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### Another Look At The History Of Tango: The Intimate Connection Of Rural And Urban Music In Argentina At The Beginning Of The Twentieth Century

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## Chapter 2

# Another Look at the History of Tango

## *The Intimate Connection of Rural and Urban Music in Argentina at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*

Julia Chindemi and Pablo Vila

Since the late nineteenth century, popular music has actively participated in the formation of different identities in Argentine society, becoming a very relevant discourse in the production, not only of significant subjectivities, but also of emotional and affective agencies. In the imaginary of the majority of Argentines, the tango is identified as “music of the city,” fundamentally linked to the city of Buenos Aires and its neighborhoods. In this imaginary, the music of the capital of the country is distinguished from the music of the provinces (including the province of Buenos Aires), which has been called *campera*, *música criolla*, native, folk music, etc. This way of understanding Argentine music establishes a very well-marked differentiation between tango and folk music, a differentiation that this chapter tries to question. Our thesis is that until well into the 1930s, such a separation between music of the city (identified with tango), and music that would later be identified as folkloric (but that at the time was called *campera*, *criolla*, etc.) was not so relevant in both the repertoires of the most important national singers of the time, and the repertoires of the most successful orchestras of the time. This is not only evident in the repertoires, but also in the music and lyrics of the songs of the period in question, in the artistic trajectories of singers and musicians, and in the recordings of those years.

By the time of the centennial (1910), certain elite circles postulated that the genuinely national culture was the one that had existed before the massive European immigration of the late nineteenth century. That authenticity was associated with the figure of the gaucho, and from the perspective that concerns us here, his guitar and the rural world that surrounded him—a world whose imaginary coincides with the geography of the Buenos Aires pampa and the regions more integrated in the agricultural export market (La Pampa, and the southern portions of Santa Fe and Entre Ríos).

The tensions between that image of the nation linked to the gaucho and the existence of large sectors of the population of other lineages or non-Spanish origins have been analyzed through the follow-up of the topics of *criollismo*.<sup>1</sup> In a period when the *criollo* is almost completely assimilated in a broad sense to the popular (whether of rural or urban origin), the mass consumption of the *folletín* (pulp novels)<sup>2</sup> and the circus incorporate,<sup>3</sup> together with the representation of the gaucho, “both the experience of the immigrants as well as the emerging culture of tango” (Chein 2011, 30, our translation).

How did popular music relate to this core of *criollista* identification and recognition? As it usually does, with a double process: on the one hand, “reflecting” certain pre-existing social conditions (as proposed by the thesis of the structural homology between music and society); but, on the other, as an important social agent, “building” realities from its signifying and affective capacities (Vila 2014). Because, after all, around the centennial, music became just another of the inevitable manifestations used to redefine the Argentineness embodied in the gaucho. As Leopoldo Lugones famously wrote at the time, “despite the profusion of guitars in the peasants’ households that the Indians looted, they did not adopt them. Only in the last years of the pampa war [the war against the Indians] did some begin to play the accordion, whose unpleasant shriek was more in keeping with their musical preferences” (Lugones 1944, 56, our translation). An unfriendly way by which Lugones, a strong advocate of *criollismo*, in a single sentence stigmatizes both the Indians and the recent European immigrants, “guilty” of the introduction of the unpleasant and shrill accordion.

Far-ranging in time and space, the gaucho’s musical sensibility crusade against the Indian was perceived to be more successful than the other, the one that had to be implemented vis-à-vis the massive European migratory population and the different manifestations of its “unpleasant shriek” (epitomized by the presence of the milongas *tangueras*, the popular language that eventually became *lunfardo*, or the body language of its preferred dance, the tango).

Those disagreeable shrieks are linked to one of the unwanted consequences of the changes produced in the popular sectors by the oligarchic development model launched in 1880 (highly relevant to our subject): their high rate of musical literacy. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were approximately 500,000 musical scores circulating in Buenos Aires “which were associated with the presence of numerous official conservatories and many more private ones, usually organized in family houses by music teachers” (Cibotti 2011, 99, our translation). Upon this solid basis of musical consumption that already existed on the streets, and was also habitual in the circus rings and stages of the River Plate theaters (i.e., in both Argentina and Uruguay), a monumental recording industry began being built in the 1920s.<sup>4</sup> In the context of this frenzied transformation, the tango is being outlined as

a cultural artifact supporting the integration of the European immigrants into the nation, but without neglecting continuous references to the countryside and the life and circumstances of gauchos.

Around 1920, the repertoire of many of the most important singers of the time, the so-called national singers—Carlos Gardel, Rosita Quiroga, Agustín Magaldi, and Ignacio Corsini—included both tango and rural music. In the context of the identitarian changes that redefined the meanings of “the national” and “the porteño” since 1880, the commercial success of the repertoire of the “canción criolla” (*estilos, vales criollos, zambas, cifras, gatos, tonadas, milongas, chacareras*, etc.), its popular presence well into the 1930s, and the complexity of the tango phenomenon itself—as dance, music, and poetry—forces us to investigate more deeply the relationships that existed between these musical traditions.<sup>5</sup>

### RIVER PLATE MUSIC, THE FIRST TANGOS, AND PORTEÑO IDENTITY

When tango was born at the end of the nineteenth century in the Rio de la Plata, the lyrics were not very important, or functioned as mere improvised choruses. It was borne in close relation to urban and suburban poverty (of both the native Argentines and the European immigrants). In this context, popular music began to transform and account for the difficult coexistence of the contrasts derived from the nineteenth-century modernization project: criollos and European immigrants; rural artisans and laborers; workers in new urban factories, the railways, and the ox carts, among others.

A description of the music of the popular sectors is offered in a River Plate songbook written in 1883:

In the outskirts of the city [the milonga] is so widespread that today the milonga is a must in every low-class dance hall. It is sometimes heard played on guitars, accordions, a comb kazoo, and by traveling musicians who play flute, harp, and violin. It is also the domain of the organ grinders, who have arranged it and played it with the style of a danza or habanera. [...] The milonga is also danced in the second-rate casinos of the 11 de Septiembre and Constitución markets, and in the dance halls and wakes of the cart drivers, soldiery, and *compadraje*. (Lynch [1883] 1925, 39–40, our translation)

The proliferation of images of places where poor people encountered music is extremely heterogeneous: low-class dance halls, casinos, markets, and wakes. It is necessary here to recall the rapid social change experienced by Argentina in general and the city of Buenos Aires in particular at the beginning of the

twentieth century. Thus, if, on the one hand, Buenos Aires grew from 187,000 inhabitants in 1869 to 1,576,000 in 1914, on the other hand, the number of Europeans living there was astonishing: in the period in question, foreigners constituted 50% of the city's total population. Tango, as well as the *sainete* (a theater of burlesque character), mixed criollo and immigrant themes to symbolically synthesize the transition.

But in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tango was only one genre (and not very identifiable as a separate genre yet) within a panoply of other genres that held a dominant place in the criollo songbook (which included *cifras*, *estilos*, *zambas*, and *milongas*). Héctor Ángel Benedetti, using the work of Carlos Vega, defines this songbook as follows:

This musical scene [...] derived from the fusion of two great songbooks: the Western (from the South American Hispanic heritage) and the Eastern songbook (from the South American Portuguese heritage), both dominating the non-aboriginal folklore of the entire continent [...] the contact of the Pacific and Atlantic coasts where, in colonial times, the Plata provinces were situated, succeeded in making the central region of Argentina a rich area of exchange. All of it is defined as the area of the Western criollo songbook. It is from this general unit that Gardel took his repertoire, giving preference within it to the manifestations of the well-known *cancionero platense* [the songbook from the River Plate], of which the *estilo* is its most publicized exponent. (Benedetti N/ Da, our translation)

The heir and main promoter of this songbook is Ángel Villoldo (1861–1919). Remembered today for his emblematic tangos (*El choclo*, *El Porteñito*, *La morocha*, *El esquinazo*, *El Cachafaz*, etc.), Villoldo also composed criollo songs throughout his entire career.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, Eduardo Romano (2009, 27) says, “Ángel Villoldo [...] used to play the guitar and sing with a *payadoresco* [like countryside payadores] style, which meant not only that he was able to improvise, but also that he never submitted his performance to a fixed, frozen text” (our translation). And this he did not only with his rural songs, but also with some of his tangos, like *El Porteñito*. Concerning the variety of criollo songs written by Villoldo, Tito Rivadaneira (2014, 16) writes the following: “He was an author and composer of rural music and even went so far as to publish a book in 1889, *Popular Argentine Songs to Sing with a Guitar*; and in the second decade of the twentieth century produced a new series of *estilos*, criollo songs, and waltzes [...] His gaucho facet led him to participate in *contrapuntos payadoriles* [music contests among payadores] with renowned payadores” (our translation). His rural compositions include *Recuerdo de mis pagos* (Memories of My Hometown), *Alborada Campera* (Dawn in the Countryside), *La criollita del pago* (The Little Criolla from My

Hometown), *Cariño gaucho* (Gaucho Affection), and *Brisas camperas* (Rural Breezes).<sup>7</sup>

As we shall see later, a brief review of the significance of the “national singers” of the 1920s and 1930s, epitomized by Carlos Gardel, may shed light on the phenomenon of the wide-ranging repertoires that seem to characterize the taste for popular music in the early part of the twentieth century.

It is interesting to note that, apparently, this type of repertoire was not liked by some academics dedicated to the study of “criollo music,” such as Vicente Forte, who, in 1925, as an introduction to the re-edition of Ventura Lynch’s *Cancionero Rioplatense* [River Plate Songbook] (originally published in 1883), writes that, in an upcoming study that will be published on “the true spirit of the music of the pampa,” it will be shown that “this music, which is above all sober, has been bastardized by the suburban infiltrations of the city of Buenos Aires” (Forte 1925, IX, our translation).

The reference to pampa music leads us to recall that the impact of massive European immigration was not confined to the city of Buenos Aires (or even to its ever-expanding outskirts), but extended to the entire littoral zone of the country and to the territory of the newly founded province of Buenos Aires:

Today, the large number of portable street organs [*organitos*] that populates our countryside has introduced among the gauchos the waltz, the *cuadrilla*, the polka, the mazurka, the habanera, and the *shotis*. In the northern part of Buenos Aires province, these musical genres are already preferred to the original ones [i.e., the pampean music genres]. There are countrymen who admirably perform them on the guitar and even on the accordion [...] [On the contrary] in the southern part of the province the expressions of national feeling have not yet disappeared. Wherever you go, you cannot hear anything other than the homeland’s music [*música patria*]. However, the advancing civilization has already begun to popularize polkas, waltzes, mazurkas, and habaneras. (Lynch 1883 [1925], 43, our translation)

Infiltrations, squeals ... and dances. In Buenos Aires’ outskirts, though perhaps also in the countryside, there was a kind of milonga that was probably not very solemn, but rather danceable and instrumental. Sometimes it had mischievous or lewd lyrics that reproduced street speech (urban or rural) and/or could include expressions like *quevachaché* (*que vas a hacer*, literally “what are you gonna do,” but also “we do not have any other choice”), or slang terms [*lunfardismos*] like *mina cabrera* [angry/fighting woman], *turra* [whore], *afanar* [to steal], and so on. The milonga as a danceable genre and/or excuse for the improvisation of payadores coexisted with these types of songs that began to be distinguished within the criollo/countryside matrix, and at the beginning of the twentieth century began to be recorded under the label

“tango criollo.” In turn, the national repertoire could also include another type of milonga that was (and still is) usually associated with the music of the countryside, not with the tango (and less with the danceable tango).

[This] other milonga ... belongs to the family of the three-three-two, and is predominantly suitable for singing, accompanied, in principle, only by guitar. In 1884 it was incorporated into the *payada de contrapunto* [improvised song contest], after passing a stage in which it was considered not sufficiently worthy of the art of the payadores. During the twentieth century, the singing milonga will become an identitarian element of great weight in the Rio de la Plata, with several subspecies, of which at least two very popular ones still exist: “*oriental*” [from the Eastern shores of the Uruguay river, usually meaning “Uruguayan”], and *pampeana* [from Buenos Aires province and neighborhood regions]. (Aharonían 2014, 443 our translation)<sup>8</sup>

The new popular music repertoire reveals in the lyrics not only the outskirts’ *acriollado* language (used by the countrymen) or *alunfardado* (city slang), but also a mix of cultisms of the archaic Spanish of payadores and singers of couplets, which, together with the old linguistic expressions popular in the countryside, vulgarisms, and the emergence of *lunfardismos*, presents—from the point of view of language—a surprising complexity, as demonstrated in several of the tango lyrics written by Vicente Greco (1888–1924) or Ángel Villoldo.

What is interesting to note here is that in these early songs it is possible to detect, almost archaeologically, changes in the identitarian maps of the River Plate. Only with the passing of time (and the invention of their traditions) would these songs be defined as either “nationals” (Argentina or Uruguay); or, in the Argentine case, as Porteños (belonging to the city-port of Buenos Aires) or provincial (belonging to Buenos Aires province). Two songs exemplify the heterogeneity of this extended criollo matrix. Our first example is *La morocha*<sup>9</sup> (Saborido and Villoldo 1905), which its sheet music describes as a “tango criollo,” a song that, although from the point of view of its authorship still belongs to the bi-national repertoire (Uruguay and Argentina) (written by Ángel Villoldo, Argentine, and Enrique Saborido, Uruguayan), from the point of view of its topics, reinforces very early the regional identity of Buenos Aires and its rural surroundings:<sup>10</sup>

*Soy la gentil compañera  
del noble gaucho porteño,  
la que conserva el cariño  
para su dueño.*

I am the kind companion  
of the noble gaucho of Buenos Aires,  
who saves her affection  
for her owner [meaning the owner of her  
heart].

In this song, the phrase “*noble gaucho porteño*” refers—according to our interpretation—to the inseparability of the city and the rural world that initially characterized the suburban space in which tango was born. What is particularly interesting in this song is that the condition of gaucho and Porteño is not only inseparable, but such a local identity is expressed without mixing or using any rural linguistic expression, despite referring exclusively to the pampa’s landscape and its habitual icons (the pair countryman/horse, the *mate*, the ranch, and the *estilo* genre of music).<sup>11</sup> And the Porteño as an exclusive city dweller identification as we interpret it today? Well, there is no city slang (*lunfardo*) for this either:

*Soy la que al paisano  
muy de madrugada  
brinda un cimarrón.  
Yo, con dulce acento,  
junto a mi ranchito,  
canto un estilo  
con tierna pasión,  
mientras que mi dueño  
sale al troceteo  
en su redomón.*<sup>12</sup>

I’m the one who gives the countrymen  
at the crack of dawn  
a mate without sugar.  
I, with a sweet tone,  
next to my little shack,  
sing a little *estilo*  
with tender passion,  
while my owner [of my heart]  
trots away  
on his horse.

The allusions to the countryman, to the cherished home (the *pago*), and to the rural world described in the song refer to the Porteño late-nineteenth-century identity, to the unitarian perception that existed between the urbanized city of Buenos Aires and the Buenos Aires countryside. This Porteño identity, which does not distinguish the countryside from the city, was particularly strengthened during the tumultuous period of national organization that followed the fall of Juan Manuel de Rosas as governor of the province of Buenos Aires (1852), when the civic militias of the province became the main military body used to remove Buenos Aires from the Argentine Confederation (1852–1861). If today Porteño refers exclusively to the inhabitants of the city of Buenos Aires, in 1880 the word still referred to anyone who lived in the province of Buenos Aires.<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the modernist literary culture quickly poeticized that identity by placing it “within the borders” of the city of Buenos Aires and transforming it into an identity linked to the city’s *barrios* [neighborhoods] (like Evaristo Carriego).<sup>14</sup> But it is possible to claim that in *La morocha*, the label “Porteño” still refers to an identity closer to the city set in the pampa.

