

FRAY MOCHO AND LUNFARDO

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B.A. Brigham Young University, 1966

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts

in the Department of

Hispanic and Italian Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April, 1968

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Date April 26, 1968

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this thesis are to present a study of José S. Alvarez, known as Fray Mocho, and his works with particular attention paid to Memorias de un vigilante; to make a study of lunfardo, the slang of Buenos Aires - its origin, its nature, and its influence on language and literature; and to show the important place of Fray Mocho in the history of lunfardo.

To accomplish these purposes, in Chapter I, I have undertaken to present a brief sketch of the life of Fray Mocho. Then I attempt to make a brief introduction to his literary work and place it into the literary history of Argentina. Chapter II contains first a discussion of the nature of and importance of Memorias de un vigilante and then a linguistic study, with definitions and etymologies, of the lunfardo vocabulary Fray Mocho gives in "Mundo lunfardo". This is a link with Chapter III which is a study of lunfardo and its historical and sociological background as well as a discussion of the sources of its vocabulary, and the nature of the language. This study of lunfardo closes with a discussion of the influence of lunfardo has had on literature and the spoken language.

The conclusion is an attempt to bring together Fray Mocho and lunfardo and show his important place in the history of slang.

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My thanks are due to

H. V. Livermore

and Dr. K. I. Kobbevig

for their help and guidance

in the preparation of this thesis.

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF FRAY MOCHO

José S. Alvarez, best known by the pseudonym, Fray Mocho, was born August 26, 1858 in Gualeguaychú, Entre Ríos, República Argentina, to Desiderio Alvarez Gadea and Doria Escalada Baldez, both of traditional Spanish families with close ties to Argentine history. His great uncle was Lieutenant Santiago Gadea, one of the "33 orientales" of Lavalleja. A grandfather of maternal ancestry, José Celedonio Escalada was related to the wife of San Martín and was one of the Spaniards who embraced the independence movement and fought under San Martín in early campaigns culminating in San Lorenzo.¹

There seems to be some question as to his second name. When he was named at birth it is evident that the S did not stand for Sixto. Marta Marín says that the S of his second name was an orthographic error of bureaucratic origin for a C that stood for Ciriaco.² This information, however, seems to be incorrect according to other sources. The Diccionario de literatura latinoamericana, Argentina says that according to the birth register, the second name was Seferino, a misspelling of Ceferino.³ Valentín de Pedro claims that the parochial record where his birth

is registered states: "José Zeferino Alvarez," with Z. This letter was replaced with a C for Ceferino and from the time when Fray Mocho began to sign his name he did it after this manner: José C. Alvarez. Later, as his name started to be made public he changed the C to S supposedly for reasons of euphony. Some have claimed that the S stood for Sixto and Lugones calls him Santos in El Payador: "Nuestro contemporáneo José Santos Alvarez."⁴

José Alvarez used the pseudonym Fabio Carrizo in publishing Vida de los ladrones célebres de Buenos Aires y sus maneras de robar (1887) and Memorias de un vigilante (1897) but with Un viaje al país de los matreros (1897) he took the name of Fray Mocho, which he continued to use and by which he became so well known in the periodical Caras y Caretas. Valentín de Pedro comments on the origin of the pseudonym:

¿Cómo se origina su seudónimo? Puede decirse que casi nace con él, ya que procede de su más tierna infancia. Cinco años contaba cuando su maestro de primeras letras, un viejecito español al que por lo visto mareaba bastante con sus travesuras, le dijo delante de la clase. "¡Quedate quieto, carnero mocho!" La expresión cayó en gracia a los muchachos, que la festejaron con risas y la hicieron suya, llamándole desde entonces "el mocho". Más tarde, el propio Alvarez, puesto a adoptar un seudónimo, ante- puso el Fray al Mocho, acaso recordando a Fray Gerundio nombre que había dado a una efímera publicación que dirigió hacia 1882.⁵

Fray Mocho was raised on an estancia in open country and did not begin school until he was twelve years of age. In 1872 he entered the Colegio Nacional de Concepción del Uruguay and in 1876 continued his studies with a scholarship at the Escuela Normal de Paraná. He had to leave school before receiving his teaching

degree.⁶ Valentín de Pedro offers the reasons for leaving school. He says that when the school, Colegio Nacional de Concepción del Uruguay closed in 1875, Fray Mocho went on to the Escuela Normal de Paraná. He claims that he was an excellent student but not always completely dedicated to his studies. Outside of school he was attracted by serenades to lovers, the billiards of the Club Social, and trips into the country. The following year (1876) he left the school and his home and went to Buenos Aires. De Pedro quotes Fray Mocho for the reason:

Por causas que no hacen al caso, me había venido yo de mi provincia allá por 1876, trayendo por único capital unos diez pesos de la antigua moneda y muchos deseos de no morirme de hambre y escapar con mi pellejo entero de ciertas aventuras en que me había metido: tenía unos diecisiete años de edad.⁷

Unfortunately, the source of this quote is not given. Valentín de Pedro says he went to Buenos Aires for adventure but that the frightening city, his homesickness, and the necessity of finishing his studies led him to visit a fellow-citizen of Entre Ríos and the Minister of Justice, Religious Affairs, and Public Instruction, Dr. Onésimo Leguizamón. This man gave him a scholarship and offered to pay his way back to Paraná. He was not really interested in becoming a teacher and despite his scholarship he was expelled from the school, accused of being responsible for the collective absense of students from a class as a demonstration of their disapproval of the incompetence of the professor. His future teaching career was, therefore, permanently interrupted.⁸

In 1879 he went to Buenos Aires, this time to succeed. He started as a reporter for El Nacional, Sarmiento's newspaper; then he became the police reporter for La Pampa of Ezequiel Paz. He went on to become one of the editors of La Patria Argentina of the Gutiérrez family; and later wrote for Mitre's La Nación for which he was parliamentary correspondent. From paper to paper and from police reporter to parliamentary reporter he penetrated the life of the city and met all kinds of people in different circles.⁹ Things were not easy during this period. Newspaper work was demanding and paid little. In his writings he indicates that things were difficult. In "Instantáneo metropolitana", later published in Salero Criollo, he writes: "Ahora no soy aquel trabajador de antes, que usted conoció echando el alma sobre las mesas de redacción...."¹⁰ In "Ramón Romero", of the same work, he talks about the union the reporters formed,¹¹ and in "Recuerdos viejos" also from Salero Criollo he writes:

Siempre me acordaré de aquella vecinita que tuve cuando era noticiero de aquel diario de la tarde, que yo y muchos de mis colegas no olvidaremos jamás, cuyo redactor y propietario no nos pagaba nunca los sueldos....¹²

Fray Mocho in this insecure and poorly paid employment frequently lived a bohemian existence, but after marrying he sought something more secure in administration work so he entered the police force in 1886. He wrote La vida de los ladrones célebres de Buenos Aires y sus maneras de robar (1887) as a sort of manual or text for the employees of the department of investigations which he founded.¹³ This is not considered of literary value and is not included in

his Obras completas published by Schapire in 1961, but from this experience he does produce a fine literary work called Memorias de un vigilante, published in 1897.

Other works are successfully published but his work will be discussed in the following section. In 1898 Fray Mocho along with Eustaquio Pellicer and the cartoonist Manuel Mayol founded the magazine, Caras y Caretas. He was the editor of it until his death, August 23, 1903 and no issue failed to have a work by him despite the fact that he suffered from tuberculosis.¹⁴ This publication lasted until 1939. It actually marked a revolution since it was the first periodical to pay for literary collaboration. It gave great importance to national literature and criollista literature. Some of the authors whose works appeared in it are Roberto J. Payró, Rubén Darío, Martín Leguizamón, Leopoldo Lugones, José Ingenieros, Ricardo Rojas, and Horacio Quiroga. Humouristic criticism using politics and figures of Buenos Aires, characterizes the publication.¹⁵

THE WORKS OF FRAY MOCHO

The first volume published by Fray Mocho appeared in 1882 called Esmeraldas, subtitled Cuentos mundanos. This is a collection of erotic short stories of a picaresque spirit. For example, one of the stories "Acúsome Padre", deals with the seduction of a girl by a priest to whom she goes for confession. He takes her to Brazil and to Europe but abandons her in Marseilles. Another story, "Fruta prohibida", tells of a husband who comes home from a dance to find his wife in bed with an employee of his almacén. In a strange turn of affairs, the husband is arrested and the employee allowed to stay with the wife.

In 1887, the work previously mentioned, Vida de los ladrones célebres de Buenos Aires y sus maneras de robar was published mainly to be used as a manual. In 1897, Memorias de un vigilante appears, but actually had been written several years before. It is a book written in autobiographic form under the name of Fabio Carrizo in which Alvarez put much of his personal experiences that makes it have a tone of authenticity. In "Mundo lunfardo", the second part of this book, Fray Mocho incorporates for the first time into Argentine literature slang words (lunfardo) used by the thieves of whom he speaks.¹⁶ An extensive discussion of the linguistic aspects of this book will follow later.

Shortly afterwards, in the same year, he published his Viaje al país de los matreros. This work is a landmark in Argentine regional literature. It can be compared to Una excursión a los indios ranqueles by Lucio V. Mansilla or Mis montañas by

Joaquín V. González (1892). It consists of scenes and stories about the life of the people who live along the Paraná River in Santa Fe and Entre Ríos -- the home of Alvarez. It is about gauchos who change their horses for canoes and who hunt herons, carpinchos, and otter. The majority of these men are in difficulty with the law.¹⁷ Juan Pinto gives this appraisal of the work:

Un hombre que se asomó a nuestro litoral, que describió en relatos breves y cuentos de visión rápida, pero ahondando en el paisaje y en los hombres que lo conviven, fue Fray Mocho (José Sixto Alvarez). Viaje al país de los matreros es el libro que comentamos y que tiene un significativo subtítulo determinante: Cinematógrafo criollo. Es una magistral pintura de una zona argentina, descripta con una facultad de aprehender la realidad, de sorprender el rasgo definidor y el ambiente que hacen de ella un libro singular en su género.¹⁸

In 1898, a lesser known work was published by Fray Mocho, called En el mar austral in which he paints the scenery and the people who live along the channels and on the islands of the Tierra del Fuego. He was never there but took his information from reports of navy friends who had visited the region. Marta Marín says it seems that Alvarez conceived these adventures of seal hunters and prospectors as proof that he could write a purely imaginative book to show to those who felt his technique was too close to reality that he did not lack imagination.¹⁹

Beginning the eighth of October, 1898 the first edition of Caras y Caretas appeared. It is in this publication which he directed until his death that Fray Mocho became well known, and for which he is best remembered. It is here that his Cuentos appeared. They are filled with humour, colour, life, and accurate

psychology in the portrayal of the life of Buenos Aires. The dialogues preserve the picturesque and colloquial language of the time. Some consist of fables and rural stories with a folklore flavour. They are filled with caricatures of the varied colourful types to be found on the streets of Buenos Aires.²⁰ Of these works the writers of Diccionario de la literatura latinoamericana, Argentina, published under the Division of Philosophy and Letters of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Panamerican Union, state:

"Fray Mocho" fue un costumbrista original, comparable en su género sin trascendencia con los mejores de cualquier país y casi sin precedentes en la Argentina, aunque sí fue repetidamente imitado: popular sin descender a lo chocarrero; picaresco, pero medido en la expresión; satírico, pero sin hiel.²¹

These cuentos were collected after Fray Mocho's death and published in 1906 under the title of Cuentos de Fray Mocho. Later, other editions under different names such as Cuadros de la ciudad have appeared.²²

One of the important features of Fray Mocho's style in these cuentos is the usage of dialogue. This style begins with the story "Aguinaldos" and becomes the prevailing type of presentation in the following stories. Miguel Cané urged Fray Mocho several times to become a playwright because of his remarkable conversational ability. Valentín de Pedro says that this "dialoguing of the characters was his way of conversing with the public." (The public liked his dialogues as was shown in the widespread mourning for him when he died.)²³ Marta Marín believes that one of the weaknesses of costumbrismo is that outside description is so important. Fray Mocho's usage of dialogue is a technique

that costumbrismo had discarded and she claims that this shows that he abandoned costumbrista techniques for realista ones. She claims these cuentos show the changing social reality of Buenos Aires better than any novel because they are fragments that approach it from different angles.²⁴

FRAY MOCHO AND HIS TIME

Fray Mocho lived during the time of the Generation of '80. Mr. F.J. Salero in his "Prólogo y notas" to the Obras Completas of Fray Mocho places Fray Mocho in this generation:

Fray Mocho pertenece a la generación del ochenta, a ésa que nos dió La Bolsa, Silbidos de un vago, Prometeo y Cía., Evangélicas Bajo la garra, Nuestra América, Rosas y su tiempo, Libro extraño, etc. En esa época se alza la figura de Darío y asoma ya, en las orillas, Misas herejes. Es el momento en que irrumpen Alén, es la expulsión de Juárez Celman, y cuando se gesta, desde abajo, desde la profundidad, Pobre mi madre querida de Betinotti, preludio eticosentimental de la ontología plenaria yacente en Mi noche triste, de Contursi-Castriota. Es el instante en que el tango asume el ropaje de lo prohibido, de lo vitando. Fray Mocho pertenece a este tiempo, participa de él, recoge su hálito, y se hunde, tal vez lo bastante como para recoger de su limo, lo más viviente e imperecedero: humanidad.²⁵

Marta Marín has an opposite point of view:

El hecho de carecer de biografía -- sólo se puede hablar de un nacimiento y una muerte, varios empleos, una revista, dos libros-- lo sitúa drásticamente fuera de la generación del 80, donde pretende incluirlo alguna obra de consulta. Cuando decimos "carecer de biografía", pensamos necesariamente en el caso opuesto, Mitre, por ejemplo, o Mansilla, cuyos hechos sobrepasan las obras literarias. Próceres u hombres de mundo que hacían literatura; por un lado; por el otro, un periodista que publicó libros, pero cuya mejor obra, y no puede ser casual, es periodística, es decir, el logró más acabado de su oficio.²⁶

She points out that since Fray Mocho was a provinciano, not a member of the liberal-conservative ruling elite, nor a participant in the cosmopolitan and secularized furor of the men of '80,²⁷ he had little influence on the literary world but his close friends knew what he wanted to do and what his work represented.²⁸ The men of '80 shared their education and social class which Alvarez did not. He remained aloof from European literature but leaned towards

el criollismo. He was one of the first Argentine writers to introduce the landscape, customs and language of Entre Ríos into their narrative as did Martiniano Leguizamón with Calandria. He is also the first to introduce the literature of marginal groups and figures and of the urban proletariat (comadritos, vagabonds, servants, street sweepers, policemen, and the like) with their vocabulary. He represents the transition from the romantic and ochentista novels to the novels of the 90's. In the first the characters are noble, heroic and of prestige, and in the latter they are ordinary men.²⁹

In reality it is a bit dogmatic to say that Fray Mocho is not of the Generation of '80 and that those who so claim are mistaken. Let us take Roberto F. Giusti's definition of the Generation of '80 in Historia de la literatura argentina and find out how Fray Mocho fits into it. Giusti says that the writers of this generation were European in outlook.³⁰ This would exclude Alvarez, whose literature is very much a product of Argentina. He also says that these ochentistas censured the materialism of those times.³¹ We find Alvarez has little concern for this problem and does not appear to have any "ax to grind". This generation cultivated impressions of trips³² like En viaje by Miguel Cané or Viajes y observaciones by Wilde. Perhaps we could say Viaje al país de los matreros is somewhat like these. The ochentistas were creators of sketches.³³ Certainly Fray Mocho created sketches of the life of Buenos Aires in his cuentos and also of life and landscapes of Entre Ríos and even of Tierra del Fuego. This Generation of '80 remembered times in the past³⁴

-- like Juvenilia of Cané. Perhaps we cannot find a work by Alvarez quite like this but we do find that Memorias de un vigilante is somewhat autobiographical and looks back on his experiences with the police department. Giusti says that these writers were creators of cuadros de costumbres³⁵ and this certainly applies to Fray Mocho. At first they condemned naturalism (Lucio V. López) but later became realists after the French tradition (Cambaceres). They started almost exclusively by describing Buenos Aires -- painting pictures of the vida porteña.³⁶ Fray Mocho is also famous for the pictures he painted of the vida porteña. His frequent use of dialogue is a technique of realism according to Marta Marín.³⁷

Alvarez's book, Viaje al país de los matreros, is often said to resemble Una excursión a los indios ranqueles by Lucio V. Mansilla, Mis montañas by Joaquín V. González, and Recuerdos de la tierra (about Entre Ríos) by Martiniano Leguizamón. These authors are considered to be of the Generation of '80.³⁸ It would seem logical to include Alvarez despite the fact that he did not have much influence on the literary world. Perhaps En el mar austral could also be considered as regional literature.

It is dangerous to state categorically that Alvarez does or does not belong to the Generation of '80 because there is no clear definition of what this generation is. If it refers to those who wrote in the 1880's then he must be included, but if it refers to a spirit or a type of work then he may or may not be included, depending on the definition of that spirit or type.

