

Entangled heritages

Frontispiece: Graffiti in the historic city center of Quito, Ecuador. Photography by Olaf Kaltmeier

Relying on the concept of a shared history, this book argues that we can speak of a shared heritage that is common in terms of the basic grammar of heritage and articulated histories, but divided alongside the basic difference between colonizers and colonized. This problematic is also evident in contemporary uses of the past. The last decades were crucial to the emergence of new debates: subcultures, new identities, hidden voices, and multicultural discourse as a kind of new hegemonic platform also involving concepts of heritage and/or memory. Thereby we can observe a proliferation of heritage agents, especially beyond the scope of the nation-state. This volume gets beyond a container-vision of heritage that seeks to construct a diachronic continuity in a given territory. Instead, authors point out the relational character of heritage focusing on transnational and translocal flows and interchanges of ideas, concepts, and practices, as well as on the creation of contact zones where the meaning of heritage is negotiated and contested. Exploring the relevance of the politics of heritage and the uses of memory in the consolidation of these nation-states, as well as in the current disputes over resistances, hidden memories, undermined pasts, or the politics of nostalgia, this book seeks to seize the local/global dimensions around heritage.

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Entangled heritages

Postcolonial perspectives on the
uses of the past in Latin America

Edited by

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3 Making heritage – the materialization of the state and the expediency of music

The case of the *cuarteto característico* in Córdoba, Argentina

Gustavo Blázquez

Let nothing be counted good, although, as always, it may seem really helpful, and nothing henceforth be considered honorable except what changes this world once for all: it needs it Like an answer to their prayers I came to the oppressors! Oh, goodness without results! Unnoticed attitude!

—Bertolt Brecht, Saint Joan of the Stockyards

First steps

The first years of the twenty-first century saw me immersed in fieldwork focused on the so-called *cuarteto* dances of Córdoba, Argentina's second-largest city in demographic weight and economic gravitation. The goal of the ethnography was the analysis of the institution of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich 1999) through ludic performances and choreographic practices associated with free time, amusement, and juvenile years. My interest lies in describing the politics and poetics of gender, class, and race, which organized these choreographies as well as the emerging subjectivities (Blázquez 2014).

Cuarteto balls were dancing reunions with live music by an orchestra exclusively formed by males, which mainly summoned together young people and adolescents from popular sectors of society. On a weekend, and only in the city of Córdoba, more than 20 balls were organized, which summoned up to 30,000 youths.

During the course of my research, I was obliged to comb out the social genesis of this local danceable musical genre called the *cuarteto característico*. I undertook the task from a critical analysis of a series of accounts, which formed an official(ized) narrative of the genre, which was repeated and repeated—always with differences—in books, magazines, webpages, songs, stories of life. I observed that the change of the meaning of the term *cuarteto* was 'naturalized' through this ensemble of narratives. Between 1940 and 1960, the word *cuarteto* referred to the number of players in the orchestras that interpreted joyful music, but never

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a type of music. The so-called ‘cuartetos característicos’ executed rhythms name as ‘característicos,’ like tarantellas, paso doble, *cumbias*, *paseítos*, marches, fox-trots, although they did it with a special accent created by Leonor Marzano, pianist of the first cuarteto característico titled ‘Cuarteto Leo.’

In the years of ethnography, the people said they danced or listened to the cuarteto without those expressions appearing to have a lack of sense, different from other forms like dancing or listening to orchestra, trio, and quintet. The cuarteto orchestras were composed of 10 or more musicians; the rhythms, which weren’t ‘característicos,’ had a strong influence of Caribbean music while adding winds and percussion. The cuarteto had turned into a musical genre, which was registered by the Diccionario de la Música Española e Hispanoamericana.

The performative force of that narration, empowered by wide dissemination and generalized acceptance of accounts, (re)constructed the historical continuity of the poetic form of the cuarteto, despite the important stylistic transformations. That story made the cuarteto, while endowing it with a history. Through that (hi)story, the cultural legitimacy of certain musicians, singers, and sonorities was (re)produced, while at the same time identifying those danceable rhythms with consumption by the popular sectors, first with the peasants and then with the urban workers (Blázquez 2008).

This article contemplates the analysis of one of the formalization moments of these heterogeneous ensembles of sonorities called cuarteto característico as ‘popular Cordobese music,’ which happened midyear in 2000. At that time, the House of Representatives of the Province of Córdoba declared its homage to the music of the cuarteto, which it referred to as ‘the cultural emblem of the Province of Córdoba’ (Decree 3626/00. June 7, 2000). From an analysis of that ceremony, it will be possible to observe how each observer built an account from which and in which it empowered its position while simultaneously building a general agreement that supported the ‘cordobesity’ of the cuarteto. This agreement, which lent meaning to the speeches of the congressmen, was (re)produced in the differential appropriation and in the significations attributed by diverse agents that participated in the performance. The different opinions, assessments, and appropriations of the homage show how any performance is made up of a confluence, not always peaceful, of perspectives and versions.¹

More than a decade after these events, the Municipality of Córdoba declared the cuarteto a ‘cultural heritage of the city’ and began the mission for the official recognition of these sonorities in the list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO. Second, I consider that the new invention of the cuarteto, now as heritage, was produced within the context of the transformation of culture into expediency (Yudice 2002) and the legitimization of the figure of a ‘cultural manager’ as a technician specialized in designing and administrating cultural policies. By that time, I had already published a book with some findings from my research and hence was summoned as a specialist on the cuarteto by municipal authorities.

The set of actions implemented by the provincial and municipal state of Córdoba in relation to some sonorities of popular tone can be understood as part of the

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newly agreed value assigned to culture and new ways of managing it. In Argentina, like other places in the world, symbolic goods were transformed into important resources for social, economic, and political growth. The actions of the state extended in different spheres of social life, even in those considered intimate, while at the same time privatizing public spaces (Sabsay 2011). In this context, cultural policies will be analyzed as part of new government technologies where certain uses and symbolic goods are transformed into a resource. Power not only suppresses but also produces and makes it desirable to recognize itself in a specific cultural identity. The whole process of (trans)formation of popular sonorities into emblem and heritage in a specific territory has a certain global character, and its analysis will allow us to describe, in a micro scale, the mutation of the strategic position of culture with relation to state practices and changes in forms of governmentality (Foucault 1999). By analyzing the heritagization of the cuarteto, we can observe how the state was (re)produced in Córdoba. Some of the questions this article tries to answer include: Who created heritage and how? How was the state materialized in that process?