Until its federalization in 1880, Buenos Aires did not exist without its rural surroundings. Since 1860, the city stretched in several directions with the original railway lines linking the few villages that existed in the nearby



countryside—now territory of the province of Buenos Aires—such as Morón, Quilmes, or San Isidro; and especially “founding new ones, whose creation is already part of an incipient process of expansion that is going to accelerate at the beginning of the twentieth century” (Gorelik 2013, 26–27, our translation). In this fluidity of city-countryside, the “city pampa” was also valued by the native elite in terms of a new cultural key capable of joining pleasure and progress, beauty and utility. A “rural urbanity that begins in the smallholdings and granges bordering the city, and that turns doubly outward and inward, towards the countryside and the city” (Silvestri 2011, 192, our translation).

From this perspective, the “noble gaucho Porteño” of 1905 coincides with the description (of sociological pretensions) of the “current gaucho” that Ventura Lynch recognizes as his contemporary in 1883, although this time, with two subtypes: the real one and the *compadre*.<sup>15</sup> The *compadre* never forsakes the *compadras*. He always makes a lot of noise: “He is the average guy between the real gaucho [*sic*] and the *compadrito* of the capital. *Milonguero* like nobody else, his songs are always sprinkled with *compadre* and aggressive jibes” (Lynch 1883 [1925], 13, our translation). Gaucho/*compadrito*, noble gaucho Porteño, the dynamism of social encounters at the outskirts goes back and forth with its music to the center of a “capital” that had hardly become one, and had still not reached its current territorial limits, neighborhood physiognomy, or the Porteño identity with which we associate Buenos Aires nowadays.

It is not a coincidence that the invaluable musical references of Ventura Lynch were part of a copious compilation of the “River Plate songbook,” whose objective was to “trace” the physiognomy of a nation, which at the time of its reprinting by Forte in 1925, seemed to be fading away with the changes brought about by the modernization process. Forte talks about what the work of Lynch wanted to portray, the life of the gaucho “threatened by the cosmopolitanism that followed the *capital question* of the Republic” (Forte 1925, VI, our translation, emphasis in the original).<sup>16</sup> How not to recognize still in that “average type” the boasting of Villoldo’s *The Porteñoito*?

*Soy hijo de Buenos Aires,  
por apodo “El porteñoito,”  
el criollo más compadrito  
que en esta tierra nació.  
Cuando un tango en la vigüela  
rasguea algún compañero  
no hay nadie en el mundo entero  
que baile mejor que yo.*

I am a son of Buenos Aires,  
they call me “El Porteñoito,”  
the toughest criollo  
ever born in this land.  
When one of my buddies strums a  
tango on the guitar  
there is nobody in the whole world  
who dances better than me.

Since 1910, thanks to radio broadcasting and the expansion of the recording industry, much of this large and heterogeneous criollo songbook—which, at first very timidly, already included tango—is being consolidated as a *national* repertoire, and is going to subsist well into the 1930s.<sup>17</sup> The high level of popularity reached by its interpreters, known at the time as “national singers” (Carlos Gardel, Rosita Quiroga, Ignacio Corsini, and Agustín Magaldi, among others), confirms what we discussed above. The trajectory of these artists in the 1920s and 1930s is a clear example of how the tango, step by step, was opening a place for itself in the criollo songbook, but without completely displacing the music of the most popular repertoire of the time.

Ricardo García Blaya, on the website Todo Tango (accessed on March 21, 2017), states that the label “national singer” comes to reflect the nature of their repertoire:

In general folkloric *surero*—music characteristic of the plains of the province of Buenos Aires—composed of cifras, estilos, zambas, milongas, and, that from the beginning of the twentieth century, incorporates the “tango milongueado” of picaresque and almost always anonymous lyrics, to finally include, later on, the “tango canción” [tango with a well-developed story line]. It is evident that our national singer has an indisputable relation with the payador—a pioneer in musical and criolla poetry [*sic*—in equal measure for both their repertoire and the style of their interpretations.<sup>18</sup> (Our translation)

The growing importance of tango in those wide-ranging repertoires throughout the 1920s is accompanied by other changes in the local music scene that give more visibility to tango. First, we can mention the expansion of exclusively instrumental combos or small orchestras. Thus, García Blaya comments, “the typical trios of the old guard—guitar, flute, and violin—by incorporating first the *bandoneón* and then the piano, were transformed into quartets, quintets, and sextets. To communicate to the public that they performed exclusively tangos, they added to the name of the combo or orchestra two words: “típica [typical] and criolla,” or only the first one” (our translation). Secondly, García Blaya continues,

The national singer, almost always accompanied only by guitars, coexisted for many years with these orchestral formations that performed tango only in instrumental form. They were two lanes running in parallel. On the one hand, the soloists accompanied by small ensembles or simply by guitars; and on the other the orchestras, generally sextets that also performed tangos with lyrics, but the melody was sung by the instruments, either in solos or in duets, but without any singer. At most a very short chorus of very short duration performed by the musicians themselves. (García Blaya N/D, our translation.)

Thirdly, the milonga is quite possibly one of the strands that converges in the tango and expands its repertoire.

When we say that the tango had been playful and brisk, we use to say that it was *amilongado* [like a milonga]. But when it becomes more unhurried, we will also hear that such a tango is a tango *amilongado*. The issue is that the concept of milonga used for each definition is different. The milonga is probably one of the strands that converges in the tango, but in the nineteenth century there were at least two musical species called milonga, which the inhabitants of the Rio de la Plata differentiate, but do not feel the need to denominate differentially. There is a quick, angular milonga, with an abundance of sixteenth note/eighth note/sixteenth note gestures that resolve to an eighth or quarter note on a strong beat. (Aharonián 2014, 442, our translation)<sup>19</sup>

Fourthly, there is the importance of the “music to be danced” (*bailables*). As we pointed out above, Carlos Gardel, Rosita Quiroga, Ignacio Corsini, and Agustín Magaldi were the most popular national singers of the period of which we are speaking. Obviously, Carlos Gardel was the most popular of all and García Blaya reminds us that at the beginning of his artistic career “he made fifteen recordings for the Columbia Record label that are a good testimony of this early stage of his career, where we can witness a folkloric repertoire without tangos” (García Blaya N/D, our translation).

### The Repertoire of National Singers, Orchestras, and Changes in the Record Industry

One aspect of the varied repertoires we are discussing in this chapter, and that subscribes to this idea of an “enlarged city that also includes parts of its campaign”<sup>20</sup> is the fact that there are many tangos that are part of the repertoire of the national singers and orquestas típicas that address the countryside or identify with the rural world in their titles: *La morocha*, *Idilio campero* (Countryside Idyll), *Senda de abrojos* (Thistle Path), *Alborada campera* (Dawn in the Countryside), *Flor Campera* (Flower from the Countryside), *Expresión campera* (Expression of the Countryside), *Cielito mío* (My Little Heaven), *La provincianita* (The Provincial Girl), *Sentimiento gaucho* (Gaucho Feeling), *Se sentaron las carretas* (The Carts Sat Down) (branded in the sheet music as “tango gaucho”), *La carreta* (The Cart), *El buey solo* (The Lonely Ox), *El palenque* (The Tethering Post), *La tranquera* (The Wooden Gate of the Farm), *Recuerdo de la pampa* (Remembrance of the Pampa), *El baqueano* (The Rural Guide), *El cuatrero* (The Cattle Rustler), *El matrero* (The Shoddy Gaucho), *La criolla*, *Expresión criolla* (Criolla Expression), *La yerra* (The Cattle Branding), *Nido gaucho* (Gaucho Nest), *Flor de cardo*

(Thistle Flower), *Lloró el gaucho* (The Gaucho Cried), *El Gaucho, Campero* (From the Countryside), *Reliquias criollas* (Criollo Relics), *Reliquia gaucha* (Gaucho Relic), *La montura* (The Saddle), *El estribo* (The Stirrup),<sup>21</sup> *Pampa, Bota de potro* (Colt Boot), *La torcazita* (The Little Ringdove), *El cencerro* (The Cowbell), *La gauchita*, *El gauchito*, *Queja gaucha* (Gaucho Complain), *Temple gaucho* (Gaucho Spirit), and *Muchachita del campo* (Little Girl from the Countryside), to name but a few.<sup>22</sup> But in addition to these tangos, as we mentioned above, the repertoires were full of criollo songs well into the 1930s.

### Carlos Gardel

In the context of this two-headed identity that implies the firm belief that Buenos Aires must lead the entire nation, tango is only one of the discourses that begin to compete for the redefinition of a “criollo soul.” For example, of the fourteen songs recorded by Gardel<sup>23</sup> as a soloist in Buenos Aires for the Columbia company in 1912, nine are countryside songs (estilos, cifras, vidalitas) and three are waltzes; of the eight recorded as soloist for Odeón in 1917, only one is characterized as a tango: *Mi noche triste* (My Sad Night), considered by most critics as the first “tango canción.”<sup>24</sup>

If we return to Gardel’s recordings of 1912, we find a very interesting song that shows an extremely amusing mixture of rural slang and lunfardo, summarizing the coexistence of the countryside with the city in the syntagm “china cabrera” [angry/fighting rural girl].

### *Mi china cabrera* (1912)

*Que te creés si sabés chorra  
de que soy algún sotreta,  
pa’ que me estires la jeta  
y chillés como cotorra,  
mirá vieja sos muy zorra ...  
el haberme acuellarao  
con usted más condenao  
aura te da por decir:*

...  
*que te vas a apolillar  
si no te llevo de farra,  
de que toco la guitarra  
por hacerte fastidiar.*

What do you think that you know thief  
that I am some kind of deceitful person,  
to stretch your face [getting angry]  
and screech like a parrot,  
look old lady, you are very sneaky ...  
to have me restrained  
with you I am more condemned  
now you are starting to say

...  
that you are going to sleep  
if I do not take you partying,  
that I play the guitar  
to annoy you.

Therefore, while *cabrera*, *chorra*, *jeta*, *apolillar*, and *farra* are lunfardo words, *china*, *sotreta*, *acuellarao*, *condenao*, and *aura* belong to the rural slang, something that shows how even songs of the era that clearly were not tangos, for example *Mi China Cabrera* (described as a “tango azarzuelado” [tango that sounds like a Spanish zarzuela]), continuously mixed rural and urban references as well. The invocation of the rural is still present in the tango well into the 1930s, when the city of Buenos Aires had already left behind the image of the “great village,” its neighborhoods had acquired their current physiognomy, the European demographic component outnumbered the criollo one, and the imaginary that linked the city to the province was no longer so prominent.

However, the songs of Gardel’s repertoire maintained “mixed” characteristics throughout his entire career, beyond the growing hegemony of tango in his solo career. And the use of “mixed” in quotation marks is done deliberately, since the impression we have is that both these national singers and their audiences did not feel that the new tangos they were incorporating into their repertoires were something “completely different” from the rest of such repertoires, but perhaps a new version of what they were normally doing. A new version that, still mixing musical elements (for instance, the danceable milonga so prominent in the origins of tango) and lyrics (as we mentioned above, there are continuous allusions to the countryside in the titles and lyrics of the tangos) of the criollo songbook, was developed to fulfill the demands for “bailables” [danceable ones] that audiences increasingly requested from these national singers.

And if it is true that there are some elements to support the idea of a “replacement” of the criollo song by the tango in Gardel’s repertoire over time, it is also true that the former never completely disappeared from his repertoire, and Gardel dies in 1935 being known, simultaneously, as “El zorzal criollo” [the criollo thrush] (a nickname that alludes to his rural music side) and “El morocho del Abasto” [the morocho from the Abasto Buenos Aires neighborhood]<sup>25</sup> (a nickname that makes reference to his urban endeavors).<sup>26</sup> Thus, if there is a clear “campero” hegemony in the repertoire of the recordings made by the duo Gardel-Razzano (1917–1925), his acoustic recordings as a soloist for the Odeón company indicate a certain constant: only six of the thirteen recordings are labeled “tango” in 1920 and, even adding the milongas, tango reaches barely 60% of his acoustic recordings as a soloist in 1921. It is the year 1922 that marks a tendency that will be reinforced throughout the decade, since twenty-one of twenty-eight songs recorded in that year are tangos or milongas. Nevertheless, as late as 1925, Gardel introduces a handful of compositions written by Chazarreta into his repertoire, that is to say, folk songs originating in the Argentine northwest, extending the geographic coverage of his rural music well beyond the pampa and its surroundings.

And what is seen very clearly is a preponderance of tango in his electric recordings from 1926 on; recordings that, curiously, also show the appearance of other non-Argentine danceable genres, such as foxtrot, shimmy, or pasodobles.<sup>27</sup>

It is very important to note, however, that the international projection of Gardel's repertoire not only includes tangos but also criollo songs and waltzes, among others. For example, the criollo waltzes, zambas, or estilos of the criollo songbook are maintained until his death, not only in Gardel's recordings for the Victor company in New York, but particularly in the recordings that musicalized his films, with themes such as *Rosas de otoño* (Autumn Roses), *Añoranzas* (Yearnings), *El carretero* (The Cart Driver), *Mañanitas de sol* (Sunny Mornings), *Criollita decí que sí* (Little Criolla, Please Say Yes), and *Lejana tierra mía* (My Faraway Land), among others.

One can access a YouTube video in which Gardel plays *El rosal* (The Rose Garden) in his first feature film, *Las luces de Buenos Aires* (Lights of Buenos Aires), filmed in Paris in 1931. *El rosal* is a typical folk song composed by Gerardo Matos Rodríguez and Manuel Romero. In the original score of the song, it is labeled simply as "song," but its instrumentation seems to correspond to a criollo waltz.<sup>28</sup> Gardel performs the song dressed as a gaucho, playing the guitar with a style clearly associated with the traditional payadores, by a campfire, and surrounded by other gauchos with their horses. It is impossible to stage a scene more linked to the countryside.<sup>29</sup> The fact that the author of this folk song is Gerardo Matos Rodríguez adds more elements to the central thesis of this chapter, that is, the inseparability of the rural (gauchesco) and city repertoires well into the 1930s. Here we must remember that Matos Rodríguez is the author of *La cumparsita* (The Little Carnival Troupe), considered by many the most famous classic tango of all time. That Matos Rodríguez is Uruguayan and not an Argentine composer adds even more weight to our thesis about the inseparability of the trajectory of Argentine and Uruguayan popular music, a subject that, due to lack of space, we cannot develop further.

In another scene of the film, now in a bar or canteen, already stripped of his gaucho outfit (but still keeping a rural kind of scarf tied around his neck that continues to "mark him," somehow, as a character linked to the countryside), Gardel sings his famous tango *Tomo y obligo* (I Drink and Insist) (which he composed, with lyrics by Manuel Romero, who also wrote the lyrics of *El rosal*), this time accompanied by bandoneon and violin. And here, it is not the musical genre of the song (clearly a tango), nor the dress of its interpreter (more or less urban), but the lyrics of the tango that refer to that inescapable relationship between the city and its hinterlands.

