



PROJECT MUSE®

Art from a Fractured Past

Milton, Cynthia

Published by Duke University Press

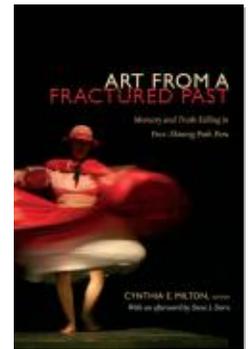
Milton, Cynthia.

Art from a Fractured Past: Memory and Truth-Telling in Post-Shining Path Peru.

Duke University Press, 2013.

Project MUSE., <a href="

<https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/64012>



THE “VOICE OF THE VICTIMS” / TESTIMONIAL SONGS
IN RURAL AYACUCHO

 n February 20, 2002, just weeks after the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) began its highly publicized work investigating the political violence of the 1980s and 1990s, hundreds of people gathered on the remote Waswantu plateau in Fajardo province in central Ayacucho for an annual song and dance contest dedicated to the local genre of Carnival music known as *pumpin*. The very first group to perform that day, the Estrellas de Fajardo (Fajardo Stars),¹ opened the contest with the song “Fosas Clandestinas” (Hidden Graves):²

Qaqa mayus qaparisqa, tukusllañas waqallasqa	The chasm and the rivers shout, only the owls cry
Llapa awqas runakuna llaqtanchikta chayamuspa	All of those enemies arrived to our town
Metralletas y granadas runallata sipillaptin	When they killed people with machine guns and grenades
En las fosas clandestinas llaqtaruna chinkallarqa	In the hidden graves, townspeople disappeared
Campeños y obreros carcullapi waqallarqa	Peasants and workers cried in prison
Estudiantes y maestros torturados masacrados	Students and teachers, tortured and massacred
Mana ima quchanmanta, mana ima faltanmanta	Bearing no fault, without sin
Llaqtaruna chinkallarqa, llaqtaruna wañullarqa	Townspeople were disappeared and killed
En Umaro, Bellavista, Accomarca, y Cayara	In Umaro, Bellavista, Accomarca, and Cayara

Like many other songs at the contest, “Fosas Clandestinas” seemed ripped straight from the headlines. That very week, Peruvian news outlets were flooded with images of the first mass graves in rural Ayacucho being unearthed by the CVR’s forensic teams, while names of towns associated with particularly well-known massacres, including those listed in the final lines of the song, were once again in regular circulation throughout the country. This performance in fact fit very well with the rhetoric surrounding the establishment of the CVR, which called for a long-overdue public dialogue in Peru about the years of violence and furthermore urged that special attention be given to the “voice of the victims”—a voice presented quite literally in this instance: sung in the Quechua language in the high, strident vocal style of much southern Andean indigenous music and articulating the kind of rural, marginalized perspective on the violent past that the truth commission would champion in the public sphere on a national level.³

Though opinions about the truth commission and its work were decidedly mixed in the Fajardo province, “Fosas Clandestinas” provoked little controversy that day, referencing shared experiences and commonly held local attitudes about the war for most of those in attendance. The towns singled out for mention in the song all lie within sight of the plateau, a point emphasized by the female singers, who turned to gesture toward each town as they sang its name, centering their act of remembrance within the local geography of violence and implicitly inviting audience members to recall their own vivid memories of those massacres. As evidenced by the subdued but supportive applause following each verse, many in the audience also remembered all too clearly the regular arrival of *llapa awqa runakuna*, “all those enemies”—whether Shining Path members or Peruvian army soldiers—in their towns throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, bearing “machine guns and grenades” and leaving death and destruction in their wake. Even the opening line of the song, with its evocative rendering of a landscape devoid of human presence, an absence sonically marked by the bad-omen cry of an owl and the rushing sound of rivers, offered a culturally specific reference to the rapid depopulation of the area in the 1980s, when local residents fled the escalation of the violence to live as *desplazados*, “displaced persons,” in the shantytowns surrounding the cities of Ayacucho and Lima.⁴



FIGURE 9.1. A contemporary *pumpin* group performs at the Waswantu Festival de Pumpin in February 2007. Photograph by author.

In at least one aspect, however, “Fosas Clandestinas” did not fit with the rhetoric of “rupture” and “breaking through” the fearful silences of the violent past that marked the truth commission’s mandate. Far from striking any new or novel theme, the Fajardo Stars’ performance fit comfortably within a well-established tradition of *canciones testimoniales*, or “testimonial songs,” that had been performed in this genre over the previous two decades. Indeed, in both its general narrative and its specific terms and cultural references, “Fosas Clandestinas” echoed the lyrics and melodies of dozens of prior songs dating back to the mid-1980s, each lamenting the victimization of area residents, recalling prominent massacres and other violent events, and emphasizing the innocence of peasants, workers, students, and teachers. Such songs, performed at annual Carnival song contests in the province and its satellite communities in Ayacucho and Lima, and later circulated via homemade and commercial cassette recordings and videos, constitute a crucial vehicle for social commentary, remembrance, and political expression for Fajardininos (people from the province of Víctor Fajardo), opening an unusual but deeply valued social space in which

to process and reflect on their experiences of violence throughout the long years of Peru's armed conflict.

Positioned as *sites of memory*, drawing on Pierre Nora's notion of self-consciously past-oriented spaces "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself,"⁵ and more specifically as *sounds of memory*, drawing attention to the ways the past may be acoustically rendered and referenced in the present,⁶ testimonial songs are not, of course, sites of uniform opinion about the past or expressions of an unquestioned and static "collective memory" of a given group of people. Rather, these songs open a dynamic social space for the construction of historical narratives, a space where such narratives can be presented and transformed in the search for public consensus about the past and present. "Fosas Clandestinas" is instructive in this sense, less statement of fact than an argument for a particular way of understanding the past, marked by its own logic of what is to be remembered and, importantly, what should be forgotten. Its narrative is in fact quite selective, highlighting the violence of events associated with the Peruvian military's counterinsurgency efforts while making no mention at all of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), the Maoist insurgency and political organization who instigated the conflict in this region in 1980. Perhaps most surprisingly, given the emphasis placed by the CVR and other human rights workers on the need for public forums in which those affected by the violence could narrate their own stories, "Fosas Clandestinas" makes no reference to its composer's and performers' own, traumatic experiences during the war, or the reasons why they might have been more interested than others in knowing who, exactly, lay in the secret graves being unearthed by the CVR.

All of which raises a number of questions. What kind of truth(s) do *canciones testimoniales* tell? What voices do they represent, and from which kinds of victims? How, and by whom, are they heard, and what are the intentions of their composers? Why are such songs written at all, and what is their effect—culturally, politically, otherwise? In this chapter, I approach these questions by tracing an alternate, musical history of Peru's internal war as it was experienced by people from the central Fajardo province, focusing in particular on the Carnival music known as *pumpin* (pronounced "poom-peen"), and the life and music of a single songwriter, the composer of "Fosas Clandestinas." This sort of person-centered ethnographic history, what anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod has

called an “ethnography of the particular,”⁷ is, I think, necessary to unravel the complicated ways memories are conjured and (re)created in the production and performance of testimonial songs, whose potential meanings fall somewhere between the individual intentionality of their authors and/or performers and the collective expectations and experiences of their audiences. By putting the history of the internal war, an individual’s lived and remembered experience of that history, and the narrative discourse of the testimonial song tradition itself into productive tension with one another, I hope to demonstrate how greater attention to cultural aspects of conflict and remembrance can expand and deepen our understanding of how this war was experienced and narrated at the local level.

Based on intensive fieldwork in Ayacucho between 2000 and 2002 and periodic visits since, this chapter joins a growing body of literature on alternate modes of truth-telling and remembrance with respect to Peru’s internal war.⁸ Little to date has been written specifically on music and performance within this literature, despite the frequent quotation of song texts in publications about the violence, as well as music’s widely acknowledged role in the expression and construction of contemporary Andean identities.⁹ Examining music and the context in which it was heard is especially important for understanding the years of violence in Ayacucho’s central southern region, where music not only fulfilled a commemorative function after that period but also provided a crucial site of contestation *throughout* the conflict. In short, I contend that music and musical performance were part of how the violence itself was experienced and processed for people from this region. In that sense, this chapter also joins a growing body of literature on the broader articulations between music and violence, in which scholars have foregrounded the complex and multivalent role of music in situations of conflict, noting how it may be just as easily be utilized to incite and enact violence as to protest or remember it—or in the case of *pumpin*, all of these, at different times and in different places.¹⁰

Pumpin and the Politics of Protest, 1976–1983

Musicians and songwriters in Ayacucho today draw a sharp distinction between what they call *canciones de protesta*, “protest songs,” and *canciones testimoniales*, “testimonial songs,” when discussing music from a variety of traditional and popular genres bearing social or political content. In almost all cases, musicians

I have spoken with prefer the latter term for their own work, reserving the former to critique songs by others that they view as overly partisan or lacking in poetic appeal. Many echo the argument made by Rodrigo, Luis, and Edwin Montoya in their seminal anthology of Quechua song texts, first published in the mid-1980s at the height of the violence: “So-called ‘protest songs’ . . . make no sense to the men and women of Andean Peru. Political reflection appears *within* life, *together* with love, humor, agriculture, religiosity. It can’t be isolated and separated from the rest.”¹¹ While overly utopian in its portrait of an integrated, holistic “Andean” understanding of politics, and overly dismissive of the affective potential of “so-called ‘protest songs’” (which they equate with politicized appropriations of Andean folklore, especially by urban university students), the position articulated by the Montoyas resonates with the diversity of themes and organic metaphors that mark most “testimonial music” in Ayacucho, including *pumpin*, and in fact the presence of such metaphors is often regarded as a mark of the “authenticity” of testimonial songs.

