

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### Cinema and Identity

Cinema is, first and foremost, the projection of a cultural identity which comes to life on the screen. It mirrors, or should mirror, this identity. But that is not all. It should also ‘dream’ it. Or make it flesh and blood, with all its contradictions. Unlike Europe, we are societies in which the question of identity has not yet crystallised. It is perhaps for this reason that we have such a need for cinema, so that we can see ourselves in the many conflicting mirrors that reflect us.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of national identity and the role of national cinema, as one of the main media forms of the twentieth century, in helping to shape, reflect and contest that identity, however unified or diverse, are the central interests of this study of contemporary Peruvian cinema, 1988-2004. Regarding the first issue, it would seem that the formation of Peruvian national identity remains particularly fluid as different cultural groups continue to vie for agency and dominance, and questions about integration, interaction and hybridity appear very tentatively on the domestic political agenda. Regarding the second, although the development of a distinct Peruvian national cinema has been difficult and slow and its relationship with the Peruvian state has often been uncertain, its capacity nevertheless to capture and portray key events of national concern and to generate debate would seem to remain important. This project examines the relationship between cinema, state and identity in Peru, with a specific focus on the representation of the political violence between the military and *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) that began in 1980. Its main purpose is to examine the place of national cinema at a time of national crisis, and in this case also at a time of crisis for the national film-making industry itself. Once the main elements of those respective crises have been explored and established in Chapters Two and Three, the remainder of the

project consists of three sets of chronologically ordered analyses of individual films that somehow defied the national cinema crisis, and that provoked varying degrees of comment on both the insurgent violence and counter-insurgent campaign, and on broader questions pertaining to the relationship between national identity and violence. The conclusion considers these films together, arguing for them as a variously connected body of cinematic works that share similar themes and concerns, and draws together some thoughts on the issues they raise, on their ideological and formal approaches to those issues, on the social and cultural impact they might have had, and on their contribution to the crystallization of a Peruvian national identity.

The official and unofficial histories of Peru are coloured by violence, from accounts of the brutal rituals and battles of pre-Columbian Chavín, Moche and Incan cultures, to reports of harsh subordination of the indigenous peoples by Spanish conquistadors. Throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s, reports of massacres and executions committed by the insurgency group *Sendero Luminoso* dominated national and international news about Peru.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the Western media seems mainly interested either in reports of archaeological discoveries that offer further apparent evidence of the brutality of the nation's quasi-mythical past, or in the brutality of the nation's contemporary leaders and the inevitability of further sets of national crises.<sup>3</sup> It is

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Salles, 'Preface', in *The Cinema of Latin America*, ed. by Alberto Elena and Marina Díaz López (London: Wallflower, 2003), pp. xiii-xv (p. xv).

<sup>2</sup> The *Sendero* insurgency, described in detail in Chapter Two of this project, began in 1980 with the symbolic burning of ballot boxes during the presidential elections. Dismissed at first by the authorities as delinquents, the rebels swiftly made their presence felt in the remote highland villages of Ayacucho and Junín, provoking a *guerra sucia* against state forces during which crimes were committed on all sides and in which the line between victim and assailant was frequently blurred. The group's authoritarian leader, Abimael Guzmán, was captured in 1992 and, while the violence seemed to end, debate about who was to blame was suppressed by Fujimori's regime using whatever means were deemed necessary to do so.

<sup>3</sup> Two examples of the preoccupation with lurid accounts of archaeological discoveries that would appear to provide evidence of the deep-rooted place of violence in Peruvian

perhaps inevitable therefore that Peru's national film-makers, with an eye on both domestic and international markets, have chosen repeatedly to use violence as a thematic device in their works, drawing on both historical myths and characters, and on the more everyday crime stories that frequently appear in the domestic mass media. Indeed, an analysis of the most prominent themes in Peruvian cinema during its first centenary highlighted the dominance of such violence-related topics as prison, crime, delinquents, the military, death and terrorism.<sup>4</sup>

### **Key research questions**

This project investigates the relationship between contemporary Peruvian cinema, state and national identity during a specific time of political, social, economic and cultural crisis. It explores representations of violence in some of the most critically and commercially successful Peruvian feature films released between 1988 and 2004, and looks in particular at portrayals of important events, characters and consequences of the bloody conflict between the state and *Sendero* that threatened to destabilize the nation entirely. It considers these representations in the context of a time of great change for Peruvian society and of transition for Peruvian national cinema, and addresses the relationship between developments in film policy and the reflection and shaping of Peruvian national identity in cinema. As such, it draws on debates about the nature and function of national cinemas, as well as on discussions between artists, cultural theorists and sociologists about the evolution of *peruanidad* since the declaration of

