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Jane Campion's *The Piano*; or, Breaking Prospero's Spells

Abstract. One of the most popular plays in Shakespearian canon is *The Tempest*, believed to have been the farewell message of the retiring artist. The play is usually staged as a Renaissance "pop"-comedy, with a love plot and elements of sorcery and magic, concluded with a reassuring happy end. However, an in-depth analysis of the composition of the drama seen through the apparatus of post-colonial studies transforms it into a piece of fiction glamorizing the gloomy realities of European colonial conquest. Jane Campion, who, in her Oscar-winning film *The Piano* combines colonial rivalries with the antagonism of Victorian domestic male-female relations, takes a further step in this direction. The result is a gripping tale of liberation through love resulting from transgression turned transculturation. Exploiting the colonial history of her New Zealand homeland combined with a feminist critique of Victorian gender ethics, Campion corrects Shakespeare's misrepresentations and reconstructs omissions, creating a picture that is likely to change our perception of what happened on Prospero's island forever.

Key words. Campion, Shakespeare, Tempest, post-colonial, feminism.

Every theatergoer who has ever watched Jane Campion's *The Piano* is likely to have noticed the striking similarity of many elements of its composition to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Both take place on an island, in both of them the two contenders meet as a result of a decision of the one who resides on and reigns over the island and who effects the visit of the other, who, in each case is brought ashore by tempestuous sea waves. Additionally, in each work, the master of the island has two assistants, one of them bringing to mind association with the earth and carnality, the other, identified with air and spirituality; in each, the coarser/ruder assistant develops love for the female in the care and custody of the master of the island, and

there is a happy ending to the love plot. In the background of each, the master of the island's power is founded on mysterious spells that give him control over the elements and his opponents, and there are references to non-European, ideal societies of the cannibals, as well as the themes of colonial conquest and dispossession of the natives. Both compositions end with the departure of the character whose arrival on the island marks the beginning of the composition, and the departure has the nature of liberation from the power of the island's ruler.

The number of similarities between the two works in their inter/relation within and to the structure of their respective compositions seems to justify the supposition that the plot of Campion's film was composed in critical intertextual relation to Shakespeare's play. An analysis of the nature of differences between the compositions of *The Tempest* and *The Piano* shows that if the two are linked, it is the case of intertextuality of the type popularized by John Barth in *The Literature of Exhaustion* and which consists in "reading" a new meaning into some already existing text, thus opening a new perspective upon its nature. Exploiting the advantage given her by the post-colonial and feminist heritage, Campion "reads" in the gaps left by Shakespeare, adding real flesh and real blood and thus breathing a new, though grim, life into the conventional fantasy of her illustrious predecessor.

The most significant modification of the composition of Shakespeare's story is the change of perspective. For the Renaissance European and a courtier, like Shakespeare, the natural viewpoint upon the event of a white man landing on an island inhabited by people representing a culture different from the European was that of a male European aristocratic colonizer. Judging everything on the basis of the belief in the centrality of his vision, he would be naturally unable to recognize the equality of rights of the peoples whose social and technological level of development were not comparable with his own. In such a situation he would be generally disinclined to co-operate and respect, showing propensity towards

conquest, and exploitation rationalized as care for the ignorant, pitiful, and inept. Like in the case of teaching Caliban by Prospero and Miranda, the colonizer might educate the native, giving him language and sharing with him European knowledge of reality (i.e. "how / To name the bigger light and how the less, / That burn by day and night (I.ii 334-336)), however, not to make him equal but useful. In exchange for the ability to communicate, Caliban, driven by love and gratitude, as well as, perhaps prompted by the sly offering of "water with berries in't" (I.ii 334) (which sounds like a euphemism for some kind of alcoholic beverage) shows Prospero "all the qualities o'th'isle, / The fresh springs, brine pits, barren places and fertile" (I.ii 337-338). When, however, he mistakes this treatment as meant to lift him to the status of Prospero's equal and develops love for his daughter, he is immediately chastised by detention in a rocky "sty," where he is kept to serve "in offices that profit" (I.ii 313-314) Prospero. The formerly condescending manner of using him "with humane care" (I.ii 346) is replaced with indignant scorn – the former friend is now called "poisonous" (I.ii 319) and an "abhorred slave" (I.ii 351), "filth" (I.ii 346) a "freckled whelp, hag-born – not honour'd with / A human shape" (I.ii 282-283), "a bastard" (V.i 273) and "demi-devil" (V.i 272) and "as disproportion'd in his manners / As in his shape" (V.i 290-291). Prospero, who, when he needed Caliban to explore the island, "stroked" him and "made much of" (I.ii 334) him, once he has learnt how to survive without Caliban's help, will not "move" him with "kindness" any more but with "stripes" (I.ii 345).

