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LOOKING BACK?

Gender, Sexuality and Race in *The Piano*

Margaret Jolly

Why 'Looking Back'?

In this paper I look back at *The Piano* in two ways. Firstly, I am 'looking back', in that quotidian sense of looking behind, over our shoulders at the past, at a film made 16 years ago and set in the mid-nineteenth century. I suggest that as active subjects viewing and interpreting films, and especially those like *The Piano* that engage colonial histories, we inhabit not a space securely partitioned between past, present and future but a leaky and interactive co-presence of moments whereby the power of pasts in presents and futures is fluid and contested.

Secondly, I consider another kind of 'looking back', the 'looking back' which has been seen to return, to deflect and disorient the 'gaze', that compelling look of power attributed variously to men, to whites and in some earlier feminist theory to mainstream cinema *tout court*. An oft-quoted essay by Laura Mulvey (1975) imputes a rigid position of spectatorship, a passive female object and an active male subject, who not only looks but gazes and is prone to scopophilia. Such an account of visuality through the eye of the camera and of cinema spectatorship is, in my view, myopic. It occludes diverse viewing positions, based not just on gender but on sexuality, race and class. As Mary Ann Doane (1987), E. Ann Kaplan (1999) and Sue Thornham (1997, 1999) avow, many feminist writers have rather been attesting to the varieties of visual pleasure which narrative cinema elicits. Jane Campion is a self-conscious participant in such debates. The aural and visual pleasures of *The Piano*, like many of Campion's films, are intrinsically connected to her reflexive, ironic lens on feminist theories of 'the gaze' and the I/eye of the camera.

The Piano

Let us look at *The Piano*, a film that rewards 'looking back' in both senses. In this paper, I combine a consideration of the film and the large literature it has provoked, from the moment of its first release until the present. *The Piano* was released in 1993 to extraordinary critical acclaim, popular success and subsequent controversy. Its video and DVD release has sustained a perduring fascination for critics and scholars in cinema, cultural and feminist studies. It is a dark white romance, 'set' in Aotearoa New Zealand in the mid-nineteenth century, a period of rapacious settler colonialism in that country. Its director, Jane Campion, is Pakeha¹ New Zealander by birth but she has lived for a long time in Sydney, where she studied at the Australian Film and Television School. *The Piano* was produced by the Australian Jan Chapman and financed by the French company CIBY. It featured a trio of Hollywood stars—Holly Hunter as Ada McGrath, Sam Neill (another expatriate Pakeha) as her husband Stewart, and Harvey Keitel as her lover Baines—together

with many local actors, including Tunga Baker who plays Baines' Māori confidante, Hira, and Anna Paquin who plays Ada's daughter, Flora.

The film catapulted Campion from being a critically celebrated director of short, avant-garde films and television features to an internationally renowned *auteur* and a 'household name' (McHugh 2007, 1).² *The Piano* was promoted and succeeded as a 'crossover' film between the allegedly differentiated markets of art houses and popular multiplex chains. It cost US\$8 million to make and grossed US\$140 million in 18 months at the box office (see Bilbrough 1993). It won the prestigious Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1993 (Campion was the first woman director to do so)³ and, though nudged out of first place by *Schindler's List* for best film, won several Academy Awards in 1994 (including best actress, best supporting actress and best original screenplay). Some time later, stories appeared, first in the New Zealand and, much later, in the global press, debating the provenance of the story and how far Campion's screenplay (1993) and the novella published from the film (Campion and Pullinger 1994) were influenced by Jane Mander's novel *The Story of a New Zealand River* ([1920, 1994]). Campion denounced the insinuations of plagiarism as a 'beat up'. I agree.⁴

Here I offer both a textual analysis of the film and a contextual analysis of its reception in some reviews in the popular press and academic texts. There has been a veritable flood of reviews and interpretations of the movie since it was released in 1993, and its circulation as a video and DVD (see Klinger 2006). Stephen Crofts (2000) considers 77 reviews in his analysis of critical reception across four countries—Australia, Britain, France and the United States. There have been many more since, including two recent books—Gail Jones' *The Piano* (2007) and Kathleen McHugh's *Jane Campion* (2007)—and several recent papers (Klinger 2006; Ramsey-Kurz 2007; Rothermel 2007), including one in the pages of this journal (Knight 2006). There are at least 40 scholarly articles or parts of books dedicated to the movie and two full collections of essays edited by Coombs and Gemmell (1999) and Harriet Margolis (2000a). Stella Bruzzi (1997, xiii) confesses that, although never a fan of 'bodice rippers' or nostalgic fossilisations of the past in period costumes, she was 'moved by the clothes', while Lizzie Franke (1993, 50) felt shaken by a 'flood of feelings'. bell hooks (1994) was rather moved by what she saw as the movie's racism and misogyny. In her book *Outlaw Culture* she dedicates a few scathing pages to how it represents Māori as 'docile happy darkies'. She likens Baines to Tarzan, 'the white man gone native' (1994, 115–23).⁵ The film has divided audiences dramatically; some love it, some loathe it. The extremity of both affective responses is important (see Jones 2007, 5). In Australia it was a topic of intense public debate and rows over dinner tables for months. I must confess to great ambivalence.