The lyrics of *Tomo y obligo* have clear references to the rural environment, because when in the song Gardel complains that he is "without a friend, far

away from my place of origin," he also states that, "if the grasses could speak, this pampa would tell you how much I loved her, how feverishly I adored her"; where the lyrics do not speak, for example, that the "city pavers" would fulfill that role.<sup>30</sup> Although it is true that the character played by Gardel (a rancher from Buenos Aires province) is conducive to this mixture of the countryside and the city, the mere choice of this character for his first talking film is already evidence in itself of the inseparability between the countryside and the city. We have to remember as well that this wide-ranging repertoire was not only part of other Gardel films in which he does not perform as a landowner, as in *Cuesta abajo*, filmed in 1934, where he plays a tango singer, and where he sings *Criollita decí que sí* (in a solo performance with his guitar), surrounded by gauchos ... but this time dressed in a tuxedo; but is also a constant characteristic of his live performances.

### Rosita Quiroga

These same tendencies are also present in the repertoire of Rosita Quiroga, another very popular singer of the time: a progressive modification of the repertoire tending to incorporate more tangos, with a climax in 1926 when she recorded thirty-seven tangos (which represented more than 90% of her recordings that year). This exclusive artist of the Victor label had debuted in 1923 as a singer of "variedades" [vaudeville theater] in the Empire Theater, as a member of the duo Quiroga-Hugo. She defined her repertoire of the early 1920s in the following way: "I performed mainly 'criollo-type songs', of the South, not of the North. Estilos ... things like that."<sup>31</sup>

This reference to "criollo-type songs of the South" is more than symptomatic, since the interview takes place in the mid-1970s, when many things have happened to the "criollo-type songs," quite different from the criollo things mentioned by Rosita Quiroga in the 1920s. What are we alluding to?

The native, country music (that would later be called "folkloric") circulating in the Buenos Aires of the 1920s was mostly that of the Pampa region (basically the province of Buenos Aires and the surrounding littoral), and its music is still known as "musica surera or sureña" [southern music]. It is evident that the music of the rest of Argentina reached the city of Buenos Aires before the massive immigration from the interior provinces toward the end of the 1930s. For instance, the performances of Andrés Chazarreta in the 1920s were anthological, and the songbook compiled in Buenos Aires by Lehmann-Nitsche at the beginning of the century contains many songs from the north.<sup>32</sup> What we want to emphasize here is that the internal migrants that went in mass to Buenos Aires in the 1940s were the ones who, for the first time in Argentine history, massively brought their regional folklore traditions "from the North" (but also, obviously, from the west and the eastern littoral).

Originally cultivated almost exclusively by these migrants in Buenos Aires, this folkloric tradition of the North was fervently accepted by the urban middle class with the burst of the folklore boom of the 1960s, mostly based on the zamba, a popular rhythm of the northern provinces, especially at that time, of Salta province.

Thus, what Rosita Quiroga is doing in the interview is to verbalize in relation to her choice of repertoire what the mixed lyrics of her songs and the varied repertoires of other artists like Gardel, Corsini, and Magaldi actually did, that is, to constantly mix the countryside with the city. In fact, during the promotion of one of her albums, she says that “if I currently sing danceable songs, it’s because the audience wants them. And I sing them, in part, against my own taste.” She felt compelled to clarify, in the same interview, that she did not begrudge it, while simultaneously advancing an uncomfortable explanation: “I like tango so much that I even wrote one” (Cañardo 2016, 4).

The staging of wide-ranging repertoires, today defined as folkloric and tangueros, tells us two things at the same time. On the one hand, that the selection of those repertoires was not the unilateral decision of the artists, but reflected a demand of the public to which the artists acquiesced. But, on the other hand, that during the decade of the 1920s the popularity of tango increased and popular artists, in an attempt to maintain such recognition, had to modify their habitual repertoires, often against their own personal tastes. And that Quiroga implicitly refers to tango using the term “bailables” [danceable songs] is more than interesting, since it gives us some clues to the role of the different musical manifestations in those mixed repertoires. Thus, it seems that the rural music was to “listen to,” while the tangos were to “dance to” (although, of course, the tango canción was also to “listen to,” and the ranchera, a rural danceable genre, became a very popular danceable music in the last part of the 1920s and first part of the 1930s).

Here, we must remember that in Buenos Aires there was no popular (in the sense of massive) close-embrace couple dance, so suggestive in the rituals of loving courtship. The ranchera in the late 1920s became very popular and filled a vacant niche for this important kind of danceable music, and competed for a while with tango, existing alongside the latter in the repertoire of the most important *orquestas típicas* of the period. But, step by step, tango became the close-embrace couple dance par excellence. This is where the tango finds an unsurpassed niche in popular taste (at least in the cities), not only because the choreography required of the bonded pair, but also because it allowed certain bodily movements of clear sensual and sexual connotations. And, by the way, that the danceable numbers were tangos raises questions regarding the function of the “tango canción,” given that many tangos of this kind of subgenre were not too danceable. We believe that the fact that many of these tango canciones were rhythmically very similar to certain expressions of



the traditional criollo songbook (milongas camperas, waltzes, etc.) supports our thesis on the importance of “mixed” repertoires, with the clarification of the use of the quotes in “mixed” that we referred to above. Obviously, there were certain “for export” guidelines put forward by the record labels, with the intention of expanding the market for music of Argentine origin and that undoubtedly influenced certain tendencies in the local market, but this line of argument fails to explain the continuity and even growing popularity and renewal of the “criollo-type songs” (of which the above-mentioned craze for rancheras is an important case) well into the 1930s.

### Ignacio Corsini

The appeal of the “criollo-type songs” to which Rosita Quiroga refers can be seen in the career of another very important interpreter of the time who has remained in the history of Argentine music as a “tango singer”: Ignacio Corsini (an Italian who migrated to Argentina from Sicily). Corsini was popularly known as “The Singing Gentleman.”

Although Corsini’s discography reaches almost six hundred and fifty different titles in all kinds of genres, what people remember most about him (something fomented by Corsini himself, who wanted to perpetuate his legacy in that way) is thanks to the recordings of what could be defined as the *Ciclo Federal* [Federalist Cycle]. Although the Federalist Cycle is not exhausted by his compositions but expands back and forth in time in a suggestive complexity, it has been barely studied in detail. (Benedetti N/Db, our translation)

Broadly speaking, the Federalist Cycle defines a set of the most popular songs of the duo formed by the composer and guitarist Enrique Maciel (of African descent) and the poet Héctor Pedro Blomberg (of Paraguayan/Norwegian descent).<sup>33</sup> The Federalist Cycle started with the success of *La pulpera de Santa Lucía* (The Female Owner of the Santa Lucía Tavern) in 1929; and ended around 1939, when Corsini recorded *La china de la Mazorca* (The Mestizo Girl of Rosas’s Secret Police).<sup>34</sup> These songs are characterized by having the same dramatic knot: the confrontation between the historic factions of the Federalists and the Unitarians in the Buenos Aires province governed by Rosas (particularly during the dramatic turn that the regime underwent around 1840) before the event that completely transformed Argentine history, that is, the massive European migration in the late nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

There are several significant differences between the Federalist Cycle and the tango, and the Federalist Cycle and the rural repertoire previously analyzed. One of those differences refers to the symbolic space delimited by their lyrics. The songs of the Federalist Cycle do not claim the margins of the city

(suburban encounter, *orillero*,<sup>36</sup> between the countryside and the city), nor the European immigrants in order to place them center stage and to revalue Buenos Aires' neighborhoods, as tango does. Many of Blomberg-Maciél's songs of the Federalist Cycle appropriate the urban space and claim it as their own in a highly politicized struggle. At the same time, they remove Buenos Aires in time by reinstalling the city and its inhabitants in a continuum with the Buenos Aires countryside and its inhabitants, making the outskirts and the contact zone vanish—at a time when the frontier with the Indians had already disappeared around 1880. In a paradigmatic example, we have the city “besieged,” something that recalls the character of Amalia in the homonymous novel of the anti-Rosista Unitarian José Mármol. We are referring to *The Song of Amalia*, of 1933, a criollo waltz popularized by Corsini:

<i>La sangre del año cuarenta mojabá,</i>	The blood of 1840 wet
<i>tu rostro divino color de jazmín,</i>	your divine, jasmine colored face,
<i>doliente azucena de la tiranía,</i>	sorrowful lily of the tyranny,

The last line of the verse states that the city of Buenos Aires will never forget Amalia.

In this criollo Buenos Aires of the Federalist Cycle, the *mestizaje* (race mixing) of Indians and Spaniards that gave birth to the gaucho appears blurred, and the *mestizaje* of this population and the European immigration that “flooded” Argentina from 1880/1890 is displaced forty years into the past, locating it around 1830/1840.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the depiction of Buenos Aires urbanity also undergoes a time displacement: the contact zone (the “arrabal tanguero”) completely disappears from the lyrics and, instead, the old colonial denominations for neighborhoods are recovered, in sequence, to depict 1840s' Buenos Aires.<sup>38</sup> As Mario Sabugo sums up, historically, once the “barrio” label was used around 1729 to explain the “blocks and distances that Buenos Ayres has” in the function of the three *arrabales* (suburbs or outskirts) added to the original old town (“Alto de San Pedro, Barrio Recio, and Barrio de San Juan”), there is a continuous terminological oscillation “that goes from the term *barrio* [neighborhood] to equivalents such as *arrabal* [suburban], *cuartel* [barrack], *parroquia* [parish], *alcaldía* ... In 1734 (...) the Buenos Aires Town Council sanctions the creation of eight urban sectors of an administrative character, which it calls barracks (...) In 1769 the bishop makes an ecclesiastical division of the city in six different parishes” (see Sabugo 2004, 47, emphasis added). In the songs written by the Blomberg-Maciél duo, it is the southern region of the city where most of their characters live: the blonde tavern owner, chinas mazorqueras (mixed-race female members of the Rosas's secret police force), cute female mulattoes, treacherous black females, embroiderers, and male and female guitar players. That southern part of the city can refer to the “barrio del tambor” [drum

neighborhood], Montserrat or San Telmo, poor neighborhood, but never *arrabal*. It is there where courageous soldiers become gauchos payadores singing to their elusive women. One paradigmatic case is *La pulpera de Santa Lucía* (criollo waltz of 1929), which recreates a nineteenth-century Buenos Aires where the “chinas de las pulperías” [mixed-race women of indigenous and white heritage] experience a sensational physiognomic transformation, described as follows:

*Era rubia y sus ojos celestes,  
reflejaban la gloria del día,  
y cantaba como una calandria,*

She was blonde and her blue eyes  
reflected the glory of the day,  
and she sang like a lark,

The song continues, pointing out that the *pulpera* was the “flower of the old parish,” and there were no gauchos who did not love her, to the point that the soldiers of four different barracks yearned for her at the *pulperia*. A payador linked to the Unitarian general Lavalle, the lyrics suggest, was lucky enough to conquer her heart by 1840, and since then, “her blue eyes no longer light-up the Santa Lucia parish.”

Blonde and blue-eyed ... what happened to the “chinas of the barracks” conspicuously mentioned in the creole songs and tango stories? Sergio Pujol (2010) claims that the song “delays half a century” and presents itself with characteristics of learned poetry, but with scant sophistication in its simple lyrics. After all, it is not an urban portrait corresponding to the time of its production (there is no city slang, *lunfardismos*, for instance). But neither is any mention made of the kind of *mestizaje* that characterized the population of Buenos Aires until 1870 and that is alluded to when speaking of “chinas.”<sup>39</sup> There is not even a gaucho dialect when the lyrics refer to a rural world that has already disappeared (Pujol 2010, 54–55). However, if not the case for “the most popular pulpera”—who in the waltz has the status of a proprietor rather than that of a waitress or even a prostitute—it is possible to sustain that, in the songs of the Federalist Cycle that Corsini popularized, many of the “chinas of the barracks” (or women in general, we should say) are not always racially characterized. When that is the case, racialization refers to the intermingling between whites and the Afro-descendant population, and is completely subordinated to the political identity of the character, and the role that subsequently unfolds in a drama that is settled in strictly Porteño terms:

### *Tirana unitaria (Vals 1930)*

In the first couple of lines of the verse we quote, the composer of the song claims that he, being a good Federalist, tied the blue ribbon belonging to the female Unitarian tyrant on his guitar:

*y en noche de luna canté en tu ventana* and on moonlit nights I sang more  
 than one  
*más de un suspirante cielito infernal.* sighing and diabolical cielito by  
 your window

The song continues, pointing out that the tyrant lover told Cuitiño (the feared chief of Rosas's paramilitary police force, La Mazorca) that she was "more saintly than Encarnación."<sup>40</sup> Cuitiño (defined as a "good mazorquero") responds by swearing over his dagger that the Argentine Federation will look after her.

Another example in the same vein is *La bordadora de San Telmo* (The San Telmo Embroiderer) (Vals 1932):

*Hoy la serenata de amor y de sangre ...* Today the serenade of love  
 and blood ...  
*brillará en los ojos de aquellos que llaman* will shine in the eyes of those  
 who call  
*la linda mulata del Restaurador.*<sup>41</sup> the Restorer's [Rosas] beauti-  
 ful mulata.

Is it possible to relate the romantic disagreements of 1830/40 to the political crisis that opens up nationally with the presidential candidacy of Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1928 and the coup d'état of 1930, a time of particular uncertainty in the whole country? This was not a minor problem for those who identified themselves as Porteños. By 1930, the city had to rethink its identity not only regarding its relationship with the immigrants and its old hinterland—the Buenos Aires pampas; but also in relation to the rest of the country, that is, in its character as *federal* capital of the nation.<sup>42</sup> This does not mean that the "ethnic metamorphosis" of the *pulpera* is a minor issue at this juncture. However, beyond the metamorphosis of the *chinas* of the barracks without indigenous blood, we must ask ourselves why the black and mulatto population that was the fundamental support of the Rosas regime are now at the center of the Porteño scene in multiple versions of the popular songs (vales criollos and milongas) of the period. The lyrics that Homero Manzi wrote for some of the milongas he composed with Piana in the 1930s—both musicians unmistakably associated, not only with the tango culture, but also with its golden age in the 1940s—share with Blomberg's waltzes plain poetry lacking cultured language or lunfardo twists. Additionally, like Blomberg, Manzi also advances a resolved claim of a federal filiation, but this time, a federal stance that must defend itself against the treason of another caudillo Urquiza (who, by the way, also "federal" and fought against Rosas who counted Afro-Argentines among his most loyal defenders.

**Juan Manuel [de Rosas] (Milonga 1934. Manzi and Piana)**

After referring to Urquiza as a traitor, and announcing that Rosas's loyalists are waiting for him, the next verse states that Rosas's loyalists will fight for the glory:

<i>de tu estrella Federal,</i>	of your Federal star,
<i>con tamboril, los morenos,</i>	with drums, the black people,
<i>la Mazorca con puñal.</i>	the Mazorca with daggers.

