

Exploring sevillian dialect and spanish popular culture through the song "El Tatuaje" by Mojinós Escocíos.

Jesús García Rodríguez.

In this short file I will briefly analyse some of the phonetical and lexical particularities of the sevillian dialect of Spanish. Some background will also be given in order for the reader to understand the song, which will provide an opportunity to learn a few things about spanish popular culture.

In the left column I will write a transcription of the lyrics as they are pronounced (please read notes below), in the middle column I will write the lyrics in regular spelling and in the right column I will attempt to translate it as best I can.

References to popular culture and extra clarifications will be added at the bottom of the file.

[Sevillia](#), mil [novesientoh](#) noventa, ehtaba yo [hartándome](#) de servesa con mi gran amigo [Euhenio-l-loco](#) en er ba de Huanishi a sesenta peheta er tanque, cuando en de repente y debido a la caló q'asía, cuarenta y sinco grado a la sombra d'un bellotero que daba lah bellota como puñioh, se quita la camisa y eso nora un pesho ¡Eso era un tebeo der Mortadelo! Tenía er tío mah dibuhito que loh tapone de la Fanta.

[Quillo](#) Loco ¿Donde t'a hesho esoh tatuaje?

Dise ¿Dónde va se? En Barselona, en tol medio de La Rambla, un shino una ve que fui p'allá.

Disiseihmir peheta er billete d'autobús, veintidó hora de viahe, con un shofe que er tío no era má [saborío](#) porque no podía, no paraba er tío ni en loh ehtó.

Por fin llegamo a lahtasión de san nosequién a Barselona, me baho, tre hora buhcando la boca der metro, cuando lancuentro me meto y me sargo y cuando sargo otra ve a la calle allíhtaba cayendo un agua p'a llevarse treh mese sin regá lah maseta. Doh mir quinientoh millone de litro por metro cuadrao. ¡Dioh mío de mi arma! ¿Barselona qué lo que eh? ¿Una siudá o un [pantano](#)? En La Rambla no había hente, no había perro, no había gato ni paloma, y er shino ¿Cómo vahtá er shino? Allí loh tío de loh kiohko embede periódico taban vendiendo shubahquero, paraguah, canoah... No había vihto yo má agua-n tó loh díah de mi vía ¡Ay vihen santa!

Voy a serme un tatuaje-i en er brazo deresho

Y eh que voy a serme un tatuaje-i en er brazo deresho

Y si no me cabe to lo que me quiero pone coheré-i un trosito de pesho

Voy a ponerme-i amor de madre dentro dun corasón, "Pepi, te quiero"

Voy a ponerme-i ehte brazo ei de uno que

Sevilla, mil novecientos noventa, estaba yo hartándome de cerveza con mi gran amigo Eugenio el Loco en el bar de Juanichi a sesenta [pesetas](#) el tanque, cuando de repente y debido a [la calor](#) que hacía, cuarenta y cinco grados [a la sombra](#) de un [bellotero](#) que daba las bellotas como puños, se quita la camisa y eso no era un pecho. ¡Eso era un [tebeo](#) de Mortadelo! Tenía el tío más dibujitos que [los tapones de la Fanta](#).

Quillo Loco, dónde te has hecho esos tatuajes?

Dice ¿Dónde va a ser? En Barcelona, en todo el medio de [Las Ramblas](#), un chino una vez que fui para allá.

Dieciseis mil pesetas el billete de autobús, veintidós horas de viaje, con un chófer que no era más saborío el tío porque no podía, no paraba el tío ni en los stop.

Por fin llegamos a la estación de san nosequién a Barcelona, me bajo, tres horas buscando la boca de metro. Cuando la encuentro me meto y me salgo y cuando salgo otra vez a la calle allí estaba cayendo un agua para llevarse tres meses sin regar las macetas. Dos mil quinientos [millones](#) de litros por metro cuadrado. ¡Dios mío de mi alma! ¿Barcelona qué es lo que es? ¿Una ciudad o un pantano? En Las Ramblas no había gente, no había perros, no había gatos ni palomas, y el chino ¿Cómo va a estar el chino? Allí los tíos de los kioscos en vez de periódicos estaban vendiendo chubasqueros, paraguas, canoas... No había visto yo más agua en todos los días de mi vida ¡Ay [virgen](#) santa!

Voy a hacerme un tatuaje en el brazo derecho

Y es que voy a hacerme un tatuaje en el brazo derecho

Y si no me cabe todo lo que me quiero poner, cogeré un trocito de pecho.

Voy a ponerme "amor de madre" dentro de un corazón "Pepi, te quiero"

Y voy a ponerme "este brazo es de uno

Seville, nineteen ninety, there I was gulping beer with my great friend Eugenio the Mad in Juanichi's bar at sixty pesetas per tank, when suddenly and due to the heat, forty-five degrees in the shade of an oak that gave acorns big as fists, he took of his shirt and that wasn't a chest, that was a Mortadelo comic book!

He had more little drawings than the Fanta caps.

Loco man, where did you get those tatoos?