This generalized explanation, however, misses an essential reason for the rigid distinction drawn between “protest” and “testimonial” music in the Fajardo province, where the former term refers specifically to songs written in support of Shining Path or that otherwise challenge outright the legitimacy of the Peruvian government, while the latter is reserved for songs that commemorate the violence in more neutral terms or that contain what is often referred to as simply *contenido social*, “social content.” For obvious reasons, “protest songs” are expressly prohibited in song contests today, though the gray area between forbidden “protest” and permitted “social commentary” offers grist for endless discussion and debate among performers, judges, and audience members. In the Fajardino context, the explicit rejection of “protest” songs thus reflects more than a debate over poetics or the boundaries of acceptable political discourse: it is a pointed response to the important and unusual role that *pumpin* music played in the initial rise of Shining Path in this region in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the difficulties of integrating that history within the normative parameters of postviolence narratives about the war.

To explain, I turn to the biography of Roberto (a pseudonym), the composer of “Fosas Clandestinas” and longtime director of the *pumpin* group Fajardo Stars. Born in 1966 in a small village located on the southern banks of the Pampas

River valley, Roberto is the eldest of four children of a local elementary school-teacher and his campesina wife. Roberto's early life revolved around pasturing their family's small goat herd, tending his mother's fields, and, by his early teens, learning to play the twelve-string guitar in the distinctive manner that is a hallmark of *pumpin* music.¹² Like most guitar players in the province, Roberto is self-taught as a musician, having learned to play primarily by watching and imitating older male relatives and friends, practicing on the sly with borrowed instruments until he was old enough to acquire his own.¹³ By his own admission, he had difficulty at first learning the necessary instrumental technique and initially had no interest in becoming a songwriter. Beyond being a pleasurable pastime in and of itself, playing guitar was simply a means of greater participation in Carnival, one of the principal annual festivities in the province.

In 1978, when Roberto was twelve, his father founded the Fajardo Stars with the intention of competing in the recently established song and dance contests, or *concurcos*, being held during Fajardo's Carnival season. The first such contest had been held two years earlier in 1976 atop the Waswantu plateau, a broad plain high on the flanks of Mount Tinka, which towers above the region, where informal gatherings and ritual competitions of youth from neighboring villages had taken place during Carnival for generations. As Roberto and many others in the province recall today, the formalized *concurso* on Waswantu proved wildly popular, attracting an audience of hundreds of spectators from nearby districts, prompting the formation of dozens of competing groups and several spin-off contests in neighboring towns and quickly becoming one of the highlights of the province's annual social calendar.

As in the case of many other cultural and political initiatives in the province in the late 1970s, a widespread belief in the necessity of "progress" and "development" had motivated the establishment of the folkloric *concurso*.¹⁴ Its founder, a native of the region and then a student of anthropology at the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga, hoped to confer a sense of cultural legitimacy on rural traditions like *pumpin* through explicit comparisons with established contests for coastal genres like the *vals* and *marinera*, forms widely considered "national" folklore in Peru and associated with the *criollo* ("Creole," in this case indicating white and Hispanic) elite. The form, choreography, presentational style, and textual discourse of *pumpin* all changed radically within

a few years of these contests' founding. The models for these changes were borrowed primarily from regional mestizo music and dance traditions and from established norms for staged folkloric presentations that dated back in Peru to the early twentieth century.¹⁵ Most notably, the meandering verses, circular dances, and improvised wit typical of Carnival ritual performances, which persist to this day in informal contexts, had given way in the *concurso* environment to precomposed songs on fixed themes, more elaborate musical figures, and rehearsed choreography that could be performed in a straight line before a panel of judges.

With the establishment of the *pumpin* contests, the changes in the thematic orientation of *pumpin* songs were especially dramatic. Like most Carnival music genres in the Andes, until the late 1970s *pumpin* verses had typically consisted of short couplets focused on themes of love and betrayal or the daily concerns of agrarian life, seasoned with an occasional dash of ribald humor or thinly veiled sexual innuendo.¹⁶ Roberto's father's first attempts at songwriting for the Fajardo Stars were typical in this regard, centering on "sentimental" topics and "songs about everyday life in the countryside," as Roberto describes them. Due in part to the judges awarding prizes to groups who made more daring thematic innovations, however, as well as the influence of regionally popular *waynos*,¹⁷ which at that time bore more explicit political commentary, *pumpin* composers soon began addressing more overtly political topics in their competition songs. Long-simmering interdistrict rivalries and disputes soon emerged as salient themes in *pumpin* verses, as did the turbulent national political climate of the late 1970s, including the crumbling Morales Bermudez military dictatorship, ongoing labor strife in Lima, and even Peru's border tensions with Chile.

This was also the period when Shining Path militants began organizing in this region, infiltrating local schools and holding semiclandestine meetings with area residents to prepare for the launch of their armed insurrection. Taking advantage of the unparalleled opportunity to address the large crowd, as well as the liminal moment of musical and textual experimentation opened by the *concurso*, Sendero militants teaching at local high schools—particularly those originally from the area and thus already familiar with the musical genre and its conventions—enlisted their students to join them in new groups to sing *pumpin* songs with explicitly revolutionary texts. A surviving recording of the Waswantu contest held in February 1980, one of several such recordings that area residents

shared with me after hiding them throughout the years of violence, offers an extraordinary glimpse into Sendero Luminoso's radicalization of the event. Five of the eight songs on a 1980 recording, taped during the final round of the contest, directly address political issues, and all take a critical position with respect to the upcoming presidential elections and Peru's return to democracy after more than a decade of military rule. "Situación Internacional" (International Situation), performed by a group announced as the "Little Sirens of Waswantu," was one of several songs containing an unambiguous call for Maoist revolution:¹⁸

Pobre wakchapapas partidonchik kanmi	We, the poor people, will have our political party
Pobre wakchapapas armanchikqa kansi	We, the poor people, will be armed
Partido comunista lliuchan llaqtallapi	The Communist Party in every town,
Marxismo leninismo pensamiento Maomi	Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Thought
[Peru nacionllapi] Derecha, Izquierda	In all of Peru, the Right, the Left
Altos militarwan eleccionesllawan	The military leaders are going with elections
Democracia nispa, parlamentullawan	A parliamentary democracy, they say
Apukunallaqa kamachikamuchkan	The wealthy will just order us around
Aswan mejortaraq gobiernawananchikpaq	We'd be better off with our own government
Guerra popularwan lucha armadawan	With a people's war, with the armed struggle
Guerra popularwan lucha armadawan	With a people's war, with the armed struggle
Obrero campesino armata hapispa	Worker, peasant, by taking up arms
Yarqay muchuyllata puchukachisunchik	We will overcome hunger and shortage

Written by the leader of a Shining Path cell in one of Waswantu's neighboring districts, "International Situation" is typical of many Shining Path propaganda texts of the era in its blunt reiteration of Maoist doctrine and a forceful call for armed struggle, prefiguring the discourse and militant performance style of the hymns and chants that were recorded by journalists among Senderista prisoners in the following years.¹⁹

More striking to contemporary listeners of this recording is the audience response: each verse of "International Situation" is greeted with thunderous

applause and cheers from the assembled crowd. How to interpret this enthusiastic response? Do these *pumpin* contest recordings, in fact, offer proof of early support for Shining Path in this region? While the wild cheers for the *guerra popular* (people's war) certainly suggest that many Fajardino residents were initially receptive to Sendero Luminoso's message, closer attention to performative and sonic aspects of these recordings reveals a more complicated political environment. First, as with any musical performance, factors going well beyond song texts play an important role in generating audience responses. The boisterous cheers for armed revolution during the performance of "International Situation," for example, appear rather less convincing as evidence of widespread revolutionary fervor when heard in the context of the rest of the song; moments after its final verse, members of the audience break into an animated shouting match between the residents of neighboring towns, suggesting that crowd reaction at that moment had as much to do with interdistrict rivalries than with any particular political message. Several witty, nonpolitical song performances also elicit similarly enthusiastic crowd responses, while a different Senderista group is later subjected to boos and catcalls when its singers momentarily forget their lyrics. Unexplained moments of applause or laughter also call our attention to the presence of other aesthetic and performance factors, including choreography, dress, and even unplanned crowd behavior, all of which had an impact on audience responses.