Vindicating the figure of Juan Manuel de Rosas, the milonga expresses people's loyalty in a simple and direct way: beyond the use of some stylistic resources, there is no metaphor for imagining any kind of intermingling. A couple of years later, Piana and Manzi recorded *Milonga de los fortines* (The Milonga of the Small Forts), in whose lyrics the native population of the territory, the Indians, are a simple metonymy, and their habitat, "the Pampa, the land of the gaucho," desert and nostalgia:

***Milonga de los fortines* (Piana and Manzi 1937)**

<i>Milonga de cien reyertas</i>	Milonga of one hundred skirmishes
<i>templada como el valor.</i>	tempered like courage
<i>grito de pampa desierta</i>	shout of a deserted pampa

The milonga goes on to claim that what is crying out, with a singer's voice, is really an alert, and asserts that its role is to "take away pains," but confessing it "longs for a population" that is definitively gone.

We want to stress that, in the Federalist Cycle, it is possible to recognize in their waltzes, estilos, and milongas a nostalgic twist that refers to a city without immigrants and an extended and very iconic pampa without racial mixing. The Federalist Cycle expressed in its music the recreation of the most popular River Plate rhythms that had managed to migrate from the countryside to the city (or from the city to the countryside, and back to the city) to end up living together successfully in urban areas, regardless of their thematic referent. As Juan María Veniard points out from a musicological perspective:

The designation "vals criollo" appears in the late twenties, perhaps because of the novelty of the "ranchera," [which began to be composed after] 1926, to refer to the waltz rooted in the countryside, performed with accordion and guitar. The dissemination that the ranchera had in the nativist milieus seems to have pushed the composition and edition of the so-called "vales criollos," a designation created by the publishers for new and old pieces released for sale. So, waltzes composed earlier ... in the popular mode of the countryside, acquired

this designation. On occasion, what appears in the interior of the editions is called “vals,” due to the use of previous printing plates, but in the cover of the new editions appears as “vals criollo” or “valsecito criollo.” Many incorporated lyrics, as did the rancheras that were published during those years, because at that time we are witnessing the supremacy of the song, which pulled the tango as well. So, when in the 1930s, “valsecitos criollos” are written in the city of Buenos Aires (which would later become popular in the countryside), there was nothing more than the [old] Boston waltz that, by the way, had disappeared from the city dance halls. (Veniard 2013, 248, our translation)

Is it possible to recognize in this “acriollamiento del vals” [waltz becoming criollo] a process similar to that of “amilongamiento del tango” [tango becoming milonga]? In his last interview of 1994, the composer Sebastián Piana seems to confirm this hypothesis:

Can we talk of “Piana’s Revolution” as far as the milonga is concerned?

—It is, simply, the change from a milonga—which was regarded as belonging to the south and the Pampas, without dance or danced in private quarters, and liked by gauchos and payadores—, to the milonga porteña, attributed to Maffia and to me. Melodically they were quite similar. We owe the renewal of the Porteña and suburban milonga to a request that Rosita Quiroga made to Homero Manzi. We had given to her a tango that she would sing. However, she asked for a milonga. Astonished, Manzi told me; “Rosita asked me for a milonga.” I answered: but if all milongas are nearly the same thing, very much alike, which is why people improvise on them ... “Look Sebastián,” Manzi answered, “I don’t understand anything about milongas.” (Piana and Barrese N/D)

Rosita Quiroga’s “things of the south,” the “gauchos and payadores orilleros and milongueros” ... these re-inventions of “lo campero” [the rural] almost entering the 1940s coincide with the hypothesis that the phenomenon of popular criollismo would not have entered a rapid and “definitive extinction” in the early 1920s (as Prieto asserted in his most influential hypothesis) “but continued to occupy a central role in Argentine culture for at least the next two decades” (Adamovsky 2017, 52, our translation).<sup>43</sup>

From that perspective, we should consider the existence of a tango song like this:

***Chispazos de tradición* (Sparks of Tradition) (Tango song, Brancati-Ciaccio 1932)**

*¡Criollo de mis pampas!,  
¡Lejos se van tus pasos!,  
¡Sólo unos chispazos quedan  
de tradición!*

Criollo [gaucho] of my pampas!  
Your steps take you far!  
Only a few sparks of tradition  
remain!

The song ends pointing out that the gaucho is giving us his farewell accompanied by his "china of long braids"; and, in the sad solitude of the rural campfires, one perceives a growing sense of pain for the gaucho's absence.

That two authors of Italian origin (Branccati and Ciaccio) dedicate a tango song to the gaucho and his partner, who are supposedly seated around a campfire and overwhelmed by melancholy (which is the main emotion that pervades the entire song), is as symptomatic as the fact that Blomberg (of Norwegian/Paraguayan origin) is the main author of the Federalist Cycle, and that a Sicilian like Corsini is its main interpreter. On one hand, Buenos Aires in the 1920s and 1930s continues to process, in a complex way, the European (mostly Italian) floods of immigration that began in 1880 and extended, without interruption, until 1914. Both the Federalist Cycle and some milongas (like the milonga federal), or the tangos that follow the *Chispazos de tradición* style seem to be a description of Argentine history and traditions made by those who did not live them, but, precisely, by those who aided their total transformation and now, melancholically, yearn for what they, of course unwittingly, helped to destroy.

Is perhaps the tremendous popularity of the blonde "pulpera" due to the fact that it allowed the children of European immigrants (many of them blonde and blue-eyed, but who lived in Buenos Aires and certainly beyond the city too) to "imagine" a past linked to the gaucho tradition that, in fact, they never had and would have wished to have in order to buttress their full "belonging" to the nation?

The answer to this question is very complex and deserves other chapters to address different (although related) questions. The first question that deserves much greater attention is how do the popular emblems of the black or mulatto female (African-European mixed blood), the provincial "morena" (Native-European mixed), and the "blue-eyed" pulpera (of European heritage, but from different European countries) circulating in popular music in the late 1930s relate to each other? Is it possible to relate the centrality acquired by blackness in the Federalist Cycle to the popularity acquired by milongas *candombe* in the following decade? While we will not be able to develop this point here, it is important to highlight some clues that were opened by the study of the Federalist Cycle. From the point of view of the lyrics, it is possible to affirm that the metaphors and metonymies of the vals criollos, tangos, and milongas that represent blackness in the Federalist Cycle (Rosas's trumpets, black people's drums, mulata mazorquera) are giving way to the enunciation of blackness in a more direct way. This is achieved, on the one hand, through the humanization of the protagonists of the lyrics (for example, *Papá Baltasar* (Balthazar the Wise Man)—Piana and Manzi 1941; *Negra María*—Lucio Demare and Manzi 1941; *Ropa Blanca* (White Clothes)—Malerba and

Manzi 1943), which express vital issues such as childhood, death, and love. On the other hand, while in the Federalist Cycle blackness appears associated with a class alliance and a political faction (the Federales), in these milongas candombe, class does not appear associated with a particular political affiliation. The partisan dispute disappears, maintaining the class condition. *Papá Baltasar* offers a clear example. The song asks Balthazar not to forget Pedro:

<i>que mi niño es el más negro</i>	that my child is the blackest
<i>y el más pobre, Baltasar.</i>	and my child is the poorest, Balthazar.

This protagonism of blackness in the lyrics is reinforced by the direct allusion in the musical setting: it is now the candombe—an African rhythm par excellence—that expresses, without mediation, characters that could populate any poor neighborhood of Buenos Aires, while in the Federalist Cycle, the musical vehicle for the lyrics are criollo songs not necessarily related to people of African descent.

What are the reasons for these important changes in the tango of the 1930s and 1940s? Hypotheses abound. Matthew B. Karush (2012b) offers one of the most interesting. He considers that the transnational cultural industry plays a crucial role in that regard. After all, Argentine blackness circulated widely on the radio and in the cinema in this period, particularly, though not exclusively, in connection to tango, when the mass cultural marketplace of the 1920s and 1930s was fundamentally transnational.

Because of that, according to Karush, domestic producers needed to emulate the standards set by Hollywood movies and jazz music as well as to distinguish their own offerings: “In the case of jazz, particular racial images accompanied the music, including the idea of blackness as a source of primitive authenticity and of black people as a noble and long-suffering race. Under the powerful influence of this prestigious and ultra-modern import, tango composers and performers rediscovered the black roots of their own national music” (Karush 2012b, 217). There is no doubt that the cultural industry could have played a very important role in the diffusion and acceptance of blackness in the popular imagination, but that same popularity makes it imperative to investigate other ethnic identifications contemporary to the success of tango and jazz. In other words, why is there a great centrality and variety in female figures expressing different types and degrees of blackness, and a great displacement of meaning between the provincial *morena*, the Argentine *morocha*, or the black female of the outskirts?<sup>44</sup> What happens to the black popular figure of the *payador*, as Rioplatense as the candombe, but who is not a central character in the songs written by Manzi and Piana (whose homage to the *payadores* is *Betinotti*—a white *payador*)? The Federalist Cycle refers to blackness, but this reference seems quite removed from the



Hollywood view to which Karush alludes in his very innovative work. And, finally, we believe that it is time to give greater importance to the Uruguayan influence in the development of tango (and popular music in general, by the way) in Argentina, and to contemplate the possibility that the emergence of milongas-candombe in the 1930s may have to do with the influence of the many Uruguayan musicians performing on Buenos Aires stages, since candombe (and blackness in general) had never disappeared, as it did in Buenos Aires, from the Uruguayan music scene (see Andrews 2010).<sup>45</sup>

At the same time, in terms of popular music, throughout the 1930s it became clear that the “criollo-type song” of the national singers’ repertoire was being redefined and such a redefinition was done within the framework of a growing popular nationalism. From this perspective, the other question that would be interesting to investigate is the relationship between intellectuals and musicians/folklorists (sometimes united in the same person, such as the trajectory of intellectuals like Homero Manzi and Héctor P. Blomberg, and Eusebio Dojorti—a.k.a. Buenaventura Luna, from San Juan Province), who also shared a previous trajectory of militancy in the Union Cívica Radical, similar ties with the new mass media, and the idea that music had a key role in paving popular paths of “nationhood.” Manzi and Blomberg were thinking of the nation from Buenos Aires and its historic role of “leader of the nation,” while Luna was doing the same from a more critical perspective of the role of Buenos Aires and its “intellectuals and doctors” in the construction of the nation.<sup>46</sup> Another question worthy of further investigation is how “The Pampas” (i.e., the province of Buenos Aires) defined its folk music now that many of the Federalist Cycle songs, tangos, and milongas called the music that historically was linked to the province their own?<sup>47</sup>

Overall, it is clear that what was going on, both in the downtown of cosmopolitan Buenos Aires and in the provincial cities of the country, was, on the one hand, the progressive incorporation of what the record companies began to label more unequivocally as “tango,” as well as the increasing importance of foreign danceable rhythms (fox, shimmy, etc.), and the growing standing of the jazz that could be danced or listened to; on the other hand, alongside those foreign rhythms—or those cataloged as “foreign-sounding”—the transnational industry also had to account for other rhythms that were considered “autochthonous.” After all, it is the “criollo” songbook (the milongas, the vals criollos, the rancheras), including the “tango” as “urban folklore,” that reinvents itself trying to follow the musical tastes of an ever broader, heterogeneous, and participatory public.<sup>48</sup> We believe that during the 1930s, in particular, with the help of radio, music contributed enormously in the redefinition of an “Argentineness” that was highly influenced by the new standards of popular consumption. As Chamosa (2010, 137) summarizes, the importance of the radio was no stranger to the deeper discussion on the limits of federalism in

a country like Argentina: “Chain broadcasting should undoubtedly be considered the most significant development in the process of cultural homogenization in Argentina since the establishment of the public education system in the 1870s. Considering, however, the complete control that the network headquarters in Buenos Aires had over programming, the integration between the capital and the provinces could hardly have been balanced.”

### The Importance of Radio and Its Headquarters in Buenos Aires

Ignacio Corsini, one of the three most popular “tango” performers of the time, once again emerges as a key figure to understand the role of the Rioplatense songbook in relation to the cultural industry and the music of the rest of the nation, because he is a fervent advocate of the incorporation of folklore from other regions of the country: “From 1929 to the end of his active career Corsini was a radio star with regular appearances on all the major *porteño*, stations. He was so popular that in 1936 he was voted ‘Príncipe de la canción porteña’ [Prince of the Porteño Song] (Castro 1991, 198). Toward the end of the decade, still at the peak of his career, Corsini popularized themes that recreated emblematic topics of the River Plate songbook, such as the figure of the payador in his interpretations of the waltz *El payador de San Telmo* (José Lojo 1932), or the milonga *Betinotti* (Manzi and Piana 1939), and also incorporated into his repertoire other songs, such as *Morocha triste* (Sad Morocha) (Sanguineti and Maciel 1939), which describes a rural landscape completely foreign to the pampas historically described by the payadores. The song starts describing a caravan that moves quite slowly:

*burritos bajan del cerro,  
detrás va la provinciana,  
acompañada e' su perro.*

little donkeys come down from the hill,  
behind goes the provincial woman,  
accompanied by her dog.

Corsini, who also participated as an important figure in the famous artistic emissaries that Radio Belgrano sent to the cities of the interior of the country (alongside very prestigious artists, such as Mercedes Simone, Hugo del Carril, Fernando Ochoa, and Dorita Davis), culminates his outstanding artistic career ten years later with a memorable radio broadcast aired throughout the entire Argentine territory. The Belgrano radio program was called “Argentinidad” (Argentineness), and in his farewell cycle Ignacio Corsini performed songs such as *El arriero* (The Muleteer) (by Atahualpa Yupanqui), *La pulpera de Santa Lucía*, and *Por el camino* (On the Road), the Carlos Vicente Geroni Flores’ zamba that marked the “campero-rural” beginning of his career. Of a total of sixty-four compositions Corsini sang on those radio programs, fifteen were milongas, fourteen waltzes, nine zambas, twenty campera songs, three

estilos, one Colombian pasillo, one gato patriotic, and only one tango, *El adiós* (The Goodbye) (by Virgilio San Clemente, with lyrics by the Santa Fe province poet Maruja Pacheco Huergo, composed in 1937).<sup>49</sup>

### Agustín Magaldi

The other national singer of immense popularity at the time was Agustín Magaldi, himself a product of the “pampa gringa” (the name given in Argentina to the rural area where the European immigrants who preferred the countryside to the city settled and engaged in agricultural activities, in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, and Córdoba), since he was born in Casilda (located in Santa Fe province), and spent most of his childhood and adolescence between that small city and the city of Rosario, Santa Fe. At the beginning of the 1920s, Magaldi was still living in Santa Fe and singing in various duos with friends from his province, playing an exclusively rural repertoire. It was only in 1923 that he decided to live in Buenos Aires, and began to mix his criollo songs with a few tangos. He had his big break in the capital city in 1924, when he was sponsored by Rosita Quiroga, with whom he formed a duo of short duration, and then, in 1926, he would form the most famous of the duos he participated in, the Magaldi-Noda duo. García Blaya tells us, in *Todo Tango*,

In 1929 they begin to record as staff musicians of the Brunswick Company and composed one of their great hits “El penado catorce” [Prisoner Number Fourteen] [...] In Brunswick Agustín collaborates as an estribillista<sup>50</sup> on special discs [of various orchestras]. In 1933 the duo, accompanied by the guitars of Centeno, Epumer, and Colia, returns to the Victor label and tours Chile. Two years later, they participate in the film *Monte criollo* [Criollo Hill], where they interpret “Mi sanjuanina” [My Loved One from San Juan Province]. On December 31, 1935, after ten years of great success, the duo split and in 1936 Magaldi launched his solo career, accompanied by the guitars of Centeno, Ortiz, Francini, Carré, and the harp of Félix Pérez Cardozo ... Magaldi became a phenomenal success on Radio Belgrano and “Nieve” [Snow], his Russian ballad, becomes his war-horse, which his public always wants to hear, as well as his tango “Libertad” [Freedom]. His versions of “La muchacha del circo” [The Girl from the Circus], “Dios te salve m’hijo” [God Save You, My Son], “Acquaforte” [Etching], “Berretín” [Obsession], and “Consejo de Oro” [Golden Advice], are noteworthy, despite the inevitable comparison we make with Gardel’s versions.<sup>51</sup>

It is interesting to note that *El penado catorce*, one of his most popular hits, musically speaking is a waltz. In turn, well advanced in the decade, in 1935, Magaldi recorded a *cueca* (a traditional dance from the Cuyo region in Argentina—also very popular in Chile), *Mi sanjuanina*, dressed as a gaucho

and with an introduction full of rural language. That *Nieve*, a Russian ballad, is one of his warhorses toward the end of the 1930s gives a touch of color (... white) to his trajectory of “national singer.”