A similar discovery of the Januslike character of his master is made by Ariel, the principal tool of Prospero's sorcery. The moment the airy servant shows any sign of moodiness and, reminding the wizard that he has done him "worthy service, / Told [him] . . . no lies, made no mistakings, serv'd / Without or grudge or grumblings" (I.ii 247-249) in exchange for which Ariel had once been promised liberty after expiration of a full year, begs to be given back his freedom, his master flies into anger and turns out to be no better than Ariel's previous

mistress, the "damn'd witch" (I.ii 263) Sycorax. When, before Prospero's coming on the island, the spirit proved "too delicate / to act her earthy and abhorr'd commands" and refused "her "grand hests" (I.ii 272-274) she imprisoned him in a cloven pine, where Ariel remained in torture for twelve years before he was liberated by Prospero. Now, seeing him "moody" (I.ii 244), the new master abuses him verbally and threatens to "peg" him in the "knotty entrails" of an oak till Ariel "hast howl'd away twelve winters" (I.ii 295-296). Prospero's assistants are not only required to serve but to do so eagerly – demanding services from Caliban and noting that he "shrug[s]" (I.ii 366), Prospero calls him "malice" and threatens: "[i]f thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly / What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps, / Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar, / That beasts shall tremble at thy din" (I.ii 366-370). In Ariel's case, only his immediate humiliated declaration that he "will be correspondent to command / And do [his] . . . spriting gently" (I.ii 298-299) appeases the irascible temper of the present ruler of the island. Prospero reigns over his subjects in a royal manner – like dogs or other menial domestics of human household, Ariel and Caliban will be treated condescendingly if they are happy to serve, but at first sign of developing ambitions to be independent, they are rebuked and corrected mercilessly.

Similarly, in their gender roles, Shakespeare's dominating males show no inclination to respect the autonomy and independence of their dependants, i.e. females living within reach of their power. The less objectionable of the two cases to be found in *The Tempest*, Prospero, uses his sorcery to shape the life of his daughter, arranging that Miranda and Ferdinand fall in love with each other. Of course, there is no apparent harm in successful match-making, however, before Prospero is offered full justification, perhaps it should be remembered that arranging the union, the former Duke of Milan was also serving his own interests. Knowing the crafty father of Miranda and that returning to his dukedom was a significant part of his agenda, can we rule out the possibility that intervening into the shape of his daughter's fate he

might have had more his designs at heart than her happiness? The other case, Alonso, King of Naples, is perhaps an even more typical case of Renaissance domestic tyrants. Having developed a plan of strengthening his power by forging a personal union with Tunis by marrying his daughter, Claribel to the king of Tunis, he will be deaf to all remonstrance that for her it is a choice between "loathness and obedience" (II.i 126). As Sebastian, Alonso's brother, complains, though Alonso was "kneel'd to and importun'd otherwise / By all of" (II.i 124-125) his courtiers, he pitilessly executed his will. Such distribution of rights of and sympathies towards the characters of the Renaissance conquests and domestic hierarchies seems to be quite an accurate reflection of Elizabethan ethics, offering recognition and fair treatment only within and to the extent prescribed by the European cultural pattern.

In her film version of *The Tempest*, Jane Campion fills the gaps left by Shakespeare by giving voice to the muted objects of the drama of the typical Renaissance royal characters – the events of what might have been a 19th century *Tempest* are viewed through the eyes not of Prospero, but from the perspective of Caliban and the female figures. These two viewpoints constitute two platforms on which Campion constructs parallel dramas that serve as each other's ignition, engine, and molding device. They are incorporated into the composition as a frame and pivotal conflicts.

The plot that sets the frame and background is the drama of the colonized – the hidden realities of Prospero's reign are exposed by confrontation with the perspective of the Maori, whose interests are questioned and annulled by the sly white colonizer, Alisdair Stewart. Campion's Prospero shares many traits with his predecessor. He is not a native of the island on which he now lives; as his behavior in his conflict with Ada (analyzed below) seems to suggest, he may have been exiled to this island; like Prospero, he is shown to cultivate interest in some botanical science (see the scene, when shaken by his spying upon Baines' making love to Ada, he retreats to his "overdone" slick hairdo, and a journal of pressed botanic

specimens). His mind, like that of Duke of Milan's, is set on increasing his power by trying to grab more land, no matter what cost, material or ethical – despite Ada's violent protests, he swaps her piano for Baines' piece of land, forcing her to participate in the deal by giving Baines piano lessons. He stakes Maori communal land as his own against their will, hoping to get away with it because their title to the land is not fortified by documents. The primary concern of his mind is clearly betrayed by a bag of stakes which he almost always carries with him and with which he marks his claims. The reason why the Maori refused to sell the land (which Stewart grabs anyway without their consent) was that it contained their burial caves, which, therefore, made this piece of land hallowed for them. Such considerations, however, mean nothing to Stewart, who, it is evident, is rather unlikely to feel unequal to violating the peace of the native dead. The scene offers a ghoulish though quite this-worldly reality to Prospero's boasts : "[g]raves at my command / Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth / By my so potent art" (V.i 48-50). Finally, the reference that Prospero "pluck'd up / The pine and cedar" (V.i 47-48) together with his boast that "to the dread rattling thunder" he has "given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak / with his own bolt" (V.i 44-46) might be reminiscent, on the one hand, of Stewart's firearms, which by the uninitiated natives were frequently taken for thunderbolts, and, on the other, of the fact that the way Stewart uses land requires burning and removing all trees. The smoke of smoldering ghoulish tree stumps blackened by fire envelopes his house and the neighborhood.