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culture include: 'Warrior queen or ritual sacrifice: The amazing secret unearthed in Peru', *Daily Mail*, 18 May 2006, p. 11; and 'City where sacrificial slaughter was way of life', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 September 2006, p. 3. Examples of the Western print media's fascination with Peru's apparent predilection for violent leaders who will lead them into a deeper state of crisis include: 'Ex-army officer with a dark past tops poll in Peru', *Independent*, 7 April 2006, p. 33; 'Peru turns to anti-American "Comandante"', *Sunday Times*, 9 April 2006, p. 35; and 'Peru's looming disaster', *New York Times*, 13 May 2006, p. 21.

independence from Spain in the nineteenth century. It interweaves textual analysis of a set of films that share a concern with violence, with contextual study of national political events and developments in cultural policy, in a bid to understand the complex relationship between national cinema, ideology and culture in Peru.

Several questions have framed this analysis of an important period for the Peruvian nation and its cinema. Above all, it has been important to examine the effect of the conflict with *Sendero* on both the production context and the thematic content of national cinema, and the way it has influenced the relationship between film-makers and state. This has led to an investigation of the ways in which issues of Peruvian national identity have been framed and contested on the cinema screen. The extent to which such films have set out and succeeded in challenging hegemonic constructions of nation dictated by state institutions that seek to maintain the political and social status quo is also considered. One of the aims has been to explore the way these films, as cultural products, raise questions about some of the assumptions made about the recent conflict and, more broadly, about the relationship between violence, Peruvian identity, and patriarchy. In this regard, it has proved essential to look at the way these films, despite their mainly realist intentions, go beyond the reflectionist approach regarded by most contemporary film theorists as 'primitive'.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that they also resist the more overtly political practices and approaches of other Latin American film-makers, including some of their predecessors from the *Escuela de Cine de Cusco* of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>6</sup> Instead, it is argued, they embed

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<sup>4</sup> Isaac León Frías et al, 'Diccionario temático del cine peruano', *La Gran Ilusión*, 6 (1996), 68-82.

<sup>5</sup> Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 152.

<sup>6</sup> As espoused by the Third Cinema manifesto developed by Argentine film-makers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in the 1970s. The article has been reproduced in several readers. See, for example, Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas, 'Towards a

political statements within classically structured narratives and utilise the systems of signs that have become integral to the distinctive symbolic language of cinema in order to offer provocative versions of recent events.<sup>7</sup> Special emphasis is placed on the development of characters that cross boundaries and defy expectations, and that take on broader symbolic significance as representative of national concerns. As such, these films also seem to contribute to the construction and redefinition of more complex notions of national identity that challenge essentialist stereotypes of race, class and gender in Peru. This study thus seeks to affirm the importance of national cinema at a time of national crisis, by exploring the ways in which a small number of thematically interlinked feature films might offer diverse ways of understanding an important period of recent national history, while at the same time challenging the perceived fixity of the Peruvian national image.

### **Representing national diversity**

Although the concept of the nation-state is a relatively modern one, ‘nevertheless, most people these days expect our membership of the nation to bind us together’.<sup>8</sup> Many film theorists acknowledge that national cinema has played an important role in the creation of nations as ‘imagined political communit[ies]’,<sup>9</sup> helping to shape ‘a shared culture, shared memories of a constructed past’.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, while Andrew Higson has suggested that a national cinema might be defined in terms of its potential to reflect and express ‘pre-existing [notions of] national identity, consciousness, or culture’, he is also

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Third Cinema’, in *Movies and Methods. An Anthology*, ed. by Bill Nicols (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976), pp. 44-64.

<sup>7</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology, Language, History and Theory of Film and Media*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 127-130.

<sup>8</sup> Turner, p. 134.

<sup>9</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Susan Hayward, ‘Framing National Cinemas’, in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 90.

clear that it is capable of shaping new ideas that contribute to the evolution of such concepts.<sup>11</sup> He further points out that although ‘national films will draw on identities and representations already in circulation – and often they will naturalize those identities ... [they might] also produce new representations of the nation’.<sup>12</sup> Since the mid-1990s, there has been increasing and more overt acknowledgement of the need to understand national cinema’s more active role in the formation of identities and the resistance to dominant ideologies. Meanwhile, many of the same theorists now draw attention to the need to understand the uncertain and shifting relationship between national cinemas and national cultures. Moreover, the general desire for a national culture to reflect and respond to the diversity of experiences that exists within any single nation has become clear. Higson, for example, admits that until very recently he was himself ‘perhaps at times rather too ready to find ... films presenting an image of a coherent, unified, consensual nation’.<sup>13</sup> With these debates in mind, the films selected for this study are examined in terms of their ideological approach to representing the conflict with *Sendero*, and its effect on the evolution of Peruvian national identity at the turn of the millennium.

