

Reframing Transitions and Contesting Memories: The Archive and the Archival Object in Peruvian Cinema

Abstract:

This essay considers the stories behind the production and screening of two very different Peruvian films that both reveal much about the way the archive, the archival object and archival fragment have worked to disrupt and force a reconsideration of key moments in Peruvian political history of the twentieth century. One, a feature film by Francisco Lombardi, *Ojos que no ven/Eyes that don't see* (2003), provides a provocative perspective on the impact of the televisual revelations of the corruption at the heart of President Fujimori's government (1990-2000). The second, a documentary made by Kurt Herrmann at the behest of the military, *Alerta en la Frontera/Border Alert* (1941), offers a patriotic recording of the border campaign against Ecuador which was banned at the time and had its first public screening seventy years later. The analysis suggests that the delay in viewing events of such national importance forces not only a reconsideration of those events and their disruptive effect on a collective, official sense of national history and identity, but also a questioning of the way that contemporary political figures and events might be considered. This article also takes account of the key role of Peru's national film archive in shaping the nature of national heritage, culture and memory.

Keywords: Peru; archive; Francisco Lombardi; contested memory; national history; identity

Introduction

Peru, like many of the countries under discussion in this issue, has a fragile and fragmented film production ecology that relies to a large extent on passion, serendipity and transnational patrons. It is also a nation in transition in the sense both that it is still recovering from the internal conflict between state and Shining Path insurgents that wreaked havoc for thousands of citizens from all strata of society over two decades up to the year 2000, and also that the shift to democracy continues to be wrought with difficulty. That transition might also be considered from the point of view of the nation's move to modernity, especially with regard to state support for its audiovisual industries which has been fraught with financial and political difficulty.¹

By way of offering specific approaches to understand the political power-plays at stake between those industries and the state within the context of transition, this essay provides discussion of Peruvian productions which draw attention to the contentious role of the archive and archival sources, and which raise questions about the tensions between ownership, rights, preservation and access. First, the focus is placed on one of the more controversial works by prominent fiction director Francisco Lombardi, *Ojos que no Ven/Eyes that don't see* (2003), which inserts actual video-recorded and later televised accounts of the corruption that led to the collapse of former President Fujimori's regime into its drama, some of which are fragments of actual videos taken at the time and some of which are reconstructions of events as imagined by the director. Thereafter, the second section of this essay offers discussion of a highly significant propaganda film called *Alerta en la Frontera/Border Alert* (Kurt Herrmann, 1941), which was banned as soon as it was completed despite being commissioned by the government, and then lost or abandoned. Having been recently rediscovered by chance, it has become the subject of hot debate in relation to its status as national treasure as well as for what it portrays, and whether it should be subject to lengthy and costly preservation. This essay considers the cultural, social and political value of such controversial restoration work, and the role played by the national archive in this endeavour. It is suggested that these productions, and the national archive itself, play crucial roles of mediation of the past and remediation of historical documents that force a reconsideration of modern day Peru. Thus, it is argued, they offer a reframing of the various modes of transitions whether from a socio-political or audiovisual perspective, through processes of remediation of audio-visual material that 'function in a constant dialectic' (Bolter and Grusin 2000: 50) with each other and with their contexts. In sum, they force us to think in a different way about the role of the archive and archival footage as active participants in the curation of a collective history.

Intimate Stories and Archival Fragments: *Ojos que no ven/Eyes that don't see* (Francisco Lombardi 2003)

The cinema of Francisco Lombardi, starting with his first feature *Muerte al amanecer/Death at dawn* (1977) has always been inextricably linked to the social and political history of the Peruvian nation, usually through dramatic accounts of events relating to violence and corruption. As Elizabeth Montes Garcés and Myriam Osorio have summarized, his oeuvre ranges from 'human exploitation and greed to fanaticism to the role of the media in shaping

