An Appropriated Antipodean Monstrosity Revisited: Jane Campion's *The Piano* as a Comment on Shakespearean "Salvage and Deformed Slave" and *The Tempest*

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Abstract: The article revisits the question of Jane Campion's *The Piano* as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. It is argued that *The Piano* can be considered an adaptation, but one that – in terms of adaptation studies – can be classified as both a case of appropriation (Sanders 2006) and a second-order adaptation (Lanier 2002). Special attention is paid to Campion's adaptive strategies and her treatment of monstrosity, which appears to be as ambiguous as it is in Shakespeare's play, especially in view of recent post-colonial criticism of the tragicomedy. A particularly interesting aspect is the director's rendering of the characters of Stewart (Prospero-figure), Ada (Miranda/Prospero/Caliban-figure), Baines (Caliban-figure), Flora (Miranda-figure) and the Maori characters (or spirit-of-the-island figures), in that Campion reconstitutes and restructures the Shakespearean characters by creating modern, feminist-sensitive and post-colonial adaptations.

Keywords: *The Piano*, *The Tempest*, appropriation, sexuality, monstrosity, Shakespeare, adaptation, Jane Campion

Introduction

The aim of this article is to look at characters (not just one) from Jane Campion's celebrated film, *The Piano* (1993), who bear a resemblance to the notorious Shakespearean figure of Caliban from *The Tempest*. It has long been observed that the movie is a loose adaptation of this Shakespearean tragicomedy (cf. Pilch 2013). In terms of adaptation studies, Campion's film can be treated as an appropriation (e.g. a text which is "a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" [Sanders 2006, 26]) or an analogy

("a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art" [Wagner 1977, 226]). As a result, the adaptation takes great liberty with the source text, without even acknowledging it openly, which paved the way for Campion to radically re-imagine and creatively appropriate (Hutcheon 2006, 8) the colonial and moral politics of Shakespeare's play. The "monster" from *The Tempest* also undergoes a fundamental change: The gender of the creature is challenged (is it only Baines who is a Caliban figure in the film?) and his/her/its sexuality/exoticising practices are laid bare. The representations of Caliban's monstrosity in the film versions of *The Tempest* are also referenced. The film, in its treatment of the source text, is also an example of Elizabeth Bronfen's (2018, 19) "crossmapping," which is a "comparative reading across media and forms …. [that] demonstrates the ways in which shared concerns or issues are worked out in each media's distinctive form." The paper argues that Campion's depiction of Caliban matches Shakespeare's complexity, posing questions about the nature of the alien, alienation, civilisation and exclusion, which are so pertinent, especially in the antipodean context. Or, to resort to Bronfen's concept, the movie is a "reverberation" of the pathos gesture generated by Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (2018, 34).

The Piano as a Film Adaptation and a Heritage Film

The Piano as an adaptation can be classified in a number of ways. Since it does not directly reference its source text, it can be treated as what Julie Sanders (2006, 26) referred to as appropriation. As a result, Campion not only radically departs from Shakespeare's play, but frames it in a totally different culture: on the one hand, evoking the context of nineteenth-century New Zealand colonised by white settlers; on the other hand, informing the film with feminist and post-colonial sensitivity. Furthermore, Campion uses the film to creatively reinterpret Victorian culture, in a manner reminiscent of John Fowles' strategy in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Consequently, the director adapts Shakespeare's play, history (of colonisation and of New Zealand) and what Sanders (2006, 120) calls "We 'Other Victorians.'; or Rethinking the Nineteenth Century". In doing so, *The Piano* has been classified as an example of a heritage film:

> US and New Zealand postmodern heritage films (ANP), comprised of the three auteur films [*The Piano*, *The Age of Innocence* and *The Portrait of a Lady*] … mixed evident heritage characteristics with

> a conscious distanciation from these, both on the part of their directors and at the site of critical reception. (Monk 2011, 108)

What Monk aptly highlights is Campion's use of the genre and its critique, (just like Shakespeare used to adapt different genres and literary conventions).

