

THE STIGMA OF MEMORY IN TUMBAYA-JUJUY

Ludmila da Silva Catela

Ludmila da Silva Catela works at the Argentine National Research Council (CONICET) and the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba. She also directs the Memorial Archive of the Province of Córdoba. Address for correspondence: Archivo Provincial de la Memoria, Pasaje Santa Catalina 66, Córdoba, Argentina. catela@yahoo.es. This research project was supported, in part, by a grant from the Agencia de Ciencia y Tecnología de la Nación, in conjunction with PAV-065, a university-network project.

The church where Lavalle was skinned.¹ A small town surrounded by mountains. A picturesque cemetery watching over the town from on high, as was the “custom in olden times.”² A small municipal office next to the only public telephone in town, and the center of public life, the square. In the middle is a flagpole that flies a large Argentine flag on special occasions and patriotic holidays. At the base of the flagpole is a plaque with the words “God, Country, Home. Tumbaya 1979,” an unmistakable sign of the military presence during the 1970s. It might be added that the only plaques in town, in square and church, were placed there by the Argentine Army in 1979.

Tumbaya,³ a small town located at the gateway to the Quebrada de Humahuaca valley in the northern part of Argentina, is home to a number of families of indigenous ancestry. This identity surfaces in times of crisis, especially regarding land claims, or during assemblies, the primary means for settling intra-community disputes. Yet it is unusual for anyone to acknowledge indigenous blood in the course of everyday life or when introducing themselves on public occasions. For all intents and purposes, this identity is denied. A small number of surnames are shared by a large number of families: everyone is kin and *compadre* to everyone else. Family and political networks (and their factions) regulate social relations in Tumbaya.

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- 1 One of the attractions in Tumbaya is an old church built in 1796. At the door of this church visitors are told that in 1840 the Unitarian troops transporting the body of the independence fighter General Juan Lavalle made a stop in this chapel. It was there that the decomposing body was supposedly stripped of its skin. Old tales of violence and death.
 - 2 Referring to “olden times” is the way the indigenous past of the community of Tumbaya is enunciated.
 - 3 Tumbaya is located at the entrance to the Quebrada de Humahuaca, 45 km from the provincial capital of Jujuy. It is on national highway no. 9 and borders the provincial departments of Capital, Tilcara, and Susques.

"Almost all of us live off the land," a local person told me. However, in recent years *planes trabajar* or work plans⁴ have become one of the main sources of income for a large part of the population. Inhabitants say that "there isn't any work," "there's nothing to do in Tumbaya," this is "a town that doesn't progress," adding that "it gets worse and worse." Unlike the rest of the Quebrada de Humahuaca, the town does not attract tourists, a lack the local population longs to remedy, viewing tourism as a possible "lifesaver" from the harsh socio-economic conditions governing their lives.⁵ The one and only time of the year when Tumbaya overflows with tourists is February 2, the celebration day of the *Virgen de la Candelaria*. The rest of the year the Gateway to the Quebrada, as Tumbaya is called, dreams of tourism, while actual tourists are few and far between. Nonetheless, amid heat, wind, and dust, artisans patiently await them in stalls set up in the center of the public square.⁶

Time seems to pass more slowly in Tumbaya than elsewhere, and nothing much ever happens. There is a slight bustle of activity in the morning as, little by little, people circulate between the municipal office and the general stores offering staples like bread, fruit, and vegetables. Meat is sold in the only butcher shop in town; many people keep animals on their plots of land to raise their own meat. To obtain the Jujuy provincial newspaper, you must travel ten kilometers to Volcán. "Newspapers don't arrive in Tumbaya," a storekeeper told me when I tried to buy one, "Nobody reads." The town is totally deserted at siesta time. In the afternoon children and young people liven up the square on their way to and from catechism class at the church. By late afternoon the streets are deserted once again. At night some young people, mostly male, go to the *Hospedaje de Tumbaya* to watch television on one of the few sets in town. Actually, they usually end up seeing a movie selected by the manager, since TV signals can seldom be captured. Apart from these youngsters, the only people frequenting the dark streets are a few "tipsy" men who can be seen weaving back and forth with wine boxes in their hands.⁷

4 *Planes trabajar* is the name of the subsidies granted to the unemployed by the state as unemployment insurance. Since 2001 these plans have served as a mitigating factor for protest by providing a large number of Argentine families with paltry sums of money.

5 The Quebrada de Humahuaca valley was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 2003; since then, tourism from abroad has increased significantly, but not in Tumbaya, which is not considered part of the tourist circuits.

6 One afternoon I began a conversation with an artisan in one of the stalls in the square. Among other things, I asked about sales. "Better than last year," was her answer, "but not much is sold." Still, she told me: "we sell to the municipality." "How so?" I asked. "If the municipality pays us a head-of-household subsidy, then in exchange we make handicrafts, we give them to the municipality, and then we work in the stalls." "I don't understand, you make the handicrafts, you sell them, and the money is for the municipality?" "Yes," she responded. And she added, "that's why I don't make handicrafts anymore, I work my hours in the stall, but I got tired, I don't want to make handicrafts for others."

7 To be drunk, or rather "tipsy," is not looked down on. Yet in the narratives of relatives of the disappeared, especially women's narratives, the relationship between disappearance, Communist Party affiliation, and drunkenness was remarked upon. Likewise, drink and domestic violence are a recurrent theme in the narratives. This problem may be addressed at a later

The current population of Tumbaya is 526.⁸ In the 1970s it was around 100–150. Between August and December 1976, the small town was hit by military operations that resulted in the illegal detention and disappearances of local people for political reasons. These were not isolated cases. The armed forces were doing the same thing throughout the province, their targets being primarily Communist Party militants. As a corollary to these coordinated operations, Vicente Consentini, the main Communist Party liaison in Jujuy, was kidnapped and disappeared on December 15, 1976. In Tumbaya twenty people, mainly peasant farmers, were kidnapped, six of whom disappeared. They all belonged to the Communist Party. Although more than thirty years have passed since these events took place, the experience of Tumbaya has been preserved within the walls. Oral tradition has safeguarded it from oblivion, and stories circulate in domestic settings, despite the fear, silences, and stigmas weighing upon family members of the disappeared.

The objective of this article is to depict the early stages of the complex relationship between memories of repression and the stigmas generated by the accusatory categories associated with past practices and the disappearance of persons. The topic of analysis is not the notion of disappearance per se, nor the problems arising in its wake; rather, it is the ways in which the friends, relatives, and townspeople who experienced hardship and repression during the last military dictatorship in Argentina (1976–83) have reconstructed their world.⁹ To this end, we have observed the practices and listened to the narratives of relatives of the illegally detained and disappeared, together with those of other local residents. Special attention has been paid to the role played by a “memory broker” (Jelin 2002) in order to shed light on the relationship between visibility and stigma, as well as on the social bonds linking the memory broker to the community. This study is based on material gathered in the course of observations, informal conversations, and interviews carried out in Tumbaya between July 2003 and July 2004.¹⁰

date; for now I will simply pose the problem. For an analysis of “Andean” drunken sprees, see, among others, Saignes (1993) and Álvarez (2001).

