



CENTRAL
EUROPEAN
UNIVERSITY



UGR

Universidad
de Granada



ERASMUS MUNDUS



Education and Culture DG

Gemma
Joint European Master's Degree
in Women's and Gender Studies

**The Body, the Abject and Horror
in Claudia Llosa's *La teta asustada* (2009)**

Jennifer Ann Vilchez

Main Supervisor:

Jasmina Lukić, Ph.D.

Central European University

Support Supervisor:

Adelina Sánchez Espinosa, Ph.D.

Universidad de Granada

Central European University
Department of Gender Studies

2014



**The Body, the Abject and Horror
in Claudia Llosa's *La teta asustada* (2009)**

Jennifer Ann Vilchez

Main Supervisor:
Jasmina Lukić, Ph.D.
Central European University

Support Supervisor:
Adelina Sánchez Espinosa, Ph.D.
Universidad de Granada

Submitted to:

Central European University
Department of Gender Studies

2014

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies

Approved by:

Jasmina Lukić, Ph.D.
Central European University
Budapest, Hungary

Abstract

Peruvian filmmaker Claudia Llosa's award-winning film *La teta asustada* (2009) centers around a troubled young woman, Fausta, who suffers from *la teta asustada*—the belief that her raped mother's trauma was transferred to her through her mother's breast milk and blood. The film is a fictional drama inspired by medical anthropologist Kimberly Theidon's *Entre Prójimos* (2004). Theidon focuses on over a decade of research in Quechua-speaking communities in rural Ayacucho and how these inhabitants were impacted by Peru's bloody civil war. Theidon's research on wartime rape and its trauma is a foundation for Llosa's film about postconflict Lima and the displaced peasants that live in the surrounding shantytowns. I consider Llosa's film in relation to Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection in order to discuss how abjection and the abject in the cinematic narrative can provide accessible mediums for the discussion and portrayal of violent trauma. Using the horror film genre to approach the horror in this drama, I discuss how traumatized women are understood as monstrous, through their relation to the body, the abject and the maternal. Llosa is able to convey the trauma of wartime rape and its various ripple effects in often unrealistic, abstract and abjective ways, demonstrating a figuratively complex vision of how life may continue after violation and violence. In *La teta asustada*, the horror that the audience may experience is directly related to the horrific and traumatic in real life. Although Llosa's film does not explicitly apply horror film genre elements, it approaches these conventions to subversively portray the memory and experiences of life after wartime rape and violence. I argue Llosa's depictions of the mother-daughter relationship and the body, through storytelling and metaphor, make it possible to approach such difficult and controversial histories and memories as those of war.

Spanish version:

La teta asustada (2009) de la cineasta peruana Claudia Llosa se centra en Fausta quien sufre del mal de *la teta asustada*—la creencia de que el trauma de su madre violada le fue transferido a través del cuerpo. La película es una ficción inspirada en *Entre Prójimos* (2004) de la antropóloga Kimberly Theidon. Theidon dedica más de una década de investigación a las comunidades quechuas de Ayacucho y cómo esta fue afectada por la guerra civil. Su estudio sobre la violación sexual en tiempos de guerra es la base de la película de Llosa sobre el postconflicto en Lima. Relaciono esta película con la teoría de la abyección de Julia Kristeva, a fin de discutir y argumentar la forma en que la abyección y lo abyecto en la narrativa cinematográfica pueden proporcionar medios accesibles para la discusión y la interpretación del trauma. Utilizando el género del cine de terror para acercarse al horror de este drama, explico cómo las mujeres traumatizadas se ven como monstruos a través de su relación con el cuerpo, lo abyecto y lo maternal. Llosa es capaz de transmitir el trauma y sus diversos efectos en formas a menudo poco realistas, abstractas y abyectas, lo que demuestra una visión figurativa y compleja de cómo la vida puede continuar. Aquí, el horror que el público puede experimentar está directamente relacionado con el horror del trauma en la vida real. Aunque en la película no se aplican de forma explícita los elementos de las películas de terror, sí se acerca a estas convenciones para representar subversivamente la memoria y las experiencias de vida sufridas después de la guerra. Las representaciones de la relación madre-hija y el cuerpo a través de la narración y las metáforas, permiten acercarse a las historias difíciles y controvertidas de la guerra.

Acknowledgements

Before I begin my list of thank you's and appreciations, I wish to take a moment to reflect and acknowledge this thesis itself. Although I understand that its very existence is indebted to my own creativity, dedication and research, I have to admit that this master's thesis has taken a life of its own and been a constant, occupying presence in my life. Aside from my dear cat Cousteau, I cannot say I have spent more time with anyone else besides this dear thesis. It has been on my mind since the beginning of my graduate studies in GEMMA and took greater form while attending CEU. It was there, in my mind, on my computer, on my various hard drives, while my life completely changed and went full throttle into the future. These past two years have seen many losses and gains, tears and laughter, challenges and triumphs, and throughout this time, there in the background, was this project. Now, as I near the end of its journey, it seems fitting that I take a moment to demonstrate some gratitude for being an anchor, at times ominous, at times welcoming, during this chapter of my life.

This thesis would not have been possible without the immense support and love I have received from my family, friends, colleagues, professors, supervisors and mentors. Coming from California to Spain and then Hungary, I have met all sorts of wonderful people who have changed my life in various ways, all of which have encouraged me to continue my studies as well as engage with the world around me. I could not have hoped for a better experience or for better opportunities despite any of the drawbacks and negativities I have faced. The writing of this thesis and the completion of this graduate program I consider an aperture to new, exciting opportunities. I hope to continue my studies and research on the topics and themes I have covered here as well as maintain and keep up the relationships that have formed during this time.

I would like to especially thank my mother and father, Maria and Teodoro Vilchez, for the neverending support and love. I could not be where I am today if it was not for both of you. I would also like to thank my sister Sindy and congratulate her for finishing her Bachelor's degree in Psychology next week. I love you, Sindy, and I am so proud of you.

I would also like to send much love and gratitude to my friends and fellow GEMMA scholars in Granada. If it wasn't for all of you wonderful *mujeres* who knows how my first year in Granada would have been like. I extend this same love and appreciation to my friends at CEU. This was perhaps an even more difficult time for me, aside from the thesis, and I could not be more grateful for the love and care I was given and continue to receive. You have all been better than friends; you have been my siblings, my cousins, my lovers, my confidants and my saviors throughout this time. I only hope that we will continue our conversations and to see you all on the conference circuits.

I would also like to thank my fellow supervisors, Jasmina and Adelina, for their insight and mentorship. I am grateful for the guidance and ideas that both of you have offered during the writing of my thesis.

Last but not least, I would like to thank those of you on the 8th Floor (and one on the 5th) for supporting me during the fury of writing, editing and submitting on the final days. I raise my glass to all of you.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background: The Film and the Sasachakuy Tiempo	3
1.2 Plot Summary and Reflections	8
1.3 Thoughts on Body and Embodiment	12
1.4 On Storytelling and Metaphors	14
2. Making and Unmaking: The Body and Traumatic Memory	19
2.1 Speaking the Unspeakable, Seeing the Unseeable	22
2.2 Subversive Representations: Wartime Rape and <i>La teta asustada</i>	26
2.3 <i>Powers of Horror</i> : Kristeva's Theory on the Abject	30
3. Abject/ion in <i>La teta asustada</i>	38
3.1 Abject/ion and Rape	43
3.2 From Horror to Drama	46
4. Fausta and Perpetua	52
4.1 Fausta	55
4.2 Perpetua	66
4.3 From Testimony to Screen Play to Mother to Daughter	73
4.3 Memories	76
5. Conclusion	79
5.1 Peru and Potatoes	82
5.2 Horror in Real Life	84

1. Introduction

Horror film is not a genre that everyone can sit through or easily enjoy, but it is one that causes emotional, mental and physical responses. The audience may look away, close their eyes, shake, scream, sweat and shiver at the actions or sight of the monster, the alien, the serial killer, the ghost or the demon. Carol Clover (1992) coined the term *the final girl* to refer to the trope of the final female character who must face the monster and bring the story to its conclusion. Aside from this trope, there is also the general representation of the female victim and/or victims that runs/run away from the male monster. But what happens, as it does in many horror films, when this monster is actually female? Barbara Creed discusses in *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993) that the horror film genre is full of female monsters, of the monstrous-feminine, that have evolved from dreams, myths and artistic images since the time of our ancestors. She calls these female monsters *the monstrous-feminine* because she believes there is something implicitly gendered regarding the evolution of these representations, in the construction of their monstrosity. The monstrous-feminine is, like other stereotypes and clichés regarding the feminine, just like the final girl, directly connected with her sexuality. Creed asks in her introduction, “what is the relationship between physical states, bodily wastes (even if metaphoric ones) and the horrific - in particular, the monstrous-feminine?” (3). In this thesis, I will consider various notions proposed by Creed in this question but in a very different genre and narrative. I too will ask what is the relationship of the physical state, bodily wastes, and the horrific but in regard to cinematic representations of wartime rape instead of the monstrous. I intend to examine the notion of collective and individual memory and response to rape by those who live during and after periods of conflict by considering Claudia Llosa’s feature-length fiction film *La teta asustada* (2009). This film represents the life of a young woman named Fausta whose mother was raped by soldiers during Peru’s civil war but grows up away from and after the scenes of

direct conflict. It is a provoking cinematic piece that offers various points of reflection over poignant questions regarding women, memory and life after violence.

Just as Creed argues how women are seen as monstrous, through their relation to their mothering and reproductive capacities, by considering Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject and the maternal, I too wish to relate this theory to how Llosa's film creates a particular sense of horror. In *La teta asustada*, the horror that the audience may experience is directly related to the traumatic. The film's protagonists as well as its visual and narrative representations are all linked to the experience and communication of trauma. Although this particular sense of trauma may not be explicitly tied to horror film elements—fear, gore, shock, disgust, violence—it is related to how an individual and community faces the aftermath of wartime rape and violence that are central to the story of the film.

In this thesis, I intend to consider Llosa's film in relation to Kristeva's theory of the abject in order to discuss how film can provide an accessible medium for the discussion and portrayal of wartime rape. Through the abject, the trauma of wartime rape and its various ripple effects—individually and collectively—Llosa is able to convey in often unrealistic and abstract ways how the individual and a community deals with life after violation and violence.

In this initial chapter, I begin with an outline of important background information regarding the production and context of the film and the filmmaker. I then provide a short summary of the film which will be necessary to base my analysis. *La teta asustada* is a significant film as it reflects a period after a very tumultuous time in Peruvian history, it allows for a reflection upon questions of memory and trauma. How do we understand trauma and violence, its memory and consequences, in cinematic representation? I intend to

approach a discussion of the body, specifically the woman's body in the film, to get closer to this question. The sections following the background on the film and filmmaker and the plot summary will review thoughts regarding the body as a significant site of study. In the final section, I allude to memory's embodiment and inscription within the individual and the collective by considering storytelling and metaphor.

La teta asustada represents the dark legacy of the violence that raged in Peru's peasant, indigenous communities, the population most affected. It is also an often unspoken story (Theidon 2009). This film presents a view of this existence through the story of Fausta. Llosa has shared that a possible intention of hers in making this film was to make a work that connects with the heritage of the pain of war and in which the viewer asks if it is possible to heal and join the process of a young woman who wants to 'redeem' herself and who, despite everything, is able to face the horror, the recollection, the memory of it all (Chauca 2010: 50).

1.1 Background: The Film and the Sasachakuy Tiempo

During the year of its release, *La teta asustada* won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale and was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 82nd Academy Awards. It became widely distributed allowing for critics, academics and researchers to offer their reflections and understandings of this particular work and of its creator, Peruvian filmmaker Claudia Llosa. I intend to contribute to these studies by investigating Llosa's film as a product of and production of memory, particularly as seen through the discussion and representation of trauma and the body. But first, some background to situate the filmmaker and her provocative motion picture.

La teta asustada is written and directed by Llosa, it is her second feature-length film. It involves, as was mentioned briefly above, a young Peruvian indigenous woman named Fausta as its main protagonist. Her story shows a subaltern vision of the life being lived on the outside-lands of the capital city of Lima after the years of the terrorist guerrilla violence and the military counterinsurgency that spanned over two decades. Making this film inside a determined context and community, and through Fausta, Llosa approaches a certain reality and story which is not shared, not spoken: the trauma of the Quechua-speaking *campesina* women and daughters that were not soldiers or guerrillas but have nonetheless lived through extreme violence. These women have survived serious harms and terror, but their experiences are not always included or considered in the collective historical memory. *La teta asustada*, therefore, represents what is not typically, normally, conventionally representable. The subjectivity of Fausta, and the memory and song of her mother that opens the film, permits the inclusion of the silenced and unrepresented histories and reconsiders how memory is understood. Although the focus of this story is not specifically a view of life under postconflict, the film provides clues to this reading. Most significantly, this film was inspired by Llosa's engagement with an anthropological study that attempts to reflect upon the period after the violence as understood through the indigenous communities most affected.

Although the film is a fictional work, it is well-known¹ it is based upon medical anthropologist Kimberly Theidon's ethnography *Entre Prójimos: El conflicto armado interno y la política de la reconciliación en el Perú* (2004). This text focuses on over a decade of research in Quechua-speaking communities in rural Ayacucho and how these inhabitants were impacted by Peru's civil war from 1980 to 1992. *El Sendero Luminoso* (the "Shining

¹ Various publications refer to Theidon's work as Llosa's inspiration for the film, such as Centro de Estudios de Opinión 2012; Chauca 2010; Theidon 2009; and Velez 2011.

Path”, the Maoist-communist guerrilla group), state military and the *rondas campesinas* (armed peasant patrols) were all involved in its bloody ordeals. Founded by Abimael Guzmán, *El Sendero Luminoso*, also known as the Communist Party of Peru, began its campaign inside Andean communities in 1980 to overthrow the Peruvian state. These mostly young, university student revolutionaries positioned themselves as a means to move the nation towards a new era of classless existence. Inspired by Maoist theories of guerrilla warfare, *Sendero* planned a top-down insurrection by mobilizing the peasants of the indigenous communities. The objective was to surround the cities of the urbanized coast and submit them to their revolution. Although at first the government paid little attention to the actions of *Sendero*, eventually the state sent out military, moving forward the brutal counterinsurgency that razed the Peruvian countryside.

The Ayacucho community in southern Peru especially experienced extreme violence, they were not just victims of the state and guerrilla, but victims of fratricidal violence committed by their own neighbors, family, friends—their *prójimos*. They referred to the period of this time as the *sasachakuy tiempo*, the difficult years (Theidon 2004, 2013). In considering the impact of such violence, Theidon discusses the sediments of traumatic memory. In her study, and most significant in considering Llosa’s film, she compiles a series of testimonies from groups of peasant and indigenous women who were sexually assaulted during this period of high political violence and economic crisis. These testimonies of wartime rape demonstrate how these women frame their own experiences: it is not just their victimization but also their reflections of what occurred that comes through the telling of what they had to endure.

Rape was a highly recurring crime during Peru’s internal conflict, committed primarily against women and primarily by agents of the state. There were rapes committed

during armed occupations of towns and villages as well as during searches for missing relatives and arrests. Rapes were also common inside homes located near military bases—bases that were supposed to provide a sense of security. The bodies of the victims, mostly Quechua-speaking Andean peasant women, young and old, were turned into battlefields. As Theidon (2009) argues, the bodies of the violated became “historical sites” (10): these bodies are bearers of extremely traumatic memories. Rape used as war strategy generated very high levels of personal and collective trauma (Burnet 2012; Das 1995; Hayden 2000, Mookherjee 2006; Theidon 2004, 2007, 2009, 2013). The testimonies of women sexually abused collected in Theidon’s studies show the unbearable weight of holding such memories, demonstrating illness and actual bodily manifestations of these memories such as premature aging and debilitating physical and/or mental disabilities. One of Theidon’s main concerns, and of particular interest for *La teta asustada*, is the fear of women who were raped that their children had their trauma transmitted to them through their bodies: through their breasts, their milk, their blood. The testimony of Salomé Baldeón of Accomarca collected by Theidon (2004) powerfully describes *la teta asustada*. Below, I provide Theidon’s (2013) English translation of this transcription:

My daughter was born the day after the massacre at Lloqllepampa. We were hidden in a hut. I told my husband to leave because if the soldiers came they would have killed him. I gave birth all alone. During that time we were escaping, I didn’t even have milk to breastfeed my baby. How was I going to have milk when there was nothing to eat? One day the other women told me, “If you leave your baby in the mountain, *alcanzo* [also known as *daño*] will grab her and she’ll die.” Remembering this, I left her in the mountain so she would die. How was she going to live like that? I’d passed all of my suffering in my blood, in my milk. I watched her from a distance, but she began to cry so much I had to go back and get her so that the soldiers wouldn’t hear her. If they had, they would’ve killed me. That’s why I say my daughter is damaged because of everything that happened, and because of my milk, my blood, my *pensamientos*. Now she can’t study. She’s seventeen and she’s still in fifth grade. She says her head hurts, it burns. What could it be? *Susto*? Ever since she was a baby she’s been like this. I took her to a *curandero* and he tried to change her luck. But it’s no better—it just stays the same. I took her to the

health post and they gave her pills [Dioxycillin] to take everyday. What could it be? Nothing helps her (43).

