns unfurl their bellows and ignite their button panels in mesmerizing ritual; and there, in the midst of malevolence, the opaque ivory of their buttons bled, revealing the exposed imprint of the girl's enduring kiss.)

¿A dónde la enterraste? ¡Me cache!
 a 'ðon-de la_en-te-'rah-te me 'ka-tʃε
Where did you burry her? Damn me!

Si ella era el poco de misterio que un Dios atribulado,
 si_ε-ʃa_ε-ra_el 'po-ko ðe mih-'te-rjo ke_un djos a-tri-βu-'la-ðo
If she was a bit of the mystery of a God troubled

Un pobre Dios porteño que amaba a su manera,
 um 'po-βre ðjoh por-'te-ɲo ke a-'ma-βa: su ma-'ne-ra
A poor God *porteño* that loved in his own way

Nos dió, para que siempre -por dentro-
 noh ðjo 'pa-ra ke 'sjem-pre por ðen-tro
Gave us, so that forever on the inside

Nos siguiera golpeando una pregunta, ¡que vos nos has matado!
 noh si-'ɣje-ra gol-'pean-do_u-na pre-'ɣun-ta ke βos nos ah ma-'ta-ðo
To us kept hitting a question, that you have killed us!

(Where did you bury her? By God! She was just but a fragment of the enigma of a tormented God, a destitute God of Buenos Aires who loved us in his own peculiar way, leaving us forever haunted by the question - why have you killed us?)

Ahora que en la hora, de atrape y profecía
 a_o-ra ke:n la_ora ðe_a-tra-pe_i pro-fe-'si-a
Now in the hour, of entrapment and prophecy

Te harán los sordos dedos de un ángel retobado
 te_a-ran los 'sor-ðoh 'ðe-ðos ðe_un 'aŋ-xel re-to-βa-ðo
Will give you the deaf fingers of an angel angry

Un solo a dos puñales por cada fechoría,
 un 'so-lo_a ðoh pu-ɲa-lɛs por 'ka-ða fɛ-tʃo-'ri-a
A solo on two daggers for each misdeed

Un solo de Iscariote, con swing de antifonía canera,
 un 'so-lo ðɛ_ɪh-ka-rjo-tɛ kon swiŋ ðɛ_an-ti-fo-ni-a ka-'nɛ-ra
A solo of Iscariot, with a swing of antiphony bad living

Hasta que escupas, de a dos, los dos teclados!
 'ah-ta kɛ:h-ku-pas ðɛ_a ðos loh ðoh tɛ-kla-ðos
Until you spit out in twos the two keyboard keys

Entonces con un verso de dientes apretados,
 ɛn-'ton-sɛs kon un βɛr-so ðɛ_ðjɛn-tɛs a-prɛ-'ta-ðos
Then with a verse of teeth clenched

Un verso en punta de hacha, con sed, total, prohibido,
 um βɛr-so_ɛm 'pun-ta ðɛ_a-'tʃa kon sɛð to-'tal pro-i-'βi-ðo
A verse of a pickaxe, thirsty, total, prohibited

Te voy a hacer un tajo triunfal, de lado a lado,
 tɛ βoi_a-'sɛr un 'ta-xo tri-um-'fal ðɛ 'la-ðo_a 'la-ðo
I will give you a cut triumphant from side to side

Para que mueras triste, gritando de parado
 'pa-ra kɛ 'mwɛ-rah 'trɪh-tɛ ɣri-'tan-ðo ðɛ pa-'ra-ðo
So you will die sad, screaming on your feet

En una como náusea de tangos, lo perdido.
 ɛn_ 'u-na 'ko-mo 'nau-sɛa ðɛ 'taŋ-gos lo pɛr-'ði-ðo
In a sort of nausea of tangos, what's lost.

(Now that is the prophesied hour of your entrapment, where the deaf fingers of an angered angel orchestrate a haunting solo with two daggers for each of your misdeeds. A melodic lament of Iscariot shall resonate, entwined with a chorus of wretched antiphony, until you unleash a torrent of keystrokes from your trembling mouth. Then through gritted teeth, I shall utter a verse forbidden, thirsty, and sharp, cutting you open from side to side, leaving you to die with sorrowful screams, ensnared in a nauseating tango of despair, witnessing all that we have lost.)

This whole number is directed at the bandoneón.

***Wisterias often symbolize love, but can often symbolize an intense and obsessive kind of love.**

MISERERE CANYENGUE
(Miserere of a Tango Dance)

LADRON ANTIGUO MAYOR
 (Chief Ancient Thief)

Hoy que a los poetas y a las pugas y a las locas
 oi ke_a loh po-'e-tas i_a lah 'puŋ-gas i_a lah 'lo-kas
Today that to the poets, the thieves and the prostitutes

Les saldrá, otra vez, un cuervo blanco por la boca.
 les sal-ðra_ 'o-tra βes uŋ 'kwɛr-βo βlaŋ-ko por la βo-ka
from them will come out once again a white raven from the mouth

Hoy que por el dos profundo y fijo de los dados
 oi ke por el ðos pro-fun-do_i 'fi-xo ðɛ loh 'ða-ðos
today that through the two deep and fixed of the dice

Miran de otro mundo, dos ojitos alunados.
 'mi-ran de_ 'o-tro 'mun-do ðos o-'xi-tos a-lu-'na-ðos
look from the other world two eyes angry

Hoy que irá a buscar su par por bares espantosos,
 oi ke_i-ra βuh-kar su par por βa-res eh-pan-'to-sos
Today that will go search for its pair to the bars horrendous

La sangrada pierna de neón de un luminoso.
 la saŋ-'gra-ða 'pjer-na ðɛ ne-'on de_un lu-mi-'no-so
the bloody leg of neon of a neon sign

Hoy que en la aburrida tangazón de algun cortado,
 oi ke_en la_a-βu-'ri-ða taŋ-ga-'son de_al-γuŋ kor-ta-ðo
Today that in the boring tango bar of some person with no money

Un arlequín, que vió la punta del piolín,
 un ar-le-kin ke βjo la 'pun-ta ðel pjo-lin
A harlequin that saw the the end of a rope

Se hundió abrazado de un terrón.
 se_un-ðjo_a-βra-'sa-ðo ðɛ_un tɛ-'ron
Drowned while hugging the dirt

(Today though the mouths of poets, thieves, and prostitutes, a white raven will soar from their mouths like an ill omen. Today through the unyielding gaze of the dice, two furious eyes will peer at us from a distant realm. Today a neon sign of a bloody leg will be found at

a grimy brothel. Today, in the mundane tango bar of a destitute, a harlequin will sink into the abyss, gazing at the end of the rope.)

VOCES DE MADAMAS

(Voices of the Madams)

Con restos de antiguos crespones en llamas
 kon 'rɛh-tos ðɛ an-ti-ɣwoh kɾɛh-po-nɛs ɛn 'ʃa-mas
With remnants of ancient crepe trees in flames

Pondremos candiles las viejas madamas.
 pon-dre-moh kan-di-lɛs lah βjɛ-xah ma-ða-mas
We will put lanterns the old brothel madams.

VOCES DE LADRONES ANTIGUOS

(Voices of the Ancient Thieves)

Atávicos signos de supersticiones
 a-ta-βi-kos 'sig-noh ðɛ su-pɛrs-ti-'sjo-nɛs
Atavistic signs of superstitions

Tendrán nuestras uñas de antiguos ladrones.
 ten-dran 'nweh-tras 'u-ɲas ðɛ an-ti-ɣwoh la-ðro-nɛs
Will have our nails of ancient thieves.

VOCES DE MADAMAS

Las viejas madamas, abriendo los lechos,
 lah βjɛ-xas ma-ða-mas a-βɾjɛn-do loh 'lɛ-tʃos
The ancient madams, opening our old beds

Tendremos la hoja de té entre los pechos.
 ten-dre-moh la 'o-xa ðɛ tɛ:n-tre loh 'pɛ-tʃos
Will have the tea leaf on our breast.

VOCES DE LADRONES ANTIGUOS

Con un antifaz de charol en la jeta
 kon un an-ti-fas ðɛ tʃa-rol ɛn la 'xɛ-ta
With a mask of leather on the face

Daremos maitines con dos palanquetas.
 ða-rɛ-mos mai-ti-nɛh kon doh pa-laɲ-kɛ-tas
We'll pray matins with two crowbars

VOCES DE MADAMAS Y DE LADRONES

Que hoy viene la Niña y estarán en flor
 ke_oi βje-ne la 'ni-na_i_εh-ta-ran en flor
That today comes the little girl and will be in bloom

La yeta y el vino y un re muy menor.
 la 'je-ta_i_εl βi-no_i un re mui me-nor
The misfortune, the wine and a D minor.

(We will illuminate the lanterns in our brothels with the burning remnants of ancient crepe trees. Demonic superstitions will be evident in the fingernails of demons. The seasoned madams and their filthy beds are open for business, sharing fortunes hidden deep in between their breasts. Thieves wear leather masks and silently pray while clutching crowbars behind their backs. Today the child will arrive at the bloom of misfortune and wine and to the sound of D minor.)

LADRON ANTIGUO MAYOR

Porque estaba escrito con sal en los muros
 por-ke:h-ta-βa_εh-kri-to kon sal en loh 'mu-ros
Because it was written with salt on the walls

De esta catacumba porteñesca y sola
 ð:εh-ta ka-ta-kum-βa por-te-ñeh-ka_i 'so-la
of this catacomb in Buenos Aires and alone

Y abrimos el grito de siete bandolas
 i_a-βri-mos εl 'gri-to ðε 'sje-te βan-ðo-las
we opened the scream of seven bandoneons

Un séptimo sello lunfardo y maduro.
 un 'sep-ti-mo 'se-fo lum-far-ðo_i ma-ðu-ro
a seventh seal of lunfardo and reflexive

Porque estaba escrito con tango, este día,
 por-ke_εh-ta-βa εh-kri-to kon 'taŋ-go_εh-te 'ði-a
because it was written with tango on that day

Y afuera hay olvido y es Martes y es trece,
 i_a-fwe-ra_ai_ol-βi-ðo_i_εh 'mar-tes i_εh 'tre-se
And outside there is oblivion and it is Tuesday the thirteenth.

Dará un negro gallo de sangre tres veces,
 ða-ra_un 'ne-γro 'ga-fo ðε 'saŋ-grε treh βε-ses
It will give a black rooster of blood three times

La pascua canyengue que anuncia a María
 la 'pah-kwa kan-ʃeŋ-ge ke_a-nun-sja: ma-ri-a
The Easter in the suburbs that announces María

(In the depths of this solitary catacomb in Buenos Aires, a seventh seal is inscribed in the cryptic language of reflexive *lunfardo*, etched with salt onto the walls. Here our screams resonate louder than the sorrowful melody of seven bandoneons echoing the anguish and secrets buried within the city's soul. On that day it was written like a prophecy; woven into the very fabric of tango. The world outside succumbs to oblivion and it remains Tuesday the thirteenth. In the forgotten corners of the ghettos, a bloodied black rooster will crow thrice, heralding the imminent arrival of the child María.)

VOCES DE MADAMAS

Ya viene la Niña buscando el *mulato camino
 ʃa βje-ne la 'ni-ŋa βuh-kan-do_εl mu-la-to ka-mi-no
Here comes the girl looking for the mulatto way

Del abismo, montada en su **gato.
 ðεl a-βih-mo mon-ta-ða_en su 'ga-to
To the abyss, on top of her cat.