In short, of the four most important national singers of the 1920s and 1930s, two are foreigners (Gardel is French and Corsini is Italian), one has Italian ancestry and was raised in the pampa gringa (Magaldi), and only Rosita Quiroga can claim a certain criollo heritage.

Thus, explaining the rise in popularity of the tango at the expense of the fall in popular acceptance of criollo songs fails to account for the “resurgence” of the rural themes as proposed by the Federalist Cycle in the late 1920s (which remains very popular in the 1930s). At the same time, the Federalist Cycle not only constantly mixes tangos with songs from the traditional criollo repertoire, but also produces tangos with clear rural topics.

### The Orquestas Típicas

As we mentioned above, Kohan (2002, 146) reminds us that, well into the 1930s, tango orchestras included in their standard repertoire rancheras and criollo waltzes, something that, according to Pablo Taboada (personal communication, July 1, 2017) continued well into the 1940s. Taboada is, without any doubt, one of the most important Argentine music collectors. He was kind enough to delve into his vast personal archives and summarized for us the most important characteristics of these wide-ranging orchestras’ repertoires. Our eternal gratitude! Without his help, this section of the chapter would have been impossible to write. What follows is an abridged version of his outstanding report. Let’s start with the “Guardia Vieja” [Old Guard].<sup>52</sup>

Juan Maglio, “Pacho,” one of the first major disseminators of tango music, composed and recorded countless records for the Columbia and Victor companies between 1911 and 1918, and released (in addition to hundreds of tangos, such as *Armenonville* [the name of a very famous Buenos Aires cabaret], and *Sábado inglés* [English Saturday]) waltzes, polkas, mazurkas, and many other styles of the rural repertoire, among them *Zamba* (a zamba-like tune of his own authorship); *Aires criollos* [Criollo Airs] (a potpourri of native music where the criollo waltz *Pobre mi madre querida* [My Poor Dear Mother] stands out); *Estilos and vidalitas* (another potpourri of famous provincial tunes); *Acuarelas pampeanas* (Pampa Watercolors) (a criollo estilo written by himself). He also composed cuecas, zamacuecas, and later, in the 1930s, he recorded Paraguayan music and music of the Corrientes province. He performed polkas, most of them with Guaraní (the aboriginal language of the Argentine northeast and Paraguay) titles, which he signed as either “Maglio” or “Oblima,” a tweaked version of Maglio—a common city slang move.

Another “founding father” of the tango, Roberto Firpo, recorded rural music with his tango orquesta típica: the famous zambas *La López Pereyra* and *Zamba de Vargas* in the mid-1910s; and, in 1924, *Los ojazos de mi negra* (The Big Eyes of My Black Sweetheart), a zamba by Adolfo Avilés. Between 1913 and 1918, he accompanied many national singers performing rural music from the Cuyo region (Mendoza, San Juan, and San Luis provinces, bordering Chile), such as Saúl Salinas (for Atlanta records); and Buenos Aires province folk music with Francisco Bianco, “Pancho Cuevas,” for Odeón records (canciones criollas, estilos, and tristes camperos). He also accompanied the duo Gardel-Razzano in the estilo *El Moro*, adapted for orchestra as *Tango campero* (Countryside Tango), a name that speaks volumes about what we try to convey in this chapter.

Francisco Canaro, like Firpo, constituted a pillar of the Old Guard, but continued his brilliant career well into the twentieth century, and his artistic trajectory occupied a preeminent place in all stages of tango history. At the beginning of his career, he incorporated zambas into his first repertoire recorded in Brazil for Atlanta discs (1914/1915), like the song *Las bolivianas* (The Girls from Bolivia). During the 1920s, he recorded some zambas for Odeón (like Firpo’s *Los ojazos de mi negra*), and continued recording countless rancheras (and even some *pericones*—a very old rural genre) in the 1930s (more about this below). We will see later in this chapter his performances in the 1940s, when he continued disseminating rural music on a large scale. As a composer, he has *pericones* to his credit, zambas, and *vidalitas* like *Yo tuyo soy, tuyo es mi amor* (I Am Yours, Yours is My Love), recorded by Gardel in 1923.

Juan de Dios Filiberto composed tangos camperos like *Guaymallén* (the name of a small city in Mendoza), and serrana songs [songs from the hills] like *Serrana mía*, recorded by Ignacio Corsini and, years later, for another important tango singer, Edmundo Rivero. He also recorded with his own orchestra criollo waltzes, such as the popular *Santiago del Estero*, written by Andrés Chazarreta. Interestingly enough, he hired Patrocino Díaz as vocalist for his orchestra. Díaz was the famous female rural singer that Chazarreta brought to his Buenos Aires performances from Santiago del Estero in 1921. Showing the fluid relationship Filiberto had with tango and folklore, in October 1938, the Municipality of Buenos Aires created the Popular Municipal Orchestra of Folkloric Art, and offered Filiberto the job as its first musical director. Additionally, his most famous tango, *Caminito* (Little Road), has lyrics by Gabino Coria Peñaloza, who alluded in its verses to a little road in the village of Olta, La Rioja province, in northern Argentina. Coria Peñaloza lived most of his adult life (and eventually died) in La Rioja.

José Luis Padula, the famous composer of the tangos *Lunes* (Monday) and *9 de Julio* (July 9—Argentine Independence Day), switched between his

tango orquesta típica and his folk orchestra, recording, in addition to tangos, for both Columbia (1930–1931) and Odeón (1935–1940), a large number of chacareras, zambas, tonadas, criollo waltzes, gatos, and rancheras, many of them written by himself, such as the famous *La mentirosa* (The Liar). Padula played piano and bandoneon, but also guitar and harmonica, instruments that he used to show his abilities as a folk performer.

If we move from the 1910s and 1920s to the 1930s, the trend of continuously mixing tangos and songs coming from the criollo songbook (and, sometimes, beyond that, including rural songs from other Argentine provinces) continues. For example, Carlos Vicente Geroni Flores composed many canciones criollas and zambas, such as *Cuando lloran los zorzales* (When the Thrushes Cry), and the classic *Vía el camino* (El Boyero) (Down the Road [The Oxherd]), of international fame.

Julio De Caro, the main representative of the Guardia, Nueva recorded two compositions that he wrote for the Brunswick Label: the vidalita *El baño* (The Bath), and the chacarera *La sufrida* (The Sufferer). In 1934, he recorded his potpourri *Las catorce provincias argentinas* (The Fourteen Argentine Provinces), including, among other rural genres, the vidalita, the pericón, and the *malambo*. Pedro Maffia also recorded zambas and rancheras as well as criollo waltzes for the Brunswick (1929–1930) and Columbia (1931–1932) labels.

The great bandoneon players of tango were also active performers of the rural repertoire. Miguel Buchino, between 1927 and 1940, recorded numerous discs with zambas and songs from the northern Argentine provinces. Federico Scorticatti and Ciriaco Ortiz, as a duet, recorded the cueca *A Mendoza* and the famous gato *El 180*. The great Ciriaco Ortiz recorded with his different orchestras (the name of the second one, 1931–1934, interestingly, was Los Provincianos [The Provincial Guys]) and trios—not only tangos, but also criollo waltzes, milongas, and other genres of the Argentine folklore as well. Another great bandoneonist and composer of tangos was Rafael Rossi. During his extensive career, he recorded tangos, but also several Spanish genres (such as pasodobles) and, of course, hundreds of rancheras, zambas, and folk songs of the most varied rhythms. In the 1930s, he directed a quartet of northern folk music. He continued recording folklore and tango until the 1970s.

Many tango piano players of the time, such as Félix Scolatti Almeyda and Alberto Castellanos (Gardel's pianist, who also directed the tango orquesta típica of the Dacapo and Columbia record companies between 1930 and 1931), included in their repertoire rancheras and folk songs along with tangos and waltzes. Scolatti Almeyda (born in Milan, Italy, who worked with Gardel in 1917) is the author of *Tango de las campanas* (Tango of the Bells), *La mascotita* (The Little Pet), *Virgencita de Pompeya* (Little Virgin of the Pompeya Neighborhood), *La taba de la vida* (The Dice of Life), *Cuchillo*

*de guapo* (Tough Guy Knife), among many others. With his folk orchestra, he regularly performed in Radio Cultura and was the composer of innumerable rural songs, such as *Nostalgia indígena* (Indian Longing), a vidala from northwest Argentina, and *Ya canta el gallo* (The Rooster Is Already Crowing), a zamba performed by the Gardel-Razzano duet, which also recorded another of his rural songs, *La salteñita* (The Little Girl from Salta Province), among many others.

The other side of the phenomenon we are trying to explain in this chapter is what happened with the interpreters whose main repertoire was rural, not tangos. Between 1925 and 1939, many ensembles of native music proliferated, generally duos of guitar and accordion or flute, guitar, and bandoneon. The most-remembered ones are Massobrio-Caldarella (who recorded for the Odeón record company), the trio Los Nativos (artists of the Víctor company), and the Trío Pampeano, who recorded for the Brunswick Company. These musicians, of course, recorded rancheras, waltzes, zambas, gatos, chacareras, and rural songs of the most varied origin, but also some tangos, which constituted at least 20–30% of their repertoire.

While what happened with the wide-ranging repertoires after the late 1930s is not the topic of this chapter, it is interesting to note, based on the invaluable information provided by Pablo Taboada, that the great tango orchestra directors (Troilo, Di Sarli, Salgán, D'Arienzo, Pugliese) continued incorporating into their repertoires tangos with rural themes and, if they eventually recorded some zambas, they did so adapting them to the rhythm of criollo waltzes, such as *Caminito soleado* (Sunny Little Trail) of Gardel, and *La tupungatina* of Cristino Tapia, which were adapted as a tango by Osvaldo Pugliese; and the zamba *Por el camino* (On the Road), which was adapted to the rhythm of waltz by Horacio Salgán and sung by Roberto Goyeneche. At the same time, for instance, Aníbal Troilo (one of the most important musicians of the 1940s) recorded numerous tangos with rural topics: *Adiós pampa mía* (Farewell My Pampa), *Sosiego en la noche* (Quietness in the Night), *Camino del Tucumán* (Road of the Tucumán Province), *Tapera* (Hut); and milongas camperas like *Cimarrón de ausencia* (Cimarron of Absence).

Two orchestra directors who continued recording rural genres with their tango orchestras without major changes in relation to what they were doing in the 1930s were Canaro and Lomuto. Given their privileged economic position in the phonographic industry, they were able to continue recording discs in great quantities, while the rest of the orchestras had to curtail their production, and to specialize only in tangos—their main repertoire, due to the lack of raw materials to produce records during World War II. In other words, Canaro and Lomuto were economically able to continue with their previous line of work. That is why rural pieces continued to appear in the repertoire of both orchestras during the 1940s, especially in the discography of Francisco

Canaro. So important was the rural repertoire in Canaro's case that, from 1938 to 1942, the Uruguayan director hired the criollo singer Francisco Amo as a stable member of his tango orchestra to exclusively perform his folkloric repertoire: *vidaldas*, *gatos*, *malambos*, *triumfos*, *pericones*, *milongas*, and *tangos camperos*, *estilos*, *cifras*, *zambas*, *chacareras*, and even *minués* (a very old rural music genre) were recorded by Canaro in the 1940s.<sup>53</sup>

### THE RISE OF RURAL RHYTHMS IN THE LATE 1920S AND EARLY 1930S: THE MILONGA CAMPERA AND THE RANCHERA

The narrative of the rampant triumph of tango over rural music also has difficulties explaining the resurgence of the *milonga campera* that occurs toward the late 1920s and early 1930s. As Aharonián (2014, 442) tells us, a danceable *milonga*,

is preserved in a few tangos of the beginning of the century, such as Vicente Greco's "Rodríguez Peña" (1911) ... but it will appear vindicated as a *milonga* in the tango world only in the 1930s, when it is rescued as a subspecies of the tango language apparently by Sebastián Piana (1903–1994). Piana suggests a historical continuity by explaining: "[Manzi] proposed that I compose a *milonga* for Rosita Quiroga, one of the most popular songwriters of that time and one of the most distinguished of the genre." Piana continues: "She was not able to record it, since it was not of the common style."

And, it seems, Piana is also the one who reintroduces in the tango the other *milonga*, the *campera*, since, as Aharonián (2014, 443–444) reminds us,

sometimes the word "milonga" will serve to bridge the gap between two subspecies, the slowly sung one and the fast danceable one. The tango world will pay explicit homage to the first one in several compositions also called *milonga*, without anyone bothering to explain the difference with the fast, danceable one. More confusion still. Piana defines his "Milonga triste" [Sad Milonga] (1936, lyrics by Homero Manzi) as a "milonga campera." And "Milonga triste" effectively allows a round trip to the folkloric terrain (listen to the versions of Atahualpa Yupanqui, on solo guitar—recorded in 1965—and Alfredo Zitarrosa's, with an instrumental group "a la Gardel"—recorded almost contemporaneously in 1967).

And Piana adds ammunition to further increase the confusion, with a remarkable production of this type of rural-style *milongas* that have over time been performed and recorded by tango and folk musicians alike.



Much more interesting still is what occurred with the ranchera (a music genre with some linkages to the rural mazurka) at that time, because the ranchera became popular from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, to the point that the most important national singers and tango orchestras recorded hundreds of them.

There is widespread consensus that, during the first part of the 1930s, tango was having popularity problems: there were fewer live performances, fewer tango records were sold, and so on, to the point that many people claim that one of the most important reasons Gardel decided to avidly pursue an international career was his inability to gather the big audiences he used to enjoy during the 1920s. The usual culprit identified for this state of affairs is the economic crisis of the 1930s. As an explanation, it makes a lot of sense: a huge unemployment rate, the country was under a military regime, many people were literally starving to death. The few tangos that most people remember from this period are sad tangos that portray the horrible situation many Argentines underwent, paradigmatically, *Yira, yira* (It Turns, It Turns), by Enrique Santos Discépolo, which states that when you are “*en la vía*” (literarily “on the train tracks,” but that in Argentine slang means “without any money”),

*sin rumbo, desesperao ...*

*cuando no tengas ni fe,*

*ni yerba de ayer secándose al sol*

without direction, desperate ...

when you don't have either faith,

nor used mate tea leaves from yesterday  
drying in the sun

Discépolo's desperate images epitomize the misery many people suffered during those years, and tango was a very good vehicle to convey them: the train tracks used by the unemployed moving from place to place to find a job; the extreme poverty of drying used mate tea due to the impossibility of buying a new container of yerba mate; “when the batteries of all the doorbells that you press are dead”; “when you realize that the people next to you are trying on the clothes that you'll leave behind [when you die]”; and so on.