La teta asustada was the Spanish term coined by Theidon during her research and what Llosa uses as the title of her film. In English, it translates to “the frightened breast²” and is the transmission of trauma and violent memory in the breast milk from mother to her child, as well as from the blood in the womb of the mother to the fetus. Theidon (2013) writes that she wanted this term to convey “how strong negative emotions and memories can alter the body and how a mother can transmit these harmful emotions to her baby” (44). Traumatic history is literally understood as embodied in this community. The term *la teta asustada* directly relates to the embodiment of sexual violence and the subsequent transmission to the newborn of toxic memories, of the suffering and fright of the mother through her body’s milk and blood. To these communities, it is considered a disease. Recognizing the significance of *la teta asustada* clarifies the reason for its use in the film but the title—as well as the film itself—did stir up controversy in and outside the media. The ignorance of the origin of the term led to some criticism when interpreting this film as a form of demystification and/or devaluation of Andean culture, particularly in reviewing the film (Velez 2011: 29). However, the direct relationship between the plot of the film and the testimonies compiled by Theidon, and other related historical documents covering the civil war, gives coherence to the title and also validates the film text in function to its political position surrounding memory. Considering that Llosa’s film speaks to the reality of the war in Peru, either directly or metaphorically, the observations developed in this study will address the fictional film and the testimonies as significant stories and these stories arise from the body. Before entering

² The English title of the film is *The Milk of Sorrow*, which, although seemingly poetic, moves away from its relation to the body. I believe this change in translation occurred because to have *breast* in the title would perhaps be seen as a little too provocative, too close to the female body. This could be read in various ways.

into an analysis of the film itself, I will provide a summary to the plot in order to introduce larger elements of the story and its characters.

1.2 Plot Summary and Reflections

Our main protagonist, Fausta, is the daughter of a woman, Perpetua, who was raped by soldiers during the prolonged internal conflict in Peru. They are of indigenous origin, Quechua, living in the shantytowns right outside of Lima. During the horrific rape of Perpetua, Fausta was still in her womb. Because of this, Fausta is suffering from a disease called *le teta asustada*, which, as described in the previous section, is transmitted through the bodily fluids and wombs of mothers who were abused or raped during or soon after pregnancy during the war. This disease has a psychological and somatic affect over Fausta—as it does all to all its sufferers—she is living in constant torment, fear and confusion. As a result, Fausta is cast aside by the community she lives in, relegated to a life on the sidelines unlike those around her.

The film begins with the death of her mother, and the rest of the film centers on Fausta planning her burial. After her death, we quickly learn that the trauma of Perpetua's rape profoundly haunts Fausta and that she has inserted a potato into her vagina in order to keep rapists away. She chose to take drastic measures to not have the same violating experience as her mother. Fausta's actions stand for the extreme measures that one may take to protect one's self when living with the traumatic memory of past violence that drastically alters one's own personal life and the lives of one's community. Although medical staff urge her through her uncle, Tío Lúcido, to have it surgically removed to avoid health

complications, she would rather keep it inside than risk being raped and asks her uncle to keep her secret.

Fausta's family all work together in her aunt Carmela's, Lúcido's wife, party planning business. They host weddings, overall, and many scenes in the film are dedicated to their productions, particularly those involving her cousin Máxima who is preparing for her own wedding. Through the different events that surround Máxima's wedding, the film demonstrates various representations that bring out the spirit of Fausta's community. Certain rituals, such as her cousin peeling a potato to see if she will have a happy marriage and nuptial dances and customs among family members, demonstrate a gendered and rather patriarchal structure of their society. Men are often those who speak in public, it is Fausta's uncle who is repeatedly the master of ceremonies and who represents her in the hospital, and it is the boys and men who escort Fausta to and from her home. Most importantly, the focus on the family, headed by Tío Lúcido, is strongly present throughout the film. .

Although Fausta works with her family, another main element of the film's story is her employment outside of the family and home. Hoping to bury her mother properly and in her home village, not in Lima, Fausta takes up a job as the maid of a Peruvian bourgeois, Aída. Aída is a wealthy but creatively struggling pianist, who lives in the capital in a very comfortable estate. This job moves Fausta out of the environment from which she rarely steps out of, especially alone, into the city setting. In contrast to her neighborhood, which is seen as more desolate, mountainous, dry, beige, Lima seems to be full of exciting sights, sounds, energy, color and greenery. In many subtle ways, Fausta does respond to this new world but with a guarded curiosity. Typically, throughout most scenes, we actually see Fausta seem notably disconnected, she rarely speaks. Her sense of fear keeps her on her toes and on the margins. However, this slowly begins to change towards the conclusion of the film.

Originally believing she would be able to get an advance on her salary to move forward her mother's funeral, Fausta soon realizes that she would need to take extra measures to ensure the money necessary to do so. *Doña Aída*, who is worried she will not be able to create a new composition in time for her annual recital—her frustration highlighted in one scene where she actually has thrown her piano out of the window—she notices Fausta's singing. Singing is central to conveying Fausta's inner state throughout the film, as she sings what she cannot say. The importance of song is immediately highlighted since the film's beginning. The opening scene is framed around song. Throughout the film, song and singing provide the main outlets for Fausta's agency and creativity. It is through the engagement with song between Fausta and her boss that Fausta begins to transform.

Aída, having overheard Fausta singing, demands that she continue to do so, especially to repeat a song she has sung about a mermaid. Fausta, unable to recall the song, stating that she makes them up as she goes along, at first is not able to complete the demands of her employer. Once Fausta becomes more desperate for money, she agrees to sing for equally desperate Aída, in exchange for the pearls that were once part of her *doña's* necklace.

While on the job, Fausta befriends her employer's gardener, also a speaker of Quechua, named Noé. The intimate scenes of Fausta speaking with Aída while at work and her gardener Noé, with whom she forms a faint romantic friendship, show the fragility of someone who has been marginalized over a long period of time—throughout life, and intergenerationally. For her to trust Noé takes a considerable amount of time, but as Fausta is able to gain enough confidence, their interactions indicate a drastically different relationship than Fausta has with her family and her employer. Noé never demonstrates anxiety towards Fausta, nor does he question her beliefs or patronizes her as Aída does. It is partially through their relationship that Fausta gains more self-affirmation. After Fausta agrees to have Noé

walk her home after her previous escort is not able to do so, we see them speak in Quechua, climbing up the huge stairs that connect her neighborhood to the capital. Fausta talks of how her brother died because he did not respect the practice of walking while touching the wall alongside it, to fend off evil spirits. Noé listens attentively, and also respects the fact that Fausta does not want him to approach her home and will watch from a distance to make sure she gets there. This begins a series of interactions that eventually leads to Noé getting Fausta to the hospital after she desperately cries out, on the brink of a nervous breakdown, that the potato from inside her be removed immediately at the end of the film. The potato is initially Fausta's means of protection but at the end becomes that which needs to be pushed away, an alien object inside her that no longer serves the purpose it once had.

Getting closer to the conclusion, the terrible upper-class woman essentially steals what Fausta has produced for her own recital, without giving credit or a thank you. Towards the end of the film, and slowly demonstrating that she is gaining more of her own voice and self, Fausta makes a remark about the reception of the recital—the applause is truly hers—which leads to her being dropped off on the side of the highway. Aída, hearing the truth in Fausta's brave remarks, wants to distance herself from this reality. Fausta, forced to get out of the car, is left walking the streets alone in a decisive moment that brings the narrative to a sense of crisis. Eventually, Fausta will go to Aída's to take what was promised to her, showing a strong change of character.

Overall, *La teta asustada* follows Fausta as she navigates her journey to finding herself, negotiating against what at first were shackles of trauma, of her family, culture and history, into less restraining foundations for a more liberated self. She begins to shed some of the defining markers of her identity as diseased and traumatized, into a woman with more agency and less fear. As potentially problematic and/or sensational as the subject of wartime

rape and postconflict that the film centers itself upon may be, Llosa treats the material with an appropriate restraint, narratively and cinematically. Setting aside the mostly static camera found throughout the film that served to highlight the social immobility of various characters, especially Fausta, Llosa commemorates Fausta's progress with a lengthy tracking shot. In the second to last scene in the conclusion, we see Fausta sitting in the back of a moving truck, with her family and mother's corpse, as it zips through a mountainous highway. The forward motion on the road and the camera following along suggest the final breakthrough in Fausta's journey. Fausta asks to stop the truck, and we see her carry her mother's corpse through the sand dunes. She takes her mother to see the Pacific Ocean.

The final shot of the film is Fausta smelling the flowers of a potato plant, a plant left at her front door by—although not depicted—Noé. She puts her nose to the flowers, sensually, and the camera tracks down the stem to the soil, to the root.

1.3 Thoughts on Body and Embodiment

When looking at *La teta asustada*, I will consider the body and notions of embodiment as related to traumatic memory which are central to this cinematic work. As the inspiration of this film was Theidon's study, I apply perspectives on the body and memory she examines in her own work. Theidon extensively discusses the relation of body and memory in the communities she studies and how pain, memory and trauma are related directly to parts of the body and bodily sensations. As her study reflects upon how these notions are understood directly by the communities most affected, I closely consider her theoretical framework for discussing both body and embodiment and relate them in the context of film study.

When Theidon (2004, 2013) discusses the speaking of silences, she reflects upon Elaine Scarry's (1985) influential work, *The Body in Pain*. In this study of the body in pain and of inflicting pain upon the body, she argues that physical pain leads to 'the unmaking of the human world' and robs human beings of their capacity to speak and make sense with/to others, whereas human creation leads to 'the making of the world'. The body is a site of multiplicity and history that brings to question boundaries and experience. As Scarry argues, the body has both productive and destructive potential. In the film, Fausta has embodied the pain and trauma of her mother as well as the collective memory of Peru's conflict. Through Fausta, we see how the body can make and unmake itself in relation to traumatic memory. The bodies of her and her mother become sites of memory that continuously negotiate their relation to it, often in uncomfortable ways for themselves and for the viewer.

Drawing upon phenomenology, the study of experience and consciousness, Thomas J. Csordas (1990, 1994) has suggested that embodiment can be understood methodologically through the assumption that all human experience is embodied social experience, which involves a mode of presence and engagement in the world. From this perspective, the body in its various cultural configurations is used as a means of expressing emotions and states of being; what varies is how one learns both to be and to have a body as a member of any given culture. I suggest that by experiencing Fausta's body through the film text, the viewer is able to connect and express her trauma and also her history.

As mentioned previously, *la teta asustada* is the transmission of trauma and violent memory (rape) in the breast milk (and blood) from mother to her child. Traumatic memory is literally understood here as embodied, inscribed, the body is site where memory and violence are manifested. In Llosa's film, we are presented some rather uncomfortable depictions of this manifestation—the representation of the traumatized body is shown and told through the

abject and abjection. Julia Kristeva's (1982) writings on abjection have been discussed in film theory in relation to the horror genre, an example being Creed's seminal work on the monstrous-feminine as cited above. The abject is that which is rejected by and disturbs the body and social reasoning. The abject exists in a liminal space, outside of the Symbolic Order, to face it is to have a traumatic experience. The abject and abjection can be read in the various representation within the narrative, particular Fausta's disease and the memory and story of her mother's rape. Her trauma causes her to reject her own sexuality, her genitalia. We turn in disgust as Fausta lives and moves about with a potato lodged inside her, there is a visceral affect possible in the spectator, as the body becomes infiltrated on the screen to represent the affect of violent, traumatic memory. The body on the screen expresses in powerful ways how the position as abject and abjection can be reproduced to portray realities that have difficulty to or cannot be articulated.

1.4 On Storytelling and Metaphors

In "Pascal's Sphere" (1983), Jorge Luis Borges contemplates the possibility that "universal history is the history of a few metaphors" (205). History may perhaps just be the conglomeration of memories that have persisted by renovating and reinventing themselves and I believe they do so through storytelling. Memories are put into stories, brought to language through such devices as metaphors. It is storytelling that allows for the transmission and representation of memory—song and film being two forms of storytelling that I wish to focus upon in this study.

I will look at the role of storytelling and representations of storytelling³ in *La teta asustada*, in order to see how memories are translated into some form of storytelling. Film, like oral storytelling, can play with the borders of truth and fiction. Storytelling is a way of not only transmitting information—demonstrating subjectivity and agency—of what happened but provides emotional capital. It is also productive. According to Trinh Minh-ha (1980), storytelling is specifically a women-centered activity. Grandma’s story does not just contain one story or a sole memory but has multiple while inciting new ones. As she also explains, in contrast to story, history enforces a singular truth and insists this truth is most present in its current version. This sets apart one version of a history, of one collective memory, as acceptable while nullifying all other versions. Although both storytelling and history change, it is especially within storytelling that all versions of a story can be maintained. This allows for a destabilization of the *truth* and the notion of a singular, homogenous historical narrative. Storytelling therefore breaks down the separation between the historian and the grandmother—something that also happens in Llosa’s film. Fausta’s and her mother’s untold history is represented and then experienced, creating new stories surrounding Peru’s violent past. As Trinh suggests, storytelling “as literature (narrative poetry) must then be truer than history” (120). Like literature and poetry, film is also narrative capital. Film can be situated as a means to create collective memory, much like the printed capital of Benedict Anderson’s (1983) imagined community produces a collective imaginary.

In Walter Benjamin’s essay “The Storyteller” (1936), he discusses the incommunicability of experiences, of storytelling, in the modern world and how the fall of

³ A deeper discussion on storytelling does not fit into the scope of this thesis. However, I am aware that issues around storytelling have been seriously discussed especially during the 1990s.

the storyteller comes at a time in history devoid of shared experiences. I relate to his ideas to suggest how storytelling indeed is an act of communicating embodied memory, voice and experience, all of which are translated to the other through the storyteller. The story affects its receivers and in turn this experience becomes part of and affects them. According to Benjamin, narrative remains timeless. By looking at a film as a transcendent work, I intend to discuss *La teta asustada* as a vehicle for experiencing a representation of a memory of a story-less-spoken, a story-difficult-to-be-spoken, of the violence committed to women during Peru's war. These women, as Theidon suggests, were more-often-than-not silenced. Llosa's film provides a subversive perspective of a collective memory of a conflict outside a homogenous, masculinized and nationalist perspective by focusing on individual characters and their struggles and trauma. This is unlike the dominant perspective that has been present in current Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, the state and the media, all of which by practice generalize memories and histories. These then form the majority of the voice that represents the civil war. Llosa provides an alternative viewpoint, one based closer to individual stories than on numbers, projects and politics.

French literary theorist Roland Barthes (1994) once rightly stated that narratives are everywhere; they permeate our existence and act as accessible means to convey the life of people, their memories and histories:

Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio's Saint Ursula), stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative.... Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself (251-2).

Storytelling becomes such an important activity in order to create dialogue and a sense of empathy between people—it can be an appropriate vehicle for the assessing and expression of living with trauma. In the discussion of trauma, current trends to evaluating and addressing this phenomena has become extremely medicalized, creating a distance between the person in pain, the traumatized person, and how they live with the affects of the past. As Setha M. Low (1994) argues, based upon the work of Laurence J. Kirmayer on the embodiment of metaphors, the “medicalization of social distress has become a political process based on creating medical metaphors out of everyday life” (144). There is a distance created, in order to be able to universalize very personal responses, in order to create frameworks of assessment. But much is lost in approaching trauma in this manner. For the “discourse of trauma—and the psychiatric diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—plays a prominent role in postconflict and humanitarian conceptions of suffering” (Theidon 2003: 25). She continues to note, rightfully so, that:

There is an enormous market for trauma and an industry of trauma experts deployed to postwar countries to detect symptoms of PTSD via the use of “culturally sensitive” questionnaires. In the process of globalizing the discourse of trauma through humanitarian and postconflict interventions, the trauma narrative itself has become increasingly normative, making it difficult to think otherwise about violent events and their legacies. From Holocaust survivors to U.S. soldiers in Vietnam, from battered women in Latin America to child soldiers in the Congo and survivors of rape in the Balkans, mainstream trauma theories beguile with their alleged capacity to encompass vastly divergent experiences fraught with etiological and moral complexity (26).

I believe Llosa’s film offers an alternative to this approach, one in which there is a greater capacity to actually engage with and recognize the type of traumas that are being dealt with. This is because, through narrative, through fiction, truth becomes something questioned but also considered generally, somehow making its limitations more obvious and therefore more

recognizable. In this sense, as Uma Narayan (2004) writes, “[n]onanalytic’ and ‘nonrational’ forms of discourse, like fiction or poetry, maybe better able than other forms to convey the complex life experiences of one group of members to another” (220). Llosa’s film engages with this approach, and, overall, one of her most successful approaches is utilizing the potato as metaphor to not only demonstrate an embodiment of trauma but the connection to the national—the collective—memory of the unspeakable, the unshowable, of war and wartime rape in Peru.

Although a film may allow for its viewer to get closer to certain unspoken, unseeable realities and memories, it is still a representation and therefore limited. Llosa remarks that it is impossible to portray the reality of a country in a movie that is an hour and a half long but that it is possible to create “mirrors and prisms” to bounce off of, so that every person can complete the story in their own way (Chauca 2010: 50). Every film story has the potential to be an action of resistance, transgression and rupture—to be subversive. If, as Borges states, universal history is indeed that of a few metaphors, what Llosa accomplishes are metaphors for the trauma that continues even after there are no more sounds of gunshots.

2. Making and Unmaking: The Body and Traumatic Memory

How is memory inscribed in the body? To speak of traumatic memory, we must first consider what is at stake when remembering. Just as Scarry dedicates attention to the destructive and productive potential of memory on the body, Fausta has embodied this ‘unmaking’—the destruction of pain, trauma—and later is also able to embody creation through song and her socializing efforts.

I place the body centrally within my inquiry of memory, as it offers an exception to the notion of cinema as a purely visual medium. The cinema is more than just a visual medium because of the various affective responses the representations may have to the viewer. Films may be able to provide such experiences, but, as Linda Williams (1991) points out in her discussion of “gross” sensational films—horror, pornography, woman’s film—there is a greater response elicited when there is a body spectacle. This spectacle, the body on screen, also increases the awareness of how it is constructed and perceived inside and outside the filmic narrative.

In *La teta asustada*, we are given a physical and metaphorical representation of traumatic memory through the body of Fausta. Traumatic memory, a term and concept derived from medicated discourse surrounding post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as mentioned above, “has become the primary framework for dealing with the suffering of war” (Theidon 2009: 25). Although there is little doubt that to frame such suffering in a medicalized fashion allows for a certain universalization, the legibility that arises only legitimates and brings to language the suffering to the appropriate audiences—doctors, researchers, politicians, for example—engaging with studies of trauma and the “traumatized”.

This is problematic, for, as Scarry points out repeatedly, the main reality of pain is its inexpressibility.