(The girl ventures forth in search of her path to the abyss, walking hand in hand with her nocturnal ally)

LADRON ANTIGUO MAYOR

Son reas candelas de luz en cuclillas
 son 're-as kan-de-las ðε lus εŋ ku-kli-ʃas
They are prostitutes of a light that's bent

Sus ojos que alumbran, corriendo las losas,
 sus 'o-xos ke_a-lum-βran ko-rjen-do lah 'lo-sas
her eyes that light up running to the stones

Pequeñas auroras polares de cosas,
 pe-ke-ŋas au-ro-ras po-la-res ðε ko-sas
small auroras spherical of things

Muy viejas que habitan las alcantarillas.
 mui βje-xas ke_a-βi-tan las al-kan-ta-ri-ʃas
very old which live in the gutters

Le queman las noches detrás de la frente,
 le ke-man lah 'no-tʃes ðε-traħ ðε la 'fren-te
they burn her nights behind her forehead

Como húmedas monjas de polvo que zurcen,
 ko-mo_ 'u-mε-ðas 'moŋ-xas ðε 'pol-βo ke 'sur-sen
like damp nuns of dust that are remedied

Rezando morbosas milongas sus dulces,
 re-'san-ðo mor-βo-sah mi-'loŋ-gas sus ðul-sεs
praying sick *milongas* their sweet

Calladas y extrañas ojeras calientes.
 ka-'fa-ðas i_εks-tra-ŋas o-'xe-ras ka-'ljen-tes
quiet and strange hot bags under their eyes

(†They trade their bodies in the twilight’s embrace, their eyes alight at the sight of spherical stones resembling miniature auroras, akin to ancient beings dwelling in the shadows. Within her dreams, thoughts smolder like embers, like dust-clad nuns seeking solace with wet cloths. In their affliction they whisper tender, tranquil tangos, bearing the weight of weariness beneath their gaze, like prayers ascending from the depths of their souls.)

VOCES DE LADRONES ANTIGUOS

La Niña ha llegado. La Niña cayó:
 la 'ni-ŋa_a_ʃε-'ya-ðo la 'ni-ŋa ka-'fo
The girl has arrived the girl has fallen

Daremos un cántico en clave de no!
 ða-'rε-mos uŋ kan-ti-ko_εŋ kla-βε ðε no
we will sing a canticle in the key of no

(The girl has arrived! The girl descends into the abyss, her descent marked by a mournful canticle in the key of “No!” as a chilling welcome.)

LADRON ANTIGUO MAYOR

Desde hoy para siempre condeno a tu sombra:
 ðεh-ðε_oi pa-ra 'sjem-prε kon-'dε-no_a tu 'som-βra
From today and forever I will condemn your shadow

Que en pena robada a la mano de Dios,
 ke:m 'pe-na ro-βa-ða: la 'ma-no ðε ðjos
that in sorrow stolen from the hand of God

Regrese al asfalto dramática y sola,
 re-'γre-se_al ah-'fal-to ðra-'ma-ti-ka_i 'so-la
you return to the ground dramatic and alone

Y arrastre tus culpas bien hembra y bien sombra,
 i_a-rah-tre tus kul-pas βjen 'em-βra_i βjen 'som-βra
dragging your blame a good woman a good shadow

Sangrada por siete navajas de sol.
 saŋ-ɣra-ða por 'sje-te na-βa-xas ðe sol
bleeding by seven knives of the sun

(Henceforth I denounce the shadow of your stolen sorrow, severed from the grasp of God. Alone and desolate, you shall retreat to the earth, burdened by the weight of your sin. You will be a bloody shadow bearing the scars of seven sunlit wounds.)

VOCES DE MADAMAS

María torcaza, María en el buche,
 ma-ri-a tor-ka-sa ma-ri-a_en el 'βu-tʃe
María dove María in your gut

Te harán los martirios su sórdido escruche.
 te_a-ran loh mar-ti-rjos su 'sor-ði-ðo_ɛh-kru-tʃe
you'll have suffering by a miserable stabbing

VOCES DE LADRONES ANTIGUOS

María de un peso, María que risa!
 ma-ri-a ðe_um 'pe-so ma-ri-a ke ri-sa
María worth a coin, María what a joke

Te trincan los muslos dos manos de tiza.
 te triŋ-kan loh 'muh-los ðoh 'ma-noh ðe 'ti-sa
they grip your thighs two hands of chalk

VOCES DE MADAMAS

María de un whisky, María en las rocas,
 ma-ri-a ðe_un 'wih-ki ma-ri-a_en lah 'ro-kas
María of whisky María on the rocks

Que gusto - a la vuelta - tendrás en la boca!
 ke 'guh-to_a la 'βwel-ta ten-'dras en la 'βo-ka
what a delight in turn you will have in your mouth

VOCES DE LADRONES ANTIGUOS

María bufosa, María de Amén,
 ma-'ri-a βu-'fo-sa ma-'ri-a ðε_a-'men
María pistol María of an amen

Y un punto escarlata tendrás en la sien.
 i_um 'pun-to_εh-kar-'la-ta ten-'dras en la sjen
a point of Scarlet you will have on your temples

(María of purity, you are burdened with the agony of a wretched wound in your gut. María worth a coin, María you are a joke! Violent imprints left on your blemished thighs. A whiskey on the rocks will be the only fleeting solace for your tormented soul. María of danger and supplication, you are forever destined to bear a scarlet letter upon your brow.)

LADRON ANTIGUO MAYOR

Allá va la sombra de María a su otro infierno.
 a-'fa βa la 'som-βra ðε ma-'ri-a: su-'o-tro_in-'fjεr-no
There goes the shadow of María to her other hell

Solo queda aquí la vaina rosa de su cuerpo:
 'so-lo 'ke-ða_a-'ki la βai-na 'ro-sa ðε su 'kwεr-po
only remaining here is the joke pink of her body

Tiene todo el mal del mundo en flor, cabal y abierto
 'tjε-ne to-'ðo_εl mal ðel 'mun-do_εn flor ka-'βal i_a-'βjεr-to
she has all of the evil of the world in flower fair and open

Hasta el final y sin embargo el corazón
 'ah-ta_εl fi-'nal i sin εm-'βar-γo_εl ko-ra-'son
until the end and yet her heart

Se le ha negado a ser peor!
 se le_a nε-'γa-ðo_a ser pe-'or
it refuses to be worse

(There goes the shadow of María fading into her next hell. All that lingers is the cruel mockery of her delicate form. She carries the weight of the world's sin, like a blossoming flower amidst desolation, yet her heart defiantly resists embracing despair.)

VOCES DE MADAMAS Y DE LADRONES ANTIGUOS

Ladrón Antiguo Mayor: su corazón está muerto!
 la-ðron an-'ti-γwo ma-'for su ko-ra-'son εh-'ta 'mwεr-to
Thief ancient chief her heart is dead

*The term *mulato* is ambiguous in this context, and could be regarded as offensive by some, due to stemming from its association with the era of slavery in the Americas. It is a term describing a person of mixed race which was used predominantly as a term for a person who has African and European heritage.

***Gato* in *lunfardo* is used to refer to a person who partakes in illicit activities. The common translation is a nocturnal thief. In a text where I interpret the use of the word thief as a thief of souls or a demon like creature, this description could be used for some kind of a demonic guide, leading María through her path to hell.

†There is a deep sense of melancholy and resignation in this stanza, perhaps depicting a scene of María's struggle and hardship. The imagery of "spherical stones that look like small auroras" and "ancient things that live in the gutters" suggests a sense of beauty and wonder found in unexpected places amongst terrible circumstances.

CONTRAMILONGA A LA FUNERALA (Funeral Contramilonga)

María de Buenos Aires, murió por primera vez
ma-ri-a ðε βwε-nos 'ai-res mu-rjo por pri-me-ra βεs
María of Buenos Aires died for the first time

La enterraron, fue tarde,
la _en-te-ra-ron fwe 'tar-ðε
they buried her it was late

Con sus muecas funerales, un puñál y un cascabel.
kon suh 'mwe-kas fu-ne-ra-les um pu-ñal i _un kah-ka-βel
With her grimaces of funeral, a dagger, and a bell

Y el alba se atoró con sensación de embolia Rea,
i _el 'al-βa se _a-to-ro kon sen-sa-'sjon ðε _em-βo-lja 're-a
and the sunrise was stuck with a sensation of a stroke of prostitution

De cuando fue la niña, arriando el gesto,
ðε kwan-do fwe la 'ni-ña _a-rjan-do el 'xeh-to
of when the girl dragging her face

Rumbo a una calle con velones y magnolias
'rum-βo _a 'u-na- 'ka-ʃε kom βε-lo-nes i mag-'no-ljas
towards a street with candles and magnolias

Ya con las cosas de morir y el frío puestos.
ja kon lah 'ko-sah ðε mo-'rir i _el 'fri-o pwεh-tos
already with the things of dying and the cold rooms

(In the heart of Buenos Aires, María died for the first time. As the sun dipped below the horizon, they consigned her dagger and mournful grimace to their final rest, serenaded by the toll of a haunting bell. The sunrise hesitated, as if afflicted by a disoriented stroke, like the girl's haunting journey towards the candlelit avenues, where magnolias whispered secrets to the night. Clad in her funeral attire, she ventured into the chilling embrace of clandestine chambers in a forgotten brothel.)

Y en la esquina donde aún tejen
 i_en la eh-ki-na 'ðon-de_a-'un te-xen
And in the corner where they still sow

Las mamitas con esplín,
 lah ma-'mi-tas kon eh-'plin
the caressing women with melancholy

Dos malenas de relente,
 ðoh ma-'lɛ-nah ðɛ rɛ-'lɛn-tɛ
two Malenas of delay

Que habían muerto muchas veces,
 kɛ_a-βi-an 'mwɛ-rto 'mu-tʃah 'βɛ-sɛs
who have died many times

Le ensañaron a morir.
 lɛ:n-sɛ-'ɲa-ron a mo-'rir
and taught her how to die

(And in the shadowed clandestine alcoves, where the nocturnal women tenderly sow their melancholy, two tormented *Malenas, acquainted with the realms beyond, imparted to María the art of dying.)

Misterio allá, misereteando en la maroma
 mih-'tɛ-rjo_a-'ʃa mi-sɛ-rɛ-'tɛan-do_en la ma-'ro-ma
Mystery there begging in the pirouette

De un jingle obsceno en soledad de sacramento,
 ðɛ_un 'dʒiŋ-ɡlɛ_ɔβ-'sɛ-no_en so-le-'ðað ðɛ sa-kra-'mɛn-to
of a jingle obscene in the solitude of the sacrament

Fueron cinchando la cureña de palomas
 'fwɛ-ron sin-'tʃan-do la ku-'rɛ-ɲa ðɛ pa-'lo-mas
they were laboring the cannon of doves

Los doce Judas de un Cristito temulento.
 loh ʔo-se xu-ðah ðε_ʊŋ krih-'ti-to te-mu-'lɛn-to
the twelve Judases of a Christ drunk

(In the enigmatic theater of solitude, twelve somber Judases surrounded an inebriated Christ. Their begging was entwined with an acrobatic dance of profane jingles, toiling to ignite a cacophony of doves amid the divine and profane sacramental hush.)

Por las fábricas, las pibas
 por lah 'fa-βri-kas lah 'pi-βas
By the warehouses the girls

Que hacen la noche a telar,
 ke_ 'a-sɛn la 'no-tʃɛ_ a tɛ-'lar
That spend the night sewing

Le pusieron a María,
 le pu-'sje-ron a ma-'ri-a
Laid on María

Un malvón de poliamida
 un mal-βon de po-lja-'mi-ða
a geranium of polyamide

Y una orquídea de percal.
 i_ 'u-na_ or-'ki-ðea ðε pɛr-'kal
and an orchid of cheap cotton

Por el escote, le salía una neblina
 por el ɛh-'ko-tɛ le sa-'li-a_ 'u-na nɛ-'βli-na
From her cleavage rose a mist

Negra y atada con la cinta sucia y triste
 'ne-ɣra_ i_ a-'ta-ða kon la 'sin-ta 'su-sja_ i_ 'triɥ-tɛ
black and tied with a dirty and sad ribbon

Que un raro beatle destrenzaba, a la sordina,
 ke_ un 'ra-ro βi-tle ðɛh-tren-'sa-βa: la sor-'ði-na
that a strange beatle untied quietly

Del luto misterioso de sus twistes.
 ðɛl 'lu-to miɥ-tɛ-'rjo-so ðɛ suɥ 'twis-tɛs
With the mourning mysterious of its dances

(Amidst the hum of factories, under the moon's watchful gaze, the night working girls sewed and adorned María with a polyamide geranium and a cheap cotton orchid. From the

depths of her chest emerged a dusky mist, entwined by a somber ribbon, until a peculiar beetle, with its mournful dances, unraveled its mysteries.)