Culture as a form of government

With great performative force since the mid-nineteenth century, culture became a prominent instrument in the creation of national states while homogenizing the ensemble of legitimate knowledge, and simultaneously securing the conditions of differential access to that capital (Anderson 1993; Elias 1997; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1984). In this process, not exempted from brutality as forewarned by Walter Benjamin (1989), the state (re)presented itself as judge and guarantor of ‘good taste’ through its cultural institutions (museums, theatres, ballet groups, and symphonic orchestras), which exercised the guardianship over specific goods with some degree of democratic access. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, culture—understood as the ensemble of cultural goods and knowledge (especially artistic-literary)—was an instrument of civilization, nationalization, and construction of political hegemony on behalf of the state and national elites.

The idea of culture as a raw material to make state and govern populations and territories in a different way was added to the instrumental function in the last years. This new function bestowed on culture implied transformations of the definition of the term itself, which could no longer exclusively refer to pieces of the repertoire of ‘high culture.’ As part of this process, and mainly originating from the development of the Latin American Social Anthropology and British Cultural Studies, handicrafts and the collection of goods and practices associated with popular sectors were now collectively defined as culture. The term became plural and evolved to include ‘cultures’ and ‘multiculturalism.’

State and supra-state organizations, like UNESCO, actively participated in helping stabilize the new definitions of cultures. For example, during the first National Argentinean Congress of Cultures, a grand event organized in 2006 by the Bureau of Culture of the Nation, the cultural areas of the provinces, and the Federal Council of Investment, it was established that ‘cultures were the belle arts

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but also were, above all, the meaning we give to our methods of community living' (Conclusions of the First National Argentinean Congress of Cultures. Mar del Plata, August 27, 2006).

To make culture(s) resulted in a way to make state and the state became a place to fulfill culture(s), starting with specific government policies. Among these efforts, we can find the organization of events like the aforementioned Argentinian Congress of Cultures, which was repeated in the following years, and whose explicit goals were

to build a space defined by the provinces, the municipalities and other social actors that intervene in the cultural makings of the country; to incorporate the definition of the role of culture within the national project, prioritizing the axes of social inclusion and the deepening of democracy; integrate the public cultural policies to the communal agents, as well as the government areas involved in social development—education, social communication, health, childhood, youth, tourism, etc.—as to favor the processes of decentralization, participation, articulation and strengthening of the State; and to broaden the horizon of strategies and actions through incorporating the regional integration of Latin America.

(Conclusions of the First National Argentinean Congress of Cultures. Mar del Plata, August 27, 2006)

It was no longer only a task of ideological indoctrination, manufacturing of consensus, or the fetishization of a determined group of goods as cultural heritage. Since the end of the Second World War and with increased strength since the 1980s in the USA, with different temporalities in Latin America, culture became a resource, a fuel, to make state and to stimulate development, growth, and strength.

As pointed out by Souza Lima and Macedo e Castro (2008), some common sense understands cultural policies as an action plan to guide decisions and actions, and, consequently, dedicated to the analysis of the conditions of emergency, mechanisms of operation, and probable impact on social and economic order of government programs. In these analyses, the actions of public policies are represented as the result of the capacity of a nation-state (liberal-democratic) to solve public problems. Those studies maintain a rational and instrumental vision of the state and try to understand their actions from the point of view of the efficiency of its practices. Therefore, public policies appear as the result of the identification of a 'social problem,' which will lead to the formulation of rational arguments that can explain them and from where collective solutions and plans of action arise. Their application, by technicians and specialists, and its final evaluation would complete an enchanted circle where the (in)capacity of action by the state to offer answers to social demands stands out.

Nonetheless, cultural policies could be understood as plans, actions, knowledge, and technologies of the government through which certain agents would—as part of a process that is socially flexible, contradictory, conflictive, changing, in perpetual movement—make the state. Even before a state, magically raised to the

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category of a manager of the social process capable of developing policies, we might find some practices and discourses that performatively make state when cited, again and again, as the rational and effective agent it proclaims to be.

A possible strategy to approach the state while seeking not to succumb to the brilliance of its own magic (Taussig 1997) is to penetrate its shortcuts and to ethnographically study how the ‘mechanism works’ (Foucault 1975) with the goal of dismantling and describing it in its specific workings. These approximations originate from the questioning of the programmatic definitions of government policies and abandon the somewhat paranoid belief of the existence of a state. When transforming the S into a capital letter in a series of government practices of populations, formed by an ensemble of decisions and acts of will more or less systematic from certain social subjects on the use of instruments, rules, strategies, and objectives that regulate different social practices, it is possible to confront the constitutive force of the state, which is capable of creating itself and the realities it enounces. Policies that are pro-indigenous, educational, sanitary, for immigrants, for minors, for youths, among others, when seen from dark hallways and administrative intricacies, turn out to be heterogeneous annexes of administrative actions by state structures of everyday intervention in the social life of determined populations inside a specific territory (Cf. Castro 2009; Corrêa 2002; Lugones 2009; Pacheco de Oliveira 1988; Ramos 2002; Souza Lima 1995, 2002; Vianna 2002).

Before diving into these oblivious interventions in everyday life, I propose to find the state in the magnificent iridescence of its production, in the ‘performances of state’ or ceremonies organized by administrative nationalized bodies that produce the state as a defined agent of the social process (Blázquez 2012; Navallo 2007; Rufer 2010; Tamagnini, 2010). The performances of the state would be acts of the state; repeatedly executed, ‘restored behaviors’ (Schechner 2000), never original and always carried out for the second time, through which the state appoints itself and meets the citizens.

The first time

On June 7, 2000, the House of Representatives from the Province of Córdoba approved a declaration of ‘homage to the cuarteto popular music from Córdoba, urging all composers, interpreters and promoters to continue its development and diffusion in all the national and international spheres as a cultural emblem from the Province of Córdoba’ (Decree 3626/00). The next day, and in a hyperbolic form, the local newspaper announced the approval ‘by unanimity of a project destined to declare cuarteto as a folklore genre from Córdoba’ (*La Voz del Interior*, June 8, 2000. Section 2C, page 1), and established June 4 as the ‘day of Cordobese popular music’ (*La Voz del Interior* June 8, 2000. Section 2C, page 1). Through these acts, a group of practices centered on a type of danceable music were formalized, recognized as local, and made a symbol of the political-administrative unit.