Higson, like many others working in this area, has turned his attention to ‘those perspectives that call attention to cultural diversity’.<sup>14</sup> Indeed this project takes account of diversity in several ways. It explores the ways in which the plurality and instability of Peruvian national identity is dealt with on screen and considers the diversity of formal and ideological approaches to such representations. It also reflects critically on the different directors who have created the films and considers the extent to which

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<sup>11</sup> Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Higson, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Higson, ‘The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema’, in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 35.

disenfranchised minority communities have participated in the cinematic writing of Peruvian history. It draws particular inspiration from Susan Hayward's conceptual essay on national cinemas, in which she refutes the idea of nations as enduring, unchanging entities. She reminds us that such concepts as nation and national identity have been 'forged and sustained by certain networks of power [and that] nationalist discourses around culture work to forge the link [...] between nation and state'.<sup>15</sup> Echoing Virilio, she suggests we should 'reterritorialise the nation ... not as bounded, demarcated and distinctive but as one within which boundaries constantly criss-cross both haphazardly and *unhaphazardly*'.<sup>16</sup> She also points to the increasing interest in sites of difference within a nation since the 1960s. In Latin America, the desire to embrace difference was marked, for example, by the emergence of Third Cinema after the Cuban Revolution that was committed to social and cultural emancipation, and was determined to intervene 'in the process of creating new people, new societies, new histories, new art and new cinemas'.<sup>17</sup> The idea of national cinema therefore offers a complicating paradox in that 'it will always – in its forming – go against the underlying principles of nationalism and be at cross-purposes with the originating idea of the *nation* as a unified identity'.<sup>18</sup> This contention is examined in the context of the development of the Peruvian nation, national identity and its national cinema, and by addressing the complex relationship between them at a time of intense political and cultural crisis via a close analysis of the selected film texts.

The perspective of diversity seems especially pertinent when exploring the cinematic representation of a nation as historically and culturally differentiated as Peru. Whereas

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<sup>14</sup> Higson, *Cinema and Nation*, p. 35.

<sup>15</sup> Hayward, p. 89.

<sup>16</sup> Hayward, p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> Mike Wayne, *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema* (London: Pluto, 2001), p. 6.

some countries have had to confront the notion of diversity only very latterly, the Peruvian nation has grappled with it for several hundred years. Peru has a complex history that has seen national borders shift constantly, and a range of different peoples (from pre-Inca civilizations and the Inca empire to Spanish conquistadors and, more latterly, migrant workers from Japan and China) take part in the often violent evolution of a fragile nation-state. This does not mean, however, that with diversity comes equality of opportunity or visibility, since within Peru there are ‘enormous hierarchies of race, gender, class, etc’.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, like so many subjects of postcolonial nations, Peruvians are generally identified, problematically, as belonging to one of three distinct social groups: ‘the white colonials, the indigenous colonized, and the African and Asian immigrant-workers’.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, the complex concept of *mestizaje*, while arguably the key to understanding and negotiating contemporary Peruvian identity, remains a problematic area for most. To complicate matters further, the problem of racism, and of inequality more generally, is rarely discussed in any public arena in Peru. As Peruvian philosopher and sociologist Gisele Velarde laments, ‘aquí no se habla abiertamente del racismo, de la pobreza, de los temas que incomodan’.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, the development and definition of Peruvian national identity since achieving independence from Spain has been viewed as a conundrum by a range of prominent national writers and politicians, many of whose work has informed this study. For example, José Carlos Mariátegui, Víctor Andrés Belaúnde, José María Arguedas and Antonio Cornejo Polar have all, as Martha Ojeda points out, ‘studied, analyzed and

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<sup>18</sup> Hayward, p. 95.

<sup>19</sup> Norma Fuller in Tito Castro and Jorge Paredes, ‘La Peruanidad: El mestizaje como emblema: Debate con Norma Fuller, Gonzalo Portocarrero y Carlos Contreras’, *El Dominical*, 25 July 2004, pp.8-10 (p.8).