public opinion' (2011: 79). Apart from during the mid-1990s when for various reasons connected primarily with funding challenges, shifting audience tastes and the threat of government intervention, Lombardi's works have been bold in shedding light on the actions of those in power and the impact of those actions on the ordinary citizens of Peru. And yet, he has largely avoided the levels of criticism and vilification to which some of his fellow filmmakers of the time have been subjected, in part because he has been consistent in emphasizing the fictional nature of his work, proclaiming to prioritize storytelling and character development over direct political comment. In his seminal feature of 1998 for example, *La boca del lobo/The lion's den*, Lombardi gave an explicit dramatic portrayal of the violence of the insurgent group Shining Path and its impact on both young military men sent out to eradicate it and the rural communities caught in the crossfire. The film's close allusions to a real attack on the Andean village of Socos in 1983 – including direct reference to that event in the film's opening scrolling text, a research process that involved testimonies from witnesses of those events, and reviews by Peru's most prominent film critic that acknowledged that 'the film might be seen as a denunciation of the policies adopted by the government and an indictment of the "inhumanity" that resulted from the "dirty war" between Shining Path and the Peruvian Army' (Bedoya in Elena and López 2003: 185) – sparked controversy. And yet Lombardi himself insisted in interviews at the time of the film's release that his primary concern was to create a work of fiction and a reflection on violence which was 'enduring, not limited to one specific place at one moment in time' (Barrow in Fowler and Lambert 2006: 136).² Moreover, it has been noted by several other commentators that by electing to focus on the emotional and psychological turmoil of his protagonists, Lombardi managed to 'depoliticize the film and present a variation of the adventure narrative – a group of paranoid soldiers confronting an invisible enemy in an alien environment' (da Gama, 2007).

This indirect approach to the portrayal of past events through genre and fictional drama was disrupted in 2003 with the release of *Ojos que no ven*, an incisive account of the intertwined lives of several Peruvian citizens who represent a cross-section of the country's socio-economic strata during the uncertainty of the ever-increasing scandal surrounding the intricate web of corruption woven by presidential adviser Vladimiro Montesinos that eventually led to the downfall of President Alberto Fujimori. Set in Lima during the waning days of Fujimori's presidency, Lombardi's film offers a composite portrait of a society in transition. It begins at the precise moment when evidence of the corruption at the heart of

Fujimori's government emerged on the nation's TV screens and continues through the months of high level exile, resignation and arrest. It ends as the nation is placed in the safe hands of an interim government led by Valentín Paniagua who brought the country back to democratic rule and launched an independent investigation into human rights abuses. The film is structured around the themes of lack of vision, the impossibility of speaking out, or betrayal and the immense challenges of redemption. Most importantly I suggest, it marks a turning point for a consideration of Lombardi's work in that it incorporates segments of the actual recordings of the corruption-in-action into the drama in a way that not only heightens the realism of the film but at the same time draws attention to the very relationship between the filmic image and authenticity. The director might still wish to argue that this film remains a work of fiction, that its focus is on fictional characters and that the film's overarching themes are perennial concerns that, as Mette Hjort outlined in her discussion of the articulation of themes of nation in cinema, 'resonate across historical and cultural boundaries' (2000: 106) such as betrayal and redemption rather than topical ones that 'arise within, and remain relevant to, a highly specific historical or cultural formation' (2000: 106). However, I would contend that the direct incorporation of a series of televisual archival fragments (Baron 2014: 355) to punctuate that drama lend this film a heightened sense of realism and undeniable indexicality that bring the topical messages to the fore. Moreover, the choices made regarding the positioning of each insert into the fabric of the diegesis and the responses of the various characters to the real-life drama they watch on their TV screens ensures that while the possibility of excessive meaning and multiple interpretations is acknowledged, in fact a version of events is offered that reveals an intense disdain on the part of Lombardi for formal politics in Peru.

Some brief context should be provided about the 'real' footage that Lombardi draws upon, in order to appreciate the complex multi-layering and re-presentation that is at play here. This should also serve to underscore the magnitude of the revelations as they were played out on TV screens in 2000 and later curated, edited and retold via Lombardi's film on cinema screens three years later. In fact, *Ojos que no ven* opens with images taken directly from the TV screening of the leaked video recordings that presidential advisor and head of the National Secret Service Vladimiro Montesinos had made throughout the 1990s as he bribed industrialists, military officers, opposition politicians and media proprietors with a seemingly unstoppable campaign of corruption that reached all spheres of political and public life.³