According to the press, June 4 would become, in the local sphere, the ‘day of the cuarteto.’ The selection of that particular day was (supposedly) on account of

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June 4, 1934, making the radio debut of the first cuarteto ensemble, the Cuarteto Característico Leo.² Adding to this event, the death of Manolito Cánovas on June 4, 2000, the founder of a successful musical band, occurred when the parliamentary project was halfway through. Because of this, according to the statement given in the legislative palace by the author of the project, ‘we cannot doubt for a single second in making it a dignified day of collective memory’ (Congressman Carlos Pereyra, Legislative Palace. June 7, 2000).

The performance that was set up in the principal premises of the House of Representatives, and where several members of some orchestras, entrepreneurs, and people that had assisted in the dances participated, was for the legislators and the honorees a righteous, necessary, and deserved act.

The author of the project, Congressman Carlos Pereyra from the Vecinalista Party,³ said at this event:

This homage was due for a long time, as long as the cuarteto has been an artistic, cultural, and social testimony of Córdoba, born in the crucible of distant rural zones from our provincial land, and arriving later onto the cutting edge of the musical manifestations of the country.

(Congressman Carlos Pereyra, Legislative Palace,
June 7, 2000)

When I got in touch a few days later with the Congressman to interview him about his initiative, and as a way to settle with determination his position, he told me: ‘I defend everything that is genuinely from here: the folklore; the indigenous; the gaucho; the tango and also the cuarteto’ (Congressman Carlos Pereyra, June 12, 2000). For Pereyra, the validation of the genre—an institutional touch to what already existed according to his words—and the declaration of the cuarteto as (the) folkloric music of Córdoba were movements of a process guiding the exportation of the cultural good of local production, ‘at least to Latin America’ (Congressman Carlos Pereyra, Interview June 15, 2000). The Congressman wanted to make the cuarteto the characteristic merchandise of Córdoba and therefore integrate it into world music to return money to Córdoba. Pereyra perfectly knew the economic potential present in the world of the cuarteto. He explained in the following speech:

How many times did the Club Defensores del Oeste, to mention only one very close example to me, summon the Leo, the Cuarteto Berna, Carlitos Rolán and Cuarteto de Oro, and from those summons funds were made available for projects that are now part of the patrimony of Villa Dolores and of each town and city.

(Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000)

The sports institution that Pereyra referred to ‘was a club that in the year 70 had 30 years of institutional life.’ During that time, his brother, who was the major of Villa Dolores and who occupied, at the time of the interview, a provincial senator’s chair, was president of that same sports institution whose patrimony was

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‘a bag with booties, another bag with shirts, and another bag with soccer balls.’
The Congressman continued during the interview:

we started to work to secure funding to make the club, in the way we made lots of partners. But, do you know what we did? . . . With cuarteto music we made events every Saturday and Sunday, Fridays and Saturdays, and we started to build brick by brick what I can presently say is the most important thing of Traslasierra⁴. And we did it with cuarteto music. [. . .] a little in the democratic period, during the dictatorship, and until the eighties.

(Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000)

Pereyra did not define himself as a ‘loyal fan of the cuarteto,’ that is, he did not view himself as an agent whose relationship with this artistic genre was established by participating in the balls, and from which a biased point of view could emerge. On the contrary, the Congressman presented himself as someone who adopted a dissociated point of view and conceived the cuarteto ‘as a social phenomenon.’ To him, this cultural production was

a means to create employment: hundreds of families from Córdoba live directly from cuarteto music. But all of these efforts, when done during the weekends, require a lot of people. And it is something genuine. And all these cuartetos, who have produced a lot of recordings—you know they have achieved platinum discs, gold discs—are currency that go into Córdoba.

(Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000)

Pereyra saw the cuarteto as a strategy to be a part of modernity and also to live (survive) in (post)modernity.

We have to use the technology of this global economy, of this globalization policy to, starting from our cultural identity, sell what is ours in a good way, export culture, export music, export idiosyncrasy, export tastes, export traditions. Similar to the case of the jeans by the Yankees. They introduced it to the world.

(Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000)

According to this point of view, to proceed with this task, ‘the state had to take all that popular culture, which could be coded, and transmit it to regular customers’ (Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000) and then develop a political policy that can assure a reconversion and a transformation of the subjects in what is said they originally were. ‘To recuperate what is ours but to create a source,’ the Congressman confirmed emphatically (Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000).

The (re)invention of a local culture was a possibility, in the eyes of the politician, to ensure economic reproduction in times of globalization. This task produced and was anchored in a specialization of different managers in charge of the production of ‘what is ours.’ In this process, the task of the professional politician was, according to the author of the legislative project, to guide the economy through

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the construction of strategies that would localize the fluctuating international economical capital.⁵ Pereyra knew that industrial development in Córdoba during the second half of the twentieth century through the impulse of the automotive and metal-mechanical industries had assured certain level of development. But, at the same time, he knew that local development was completely dependent because ‘big companies are here today, but tomorrow they will be in Brazil, another day they in Europe or get transferred to Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore or Southeast Asia or wherever’ (Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000).

The route to development depended, for politicians like Pereyra, on the sedentarization of international capital. This activity, contrary to the ‘nature’ of capital, would be possible through the delimitation of certain practices associated with cuisine or music, its isolation and future codification as a ‘traditional’ feature: ‘the Cordobese cuisine’ or ‘the music of Córdoba.’ In this project of dependent development and the fabrication of an ‘authentic culture,’⁶ professional politicians were responsible for *guiding* the investments of capital toward the production of some merchandises that would only have value when staying ‘traditional.’ At the same time, the politicians must guarantee the ‘authentic’ character of these goods.⁷

As part of that policy—which did not discuss the way in which the produced income would be distributed—the state would also have to be responsible for the production of the producers of such merchandise, and consequently develop technical education to qualify an ensemble of future workers capable of integrating themselves in the labor market. ‘The government has to train these people by giving them cooking courses and specializing them in those dishes which will identify all that iconography [. . .] for them to be good cooks, good confectioners of those dishes’ (Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000). Supposedly, there would be private firms that would join forces with this economic movement, accelerating the process further and therefore, in the vision of the Congressman and other agents, Córdoba would develop.⁸

Although these were the motivations behind Pereyra’s homage, as confided to me, some congressmen distrusted the initiative and were afraid that it would be seen by civil society as another of the discredited and useless parliamentary practices. On the other hand, the congressmen also had some fear in relation to the proper execution, given the subaltern origin of the cuarteto and its association with bad taste and rude language. The success of the strategy of authentication, as the Congressman knew well, depended on the capacity to generate a representation that was at the height of the circumstances. ‘Then, suit, tie, vest, otherwise this would be a disgrace’ (Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000).