<sup>20</sup> Carlos Contreras in Castro and Paredes, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Gisele Velarde in Miguel Angel Cárdenas, ‘Ser Peruano (I): Una ética de la choledad’, *El Comercio*, 28 July 2004, p.16.



theorized about the hybrid and heterogeneous nature of Peruvian culture’, mainly emphasizing the tensions and encounters between the indigenous and European groups.<sup>22</sup> From the early part of the twentieth century, debates around the place of indigenous culture within concepts of the nation became increasingly important, if irritating for the political elite, since ‘el indigenismo sobre todo buscó cuestionar el concepto hegemónico de la identidad nacional basada en la Lima criolla’.<sup>23</sup> Since then, racial and ethnic identities in Peru have been more widely acknowledged as ‘shifting, decentred, relational constructions, subject to a politics of identity, culture and difference that encompasses gender, sexuality, religion and other cultural expressions’.<sup>24</sup> For, as Wood notes, culture is neither fixed nor homogeneous and ‘la peruana en particular se caracteriza por la diversidad y por una relación dinámica – y, a veces problemática – entre diversos ámbitos culturales y sus procesos y productos’.<sup>25</sup>

### **Corpus of films**

Part of what makes the set of films chosen for study so remarkable is that they all, in various ways, draw attention to the divisions and rifts between state and society, and contribute to dispelling the myth of a coherent and unified national identity. They reveal and examine the complexities of a society that is shown as still struggling to come to terms with the realities of its multicultural identity. Perhaps more intriguing is the fact that these films were all at least part-funded by state resources and accepted by critics, audiences and government authorities as part of the national cinema framework, despite the challenges they pose to an understanding of the conflict with *Sendero*, and national

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<sup>22</sup> Martha Ojeda, ‘Nicomedes Santa Cruz and the Vindication of Afro-Peruvian Culture’, in *Contemporary Latin American Cultural Studies*, ed. by Stephen Hart and Richard Young (London: Arnold, 2003), p. 239-252 (p. 241).

<sup>23</sup> David Wood, *De sabor nacional: El impacto de la cultura popular en el Perú* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2005), p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London: Pluto, 1997), p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> Wood, p. 256.

identity more generally. Most of the films were warmly received by domestic audiences in different parts of the country, and several were also critically acclaimed on the international film festival circuit.

Investigating the cinematic representation of political violence in chronological order, this project takes as its point of departure Francisco Lombardi's powerful and influential account of the state response to the *Sendero* insurgency in his award-winning feature, *La boca del lobo* (1988). All the films selected for close discussion draw upon events, people and images that were already in circulation throughout the national and international public spheres. Some are dramatic reconstructions of specific real events, while others create fictional accounts that help (re)shape memories of a significant period in national history. Most were released after the conflict had officially ended, and some provoked uneasy and sometimes hostile reactions from domestic audiences for raising uncomfortable questions about the complicity of civil society in the suffering of many impoverished Peruvian citizens. As such, they were associated with a left-wing political vision that had been largely discredited through its own uncertain response to the violence. The choice of a set of films that refused to remain silent on a potentially shameful period of national history obliges this project to address the role of national cinema as a forum for testimony and debate. The persistent return to representation of a controversial topic that many might have preferred to forget prompts a further set of questions on the purpose of collective memory. Finally, the study considers the re-emergence and, hence, remembering, of this important era with the release of two very different films shortly after Fujimori's demise: *Paloma de papel* (Fabrizio Aguilar 2003) and, one year later, *Días de Santiago* (Josué Méndez 2004).

All the films selected for close study were made and released during a time of crisis for Peruvian national cinema itself. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the period between 1988 and 2004 coincided with the abolition of a flawed but supportive protectionist cinema policy and with the development of new legislation that philosophically was more in keeping with the prevailing emphasis on neoliberal free market practices. Despite the promise of regular funding competitions, lack of resources and technical infrastructure led to a difficult decade for Peru's national film-makers. Increasing restrictions on freedom of expression due to anti-terrorist legislation that was maintained even after the main insurgent threat had been eliminated affected the extent to which productions could explore issues of social and national concern in explicit terms. Meanwhile, the exhibition infrastructure and demography of cinema-goers changed completely as locally-owned, city centre premises closed or divided their large screens into several smaller, more profitable ones, and US-style multiplexes opened in suburban shopping malls.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, several important films were produced by national film-makers during this period that dared to explore aspects of the *Sendero* conflict and its social consequences in ways that threatened to undermine the position of the state and draw attention not only to flaws in the counter-insurgency strategies of the various regimes

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<sup>26</sup> Enrique Silva reported that after a period in the early 1990s during which many cinemas closed down, by 1997 the growth in number of cinema screens in Lima seemed unstoppable. He wrote that the first main cinema to restructure its architecture so as to offer greater comfort and increased choice was *El Pacífico* in Miraflores which divided its enormous screen into six separate ones in 1995. Throughout the last half of the 1990s, luxurious malls were constructed in various parts of Lima that included multiplex cinemas, most of which were financed by distributors such as the transnational company, Continental Films. It should be noted, however, that this development resulted in greater opportunities for more affluent urban citizens to view studio films from the US rather than support for an emergent diversity of film culture in Peru generally. It also led to a sharp increase in cinema ticket prices, from six to fourteen *soles* in 1997. See Enrique Silva, 'Nuevos cines en Lima: Crecimiento imparable', *La Gran Ilusión*, 8 (1997), 18.