- 8 The administrative district of Tumbaya has a population of 1,694, which includes 290 children, 1,081 adults, and 168 elderly people. Of these, 40% live in rural areas.
- 9 Studies on the disappearance of persons in the Southern Cone are extremely varied, constituting what is, without a doubt, one of the most fertile and thought-provoking fields of research in Latin American social sciences today. As the present article is confined to a singular space and specific problem, I will neither assess nor map out the discussions, analyses, and innovations in this field. However, I would like to refer readers to the collection entitled *Memorias de la Represión*, edited by Elizabeth Jelin and published by Siglo XXI; in its 12 volumes diverse problems are subjected to detailed analysis from a number of perspectives by social scientists from different countries. As a whole, the collection, which analyzes the dictatorships in Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, and Peru, probes dictatorial processes in the Southern Cone.
- 10 Although I employ only observations from these two years in this paper, my fieldwork in Tumbaya is ongoing; I returned in 2006–7 and maintain contact with the town’s residents to this day (2009). Some changes have been observed in recent years, especially with regard to the increase in the number of people arriving from Buenos Aires with the intention of imposing

DISAPPEARANCE, POLITICAL VIOLENCE, AND DICTATORSHIP IN ARGENTINA

From 1974 to 1983, the period comprising the last military dictatorship in Argentina, security forces (the armed forces, police, and gendarmerie) kidnapped, tortured, assassinated, and disappeared thousands of Argentine citizens of diverse social origin, age, and place of residence. Men as well as women were declared “enemies” and assassinated or disappeared in the name of the nation, Christian values, and anticommunism. Pregnant women were held in captivity until they gave birth, then assassinated and the newborn taken into state custody.¹¹ Thousands of citizens went into exile inside Argentina and abroad. The court system, ministries, and prisons almost without exception colluded with the clandestine activity carried out by the state. Each province, town, and locality experienced the different forms and meanings of this repressive period. The 1970s are remembered as the era of greatest political violence, and the last military dictatorship (1976–83) as the bloodiest, in recent Argentine history.

The systematic violation of human rights, the use of torture on a massive scale, the creation of concentration camps and clandestine detention and extermination centers, the mechanism of disappearing the bodies of persons assassinated and “appropriating” newborns were egregious acts of political repression never before experienced in Argentina. Confronted with this extreme situation, groups of family members gradually joined together to report disappearances and demand the return of children, spouses, friends, and relatives. Based essentially on the symbolism of “blood ties” and metaphors of primary bonds, organizations such as *Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas* (1976), *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (1977), and *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (1977)¹² came into being. Little by little these organizations gained visibility and legitimacy, inaugurating unprecedented forms of political action. Based primarily on strategies for drawing international attention to disappearances, the practice of enacting weekly protest rounds in a public space, begun in 1977, has continued to this very day; the creation of powerful symbols like

models of “how to remember” (marking certain places with plaques and making new lists of the disappeared). Yet the ways in which local memories are produced and the forms they take remain unchanged. Above and beyond the temporary impact of a policy of memory preservation adopted by the state in 2006, in this particular case local memory production is grounded in an “Andean” oral tradition that has persisted, with its own structural framework, through historical change. Finally, my interest in working exclusively with these interviews and not those conducted at a later date has a methodological justification: this was the moment when these people “broke their silence” and made their stories public.

- 11 The “appropriated children” constitute one of the most sensitive and extreme issues of life under the military dictatorship. Approximately 500 babies were born in captivity in the 360 clandestine detention centers located in different parts of the country. Once born, the babies were illegally “adopted” by military or police personnel and their friends. As of 2009, ninety young people have been “recovered” by their biological families, thanks to the tireless efforts of the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*.
- 12 Relatives of Detained-Disappeared for Political Reasons, Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, and Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.

the headscarves worn by the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* and the display of outsized and group photographs of the disappeared have also been important tools for public protest.¹³

It should be mentioned that the above strategies for protesting disappearances and combating impunity¹⁴ were replicated in cities and towns throughout Argentina. Yet when the analytical focus shifts from urban centers to the periphery, the means by which human rights violations are protested and memories constructed and made public take on distinctive shapes, with different repercussions and nuances. As will be shown below, the experience of dictatorship, the narrating of the past, and the construction of memory are neither homogeneous nor lacking in tension and conflict. Indeed, this is one of the main points of the present article.

(IN)VISIBILITY AND MEMORY

When I finished my work on the relatives of disappeared in La Plata (da Silva Catela 2002), the questions left open, which triggered my subsequent research on the *Apagón de Ledesma*,¹⁵ revolved around two basic issues. The first was on the order of silences: Why was so little said about the disappearance of workers? Who remembered them? The second had to do with territorial representations and meanings: What differences, similarities and conflicts existed between dominant national memories and local, peripheral ones? My fieldwork on Calilegua was oriented around seeking answers to these questions, and for comparative purposes, I became interested in Tumbaya. How to explain the marked visibility in northwestern Argentina of the *Apagón de Ledesma* alongside the equally marked silence on the disappeared in Tumbaya when, in numerical and territorial terms, the cases appeared analogous?

While reading Andrés Fidalgo's book on the repression in Jujuy, I was struck by the number of disappearances in a place I had never heard of called Tumbaya. And

13 For an analysis of the use of primary bonds as political strategy and the strategic ways in which human rights organizations developed, the following can be consulted: Leis 1989; Jelin 2004; Filc 1997, and da Silva Catela 2002.

14 In Argentina there have been different cycles in judicial efforts to punish the guilty. In 1983 the *Comisión Nacional sobre Desaparición de Personas* was created to investigate acts of state terrorism during the military dictatorship. In 1985 the military juntas were tried, but only the highest-ranking officers were found guilty. Slightly less than a year later, two laws pardoning these high officials were enacted: the *Ley de Punto Final* (1986) and the *Ley de Obediencia Debida* (1987). And finally, all repressors were absolved in the generalized pardons issued in 1989 and 1990. With the way to trying and condemning the guilty barred, the legal concept of *Juicio por la Verdad* or Truth Trial was created, the main objective being to ascertain the fate of the disappeared and those responsible for the disappearance without a declaration of guilt. Then, on June 14, 2005, the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation declared null and void the *Ley de Punto Final* and that of *Obediencia Debida*. This made it possible once again to try repressors accused of assassinations and disappearances, and a new cycle of trials was begun.