More important from a political perspective, even if we assume that listeners were often responding primarily to the song texts themselves, the political discourse of the *concurso* was far from monolithic. A full review of available recordings from the early 1980s suggests that numerous composers and performing groups in Fajardo shared Sendero's critique of the prevailing social and political order—what Gonzalo Portocarrero and Patricia Oliart have called the "critical idea" common to many rural and working-class youth of the era²⁰—without necessarily supporting Sendero itself or its vision of armed struggle. Roberto's story and the early career of the Fajardo Stars are again instructive. In 1980, the same year several groups were making the case for Maoist rebellion, the Fajardo Stars competed in two contests with the song "Lorucha" (Little Parrot), written by Roberto's father, which cast doubt on the potential for meaningful change in

Peru as a result of the upcoming elections and praised the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, which had taken place the previous year, as a potential model.

Desde Limamantas	From Lima
Lurucha qayakamun	A little parrot [the mass media] is calling
18 mayutam elecciones nispa	There are elections on May 18, they say
18 mayutam votaciones nispa	There are elections on May 18, they say
Chayllay elecciones pobrepa bien ninchu	Will the poor benefit from these elections?
Chayllay votaciones wakchapa bien ninchu	Will the poor benefit from the vote?
Allin yachaykusqa apu favorninsi	It is well known that they favor the powerful
Allin yachaykusqa rico favorninsi	It is well known that they favor the rich
Desde Nicaragua	From Nicaragua
Kunamuwachkanchik	We take our cue
Kay ñuqaykuqina luchaychik nispa	Our struggle is like theirs, they say
Kay ñuqaykuqina qatariychik nispa	Our awakening is like theirs, they say

These lyrics certainly expressed a Marxist position, praising the revolutionary struggle in Nicaragua and making suggestive comparisons to the situation in Peru, but in this charged context they also served as a minor statement of ideological resistance to the dominant Maoist discourse of the Senderista groups, who dismissed all other existing Marxist governments and parties as “revisionists.” When I asked Roberto about this song and its relationship to the politics of that moment, he explained:

My father was a grade school teacher. His [political] tendency leaned toward socialism, something like that, but never communism. In his songs, he never put anything about armed struggle, nothing like that—just something about socialism.²¹ He said that in Nicaragua they were forming a [kind of] socialism, equality between the poor and rich. That was his thinking. He always talked to me about a just society. And so, listening to the news that there had been a revolution in Nicaragua, he composed his song. The

elections in Peru were coming up on the eighteenth of May, and [he said] perhaps there would be an unjust election, only for the powerful.

Considered together with other songs from the era that shared a critique of the Peruvian state but offered different solutions—a longing look back at the policies of the Velasco regime in the early 1970s, for instance, or more vigorous support for the country’s labor and peasant movements—the *pumpin concursos* offer a clear illustration of both the ideological reasons behind the initial support Sendero received in this region and the limits of that support. The sheer number and variety of these songs by the early 1980s also confirms the importance of the *concurso* itself as a privileged forum for political commentary: a dialogic space in which political ideas, complaints, and proposals could be presented to the largest annual gathering of people in the province.

As the war got under way, both the government’s distrust of local activism and Sendero’s intolerance for alternatives to its revolutionary program began to limit the possibilities for dissent. Hints of the state repression to come surfaced as early as 1980, as Roberto recalls:

Waswantu [provided] a place that was, well, free for all groups to express themselves, their problems, to denounce or reject some abuse. It was a very natural place where there was a very large gathering of people, from the different towns. I was fourteen years old, and when there were those revolutionary songs, they stayed recorded in me, those messages. Up to the point that I was scared something could happen to those performing groups, and not just the groups, but to all of us who were gathered there. There could be some kind of repression, or detention of the members of the group.

I remember very well in the year 1980, when we were in Huancapi, a group of police followed us when we were singing “Lorucha.” My sister was practicing, and there was this kid who came up to the group and threw talc powder on all of the singers.²² My sister reacted furiously, giving him a few strong punches and slaps on the face. And so this kid went to the police, telling them “that group is singing against you all.” My sister was detained in the commissary—one of our best singers!—and we had to go to the authorities [and beg that] they release her so she could come sing. They kept her for an

hour before letting her out, to sing. So, there was already a fear that if you sang something, there was a possibility that you could be arrested.

Apparently undeterred by such a threat, at least at that early date in the conflict, Roberto's family returned to the Huancapi contest the following year to compete with the song "Llapa Preso" (All Those Prisoners), which protested the unjust detention of (presumably innocent) local men and women in the Ayacucho jail.²³

The boldness of the Fajardo Stars' response reflects in part the retreat of the state from much of rural Ayacucho between 1980 and 1982, a move that eventually left the central Fajardo province under the virtual control of Sendero, who moved to consolidate their power in both political and cultural realms through threats and acts of violence. In February 1981, much like the year before, many songs performed at the Waswantu *concurso* contained explicit calls for support of the armed struggle. As Roberto recalls, echoing sentiments I heard from many others in the province, support for these groups by that point was based on a mix of factors: "At that time, I think almost everyone was with the Shining Path, out of fear or conviction—I think half out of fear and half out of conviction, for fear that they would kill you, or that something would happen to your family." Given the presence of known Senderista militants in some performing groups and the very real acts of violence that were beginning to take place as Shining Path assumed control of the region, that mixture of fear and conviction extended to the experience of the contests themselves, affecting everything from audience applause to decisions by other groups on how, and whether, to participate. One successful *pumpin conjunto* (performing group) director I interviewed quickly disbanded her group and moved out of the province entirely after the local Senderista leadership asked her to begin composing songs for them, while other *conjuntos*, like the Fajardo Stars, chose to write and perform songs emphasizing the critique of the Peruvian state that they shared with Sendero Luminoso—"Llapa Preso" is a telling example, given that many of the prisoners in Ayacucho's jail were presumed Senderista militants or sympathizers—while avoiding any potential discrepancies or disagreements they had with Shining Path's revolutionary agenda.²⁴

Finally recognizing the role of these song contests in Sendero's campaign,

Peruvian police forces stepped in and forcibly ended the *Waswantu concurso* in 1982, firing their weapons in the air and sending those present fleeing down the mountain. Ten months later, the Peruvian government declared a state of emergency in Ayacucho, placing most of the region under military control. Caught between the revolutionary zeal of the Senderistas and the scorched-earth counterinsurgency tactics of the military, Fajardinós were soon subject to extrajudicial detentions, torture, selected assassinations, disappearances, and outright massacres, all of which quickly emptied the region as people fled to the barrios of *desplazados* (displaced people) in Ayacucho, Ica, and Lima. The effect on *pumpin* was immediate and dramatic. The leaders of at least one of the principal Senderista *pumpin* groups discussed here were captured, tortured, and killed by the military in 1983, while former festival organizers were detained and questioned about their alleged role in “fomenting terrorism.” All forms of public festivals, including Carnival *conCURSOS* and patron saint fiestas, were canceled that year.

As for so many others in the province, the rapid escalation of the violence had personal consequences for Roberto. Soldiers from the Peruvian military entered his home in 1983 and took his father into custody. No explanation was offered to his family regarding why he was being apprehended, and inquiries by family members at the army garrisons in Cangallo and Huancapi during the following days and months were met with obfuscation and denial. His father, in short, had been “disappeared,” one of the thousands who met a similar fate at the hands of the Peruvian military in the 1980s. Roberto and his sisters subsequently fled to live with relatives in Lima, while his mother and youngest brother, then just ten years old, stayed to tend their crops and goats, and search in the gullies along the Pampas River where bodies of the disappeared occasionally surfaced. His father’s body never reappeared, and to this day they do not know the full truth about his fate.

The following year, Roberto opted to fulfill his obligatory military service, in his own words, “to try and see what the military was doing in Ayacucho.” After ten months, having “witnessed many crimes,” and convinced that his father had been executed, Roberto returned to Lima. He eventually found work in Peru’s informal economy as an *ambulante*, a street vendor, selling fruit on the streets

of Callao. A victim and a veteran of the war, with few prospects and his family scattered, he was still only eighteen years old.

The Testimonial Turn: Lima, 1984–1985

The story of *pumpin*'s transformation and politicization could easily have ended in 1983. The prohibition of public festivals and gatherings remained in effect for several years in most of the Ayacucho region, while the mere possession of cassette recordings of recent *pumpin concursos*, according to those who later shared them with me, was sufficient proof of “terrorist sympathies” to lead to arrest or worse at the hands of the military. Certainly the kind of militant discourse of songs by Sendero-affiliated groups was no longer permissible in any public forum outside the areas directly controlled by Shining Path, and in the polarized political climate, any sort of protest or questioning of the state was viewed with suspicion.

But the social space for political commentary opened by the *concursos* was not so easily closed, especially in an environment where many other forms of speech were so tightly controlled. In 1984, one year after the cancelation of the Waswantu contest, Fajardino migrants founded a new Carnival *curso* in Lima, which was heavily attended by the newly arrived *desplazado* population. Within a few years contests were also established and revived in both Ayacucho and the Fajardo province. Not surprisingly, the revolutionary slogans of previous years were dropped, both for prudent reasons—the new contests were held in large public venues in urban areas with a notable police presence—and as a tacit acknowledgment that Sendero's revolutionary project had failed them. In place of odes to the armed struggle, the revived *concursos* were dominated by what came to be called *canciones testimoniales*, which initially took several forms: tragic pathos and the nostalgia of exile from a devastated homeland, commentary on the injustices and indignities of life as a *desplazado* in the city, and direct protest against the government and the military of real and perceived misdeeds.