The fate of Ada McGrath, Stewart's wife, resembles both that of Claribel and Miranda. Like Claribel, Ada was married by her father to a man living in a distant land and whom she had never seen before. Similarly to Miranda, Ada becomes a teacher and an object of lust and love of George Baines, a Caliban figure.

George Baines, Stewart's Caliban, is stocky, illiterate, careless in his dress, and heedless of nakedness. He lives in a rude shack in the middle of the forest, and looks partly civilized and

partly de-civilized. He is treated in a fashion reminiscent of the way Prospero treated his servant. Stewart uses him but never lets him forget that they are not equal – e.g. during the visit at Aunt Morag's, when tea is served, Baines is not included in the company of the whites but is offered his in the kitchen, from which he may see the meeting in which it is denied him to participate.

Stewart's colonial opponents, the Maori, also bear some similarity to Prospero's subjects. Their behavior in several scenes seems to reflect some of the categories of creatures whom Prospero commands. The scene, when the group of fantastically costumed Maori accompanying Stewart to carry Ada's luggage from the beach start playing with waves at the edge of the surf cannot but remind Prospero's associates who "on the sands with printless foot / Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him / When he comes back" (V.i 34-36). The Maori communal structure of society, equality between the sexes, their innocence, illiteracy, and idleness, as well as reliance on nature for the means of their sustenance is an almost exact reflection of the structure of ideal commonwealth that Gonzalo would plant on the island:

> I'th' commonwealth I would by contraries
> Execute all things, for no kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
> Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
> No occupation, all men idle, all
> And women too, but innocent and pure;
> No sovereignty –
> . . .
> All things in common nature should produce
> Without sweat of endeavour. Treason, felony,
> Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine

> Would I not have, but nature should bring forth
>
> Of it own kind all foison, all abundance
>
> To feed my innocent people. (II.i 143-160)

Additionally, if one recalls the reaction of the Maori when they take a gory fragment of the amateur performance presenting the Bluebeard's history in *The Piano* to be real, it is difficult not to discern parallels between it and the fragment omitted by Shakespeare from the source for Gonzalo's ideal, Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals." Montaigne adds that "the very words that import lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulation ... were never heard of among" (qtd in Shakespeare 2010, 94) the citizens of the community of cannibals. Likewise, the commentary of Stewart's Aunt Morag upon the Maori as behaving "without a shred of manners" sounds like a distant echo of sneers of Sebastian and Antonio deriding Gonzalo's vision as idealistic nonsense, a commonwealth of "whores and knaves" (II.i 162).

Like Prospero's "elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves" (V.i 33), the Maori are practically mute – Stewart neither speaks their language nor cares to learn it. He contracts their services through Baines. With an insight given her by her own post-colonial heritage and university studies (according to IMDb, i.e. Internet Movie Database, she has BA in Anthropology from Victoria University, Wellington), Campion discerns significant, though left unspoken, consequences in Shakespeare's description of Prospero's servant. She notes that, like Prospero, Caliban is not one of the natives of the island. However, unlike his master, Caliban has clearly assimilated into the place where he lives – when Prospero seeks terms to call and abuse him, he finds "earth" as probably accurate rendition of his peculiarity, unwittingly admitting the fact that unlike himself, Caliban has found a way to become one with the island. Like his Shakespearian alter-ego, Baines also becomes "earthy" – he learns the language of Maori neighbors, and accepts some kind of initiation into their community by permitting to tattoo his face (which makes him look like an embodiment of Prospero's abusive epithet for Caliban: a "freckled whelp" (I.ii 282)). He does not live with or even near Stewart,

and, as it is evident during the performance of the amateur theatre as well as treatment by Aunt Morag, Baines, though white, is perceived by his compatriots as no longer fully one of their own. Thus, Campion's Caliban lives on the border between two cultures, belonging partly to each, and, therefore, a complete member of neither. Like Nathaniel "Natty" Bumppo of James Fennimore Cooper's Leather Stocking Tales, Baines becomes a device and a ground for the two cultures to meet – he is knowledgeable about each but partial to neither.

Thanks to Baines, we get an intimate insight into the feelings and opinions of the party that in Shakespeare's conventional comedy is denied voice, the natives. Campion shows that the fact that they do not observe European manners and forms of behavior does not mean that they are without culture. Theirs is founded primarily upon respect for the nature. Like Montaigne's cannibals, they live off what nature offers without trying to fight or subdue it. Stewart and like-minded whites understand possession of land as a license to transform it – they clear the primeval forest cutting and burning it. As a result, they clearly disrupt the mechanism of natural water circulation and, in consequence, their habitations, ever enveloped in smoke, are sinking in an almost knee-deep black putrid mud. In the cleared area, one can frequently move only along plank walks.