All local media were present and newspaper chronicles, which narrated the homage, always highlighted the rejoicing and order that prevailed in the precinct. The wife of singer Carlos ‘Pueblo’ Rolán, one of the honorees, stated:

It was a beautiful reception, very gratifying. It is the formalization of cuarteto. After so many things that we have been through, to be able to reach this instance, the recognition of all social classes. We are all very happy.

(Laura Rolán. *La Voz del Interior*, June 8, 2000.
Section 2C, page 1)

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The homage

In the performance that took place in the House of Representatives, two great moments can be identified. First, ‘the project of declaration number 3626, in reference to the Homage of the Popular Music of cuarteto’ was presented, followed by words from Congressman Pereyra, who justified his project. Later the speeches continued: a brief comment from a congresswoman from the first minority, then two other longer discourses, one from a conservative congressman and another from a representative of the ruling party.

Once the first part of the ceremony was over, during which the representatives of Córdoba spoke on the cuarteto, the ceremony proceeded to hand out plaques and diplomas to those who were considered the most important figures in the genre or those to whom tribute should be paid if the cuarteto was to be honored.

In his speech, Pereyra narrated the story of the genre since its first presentation of the first ensemble of the cuarteto:

at eleven at night of the fourth of June of 1943, in a cold radio booth up to the multitudinous recitals of La Mona in the Monumental Nuñez Stadium and Luna Park, which marked the glorious entrance of cuarteto cordobés into Buenos Aires.

(Congressman Pereyra, Legislative Palace, June 7, 2000)

In his version, we find an epic account where a musical form unfolds and develops heroically within time. In this process, prosopopoeia or personification as a discursive trope is used to objectify the cuarteto genre. Different milestones from the development stages are emphasized. First, the birth of the cuarteto on the radio on the night of June 4, 1943, followed by the performance at a rural level in patron saints’ and civic festivities, and later at the suburban level with balls in clubs at the outskirts of Córdoba city starting in the mid-1950s. The beginning of the 1970s marked a glorious period with big family dances and production of ensembles. At that time, according to the story, ‘the cuarteto, that son, born in Córdoba, of the tambourine and the tarantella, of the piano, the polka, the accordion and paso doble, had turned into a man on its own right’ (Congressman Pereyra, Legislative Palace, June 7, 2000). Stories of repression and resistance continued during the period of the last military dictatorship (1976–1983). Finally, the definitive consolidation came with the participation of the Cuarteto Característico Leo in the most important folkloric festival of Argentina in 1987 and the first shows in Buenos Aires. Pereyra’s speech seemed to mention, it is time to take over the world and the legislative declaration forms a part of this new era.⁹

The speech ended with some stanzas from ‘Nuestro Estilo Cordobés’ read out loud. In this song, as in the speech of Pereyra, the cuarteto is (re)presented as a musical type based on the local traditions and part of the combination of dominant symbols (Turner 1968, 80) capable of calling one regional identity that would distinguish the province over the other political-administrative units. Some of the provinces of Argentina appear in the song sang in chorus at the Legislative Palace

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identified through some musical type already integrated in the national cultural heritage. In this way, the song configured a musical map according to lines that traced the political geography of Argentina. As a result, the *cuarteto* is localized in spatial terms when it is associated with a specific territory and at the same time it is made as old and original as other mentioned musical genres that originated in the rural world of the nineteenth century or, as in the case of tango, in the suburban stages of Buenos Aires at the end of the same century. In summary, Pereyra's speech started treating the *cuarteto* as a distant social phenomenon and ended in an appeal, by means of the appropriation of a famous song, to put (one's own) death as the limit of the musical genre and therefore identifying it with life. Dancing the *cuarteto* (*cuarteteando*) until death was the mandatory sentence of the song.

Following this cheered speech, a congresswoman from the Radical Civil Union expressed her support for the initiative which, in her opinion, 'arrives late because it was an unresolved matter that the Cordobese had with *cuarteteros*' (Congresswoman Castro, Legislative Palace, June 7, 2000). Immediately after this brief interlocation, a congressman for a center-right party took the floor. His speech stated 'that music which properly and totally represented Córdoba' (Congressman Bustos Argañaráz Legislative Palace, June 7, 2000) as a product of the fusion of several traditions. Among them, he highlighted: the *paso doble*, which according to him, 'Don Jerónimo Luis de Cabrera surely brought' (Congressman Bustos Argañaráz Legislative Palace, June 7, 2000); the creole waltz with strong reminiscences from Paraguay; the *chamamé* from Corrientes; the southern *milonga*; the *cumbia* of Afro-American origin; and the *tarantella* brought by the immigrants from southern Italy.

According to the version presented by this congressman, the *cuarteto* emerged from a much more heterogeneous mix than the version presented by Pereyra. However, that probably was not the most significant difference. Bustos Argañaráz, an individual identified with the high local bourgeois, in particular with the fraction that establishes the legitimacy of its hegemonic social position with its genealogical connections with the Spanish conquerors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, temporarily separates the Hispanic and Italian components that he recognizes in the *cuarteto*. The first, represented by the *paso doble*, came with the conquerors 'four centuries ago' (Congressman Bustos Argañaráz Legislative Palace, June 7, 2000), while the second, distinguished by the *tarantella*, arrived with Italian immigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁰

According to this presentation, the *cuarteto* music is characterized by the capacity to articulate different tendencies or forces and therefore by the capacity to represent—'reflect,' according to the congressman—the supposed hybrid nature of Córdoba.