He said where else? In Barcelona, in the very middle of Las Ramblas, a chinaman, one time I was there.

Sixteen thousand pesetas for the bus ticket, twenty-two hours of trip, with a driver who wasn't meaner because he couldn't, he wouldn't even stop at stop signs.

Finally we arrived at Saint wosname in Barcelona, I get off, three hours searching for the entrance to the subway station, when I find it I get in and get out and when I step out into the street again enough water was falling to not water the pots for three months. Two thousands five hundred litres per square meter. Oh god of my soul! What is Barcelona, a city or a water reservoir? In Las Ramblas there were no people, no dogs, no cats nor pigeons, and the chinaman, how was the chinaman? There the men in the kiosks instead of newspapers were selling raincoats, umbrellas, canoes... I hadn't seen so much water in all the days of my life, oh holy virgin!

I'm getting a tatoo in my right arm

Yes, I'm getting a tatoo in my right arm

And if there isn't room for all I want drawn, I will use a bit of the chest

I'm going to get "Mother's love" inside a heart "Pepi, I love you"

And I'm going to get "this arm belongs to

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| hiso la mili en la lehión y por supuehto voy a ponemme (ie ie...) la cara de Camarón | que hizo la mili en La Legión " Y por supuesto voy a ponerme (ie ie...) la cara de Camarón | one who did the military service in The Legion" And of course I'm going to get Camarón's face. |
| Voy a serme un tatuaje-i en er brazo deresho Y eh que voy a serme un tatuaje-i en er brazo deresho Y si no me cabe to lo que me quiero poner coheré-i un trosito de pesho. (2) | Voy a hacerme un tatuaje en el brazo derecho Y es que voy a hacerme un tatuaje en el brazo derecho Y si no me cabe todo lo que me quiero poner, cogeré un trocito de pecho. (2) | I'm getting a tatoo in my right arm Yes, I'm getting a tatoo in my right arm And if there isn't room for all I want drawn, I will use a bit of the chest |
| Voy a ponerme un aguilusho, iwar que er cantante de loh Hudah Prié Voy a ponemme-i una caravela debaho del ombrigo Y por supuehto voy a ponemme (ie ie...) "Camarón ehtá vivo" | Voy a ponerme un aguilucho, igual que el cantante de los Judas Priest Y voy a ponerme una caravela debajo del ombligo Y por supuesto voy a ponerme (ie ie...) "Camarón está vivo" | I'm going to get a harrier, like the singer of Judas Priest And I'm going to get a skull/caravel below the navel And of course I'm going to get "Camarón lives" |

Linguistic clarifications.

[1] Just like in English sometimes spurious consonants appear between certain words (such as r between "idea" and "inside"), sometimes vowels are pronounced for no apparent reason in Spanish, most often i and e when the word ends in vowel-consonant-vowel. See also "puñioh" instead of "puños" and in the verse there is an unexpected i between "tatuaje" and "en" or any other word beginning with vowel sound.

[2] The final s in most cases is transformed into the voiceless (or sometimes voiced) glottal sound /h/, which in this rather strong version of the dialect also happens to the s sound if followed by a consonant. Furthermore, in many cases other phenomena are involved and the sound disappears entirely or is otherwise modified, so for the purposes of this file, the letter "h" will be used unless the particular case clearly deserves a different letter.

[3] The letters ch, wich usually correspond to the sound /tʃ/ (as in "channel") are pronounce more like /ʃ/ (as in "shape"), so the letters "sh" will be used in these cases.

[4] The word "calor" is masculine, but in Andalucía and some parts of America is also feminine.

[5] The sevillian dialect very often joins words together partly due to the disappearance of sounds and synalepha, but also because of more convenient pronunciation. An apostrophe will be used when the first word is cut (as in "q'asía") but unfortunately in this first case, hyphenation is required for better clarity.

[6] The word "quillo" comes from "chiquillo" but since it's so deeply rooted in the dialect it won't be translated. It means "kid" (masculine). The feminine "quilla" is used for females, regardless of the fact that, by coincidence, it also means keel.

[7] The word "saborío" is very common in the dialect, it comes from "desaborido", which means lacking flavour or substance. In the dialect it means unpleasant, and its opposite, "salao" (which obviously comes from "salado", meaning salty) is used to describe pleasant people. In "The Old Man and The Sea" other meaning of this word (cursed with bad luck) is also shown.

[8] The word "pantano", which also means "swamp" is used in Spanish to refer to the lake-like water reservoir created when a dam is built.

[9] A "bellotero" is a person who gathers acorns (bellotas) but in this dialect it means a tree that gives acorns, most likely an oak.

References to popular culture.

[a] Prior to 1999 the peseta was the currency of Spain. The value of one peseta would be lower than one cent of euro, and it was not often one could buy things with one peseta; one single sweet or one small gumdrop may cost one peseta. At the time the Euro was introduced, the exchange was 1 euro = 166 pesetas, so one glass of beer for 60 pesetas would already be cheap.