In many ways he produces work similar to others of his age and in other ways he is unique (like in Memorias de un vigilante).

Valentina de Pedro points out that Fray Mocho did not belong to any literary school:

Sin hacer alarde de escuela literaria, sin levantar bandera propia ni alistarse bajo ninguna otra, con humildad laboriosa, realiza su obra, en la que nos deja una gran lección a través de una actitud verdaderamente ejemplar. A contribución de su obra puso sus dotes naturales, afinadas por el estudio y la observación, creando una literatura que no puede llamarse literatura periodística en sentido peyorativo, porque es literatura en la acepción más íntegra, y por consiguiente perdurable, ya que hoy la leemos con el mismo placer que se leyó en su tiempo. Literatura en la que se advierte una intención filosófica matizada de suave humorismo, de una comicidad empapada en simpatía humana, sin que falte en la ocasión un toque de lirismo.³⁹

Some have wished to take his criollismo as kind in opposition to the modernismo then in fashion and talk of a combative attitude on the part of Fray Mocho. He had no such attitude but produced a personal work based on his penetrating observations, his creative abilities, and on his command of the language.

Miguel Cané had this to say about José S. Alvarez:

...no se preocupaba de ninguna manera de entenderlo o comentarlo. Como todos los artistas verdaderos, se ocupaba sólo en producir y esto de la única manera que podía hacerlo: mirando y pintando. Sus personajes no sólo hablaban como estamos habituados a oír hablar en nuestros campos, calles y casas, sino que sentían y concebían las cosas como las sienten y las conciben necesariamente, por educación, por herencia y por la influencia del medio, los diversos tipos sociales de nuestro país.⁴⁰

FOOTNOTES

¹Valentín de Pedro, "Nota Preliminar" to Memorias de un vigilante by Fray Mocho (Buenos Aires: Compañía General Fábril Editora, 1962), p. 11; and Marta Marín, Fray Mocho (Buenos Aires: Centro de América Latina, 1967), p. 7.

²Marín, p. 7.

³Diccionario de la literatura latinoamericana, Argentina, First Part (Washington, D.C.: Unión Panamericana, 1960), p. 12.

⁴De Pedro, pp. 11-12.

⁵Ibid., p. 12.

⁶Diccionario, p.12.

⁷De Pedro, p. 13.

⁸Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁹Ibid., pp. 14-15.

¹⁰Fray Mocho, Obras completas (Buenos Aires: Editorial Schapire, 1961), I, 59.

¹¹Ibid., I, 76-78.

¹²Ibid., I, 106.

¹³De Pedro, p. 16.

¹⁴Diccionario, pp. 12-13.

¹⁵Marín, pp. 29-30.

¹⁶De Pedro, p. 17.

¹⁷Diccionario, p. 13.

¹⁸Juan Pinto, Brevario de literatura argentina contemporánea (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Mandrágora, 1958), p. 85.

¹⁹Marín, p. 28.

²⁰Diccionario, p. 13.

²¹Ibid.

²²See Marín, pp. 29-31.

²³De Pedro, p. 21.

²⁴Marín, pp. 33-36.

²⁵Obras completas, I, 10.

²⁶Marín, p. 7.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 8-9.

²⁸Ibid., p. 25.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Roberto F. Giusti, "La prosa de 1852 a 1900," Historia de la literatura argentina, ed. Rafael Alberto Arrieta (Buenos Aires: Peuser, 1959), III, 370.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., III, 372.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., III, 375-3.

³⁷Marín, pp. 33-36.

³⁸Giusti, p. 416.

³⁹De Pedro, p. 19.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 20.

CHAPTER II

MEMORIAS DE UN VIGILANTE

In this chapter we shall observe one of the most fascinating linguistic aspects of the work of Fray Mocho -- "Mundo lunfardo", the second part of the book Memorias de un vigilante, written perhaps in 1894 under the pseudonym of Fabio Carrizo, published in 1897. As previously mentioned, José S. Alvarez worked on the police force and in 1887 had published Vida de los ladrones célebres de Buenos Aires y sus maneras de robar, an album of photographs with biographies about the most popular delinquents, also used as a manual or text for employees of the Department of Investigations. In Memorias de un vigilante we find that Alvarez brings out much more - the psychology of the lunfardo (thief) and to some degree his vocabulary. Alvarez observed with the great curiosity of an author, everything he saw while working with the police and in this work he preserved some of that for us. In his cuentos we also find frequent reference to the police. José Gobello, linguist and student of lunfardo (slang), has pointed out that Alvarez was one of the first lexicographers of lunfardo and therefore is greatly appreciated in helping to show the evolution of the porteño language.¹

Just what is lunfardo? The next chapter will be devoted to trying to find the answer to this question because it is a vast field to consider, however Enrique Ricardo del Valle in Lunfardología gives us a brief definition which will help at first to orient the reader who may be unfamiliar with the subject:

Lengua orillera del gran Buenos Aires: Es decir, el lunfardo es, o fue en principio, un fenómeno marginal dentro de un área de cultura. Su localización geográfica fue Buenos Aires. Su punto de contacto (o adstrato de los lingüistas) la pampa o el campo; usada no sólo por los ladrones, como sucedió en su origen: luego el lunfardo fue una jerga esotérica, profesional, de la delincuencia; de cuyo vocabulario pasaron a la lengua común del pueblo buen número de palabras: hubo préstamos dialectales en un contacto lógico que hubieron de mantener sus hablantes con el resto de la comunidad; cuyo sentido especial se ha adecuado en boca de éste para otros usos conocidos: luego esos términos esotéricos, cambiaron de significado, se convirtieron en neologismos morfológicos, en neologismos de sentido y perdieron su carácter criptológico, se hicieron populares y vulgares y por provenir de una jerga que la utilizaban los lunfardos, se la siguió llamando del mismo modo.²

The only other writer about lunfardo to precede Fray Mocho was Benigno Lugones, certainly the first to publish information on lunfardo which he did in 1879. Like Fray Mocho he also had been an employee of the police department and he recorded the words he found in two articles: "Los beduinos urbanos" published in La Nación March 18, 1879 and "Los caballeros de industria" also in La Nación on April 6, 1879.³ Having published these works and later being dismissed from the police force, Lugones sought to cultivate less popular aspects in literature until he died, still very young, in 1884. These articles by Lugones were most useful to Dellepiane in his work El idioma del delito y diccionario lun-

fardo because they were the oldest documents of the slang of Buenos Aires. Later linguists find them to be of great value. Lugones wrote probably the only poem in lunfardo that there is:

Estando en el bolín polizando
Se presentó el mayoreño:
A portarlo encana vengo
Su mina lo ha delatado.⁴

It is interesting to note that these first two works on lunfardo came from former employees of the police force. The police are obliged to study the slang of delinquents and their ways of robbing. For this purpose there exists the Escuela de Policía which has instructors who teach the lunfardo vocabulary besides the usual science of crime detection. In Chapter 26 of his book Lunfardología, Enrique Ricardo del Valle gives an example of what can be found in the lexicographies of police archives.⁵

Despite the fact that Benigno Lugones precedes him, Alvarez was the first to incorporate these slang words into Argentine literature in "Mundo lunfardo". Valentín de Pedro says that since Fray Mocho knew his language so well he was able to bring this slang to his works without impoverishing them. To the contrary he enriched them with great success.⁶ Del Valle points out that José S. Alvarez made an "extensa y profusa incursión en el mundo lunfardo" in Memorias de un vigilante. This work concludes the "histórico lunfardo" or that of the 19th Century because nothing more was written on the subject until the 20th Century by which time great changes had taken place. He points out that there is a great difference between the lunfardo of Alvarez and that current

today even though some words are still used.⁷

Now let us look at Memorias de un vigilante and especially the part, "Mundo lunfardo". At the first Fray Mocho calls this book "mis recuerdos" and says he wrote them without any pretensions of being a philosopher or a literary figure.⁸ Fabio Carrizo begins with his birth and tells of how his childhood ended when the ranching foreman came to his house and he was told by his father to go with him because this was his patrón now.⁹ He seeks to write what happened to him not to paint a picture but with the intention of presenting a scene of the campo of times gone by.¹⁰ Chapter IV, "De oruga a mariposa" is a rich cuadro de costumbres of a fiesta (dance) of farm hands in the country which ends in the conscription of all the men present and Fabio Carrizo enters the army. He stayed in the army for sixteen years until 1880 and became Captain Fabio Carrizo.¹¹ Up to this point there are few similarities to the life of Fray Mocho and that of this Fabio Carrizo except the fact that both were born in the country and were poor. Alvarez also probably worked on a ranch when very young for we do know that he did not enter school until twelve years of age.

After his retirement from the army in 1880, Fabio Carrizo goes to the big city of Buenos Aires. This corresponds closely to the date when Fray Mocho went for the second time to Buenos Aires - 1879. Carrizo went to Buenos Aires with letters of recommendation from the Army and went to Mr. Marcos Paz, the Police Chief, to obtain employment.¹² In Chapter VII, "Mosaico criollo", Alvarez writes the impressions this Fabio Carrizo had of the big city: this is probably very autobiographical as Alvarez

remembers his own surprise on seeing the city for the first time.

Here is a selection of this impression:

El principio de mi carrera fue penoso y mortificante. Carecía hasta de las nociones más elementales de lo que formaba la vida de la ciudad, y todo era para mí motivo de asombro y de curiosidad.

Las calles, los tramways, los teatros, las tiendas y almacenes lujosos, las jugueterías, las joyerías, las iglesias, no era extraño que me arrastraran hacia ellas con fuerza invencible y que no tuviera ojos ni oídos sino para observarlas y asombrarme: era que todo me llamaba, todo me atraía.

No conocía ningún detalle de la vida civilizada, y cada cosa que saltaba ante mi vista era un motivo de sorpresa. No hablo, por cierto, de las maravillas de la electricidad, de la fotografía, de la imprenta o de la medicina, que eran cosas abstractas para mí en ese tiempo: hablo de los carros, de los carroajes, de los vendedores ambulantes, del adoquinado, del agua corriente, que no podía comprender como manaba de una pared con sólo dar vuelta a una llave, del gas, que me producía verdadero delirio cada vez que pensaba en él, de las casas de vistas, de las vidrieras lujosas, del sombrero, de la ropa y hasta del modo de reír y conversar de las gentes.

Durante un mes mi cerebro trabajó como no había trabajado durante todos los días de mi vida, reunidos, y de noche las paredes desnudas de mi modesto cuarto de conventillo me veían caer como borracho sobre mi cama, abrumado bajo el peso de las sensaciones de cada día.

Me acostaba, y la baraunda de las calles zumbaba en mis oídos, y desfilaban, en hilera interminable, las figuras heterogéneas que en el día habían pasado ante mi vista.¹³

Then he perhaps recalls his first days in Buenos Aires when he says:

¡Y considerar que a pesar de haber tanta gente a mi alrededor, de tener tantos compañeros en mi nuevo puesto yo estaba solo, solo como si me hallara en el desierto!¹⁴

He continues his descriptions of Buenos Aires and his first duties

and then says this, which surely must be the words of Fray Mocho himself in remembering his own experiences:

Estas impresiones, que son las primeras que tuve en Buenos Aires, puede decirse, las tengo presentes, y las siento como si fueran de ayer; veo aun las escenas y las cosas, tal como se presentaron a mí, así en tropel, medio confusas, informes, barajándose de una manera infernal; figuras espectáculos, diálogos, ruidos y hasta aire de personas absolutamente desconocidas, que yo encontraba en la calle o veía en las antecillas del Ministerio en las horas de facción.¹⁵

Chapter IV, "Cinematógrafo", is a colourful dialogue between a woman and an official at a wicket in the Administration.

In Chapter X, Carrizo describes a dear friend of his, Tomás Regnier - perhaps a person Alvarez knew in his own life. This person is mentioned again later. Chapter XI contains descriptions of more people who associated with Carrizo in the police force and Chapters XII and XIII deal with his advancement to the Department of Investigations where he was taught under a Sergeant Gómez. It is here where he learns all about the delinquents and crimes that are described in the second section, "Mundo lunfardo". This again appears to be autobiographical for it was in this same Department of Investigations that Alvarez did so well - the department he actually founded, according to Valentín de Pedro.¹⁶

The second part, "Mundo lunfardo", starts with Chapter XIV, the major chapter of this part, which is divided into sections, the first being called "En la puerta de la cueva" in which Fray Mocho laments the difficulty of penetrating the "mundo lunfardo". In "Perspectivas" we find an explanation of the difficulty of following a rogue through the streets and the story of an experience that happened to Carrizo one day. Fray Mocho in these sections

puts the lunfardo word in italics with the meaning right after it as in this example:

Como él siempre está sobre aviso y teme que lo embroquen -- conozcan, observen --, camina una cuadra y la desanda para ver si alguien lo sigue, da quinientas vueltas antes de llegar a un punto deseado, penetra a las casas a preguntar por don Fulano o don Zutano, -- un nombre supuesto--- para darle el esquinaso -- lo que equivale a despistar -- a algún empleado que pasa y lo conoce.¹⁷

In "Entre la cueva" he discusses the two basic kinds of thieves -- the native Argentines, who are few and less dangerous, and the foreigners, who are the most common and the most difficult to catch. "Ellas" refers to the women associated with the pillos -- the accomplices. He presents a sad picture of the conditions of these women -- las minas. Here is one of these descriptions:

¡He visto madres que no sólo abandonan las comodidades que un hijo honorable puede proporcionarles, sino que hasta cubren de vergüenza su nombre por disimular las bajezas de uno de estos canallas que ha rodado al abismo y que les paga sus sacrificios imponiéndoles cada día otros mayores!

He visto mujeres hambrientas, casi desnudas, vender, no ya su cuerpo si algo valiera, sino lo más indispensable para su subsistencia, a fin de llevar cigarrillos o bebida a sus maridos que, cuando están fuera de la cárcel, dilapidan con otras de mala vida el dinero que pueden atrapar, y ellas les compensan su abnegación con caricias que dejan sobre sus cuerpos indelebles cicatrices que no se borran jamás.¹⁸

There are five basic groups of thieves which Alvarez gives us in "Ellos". They are the punguistas -- the pickpockets; the escruchantes -- those whose profession is to open locked doors; those who dan la caramayolí or la biaba -- the assailants; those who cuentan el cuento or hacén el scrusho -- the cheaters or swindlers;

and the fifth group -- those who have all four of these talents called those de las cuatro armas.¹⁹ "El campana" is a section referring to those who select the houses or men who can be easily robbed. Alvarez says they are the real thieves and are hard to catch for they appear to be honourable people. They work at a profession or in some other work -- like servants, bellboys in hotels, porters, businessmen, financiers, etc. They guide and inspire the thieves who actually execute the crime and are those who take the biggest part of the loot. In the part entitled, "El arte es sublime" Fray Mocho describes how the punguista, a pickpocket, performs his crimes. "El Café de Cassoulet", the next part, is about the famous place of this same name where the thieves met. "El burro de carga" deals with the methods used by the escruchante to commit his crimes; "Los que cargan con la fama" deals with the assailants; and "El panal en la lengua" is about the cheater and swindler. "No le salvó ser ministro" tells a story of how a priest was robbed by a trick of all the coins he had saved. "Cupido y caco" tells a story of how some swindler robbed don José Robellatti. In "El primer cliente" we read of how a lawyer was blackmailed by a thief and a girl who appear to be a gentlemen and his daughter. The girl led him on until he was caught with her by the supposed father who demanded a price to keep it quiet. This "father" was the famous thief: El Cuervito. The final section of this long chapter is entitled "Al revuelo" and deals with how a store-keeper is robbed by trickery.

The next chapter IV, "Los misterios de Buenos Aires", continues the story of Fabio Carrizo but certainly appears to be

Alvarez speaking of his own life. He mentions the experiences he had with the police which helped him to observe Buenos Aires -- later so valuable in writing his Cuentos:

Yo penetré el movimiento de los hombres en sus calles estrechas, las pasiones que encierran los palacios y los conventillos, los intereses que se juegan diariamente desde la Bolsa a los mercados, y nacido en las más humildes esferas, ascendí peldaño a peldaño la larga escala social, tendida entre el humilde vigilante, que parado en una esquina, expuesto a las inclemencias del tiempo, ignora todo lo que no se relacione con el pequeño radio puesto a su cuidado, y apenas sospecha los sucesos de más volumen que ocurren fuera de su parada y la vida turbulenta y accidentada de los hombres de mundo.

Todo lo que vi y aprendí en mi larga y penosa ascensión, todo desfilará en las páginas de estas Memorias, y si no en este volumen, en otro que le seguirá, reflejaré con toda la precisión que me sea dada, las cosas y los hombres que encontré en el andar de mi vida y los sucesos extraordinarios en que más de una vez tuve que actuar.²⁰

We can note his reference to future books to follow and how these observations will help.