These first images were screened on 14 September 2000, by a relatively new national cable and satellite TV channel, Canal N, as part of a formal press conference of a video acquired by a group of opposition politicians. One of those, Luis Iberico, had established contact with a group of Secret Intelligence agents, who offered him the video that showed Montesinos handing money over to another opposition congressman Alberto Kouri in return for his defection to the party led by Fujimori. The repercussions of the discovery of these recordings (filmed with hidden cameras and kept as a private and politically explosive archive in Montesinos' house on the coast) and their subsequent screening via national television were such that they brought an end to the Fujimori regime. Montesinos fled from Peru (later to return and become incarcerated); Fujimori resigned from his position by fax from Japan (also returned and was incarcerated); and a transition government led by Valentín Paniagua was installed. Acknowledging the great impact of these discoveries and emphasising Lombardi's take on events, the press pack for *Ojos* affirmed that this was the 'starting point that led to the unveiling of the monstrous machinery of corruption' (2003). Over a period of eight months, more and more of these 'Vladivideos' were released as such on TV screens via news bulletins on Canal N. In one, the owners of Channel 2 are seen being offered US \$500,000 a month to ban appearances of the political opposition on their channel. Another showed Channel 4 owners receiving \$1.5 million a month for similar co-operation. Others reveal Montesinos counting out \$350,000 in cash to Channel 5's proprietor, and the owner of Channel 9 receiving \$50,000 to cancel an investigative series called *SIN censura/Uncensored*. In June 2001, with the assistance of the US Government, Montesinos was turned over to the Venezuelan government in Caracas and extradited back to Peru. The impact of this footage being played out day and night as rolling news bulletins was unprecedented. As Jon Beasley-Murray has described, 'as hundreds of these so-called vladivideos came to light, to be played nightly on the television news, the murky world of official corruption became a spectacle, a sort of soap opera that glued Peruvians to their television screens' (2007).

Ojo que no ven follows several fictional storylines set against a backdrop of the real-life collapse of Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori's regime; each storyline is emblematic of real situations and designed to reveal the corrupting and corrosive nature of power; most of the drama is focused on ordinary people whose lives were in different ways damaged by the events that unfurl on the TV screens. The archival footage (real and reconstructed) might occupy just a tiny proportion of screen time (less than two per cent), and yet its impact is monumental. I would suggest that the excessive value of the televisual interruptions (echoing

the concept elaborated by Jaime Baron in her work on the power of the archival fragment) is as important to the impact of the film's narrative as it was in real life and is a large part of the affective appeal of this feature production. Lives were changed both by the effects of what was shown in the footage and by the viewing of the footage itself by a mass public. Within the cinematic context a further impact is granted that is disruptive in terms of undermining a sense of national memory and identity. In the first place, the audience of Lombardi's film witnesses how the evidence of the corruption that had been at the heart of Fujimori's regime was made visible via the discovery and broadcast of the 'vladivideos' themselves and created shock waves across Peru. In the second place, the film, with its selective reuse of the material and its reconstructions of the past, brings this murky moment of recent political history back to life and forces a reconsideration of behaviour on the part of those in power on a more general and contemporary level. It asks, one decade later, whether we can be sure whether this corruption might not have been happening again.

The prologue sequence that precedes the opening credits opens abruptly with images of the direct transmission of a fragment of the Kouri bribery video as it appears 'live', reconstructed in the diegesis of this film, 'as live', recalling Bruzzi's concept of 'approximation' in her essay of 2013 when she studies how the document, the factual footage is used as the mise-en-scene of the fiction. Just as one might begin to question the rationale for this grainy picture that bears no resemblance in its composition or quality to a well-shot piece of fiction cinema, the camera pulls back to reveal a fictionalised hospital scene with several characters watching the TV and providing comment who end up becoming embroiled in one way or another in the traces of what they see on screen. In fact the ever-present TV set placed by beds, in kitchens and living rooms, becomes a linking device of the film itself, bringing together a range of characters and their circumstances. Over the course of the film's narrative and via the archival fragments shown on those TV screens, the slow agony of the developing scandal is transmitted and revealed as the extent of the corruption becomes apparent.