It is important to acknowledge here that the revival of the *pumpin* contests and the testimonial turn that they took was not simply an inevitable response to the experience of political violence and refugee flight, or a natural development given the long history of social and political commentary in Andean musical

traditions. Though the resurrection of performance traditions occurs frequently among refugee and forced migrant populations as a way of ensuring cultural continuity and providing an anchor amidst the uncertainties of everyday life, it is in no way guaranteed.²⁵ Most other rural song traditions from the Ayacucho region, for instance, did not undergo a similar renaissance or take on the same testimonial role that *pumpin* did in any sustained or widespread manner, and the fear of persecution limited participation initially even among Fajardininos. Why, then, the *pumpin* revival and subsequent testimonial turn? Elizabeth Jelin's work on memory in postconflict societies is useful here for thinking about the role played by individuals and institutions in promoting remembrance. Jelin emphasizes what she terms the *labor* of memory, noting the presence of agency and work when "human beings are actively involved in the process of symbolic transformation and elaboration of the meanings of the past," a process that is particularly acute in contexts marked by political violence and trauma.²⁶ Several Fajardininos in the 1980s, people who, following Jelin, we might refer to as "memory entrepreneurs"—including contest organizers, community leaders, songwriters, and performers—recognized the need in their community for a social space that would allow for some kind of dialogue, testimony, and public recognition of their suffering and specifically chose the *pumpin concurso* as a culturally significant and resonant vehicle with which to meet that need.

The justifications for the *concurso* that these "memory entrepreneurs" offered were not limited to its testimonial function, however, and in fact the publicly stated reasons for the contest, as they were articulated to me much later by its organizers and attendees as well as expressed in period documents, coalesce around several other key themes that help explain the parameters within which such testimonial work could occur. First, as with virtually every folkloric music or dance contest in Peru, including the founding of the Waswantu contest less than a decade before, the new *concursos* had a stated objective of "preserving and promoting" Fajardino traditions, which were justifiably seen as threatened at that moment. The preservation of *pumpin* as a distinctive tradition within the Ayacucho region was also easily subsumed within the project of maintaining a Fajardino cultural identity in the urban migrant milieu, fitting with and benefiting from a broader resurgence at that time of regionally specific musical and cultural traditions within Lima's Andean *provinciano* ("provincial") community,

a movement whose origins predated the outbreak of violence.²⁷ The rhetoric of cultural preservation and the maintenance of tradition was also encouraged by the availability of funding and support from the National Institute of Culture, which assisted in organizing the first *concurcos* in Lima. Established discourses on folklore and cultural conservation thus dovetailed with, and provided some justification and cover for, the urgent issues of cultural survival and political dialogue facing Fajardinós at that critical juncture.

On a symbolic level, *concurcos* also represented a conquest, or at minimum a temporary appropriation, of public space in the urban environment. Like most Andean migrant events at that time, the contests were held in rented outdoor stadiums, the first year in the working-class neighborhood of San Cosme and the second in Campo de Marte, a band shell near central Lima that remains a popular venue for Andean musical performance in the city today. For *provincianos* living in Lima, this was an act of cultural resistance with a long history, echoing decades of struggles by Andean peoples to find a place for themselves, literally and figuratively, in the capital city in the face of rampant racism and overt discrimination. For the newly “dis-placed,” facing the double challenge of generalized discrimination against highland migrants and their especially precarious status as internal refugees from the violence in the highlands, the symbolic claim on a “space” in the center of the city, however temporary, was especially powerful, as they struggled to find places to live by means of land invasions in the increasingly far-flung northern and southern sectors of the sprawling metropolis.²⁸

Despite the foregrounding of folkloric preservation and provincial identity as principal justifications for the new *pumpin* contests, all evidence suggests that participants themselves immediately grasped the event’s potential as a site for continued social and political commentary. Though no recording exists of the first contests in Lima in 1984 and 1985, thus limiting possibilities for performance analysis, a printed *cancionero* (song book) of contest entries from those years, published later by the contest organizers, provides ample proof for this argument. More than half of the twenty-seven songs included in the booklet address topics related to the political violence and/or poverty. To cite one fairly typical example, a group called the Hijos de Colca (Sons of Colca) competed in 1984 with the song entitled “Profesorapa Llakin” (Teacher’s Sorrow), a lament over the abandonment of their hometown:

Colcallaway llaqtanchispas	In my little town of Colca
Mana runa kanchu	There are no people
Hoyway allqollani	Only dogs
Tristita awllachkan	Howling sadly
Colquinollay paysanuykuna	My Colquino, my countrymen
Qamkuna kutikusun	We will all return
Amaya qonqasunchu	We should not forget
Kuyay llaqtanchita	Our beloved pueblo

The desire to “not forget” and “return” are common refrains in many songs, the latter emphasis suggesting that the songwriters and performers were primarily *desplazados*, those recently displaced by the war, rather than long-term residents of the capital. These themes are taken up forcefully in the *fuga*, or conclusion, to another entry from 1984, “I Come from Huancapi”:

San Cosmechallay pampachallapis	On the field of San Cosme
Pares paloma yawarta waqan	A pair of doves weep blood ²⁹
Amaya waqaychu amaya llakiychu	Don't cry, don't suffer
Kuskachallanchikmi ripukullasun	Together we will return
Ima palomaraq mana waqanmanchu	What dove could not cry
Waswantullanta yuyarillaspa	Remembering Waswantu?
Amaya waqaychu amaya llakiychu	Don't cry, don't suffer
Kuskachallanchikmi ripukullasun	Together we will return

Nostalgia for the life in the countryside was endemic. In “Huancapinutam” (To a Huancapino), a song from the 1985 contest also by a group from Colca, remembrance is directed at musical customs and the *concurso* performance itself is positioned as an act of memory.

Yuyachkankichu yuyallachkanin huancapino	Do you remember as I do, Huancapino
Waswantullay patallapi tususqanchita	When we danced on my Waswantu
Waswantullay patallapi takisqanchisqa	When we sang on my Waswantu
Chaychallata yuyaykuspa cayarino	Remembering like that, Cayarino
Campo de Martipi	Here in the Campo de Marte
Tusuykullasun takiykullasun	We will dance and sing

The appeals for remembrance and provincial solidarity—the singer from Colca calling out to those from the neighboring districts of Huancapi and Cayara



FIGURE 9.2. The front cover of a book of songs (*cancionero*) performed at the Lima *pumpin* contests in 1984–1985, published by Fajardino migrants in Lima of the Fajardino Folkloric Institute. It is very old, grainy, stained, and thus quite evocative of a difficult era and the unusual efforts made to register songs about the violence in a more permanent way.

to remember their collective experiences on the Waswantu plateau—runs through virtually all of the new testimonial songs, reinforced by frequent invocations to “my brothers and sisters” and “my fellow beloved countrymen” and anchored by references to specifically Fajardino locations, including town names and prominent geographic landmarks.

The desire for collective solidarity is also expressed in the grammar itself of most songs, which use the inclusive Quechua form of the first-person plural (*ñuqanchik*, which includes the speaker and listener(s), rather than *ñuqayku*, which excludes the person or people who are being addressed), thus enveloping performers and audiences in the same literal and metaphoric community of those who dance, sing, remember, and mourn together. We might interpret this in at least two different ways. As a practical matter, the use of this grammatical structure suggests that the expected audience for these songs, despite their performance at a public site in Lima, consisted primarily of fellow citizens

from the Fajardo province, and all evidence points to this being the case. Yet, as Jelin suggests for a similar case with the Guaraní language in Paraguay, use of the “inclusive we” also constitutes an invitation to a broader audience, an attempt to find points of connection and mutual identification with others beyond one’s own community, and that search for wider recognition of Fajardino suffering—the desire to *be heard*—was certainly a prime motivation for testimonial songwriters.³⁰

While sadness and nostalgia were dominant themes, songwriters and performers did not avoid political topics or moderate protest. Well aware of the recent contest history in Fajardo, *concurso* organizers in Lima stipulated in the published rules that “protest songs” would be forbidden, hoping both to forestall potential Senderista involvement in the contest as well as to provide themselves with political cover should they be questioned about the event by the police or military.³¹ Nevertheless, in addition to the new testimonial songs, a number of *conjuntos* entered the Lima contests with songs explicitly addressing government policies, poverty, rampant inflation, and the lack of employment. The very first song in the *cancionero*, “Proletario” (Proletarian), the winner of the 1985 *concurso*, summarizes a number of these themes, bearing the class consciousness of “protest songs” from the early 1980s but replacing the triumphalism of revolutionary struggle with an air of resigned fatalism:

Sachallamanta llaki wichisqa	Sorrow has fallen from a tree
Mana pipapas uqariñan llaqi	A sorrow that no one can pick up
Chaynam pobrepas proletariopas	The same way, the poor proletariat
Mana pipapas yuyanallan runa	No one remembers them
Chaynam wakchapas obrerullapas	The same way, the poor and the workers
Llapallanpapas qunqanallan runa	Are forgotten by all
Qawarillayña wakllay lluqllata	Look up this little avenue
Llapa causayta chincaririchin	All of the lives are disappearing
Chaynallañataq llaqta runapas	And just like that, the people
Allillamanta chinkarillachkan	Are slowly disappearing
Chaynallañataq entero Peru	And just like that, all of Peru
Allillamanta chinkarillachkan	Little by little is disappearing
Año 2000 chayallasunchik	In the year 2000
Wakcha runaqa imaynaraq kanqa	How will poor people be doing?