Memorias de un vigilante finishes with Chapter XVI, "El hombre providencial", a chapter rich in autobiographical material. He first mentions his being named to replace Sergeant Gómez as head of the Department of Investigation. José S. Alvarez did head this department. He mentions again Tomás Regnier, a good friend. They go to a cafe named "La Croce di Malta" and at a nearby table there happens to be a curious group of people talking loudly:

...son los muchachos de los diarios, ¿sabe? los noticieros de la Patria Argentina, La Nación, La Prensa, que vienen a conspirar contra los directores porque no les aumentan el sueldo,...²¹

This is an interesting reference to Fray Mocho's past mentioned previously when he took part in organizing a union of newspaper reporters.

Ya ni me acuerdo: debe haber sido allá por 1880 cuando comenzamos con Niño y Varas aquella lucha del Centro de Cronistas contra la situación precaria en que se hallaba el gremio.

Don Juan Gutiérrez vió en tal sociedad un motivo de alarma y nos fulminó: no quería en La Patria Argentina gentes comprometidas en centros, y le tenía miedo a La Nación, que comenzaba a levantarse y cuyo cronista (Niño) era el caudillo de todos, debido a su bondad de carácter, su generosidad y su talento.

* * * *

Nuestro trabajo tuvo recompensa: dejamos de congregarnos en la Croce di Malta y en Volta, cafetines de la calle cortada del Mercado del Plata, para reunirnos en la Rotisería Charpentier: ya habíamos trepado unos cuantos peldaños.²²

Notice the similarities with that mentioned in Memorias de un vigilante.

Memorias de un vigilante, we can say, is basically "Memorias de José S. Alvarez" from the autobiographical notes in it we have observed which are closely related to his experiences in the police force. It is closely similar then in form to other works of the Generation of 80 for they frequently wrote of memories of the past (as in Juvenilia). We have also observed how this work adds to the knowledge of lunfardo and how it fits in historically with other works on the same subject. The next part of this chapter will be a linguistic study of the lunfardo vocabulary which Fray Mocho gives us in "Mundo Lunfardo".

VOCABULARY OF "MUNDO LUNFARDO"

The lunfardo vocabulary of Fray Mocho given in "Mundo Lunfardo" has been considered a great contribution to the understanding of the early growth of porteño speech by such linguists as José Gobello and Enrique Ricardo del Valle, previously mentioned - and especially to the understanding of the growth of lunfardo.

In this study of the vocabulary he gives us we shall observe the words from various aspects. We shall seek to find the etymological origins of the words, to study their meanings, to see how generally they are used and to see if they were also mentioned in the works of Benigno Lugones. Later we shall study in greater detail the information on lunfardo and the outside influences on it, but in this study of the vocabulary we shall mention the origins and leave the explanations to the following discussions. After each vocabulary item will follow in parenthesis the page on which that word appears in the Obras completas of Fray Mocho previously cited. We shall follow an alphabetical rather than a chronological order of sequence.

Alcachofa (195) Fray Mocho gives this word as the name of a particular thief - "Alcachofa, el ladrón más decidido que he conocido,..." It does not appear in the vocabularies of Lugones nor in those of Dellepiane, Del Valle, Gobello nor Casullo. Though it is a proper name it does have an interesting linguistic background. C. E. Kany in American - Spanish Semantics²³ says that besides "artichoke" it has come to mean a "worn out brush" among

painters and in Chile it had the meaning of "blow" which he lists as now being obsolete. Francisco J. Santamaría in Diccionario general de americanismos says in Chile alcachofa means bofetada, guatada, manazo.²⁴ Kany felt that it probably got this usage from the fact that the plant called alcachofa had the shape of a clenched fist. Of course this Chilean usage could possibly have been the reason for the thief's name since "blows" are closely associated with robbery.

Armas (183) - las cuatro armas. The definition Fray Mocho gives us of this is that it is the designation for a thief with the four abilities (pickpocket, house breaker, assailant, and swindler). It cannot be found in the vocabularies of Lugones, Gobello, Del Valle, Casullo nor Dellepiane. Evidently each type of crime was an arma. Armarse in Central and Mexico means "to get rich".²⁵

Balurdo (195, 207) Here is the way Fray Mocho defines balurdo:

Cuando estafan, valiéndose de los sentimientos religiosos, dicen que han hecho "un católico", y si han empleado el recurso de los papeles inservibles, o sea el balurdo, han hecho un toco o un vento mischo. (207)

It does not occur in Lugones. Roberto Arrazola in Diccionario de modismos argentinos gives us this definition:

Paquete que aparenta contener dinero y que sirve a los estafadores para engañar al prójimo. Engaño. Señuelo. Voz lunfarda.²⁶

It has basically the same meaning in the Diccionario de voces lunfardas y vulgares by Fernando Hugo Casullo.²⁷ In Breve

diccionario lunfardo by Luciano Payet and José Gobello we find this definition which is not very different but adds a little more information:

1. Envoltorio de papeles, que a simple vista semejan una gruesa suma de dinero, con el que el lunfardo engatusa al otario en el trabajo deuento. 2. Envoltorio en general. 3. Engaño, mentira.²⁸

This word is not mentioned by Santamaría. Giuseppe Bellini in Lo Spagnolo d' America gives the word balurdo as having come from the Italian word balordo, "fool".²⁹ Dellepiane gives us balurdo and capa de balurdo which he says is the actual bills of money placed on the outside of a roll of paper to form the balurdo.³⁰ Gobello gives this information on this word's possible origin:

En "Lunfardia" lo supuse de origen genovés. Me guié entonces por el "Dizionario Etimologico del lunfardo di origine cocoliche" de Calibar [Ettore Rossi]. M. Barres pensó que provenía de balumbo (bulto que forman algunas cosas juntas). Mas la cosa se complica un poco si se piensa en que balourd es palabra del argot, que se refiere a todo lo que es falso y, desde luego, a los billetes de banco cuando lo son. Y el balurdo no era, en el fondo, sino un bulto de recortes de papel que se hacían pasar por billetes de banco. Más falso no podía ser.³¹

According to Gobello also, balurdo is a word used in common popular speech today.³²

Batidor (194). Fray Mocho says batidores are delatores - "informers, denouncers". Casullo gives the same definition.³³ Dellepiane gives us this information: "Denunciante, él que revela el delito delatando a los cómplices".³⁴ Santamaría gives denunciador, soplón.³⁵ It is not listed by Gobello as being in common use today.

Biaba (183 - "dan la biaba", 193) Those who dan la biaba according to Fray Mocho are assailants and the most infamous

type of thieves without the least bit of talent. (193). Biaba according to Gobello is:

Salteamiento en el que el ladrón ataca a mano armada en los sitios abiertos. Paliza, castigo. Usase con extensa variedad de acepciones figuradas.³⁶

We find the same basic definition in Casullo,³⁷ but he also adds this other usage:

3. Darse una biaba. Frase figurada. Abusar en el uso de cosméticos. "Le dió al balero una biaba de gomina que le quedó como charolado."

Dellepiane gives us these definitions:

Golpe, herida. Biaba de estaro, sentencia. Biaba seca, muerte. Dar la biaba, golpear, lastimar, herir. Tрабajo de biaba, asalto.³⁸

Arrazola gives us: "Cachetada. Puñetazo. Paliza. Vulgarismo."³⁹

Kany goes along with the above definitions saying it means "beating, slap"⁴⁰ Santamaría lists this word as an Argentine word meaning globo, arremetida, sopapo.⁴¹ There are other words which come from biaba such as biabazo, the augmentative of biaba. It is also a blow on the right side of a victim or in his back.⁴² Another word is biabista, the thief who uses blows to incapacitate his victim so as to facilitate the robbery. Santamaría gives this definition of biabista:

En Argentina, ladrón que para operar libremente empieza por poner a su víctima fuera de combate, hiriéndola o matándola.⁴³

He also gives the word biabar - also in Argentina - arremeter, atacar a golpes.⁴⁴ The origin of this word definitely is Italian and to show that, José Gobello gives a list of the words in each of the dialects of Italy from which this word comes. Here is his list: "Italiano - biaba - avena, pienso; Genovés - biava -

avena, pienso, (Fig.) paliza; Napolitano -biava - avena, pienso, (Fig.) paliza; Piamontés - biava, avena, pienso. (Fig.) paliza; Milanés - biava - avena, pienso, (Fig.) paliza.⁴⁵ He also states that it still is very much in common usage. Lugones gives it in his vocabulary beaba but with the same meaning as Mocho.⁴⁶

Burra (190 -cargar la burra). Fray Mocho gives the phrase cargar la burra meaning alzar los robos (190). Burra is a "caja de hierro donde se guardan caudales".⁴⁷ Cargar in the Americas means "to carry" and "to take on"⁴⁸ Casullo gives us various usages of burra:

2. Burra de viaje. Frase. Valija. 3. Burrita, de viaje. Frase. Maleta pequeña. 4. s. (En determinadas cárceles), baúl de pequeño tamaño, de sesenta por veinticinco centímetros, en el que el penado guarda sus pocos efectos personales, sirviéndole además de asiento. "La otra noche yo tenía cuatro botellas de Sello Verde, escondidas, envueltas en una manta dentro de la burra." (José Gobello, Historias con ladrones.) 5. Cargar la burra. Expresión lunfarda. Alzar el robo. "Antes que el sereno reaccionara, cargaron la burra y rajaron por los fondos del garage." 6. Hacer una burra. Frase lunfarda. Robar una caja fuerte.⁴⁹

This word is not listed as being in common usage today by Gobello in his list of lunfardo words used in the current colloquial speech of Argentina.⁵⁰

Busecca (211). Fray Mocho talks about "un plato de busecca" - today buseca - a soup made with tripe. Payet gives us the meaning vientre and gives us this quote: "...cachó el tipo por el cogote y lo dejó groggy de un seco castañazo en la buseca. (Last Reason)"⁵¹ Gobello gives us these definitions including both: "Suerte de sopa que se prepara con mondongo y diversos condimentos. Vientre."⁵² This word does not appear in the vocabulary of Lugones. It is

definitely of Italian origin from these dialects: "Italiano - busecca - callos, Piamontés - buseca - tripas, Milanés - busecca - estómago de los animales que, bien limpio y condimentado, se emplea como alimento."⁵³ This word is the current word in Argentina for this soup prepared from tripe.

Cabra (191 - pata de cabra). As defined by Fray Mocho this is a steel instrument in a zig-zag shape used by the escruchantes in breaking open doors:

Si el dueño de casa es precavido, y usa sus puertas enchapadas de hierro en la parte vulnerable, se da un corte en el umbral con el formón frente a los pasadores y se levantan estos; luego se introduce la pata de cabra -- instrumento de acero, formado en zig-zag -- frente a la cerradura, y se la hace saltar sin ruido, con un leve movimiento lateral. (191)

Payet gives us this definition for cabra "palanquita con apoyo usada por los lunfardos".⁵⁴ Santamaría gives us a definition for the complete phrase pata de cabra which he states is used in Argentina. It is a variety of a game of dominos.⁵⁵ Whether there is any relation is not sure. This expression was not in the vocabulary of Lugones and it is not used currently today.

Cachar (180). Alvarez uses this word in the past participle form here. He gives the meaning as being embromar. Other definitions given for the word are: fastidiar, burlar, agarrar, asir, coger, apoderarse de algo.⁵⁶ Arrazola gives this definition: "Sacar un pedazo o astilla a un objeto duro. Molestar, incomodar, embromar, engañar."⁵⁷ The word seems to be in use throughout the Americas. In Colombia cachar means to chat, flirt from cacho - "joke".⁵⁸ In Peru it means robar, engañar.⁵⁹ Kany says that cachar in the River Plate and Central American regions comes from the standard cachear meaning "to search a person for hidden weapons" (to

frisk > to rob).⁶⁰ Santamaría gives two sets of meanings based on the origins of the word. The first group is based on cachar, from the English "catch", which means asir, obtener, hurtar, coger, and in Argentina azotar, castigar, vapular. The second group has cachar as coming from the word cacha meaning cuerno. The Ecuador this means burlar, ridiculizar; in Central America - acornear, and in Argentina - "sacar un pedazo a un objeto duro" and he adds: "En este último sentido hay ejemplos de ascendencia española."⁶¹ This word is not given by Lugones. It is in very common usage today.⁶²

Cadena (186 - formar la cadena). The definition given for the term formar la cadena is for the associates in crime to station themselves behind the thief in such a manner as to pass the stolen item from hand to hand so as not to get caught. Casullo gives us this definition which is basically the same as the above but with added information:

2. Formar la cadena. Frase figurada. Manera determinada de practicar la punga, y que consiste en entregar lo hurtado a los colaboradores del ladrón. "Muchachos, a prepararse a formar la cadena. Ya saben el lugar que le toca a cada uno. ¡Atenti!"⁶³

The word formar also had other meanings. It can mean "relatar una historia inventada con el objeto de engañar a alguien y sacarle dinero"⁶⁴ or "pagar, contribuir".⁶⁵ The word formar is in common usage today but not the phrase formar la cadena.⁶⁶ Neither this phrase nor formar alone appeared in the vocabulary of Lugones.⁶⁷

Cambiazo (207). This refers to one of the methods of swindling. Fray Mocho gives us engaño and mistificación as synonyms and then proceeds to tell us of how a man makes friends with the owner of an almacén and then abuses that friendship to take

advantage of him. Casullo gives us this definition:

(En un robo), cuando una cosa es reemplazada por otra tan solo en apariencia, o cuando se altera el contenido de un envase..... Usase más en la expresión: pegar el cambazo.⁶⁸

Dellepiane spells it cambiaso and says that it means "cambio, el acto de cambiar." He says that pegar el cambiaso means the same a baratinar which he in turn defines as the operation of changing the baratín ("el rollo de papeles de estraza que se le deja al otario en cambio de su dinero en el trabajo deuento") for the money of the victim without his noticing it.⁶⁹ Lugones does not list this word in his vocabulary and apparently it is not in common usage today.⁷⁰

Caminar (187). "El punguista, cuando camina, jamás lo hace llevando al lado a sus compañeros" (187). This word did not appear in the vocabularies of Lugones nor in those of Casullo, Gobello, nor Payet. Dellepiane gives us this definition: "Caminar (con alguno). Robar en compañía del mismo o bajo sus órdenes."⁷¹ No other definitions seem to be available. It is not in use today with this meaning.

Campana (184-185). Fray Mocho gives us this definition:

El punto de contacto es el campana, es decir, el que busca la casa o el hombre fácil de robar, el que estudia el medio de efectuarlo, el que está en relaciones con los que cambian lo robado por dinero; la providencia en forma de hombre.

Bien considerado, estos campanas son los verdaderos ladrones; los que efectúan el robo son solamente sus instrumentos. (184)

Besides this definition there is the general one of a campana being a spy, generally placed outside of the house being robbed to give

a warning to the one inside if anything happens:

Espía, el ayudante de un ladrón que se coloca en acecho o sigue a alguien con el deliberado propósito de dar la alarma o avisar a los que efectúan el robo. "Uno comienza a trepar; el otro hace de campana." (Ricardo Lorenzo, En el área del potrero.)⁷²

From this word there comes a list of different words derived from it. We get campanaza - "Gente apostada cerca del lugar donde opera un ladrón, con el propósito de prevenir a éste y disimular cualquier actitud sospechosa, a la policía"⁷³; campaneadero - "sitio elegido previamente, desde donde el campana puede atisbar, espiar, campanear";⁷⁴ campaneado/da - "adj. Observado, atisbado, espiado";⁷⁵ campaneador/ra - "adj. Campana. 'Como companeador, nadie le gana'";⁷⁶ campanear - "oficio del campana, atisbar, observar";⁷⁷ and campaneo - "acción y efecto de campanear".⁷⁸

The origin of the word campana according to C.E. Kany comes from the word campana⁷⁹ meaning "bell" or campanaza - "stroke of a bell" and came to mean "accomplice who stands watch to warn of approaching danger" in the River Plate region and in Peru and Colombia. From this we get campanear.⁸⁰ Luciano Payet and José Gobello claim the lunfardo word came from either Genoese stâ de campanna, to accompany someone or from Neopolitan menarsè int'a 'e campanë, to pretend not to see nor to hear.⁸¹ In Genoese stâ de campanna a ònn-a persônn-a means to wait for someone.⁸² Since so many words in lunfardo did come from Italian because of the large number of Italian thieves in Argentina as will be discussed more in detail later, these explanations of the Italian origin seem more accurate

than Kany's -- that it came from Spanish campana "bell". Campana was listed by Benigno Lugones as meaning espiá.⁸³ It is still in wide use today.⁸⁴

Cantar (187, 204). Fray Mocho gives the definition of this word as being descubrir. Casullo gives us "Confesar un delito, decir la verdad."⁸⁵ This word was not found in the vocabulary of Benigno Lugones and is not listed in many vocabularies. It seems to be a little used word with this meaning.