So far, so good. But how can we explain that during those same years of tango decay, another popular rhythm of rural heritage (of mostly festive rhythms and lyrics) became fashionable? Thus, while Discépolo portrayed with graphic sadness the desperation brought about by the crisis, thousands of people danced and enjoyed (among many others of the same kind) a very festive ranchera whose lyrics seem to directly mock Discépolo's *Yira, Yira*, or, at least, to address the severe economic crisis with a sense of humor (perhaps to lighten the bad mood?):

“*Donde hay un mango?*” “Where Can One  
Find a Buck?” (Ivo Pelay and Francisco Canaro)

*¡Los han limpiado con piedra pómez!*

They scrubbed out money  
with pumice!

*¿Dónde hay un mango que yo lo he buscado*

Where is there a buck that  
I have been looking for,

*con lupa y linterna y estoy afiebrado?*

with a magnifying glass and a  
flashlight, and I'm feverish?

The song continues, pointing out that nobody seems to know where all the money has gone: neither the bankers, nor the journalists, neither dogs, nor cats, have news or clues of its whereabouts!

*Los amores en la crisis* (Love in the Time of Crisis) (by the same authors, Pelay and Canaro) goes in the same direction:

*Los amores con la crisis están “dificiles,”*

In these times of crisis love has  
become “difficult,”

*y te dan amor y amor y te tienen sin morfar*

and the guys give you love and  
love, but they don't give you  
any food

*y te dicen que querer es querer y no formar*

and they tell you that love is  
love, but not necessarily build-  
ing a family

According to the lyrics of the song, love is so difficult in these times of crisis that your partner does not give you clothes, jewelry, or anything else any longer! And more often than not, by the end of the month you don't see any money. And, in these times, boys are braver than ever, and resist all pressure to marry.

If we add to the two previous examples of a totally different approach to the economic crisis the fact that Pelay and Canaro were also the authors of some “tangos optimistas” [optimistic tangos] (*El tango de la mula* [The Tango of How to Cheat Somebody], *La milonga optimista* [The Optimistic Milonga], *Ya vendrán tiempos mejores* [Better Times Will Come]),<sup>54</sup> as if it was necessary to add the adjective “optimistic” to qualify a genre, tango, which seemed to require such an adjective to detach itself from its standard connotations, we begin to see a competing explanation of what could have been the reasons for the temporary loss of popularity of the tango in the early 1930s. It is beyond the scope of this chapter (and current intellectual abilities of the authors) to delve deeper into this issue. However, it is very important for our main argument to stress that a genre of rural heritage, the ranchera, was, at the very least, as popular as tango during the late 1920s and early

1930s, to the point that the most important national singers, tango orchestras, musicians, and composers of the time felt it necessary to engage with the genre. Among them, we have found Carlos Gardel, Agustín Magaldi, Ignacio Corsini, Charlo (Carlos José Pérez de la Riestra), Rosita Quiroga, Azucena Maizani, Ada Falcón, Mercedes Simone, Soffa Bozán, Tita Merello, Adolfo R. Avilés, Antonio Bonavena, Francisco Canaro, Enrique Delfino, Osvaldo y Edgardo Donato, Rafael Rossi, Juan de Dios Filiberto, Osvaldo Fresedo, Francisco Lomuto, Enrique Maciel, Juan Maglio (Pacho), Gerardo Matos Rodríguez, Ciriaco Ortiz, José Luis Padula, Alfredo Pelaia, and Francisco Pracánico. According to Veniard (2014, 292), the definitive authority on the topic, the authors of rancheras among the people quoted above, “composed melodies for different repertoires, which is felt in the rancheras [they wrote]. Thus, Adolfo Avilés, author of the zamba ‘Los ojazos de mi negra,’ reveals folkloric influences; Antonio Bonavena, author of all kinds of fashionable dancing music, shows a jazz inspiration; Francisco Canaro, infuses his rancheras with the ‘cuts’ and ‘breaks’ that characterize tango” (our translation).

We assume that the reader is aware that when we referred to the ranchera above, we referred to it as a “genre of rural heritage,” and not as a straightforward “rural genre.” The reason for this description of the genre is not by chance, and follows Veniard’s outstanding research on the origin of the genre, which, according to this author, goes back to ... the mid-1920s! Not only that, but it also seems that the genre had many more commonalities with the Brazilian *rancheira* (very popular at the time—and still today, in southern Brazil), than with the Argentine mazurka, with which it still shared several features. In any event, according to Veniard, the ranchera was not a genre of rural origin that, eventually, moved to the cities; but, on the contrary, a city-invented rural genre that, eventually, ended up in the countryside.

After an impeccable musicological analysis of the first ranchera ever written, and the one that started the craze for the genre, *Mate amargo* (Bitter Mate), Veniard (2014, 287) points out that Bravo, the author of *Mate amargo*, introduced significant changes to the musical structure of the mazurka that was popular in Buenos Aires’ countryside. However, those changes were not a novel invention of Bravo, but, in fact, were already present in the Brazilian *rancheira*, from which Bravo only acknowledged borrowing the name for the genre of *Mate amargo*. Thus, according to Veniard, Bravo not only got the name of his creation from a Brazilian troupe that was performing in Buenos Aires in the mid-1920s (something he willingly acknowledged), but also the basic musical structure of the new genre he called “ranchera” (something he did not): “‘Mate amargo’ is a Brazilian *rancheira*. To such a degree that, among the popular sectors of southern Brazil (the *gaúcha* region), it is still played today with its own title, but with no recognition of its author” (Veniard

2014, 287) (our translation). This can be easily confirmed if the name “Mate amargo, rancheira” is entered in YouTube.

Therefore, the obvious question is why a genre of rural heritage, written and recorded mostly in the city of Buenos Aires, ended up being so popular to the point of challenging tango’s hegemony?<sup>55</sup> At this point in our research, we only have hypotheses; further explorations will eventually shed some light on the topic, but one fact (the one that really matters for the main argument of this chapter) is that, certainly at the end of the 1920s and early part of the 1930s most national singers and orchestras still performed a wide-ranging repertoire in which rural music (or quasi-rural music, if we agree with Veniard) had a prominent role. The fact that the first recording of this ranchera was done by the folk ensemble Los Nativos in 1927 (Libertad Lamarque’s famous version was recorded in December 1928) adds more weight to our thesis.<sup>56</sup>

But what about an alternative explanation? What if these rancheras were popular in the countryside but not in Buenos Aires, and part of the repertoire of musicians and orchestras that travelled all around the country at that time? Considerable evidence, we have found, contradicts this explanation. On the one hand, several of the most important rancheras were part of theater performances (“sainetes” or musical comedies) staged in the city of Buenos Aires, which became resounding hits, such as *Café cantante* (Singing Café), where *Dónde hay un mango?* comes from; *La canción de los barrios* (Song of the Neighborhoods), of which *Los amores en la crisis* is a part; or *Me enamoré una vez* (I Fell in Love Once), from *La muchachada del centro* (The Downtown Youth). On the other hand, in Buenos Aires, the ranchera craze was not for an instrumental genre but for a vocal one. Indeed, this is a key difference that distinguishes the ranchera from the mazurka, which did not have lyrics. According to Veniard (2014, 289–290), “‘Mate amargo’ was broadcast as a song, no doubt influenced by Libertad Lamarque’s shows (performed with another actor in charge of recitation). If it was played in the countryside, it was performed—as still happens in Brazil today—only as an instrumental piece for dancers. But in the city of Buenos Aires it was a dance song.”

The success of the rancheras in the 1930s was of such magnitude that prestigious authors like Blomberg and Maciel (who we already pointed out were crucial in the development of the Federalist Cycle—musically mostly linked to walses and milongas) authored them as well, or tried to ... because, as Veniard (2014, 290) points out,

from around 1930 is “Flor de pajonal” [Scrubland Flower], labeled in the music sheet as a “Mazurka-ranchera.” The lyrics were written by Héctor Pedro Blomberg and the music by Enrique Maciel. It is highly representative of the type of popular mazurkas of the time, made up entirely of simple but melodic lyrical sentences. Perhaps the “Mazurka-ranchera” designation was a label used to sell,

because if there is nothing in it that suggests a ranchera, there is nothing criollo either to justify Blomberg's text, which is learned poetry on a rural drama. (Our translation)

According to Veniard (2014, 292), 1933–1934 was the apex of the ranchera craze:

Alfredo Perrotti was the greatest publisher of ranchera sheet music and, being so, its great disseminator at a time when amateur pianists abounded. In 1933, in a commercial announcement for his business, under the title: "Form your own repertoire. Acquire the best rancheras of the year, the popular trendy dance," a list of twenty-seven rancheras of diverse authors appears ... Throughout 1934, the central year in the diffusion of the ranchera, more than a hundred rancheras were registered in the National Registry of Intellectual Property, in printed and recorded editions. (Our translation)

Some of the most popular rancheras of the period were *La mentirosa* (The Lying Woman), *Afilador* (The Knife Sharpener), *Martín pescador* (Martin, the Fisherman), *Torta frita* (Fried Bread), *En la tranquera* (By the Wooden Gate), *El rancho está de fiesta* (There Is a Party in the Shack), *Cadenita de amor* (Little Chain of Love), *Hay baile en lo de doña Juana* (There Is a Dance at Ms. Juana's), *Como aníyo al dedo* (literally, "Like a Ring to a Finger," but meaning "Like a Hand in a Glove"), *Mañanita de mis pagos* (Mornings of My Home), *Maíz frito* (Fried Corn), *Martín Fierro*, *Decí que sí* (Please Say Yes), among others. The most famous of all seems to have been *Las margaritas* (The Daisies). The lyrics were written by Domingo Pelle, and the music by Alfredo Pelaia in 1933. Many different performers recorded this ranchera and it became so famous that it turned out to be a song commonly performed by elementary school children all over Argentina. According to Veniard (2014, 295),

"Perfume gaucho" [Gaucho Perfume] by the same ... authors, is specified as "Continuation of 'The Daisies,'" and has a similar structure and phrases ... We note that in the dedication to the "artists who played its sister"—"The Daisies"—the latter is indicated as a "humble rural composition," although it was neither in origin, nor the case for this ranchera. This may be pointing out two aspects: that by mid-1930s the ranchera was considered a rural dance; or that this one, in particular, had a rural character that not all rancheras exhibited and the authors wanted to stress such a difference. (Our translation)

What Veniard is talking about is an "invention of tradition," that is, certain traditions may appear or claim to be old but oftentimes are quite recent in origin and, sometimes, directly invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012).

The Argentine musicologist, with strong support from historical sources and performing impeccable musical analyses, claims that the ranchera is one of those “invented traditions.”<sup>57</sup> What we found listening to the ranchera *Con los colores del cielo* (With the Colors of the Sky—referring to the Argentine flag, which is light blue and white), written by Padula and Laino, and interpreted by the orchestra of Francisco Canaro, is a very good example of what Veniard talks about. Before the song starts, Carlos Galán, the singer of the orchestra, states that today it is impossible to see gauchos in countryside parties as was usual a long time ago, and recites the following verses:

<i>avanrrearse una ranchera, con guitarra y acordeón</i>	performing a ranche-ra, with guitar and accordion
<i>hoy es pura fantasía ver bailarla en la ciudad</i>	what is danced in the city today is pure deception
<i>eso, es hacerle maldad a mi gaucha tradición!</i>	that does harm to my gaucho tradition!

In this way, what the recitation is assuming is that the ranchera is a genre of rural origin that is no longer popular in the countryside and only survives, totally distorted, in the big city, in such a way that it totally betrays its gaucho inheritance.

While most rancheras have rural themes and sounds, a few of them have city-oriented lyrics and, according to Veniard (2014, 294–294), some of them have tango inflections as well. For instance, *De contramano* (Wrong Way), which is labeled a “ranchera, tango like,” by Amadori and Canaro (a ranchera that was sung in the movie *Puerto Nuevo* of 1936), is a ranchera of tango spirit that, in Sofía Bozán’s version, is performed with certain tango nuances that give the performance a traditional tango veneer.

Summarizing his pioneering work on the topic, Veniard (2014, 295–296) points out that it is very interesting to compare the three most famous rancheras: *Los amores con la crisis, ¿Dónde hay un mango?*, and *Las margaritas*, because they are very different from each other:

The first one has the traditional aspects of a ranchera and presents the difficulties of intonation [which characterize the genre], over lyrics that are clearly city-oriented. The second one, with its lyrics “Where can one find a buce, old man Gómez?,” has an arrabalero [from the outskirts] character. The third, “Las margaritas,” which is a “ranchera song,” has nativist lyrics, “campera” [from the countryside] as it was then designated, and is lyrical . . . In the ranchera, the alleged popular character of the countryside will have to be achieved by means of resources that produce rancheras to suit that kind of public. In any case we

have made a difference, by its character, between those examples more typical of the popular, with “city-oriented” music and lyrics, and those who approach the rural popular music. (Our translation)

### Searching for Additional Clues ...

The long coexistence, which we might well term “inseparability,” between the two traditions (the rural one and the one belonging strictly to the city) in popular repertoires well into the 1930s is exemplarily presented in the song *Golondrinas* (Swallows) (Gardel-Le Pera 1933), which synthesizes paradigmatically the plain and archaic rural language and timid lunfardo (city slang) that refers to the wandering criollo soul that moves between the countryside and the city. The lyrics of the song first describe the image of single summer swallows, which are portrayed as having a constant longing for distant places (using the metaphor of “distant skies”):

<i>alma criolla, errante y viajera,</i>	criollo soul, wanderer and traveler,
<i>querer detenerla es una quimera.</i>	wanting to stop it is a chimera.
<i>Criollita de mi pueblo, pebeta de mi barrio,</i>	Criollita of my little town, girl of my neighborhood,

Later in the lyrics we learn that when the swallow eventually ends its journey, there will be no cloud in its eyes of “vague remoteness,” and “in your loving arms” the beautiful swallow will build its nest. Thus, the lyrical displacement of the swallow is equated with the spatial shift between the countryside and the city.

The notion of an enlarged city that is not only limited by the boundaries legally established by the federalization law of 1880, but also includes part of the countryside that surrounds it as an exponent of its civilizing mission, still seems to be present in the popular imaginary as described by these lyrics, where the “criollita de mi pueblo” (little girl from my small countryside town) coincides (perhaps is the same person?) with the “pebeta de mi barrio” (little girl from my city neighborhood).<sup>58</sup>

Finally, it is interesting to note how in the iconography linked to the tango that can be accessed on the internet, its intimate relationship with the criollo icons (and, by the way, with the Uruguayan as well) is more than evident. Let’s take a look at what, according to the internet, are some of the first photographs related to tango. They were published in the magazine *Caras y Caretas* in 1903. These photos are considered to be the first to portray a tango dancer who, eventually, becomes very famous, Arturo de Nava.<sup>59</sup>

In the first photo, he appears dancing tango with another man, while in the second one he does so with a woman. In both, his outfit is a mixture of

peasant clothing (boots and rural trousers) and city attire (jacket and urban-style hat), following the line of argument that we have been advancing in this chapter. But not only that, his life trajectory is, in itself, another sign of how difficult it is to separate the rural imaginary from the tango until, at least, the mid-1930s, and how Uruguay is an unavoidable presence in the development of tango in Argentina.