The Piano is also an adaptation of a number of texts, which it references not in terms of intertextual allusions only, but as constitutive ones: these include *The Tempest* and Jane Mander's novel *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920). Interestingly enough, neither of the texts was acknowledged by the director, which has been duly noted and discussed by critics. An example of such critical reservation comes from Phyllis Frus (2010), who observes that critics

> have complained about the jarring contrast between the period look and the postmodern sensibility of the characters in *The Piano* …. Hoeveler … believes the discordant notes struck by *The Piano* are the result of Campion's attempt to disguise the fact that her screenplay is an adaptation of a novel that she did not have the rights to – Jane Mander's Story of a New Zealand River, first published in 1920. (32)

Frus (2010, 32) also points to the large number of source (adapted) texts in the film: "a variety of literary, historical and folk texts … create a complex web of allusions, making the film highly suitable to treat as a retelling of other stories." She further adds that "Hoeveler identifies many sources for *The Piano*," which is "evidence of the film's polyvocalism" (2010, 32). Frus lists a number of such texts, which have been recognised by critics in the many reviews and scholarly responses the film has generated.

If Campion did not acknowledge Mander (or Shakespeare, for that matter), then *The Piano* appears to be Sanders' appropriation *par excellence*. At the same time, it would perhaps be worthwhile to apply yet other concepts in adaptation studies which would help specify the nature of the adaptation in Campion's film. One of them is the idea of transformation, which Frus and Williams (2010) describe as follows:

> At its most basic level, a transformation is a text that reworks an older story or stories, making a transformation very much like

> an adaptation. … But in the vast range of texts that can be called adaptations, there are some that move beyond mere adaptation and transform the source text into something new that works independently of its source. (14)

The keywords here seem to be "reworking," "moving beyond," "transforming" and "independent." These elements are similar to how Sanders approaches the general trend in adaptation studies, in opposition to the fidelity fallacy, in order to grant autonomy to adaptations as well as to claim the freedom to change the source text to virtually any degree. This is also confirmed in another observation that Frus and Williams (2010) make:

> whereas adaptations are frequently "based on" another text, transformations are often "inspired" by another text. Because they are not limited to representing a source text, they can re-imagine all sorts of new possibilities for the characters, settings or plots that audiences have made popular. Many transformations work from multiple texts, not just a single one. (16)

Moreover, the two scholars admit that radical transformations of source texts are categories of the larger and more encompassing "umbrella term" of adaptations. In other words, they too treat such texts as *The Piano* as a variant of adaptation. There is, however, a difference between adaptation and appropriation:

> Adaptation is a text that has been changed to suit a new purpose or environment (like a classic novel updated to a twenty-first-century setting). But … the new text is recognizable as a relation of the earlier text. A transformation, however, is generally drastically different from its source text, so it may not be recognizable as a cousin. … [It may be useful to] think about metamorphosis. When a caterpillar has reached maturity, it transforms into a butterfly – an entirely new form that is based on the earlier form. In literary transformations, the new text may be based on an older one, but the reader or viewer may not recognize the connection. (Frus and Williams 2010, 15)

What perhaps needs adding in the context of this discussion is the issue of reception. Hutcheon (2006, 8) views adaptation as both creation and reception: "seen from the perspective of its *process of reception*, adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation [original emphasis]." In other words, a very important aspect of the process of reception is the "pleasure" of adaptations, resulting from the recognition of the link between the source and target texts. In the case of appropriation and/or transformation, such recognition does not constitute part of the reception process. It is here where the most fundamental difference between adaptation proper and its variations lies.