15 I analyzed the *Apagón de Ledesma* or Night of the Blackout in Ledesma in da Silva Catela 2003.

I sked myself why there were so many disappearances concentrated in this particular small town and no information on what had happened or testimonials on the identity of the disappeared.

In responding to the above questions, I was able to confirm that the violent episodes with the greatest public resonance are those that have been the subject of a book or have otherwise appeared either in print (in reports such as *Nunca Más*, testimonials, and investigative accounts by journalists or historians) or in other media in the form of oral history projects, videos, movies, etc. The second factor appears to be the existence of someone or some group that makes a cause of preserving the memory of a particular event, investing time and all the political, cultural, and symbolic capital at their command to “publicize” it (the survivors of Vesuvio, for example, or the organizers of the annual *Marcha del Apagón*, among others). One type of process does not necessarily rule out the other. Practices like these are what makes visible certain memories, while others, outside their scope, remain invisible and silent, awaiting an opportunity to become public that may never come.

The objective of what follows is to provide a preliminary account of my reflections on the complex relationship between memories of repression and the stigmas generated by accusatory categories on past practices and the disappearance of persons. To this end I observed the practices and examined the narratives of relatives and neighbors of the disappeared and the illegally detained. My analysis of the visibility-stigma relationship in these memories will be centered on the role played by a “memory broker” (Jelin 2002). This study is based on the material gathered in the course of observation, conversations, and interviews in Tumbaya from July 2003 to July 2004.

TUMBAYA, THE PRETTY ONE... TUMBAYA, THE COMMUNIST

One cold, windy, desolate day we arrived at the public square in Tumbaya, where there were two small handicraft stalls. We asked the young man behind one counter whether he knew anything about people who had disappeared during the “military government,” whether he knew relatives of any of the disappeared who might talk to us. This was how we first learned of the local “historian,” who also had disappeared family members. “Talk to Don Federico. He knows everything and will tell you all the details,” we were told. “He lives over there on the corner and has two disappeared brothers.” With little urging on our part, the young man continued enumerating the names of people who had been illegally detained and relatives of disappeared ones, indicating where they lived, what they did, and how to locate them. And finally he added: “You can talk to my mother-in-law, she can tell you something because her brother also disappeared. Come down to church this evening, I’ll let her know and you can talk to her.” Before fieldwork began we had feared we would be met by silence; our fears were immediately dispelled, and the residents’ willingness to talk showed that silence could not be an explanation for the low public visibility of memories of the dictatorship and the disappeared.

As the days went by during the second trip,¹⁶ conversations became increasingly intense. The apparent tranquility gave way little by little, revealing underlying social tensions and layers of violence. Inquiries into violence in the 1970s and the disappeared led women to raise the subject of domestic violence and locals in general to mention recent deaths resulting from political infighting. Our perception of this tranquil small town gradually took on new contours. Memories of the 1970s opened the way for talking about other kinds of violence. And as our circle of acquaintances grew to include people not directly related to those illegally detained and disappeared in 1976, we became aware of the recurrence of stories about the stigma on Tumbaya when “communists were there.”

Tumbaya was “intervened” in 1976.¹⁷ Carlos Jeczmienski, from the neighboring province of Salta, was put in charge of the community.¹⁸ Prior to this time he had run a mine in Tumbaya Grande that, according to local residents, was the property of Juan Carlos Romero, the current governor of Salta. This intervening authority was also the person who baptized Tumbaya “little Tucumán,”¹⁹ and who actively participated in denouncing and drawing up the lists of those to be kidnapped and disappeared.

As indicated above, twenty persons were illegally kidnapped in both Tumbaya and San Salvador de Jujuy in various military operations that had a single target: Communist Party militants. Of the twenty men kidnapped, six disappeared.²⁰ Two peak moments marked the repression in Tumbaya. During one large military operation, many local residents, both men and women, were picked up and taken to Volcán to

16 The first trip made in July 2003 lasted a single day. At that time I made two interviews. My research assistant was Mariana Tello. The second trip took place in July 2004 and lasted five days. Anthropology undergraduate Guillermina Esposito was my research assistant on this visit. We rented a house, which enabled us to forge a closer relationship with the people. We could talk informally with them, walk around, participate in different activities and observe how daily life unfolded in Tumbaya. We interviewed five people and took part in a variety of community activities.

17 All political authorities in Argentina were replaced by members of the Armed Forces or civilians that supported them after the military coup in March 1976. “Intervention” is the name given to this change of authority.

18 It is noteworthy that all those who talked about this “intervening authority” mentioned that he was “not from Tumbaya.”

19 Tucumán is a province in northern Argentina. It was there that rural guerrillas, specifically the People’s Revolutionary Army (ERP), began the armed struggle that was expected to spread the “revolution” throughout the country. In 1975, with a democratically-elected government still in power, the state launched the so-called “Operation Independence,” whose objectives included the annihilation of this rural guerrilla movement. It was successful, and Tucumán was considered exemplary in the fight against “subversion,” which is why the armed forces coined the phrase: “Tucumán, cradle of Independence, tomb of subversion.” When the notion of “little Tucumán” is mentioned in Tumbaya, the meaning of the metaphor is dual: the presence of “subversion,” and “the Armed Forces campaign.” For an analysis of the Tucumán case, see Crenzel (2001).

20 Percentages tell little about the violence unleashed by the state, but the numbers in this case are eloquent: almost 20% of the inhabitants of this small town were kidnapped, and 6% disappeared.

make a statement; some were held in custody in Villa Gorriti (Jujuy), while others were quickly released. No disappearances resulted from this operation. Then, during a second wave of detentions, Communist Party members were kidnapped, six of whom disappeared.

I asked Federico, brother of two disappeared, about the military operations in Tumbaya. This is how he describes the first:

Ludmila: Were they picked up in a military operation?

Federico: Yes, yes, there were a bunch of operations, and before the disappeared too. Even the priest, Carlos Brukman, a German who was here, helped out. One day the police came and said to the father, "Can you collaborate with us, we have an operation here?" The Father goes and gets a pickup. He had a pickup with a cover, he opens the back door and they go into a bar. There was a bar that belonged to an uncle of mine, Adrián Méndez. And they begin to load them. At one moment the Father says, "you too, Norberto?" He helped out in the church [laughs], and they got them all inside. They got Doña María Pilano, they got Mariano Vilca, they got Adrián Méndez, Doña Isidora, an aunt of ours, all of them to the police, prisoners. So the Father checked the documents and let them go, and some who were involved, inside! And Bishop Medina had a lot to do with this, didn't he? Because he confessed the kids and these confessions he passed on to the Army, the police. These confessions got a lot of prisoners from here. And how about loyalty and disloyalty, here we had two brothers who were called Pedro Ramos and Daniel Ramos; they picked up Pedro, and Pedro passing by in the police car says, "there's my brother, he's on the list too!" [laughs] The brother goes too! Inside the brother!²¹

Following this violent episode, more people were detained and disappeared in October 1976. Between October 15 and 20, the Volcán police picked up twenty men from Tumbaya. Almost all of them were taken from their home or workplace, small farms and truck gardens in the foothills. They were taken to Humahuaca, where gendarmes and police interrogated, beat, and otherwise mistreated them. The phrase most commonly repeated in the interviews was: "they treated us like animals."²²

During and following the military dictatorship, relatives did not report disappearances to the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP);²³

21 I interviewed Federico for the first time in July 2003 in his home. Photos of his two brothers were beside him as we spoke. Each time one of them was mentioned, Federico would point to his photo.