involved, but also to entrenched institutional and social prejudices. This resonates with an important trend within Peruvian cinema to explore the nation's social reality as a way of connecting with domestic audiences and offering an alternative from more commercial domestic and international productions. As Peru's most well-known filmmaker, Francisco Lombardi, has remarked, when he began to make films in the late 1970s it was 'en un momento en el que el cine peruano daba sus primeros balbuceos en relación con su medio, con su ambiente'.<sup>27</sup>

Christian Wiener reflects further on this impulse by national film-makers to tackle issues of immediate social concern: 'de alguna manera, gran parte de nuestros cineastas aprendieron el oficio fílmico en simultáneo con el conocimiento del país y sus monumentales desequilibrios sociales y culturales'.<sup>28</sup> Given also the tradition of cultural production being part of counter-hegemonic discourse since the early twentieth century in Peru, it was perhaps not surprising that several national film-makers would look for ways of bringing aspects of the *Sendero* conflict to the cinema screen. Such material offered plenty of scope for visual spectacle and also allowed for the development of memorable stories based on issues of social and political concern. Such stories contributed to the further development of a successful body of films devoted to the common preoccupation of political violence and national identity, and hence to the relative revitalisation of Peruvian national cinema itself.

The first Peruvian feature film that made explicit reference to the political violence was Lombardi's aforementioned *La boca del lobo* (1988). Despite initial concerns from the authorities, the film was released with official approval and enjoyed a warm reception

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<sup>27</sup> Francisco Lombardi in Ricardo Bedoya, *Entre fauces y colmillos: Las películas de Francisco Lombardi* (Huesca: Festival de Cine de Huesca, 1997a), p. 201.

<sup>28</sup> Christian Wiener, 'Miedos de guerra', *Butaca Sanmarquina*, 12 (2002), 18-20 (p. 18).

from domestic audiences.<sup>29</sup> Cinema critics applauded the way in which *Sendero* was not overtly depicted on screen in simplistic and obvious fashion, but was implicitly suggested as an ominous invisible threat, sheltering in the barren landscape. Despite unanimous praise for its formal qualities, the film's provocative depiction of the military's treatment of Andean villagers caught up in the conflict sparked heated debate, and arguably helped to shape public opinion regarding key events. Above all, it reaffirmed the power of cinema at a time when most were cynical about its social role. As Wiener suggests, 'la reacción que originó el estreno de *La boca del lobo* (1988), acusada por cierto sector de la prensa y el poder castrense de favorecer a la subversión (mientras en el extranjero otros la tildaban por el contrario de militarista) revela una vez más el enorme poder de influencia social que el cine ostenta'.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the film was also important in ensuring the survival of Peruvian cinema at a time of great uncertainty by demonstrating the desire for films that dealt with issues of national concern in cinematically compelling ways.

The next national feature film to broach this topic was *Ni con dios ni con el diablo* (Nilo Pereira del Mar 1990) which focuses on those citizens who became unwittingly implicated in the conflict. The protagonist is a peasant who is forced to flee from his rural community to Lima, and who becomes a victim of abuse from both sides. He discovers that the city does not in fact offer a safe haven for poor people with dark skin and the film thus exposes the racism and prejudice inherent in a society intolerant and fearful of difference.

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<sup>29</sup> Reviews that appeared at the time noted the long queues at the box office and the unusual applause given at the end of many screenings. See, for example, 'Francisco Lombardi está trabajando en dos nuevos proyectos de película', *El Comercio*, 8 December 1988, p.7.

<sup>30</sup> Wiener, 'Miedos de guerra', p.18.

One year later, another established national film-maker, Alberto 'Chicho' Durant, released *Alias la gringa* (1991), a production that was inspired by the true story of a criminal sent to one of the state-run island penitentiaries which also held *Sendero* prisoners. It thus interweaves, in testimonial form, the specific adventures and observations of one man with a broader critical portrayal of the massacre of political prisoners in 1986, widely regarded as one of the most shameful events of the counter-insurgency. The film does not attempt to criticize the state through siding with the insurgents: the *Sendero* fighters are depicted from the point of view of a loner protagonist who feels neither sympathy for nor understanding of their fanatical ways, their absolute faith in the collective over the individual, nor their strategy of complete destruction of the existing state structure. Instead, the film sets up a debate about individual freedom and collective responsibility by focusing on those caught in the crossfire, and appeals for the preservation of a sense of humanity and social concern.