In the first section of Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, she deals primarily with her investigation of the impossibility of expressing pain, one's own pain or that of others. She connects this with pain in relation to war. She argues that the main point of war is its pain-causing aspect, its violence. There is intent to injure the body, inside and out, that sets itself apart in war—if war was really only for strategic advancement or agency in resources, such as technology—then why could not this contest be something else besides warfare? Why not a dance-off or a chess game? Particularly if it really is about winning? This is because it is 'winning' through *injury*, through the practice of violence that marks war as war. With underlining the intent to injure in war, this leads Scarry to torture. For her, war and torture become almost equivalent. Both intend to destruct and negate civilization for the tortured. War and torture—and by extension, rape—'unmake' the world, destruction is the aim.

The second section of the book goes from the 'unmaking of the world' to the 'making' of it. Scarry here deals with the creative aspects of civilization, in contrast to its dismantling as seen in the first part. Through her study on bodies in Judeo-Christian scripture and Marxist theory, she discusses how war and torture become productive. Scarry argues that after everything is annihilated, after the horror of the violence and even through the suffering of trauma in and on the body, something new will take its place. Women who survive rape do find spaces for agency, many do find ways to move forward within their forever changed lives. Many of these women deal with the violent destruction and departure of their former lives, be it through personal endeavors or social projects. But it never erases what has happened to them. In Scarry's discussion of 'making', she argues that similar to pain is imagination and the ability to envision and create that which has been taken or is no longer

there. I am not suggesting that there are inherently productive potentials in wartime rape; however, many victims must and need to keep going—they become survivors. On a wider scale, I believe a more open dialogue around wartime rape is necessary to lead to new conceptualizations and approaches to truly consider what is at stake in this violent practice and in the life that comes afterwards.

Veena Das (1996), discussing lamentation within her arguments on the construction of pain through language and the body, demonstrates, using Stanley Cavell's river metaphor of philosophy, that grieving is a metaphorical shore, the nearer, everyday shore, on the river of existence—the other shore being the farther, metaphysical shore. In the nearer shore, the everyday, 'public' grieving objectifies the inner state of turmoil and trauma caused by rape by giving it a place in language. She rightly notes:

Thus the transactions between body and language lead to an articulation of the world in which the strangeness of the world revealed by death, by its non-inhabitability, can be transformed into a world in which one can dwell again, in full awareness of life that has to be lived in loss. This is one path towards healing—women call such healing simply the power to endure (68-69).

But, as has been shown by much of Theidon's work, it is not just the question of endurance, especially individually, with the affect and memory of wartime rape and violence. There is also a project involved with wartime rape in collective memory, as seen through feminist organizations and Truth Commissions. I mention this now because I will bring about these discussions of body, memory and rape to the level of its representation—specifically cinematic representation. As Das notes in the same text, "[s]ome realities have to be fictionalized before they can be apprehended" (69). I believe that for collective healing of such atrocities to happen it takes more than just politicized and governmental agendas, such as Truth and Reconciliation Committees and war trials. There must be a means to bring about

this traumatic memory of violence to a destructive and productive mode of understanding. Cinema is a possible vehicle, as it allows for mass consumption of its visual narrative and effects that engage with stories and realities that cause discomfort, with stories that one would rather forget, that one would rather not speak or see again, but that should not be forgotten because they are legacies to the endurance of the human spirit and to the actual happenings of history even if it is outside its official record.

2.1 Speaking the Unspeakable, Seeing the Unseeable

This section will look at violence, memory and cinema in order to inquire how we understand violence, its memory and consequences, in cinematic representation. How does one approach saying what should not be said, or cannot be said, or showing what should not or could not be seen? These are questions surrounding personal and collective trauma, and is especially a question related to rape. Peru's civil war and atrocities, the individual and collective memory of it, is reflected and represented in a cinematic translation in *La teta asustada* in the body of Fausta and her mother. Llosa's representations of memory and trauma through both characters are often uncomfortable if not fantastic. Her visual narrative consists of symbolic and metaphorical reflections and interpretations of the true stories and testimonies recorded by Theidon's anthropological study. How does Llosa approach the "violence of memory" (Theidon 2009) and how does she embody these realities in her work? This seems to come out of the translation of the research into a fictional story, by the focus on a female character and her subjectivity, pulled from testimonies, rather than an explicit focus on violence and rape. To speak the unspeakable, to see the unseeable, is something that fictional narrative can approach in ways that offer representations of the unspoken without

speaking, to see the unseeable with darkness, absences, omissions. This is particularly possible in the medium of narrative fiction film.

In speaking of fiction, I want to refer to storytelling and to storytelling devices, specifically the metaphor⁴. I return to Borges's notion that perhaps "universal history is the history of a few metaphors". These metaphors are memories that have persisted by renovating and reinventing themselves through the act of storytelling. These memories, realistic, fantastic or traumatic, communicated through stories, are a basis for the narrative potential of film. Through the film medium's capabilities, narrative film is sometimes able to transmit certain forms of knowledge and experience that would otherwise seem inaccessible. I argue this allows for a platform for discussions around rape—its unspeakable, unseeable violence—and the individual and collective trauma that arises from it.

In regards to rape trauma, it is important to understand that "*trauma* is a subjectively structured form of knowledge" (Winkler 1994: 250). It is always individual but also collective. Its affect is inexpressible; it is difficult to communicate, as Scarry argues in regards to pain. Therefore, devices such as metaphor become constructive towards this aim. Metaphors are a way to transmit lived experience. In Csordas's (1994) collection on embodiment and experience, contributor Setha M. Low, in discussing the phenomena of *nervios* (nerves)—a form of suffering—as lived experience with emotional and somatic manifestations in various Latin American communities, she problematizes the dualism of body and mind, of culture and biology. She does this through her analysis of the embodied metaphor of *nervios*, the metaphor that emerges from bodily experience. The body becomes

⁴ Due to the scope of this thesis, I will only provide a limited discussion of metaphor as it pertains to the topics I am addressing. I am aware of the vast amount of literature on the subject. Please see George Lakoff's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and Roman Jakobson's *Fundamentals of Language* (1956) for a more detailed and recommended discussions on metaphor.

the means for an individual to communicate their distress from *nervios* to others. Bodily experience then becomes a source of meaning and representation of social forces. She writes that metaphor is a “way to define the undefined and nascent identity of a person or group. Metaphor allows one to move from the abstract and inchoate of lived experience to the concrete and easily graspable”. She continues to argue that metaphor is also “strategic; it is a plan for action and performance.... metaphor allows for the communication of otherwise senseless and unspeakable suffering” (143). In this study, I am looking at how visual metaphor in cinema allows for an engagement with senseless and unspeakable suffering. In *La teta asustada*, it is the visual metaphor specifically of the potato that Fausta embeds inside her, like a pessary, to prevent rape that provides for a certain level of engagement with the trauma of war, rape, violence and survival. The potato protects from rape but it also represents the embodied trauma itself—it is invisible but always present. It can be put away, in the dark, but it will come out eventually. The potato continuously grows. The potato as metaphor points to an example of body spectacle within film to which the audience reacts and responds.

Much of the experience of Llosa’s film is tied to its audiovisual elements. The film medium has the ability to affect its audience in various complex ways because of its audiovisual and narrative capacities. In Williams’s discussion of body genres, in relation to films that may be perceived as “gross”—pornography, horror and melodrama—she discusses how all three share the same main feature of bodily spectacle. All three genres show a spectacle of the body experiencing intense sensation or emotion. In pornography it involves orgasm, in melodrama weeping and in horror, which is more pertinent to this thesis, violence and terror. All three share, as Williams argues, the bodies of women on screen which function, as they “traditionally” have “as the primary *embodiments* of pleasure, fear, and

pain” (4). In Llosa’s film, Fausta and her mother will have a similar function, but it is not in the same traditional mode. They are both embodiments of fear and pain, and at times even pleasure, but do not function in the same framework as these body genres. Since *La teta asustada* is not a horror film, or a conventional melodrama, the film gets near to such genre structures but is entirely on its own. Like traditional horror film, it relies on representations and relationships with the horrific and traumatic but is not necessarily directed towards the same voyeuristic ends. Still, what is significant is that film may elicit both passive and active emotional and physical responses because of the identification the audience has with the characters and story. As Williams states, in relation to body genres, “identification is neither fixed nor entirely passive” (8). The spectator, then, is neither necessarily passive nor fixed. She is active in that she reacts to what she sees on screen, to the body spectacle, in various individual ways. She receives the story, the images, the sounds, in the darkness of the theater, accepting them while at the same time questioning them. This shows how the cinema can become a powerful, even subversive, tool for approaching and representing untold stories and unofficial histories.

Before going on to discuss how film provides a platform for subversive representation, I first want to discuss the sociopolitical use of metaphor on and of the body. In the case of the Ayacucho community on which Theidon bases her work, much like Low’s work on *nervios*, there is evidence of the type of somatic culture that exists and, therefore, the political meanings of somatic conditions such as *nervios*, or in the Peruvian case, *susto* (fright; soul lost due to fright) become evident. *Nervios*, *susto* and *la teta asustada* are embodied experiences and knowledges of something that has broken a sense of order and tranquility that will not be recovered by the current generations and perhaps not even by generations in the near future. *Susto* embodies the experience of losing oneself, of the

discomfort of unending trauma. *La teta asustada*, a trauma that has infected the rape victim, like a disease, is transmitted to the bodies of the next generation who will also carry that trauma. The form and experience of the embodiment of these conditions, in various ways,

suggest that the bodily experiences are metaphors of self/society relations, with the body acting as the mediating symbolic device. While the cultural context remains, the locus of the specific symbolic language of the metaphors - the body shaking, incorporation, extrusion, loss of feeling, and disappearance - suggests a kind of metaphor transparency to the vulnerability of the individual sufferers within the hostile and sometimes violent context of their lives (Low 1994: 157).

The body, therefore, is the site, historically and metaphorically, for the representation of traumatic memory in film. Rape does not have to be explicitly portrayed, nor directly involved, to create a traumatic ripple effect through the generations, through individual and collective memory. Wartime rape is no exception, and it is this type of rape that Fausta suffers—although not directly. In Llosa’s portrayal of Fausta’s struggle with this past and present, it is possible to consider how film—through its visual metaphors and storytelling—provides a subversive representation to create new means and modes of memory, history and, perhaps, the future.

2.2 Subversive Representations: Wartime Rape and *La teta asustada*

Subversion in cinema starts when the theatre darkens and the screen lights up. For the cinema is a place of magic where psychological and environmental factors combine to create an openness to wonder and suggestion, and unlocking of the unconscious (Vogel 1974: 10).

Where do the images come from that we use to construct our memories? Can “reel images” become the stuff of “real” life? (Theidon 2013: 90)

As mentioned above, films can destabilize the borders of truth and fiction, of collective and individual memory to transmit sensations as well as descriptions. Llosa’s *La*

teta asustada represents the dark legacy of the violence that raged in Peru for over two decades, also often an unspoken, “unofficial” story. I argue that films, particularly Llosa’s film, allow for subversive representations that intend to break this pattern of untold stories, that create revolutionary perspectives and responses by doing something outside of the expected. If subversion is a break from current systems, of an overthrow of structures of authority, then Llosa’s films does precisely this. By deciding to portray such a story as Fausta’s, she undermines the official story and legacy of the war involving *el Sendero Luminoso* and its aftermath, on a grand scale—locally, nationally and internationally. She creates a historical imaginary that includes women, their children, and life after the violence. Llosa includes specifically within this imaginary the portrayal of life after wartime rape, not through the media, the nation or the victim, but through the next generation, the daughter who knows the violence that occurred to her mother and community. She is also able to portray wartime trauma through narrative and visuals means that shock even perhaps shake, or a Williams argues “jerk”, the audience (5).

Wartime rape is both foregrounded and backgrounded in *La tetra asustada*. It constitutes the basis of Fausta’s character but it is also not something she suffered personally and directly as it is her mother that is violated. Fausta’s violation occurs through her mother’s story, but she is diseased with *la tetra asustada* because of her mother’s embodied trauma. Wartime rape, as opposed to rape in “peacetime”—a contested term surely—, is the practice of sexual violence amidst conflict and war. It can occur within the same party or side just as it can to the supposed enemy, it is practiced by both combatants and civilians. It has been found to occur in all wars, although much attention has been paid, in recent decades, on the mass rapes in Bosnia during the war in the 1990s. In *The Body of War* (2007), Dubravka Žarkov looks at how media, ethnicity and gender have been portrayed and represented in the break-

up of Yugoslavia. By looking at various bodies—female and male specifically—she discusses how bodies are used in the Croatian and Serbian press during the conflict. She argues how this war was not a war between ethnic groups—Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks—but that the war itself produced the ethnic divides. Bodies became central to the production of ethnicities, as well as genders and sexualities. The media depicted the conflict based upon ethnicities, gender and sexuality norms, with the war itself depending on these various norms and definitions for committing violent practices.

As Žarkov rightly points out, it is “impossible to overstate” the intersections of gender and sexuality with other relations of power in the context of wartime rape (170). There are no fixed, singular meanings of the rape of women during conflict, but meaning is gained through the intersections of hegemonic formulations of gender and sexuality norms; relations of difference-based social relations and identities; and a specific political context or project in a particular time and place. In order for the act and violence of rape to be effective, both victim and perpetrator draw upon the dominant system, using the same language and representations to construct their experiences, which, although different, individually attempt to account for action and construct identity (174). Žarkov points out that by falling back upon these norms, the victim may be made invisible by the lack of discursive space these norms provide where the victim can speak or be spoken about. This has been noted by various studies, as demonstrated by Žarkov, and is also a question in discourse around sexual violence towards indigenous women in the internal conflict of Peru (Theidon 2004, 2007, 2009, 2013).

As demonstrated in Theidon’s work, the women she studies have created and still create their own separate discourses regarding their experience with wartime violence and rape. Just as in the former-Yugoslavia, these Peruvian women “use different rhetorical strategies in order to find a language that will suit their own accounts of events, accounts that

differ from the dominant versions of absolute victimization” (Žarkov 2007: 179). As Theidon (2007) writes: “... I have been told in every pueblo with which I have worked, women participated in the defense of their communities, their families, and themselves” (464). These women show immense heroism in how they lived through and after the conflict. They fought back during their rape, they traded their bodies for safer conditions or the returns of their abducted ones, and they systematically impregnated themselves to avoid being impregnated by a rapist. Many speak of their heroism, or decide not to dwell in it at all. These are all strategies as well as part of the history of the conflict. These are important to have because “[w]ar stories influence the public policies implemented in the postconflict period: these histories are a form of political action” (464). Wartime rape is something that must not be forgotten as an atrocity of the war, especially since, as Theidon notes:

In Peru, there has been no discussion about the thousands of soldiers and sailors who systematically raped during the internal armed conflict. The *sinvergüenzas* [those without shame] forged during bloody acts of gang rape are not discussed in public discourse in Peru. This is indeed a troubling silence. Reparation should include the redistribution of goods and services; it should also include the redistribution of shame to those who earned it (Theidon 2009: 475).

I believe that if rape is not fully part of the public discourse, then bringing this topic and a focus upon it to the public through the cinema is a subversive act. Here, it is also consisting of subversive representations—for instance, the visual and narrative metaphor of the potato and, as will be seen later on, its relation to the abject. The breakdown of social propriety and expectations, of conventional characterization and plot, all of which signal subversion, are ways to address individual and collective rape trauma in Llosa’s film. Llosa’s film is subversive because we are shown the victim, but at the same time she makes a subversive claim that it should be placed within the agenda of history, memory, nation—a political agenda, related to projects of retribution and reconciliation. Subversion is a possible means to

represent something that is difficult to put into words or when doing so may be avoided, even if there are promises of retribution and justice as in the real-life cases studied by Theidon.

In Llosa's film, both the visual and the absence of speech demonstrate a means to communicate when words are purposefully set aside or there are none. This is specific to the medium of film, allowing various modes of representation that can communicate to its viewer in various ways. This idea of silence is important as there is much implicated in how to understand what is left outside of language. Using the audiovisual, Llosa is able to portray the violence of memory—the trauma in remembering—and the memory of violence without necessarily going into gruesome details or “pornographic” displays of terror and abuse⁵. Llosa does so instead metaphorically, as can be seen through her use of the abject.

2.3 Powers of Horror: Kristeva's Theory on the Abject

Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned (Scarry 1985: 4).

My discussion of the abject and abjection will look at how it deals with pain, trauma, memory and subversion, with rape foregrounded as a narrative and historical event. Cathy Winkler with Kate Wininger (1994) begin their discussion on the contexts of meanings behind rape trauma writing that the rapists' “methods of torture implant landmines of horror in the bodies of their victims. After the attack(s), victims feel these landmines in terms of trauma - frequently a trauma unnoticeable by most people” (248). This trauma exists inside

⁵ Theidon herself says: “I am not a fan of ‘shock anthropology’. We've all seen it. Photographers and filmmakers will seek out the goriest photo or image they can find, thinking that will move people to action. That may be the case; but, we also talk about the *dismay* of images and at some point we can also have an act of exaggeration where people turn off. Part of what Claudia has done in *La teta asustada* is that she has left some of the gruesome off of the screen. It's there, and it haunts the viewer, just as it does Fausta and her mother. There's something so powerful in *not* having to show graphic details, which would be disrespectful of the women who have talked about these kinds of experiences, but also the audiences” (Guillen 2010).

and outside of them, it affects how to go about the world physically and emotionally. Rape survivors never know what will set off these landmines inside their bodies; smells, sights, sounds, tastes and sensations may lead to an explosion of anxiety and fear related to their trauma from the violation. A way to understand rape and trauma is through a consideration of the abject. In this section, I wish to ground the concept of abject to provide a basis for following analyses.