In both plays, the conquerors fear and distrust nature. The scene when, to the immense surprise of the Maori mission girls, Aunt Morag and Nessie get panicky over a noise of fluttering pigeon in the forest, reminds Caliban having to calm down Trinculo and Stephano, who are frightened by the noises of the island. Caliban's perception is utterly different – instead of arousing fear, the noises relax him: "Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises, / Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not" (III.ii 131-132). It is quite likely a similar comment might be elicited from Baines if he were asked. The construction of his native-like cabin, solitary in the heart of the forest, evinces no fear and no ambition to be separated from the wild as the air-tight container of Stewart's European house. Baines' hut lets

the forest and everything that lives there in. Although to Europeans Baines' dwelling may look no better than a pig-sty, the reality is quite the opposite. Since he lives in the native-like manner, respecting nature, unlike steaming swamp surrounding Stewart's house, his place is cool in the heat of the sun and remains dry and sheltered when the rain pours.

This colonial confrontation between two antagonistic cultures sets the scene for and ignites the pivotal conflict of *The Piano*. The main plot of Campion's film is weaved of the threads of critical analysis of Shakespeare's omissions and simplifications performed from a largely feminist perspective. The composition of the central female figure of the film, Ada McGrath, has naturally been synthesized from the fates of several characters borrowed from *The Tempest*. The first and obvious of Ada's Shakespearean predecessors is Claribel, married to a man living in a distant land and whom she had never met. Campion's film begins with words that might have rung in the mind of the future bride of the king of Tunis: "Today he [Ada's father] married me to a man I've not yet met. Soon ... I shall join him in his own country." An even more striking parallel between the two dramas is the fact that, like Miranda, Ada becomes a teacher and an object of desire of a character who, because of his looks and nature, is qualified to be viewed as an offspring of Sycorax's carnal lusts, Caliban.

However, of all Shakespearian character types from *The Tempest* which may be traced to have converged in the figure of Ada, the least obvious and yet, if true, absolutely the most significant seems to be that of King of Naples. At first sight, the only element of composition of the film suggesting the possibility of such intentions is the fact that the film begins with Ada's being brought by tempestuous surf to a shore unknown to her, which might be agreed as resembling the shipwreck of Alonso on Prospero's island. Additionally, both characters come to the island as a result of the initiative of its ruler – Prospero, with the use of his magic, starts the tempest that brings King of Naples to the shore; Stewart, with the use of some other magic, brings Ada to the island over tempestuous seas. Finally, each of the compositions

revolves round the rivalry between the ruler of the island and his antagonist. In Shakespeare's case, Prospero's rival is Alonso, in Campion's film, Stewart's only antagonist is Ada. At the end of each drama, the ruler-character finally scores a victory by brutal force, having his opponent at his mercy, and in each case, prompted by a more heavenly magic, releases his hold upon the defeated rival and permits him/her to leave the island.

This seemingly simple replacement of a political rival with a woman permitted Campion to move beyond the mechanical pattern of "modernizing" intertextuality, in which a story becomes a contemporary version of some old drama. *The Piano*, as it was noted above, does not seek to show that our times were prefigured in Shakespeare's genius but asks to what extent what may be found in dramatic tradition is an effect of omission, falsification, and dissimulation. Armed with the theoretical apparatus of Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, combined with Pierre Bourdieu's studies on symbolic violence, Michel Foucault's discourse analysis, and psychoanalysis, Campion throws her plummet into the gaps in the still very Shakespearean 19th-century domestic paternalism and carefully analyses what the probe has managed to pull out from behind the solemn facade. Recasting *The Tempest* in the dynamic dialectics of Victorian cultural antagonisms between the dominating male figure and his alien other, a woman caught in the web of paternalistic coercive pedagogy, *The Piano* tries to reconstruct violent undercurrents and streams struggling under the silent surface of domestic propriety. In consequence, Campion's drama communicates with the viewer largely through muted symbolism characteristic for psychoanalytical discourse, rather than Shakespearian tirades, the din of battle, or simplicity of open brutality. The plot of the film is a meager dummy moved by the strings attached to something hiding in the darkness behind, invisible but accessible in the behavior of the characters that it shapes. The critics who wish to work out some understanding of that invisible but indirectly tangible something that justifies, on the one hand, peeping at one's wife making love to another, and, on the other, chopping her

finger off for sending a farewell message to her departing lover, they will have to trust the X-ray apparatus of anthropological criticism not less (or even more) than rely on the report of their eyes.

When the viewer hears of Alasdair Stewart for the first time, the information about him, though not entirely free of ambiguity, is far from unfavorable. He is introduced as a person who has decided to marry Ada despite her muteness and illegitimate child. What, at such an early stage of the development, most viewers are likely to overlook is the fact that recommending himself as a person capable of loving Ada despite her defects, he refers us to a figure of God the parent, not of a husband or lover, and the object of his offer of love, to a figure of a pet, a silent, animal friend – Ada quotes: "My husband said my muteness does not bother him. He writes and hark this: God loves dumb creatures, so why not he!" This seemingly innocent scene in fact prefigures a lot of what will be awaiting Ada on the other side of the world.