In the fabrication of the *cuarteto* as 'popular Cordobese music,' Bustos Argañaráz uses a frequent trope in the analysis of the alleged historic singularity of Córdoba. The province—or the city—is considered a privileged stage where the tension between the colony and the republic, tradition and modernity, the interior and Buenos Aires, the countryside and the city, has been played, several times in

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an anticipative way.¹¹ In the congressman's speech, Córdoba and the cuarteto work as terms trapped in a metonymic relationship in which the second term works as one of the sowers of the first. The cuarteto appears, according to this allocution, as an allegory in which the unique collective and distinct character of Córdoba is expressed and understood as a product of a process in which the ethnical-racial and the geographical atmospheres are combined.

After this critique, considered by the media to be in an 'academic tone' (*La Voz del Interior* June 8, 2000. Section 2C, page 1), the next speech was by Peronist Congressman José Rufeil. Different from previous presentations, this politician based his defense on the personal knowledge he had of the cuarteto and the friendship that linked him to many of the honorees. Rufeil defined himself as a 'loyal cuartetero' (Congressman Rufeil, Legislative Palace, June 7, 2000) and stated:

The moment that cuarteto is going through is lovely. I see people from the Cerro de las Rosas, students from the faculties. A social difference does no longer exist in cuarteto, but I would be a hypocrite if I did not remember that those of us who went to a cuarteto ball were discriminated. Even by our own families.

(Congressman Rufeil, Legislative Palace, June 7, 2000)

The Peronist politician, who was very happy with the ceremony, which he compared to the highly advertised award ceremonies in show business, differed from the rest of the opinions due to his personal tone and automatic identification with the honorees.¹² With regard to the origin of the genre, Rufeil maintained that together with the contribution of European migrations it was necessary to acknowledge the contribution of 'Native American people.'

With that speech the first part of the ceremony ended, and the awards began. First, commemorative plaques were handed out to singers Carlos 'la Mona' Jiménez and Carlitos 'Pueblo' Rolán, composer and lyricist Aldo Kustin, and accordionist Eduardo Gelfo, grandson of the founder of the Cuarteto Característico Leo. Afterward, 13 carton diplomas were handed out to artists and entrepreneurs who participated for a longer or shorter time in the world of the cuarteto. The awardees were announced by the master of ceremonies, who presented the honored artists as well as the congressman who handed out the awards. Later, both subjects found themselves in the space occupied by the president of the House of Representatives and the public applauded.¹³

During the ceremony, each speaker built a place for their enunciation and positioned themselves as progressive politicians who wish to praise a group of local cultural producers and, through that, activate a process of economic development; either as an academic that interprets the cuarteto and attributes to it a determined significance, or as the 'loyal cuartetero' who shares a personal story with the honorees. Beyond these different discursive positions and as they highlighted, all agreed on the act of justice of the homage to a musical genre that they, as representatives of the people of Córdoba, recognized as properly

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Cordobese. On the other hand, and as we have also pointed out, each of the speakers attributed a different origin to the cuarteto. Pereyra, based on an academic text, considered the cuarteto as a synthesis of music of the immigrants. Bustos Argañaráz broadened the field by giving way to other musical traditions although first he had to recognize the Hispanic contribution of the city's founder. Rufeil, moving chronologically beyond the conservative congressman, claimed a 'Native American' contribution as mentioned a few months earlier by a local newspaper.

The cuarteto, that very special music; which we Cordobese feel has to do with indigenous roots. The Sanavirones were very happy, they had ensembles and danced. Compared to the Comechingones, who were much calmer.

(La Voz del Interior, January 5, 2000. Section 2C, page 3)

The parliamentary ceremony (re)told a story very distant from the facts. The performance created a rural and immigrant tradition for cuarteto and built an authenticity in which each of its presenters found a distinguished place. The legislative act also (re)established a hierarchy among the artists depending on who received the rare plaque or the abundant, and therefore lesser distinctive, paper diplomas. Those who received the plaques (Gelfo, Jiménez, Kustin, and Rolán) represented a version of the genre defined as the most 'original': the cuarteto-cuarteto.¹⁴

To other agents, especially the youths that attended the balls, the importance of the parliamentary act wasn't based on the official recognition of the genre that they danced to. For them the performance was an opportunity to be close to their idols, and take autographs or pictures.

The second time

Years after that homage, in July 2013 and in the framework of the celebrations for the 440 years of the establishment of the city of Córdoba, the Deliberation Council declared the cuarteto the 'Cultural Heritage of the city of Córdoba.' The motion was presented by an initiative of the Municipal Ministry of Culture and had the specific goal of securing the local cultural identity.

Such a meaningful ceremony obligated a change of venue for the sessions of the Council, which in that occasion took place in the distinguished and colonial Red Hall of the municipal town hall. Another distinctive feature was the presence of the media, and of course, of artists and entrepreneurs of the cuarteto. According to the website of the Municipality of Córdoba, 'musical connoisseurs as Eduardo Gelfo and Carlitos Rolán, and young promises as Catriel Argüello' (www2.cordoba.gov.ar/portal/index.php/el-cuarteto-ya-es-patrimonio-cultural-de-la-ciudad/) were present.

After the motion was approved unanimously, the municipal mayor, Ramón Mestre, entered the precinct and addressed those present:

This is an act of strict justice. For us it is transcendent to recognize cuarteto music for what it means to the culture of our city and our province. Similar

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to the way that tango is recognized in Buenos Aires and worldwide, same as the *candombe* in Uruguay, we hope that this is the first step to find worldwide recognition of *cuarteto*. The initial kick is the recognition of the Deliberation Council, representing the neighbors, and we think that we should keep working to manage the support of the Legislature of Córdoba and the National House of Representatives and, in that way, obtain the most consensus possible so that UNESCO declares our music a Cultural World Heritage.

(Municipal Mayor, Town Hall, July 4, 2013)

The speech laid out, again, the debt that the state had with the *cuarteto* in such a way that those municipal cultural policies acquired a reparation character: ‘an act of strict justice.’ The approved ordinance went further than the previous homage at the House of Representatives as it planned to take specific actions. Together with making the *cuarteto* musical genre the city’s heritage, the ordinance obliged the municipal state to develop actions aimed at ‘its preservation and conservation; guaranteeing its dissemination and promotion, fomenting the development of every artistic, cultural, touristic, academic, educational and/or urban activity related with itself’ (Ordinance 1528/13). For this, it must find the provincial, national, and international recognition of the new heritage while at the same time entrusting the areas of tourism, culture, and education with the mission of fulfilling the order of the ordinance.