Tails and heads of a 1989 peseta

On a related note, an extremely common word for 5 pesetas is "duro" (literally "hard"). This used to be so common that the 100 pesetas coin was more often referred to as "veinte duros" (that is, 20 duros). Many common slurs include the word, such as "costar dos duros" (costing next to nothing) or "costar buenos duros" (costing a handsome sum), "estar sin un duro" (being broke) or "no valer un duro" (being worthless).



One "duro"

[b] In Spain it is sort of traditional to append the words "a la sombra" (in the shade) when informing about the weather temperature. Due to the heavy insolation characteristic of Spanish weather, the temperature experience by someone in the sun can be much higher than that in the shade so, by default, weather forecasts used to clarify that the temperature they were reporting or forecasting was the one measured in the shade. The song's humorous turn is that the object yielding the shade is also specified.

[c] The word "tebeo" is the one used for comic books of pretty much all types. It comes from the publication TBO, one of the first spanish publications of the kind (1917 to 1998).

Mortadelo is one of the pair "Mortadelo y Filemón", two comic book characters by Francisco Ibáñez. These two TIA (a joke on CIA) agents' stories are well know to most spaniards and several animation movies and one movie with real actors have been made.



Filemón (left) and Mortadelo (right)

[d] During the 70's and 80's the caps of Coca-Cola beverages had, on the inner side, a collectible picture. Several collections succeeded each other, including superman characters, olympic-themed pictures (alongside the 1976 Montreal Olympic games) and several football collections. Even though Coca-Cola sales were higher, Fanta was better known among children.



[e] The avenue of Las Ramblas is one of the best known in Barcelona, it is a must-see for visitors to the city and it contains many kiosks, cafeterias, restaurants, pigeons, pickpockets, street sellers and, on weekends, people from *all* nations of the world.



Las Ramblas (Barcelona)

[f] Another feature of the Spanish spirit is exaggeration. It is not always clear whether the person intends to make the listener believe what he is saying or is just being creative and humorous in the description (in this case it's clear since the amount of water claimed to rain in the song is roughly 250 times more water per square meter than one would find in the Mariana Trench). Expressions like "es más largo que un día sin pan" (it's longer than a day without bread) or "está más sucio que el palo de un gallinero" (it's more dirty than the bar of a henhouse) are common in Spanish, but the formula "more X than the Xest part of something that already is as X as something can be" is relentlessly and creatively reused, thus giving expressions like "más oscuro que el sobaco de un grillo" (darker than a cricket's armpit).

[g] The "Virgen" refers technically to the virgin Mary of the christian religions, but in the catholic faith there are hundreds of versions of this idol, making it handy both for worship and speech. Many phrases and short slurs refer to unspecified virgins, such as the "¡Ay virgen santa!" in the song or "¡La virgen!" (equivalent to "Dear god(s)!" but sometimes specific virgins ("real" or made up) are invoked, in which case the "Ay" can be omitted: "¡Virgen del amor hermoso!" or "¡Virgen de misericordia!" (which is almost exactly "Holy mother of mercy!"). These idols are also profusely used in cursing and other inappropriate language, see [Guide to Spanish bad language](#).

[h] In Spain until 1996 young men were conscripted to do military service for a period of 9 months. This period of a man's life usually made a permanent impression in their psyche and often their body, and men can be found who suffered psychological trauma as well as men who state that it was the most character-building experience of their life thus far.

The Spanish Army still has a division called The Spanish Legion. It is an elite division in which soldiers (legionnaires) are toughened by indoctrination, ordeal and exercise.

When a man was conscripted for military service he was assigned to a military base depending on his birthplace. Some men were sent to do the military service in The Legion, which was clearly tougher and immersed the conscript much further in martial disciplines and dogmas.

Of course, those who finished their service there, were proud of having done so, and it is not uncommon to mention such thing when describing a man's personality to someone.



Uniformed legionnaires on the 12th of October parade

[i] Camarón de La Isla (born José Monje Cruz) was a spanish flamenco singer considered one of the greatest of all time.

He and maestro Paco De Lucía (guitar) were major actors in the rediscovery of flamenco during the eighties before finally succumbing (Camarón) to decades of alcohol and drug abuse and dying of lung cancer at age 41.



Camarón de la Isla

[j] A caravela is just a caravel, a type of small ship from the 15th century. It is not a particularly stylish ship compared to, for example, a brigantine or a barque, but the word is very well known to all spaniards because Christopher Columbus' journey to the Americas was done in caravels (actually, *his* ship was a nao and it was accompanied by two caravels, but this fact seems not put forward when the subject is taught), so this can be accepted as motivation to have a tattoo of one.

It is somewhat a coincidence that the Spanish word for skull is "calavera", which is only one consonant swap away. Swapping two consonant is also very common in sevillian dialect (and indeed in sufficiently young learners of all languages), so the words "pilureta" (piruleta) or "murciégalo" (murciélagos) are perfectly understood by sevillian speakers. This all brings me to, if not the conclusion, at least the suspicion that the initial intent was to say he is getting a skull tattoo, a much more traditional motif, right in the same line as the other examples given. This is why in the translation, I have mentioned both possibilities.



Caravel