At the same time, the scene contains a number of inconspicuous though significant clues. Ada neither heard of nor saw her husband before, so it naturally was an arrangement between her father and Stewart. What may be inferred from the fact that Ada and her daughter are dressed according to fashion, that they live in what, judging upon the interior, is a modest but quite opulent manor house, that Flora has the use of a horse and a corridor at home long enough to ride roller skates along, together with the fact that Ada herself owns a very expensive instrument, Ada's family is rich. A question arises then why they should have married her so far away from home that it is unlikely that they will ever see her again, to somebody living the life of a pioneer at the frontier of civilization. One not really improbable answer is that the family sold Ada as far away from home as possible to hide its shame of her being a mother of an illegitimate child. Perhaps, in the rigorously regulated culture of 19th-century Great Britain, a rich dowry that we may expect has been offered to possible husbands

could tempt only somebody desperately needing money and living in a place where the corset of convention was relaxed. The evidence showing that such might have been the reality of this marriage could be the welcome, which was rather matter-of-factly than affectionate and Stewart's immediate departure after bringing Ada home to buy some Maori land, perhaps the piece that previously, without the dowry, he could not afford.

If one wished to probe behind the conventional facade of usually courteous behavior of Ada's husband, one might perhaps reveal secrets not less interesting. As Campion perceptively notes, like Prospero and Caliban, Stewart and Baines are possibly both exiles on the island, however, unlike in Shakespeare's play, although so unlike, the two come from the same country, so the genesis of the distinction is not nationality but culture. The first of several differences between them determining their behavior in the future conflict is the degree and status of their possible participation in the culture of origin. Baines is illiterate, has quite cheap tastes and primitive expectations with regard to household furniture and design. He lives in a rude, native like cabin, with very rudimentary amenities. He seems to be believed by other members of the white community to have no natural cultural needs or sense of importance – during the amateur performance he is an object of ridicule, and his awkward behavior clearly shows that, like at Aunt Morag's, he feels that he does not belong to the parlor but to the kitchen society. In many respects, Stewart is Baines' contrast. He clearly belongs to the core of the white society, owns a comfortable, European style house. His clothes, furniture and interior design betray middle-class ambitions. His notebook with dried up botanic specimens testifies to his education and cultivation. The drive to acquire more and more land, seems to testify to the mind shaped in the tradition of landlords rather than tenants. Thus, clearly, from the point of view of Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, as long as they remained in the mother country, Stewart and Baines belonged to antagonistic strata of the society, to the dominating and the dominated, respectively. In consequence, Stewart may

be expected to betray the traits of mentality of a person for whom culture is a tool of fortifying his claims, while Baines, the personality of the ruled, who might be determined by their culture but for whom there is no natural gain in defending it and who, when offered anything more convenient, might be ready to trade.

The different social and cultural capital and interests seem to play a significant role in shaping the attitudes of the two suitors in the situation of colonization of the island. Baines has clearly undergone transculturation. Although he has retained a lot of his European heritage, the marks on his face attest his initiation in the Maori culture. He speaks their language, accepts their advice, benefits from their experience, and respects their culture and beliefs. Having retained his white man's skills and knowledge, Baines has clearly permitted the Maori mentality to dominate many aspects of his personality. In effect, he lives in the no-man's land between the two cultures, benefiting from both but restricted by neither. In contrast, Stewart, who has come to colonize, develops a different personality. He does not care to learn the Maori language, ignores their beliefs, and is not above cheating them whenever he finds it possible, like in the case of paying them with buttons instead of money, or, when they refuse to sell a piece of their land because it is hallowed as their burial ground, taking it anyway, without money or consent on the grounds that the natives have no documents that would testify to their proprietorship. Endeavoring apparently to fortify his privileged status, Stewart cultivates his separate culture, trying to live and act in accordance to European standards, no matter whether they are suitable and comfortable or not. In effect, like other likeminded Europeans (Morag, Nessie, Ada), he tends to be overdressed, wears an artificial hairdo, transforms the landscape to make it look like Europe.

In their attitude to sex and carnality, the contrast between the two rivals is even more apparent. Both of them seem to have significantly been shaped by their previous history. Baines left his wife in the homeland, explaining it to his Maori friends in the scene of bathing

and washing in the river hole as resulting from her "having her own life" apparently different from his. If the ease with which he acquired the Maori lack of restraint in the matters of sex may be a clue to his natural mentality and the behavior of Ada in the first scenes of the film, to be typical for a woman living in the part of the world from which Baines comes, although his marriage shows that he managed to form a union with a woman, Baines had no chance to satisfy his appetites at home.

Alasdair Stewart is a different matter. If it is legitimate to interpret the composition of Ada's fate as suggesting that in Campion's film she plays the part of Shakespeare's Alonso, than perhaps we are permitted to regard Stewart's stay on the island as a continuation rather than the beginning of his antagonism with Ada's kind. He is a handsome, hardworking, and resourceful man, but, despite his advanced age (about 45), it is quite likely that he had no carnal experience prior to marrying Ada. In the scene on the beach, the Maori call him "old dry balls," which suggests impotence, but his behavior in the course of the film makes it certain that it cannot be a medical but rather a psychological condition. On the one hand, he is a reticent, restrained silent man with a keen sense of shame concerning all matters of sex – although declaratively willing to form a union with Ada, he cannot stand being caressed by her while he is to remain passive. When he sees Flora playing the game of copulation with the trees, though he must realize that she does not understand the meaning of her gestures, stops the game and severely reprimands the girl, telling her that she is giving a great shame to the trees. By way of punishment, she has to wash the trunks that she "defiled" by her game. At the same time, when he happens to be the witness of the scene of his wife's unfaithfulness, instead of stopping it, he watches the lovers with fascination so intense that he even crawls under the house to have a better view upon it. Although he is quite impotent – awkward and unconvincing – in his attempts to win Ada's heart, he is simultaneously not averse to trying to rape her brutally. Despite his usually civil manner, it is not beneath him to try to exploit Ada's

weakness when she lies feverish after he chopped off her finger – thinking her unconscious, he starts unbuckling his belt preparing to have sex with his victim, but when she looks at him, he stops, though he could now perform easily the rape that he attempted in the forest.