My ambivalence derives from a tension between a qualified sympathy for Campion's feminist revisioning of gender and sexuality and my distaste for the way in which Māori are represented, despite Campion's expressed cross-cultural intentions. I stress the imbrication of gender, sexuality and race because in some reviews and critical essays there has been a tendency to pull them apart—such that a focus on gender and sexual narratives occludes the racial narratives and vice versa. Several authors in the British journals *Sight and Sound*, *Screen* and *Feminist Review* and the American literary journal *MLN* fixate on the first: Lizzie Franke (1993), Stella Bruzzi (1993b, 1995), Carol Jacobs (1994), Sue Gillett (1995), Suzy Gordon (1996) and Feona Attwood (1998). By contrast, as well as bell hooks' vituperative dismissal, several essays published mainly in Aotearoa New Zealand and in Australia by Leonie Pihama (1994, 2000) and Cheryl Smith (Smith and Pihama 1993) consider race to

the exclusion of gender and sexuality (but see also Reid 2000; Roscoe and Hardy 1996).⁶ Only some interpretations, most notably by Lynda Dyson (1995a, 1995b), Annie Goldson (1996, 1997), Reshela DuPuis ([1996] 2000), and some chapters in the collections by Coombs and Gemmell (1999) and Harriet Margolis (2000b) keep the stories around gender and sexuality and those around race simultaneously in full view. Firstly, I consider how the two narratives have been separated in many critical interpretations before suggesting how they are intimately, even perversely, articulated.

The Feminist Story—Revisioning Gender and Sexuality

Ada's fierce independence is expressed through her repeated refusal to conform to the designated role of the pacified and distanced image of women contained by the voyeuristic male gaze. In her muteness, her musicality and the expression of her sexual desire through touch, Ada represents the possibility of a radical alternative feminine and feminist mode of discourse. (Bruzzi 1995, 257)

Most feminist interpreters, like Bruzzi, start with the figure of Ada. She is focal in visual, aural and narrative registers. The opening frames of the film situate us *as* her, looking through the inside of her hands—a pink and fleshy peeping box on the world, before we are then looking back *at* her, her face emerging from behind her hands, pallid white skin, dark determined eyes, coiled black hair and the wedding ring of her arranged marriage like a gold gash on her fingers.⁷ We hear her voice not from her throat but her mind, a girlish Scottish brogue. Her muteness is chosen: in her father's words, her 'dark talent'.⁸ Her mind's voice is accompanied by the sound of piano music playing 'Ada's theme' (see Gorbman 2000, 51).

Her muteness and her piano are soon connected. The muteness bespeaks the dark talent of her will, a sign of anger at the world as it is, a refusal to speak in the midst of patriarchal inanities. Flora, her daughter, spins apocryphal yarns to Stewart's ingenuous aunts about the origins of her muteness: grief and shock at the death by lightning of Flora's father, an Austrian conductor: 'at the same moment my father was struck dead, my mother was struck dumb! She—never—spoke—another—word' (Campion 1993, 32).⁹ Later, she offers a more brutal explanation: 'Mama says most people speak rubbish and it's not worth the listen' (Campion 1993, 57).

Ada speaks only in sign language interpreted by Flora and through her piano. We hear the piano as her voice. Soon after her inauspicious, unwelcomed landing with her piano on the beach, we see her struggling to insinuate her gloved fingers through the crate to grope the keys. We see her without her piano, making music in her head with keys carved on a kitchen table. When, at her insistent urgings, Baines takes her back to the beach, we see her ebullience playing the stranded piano as Flora cavorts and cartwheels and Baines gazes mesmerised while the camera circles, like a soaring bird. We witness the erotic tension of the forced exchange of Baines' piano lessons and the way in which she registers her disregard for him through sudden shifts in melody, from her own languorous creations to a loud and mechanical rendition of a Chopin waltz. We see her playing in the middle of the night, distracted and seemingly asleep. The melodies she plays are her own or free variations on Scottish folk tunes, ballads or jigs. As Aunt Morag avers, 'She does not play as we do'—neither the predictable repertoire of mid-nineteenth-century classics nor

in a conventional style—‘the music comes from inside’ (Nyman cited in Gorbman 2000, 46).¹⁰