Douglas Lanier reminds us of the variety of approaches to adaptation with reference to Shakespeare. His reflection can function as an apt summation of the problems which an adaptation scholar faces:

> We have several competing models for thinking about the structure of this transmedial set of objects we call Shakespeare: Foucault's discursive model, which stresses the interconnection between particular discursive modes of truth-making and legitimation, and the institutional agents of those modes; the arboreal model, in which "the Shakespearean text" serves as originary root and all other works are derivative offshoots; the rhizomatic model in which "Shakespeare" is a network of adaptations through a series of decentered relationships or relays, a network with nodes but no originary center); the actor-network model, which places stress upon the aggregated agency of individual producers within the network but remains agnostic on the question of a textual center. But illuminating as debates over the structure of this ever-emergent "Shakespeare" might be, what we've left largely unaddressed is the question of membership in the discourse or set or tree or rhizome or actor-network we call "Shakespeare." How do we tell Shakespeare from "not Shakespeare"? Where to place the slash? (Lanier 2017, 295)

Can *The Piano* be called an adaptation of "Shakespeare" then? Can it be legitimately considered a version of *The Tempest*? I am not alone in arguing for the

relationship between the film and Shakespeare's romance (see below). I look at the film not as a potential adaptation of Mander's novel, which draws on *The Tempest* (Lanier's "second-order adaptation," viz. "adaptations of earlier Shakespearian adaptations or performances" ([2002, 104–105]), but as an adaptation (appropriation) of Shakespeare's text, without the mediation of *The Story of a New Zealand River*. After all, the two texts belong to a complex web of sources which do not constitute a hierarchical relationship.

The argument for the film to be an appropriation of Shakespeare's play in a more literal and simultaneously metaphorical manner can be further developed by referencing Elizabeth Bronfen's idea of "crossmapping." It stresses two processes: the absorption of a formula/image/energy (as she also deploys Greenblatt's concept of social energies) and its re-emergence in a "changed" form:

> The method of crossmapping is concerned with asking why a given image formula has been confiscated and re-interpreted in a particular way, even while it is equally intrigued by what has proved to be most decisive about the affective cultural after-effects it has had. (Bronfen 2018, 37–38)

Elsewhere, Bronfen refers to crossmapping as a "process of seizing upon and appropriating past pathos formulas" (2018, 33); in other words, it is an artistic procedure which "radically" treats the source text and "re-charters" it in a new context, attempting to render and re-visualise what Bronfen calls "figures of thought" and "image formulas" to evoke – or hold – *pathos* of the adapted text. It appears that Campion's film can also be looked at from this perspective as it thoroughly remediates and reimagines Shakespearean and, in a more general sense, early modern figures of thought and image formulas to preserve the pathos of the past culture. Bronfen does not provide a precise definition of these concepts; as she puts it herself:

> My own insistence on crossmapping figures of thought and image formulas for which no simple or unequivocal intertextual relation can be determined is meant to draw our critical attention to similarities between aesthetic formalizations that have remained overlooked or unchartered. (2018, 37)

Interestingly enough, an aspect of such "overlooked aesthetic formalization" can be the cultural re- and cross-mappings drawn by artists whose voice, for a variety of reasons, has been hushed or marginalised, such as female artists whose "intervention … in modern visual culture" is Bronfen's conscious choice (Bronfen 2018, 41). The choice is justified by a series of questions the critic asks:

> How do women artists appropriate traditional conceptualizations of femininity so as to both critically as well as creatively think the equation of woman with the image? … How do they develop their own voice, their own self-image, their own authenticity in a medium that has traditionally served to screen out feminine subjectivity so as to function primarily as a medium of masculine self-expression? (Bronfen 2018, 41)

Engaging in a feminist reading of Campion's film, if we read it as a version of *The Tempest* (and not only from this interpretative perspective), then we can discern that it is visibly a feminist reimagining of the play; a positively understood "female gaze," and that this reading extends to the treatment of the characters Miranda and Caliban.

The Piano as *the Tempest*

As already signalled, the film did not go unnoticed as an adaptation of Shakespeare's tragicomedy. The *Guardian* critic Philip French identifies the major equivalences between characters: "Stewart is a disoriented Prospero, Baines a yearning Caliban (his name an appropriate echo), Ada and Flora two sides of Miranda" (French 2014).[1] Likewise, Tomasz Pilch remarks that

> every theatergoer who has ever watched Jane Campion's *The Piano* is likely to have noted 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 reigns over the island and who effects the visit of the other, who, in each case is brought ashore by tempestuous sea waves. (2013, 145)

Fortunately enough, both critics are aware of the complexity of Campion's adaptation, especially in her treatment of Shakespeare's characters – in the film there are no one-to-one equivalences with the figures from the play. Rather, the director proposes a dynamic series of configurations: Some of the characters merge into one Shakespearean persona, others bud into a number of play-related figures.