After the speech, the attendees moved to a joint room where the *Cuarteto Característico* Leo and Carlitos Rolán played classics of the genre and were enthusiastically cheered. The ceremony ended with the official presentation of ‘Walk of Fame of the *cuarteto*,’ in a downtown area of the city associated with popular sectors. The project considered sharing a series of architectural interventions, such as piping rain drainage and bettering public lighting, together with the placing of plaques and commemorative sculptures of Cordobese artists who represent the *cuarteto*.

The official act was well received by the citizens and the media took care to highlight its value. However, the alleged incorporation of the *cuarteto* to the scholar curricula unleashed a series of discussions and disagreements as well as support and defenses. Was the *cuarteto* worthy of entering classrooms? Some parents and teachers denounced the musical poverty of the genre, its scarce originality or simplicity, the rude character of some of its lyrics, as well as how some themes addressed marginalization, a bad life, and the world of crime, drugs, and night. But, others argued that it was a good way of effectively approaching students and interviewed high school students maintained that this would finally be a course they could pass.

The middle sectors of the population that did not adopt the *cuarteto* favorably looked at the symbolic recognition of popular culture and, at the same time, rejected it occupying a space among scholar knowledge. The *cuarteto* was legitimate music and worthy of becoming heritage as long as it stayed encapsulated in the world of cultural consumption of the popular sectors. That double lecture assured the illustrated and professional urban middle classes a dominant cultural position, in charge of controlling ‘good taste’ and the legitimate scholar education, while

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maintaining a subaltern and folkloric place for popular sectors, rooted in local identity or Cordobesity.

The state ordinance and the ceremony identified the cuarteto with all Cordobese and undid, once more, the class identity indicated by the music. At the same time, these actions strengthened the subaltern and folkloric side of the cuarteto and saved the mimesis of 'Fame Boulevard' in Hollywood to a downcast street that served as an open aired popular market. Through the cuarteto, class as a form of social division was (re)created as well as a local cultural identity was (re)built, which joined subjects beyond these separations.

A similar duplicity could be found in the state policies, which on one part promoted the heritagization of the cuarteto and the acknowledgement of its artists, and on the other persecuted the youths that attended the balls. While the life conditions of the popular Cordobese sectors deteriorated and the young cuarteto followers were hunted down and punished as delinquents or dangerous people, their main cultural consumption, the cuarteto, was transformed into heritage.

Given these differential policies with respect to popular sectors and the cultural consumption, one can ponder on the political value of these state-administrative practices referring to culture. If, as this was the case, the policies of cultural acknowledgement were not combined with policies of social or economic redistribution, those processes of heritage formation can become the means for positively accenting a new unequally distributed prosperity. In those opportunities, the cultural identity becomes a spectacle in the sense of Guy Debord (1999) as performed in the 'Camino de la fama del cuarteto': a means for the non-problematic staging of a social economic disparity covered by the protective mantle of culture. Social exclusion combined with cultural inclusion when somebody enjoys economic prosperity while some others have a symbolic recognition. The state, in this case municipal, uses the performative power that constituted it to make heritage, culture, identity, and through them make the inequality it administered visible.

The municipal state made the cuarteto a heritage and in this process it invented itself through the creation of duties and the forming of new relations of interdependence. As part of this materialization of the state, a series of specialists and cultural managers were put in charge of making the cuarteto 'a World Heritage' according to established regulations by supernational organizations.

The project that the Bureau of Culture established, as highlighted in the speech of the municipal major, was to reach UNESCO. For this purpose, different actions were taken, like the formation of a commission integrated by notable and model members of the community. A technical commission was also constituted to be in charge of the heritagization processes, coordinated by a cultural manager, a municipal employee, and a historian. This commission created a 'Memory' where again the same (hi)story of gender is traced and all of the required paperwork to complete the presentation at UNESCO, which occurred on March 31, 2015.

All these actions were followed by a lobbying effort to get the provincial legislature and the national state to recognize the cuarteto as heritage. As mentioned by the newspapers, the major would meet with the Minister of Education

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of the Country and the Secretary of Culture worked on a statement project on behalf of the House of Representatives.

As part of that process, the provincial Legislative Power approved on April 14, 2014, law 10.174, which declared the cuarteto as 'a proper, characteristic and traditional musical folkloric genre from the province of Córdoba' and recognized it as 'a component of the provincial cultural heritage in all its manifestations: music, lyrics and dances.' The law declared as 'Provincial Interest' the 'activities related with the development of studies and research on cuarteto and the conservation and reappraisal of documents, places and objects that preserved the oeuvre of its creators and performers.' The provincial law also established June 4 as the 'day of the cuarteto' and January 12 as the 'day of the Piano Saltarín (jumping),' in commemoration of the death of pianist Leonor Marzano, considered as the creator of the genre. Finally, the cuarteto and its creator were officially devoted a day in the calendar of cultural ephemeris of Córdoba.¹⁵

The materialization of the state

The homage made by a congressman who did not consider himself a 'loyal cuarterero,' but recognized the ability of the balls to create economic resources, was not capable of creating concrete actions beyond the recognition and the (re)consecration of certain hierarchies in the artistic field of the cuarteto. In this opportunity, the state appeared as a beam able to establish, celebrate, institute, and name the cuarteto. Different from this act, the cultural policies carried out by the municipal state defined actions designed to achieve the lined goals. It no longer represented pure statements or words, but proposed putting things in action. The state stated and acted in such a way that the results from its actions became a guarantee of its performative power.

