

Part Four

Cinema, Memory and Truth

Part Four focuses on two important national films that were made and released after the abrupt end of the Fujimori regime in 2000, one of which looks back at a specific period during the *Sendero* conflict while the other examines the fragmented nature of society in Lima. Both take the point of view of a young man who has experienced the trauma of violence. While Juan, the protagonist of Aguilar's *Paloma de papel* (2003) looks back on his childhood in a rural village and remembers his reluctant involvement with the insurgent campaign, the eponymous hero of *Días de Santiago* (Méndez 2004) struggles to cope with his return to life in Lima after several years fighting as a member of the marines in the remote parts of Peru. Each film exposes the persistence of prejudice rooted in cultural and economic difference.

During the end of the 1990s and Fujimori's second term in office, dissatisfaction with the President's increasingly dictatorial style of government had spread and social unrest was on the rise. Despite winning a third term after a suspicious election round in early 2000, he was forced to resign after the national media revealed a series of corruption scandals that implicated Fujimori and many of his senior ministers. An interim government oversaw fresh elections and established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that had long been promised as a way of exposing some of the truths about the so-called dirty war that had threatened to destabilise the nation between 1980 and 1992. While the Commission was welcomed by many, it was greeted with suspicion by others who preferred, for a range of reasons, to forget the traumas of the past. Amongst other things, the final report published in September 2003 revealed that some of the acts of violence perpetrated by the military resulted from deep racial prejudice and lack of understanding. Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006) became the first Peruvian president of indigenous descent, and was welcomed by the poor majority with excitement, anticipation and expectation. His style of governing quickly lost its popularity, however, when Toledo's policies failed to improve the living conditions of those who suffered the

most. Indeed, while the nation's macro-economic situation improved during his term, the daily life for many families remained extremely harsh.

By 2003, the cinema legislation of 1994 was still just about in place, but only a small proportion of the intended funding had been made available during those first nine years of the new legal framework for supporting national cinema. It had proven difficult for the body established to oversee the administration of its activities to fulfil its mission in a way that would set the agenda and create the infrastructure for the development of a sustainable national film industry. Amongst the new generation of national film-makers, there was an increasing awareness and acceptance of the need to look beyond national borders for funding, an approach that represented a departure from the attitude of some of their predecessors who had favoured the protectionist model of more vigorous state support. Indeed, the funding histories of the films discussed in Part Four demonstrate both the possibilities and complexities of transnational co-production arrangements.

While issues of violence, and to a lesser extent identity, had continued to be concerns of those handful of films made between 1998 and 2004, only the two examined here make an explicit effort to tackle the relationship between recent episodes of political violence and national identity. *Santiago* makes reference to post-*Sendero* conflicts, such as the border struggle with Ecuador, that demonstrate the continuing desire to protect boundaries and territories, while *Paloma* deals directly with the experience of *Sendero* violence and its impact on a remote Andean community. As such it triggers memories not only of the conflict itself, but also of those earlier national films, such as Lombardi's *La boca* and Eyde's *La vida*, that shared similar locations and concerns. While *Paloma* tackles the past and *Santiago* struggles with the present, both films seem reluctant to

suggest a more promising and enlightened future and, like their predecessors, they fall short of foreseeing a future for Peru that is not tainted by violence.