Arturo de Nava was born in Montevideo, Uruguay in 1876, and died in Buenos Aires in 1932 (a life trajectory very common to Uruguayan tangueros). He was a singer, composer, dancer, and Uruguayan payador by birth, who pursued a substantial portion of his career in Argentina. Arturo was a great payador (a criollo musical style by definition), and toured the Rio de la Plata region performing the rural songs of his time. He also performed successfully as an actor in street shows, especially in the circus of the Podestá brothers, and also with Florencio Parravicini.

With the Podestá brothers' company, he had an important career as a criollo singer and tango dancer. He continued for many years acting onstage and in 1930 participated in the short film *El carretero* (The Carter), directed by Eduardo Morera, in which he dialogues with Carlos Gardel before the latter plays the song of the same name, written by Navas (a song that, by the way, Gardel recorded twice, in a duet with Razzano in 1922 and solo in 1928). In the film, Navas presents himself to the young audience as an interpreter of criollo repertoires and, although dressed in a tuxedo, his posture and language are clearly related to the gauchos. In the film, he thanks Gardel, "that you remembered this poor old man. And that you have rescued that old *mancarroncito* [old horse, in reference to "The Carter"], that was buried in the pastures of forgetfulness so that these new generations realize how the grass and the campfires smell, brother," while engaged in a very emotional handshake with the singer.

The song, clearly a rural one (similar to a *cifra*), is interpreted by Gardel playing the guitar (and accompanied by other guitarists) and, in at least four parts of the song, Gardel imitates the whistle of the muleteers' calling to the troupe in a clear gaucho-like sign that becomes really implausible, given that Gardel is dressed in tuxedo and bow tie in the scene.

## CONCLUSIONS

What we can unmistakably witness following the path of popular music in Argentina in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s is a very interesting debate about the role of the city of Buenos Aires in relation to the province of the same name, the Argentine nation, and the world in general. Tango, the criollo songs, and the "quasi-rural" genres (*ranchera* and vales criollo originating in



the city) that became very popular in those decades are, at the same time, an expression of a wider debate that has other very important cultural vehicles, and one of its most important agents, given the massive consumption of those genres and the participation as authors and promoters of songs by very important intellectuals, such as Manzi, Blomberg, and Buenaventura Luna (to name only a few). At the same time, by default, Buenos Aires province is undergoing a process of re-identification after the federalization of the city of Buenos Aires in 1880. In such a process, it has to delineate its similarities and differences with the city of Buenos Aires, the rest of the provinces, and the world at large. Obviously, the same occurs with the city of Buenos Aires, for the first time stripped of its symbiotic relationship with its rural hinterland and the province of the same name. Popular music is a very sensitive vehicle for both expressing and conveying this process. How tango entered the criollo songbook, delineated its identity, and, eventually, became a music genre with well-defined contours, was not easy, and we have tried in this chapter to show some of the intricacies of the process.

The image we have from the data we have shown in this chapter is of a very fluid music scenario, from the points of view of both emission and reception. An igneous blend would be another way to depict it. Songs of clear urban origin that migrate to the countryside to eventually return, modified, to the same city that was their birthplace; melodies that originate in the city with clear rural rhythms and themes; rhythms that are clearly “invented traditions,” in the sense of claiming a rural origin they never had; rural songs with city themes; tangos with rural topics; singers and orchestras that continuously perform what today we consider rural and city-oriented types of music; and so on. All these phenomena lead to our rejection of the word “mixed” to depict this *mélange*, because mixed means that those genres were separated and, eventually, “mixed” in the performances of singers and orchestras. This is not what we believe was occurring during those years. We believe that singers, orchestras, and the public alike enjoyed a criollo repertoire that, over time, included and discarded different types of music. Some singers and orchestras emphasized particular portions of the songbook over others, but all of them kept the entire songbook alive and combined for many years. Thus, while Gardel was leaning over time more toward tango than rural music, the trajectory of Corsini is a different one, one that starts with rural music, incorporates some tangos, emphasizes rural music one more time with the Federalist Cycle, and ends up with an almost complete folk repertoire. In the case of the orchestras, it is very interesting how they “tango-ize” or not the rural repertoire, a practice that varies from orchestra to orchestra.<sup>60</sup>

The 1930s show some continuity and some change in comparison to the 1920s. In terms of continuity, the broad repertoire still characterizes the performances of singers and orchestras. In terms of change, the tremendous

success of the Federalist Cycle and the ranchera should require a rethinking of the popular vision of tango's decline due to the 1930s depression. We are not saying that the depression did not affect tango economically. What we are saying is that, obviously, people still supported popular musicians at that time, but those musicians were the ones linked to the Federalist Cycle (Corsini) or the performers of rancheras, who, as a matter of fact, were the most important national singers and orchestras of the time. The other novelty of the 1930s is the full appearance of blackness in popular music, a topic that deserves research in itself and about which we only offered provisional hypotheses.

Villoldo playing like a rural payador some of his best known tangos; an infinity of tangos with rural names and thematic plots; *Criollita de mi pueblo*, *pebeta de mi barrio*; *El zorzal criollo*, *el morocho del Abasto*; one of the three best male tango singers of the 1920s and 1930s (Corsini), born in Sicily and who wants to be remembered as an interpreter of the Federalist Cycle; Rosita Quiroga, who has to incorporate tangos in her repertoire at the request of the public, although she personally likes the criollo-like songs "from the south"; a character like Navas, who constantly navigates between the criollo song and the tango; the recovery of the rural milonga by Piana during this period; Gardel, dressed in a tuxedo and bow tie, whistling to the oxen; most tango orchestras of the period performing a (quote-unquote) mixed repertoire; and the revival (and even the creation) of rural genres like the ranchera and the vals criollo in the late 1920s and first part of the 1930s are just some examples of a magma, a complex amalgam of what today (but not necessarily in the 1920s and 1930s) we would define as urban and city music, which was what characterized the popular music in and around Buenos Aires, at least, until mid-1930s. This is a rather distant image from a certain popular interpretation that suggests a kind of linear evolution from the countryside's folk music to the urban tango between 1910 and 1930.

## NOTES

1. Ezequiel Adamovsky (2014, 2016a) has opened the richest lines of analysis around this question neglected by traditional Argentine historiography. He aptly analyzes the mechanisms by which the myth of the white-European nation was gradually eroding and, in doing so, he rightly places at the center of the debate the importance of both the criollista discourse and the "folkloric" movement in the process of visualizing a heterogeneous nation from an ethnic and racial point of view.

2. A *folletín* is a type of serialized popular literature published in newspapers or in pamphlet form.

3. The "criollo circus" was slightly different from other circuses around the world because, in addition to animals and acrobats, it also offered theatrical representations

of small plays, like the famous Juan Moreyra of the Podestá brothers. That was the reason it was referred to as a “circus of first and second parts.” The circus provided the main actors of the drama, while the supporting cast was usually recruited from local commoners.

4. We assume that a discussion about “the Rioplatense” [from the River Plate] as a sociocultural (and even territorial) concept escapes the scope of this chapter. However, it is important to note that at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, both *criollismo*—in all its aspects—and the phenomenon of tango cannot be explained in strictly national and/or urban terms (Buenos Aires/Montevidéo). For an analysis of the Rioplatense around the tango see the excellent compilation of Lencina (2011 vol. 2).

5. We are especially grateful to Nancy Morris and John Turci-Escobar for their help with the English grammar of this chapter.

6. We especially would like to thank Teresita Lencina for directing us to the bibliography that follows.

7. We think that the fact that some books of his songs arranged for piano, like, for example, *Carbonada criolla* [Criolla Meat Stew] (ca. 1906), depicted in its covers a caricature of Villoldo dressed as a gaucho (even if he is portrayed trampling the sheet music of some of his better-known tangos) was not by chance (see Bockelman 2011, 576). Villoldo’s profession before he became a famous singer was, first, to tow carts stuck or facing a steep hill in Buenos Aires’s muddy streets with his horse (a common endeavor); and secondly, to work as a cowboy in the local slaughterhouses. At the same time, Bockelman reminds us (2011, 591–592) that the best-known turn-of-the-century payadores not only no longer lived in the countryside and had moved to the big cities, but also that the most famous of them all, Gabino Ezeiza (who happened to be of African descent), performed in a rigorous black suit, not in gaucho attire.

8. Ventura Lynch (1883 [1925], 36–37), also refers to this sung milonga in his Buenos Aires Songbook: “The milonga is much like singing by *cifra*, with the difference that singing by *cifra* is typical of the payador gaucho and the milonga is worshiped by the *compadraje* of the city and the countryside.” “The milonga is *zan-dun-gue-ra* [meaning joyful], singing by *cifra* is much more serious—it can be said that this is due to the classic character of the philosophical poetry of the gaucho.” (our translation).

9. “Morocho/a” is a very difficult term to translate. Literally, the best English word for it would be “brunette,” but it does not get the ethnic/racial twist that, many times, the usage of “morocho/a” can imply. Depending on the context of its use, the word can be a compliment (“El morocho del abasto” is clearly an endearing way to name Gardel), or a slur. To give the reader a glimpse of this polysemy, consider this (egregious) Argentine joke: “*Qué hacés, morocha de labios gruesos, por no decirte negra jetona*” [How are you doing, thick-lipped morocha, so I don’t have to call you fat-mouthed n\*\*\*\*\*].

10. To complicate matters further and to make a brief reference to a topic we cannot develop in this chapter (that is, the intrinsic Argentine-Uruguayan nature of tango), we have to remember that the inspirational muse of the tango, the character that enthused its composition, was a Uruguayan dancer residing in Buenos Aires whose name was Lola Candales.

11. In the Buenos Aires Province Songbook of Ventura Lynch published in 1883 there are several allusions to the “gaucho porteño,” where the reference, clearly, is to a gaucho who lived anywhere in the province of Buenos Aires.

12. As Ezequiel Adamovsky aptly pointed out (personal communication, April 8, 2017), “The figure of the ‘Argentine morocha’ as an emblem of Argentineness (which is prior to Villoldo and has a subsequent career in Argentine culture), can be considered a bridge of communication between the rural and the urban and, at the same time, between the white and the mestizo.” See also Adamovsky 2016b.

13. For example, Ventura Lynch (1883 [1925], 23) refers to the death of a very important dignitary of the town of Rauch, and points out that, given his importance, people in Rauch “will always remember the name of this illustrious Porteño.” (our translation). Rauch is a city located in the eastern center of the Buenos Aires province, 172 miles from Buenos Aires and 169 miles from La Plata. The nearest seaport, Mar del Plata, is located 135 miles from Rauch.

14. For an analysis of the heterogeneity of tango canción’s poetry, see Romano 2014.

15. “Compadre,” literally means co-father or co-parent. But, as usual, literal translations do not convey exact meaning. Compadre, in Ventura Lynch’s usage, meant braggart, loudmouth, and bully.

16. Forte is referring to the heated discussion about converting the city of Buenos Aires into the capital of the country, separating it from Buenos Aires province.

17. Bockelman (2011, 597) points out the importance of these wide-ranging repertoires in the production of the payadores of the time who, supposedly being the representatives par excellence of the countryside music, constantly mix urban themes in their rural payadas and tangos in their compositions. That is the reason why in the series of songbooks called “Biblioteca Gauchesca” [Gaucho Library], included, in 1909, a booklet titled “Popular Tangos.” In turn, many booklets of songs, whose titles would make us think that they only contain tangos, actually have rural songs as well. Such is the case of Cientofante’s “The Tango of the 50’s,” published in 1907. We would like to thank Matt Karush for alerting us to this article. Karush reminds us that in 1911, when the record label Columbia wanted to explain that the type of music that the group of Vicente Greco was playing was tango, it called it “typical criolla orchestra,” which points to the inseparable relationship between the criollo song and the tango at this time (see Karush 2012a, 52). Finally, Kohan (2002, 146) reminds us that tango orchestras, at least until 1930, played rancheras and criollo waltzes as part of their usual repertoire, something that, according to Pablo Taboada (personal communication, July 1, 2017) goes on well into the 1940s (more about this below).

18. In <http://www.todotango.com/historias/cronica/68/El-Cantor-del-Tango:-Su-evolucion-en-el-tiempo-El-cantor-nacional/>

19. Ventura Lynch (1883 [1925], 36) refers to this type of milonga as follows: “The malambo is not sung, the milonga is only danced by the city’s compadritos, who have created it as a mockery of the dances performed by the negros in their meeting places. It has the same movement as the tambourines of the *candombes*.” (Our translation, emphasis in the original.)

20. We believe that the inescapable transformations of Porteño identity and its relation to the rest of the country after the process of federalization of the city of

Buenos Aires in 1880, and the impact of the massive European immigration that occurred at the same time are several of the elements to take into account in the analysis of the criollista resurgence of the 1920s and 1930s (in both its literary and popular versions), but this analysis goes far beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it is interesting to remember that, in 1926, in the city of San Antonio de Areco, a major criollista revivalist movement ensued, and Ricardo Güiraldes, author of *Don Segundo Sombra*, was honored by the locals in his ranch, whose name was “La Porteña” (see Archetti 2003, 21).

21. We want to thank John Turci-Escobar for bringing to our attention (while reading an early version of this chapter) that “El Estribo” (and perhaps some other tango names such as “La Montura”) are actually the names of “pulperías,” showing another angle of the articulation between the city and the countryside we are trying to describe in this chapter because, as John aptly points out, many pulperías, eventually, when the city extended toward the countryside, became food markets.

22. Even Karush reminds us (2012a, 53) that the first tango competition launched in 1924 by the record label Glucksmann was won by the tango *Sentimiento gaucho*, by the Uruguayan Francisco Canaro. Canaro used to recall that, during one of his performances in the Tabaris cabaret, Ricardo Güiraldes (one of the most important representatives of the gaucho traditionalist movement) was present. He liked the new tango very much and, eventually, he approached Canaro and asked for its title. When he discovered that the name was “Sentimiento gaucho” he exclaimed, “Gaucho it had to be to be so good!” We want to thank John Turci-Escobar for telling us this anecdote that is transcribed in Del Priore and Amuchástegui 1998.

23. Carlos Gardel is considered the most important tango interpreter of all time. He was born in France (Toulouse, 1890) and raised by a single mother in Buenos Aires’s working-class Abasto district, a central food market distribution area. The first tango he ever sang was Pascual Contursi’s *Mi noche triste*, which is considered the first tango song. Because of that, the year 1917 is considered the start of tango’s popularity, opening up a new era for the genre, called “La Guardia Nueva” [The New Guard] from around 1920 to 1935. That same year, Gardel began his film career, as well as his international performing career with a tour to Chile and Uruguay. In 1924, he appeared on radio for the first time, but by the mid-1920s he was already an international star, popular in Europe. His tragic death in an airplane accident in Medellín, Colombia, in 1935, produced a great popular manifestation of public grief and love in Argentina and abroad.

24. These data are from Por siempre Gardel, <http://gardel.unsl.edu.ar/carcamo.htm>.

25. “Abasto,” the name of the neighborhood, comes from “Mercado de Abasto,” the neighborhood in which the central wholesaler market for the entire city is located.