A key turning point for national cinema and the representation of *Sendero* came with Marianne Eyde's production *La vida es una sola* (1993). Like Lombardi, Eyde had been supported in her career, including with funding for this film, by the protective national cinema legislation established in 1972. However, the release of *La vida* was delayed on political grounds for fear of aggravating social unrest at the precise moment when the insurgency had been overcome. *Sendero*'s leader, Abimael Guzmán, was captured in 1992, putting an end to most of the violence. This crucial event also appeared to vindicate the more repressive tactics of the Fujimori regime which were sustained throughout the decade in a bid to maintain political dominance. The film's very precise portrayal of brutal but impassioned and articulate *Sendero* leaders, and of an Andean community that was caught in the crossfire between both sides of the conflict, threatened to undermine state efforts to silence criticism of its actions. Moreover, the

collective desire to forget a period of great national trauma, and to support the government in its plans to unify the nation, was greater it seemed than any impulse to relive and understand events of the recent past.

During the remainder of the 1990s, film-makers adopted an increasingly oblique approach to critical portrayals of the *Sendero* conflict. Although *Anda, corre, vuela ...* (Augusto Tamayo 1995) was produced by Stefan Kaspar of the *Grupo Chaski*, it did not embrace the overtly politicized aesthetics that had characterized the group's work during the previous decade. With Tamayo, Kaspar attempted to continue the popular and politically committed stories of *Gregorio* (1985) and *Juliana* (1988), but deployed urban terrorism as a backdrop to a romantic youth adventure film that had more in common with commercial cinema of the time.

Meanwhile, Lombardi's work became more introspective in its depiction of themes of crisis, violence, terror and guilt in Peru. With *Bajo la piel* (1996), he alluded indirectly and critically to a society in turmoil. As Wiener further points out, the film went against the prevailing mood in confronting such themes as 'el derecho a disponer de la vida de los demás y la verdad escondida, en momentos en que gran parte de la población y el discurso gubernamental hablaban de voltear la página, perdonar a los vencedores y olvidar a los muertos'.<sup>31</sup>

Chicho Durant returned to the theme of political violence more explicitly in *Coraje* (1998), reconstructing key events from the final weeks in the life of iconic community leader María Elena Moyano who was assassinated by *Sendero* in 1992. Criticised for offering a rather sketchy portrayal of the insurgents and an excessively sentimental

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<sup>31</sup> 'Miedos de guerra', p. 20.

depiction of Moyano, Durant's production also suffered, like Eyde's, from the stifling of political debate by the Fujimori regime, and from the constraints of the new funding structure that struggled to meet its commitments.

Undaunted by the limitations of *Coraje* and the struggles of films such as *La vida* to find sympathetic audiences, two new national film-makers returned to the themes of political conflict, social crisis and national identity with productions, made after the collapse of Fujimori's government, that enjoyed much greater domestic and international acclaim. Their success is suggestive of a renewed collective desire to remember, reclaim and redefine the past, with the hope of better understanding and dealing with the present and – perhaps – in order to set the framework for shaping a future for a more culturally inclusive nation that rejects violence. As Wiener points out, such projects developed by a younger generation that experienced the violence and its consequences in different ways have the potential to offer 'nuevas perspectivas y elementos sobre un episodio y una época aún latente en la conciencia del país, y de la que todavía hay mucho que decir'.<sup>32</sup>

The release of the first of these, *Paloma de papel* (Fabrizio Aguilar 2003), coincided with the publication of the final report from the *Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* (CVR), commissioned by an interim government, on the *Sendero* conflict and related human rights abuses. Both the film and the report sparked renewed debate on events that had taken place between 1980 and 2000, including abuses committed by the state on villagers suspected of sympathizing or collaborating with the insurgents in some way. It questioned the clarity of labels such as terrorist and victim, by showing how villagers were coerced through physical violence or political rhetoric to engage in rebel

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<sup>32</sup> 'Miedos de guerra', p. 20.



activity, often fearing for their lives. The film enjoyed enormous success throughout Peru, especially amongst Andean audiences whose experience during the conflict had been largely erased from dominant discourse.

Finally, *Días de Santiago* (Josué Méndez 2004) offered a new dimension to the representation of political violence in Peru by avoiding any direct depictions of military conflict. Instead, it focuses on the intense struggles faced by its ex-marine protagonist to come to terms with the daily frustrations of civilian life in Lima while still traumatized by memories of battle with a range of enemies that included the remnants of *Sendero* insurgent cells. The film represented a new high point for Peruvian cinema in that it was critically acclaimed domestically and at festivals around the world, enjoyed by the Peruvian public in commercial cinemas, and resulted in the award of a screenwriting residency for the director from the prestigious Cannes Film Festival.