Thus, according to Pilch (2013, 154), Ada McGrath (Holly Hunter) can be identified as Claribel, Miranda as well as Alonso, whereas her daughter Flora (Anna Paquin; what a name, reminiscing Shakespeare's betrothal masque) is Ariel and/or Miranda. The complexity of the characters and their dynamic relations, their constantly shifting roles, is also visible in the way in which Campion constructs the figure of Caliban/George Baines (Harvey Keitel) and Prospero/Stewart (Sam Neill). Baines is illiterate, has a Maori tattoo on his face, is on friendly terms with the natives and speaks their language. He, too, rapes Ada (echo of Caliban's aborted rape of Miranda in *The Tempest*). Yet, it is he who wins Ada's heart and eventually leaves the island with her and Flora (thus assuming the part of Ferdinand and, to a degree, Prospero). On the other hand, Ada's arrival on the island, with her precious piano (equivalent to Prospero's books) and daughter reminds one of a Prospero. Campion may thus invite the viewer to look for parallels with Shakespeare's play, but if she does so, she keeps them on edge; making them constantly update their findings. The film is also what Geoffrey Wagner (1977, 223) elsewhere called a commentary on (or "a re-emphasis or re-structure" of) both Shakespeare's play and its (colonial) interpretations, such as Meredith Anne Skura's (1989) now classic reading of *The Tempest*, especially in its interpretation of the relationship between Prospero, Caliban and Ariel.

The film has been found by critics to be a major adaptation of melodrama, more specifically "female melodrama" (Gillett 1995), especially in its treatment of marriage, the essential social Victorian status.

> Revisioning generic conventions, this marriage [Baines and Ada's] is not the same marriage: it is a new and transfiguring marriage. It replaces the marriage with Stewart but it also transforms the isolation and self-absorption of the heroine without, it should be added, effacing her subjectivity or forgetting her pain. (Gillett 1995, 281)

Gillett finds the ending of the film in a way surprisingly traditional and revisionist, emphasising that in the new marriage Ada is not deprived of her

feminine agency; furthermore, by regaining "her index finger" she regains the "index of her speech, sign of her tenderness" (Gillett 1995, 279). As a result, the ending of the film epitomises the nature of adaptation: "repetition without replication" (2006, 7). Similarly, Zarzosa (2010, 396) finds the film an interesting example of adapting melodrama in terms of a "social experience (or sensibility) and … representational rhetoric (or artistic expression)," which the scholar relates to the nature of "economic exchange."

Ideological Aspects of Ugliness and Monstrosity

One of the issues radically revised in a reading of the play in the post-colonial context is Caliban's monstrosity as contrasted with Prospero's (or Miranda's, etc.) loveliness and/or normalcy. Naturally, these concepts belong in the discourse and ideology and they have been used as significant political tools. It is interesting, then, to see how they have been presented in the film: What kind of monster is the filmic Caliban? How does the director shape the concept of the "savage and monstrous" slave? And how does his (her?) nature reflect the Shakespearean figure? Caliban in the play is made monstrous in a number of ways. Mostly, his monstrosity is discursive in nature: He is called different names by other "human" characters. Prospero and Miranda use vilifying strategies to control Caliban; Stephano and Trinculo find him a freak to be shown at fairs, which would indicate his physical deformity. Furthermore, we hear about the attempted rape of Miranda, which mainly proves Prospero's pedagogic incompetence, rather than Caliban's savagery. Also, because Caliban's mother was a witch who allegedly had sex with the devil, Caliban is perceived as the devil's offspring. This, too, contributes to the character's ill nature and monstrosity.

