

Part Three

Cinema, Oppression and Ideology

Part Three examines four national feature films made between 1993 and 1998, a period that spans the first and second terms of President Fujimori's increasingly oppressive regime and a time when freedom to debate difficult issues of national concern was gradually stifled. In early 1992, Fujimori had enacted a shocking *autogolpe* and created a new constitution and government structure that was welcomed by many of the electorate who felt isolated by and marginalized from the ruling elite. This move, which included the strengthening of anti-terrorist legislation, also served to counter some of the criticisms that had fuelled sympathy for the *Sendero* campaign that was determined to destroy all the authorities and institutions of Peru before creating a new system that promised to address issues of injustice and inequality. Moreover, later in 1992, Fujimori's security forces succeeded in capturing the *Sendero* leader and produced memorable media images of a humiliated Guzmán, caged, bound and dressed in prisoner's uniform. There swiftly followed a cessation of violence and the end of *Sendero* as an organised group. Finally, Fujimori quickly embraced a neoliberal approach to economic development, welcoming foreign investment in particular, and introduced policies that stabilised the nation ready for future growth.

Within this context, national cinema struggled as the plans for a revised cinema law were abolished by Fujimori's regime and a new project was unilaterally developed by the Finance Minister and approved by government without any consultation with film-makers or producers. This new legislation did away with guaranteed screening and associated revenue and introduced a competitive funding mechanism which emphasised the need to look for matched funds beyond the state. Most national film-makers were alarmed by these developments and their fears were borne out when the funds to support such a scheme failed to materialise. Indeed, three of the films addressed in this

section were made during the period when state resources had dried up completely while the fourth, completed after a barren year for national cinema in 1997, received a small amount of funding but suffered from lengthy production delays and complex co-production arrangements with a range of overseas partners. Meanwhile, a new regional venture called *Ibermedia* was set up in a bid to encourage film-making in Latin America through the pooling of resources, but Peruvian directors were unable to benefit from this until 2001 due to Fujimori's failure to fulfil the required national contribution.

Films that dealt with political issues struggled, and even Lombardi's work became increasingly symbolic, tackling less directly the contemporary Peruvian situation. Violence and identity remain at the heart of each of the films under discussion in Part Three and female identity is shown to play a more important role in each with protagonists as warriors, protestors, survivors and victims. Indeed, there is a blurring and shifting of the boundaries between these labels as complex characters are developed. Marianne Eyde's *La vida es una sola* (1993) was the first to look closely at the position of women in the conflict and hence to interrogate and complicate the relationship between patriarchy and violence in the contemporary Peruvian context. Her fictional depiction of events located in the Andes provoked more hostility than any of the other films addressed in this study, and the detail of the film's controversy is explored. Two years later, Augusto Tamayo released *Anda, corre, vuela ...* (1995), a film that draws on the socialist ideology and neorealist pretensions of previous Chaski productions to highlight some of the injustices and prejudices of the counter-insurgent campaign, and to argue for models of social development that reject violence.

Lombardi's *Bajo la piel* (1996) is a much darker affair, preoccupied with the historical roots of violence in Peruvian culture, and the apparently inextricable connection

between brutality and national identity. The film draws on exotic aspects of the ancient Moche culture to emphasise the inescapability and inevitability of violence in human behaviour generally, and suggests a close relationship between beauty and horror, death and passion. It links this to the national context by developing a provocative connection between the actions of a serial murderer and a copycat killer operating in the 1990s, the insurgent violence of *Sendero Luminoso*, and the rituals of human sacrifice as practised by the ancient Moche civilization.

Finally, *Coraje* (Durant 1998) is discussed in terms of its representation of a controversial woman whose real-life role as defiant community leader is presented as an iconic figurehead for non-violent social change. The issues explored within the film and its difficult reception offer the possibility to probe further both the political role of national cinema to activate public debate on events of national concern, and its capacity to provoke opposition to the prevailing hegemonic discourse of the second Fujimori administration.