22 It is striking that none of the interviewees who were in this situation speak of torture or clandestine detention centers. The words most frequently used are: *they beat us up and we were in the police station or jail*. When asked how they were beaten or for further details on the experience, they are always very succinct; not wanting to go into detail, they simply make use of animal metaphors to describe their treatment: "worse than a dog, worse than a pig, like animals."

23 In the preliminary lists compiled by CONADEP for the *Nunca Más* book, Paulino Galián (misspelled as Galeán) is the only name from Tumbaya. I asked Federico if he knew who had

there were no mothers in the square or groups of relatives making inquiries about what had happened. Instead, individual family members tried to get information on their own about the detained relative. Between October and December 1976, most of the family members of persons who later disappeared maintained contact with their relatives in the Villa Gorriti jail in Jujuy; they were even told that the prisoners would be released on a given date in December 1976. Family members traveled to Jujuy on that date to pick up their relatives; upon arrival at the jail, they were simply told that “they already left.” This episode, repeated by all the relatives I interviewed, was to them the most incomprehensible circumstance of all: “Why did they lie to us?” asked Carmela, the sister of one of the disappeared young men. No further inquiries were made for the rest of the dictatorship. It wasn’t until the 1990s that the disappearances were officially reported, and for a concrete reason: to collect an indemnity.

As I mentioned above, these memories are almost invisible in the public sphere. Relatives do travel from time to time to Jujuy for a commemoration. And in 2003 I observed for the first time in the *Marcha del Apagón*, photos of two disappeared persons from Tumbaya: Juan Elías Toconás (15-10-76) and Rosa Santos Mamani (17-10-76). So a few traces were left at the regional level. At the national level, the Communist Party has added the names of the Tumbaya disappeared to their lists of disappeared militants. However, only the names, many of them misspelled, and date of disappearance figure on the list; their place of residence is stated with extreme imprecision: “the province of Jujuy.”²⁴ Although their names do not appear on the preliminary *Nunca Más* lists, the illegally detained and disappeared were subsequently written about in books by José Luis D’Andrea Mohr (1999) and Andrés Fidalgo (2001).

Within the community of Tumbaya, one way or another everybody knows and has their own version of what happened. Yet these narratives circulate only within family circles or peer groups, the latter comprising people who have gone through the same experience. In a locality where, in accordance with Andean tradition, it is customary to call an assembly for discussing and reaching agreement on community concerns, the fact that there has never been a “shared” activity regarding the disappeared is mentioned by their family members as a problem.

When I interviewed Gloria, her first words were to remark upon this silence. Gloria interrupted her catechism class for young people to meet with us and tell about Rosalino Ríos, her disappeared brother. We sat around a table with her and her husband. The interview was short and full of silences. Gloria held a handkerchief in her hand, and her eyes filled with tears at different moments during the interview. It

reported the disappearance; he said he didn’t, but that it could have been someone linked to the Communist Party.

24 I requested that the Communist Party email me the lists of “their” disappeared. I then asked if they could tell me anything or if anything had been written about the Tumbaya episode; they answered that they knew nothing about it. They sent me the email address of a person in Jujuy, who has yet to respond to my message. Paradoxically, in 2007, two years after my request, as a relative of disappeared persons, Don Galián was invited to speak at an event that took place in Communist Party headquarters in Buenos Aires.

was the first time she had talked about the subject with “strangers.” She said little, but she did tell us that the main problem is that “the community never got together to talk about what happened.” Her words were eloquent:

G: My name is Gloria Ríos, I am forty-four years old and am from here in Tumbaya.

L: Were you born here?

G: Yes, along with my eleven brothers and sisters. Eleven brothers and sisters, and my brother, the one that disappeared. Rosalino Ríos was two years older than I. He must have been almost twenty years old at that time because he was waiting to do his military service that was done then at twenty years of age. *Maybe the mistake, or I don't know what it is that he did that made them disappear him, was that he was affiliated with communism.* He was affiliated with communism and [...] that's why [...] the majority of the kids that disappeared in this town were affiliated with communism. *They say that when they disappeared these kids [...] according to what they say they had a barbecue and made them get drunk there. I believe they made my brother sign up when he was “tipsy” and they made him fill out the membership card.* After the military coup they began to persecute them, and so [...] That's how some of the town kids, they took them away.

L: And do you here in the town talk about what happened?

G: No, this subject isn't talked about, that is, let's say, what we would need to do. Here, when there is a loss of somebody in town who dies or is sick, then that's when you see unity, the support of the people, all that, but in this, this that happen to a number of us, you didn't. We never get together, *we never talk about it.* Now and then I participated in some marches they held there in San Salvador, to remember [...] If I participated, they went too, but everyone went on their own [...] What we would need to do is talk about that.

In Gloria's story neither the police nor the armed forces appear as figures associated with the disappearance. The security forces only appear when I explicitly ask her who took her brother away and to describe the kidnapping. And then she only says that “they were people in street clothes, they weren't dressed like police.” “Communism” is present in the story as the single guilty party and the main explanation for the fatal outcome. Between the lines of her story can be glimpsed the split that the kidnappings made in the community, together with her feelings of anger toward those who took advantage of her brother's vulnerability to “affiliate him with communism.” In the symbolic order, “communism” serves as unifying factor for the experience lived through.

BODIES, HUMILIATION, AND SILENCES

While among family members of the disappeared there exists a prevailing need to “do something,” especially once they have collected the indemnity, those who were detained and tortured but survived do not speak with the same urgency. The

majority of them have never discussed their ordeal with their family. When slowly and painfully telling their stories during interviews, their bodies express the marks left by detention. They tremble, become short of breath, wring their hands, and lower their eyes, and their answers are punctuated by long silences, each interviewee remarking that the humiliation suffered was worse than the physical pain caused by the blows. The accusations made against them are remembered as causing the most pain: "they blamed us [...] they blamed me for not being a patriot, for being a communist. And I never offended my country, never [...]" Gerónimo states nervously.