Caramayolí (183, 193 - dar caramayolí). He gives it as the synonym of biaba. It is given as asalto, biaba in Casullo and is not mentioned by many other writers. Dellepiane gives a word caramayola to mean "La pelota que se hace con el pañuelo y se introduce en la boca de las personas para impedir que griten."⁸⁶ It is also used in the phrase trabajar de caramayola - "cuando se acogota a la persona asaltada, para impedir que pida auxilio."⁸⁷ Corominas mentions caramañola as being a soldier's canteen in Leonese and Aragonese coming from the word carmagnol - a soldier in the First French Republic. Then he says: "En Chile y en la Argentina se emplea una forma vulgar caramayola pero la variante con - ñ - es usual en ambos países y predomina en la Argentina." He continues by giving the word in Catalan caramanyola which is a gourd used as a wine container.⁸⁸ Evidently caramayolí never did achieve the popularity of biaba which is still in wide usage. It is not listed as one of those words in the common speech of Argentina today by Gobello.⁸⁹

Cebo (183 - dar el cebo). It appears to be another name for money:

...los que dan el cebo, o sea el dinero necesario para realizar el robo, que hasta para eso se precisa plata dada la situación a que ha llegado el mundo;... (183-4)

This term wasn't given by Benigno Lugones nor is it given by most dictionaries of lunfardo words. Fray Mocho appears to be about the only lexicographer to list it. Corominas traces the origin of the Spanish word cebo from the Latin cibus - alimento, manjar. In Portuguese it was cevo - in the Middle Ages it had a v and meant alimentar, manjar.⁹⁰ This could have some connection with the usage of cebo for money. Food and money are frequently connected. In English we sometimes use "bread" to mean "money". The word is not in usage today with the meaning used in lunfardo.

Contar el cuento (183; 207). Los que cuentan el cuento are swindlers (estafadores). We find that each different type of swindle (cuento) had a special name. Roberto Arrazola gives us this description of what is the cuento de tío:

Cuento: Estafa. Engaño. Dícese especialmente del que los bonaerenses denominan el cuento del tío. Profesional de la estafa por medio del cuento dicho y que consiste en referir a quien se quiere hacer víctima de una estafa, un cuento en el que un supuesto tío ha ordenado "in artículo mortis" a un sobrino de pega restituir una cuantiosa suma que el difunto había robado a un doctor X or Y a quien el sobrino no conoce porque acaba de llegar a la capital o es pajuerano. El objeto que persigue el estafador es despertar la codicia de la víctima, pues el sobrino dice llevar el dinero encima, lo cual casi siempre consigue, resultando a la postre estafado codicioso.⁹¹

This cuento de tío is also sometimes called cuento de otario.

Santamaría gives us this definition of el cuento del tío - "modo de estafar que algunos bandoleros emplean, haciendo una historia fingida para embromar a la víctima." He also gives cuento to mean chisme, traición.⁹² Dellepiane gives us contar as meaning engañosar and cuento to mean trabajo (robbery). Tomar el cuento is to believe the story of the one who tells the cuento del tío.⁹³ Lugones did not use either contar or cuento but they are used today.

Cuervito (191). Alvarez does not give us the definition for this word. The only dictionaries to mention it are Dellepiane who says that cuervo is a "sacerdote, capellán de prisión."⁹⁴ Santamaría says that in Chile cuervo is used to speak of monks who traffic in sacred things and is used in a derogatory sense of all priests. This he says is common in several countries.⁹⁵

Chafe (204). This is another word for vigilante which in Argentina means policeman. Lugones in his vocabulary gives chafo for vigilante instead of chafe.⁹⁶ Casullo has more information to add: "Agente de policía. Igual en Uruguay. También se usaron las voces chafo, chaferola y chaje."⁹⁷ Chafe is sometimes spelled chaffe.⁹⁸ Arrazola gives us chafle for vigilante but mentions that it also is chafe.⁹⁹ This appears to be another word not used today - in fact Gobello does not even list it in his book Vieja y nueva lunfardía except as part of the vocabulary given us by Fray Mocho. The origin is uncertain. Arrazola in his Diccionario de modismos argentinos gives us some other words which bear a similarity in form but not in meaning. He gives us chafar

as meaning hacer burla or mofarse and says that it comes from Portuguese. As the noun form of this verb he gives us chafa - burla, mofa.¹⁰⁰

Champurria (189). A definition of this word is not given by Fray Mocho. In its usage here it apparently has the same meaning as given by Arrazola: "Champurreado: (sustantivo) Dícese del licor que se obtiene mezclando dos o más licores distintos."¹⁰¹ Here is how Fray Mocho uses the word in discussing "El Café de Cassoulet":

Allí todo era cuestión de dinero. Teniéndolo, se hallaba desde la pieza lujosamente amueblada, hasta el tugurio infame, donde podía gozarse de las comodidades de un catre de los muchos que, en fila y pegados unos a otros, contenía un pequeño cuarto de madera y desde el vino y los manjares exquisitos, hasta las sobras de estos barajadas en un champurria indescifrable, y que podía remojarse con el agua turbia del aljibe, donde viboreaban los pequeños gusanitos rojos, descendientes quien sabe de que putrefacción y cuyos movimientos rápidos y variados podían servir de diversión al ánimo preocupado. (189)

Santamaría says that champurreado in Mexico is a drink made of atole, chocolate and sugar¹⁰² which agrees with the definition given by Kany for champurrao¹⁰³ (like champurria a corruption of champurreado). Santamaría says that champurreado in Central and South America means a mixture of intoxicating beverages and that champurrear in South America means to make the drink, champurreado.¹⁰⁴ This agrees with Arrazola, however he says that champurrear means: "Champurrar. Hablar con dificultad un idioma. Es un americanismo."¹⁰⁵ A similar definition is given in the vocabulary at the end of the publication of Memorias de un vigilante by Compañía General Fabril Editora: "Hablar con dificultad un idioma, pronunciándolo mal y

usando en él vocablos y giros exóticos."¹⁰⁶ A more extensive definition including both the definitions of Santamaría and of Arrazola is given by Tito Saubidet in his Vocabulario y refranero criollo: "Hacer mal una cosa o trabajo, a medias. Hablar mal un idioma mezclándolo con otro. Mezclar un licor con otro u otros. Chapurrear."¹⁰⁷ This word is not listed in lunfardo vocabularies and seems not to have been a lunfardo term.

Chapurra and chapurrear are from Spain. Corominas says that chapurrar means "hablar mal un idioma mezclándolo con formas de otro; mezclar un líquido con otro." He says its origin is not certain but the ancient form seems to be champurrar. This form with m is the one in common use in America.¹⁰⁸

Changador (180 - changadores). These the helpers: "--el gremio auxiliar más importante--, que se las venden [las victimas] por un tanto de lo que produzcan." (180). Payet-Gobello list changador in their Breve diccionario lunfardo as: "mozo de cuerda. Changador de otarios: auxiliar del ladrón." They give credit to Fray Mocho.¹⁰⁹ Lugones did not list the word and it is not generally found in lunfardo dictionaries. According to Santamaría, Corominas, Kany, and others it is a word of the River Plate region. Santamaría gives us these definitions:

1. Voz platense - persona que anda changando o haciendo changas, trabajos de ocasión y poca monta.
2. Peón suelto, sin trabajo, ni empleo fijo.
3. Mozo de cordel.¹¹⁰

He also gives us a definition of changa as meaning: "servicio que presta el changador y también él que se le da"¹¹¹ He also gives us a definition of changar: "hacer changas o negociocitos

de poca importancia - en el norte argentino - andar ejerciendo su oficio la ramera clandestina."¹¹² His first part of this definition and that of changa coincide with those given by Saubidet,¹¹³ and the second part of this definition corresponds to the word given to us by Kany - changadora - prostitute.¹¹⁴

The origin of the word changador or changa is a disputed one. Kany merely says: "of complicated and disputed origin".¹¹⁵ Let us observe some of the various theories as to the origin of changador. Corominas, Kany, and Santamaría all give as a possible origin that of the Quichua word chancay, today changay which means maltratar, majar.¹¹⁶ Corominas says that in Argentina and Uruguay changador was a "mozo de cordel" (like the definition of Payet-Gobello previously mentioned) and one who killed animals and sold the hides. He then gives the possible origin from Quichua and also a possible origin from Galician - Portuguese - facer changa - hacer negocio. He then gives the etymology of the Portuguese word - from a language of India - čangādam.¹¹⁷ Another possible origin is that from French quoted from Lizondo Borda and cited by Santamaría.

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Groussac...considera como lo más probable que esta voz y sus derivados han tenido su origen en una corrupción de échange, vocablo francés. Y se basa en que los primeros changadores, de que tenemos noticias, eran contrabandistas que, a principios del siglo XVIII - "tenían" sus guaridas en la costa oriental, donde acopiaban los cueros destinados a cargar los barcos filibusteros especialmente franceses que cruzaban el Litoral desde el Plata hasta las Antillas.¹¹⁸

Changa is used in the slang of Spain to mean negocio or ganga.¹¹⁹

In lunfardo, the common word, changador, evidently was used to mean a specific type of thief as given by Fray Mocho.

Dirse (187). "Tengo malos antecedentes, es cierto, pero eso no hace al caso..., iel decir adiós no es dirse!" (187) E. Herman Hespelt in An Anthology of Spanish American Literature has a section called, "Note on the Lengua gauchesca." He says: "6. Unorthodox Prefixes are common: dentrar for entrar, dir for ir; afijo for fijo..."¹²⁰ Saubidet lists the definition of dir as that of ir.¹²¹

Doctores (187). Here Fray Mocho seems to use this word to mean experts: "Estos practicantes llegan a ser unos doctores que dan miedo, y no pasa mucho tiempo sin que den vuelta y raya a su maestro!" (187) This probably comes from the adjective docto(a) - expert, well posted or informed.

Embrocar (179 - embroquen, 180 - embrocó). The definition given by Alvarez is conocer or observar. (179) Further meanings of the word are given by Casullo:

Mirar con mucha atención, filiando.... "Se te embroca desde lejos, pelandruna abandonada." (Celedonio Esteban Flores, Gardel-Razzano, Margot, Tango.) 2. V. Vigilar....¹²²

Dellepiane lists embrocar as having the same meaning as manyar, campanejar, and jamar.¹²³ Benigno Lugones in his lunfardo vocabulary gives embrocar to mean "mirar filiando".¹²⁴ Embrocar is one of those many lunfardo words which came into the speech of Buenos Aires through the many Italian immigrants. Gobello says that it comes from two Italian dialects: "ITALIANO imbroggiare - Dar en el blanco; acertar. Adivinar. GENOVES imbroggiâ - Golpear justo, dar en el blanco."¹²⁵ Santamaría lists an interesting but unrelated usage of the word embrocar in Mexico - empinar el codo, beber.¹²⁶ Gobello does not list this word as being in use today

in the colloquial.¹²⁷

Encandilado (194):

-- ¡Nosotros lo que hacemos es embromar a quien nos tiene por zonzos! ¡A los otarios les contamos un cuento, les ofrecemos una ganancia enorme, y encandilados, los clavamos: eso es todo!... (194).

The word here probably has the same meaning as given by Cuyas:

"Encandilar - to dazzle, to daze, to bewilder." Santamaría gives several definitions of this word in different parts of the Americas.

In Cuba encandilar means "alumbrarse con candil para paseo; in Chile and Puerto Rico - encender, lumbrar; in Colombia and Puerto Rico - asustarse, alarmarse.¹²⁸ This word is not listed in the vocabularies of Lugones, Casullo, Gobello, Dellepiane, and Payet.

Escabios (188 - schacar escabios). An escabio is a drunk. (188). This word is an apocopation of escabiado, the past participle of the verb escabiar- (beber) which is from the word escabio meaning an alcoholic beverage.¹²⁹ This word comes from Genoese slang scabbio, - wine and from the Milanese slang scabbi - wine.¹³⁰ Casullo gives us a list of alcoholic beverages using the word escabio;

Escabio amarillo - cognac.
Escabio de cañón - caña.
Escabio fuerte - aguardeiente.
Escabio verde - ajenjo.¹³¹

He also gives us some other uses of the word escabio - "estar escabiao - estar completamente borracho; darse al escabio - ser borracho consuetudinario."¹³² We find escabio in the vocabulary of Lugones¹³³ and according to Gobello escabiar is in general usage today.¹³⁴

Escruchante (183, 190). These are the abridores de puertas (183) whose art is described in detail by Fray Mocho (190). There are differences of spellings of this word. Casullo writes it escrushante,¹³⁵ as does Payet.¹³⁶ Other spellings given by Casullo include: scrushante and scruchante.¹³⁷ Arrazola gives "Scrushante: Ladrón de pisos o interiores. (Del lunfardo)."¹³⁸ Santamaría gives this definition: "En Argentina, ladrón que penetra en un domicilio, por la astucia o lo violencia."¹³⁹ Lugones gave us this word, spelled as did Fray Mocho "lunfardo que practica el escrucho".¹⁴⁰ Casullo quotes Francisco García Jiménez to give the origin of the word:

La palabra vino de "scrunch", que en inglés popular equivale a lo que "amasijo" en el hampa porteña; el temible "escruchante" de nuestro medio es un ladrón domiciliario que no repara en fractura y no trepida en matar, a lo menor alarma.¹⁴¹

Escrushe (183 - hacer el scruscho). As in the case of escruchante we find various spellings of this word such as: escruche, escrucho, scruscho.¹⁴² The main problem with this word is the definition. Fray Mocho gives us hacer el scruscho to mean estafar - synonymous with contar el cuento (183) yet he says that the escruchante devotes himself to escrucho or opening doors (190). Other lexicographers agree generally that escrushe with its various spellings refers to the robbery effected inside the house and not swindling. Dellepiane gives us this definition:

Robo efectuado dentro de las casas, de día o noche, pero en ausencia de los moradores por hallarse éstos en el campo, el teatro, la iglesia, de visita, etc.¹⁴³

Lugones gives escrucho and escracho each with different meanings.

Escracho means "robo en que el ladrón entra en una casa o edificio para hacer el trabajo" and escracho has a definition much more like that given by Alvarez for hacer el scruscho:

Se llama escracho la estafa que se comete presentando a un otario un billete de lotería y un extracto en que aquél aparece premiado con la suerte mayor.¹⁴⁴

This latter word and definition are mentioned by Payet. To that definition he adds rostro and fotografía.¹⁴⁵ Dellepiane gives a long list of usages of escracho but not associated with swindling:

Rostro, fotografía de una persona, carta. Escracho a la gurda, rostro hermoso. Escracho fulero, rostro feo. Hacer un escracho, escribir una carta. Escracho volante, caretta.¹⁴⁶

There apparently are various definitions for the various forms of spelling of escrushe and for Fray Mocho scruscho is not the same as escracho. José Gobello offers this helpful explanation:

Al mismo tiempo que rostro, escracho significó fotografía. Luego se la acoplaron otras significaciones: "mujer fea y desagradable", tal como se lee en Díaz Salazar; pinta fulera, según se desprende de este texto de Ernesto Sábato: "Pero imaginante, pibe ... era gente rica ... y yo además ... con este escracho"; y tal vez algún otro. Sin embargo, ab initio el escracho fue otra cosa, precisamente la que explica Benigno B. Lugones: "Se llama escracho, la estafa que se comete presentando a un otario un billete de lotería y un extracto en que aquél aparece premiado con la suerte mayor; la grande, como se dice generalmente la gurda, como dicen los lunfardos". Y bien, an argot escrache es, según Virmaitre, pasaporte o papel; cosas ambas fáciles de asociar al susodicho extracto, y a la fotografía, que es la parte más destacada de un pasaporte y, por razones obvias, la que más inquietaba a los delincuentes aluvionales.¹⁴⁷

From this we can see first that earlier escracho did refer to a form of swindling but evidently not to house breaking and that it has taken on other meanings - not uncommon in lunfardo or any

other language. Another interesting point is that escracho appears to have come from the argot while escrucho appears to have come from the English "scrunch". In any event there is confusion on this word which has not been clarified. This word and its variations were very common in lunfardo though not used much today.

Esparo (187). This word is the name of an art practiced by the punguistas, pickpockets, described by Fray Mocho in this way:

Cuando es necesario interceptar la vista de alguien, ahí se encuentra el practicante, que hará de nube, oosí no el brazo que no va a operar y que se baja o se levanta a la altura necesaria.

Hay punguistas que son muy hábiles en esta maniobra, que se llama esparo, y que es reputada como uno de los escollos del arte. (187)

Besides this meaning given by Fray Mocho the word has acquired others. It refers to an ayudante del punguista and also anything which is used to facilitate the robbery by a pickpocket like a newspaper, a book, a hat - anything to hide the hand of the thief: "Llevaba una revista como esparo / una revista que junaba apena."¹⁴⁸ This word is not given by Lugones and is not listed by Gobello as being in common usage today.¹⁴⁹

Esquinazo (179 - darle el esquinazo). The definition of this according to José Alvarez is despistar - to evade someone or "Turn from the trail or course". The word equinazo in one usage refers to a serenade - used in both Argentina and Chile. Kany relates this meaning with darle a uno esquinazo. It is derived from the word esquina, "corner", perhaps through the standard expression darle a uno esquinazo - to give someone the slip by disappearing

suddenly around the corner, since incognito serenaders often disappeared in this manner.¹⁵⁰ Casullo lists engañar, deceive, as another meaning of the word.¹⁵¹ In Diccionario general de americanismos we find a meaning somewhat related with engañar plus further usages of this word in other nations of South America:

En Argentina, en el lunfardo bonaerense, el hecho de burlar un ladrón al otro, llevándose el producto del robo, sin dejarle parte a éste. Por extensión, estafar, engañar, burlar en general. En Perú - asalto o ataque alevoso y en Chile alborada, serenata.¹⁵²

This word is not included in the vocabulary of Benigno Lugones. It is in common usage today with the meaning as given above and also to hold someone up (dejar a uno plantado).