Beyond these differences, the state materialized during the performances several times. First, the state was formed when, with the goal of creating a performance, the relationships of interdependence grew between different agents and, in some occasions, were nationalized. The organization of parliamentary ceremonies that required certain rules of etiquette if they wanted to be happy, according to Austin (1981), connected very diverse agents. Their production involved everything from important lobbying work, conversations between congressmen, inviting esteemed artists, handing out of plaques and diplomas, communication with press, and the fitting-out of the spaces, among other activities. This collaborative work by diverse agents allowed for specific stages to be created where the avatars of cultural distinction and social differentiation could play at the same time as a joint cultural identity was created. For example, joined and separated, those present during the homage called themselves Cordobese while dividing into loyal *cuartereros* or the *people*, which included artists, at the same time divided hierarchically, their followers, a congressman, and those who, as representatives of the people, awarded them.

The actions taken by the Bureau of Culture of the Municipality of Córdoba allow us to see how the state made itself in the quantitative growth of the number of

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agents whose economic reproduction depended once more on the incorporation of the state networks. For example, the task of organizing the presentation before UNESCO and producing necessary material meant the nationalization of freelance workers dedicated to the management of cultural projects.

The state was also made in the recognition of ‘specialists’ who recognized in and by the public powers stop being ‘independent managers’ and transformed into contractors of the State or even public functionaries. For example, the Secretary of Culture and main promoter of the project was a young man who held several management positions since the beginning of the century at a Cultural Center managed by the Spanish state and the Municipality of Córdoba, all this thanks to his family’s resources. Due to his work in that institution, sustained by important European funding, he built social capital and gained knowledge that secured him a specialist position in the area of cultural management. Taking advantage and strengthening that hegemonic position, the subject turned to direct a space of academic formation in the specialty, associating with a private university and with the support of an NGO.

It is interesting to highlight how in the context of a new administration of the municipal state that sought to build itself as effective and efficient under the slogan of ‘Ordering Córdoba,’ that specialist, whom the state itself created, resulted in an important political capital. In those dynamics, the managers were nationalized while they were integrated in specific administrative networks and gave the state the same materiality produced by itself.

In relation to the *cuarteto*, the state also materialized through the accumulation of economic resources produced by a higher imposing collection. Exporting the *cuarteto*, as imagined by Congressman Pereyra, would contribute huge amounts of currency to the depressed provincial economy. The *cuarteto* could also become a tourist attraction and the collective commercial activities that would be generated around this practice could contribute resources to the state’s coffers. On the other hand, by stimulating the production of the *cuarteto*, the state would transform independent artists that did not pay taxes, because they were sporadic workers, into fiscal subjects that must compulsorily become a part of the current social security protocol. As these sonorities became more successful, massive, and profitable for entrepreneurs and *cuarteto* artists, the fiscal rent would increase. Through the use of its own performative force, and its capacity to declare and make the *cuarteto* a glocal artistic genre, the provincial and municipal state could contribute to that process from which they were benefiting.

In other words, the state was materializing when it associated itself with an image that gave it substance. Córdoba was made in and by some sonorities which it legally defined as ‘proper, characteristic and traditional of the province, musical folkloric genre.’ To that state imagery, as held by Tambiah (1985) in relation to rituals and ceremonies, certain indicial values would be supported and inferred. According to Peirce (1974), it could be said that the legisign *cuarteto* acquired an emblematic value that derived from its repeated association with the Córdoba legisign. The creation of that relation and its transformation into law was carried out in different actions of the state capable of (re)citing over and over the same (hi)story through

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which Cordobeity was manufactured as well as the authenticity of the cuarteto. In the ceremonies, the law with which each particular experience of the ensemble of popular sonorities called the cuarteto should materialize was established as a reply to the metonymic association with Córdoba. When finding the cuarteto at balls, in songs, on the radio, TV, movies, or in the 'Camino de la Fama,' subjects found themselves in and with Córdoba. The actions of the state (re)established the emblematic Cordobese character of the genre and iteratively (re)established the metonymic relationship that made the cuarteto one of the semes that condensed in Córdoba (Group (1987).

The metonymic character, a type of synecdoche that made the cuarteto an indicial symbol of Córdoba, was the product of the foreclosure of the metaphoric relationship that both terms maintained. That transformation seemed unthought-of and unthinkable. The actors that participated in these performances of the state did it for different motives and for each of them the acts seemed to have a differential significance. However, everyone said they experimented the emblematic value that the cuarteto had/would have to the agents that identified/were identified as Cordobese. In and through the ceremonies, it was said, experienced, learned, and instituted that the cuarteto was 'Nuestro Estilo Cordobés' (our Cordobese style).¹⁶

That emblematic value built in and by the performances of the state, was part of the tactics through which Cordobeity, which cuarteto and subjects should/said to have, was generated. In this way, a series of heterogeneous sonorities were objectivized under the form of a specific artistic genre at the same time as some agents subjectivized/subjected as members of the same collectivity.

Last, the state materialized while re(producing) the belief in the capital S, in its power and material. This overvaluation of the state required two somewhat different forms that converged in their productivity. On the one hand, the state presented itself as a being that forgot, disowned, and excluded the cuarteto and popular sectors. Simultaneously, it presented itself as the only, or at least the most important, agent capable of solving the problems it produced. The different performances repeated the debt that the state kept while paying it off at the same time. In this dynamic, the state was self-constituted as a perfectible and fundamental agent in the social process.

In summary, that which was defined as the cuarteto resulted in an excellent resource in the process of the formation of the state as long as it was a new sphere in which state organizations could/should legally intervene. At the same time, through this intervention, the state was given an emblem and heritage that represented it, it constituted itself of a group of nationalized specialists in charge of handling this administration, and it tried to increase tax collections.

The music, and in a more general sense, the culture transformed a resource for the governmentalization of the state while in its name a group of institutions, procedures, knowledge, calculations, and tactics were built, which allowed a particular form of power to be exercised. In the analyzed case, that 'cultural power' or 'force of culture' had specific populations as a goal, particularly the popular sectors, but in a more general way to all of those who inhabited the Cordobese

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territory, and its most distinguished instruments were ceremonial devices of recognition and creation of heritage.

To make state, or in terms of Foucault, the development of governmentality meant that during the last decade there was an expansion of the government in Córdoba through an ensemble of sonorities, which during the process were transformed into a musical genre and a symbol of identity. The described cultural governmentality was at the same time interior and exterior to the state, because the government tactics allowed defining, in each moment, its limits. These (un)realizable limits of the inside and outside of the state could be observed in the state ceremonies where, in front of media, politicians, artists, entrepreneurs, and consumers mingled. The performances that situated each one in their place also allowed the erasure of those limits, such was the case of Congressman Rufeil and his self-defining as 'loyal quartetero.'