According to Julia Kristeva (1982), as based on her work on psychoanalysis, the abject exists outside of our cultured understanding of society—of its systems and orders—it draws one towards the place where meaning collapses, it is the “jettisoned object” that one “radically” excludes (2). Confronting the abject causes psychological anguish, it causes trauma. The corpse is a good example of the abject, as it is a traumatizing sight, the lifeless body scares us, causes us horror visually and is a reminder of our own mortality as the corpse was once but is no longer subject (3). We all will eventually die one day, this is the traumatizing experience of witnessing the corpse, it is, if acknowledged, an annihilating reality (2). The corpse, “seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject.” (4). Abject is, similar in quality to the object, “opposed to *I*”, the subject (1). However, it “is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object”. It is “not me” and “not that” (4). The corpse is the “utmost of abjection” because it signals with its presence the fragile borders of life and death, of once being but now no longer being subject and within the Symbolic Order. Therefore, abject and abjection are “safe-guards”. They are the “primers of my culture” as they are reminders of the fragility of the borders that protect us (2).

Abjection is what that abject signifies, it is the fragility of the law that a crime highlights, it is “immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that

smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you” (4). The abject is located in the presymbolic, it cannot be articulated: the place of abject is where you do not enter rationally, it is prelinguistic. This is where abject with trauma works. Hence, physical pain, as Scarry suggests, does not just resist language, it can destroy it, bringing us back to a time before language is learned. The abject allows one to see the instability of protective, segregating barriers. The child rejects the skin of milk in disgust and convulsions and in doing so abjects herself while establishing herself as an *I* (3). This can also be projected further, instead of just the child separating and establishing herself from her mother and father, it can demonstrate how one body is separated from the collective body and vice versa.

Scarry also considers how the ego moves to externalize, to make other, to objectify, the source of its suffering and pain which is placed upon the body (15-16). For Kristeva, the abject shares one quality with the object, the objectified, and this is being opposed to *I*. The abject is a key component to the formation of this *I*. Pain, therefore, also relies on this rendering of object and subject to try to find a source of pain as well as the communication of this pain. But the boundaries between object and subject are not stable. Therefore, the body is not simply subject nor object—it is abject.

Before elaborating upon the idea of body as abject, first it is important to consider its status as neither object nor subject and how it relates to embodiment. The body is never solely object although it is an entity marked by biology and materiality. This differs from embodiment, which is not determinate, it rests upon experience and perception, of being present and engaged in its environment. It is to be inscribed somehow. To be a body and to embody are two different ideas, but both allow for the notion of the body to signify how we can perceive ourselves and our lives: “Our lives are not always lived in objectified bodies, for

our bodies are not originally objects to us” (Csordas 1994: 7). We cannot look at the body as simply outside of a self, or as self, but as an example of the instability of these barriers and frontiers.

The body can also be inscribed as well as inscribe, and this can be related back to Kristeva’s notions of the abject and abjection. In Jasmina Lukić’s “The Language of the Body as the Language of Trauma in J. Žbanić’s Feature Films *Grbavica* and *Na putu*” (2013), she describes how the trauma of Esma, the main protagonist of *Grbavica*, a mother of a daughter born out of mass rapes during the war in Bosnia, has been also inscribed onto her daughter Sara’s body. Sara’s attempt to defy it involves an alteration of the body—more specifically, her hair. Sara asks her mother what she has inherited from her father. Esma points to Sara’s hair as a similar trait. Later on, when it is discovered how Sara was conceived, she shaves her head “thus cutting off her hair in a dramatic, and yet a positive move which means a symbolic dissociation from her unknown, violent father” (95). She pushes her father away, it is abjection “elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin”, in this sense literally, “nothing is familiar” (Kristeva 1982: 5). The father, “the shameless rapist” draws attention to “the fragility of the law” (4), of order: the rape is abject, the disturbance of order—familial and criminal—causes abjection. With no father, the child “would probably have no sense of the sacred; a blank subject” she would remain, “discomfited” (6). Sara did not know her father, but knowing of him reframed his absence into a necessary repulsion. She felt as if she was missing a sense of the sacred, part of her self as subject, by not knowing her father. However, knowing her father and disassociating herself, she abjects to define herself in a new positive way. Through the presence of abject and abjection as understood using Kristeva’s arguments, Sara is able to safe-guard herself

and establish herself—in order to do so, she shaves her head as a symbolic move to disassociate herself from the father-rapist.

I return now to the idea that the body cannot be looked at as simply outside of a self, or as self, but as an example of the instability of these borders. The body is abject when it demonstrates this instability. According to Kristeva, the abject is also what the body may secrete: blood, vomit and excrement (2-3). These secretions are abject as they are at the same time part of and not part of the body. The disgust of the abject is caused by *not* being an object while the *object* is also not the subject. However, by coming from the body, by being secreted, then the *abject*—neither object nor subject—becomes both object and subject simultaneously. The abject makes us aware of our boundaries, of what should be inside or outside, of what is subject or object. Biological wastes such as feces, urine, vomit and saliva are repulsive because they make us aware of the split between self and other that forms subjectivity (3-4). The abject reveals to us that these boundaries are unstable and permeable. The body itself is the example of this.

In the beginning of this section, I share Winkler and Wininger's notion that rapists implant landmines of horror into the bodies of their victims. The body becomes a site that can explode, it is uncomfortable, one fears when and where to tread. The body may be seen as abject (like the lifeless body, the corpse, the violated body is that improper thing) and the body itself may become abject (the abject body, the unclean thing). In wartime rape, rapists "who traumatize the victim's body objectify the body, and this objectification results in the victim feeling as if there is a separation between the body and the mind" (Winkler 1994: 250). The immense pain and trauma that comes from being raped seems to destroy the world as one knows it—one may be pushed outside of the community, isolate herself from the community, be disgusted with oneself, cause disgust in others. With this in mind, pain and/or

trauma are/is “not that inexpressible something that destroys communication or marks an exit from one’s existence in language. Instead, it makes a claim asking for acknowledgment, which may be given or denied”, most importantly, “it is not a referential statement that is simply pointing to an inner object” (Das 1996: 70). Pain and trauma become the abject vehicle of reflection upon existence and on how to navigate through it.

Rape survivors, as mentioned previously, and as discussed through Scarry’s work on making and unmaking, come out of destruction with new means of facing and being in the world. The trauma is never forgotten, it lingers, but there are new ways to frame one’s living. In the story of Esma and Sara, “Esma does remain deeply scared by the violence she lived through, and her trauma gets to be continually evoked in a number of ways by the society” but “when Sara cuts off her hair, she confirms her mother’s refusal to be overpowered by the logic of violence” (Lukić 2013: 95). The act of cutting her hair, of repelling her body, “is also her way to face the trauma and free her body from its inscription” (ibid.). She abjects. It disgusts her, she rejects it. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this use and representation of the body is also seen in the characters of *La teta asustada*.

What is most important to note is that culture, as we know it, according to the work of Kristeva, is founded upon the horror aroused by the abject. The abject becomes a means of understanding. In the early processes of forming an identity, according to psychoanalysis, in the process of reaching the Symbolic Order, the abject first and foremost contributes to the child’s separation from its mother. This formation of identity relies on various and continuous processes, as the child reaches subjectivity and language. When moving forward in these processes, the Symbolic Order is often disrupted and this tends to occur with the operation of the abject (Kristeva 1982: 12-13). Since our identity and stability, as self and subject, derives from some sort of unity and stability to the objects that surround us and to

which we attach ourselves, the very nature of the abject poses a threat to this subjectivity and stability. The abject demonstrates the precariousness of these formations, of the complex and continuous processes that it entails. The formation of subjectivity, complex and ongoing, is where we also may witness the blurring of boundaries, as mentioned previously, between self and other, between self and object, as well as the ability to tell our self apart from other and object. It is the abject that allows the child to set itself apart from its mother. The maternal order and world in which the child first finds itself is eventually replaced by that of the Symbolic Order, the child turns towards language and convention. The mother is abjected, left behind as abject (13).

As the child becomes a “clean and proper” subject, she leaves behind the mother. The mother is then relegated to the same place as is all that is filthy and disorderly—the mother is in the place of the uncivilized, of the abject. The mother—her sensuality, her breast milk, her protection, her warmth, her menstrual blood, her waste and disposal of the child’s waste—becomes that which must be pushed away to become individual, to become self, to enter into language and become part of the greater social world. There arises a certain horror to this abject maternal body, sometimes, wrongly, mistranslated (although rather tellingly) to the abject feminine and female body in general (in relation to a supposed maternal function).

Horror will become a point of departure in the following chapter as I bring the ideas of Kristeva’s theory of the abject and abjection to Llosa’s film and subject matter. I take Kristeva’s theory to this study on film, as have others, particularly in the study of the horror genre (Clover 1992; Creed 1993). The abject in the visual can be provoked in the viewer by triggering emotions through visual and emotional elements. It is as easy to evoke joy or fear through evoking memories. It is elemental in provoking uncomfortable voyeuristic experience. Much of Kristeva’s theories that will be useful to the analysis of *La teta asustada*

has been outlined above, with further elaborations to come. By looking more closely to Kristeva's abject in relation to film, I analyze how it works directly within Llosa's film. I do this by demonstrating how, in her film, woman is seen in relation to the abject and abjection in various ways, through the mother/daughter relationship, the rape-survivor/collective relationship, as well as individualized trauma and memory.

3. Abject/ion in *La teta asustada*

To begin this chapter, I will consider Kristeva's theory on abjection and how it can be used in reading Llosa's film. I find Kristeva's work provides a telling framework for reading the story and visual representations that are evoked in the film—especially in regards to the body, and how it can be related to the abject and abjection. In looking at the body and its representation, I discuss how Fausta, how woman, can be read as abject, through self-reflection and through the eyes of the community. Fausta, much like a rape victim herself, can be read as perceiving herself as abject—as 'dirty', 'filthy'—even though it may not seem that she sees herself in such a way. However, we are given subtle cues: in the hospital, when Fausta is asked if she is a virgin, she replies that she does not know⁶. The act of rape inflicts upon the body of the mother and the daughter *in utero* a certain mark which cannot be removed, which seems to pollute inside and out. It questions her virginity, her purity. She, and her community, may or may not perceive herself as abject; however, it still provides a means to create metaphor that may lead to new understandings. The abject, particularly in relation to the body, can be considered as a means to communicate the violence and reality of war. This is because "traumatic experience is deeply paradoxical; while on the one hand it resists being revealed, on the other is yearning for articulation" (Lukić 2013: 91). For those suffering from trauma, "this paradox becomes translated into mediated forms of communication, where body language often tends to replace or supplement verbalization" (ibid.). I argue that the representation of the body, and its reading as metaphoric, have the same ends. It is from these reflections that I extend my analysis.

⁶ This can be read in various ways. Here, I focus on the notion of genealogical trauma. However, another reading of Fausta not knowing if she is a virgin can be more closely related to the potato. Perhaps, she is not sure she is a virgin because she is aware she, in a sense, has *violated* herself with the tuber. Even as a preventative measure, the potato has made her 'impure' in order to be 'undesirable'. It too pollutes inside and out, it grows inside as well as outside becoming the materialization of the unseeable, the unspeakable ever-present trauma of rape.

While Kristeva's writings on the abject have been discussed in film theory in relation to the horror genre, I wish to extend this discussion to traumatic memory within drama. In doing so, I demonstrate how the abject is a means to communicate painful historical memory as well as bring new readings to what exactly happens during and after conflict. According to Kristeva, as noted above, the abject refers to the human reaction—horror, vomit, disgust, spasms—to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object, self and other (2). An important example to discuss how the abject works in *La teta asustada* is the example of the mother's corpse.

In the film, Perpetua dies and much of the story involves her burial. We do not see any sort of funeral until the very end of the film, the body of the mother is wrapped and left inside the home. Metaphorically, this could be read in many ways, and I return to this later. In terms of Kristeva's abject, the corpse reminds us, traumatically, of our own mortality and materiality. The body lingers, even despite Fausta's uncle asking her to make sure it is gone before her cousin's wedding—the reminder of death cannot be present in a ritual that represents new life. However, it stays there, but hidden underneath the bed, away from sight. This reaction to this reminder can also be elicited by other means that also have to do with the body: bleeding wounds, shit, rotting food almost consumed, as Kristeva has argued. It is present every time Fausta's panic causes her nose to bleed.

Kristeva's theory claims that the abject pushes away but also draws one closer to the place where meaning collapses, where the order is shaken. It is what reminds us of our place in a system. It is situated at a place before entering into the Symbolic Order. How does this relate to bodies? It is through abjection, the condition of demonstrating fragility, that "preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (10). The

abject and abjection, therefore, can provide a framework to consider what happens when bodies cannot be separated from other bodies, as in the case of traumatic memory, collectively and personally. Fausta cannot separate from her mother, and her community cannot separate fully from the conflict as shown through their belief systems. There seems to be mixtures of bodies on various levels—between victim and rapist, self and other, mother and daughter. There is no separation here. One’s own body becomes alien to oneself, compromised of what should not be there—the abject. Both the abject and abjection remind us of the traumatic realities of life and death, of violence, providing a guide to consider Llosa’s film and its characters.

In further developing a reading using Kristeva’s theories, it is also worth noting that the abject marks a “primal repression”: that which precedes the establishment of the subject’s relation to its objects of desire and of representation, even before the establishment of the conscious and unconscious (10-11). Kristeva discusses the moment in our development when we established a border or separation between human and animal, between culture and that which preceded it, between past and present (12-13). The abject, therefore, marks the moment when we separated ourselves from our mother—from another body in order to be. It is the recognition of a boundary between myself and other, between myself and mother. I argue that when this boundary is not put forth rigidly, it too is a sign of abjection—it “notifies us of the limits of the human universe” (11). The film begins with mother and daughter singing, their duet demonstrates they are intertwined. Their singing represents a place and time where meaning collapses—of remembering, as Kristeva writes considering Celine, “war bordering on putrescence” (135). Through singing, they are “inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject” (18). The lack of separation between daughter and mother, in terms of memory, that is present in *La teta*

asustada is a disruption of order and identity because it presents a genealogical memory, much like the archaic memory of Kristeva, that persists with the same function: do not forget in order to survive.

To not forget highlights how there is a threat that meaning is breaking down and it constitutes our reaction to this breakdown: a *reestablishment* of our (primal) repression. Abjection “*is a precondition for narcissism*”, it is before being “*like*” something, it is what *I* am not and from what I separate myself from, so that the “more or less beautiful image in which I behold or recognize myself rests upon an abjection that sunders it as soon as repression, the constant watchman, is relaxed” (13). The watchman looks away, and it demonstrates the state of vulnerability. Abjection, as I have described, has to do with “what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules” and, so, can include horrific crimes like genocide and wartime rape. The abjection of crimes committed under such circumstances are precisely so because they draw attention to the “fragility of the law”, the lack of order, chaos (4). When repression relaxes, it is proof, to a certain extent, that anything goes. Hence, to internalize abjection, to internalize that which disturbs order, to inscribe it into the body, is to be constantly reminded that this watchman is not always on duty. It is Fausta’s fear that she may be raped at any moment.

To bring Kristeva’s notions to film, it is important to consider her approach to narrative, specifically literature. Kristeva closely ties her theories to religion and art, but she pays special attention to novels and poetry. According to her, the best modern literature explores in the narrative the place of the abject, a place where boundaries begin to breakdown, where we are confronted with an archaic space before the linguistic binaries of self and other, subject and object. The transcendent, or sublime, intend to cover over these breakdowns associated with the abject; both are found in narrative works. By extension, they

can be found in storytelling and cinema. As Kristeva notes, “all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse that seems to me rooted, no matter what its sociohistorical conditions might be, on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so—double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject” (207). Literature, then, is a project that demonstrates language lack and desire. I extend this especially to film. For Kristeva, literature like poetry demonstrates the fact that language is at once arbitrary and involved with the abject fear of loss and hurt. Just as she argues that poetry has a willingness to play with grammar, metaphor and meaning, so does film but on an audiovisual level. Kristeva also, in arguing that narrative is a “cache for suffering” (140), speaks of the difficulty in narrating when the narrator is suffering, she “cries out”, signifying how this theme of suffering and horror plays out in the “violence of poetry” and silences:

the unbearable identity of the narrator and of the surroundings that are supposed to sustain him can no longer be *narrated* but *cries out* or is *descried* with maximal stylistic intensity (language of violence, of obscenity, or of a rhetoric that relates the text to poetry). The narrative yields to a *crying-out theme* that, when it tends to coincide with the incandescent states of a boundary-subjectivity that I have called abjection, is the crying-out theme of suffering-horror. In other words, the theme of suffering-horror is the ultimate evidence of such states of abjection within a narrative representation. If one wished to proceed farther still along the approaches to abjection, one would find neither narrative nor theme but a recasting of syntax and vocabulary—the violence of poetry, and silence (141).

I return to these notions of violence, silence, and horror in my analysis of *La teta asustada*. Although I have taken time to cover various notions of her theory, it is important to note for the context of this thesis, that while Kristeva maintains her discussion of the abject in psychoanalysis, much of her arguments can be put within other perspectives, particularly cinematic discourses. Cinema like literature shows deficiencies in language and mechanisms

of desire, but it is able to engage with them by different means—not just text and language, but through images and sounds. Cinematic narrative, therefore, can be considered under Kristeva’s framework for approaching literature. I will connect Kristeva’s idea to the body, to consider how the body, especially the woman’s body, is not just a battlefield or a historical site, but a social and metaphorical abject, personally and socially. Fausta sees her own body as abject, as does her community. The abject is present in several ways, and I discuss this in the following section.

3.1 Abject/ion and Rape

Rape has greater ramifications than physical damage, it is often the trauma of rape that persists and continues to cause harm psychically. Wartime rape, like all rape, works the same way, but also points to other significations. Wartime rape is “where the masculine principle is assumed to have power over the female body and is using it as a territory to conquer, or as a vessel to introduce ‘foreign blood’ into and otherwise assumingly ‘pure national body’ and thus ‘polluting’ it” (Lukić 2013: 95). Although in my analysis I only touch upon the relation to the nation, this notion of the outside coming in and polluting the body is significant to my reading of Llosa’s film with Kristeva’s notion of the abject. This pollution psychically affects but is also very much coming from the physical pain, penetration, and violence that defines rape. The physical damage caused by rape can be considerable but the trauma of rape may for some be even worse than the bodily harm. Abjection can be used to consider the trauma of rape, as its “intimate side is suffering and horror its public feature” (Kristeva 1982: 140). The act of rape “destroys communities by transforming women into abjects” (Diken and Lausten 2005: 117). The rape victim often perceives herself as an abject, as a ‘dirty’, ‘marked’, a morally inferior or incapable person.