Gato (191 - meter un gato). Fray Mocho describes the various ways of breaking into the house by the escruchante and then mentions another procedure:

Si estos medios no son posibles, queda aún el recurso de meter un gato, es decir, hacer esconder en la casa un cómplice que a una hora dada franqueará la entrada.

Este papel de gato no lo desempeña sic! cualquiera; es necesario dedicarse a él y hacerse una especialidad; acostumbrarse a estar inmóvil por horas enteras; a respirar sin hacer ruido; a no estornudar ni toser; en fin, hacerse un cadáver. (191)

Further meanings of gato are given by Payet and by Casullo. Besides referring to an accomplice who gets into the house to open the door for the thief, gato can also refer to the thief who secretly enters a house or a store and does the robbing himself when the victims have gone to sleep or out. Gato also refers to a person of little value. Both of these lexicographers claim that this word

with this usage is from the germanía (slang) of Spain.¹⁵³ Besses gives this meaning: "d. Robo del gato. El que verifica una prostituta entrado a gatas en el cuarto donde otra entretiene a un hombre."¹⁵⁴ The Dictionary of the Real Academia Española among its definitions gives these: "ladrón ratero que hurtá con astucia y engaño", "hombre sagaz, astuto", and "hombre nacido en Madrid". Fray Mocho evidently is the first to list this term for it did not appear in Lugones.

Golpe (183). Alvarez uses this word when discussing the cuatro armas (previously mentioned). He says that they are those who direct the important golpes (evidently the offenses). In Breve diccionario lunfardo by Gobello and Payet we find this definition for golpe: "En la expresión dar un golpe, cometer un delito."¹⁵⁵ The other vocabularies of lunfardo terms do not give this word, in fact Gobello even fails to list it as part of the vocabulary of Fray Mocho, perhaps because it was in very common use, but Alvarez does write the word in italics. Zunzunegui in La vida como es uses golpe consistently to mean a robbery or an offense as defined above, so it seems to be meaning in widespread usage in the Spanish-speaking world.

Lunfardo (183). "Entre los lunfardos hay cinco grandes familias" (183). Here Fray Mocho refers to the lunfardos as the thieves. Dellepiane gives us this definition:

Ladrón, genéricamente. El idioma que emplean los mismos en Buenos Aires. Sinón: Lunfa, choro, malevo, de la vida, Lunfardo a la gurda, ladrón que practica todos los procedimientos de robo, sin especializarse en ninguno, como regularmente acontece con la mayoría de los lunfardos,

cada uno de los cuales adopta aquella especialidad que se armoniza con sus aptitudes físicas y psíquicas.¹⁵⁶

By extension it also refers to the popular language which includes lunfardo words and others brought in by the many immigrants.¹⁵⁷

Arrazola gives us this definition:

Argot. Caló. Dialecto propio de la gente del hampa bonaerense cuyo uso se ha extendido a algunos sectores de la población y algunas voces del cual son de curso forzoso. Ladrón. (adjetivo): Perteneciente y relativo al lunfardo como idioma y como actividad.¹⁵⁸

Further information will follow on this language and how it developed. All the lexicographers write vocabularies of lunfardo but none gives its etymology. Américo Castro says that it is a dialectal word from Italian, but, unfortunately, fails to state that dialectal word.¹⁵⁹ The word is used by Lugones and he also gives the definition for lunfardo a la gurda previously mentioned. He gives only the definition "thief" and does not mention its application to language.

Marengo (195 - secuestro de marengos). Fray Mocho does not give us the definition of marengo. When Gobello lists it in the "Vocabulario de Fabio Carrizo" in his book, Vieja y nueva lunfardia, he merely says "no trae definición". In Italian the word marengo is a gold French coin of 20 francs of Napolean I. Secuestrar besides meaning "to kidnap" can also mean "to seize". This, then could have the definition to rob. It seems that this is the usage intended by Fray Mocho:

— ¡Aquí me train, señor!... siempre por lo mismo!...,
secuestro de marengos — parodiando el estilo de los
partes policiales — a un gringo que quería volar! (195)

This refers to Alcachofa, the famous thief previously mentioned.

Luis Soler Cañas in Orígenes de la literatura lunfarda makes a statement that seems to support this conclusion. He says "marengos, antecedente directo de mangos, hoy todavía en uso con el significado de pesos moneda nacional..."¹⁶⁰

Mina (183). These are the women described by Fray Mocho and quoted earlier in this chapter. He says this:

Son las madres, son las mujeres, son esas pobres mártires que arrastran su cruz a través del mundo -- las minas, como ellos les [sic] llaman --, las que les sirven de escudo contra los golpes de la suerte! (183)

This word is first given by Lugones in his lunfardo vocabulary as mujer. Mina referred to a woman in general but could also mean the lover of a lunfardo (thief), as given by Fray Mocho. A mina de tango is a prostitute¹⁶¹ as is mina de tambo "(tambo, prostíbulo)". A mina sin shacar is a virgin "(shacar, engatusar, engañar, robar por medio de la mentira, es decir, seducir)".¹⁶² Santamaría gives mina as concubina and barragana or any compañera amorosa in Bolivia.¹⁶³ Casullo says that in Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay mina is a woman in general or the lover of a thief.¹⁶⁴ Kany gives the English translation of mina as "mistress".¹⁶⁵ There are two possible explanations as to the origin of the word. Kany says that it comes from Italian jargon in which mina means woman but gives us no further information.¹⁶⁶ Casullo claims that it is a word possibly of Portuguese origin from menina, a girl, and at the same time an affectionate word.¹⁶⁷ The word mina is very much in use in Buenos Aires today, especially

among the younger set. The definition given by Arrazola agrees with this modern usage:

Mina: (sustantivo) Mujer joven, hermosa y bella. Este localismo bonaerense significa algo más de lo que dejamos consignado para cierta clase de individuos sin escrúulos.¹⁶⁸

Mosca (203) "Y Robillotti nadaba ya por largar la mosca, cuando para felicidad de su bolsillo, lo encontró el agente policial."

(203) The definition listed by Gobello in "Vocabulario de Fabio Carrizo" is dinero.¹⁶⁹ Casullo says: "Dinero. 'Para mí no hay mosca que valga. O laburan o no comen.'"¹⁷⁰ It is not given in most dictionaries of lunfardo, and was not given by Lugones.

Santamaría lists this definition for Argentina: "...impacto en el centro mismo del blanco; punto marcado en el centro del blanco."¹⁷¹

Muchacho (183). In describing the work of las cuatro armas Fray Mocho says: "Ellos son, generalmente, los que educan y forman los muchachos esmerándose en aquellos que revelan mejores facultades: ..." (183). Evidently by muchachos he refers to the young men being prepared to be thieves. This does not appear in any lunfardo vocabularies though Mocho uses it in italics. Santamaría gives us the definition in Argentina for muchacho as being tentemozo del carro,¹⁷² a type of support or prop of a cart. These muchachos were indeed the props or support for the cuatro armas who planned the crime but had them to carry it out.

Otario (180, 194). "Viven de los otarios, como llaman a las víctimas que caen entre sus garras,..." (180). "...como anda día y noche por las calles en busca de otarios -- víctimas -- ..." (194). Most definitions of otario agree with these but give the

idea of his being a fool or very stupid. Dellepiane gives us these definitions:

Hombre honrado. Ignorante, infeliz, sujeto fácilmente embaucable explotando sus condiciones de tonto y de pillo, de crédulo y de codicioso, a la vez. En este segundo sentido es sinónimo de cuadro, gil, vichenzo, turro, servicio lila, sánchez, cartón, etc. Otario de la gurda, tonto de capirote. Tomar de otario (a alguno), tratar de embaucarlo, suponiéndolo tonto.... Shacador de otarios, ladrón que se dedica a la estafa por medio del cuento del legado del tío, del legado para la crianza del niño, etc.¹⁷³

Arrazola gives us: "Idiota, Zonzo, Estulto, Necio, Bobo."¹⁷⁴

Santamaría gives about the same meaning. This is basically what Lugones says in his definition. He adds: "otario cuadro: muy zonzo, casi idiota".¹⁷⁵ Kany states that in the River Plate region the slang otario was once widely used in popular speech but has lost force and is being replace by gil and gilito (tonto).¹⁷⁶ Despite this, Gobello lists otario as being a word in popular use today.¹⁷⁷

Punguista (183). These are the pickpockets (183). All of the part entitled "El arte es sublime" of Chapter XIV of Memorias de un vigilante is dedicated to the description of the punguista. There are several related words. Punga is the "robo o sustracción de los objetos que la gente lleva en los bolsillos; ratería hecha con maña y astucia."¹⁷⁸ It can also be that which is robbed from the pocket. Dejar la punga means to deposit what is robbed in a safe place to pick it up later when the danger has passed.¹⁷⁹ Punguear means "robar, sustraer por medio de la punga." This means the same in Chile.¹⁸⁰ Arrazola in his Diccionario de modismos argentinos gives punguista a

broader meaning - more than just a pickpocket: "Ladrón. Ratero. Lunfardismo."¹⁸¹ Kany says punguista is a pickpocket in Argentina and Ecuador but that in Chile they use punga and in Ecuador punguero.¹⁸² Benigno Lugones gives both punga and punguista in his vocabulary.¹⁸³ Gobello does not list it as being a word in current usage today.¹⁸⁴

Queso (191 - entrar como en queso). An escruchante tries to break open a door but has difficulties: "Entonces es cuando se recurre a cortar el tablero de la parte inferior de la puerta, formado por lo general de madera blanda, en la cual una cuchilla afilada entra como en queso y abre un buen postigo."
(191) This appears to be nothing more than a simile - perhaps used commonly among the lunfardos. Queso was used in lunfardo but with meanings far different from the one already mentioned.

Casullo gives us these definitions:

Porquerías, cascarría en los pies de las personas desprolijas, sucias. 2. s. Los pies de las personas. 3. Las medias. 4. Figura. El presupuesto del Estado. "Todos patalean, todos critican... pero les gusta el queso." 5. adj. Hermoso, bello; buay bueno....¹⁸⁵

Besses lists several difinitions in the slang of Spain: "Pie. Pie de gran tamaño. Dar el queso: Engañar; engatusar."¹⁸⁶

Rostro (185 - dar el rostro). Fray Mocho gives this explanation of this phrase:

Sin embargo, el negocio tiene sus contras. Veces hay que ha hecho efectuar un robo valioso, y cuando va a retirar su parte se encuentra con una puñalada o con que, sencillamente, le dicen que no sea zonzo, y se alzan con el santo y la limosna, acción que se llama dar el rostro. (184-5).

There are other words related to this one. Rostrear means dar el rostro and rostrazo is the action and effect of rostrear.

Rostro means the same as rostrazo. Dellepiane defines rostrear in this way:

Ocultar a los cómplices una parte del robo para que no entre en la distribución, y obtener así una parte mayor de la debida. Lo mismo que dar el rostro.¹⁸⁷

This term was not listed by Lugones and does not appear to be in common usage today. Santamaría also fails to list it.

Schacar or shacar (188 - schacar escabios). This expression means robar borrachos. Schacar in general means to rob and also to rob through deceit.¹⁸⁸ It has various other uses:

Engañar, sacar una cosa por medio de la mentira. Shacar el viento, conseguir el dinero de otro, merced al engaño. Shacar una mina, forniciar. Mina sin shacar, mujer virgen.¹⁸⁹

There are derivatives of this word: shacador/ra - thief;

shacadura - robbery; shacemento - robbery, deceit, swindle.¹⁹⁰

These words come from sciacca in Genoese which means to squeeze.¹⁹¹

Fray Mocho is the first to give us this word and it appears to still be in wide usage in the common colloquial speech of Argentina.¹⁹²

Tano (195). This is an apocopated form of napolitano - Neopolitan. Arrazola gives this definition: "Dícese familiarmente del italiano residente en la Argentina, especialmente del napolitano."¹⁹³ Kany says that it means napolitano and by extension any Italian.¹⁹⁴ Santamaría says that it was a derogatory name: "En Argentina, aféresis de napolitano - nombre despectivo que se da a los extranjeros emigrantes de esa nacionalidad."¹⁹⁵

Toco (184 and 207, hacer el toco).

El campana presta servicios a los ladrones, pero que digan estos lo que les cuesta: siempre se lleva el lo mejor del toco, o sea del monto de lo atrapado! (184)

Toco is a portion of that which is robbed. It is also a bundle of bank notes.¹⁹⁶ This second definition is related to the usage of toco made by Fray Mocho on page 207 - hacer el toco or use the balurdo (useless papers that look like a roll of money) to deceive. Dellepiane gives us another usage dar el toco - "entregar la porción correspondiente de lo robado."¹⁹⁷ Another word derived from toco is tocomocho:

Tocomocho. s. (En algunos "trabajos", en el cuento del tío, especialmente), billete de lotería adulterado, que se usa para estafar. También, montón de papeles, recortes de diarios, simulando un paquete de billetes, para timar. "Y usted por servirlo, le dió cientos o doscientos. Eso se llama tocomocho." (Florencio Sánchez, Teatro, 187.)¹⁹⁸

We also find tocomochero - "El que practica el género de estafa denominada, trabajo de tocomocho."¹⁹⁹ Arrazola gives this definition of toco: "Cuota, parte que le corresponde a cada uno de los que participan en un robo o delito. (Del lunfardo)."²⁰⁰

For tocomocho he gives: "Dícese del billete y extracto de la lotería falsificados para hacer el cuento o trabajo denominado del tocomocho. (Localismo del lunfardo bonaerense que ha caído en desuso)."²⁰¹ Santamaría gives another meaning not exactly related to lunfardo - a type of indigenous cedar tree in Argentina.²⁰²

Toco comes from Genoese - tocco - a piece of something, hence a part of the loot. Piggia o tocco - to allow yourself to be bribed (dejarse sobornar).²⁰³ Toco was

given by Lugones before Fray Mocho. It is not in common, popular usage today..

Trabajo (180, 183, 186). Trabajo in general terms is a robbery, and trabajar in lunfardo means to rob in the widest sense of the word.²⁰⁴ Payet for trabajar also gives another meaning: "conquistar el ánimo de alguien".²⁰⁵ This was first given by Lugones. Today it no longer has this meaning in popular speech. Dellepiane in El idioma del delito gives us several pages of various types of trabajos. Among some of those listed are these: trabajo de albarde, trabajo de biaba, trabajo de caramayola, trabajo de cuento, trabajo de otario, trabajo de descuido, trabajo de escamoteo, trabajo de escrusho, trabajo de espiante, trabajo de punga, and trabajo de tocomocho.²⁰⁶ The usage of trabajar meaning "to rob" is not limited to Argentina. Besses gives the definitions of robar for trabajar and expender moneda falsa for trabajar el percal.²⁰⁷

Tumba (181).

Cuando un mocetón empieza a andar a malos tratos, ya los del oficio, al hablar de él dicen: "jamás será nada" o "es un muchacho de esperanzas y que irá lejos", según sea que tal pájaro haya salido bien o mal en sus primeros revuelos. En el primer caso, no encuentra protectores y tiene que hacerse carne de cañón, soldado de la gran falange, brazo ejecutor y por lo tanto frecuentador de calabozos y abonado a la tumba del Departamento Central. (181)

Tumba is a puchero, "carne cocida en agua" and also "comida de presos".²⁰⁸ Santamaría says that in Argentina it is "comida peculiar del pobre, escaso alimento; pieza o bocado que se saca de la olla; trozo de mala carne hervida en agua sin sal."