The specific crime committed by the main military character Colonel Revoredo (Gianfranco Brero) is not outlined, but he seems to know that he will be lucky to escape the country with his life, let alone his military status. Lawyer Penaflor del Aguila (Gustavo Bueno) finds that his method of achieving success for his clients through bribery of corrupt officials is now useless; on the other hand, Mercedes (Melania Urbina) is the innocent girl who desperately tries to help her criminal father and sick grandfather, and finds herself the unwitting victim of

those who have lost all sense of morality. Meanwhile, Helena Polanco (Patricia Pereyra) is raped by a member of the group that committed mass murder on behalf of the Armed Forces in 1992, while her husband Antonio (Miguel Iza), a forensic anthropologist, is assassinated by the same man for working to reveal the truth of that massacre. Almost all of these characters cross paths at some point, and almost all have reason to visit the main public hospital as patient or visitor, which provides a geographical and thematic thread for events as well as the main location for the collective viewing on TV of the unfurling political chaos. Don Lucho (Carlos Gassols) and Don Victor (Jorge Rodríguez Paz) are the two elderly patients who serve as direct mediators of the ‘vladivideo’ revelations, responding to each new episode of the real-life soap opera by providing context, opinion and links back to earlier key moments of Peruvian political history. Their differing responses to the footage are representative of two of the main opposing views of the time and show succinctly how such pre-formed views lead to conflicting interpretations of the same images even when viewed in exactly the same context in terms of time (as live) and space (in hospital): for one is a staunch supporter of President Fujimori for his neoliberal economic policy that seems to be on the side of the poor and for his strict anti-terrorist stance; the other is very much against him since he sympathises with the main left wing opponents.⁴ As the title of the film suggests, neither of these characters really sees what is going on in the footage; instead, they impose their own views upon it, predicting alternative endings.

Moreover via those TV images, links are provided to the behind-the-scenes drama at the television station where the rolling news is breaking, where Gonzalo the celebrated newsreader (Paul Vega) becomes increasingly disillusioned with his lack of power to make any difference, and Angélica (Tatiana Astengo) is the frustrated make-up artist whose ambition to marry is thwarted by the discovery – through the TV images – that her boyfriend is also implicated in the corruption. While the ‘vladivideo’ archive itself comprised of the recording of acts of bribery of those at the highest levels of society in order to keep Fujimori in power, the way each fragment of archival footage is inserted into the everyday lives and (via the TV set) the intimate spaces of each of the characters shows the extent to which the revelation of that archive had the potential to affect everyone. Lasting over 155 minutes (the longest of Lombardi’s films to date), the story cross-cuts from one set of characters to another, and back again, using a network narrative structure that reflects the multi-layered web-like structure of actual corruption and which is held together largely by the ‘vladivideos’

archive inserts. As Bedoya notes, Lombardi's film marks 'the end of an era and highlights the ill-fated moments of disaster that most distinguished it [...] moments and feelings embodied by the emblematic characters who are defined by their proximity to or distance from the corrupt political environment' (2015: 437) and its use of the very archival footage that rocked the whole nation as it was shown, intertwined with fictionalised accounts of the effect of the revelations and the corruption it exposed, bestows upon the film a sense of shock and awe, of what Baron would term 'excess' (2014: 109).

At the same time, however, this film is amongst those that Baron might suggest points to 'one of the paradoxes of the archive [...] constituted by both absence and excess' (2014: 110). Even as Lombardi's work reveals these real fragments and while several of the most infamous clips are freely available on Youtube, the film suggests that public access to this very peculiar archive was likely to remain highly controlled. As this film also reveals through its own narrative structure, only select highlights of the 'vladivideo' footage were shown on national TV, over the course of several months, as multiple layers of lawyers and clerks watched, scrutinised, logged and sought approval for the broadcast or otherwise of each 'episode'. As such, and as echoed in Lombardi's fiction mainly through the running commentary and fierce political arguments enacted by Don Lucho and Don Victor from their hospital beds, the archive was released onto TV screens as fragments, put into context by a newsreader who is shown being warned by his (implicated) producer not to make any comment about what he sees that might lead to further harmful revelations, and with an omniscient overarching curator/director. Such a situation led inevitably (in real life as in Lombardi's fictional version) to multiple conspiracies amongst its largely passive and powerful spectators. Moreover, as Margarita Saona points out in her important text on memory matters and transitional Peru – and as Lombardi makes clear through his own choice of archival inserts (curator of the already curated) and dramatic reconstructions – 'the videos shown on TV repeated over and over the same scene with a different character: Montesinos bribing yet another government or media personality' (2014: 38). Indeed, for Saona, 'those images seemed to catch Peruvians in a nightmarish standstill, stuck in a primal scene, outside of history' (2014: 38). This vision of nightmare is certainly at the heart of Lombardi's interpretation, as no character is spared from the evil consequences of the corruption that is shown by the archival footage as being at the heart of the nation's ills, and no neat vision of the future is offered.