Se murió tanto la niña cuando se puso a morir
 se mu-ˈrjo ˈtan-to la ˈni-ɲa ˈkwan-do se ˈpu-so_a mo-ˈrir
She died so many times when she decided to die

Que era una trágica encinta
 ˈke:-ra_u-na ˈtra-xi-ka_en-ˈsin-ta
That it was a tragic pregnancy

Que llena de muertecitas, no cesaba de parir.
 ke ˈʃe-na ðe mweɾ-te-ˈsi-tas no se-sa-βa ðe pa-ˈrir
Who full of small deaths, she could not stop birthing

Que cosa! nuestra María murió por primera vez.
 ke ˈko-sa ˈnweh-tra ma-ˈri-a mu-ˈrjo por pri-ˈme-ra βes
What a thing our María died for the first time

La enterraron dos mendigas al doblar de las propinas
 la_en-te-ˈra-ron ðoh mən-ˈdi-ɣas al ðo-βlar ðe lah pro-ˈpi-nas
They buried her two beggars to the toll of tips

En la borra de un express
 en la ˈβo-ra ðe_un eks-ˈpres
And the uselessness of an espresso.

(The poor girl died countless times, always set on dying, burdened by a pregnancy teeming with untimely demises. Our poor María, her first death a cruel twist of fate. Two destitute women laid her to rest, their steps keeping time with the clinking of coins as the bitter taste of a useless espresso lingered in the air.)

Pero en su sola catamufa, zurdo antojo
 ˈpe-ro_en su ˈso-la ka-ta-ˈmu-fa ˈsur-ðo_an-ˈto-xo
But in her lonely deceptiveness, a left-handed craving

De un loco mimo sobrehumano,
 ðe_un ˈlo-ko ˈmi-mo so-βɾe-u-ˈma-no
of a crazed caress supernatural

A contrayumba de dos pequeñas explosiones de los ojos,
 a kon-tra-ˈʃum-βa ðe ðoh pe-ˈke-ɲas eks-plo-ˈsjo-neh ðe los ˈo-xos
Against the two small explosions of the eyes

Echó dos lágrimas de rimmel por la tumba.
 ε-ʔfo ðoh 'la-ɣri-mah ðe 'ri-mel por la 'tum-βa
She had two tears of mascara on her grave

María de Buenos Aires lloró por primera vez.
 ma-ri-a ðe βwe-nos 'ai-res ʃo-ro por pri-me-ra βes
María of Buenos Aires cried for the first time

(In the depths of her solitary guise, a clandestine craving of a supernatural caress stirred within against two explosions in her eyes as she wept mascara tears upon her own grave. María de Buenos Aires cried for the first time.)

***Malena is the name of a famous Argentinian tango. In this very familiar tango, Malena is a tortured soul, who sings with a broken voice to the painful sound of the *bandoneón*.**

CARTA A LOS ÁRBOLES Y LAS CHIMENEAS (Letter to the Trees and the Chimneys)

Buenos Aires, Abril de toda mi tristeza.
 βwe-nos 'ai-res a-βril ðe 'to-ða mi trih-te-sa
Buenos Aires April of all of my sadness

Queridos árboles, amadas chimeneas
 ke-ri-ðos 'ar-βo-les a-ma-ðah tʃi-me-ne-as
Dear trees and beloved chimneys

Que dan la sombra y dan la nube de mi barrio:
 ke ðan la 'som-βra_i ðan la 'nu-βe ðe mi βa-rjo
that give the shadow and the cloud to my neighborhood

Mi dolor ha inventado el dolor de otra cruz en la misma raíz;
 mi ðo-lor a_im-βen-ta-ðo_εl ðo-lor ðe_ 'o-tra krus en la 'mih-ma ra-is
My pain has invented the pain of another cross in the same root

(In Buenos Aires, April embodies all my sorrow. Beloved trees and cherished chimneys, bestowing clouds and shadows upon my neighborhood. My pain, rooted in its own cross has invented agony.)

Todo pasó como sabrán, que estoy de luto por mi propio recuerdo.
 'to-ðo pa-so 'ko-mo sa-βran ke_εh-toi ðe 'lu-to por mi 'pro-prjo re-kwer-ðo
Everything happened as you'll know - I am mourning my own memory

En tanto les escribo con la ternura al hombro
 en 'tan-to les εh-kri-βo kon la ter-nu-ra:l 'om-βro
About all of this I write with the tenderness shoulder

Y llena de esa sola mala palabra que no sé como se dice
 i'ʃe-na ðe:-sa 'so-la 'ma-la pa-'la-βra ke no se ko-mo se ði-se
and full of that lone word cursed that I don't know how to say

Sale, otra vez, el sol para apedrearme el miedo
 'sa-le_ 'o-tra βes el sol 'pa-ra:-pe-ðre-ar-me:l mjε-ðo
rises once again the sun to throw stones at my fear

Con unas migas de su dulce desayuno,
 kon 'u-nah 'mi-γah ðe su ðul-se ðe-sa-ʃu-no
with sweet baked bread for breakfast

Como aquel que tira tres pelotas por veinte
 ko-mo_a-ke:l ke 'ti-ra treh pe-'lo-tah por 'βein-te
like the one that throws three balls for twenty

Contra la cara ensangrentada de la infamia.
 kon-tra la 'ka-ra_en-saη-gren-'ta-ða ðe la in-'fa-mja
against the face bloodied by infamy

(Everything unfolded as you will someday understand, for I grieve the death of my memories. With all the tenderness I can muster, I share this burden, weighed down by the words I can no longer speak. Once more, the sun rises to assail my fears with bread turned to stones, as if infamy were hurling those stones at a face stained with shame.)

Ya la gente fue a vivir, cabe el cielo en un jornal;
 ʃa la xen-te fwe_a βi-βir 'ka-βe:l 'sje-lo_en uη xor-'nal
Already the people went to live fits the sky in a wage

Loco de azul, a Dios le sobra luz
 'lo-ko ðe_a-'sul a ðjoh le 'so-βra lus
Crazy for blue God (has) to spare light

Para amasar los pájaros y el pan.
 'pa-ra:-ma-'sar loh 'pa-xa-ros i_ el pan
to knead the birds and the bread

Si el, otra vez me cierra el ventanal,
 sje'l 'o-tra βes me 'sje-ra_ el βen-ta-'nal
If he once again shuts my eyes

Hartos de mí, los ojos me darán tres vueltas y se irán
 'ar-toh ðe mi los 'o-xoh me ða-'ran treh βwel-tas i se i-'ran
Fed up with me my eyes will roll three times and leave

bizqueando hasta un guiñol
 βih-kɛan-do_ 'ah-ta_ uŋ gi-ɲol
Squinting towards a puppet

De pólvora y de alcohol.
 ðɛ 'pɔl-βo-ra_i ðɛ_ al-'kol
of gunpowder and alcohol

(The world has emptied of its people off to chase distant dreams. A day's wage now measures the expanse of heaven, while God's luminous blue spills abundantly. This radiant light molds both bread and birds - shaping the mundane like bread and breathing life into the world's creatures. If God should close my eyes once more, weary of my gaze, my eyes would roll thrice and bid farewell with a wink to a puppet sipping navy-strength spirits.)

Ya dirán, en el barrio, después:
 ʃa ði-'ran ɛn ɛl βa-rjo ðɛh-'pɔwɛs
They will say in the neighborhood later

Su recuerdo está grave, otra vez.
 su rɛ-'kwɛr-ðo_ ɛh-'ta 'gra-βɛ_ 'o-tra βɛs
her memory is very ill once again

Queridos árboles y amadas chimeneas:
 kɛ-'ri-dos 'ar-βo-lɛs i_ a-'ma-ðah tʃi-'mɛ-'nɛ-as
Dear trees and beloved chimneys

Igual que el humo y que la hoja ya perdidos,
 iɣ-'wal kɛ:l 'u-mo_i kɛ la 'o-xa ʃa pɛr-'ði-ðos
Just like the smoke and the leaf already lost

Oirán mi nombre con la sombra en la muerte viva
 oi-'ran mi 'nom-βrɛ kon la 'som-βra_ ɛn la 'mɛr-tɛ βi-βa
They'll hear my name with the shadow of the living death

La vez primera y la vez última
 la βɛs pri-'mɛ-ra_i la βɛs 'ul-ti-ma
the first time and the last

Que un viento - asma del Sur,
 kɛ_ um βjɛn-to_ 'as-ma ðɛl sur
that a wind asthma of the south

Gusto de Amén, macho en exilio
 'guh-to ðɛ_ a-'mɛn 'ma-tʃo_ ɛn ɛk-'si-ljo
taste of Amen, a man in exile

Entre a zapar su tango aún por Buenos Aires.
 'en-tre_a sa-'par su 'taŋ-go_a-'un por 'βwe-nos 'ai-res
Enters to work its tango still for Buenos Aires

Nada más. No hay adiós:
 'na-ða mas no_ai_a-ðjos
Nothing else there is no goodbye

Que el adiós: nos dolía al principio y no al fin.
 ke:l a-ðjos noh ðo-li-a:l prin-'si-pjo_i no_al fin
like the goodbye - it pained us at the beginning and not at the end

Ya en un balcón oloroso a mi voz,
 ja_en um βal-'kon o-lo-'ro-so_a mi βos
Already in a balcony fragrant to my voice

Ponganle dos lutitos de hollín.
 'poŋ-gan-le ðoh lu-'ti-toh ðe_o-'fin
put on it two mournings of soot

La Sombra de María.
 la 'som-βra ðe ma-'ri-a
The shadow of María

(Dearest trees and cherished chimneys; like the smoke intertwines with your foliage, my name whispers a ghostly echo of life's cruel dance like the asthmatic sigh of the southern wind, the exile of men, and the bittersweet taste of an “Amen” still lingering, and laboring a tango through Buenos Aires. There are no grand farewells, just a painful parting that stung us at the start and not in the end. Therefore, while my voice is still fragrant on this balcony, place two small mournings of soot on this shadow of María.)

ARIA DE LOS ANALISTAS
(Aria of the Psychoanalysts)

CORO DE ANALISTAS
(Chorus of the psychoanalysts)

¡Pasen a ver, caballeros! Cosas jamás nunca vistas
 'pa-sen a βer ka-βa-'je-ros 'ko-sah xa-mas 'nuŋ-ka βih-tas
Come and see gentlemen things before never seen

¡Traeremos los analistas a este circo porteño!
 traε-'re-moh los a-na-lih-tas a_ 'eh-te sir-ko por-te-'ne-ro
We the psychoanalysts will bring this circus (from) Buenos Aires

¡Pasen a ver! Malabares de un bello remordimiento
 'pa-sen a βer ma-la-βa-reh ðe_um βe-fo re-mor-ði-mjen-to
Come and see juggling of a beautiful remorse

Que hace su trágico intento con siete libriums impares!
 ke 'a-se su 'tra-xi-ko_in-ten-to kon 'sje-te 'li-βriums im-pa-rēs
that makes its tragic attempt with seven sedatives uneven

ANALISTA PRIMERO
 (Main analyst)

Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires saca tus sueños al sol,
 βwe-nos ai-rēs βwe-nos 'ai-rēs 'sa-ka tus 'swē-ɲos al sol
Buenos Aires Buenos Aires bring out your dreams to the sun

Que los sueños tienen picos, rataplán y rataplón!
 ke los 'swē-ɲoh tje-nen 'pi-kos ra-ta-βlan i ra-ta-βlon
that these dreams have spikes *rataplán* and *rataplón*

(Step right up, ladies and gentlemen! Behold the unprecedented marvels brought to you by us, the circus psychoanalysts of Buenos Aires. Witness the mesmerizing juggling act of a beautiful remorse, delicately balanced with seven frail doses of Valium. Buenos Aires, unveil your dreams, even the ones adorned with thorns, for tonight they shall dazzle under the spotlight to the sound of drums.)