He points out that this word is also heard in places on the coast of Southwestern Mexico.²⁰⁹

Vento mischo (207 - hacer un vento mischo). Vento mischo is synonymous of toco. (207) It means to use false papers to deceive and rob. Let's analyze each word. First vento. It means money (dinero) - also there is another form - ventolina.²¹⁰ Some of its synonymns are guita, guitarra, paco, and rollo.²¹¹ It comes from substandard Genoese vento, meaning dinero - "o l'è ommo chi ha do vento, es un hombre rico."²¹² It is in use today in the common language. It was given by Lugones before Fray Mocho. Now let us examine mischo. It is sometimes spelled mishio, misho, or mishia.²¹³ It means pobre and misero. Casullo gives andar misho - "estar o andar sin un centavo."²¹⁴ Misho de uniforme means naked, and misho de rebute - very poor.²¹⁵ There appears to be some discrepancies on the origin of this word. Gobello gives mishio as coming from Genoese, miscio - "falto de dinero".²¹⁶ Kany cites Lizondo Borda as giving misho - a word in Northwestern Argentina meaning miser,²¹⁷ and Santamaría claims that it comes from the Quichua michha - "seco para otros, agravado en todo género."²¹⁸ The more likely explanation of etymology is that of Gobello as far as lunfardo is concerned. Micho was listed in the vocabulary of Benigno Lugones as meaning insignificante and pobre.²¹⁹ The word mishiadura (poverty) is still in widespread use, but not misho or mishio.²²⁰

Vida (180). From the context we get the impression that in this case vida means the mala vida - the life of thievery:

— ¡Véngó por una temporada a visitar a la familia! ¡Yo prometo que no haré ningún daño!... ¡Ya me he retirado de la vida!... ¡No me persiga y ocúpeme en cualquier averiguación! (180)

Payet says this of vida: "Se sobreentiende la mala vida."²²¹

And so we conclude the vocabulary of Fray Mocho. He was the first to record many vocabulary items, but in other cases Lugones had previously recorded them. Some of the Lunfardo words given by Fray Mocho are not listed by other lexicographers. Some are in common usage today but others are not. Many dictionaries like that of Payet, Dellepiane, and Casullo give frequent credit to José Alvarez as their source of information. Besides the literary value of Memorias de un vigilante, this work is of great worth to the student of the speech of Buenos Aires.

FOOTNOTES

¹José Gobello, Vieja y nueva lunfardía (Buenos Aires: Editorial Freeland, 1963), p. 16.

²Enrique Ricardo del Valle, Lunfardología (Buenos Aires: Editorial Freeland, 1966), p. 44.

³Gobello, pp. 101-117.

⁴Gobello, p. 13.

⁵Del Valle, pp. 249-253.

⁶De Pedro, p. 17.

⁷Del Valle, p. 42.

⁸Obras completas, I, 147.

⁹Ibid., I, 148.

¹⁰Ibid., I, 149.

¹¹Ibid., I, 159.

¹²Ibid., I, 160.

¹³Ibid., I, 162.

¹⁴Ibid., I, 164.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 165.

¹⁶De Pedro, p. 16.

¹⁷Obras completas, I, 179.

¹⁸Ibid., I, 182.

¹⁹Ibid., I, 183-4.

²⁰Ibid., I, 209.

²¹Ibid., I, 211.

²²Ibid., I, 76-77.

²³C.E. Kany, American - Spanish Semantics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 52.

²⁴Francisco J. Santamaría, Diccionario general de americanismos (Mexico City, Mexico: Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1942), I, 75.

²⁵C.E. Kany, American - Spanish Euphemisms (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 89.

²⁶Roberto Arrazola, Diccionario de modismos argentinos (Buenos Aires: Editorial Colombia, 1943), p. 32.

²⁷Fernando Hugo Casullo, Diccionario de voces lunfardas y vulgares (Buenos Aires: Editorial Freeland, 1964), p. 33.

²⁸Luciano Payet and José Gobello, Breve diccionario lunfardo (Buenos Aires: Editorial A. Peña Lillo, 1959), p. 14.

²⁹Giuseppe Bellini, Lo Spagnolo d'America (Milan: La Goliardica), p. 60. See also Américo Castro, La peculiaridad lingüística rioplatense (Madrid: Taurus, 1961), p. 124.

³⁰Antonio Dellepiane, El idioma del delito y diccionario lunfardo (Buenos Aires: Compañía General Fabril Editora, 1967), p. 77.

³¹Gobello, p. 190.

³²Ibid., p. 209.

³³Casullo, p. 35.

³⁴Dellepiane, p. 77.

³⁵Santamaría, I, 196.

³⁶Gobello, p. 146.

³⁷Casullo, p. 38.

³⁸Dellepiane, p. 77.

³⁹Arrazola, p. 35.

⁴⁰Kany, Semantics, p. 179

⁴¹Santamaría, I, 208.

⁴²Gobello, pp. 146-147.

43 Santamaría, I, 208.

44 Ibid.

45 Gobello, p. 146. See also page 139.

46 Ibid., pp. 209, 14.

47 Casullo, p. 45.

48 Kany, Semantics, pp. 163, 220.

49 Casullo, pp. 45-46.

50 Gobello, pp. 209-210.

51 Payet, p. 18.

52 Gobello, p. 147

53 Ibid., pp. 147-8.

54 Payet, p. 19.

55 Santamaría, II, 422.

56 Casullo, p. 50.

57 Arrazola, p. 44.

58 Kany, Euphemisms, p. 162.

59 Ibid., p. 184.

60 Ibid., p. 103.

61 Santamaría, I, 258. Corominas gives us the origin of the word cacha as having come from the vulgar Latin cappula, plural for cappulum, meaning the hilt of the sword. J. Corominas, Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellano (Berne: Editorial Francke, 1954), I, 92-3.

62 From cachar we also get the word cachada - broma, burla, guasa and cachador/ra - he or she who cacha. Casullo, p. 50.

63 Gobello, p. 110.

64 Dellepiane, p. 86.

65 Payet, p. 41.

66 Gobello, p. 210.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁶⁸Casullo, p. 54.

⁶⁹Dellepiane, pp. 77, 79.

⁷⁰Gobello, pp. 14-15, 210.

⁷¹Dellepiane, p. 79.

⁷²Casullo, p. 55.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 56.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹See Corominas, I, 619.

⁸⁰Kany, Semantics, p. 69.

⁸¹Payet, p. 21.

⁸²Gobello, p. 148.

⁸³Ibid., p. 14.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 210.

⁸⁵Casullo, p. 58.

⁸⁶Dellepiane, pp. 79-80.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 98.

⁸⁸Corominas, I, 668.

⁸⁹Gobello, p. 209.

⁹⁰Corominas, I, 743.

⁹¹Arrazola, pp. 58-59.

⁹²Santamaría, I, 427.

- 93 Dellepiane, p. 80.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Santamaría, I, 429.
- 96 Gobello, p. 14.
- 97 Casullo, p. 74.
- 98 Payet, p. 29.
- 99 Arrazola, p. 61.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 Ibid., p. 62.
- 102 Santamaría, I, 462.
- 103 Kany, Semantics, p. 9.
- 104 Santamaría, I, 462.
- 105 Arrazola, p. 62.
- 106 Fay Mocho, p. 159.
- 107 Tito Saubidet, Vocabulario y refranero criollo, 6th ed.
(Buenos Aires: Editorial Guillermo Kraft, 1962), p. 119.
- 108 Corominas, II, p. 25.
- 109 Payet, p. 30.
- 110 Santamaría, I, 465.
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 Ibid.
- 113 Saubidet, pp. 119-120.
- 114 Kany, Semantics, p. 114.
- 115 Kany, Euphemisms, p. 35.
- 116 Corominas, II, 17; Kany, Semantics, p. 114; and Santamaría,
I, 465.
- 117 Corominas, II, p. 17.

118 Santamaría, I, p. 465.

119 Luis Besses, Diccionario de argot español (Barcelona: Sucesores de Manuel Soler, n.d.), p. 60.

120 E. Herman Hespelt (ed.), An Anthology of Spanish American Literature (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1946), p. 304.

121 Saubidet, p. 135.

122 Casullo, p. 87.

123 Dellepiane, p. 82.

124 Gobello, p. 14.

125 Ibid., p. 156.

126 Santamaría, I, 591.

127 Gobello, pp. 209-210. The word is used in the slang of Spain. In Zunzunegui we read this: "... ((El Pintao)) es el maestro de una escuela de soñeros fáciles que salen limpiamente del embroque ... ¿Y qué es el embroque? Es ((... la disposición en que el torero se halla respecto al toro, cuando si no se moviera llevaría la cornada))." Juan A. de Zunzunegui, La vida como es, 2d. ed. (Barcelona: Editorial Noguer, 1956), p. 513.

128 Santamaría, I, 597.

129 Payet, p. 36.

130 Gobello, p. 158.

131 Casullo, p. 93.

132 Ibid.

133 Gobello, p. 14.

134 Ibid., p. 210.

135 Casullo, p. 95.

136 Payet, p. 36.

137 Casullo, p. 95.

138 Arrazola, p. 178.

139 Santamaría, I, 620.

- 140 Gobello, p. 14.
- 141 Casullo, p. 95.
- 142 Ibid.
- 143 Dellepiane, p. 84.
- 144 Gobello, p. 13.
- 145 Payet, p. 36.
- 146 Dellepiane, p. 83.
- 147 Gobello, p. 195.
- 148 Ibid., pp. 97-98.
- 149 Ibid., p. 210.
- 150 Kany, Semantics, p. 110.
- 151 Casullo, p. 100.
- 152 Santamaría, I, p. 626.
- 153 Payet, p. 43; Casullo, p. 117.
- 154 Besses, p. 83.
- 155 Payet, p. 44.
- 156 Dellepiane, pp. 89-90.
- 157 Payet, p. 49.
- 158 Arrazola, p. 122.
- 159 Américo Castro, p. 89.
- 160 Gobello, p. 17, and Luis Soler Cañas, Orígenes de la literatura lunfarda (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Siglo Veinte, 1965), p. 23. Gobello links mango and marengo as referring to money (Gobello, pp. 42-43).
- 161 Casullo, p. 145.
- 162 Dellepiane, p. 92.
- 163 Santamaría, II, 281.
- 164 Casullo, p. 145.

165 Kany, Euphemisms, p. 179.

166 Ibid., p. 165.

167 Casullo, p. 145.

168 Arrazola, p. 134.

169 Gobello, p. 17.

170 Casullo, p. 150.

171 Santamaría, II, p. 302.

172 Ibid., II, p. 312.

173 Dellepiane, p. 93.

174 Arrazola, p. 145.

175 Gobello, p. 15.

176 Kany, Euphemisms, p. 52.

177 Gobello, p. 210.

178 Casullo, p. 179.

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid.

181 Arrazola, p. 164.

182 Kany, Euphemisms, p. 106.

183 Gobello, p. 15.

184 Ibid., p. 40.

185 Casullo, p. 182.

186 Besses, p. 139.

187 Dellepiane, p. 95

188 Payet, p. 65.

189 Dellepiane, p. 97.

190 Casullo, pp. 194-5.

- 191 Gobello, p. 184.
- 192 Ibid., p. 210.
- 193 Arrazola, p. 183.
- 194 Kany, Semantics, pp. 38, 255.
- 195 Santamaría, III, p. 128.
- 196 Payet, p. 68.
- 197 Dellepiane, p. 81.
- 198 Casullo, p. 203.
- 199 Dellepiane, p. 97.
- 200 Arrazola, p. 185.
- 201 Ibid.
- 202 Santamaría, III, p. 190.
- 203 Gobello, p. 185.
- 204 Casullo, p. 205.
- 205 Payet, p. 68.
- 206 See Dellepiane, pp. 98-100.
- 207 Besses, p. 161.
- 208 Payet, p. 68.
- 209 Santamaría, III, 228.
- 210 Casullo, p. 209.
- 211 Dellepiane, p. 101.
- 212 Gobello, p. 186.
- 213 Casullo, pp. 146-7.
- 214 Ibid.
- 215 Dellepiane, p. 92.
- 216 Gobello, p. 176.

217 Kany, Euphemisms, p. 72.

218 Santamaría, I, 284.

219 Gobello, p. 15.

220 Ibid., p. 210.

221 Payet, p. 69.

CHAPTER III

What is lunfardo? How did it develop? Who used it? Does it still exist? These questions all arise as we mention lunfardo. This chapter is an attempt to observe the sociological background of its growth, how it developed and what linguistic and literary influences it has exerted on the speech of Argentina and other nations.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF LUNFARDO

Buenos Aires was slow in growing in population. The first settlers in Argentina went into the Northwest region, today known as the Provinces of Salta, Jujuy, Tucumán, and Santiago del Estero. It was not until 1580 that Buenos Aires was established (for the second time) and then the chief purpose was to provide a place where ships, after a long voyage from Spain, could stop to take on provisions and water before starting up the river to Asunción.¹ This region was not an attractive place for Spaniards who sought gold. For two centuries or more

Río de la Plata was a neglected colony and Spain's monopolistic trade policy stifled the economy. Politically it was under the jurisdiction first of Asunción and then of the Viceroyalty of Perú, until 1777 when the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata was formed with Buenos Aires as capital. Even at the time of independence in 1810, Buenos Aires was a small village. The country and city grew slowly during the forty years of anarchy, civil war, and succession following independence. Juan Manuel de Rosas ruled for twenty-three years until his defeat in 1852, after which the country adopted a federalist constitution. The end of the era of anarchy and the entrance of the Province of Buenos Aires into the Confederation made way for a united nation to be formed. At this point there were only 1,200,000 people living in Argentina.² This is when Buenos Aires started to grow. The pampa began to be cultivated and in 1857 the first railroad started operations. Soon a whole system of railroads converging on Buenos Aires came into being and it became the big port. British capital flowed into Argentina as did immigrants. This is of great importance as we study the growth of lunfardo. In 1869 Buenos Aires had 177,787 inhabitants of which 44,233 were Italians, in 1887 it had 433,375 with 138,166 Italians, in 1895 there were 633,854 with 181,093 Italians, and in 1914, 1,575,814 with 312,267 Italians.³ Between 1857 and 1900 approximately 2,000,000 immigrants arrived in Buenos Aires and 800,000 departed leaving a net increase of 1,200,000. Again after World War I immigration increased and from 1859 to 1930 the total immigration

came to 6,300,000 persons. About 80% of those who came were of Italian or Spanish nationality. Also represented in large numbers were French, Germans, Austrians, Russians, British, and Swiss. The arrival of the immigrants changed the character of the Argentine people radically.⁴

According to Marta Marín the "bad" legislation in Argentina caused these immigrants to stay in the cities - mainly Buenos Aires where they were employed in building railroads and other public works.⁵ Buenos Aires up to the time of immigration had a traditional social organization based on the landowners who were former military leaders in the War of Independence or politicians who had become famous in their work to build the country from chaos. The general masses were unskilled workers who worked part of the year in the country and part in the city. There existed a small group of merchants who could not really be said to form a middle class. The impact of immigrants changed Buenos Aires - they formed a large new urban proletariat, whose immediate interest was in rising socially and economically. They formed a middle and a new upper class based on wealth. During this time the stock market became a symbol of the new growth of the nation.⁶ Jauretche in El medio pelo said there came about an inversion of classes. Those who descended from the founding hidalgos became orilleros and gauchos and the imported bourgeoisie became the Argentine aristocracy. The descendants of the founders gave their place in the city to the wealthy, who were descendants of smugglers and merchants, and moved out to the suburbs.⁷

We find the immigrants have a large effect on the development of lunfardo. The largest group of foreigners at first was the English (until 1810). At that time almost any foreigner in Buenos Aires was called an inglés. Many early leaders learned English - among them Manuel Belgrano. In the time of Rivadavia the number of foreigners increased. General O'Brien went from the campaign in Chile and Peru to Europe and returned with two hundred young men to work in agriculture. In 1821 the French population began to increase. The Galicians started to come in 1845 and became mostly peones and criadas. Later the Basques came - they became labourers and devoted themselves to milk production especially in Quilmes, Flores, and Morón, in fact, it is said that almost all milkmen in Buenos Aires were Basques.⁸ Then came the great influx of immigrants as mentioned-mostly from Italy and Spain. In Buenos Aires existed the famous Hotel de Inmigrantes near Dársena Norte where poor immigrants stayed until they found work. It was a place of misery and promiscuity. The conventillos grew up where these immigrants went to live. Because of this influx of immigrants more than half the adult male population of Buenos Aires was made up of foreigners.

Sólo él que vivió en medio de esa multitud y llenó sus ojos con la variopinta de sus ropas y sus oídos con el ruido de cascada de todos los idiomas cayendo al mismo tiempo sobre el español o el lunfardo, puede medir la magnitud del milagro de asimilación que se realizó en Buenos Aires en el vértigo de unos pocos decenios.....⁹

Since most immigrants were young single males, many Argentine girls married immigrants - another reason for the large number

of Italian words in lunfardo and the common language of Argentina.

The Avenida de Mayo became the axis of movement of the new city.

It was the modern street¹⁰ filled with hotels, taverns, cafes, and mujeres pintadas. Individuals of diverse nationalities entered these cafes. German hotels and Turkish stores abounded.¹¹ This intermixing naturally caused many foreign words especially Italian to be incorporated into the speech of Buenos Aires. Américo Castro discusses this phenomenon in La peculiaridad lingüística rioplatense. Here are some of the observations he gives, and in part he is quoting Amado Alonso:

Lo que pone a Buenos Aires--dice--en desventaja frente al resto de Hispano-América (incluyendo España) es su increíble crecimiento por aluvión, y su condición de campamento colosal, en cuya vorágine, la pequeña minoría que mantiene la tradición de la lengua culta está desperdigada y apenas tenida en cuenta.¹²

A strong Spanish hierarchy had not developed in Argentina as in Peru or México and with the flood of immigrants, it was unable to defend its Spanish against the foreign words. Although most immigrants were Italians, or Spaniards, as mentioned, the Spaniards were mainly from rural areas and brought dialectal forms - not Castilian - with them.¹³ As we already observed, the old hierarchy descended from the founding hidalgos was replaced by the imported bourgeoisie.