Ojos Que No Ven is not a political film in the way that political Latin American films of the 1950s and 1960s were. Although Lombardi lost most of his co-production support for creating a script that appeared to focus too much on one nation's topical concerns, this is not a film about Montesinos or Fujimori; it is more interested in the politics of the everyday and the way that politics is the foundation upon and the context against which the more intimate stories are developed. The political and the private are intertwined, and the archival footage fragments or inserts themselves achieve this through their interplay of excess and absence. All are connected by their relationship to the broader political events; on the one hand the archival fragments serve as 'missing pieces' (Baron 2014: 110) in the contemporary political history of Peru; on the other, they bring together disparate groups of people in what is essentially a universally human story. As Peruvian critic Federico de Cárdenas has noted, this film is above all the story of a group of people whose lives are changed irrevocably by the decline and fall of a corrupt government whose modus operandi was the clandestine recording of acts of bribery which ended up being brought to light (first on TV in 2000 and later in Lombardi's film) 'precisely because of their predilection for secrecy and espionage' (2014: 123).

Rediscovering History: *Alerta en la Frontera/Border Alert* (Kurt Herrmann 1941)

By contrast, this second film under discussion was primarily concerned with the recording and representation of an important moment in Peruvian history when a border dispute with Ecuador dating back to 1840 resulted in the first of three military conflicts between the two nations in the twentieth century.⁵ Although Herrmann's film, a little like Lombardi's, uses a blend of archival footage and dramatic reconstructions, the explicit mission set for Herrman was to represent (a version of) reality in the form of documentary for propaganda purposes. The irony is that it was banned from being screened until recently rediscovered precisely because by the time the film had been completed, the outcome of the struggle had moved beyond military conflict to diplomatic negotiation, and it was concluded that exhibition of the film at such a delicate time might have provoked further conflict between the adversaries. Despite its patriotic tone, the Peruvian government realized it could not allow the film to be screened while peace negotiations were underway for fear of it igniting further resentment and hostility. Recently rediscovered by the Ministry of Defense, the film was finally screened at the Lima Film Festival 2014, over seven decades after it was made and after the end of that

conflict. This section of this essay explores the story of the film and some its distinctive features, including its use of archival footage, and then pays attention to its status as rediscovered archival object, as a preservation/conservation project, as historical document that has the potential to bring fresh controversy as well as to trigger and reshape memories of another important moment in Peru's history. It is argued here that it is the very act of rediscovery of the film, the debates about its preservation and screening, and the unusual partnership between the National Film Archive, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Defense, that provide most interest to this cinematic (hi)story. It is further suggested that this extraordinary film and reflection on the controversy surrounding both its context for production and its preservation provide a springboard for thinking about how and the extent to which the past increasingly frames our relationship to the present. It also allows us to consider the relationship between film-maker, state (whether represented by military or national archive) and spectator, and the complicated business of propaganda, censorship and the role of film in shaping a national history.

Alerta en la Frontera/Border Alert records and recounts the conflict between Peru and Ecuador of 1941,⁶ using unreleased footage captured by war correspondents and reconstructions made by director Kurt Herrmann and a production team consisting largely of former members of Amauta Films. Amauta was a company which had been established in the late 1930s with a remit to produce some of the first sound feature films in Peru. Like many companies of its sort in Peru, Amauta was short-lived, closing down as a formal entity in 1940, due in part to its focus on very topical and localized stories that did not translate well beyond their area of origin, and in part due to a context of inadequate and unsystematic state-led support for cinema.⁷ Despite such disappointment and seizing an opportunity to continue making films, many of those from the Amauta technical team accepted a commission to work with director Kurt Herrmann to create this work of state war-time propaganda, providing them with an opportunity to use and develop their skills with more financial backing than they had ever enjoyed as an independent production company. The Peruvian Army gave full support to the filming, and allowed them to do so at the heart of their military battle with Ecuador.⁸ Their aim was to produce a sensational newsreel of the action that would ensure patriotic support on the part of audiences across Peru.