The paths of the congressman that organized the homage and that of the municipal Secretary of Culture who pushed the heritagization of the *cuarteto* also show the (un)realizable frontiers of the state. In different ways these subjects, who had the social, cultural, and professional capitals that allowed them to pursue their project, formed part of the government and nongovernment institutions while at the same time trafficking knowledge and influence between them. One based his project in the knowledge acquired while he was president of a sports institution, while the other did it taking advantage of the knowledge he had of the global forms of administration in culture, which he incorporated while administrating a cultural institution financed by a European state.

The (trans)formation of *cuarteto* into a symbol and cultural heritage makes obvious the heterogeneity of the participating institutions and agents and therefore should call attention to that which we call state. This diversity was executed in two planes. On the one hand we find distinct states (provincial, municipal) and supranational organizations linking their actions, and on the other hand we find 'non-nationalized' agents like musicians, entrepreneurs, and cultural managers forming part of this lattice, which meanwhile, with their presence, made state.

With all its apparent banality and kitsch charm, the enactments of the state that made the *cuarteto* a proper Cordobese musical genre could be described as other mechanisms through which the state was materialized, as nationalized belief, image, and social media in everyday intervention of social life. The magic of the state, in other words, its power to auto-reproduce and represent as a rational agent in social processes in charge of satisfying needs and securing rights of a territorialized population, could be understood as a performative effect of those same performances of the state.

Cases as the one described above allow us to observe the capillarization of forms of domination, their open margins where the state was being made, governmentality, and culture through the action of specific agents.

Notes

- 1 Several authors have highlighted the importance of considering rituals and performances as practices constituted from the crossing of diverse perspectives and points of view (Cf. Geertz 1987; Gerholm 1988; Gluckman 1958; Rosaldo 1991).

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- 2 Although celebrated, it is possible to suspect whether June 4 is the day of the 'birth' of cuarteto because on the same day a new coup d'état was produced and the military that took political power declared 'Martial Law.'
- 3 Pereyra, in his own words, came from 'a rural family, the smallest of nine siblings. I am the youngest and the only one who could study, and my parents were two peasants totally identified with, let's say, the idiosyncrasy of the rural area.' Born in 1954, Pereyra graduated as a lawyer from the National University of Córdoba. He was mayor of a town of his region and this was his third term as provincial congressman. The Unión Vecinalista party, was at that time, the second minority and was defined by Pereyra as 'a party that was born from the small towns and that joins neighbors to give solutions to specific problems' (Interview with Pereyra, June 15, 2000).
- 4 Traslasierra is a valley in the province of Córdoba.
- 5 The vision that Pereyra held on the regional economic development justified in tourism picks on a large local political tradition that we cannot analyze here.
- 6 In his study of North American 'country music,' Richard Peterson uses the concept of 'fabrication of authenticity' with which he wants to point at the socially constructed character of a plan or event that declares itself 'authentic' (Peterson 1992). This fabrication, the author sustains, always has some type of historic infidelity built through a series of permanent adjustments between commercial interests of the producers and the tastes of the public. Peterson's analysis tries to pierce the character of deliberate political manipulation assumed by these concepts and introduce the creation of a public whose reactions, unpredictable at one point, also participate in the self-interested fabrication of the authentic character of determined goods.
- 7 Additional to this project related to the cuarteto, Pereyra had created a project he called 'Ruta del Paladar' (Route to the Palate), which consisted in organizing the provincial territory in touristic and traditional gastronomic tours based on regional characteristics.
- 8 For example, on May 31, 2000, a week before the declaration at the House of Representatives, a news story appeared in the *La Voz del Interior* newspaper, which reported about the presence in the city of a famous cook, 'the Gato Dumas,' who recorded a chapter of his television show 'Argentina Genial' transmitted from a channel in Buenos Aires. Dumas invited 'la Mona' Jiménez to his program, and the news journalist registered this encounter where the cook confirmed 'I had a survey made to know where it would be convenient to set a gastronomic school. It was a serious survey; the result claims that Córdoba is one of the best places for the idea' (*La Voz del Interior*, May 31, 2000; Section 2C, page 1).
- 9 To this metaphysical story that Pereyra (re)cites full of certainties, it is possible to oppose a genealogy of the genre that shows a lot of doubts. It is not only plausible that Leo did not play on June 4, but it is also possible to suspect the rural origin, as all of the musicians lived in the city and had a long career as urban subjects. Either way, the participation of the Sicilian tarantella in the conformation of the cuarteto could probably happen before through radio or recordings than by the contact of Italian immigrants, which were mainly from Piamonte.
- 10 The anachronism produced by Bustos Argañaráz must be noted, because the paso doble, a Spanish dance in which the dancer imitates the steps of a bullfighter dominating its prey, has a much more recent origin and it became famous in the dance floors during the 1930s decade when it was embraced by the high society of Paris.
- 11 The local historian Horacio Crespo (1999) made a synthesis of the tensions that are articulated in Córdoba, and proposes a rereading of this trope that describes Córdoba as a point of encounter through the analysis of thought of José María Aricó and his characterization of the city as 'frontier.'
- 12 Rufeil confessed he felt like 'I had received a prize together with you, because I consider myself one of you' (Congressman Rufeil, Legislative Palace, June 7, 2000).
- 13 Together with the dancers and fans of the honorees, students from two elementary schools who were visiting the House of Representatives were present as part of their educational activities.

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- 14 In this group, Gelfo—still active but without much success—was awarded last as the representative of the origin of the genre, while Jiménez—in full activity and fortune—received the award first as the representative of the present-day genre. Rolán and Kustin, already retired, seemed to be there to complete the existing vacuum between the origin and the present.
- 15 Although since the homage of the year 2000, when June 4 was considered the ‘day of the cuarteto,’ this ephemeris was a product of the interpretation of the media and was not a part of the declaration on behalf of the House of Representatives.
- 16 We must recall how the speech of Congressman Pereyra ended with the reading of some stanzas of ‘Nuestro Estilo Cordobés’ (our Cordobese style), a song by Jiménez that expressed the folkloric and Cordobese character that the cuarteto must have.

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