The film offers a wider spectrum of means to present monstrosity: apart from the verbal plane, the audio-visual dimension does significantly contribute to the mode of presentation (of course, these elements are to be found in theatre, as well). On top of that, one should consider in this particular case the adaptive strategy deployed by Campion, whereby the plot is set in mid-nineteenth-century New Zealand, or in a (post)colonial Victorian reality. In other words, the issue of how Campion approaches the nineteenth century imagining of monstrosity should also be considered. Finally, the film's genre and its engagement in a dialogue with other filmic genres and how it helps construct monstrosity is a problem to be addressed.

In her representation of monstrosity, Campion draws on a number of cultural indicators: physical deformity, physiognomy, language, law, womanhood and sexuality. Alexa Wright (2013, 1), while emphasising the bodily irregularity of the monster, draws one's attention to the cultural and social need to constantly verify what "constitutes acceptable human identity." Significant in this respect, next to obvious somatic deformities, is what Wright calls

> the practice of physiognomy, which was highly popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries [and] is based on the belief that there is a direct correspondence between a person's inner being, or character, and his or her outward appearance. (2013, 61)

This is another issue which Campion addresses in her film. Hock-soon Ng (2004, 3), in turn, emphasises another crucial feature of the monster, viz. its inability to speak a language: "although the monster is situated within language, its trademark is that it is unspeakable" (2004, 3), which in the film is visible in the case of Ada and the Maori characters as well as the hybrid figure of Baines. Michel Foucault (2003, 63) finds "the monster … the transgression of natural limits, the transgression of classifications, of the table, and of the law as table: this is actually what is involved in monstrosity." Yet another source of monstrosity is constituted by the woman, especially her departure from the precisely determined Victorian ideal: "contemporary monster narratives seem to posit the woman as the original site of horror, [though] it is ultimately not woman, but what she represents (or fails) to the Symbolic order that situates her in such an etiological position" (Hock-soon Ng 2004, 10). Finally, it is illegitimate sexuality, strictly defined by the Victorians again (also in legal terms), which may lead to deviations, to monstrosity. As Foucault reminds us,

> if it was truly necessary to make room for illegitimate sexualities, it was reasoned, let them take their infernal mischief elsewhere: to a place where they could be reintegrated, if not in the circuits of production, at least in those of profit. The brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance: the prostitute, the client, and the pimp, together with the psychiatrist and his hysteric – those "other Victorians," as Steven Marcus would say – seem to have surreptitiously transferred the pleasures that are unspoken into the order of things that are counted. (1978, 4)

The social spaces for such "abnormal sexualities" in nineteenth-century England have also been identified by Steinbach (2017, 241–244, ff.); they correspond, in the film, to the colonial "elsewhere," viz. New Zealand, where such practices are even more illegal and more acceptable, belonging to what Anna Clark termed a "twilight" moment (cited in Steinbach 2017, 244).

Abramson and Pinkerton (1995) provide the following summary of Campion's film in the context of sexuality:

> A helpless and troubled, though attractive woman is married off to an ineffectual man. Later, a second man coerces her into selling herself sexually, and somehow, she falls in love with her coercer. When her husband learns of the affair he attempts to rape her, and then, when she continues the affair, he mutilates her. Despicable? Yes. Horrific? Definitely so. Obscene? Perhaps but probably not. … To some of us … *The Piano* was merely despicable, and even more so because the woman's daughter in the film was a witness to both the rape and the mutilation. This film and the critical acclaim it has garnered aptly demonstrate the hypocrisy surrounding the issue of pornography. An X-rated movie that suggested that victims of rape and attempted rape sometimes fall in love with their victimizers would be rigorously condemned and possibly even successfully prosecuted as obscene. (168)

There is no denying that the relationships between Ada and the two men are complex, if not bordering on the perverse. It is manifest not only in the violence Ada experiences from both male figures, but also in the treatment of the naked body and sex in the film. At the same time, one must not forget that Ada, too, is capable of violence with reference to others – the two male-figures, sailors or her own daughter. Her activity and agency is perceived as monstrous in the Victorian world; it is not, however, such in the West of the 1990s or later. She is certainly victimised but does not refrain from victimising others. Hers is the position of a magus (unlike Stewart's); she is the real Prospero with her piano and music, enchanting the natives and Baines while unnerving the white settlers (Aunt Morag finds her music strange). She has a "strange" relationship with her piano and its keys (phallic symbols), which is reminiscent of the natives' copulating with trees (also phallic elements) – trees which in the eyes of the Victorian Stewart have been defiled and need to be cleansed by Flora.