Pobre runapaq wakcha runapaq	For the poor people
Sinchi llakillach chayaykamullachkan	only great suffering will arrive
Ay, que destino	Ay, what a destiny
Pobre kay kasyarqayllamantach	For being poor
Wañullachkasunchik	We are dying

While lodging a complaint against entrenched poverty and official neglect, “Proletario” positions Peru’s poor, the “proletariat” of the title, as powerless to confront that reality, articulating a subject position defined by victimhood that emerged as a central theme in the testimonial song repertoire of the following decade.

A handful of composers took a more confrontational approach, more clearly echoing the political critique of songs from the early 1980s, but without the explicit calls for armed revolution. The Mensajeros de Quilla (Quilla Messengers), for instance, competed with a song directly addressing the president, performed unusually in Spanish rather than Quechua:

Señor Belaúnde escucha nuestras voces	Mr. Belaúnde, hear our voices
Del Ande, de los pueblos olvidados	From the Andes, from the forgotten towns
Año 1984, costo de vida se empeora	In 1984, the cost of living is getting worse
El salario que ganamos ya no alcanza para nada	The salary we earn is not enough for anything
Despertemos hermanos campesinos	Awaken, brothers, peasants
para reclamar nuestros derechos	To reclaim our rights
que nos corresponde	That are our due
Ya es hora tomemos conciencia	It is time to wake up
para reclamar nuestros derechos	To reclaim our rights
que nos corresponde.	That are our due.

Without a recording, it is difficult to gauge what the public reaction to such a song might have been. In contrast to the Waswantu contests in 1980–1982, when the line “It is time to wake up” might have generated a cheer, most of the audience members at this contest were living a nightmare brought on by such rhetoric. Not surprisingly, references to Shining Path itself or its trademark slogans are entirely absent from the songbook, an erasure that would also mark *pumpin* compositions throughout the remainder of the internal war (a point I will return to later). Nonetheless, the command to “rise up” or “awaken” appears

repeatedly in other songs, a lingering echo of the genre's earlier radicalization and an indication of the continued sense of frustration and political powerlessness felt by many from the province.

The resurrection and reorientation of *pumpin* that occurred in Lima in 1984–1985, from voice of revolutionary protest to one of painful remembrance and renewed political commentary, established an enduring model for *pumpin* contests and songs that was adopted throughout the extended Fajardino community in the following years, as people circulated between Lima, Ayacucho, and the Fajardo province. *Pumpin* groups formed in the city of Ayacucho to compete in both small-scale contests organized by various district clubs as well as the larger Carnival competitions put on by the municipal government, where *pumpin conjuntos* developed a reputation for their especially biting and blunt political commentary and dedication to testimonial themes.³² After an absence of several years, contests also returned to the Fajardo province in the later 1980s, beginning in 1987 with a *concurso* in the provincial capital of Huancapi and soon spreading to other towns. Though remote sites like Waswantu remained off-limits due to the dangers posed by the ongoing conflict, by the early 1990s *pumpin concursos* were held annually in all of the central districts of Fajardo, and all evidence I have gathered indicates that testimonial songs were a regular feature in all of them.

The Poetics and Politics of Testimonial Songs, 1985–2000

After the radical and rapid shifts in the political discourse of *pumpin* songs in the late 1970s and early 1980s, changes in the genre evolved more slowly during the remainder of the conflict, drawing primarily on established models for protest and *testimonio* already evident in the Lima contests just discussed. Despite the regular eruption of violence in the Fajardo province—including nationally newsworthy events such as the army massacres in Umara/Bellavista (1985) and Cayara (1988), the disappearance of an entire slate of political candidates in Huancapi (1991), and dozens of smaller-scale but still lethal attacks by both the military and Sendero up through the mid-1990s³³—relatively few testimonial *pumpin* songs attempted to narrate or recount any of these events in detail. Rather, the testimonial repertoire was marked by the repetition and continued circulation of several broad themes that marked, and arguably helped consol-

idate, points of consensus within the extended Fajardino community: protest against entrenched poverty; the powerlessness of campesinos as victims of violence; reflections on the landscape as a “mute witness” to human suffering; and by the late 1990s, a growing concern with national and even international political affairs, as the experience of refugee flight and return repositioned Fajardinós’ sense of their place in the world.

To explore these themes, and the continued role of testimonial songs and *pumpin concursos* in mediating between individual and collective experiences and memories of the war, I return to the story of Roberto. After missing the first contest in Lima in 1984 while serving in the military, Roberto and several family members and friends re-formed the Fajardo Stars to compete in the 1985 Lima *concurso*. When I asked what he remembered of that event, he confirmed the importance of many of the themes evident in the *cancionero* discussed above: “Well, the songs . . . [expressed] our troubles and sadness, that we had left behind our fields and our homes, that we had abandoned our families, our parents, that we had lost our families and our loved ones. We sang for them in Lima. The content was always social content, as well as political content.” Taking inspiration from his father’s earlier works as well as the new testimonial discourse he encountered at the Lima contests, Roberto began writing his own songs, and he quickly took charge as musical director and principal songwriter of the Fajardo Stars. Encouraged by their successful participation in the contest in Lima, he continued rehearsing and writing for the group when he moved to Ayacucho in 1986 to begin studying agronomy at the Universidad Nacional de San Cristóbal de Huamanga, an arduous process that would take more than a decade due to frequent university closures and the precariousness of his own economic situation. Not coincidentally, this university was also a hub for testimonial *wayno* songwriting and performance during that period, exposing Roberto to a community of fellow students, faculty, and other activists using musical (and other) arts to reflect on the violence in the region.

It was in that environment that Roberto wrote what he refers to as his “first testimonial song,” entitled “Kayllay Miseriata Puchukachisunchik” (We’ve Had Enough of This Misery), which merits close examination here as an illustrative example of the *testimonio* genre as a whole. Performed at the 1987 *pumpin concurso* held in Huancapi, the first to take place in the Fajardo province since the

escalation of violence in 1983, “Kayllay Miseriata” was one of four songs Roberto wrote for the contest. In a revealing instance of how songwriters and performing groups tailor their presentations for their expected audiences, his other three entries were all songs that addressed agricultural themes and aspects of quotidian life in Fajardo, written (by his own admission) to appeal to the sponsor of the *concurso*, an NGO dedicated to agricultural and rural development. The strategy paid off; the Fajardo Stars won the contest, and Roberto’s song “Tarpuy Yapuy” (To Plant and Plow) was declared the winning song of the event. Nonetheless, moved by the testimonial songs he had heard in Lima and Ayacucho and hoping that a song with a more current and urgent message would appeal to many in the audience, Roberto had added “Kayllay Miseriata” to the Fajardo Stars’ set list. It begins with a familiar set of exhortations:

Hermanullaykuna rikcharillasunña	Wake up already my brothers!
Paisanullaykuna qatarillasunña	Wake up already my countrymen!
Quri qullqinchikpas manañam waypanñachu	Our money does not amount to enough
Arrozlla fideoslla rantillananchikpaq	To buy our rice and noodles
Quri qullqinchikpas manañam waypanñachu	Our money does not amount to enough
Chapla tantachalla kachuykunanchikpaq	For our biscuits and bread
Maytañach rimanchik qayakullanchikpas	Where can we send our message
Maytañach rimanchik qaparillanchikpas	Where do we shout our message
Señor Presidente wakcha runakunam	Mr. President, poor people
Waqay waqallachkan mikuymanta nispa	Are crying for food, they say
Señor Presidente wakcha warmakunam	Mr. President, poor children
Waqay waqallachkan yarqaymanta nispa	Are crying of hunger, they say
Wakcha warmakunam waqastin purichkan	Poor children are walking along in tears
Tayta mamallanta manaña rikuspa	Never to see their mothers and fathers again
Verde capa loro wañurqachillaptin	When the green-caped parrots kill them
Tayta mamallanta manaña rikuspa	Never to see their mothers and fathers again
Qanqra allqukuna sipirqapullaptin	When the dirty dogs kill them
Chayta qawaspanchik piensarillasunña	Seeing that, we begin to think
Llapan campesinos cuentataqukusun	All peasants, we begin to say

Kayllay miseriata puchukachisunchik	We've had enough of this misery
Sumaq llaqtanchikta respetachisunchik	Respect our beautiful town