Depending on the context, categorization as a leftist can be extremely stigmatizing; to be communist in opposition to the Fatherland functions in the present case as a clear threat to the established order, with connotations of danger and violence. As Velho (1980) shows so well in his short, concise analysis of accusatory categories in Brazilian society, although eminently political, the category of subversive contaminates other domains:

Many times it is accompanied by "criminal," "atheist," or "traitor," with strong moral implications. The logic of the accusatory discourse turns the political denunciation into a more global accusation in which the very humanity of the accused is placed in doubt [...] The idea exists that their mind is corrupted by agents from outside the frontiers of their society (Velho 1980:59).

Thus the subversive, the communist, brings in things from the outside, contaminating their society with something exogenous, somehow disarming and disorganizing "the natural order of things" with disruptive ideas and behavior. Or, in the words of Velho, which recall what Gerónimo told us, in this system of representations and accusations the communist "is a traitor who has renounced his/her country" (Velho 1980:60).

Emilio, another interviewee, tells us in an almost inaudible voice that the worst thing he went through was that "they accused me of being a communist" and also of "having taken advantage of my job in the mine to give them explosives. I, who have always been a Peronist, wasn't going to give explosives to communists! Why should I?" Each and every former detainee interviewed remarked that what they had gone through at that time was best forgotten, that it has caused much pain and left them all with "bad nerves." Each survivor's body bears marks of memories that seldom can be articulated. We could ask if the same notion of social "contamination" carried by the idea of "the communist" might not manifest itself corporeally when the men talk about it.

These silences and the references to "bad nerves" tell how the stigma associated with the memory is a burden carried by the body as part of the humiliation of being called "communist." Those who were incarcerated want to forget about the experience. None has told his children, nor have the offspring ever asked about it. Pablo, Gerónimo, and Emilio all agreed to talk because of their friendship with Don Federico. Don Pablo finished the interview saying that talking was bad for him, but it was important to have been able to do it. That night Gerónimo went to visit Don

Federico and asked for some wine “since he was very nervous because he had talked about things that nobody had ever made him say.” We ran into him that night “drunk” on a corner.²⁵

Nevertheless, these memories and their stigmas cannot be understood if taken only as individual stories. They are rooted in and nourished by social relations, representations of the other, accusatory categories, and bonds within the local community. When I asked Gerónimo what communism was for him, his explanation centered on the idea of “sharing as a community,” that “everyone can have a little and live better,” stating that “nobody is going to take that idea out of my head no matter how much they hit me and treat me like an animal.” This despite denying he was a “communist” when asked. In this denial resides a great deal of the tension between memory and stigma in Tumbaya. How “communist” is defined organizes and articulates a series of social experiences, prejudices, and differentiations that divide an “us” from a “them.” It marks off a familiar local space characterized by bonds of trust and solidarity from a foreign, threatening, “external” space that questions “the order and conceptions of the world that must be viewed as natural and beyond dispute” (Velho 1980:64).

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STIGMA: ROSA AND HER MEMORIES

In a low voice, almost as if telling a secret, Rosa talks about “communism in Tumbaya.” She was not living there during the dictatorship because she was teaching school in La Puna, but her parents did, and for her fellow teachers and students, Rosa was “someone from Tumbaya.” During lunch at Rosa’s on our first trip, we heard communism in Tumbaya mentioned for the first time. On our second trip I met Rosa on various occasions (in the church, on the street, buying vegetables from a truck that stops in Tumbaya twice a week, at her kiosk), and I asked her whether she would want me to interview her, that I would like to know her views on the dictatorship and on Tumbaya. Upon my insistence she finally agreed to be interviewed only a few hours before our second stay in Tumbaya ended.

Rosa views “from a distance” what happened in Tumbaya in 1976 because she was in La Puna at the time; yet she also experienced the events as “familiar” because the people “involved” were neighbors and friends. And furthermore, freed from all suspicion by not “having been in Tumbaya during those years,” she is qualified to make a unique contribution: to describe how the town looked to “outsiders.”

I found out while in La Puna [...] I found out a little of what had happened here. First they told me “eh... Tumbaya is little Tucumán, right?” “What?” I said. What they were saying hadn’t ever occurred to me. It was about the Tucumán guerrillas. “Yes,” they said, “Tumbaya has been declared little Tucumán.” Ah.... “And why?” “You don’t know

25 The next day he ran into Guillermina and said: “It’s good to have made a friendship between *gringas* and a *negro*.”

anything about what's happened there, it was quite ugly." It was people from Tilcara that said that. But I still didn't know anything at all about the people here. "They have taken away people from Tumbaya." I was surprised. And they told me that they had loaded up the people and taken them away. They hadn't seen it, they had been told.

Despite the proximity and her visits to Tumbaya, Rosa remembers events as told to her by people who likewise were not present there in Tumbaya. As with any small town, people know each other, and the inevitable question is whom had they taken away.

OK, I said, "when I go down I'll find out." And I say, "and who, more or less, might they be?" "I don't know, a guy named Galián, it seems." Then the man who rented to you here passed quickly through my mind because when I came here, he is my neighbor, we are across from each other. My dad and mom and his parents are *compadres*, and I used to see him. I came in over there and he was leaving, and I even said one day: "Ehh ... Fede, you've taken up the hammer and sickle," I didn't know how it was said at that time. Then, he was a little drunk, he laughed and didn't say anything. He went around with his shirt all open, all this part open and that's why I said that. *We already knew that they* ["the communists"] *walked around like that*. A cousin who was in Tucumán told me that, how the communists walked around, so that I would be a little careful.

Rosa is speaking of her neighbors and the children of her parents' *compadres*. Yet when she refers to them, her tone changes: she lowers her voice more and more and refers to them as "those people," then she tells us that "those people" (the communists) killed innocent people and that in Tucumán they disguised themselves as soldiers in order to rob and kill.²⁶ Although she was in Tilcara, Rosa was afraid something would happen to her "mom and dad" because they lived next door to the Galián's. An interesting aspect of her story is that when I ask her about "her neighbors," she refers to Crescente and Paulino as two young people whom she asked to do her favors. I asked Paulino many times to make drawings for me, we said hello to each other, we talked, so I knew him. When I asked her why she thinks they "took them away," she answered:

[...] because they must have been involved in communism. Because they say that in those high foothills, on the other side, my sister said that ... as she kept her animals there, that there they had buried part of their firearms. And here,

26 These same distinctions are also used with an acquaintance, who goes from being "that person" to "she" when talking about her disappearance. The distinction is made explicit when talking about Marina Vilte, who remains disappeared and belonged to the same union as Rosa. When Marina is spoken of as a union member, she is incorporated into a group of people that Rosa knows and for whom she feels affection and admiration. However, she quickly establishes a distinction: "she was a good person for me, but I didn't know that she was involved in those things. You don't even realize it ... only afterwards."

behind the cemetery where the red hills are, they say that there they had some kind of a cave. They said this, right? ... that they have been very intelligent, they have been very intelligent, because other kids that weren't so intelligent, it seems they brainwashed them, they said that they were like the "head" here and that they went around getting to know people. I don't know, look, these are the versions that reached me, I haven't seen anything.