When Campion looks at 19th-century Prospero, she discerns a tight knot of ambition and insecurity, narcissism and repression, strenuous clinging to social norm and fascination with the darkness it tries to curb and banish. Enchained, mind and tongue, by the paternalistic discourse, Stewart finds voice only in situations when his rival is completely at his mercy. His culture has prepared him to buy, cheat, force, but leaves him ignorant of how to persuade, win hearts or minds by argument or appeal – his conversations have this indelible mark of explanations of his position rather than attempts to negotiate consent, and he flies into a rage whenever the exposition of his reasons fails to silence the opposition.

At the same time, Stewart is not only repressing, he is also repressed, and the plot of the film makes it quite clear that his own bondage may simply be the price he pays for legitimizing his rights of the conqueror with faithfulness to a cultural model whose alienation from the local circumstances may be as much a nostalgic sentiment as a strategy solidifying the special, privileged status of the newcomers on the island. Paradoxically, Baines' illiteracy and lack of education, strengthened with the Maori influence liberate him from the centrality of the past. Unlike Stewart, he would not profit from loyalty to his culture of origin, so he can easily shed the cultural corset and act flexibly, adjusting to the situation.

The Victorian culture, to which Stewart clings, offers him, as a man and the head of a family, a privileged position but, at the same time, makes him rigidly inflexible. He has a right to but also an obligation to demand submission to his fatherly figure. It gives him the right to demand carnal union but, simultaneously, represses, making him ashamed of it – he knows how to rape but not how to woo. Like Prospero in his capacity of a teacher of Miranda, Stewart is entrusted with the responsibility to defend the stability of the cultural foundation

which gives him authority, legitimizing even "clipping a wing" of his woman-pet so that they could be happy. This cruel brutality as punishment for a farewell love letter while a sexual intercourse was deemed to justify merely house arrest demonstrates that Stewart's conscious self is possibly a transitory dialectical contract between two identities: the surface, dominated by a self-confident, tyrannical Victorian pedagogue ready to demand respect and obedience, and, what hides underneath, a repressed, deeply insecure soul craving for acceptance of others.

With the scene of Stewart's bestiality, Campion moves beyond a mere intertextual parallelism, unexpectedly (for those who have discerned the similarity between the two texts) enriching Shakespearian model with events that emphasize the difference between the realities of Renaissance dynastic rivalry and Victorian domestic pedagogy. When the Shakespearian critic expects the final reconciliation resulting from Prospero's change of mood, *The Piano* adds *peripety* demonstrating the significance of the differences underlying the two patterns of behavior. Like Ada's husband, Prospero also has two identities: a Duke of Milan and a wizard ruler of the island. However, in contrast to Stewart, Prospero understands that a mere physical victory will not solve his problem, which is "to please" (V.Epilogue 331). If he is to leave the island and be permitted to return home, his objective is not to destroy but to win the recognition and respect of his antagonist, who holds the keys to his freedom, i.e. to be liberated he needs to liberate Alonso first. In the scene of the turn of feelings supposedly prompted by Ariel, Prospero declares soberly that although with "the high wrongs" (V.i 25) of his rivals, he is still "struck to th' / quick" (V.i 25), nevertheless, he will "take part" with his "nobler reason 'gainst [his] ... fury" (V.i 26).

The natural question arises why Campion's Prospero, unlike his Renaissance predecessor, having forgiven carnal unfaithfulness, would now no longer listen to his Ariel's remonstrance and pursue his "fury" rather than "nobler reason." First of all, if there are grounds to believe

that the reason why Campion's Prospero lives alone so far away from homeland is a result of painful emotional blows and defeats he suffered in his previous dealings with the other sex, a woman, and if his decision to marry Ada was motivated by a wish to find remedy that would liberate him from his psychic confinement, it is quite likely that his marriage came to effect not *despite* Ada's defects but *because* of them – he may have expected that a mute woman, with an illegitimate child and so far away from home, would not be a strong antagonist even for so inept a father-figure as himself. If such were the case, it would demonstrate a deeply ingrained deficit of self-confidence hiding in the dark vaults of Stewart's self, observing suspiciously the development of situation, ever ready to despair about the possibility of final success.

Ada's farewell letter to Baines, brought by obliging Ariel-Flora, clearly catches Stewart off guard. One identifiable agent possibly responsible for the unjustifiable cruelty of his response may be the above-mentioned premonition that all his efforts are going to fail anyway. Such a state of mind might explain the finality of punishment – Stewart seems driven by helpless desperation of someone who believes that all is lost and that, therefore, there is no longer any sense in negotiating or bargaining. At the same time, there are clues suggesting that it might not have been the only determinant of his behavior. Another factor that may have intensified Stewart's reaction was the violation of socio-cultural hierarchy – by declaring that her innermost self, her heart belongs to Baines, Ada has lifted the barely tolerated servant, a half-civilized Caliban, to the level of the master's equal, delegitimizing the latter's privileged position. Perhaps, sending Ada's finger to Baines, Stewart revenges the humiliation of such comparison and sends a warning that the scaffoldings of social hierarchy are still firm.