The penetration inflicted upon her body is not only a mark but a stigma that cannot be effaced. She may perceive herself as abject because her body feels marked and she cannot remove it. Her presence also signifies the reality of war, it is abjection by its demonstration of the disturbance of the system by wartime rape and violence. There is a communal aspect to this as well: the victim may be chastised by neighbors and by family members because of what is perpetrated upon her. The rape victim suffers dually: first by being raped and second by being condemned, chastised by her community. As discussed by Diken and Lausten (2005), in analyzing wartime rape in Bosnia, in the cases of forced pregnancy, the child might be seen by some, if not most, women as an abject: an alien, a disgusting object, a thing. They argue that the abject in the case of the “war baby” is neither fully inside (the child is never hers), nor fully outside (she feels polluted by it) (113). The boundaries, of motherhood, community, body, are shaken up and unstable.

In Peru, like in Bosnia, sexual violence and gang rapes were rampant (Theidon 2004, 2007, 2009, 2013). Wartime rape is marked by its polluting abilities, as mentioned above, by its ability to give rise to shame and guilt. In Diken and Lausten’s discussion of how gang rape in the Bosnian war forged a “brotherhood of guilt” based in part upon the transgression of taboo by raping the victim, the woman, they point to how it is through the soldier’s guilt that the gang of the perpetrators are unified. Through collective guilt, individual shame is pushed aside. Rape becomes a rite of initiation: together in guilt while individually erasing shame. Shame resists verbalization while guilt incites it. It is from shame that arises trauma, therefore these soldier-rapists were able to remove themselves from it, to a certain extent. It is, as Kristeva writes, the “shameless rapist” that points to abjection. The shameless rapist does not suffer from trauma as does the shameful rapist. This also works similar in the rape victim. The survivors of rape, then, who find moments of agency to avoid shame, to protect

themselves from the fragility of the system, as Fausta does, from the destructive capability of abjection. As Diken and Lausten rightly argue:

Abjection thus works on both sides. On the side of the victim, abjection has a destructive impact because it cannot be verbalized, and on the side of the offender, it works to create a strong symbolic bond, a brotherhood in abjection or in guilt to use the more common term (124).

Abjection, then, points to the destructive possibilities inherent within rape. It also points to how rape survivors can be read as abject, as signifiers of becoming outside of the social order. Women become abject in these violent acts and may remain so afterwards. If abject is seen as that which provokes anxiety, disgust, disorder, then there is an obvious negative connection to and consideration of the rape survivor. However, it is not the only way to consider the abject. Perhaps the abject is what through its presence threatens normality and conventionality, but, as Diken and Lausten argue in regards to abjection, it is more than this. It has implications that not only show how easily order can be shaken but that it can be used as a tactic in war to somehow exert control—the control of the soldiers for example through this brotherhood. Since the abject, as Kristeva notes, is outside of order, it is outside these binaries—it is indistinction itself, it is formlessness. It can be that which does not make sense, but that intends to achieve it.

As mentioned above, the abject provokes discomfort. It reminds us that we should avoid rotting foods, to keep away from impurity. However, “it is documented that seemingly impure objects are not avoided in all cultures, that some objects are considered impure only when they appear as being out of place... in some traditions filth can be elevated into a sign of spiritual purity as is the case for the hermit” (Diken and Lausten 2005: 116). Nothing is impure or filthy on its own, it becomes that way through inscription of meaning. Still, this

does not change the fact that most often than not, abject matter incites a corporeal disgust and anxiety on its own because it reminds us about the limits of ourselves.

I now bring Kristeva's work on abjection and abject to the horror film. Creed (1993) argues in regards to the monstrous-feminine that the horror film "would appear to be, in at least three ways, an illustration of the work of abjection" (10). She argues that first the horror film "abounds in images of abjection", especially the corpse and bodily wastes (10). Secondly, "the concept of the border is central to the construction of the monster in horror film; that which crosses or threatens to cross the 'border' is abject" (10-11). Thirdly, "the horror film illustrates the work of abjection in the construction of the maternal figure as abject" (11). In the following sections, I intend to illustrate how all three appear to work similarly in *La teta asustada*. Although horror is not what is at work in this film, as it is a drama, there are still similar features at work. Overall, Llosa's film does provoke a certain reaction of disgust, fear and anxiety. For it is abjected matter that "provokes corporeal responses of a bodily and reflex-like character", that causes spasms and jerks (Diken and Lausten 2005: 116).

3.2 From Horror to Drama

Adriana Cavarero (2008) argues that through *horrorism* scenes of violence from the past through the present cannot be fully understood through current categories that address it. Horrorism "is meant to emphasize the peculiarly repugnant character of so many scenes of contemporary violence, which locates them in the realm of horror" (29). She argues for a concentration upon the 'helpless' victims of violence, discussing how it is through these individuals and their very helplessness that current perspectives should be oriented, instead of those of the perpetrators. Cavarero suggests horrorism for those forms of violence which

offend the human condition at its ontological level—for “horrorism is characterized by a particular form of violence that exceeds death itself” (32). Horror, in real life, instead of the imagination, in fantasy, is very real and very difficult to approach. How does cinematic horror approach this—specifically the horror film?

The horror film demonstrates an interesting paradox. If the abject reminds us of what must be avoided, why the fascination with fear, monsters and gore? Horror films demonstrate that there is some desire in witnessing and experiencing the abject. These are both repellent and fascinating. Creed (1993) writes:

In terms of Kristeva’s notion of the border, when we say such-and-such horror film ‘made me sick’ or ‘scared the shit out of me’, we are actually foregrounding that specific horror film as a ‘work of abjection’ or ‘abjection at work’ - almost in a literal sense. Viewing the horror film signifies a desire not only for perverse pleasure (confronting sickening, horrific images/being filled with terror/desire for the undifferentiated) but also desire, once having been filled with perversity, to throw up, to throw out, eject the abject (from the safety of the spectator’s seat) (10).

I find the same reactions related to *La teta asustada*. By looking at the abject to produce horror, I will later extend this discussion to traumatic memory in *La teta asustada*. How does the abject produce emotional and visceral reactions? How does this work in the horror film?

I return to Creed’s notions of the abject in regards to horror, she outlines that in “Kristeva’s view, woman is specifically related to polluting objects” and this “in turn gives woman a special relationship to the abject”, which she relates to the horror film monster (10). It is her consideration of the woman as a horrific entity—the the sense that it arouses discomfort and sickening—that I wish to foreground. In her work on the monstrous

feminine⁷, she discusses the representation of the woman as the monster in the horror film genre, instead of “the simple reversal” of “the ‘male monster’” (3). This monstrous-feminine—be it the zombie, the werewolf, the phantom, witches, ghosts—in patriarchal society are linked to “sexual difference” and “castration” (2). The term ‘monstrous-feminine’ foregrounds “gender in the construction of monstrosity” (3), challenging the notion of the male monster and Freud’s theory of the “castrated woman” (1). She argues that this ‘monstrous feminine’ speaks more about male fears than feminine subjectivity (7): the fear is grounded in women being castrator rather than as castrated (6). Putting castration anxiety aside, Creed elaborates upon Kristeva’s notion of the abject, as I have already pointed to previously, to discuss how the monstrous in horror is grounded in “ancient historical notions of sexual immorality and perversion, corporeal alteration, decay and death, the corpse and the feminine body” (3). Creed suggests that the importance of abject in horror films allow for a “perverse pleasure” derived from watching images that may make someone so uncomfortable as to feel sick (3, 10), as noted above. The crossing of borders that defines the abject, that threatens the Symbolic Order and its stability, is present in the monstrous. The monster is a being that confronts the fragility of borders between “good and evil, the human and inhuman, the natural and supernatural, propriety and impropriety, normality and abnormality, the pure body and the abject body” (11).

⁷ At this time, I would like to mention fellow scholar Xiang Zairong’s master thesis presented for the Erasmus Mundus Master in Women’s and Gender Studies (GEMMA) titled “The Chinese Myth of the White Snake: A Feminist Cultural Analysis of the Interrelationship between the (Gendered/Textual) Body and Narrative Transformation”, supervised by Prof. Adelina Sánchez (University of Granada) and Prof. Ann Heilmann (University of Hull), defended on July 15th, 2009 in Granada. In his thesis, Zairong studies the Chinese snake-woman myth to show how artistic reproduction of the myth and critical discourses surrounding it have tried to control the “monstrous” female body. I mention this work now to demonstrate that the consideration of the female body and its relation to the monstrous have provided telling readings of this relation in studies of various kinds of texts and discourses. My work is in addition to the current studies of the monstrous and gender in the GEMMA program. In the thesis of Zairong, abject theory is used in relation to embodiment in literature, even though it is a different perspective and methodological approach than my own. Although this thesis is unpublished, it can be accessed by contacting GEMMA.

Creed suggests that horror film illustrates the work of abjection in three different ways, with images of abjection, the concept of the border, and abjection in the construction of the maternal figure as abject. This third work of abjection in the construction of the maternal figure will provide a guiding idea to consider Fausta and Perpetua's relationship within the narrative. The role and presence of the mother is one of the strongest features of *La teta asustada*. In Creed's analysis of Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), she provides an example of how in the horror film genre these monstrous representations of the female resonate with the archaic figure of the mother. Her reading of this film provides some insight into how to consider the mother in *La teta asustada*. In *Alien*, a seven-member crew in suspended animation aboard the spaceship *Nostromo* receive a distress call from an unexplored planet. The ship computer, known as 'Mother', awakens the crew, who are ordered to investigate the mysterious transmission. After visiting the foreign planet, one of the crew members is attacked by an alien presence. Although this creature dies, it, alongside the attacked crew member, are taken on board. The crew heads home only to realize that an aggressive living extraterrestrial creature has joined them—deadly encounters ensue. Ripley, the main protagonist, the lone survivor (a different kind of 'final girl'), faces the alien and escapes. In this film, as Creed points out, bodily dismemberment and forcible impregnation can all be understood as explorations of the primal scene and the encounter with the boundaries, or lack thereof, of the nature of the original archaic mother. The mother's body is constructed as abject as a means to create and separate oneself, in Creed's application of Kristeva's theory, but it also demonstrates how one can be tied to the origin, to the mother—in the case of Fausta, to the trauma of rape and violence.

Kristeva's work is mostly interested in how, through abjection, maternal power becomes subordinated to that of the Symbolic Order. The mother, within the pre-symbolic, is

pushed away in order for the child to enter into this Order and become a self. Using Kristeva's notions of the archaic mother, Creed suggests that the archaic mother in *Alien* is present as "the blackness of extinction - death". It is the abyss from which one emerges but to which one may be reabsorbed, in the horror film. But to separate from the mother is also a form of death, a "psychic death". It is this "confrontation with death as represented in the horror film [which] gives rise to a terror of self-disintegration, of losing one's self or ego" (28). I suggest that Fausta has lost a sense of self by not fully separating from her mother and her mother's story—she is forced to do so by her death, but even before so, she seems terrified by the world because of her lack of self. Fausta, as pointed out by her cousin Máxima, is afraid to walk alone and she often refuses to speak with others. With her mother gone, she is forced to enter her social world with more engagement, but, with the lingering presence of her mother's corpse, and her extreme fear of being violated, she is unable to do so fully. As can be understood through my analysis, I do not wish to enter a deep discussion surrounding psychoanalysis to apply Kristeva's theory on abjection in regards to my film analysis, as there is no necessity to do so in the scope of this thesis; however, there are telling elements to the reading of the archaic mother within Kristeva's work and Creed's within the horror film that suggest one way of reading what is at hand in Llosa's film. In horror film, the mother is shown as monster; in Llosa's film, the mother is not monster, but her story and experience is horrific, it terrifies us in a different way, by showing us the extreme violence human beings are capable of committing towards one another.

In *La teta asustada*, Fausta and her mother are not conventional monsters in any sense of the term but do represent these notions of violated boundaries, of marginality and a reminder of extreme, senseless violence. Although this film is a drama, we encounter various scenes that create discomfort and anxiety. They beg us to ask *why*, and they also provide

metaphors and perspectives on what it means to live in and outside violence. Llosa retransmits her reaction to reading Theidon's text, confronting these realities, the horrors that she experiences when reading the testimonies of these raped women, in a cinematographic work. Llosa says in an interview that she does not pretend to portray reality but attempts to read, point out and raise an issue, an awareness, which somehow will help generate arguments, to then have the discussions that we have repressed (Chauca 2010: 51). In the following chapter, I will describe various scenes that demonstrate this: the opening scene mentioned earlier with Fausta's mother on her deathbed, the first scene in the hospital which comes shortly afterward, Fausta's trimming of the roots, among others.

Before continuing, I wish to reflect upon the notion of using the abject, the reminder of our materiality, as a means to communicate metaphorically memories and histories. It is through the use of abject that Llosa's film is able to shock, reveal and engage by pushing for new imaginaries, new memories, new readings. It becomes possible to understand the trauma and terror of Fausta as the film obliges its audience to imagine and visualize that which is not imaginable nor reproducible, that which cannot always be spoken or seen, by utilizing abjection.

4. Fausta and Perpetua

An act of human contact and concern, whether occurring here or in private contexts of sympathy, provides the hurt person with worldly self-extension: in acknowledging and expressing another person's pain, or in articulating one of his nonbodily concerns while he is unable to, one human being who is well and free willingly turns himself into an image of the other's psychic or sentient claims, an image existing in the space outside the sufferer's body, projected out into the world and held there intact by that person's powers until the sufferer himself regains his own powers of self-extension. By holding that world in place, or by giving the pain a place in the world, sympathy lessens the power of sickness and pain, counteracts the force with which a person in great pain or sickness can be swallowed alive by the body (Scarry 1985: 50).

Claudia Llosa's film intends to give an individual and collective painful, traumatic memory a place in the world. Her story also intends to hold the world in place, to give a view of a story less spoken, to not let it get left aside or lost in time or behind official recollections. Through her characters and narrative, Llosa provides the hurt survivors of the war a worldly extension, she gives them an image of some of their pain, to attempt to counteract the destructive potential of that pain.

As I have mentioned throughout the previous chapters, the audience is able to engage with these individual and collective representations and expressions of trauma through the characters Fausta and her mother and their bodies. Their bodies can be read through the literal representation given on the screen or through their metaphorical implications. The bodily metaphors of *La teta asustada* seem to be what stays longest with its viewers, long after the movie. The potato and the mother's ever-present body hold power as images, as visual synopses through their affect—they contain the story, or elements of the story, in their dynamic representations. These metaphors seem to bring out the internalized, less accessible worlds of Fausta and her mother, making them into something the audience can engage with, exteriorly placing them onto the shots and scenes the film provides for its audience. In the

realm of the cinematic, what these bodily metaphors are able to accomplish, to a certain extent, is the representation of that which cannot be represented, of what cannot be spoken.

To speak of something is to communicate, but speaking also has the power to stand for action. In “The Rape of Narrative and the Narrative of Rape” (1988), Mieke Bal discusses the role of three young women who are victims without names (she names them), and pays particular attention to Chapter 19 of the book of Judges whose victim “is dragged from house to house and gang-raped and killed when expelled from the house” (1). Bal names her *Beth* (ibid.). In her analysis of Beth, Bal works with philosopher of language J.L. Austin’s theory of speech-acts. Speech-acts are those acts that are enacted through being spoken, as Bal notes, the “favorite example is marriage, where the utterance of the word accomplishes the deed” (3). To say “I do” is to become married, a performative utterance that not only passively describes a given reality but is changing that reality it is describing. But what if one cannot speak? What if the power of speech is not delegated to a certain individual? A woman? And what of speech in relation to the body? Bal goes on to argue how rape “is the body speech act par excellence” (20). She continues to elaborate her notion, referring to both heterosexual and homosexual rape:

It is well known that rape victims experience the act as aggressive, not lustful; the rapist as misogynist full of hatred not as the excusable frustrated loner. Homosexual rape is equally motivated by hatred of the object, and it is ‘logical’ that it is often committed by heterosexual men. Rape being motivated by hatred, not by lust, men who hate and fear women and their attraction to them will rape women, while men who hate and fear men and their attraction to them will rape men. Homophobia and heterocentrism parallel gynophobia and androcentrism. To rape is to speak the hatred. Often, the act is accompanied by (or should we say: accomplished through?) offensive verbal language, as if the symbolic meaning of the act needed to be enhanced. It is also an act of cutting, of dividing flesh, destroying its wholeness, hence the subject. It alienates the victim from herself *and it is meant to do so* (ibid.).

She continues her argument, also speaking of how the “aggression of rape is the speech act of contiguity par excellence. The hatred is spoken by one body into the other” (ibid.). Contiguity is the state of bordering, of being in direct contact with something, a physical relation. The aggression of rape, therefore, is to get into someone else. It is moving hatred into the victim. If rape is body speech act par excellence and its aggression the speech act of contiguity par excellence, meaning that the rape as body speech act accomplishes a certain deed—here, hatred—and signifies a physical relation, this provides a telling reading of Perpetua’s rape. As the rape is not represented, but sung, by Perpetua herself, the body speech act of rape, by not being seen and being verbally communicated, removes some of the agency of the rapists and gives it to Perpetua, who sings the words. Her body speech act of singing takes up that agency. Hatred is lessened, gives Perpetua the position of narrator, although the trauma and violence are just as present and foregrounded.