Like most testimonial songs, “Kayllay Miseriata” recycles a number of key phrases and metaphors from prior songs. Verses 1 and 2 directly echo both Roberto’s father’s 1981 song “Llapa Preso” and the Quilla Messengers’ song quoted earlier, demanding that fellow “brothers” and “countrymen” “wake up” and making a direct appeal to the Peruvian president to address chronic poverty and hunger, especially among children and orphans. It is worth noting that these prior songs themselves were adaptations of even earlier ones, including in this case a long tradition of *waynos* addressed directly at the Peruvian president, and their invocation here thus referenced layers of accrued meanings and memories for Fajardino listeners.³⁴

On the one hand this practice of intertextuality simply reflects a long-standing and widespread tradition of borrowing, altering, and improvising with existing or well-known verses during Carnival, despite official *concurso* rules demanding “original content.” Roberto’s paraphrasing of earlier songs thus fit with traditional practices in this musical genre, while also providing him with a useful musical and textual model as he made his first attempts at songwriting. At the same time, the quick establishment in the mid-1980s of several new themes and metaphors in this set of stock phrases, what I will call a *testimonio lexicon*, also reflects Roberto’s and other songwriters’ search for a common language and vocabulary capable of expressing and reflecting on their experiences during the internal war. Successful entrants to this lexicon—phrases like the thinly disguised *verde capa loro*, “green-caped parrot,” referring to thieving or murderous Peruvian soldiers, or endless variations on *waqay* (to cry), *llakiy* (to be in pain, sorrow), *waqastin purichkan* (to walk along in tears), *yawar waqay* (to weep blood), and the already mentioned *yawar mayu* (river of blood)—offered a poetic shorthand for complex and powerful memories and emotions, allowing songwriters to access and express a wide range of experiences and feelings within the relative economy of each individual song text.

Given the emphasis placed on narrating personal experience in the rhetoric of the truth commission, as well as the broader discourse on *testimonio* in Latin America as a manner of “speaking truth to power,”³⁵ one of the most striking

aspects of this and other *pumpin* testimonial songs is their utter lack of first-person narrative. Almost without exception, the experience of political violence is cast in collective or generalized terms, offering few details or specifics on any individual experience or atrocity.³⁶ In “Kayllay Miseriata,” Roberto and his family’s own traumatic experience—the forced disappearance and presumed assassination of his father at the hands of the military and their subsequent economic hardship and dispersal as a family—is implied in the third verse about “poor children . . . who will never see their mothers and fathers again” because the “green parrots” and “dirty dogs” (a frequent insult in Quechua) have killed them, but that personal connection is never made explicit. In fact, in contrast to the “inclusive we” language marking all of the other verses, these lines adopt a distanced, third-person perspective.

There are several likely reasons for this narrative shift. One is simply pragmatic and contextual: making direct accusations against the military was a risky proposition, especially when performing in a town with a military base in the midst of the war. As Roberto pointed out to me in a later conversation, insulting soldiers in Quechua as “green parrots” and “dirty dogs” was a safer alternative, and one that could still carry a strong critique and message for the *concurso* audience, which consisted almost entirely of local *campesinos* and other residents. But other reasons for the shift to the third-person perspective in this verse may bear more directly on the nature of *testimonio* itself. From a psychological perspective, we could interpret the shift as evidence of a traumatic break: an inability to fully narrate personal traumatic experience, with the use of the third-person perspective thus constituting an act of deflection or externalization. Roberto’s reluctance to discuss the subject of his father’s disappearance, even today, hints at this “unspeakability” and the continued psychological effects of this event in his life. The public nature of this performance, however, and the pattern of other songwriters I interviewed who suffered personal losses and adopted a similar narrative strategy in their own songs suggest that the tactic of casting personal experiences of violence as shared, collective ones in *pumpin* songs was less an individualized psychological response to trauma than a culturally appropriate way of referencing, legitimating, and working through such an experience, rooted in the collective ethos of the community and the quasi-ritualized context of the *concurso*.³⁷ Rather than deflection or externalization,

the distanced and/or collective narratives about political violence in testimonial songs may be understood in local terms as a form of direct engagement, an act of positioning individual experience within a value system emphasizing solidarity and the shared experience of the community as a whole.

While “Kayllay Miseriata” approaches the topic of army violence and the practice of “disappearances” in an oblique manner, it elides other topics entirely. Like nearly every testimonial *pumpin* song I have encountered that was performed or recorded in contests held between 1985 and 2000, “Kayllay Miseriata” avoids mentioning Shining Path altogether. I asked Roberto about this silence:

[JR] There were songs protesting abuses by the military, the government, the *sinchis* [a division of the national police]. But were there songs protesting against Sendero?

[R] I don't think there were any songs against Sendero. Not because there weren't abuses committed by Sendero, but these were fewer. And I also think that groups couldn't compose songs against Sendero because it would have been a lot more problematic. Because in a real short time you'd be in your grave!

[JR] It's interesting that Sendero had more power [in that sense] than the state.

[R] That's how it was. The army and the police committed abuses, perhaps illegally, but it was a legal government. The army would come, they would take your livestock, what you had to eat, and they would say “You all always give food to Sendero, so what about us?” And they would take it. If we wanted to protest, we would have to pay the consequences, the repression, or take the hits that they freely gave out. Meanwhile, Sendero was hidden. If you sang out against them, they would come in the night in their ski masks, and you knew who it was: someone who was going to kill you. So, songs against Sendero did not exist.

While this fear of Senderista reprisals undoubtedly played a major role in limiting references to Sendero Luminoso in *pumpin* songs, especially those performed in the Fajardo province, there were also less obvious reasons for this erasure that go unmentioned here. First and foremost, the history of Sendero's involvement with *pumpin concursos* in the early 1980s made songwriters and

performers reluctant to remind listeners of the Senderista role in politicizing this song tradition. In the polarized, zero-sum politics of the violence in Peru, any reminder of the cheering crowds for revolutionary songs at *pumpin* contests just a few years before would have challenged the narrative of collective victimhood that most Fajardininos had embraced as the only viable subject position open to them with regard to the internal war. Any hint of prior support for the Sendero Luminoso—however conditional or partial, or removed in time—undercut that position, and risked labeling Fajardininos as “sympathizers” or “apologists” for terrorism, a dangerous label at any point and one that became a prosecutable offense under the Fujimori regime in the 1990s. In a related manner, mention of Sendero also risked raising or exposing internal rifts and divisions within Fajardino communities, where many former Sendero sympathizers continued to reside, having renounced their allegiance to the Maoist party and retreated to live in a state of quiet but uneasy coexistence with their neighbors.³⁸

Though “Kayllay Miseriata” is typical of many testimonial *pumpin* songs written in the Fajardo province in the late 1980s and 90s, not all songs were so explicit or pragmatic in their political engagements. Generalized references to sadness, nostalgia, and recourse to deeply held, and distinctly Andean, beliefs about the power of place also figured in many songs and tell us something about how violence, fear, and even the act of bearing witness were understood in cultural as well as political terms. Roberto’s song “Pampas Mayu” (Pampas River; 1993), for instance, evokes the sense of sorrow and the cries against social injustice marking much of the testimonial repertoire but directs its appeal to the natural world and its spiritual manifestations in the sun, moon, rivers, and local mountains. Roberto specifically calls on Apu Tinka, the principal mountain deity of the region, to acknowledge their plight: “Qatun sunqu apu Tinka, qanmi taytay yachachkanki, kay pachapi kausasqayta injusticia pasasqayta” (“Big-hearted Apu Tinka, Father, you know, that in this living world, injustice occurs”). As noted, such references to places and geographic features appear frequently in testimonial songs, at times in reference to the specific location of a violent incident or to identify the performer as from a particular location but also, as here, as a way of anchoring the experience of violence within an intimately known and living landscape. As Roberto explains, references to local mountains and other geographic features in his songs draw on both of these rationales:

The mountains that we know as Tinka, Wamaqo, and others, are witnesses to our suffering, to what has happened to the population. There in Fajardo many people did not sleep in their houses, they had to take refuge in the mountains because it was easy for the army or for Sendero to find you in your house and commit abuses. So they had to live on the slopes of the mountains, under a tree, covering themselves up. So the mountains are mute witnesses to the suffering of all of the pueblos. About Mount Rosacha in Huancapi, [for instance,] many songs say *qanmi yachachkanki llaqtapa vidanta* [you know the life of the pueblo], something like that.

As the anthropologist Keith Basso notes in his work on Apache narrative, place-names have the capacity “to summon forth an enormous range of mental and emotional associations—associations of time and space, of history and events, of persons and social activities, of oneself and stages in one’s life,” further observing that “poets and songwriters have long understood that economy of expression may enhance the quality and force of aesthetic discourse, and that place names stand ready to be exploited for this purpose.”³⁹ The rich associative qualities of place names that Basso recognizes here made them especially powerful for testimonial songs, allowing songwriters, performers, and audience members to access and reflect on their own memories and narratives about such places, simultaneously constructing a shared narrative or “collective memory” of the local geography of violence while appealing to the spiritual power of such places to bear witness to their collective suffering.