Toward the end of the interview, after a long story by Rosa about how much she had suffered and the importance of religion in overcoming her pain, I asked her if she believes that the military were right to disappear people:

Look, I sometimes say if it hadn't been for the soldiers disappearing those people, how many would have died? Because the extremists, they killed all kinds of people! ... That's why, on the one hand, I say: they did good. But on the other, I start thinking what became of all the people they took away, and where, what did they do with them, did they burn them, did they throw them out, how did they kill them? What I mean to say is I see that, on the one hand, the soldiers did good. Because that's why they stopped killing a lot of people, but on the other, the soldiers didn't proceed well, I say, because they didn't take them away, they locked them up ... well.... Because you never knew that so many people had also disappeared. That's why I say that the soldiers behaved badly and the others super badly too. You have to be there, because that cousin of mine in Tucumán told me that *they show no pity at all, they aren't afraid of anything, if they have to kill you, they kill you in cold blood and if you have to kill them they don't have the tiniest bit of fear* ... it's like they are so prepared to be like that...²⁷

In Rosas's narration, extremists and communists—interchangeable categories—are scarcely human, as can be observed in the sentence: "they kill you in cold blood" or "they don't have the tiniest bit of fear." Extremists not only bring evil, but they themselves are dehumanized and so deserve to die. Although inverted, the elements are classified in the same way as in the stories told by the men who had been "beaten like animals" while incarcerated: in a "non-human" world, the other has lost all rights, which opens the way for exercising violence on his body.²⁸

27 Rosa's story is not lineal; she constructs this opinion of the way the armed forces acted. At another point in the interview she narrates how once, when visiting a friend in Jujuy who lived near the 20th Regiment, she was kept awake at night by the screams she heard. She told us: "how can it be [...] this really was sad, how can it be that human beings kill each other worse than animals, one thinks that animals [...] can kill like that but not us [...] I couldn't sleep all night long, I was terrified and I never have gone back again. I don't know what they were doing to them, but it was pain that made them scream. I always remember that place. And the soldiers were doing that. I said, don't they deserve to be punished? Because no matter how bad they have been, but ... I don't know if they deserve that I don't know.... When this is talked about I always remember."

28 For a discussion of humanity and animality as ways of legitimizing the use of violence, see Burgat 1999.

But in this classification of good and evil, of who deserved to die and who to kill during those years, of who were communists and how she imagined them, what Rosa is interested in pointing out is that for her it was not easy to be from Tumbaya:

The people, everybody ... from Jujuy, from wherever, said "Tumbaya, little Tucumán." This is what people from any place at all said to you. When I said I was from Tumbaya, they said to me: "Tumbaya, little Tucumán" they said to me, that here was an extremist town. I remained calm, didn't say anything ... so they wouldn't grab me too.

In Tumbaya, as is many other Argentine small towns, accusing someone of "being a communist" or coming from an "extremist town," as was done to Rosa, was undoubtedly one of the worst political stigmas that could be cast on them.²⁹ This accusatory category employed a wide range of expressions that, in addition to the classic representation ("communists eat children"³⁰), included, as has already been said, more specific accusations such as anti-Peronist, atheist, or leftist.³¹

"Communism" as a broad category covering a variety of social imaginaries generally associated with accusations or suspicions regarding the "other" is what this community had culturally "on hand" both then and now to explain the kidnappings and disappearances. As research on the representation of violence has shown, evil generally comes from the outside.³² The communists in Tumbaya fit this description. Despite the fact that all the disappeared communist militants, like the main local referent, Paulino Galían, were "neighbors," in Tumbaya "communists" are spoken of as foreigners unlike the local people and who do not belong to the community.³³ And this same representation is "incorporated" by family members of those illegally detained and disappeared. Thus it can be said that a dual violence is at work: the physical violence of the 1970s, and the symbolic violence of post-dictatorship

29 It is worth mentioning that the accusation of "communist" is not limited to Argentina. In Brazil, for example, it means something similar. Regina Novaes's (2001) work on indigenous memories with the *Ligas campesinas* can be consulted in this regard.

30 It is interesting to search for "fear of communism" on the Internet and see the number of pages that appear on Fidel Castro, the Zapatistas in Mexico, violence in Colombia, and the ETA, among other references. An exercise that remains to be done is to map the agents indicated as producing this "fear" around the world during the 20th century.

31 Fear of communism in Argentina offers a broad field for analysis that falls outside the limits of the present article. I can think of two specific types of problems to be explored: tracing the origin of this accusatory use of "being a communist" and examining the relationship between Peronism and the demonization of communism. Employing a historical approach, David Rock (1993) analyzes how the term "communism" was used to draw a line between national and foreign, desirable and undesirable, or directly as primary referent for "enemy" applied at different times in Argentina to immigrants, anti-Peronists, and guerrillas in the 1970s.

32 A general analysis can be found in DUBY (1998); DEL PINO (2003) specifically examines Peru.

33 Kimberly Theidon draws a similar conclusion regarding Sendero Luminoso members in her analysis of certain communities in Peru. See, for example, Theidon (2006).

narratives, the latter a sweet violence incorporated, made flesh and blood, and lived as stigma.

REVERSING THE STIGMA: THE WORK OF A MEMORY BROKER

We already know something about Don Federico, and I will now complete the introduction and endeavor to analyze his investment of time and effort in writing about and reversing the stigma on memories that become shameful at times for people that lived through the repression in Tumbaya.

Federico Galían is the brother of Paulino Prudencio and Crescente Galían, two Communist Party militants that disappeared in Jujuy on October 18–19, 1976. As mentioned above, he was the first person indicated to me as referent. Implicit in this indication is the idea that not only does he belong to the world of relatives of the disappeared, but his is the legitimized voice authorized by the community to tell the story of what happened in Tumbaya. Among other qualifications, Federico played an important role in helping people receive the indemnities corresponding to relatives of the illegally detained and disappeared in Tumbaya. He was also the person who got in touch with Andrés Fidalgo in order that the latter include the names of the local illegally detained and disappeared in his book on the repressions in Jujuy. The definition Federico provides at the beginning of the interview to explain the disappearances in Tumbaya is striking:

F: Look, I am Federico Galían, the brother of two of the disappeared and cousin of another here in Tumbaya, because there are six in all. I must tell you that life here has been an everyday affair. *We began in politics as revolutionaries, as people who wanted to change things*, but we saw that politics was very contaminated. Then we saw, within politics, a change. *The change was the revolution, and we joined the Communist Party*. I have been a Communist Party member, my brother Paulino was in charge of running things as head of the party here in the zone from Jujuy to Tilcara, but the greatest number of people have been from Tumbaya, because we were from here, from Tumbaya. Everybody belonged to the Communist Party.