Argentina does not have a socio-cultural integration and therefore there are many different levels of linguistic peculiarities. Geography plays a decisive role in the evolution of language. The inhabitants of Mendoza, because of its location, speak more like Chileans than like porteños. In Buenos Aires, bilingualism,

linguistic contact, and linguistic borrowing are some of the socio-cultural processes which affect lunfardo. Buenos Aires turned its back on the Provinces of Entre Ríos and Corrientes where archaic Spanish still exists and adopted foreign forms freely.¹⁴

The city grows and extends its border over rural areas. The superstratum of the porteño language is established over the substratum of the gauchesque language. Del Valle claims that in Benigno Lugones, Dellepiane, and Fabio Carrizo, one can see a mixture of rural and cosmopolitan language.¹⁵ As city limits expand, a phenomenon occurs which Del Valle describes:

Es que la ciudad y el campo se van tocando. La ciudad ganando terreno sobre el campo, urbanizándolo en círculos concéntricos de diámetro cada vez mayor. Y en las regiones periféricas de la urbe, nace, crece y vive este medio expresivo que es la connotación revelada de sus hablantes. Un nuevo hombre, mezcla de homo rusticus y homo urbanus. El gaucho de arrabal que llegaba a los Corrales (barrio de extramuros situado más allá del Retiro) a caballo o en carretas transportadoras de mercancías procedentes de la campaña. El gaucho pueblero fue asimilando y contagiándose de costumbres ciudadanas. De ahí al compadrito de arrabal no media sino un paso. "Constituía la fuerza principal de tal suburbio esa clase media entre el hombre de la urbe y el de la campaña; o sea el compadrito criollo..."¹⁶

Because of this cultural superposition of city dwellers over country dwellers at the edges of the city there arose the orillero, the compadrito or compadre as he was called. He has characteristics in common with the gaucho but also there are notable differences. There was considerable contact and dialogue between city and country:

Los malevos de las orillas constituyen un grupo humano de carácter marginal.

"El malevo además de ser un individuo marginal, es un resentido."

En su desplante excesivo se agazapan un trauma psíquico y una protesta social.

Desdeña al aristocrático jai laife de las calles céntricas que lleva galera y gasta yugillo, al susheta contemuse lleno de berrentines, al chitrulo sin experiencia en la carpeta o en el trato con el bramaje, al pituco afeminado que moteja de ministro, al chantapufi que no paga sus deudas, todas variedades de la fauna urbana.

No tiene tampoco simpatía por el paisano que carece del hieratismo taimado, de su garbo elástico, de su lenta elegancia, de su gratitud oprobiosa. El campesino es el grébano, el canario angelito, el payucano zonzo, el hombre sin clase orillera que no sabe bailar tangos ni chamuyar debate o manejar el vaivén con corte y quebrada.

Y finalmente desprecia, como buen xenófobo que es, a los tanos lacrimosos, a los franchutes amigos de la pichi-cata, a los gaitas aplicados al laburo, a todos los extranjeros rantifusos.¹⁷

In the seventeenth century, because of industry, suburbs grew around cities. These suburban areas had different names according to the country. In Buenos Aires it was the suburbio or arrabal, the suburra in Italy and the faubourg in France. From Latin came the idea that suburra is where the people of mal vivir lived. The French faubourg came from Latin foris burgum, "outside of the city". In more modern times, these areas were referred to as bajos fondos. Some famous barrios of this nature are: La Villette in Paris; the East Side in New York, and the Barrio chino in Barcelona. Buenos Aires, because of the large number of immigrants has an abundance of barrios where these different nationalities congregate. One of them the barrio de los turcos

between Reconquista, Cordoba, Charcas, and Tres Sargentos, consisting mainly of Syrian or Turkish merchants who have little shops of all kinds. Another one is the barrio judío consisting of two important centers - the barrio de Villa Crespo and Corrientes and Pueyrredón where retail and wholesale businesses abound. In the barrio de la Boca, the most picturesque, one can hear languages and dialects from all over the world but with a preponderance of Italian. If there existed a true bajo fondo in Buenos Aires it was what is today Leandro N. Alérm Avenue.¹⁸ Another kind of barrio has grown up in Buenos Aires in the past few decades - the villa or the barrio de emergencia. These villas miserias are not unique to Buenos Aires but common throughout Latin America:

En las grandes capitales del mundo donde existen los bajos fondos y moran en ellos, gente de mal vivir, es decir inulta, no urbanizada, se produce la descomposición de la lengua oficial, que recibe según los distintos países a que pertenece, diversos nombres, a saber: cant y slang, en Inglaterra; furbesco y gergo, en Italia; germanía, bribia y hampa, en Espafia; Rotwelsch, en Alemania; coa, en Santiago de Chile; Koeltrigelatin y Proevelikvant, en Dinamarca; briba, en Cuba; caló, en Mexico; calão, en Portugal; Bargoens, en Holanda; hantyrka, en Bohemia; balaibalán, en India; hiant-chang, en China; replana o cantuja, en el Perú; giria, en el Brasil; argot y patois, en Francia, etc.¹⁹

Buenos Aires also has her argot. The lunfa (thieves) or the human product of the hampa of the River Plate inaugurated a style of speech which the orillero assimilated little by little. The word lunfardo came to designate a certain tipo and also his language. In time the compadre began to use this colourful jargon

but never associated himself with those who originated it.²⁰

Lunfardo was the name for malvivientes and the atmosphere in which they acted.²¹ We recall that Fray Mocho claimed there were more foreign thieves than Argentine thieves.²² A list of the prisoners in Buenos Aires in 1901 helps to show how many foreign prisoners there were - a source of so many foreign words in lunfardo for these prisoners often developed their own language while in prison. Gobello gives this list:

860 Argentinians
782 Italians
374 Spaniards
142 Orientals
57 French

Also - North Americans, Germans, Greeks, Cubans, Chileans, Russians, etc.²³

There are three hypotheses as to how lunfardo developed among the thieves: 1) The most popular is that the necessity of communicating in the presence of the victim without being understood causes the thieves to develop their own language.

To refute this theory Dellepiane says:

Esta hipótesis no resiste a un examen minucioso. En primer lugar, es inexacto que el delincuente haga uso del argot en presencia de la persona a quien va a hacer víctima de una bribbonada, o de la de los empleados de la policía. En casos tales, los delincuentes echan mano de un lenguaje mímico, que no excita sospecha alguna y que pasa enteramente inadvertido para aquel de quienes tienen interés en ocultarse.²⁴

2) Lambroso explains the origin of argot as a result of the criminal, savage character of thieves. They create their own language, which is similar to that of savage tribes, because of their regression to the state of primitive barbarity. If a

criminal is a savage then he will think and feel as a savage.

He gave these analogies between the criminals' language and that of savage tribes:

Los mismos automatismos (titi, tipografía; coco, bebé, amigo), la misma tendencia al onomatopeyismo (tap, marcha; tic, reloj; fric-frac, la salida de la prisión), la misma afición al empleo de la metáfora para designar los objetos (el incómodo, el pico de gas; el lavandero, el abogado).²⁵

Dellepiane refutes this hypothesis:

No obstante las analogías indicadas y algunas otras que pudieran señalarse, forzoso es convenir que el parecido entre el argot criminal y los idiomas salvajes es más aparente que real, y que, en el fondo, existen caracteres diferenciales importantísimos entre unos y otros. Como tendremos ocasión de ver al estudiar la naturaleza del argot, su estructura sintáctica, su tipo gramatical, las leyes de formación de su léxico, más que como idioma distinto, debe ser considerado como un remedio, como un engendro bastardo de la lengua ordinaria de que deriva. El análisis de los caracteres psicológicos de estas jergas nos va a revelar igualmente el abismo profundo que separa al argot criminal, cuyos rasgos principales son el cinismo, el espíritu chancero, la tendencia a rebajar las ideas, del idioma del salvaje, "siempre grave aún en medio de su ferocidad, jamás irónico, nunca bromista, no buscando manchar el objeto de su pensamiento, sencillo y rural en sus metáforas, fecundo en formas gramaticales, originales y perfectas."²⁶

3) The third hypothesis Dellepiane accepts as being better founded.

It is that any group of people who are together and have their own habits and customs create their own slang, so criminals have theirs. Lunfardo is a professional language. The terms the speakers have, the objects they name, and the ideas they explain are all related directly or indirectly to the exercise of their profession of crime:

Así, al ladrón, y solamente al ladrón, puede ocurrírsele dar un nombre especial a cada uno de los bolsillos del traje masculino; en lo cual nuestro argot aventaja a la misma lengua ordinaria que no ha pensado jamás en establecer semejantes distinciones (cabalete, bolsillo en general; grillo, bolsillo lateral del pantalón; grillo de espienate, bolsillo trasero del pantalón; grillo de camisulín, bolsillo del chaleco; shuca, bolsillo lateral del saco; sotala o sontana, bolsillo interior del saco, jaquet o levita; media luna, bolsillo exterior del saco, donde suele llevarse el pañuelo).²⁷

Lunfardo, then, developed as a language of a marginal society of Buenos Aires. Marta Marín points out that it is interesting to note that Fray Mocho in three major works wrote of marginal societies as a type of confrontation with the society in which he lived. They were the compadritos and the lunfardos of Buenos Aires in Memorias de un vigilante, the seal hunters and prospectors of Tierra del Fuego in En el mar austral, and the hunters and matreros of Entre Ríos in Un viaje al país de los matreros.²⁸.

LUNFARDO VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR

Lunfardo developed from several sources among the delinquents of Buenos Aires. Del Valle claims that is not a dialect because it does not pertain to a geographical region but to a social group. He calls it an habla grupal.²⁹ When it is used by professionals in crime to communicate among themselves, it is a special jargon of a particular social group but when it supplies words for the common language (which it does as we shall see) then it goes beyond this.³⁰ Let us see how the lengua grupal developed. Del Valle states that the laws of the formation of slang, except in a few exclusive cases, are basically the universal laws of language and therefore similar to the development of any ordinary vernacular.³¹ As in the cultured languages, words do not usually appear by spontaneous generation.³²

Because of the large proportion of immigrants and because of the number of criminals of foreign descent, as previously mentioned, it is natural to expect that in lunfardo much of the vocabulary derives from foreign sources and, in many cases, foreign slangs.

We have observed in the lunfardo vocabulary given by Fray Mocho the large number of words of Italian origin. Of the 142 words given in the Diccionario lunfardo-español by Dellepiane, fifty are probably from Italian. Gobello gives the definitions and etymologies of more than 180 words from Italian in Vieja y nueva lunfardia.³³ Américo Castro calls the language "lunfardo

"italo-argentino" because of its many Italian words.³⁴ About this phenomenon he states:

En realidad la influencia italiana, en su mayoría dialectal, ha contribuido más que nada a desvincilar la lengua de Buenos Aires, y de rechazo, la de los países platenses. La fonética y la entonación, a veces la sintaxis e infinitud de vocablos revelan la huella de tales dialectos. Un cierto aire de desgarro y cinismo plebeyos ha soplado a su favor, y ha sido luego a su vez favorecido por tales influjos.³⁵

Words from Piedmontese, Milanese, Sicilian, and Genoese are mixed into the speech of Buenos Aires, but especially those from Genoese because the speakers of this dialect were mariners and preferred the city and its port.³⁶ This is a list of some of the most common words in Argentina which have come from Italian dialects into porteño speech through lunfardo:

apoliyar (or apolillar) "to sleep" < puleggiare "to sleep" (Italian jargon).³⁷

bacán "rich man" < Genoese baccan "patrón, principal, padre."³⁸

chapar "tomar, agarrar" and by extension "to make love"
< aciapá or in Genoese acciapare "atrapar".³⁹

manyar "to eat" < Italian mangiare "to eat". Genoese mangia "to eat", and Piedmontese mangè "to eat".⁴⁰

pibe "boy" < Italian pivo (jargon of the 17th century) "little boy", Genoese pivetto "little boy", and Milanese piva "little boy".⁴¹

There are a great many other words from Italian or Italian dialects used in Argentina but which did not come through lunfardo such as canelones < cannelloni, chau < Italian ciao or Milanese ciavo, macarrones < maccheroni, and ñoquis < gnocchi, and other names for foods.⁴²

Many words naturally come from the Spaniards since after the Italians the next largest group of immigrants were from Spain, who brought their slang. Gobello points out that germanía was mixed with caló:

Nuestra jerga no tomó de labios gitanos las voces del caló que trae asimiladas. Las importaron los españoles, confundidas con los vocablos germanescos. "En un primer período, discrimina Salillas, en el de gran acrecimiento, de gran personalidad de la hampa, la germanía, que fue su lenguaje, influyó poderosamente en el caló; y en un segundo período, es decir, el de la decadencia de la colectividad hampona, el caló influyó tanto que llegó a suplantar, ya que no a desvirtuar, la germanía." Los delincuentes españoles hablan, en realidad, un híbrido germanescogitano. De los que llegaron hasta aquí, no de las tribus sucias y policromas que acampaban en los baldíos en días de tolerancia municipal, tomó el lunfardo algunas de sus voces más características: chamuyar, junar, chorro, etc.⁴³

Américo Castro claims lunfardo was based on caló and Italian dialectal words.⁴⁴ Gobello lists some of the words that came from caló among which are these: chorro < chorar - robar; gil - tonto, lelo; najar - to flee, run - now replaced by rajar which, according to him, is a transformation of najar by phonetic assimilation; and pirobar - a version of piraberar or pirabar - fornicar.⁴⁵ Dellepiane gives a list of words as having come from what he calls bribia - the criminal slang of Spain, a mixture of germanía and caló: guita - dinero, parné - dinero, jamar - comer, ladrillo - ladrón, lima - camisa, najar - huir, pisante - pie, timba, - casa de juego, garrotear - acto de romper.⁴⁶ Gobello has a rather long list of words from germanía. He claims that the influence of germanía is not as large as some had supposed nor as small as others believed. Among the many words he lists are these: aliviar

(robar), baliche (casa de juego, comercio de poca monta), cantar (declarar o confesar un delito), penca (azote de verdugo), and parlar (an Italian word used in germania for hablar).⁴⁷

Because many thieves from Buenos Aires went to Brazil to practice their arts there is a certain degree of interchange of words between lunfardo and giria dos gatunos. In giria, many terms were taken from Buenos Aires. A few words in lunfardo came from giria such as quilombo which came to be enquilombar or quilombificar (to confound or cause disorder) from cachimbo or cachimba, an African word in Brazil meaning a pipe for smoking, and bondi (tram) which did not remain in usage in Buenos Aires.⁴⁸

French immigrants were a much smaller group than were the Italians or Spaniards. Only about four per cent of the prisoners of 1901 were French. Of the lunfardo words collected by Dellepiane only three per cent are from argot. Among these words we find: balurdo - mentioned earlier; bobo (reloj) from bobino, from the argot des voleurs according to Virmaitre; castaña (golpe) from French chataigne; gamba (100 peso bank note) from argot, jambe (100 francs); largar (dar, regalar) from larguer; and morfar (to eat) from morfiler.⁴⁹

In lunfardo there are also indigenous words and a few isolated words from English or other foreign languages, but these influences are minimal. Words die out and words are born in lunfardo and as in any cultured language, there is constant change.⁵⁰ That is why so much of the vocabulary given by Fray Mocho is no longer used at present.