According to a note taken at the time by cinematographer Manuel Trullen which is held in the private Trullen archive, there was much excitement about the creation and screening of a film

which brought to audiences images of specific dramatic moments of the military campaign, most of which was shot at the time of those battles mixed with some dramatic reconstructions. However, there were to be no public audiences for this film in 1941 or for any time after that until 2014. As Trullen records, ‘on the very day of the premiere, the screening was prohibited [...] the team was told that it would be counterproductive to show it when the Rio de Janeiro discussion was in train.’ (in Bedoya 1997: 141) It was considered that allowing the public to watch such a powerful film, using footage taken directly from the battlefield, would disrupt the diplomatic negotiations that resulted in the Rio Protocol (also known as the Protocol of Peace, Friendship, and Boundaries) of February 1942 which awarded to Peru some 205,000 square kilometres of previously disputed Amazon territory, in return for Peruvian withdrawal from Ecuador's coastal provinces. Its purpose as propaganda was no longer required.

One further irony in this sorry cinematic tale is recounted by Bedoya in his commentary on the making of the film. He notes that the original intention had been to make a piece of newsreel about the conflict which could have been screened quickly in Lima, meeting the appetite of the city's public for updates on the war. However, the focus changed to a more ambitious project as the Amauta team's work was considered too good for newsreel fodder: as such, on seeing the ‘quantity, variety and quality of the shots taken by Trullen and Valdivieso the director decided to edit a feature-length film using all the accumulated material’ (1997: 142). Scenes of note include highly significant moments of the border conflict itself such as the taking of the Puerto Bolivar by the paratroopers, as well as operations by the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, images of Ecuadorian prisoners, occupied Ecuadorian towns and villages, the state visit of the President's wife to the occupied zone, and state ceremonies. It also included recordings of everyday life in Peru of the 1940s, with scenes of motor-racing and roller-skating, and the victory parade organized by President Manuel Prado Ugarteche. The delay caused by creating a very different kind of project that was vastly more epic and triumphalist in nature, led the date of the premiere to coincide with a complete shift in political climate. Under the terms of the Rio settlement that was overseen by the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States, Peru agreed to withdraw its forces to a designated area within fifteen days after which technical experts would mark the boundary outlined in the protocol. The need for public displays of patriotism that had been so important at the start of the production process was replaced with the requirement for a more subdued and far less brash strategy of diplomacy. Records show that

the film's producers were paid handsomely for their work and were also, by way of secondary compensation, given access and funding to film in the Military School in Chorillos to create another project, *The Life of the Peruvian Soldier* (1942), which was put together as a much more straightforward informational documentary about military life.⁹ In return, the team agreed to hand all copies and negatives of *Alerta en la Frontera* over to the Peruvian Army, and as Bedoya writes in 1997, the whereabouts of the film were even at that point still unknown.

Seventy-one years after the signing of that Rio Protocol, this unreleased work (by now having become an archival object itself) was 'discovered' in a military storeroom. The unearthing of such a treasure has become the source of new excitement and fresh controversy around rights, access, costs of preservation and, perhaps most significantly, its potential to trigger memories about a key period of Peruvian history and to reignite debate about Peru's contemporary position in the world. Indeed, the trailer for the special public screening of a digital copy of the film heralded it as a 'historic document' and as 'part of our history'. That screening, a special event as part of the Lima Film Festival, took place on 11 August 2014 at the National Museum.¹⁰ It was so packed full of dignitaries from the Ministry of Defense along with their security detail that many ordinary people who had come hoping to catch glimpses of family members who had in the war on screen, immortalized by Trullen's team's footage, were unable to gain entry. Norma Rivera, the formidable director of the national film archive (*Filmoteca de Lima*), gave a thoughtful and impassioned presentation about the importance of film archives as part of cultural heritage and argued for the preservation of films correctly. She expressed her concerns for the tendency to conflate preservation with digitization (as had been the case with the preparation of this film for its screening), and argued the case for investing time and funds in a more fundamental frame-by-frame restoration. She emphasized her preference that this would be the next step for this project. The representative of the Ministry of Defense used his time at the microphone to congratulate the Armed Forces on supporting the project of bringing this lost film back to life, while the one of the representatives of those Forces on the front row took advantage of the situation to make a series of patriotic points that emphasized a perspective of the Peruvian army of 1941 as dignified victors. It was a fascinating hour and a half of debate and proclamation that, for this writer/observer, touched on several of the ethical and logistical dilemmas at the heart of any restoration project, and highlighted the importance of an independent national archive. It also reinforced the importance of cultural heritage to enable a debate about contemporary national

identity, in this case linked to a border struggle that was only really settled in 1995 and even then remains fragile.¹¹