The most referenced geographic place in the *pumpin* testimonial repertoire is the Waswantu plateau, a site that in the midst of the war bore a complicated set of associations and memories, functioning as a sort of metonym for the entire history of *pumpin* and the consequences of political violence. In 1995, thirteen years after the last contest there had ended in a hail of police bullets, that narrative began a new chapter when the Waswantu *concurso* was reestablished and immediately resumed its role as the annual championship contest for the *pumpin* genre. Reflecting more than a decade of fraught experience, the contest rules, circulated among area districts in a small pamphlet prior to the contest, stipulated that the judges “would not accept protest songs with a political or partisan tint” but encouraged participants to perform “songs based on new inspirations

with messages related to agricultural work, the needs of the people, demands for public works, amorous sentiments, etc.”—a delicately worded distinction that needed no further explanation for area residents and songwriters.⁴⁰

Roberto and the Fajardo Stars, now well-known performers and frequent winners of other *pumpin* contests in the province, competed with the song “Festival,” reflecting the complex of emotions they and many others felt about this moment of return:

Hermanullay paisanullay llaqtanchikman chayaykamuni	Brothers, fellow countrymen we are arriving to our <i>pueblo</i>
Kuyasqallay wayllusqallay qanllapaqmi abrasullayku	Beloved friends and neighbors with an affectionate greeting for all of you
Takiykusun tusuykusun llaki vidata qunqarillaspa	Let us sing, let us dance in order to forget our sad lives
Takiykusun tusuykusun llaki vidata qunqarillaspa	Let us sing, let us dance in order to forget our sad lives
Llaqtanchikpa takiyninchik hermanullay paisanullay	In our town, in our song, brothers and fellow countrymen
Sapa wata puquy tiempo qatun qatun festivalninchik	Every year during planting season we have our big festival
Takiykuspa tusuykuspa llaqtanchikta kusirichisun	Singing and dancing we make our town happy
Takiykuspa tusuykuspa llaqtanchikta kusirichisun	Singing and dancing we make our town happy
Llaqtanchikpa takiyninchik hermanullay paisanullay	In our town, in our song brothers and countrymen
Sapa wata puquy tiempo qatun qatun festivalninchik	Every year during planting season we have our big festival
Quillaqasa patachapi Huancapillay llaqtallapi	On the Quillaqasa plain in the town of Huancapi
Waswantullay patachapi pumpin taki pumpin tusuy	On the Waswantu plateau we sing and dance <i>pumpin</i>

The contradictory rhetorical positioning here—of singing and dancing *pumpin* in order to “forget our sad lives,” even as many songs at the contest, and others by the same composer, commanded audiences to “remember” and confront the violence and poverty of Fajardino lives—sheds light on a key aspect of the testimonial song phenomenon in Fajardo. As Gila Flam notes in her study of the music

of the Lodz ghetto during World War II, the juxtaposition of entertainment and social commentary is a potent one for communities who have been “purposefully restrained from pursuing a traditionally meaningful life”; music, and particularly songs, she notes, “comment and testify on the ongoing events and at the same time provide an aesthetic experience or diversion from reality.”⁴¹ While many forms of testimonial arts bear this aesthetic dimension, *testimonio* songs and their powerful emotional messages were also, crucially, songs performed at Carnival events, which people attended to socialize, to be entertained, to sing and dance, and to be reminded of the beauty of their own cultural traditions and sense of identity as Fajardinós. Far from contradicting each other, the aesthetic pleasures of *pumpin* music and the testimonial messages of many songs formed a complement to one another, a mutually reinforcing narrative—especially in the context of the revived *concurso* on Waswantu—of cultural survival in the wake of the violence.

Though never articulating his own personal experience of the war and its consequences, Roberto’s successful participation in the *pumpin* song contests year after year ensured that elements of his story and that of his family became part of the collective narrative that Fajardinós told, and have continued to tell, themselves about the years of violence. By the late 1990s, as peace was re-established in the region, Roberto’s songs also reflected the advent of new, post-violence concerns and discussions in the province, including topics of national and international political importance, such as the Fujimori administration’s move to privatize state industries (“Wakcha Vida,” 1996), the hostage crisis in the Japanese Embassy in Lima (“Embajada Japonés,” 1997), and even the U.S. bombing of Iraq (“Guerra contra Irak,” 1998). By 2002, when I recorded them singing “Fosas Clandestinas,” the Fajardo Stars had either won or come in second place at the Waswantu contest annually for five years and had just recorded their first commercial cassette in Lima. Not coincidentally, every one of those years included at least one, and sometimes multiple, songs protesting government misdeeds, praising teachers for their sacrifices, or reflecting on the difficulties and suffering of living through the years of violence, all “truths” that not only drew on a discourse jointly developed by dozens of songwriters and *pumpin* groups at these *concursos* over many years but also were intimately linked with the story of this one individual and his family.

Conclusion

To conclude, I return to the questions of what sort of “truths” are narrated in testimonial songs like “Fosas Clandestinas” and what could account for the rise and apparent power of this genre for processes of remembrance within the Fajardino community. The very particular story of *pumpin*’s radicalization by Shining Path, resurrection and transformation within the *desplazado* community, and ultimate return to its place of origin is, as far as I know, a singular one in the panorama of Peruvian music about the internal war, and that fact has everything to do with the importance that it eventually took on as a site of memory. Indeed, as evidenced by the history sketched here, *pumpin* music played a crucial role in how the violence itself was experienced and processed among Fajardininos—from their disputes over Marxist ideology at the advent of the conflict to their search for common narratives as victims of the violence in later years. Memories of the performance of testimonial songs at contests in diverse locales, including Lima, Ayacucho, and at home in the Fajardo province, are consequently inseparable today from broader Fajardino memories of the internal war.

Testimonial songs also provided a key vehicle for songwriters, performers, and their audiences to mediate between individual and collective experiences and memories of the conflict. Unlike virtually all other forms of testimonial art in Peru, the principal audience for testimonial *pumpin* songs consisted of fellow people from the Fajardo province, and individual experiences, as demonstrated in the songs written by Roberto, were often cast in terms of that collectivity, legitimating personal experiences for those singing about them while also forging a common narrative about Fajardino victimhood. That narrative was marked as much by what it excluded—in particular Sendero’s history in the region and its role in the development of *pumpin* music—as by what it included: laments over death, loss, and longing, expressed and framed by cultural references to a testimonial lexicon of poetic phrases and place names in a geography of violence. Testimonial songs did not, then, present a “collective memory” of the violence so much as open a social space for individuals and groups to contribute their versions of a collective past and present in the search for solidarity and consensus.

Returning to the question of “truth-telling” in *pumpin* music, the songs ex-

amined here remind us that there may be more than one kind of “truth” to be told in the aftermath of violence. As Richard Wilson notes in his work on the South African Truth Commission, “truth paradigms” can at minimum be separated into two distinct categories, what he calls “forensic truth,” consisting of facts and evidence, and “narrative truth,” which emphasizes the personal and/or social, subjective, experiential nature of truth-telling. Postconflict societies, he argues, need both.⁴² Obviously, testimonial songs’ contributions to the “forensic truth” about Peru’s years of violence are minimal; very few testimonial songs offer specific details about events during the war, and, as noted, many important details are intentionally omitted or ignored in sung testimonial discourse. Nonetheless, the convergence of certain themes in testimonial songs year after year—the overwhelming sense of sadness and loss as a response to the violence, a deeply felt anger and even cynicism over poverty and government neglect, and the embrace of a “victim” identity for the region in the hope of securing citizen rights as sympathetic subjects—give voice to a very powerful, particular, and underacknowledged “narrative truth” of how this conflict was understood and experienced by one group of people, from the very heart of the region where it all began.

Epilogue

In November 2006, Roberto was elected a *regidor provincial* (provincial council member) of Fajardo province, in part due to the reputation he had developed through his success in the song contests. For the first time since 1983, he returned to live in Fajardo full-time with his growing family and assume his duties as a member of the provincial government. At the same time, his performing group, the Fajardo Stars, were forced by *concurso* organizers (under pressure from other *conjuntos*) to retire from active competition and “give others a chance.” They were invited instead to continue presenting songs as a noncompeting group to entertain the crowd in between rounds of the *concurso*. Unable to convince his sisters to make the long trip out to the province to join him for such a presentation, Roberto was left without a group to perform with for the first time in twenty years. I found him in a small storefront off the plaza in Huancapi on the day of the event, drunk and crying. Despite the many difficulties he had endured,

this was the only time I saw him drink to excess, and the only time I ever saw him cry. When I asked him what was upsetting him, in between demands that I join him in drowning his sorrows, he choked out that he had no one with whom to sing his songs.

Notes

I would like to thank, first and foremost, the singers and songwriters of Colca, Huancapi, Cayara, and Huancaraylla for sharing their extraordinary music and life stories with me. Thanks also to Cynthia Milton, Ponciano del Pino, Renzo Aroni Sulca, Raúl Romero, Caroline Yezer, and Martin Daughtry for feedback on prior versions of this essay, and to Fulbright IIE and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for funding my initial fieldwork in the Fajardo Province in 2000–2002.