In discussing Beth, Bal suggest that “Beth’s dead body can speak, but by a perverse twist it is the man who totally subjected her, not herself, who speaks” (18). What cannot be spoken finds a way to be uttered. Perpetua’s story would not have the same testimonial power if it was not sung; by making and producing song, she claims a position of agency. Yet, as Bal points out, in regards to Beth’s husband, who is the one handing her over to the rapists and speaking for her, “the speaking body fails to speak because it is not listened to. There lies the deepest scandal of the speaking body: it is not permitted to speak” (21). The unspeakable becomes spoken even after the destructive body language of rape, but it is scandalous, it is not listened to. Fausta’s mother, who sings to her daughter so she does not forget, who is demonstrated to us as a marginal figure—as woman, as elderly, as migrant, as indigenous, as subaltern—sings in the privacy of her bedroom. We are permitted a view into a private exchange that has very public ramifications. We are made to listen. The way in which Llosa

takes considerable care to portray and set-up this scene demonstrates the power of the body speech act in the audiovisual and it seems it is meant to create a response in the audience. Here, singing, becomes a way to portray that which cannot be spoken or seen, rape. It becomes a metaphor based in abject—in speaking of the horrific acts—functioning as it does because of the cinematic medium. It is the relation of the visual and sound that creates its potency and effectiveness. Perpetua, in many ways, cannot speak, so instead sings. It is an act to remember. Perpetua, therefore, is in this same type of position as Beth, who is not only raped, but dismembered and sent to pieces throughout the tribes as a message is a “totally destroyed subject” who “becomes the speaker to the whole nation” (18). When Perpetua sings of her rape, she sings of the rapes of all the women who were violated during Peru’s war. Through her singing body, through her bodily act of speech through song, the audience enters into her traumatic reality. She connects us to the story.

Perpetua sings her story, and dies in the same scene. Through her death, her corpse, we are given a metaphor of the violence of memory, both for individual and collective. It is, however, through the representation of Fausta and her story within the film that we are provided the strongest metaphors using the body. In the following sections, I will first discuss Fausta and then return to her mother before exploring the move from real-life testimony to screenplay. I will end this chapter with reflections upon how *La teta asustada* engages with individual and collective memory inside and outside the narrative.

4.1 Fausta

La teta asustada forces us to consider, to imagine the type of pain and fear that would make a woman do what Fausta does to herself to protect herself. Present in the film is a

necessity to communicate the results of the disastrous, the painful, and the violent memories. The expression of pain is what Theidon (2004) calls a “demand for recognition” (38): through language one moves one’s pain to their interlocutor and one speaks in order to find compassion, relief and justice in their multiple significations. However, sometimes language and speaking are not possible or enough.

Although there are limitations to articulating in language what has happened or how one experiences an event, the film begins with song to establish the departure point of Fausta’s story. *La teta asustada* opens with the scene between mother and daughter. And it begins in darkness. We hear a disembodied voice come from the screen’s windy black abyss. The first words are sung in Quechua, their translation⁸ appears against the black: “Perhaps, one day / You will understand”. The voice continues to sing: “This woman who sings / Was grabbed was raped / That night / They didn’t care”. When she sings that “they didn’t care”⁹, the black fades into the image of a woman in bed. She is seen up close, her head laid back on the pillows of her bed, an elderly woman—named Perpetua—on not just any bed but, as the audience soon realizes, her deathbed, she continues to sing an autobiographical song, its lyrics painting a brutal image of being raped and tortured during her pregnancy. The song is beautiful but the things she describes are horrific—she was forced to put her dead husband’s penis in her mouth, the soldiers’ hands were everywhere. She sings the sad and terrifying words with her eyes closed. Her wrinkles share a serene beauty of the marks of time that are

⁸ All lyrics and dialogue cited in this thesis are based upon the English subtitles provided by the DVD. At times, I will provide my own translations if fitting when I feel they reflect more closely the dialogue in Spanish; however, if Quechua is used, I rely solely on the provided subtitles.

⁹ Velez (2011:37) analyzes this same opening scene with similar readings; however, she uses the Spanish translation of *vergüenza* (shame) as the word breaks away from the darkness to the light. Her readings highlights more strongly the sense of shame, arguing that the uttering of this word is what not only illuminates the screen but it also announces and brings to sight the invisibility of the crime and its obscenity.

also shared by the cracked wall and the bed-frame we see behind her head—a strong contrast to what we are listening to from this woman.

Soon another voice is heard, joining her, it is that of her daughter Fausta who is also singing. The spectator is not yet certain that it is Fausta, at this point, she is just a disembodied non-diegetic voice intervening this song. Fausta sings: “Every time you remember / When you cry, mother”. Then entering from the top-left of the frame, there is the face of Fausta, while continues: “You stain your bed / With tears of sorrow and sweat”. Singing again, both form a communion in song between generations of suffering. They maintain their histories alive, although painful, through this act. Fausta sits next to her mother, her back to the camera, she caresses and tucks her mother better into bed. She asks Perpetua to continue singing, to not forget. The camera follows Fausta from here. In the background, we can see windows, a yellow hued landscape, dry and urbanized. Fausta continues to sing with her mother, coming into and out of the frame while continuing to arrange the bed. Foregrounded, Fausta is now the only one on camera, her eyes looking at her mother, with the window behind her. The camera comes in towards her. Perpetua dies. The scene cuts, returning to the initial windy darkness of the black screen.

The fading in and out of darkness that brackets this scene is itself significant. The composition of entering and exiting this opening is an attempt to bring us into the story in a very specific manner. It is to connect the audience to a sense of loss, fear, trauma, through the absence of image and sound, in order for us to align ourselves with Fausta. We fade out, as does the camera, into this sense of loss, of the fear of losing one’s self, which is “often represented cinematically by a screen which becomes black, signifying the obliteration of self, the self of the protagonist in the film and the spectator in the camera” (Creed 1993: 28). The audience situates itself with these two figures by these compositions and through the

song, the song arising from the mother's mouth and, by extension, her body. The mother's song speaks of the history of these women, a story not told, an unspoken reality of wartime rape. Through the song, we understand we are in present-day Peru and that the violence in question took place during the times of the civil war. Fausta's mother, the victim of horrific acts, sings to her daughter, telling her that she also suffers from the rape she survived. The film never returns to the total yet intriguing blackness from which it begins, from the absence of images of the first sequence that precedes the moment when mother and daughter sing together. This scene permits its audience to approach and get nearer to the characters that we will encounter, especially to Fausta. The audience, like Fausta, experience the death of her mother and this creates the necessity of trying to end this story, of helping Perpetua reach her resting place. We go along with Fausta while she tries to find the means to bury her mother while her corpse lingers in the household. Although we lose Fausta's mother, she remains ever-present. Fausta never seems to separate herself from her mother. As I argue earlier, Fausta does not seem to be a full self, she is not fully separated from her mother and her mother's story. She is forced to do so only by her death. This is seen more elaborately in the scene that follows Perpetua's death and describes Fausta's particular ailment which links her life to the memory of war.

Her mother's sung story explains that Fausta is hurt, broken, tormented, disturbed because of *la teta asustada*. As a result, Fausta is unstable and, furthermore, relegated to a life in the margins while already living a marginal existence in the borderlands of Lima. Fausta is paralyzed by the past and fears everything around her, and others also seem anxious around her. Although she was not raped herself, she is an abject figure in her community. The community itself in the borderlands, is an abject reminder of the violence of Peru's internal conflict. All these abject positions can be witnessed working at once in the scene where the

women of Fausta's family and community are preserving her mother's corpse. Perpetua's dead body, still in bed where she has passed away, is surrounded by six women, three on each side of the bed, with the camera facing straight on, directly from the foot of the bed. We can clearly see the bottom of Perpetua's feet, but her body is underneath a sheet and another cloth is placed over her eyes and face. We can see the bed-frame again but this time its cracked paint and the peeling wallpaper on the wall behind it are more prominent. It is another example of the state and conditions of the *pueblo joven*, the young shantytowns, in the peripheries of Lima. The room looks old, worn-down, crowded, especially so through the scene's composition. Fausta's aunt Carmela, closest to Perpetua's head at the top of the bed, is the one who seems to be leading the preservation of the body and asks a younger woman, Severina, her cousin, to hand her the bowl with the hot oil. Severina says, "This is making me sick" to which the woman responds, "Sick or not sick" and takes the bowl. She rubs the body with the oil and speaks: "We've helped so many preserve their *muertitos*". Their *muertitos*, little dead ones, an affectionate diminutive of *muertos*, the dead. She continues: "How could we prove their existence to the authorities? We didn't even have a picture, even less an ID card. We had no proof of being born... and much less of being killed". Carmela here adds more context to the conditions of the room and its inhabitants, the room being an extension of their neighborhood. The people here, many refugees from the south, escaped the violence, some even as dead loved ones to be buried in other places. Their community located in the periphery is an the abject reminder of the war. Its people are abject figures of the Peruvian state—with no documents, they exist but never existed. Then, within this community of abjects, there is Fausta, who is herself abject within it. She is someone who escaped the violence, in the womb of her mother, but did not escape all of its effects: the disease *la teta asustada* is inside her. Carmela looks over to Fausta, affectionally calls her daughter and asks her to go over her mother's breast with the oil. "I don't want to be infected by her nipple,"

she claims. She hands over the bowl of hot oil to Fausta, who, because of her illness, is able to touch this part of her mother. All this is occurring with the presence of corpse, “the most sickening of wastes”, which “is a border that has encroached upon everything”, its presence reminding us of the fragile borders between life and death (Kristeva 1982: 3). Yet, here, the corpse is cared for, preserved, touched, referred to affectionately—perhaps causing discomfort to the audience, as it is easy to feel uneasy in the presence of the dead on and off screen. The memory of the war is in the story of Carmela, in the presence of the corpse, and in the body of Fausta, in all the different examples of the abject. Fausta, however, our main protagonist, is the one who shocks us the most in how the memory of violence, of trauma, is demonstrated through her body.

We learn during the first scene in the hospital that Fausta has inserted a potato in her vagina for fear of being sexually violated. Llosa does not show what Fausta has done explicitly, it is spoken of in the dialogue between her uncle, Tío Lúcido, and her doctor on what she has done to protect herself. In the scene right before this interaction, Fausta’s mother has just passed away, and Fausta, walking towards her uncle and cousins who are sitting outside of their home, is seen bleeding from her nose and faints in front of her family. Then, in the hospital, her doctor, dressed in his white medical gown, and uncle are seated one in front of the other. Both uncle and doctor appear individually, almost centered although slightly angled while maintained in medium-shot. Llosa situates each character so they seem to be directly facing the audience whenever they speak or react while also providing a false sense of equality between them through this framing. The doctor tells Tío Lúcido about the potato the medical staff has found, calling it “rather strange” and “unusual” for a young woman like Fausta. Fausta does not permit the physicians to remove the potato—something that seems horrifying, disgusting, uncomfortable, abject. At first, her uncle seems not to pay

attention to the doctor's words, referring to her nosebleed. Tío Lúcido intends to explain that Fausta "[has] bled since she was a child, when she's scared. Her mother, she just passed away. That's why she fainted". He continues saying that "she lived very hard times in the village. Fausta was born during terrorism. And her mother transmitted her fear through her breast milk". He shares the reasoning that it is *la teta asustada* that Fausta has, she "has the 'milk of sorrow', as we call anyone born that way, without a soul because it hid underground out of fear. There is no illness like this in Lima, is there, doctor?"

The doctor does not listen or pay attention to what Tío Lúcido has told him. This medical professional explains that the "the bleeding isn't related. Her capillary vessels are very superficial. With a simple operation they are cauterized and that's the end of it". But, leaning in, her uncle insists that "she bleeds because of the illness, doctor, because of the 'milk of sorrow'. She was born that way, no potatoes. How can we harvest potatoes from a vagina?" The doctor, visibly annoyed, responds: "The illness of the 'milk of sorrow', or whatever, doesn't exist and much less transmitted by a mother's milk". He finished what he has to say, his eyes barely lifting from his desk as he ends the conversation, by returning to the conventional medical visit: "Here is a document so as to have her admitted".

The doctor has ignored, totally dismissed, what Fausta's uncle has shared with him regarding his niece suffering from *la teta asustada*. This scene reflects an encounter that could occur in real life, it demonstrates a hierarchy of knowledge and speech, of order. Fausta's body disrupts this conventional ordering, but instead of the doctor reflecting upon it, it is dismissed. The abject here—the indigenous knowledge, the potato in Fausta—is ignored in order to continue with business as usual. However, the audience does not brush away such things so easily, especially what Fausta has done to herself. This shocking news affects the viewer. How could Fausta do this to herself? How can this be seen as protection? She seems

to violate her body to avoid sexual violation—abjection. Her disturbing demonstration of agency occurs so that her body will not be violated and objectified by others. Her actions elicit responses from the viewer even though we are only told and it is not shown. Her uncle's and doctor's interaction also causes discomfort, by the lack of consideration, and even respect. In both cases, the abject as understood through the characters' dialogue, their language, is powerful. It also helps to demonstrate the trauma of wartime rape and its continuing repercussions in various ways, especially what Fausta has done to her body.

Once we learn of Fausta's initiative to protect herself with a potato, we also understand that she does not remove it. She continues to keep the potato inside her, even against warnings given to her uncle—which Fausta overhears—that the potato is growing inside her. It is growing roots, as potatoes do in dark, damp locations. The boundaries of the inside and out, of giving life, are shaken up. Here, there is playing with boundaries to see how trauma maintains her in a space without form, without order. Fausta is traumatized and does traumatic things to her body to avoid more trauma. She pollutes herself to not be polluted. The abject here still functions as Kristeva outlines: it will keep out what shouldn't be inside. As Theidon (2007, 2009) and Winkler (1994) have argued, often times when considering rape victims, they are only seen as *victims* instead of active agents. In the framework of victim/perpetrator, a raped woman is not given agency, her ability to fight back is not foregrounded. Theidon (2007) has collected various testimonies from many women who describe how they had tried to defend themselves and their loved ones, with sticks, teeth, screams, and fists. Some women describe how they pretended to be pregnant to dissuade potential rapists, others smeared blood on their underwear for the same effect. Fausta is another example of this type of courageous response and agency, but it is in an extreme abject that Llosa represents to her audience.

On the crowded bus ride back home from the hospital, Fausta and her uncle are on their feet, holding onto the overhead rails. Tío Lúcido is standing, his face in profile, looking out towards a window, to the right of the frame. Fausta is facing him, and incidentally faces the camera, and therefore the audience. Fausta tells Tío Lúcido, in Castillian Spanish, “Uncle, that doctor knows nothing”. She continues to speak to him, but now in Quechua: “It’s not a birth control method. I know that”. She switches back, “It is not like I am ignorant. I’d prefer that instead of something else. Please, don’t tell anything to my aunt, if she won’t understand it. And you must respect me”. Her uncle does not look at her, but seems to nod slightly. Fausta looks away briefly, and looks back, and speaks again, in Spanish: “My mother told me that during the terrorism... a neighbor did it so as not to be raped. They say it was disgusting. I thought she was the smartest. Then, she got married, had four kids and didn’t have to live with a rapist or anything”. Now, her uncle responds, letting her know that these are different times, in Lima “it’s different. Things have changed. No one will hurt you”. Fausta, looking around, with a look of anxiety, responds: “You came to Lima very young. My mother told me everything”. Her uncle quickly responds, “Your mother is dead, dead!” Fausta looks to the ground, towards the right, no longer facing her uncle. Neither of them speak, and then a few seconds later, the camera cuts away. In this scene, Fausta is also talking to the audience by looking towards the camera. She plainly explains what was her intention with the potato, and she is very sure and practical about her decision, as horrific as it is. She also does so in Spanish, the most dominant language in Peru, and, by extension, within the audience. Her uncle, who cannot face her story—while the audience is forced to—listens and does so uncomfortably. Fausta, the abject figure within the community, has inscribed her body with the traumatic memory of the war. She has abjectified her own body, making it “disgusting” like the woman her mother told her about. She is not letting go of the memory of the war. Her uncle, on the other hand, wants to believe that it is over, and that, in Lima, it is different. But

he cannot tell her, or us, this straight on—for it is not necessarily true. By not looking at her, he is also attempting to look away in order not to face the reality, the limbo, the ambiguous border between the time of conflict and the present. He now is also forced to live with the secret of the potato, which, as it lingers in his mind, must become a constant reminder to him of the violence and trauma that existed then and still continues to exist. The same could be said of the film's audience.

Although we are not shown her doing this, or see the potato, we do get a glimpse of what Fausta has done. As mentioned earlier, we are shown Fausta trimming the roots that have protruded outside her vagina. She trims them carefully, and does it unhurriedly. In one of these scenes, she trims at the home of Aída, with the little finger nail clippers she is given to keep herself looking proper and clean. Fausta is sitting on a bed in her servant's quarter. In medium shot, we have Fausta centered in the frame, only seen from the waist up. In the bottom of the frame, we cannot see, but we understand, that her hands are working the nail clippers. She sings, in Quechua, sometimes quivering as she does so: "Let's sing, let's sing / We must sing pretty things / To hide our fear / Conceal our wound / Pretend it doesn't exist". She looks down, her voice trails off, almost in pain but concentrated. We can hear the sound of her cutting the roots, like the sound cutting and trimming roses, or perhaps breaking celery. She shakes a little. The camera cuts to a close-up of her feet, curled up, against the green carpet. The trimmed root falls to the floor, some faint sound of heavy breathing. This root is a reminder of all the violent traumatic memory stored within her, which is also underlined by her words of her song. The song seems to be doing the opposite of what she has done with the potato. She sings pretty things to hide fear, conceal wounds, to pretend it does not exist, but the potato represents that it does exist. She wishes it does not, but, as she trims the potato, she knows it does, and so does the audience. However, this potato, her

disease, are all inside her body, they mark her with trauma. So, Fausta is alive but she is not living. Like the corpse of her mother, she is in an ambiguous zone, a reminder of “death infecting life”. This pessary-like potato prevents Fausta from living—her uncle says breathing—and thus the potato she carries inside of her becomes the very object which at once cripples her being and protects her from future rapes and its present and potential trauma. Fausta says herself that she has to do something “revolting” to protect her from “revolting people”.