The role of Peru's national archive in this discussion, and its development as a key player in the ongoing debate about national cultural heritage, memory and identity are worthy of brief exploration. As Julia Noordegraaf indicates in her essay about archival displacement, archives are increasingly acknowledged by arts and humanities scholars as highly complex entities. They not only allow for a 'collecting, ordering and storing of our documentary heritage' but they also play a key role in shaping 'the nature of that heritage and its use.' (2008: 322) They are still, as Baron notes, largely conceived as 'the point of access to what counts as evidence of past events' (2014: 355) and even more so if known as a 'national' collection. And yet, they are no longer simply 'sites of knowledge retrieval' (Noordegraaf 2008: 322); for they and their directors have become, as demonstrated by this anecdote above, more active and powerful gatekeepers of cultural heritage and memory. They play a part in curating recordings, recollections and retellings of the past through their participation in restoration projects, exhibitions and screening events such as the one involving *Alerta en la Frontera*. As such, they have become very much part of the way that individual and collective identity formations are achieved on a local, regional and national level, and enable (when access and restoration efforts allow) a constant reshaping of our relationship between past, present and future. Moreover, drawing on Ernst (2013) and Parikka (2012), I would suggest that they are increasingly regarded as contested sites of curation that have the potential to impose or disrupt the status quo through preservation priorities that might be at odds with those of other stakeholders, as appears to be the case here with Herrmann's film. In sum, they offer the potential for curators, as well as film-makers who are given access to their collections, to mediate and construct alternative memories of the past that complicate and disrupt any official state-constructed versions that may exist, through representing lost or forgotten films in new contexts or through enabling the use of old footage in new works.

Peru's national film archive (the *Filmoteca*) emerged as a formally recognized institution during a period of intense economic, political, social and cultural instability for the nation. It has developed strategically and (relatively) independently from the state since its inception in 1986, when its founders – the Museum of Art in Lima and Continental Bank's Foundation for Education and Culture – set out a clear mission to preserve and make accessible the cinematic heritage of the nation (Bedoya 1995: 283). The aspect of access was important from the

outset, as founding director and cinema critic/scholar Isaac León Frías oversaw the organization of daily projections of series of films based on a director, genre or other aspect of national cinema. Previous efforts to establish a national archive (in 1965 and 1980) failed due to severe lack of resources and a tendency by Peru's film distributors to destroy copies of films after their commercial screenings. The *Filmoteca de Lima*, however, managed to survive for almost two decades in the most difficult of socio-political and economic circumstances encompassing a civil war and aggressive neo-liberal policies, due to its commitment both to preservation and access, and in 1989 was accepted as a member of the International Federation of Film Archives. By the turn of the millennium however, it found itself in crisis as the costs of preservation spiraled out of control and the conditions in which the archive was kept were considered to be inadequate.

In 2004, the archive was acquired by the prestigious Catholic University of Peru (PCUP) and now comprises over six thousand films. The former rector of that university, Salomón Lerner Febres, is now the President of the archive, and explained the significance of the collection in an interview in 2012 as being 'the filmic memory of our country'. For him, the most important challenge continues to be finding the means to preserve those records of national cultural heritage. As a result of work already achieved in this respect, the collection now includes films from the period of the aforementioned Amauta Films, the production company that attempted to create a national cinema industry. Alongside this can now be found most of the newsreel work of Manuel Trullen, the cinematographer of *Alerta en la Frontera*, recording highlights from the regime of President Manuel Odría (1948-1956). As Febres points out, preserving and screening material such as this allows people to get to know a different sort of Peru, from an era that can barely even be imagined (2012).

By way of conclusion, one might argue that the act of recalling the past through the discovery and reuse of archival audiovisual artefacts, whether as footage in a contemporary feature by the country's most well-known director, or as preservation project conducted through a partnership between the Ministries of Defense and Culture, has little significance other than for those directly involved in those productions. However, as this essay hopes to have revealed, the potential to disrupt a nation's sense of itself through film, television, video images and sounds, especially when placed in new contexts and viewed with fresh eyes whether one decade or seven decades later, is profound. Moreover, the capacity for these artefacts, presented from new perspectives, to destabilize, undermine and provoke debate

about the present is revealed here as part of the attraction and affective pleasure of these productions and contributes to what Marcia Landy has termed ‘an expanded and altered understanding of [...] historical thinking’ (2015: ix) about Peru’s past. Finally, what an analysis of these films and their production and screening contexts should have revealed, is that audiences have a much closer and more complex relationship with the moving image due in part to the changing formats by which those images are distributed and viewed. For while in 1941, it was film and cinema that provided perspectives of conflict that were highly controlled by the government of the day, and in the 1990s it was video and television that did so, largely still under the auspices of the state, in 2015 it is increasingly the internet that we turn to for images and perspectives of conflict that are not controlled in any coherent way, and where new forms of archives are being created.