1. The names of all performing groups and individuals discussed in this essay are pseudonyms.

2. For brevity, lyric repetitions have been omitted. In performance, the first line of each verse was repeated, and the second and third lines repeated as a unit (AABCBC). All translations from Quechua to English are by the author.

3. The mandate to “recover the voice of the victims” (“recoger la voz de las víctimas”) is made explicit in the final report of the CVR, which also identifies a majority of the war’s victims as indigenous people living in rural areas. See CVR, *Informe final*, www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/, accessed June 24, 2013.

4. Ayacucho was one of the only Peruvian departments to register negative population growth in the period between 1981–1993, due primarily to forced migration as a result of political violence. The province of Fajardo suffered one of the most precipitous declines, losing 16 percent of its population during that period, a figure that likely underestimates the extent of outmigration at the height of the violence in the mid-1980s. See Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD), *La Provincia de Víctor Fajardo en Ayacucho*, 17–18.

5. Nora, “Between Memory and History.” Though I find Nora’s phrase useful for describing the intentional, ritualized nature of acts of remembrance like those discussed here, the relatively self-contained community in which these song contests take place also poses a challenge to Nora’s insistence on separating the *lieux* (sites) from the *milieux* (real environments) of memory, the latter of which he argues are lost in the transition to urban life and encroaching modernity.

6. Morris, “The Sound of Memory.” Morris’s work usefully critiques the overemphasis on the visual, or scopocentric, nature of most work on memory, pointing to the difficult but powerful and emotional role of sound in processes of remembrance.

7. Abu-Lughod, “Writing against Culture.”

8. In addition to other essays in this volume, see Milton, “At the Edge of the Peruvian Truth Commission”; Milton, “Images of Truth.” Multiple authors have discussed Ayacuchan *artesanía* (folk art) as a vehicle for protest and memory, including Isbell, “Violence in Peru”; Lemlij and Millones, *Las tablas de Sarhua*; González, *Unveiling the Secrets of War in the Peruvian Andes*; and Jimenez’s powerful work as an artist, *retablo* maker, and author, particularly in *Chungui* (see also Jiménez’s chapter here). For a countervailing view of the resistance to memory, see Yezer’s work on rumor, “Who Wants to Know?”

9. Important exceptions to this characterization include Abilio Vergara’s recent biography of the testimonial songwriter Carlos Falconí, *La tierra que duele de Carlos Falconí*, and Vergara’s earlier studies cowritten with the ethnomusicologist Chalena Vásquez, including a biography of another testimonial songwriter, Ranulfo Fuentes, *Ranulfo, El Hombre*; and their joint book on Ayacuchan carnival, *¡Chayraq! Carnaval ayacuchano*. Billie Jean Isbell also discusses rural forms of testimonial music in Ayacucho during the war in her article “Violence in Peru.”

10. Recent contributions to this literature include O’Connell and Castelo-Branco, *Music and Conflict*; Johnson and Cloonan, *Dark Side of the Tune*; and Ritter and Daughtry, *Music in the Post-9/11 World*.

11. Emphasis in the original, translation by author. Montoya, Montoya, and Montoya, *Urqkunapa Yawarnin*, 77.

12. *Pumpin* music, according to oral tradition in the Fajardo province, has its origins in seasonal labor migration to the Pacific Coast beginning in the late nineteenth century. Young men returned from such work bearing guitars and influences from what they call *música quebradeña*, music from the deep valleys leading south out of the Andes to the coastal plains of Ica. Adapting the instrument to fit local musical aesthetics, Fajardino guitarists switched to metal strings, doubled the number of courses, and began playing in a much higher register to accompany female singers during agricultural work. Contemporary *pumpin* music—staged in casual contexts during Carnival or in more formal contests—is usually performed by a small ensemble consisting of three or more male guitarists and an equal or greater number of female singers.

13. Information attributed to Roberto throughout this article pertains to informal conversations that took place during the author’s principal period of fieldwork from 2000–2002, as well as later communications in person and over the phone in the many years since. Direct quotes are drawn from a long recorded interview that took place in Roberto’s home in Ayacucho on February 18, 2002.

14. Ritter, “Siren Songs.”

15. For a history and analysis of early twentieth-century *indigenista* folklore and its continued influence on performance today, see Mendoza, *Creating Our Own*. President Leguía’s efforts in the 1920s to promote Andean music as a part of nationalist folklore are analyzed in Turino, “The State and Andean Musical Production in Peru.”

16. See Vergara and Vásquez, *¡Chayraq! Carnaval Ayacuchano*. A surviving cassette recording of the first Waswantu *concurso* in 1976, before the changes discussed here had come into effect, also confirms this characterization.

17. The *wayno* is the most popular and widespread genre of Andean music and dance, found throughout much of Peru and Bolivia, though marked by significant regional variations in instrumentation and style. The history of political commentary in Ayacuchan *waynos*, dating back to the nineteenth century, has most recently been surveyed by Vergara in *La Tierra que duele de Carlos Falconí*, 145–169.

18. Given the poor audio quality of this cassette recording, not all verses of the song are intelligible. This transcription corresponds to verses 4–6 of the recorded song.

19. See, for example, descriptions of Senderista prison performances in Gorriti, *The Shining Path*.

20. See Portocarrero and Oliart, *El Perú desde la escuela*.

21. The denial of prior involvement with “communism” or Sendero is, of course, nearly universal in Fajardo today, given the potentially lethal consequences of admitting to any kind of support for Shining Path in Peru’s polarized political climate during the war. This was especially true during the 1990s and early 2000s, when the Fujimori administration’s draconian antiterrorism laws were implemented to lock up thousands of innocent people for supposed Senderista sympathies. In this case, I have encountered little reason to suspect that Roberto’s father was a Sendero militant or sympathizer; he was never identified as such in my many conversations and interviews with others in the province, and as I argue here, his song texts in and of themselves position him as part of the broader Peruvian left rather than the narrow, sectarian Maoism of Sendero Luminoso.

22. Throwing talc powder is a common prank during Carnival.

23. The prisoners are described as “mana ima quchanmanta, mana ima faltanmanta,” “blameless and sinless,” the very phrase Roberto would use in “Fosas Clandestinas” twenty years later.

24. Information on the songwriter who fled the province is from an interview with the author, February 13, 2001.

25. See, for instance, Conquergood, “Health Theater in a Hmong Refugee Camp,” as well as Adelaida Reyes’s recent work on music among Ugandan refugees, “Asymmetrical Relations,” and her earlier study on music among Vietnamese refugees, *Songs of the Caged*.

26. Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, 5.

27. See Turino, *Moving Away from Silence*.

28. Land invasions were one of the primary methods used by migrants to the city of Lima in the latter twentieth century to obtain property and build new neighborhoods. Targeting parcels of unused—but often privately owned—land on the outskirts of the

city, organized groups of settlers typically moved in under cover of darkness, and marked out lots, streets, and erected rudimentary shelters overnight. Despite legal challenges and threats and acts of violence by prior owners, many invasions endured to become thriving communities.

29. The phrase *yawar waqay*, to “weep blood,” appears frequently in testimonial songs. Though used colloquially as an emotional intensifier, such as “to sob” or “weep uncontrollably,” the reference to “blood” in songs about the political violence also took on a more literal character during the war.

30. Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, 43–45.

31. A prudent move, as it turned out. The main organizer of the Lima contest in 1984 and 1985 was detained and questioned by the police about his role in the *concurso*, and he credits his eventual release in part to the printed contest rule forbidding “protest songs.” Interview with author, April 8, 2000.

32. See, for example, the brief chapter on *pumpin* music in Vergara and Vásquez, *¡Chayraq! Carnaval ayacuchano*, 369–379.

33. For a detailed account of violence in the Fajardo province throughout the internal war, see CVR, *Informe Final*, vol. 4, chap. 1.1, www.cverdad.org.pe, accessed June 24, 2013.

34. Listen, for example, to the recording of Fortunato Galindo’s “Queja Andina” (Andean Complaint) by the Ayacuchan *wayno* singer Edwin Montoya, the lead track to his 1966 debut LP *Queja Andina*.

35. For a useful overview of *testimonio* as a literary genre and the debates it has generated, including the tensions between individual narratives and collective experiences, as well as the notion of “speaking truth to power,” see Gugelberger, *The Real Thing*.

36. Even a set of songs I recorded in 2001 in Cayara, for example, performed by a group of survivors of the 1988 massacre that took place in that town, contained numerous references to that event but offered no actual narrative of the acts that occurred on that day.

37. The cultural and collective aspects of traumatic experience and recovery in rural Ayacucho are analyzed in compelling fashion by Theidon in *Entre prójimos*.

38. Such processes of reconciliation are discussed extensively in Theidon, *Entre prójimos*.

39. Keith Basso quoted in Feld, “Wept Thoughts: The Voicing of Kaluli Memories,” 102–103.

40. Quotes taken from the pamphlet “8° Concurso de Pum-Pin de Washuanto, 1995: Bases Generales,” published by the Concejo Distrital de Colca. Document in possession of the author.

41. Flam, *Singing for Survival*, 5.

42. Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*.