CORO DE ANALISTAS

¡Pasen a ver! que la vida se enredó en la pena floja.
 'pa-sen a βer ke la 'βi-ða se:n-re-ðo_en la 'pe-na 'flo-xa
Come and see that the life twisted itself in the grief lazy

¡Y un “Yo” porque se le antoja traga angustias encendidas!
 i_un fo por-ke se le_an-to-xa 'tra-ɣa:ɲ-guh-tjas en-sen-di-ðas
and a me because it wants to swallow anxieties burning

¡Aquí está la voltereta de un rencor que,
 a-ki_eh-ta la βol-te-re-ta ðe_un reɲ-kor ke
Here is the acrobatic flip of a resentment that

en zapatillas, saca un boom de pesadillas por detrás de la careta!
 en sa-pa-ti-fas 'sa-ka_um βum ðe pe-sa-ði-fah por ðe-'trah ðe la ka-re-ta
in slippers makes an explosion of nightmares behind the twisted face

ANALISTA PRIMERO

¡Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, saca tus sueños al sol,
 βwε-nos 'ai-rɛs βwε-nos 'ai-rɛs 'sa-ka tus 'swɛ-nos al sol
Buenos Aires Buenos Aires bring out your dreams to the sun

que los sueños tienen filo, rataplano y rataplón!
 kɛ los 'swɛ-noh 'tjɛ-nɛn 'fi-lo ra-ta-'plɛ-no ra-ta-'plon
That the dreams are sharp *rataplano y rataplón*

(Behold! Life, in its languid sorrow, entwined itself and capriciously devoured fervent anxieties within her. Witness the acrobatic display of resentment, performed in balletic slippers, unfurling an explosion of nightmares beneath a mask of twisted emotions. Buenos Aires, unveil your dreams, for even your sharpest dreams are ready to dazzle in the light to the sound of drums.)

CORO DE ANALISTAS

¡Pasen a ver! Que asomado por el plano sagital,
 'pa-sɛn a βɛr kɛ_a-so-'ma-ðo por el 'pla-no sa-xi-'tal
Come and see that peeking out of sagittal plane

da un doble olvido mortal un gran complejo amaestrado.
 ða_un 'do-βlɛ_ol-'βi-ðo mor-'tal uɲ gran kom-'plɛ-xo_a-ma-ɛs-'tra-ðo
gives a double forgotten (memory) a great complex mastered

¡Pasen a ver! ¡Adelante!
 'pa-sɛn a βɛr a-ðɛ-'lan-te
Come and see come on in

¡Que en la pista y poco a poco va hilando una sombra el copo
 kɛ_en la 'pih-ta_i 'po-ko_a 'po-ko βa_i-'lan-do_u-na 'som-βra_el ko-po
That on the platform little by little goes to sow a shadow a friend

con culpas de antes de antes!
 kon 'kul-pah ðɛ_an-'tes ðɛ_an-'tes
with regrets from before and before

ANALISTA PRIMERO

Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, saca tus sueños al sol,
 βwε-nos 'ai-rɛs βwε-nos 'ai-rɛs 'sa-ka tus 'swɛ-nos al sol
Buenos Aires Buenos Aires bring out your dreams to the sun

Que este sueño es de María, rataplín y rataplón!
 ke_ 'eh-te 'swε-no_εh ðε ma-ri-a ra-ta-'plin i ra-ta-'plon
That this dream belongs to María *rataplín* and *rataplón*

(Step right into the extraordinary! Behold, arising from the depths of forgotten recollections, a profound trauma and intricate legacy. Witness the poignant spectacle where the shadow will delicately weave a forlorn companion, stitched with threads of long - held - regrets. Buenos Aires, unveil your dreams! Here comes María's final dream to the sound of the drums!)

CORO DE ANALISTAS

¡Cámara uno: al recuerdo! ¡Cámara dos: a la conciencia!
 'ka-ma-ra_ 'u-no_ al rε-kwεr-ðo 'ka-ma-ra ðos a la kon-'sjen-sja
Camera one to the memory camera two to the conscience

Que pongan un decorado con trapecios de tiniebla,
 ke 'poŋ-gan un ðε-ko-ra-ðo kon tra-'pε-sjoh ðε ti-'njε-βla
Let's put a decoration with somersaults of darkness

Que la niña hará su salto vestida de memoria negra.
 ke la 'ni-ŋa_ a-ra su 'sal-to βεh-ti-ða ðε mε-'mo-rja 'nε-γra
that the girl will do in her jump dressed in a memory black

Y el Analista Primero le pide cuatro piruetas.
 i_ el a-na-lih-ta pri-'mε-ro le 'pi-ðε kwa-tro pi-'rwe-tas
and the first analyst will ask for four pirouettes

(Focus camera one on her memory and camera two on her conscience. Adorn the stage with a safety net, as our girl prepares to leap into the dark unknown, shrouded in the cloak of haunting memories, as I, the first psychoanalyst, will invite her to unravel the enigma of herself through four pirouettes.)

ANALISTA PRIMERO

Cerrá los ojos María, que así en tus ojos cabrán
 se-'ra los 'o-xos ma-'ri-a ke_ a-'si_ en tus 'o-xos ka-βran
Close your eyes María that like that in your eyes will fit

Un patio ñato y un canto que en ese patio se oirá.
 um 'pa-tjo 'ŋa-to_ i_ uŋ kan-to ke:n 'ε-se 'pa-tjo se_oi-'ra
a memory ugly and a song that will be heard in that memory

¿Es el llanto de tu madre?
 es el 'ʃan-to ðε tu 'ma-ðrε
Is that the weeping of your mother

LA SOMBRA DE MARÍA
(The shadow of María)

No lo siento. Dicen, de ella, que tenía en la cintura una gran sensiblería,
no lo 'sjen-to 'di-sen ðe:-fa ke te-ni-a_en la sin-tu-ra_u-na gran sen-si-βi-le-ri-a
I don't feel it. They say about her, that she had in her waist a great sentimentality

De silla vacía, y que fregaba estrellas sucias para afuera.
ðe 'si-fa βa-si-a_i ke fre-γa-βa_εh-tre-fas 'su-sjas 'pa-ra:-fwe-ra
of an empty chair, and that she scrubbed stars dirty outside

Pero que nunca lloraba. Eso cuentan los que estaban de ella al tanto.
'pe-ro ke nuŋ-ka fo-'ra-βa_ε-so kwen-tan loh ke:h-ta-βan 'de:fa:l 'tan-to
but that she never cried that they tell those who knew of her

Fue un Viernes, y no fue santo y, ya, me lo acuerdo mal.
fwe_un βjer-nes i no fwe 'san-to_i fa me lo_a-kwεr-ðo mal
It was a Friday and it was not holy, and I recall it badly

(Close your eyes María, and embrace the darkness of an unsettling memory and a haunting melody. Are those the tears of your mother? “I cannot feel them. They speak of her vain sentimentality veiled by an empty chair, where she scrubbed tarnished stars, and shed no tears. It was a Friday and it was not holy. Such are the whispers of those who knew her, and I recall it with a heavy heart.”)

ANALISTA PRIMERO

Abrí los sueños, María, que así en tus sueños habrá
a-βri los 'swe-ɲos ma-'ri-a ke_a-'si_en tus 'swe-ɲos a-βra
Open up your dreams María that in your dreams will be

Una fragua con dos manos que en esa fragua hacen pan.
'u-na 'fra-γwa kon doh 'ma-nos ke:n ε-sa 'fra-γwa:sen pan
a forge with two hands and in that forge they make bread

¿Son las manos de tu padre?
son lah 'ma-nos ðe tu 'pa-ðε
Are those the hands of your father

LA SOMBRA DE MARÍA

No sé. Pero de él se ha recordado que jugaba al pase Inglés
no se 'pe-ro ðe:l se_a re-kor-ðá-ðo ke xu-γa-βa:l 'pa-se_ιŋ-'gles
I don't know. But of him its remembered that he played craps

Con dos cortafierros cargados con sangre dura, y que perdía cuantas veces lo quería.
 kon doh kor-ta-fje-roh kar-ya-doh kon saŋ-grɛ ʔu-ra_i kɛ pɛr-ʔi-a kwan-tah βɛ-seh lo ke-ri-a
With two crowbars loaded with blood dried and that he lost as many times as he wanted

Eso juran los que entonces le ganaban con sietes y onces de risa.
 eso xu-ran loh kɛ:n-ton-seh lɛ ga-na-βan kon sje-tɛs i_ 'on-seh ʔɛ-ri-sa
That they swear those who would then beat him with sevens and elevens of laughter

Fue un Miércoles de ceniza, y ya me lo acuerdo mal.
 fwɛ_un mjɛr-ko-lɛh ʔɛ sɛ-ni-sa_i fa mɛ lo_a-kwɛr-ʔo mal
It was a Wednesday of ashes and I recall it badly

(Unlock your dreams María, and within them, discover a strange forge where two hands tirelessly make bread. Are these the hands of your father? “I cannot say for certain. But the tales speak of him, wielding crowbars laden with hardened blood, gambling with dice against fate with unwavering resolve. He aced repeated defeat, yet those who beat him were often cloaked in laughter and triumphed with sevens and elevens. It was a Wednesday of ashes they say, and I recall it with a heavy heart.”)

ANALISTA PRIMERO

Cerrá tus ojos María que así dos ojos verás,
 sɛ-ra tus 'o-xos ma-ri-a kɛ_a-si ʔos 'o-xos βɛ-ras
Close your eyes María and with two eyes you'll see

Un grito y un beso izquierdo que en este grito se va.
 uŋ 'gri-to_i_um βɛ-so_ih-kjɛr-ʔo kɛ_en 'ɛh-te 'gri-to se βa
a scream and a kiss left-handed and in that scream it will go

Es ése tu primer beso?
 ɛs 'ɛ-sɛ tu pri-mɛr βɛ-so
Was that your first kiss

LA SOMBRA DE MARÍA

No sabría. Pero cuentan que en él cabía tanta tristeza
 no sa-βri-a pɛ-ro kwɛn-tan kɛ:n ɛl ka-βi-a 'tan-ta trih-tɛ-sa
I wouldn't know yet they say that in it fit so much sadness

Como la que hubo en el Jesús que no tuvo para leños y se pintó una cruz en el lomo.
 ko-mo la kɛ_u-βo ɛn ɛl xɛ-suh kɛ no 'tu-βo 'pa-ra 'lɛ-nos i sɛ pin-to_u-na krus ɛn ɛl lo-mo
Like it had in him Jesus that did not have for wood and he painted a cross on his back

Y que, ese beso, otro día, se hizo hacer un pequeño aborto cerezo en cada labio.
 i kɛ:-sɛ βɛ-so:tro ði-a sɛ_ i-so_a-'sɛr um pɛ-kɛ-ɲo_a-βor-to sɛ-rɛ-so_ɛɲ ka-ða la-βjo
And that kiss another day wanted to have a small abortion of cherry on each lip

Eso callan los que saben de ese beso y aún lo gozan. Yo, entonces, era una rosa,
 'ɛ-so ka-ʃan loh kɛ 'sa-βɛn 'dɛ:sɛ βɛ-so_i_a-un lo 'go-san ʃo_ɛn-ton-sɛs 'ɛ-ra_u-na 'ro-sa
This they don't speak of the ones who know of that kiss and still enjoy it I was then a rose

Y ya me lo acuerdo mal.
 i ʃa me lo_a-kwɛr-ðo mal
and I remember it with a heavy heart

(Close your eyes María, and within your gaze, behold a violent kiss, and a silent scream longing to flee within its embrace. Was this your first kiss? “I can't be certain, but they say that in it there was a profound sorrow, like the anguish of Jesus, unable to afford the wood for his cross, thus etching with paint a cross upon his back. Each cherry tinted lip sought to untangle itself from that kiss. Such is the tale recounted by those who were acquainted with that kiss, and still revel in its memory. I was once as pure as a rose. I now reminisce with a heavy heart.”)