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Notes

¹ I refer to audiovisual industries in part because this is the term used in the current title of the government department (DAFO) that regulates and supports cinema, television and other forms of media in Peru. Its former titles were Conacine and Dicine. See <http://dafo.cultura.pe/category/dicine/>. It is also because the nature of the footage used by Lombardi in his feature takes a route that embraces several media formats – starting out as video recording, broadcast on TV, then converted for use as part of this High Definition production.

² This debate is explored in more detail in other essays I have published on Lombardi’s work, such as ‘Political Violence, Cinematic Representation and Peruvian National Identity’, in Will Fowler and Peter Lambert (eds), *Political Violence and the Construction of National Identity in Latin America* New York and Basinstoke: Palgrave, 2006, pp. 131-148.

³ It is worth noting that *Ojos que no ven* was the first of Lombardi’s films (his twelfth feature) to be made using a High Definition camera, with highly regarded and experienced Spanish cinematographer Teo Delgado. This technical choice for recording the fictional dramatic elements of the film (a decision made reluctantly by Lombardi who until that point preferred to work with film) gives rise to a quite seamless blending of archival footage (first filmed on video tape and shown here as TV transmission material). See the documentary by critic José Luis Ridoutt about Lombardi’s work *Ojos que sí ven el cine de Lombardi/Within sight*. The actual footage of many of the ‘vladivideos’ is now quite widely available via Youtube and a

special issue of major national newspaper *El Comercio* was published online in September 2015 to mark the fifteenth anniversary of their ‘discovery’:

<http://elcomercio.pe/especiales/vladivideos-15-anos/> with clips and feature articles.

⁴ Don Victor is revealed as a fervent supporter of APRA (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) and its current leader/former President (1985-1990; 2006-2011)/Presidential candidate for 2016, Alan García, a fierce enemy of Fujimori’s, who had his house raided at the time of Fujimori’s autocoup in 1990s, leading to García’s exile to France.

⁵ The border dispute revolved around whether Ecuador’s territory extended beyond the Andes mountain range to the Amazon river, including the Amazonian basin. A cease-fire agreement between the two countries came into effect on 31 July 1941. Both countries signed the Rio Protocol on 29 January 1942, and Peruvian forces subsequently withdrew. Resentment between the two countries over the territorial dispute continued after 1942 and formally concluded following the Cenepa War of 1995 and the signing of the Brasilia Presidential Act agreement in October 1998. Informally, a sense of hostility continues.

⁶ For a detailed discussion of the Peru-Ecuador conflict of 1941, see, for example, Miguel Angel Centeno’s text *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (2002) and Rachael Bradley and Clive H. Schofield, *The Ecuador-Peru Boundary Dispute: The Road to Settlement* (2000).

⁷ For a more detailed discussion of Amauta Films, see the section in Ricardo Bedoya’s text *One Hundred Years of Cinema in Peru: A Critical History*, pp. 92-98.

⁸ This recalls the infamous filming of the battles fought by Mexican rebel Pancho Villa who signed a contract with US Mutual Film, granting it exclusive rights to film his battles. See John King, ‘Mexico: Inside the Industrial Labyrinth’, in (2000) *Magical Reels*, pp. 129-144.

⁹ See Bedoya 1997, p. 142, for a short account of *The Life of a Peruvian Soldier* (1942).

¹⁰ Details of this screening event can be found here, on the website of the Ministry of Culture: <http://dafo.cultura.pe/alerta-en-la-frontera-proyeccion-y-conversatorio-en-la-sala-armando-robles-godoy-en-el-marco-del-festival-de-cine-de-lima-lunes-11-de-agosto-7-30-p-m/>

¹¹ During the 1960s, the Ecuadorian government alleged that the Protocol was invalid, because it had been signed under coercion while foreign troops were stationed on Ecuadorian soil. This stance was never officially reverted until the formal resolution of the dispute in 1995 and even now there remain tensions between the two nations.

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