The last but not the least powerful influence shaping the reaction of Ada's husband may have been his sense of responsibility for her waywardness, explaining why this normally reticent and unassuming person exasperatedly complains that she is forcing him to hurt her. It

must be remembered that the delivery of Ada's letter and the spectacle of domestic violence follow each other only in the film presentation. If we recall how far Flora had to walk to find him, it becomes clear that Stewart had a lot of time to think before he reached his house. Perhaps, on his way back, still ignorant about the real facts, he had enough time to let his imagination fly, picturing the possible social consequences of futility of his repeated attempts to stop Ada's romance. In consequence, he may have felt obliged to act, which opened the channel through which his bitterness, resentment and humiliation could gush out into the spectacle of pedagogical bestiality.

Due to the fact that in his struggle for dominion Stewart fails to check himself in time and trusts his "rough magic" more than charity, he will be denied the final happy liberation. He misses the fact that like Prospero on his island, Victorian paternalism makes him a ruler and a prisoner at the same time. If his marriage and fascination with carnality suggest that he feels enchained in the cultural pattern from which he derives his power, he also needs his Alonso-Ada to liberate him. However, his decision to trust, at the moment of crisis, the intellectually clearer pattern of behavior, namely paternalistic brutality and aggression, destroys the tools of his liberation within and without him. He seems slow to realize it as is attested by the scene in Ada's bed, when, confused about the consequences of what he did, he expresses a hope that everything will be all right, that the gory act of which he is guilty was nothing but clipping a wing of a pet "dumb creature." He needs time to realize that his brutality has turned his marriage into a nightmare from which he will soon want to wake up. Given Stewart's keen sense of morality and shame, not for long will he retain the sense of empowerment given him by his brutality when, perhaps for the first time in a long time, proudly and unhesitatingly he demands that Flora should tell Baines that he is prepared to chop his wife's fingers one by one if need be. When he sobers, he will be sure to destroy himself all hope that some "good hands" might find him deserving to be released from his "bands" (V.Epilogue 327-328).

Understanding finally that his "crimes" cannot "pardon'd be," and that no "indulgence" may "set [him] ... free," he retreats into his "bare island" (V.Epilogue 326) of mental imprisonment, giving Ada back her freedom first. In the last scene of Ada's departure, Stewart cannot be seen even in the background.

As a result of cultural mental upbringing, the Victorian and Shakespearian father-figure is likely to perceive a woman as the domestic alien other – they have to be rigorously trained to browbeat them into accepting the cultural dictate. The initial and final stage of this process can be seen in *The Piano* in the figures of Nessie and Aunt Morag. Their theatrical dress, hairdo, behavior manifest artificiality of the culture that shaped them, restricting their individuality and independence, making them, like Nessie's piano playing, "plain and true," tepid and sterile. In contrast, as Morag observes critically, Ada's playing is upsetting, though, when she talks about it being "strange like a mood that passes into you," the sound creeping inside, Morag's tone loses the ring of paternalistic instruction and seems to be intrigued or bemused as she observes that it "is not all pleasant." As Foucault would have it, the personalities of the women are "born . . . out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint" (Foucault 1987, 29), they are "the present correlative of a certain technology of power over the body . . . it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body, by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished . . . on those one supervises, trains, and corrects, over madmen, children at home and at school, the colonized, over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives" (29).

This system of mental corruption of a female offers social advancement only to those who are ready to espouse it and become perpetrators of the coercion as supervisor's assistants. Aunt Morag is now an active agent of this education, severely correcting every departure from convention in her daughter. Her "soul," now not only "the effect" but also an "instrument"

(30) of political correctness, is the prison of body and mind, her own and that of the women in her care.

In this context, if we view Stewart's choice of a spouse as a result of a combination of his clumsiness with women and paternalistic culture that shaped him, he clearly made a grave mistake in his calculations. What Stewart cannot know before it is too late, is that Ada's personality is an effect of rebellion of femininity against Victorian paternalism – her muteness, illegitimate child, piano playing do not signify weakness and humility but operation of a robust free spirit. Protesting against the upbringing and social role that was meant to shape her into a version of Nessie, Ada rescues her independence by walling herself in by muteness, which naturally impedes the process of personality shaping. She hides behind an expressionless face looking like a dead mask, protecting her true self, making it inaccessible to prying eyes and attacks – even the rape attempted by Stewart can not change that expression much. This inclination to hide within herself may be detected already in the first scene of *The Piano,* in which Ada is seen peeping upon the world from behind the bars of her own fingers constituting a protective barrier between her and the outside reality.