ANALISTA PRIMERO

Abrí los sueños, María, que así en tus sueños cabrán
 a-βri los 'swɛ-ɲos ma-'ri-a kɛ_a-'si_ɛn tus 'swɛ-ɲos ka-βran
Open your dreams María and in you dreams there will fit

Un whisky y dos golpes rubios que desde el fondo se oirán.
 un 'wis-ki:doh 'gol-peh ru-βjos kɛ ðɛh-ðɛ:l 'fon-do sɛ_oi-'ran
A whiskey and two blows blondes that from the depths will be heard

Es tu corazón que llama?
 ɛh tu ko-ra-'son kɛ 'ʃa-ma
Is your heart calling

LA SOMBRA DE MARÍA

Difícilmente. Mi corazón cortado en cuatro,
 ði-fi-sil-'mɛn-tɛ mi ko-ra-'son kor-ta-ðo_ɛɲ 'kwa-tro
Hardly my heart is cut in four

Está - dicen - sepeliado en las cuatro troneras de un billar robado.
 ɛh-ta ði-sɛn sɛ-pe-li-a-ðo_ɛn lah 'kwa-tro tro-'nɛ-rah ðɛ_um βi-'ʃar ro-'βa-ðo
it is they say buried in the four holes of a pool table stolen

El que ahora llevo puesto se lo compré a una encorazonadora
 el kɛ a_ 'o-ra 'fɛ-βo 'pweh-to sɛ lo kom-prɛ_a_ 'u-na_ɛn-ko-ra-so-na-ðo-ra
The one that I wear now I bought from a heart maker

Que tenía corazonería de viejo en un paisaje
 kɛ tɛ-'ni-a ko-ra-so-nɛ-'ri-a ðɛ 'βjɛ-xo_ɛn um pai-'sa-xɛ
that had a heart shop of old in a landscape

Terraja, y vendía corazoncitos tristeros de baraja francesa y de conejo,
 tɛ-'ra-xa_i βɛn-'di-a ko-ra-son-'si-toh trih-'tɛ-roh ðɛ βa-'ra-xa fran-'sɛ-sa_i ðɛ ko-'nɛ-xo
ordinary and sold little hearts sad of a card deck French and of a rabbit

De tatuaje de Marínero con Pérez, de rima de canción de cuna y de alcaucil.
 ðɛ ta-'twa-xɛ ðɛ ma-'ri-'nɛ-ro kom pɛ-'rɛ-sa ðɛ 'ri-ma ðɛ kan-'sjon ðɛ 'ku-na_i ðɛ_ al-kau-'sil
of a tattoo of a sailor with laziness of a rhyme of a song of a cradle and accusation

A mi, me puso uno que es de vista y no de lástima,
 a mi mɛ 'pu-so 'u-no kɛ:h ðɛ 'βih-ta_i no ðɛ 'lah-ti-ma
For me she put one that was for display and not of pity

Recortado del mandil de un bandoneonista;
 rɛ-kor-'ta-ðo ðɛl man-'dil ðɛ_ um βan-do-nɛo-'nih-ta
cut from the apron of a *bandoneón* player

Y con agujita de estaño y de hilo de humo castaño, me lo bordó en el vientre.
 i kon a-γu-xi-ta ðɛ:h-'ta-ɲo_i ðɛ 'i-lo ðɛ_ 'u-mo kah-'ta-ɲo mɛ lo βor-ðo_ɛn ɛl 'βjɛn-tre
And with a needle of metal and of the thread of a smoke brown she sowed it in my womb

Dijo que eso era lo que convenía para quien, como yo, soy una sombra María,
 'ði-xo kɛ:so 'ɛ-ra lo kɛ kom-βɛ-'ni-a 'pa-ra kʲɛn ko-mo ʃo soi_ 'u-na 'som-βra ma-'ri-a
She said that was convenient for someone like me who is a shadow María

Y ya por sombra - solo sombra - seré sombra y seré virgen para siempre.
 i ʃa por 'som-βra 'so-lo 'som-βra sɛ-'rɛ 'som-βra_i sɛ-'rɛ 'βir-xɛn 'pa-ra 'sjɛm-prɛ
And already a shadow only a shadow I will be a shadow and a virgin forever

Lo dijo mientras cosía y ya me lo acuerdo mal!
 lo 'ði-xo 'mjɛn-trah ko-'si-a_i ʃa mɛ lo_ a-kwɛr-ðo mal
She said it while sswing and I remember it badly

(Unveil your dreams María, and within the depths of your dreams, a whiskey and two golden blows will resound. Is that your heart crying out for help? “Barely. They say my heart was taken from me and divided into four pieces, buried within the pockets of a pool table. The heart I possess now, I purchased from a heart maker who had an ordinary heart shop, and crafted somber hearts made from French playing cards, rabbit foot tattoos, and accusatory lullabies of weary sailors. For me, she selected one purely for display, devoid of

pity, woven from the fabric of a tango and sewn into my womb with a Smokey brown thread and needle. She claimed it was fitting for someone like me, a mere shadow, destined to remain so. I am destined to be forever virginal and the weight of this burden I carry in my heavy heart.”)

ANALISTA PRIMERO

Cubrí tu pecho, María, con un puñado de sal,
 ku-βri tu ʔe-tʃo ma-ri-a kon um pu-ɲa-ðo ðe sal
Cover your heart María with a handful of salt

Que adentro te mira un cero, y el cero te va a llorar!
 ke_a-ðen-tro te mi-ra_un 'se-ro_i_el 'se-ro te βa: ʃo-rar
That inside it looks at you a zero and that zero watches you cry

LA SOMBRA DE MARÍA

Del numeroso gris de anteayer
 ðel nu-me-ro-so gris ðe_an-tea-ʃer
Of the numerous greys before yesterday

ya no me acuerdo más que de aquel
 ʃa no me_a-kweɾ-ðo mas ke ðe_a-keɫ
I don't remember more than that

Misterio cruel que me gritó: Nacé!
 mih-te-rjo krwel ke me gri-to na-se
Mystery cruel had once screamed be born

y cuando entré a vivir, se sonrió...
 i kwan-do_en-tre_a βi-βir se son-rjo
And when I came to live it smiled

Y al fin al verme así, tan última y tan yo, mordiéndose, gritó:
 i_al fin al βer-me_a-si tan 'ul-ti-ma_i tan ʃo mor-ðjen-do-se gri-to
And finally seeing me like this so final and so myself biting itself it screamed

Morí!
 mo-ri
Die

(Protect your heart, María, with a handful of salt. For within it, emptiness observes you, as the void bears witness to your tears - From that long and somber day, I recollect nothing more than the haunting scream that clamored for my birth. And as I emerged into the world, it grinned, but upon glimpsing my undeniable essence, it gnashed its own teeth and wailed for me to die.)

ROMANZA DEL DUENDE
(Romanza of the Duende)

DUENDE

Aquí, en este mágico bar talismanero
 a-ki ʔen 'eh-tɛ 'ma-xi-ko βar ta-lih-ma-'ne-ro
Here in this magical bar talismanic

Se sabe casi todo... lo cuentan, de escolaso
 se 'sa-βɛ ka-si 'to-ðo lo kwɛn-tan ðɛ:h-ko-'la-so
it's known almost everything they tell it suddenly

Las sotas y los reyes, ventrílocuos cabreros
 lah 'so-tas i loh re-'fɛs βɛn-'tri-lo-kwoh ka-βrɛ-ros
the sergeants and the kings and the ventriloquists angry

De cosas que el destino fermenta entre los mazos.
 ðɛ 'ko-sah kɛ:l ðɛh-'ti-no fɛr-'mɛn-ta ʔen-tɾɛ loh 'ma-sos
about things that destiny ferments in between card games

Aquí, pegado al ñato revés de cada vaso
 a-ki pɛ-'ɣa-ðo ʔal ɲa-to rɛ-βɛh ðɛ 'ka-ða βa-so
Here stuck to the flat of the bottom of each glass

Nos mira el ojo quieto y abierto de locura,
 noh 'mi-ra ʔɛl 'o-xo kʲɛ-to ʔi ʔa-βjɛr-to ðɛ lo-'ku-ra
looks at us an eye still and open crazed

Que algún Discepolín que quiso verle los pasos al diablo,
 kɛ ʔal-'ɣun di-sɛ-po-lin kɛ ki-so 'βɛr-lɛ loh 'pa-sos al 'ðja-βlo
that some admirer that wanted to see the steps of the devil

Cosió con un hilito de amargura.
 ko-'sjo kon un i-li-to ðɛ a-mar-'ɣu-ra
sewed with a thread of bitterness

(Here in the hallowed halls of this mystical bar, whispers of ancient and shocking truths intertwine with the clinking of glasses and the shuffle of cards. Destiny itself seems to brew amidst the laughter and murmurs of sergeants, kings and angry ventriloquists convening. Here at the bottom of my empty glass, I find myself drawn into the gaze of the still and crazed eye of an admirer consumed by the insatiable thirst for the forbidden. Its unblinking stare, like the bitter steps of the devil holds me captive.)

TRES MARIONETAS BORRACHAS
(Three drunken marionettes)

Desde esta copa que el Duende,
ðeh-ðeh-ta ko-pa kɛ:l 'ðwen-dɛ
From this glass that the Duende

Por triste, se está fajando,
por 'trih-tɛ sɛ:h-ta fa-'xan-do
in Sadness he is drinking

Tres Marionetas Borrachas
trɛh ma-rjo-'ne-tah βo-'ra-tʃas
three marionettes drunken

De cosas, lo campaneamos.
ðɛ 'ko-sas lo kam-pa-'ne-a-mos
of things we monitor

(As the Duende empties his glass in a melancholic trance, his three drunken marionettes watch over him.)

DUENDE

Aquí, donde mañana sabe a antaño,
a-'ki 'ðon-dɛ ma-'ɲa-na 'sa-βɛ_a:n-ta-ɲo
Here where tomorrow tastes of yesteryear

Buscando a Dios yo ví, de escalofrío,
Buh-kan-do_a ðjos fo βi ðɛ:h-ka-lo-'fri-o
looking for God I saw with chills

Que estaba en lo que quiero y en lo que extraño,
kɛ:h-ta-βa_en lo kɛ 'kje-ro_i_en lo kɛ:ks-'tra-ɲo
that he was in what I love and what I miss

Cortado a esa sazón, como el tamaño
kor-ta-ðo_a_ɛ-sa sa-'son 'ko-mo_el ta-'ma-ɲo
cut to that seasoning like the size

Del grano da el tamaño del estío.
ðɛl 'gra-no ða_el ta-'ma-ɲo ðɛl ɛh-'ti-o
of a grain gives the size of summer

Aquí, en cada botella, cabe un río;
 a-ki_en 'ka-ða βo-'tɛ-fa 'ka-βɛ_un 'ri-o
Here in each bottle fits a river

Y al fondo de ese río hay otro estaño;
 i_al 'fon-do ðɛ:-sɛ 'ri-o_ai_ 'o-tro_ɛh-'ta-ɲo
and at the bottom of each river there is another tin can

Y, en curda, en ese estaño, un verso mío,
 i_en kur-ða_en 'ɛ-sɛ:h-'ta-ɲo_um βɛr-so 'mi-o
and drunk in that tin can a verse mine

Y, en el, la plata triste de otro río
 i_en el la 'pla-ta 'trih-tɛ ðɛ_ 'o-tro 'ri-o
and in it the money sad of another river

Que me hizo Duende, me hizo... hace mil años!
 kɛ mɛ_ 'i-so ðwɛn-dɛ mɛ_ 'i-so_ 'a-se mil 'a-ɲos
that made me Duende it made me a thousand years ago

(Here where the essence of bygone days lingers in the air, my search for God led to the chilling discovery that God, with meticulous care was already weaving the very fabric of what I cherish and love. With the seasoning of a humble grain, he infused the elements of my heart's desires, crafting them into a tapestry vast enough to birth a new summer. Here in every bottle lives a river, and within each river, a can brimming with drunkenness and a verse of my own poetry. I have only enough to buy another sorrowful river, like the river that made me Duende. It made me a thousand years ago.)

TRES MARIONETAS BORRACHAS

Al Duende que en la operita
 al ðwɛn-dɛ kɛ:n la_o-pɛ-ri-ta
To the Duende who in the *operita*

Venía el cuento contando
 βɛ-'ni-a_el 'kwɛn-to kon-'tan-do
comes to tell the tale

Se le ha perdido una sombra
 sɛ le_a pɛr-'ði-ðo_u-na 'som-βra
he has lost a shadow

Y, en curda, la va llamando.
 i_en kur-ða la βa fa-'man-do
and in drunkenness he is calling it

(The Duende, who has come to tell the tale of his lost shadow, beckons for her return in his inebriated lament.)