There is something singular in the way the memory above is presented. It differs from how memories corresponding to the “official” narrative are framed and how the idea of the victims is structured. There is an explanation for this, however, which I only came to understand after listening to another series of narratives in which, like those seen above, negative, guilty, and foreign connotations are attached to communism. Here, on the contrary, belonging to the Communist Party is not associated with *fear*; rather, it is viewed as *a positive political perspective*, and political militancy is clearly indicated as one of the reasons for the disappearances. Noteworthy in this case is that, unlike other interviewees who use “communism” to tell stories of fear, accusations, and distrust, Don Federico uses the word to refer directly to the Communist Party, politics, and revolution. With the same “sincerity” in memory construction, Don Federico relates the consequences and impact that being considered “communists” had on his family in Tumbaya.

L: What was it like to belong to the Communist Party in Tumbaya?

F: Well, it was to raise people's consciousness, a fight to advance, to change the predominant, North American doctrine for another, a more social, more participative, more democratic doctrine, let's say.

L: After the prisons, how did local people react?

F: They were afraid and began to use insults. For example, María, who was married to Santiago, came here and insulted my mother, "It's your communist son's fault, my husband has been taken prisoner and I can't feed my children!" My mother told them "I have nothing to do with it." And Paulino's wife in Jujuy had rocks thrown at her house a number of times, they insulted her, they said things such as: "it's your husband's fault, it's Paulino's fault that we are in this situation, that we are without our husbands, that they have detained my son, you and he are to blame." Things like that. It was logical that that happened, right? It was logical, that had to happen.

L: And when you returned to Tumbaya, what happened?

F: Well, I returned eleven and a half years after having left, right? But in '76 I was here, I left in February and the coup was March 24, and after that I didn't come back. Well, after I came back there was a mechanic here who said to me "you were a coward, you escaped to Bolivia." I didn't go during the coup, I went two months before the coup, that wasn't cowardice ... I was working in Bolivia by chance, and thanks to that coincidence I am alive because, if not, I would be a corpse like my brothers for sure, for sure if I had been here in Tumbaya.... I had a cousin, Américo Vilte, he disappeared here too, he lived in Buenos Aires, he came here, and here he disappeared, and [...] Rosalino Ríos, Santos Mamani, Juan Elías Toconàs, all disappeared.

Various planes come together in his words: guilt and the hatred Tumbaya residents feel for those belonging to "communism," the accusations and aggression directed at the families as visible centers of evil, and the additional accusation of cowardice for having saved himself and abandoned the community during a time of violence, pain, and uncertainty.

"Don Fede" has transformed all this "evil" into concrete collective action. In the words of Jelin (2002:48),

a 'memory broker' gets personally involved in his/her project, but also commits others, generating participation and commitment to an organized task of a collective nature. [...] the memory broker is a generator of projects, of new ideas and expressions of creativity—more than of repetitions.

It was Federico who got people together in Tumbaya to collect the indemnities. It was he who sent the names of the disappeared and kidnapped to Fidalgo so that they would appear in his book, and it was he who incorporated the name of his brother into the criminal case presented during the *Juicios por la Verdad* in Jujuy. He is likewise the one who saves papers and documents, who writes letters, and who gets in touch with lawyers. He is the one who has managed to turn an area of stigmas and

accusations into a space for communication and recognition. And it was Don Federico, too, who introduced me to all the people I interviewed, gave me documents and found photos “so that you write a book about what happened in Tumbaya.”

In this regard Don Federico “works” as memory broker in the three areas distinguished by Jelin (2002:50): influencing “official” stories, collecting vindictory material, and seeking out communities among peer groups for companionship and support. He has sought to influence and ultimately change the predominant, at times shameful, feelings associated with people termed “communists” by getting them to speak out and tell their stories to the community. On the other hand, he has stressed his own membership in the Communist Party, linking it to political ideals and thus countering its function as a mere accusatory category. Along similar lines, by handling indemnity demands for relatives of the illegally detained and disappeared, he has been instrumental in gaining recognition and material reparation for victims. Collecting an indemnity from the national state constitutes recognition of the suffering endured. However, the act of receiving money in an impoverished community has burdened most recipients with yet another stigma: exchanging death for money. In all the conversations that took place in Tumbaya, no one failed to stress the fact that the indemnities marked a before and after in the town. The general run of opinion was summed up, crudely and violently, by a man we met in the street who had been incarcerated during an early round of kidnapping: “What are they complaining about? There’s nothing to say anymore. They’ve paid everybody a lot of money. They can’t complain anymore.” Collecting an indemnity also has more than one dimension. Those suffering the violence acted as a group for the first time when they hired lawyers and were able to collect an indemnity. But this same visibility has made them the object of finger-pointing within the community once again. Indeed, the indemnity made it possible for them to acquire what is “unattainable” for the majority, such as cars, ranches and parabolic antennas.

And finally, as a memory broker Federico thinks up and seeks out ways to gain ritual and symbolic recognition for this period of Tumbaya’s past. He wants to organize a mass for the disappeared; he is planning to put a plaque on the wall of his house, since “this was the place where we met.” And through his efforts, each family member has a large photo of their disappeared relative, which they carry in the annual marches in Jujuy and Ledesma.³⁴

Yet the symbolic and cultural capital enabling Federico to accomplish what he does on memory is a product of more than having two disappeared brothers. He is a significant figure in the community because he knows “history” and “knows how to talk.” He is the person delegated to safeguard documentation on political conflicts and land claims, and he is the one sought out for television and radio programs and when journalists, archeologists, and tourism authorities come to town. In other

34 It should be mentioned here that Federico was motivated by and had the support of the sisters of Marina Vilte, a teacher who disappeared in Tilcara in 1976. The two women, who live in Purmamarca, are, like Federico, “memory brokers” who have played a leading role in gaining visibility for memories of repression in small towns in the Humahuaca gorge.

words, he is not only a broker for memories of the repression; he also serves as the guardian of many other types of memory pertaining to community cohesion, local history, and politics. And as memory guardian he plays a social role in the community, collecting, investigating, selecting, and conserving goods, objects, and documents, while at the same time taking upon himself the obligation of keeping watch over the entire community. And these attributes are recognized by a large part of the community.³⁵ The memory guardian is in charge of archive centralization as well. Indeed, this constitutes one of his powers, since it is up to him to decide when and how files circulate, what is in them, which ones are selected, and to whom they are made available.