At the same time, the Ada whose "mind's voice" is heard at the beginning of the film is clearly a figure of split personality. Campion enriches her 19th-century *Tempest* with the insights derived obviously from the conclusions of Gramsci's observations on the influence of hegemonic culture on the personality of the subjugated combined with Foucault's analysis of discourse and coercion. Gramsci notes that the "active" among the subjugated may develop a "contradictory consciousness" (Gramsci 1999, 641). In other words, the "soul" which Foucault believes "brings [man] ... to existence" (Foucault 1987, 30) and of which Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish* as being "the prison of the body" (30), this soul may be, according to Gramsci, a prison of another, truer soul.

The person whose mute, dead face covers the self-introducing herself to the world as "Ada" is clearly only a self-conscious fragmentary materialization of an active agent hiding behind it and which is referred to by "Ada" as her "will." Its existence and autonomous power is attested to by numerous events when it takes over control over "Ada." Such was the genesis of her muteness, which "Ada" neither willed nor understands, the test of suicide during the departure from the island, which surprises and frightens "Ada" both in the fact that it was attempted and that it was abandoned, her attempt to run away from home in sleep when she was young, her sleep piano playing. The viewers whose suspiciousness exceeds the average might find it interesting to ask if the final confrontation between Ada and Stewart, which begins with her sending a farewell love letter on a piano key, should not be viewed as possibly having been effected by this mysterious will – if we remember, Baines to whom the letter was supposedly sent cannot read, which Ada knows from her first visit at his cabin. Was the idea of sending him a letter a mistake, or a challenge to Stewart and Flora, the latter, by that time, clearly coerced into the role of Ariel, an airy spy and subaltern of Prospero.

In view of the fact that Ada's forms of rebellion are abandoned in consequence of her liberation, thanks to Baines, from the hegemonic paternalism, it seems justified to regard both her muteness and piano playing as examples of the effectiveness of hegemonic discourse in taking over and shaping even the forms of rebelling against itself, channeling them into such activities that could not undermine its rule. If we view the system of coercion of women in Victorianism as a kind of prison, Ada's struggle against it originally takes the form of locking herself in an internal prison within prison of her own making.

In his notes on the possibility of emancipation of the subjugated, Gramsci emphasizes that it is unlikely that they might "become independent in [their] ... own right without ... intellectuals ... in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence" (1999, 643) of individuals representing this

rival cultural paradigm. Ada's chance for liberation comes paradoxically in the form of exercise of paternal power – her father marries her to somebody she has never met, living in a distant country. What her father does not know is that the place where Ada is sent is a battleground of a still unresolved conflict between two cultures representing radically different attitudes to femininity and sexuality in society. Ada gets into contact with this other culture through a go-between operating on the border between them, George Baines. He is a different model of "theory-practice," which Gramsci analyzed. Unlike Stewart, he bargains instead of coercing, thus making Ada his equal and giving her subjectivity back; when he wants her to lie naked with him, he makes himself vulnerable by undressing and exposing himself first; finally, he offers her a privileged position by resigning from all instruments of coercion and returning her piano, showing concern for her feelings and applying for her love and care from the position of a supplicant.

The behavior of this Caliban/cannibal figure turns Shakespearian and Victorian hierarchies upside down, offering Prospero's antagonist not only physical, social, and cultural liberation but managing to free also her repressed true self. When realization of the meaning of what has happened finally sinks to the depths of Ada's self, she recognizes the fact that the piano was not an instrument of liberation but an accomplice in keeping her in resigned subjection. With her freedom of body and soul regained, she wants to see it no more and demands that it should be thrown into the ocean. The scene prompts the crisis in her innermost self – one part of herself clearly (as it is attested by her later musings on her dream of remaining submerged in the calm and silence of the ocean deep) is afraid of what this entrance to life might mean and shies away, trying to run after the piano into the peace of death, while the other, the true self, started to action to defend its just regained life, literally kicks back wrenching itself free from the last vestige of the past bondage and brings "Ada" back to life.

The last scene at the porch and garden in Nelson, where Ada is learning to speak and Flora enjoys her childhood innocence given her back by Hira, a Maori woman, who has absolved her of all the sins to which Prospero's influence coerced her, is the finale of the contest between Ada's innermost self and Prospero's sorceries. It is the intractability of her female will bringing Stewart to the limits of his own tolerance to exercise of power that affects her liberation. If exercise of control requires chopping his wife's body piece by piece, Stewart, although capable, is mentally unequal to it. The confrontation with, to use Ada's father's words, her "dark talent" proves him the weaker party, so, after a short struggle, Stewart prefers to listen to a "voice in his head" to give Ada her liberty back than continue the fight for his "paternal" rights.

Also in this case, Campion "reads" a new feminist and post-colonial meaning into Shakespearian text – in the last scenes, in which Ada gains her freedom, Stewart is absent and she is assisted reverently and affectionately by Baines, helped by his Maori friends. It is the defeat of both Stewart's paternalism and Prospero's colonial racism and a vindication of the subjugated, female and native alike. Like John Barth's stories, Jane Campion's film leaves no stone of Shakespearian masonry unturned, on the one hand, exposing grizzly reality hiding under the faded robe of Victorian domestic magic, and, on the other, giving new life and significance to the events and figures making up the plot, though in a way beyond imaginative powers of the genius of Renaissance.

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