DUENDE

De mí, jugado a vos, te mando este retazo
 ðe mi xu-ʎa-ðo_a βos te 'man-do_ 'eh-te rɛ-'ta-so
From my game to yours I send you this metal scrap

De tango con ojeras, que allá en tu pena entero,
 ðe 'taŋ-go kon o-ʎɛ-ras kɛ a-'fa_ɛn tu 'pɛ-na_ɛn-'tɛ-ro
of tango with eye bags that there in your pain full

Removerá en la amarga ceniza de tus pasos
 rɛ-mo-βɛ-'ra_ɛn la:'mar-ɣa sɛ-'ni-sa ðɛ tuh 'pa-sos
will remove the bitter ash of your steps

La bronca enamorada de un canto compañero.
 la βron-ka_ɛ-na-mo-'ra-ða ðɛ_uŋ kan-to kom-pa-ɲɛ-ro
the angry lover of a song companion

De mí, y a donde me oigas, irán hasta tu cero,
 ðe mi_i_a 'ðon-de me_oi-ɣas i-'ran 'ah-ta tu 'sɛ-ro
of me and wherever you hear me will go to your zero

Dos lucas de rubionas, yironas y Melatos,
 ðoh 'lu-kah ðɛ ru-βjo-nas ʃi-'ro-nas i mɛ-'la-tos
two bills for the blondes, street walkers and pimps

A echar sobre tu sombra un fato de luceros.
 a_ɛ-'ʃar 'so-βrɛ tu 'som-βra_um 'fa-to ðɛ lu-'sɛ-ros
to put over your shadow a fleeting love of stars

Los huesos de Olivari conocen de este fato.
 loh 'wɛ-soh ðɛ_o-li-βa-ri ko-'no-sɛn 'ðɛ:h-te 'fa-to
The bones of Olivari know all about this love

(From the table of my card game, I offer you a weary tango melody that promises to alleviate the magnitude of your sorrows. The song of a jilted lover carries the echo of your forgotten footprints. Wherever you may be, may my words find you. Let them resonate in the void of your heart, worth only the two bills claimed by the pimps of blonde streetwalkers. I send my voice to cover your shadow with a transient love made of stars. The bones of Olivari bear witness to the depth of this love.)

TRES MARIONETAS BORRACHAS

Pobre Duende! Anda por esa
 'po-βɾɛ 'ðwɛn-dɛ_ 'an-da por 'ɛ-sa
Poor duende he searches for that

Sombrita, desesperado:
 som-βɾi-ta ðɛ-sɛh-pɛ-'ra-ðo
shadow desperate

Y nos pide a los compinches
 i noh 'pi-ðɛ_a loh kom-'pin-tʃɛs
he asks us his henchmen

Que a ella llevemos su llanto.
 kɛ_a_ 'ɛ-ʃa ʃɛ-βɛ-mos su 'ʃan-to
to her we bring his tears

(Poor Duende, he searches through the night desperately for his shadow, and begs for his drunken disciples to bring her his tears.)

EL DUENDE

De mí, y en donde estés, con una fuerza
 ðɛ mi:_ɛn 'ðon-ðɛ:h-tes kon 'u-na 'fwɛr-sa
From me and where ever you are with a strength

De locos, como un himno estrafalario,
 ðɛ 'lo-kos ko-mo_un 'im-no_ɛh-tra-fa-'la-rjo
of crazy people like a hymn bizarre

Tan hondo sonará el concierto mersa
 tan 'on-do so-na-'ra_el kon-'sjɛr-to 'mɛr-sa
so profound will resound in a concert cheap

Que un viejo ciego, a vos, te hará
 kɛ_um βjɛ-xo 'sjɛ-ɣo_a vos tɛ_a-'ra
that an old blind man to you will give

En la terza morena de su reo estradivario.
 ɛn la 'tɛr-sa mo-'rɛ-na ðɛ su 'rɛ-o_ɛs-tra-ði-'βa-rjo
in the third string of his broken deceitful Stradivarius

De mí, y en donde estés, pondré un plenario
 ðɛ mi_i_ɛn 'ðon-dɛ:h-tes pon-dɾɛ_um plɛ-'na-rjo
Of me and wherever you are I will put a meeting

De dulces duendecitos que retuerza
 ðε 'ðul-sɛh ðwɛn-dɛ-'si-tos kɛ rɛ-'twɛr-sa
of sweet duendes that twist

La niebla de tu piel; y un tabernario
 la nje-βla ðε tu pjɛl i un ta-βɛr-'na-rjo
the fog of your skin and a tabernacle

Rumor de nazarenos carcelarios
 ru-'mor ðε na-sa-'rɛ-noh kar-sɛ-'la-rjos
rumor of Nazarene officers

Dirá tu Anunciación en parla inversa.
 ði-'ra tu a-nun-sja-'sjon ɛn 'par-la im-βɛr-sa
Will speak your coming in speech reversed

(Wherever you may be, I send forth a bizarre and profound hymn with all the might of my being. It echoes through the chambers of a cheap concert, played by an aged, sightless fool whose broken Stradivarius yields only its third string, resonating with the depth of my love for you. Wherever you roam, I shall summon a band of devoted Duendes twisting and weaving the mist of your silhouette, as the rumors of Nazarene soldiers herald your arrival in broken speech.)

TRES MARIONETAS BORRACHAS

Iremos todos, Don Duende,
 i-'rɛ-moh 'to-ðos ðon 'dwɛn-dɛ
We will all go Don Duende

Los puntos de este curdato
 loh 'pun-tos ðɛ 'ɛh-tɛ kur-'ða-to
to the place that is sketchy

A llevarle a la Pequeña
 a ʃɛ-'βar-lɛ a la pɛ-'kɛ-ɲa
to bring the girl

De parte suya, un milagro.
 ðɛ 'par-tɛ 'su-ʃa un mi-'la-ɣro
from you a miracle

(We will go to this perilous place on your behalf Don Duende. We will bring the girl the gifts of your miracle.)

DUENDE

Y así que vos renazcas, sabras qué trampa tienen
 i_a-'si ke βoh re-'nah-kas sa-βrah ke 'tram-pa 'tje-nen
Like this that you are reborn will know what trap have

La yerba en su barrica, y el cielo del agujero
 la 'ʃer-βa_en su βa-'ri-ka_i_el 'sje-lo ðel a-γu-'xe-ro
the herb in its barrel and the heaven of the hole

Que mira del zapato; la lluvia que no viene
 ke 'mi-ra ðel sa-'pa-to la 'ʃu-βja ke no βje-ne
that watches from the shoe the rain that does not come

Y un sorbo de esa lluvia, y el tiempo en su tienpero...
 i_un 'sor-βo ðe-sa 'ʃu-βja_i_el 'tjem-po_en su tjem-'pe-ro
and a sip of that rain and the time in its stash

¡Y así María! ¡Así, María! ¡Así! por cada quiero
 i_a-'si ma-'ri-a:-'si ma-'ri-a:-'si por 'ka-ða kje-ro
Like this María like this María like this for each I love you

Y nueve lunas locas y en celo de tu infarto
 i_nwe-βe 'lu-nah 'lo-kas i_en 'se-lo ðe tu im-'far-to
and nine crazy moons in the envy of your heart attack

De luz, te harán -en torno- los guiños sensibleros
 ðe luh te a-'ran en 'tor-no loh 'gi-nos sen-si-'βle-ros
of light will give you in return the clues sentimental

De un baile amanecido de risas y de partos.
 ðe_um 'bai-le_a-ma-ne-'si-ðo ðe ri-sas i ðe 'par-tos
of a dance that goes till morning of laughs and births

(Like this, you shall emerge acquainted with life's strife, as a celestial shoe peers through a rift in the heavens, guarding you. You'll yearn for rain and a mere sip of its eternity. Then María, for each of my loves for you and amidst nice lunacies, your heart's covetous gleam will embrace the tender hints of a dance enduring till daybreak, birthing laughter.)

TRES MARIONETAS BORRACHAS

Ya vamos, Sombra María,
 ʃa βa-mos 'som-βra ma-'ri-a
we go shadow María

Con el Diciembre y los cantos
 kon el ði-'sjem-βre_i loh kan-tos
with a December in our singing

Que está amasándote el Duende
 kɛ:h-ta:ma-san-do-tɛ:l ðwɛn-dɛ
That working on is the Duende

Con el polen de este estaño.
 kon el 'po-lɛn 'dɛ:h-tɛ:h-ta-ɲo
With the money from this deal

**(We go forth in your pursuit Shadow María embellishing with our song the essence of
 December skillfully crafted by the Duende with the spoils of his gambling.)**

DUENDE

Y así, por un silencio de corchea, vendrá -por fin- tu día:
 i_a-'si por un si-lɛn-sjo ðɛ kor-ʔʃɛ-a βɛn-dra por fin tu ði-a
And like this with a silence of an eight-note rest will come finally your day

Un alazano Domingo, que te hará con las más feas hojitas
 un a-la-sa-no ðo-miɲ-go kɛ tɛ_a-ra kon lah mas 'fɛ-as o-'xi-tas
a feminine Sunday that will give you with the ugliest leaves

De un laurel de olor, la rea y angélica belleza de sus ramos.
 ðɛ_un lau-rɛl ðɛ_o-lor la 'rɛ-a_i_aɲ-'xɛ-li-ka βɛ-'ʃɛ-sa ðɛ suh 'ra-mos
of a laurel of fragrance the prostitute and angelic beauty of its branches

Tu día, nacerá del meridiano cachuzo del umbral
 tu ði-a na-sɛ-ra ðɛl mɛ-ri-ðja-no ka-ʔʃu-so ðɛl um-βral
your day will be born from the meridian ruined from the accused

En donde hornea su misa, algún poeta a contramano.
 ɛn 'don-dɛ_or-'nɛ-a su 'mi-sa:l-ɣun po-ɛ-ta: kon-tra-'ma-no
where crafts his mass some poet heading the wrong way

Así sea, querida, de cristiano.
 a-'si 'sɛ-a kɛ-'ri-ða ðɛ krih-ʔja-no
Like this my love of a Christian

Así, de tuyo y nuestro... Que así sea.
 a-'si ðɛ tu-fo_i nweh-tro kɛ_a-'si 'sɛ-a
Like this yours and ours so be it

(Therefore, in the hush of an eighth-note rest, your day shall dawn. A feminine Sunday shall bestow upon you the unsightliest yet fragrant laurel leaves, carrying the clandestine and celestial grace of its branches. Your day shall emerge from the tainted meridian, fashioned by the condemned poet's misguided liturgy. Thus, my love, with this Christian ardor, thus, yours and mine. So let it be.)

MILONGA DE LA ANUNCIACIÓN
(Milonga of the Annunciation)

Tres marionetas - chuecas y locas
trɛh ma-rjo-'nɛ-tas tʃwɛ-kas i lo-kas
Three marionettes twisted and crazy

Que una violeta en la boca me hincaron ayer,
kɛ_ 'u-na βjo-'lɛ-ta_ɛn la βo-ka mɛ_ iŋ-ka-ron a-ʃɛr
that a violet in the mouth was thrust yesterday

Con un cuchillo en los dientes, por el revés
kon uŋ ku-'tʃi-fo_ɛn loh ðjɛn-tɛh por ɛl rɛ-βɛs
with a knife in the teeth inside out

De mis caderas tordillas, zurciendo van
ðɛ mih ka-ðɛ-rah tor-ði-ʃas sur-'sjɛn-do βan
From my hips old mending badly go

Un gran remiendo en flor de hinojo y de sisal Ay!...
uŋ gran rɛ-'mjɛn-do_ɛn flor ðɛ_i-'no-xo_i ðɛ si-'sal ai
a great addiction in flower of fennel and sisal

(Three contorted and frenzied marionettes, with their mouths clenching a knife in a sinister grip, force a delicate violet into my open mouth as I kneel. My aging hips, grievously on the mend, seek refuge in an obsession with the soothing essence of fennel and the comforting touch of sisal's bloom.)

Flaco y en banda - tan cadenero,
'fla-ko_i_ɛm βan-ða taŋ ka-ðɛ-'nɛ-ro
Thin and abandoned such an oppressor

Me anda un Jesús chapaleando, de cuarta, en la voz,
mɛ_ 'an-da_uŋ xɛ-'suh tʃa-pa-'lɛan-do ðɛ 'kwɛr-ta_ɛn la βos
goes with me a Jesus walking incompetently in the voice

Un canyenguito sobón con un compás
uŋ kan-ʃɛŋ-'gi-to so-βoŋ kon uŋ kom-'pas
A broken dance lazy in one measure

De punto cruz, y un dulce barro torcaz
 ðe 'pun-to krus i un 'dul-se ða-ro tor-'kas
Of a cross stitch and a sweet erroneous wood pigeon

De Cruz del Sur que hoy me ha puesto a temblar.
 ðe kruh ðel sur ke oi me a pweh-to a tem-βlar
Of a cross in the south that today has made me tremble

(Emaciated and forsaken, this inept Jesus and misunderstood oppressor walks with me haunting an echo in my voice, as we sway in a fractured dance, a testament to our shared tribulations. Amidst the chaos, I'm but a sweet erroneous wood pigeon, seeking solace in the midst of turmoil. And today, a cross in the south has shaken my very core, leaving me in shambles and trembling before it.)