### **Literature review**

There are very few published works on Peruvian cinema in English or Spanish; most of what is available has been produced by Peruvian writers and publishers, often in collaboration with festivals or universities. The primary works on Peruvian cinema up to 1972, the year of the introduction of protective cinema legislation, include Giancarlo Carbone's two edited volumes of eyewitness accounts from critics and film-makers of the time, and Violeta Núñez Gorriti's critical study of the so-called 'golden age' of Peruvian cinema, 1936-1950.<sup>33</sup> These have been of some preliminary use in helping to inform the historical cinematic framework for this study only. Most of the monograph studies of contemporary Peruvian cinema have been developed by Ricardo Bedoya,

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<sup>33</sup> Giancarlo Carbone, *El cine en el Perú, 1897-1950: Testimonios* (Lima: Universidad de Lima, 1991); Giancarlo Carbone, *El cine en el Perú, 1950-1972: Testimonios* (Lima:

Peruvian critic, academic and film historian. These include the following: a comprehensive illustrated dictionary of Peruvian films, incorporating edited reviews of each entry, and an annotated book of stills which were published to coincide with the centenary of cinema; a critical history of Peruvian cinema up to 1997; and a detailed analysis of the work of Francisco Lombardi, Peru's most productive and internationally acclaimed film-maker.<sup>34</sup> While useful in that they document the setting up and impact of the first cinema law of 1972, and the analyses of the form and context of Lombardi's work have helped the development of ideas concerned with representing violence, they cover only the period up to the mid-1990s and make only scant address to the specific political conflict with *Sendero*. Bedoya's chapter on Lombardi's seminal *La boca del lobo* (1988) in a collection of textual analyses of key Latin American films is one of the only pieces of its kind available in English, but is little more than a drawing together of ideas already published in his Spanish language texts.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, Lucía Galleno's more recent essay on the same film, included in a Spanish language collection of articles on political violence and culture in Peru since 1980, focuses mainly on its representation of sexual violence and abuse committed by officers towards young Andean women.<sup>36</sup> The only other English language resource that explicitly informed the initial research for this study of Peruvian cinema is John King's history of Latin

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Universidad de Lima, 1991); Violeta Núñez Gorrutti, *Pitas y Alambre: La época de oro del cine peruano, 1936-1950* (Lima: Editorial Colmillo Blanco, 1990).

<sup>34</sup> Ricardo Bedoya, *Cien Años de Cine en el Perú: Una Historia Crítica* (Lima: Universidad de Lima/Fondo de Desarrollo Editorial, 1995); *Entre Fauces y Colmillos: Las Películas de Francisco Lombardi* (Huesca: Festival de Cine de Huesca, 1997a); *Un Cine Reencontrado: Diccionario Ilustrado de las Películas Peruanas* (Lima: Universidad de Lima/ Fondo de Desarrollo Editorial, 1997b); *Imágenes del Cine en el Perú*. (Lima: Banco Central de Reserva del Perú & Conacine, 1999). All were produced to commemorate the first centenary of cinema in Peru. While the first three are rigorous, critical studies, the fourth is a more glossy publication that makes extensive use of the stills from the national archive.

<sup>35</sup> Ricardo Bedoya, 'La Boca del lobo/The lion's den,' pp. 185-192.

<sup>36</sup> Lucía Galleno, 'El ataque sexual y canibalismo de la bestia en *La boca del lobo*' in *Pachaticray (El Mundo al Revés): Testimonios y ensayos sobre la violencia política y la*

American cinema, *Magical Reels*, which in its overview of the cinemas of the Andes makes a brief address to the Peruvian context and some key developments.<sup>37</sup> Undoubtedly more helpful have been the annual contributions provided by national critic and academic Isaac León Frías to the international film guides published under the auspices of *Variety* trade magazine and, more recently, *The Guardian* newspaper.<sup>38</sup>

Although published academic work on Peruvian cinema remains scarce, film criticism has been a thriving activity throughout Latin America since the late 1960s when, as Middents notes, film-makers and writers reacted ‘to dominating forces within their cultures with a new sense of politically motivated activism’.<sup>39</sup> Several national film journals have proved invaluable to this study, including *Hablemos de Cine* (founded in 1965), its successors *La Gran Ilusión* and *Tren de Sombras*, *Butaca Sanmartina* and *Abre los Ojos*. Essays, reviews and interviews published in *La Gran Ilusión* have been particularly relevant as it stands out as the only national cinema journal to have reviewed all the Peruvian films made and documented the changing legislative framework for cinema in Peru throughout the 1990s. Primary sources from the government body for national cinema that document the changing legislation during the period under scrutiny have also been essential.<sup>40</sup> Finally, the resources of the national

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*cultura peruana desde 1980*, ed. by Mark R. Cox (Lima: San Marcos, 2004), pp. 139-147.