Victorian culture, as Susie L. Steinbach (2017) observes, had an ambivalent approach to sexuality and sex. Whereas men's sexual behaviour, though morally condemned, was acceptable even when excessive (viz. outside matrimony or orientated towards prostitutes), women's sexual "acts and desires [were] considered … deviant" (Steinbach 2017, 241). Interestingly enough, in the case of male sexuality, two threats were believed to be particularly serious: impotence and masturbation, which were "linked to 'spermatorrhoea.' … Masturbation was a primary cause; impotence, a result" (Steinbach 2017, 242). Needless to say, these two "afflictions" constitute the film's major focus on sexuality: Stewart's impotence and the natives' masturbation with trees.

Pornography is a taboo in both our and Victorian cultures. In the former, branding a movie "pornographic" relegates it to a category that defies the standards of art cinema. In the latter, the body becomes a site of the pornographic. In Campion's film, what may be deemed sexually explicit (if this is a working definition of porn) are the relationships between Ada and her husband/Baines, which lack a romantic aspect. It is the bargaining of her body for her husband, and then the piano, which strips the relationships of any romantic element. Interestingly enough, it is Baines who rejects such a relationship in favour of a romantic one. Since Ada cannot develop affection for her husband, Stewart accepts it, from a romantic point of view, and grants her and Baines freedom. This makes Stewart a romantic character, despite his violence, which paradoxically illustrates the Victorian ideal of marriage, whose "essence … was not sex but romantic love" (Steinbach 2017, 242). Ada's monstrosity in this ménage a trois is lessened by her decision to drown the piano, the token of her magic and sexuality, as both Baines and Stewart help her discover her own sexuality.

Flora/Miranda/Ariel appears to be one of the keys to this conundrum. Witnessing the sexual encounter between her mother and Baines, which she finds deprived of music or magic, she reports it to her Victorian "father," Stewart, just as Ariel does/would do to Prospero. Stewart becomes her "papa"; although she first makes a vow never to call him by this appellation, he becomes an anchor in a troubled world, somebody who would guide her behaviour in an unstable situation. She is a child who needs stability and Stewart, a Victorian father-figure, provides her with it – Flora is desperate to locate such a figure, telling incredible stories about her father, whom she never knew. She wants to live the life of a child, not just a translator for her mother, who – as it is visible in film – chooses Baines instead of her. It thus becomes a very modern problem: Can

a single mother have a life of her own in spite of her duties to the child she is raising? It also sheds a light on single mothers, the margins of society in the Victorian era, and perhaps not only then. If she is an Ariel figure, is she eventually freed when her mother, herself and Baines leave the island? Sadly, we are never given a chance to hear her voice, as at the end of the film it is replaced with that of her mother learning to speak: a voice which in the beginning and the ending sounds very childish. If we compare her to Miranda, in turn, she is given no freedom, because her mother stays in a relationship with Baines, a legally dubious one as both Ada and Baines are formally married to others: Ada to Stewart, Baines to a wife in London who, according to him, prefers a different life, which he granted her (allegedly). Unlike Miranda, Flora cannot choose how she may live, with or without a Ferdinand figure. At the same, her new family, by challenging the Victorian model, may be considered in the eyes of a present-day viewer open and liberating.

This brings us to the (post)colonial reading of the film. Are the characters freed of their pre-colonial bonds in the new world ("Oh brave new world")? Is the natives' approach to sex and marriage an excuse to shed the obligations of the old world? It is difficult to call Baines a sexually-orientated character if he eventually plumps for old-fashioned love and affection, despite his facial tattoo and communing with the natives, who – in the film – never betray affection. Interestingly enough, they are presented in the film as embracing the colonists' culture in their clothing, the epitome of which is the top hat. They look strange in European clothing; their representation is unnerving. If they are monstrous, their monstrosity results not from their native looks, but from the mixture of the native and the colonised. Like Baines, they are mongrels, who sit astride two cultures while belonging to neither. Consequently, they produce in the recipient a sense of unease.