Y un angelito de terracota,
 i un aη-xe-'li-to ðe te-ra-ko-ta
And an angel of terracotta

Tuerto del grito en la rota viudez de un pretil,
 'twer-to ðel 'gri-to en la 'ro-ta βju-ðeh ðe um pre-'til
One eyed from the scream of the broken widowed railing

Mascando un salmo en sanata, con un jazmín
 mah-kan-do un 'sal-mo en sa-na-ta kon uη xah-'min
Chewing a psalm confusingly with a jasmine

Me ató un solcito de leche sobre el sutién,
 me a-to un sol-'si-to ðe le-tfe 'so-βre el su-'tjen
Tied me a small sun of milk over my bra

Qué dos espasmos de luz tengo atrás de la piel!
 ke ðos eh-pah-mos ðe lus 'teη-go a-'trah ðe la pjel
What two spasms of light I have behind my skin

(And a small terracotta angel stands before me, bearing the scars of a broken, widowed fence, and the burden of a sightless eye screams a testament to the pain of its past. There in the fragrant jasmine, it chews a psalm of confusion seeking solace in my breasts. He steals a small sun of milk, a fragile offering from within my being, for I carry within me two spasms of life stirring in the depths of my womb.)

¡Dale María! Sí nueve llantos
 ða-le ma-'ri-a si nwe-βe 'fan-tos
Give it María yes nine cries

Son todo el pardo misterio que habia que ver,
 son 'to-ðo_əl 'par-ðo mih-'te-rjo ke_a-βi-a ke βer
Are all of the dark mysteries that had to be seen

¡Qué loco intento de espiga que vas a hacer!
 ke 'lo-ko_in-ten-to ðe_εh-pi-ya ke βas a:-'ser
What a ludicrous intent of fruition you will make

¡Qué dura rama celeste te va a crujir!
 ke 'ðu-ra 'ra-ma se-'leh-te te βa: kru-'xir
That a hard branch blue will creak

¡Dale que está al venir! ¡Dale que duele bien! ¡Ay!
 'ða-le ke:h-'ta_al βe-'nir 'ða-le ke 'ðwe-le βjen ai
Give that its about to come give it that hurts so well

Tengo atorada tanta ternura
 'teŋ-go_a-to-'ra-ða 'tan-ta te-'nu-ra
I have stuck in me so much tenderness

Que de una sola ternura a Dios puedo parir.
 ke ðe_ 'u-na 'so-la te-'nu-ra: ðjos 'pwe-ðo pa-'rir
That a single tenderness of God I can birth

Y si es que nadie ya quiere de mí nacer,
 i si_εh ke 'na-ðje ja 'kje-re ðe mi na-'ser
And if nobody wants from me to be born

En el rebozo robado de algun Chaplin,
 en el re-βo-so ro-βa-ðo ðe_al-γun tʃa-'plin
In the shawl stole of some Chaplain

¡Entre mis brazos daré de mamar a un botín!
 'en-tre mih βra-soh ða-'re ðe ma-'mar a_um βo-'tin
Between my arms I will give to feed a shoe

(Hold on María! Through nine cries all secrets will unveil. In a strange pursuit of fulfillment, you will craft a fractured blue branch. Endure the pain for the child is arriving. Within me there is such a profound tenderness that I can birth God from it alone. And if no one desires to emerge from within me, I will in a simple shawl worn by a Chaplain, cradle the birth of a shoe in my arms.)

TANGUS DEI

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

(The voice of that Sunday)

Hoy es Domingo, y al día los sacan del Domingario

oi_εs ðo-'miŋ-go_i al 'ði-a los 'sa-kan dɛl ðo-miŋ-'ga-rjo

Today is Sunday and (on that) day they are taken out the *Domingarios

Una novia sin Domingo y el penúltimo borracho.

'u-na no-βja sin ðo-'miŋ-go_i el pɛ-'nul-ti-mo βo-'ra-tʃo

a girlfriend without a Sunday and the penultimate drunk

(Today is Sunday, and on this day, a girlfriend without a Sunday and the second to last drunk are plucked from the church sanctuary.)

DUENDE

Hoy es Domingo: Laurel con leche. Desde el badajo de su cuchara

oi_εs ðo-'miŋ-go lau-rɛl kon 'lɛ-tʃɛ 'ðɛh-ðɛ:l βa-'ða-xo ðɛ su ku-'tʃa-ra

Today is Sunday laurel with milk from the clapper of his spoon

Da un capuchino tres campanadas trás los misales,

ða_un ka-pu-'tʃi-no trɛh kam-pa-'na-ðas trah loh mi-'sa-les

give a cappuccino three bell rings behind the missals

Pican motetes las derrotadas y alegres nalgas de las matronas: Laurel con ajo.

'pi-kan mo-'tɛ-tɛs lah ðɛ-ro-'ta-ðas i_a-'lɛ-γrɛh 'nal-γas ðɛ lah ma-'tro-nas lau-rɛl kon 'a-xo

grind out motets the defeated and joyful asses of the midwives laurel with garlic

(Today is Sunday, a day dressed in laurel and steeped in milk. The cappuccino mug chimes like the sacred bells of missals echoing three times to the rhythmic sound of a spoon's clapper. In this Sunday morning, the defeated, exhausted and jubilant midwives grind out motets infusing the aroma of laurel and garlic into the air.)

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

Hoy es Domingo, y las brujas espiran,

oi_εs ðo-'miŋ-go_i lah βru-xas ɛh-'pi-ran

Today is Sunday and the witches breathe

Porque asomados del tuco les tiran soles los chicos y los payasos.

por-'kɛ_a-so-'ma-ðos ðɛl tu-ko les ti-ran 'so-les loh tʃi-'kos i loh pa-'ʃa-sos

for peeking through the tomato jar they throw suns the kids and the clowns

(Today is Sunday, a day when the witches with mischievous delight breathe and hide their laughter mingling behind a tomato sauce jar. They playfully peek as they magically scatter suns to the children and the jesters.)

DUENDE

Hoy es Domingo, laurel con fiaca. Domingamente rueda un bostezo.
oi_ɛh ðo-miŋ-go lau-rɛl kon ʔja-ka ðo-miŋ-ga-mɛn-tɛ rʷɛ-ða_ɯm βoh-tɛ-so
Today is Sunday laurel with laziness. Lazily rolls a yawn

Y, en el bostezo, dan las muchachas la buena nueva del buen mal paso
i_ɛn ɛl βoh-tɛ-so ðan lah mu-tʃa-tʃas la βʷɛ-na nʷɛ-βa ðɛl βwɛn mal ʔa-so
And in that yawn give the girls the good and new of the good and bad step

Que arde en la hilacha pródiga y tensa de sus bluyines: Laurel caliente.
kɛ_ʔar-ðɛ:n la_i-la-tʃa ʔro-ði-ɣa_i ʔɛn-sa ðɛ suh βlu-ʃi-nɛs lau-rɛl ka-lʃɛn-tɛ
that burns in the thread prodigious and tense of their blue jeans laurel hot

(Today is Sunday, a day adorned with the tranquility of laurel and the embrace of laziness. A lazy yawn meanders through the air, carrying with it memories of laughter and remorse from the night before. The girls, stirred by this languid morning ritual, find themselves reminiscing, guided by the lingering embers of the previous night's adventures etched into the fabric of their blue jeans. In the warmth of the day, this lazy contentment lingers like a fragrant, smoldering laurel.)

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

Hoy es Domingo; y un coro de mil domingos muchachos
oi_ɛs ðo-miŋ-go_i_ɯŋ ʔko-ro ðɛ mil ðo-miŋ-goh mu-tʃa-tʃos
Today is Sunday and a choir of a thousand Sunday boys

Desde el orsai dice un viejo romance en cuatro dos cuatro.
ðɛh-ðɛ:l or-sai ði-sɛ_ɯm βʃɛ-xo ro-man-sɛ:ŋ kwa-tro ðoh kwa-tro
from the offsidés (of a soccer game) tell an old romantic story in four two four (stanzas)

(Today is Sunday, and a choir of a thousand boys known for their Sunday - only virtue, gather to badly play soccer on the pitch. In unison they recite an age-old romantic tale, each stanza unfolding with a rhythmic cadence of four - two - four.)

AMASADORAS DE TALLARINES

(Voices of the noodle makers)

A las amasadoras de tallarines algo nos pasa:
a las a-ma-sa-ðo-rah ðɛ ta-ʃa-ri-nɛs ʔal-ɣo noh ʔa-sa
To us the noodle makers something happens

Porqué es que se nos retiemblan las manos duras entre la masa?
 por-ke_ɛh ke se noh rɛ-tjɛm-βlan lah 'ma-nos 'ðu-ras 'ɛn-tre la 'ma-sa
why is it that to us tremble the hands hard inside the dough

(We the noodle makers, feel an inexplicable shift within us as our hands quiver while tending to the dough.)

ALBAÑILES MAGOS
 (Magi carpenters)

Que gusto le han mezclado los copetines,
 ke 'guh-to le_an mɛh-kla-ðo loh ko-pɛ-ti-nɛs
What delight they have mixed these cocktails

Que tienen una patota de estrellitas. ¿En donde estaban las aceitunas?
 ke 'tjɛ-nɛn 'u-na pa-to-ta ðɛ:h-tre-ʃi-tas ɛn 'don-dɛ:h-ta-βan las a-sei-tu-nas
that have a gang of stars where are the olives

(The youthful gang of stars concoct exquisite cocktails, yet we wonder, where have the olives in my martini gone?)

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

Hoy es Domingo y atorrán hasta los séptimos tangos;
 oi_ɛs ðo-min-ɣo_i_a-to-ran 'ah-ta los 'sɛp-ti-mos 'taŋ-gos
Today is Sunday and sleeping even the seven tangos

Será, sin embargo el día del más antiguo trabajo.
 sɛ-ra sin ɛm-βar-ɣo_el ði-a ðɛl mas an-ti-ɣwo tra-βa-xo
it will be without a doubt the day of the most ancient work

(On this Sunday, even the seven tangos are in deep slumber, embracing a profound stillness. Undoubtedly, this day belongs to the most ancient of labors.)

DUENDE

Hoy es Domingo: Laurel y azares.
 oi_ɛs ðo-min-ɣo lau-rɛl i_a-sa-rɛs
Today is Sunday laurel and chance

Qué Buenos Aires le echó los naipes a este Domingo
 ke 'βwɛ-nos 'ai-rɛs lɛ:-tʃo loh 'nai-pɛs a_ɛh-tɛ ðo-min-ɣo
That Buenos Aires threw the playing cards on this Sunday

Que así, en la altura pampero arriba, tres profetitas locos laburan
 kɛ_a-si en la:l-tu-ra pam-pɛ-ro_a-ri-βa tɾɛh pro-fɛ-si-tah 'lo-kos la-βu-ran
like this in the heights of Pampas three prophets madly work

Juntando ramos de un nuevo aroma: Laurel del aire?
 xun-tan-do 'ra-mos ðɛ_un 'nwe-βo_a-ro-ma lau-rɛl ðɛl 'ai-rɛ
gathering sticks of a new fragrance laurel of the air

(Today, Sunday, is a day of luck and laurel. Buenos Aires deal the playing cards to the masses. Meanwhile, in the elevated Pampas heights, three wildly imaginative prophets labor feverishly, gathering twigs of a novel fragrance. This is the essence of the airy laurel.)

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

Hoy es Domingo y me han dicho que hasta el muñeco de trapo
 oi_es ðo-miŋ-go_i mɛ_an 'di-tʃo kɛ_ 'as-ta_ɛl mu-ɲɛ-ko ðɛ 'tra-po
Today is Sunday and they have told me that even the doll of rags

Que cuelga en los colectivos viene a lo alto mirando.
 kɛ 'kwɛl-ya_en los ko-lɛk-ti-βos βjɛ-nɛ_a lo_ 'al-to mi-ran-do
that hangs in the busses comes to the heights to watch

(Today is Sunday and it has been told that even the rag doll hanging from the rearview mirror of the public busses comes to these heights to see for itself.)