But the notion of revolting people is not just the rapists, the soldiers, but also whom they represent by extension. As we see in Aída’s home, in her bedroom covered in family photographs, she is related to the military. She is also of a bourgeoisie class, living inside Lima, not the periphery. She is also not indigenous, but blonde, *mestiza*. Most importantly, she is someone who does not hide how she subordinates Fausta. Aída is even unable to call Fausta by the correct name. She demands that Fausta work in a maid’s uniform to show her position as the help. In addition to the nail clippers, she provides a mirror, deodorant and a comb, to make sure her help is presentable—because she does not trust that her new maid would wash up prior to showing up to work, she gives these “gifts” to ensure hygiene is being practiced. For Aída to not be revolted by her possible ‘dirty’ help, by Fausta, she shows how revoltingly patronizing she is through her shrewdness and unsympathetic character that seems related to her higher social position and relation to military. Although the encounters between these two women are very belittling to Fausta, they seem to initiate a new trajectory for her, as she begins to demonstrate more and more agency. It is in the scene following the one in which they meet that we see Fausta trim the roots of the potato growing from inside her. The trimming, as disgusting as it might seem, is actually one of the first steps taken by Fausta in moving forward with her way of dealing with anxieties and fear. Before her

mother's death, it would be unimaginable, as understood by her family, for Fausta to work in the city. To bring herself to this home, and to trim her roots there, demonstrates her agency. We can understand what she has done as an expression of agency, as horrific as it sounds, because it is an action taken to combat and move away from the repulsive and offensive objectification of her body, of the use of her body by others. She purposefully makes her body repugnant to protect herself. As a soul-less being, a child of a raped mother, a traumatized young woman, Fausta's situation seems bleak at best. Yet, her abjective acts of agency begin to influence how she confronts the society of which she is a member. She must also bury her mother, and she takes steps towards finding a means to do so. The trimming of the roots preface the removal of the potato and her ability to be part of her social world.

4.2 Perpetua

Fausta's suffering and trauma is triple-fold: she occupies the space of the rape memory, she inherits the maternal and social trauma of rape, and lives perpetually with that rape within her body. If Fausta is at home, she is mostly in the bedroom which she shares with her mother's corpse. She sings to her, caresses her, even though she has passed, and even preserved and wrapped in blue cloths. In one scene, we see her brush her mother's hair with her hands, singing and whispering to her lovingly, only to end up with locks of grey hair between her fingers. It is this bedroom where we hear the song that begins the film's story. It is the space of the traumatic memory being spoken and it is shown in the act of the mother and daughter singing together. It is the place of the narrative initiation through death—the corpse its constant reminder, the abject presence.

We meet Fausta, who is, as we have discussed, nervous, quiet, suffers nosebleeds, has immense fear. We know it is due to her knowledge of the violence, of the rape of her mother,

of her community's suffering. Her body inherits and is inscribed by the trauma of the war through her disease, which everyone is aware of and also dreads. Fausta, living in such intense anxiety, not only lives perpetually with that rape within her body through her illness but because of her fear now lives with it inside her body in another way. Instead of a disease, it is an object that she has placed herself willingly. It is disgusting, but better than the disgusting act and powerlessness of violation.

And what of the ever-present figure of the mother? Her memory and her corpse are present in all that her daughter does. Perpetua, as her name suggest in Spanish, is that which lasts and remains always. Her name is also related to the Christian martyr, who documented her imprisonment, her text considered "one of the rare surviving documents written by a woman in the ancient world" and continues to draw readers and praise (Salisbury 2013). I mention this because there seems to be, in the presence of Perpetua, alive and dead, the lingering reality of her suffering. All that occurs in the film is underlined by what she sang to us and her daughter. Much like the Christian martyr, who died because she would not renounce her faith, Perpetua dies without renouncing her memory. The act of telling, like the Christian figure, is also practiced despite its danger and pain.

As her song is already explored, what I wish to do now is look at how her corpse as it is shown throughout the film. As I have already mentioned the preservation, Fausta's continuing affection for the body, I will focus mainly on the concluding scene in which Fausta takes her mother to the ocean. The audience has seen the corpse various times, mostly confined to the room in which she passes. The corpse appears in about ten different scenes throughout the film. We see her in bed, next to Fausta as she prepares napkins for parties, we see Fausta laying next to and caressing and singing to her dead mother. When her cousin begins the series of rituals that come before her wedding, the necessity to bury the body—to

move it away from the scenes of life—becomes greater. These rituals are for new life, not for death, and the corpse signifies the fragility of this barrier but also the possibility of living with broken boundaries.

Right before the scene in which Máxima peels the potato, as part of a ritual that will shed light on the future of her marriage, Fausta has just let Noé into Aída's garden. There is a broken piano in the patio—we all know, as mentioned previously, it was pushed out by frustrated Aída. From an overhead shot, we see Fausta and Noé surround the piano's pieces. Fausta tells Noé simply that "the piano fell". Noé responds, in Quechua, "it's broken, but it still sings. Can't you hear it?" Fausta answers, also in Quechua, "these look like colored sweets" as he begins to pick up the pieces and as she holds small bits of colorful broken glass in her hand and walks out of the frame. We see Noé begin to pick up the pieces. Then, the scene cuts, to a woman's hands, on her lap of her pink dress, peeling a potato with a knife, with pink ribbon on her hand. The camera cuts to a shot of her feet, in gold sandals, from overhead. A piece of potato skin enters the frame from above, its curling form falling into the shot. The camera then cuts to Máxima, a medium shot, of her concentrating and peeling the potato. A cut back to her feet, and the skin falls to the sandy ground. Tío Lúcido comes over, picks it up. The camera cuts to him holding this skin above his head, its tail hanging, and he happily announces, "it's whole and very thin. It will be a long live full of love and hope". It cuts away to the group who was observing Máxima, who was sitting in a circle on chairs, as they all applaud. Máxima is hugged and kissed by her uncle, who holds her close, embracing her, still continuing to hold up the peel, demonstrating it to the audience of the ritual and the film. It is the potato that helps signify the future, here in the marriage. The discarded part of the potato, the inedible skin, shows the future. Its discarded wholeness symbolizes a happy life as understood by the naked, skinless tuber. No longer whole and vulnerable, but edible

and life-giving. Life continues. Although broken, by war, by the presence of the corpse, life still sings like the piano in this community. For Fausta, the potato is not only her object of protection but also the constant reminder of the trauma, her sense of displacement, within her body and her life.

The move from the broken piano, which continues to sing, to the potato peeling, is significant because it demonstrates two things that occur throughout the film. First, the broken piano which sings, like Fausta, is related to the perseverance and survival of those who have suffered. This cut to a ritual of the future, of marriage, expresses its significance in the formation and telling of the future. Life continues, still with obstacles—her peeling may have led to a bad omen instead of a positive one—but, regardless, its presence in such an event signifies the ever-present momentum of moving forward. This is despite the difficulties, despite the actual action of movement as demonstrated by the lack of active cameras and shots and the static presentation of many characters.

Various rituals are present within the film that demonstrate this forward-moving momentum. Although Fausta is someone who seems stuck and static, we see her become upset and anxious. Throughout the planning of the wedding, and the threat of the body's removal, Fausta is often shown agitated at the corpse's possible absence. Right before the wedding, we see her become very anxious when she does not see her mother on her bed, only later to find out the corpse has been put underneath it. Throughout the story, Fausta is not able to complete the demand of her uncle, who wanted the body gone by the time of the wedding. Because this was not possible, the body is simply put away, aside—a constant abject reminder.

When Fausta begins her journey to bury her mother, we see her, accompanied by a younger male cousin, visit funeral homes and investigating prices and procedures. Much of this series of scenes is rather macabre. In the first shot of the funeral home scenes, we are shown tables and open caskets. On the floor, the motionless legs of a little boy, next to an open child-size sky-blue coffin, are shown as we hear the talk of the funeral business. The camera cuts to Fausta's face, inattentive to the owner of the funeral agency. There is a cut back to the boy on the floor, but now he moves, no longer looking lifeless. We return to the owner, and Fausta and her cousin, speaking of death in business talk—prices, services, shipment. This owner states he is such, showing his business card, but unable to offer it as apparently it is his only one—another seemingly dark-humored occurrence. Another cut, this time to another funeral parlor, with a woman guiding the two through a room full of coffins. Many are colorful, cartoonish, hand-painted, with different themes: there are coffins for the *fútbol* fanatic, the patriots (“For God and the country” is painted on top), one for those who miss their land, one for peace. As the woman showing the coffins continues to speak and market her availability, we cut to Fausta's face, looking towards the camera, but also towards something in the distance. It is a coffin, the woman says it is the image of the Pacific Ocean “that lightens their load and washes their sorrow”. The camera cuts again, this time we see Fausta turned around, looking onto the painting of a sunset on the top of a coffin, as if looking out into the horizon of the ocean. This clashes with her cousin who remarks on the coffin right underneath it, that says “Arde Papi”, with a bikini-clad woman. He believes it is perfect for when he dies. Although Fausta doesn't speak, this sense of finding a solution—something perfect, as her cousin remarks—is a foreshadowing to the conclusion of the film, when Fausta finally is able to take her mother to her resting place.

Fausta, who at this point has had the potato surgically removed, after having gone to Aída's home to take the pearls promised but denied her, is on a mountainous highway road with her entire family. They are surrounded by the same grey-beige scenery found in their *pueblo*. The highway, seeming so modern against the background, cuts through it. We see the background move away from us, the camera on the back of the truck, looking at what is being left behind. As they go through a tunnel, the scenery is reduced to a circular opening, the rest is darkness. We go through the tunnel, as we leave, we see a group of people, a few cars. At the other end of the tunnel, a huge ship, which cannot possibly pass through, is sitting there perplexingly with people aboard it. At first, we do not see the truck or who is on it. Once the ship is passed, the camera cuts, and now we can see Fausta and her family. They all sit in silence, huddled together. Between her and her cousin Jonathan is Perpetua, wrapped up in various blanket, with a hat and sunglasses on. In a close-up of Fausta's profile, in the wind, she is looking over and we begin to hear the sound of waves crashing: the ocean. We can see the shore, out of focus, behind her head. She demands her uncle to stop driving.

Fausta carries her mother's corpse on her back through and over the sand dunes. We see her do this through a long shot, both bodies small against the sands. The camera cuts to another out-of-focus panorama of the shore, from the bottom-middle of the frame we see Fausta stand up, in medium shot, facing towards the ocean. She sings, in Quechua: "Look at the sea, mother". The camera cuts, goes back, long shot of Fausta on the dunes with the ocean in front of her, again made smaller by the nature around her, her mother laying on the sand next to her. "Look at the sea", she continues. The camera lingers. Then a cut to a black screen, with the non-diegetic theme music continuing then ending.

This is one of the main concluding scenes of the film, but it is not the last one. This is in fact the end of the journey of Perpetua. She is at the ocean, the ocean which will lighten

her load and wash away her sorrow. Now cleansed, there seems to float away in the story the remnants of the overwhelming trauma as embodied within the lifeless body of Perpetua that is also inside Fausta. The potato is gone, her mother is leaving and put to rest, and Fausta has been reborn into another person who has negotiated with traumatic memory, its violence, her own trauma, into a different way of being—she is no longer so fearful. She has learned to trust Noé. She has found new agency to approach the world after living in horror and fear.

This is also foregrounded in the conclusion of the film, underlined with a greater sense of hope and beauty than the abjective situations we have faced. The conclusion of the film, the real finale, is very much related to the overall presence of hope above horror in the aftermath of war and trauma. In the final scenes, Fausta is visited by Noé, although he is never pictured. He has come to summon her at her door, and, although we do not see him, we understand who is there. The children—the future, practicing the Andean dance *huayno*—of Fausta’s family announces him. She comes, slowly, as she always does. She opens the heavy black metal doors, looks around, then looks down, and sees, out of frame, what has been left for her. We cut to a white flower, on a stalk. It is a potato plant—the plant she had demanded to see in the garden of her *doña*, the plant Noé said was not worth gardening because it did not flower, despite Fausta’s frustration to hear this. She smells it with eyes closed, and the camera pans down to the roots, of where the potato is underneath the soil. Then fade to black. The potato once again is something that brings life, brings sustenance, order and survival. We end on this, on the roots, on a new beginning and foundation. Some sense of order has been restored, and we have moved away from the horror for now. Yet, it is through horror how the film, the story, its characters and the audience reach this point.

Creed argues, when speaking of horror film and the archaic mother, that it is the “gestating, all-devouring womb of the archaic mother which generates horror” (27).

Although, in more-or-less conventional horror films, this may be the case, in *La teta asustada* what occurs is something slightly different. The womb of the mother is all-devouring for Fausta: it is infected and it infects her. Fausta purposefully infects her womb because of her mother's trauma. The mother here, related, however loosely, to the role of the archaic mother, still generates an anxiety—if not fear—not only by her continuous presence and her infected wound but by what she signifies and her contagiousness. Her nipples will not be touched by anyone but her daughter because she holds a devouring disease. This disease is the embodiment of rape and trauma. Her lifeless body, her defunct womb, are still the carriers of a history, of a memory, of an illness, even though the body can no longer move, speak or sing. If for Creed, following Kristeva, the fear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power, then Perpetua's body in the film also functions as a metaphor for the generative power of pain and violence (34). Through this pain, however, also lies the power of storytelling and the importance of keeping these stories alive—something also seen in the very act of Llosa writing and producing her film.

4.3 From Testimony to Screen Play to Mother to Daughter

Brother, paisano,
our beloved pueblo of Accomarca,
we remember again,
the massacre of Lloqllepampa.
We remember again
The river of blood that flowed.

August 14, 1985
My father and my mother were innocent
They disappeared them without warning.
Former president Alan Garcia
What sort of conscience could you have had?
My father and my mother were innocent
Why did you disappear them without warning?

That all of us, united and remembering
All of your children demand
Sr. President Toledo
We ask you for support
For the progress of our pueblo
That you designate funding
For the progress of our pueblo.

—“La Tragedia de Lloqllepampa,” composed and sung by the group
(*comparsa*) New Heart of Accomarca, Carnival 2005 (Theidon 2013: 341)

The killing of Lloqllepampa, the stories around it, as documented by Theidon, laid the foundation for the development of the script and the film’s interpretation of this historical event that generated deep trauma at the individual and collective level in Peru. Especially for the communities directly affected, the indigenous people of the south, as shown through the song above, there is the constant question of how and what will be remembered, and what justice will be put forth regarding how the tragedy is recollected—whether it will be spoken of as the people of the area speak of it or as the officials speak of it, or if it will be spoken of or remembered at all. For instance, there is knowledge of “the short-sighted efforts of President Alan García to block the construction of a Memory Museum in Peru. His commemorative short-sightedness is combined with his blind insistence that the armed forces committed only a few ‘excesses and errors’ during the internal armed conflict” (Theidon 2009: 14). Some accounts record over seventy-thousand deaths during the war (Centro de Estudios 2012). How to relate that number with García’s instance that there were only a few ‘excesses and errors’? Even García, the Peruvian president, himself cannot, does not want to make visible these histories, not in a museum nor in his discourse regarding the conflict. This has a direct affect on collective memory in Peru generally, it is also contradicting the collective memory and suffering of the people most affected. Silences like those of García, a political-national silence, is functioning on wider scale that can influence the individual and communal practices of silence. It, overall, seems to silence and hide the individual

memories—as recorded by individuals like Theidon—from what they know they have suffered.

During the massacre of Lloqlllepampa, sixty-two people were killed, many of which were pregnant women, some close to giving birth (Theidon 2013: 342). As discussed throughout this thesis, these women suffered but so did, since then, their children after going through this violence. As demonstrated through Theidon's studies, certain testimonies indicate that some of the children born at that time are now “damaged”, mentally and physically. The disease that Fausta suffers in the film has, in real life, also been linked to children born with learning disorders and epilepsy. Through Fausta, Llosa reinterprets this traumatic experience and gives to her audience a vision of what it is like to live such an existence. She also gives these “damaged” women characters agency, even outside of employment and potatoes. Fausta, specifically, although anxious and fearful insists on saying “no” throughout the film: to the doctor, her uncle, to Aída, to Noé. She is not completely broken although infected with the violence of traumatic memory.

Jumping from Theidon's work, Llosa moves real-life testimony onto a fictional screenplay. In the screenplay, she moves the memory of the events from the mother's song, her testimony, to another generation, her daughter, who stands for the current generation in Peru, even perhaps the international community. It is a difficult endeavor, but it is necessary, because people do not want to deal with what reminds them of the horrific capabilities of humankind. Inside potentially (and real) misogynist, patriarchal, classist and/or racist discourses, as those who are motivated by political interests and projects, collective memories are capable of getting further away from a sense of fuller representation. As Llosa states during an interview,

What happens when you see something that makes you feel sorry for it? We turn, turn away our faces. Not that human beings are unable to connect, but rather it hurts so much that we cannot look. Then the criticism should not be ‘How awful, what an intolerant society, so unable to see, to connect with those who suffer!’, but ‘how hard it is to see that when the other suffers, we move so far away to protect ourselves’. And this extends to all societies. [my translation] (Chauca 2010: 50-51)

4.3 Memories

Personal and collective trauma are independent but interconnected, especially as related to wartime rape (Burnet 2012; Cockburn 2010; Das 1995; Hayden 2000; Mookherjee 2006; Turpin 1998). Rape is almost impossible to be spoken of, and often, it is expected not to speak of it (ibid.). To show rape is even less possible, or so believed, hence the horrified reactions and disgusted receptions of the rape scenes in films like Gaspar Noé’s *Irréversible* (2002) or Kimberly Pierce’s *Boys Don’t Cry* (1999). Noé’s, a sensationalist, pornographic, depiction of a rape in public—a single, unbroken shot, of almost nine-minutes in length—brings the viewer disturbingly close as voyeur and accomplice to the rape. In Pierce’s film, based on real life events, on the life of Brandon Teena, a trans-man who is raped and later killed once it is discovered he was born anatomically female, creates a similar sensation, but more on the side of helplessness, disgust and despair. Either way, the representation of the rape scene does not necessarily add or take away from the main narrative, but does make one react viscerally and forces them to view the capability of violence explicitly. Llosa does not wish to focus on this type of abjection or scene, instead, she seems to approach the memory of it, the living with this reality. Peru’s civil war and atrocities, the individual and collective memory of it, are reflected and represented in a cinematic translation in *La teta asustada*, in the filmmaker’s techniques, the settings, in the body of Fausta and her mother.