Besides words from foreign languages we find many other sources for the lunfardo lexicon. The words in lunfardo do not appear by spontaneous generation but are developed or evolved from other words by various processes. The evolution of a word in a cultured language is the product of a long and slow process. In lunfardo that process at times is abbreviated by a sainetero or the writer of tangos. In lunfardo there occurs aphaeresis (leones < pantalones, tano < napolitano, ñapar < añapar), syncopation (nal < nacional, mango < marengo), and appocopation (ciruja < cirujanos). Some words come from defective hearing (orsái < "off side" in English; bufarrón < bujarrón in normal Spanish, chinchivirría, a drink used by criminals in Ushuaia, < gingerbeer).⁵¹

There are many synecdoches in lunfardo where part of a whole comes to represent the whole. This also occurs in germania where, for example, a poniente stands for a sombrero because it is put on (se pone). In lunfardo sangre means dinero because of the scratch or cut made on the victim by the thief to get the money; a homosexual is a mino, masculine of mina, and it soon became ministro; a gallego is a gaita; street sweepers were called musolinos after the famous Sicilian bandit named José Musolino, who was a street sweeper; yoni (from Johnny) meant any Englishman; and cosaco referred to any agent of the mounted police. Other metaphors are these: coco, mate or melón for "head"; whiskey was alpiste because it is made by fermenting certain grains among which was alpiste; queso for "feet" possibly because of the odor;

soñadora for pillow; ventanas for eyes; centenario for the hundred peso bank note (associating one hundred with the centennial of Independence) or sometimes it was called canario for its colour; a thousand peso note was fragata because of its decoration (the picture of a frigate on the back). Hyperbole exists also ("acanalar - la accion de abrir un tajo en la cara; carga - dinero que se lleva en el bolsillo, piojosa - cabeza").⁵²

Another phenomenon in the growth of lunfardo is el calambur mentioned by Del Valle. It comes from French calembour, a play on words. This is not new or peculiar to Buenos Aires for it was used far earlier in Spain. An example of this from Villamediana is: "Diamantes que fueron antes / de amantes de su mujer." An example in English is "Dew drop inn" for "Do drop in".⁵³

Other words in lunfardo as in other languages are formed from onomatopeetic sounds like tun tun for a revolver and bibi for a girl. Dellepiane says that this repetition makes criminal languages more similar to the language of a child.⁵⁴

Some lunfardo vocabulary items come from phonetic modification or ordinary words by metathesis, contractions, and transpositions like rufino for rufián; lache for cambalache; barbusa for barba; cambiaso for cambio; and jaife for lechuguino. These slangs, according to Dellepiane are poor in words mainly because the mentality of the criminals is poor but in things dealing with their own like robbery, killing, money or hurting, their jargons are rich. An example is the long list of words for money: blanca,

amarillo, parné, pulenta, guita, guitarra, paco, rollo, vento, ferros, mangangas, and others. (In Italian slang there are seventy-two ways of talking about getting drunk or drinking.⁵⁵)

Philosophers, jurists, sociologists, and writers are interested in lunfardo or any slang, because it reveals the soul of the person - his world, his life, his brutality, materialism, obscenity, and character. Some examples of words that may reveal the character of the lunfardos are these: cuero for piel, alón for brazo, pico for boca, reventar for morir, and tener un polichinela en el cajón for estar encinta.⁵⁶ Lunfardo is also highly figurative: blood is called colorada or chocolata, sugar is endulzante, yerba mate is verda, and lawyers are called blanqueadores. It is an imaginitive language abounding in picturesque and colourful images which are often full of irony and sarcasm - a policeman who deprives a lunfardo of his liberty is called a botón, and a door which is hard to break is a virgen.⁵⁷

Another source of vocabulary in lunfardo is the vesre, something similar to our "pig latin" in English. Gobello says that vesre is a game, not a slang, and a Spanish custom.⁵⁸ It was used among thieves so outsiders could not understand. Some words formed in this manner are: greno < negro, chepo < pecho, toba < bota, grito < trigo. In these we notice that the consonants change places but not the vowels. Others are different like gotán < tango, cañemu < muñeca, or topla < plato - an inversion of syllables. Monosyllabic words often undergo other changes like oyo for yo or eñe for fe.⁵⁹

In review of the origins of lunfardo, let us read what

José Gobello says about:

Se insiste... en hablar del lunfardo como de un vocabulario generado en las cárceles, sobrentendiendo las cárceles argentinas. Y esto no es exacto. Si la mayoría de los vocablos lunfardos son productos de importación -- como está demostrado con creces en los trabajos lunfardológicos que proliferan, en buena hora, desde hace un tiempo --, es evidente que no se crearon en Las Heras ni en la Prisión, ni en la Tierra cruel e inhóspita que, durante tantos años, escarneció el artículo 18 de la Constitución Nacional. La mayoría de las palabras lunfardas vinieron de Europa -- Italia, España, Francia -- y fueron mudando luego en forma -- a veces también su significado --; se enriquecieron con nuevas connotaciones; asumieron acepciones metafóricas; incorporáronse indigenismos y sematemas campesinos, y sumaron algunas otras de formación popular. Si este proceso ocurrió en las cárceles o en los conventillos es cosa necesaria de esclarecer, mas todo indica que la promiscuidad de los segundos contó tanto como las primeras.⁶⁰

Lunfardo is not a regular language. It does not have its own syntax but used that of Spanish though at times it does violence to it by omitting prepositions or conjunctions. An essential part of it is the use of metaphors. Lunfardo does have a very extensive vocabulary which is always growing even though it does not constitute a language with all its structural resources. Though it does follow the basic rules of Spanish syntax, there are some formations which are irregular like the augmentative of otario is otario cuadro because cuadro is Spanish means tonto, the same meaning of otario. They are actually saying tonto tonto. This is similar to aboriginal languages and different from Spanish where the expression would be tontísimo or requetetonto. Del Valle says: "El lunfardo ha hecho uso de todos los mecanismos posibles del lenguaje."⁶¹

THE INFLUENCE OF LUNFARDO

José Gobello in the Prologue of the book, Orígenes de la literatura lunfarda states:

La definición que presenta al lunfardo como una tecnología de ladrones ya ha perdido validez. Ahora se advierte y se admite que el lunfardo es el lenguaje popular de Buenos Aires, de Montevideo y de Rosario -- en cada ciudad adquiere matices diferenciales--, y de las zonas de influencia de esos grandes núcleos urbanos; un lenguaje llevado por el tango a otras ciudades mediterráneas, que en 1918 plantó uno de sus vocablos en París, en el letrero del cabaret "El Garrón".⁶²

Lunfardo went from the malvivientes to the language of the pueblo as these thieves came in contact with other people. Del Valle gives this definition of lunfardo: "Lenguaje de la gente de mal vivir, propio de Buenos Aires y de sus alrededores y que posteriormente se ha extendido entre algunas gentes del pueblo."⁶³ Payet and Gobello also give this definition: "por extensión Lunfardo es el lenguaje popular que incluye voces lunfardas y otras traídas por la corriente inmigratoria."⁶⁴

A multitude of expressions from lunfardo got into the ordinary language because: 1) they are rich, graphic, and picturesque; 2) the lower classes came in contact with the criminal world and then immitated them and used their vocabulary; 3) the youth of higher classes used these words and carried them to higher levels of society.⁶⁵

Lunfardo originated in Buenos Aires and spread because of geography to the River Plate region and then later because of the tango to more places. It spread to other countries of

America. Many words went into giria of Brazil. Dr. Ordóñez Peralta observes that the majority of the words used in the slang of Bogotá are Argentine origin.⁶⁶ Today such words as pibe, atorrante, and farra are completely accepted in Buenos Aires. Gobello gives a list of 129 lunfardo words now used commonly in the language of Buenos Aires.⁶⁷ Del Valle discusses how so many words came into lunfardo from Europe but also says that the reverse is true because many words have gone into Spain and Europe from the Americas.⁶⁸

Through the sainete, the theatre incorporated local idioms and expressions used in Buenos Aires at the end of the nineteenth century. This lunfardo was propagated by newspapers, the tango, and the creole theatre. The first sainete, premiered in Río de la Plata and by an Argentine writer, "De paso por aquí" by Blas Raúl Gallo in 1890, used the language of the orillero. Lunfardo appeared in the theatre of Florencio Sánchez and several other writers.⁶⁹

Tangos are filled with lunfardo mainly because the tango grew up among the malvivientes of Buenos Aires. Many writers besides Fray Mocho and Benigno Lugones have used lunfardo, though Alvarez led the way. Cambaceres in Pot-pourri used local language as did Roberto Arlt. Other include Félix Lima, Luis Pardo, Enrique Rúa, Evaristo Carriego, Manuel Gálvez and even Leopoldo Lugones used such words as: atorrante, calavera, compadre, and gomina.⁷⁰ There has been an exuberant costumbrista literature. Del Valle gives five pages of authors and their works which have lunfardo in them.⁷¹

Américo Castro expressed his displeasure at the way lunfardo has grown in popularity and has been embraced by the people of Buenos Aires as "their language". He tells how by 1927 it had become so well accepted:

Círculos amplios adoptan más o menos esas palabras, las prefieren los escolares, y, para algunos, hacia 1927, parecían el pedestal sobre el que debiera alzarse el futuro gran idioma de los argentinos, reflejo de su alma. El lunfardo tuvo antes cultivadores (ya se supone para que clase de literatura) en Fray Mocho y Félix Lima; luego el apóstol de la nueva fe lingüística fue Last Reason, quien dio en A rienda suelta una serie de narraciones de la vida en los arrabales porteños.⁷²

Del Valle makes a plea for consideration of lunfardo.

Some have called it a worthless language spoken only by crazy people or prisoners and it has been rejected by many because its history keeps it from being assimilated, yet Cervantes, Quevedo, and other Spanish writers used common words like those of lunfardo which later were included in the dictionary. It should be recognized once and for all that the common speech, the vulgar language, is filled with lunfardismos.⁷³ Castro admits that many of the words of lunfardo from Italian live in the common language, occur in family conversation, and at times even reach the higher levels.⁷⁴ Del Valle makes a rather emotional plea for lunfardo similar to the ones made earlier in the century by those who wanted to use it as the basis for a national language and who were so severely criticized by Américo Castro:

El lunfardo es como uno de esos hijos adúlteros, bastardos o ilegítimos, y que pese a su origen espurio, legitimamos, acunándolo en nuestros brazos, porque es de nuestra misma sangre.⁷⁵

FOOTNOTES

¹Preston E. James, Latin America, 3d. ed. (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1959), p. 331.

²James, p. 332.

³Gobello, p. 44.

⁴James, p. 339.

⁵Marín, p. 10.

⁶Ibid., pp. 11-12.

⁷Arturo Jauretche, El medio pelo en la sociedad argentina (Apuntes para una sociología nacional), 7th ed. (Buenos Aires: A. Peña Lillo, 1967), pp. 60-61.

⁸José Antonio Wilde, Buenos Aires desde setenta años atrás (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1960), pp. 78-96.

⁹Jauretche, p. 128.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 129-36, 154-55.

¹¹Manuel Gálvez, El mal metafísico, 2d.ed. (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1947), p. 196.

¹²Castro, p. 34.

¹³Ibid., pp. 31-37.

¹⁴Del Valle, pp. 65-66.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 110-112.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 131-132.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 117-126.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 126.

²⁰Ibid., p. 130.

²¹Ibid., p. 42.

²²Fray Mocho, I, 181.

²³Gobello, p. 189.

²⁴Dellepiane, p. 50.

²⁵Ibid., p. 51.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 53.

²⁸Marin, p. 28.

²⁹Del Valle, p. 37.

³⁰Ibid., p. 39.

³¹Ibid., pp. 30-31.

³²Gobello, p. 63.

³³Ibid., pp. 139-188.

³⁴Castro, p. 20.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 123-24.

³⁶Gobello, pp. 44-45.

³⁷Castro, p. 124.

³⁸Gobello, p. 143.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 45, 158.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 174.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 181.

⁴²Del Valle, p. 62.

⁴³Gobello, p. 26.

⁴⁴Castro, p. 86.

⁴⁵Gobello, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁶Dellepiane, p. 59.

⁴⁷Gobello, pp. 19-25.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 54-57.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 189-200.

⁵⁰Dellepiane, p. 62.

⁵¹Gobello, pp. 63-64.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 65-68.

⁵³Del Valle, pp. 67-74.

⁵⁴Dellepiane, p. 58.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 60-62.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 54.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 55-57.

⁵⁸Gobello, p. 69.

⁵⁹Del Valle, pp. 75-79.

⁶⁰Soler Cañas, p. 9.

⁶¹Del Valle, pp. 53-59.

⁶²Soler Cañas, p. 9.

⁶³Del Valle, p. 27.

⁶⁴Payet, p. 49.

⁶⁵Dellepiane, p. 62.

⁶⁶Del Valle, p. 43.

⁶⁷Gobello, pp. 209-210.

⁶⁸Del Valle, p. 62. He refers to Menénez Pidal, R., Manual de gramática histórica española, 8th ed. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1949), pp. 28, ff.

⁶⁹Del Valle, pp. 137-139.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 148.

71 Ibid., pp. 164-172.

72 Castro, p. 86.

73 Del Valle, p. 148.

74 Castro, p. 124.

75 Del Valle, p. 149.

CONCLUSION

Lunfardo is more than just another slang of a big city.

It has proved to be an important source of vocabulary for the common language and literature of Argentina. It has supplied many words which have become common place in ordinary conversation.

It has also had international influence and has been observed.

One of the reasons for this success is the development of the tango which gave lunfardo a boost to popularity not enjoyed by other jargons. Another reason was the Argentine desire to create a national language distinctive from that of Spain or any other Spanish-speaking country. Many felt that lunfardo could be the base for such a language and promoted it in earnest.¹

Castro says that in Argentina, because of its lack of a firm Spanish hierarchy like those which developed in Lima and Mexico City, the rural influences which used archaic forms like the voseo prevailed on the national speech.² The same is true for the rapid growth of Italian words through lunfardo in the national language. There was no firmly established society to defend Spanish. It is interesting that the gaucho language attained attention and acceptance because of the writings of Hidalgo, Ascasubi, and José Hernández. Many other

writings followed in the gaucho setting with an imitation of their language. This did for the rural speech of Argentina something that never happened to the rural speech of Chile, Colombia, or Mexico, and though some minor literary works in those rural languages were written, they never attained the popularity and wide acceptance in literary circles as did the gauchesque literature.

As Hernández and Ascásubi advanced among the educated through their works the knowledge of the gaucho language they had observed, so Fray Mocho made a place in the literary world for lunfardo, and we have seen, others such as Roberto Arlt followed suit. We have observed briefly the writings of Fray Mocho and have noted that he offered to the linguist one of the first lunfardo vocabularies. To the general public he gave an understanding of the lunfardo as well as a bit of his language. As the gauchesque literature furthered the knowledge of the gaucho language and culture, so the works of Fray Mocho furthered the general knowledge of lunfardo, though to a lesser degree. In both the case of the gaucho and the lunfardo, those who wrote of them were outsiders who observed these groups and interpreted them to their educated urban readers in a way which added greater acceptance of or at least greater interest in their jargons. In both cases one from the predominant society is writing about a marginal society.

Fray Mocho is always mentioned in any study of lunfardo, whether linguistic, psychological or literary. Benigno Lugones

started this lunfardo literature but his work was small and not well known, in fact Gobello says that the articles in La Nación of Benigno Lugones had never been reproduced until he did so in his book.³ Fray Mocho's works attained a far greater success - especially as he became the editor of a leading literary magazine. His work is valuable because of the vocabulary but also because of the psychology of the lunfardos which he interprets.

Indeed, Fray Mocho's works, which we have discussed, make him almost the "patron saint" of lunfardo. His work makes lunfardo available to us and it makes it worth studying. Perhaps without him it would never have attained the place it has in Argentina. Because he worked on the police force, which few writers have done, he was able to introduce to the educated a language which was quite unknown by them. He gave that language more acceptance by the mere fact that he, a literary figure, put it in writing in a fine literary work.

La ternura, el tibio abrazo del hombre por la mujer caída, por la mujer que arrastra su flaqueza, y se entrega, amorosa, al gesto de aquél que la golpea y olvida, encuentra en Fray Mocho una palabra tierna, de hermano, de hombre que ha sufrido y comprende. Y cuando enumera los oficios del submundo de Buenos Aires, no hay acusación, no hay crítica. Hay cariño por el que padece, por el que mata, por el que roba, por el infeliz que no sabe qué hacer de su vida. Y si la monstruosidad estalla, entonces, la cubre con un velo irónico.³

Y en la intergración de Fray Mocho tiene un papel importantísimo el lenguaje.⁴

El vos suprime toda retórica, es lo íntimo, lo recondito lanzado con pura desnudez al mundo de una forma universal -- el lenguaje -- pero que entre nosotros, se va trasvasando por la paulatina incorporación de palabras extrañas, readaptadas y, con el tiempo -- ya se observan algunos ejemplos --, elevados a rango de objeto mundial,

en donde irrumpie con la confianza de lo imprescindible y en cuyo horizonte aún existe cierta inseguridad debido precisamente, a la estructura accidental de las ciudades, a la hostilidad permanente de la llanura, del paisaje.⁵

These words of F.J. Solero in the Prologue to the Obras completas of Fray Mocho along with the following of Valentín de Pedro show that the language contributions made by Fray Mocho form one of the important contributions of his writings:

Y es curioso ver cómo, con este libro de características locales, José S. Alvarez se coloca dentro de la más pura tradición literaria española, codeándose con los maestros del idioma que afinaron sus oídos para escuchar al pueblo, que descendieron hasta el hampa para recoger sus voces de germanía, como Cervantes, y todavía más don Francisco de Quevedo. Puede decirse que José S. Alvarez, con sus Memorias de un vigilante inaugura una modalidad literaria, agregando al castellano que se hable en Buenos Aires, voces que mezclan con él sus hablantes de todo el mundo. Si otros antes que él se habían referido a esos vocablos del Mundo lunfardo -- título de la segunda parte de este libro --, Alvarez es el primero que los incorpora literariamente a nuestro idioma. Y porque conocía bien el idioma en que escribía, pudo llevar a sus páginas, sin demérito del propio idioma, sin empobrecerlo, sino al contrario, enriqueciéndolo, las locuciones de la lengua corriente, las de la calle, con sus giros especiales, con sus modismos, con su sintaxis; como también recoger y definir las palabras de germanía. Su éxito se debió a su particular talento, a su conocimiento y sentido del idioma, y a sus extraordinarias dotes de observación.⁶

FOOTNOTES

¹Castro, pp. 83-94.

²Ibid.

³Fray Mocho, I, 12.

⁴Ibid., I, 13.

⁵Ibid., I, 15.

⁶De Pedro, p. 17.

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