DUENDE

Hoy es Domingo: Laurel servido. Qué extraña siembra dió este Domingo,
 oi_es ðo-miŋ-go lau-rɛl sɛr-βi-ðo kɛ:ks-tra-ɲa 'sjɛm-βra ðjo_ 'ɛh-tɛ ðo-miŋ-go
Today is Sunday laurel served what a strange planting gave this Sunday

Que allá en lo alto de un piso treinta, sola en la sola cal de un andamio,
 kɛ a-ʃa_en lo_ 'al-to ðɛ_um 'pi-so 'tɾɛin-ta 'so-la_en la 'so-la kal ðɛ_un an-'da-mjo
that over there in the heights of the thirtieth floor in the lonely lime of a scaffold

Repaturienta de nueve asombros, hierve una sombra: Laurel con hembra.
 rɛ-par-tu-rjɛn-ta ðɛ 'nwe-βɛ_a-som-βros 'jɛr-βɛ_u-na 'som-βra lau-rɛl kon 'ɛm-βra
creator of nine astonishments boils a shadow laurel with femininity

(Today is Sunday, and through this strange harvest, unfolds an unexpected twist - a laurel as a symbol of triumph. The strangeness of this occurrence is highlighted by the image of a lime casting a shadow of a feminine laurel on the scaffolding outside the thirtieth floor.)

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

Hoy es Domingo; y a punta de diente, como peleando
 oi_εs ðo-'miŋ-go_i_a 'pun-ta ðe ðjen-tε 'ko-mo pε-'lean-do
Today is Sunday and to the sharpness of teeth like fighting

Allá esa sombra por dentro sus lutos se esta lavando.
 a-'fa_ε-sa 'som-βra por ðen-tro sus 'lu-tos sε:s-ta la-'βan-do
there that shadow inside her mourning she is washing

(Today is Sunday, and amidst a fierce internal battle, the shadow fights though gritted teeth, determined to wash away her grief, and sorrow.)

AMASADORAS DE TALLARINES

Se le abisma la cintura la cincha de un nudo zaino.
 sε le_a-'βih-ma la sin-'tu-ra la 'sin-tʃa ðε_un 'nu-ðo 'sai-no
It is engulfed the waist the girdle of a knot dark

ALBAÑILES MAGOS

Y la marca de sus uñas se ve en el cemento armado.
 i la mar-ka ðε sus 'u-ŋas sε βε:n el sε-'men-to_ar-ma-ðo
And the trace left by her nails can be seen in the cement enriched

(Her waist tightly encased in a girdle, bound by a dark knot, while the imprints of her nail scratches are etched into the freshly laid cement, leaving a trace of her presence.)

DUENDE

Cuánta cosa, uno por uno, le retoña los ovarios fecundos de mil dolores
 kwan-ta ko-sa_u-no por 'u-no le rε-'to-ŋa los o-'βa-rjoh fε-'kun-doh ðε mil ðo-'lo-rεs
What a thing one by one it sprouts the ovaries fertile of a thousand pains

En seducción de sopapo. Si parece que tuviera hasta el nombre embarazado.
 en sε-ðu-ksjon de so-'pa-po si pa-'rε-sε ke tu-'βje-ra:h-ta el nom-βrε:m-'βa-ra-'sa-ðo
in seduction of a punch it seems as if she had the name pregnant

Que retemblor le sacude la entraña, como si echando setenta reencarnaciones
 kε rε-'tεm-βlor le sa-ku-ðε la_εn-'tra-ŋa 'ko-mo si_ε-'tʃan-ðo sε-'tεn-ta rε:ŋ-'kar-na-'sjo-nεs
What a shivering shakes nature as if it were throwing out seventy reincarnations

De un jesucito nonato, se arrancara del los huesos del vientre, setenta clavos...
 ðε_un xε-su-'si-to no-'na-to sε_a-'raŋ-ka-ra ðel loh 'wε-sos ðel βjen-tre sε-'tεn-ta kla-βos
of a little Jesus not born it rips out from the bones of the womb seventy nails

(What a strange occurrence. Her fertile ovaries unfurl a myriad of pains, drawn to the seduction of a clenched fist. It's as if her very name carries the weight of pregnancy. Nature's brilliance causes her to quiver, as if she were birthing seventy incarnations of an unborn Jesus sculpted from the marrow of her womb, where seventy nails lie.)

Dos angelotes parteros la trincan de bruces,
 ðos aŋ-xe-lo-teh par-tɛ-ros la ʔriŋ-kan ðe βru-sɛs
Two angel midwives hold her while she is faced down

Cuando le dan de forceps los fierros del pesebre hormigonado.
 kwan-do le ðan de ʔor-sɛps loh ʔjɛ-ros ðel pɛ-sɛ-βrɛ-or-mi-ɣo-na-ðo
When they give of forceps the iron rods of the manger full of people

¡Como alumbra para adentro! ¡Qué luz le chaira en el tallo!
 ko-mo_a-lum-βra ʔa-ra:-ðɛn-tro ke lus le ʔʃai-ra_en el ʔa-ʃo
How luminous on her insides what a light that sharpened the knife

Qué clara lastimadura cruza de muerte y de orgasmo
 ke ʔkla-ra lah-ti-ma-ðu-ra ʔkru-sa ðe ʔmwɛr-tɛ_i ðɛ-or-ɣas-mo
What a clear wound a mixture of death and an orgasm

Le enciende por la cadera como un canyengue de astros.
 le:n-ʃjɛn-de por la ka-ðɛ-ra ko-mo_un kan-ʃɛŋ-ge ðɛ_ah-tros
that lights her up by her hips like a crooked dance astral

Fuerza María: que nace y nace, naciendo tanto,
 ʔwɛr-sa ma-ri-a ke ʔna-sɛ_i ʔna-sɛ na-ʃjɛn-do ʔtan-to
Strength Maria that is born and is born so much

Que te pare hasta el olvido, y te empuja entre las manos
 ke tɛ ʔa-rɛ ʔas-ta_el ol-βi-ðo_i tɛ:m-ɣu-xa_en-tre lah ma-nos
That it births you the loneliness and it pushes you through its hands

Y en la raíz y en la rabia y te renace a pedazos,
 i_en la ra-is i_en la ra-βja_i tɛ rɛ-na-sɛ_a pɛ-ðɑ-sos
and in the roots and the anger to you is reborn in pieces

Por las puntas de otras trenzas, por las grietas de los labios,
 por lah ʔpun-tas ðɛ_o-trah ʔtren-sas por lah ʔgrjɛ-tas ðe loh ʔla-βjos
through the ends of your braids and the cracks of the lips

Por el gesto, y por las ganas de nacerte hasta el cansancio.
 por el xɛs-to_i por lah ʔga-nas ðɛ na-sɛr-tɛ_ah-ta_el kan-san-sjo
through your grimace and through the desire of birthing even the exhaustion

¡Cuánta Navidad tenías atragantada en los años!
 kwan-ta na-βi-ðað te-ni-as a-tra-γan-ta-ða_ en los 'a-ɲos
How much Christmas you had stuck in your years

Qué zafra brava, María, zafra de partos, tu parto.
 ke 'sa-fra βra-βa ma-ri-a 'sa-fra ðe 'par-tos tu 'par-to
What a harvest brave Maria harvest of birthings your birth

AMASADORAS DE TALLARINES

A quién recién ha nacido nada le sobra y no tiene cuna.
 a kʝen re-'sʝen a na-'si-ðo 'na-ða le 'so-βra_i no 'tʝe-ne 'ku-na
To whom recently was born nothing is abundant and doesn't have a cradle

ALBAÑILES MAGOS

Su padre que es un carpintero de obra ha de hacerle una.
 su 'pa-ðre ke_es un kar-pin-te-ro ðe_ 'o-βra a ðe_a-ser-le_ 'u-na
Her father who is a carpenter must make her one

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

Desde lo alto del Domingo los Tres Albañiles Magos,
 'ðes-ðe lo_ 'al-to ðel ðo-miɲ-go los tres al-βa-ɲi-les 'ma-γos
From the height of Sunday the three construction worker Magi

En la arena de esa cuna un guiño rosa han dejado.
 en la_a-re-na ðe-sa ku-na_un 'gi-ɲo 'ro-sa:n de-'xa-ðo
on the dirt outside of her manger a wink pink they have left

ALBAÑILES MAGOS

Porque es que los angelitos todos llorando a encurdarse han ido?
 por-ke:s ke los aɲ-xe-li-toh 'to-ðos fo-ran-do a_εɲ-kur-ðar-se_an 'i-ðo
Why is it that the angels all crying to get drunk have gone

AMASADORES DE TALLARINES

¡Porque ese niño no es niño, Jesus! ¡Que es niña, niña ha nacido!
 por-ke:se 'ni-ɲo no_es 'ni-ɲo xe-sus ke:s 'ni-ɲa 'ni-ɲa: na-'si-ðo
Because that child is not a boy Jesus it is a girl a girl has been born

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

La Niña tuvo otra niña que es ella misma y no es tanto.

la 'ni-ɲa 'tu-βo:tra 'ni-ɲa ke_εs 'e-ʃa 'mis-ma_i no εs 'tan-to

The girl had another girl that is herself and not much more

Quieren final y principio ser gotas del mismo llanto.

kje-ren fi-nal i prin-'si-pjo ser 'go-tas ðel 'mih-mo 'ʃan-to

They want at the end and the beginning be tears of the same weeping

ESPECTADORES (FULL CHORUS)

Por Dios: los espectadores también queremos saber,

por ðjos los εh-pek-ta-ðo-res tam-βjen ke-'re-mos sa-βεr

By God the spectators also want to know

Si la letra de este tango ya ha sido o esta por ser.

si la 'le-tra 'ðe:h-te 'taɲ-go ʃa: 'si-ðo:_εh-ta por ser

if the poetry of this tango has already been or is yet to be

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

En los ojos de la niña el tiempo está bien robado,

en los 'o-xos ðe la 'ni-ɲa_εl 'tjem-po_εs-ta βjen ro-βa-ðo

In the eyes of the girl time is very much stolen

Por ayer y por mañana María la han bautizado.

por a-ʃεr i por ma-ɲa-na ma-'ri-a la:n bau-ti-'sa-ðo

but yesterday and today Maria they have baptized her

DUENDE

Pero aquellos hombres, los rudos maestros de mi tristería,

'pe-ro_a-ke-ʃos 'om-βres loh 'ru-ðos ma-'εh-tros ðe mi trih-te-'ri-a

But those men, the rough masters of my sadness

Que saben del mudo arremango que cabe a ese nombre,

ke 'sa-βen del 'mu-ðo_a-re-'maɲ-go ke 'ka-βε a_ε-se 'nom-βre

that know of the quiet excitement that fits in that name

Cuando hay pena llena sobre el aire overo de las curderías,

kwan-do_εi pe-na 'ʃe-na 'so-βre_εl 'ai-re_o-'βε-ro ðe lah kur-ðe-'ri-as

when there is pain full over the air ovary of the bars

Lo nombran, apenas, ladrando a su recuerdo
 lo 'nom-βran a-pe-nas la-ðran-do_a su re-kwɛr-ðo
they name it barely barking to its memory

La sombra de los tangos que ya fueron y no existen todavía.
 la 'som-βra ðe loh 'taŋ-gos ke ʃa 'fwɛ-ron i no_ek-sih-tɛn to-ða-βi-a
the shadow of the tangos that have been and don't exist yet

UNA VOZ DE ESE DOMINGO

Nuestra María de Buenos Aires.
 'nwɛ-stra ma-'ri-a ðe βwɛ-nos 'ai-rɛs
Our María of Buenos Aires

DUENDE

De olvido eres entre todas las mujeres...
 ðɛ_ol-βi-ðo_ 'ɛ-rɛs 'ɛn-trɛ 'to-ðas las mu-'xɛ-rɛs
Of oblivion you are between all women

Presagio eres entre todas las mujeres...
 prɛ-'sa-xjo_ 'ɛ-rɛs 'ɛn-trɛ 'to-ðas las mu-'xɛ-rɛs
An omen you are between all women

***Domingarios refer to people who only practice their faith during the Sunday service, and are not devout for the remainder of the week.**