Through the individual bodies of Fausta and her mother, the former soulless, the latter lifeless, we are given access to what it is like to live with trauma, to have it present, to not be able to bury it away, and to not be able to be cured of it. They are representatives of the abject violence people are capable of, while their lives are examples of the social abjection caused by prejudice, hatred and ignorance. Fausta's presence in Lima and at Aída's is also the intermingling of the peripheries and the center, of the true nature of collective existence. No one is truly isolated, especially as victims of a national conflict. Through Fausta, we see how the borders are shaken, how realities are intertwined.

La teta asustada also aims to recuperate and resuscitate a sense of subjectivity that includes women through cinematic, at times visually poetic, means. The use of camera, constructions of scenes, choices of shots and props all reflect and remark upon the subjectivity of the women characters. Example include the contrasts of colors seen in Fausta's community compared to those of Lima, the use of song that compliments or contrasts the image, the static cameras found throughout the film until the flowing camera at the end when reaching the Pacific Ocean. This poetic camera and the metaphors it helps form are present perhaps because these memories and histories, like reality, cannot be portrayed directly, it belongs solely to those who look, it is in the "point of view of who represents it" (Chauca 2010: 50-51). It is only possible to get near to them and this is all that one can hope to do. This is what Llosa's film seems to accomplish.

Through image, voice and sound, through the cinema, storytelling here seems to destabilize the borders of truth and fiction, of the realistic and fantastic, of collective and individual memory to transmit sensations as well as descriptions. We have Llosa's fictional film that approaches the realities of postconflict life. We have the real life stories of women who fought back mixed with Fausta's fantastic use of the potato to protect herself. We enter

the film through a private bedroom to hear a personal, individual story that reflects back to the greater collective stories of living after the war. In Llosa's film, the dramatic contrasts of settings, the colorful rituals and festivities against the bleak colors of the shantytowns, the happiness of festivities within such marginal placements, Fausta's absence of speech while powerfully providing songs, the mother's constant signaling of life with the presence of her corpse, all demonstrate a means to communicate when words are purposefully set aside or there are none, when one is left outside of language.

5. Conclusion

Llosa's film demonstrates the ability to engage with difficult memories and traumatic events, as I have mentioned previously, without having to replicate the violence and horror directly. In most scenes I analyzed, the sense of the violent memory and trauma arises without depending on such displays. It seems to say that the most effective abject is that which we sense and fear but fail to touch or fully see. It without "pornographic" and direct displays. In this film, we do not see the rape scene, there are no battles or combat. Without the use of blood and gore, monstrous villains or realistic reenactments of violence, *La teta asustada* made it possible for an audience to get close to the effects and aftermath of war, to get closer to its horror, to the people most affected, the people who are often forgotten or simply left out of the story. Through the abject and abjection, through storytelling, as demonstrated in the songs and ritual in Llosa's film, it is possible to feel and get closer to a sense of understanding of events that are difficult to put into words, into language. Within this thesis, I have attempted to show how Llosa's film attains this. By using Kristeva's theory of the abject and abjection, as situated within the horror film genre, I argued how this film provides an accessible medium for the discussion and portrayal of wartime rape. By looking at Llosa's film through the use of the abject, it is possible to approach the individual and collective trauma of wartime rape, as depicted through Llosa's story of Fausta and her mother. Her film was able to convey in often unrealistic and abstract ways—through the camera, song, silence, scenery and props—how someone and their community deals with life after violation and violence.

I chose to do this thesis because I believed it would provide an addition to current compelling literature around Claudia Llosa and *La teta asustada*. This film specifically seems to deal very delicately and beautifully with the idea of giving voice to silences. I also wished

to partake in this project by engaging with this work. There is still much to say of the conflict and postconflict situation in Peru, particularly in regards to their popular and cultural works. Not to mention, must still must be said regarding the populations most affected by the war. As permitted within the limitations of thesis, I considered as fully as I could the rich background and foundation that this film is based on, and I paid careful attention to the inspiration and history the screenplay situates itself in, particularly the testimonies and histories of women. Although I indirectly mention this film's relation to nation this it is also a topic I would have liked to focused upon more thoroughly but was unable to do so.

In my introduction, I described what I intended to cover within this thesis and mentioned specifically Theidon's work and inspirational testimonies. I situated the film historically and gave context to the background of the conflict in the film. I also outlined selective thoughts and reflections on the notions of body and embodiment to discuss how trauma, memory and violence are related to and inscribed within the body. The body was from the start intended to be a central location of my study, as it is through the body that I had applied my discussions and readings of Kristeva's work on abjection theory onto Llosa's film. The use of abject and abjection are demonstrated through story and metaphor throughout *La teta asustada*, which is something I also discuss—although it merits more attention and detail in the future.

Before delving into the abject and abjection, I reviewed the relation of the body to traumatic memory, specifically of wartime rape. In my second chapter, I go into a review of Elaine Scarry's seminal work on the body in pain in order to reflect upon her ideas of 'making' and 'unmaking' to approach how to discuss the cinematic representations of what I call the unspeakable and unseeable. Speaking the unspeakable and seeing the unseeable are possible in film because through this medium, the use of colors, images, sounds—or lack

thereof—can all signify these incapacabilities while also arousing an affective response in the audience. These affective responses, I argued, are what is able to recreate and rework current memories and records of what occurred in Peru during its civil war, especially to the indigenous populations and especially women. Llosa, in her ability to figuratively and fantastically represent life after war and living in trauma, demonstrates a sense of subversive filmmaking that is possible and necessary to attempt to represent wartime rape in a way to create dialogue instead of sensationalism. I also wish to study this in further detail in future studies.

At the end of chapter two and throughout the length of chapter three, I discuss Kristeva's theory of the abject and abjection as it seems to function within *La teta asustada*. The abject could be read in the various formulations and characterizations that Llosa provides. We not only see an abject, marginalized community on the peripheries of Lima but we also meet Fausta who is herself an abject being on so many levels. As a daughter of a rape victim, as a diseased and fearful young woman, as indigenous and marginalized, Fausta is the abject figure in almost every situation she finds herself. Llosa takes this to another level, to try to show not only her social position but also her emotional and psychic one. Fausta's potato becomes the ultimate abjective metaphor of agency and trauma.

My focus on abjection led me to read *La teta asustada* through a framework very much indebted to the horror film genre. Although horror film genre conventions are not found directly in Llosa's film, they are hinted at throughout. To demonstrate the horror found in real life is to apply the customs and practices of the horror film, the *scary movie*, even if in more delicate ways. As I have mentioned, there is no blood, no direct violence, no depiction of rape in this film. Yet, the disgust, the fear, the anxiety, the pain that could be elicited by the same explicit depictions are still sensed. The potato makes us jerk, the silences can be suspenseful

and Perpetua's corpse is uncomfortably present. The relation of the horror to *La teta asustada* is to convey and engage with memories that are traumatic and violent.

Although the use of the horror film genre proved to create a productive means for approaching Llosa's film, there was still much to be desired in the completion of this thesis. Closely related to horror is also the idea of trauma. This is another concept I wished to have been able to look at more closely and specifically. Traumatic experience is multifaceted and complex. Here, I focused mostly on rape trauma, but even this field is larger than what I was able to cover. Trauma is central to this study, but I did not go deep into trauma studies. Due to the scope of this thesis, I was unable to go farther into its elaborations. This is an area I wish to focus on more closely in the future, particularly in the realm of horror—not just horror film, but in the horror found around us, much like Cavarero's work on horrorism. This is something I hope to focus on in doctoral studies in the future, particularly in how to approach it figuratively in cinematic and artistic works.

Due to limitations, I also found that much more attention also could have been focused upon metaphor, storytelling and memory. I cover all three but an in-depth discussion in the future could reveal and provide more telling arguments. The various metaphors present in Llosa's films deserve attention on their own, and I may wish to consider this approach later on in future research. Also, I believe a study to compare *La teta asustada* to other films with similar fantastic approaches to postconflict representations would provide interesting and necessary readings.

5.1 Peru and Potatoes

Before the end of the study, it is important to note the various functions of the potato in this film—it is more than just symbol of Fausta’s trauma and agency. The metaphors of *La teta asustada* are bountiful and powerful, but none stand out like the potato. It is one of the most powerful metaphors in *La teta asustado*, we know it in its relation to Fausta, but it also has a function as a plant, a staple, as a national symbol. The various readings of this metaphor of the potato has a strong and constantly present purpose within and throughout the film. The potato is a metaphor for trauma, both collective and individual. It is indigenous to the Andes, especially southern Peru, where the violence raged, and it is one of the staple crops of the country. The indigenous people, before their violent encounter with colonialism, before the equally violent encounter with capitalist enterprise, relied and continue to rely on the potato for sustenance and survival. Fausta does a similar thing, but to a fantastic, perverse, abjective extreme, she violates herself with the potato to protect herself against rape in an abject demonstration of agency. This use of the staple, that provides life and sustenance, is applied for different reasons. In doing so, Fausta is not only demonstrating her own encounter with her trauma but the nation’s relation to it. The potato begins to signify the constant relation of a national discourse to the individual body and to the collective bodies, and their respective traumas and memories.

The potato in the story and within Fausta functions in various ways. They range from the more ‘practical’ utilizations, at the level of the protagonist, to more elaborated ones at the level of the filmmaker and the narrative. Llosa’s choice to utilize this specific motif, this tuber, in the story, signifies a direct connection to Peru, since Peru is considered the origin of the potato. Moving away from Fausta to her immediate community, for instance, in the marriage ritual of her cousin Máxima, the peeling of the potato by her in one piece, in an entire spiral of skin, demonstrates how this potato is used to evaluate relationships, the

formations of family, to signify who will be a successful wife and who will have a prosperous marriage. Families have often been considered the building blocks of nations (McClintock 1993), so, even though this family may appear at the margin, it reflects the greater approach to creating networks on personal, familial, to national levels.

People and families find a way to go on despite tragedy and suffering. For, when one lives in such a life, as seen through Llosa's film, there seems to be an active appreciation for what one has and what one looks forward to. The people of Peru continue forward despite their horrific history, and, as seen through *Fausta*, we realize the possibility of moving forward and living with trauma. We connect *Fausta's* story to a greater narrative of a people, a people who also consume this food, and therefore are intrinsically connected to it.

5.2 Horror in Real Life

As Centro de Estudios de Opinión (2012) notes, after seeing *La teta asustada*, we can direct our gaze and preoccupation towards the original communities of Latin America that continue to be discriminated and maltreated, without the recognition of their legitimacy and diversity. We cannot forget the continuing killing of indigenous people, for instance, in 2009 in Bagua, in the Amazonas of Peru. This, for me, hits close to home, as my father is from the region of Bagua. Often, in our family, we have had to face adversity, as immigrants, as the *other* in the United States. There were many times when my father could not articulate how terrible and difficult it was to make it to the country of my birth or how it was back in Bagua. "One day, when you are old enough, I may tell you", he would say. He has still never told me, often saying it is not worth telling or that he has no way of describing it. For him, as for those who survive war, who live with violent trauma ever since, or had to become displaced

because of economic or political reasons, there is a desire to put the unspeakable to words, yet they often encounter the inability of those words to communicate what they desire to. Often, this may lead to silence. My father does not want to hurt me, and, indirectly, does not want to upset himself in the process of telling. Often, my father said, it was better for me to live without such knowledge. Until this day, I only know pieces of his experience prior to coming to the United States. I tell his story, even with its omissions, because it is revealing of what it is like to live after traumatic experiences.

Llosa's film takes into account an urgency, on part of Latin American countries, to look at themselves profoundly, to intent to approach that difficult recognition of those who conduct an obsessive questioning of their identity—as demonstrated through her film in the figure of Fausta. In a study entitled “The Difficult Translation of Fear”, it concludes its review of *La teta asustada* with the following words:

All we need to do in order to understand accumulated fear is listen to the music which brings humanity together. And we must listen to it without prejudices, trying to go beyond language. Only then will we be able to perceive the complex translation of fear (Centro de Estudios 2012).

I add to that fear the experience of pain, of trauma. *La teta asustada* is a cinematic vehicle that helps approach all these questions and allow us to engage with the aftermath of war, with those who suffer, with the reality of pain, trauma and war that the human experience may and continue to consists of as long as these realities are part of collective and individual realities. Although one may never know the exact pain and trauma the other feels after living through violence, it is possible—through fiction, drama, song, story—to get near to these experiences and to hopefully understand its real devastation and horror.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Benedict R. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Bal, Mieke. 1990. "The Rape of Narrative and the Narrative of Rape" in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Elaine Scarry. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press: 1-32.
- Barthes, Roland. 1994. *The Semiotic Challenge*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1969. "The Storyteller" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books: 253-64.
- Bennett, Judith M. 1989. "Feminism and History". *Gender & History* 1(3): 251-272.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. 1983. "Pascal's Sphere" in *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952*, trans. Ruth L.C. Simms. Austin: University of Texas Press: 205.
- Burnet, Jennie E. 2012. "Situating Sexual Violence in Rwanda (1990-2001): Sexual Agency, Sexual Consent, and the Political Economy of War", *African Studies Review* 55(2): 97-118.
- Cavarero, Adriana. 2009. *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Centro de Estudios de Opinión. 2012. "La difícil traducción del miedo", *La Sociología en Sus Escenarios* 23.

- Chauca, Edward M., Rafael Ramirez, and Carolina Sitinsky-Cole. 2010. ““No pretendo retratar la realidad. Pretendo interpretar un tema para sacar discusiones que tenemos reprimidas’: Una entrevista con Claudia Llosa”, *Mester* 39: 45-55.
- Clover, Carol J. 1992. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cockburn, Cynthia. 2010. “Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12(2): 139-157.
- Covino, Deborah Caslav. 2004. *Amending the Abject Body: Aesthetic Makeovers in Medicine and Culture*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Creed, Barbara. 1993. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge.
- Csordas, Thomas J. 1990. “Embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology”, *Ethos* 8 (1): 5-47.
- , ed. 1994. *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Das, Veena. 1995. “National Honor and Practical Kinship: Unwanted Women and Children” in *Conceiving the New World Order*, eds. Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp. Berkeley: University of California Press: 212-233.
- . 1996. “Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain”, *Daedalus* 125 (1): 67-91.
- Diken, B. and C.B. Lausten. 2005. “Becoming Abject: Rape as a Weapon of War”, *Body and Society* 11 (1) (2005): 111-128.

- Guillen, Michael. 2010. "PSIFF10: *The Milk of Sorrow* (*La teta asustada*, 2009): Interview With Dr. Kimberly Theidon". Web. 3 April 2014. <http://twitchfilm.net/interviews/2010/01/psiff10-the-milk-of-sorrow-la-teta-asustada-2009-interview-with-dr-kimberly-theidon.php>.
- Hayden, Robert M. 2000. "Rape and Rape Avoidance in Ethno-National Conflicts: Sexual Violence in Liminalized States", *American Anthropologist* 102(1): 27-41.
- Jakobson, Roman and Morris Halle. 1956. *Fundamentals of Language*. The Hague: Mouton & Co., Printers.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Llosa, Claudia. 2009. *La teta asustada*. Barcelona: Cameo. DVD.
- Lothe, Jacob. 2000. *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Low, Setha M. 1994. "Embodied Metaphors: Nerves as Lived Experience" in *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, ed. Thomas J. Csordas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 139-162.
- Marzorati, Gerald. 1989. "Can a novelist save Peru?" *New York Times Magazine* (5 Nov. 1989): 44. Web. 3 Feb. 2013.

- McClintock, Anne. 1993. "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family", *Feminist Review* 44: 61-80.
- Mookherjee, Nayanika. 2006. "'Remembering to Forget': Public Secrecy and Memory of Sexual Violence in the Bangladesh War of 1971", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12(2): 433-450.
- Narayan, Uma. 2004. "The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist" in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, ed. Sandra Harding. New York: Routledge.
- Salisbury, Joyce Ellen. 2013. "Perpetua" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*. EBSCOhost. 20 May 2014.
- Scarry, Elaine. 1985. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scott, Joan W. 1986. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis", *The American Historical Review* 91(5): 1053-1075.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorti. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Theidon, Kimberly. 2004. *Entre prójimos: El conflicto armado interno y la política de la reconciliación en el Perú*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos Ediciones.
- . 2007. "Gender in Transition: Common Sense, Women and War", *Journal of Human Rights* 6(4): 453-478.

- . 2009. "The Milk of Sorrow: A Theory on the Violence of Memory", *Canadian Woman Studies* 27(1): 8-16.
- . 2013. *Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Trinh, Minh-ha T. 1989. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Turpin, Jennifer. 1998. "Many Faces: Women Confronting War" in *The Women and War Reader*, eds. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin. New York: New York University Press: 3-18.
- Velez, Irma. 2011. "Matricidio y ob-scenidad en la (est)ética de Claudia Llosa", *Lectures du genre* 8: 28-52.
- Vogel, Amos. 1974. *Film as a Subversive Art*. Web Archive PDF. 3 April 2013.
- White, Hayden. 1987. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Williams, Linda. 1991. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, Excess", *Film Quarterly* 44(4): 2-13.
- Winkler, Cathy (with Kate Wininger). 1994. "Rape Trauma: Contexts of Meaning" in *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, ed. Thomas J. Csordas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 248-268.
- Zairong, Xiang. 2009. "*The Chinese Myth of the White Snake: A Feminist Cultural Analysis of the Interrelationship between the (Gendered/Textual) Body and Narrative Transformation*". Master's thesis, University of Granada, Spain. Unpublished.

Žarkov, Dubravka. 2007. *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-up of Yugoslavia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.