If Prospero in *The Tempest* embraces Caliban as his own – "this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" – then Campion suggests that we accept the (repressed) desires of our sexuality; since they, in the end, appear to be driven by romance. Campion did not shoot a film which borders on pornography; hers is eventually a movie about affection and love, which can be triggered by sexual liberation. The "darkness" may be the initial sexuality (or alleged monstrosity), but in the end it turns out to be tenderness and love. Interestingly enough, it is the two characters who are social outcasts, deformed, who eventually achieve happiness, though – it needs to be stressed – its status is rather

precarious: Baines still has a wife in London and Ada is still married to Stewart. Their living a happy life in Nelson is utopian, as it is difficult to imagine that the inhabitants of the town (whom we never see in the film) would accept such a relationship.

Both Baines and Ada blend into the figure of Caliban – he with his lower social status, Maori marks on his face and the ability to speak their language and she with her reputation of a single mother and marital unfaithfulness, her muteness and an amputated finger replaced with a metal prosthesis. Campion thus again transfigures Ada into yet another variation of a character from The Tempest. Because we hear Ada in the film twice (in an internal monologue), at the beginning and at the ending, her voice constitutes a frame. In the final scene, she says that she is again learning to speak. Ada's voice contrasts with the character's age, as it belongs to a child. Indeed, Ada remembers her voice from early childhood, when she did speak. This contrast, however, is unnerving and creates a discord, which, I would argue, is also part of the strategy of estrangement that Campion deploys in the film. Her voice and use of sign language make her monstrous, as well.

Campion complements her treatment of the characters in the film with camera work. French (2014) observes that the film is "shot in an exquisite, painterly fashion by Stuart Dryburgh that gives the landscape an appropriately exotic look." It is not just the landscape which is thus exoticised by Dryburgh's cinematography, but in general the fictional world is presented as strange, in the formalist meaning. In the opening scene, it gradually emerges from between Ada's fingers; the director deploys many high- and low-angle shots; and there are sequences of underwater shots, i.e. the boat ploughing the waves and the piano (and Ada) drowning. Actually, Campion herself claimed that she wanted "the film to appear as if being shot under water" (French 2014). The effect is quite disturbing and it may evoke in the viewer a feeling of the uncanny (in both Freud's and Todorov's understanding).[2]

Campion treats the Shakespearean text in a most peculiar way. In a post-colonial fashion, she questions both the alleged supremacy of the colonisers and the alleged devastation of the colonised. The Maori characters in her film wear European clothing, which estranges them. Furthermore, they do not seem to suffer as a result of Stewart's land-avarice, even when it poses a threat to their hallowed land (we do not know whether Stewart managed to impose his will). They seem to be portrayed as quite in control of the situation; it is, after all,

Stewart and the colonists who find the land difficult to manage due to its lack of paved passageways and the overwhelming mud – not to mention their obsession with the myth of accumulating land. The Maori are quite free to live the life they are used to, mocking the white newcomers, which is so visible in the scene of children copulating with trees. It is sexuality – a most fundamental human drive – which becomes the symbol of vitality and life, so differently approached by the white settlers and the natives. Its prevalent lushness makes Ada find joy in a sexual encounter with Baines and Stewart in watching them have sex. Interestingly enough, Stewart, though shocked by the explicit token of his wife's infidelity and fascinated with the sex in general, is desperate to find out whether Ada spoke to Baines during their intercourse. For Stewart, it is her communication with others that marks the dimension of affection and love. Despite his initial claim that he would accept Ada as she is, mute, he finds her (in)ability to speak the measure of utmost intimacy, which he is deprived of (unlike the viewers) and which she learns for Baines in the utopian coda of the film.