<sup>37</sup> John King, ‘Andean Images: Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru’, in *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 189-206.

<sup>38</sup> The annual guides produced for *Variety*, and edited by Peter Cowie and Daniel Rosenthal, include a short statement on each Peruvian film made, released or in development during the year of publication and a brief overview of the context for national cinema generally.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey Middents, ‘Peru vs. the New Latin American Cinema: *Hablemos de cine* and the Viña del Mar Film Festivals of 1967 and 1969’ (unpublished article, 2006), p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> The most important of these were produced by lawyer José Perla Anaya, *Censura y Promoción en el Cine* (Lima: Deyco Instituto Peruano de Derecho de las Comunicaciones, 1991); *Los Tres Primeros Años: Memoria 1996-1998* (Lima: Conacine, 1998).

*Filmoteca de Lima*, in particular the newspaper reviews of and features on all the films and directors examined in this project, have provided the most compelling evidence of critical and audience response that helped frame the debate about the cultural role of national cinema at a time of political and social crisis.

In terms of secondary sources, a range of theoretical literature that deals with issues of national identity, both general and pertaining specifically to the Peruvian context, has been drawn upon in conducting this study, some of which has already been noted in earlier parts of this introduction. Contemporary debates that rage between national journalists and commentators every year as Independence Day approaches about the complexity and evolution of *peruanidad* have been particularly useful and enlightening, as have personal discussions with academics and film-makers on this topic. The key themes of memory and trauma began to emerge more strongly and openly during the latter period of research, coinciding with public debates sparked by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. With this in mind, it felt important occasionally to draw upon psychoanalytical approaches to the understanding of social structures, human relationships, the unconscious and the way such concepts are associated with cinema, using the work, for example, of Sigmund Freud, Elizabeth Jelin, Gonzalo Portocarrero, Erich Fromm and Kaja Silverman. This will be seen in the analyses of Lombardi's *Bajo la piel* that interrogates the human capacity for horror and violence, of Aguilar's *Paloma de papel* that traces its protagonist's memory of a traumatic violent event that marked the end of his childhood, and Méndez's *Días de Santiago* that portrays the collapse of its protagonist's subjectivity as he struggles to cope with brutal events of both past and present.

## **Organisation of project**

The rest of the first Part of this project consists of two chapters that set out the contexts of cinematic and national crisis. Chapter Two addresses some of the specificities of contemporary Peruvian cinema, including its relationship with state institutions and the shift from protectionist to free market approaches to culture. It also overviews key issues pertaining to the development of Peruvian national identity since independence from Spain. Chapter Three provides a discussion of the emergence of *Sendero Luminoso* and draws on a range of writers and positions in an attempt to highlight some of the key debates that seek to explain the appeal and strategies of such a group. Parts Two, Three and Four comprise critical analyses of the nine films briefly outlined above, addressed chronologically and grouped in such a way as to reflect the various political and legislative contexts that prevailed between 1988 and 2004. These chapters focus mainly on examining the diverse cinematic approaches to representing the most recent period of political conflict and its impact on Peruvian society and identity. Close textual analysis is supported by further contextual discussion of pertinent issues such as urban migration, *mestizaje*, indigenous rituals and belief systems, and gender positions. Consideration is also given to the domestic and international reception of the films, and the relationship between such films and the Peruvian authorities.

The role of Peruvian national cinema in challenging dominant discourses of identity that privilege white patriarchal culture, and in shaping new perceptions of the nation is discussed in the concluding part of this project. The emerging sense of violence as an inescapable, inevitable and integral element of Peruvian national identity is set out, as is the challenge to stereotypes of gender roles offered by several of the films through the portrayal of complex female characters engaged in acts of violence or resistance. In all areas, issues of 'intertextual and socio-political and/or socio-cultural coherence [that

are] implicitly or explicitly assigned to the nation' are addressed in the context of this specific topic, further highlighting the undeniable complexity of national cinema debates.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the project considers the capacity of Peruvian cinema to contribute effectively to public debate about issues of national concern, when as Michael Chanan suggests in his discussion of Latin American film-makers who lack vigorous and sustained state support, 'everything would seem to be against the idea'.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Philip Rosen, 'History, Textuality, Nation: Kracauer, Burch and Some Problems in the Study of National Cinema', in *Theorising National Cinema*, ed. by Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemsen (London: British Film Institute, 2006), pp. 17-28 (p. 18).

<sup>42</sup> Michael Chanan, 'The Economic Condition of Cinema in Latin America', in *New Latin American Cinema Volume One: Theory, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, ed. by Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 185-200, (p. 196).