In this dual function of broker and guardian of memories on local topics and the repression, Don Federico endeavors to make visible beyond Tumbaya's borders what happened there during the dictatorship, and within the community to transform the stigma attached to "communists," making them once again "human," "neighbors," or simply Crescencio, Paulino, Pablo, Gerónimo, Elías, Rosa, etc.

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD: A REVEALING EPISODE

In his tireless efforts to achieve the dual objective of making visible and destigmatizing, Don Federico invited us to all the public events that took place in the five days we were in Tumbaya. Without realizing or planning to in advance, on two occasions we played a part in the circulation and raising the visibility of memories. Briefly described, the first, with unforeseen consequences, occurred when the people from *Radio Nacional* arrived in Tumbaya. Don Federico asked me to see them in order to "talk about" what I was doing. And so it was that the on-duty anthropologist spoke about the disappeared in Tumbaya during a radio program on "tourism." Frowning, the mayor looked on with misgivings. The reporters were astonished at my words. For his part, Federico felt very happy, as he told me afterwards.

The second event, extremely revealing in my view, occurred inside the church during a "celebration of the word," a ritual similar to a mass, but conducted by a deacon rather than a priest. We arrived early; the church was almost empty. We sat

35 During the time we spent in Tumbaya, there were revealing indications of this social role. One day when no interviews were scheduled, Don Federico arrived at the house we were renting with two large folders full of papers. "I'm leaving them for you so you can entertain yourselves and learn more about Tumbaya." The documents, photos, brochures and newspaper clippings were a compendium of conflicts over land, news items on Tumbaya, *Virgen de la Candelaria* celebrations, and pamphlets on political struggles, all carefully filed and classified. There was nothing in these files on disappearances or indemnity paperwork, materials he kept in another set of files that were made available to us upon request. Another day we heard that people from the radio station *Radio Nacional* were arriving in Tumbaya the next day to interview the town's mayor on tourism. The mayor had convoked Don Federico to participate in the interview. The affection for and recognition of Federico by local residents was a recurring theme in our interviews. One of the interviewees said: "When I don't understand something in a book or a child of mine needs help, I go to Uncle Fede, he knows everything."

down to watch the end of a catechism class. We knew the deacon was José, whom we had met the day before while walking around town.³⁶

There were around thirty people present. José's wife Elvira assisted him. From the altar she explained what a celebration of the word was; a ritual consisting of a dialogue between herself and those of us in the pews. At one point she asked Don Federico and some local women, Rosa among them, to come forward and read passages from the Bible. Then Elvira ended her part of the ceremony with some Bible verses.

A few minutes later José entered dressed in a green tunic and using a priest's body language. He read verse XVI from the Book of John, together with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which he used to talk about urban violence today. He then expanded on the themes of violence and denial of the other in a morally and politically meaningful sermon. In it, he referred—albeit not explicitly—to the political assassination that took place in Tumbaya in November 2003.

Then Elvira returned to read the invocation, to which all those present were required to respond "We ask you, O Lord." Appeals were made for the sick, for peace, for the unemployed, for the health of a woman who had been Don Federico's teacher, and for "many of our children." This last appeal opened the way for Elvira to say: "I don't know, Don Federico, since the girls are here, you might like to invoke the disappeared." Don Federico then turned around and, after explaining that we were in Tumbaya carrying out "a project on memories of the disappeared," pronounced an invocation in their name and that of their families. The ritual celebrating the word then continued.

After the ceremony Elvira asked if there were any announcements and invited Federico to make one. So once again, Don Federico spoke of our presence and told the stories of the six disappeared from Tumbaya and the incarceration suffered by other local residents. He requested that everyone collaborate by contributing photos, documents, and other materials to further our task of writing a chapter in the history of Tumbaya. This highly unusual, highly emotional, confused moment was the first time that the disappeared had been spoken of in a public, institutional space in Tumbaya; the celebration of the word had been used to invoke them, resulting in the sharing of a memory that, despite its multiple readings, had remained until then in the private sphere or circulated only informally as commentary or gossip. The memory

36 How we met is another, yet closely related, story. José and Elvira own a handicraft shop. Passing by one day, we entered to "look around." Then Guillermina asked where a big bookcase she saw had come from. That was the starting point of a conversation with the owners that lasted for more than an hour. The story began with their activity as militants in the Catholic Church; then it was our turn to tell what we were doing in Tumbaya, to which they responded that it was important to talk about the subject because, as Elvira put it, "certainly things haven't changed much." At this point the storyline broadened and the mood became emotionally charged as the couple talked about their time as *Juventud Peronista* militants in the 1970s and the murder of Elvira's brother, who had been beaten to death for political reasons in Tumbaya in 2003. That explained Elvira's saying "certainly things haven't changed much" and also the couple's reluctance to talk about their militancy in the 1970s: the recent assassination made them feel "very sad and weak." In a number of senses, this encounter was the pre-able to what would take place later in the church.

broker had waited for the right opportunity to release the illegally detained and disappeared from marginality and place them at the center of a ritual taking place in a sacred space, thus purifying them.

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

This article has dealt with the efficacy of stigmas and accusatory categories in shaping memories of repression during the last military dictatorship. In Tumbaya, in the words of Pollak (2006), a “convenient silence” still surrounds the militancy in the Communist Party of a large number of the town’s young people in the 1970s. Going against the tide, a memory broker has made progress in revealing the political dimension of the repression. His position is a privileged one: brother of two of the disappeared, ex-Communist Party militant, and charismatic community leader, he serves as broker for and guardian of cultural and political memories that extend beyond the scope of the last dictatorship. Working within the oral tradition and the telling of stories to transmit the past, Federico Galián has not compiled the kind of authorized “history” of events that finds a place in the quasi-official histories of human rights organizations, academia, and the state. The story of the repression in Tumbaya does not yet exist for these institutions. This circumstance has provided ethnography with the opportunity to record visions, feelings, value judgments, and tensions whose multiplicity and complexity are not unique to Tumbaya. But once the generalized version of the tragic events of the last dictatorship is established and consecrated by national representatives, these substrata tend to disappear or be repressed.

This article has also examined certain unresolved issues and problems. One of them is the intervention, voluntary or involuntary, of social scientists in the social construction of memory and history. Another touches upon the inclusiveness of the categories defined as valid for identifying victims of state terrorism: statistically and evaluatively, peasant farmers and indigenous people are all but non-existent. In *Nunca Más* one reads about “workers, students, housewives, religious personnel, professionals, teachers, the self-employed, and others, journalists, actors, conscripts and non-commissioned officers in the security forces, administrative employees” (*Nunca Más* 1986:480). Unlike most of the rest of Latin America, were “peasant farmer” and “indigenous person” not political categories in Argentina in the 1970s? Is this because of the small number of kidnappings, incarcerations and disappearances actually reported? Or is it yet another instance in Argentine history of these persons being erased, silenced and disappeared?

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