At the same time, the figure of Baines is considered ambiguous from a postcolonial perspective. As Mark A. Reed argues in his critique of the ideological message of *The Piano*, Baines appropriates and, indeed, recolonises Maori culture. He is an example of a white New Zealander who goes native, the so-called "Pakeha," whose

> moko tattooed face signifies his solidarity with the Maori people, [but] may also be a sign of his ability to deceive both the Maori and the audience who desires and celebrates cultural hybridity. (Reed 2000, 108)

Reed's postcolonial criticism of the film also rests upon the representation of the Maori people, which Leonie Pihama (cited in Reed 2000) found congruent with a colonial approach:

> It is Maori women who cook for Baines in line with a colonial agenda that focused on Maori girls as house servants. Maori men are irrational, naive, simpleminded and warlike. These are the types of colonial discourses that have informed filmmakers, in particular Pakeha [white New Zealander] film makers, as to how we should be represented. These are the colonial discourses that find contemporary

> expression in feature films like *The Piano* and which are then sold to the world as an authentic depiction of our people. (108)

This "openness" of the film to different postcolonial readings is very much in tune with the critics' response to *The Tempest*.

As signalled above, language in Campion's film is strictly linked with the issue of monstrosity, Calibanism and ugliness. The characters speak in (regional) dialects: Glaswegian English, Maori and sign language. They do not speak *standard* language, whatever it may be today, rightly questioned by linguists. The director appears to refer to Caliban's "You taught me language; and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!" (1.2.365–366). A plague means mutation and variety, deformity, yet variation. Caliban's language is *par excellence* non-standard. And so are Campion's characters with reference to the source text: blends, liminal, transgressing.

The article is an attempt to discuss Jane Campion's *The Piano* as an example of an adaptation in general, in light of the adaptation strategies employed by the director, and as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in particular. It is argued that the film, in terms of adaptation studies, can be classified as an example of "appropriation," as proposed by Julie Sanders. The adaptation occurs on a number of levels – plot, characters, ideology and Victorianism – as well as the question of monstrosity, which is the major focus of the analysis, and the manner in which this ambiguous concept is handled by Campion's film.

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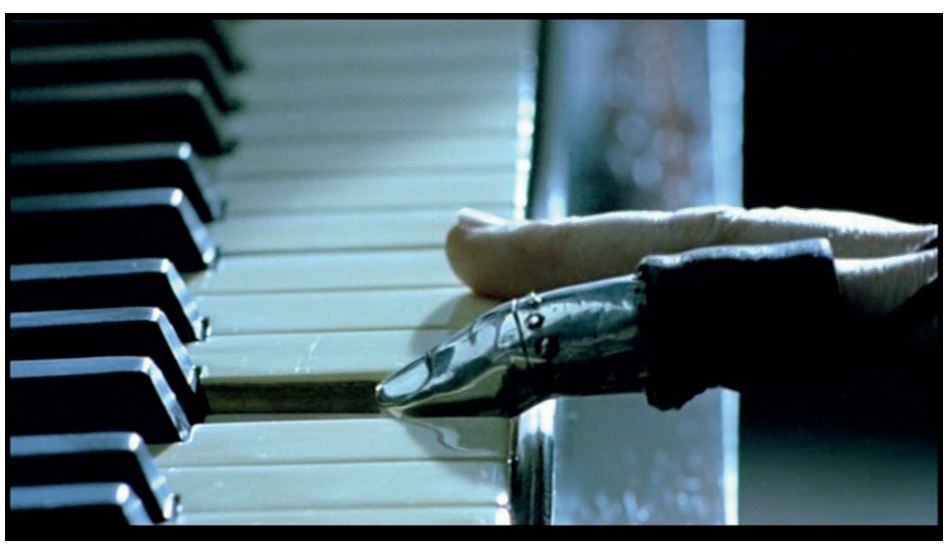
(Endnotes)

[1] Interestingly enough, four years later, Peter Bradshaw, another *Guardian* critic, ignored the film's references to Shakespeare.

[2] Cf. Freud (2003) and Tzvetan (1975).



Ada's prosthesis

Baines′ moko tattoo