26. Karush (2012a, 56) reminds us that in the immense journalistic coverage of Gardel’s death in 1935, the images of the singer dressed as a gaucho were numerous.

27. Karush (2012a, 53) gives us a crucial statistic to understand this, when he states that in 1925, of the 500,000 records sold in Argentina, about 90% were tangos.

28. Pablo Taboada, reading a previous version of this chapter, notes that although *El rosario* could be sung as a waltz, what Gardel does in the film is a typical version of a criollo song.

29. Ezequiel Adamovsky, reading a previous version of this chapter, commented, “possibly this fact—that Gardel dressed as a gaucho—is rather a transnational pressure more than an evidence of the closeness between the urban and the rural in Argentina. Foreign audiences—partly influenced by Valentino and American cinema—demanded to see Argentines dressed as gauchos.” Although we think that Ezequiel is, somehow, on target with his comment, it is necessary to remember that these Gardel films were very popular in Argentina as well, not only abroad; proving that to the Argentine audiences this mixture of the rural and the urban was not quite “strange.” Something similar is argued by Archetti regarding the musicians’ acceptance to appear in gaucho clothes in scenarios and films (Archetti 2003, 24).

30. For a very interesting analysis of the same film see Alabarces 2012 and Ga-rramu-ño 2007.

31. Interview by Julio Ardiles Gray originally published in *La opinión cultural* (Buenos Aires 4 no. 1055: 6–8) (quoted in Cañardo 2016, 4).

32. Reading a previous version of this chapter, Carlos Molinero reminded us (again, showing the intricate relationship between tango and rural music we are proposing in this chapter) that a very important singer in the troupe that Chazarreta brought to his historical performances at the Politeama theater in Buenos Aires was Patrocinio Díaz, from Santiago del Estero province. Later in her career she also interpreted some very relevant tangos.

33. “Federalist” and “federalism” in the Argentine political context are terms that deserve clarification. Between 1810 (Independence Wars) and 1853 (when Juan Manuel de Rosas went into exile), federalism in the Rio de la Plata was a set of doctrinally undefined political tendencies that functioned on the basis of pacts that reserved for the states (provinces) a high degree of power. From this perspective, during that period, the most successful process of centralization (accomplished via a political agreement) was the confederation in force between 1831 and 1852. That confederation was led by Juan Manuel de Rosas, and his followers were called federal/federalists, although the pact behind Rosas’s power was really a “confederation.” In the political literature, from which the concept of federalism (Hamilton) derives, the term means exactly the opposite, that is, processes of unification and conformation of a “federal” state, not a “confederation.” On the sliding of meaning between both federal/confederative concepts and their consequences in the interpretation of Argentine history, see Chiamonte 1993. During the period we are talking about in this section of the chapter, that is, between the late 1920s and early 1930s, the revision of the experience of Rosas’s time seemed to function to shed light on different kinds of concerns, from the need for a new political pact between the central/federal power and the provinces in the face of a crisis of representation (often expressed in terms of tyranny), to the defense of national sovereignty against foreign powers, but also to redefine political and social citizenship, implicitly leading to a redefinition of the nation, as seems to have happened with the resurgence of the rural-based popular music genres that we are considering here. It is also important to bear in mind that from the points of view of show business and popular consumption alike, the “federal” signifier was part of the common sense of the period, as demonstrated, for example, in the auspices by *Jabón Federal* [Federalist Soap] (one of the most important soap makers of the country) of the radio programs called the Federalist Cycle.

34. There were other Blomberg-Maciél songs that were not recorded by Corsini, such as *Rosa morena* (milonga). We have found versions of this milonga performed by the Carlos di Sarli Orchestra (sung by Roberto Rufino); and the Francisco Canaro Orchestra with Carlos Roldán as a singer. Both versions were recorded in 1942.

35. Héctor P. Blomberg also wrote a series of novels of the same theme, some of which were adapted to the radio and became very popular. The role of this multifaceted intellectual in the popular culture of the 1920s and 1930s (poet, lyricist, writer, disseminator, his role in broadcasting, etc.) has not aroused enough interest among researchers. There are some exceptions, though. See Rea (2013) particularly for his serialized radio drama scripts. See Delaney (2006) and Rea (2015) for Blomberg as a poet/writer.

36. “Orillero” refers to people and things that belong to the “orillas,” that is, the margins, the outskirts of the city.

37. This ideological operation toward the past was not new and was shared by many intellectuals who were trying to rethink the Argentine nation from a pre-immigration stage (like Ricardo Rojas and his “Eurindia,” or Manuel Gálvez and his biography of Juan Manuel de Rosas, to mention just two). In terms of popular culture, it was the theater where the most resonant claims were made. In the mid-1920s, there was an “Argentine Creole Company of comedies, pochades, and sainetes ‘Juan Manuel de Rosas,’” which went on tour to the provinces with performances of various kinds, including gauchesca plays. In 1928, the playwright Alberto Vacarezza staged in Buenos Aires a sainete set in 1840, *El cabo Rivero* (Rivero, the Corporal), whose protagonist—gifted with all the attributes of the fictional gaucho—declared himself a fervent Federal and supporter of Rosas, whom he described as a defender of criollos against foreigners (see Adamovsky 2017, 32.). The serialized radio drama as a new form of mass entertainment in its beginnings highlighted the topics of the persecuted gaucho and the Buenos Aires Federals, and it is possible that the great popularity of the songs of the Federalist Cycle analyzed here is due to a large extent to the existence of a public highly familiar with the theme. For a pioneering analysis of the popular reception of the first “radioteatros,” see Terrero 1981.

38. For the tango *territorialización* process see Cecconi 2009.

39. This way of looking at the native population of the province of Buenos Aires pre- and post-European immigration flood coincides with what Ventura Lynch wrote in 1883. Speaking of the physical characteristics of the gaucho of his time, he says, “even though we find among them the type of the primitive gaucho, it is no longer as accentuated as it was in the time of the dictator [Rosas, who ruled until 1852]. An immense stream of immigration has changed the type of country folk living in the province. Today, it is very common to find gauchos who are blonde, white, with blue eyes, and extremely fine features. However, the most general type is tan or brown, with black or dark brown hair, brownish, black or greenish eyes, and a very thin or bushy beard” (Lynch 1883, 12, our translation).

40. This is a play on words, because “encarnación” means “incarnation”—of Jesus, the Virgin, and so on—but also as in Encarnación Ezcurra, Rosas’s wife.

41. The full title was “Restorer of the Laws and Institutions of the Province of Buenos Aires” and it was given to Juan Manuel de Rosas by the House of

Representatives of Buenos Aires on December 18, 1829. After the Desert Campaign (1833–1834) against the Indians, he was called the *Conquistador del Desierto* (Conqueror of the Desert). Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas is one of the most controversial figures of Argentine history. That was the case while he ruled (1829–1832, 1835–1852), but also after his exile and death in England. The debates about his life and legacy continue to play an important role in the cultural, academic, and political spheres of Argentina.

42. For a critique of the hypothesis that tango was instrumental in forging a political “accord” with the ruling class, see Vila 2000, 75–85.

43. There are several historiographic works that reinforce this hypothesis. See Adamovsky (2014) and Chamosa (2010). For a more generic approach of the role of mass culture and nationhood in Argentina see Karush (2012a).

44. For an outstanding genealogical perspective of some of these “displacements” see Adamovsky 2016b. For an analysis of Afro-Porteñas and nationhood see Rea (2015).

45. Continuing with the hypotheses that can enrich the pioneering work of Karush, it could be interesting to consider how the first black immigration of relevance after the forced immigration brought to Buenos Aires by the slave trade, that is, the immigration of Cape Verdeans that occurs at the end of the 1920s and early 1930s, by “making highly visible” an important black population in Buenos Aires for the first time in many years, did not contribute in some way to this resurgence of the black matter in popular music.

46. Buenaventura Luna (Eusebio Dojorti—“Dojorti”—the product of his family’s Argentinization of its original “Doherty,” an Irish surname) started his career in the radio of his native San Juan, but in 1937 moved to Buenos Aires with La Tropilla de Huachi Pampa, the first of the folkloric ensembles that Luna created and directed (followed by Los Manseros del Tulum and Los Pastores de Abra Pampa, both of them under his leadership). With La Tropilla, Luna had a lot of success on the radio and the circuit of traditionalist centers and “peñas” [clubs]. For Eusebio Dojorti’s trajectory from politician to folklorist, see Adamovsky (2016a).

47. In 1939, the senate of the Buenos Aires province approved November 10 as “Día de la Tradición” (Tradition Day) to commemorate the birthday of Argentine poet José Hernández (1834–1886), author of the narrative poems *El gaucho Martín Fierro* and its continuation, *La vuelta de Martín Fierro*, oeuvres that portrayed the gaucho in a way that, eventually, became the emblem of the Argentine gaucho.

48. Karush (2012b, 234) aptly documents this discussion:

Radiolandia Magazine (1938) described tango as “urban folklore” and argued that “folklore ... is the basis of all the great musical creations of the world,” and in Sintonía (1937) Julio de Caro defended himself against the accusation that his “modern orchestrations” would rob the tango of its “traditional flavor,” by arguing that the foxtrot and rumba had both been orchestrated without losing their authenticity. Interestingly enough, in a 1938 radio script, the noted tango lyricist and screenwriter Homero Manzi described Gardel’s repertoire as “folklore” that might serve as “the foundation for the great Argentine music.”



49. The analysis of Corsini's repertoire and its impact on the transformations of the criollo songbook would not have been possible without the stupendous contributions of Argentine collector and scholar Pablo Taboada. Taboada (who owns the original 1946 recordings) clarifies that the songs *Mama vieja* [Old Mama] (zamba); *Milonga triste* [Sad Milonga] (milonga); *Tristeza criolla* [Criollo Sadness] (waltz); and *Hermano gaucho* [Gaucho Brother] (zamba) are interpreted by Corsini with the accompaniment of his historical guitarists (Pagés, Pessoa, Montenegro, and Fernández—the “Negro” Maciel no longer one of them), to which he added the piano of Carlitos García, a musician who was well known for his fusion of tango with folklore and jazz. Meanwhile, his other recordings of the year 1946, *Nostalgias santiagueñas* [Longing for Santiago del Estero Province] (zamba); *El humahuaqueño* [The One from the Humahuaca Ravine] (carnavalito); *La palomita* [The Little Dove] (tonada); *Que siga el baile* [Let the Dance Continue] (escondido); *Ya canta el gallo* (zamba); and *Corazones partidos* [Broken Hearts] (cueca) are from the duo Ruiz-Gallo (and Ruiz-Gallo-Pérez Cardozo), folklorists who were highly involved with tango in the 1920s and 1930s. During those decades (and even earlier), they recorded songs of the type that Gardel performed, such as *Ya canta el gallo* [The Rooster Is Calling], a zamba written by Scolatty Almeyda, which was released by Gardel-Razzano in 1917; and *Corazones partidos* [Broken Hearts], a Saul Salinas cueca.

50. In the late 1920s, it was common for orchestras to have a singer who sang only the chorus of the songs they performed. The rest of the piece was just instrumental.

51. In <http://www.todotango.com/spanish/creadores/amagaldi.html>.

52. The periodization of tango is not written in stone, and while “Guardia Vieja” and “Guardia Nueva” are terms that most tangueros accept, their precise time contours are not always clear. Castro, for example, considers that at the beginning of tango history (around 1880–1910), during the “Guardia Vieja,” the tango was essentially a music dance of the urban poor (both criollos and immigrants), the lyrics were incidental, and the music, or the rhythmic factor of tango, was its dominant feature. The second stage of tango, “La Guardia Nueva” [The New Guard, ca. 1920–1935] is when tango becomes the music of the cabaret and is orchestral as well as vocal. (Castro 1991, 130–31).

53. As an illustration of this continuous mixing of tango and rural music it is very interesting to listen to a “Carnavalito” (compiled by the Abalos brothers), disguised as a “milonga,” recorded by the orchestra of Lucio Demare (with Adolfo Berón singing) in 1943. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4JGDCBtVL1Q>.

54. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHvyvD5IfCc>

55. Veniard's (2014, 285) outstanding information comes, among other sources, from an interview with the son of the author of the lyrics, Francisco Brancatti: “We have another account of the origin of ‘Mate amargo.’ We owe it to Alberto Brancatti—son of Francisco Brancatti, author of the lyrics of this ranchera—who pointed out several very interesting things. That Bravo and Brancatti composed the ranchera together, seeking to do something ‘criollo’ that could be accepted by the people of the countryside, ‘del rancho’ [from the hut]. He said that the authors knew ‘the ranchera was already known in other countries.’” (our translation).

56. This ranchera became so important for Lamarque's repertoire that, between 1928 and 1929, she recorded three different versions of *Mate amargo* [Sour Mate], two accompanied by orchestra and one by guitars (Veniard 2014, 288).

57. Another very interesting example of an "invented tradition" (that adds more ammunition to the main thesis of this chapter) brilliantly analyzed by Veniard (2013, 287) is, as we pointed out above, the case of the "vals criollo," which only appeared by the end of the 1920s. Before, pieces of music belonging to this genre were only labeled as "vals." Veniard thinks that the popularity of the ranchera is influential in this change in nomenclature, that is, to repackage an existing genre with a new name to take commercial advantage of a music fad. In other words, because rancheras were making lots of money with rural themes, why not to do the same with the waltzes so common in the countryside and start composing them in the city? Veniard (2013, 250) also points out that many of the vals criollos' lyrics written in the 1930s, notwithstanding the genre's name, were of sentimental character and did not deal with rural topics at all, such as *María, Amor que muere* (Love that Dies), and *Celia*. In turn, others, such as *La flor de los gauchos* (The Gauchos' Flower) had clear rural topics.

58. "*Eternamente abierto esperará el regreso, la pupila amarilla de un farol de arrabal / Y el árbol de la pampa soñará con el nido del pájaro viajero que ya nunca tendrá*" (Eternally open will [it] wait for his return, the yellow eye of a lamppost on the edge of town. And the pampa tree will dream of the traveling bird's nest that it will never have again). Pablo Taboada (personal communication, June 20, 2017) sent these verses to us to fully illustrate the inseparable relationship between the city and the countryside that many people attributed to the figure of Carlos Gardel. The lyrics were written by Juan Carlos Patrón, the author of the famous tango *Murmulllos* (Whisperings), lawyer and dean of the Faculty of Law of Montevideo, Uruguay. He wrote them as a tribute to Gardel after the aviation accident that killed the singer in 1935. With music by the great Uruguayan composer Pintín Castellanos, his verses became the tango *El pájaro muerto* (The Dead Bird), recorded by Charlo in 1935, a few months after Gardel's death. Here, we can see as well the inseparable relationship between Argentine and Uruguayan tango. Many thanks to Pablo for this invaluable information.

59. In [https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C1JZAP\\_enUS703US704&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=fotos+de+tango+caras+y+caretas&\\*](https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C1JZAP_enUS703US704&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=fotos+de+tango+caras+y+caretas&*&).

60. As John Turci-Escobar pointed out reading a previous version of this chapter, "for instance 'Merceditas,' performed by the Orquesta Símbolo Osmar Maderna, or 'La tupungatina' by Osvaldo Pugliese are, without any doubt, tangos."

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