Michael Nyman’s original score, created in part to fit Holly Hunter’s particular piano talents, was critically assaulted as ‘simplistic, anachronistic and relentless’ (Gorbman 2000, 42) but, defying the critics’ adjudications, the compact disc sold one and a half million copies in a few months. To my ear, the spare, repetitive music with its abrupt metric shifts and arpeggiation is closer to twentieth-century minimalism than nineteenth-century Romanticism, and that very anachronism is significant, creating permeability between past and present. To my eye and ear the music works brilliantly in visual and narrative context, both diegetically and non-diegetically. The chords in the opening sequences on the beach are superbly segued into the sounds of ocean, wind and birds.¹¹ Ada’s theme recurs in very different contexts: in the opening sequences when Ada plays on the beach; when she gazes longingly through a rain-stained window thinking of her bereft piano; and when she and Flora reclaim the piano with a rich duet version of the melody. Yet, as Gorbman (2000) argues, Ada’s theme does not have a stable signification, it recurs in the lesson when Baines rudely removes her jacket and inhales its perfumes, when Stewart tries to rape her, and when Stewart chops off her finger, its insistent obsessive rhythms then evocative of Stewart’s crazed jealousy and rage. We hear it as Ada’s voice, it creeps into our minds, blurring Ada’s subjectivity and our own affective response (see McHugh 2007, 86).¹² The musical score, like the visual language of the film, is open and enigmatic, with one important exception (Gorbman 2000, 49). As the Māori porters come to first carry Ada’s baggage, they are seen in silhouetted procession on the beach while a trio of woodwinds plays a tinkling, parodic theme. It recurs later when Māori men are hauling the piano from Baines’ hut to Stewart’s house, and through musical stereotypy comes to signify, in Gorbman’s apt phrase, ‘comic Māori processions’ (2000, 49).

The piano is not only burdensome colonial cargo but imaged as a surrogate for, or an extension of, Ada’s body. Her fingers and its keys are not just likened but intimately attached. She caresses the ivory and ebony keys like the skin of a lover.¹³ There is a constant visual geometry connecting the large cumbersome box which encases the passionate delicacy of her music and the huge confining gowns which envelope Ada’s body, encumbering her movement through the mud and the tangle of the bush, but also protecting her from Stewart’s attempted rape. Ada habitually appears in stunning costumes: stark black or blue gowns with matching bonnets and bows, a discreet suggestion of lace. The ballooning curve of the crinoline, the pinched waist, the white undergarments and black stockings are suggestive simultaneously of confinement and secretive passion—visual illustration of Foucault’s argument about repression—that censorship incites excess, silencing invites a cacophony of talk (Bruzzi 1995, 259).

We see not just the external effects but the internal machinery, the hoops, the voluminous whalebone petticoats and pantaloons. In a sequence of intense erotic agony Baines orders Ada to lift her skirts and she agrees. He lies down on the floor beneath her piano gazing up inside the carapace of her clothes. He finds a small tear in her worsted black stockings and with his grubby finger rubs the hole of her exposed white flesh.¹⁴ Her outer layers signal stylish wealth and bourgeois decorum, the inner layers intimacy and abandon, in both her sexual and maternal relations. Ada’s hooped petticoat doubles as a tent in which she and Flora shelter in their first night stranded on the beach. Inside this tight pink womb, by the light of a soft candle, the mother signs captivating bed-time stories about the wild wind, her sign language appearing from outside as a shadow play.

Mother and daughter are connected not just through the visual parallels of gowns and bonnets but imaged in moments of abandon in their white nightdresses, caressing and brushing each other's hair and telling each other stories about Flora's father. This is a world which the arranged husband Stewart can neither penetrate nor share. When it is broken apart by seeming mutual betrayal, their distance is signalled in different clothes.¹⁵

The closeness of this mother-daughter connection is broken not by the fantasy father of the past but the two male rivals of the present. Flora is threatened by Ada's growing intimacy with Baines, by being literally locked out of Baines' hut, where she spies on them naked through the cracks, and betrays to Stewart that Baines does not seem to be learning to play the piano at all. Some critics suggest the film portrays a classic Oedipal situation (e.g. Molloy 1999), but the erotic and familial dynamics are far more complicated, with three contending 'fathers': the good dead one, the bad, unloved husband, and the threatening lover. In psychoanalytic terms, I am more inclined to Gillett's appraisal that it 'immerses us both visually and aurally in a watery, muddy, semiotic imagery of maternal, nostalgic longing' (1995, 287).¹⁶

Stewart embodies the repressed and repressive nineteenth-century patriarch, the husband who has been 'arranged' by Ada's father rather than chosen in love. He is palpably uptight; his clothes were made too small for him to emphasise this quality. His suits are typically greys and browns, frayed and muddied by the rough life of the white settler. Our first view of Stewart struggling through the bush to meet Ada, in a grimy suit and battered top hat, is of a man desperately worried about appearances. He grimly combs his hair and adjusts his clothes, and turns his pocket portrait of Ada to reflect his own face in the glass.¹⁷ When he first encounters Ada on the beach, he is more concerned with her small stature than her comfort: 'You're small. I never thought you'd be small' (Campion 1993, 22). Baines, by contrast, when asked by Stewart to appraise her appearance, says: 'She looks tired' (Campion 1993, 22). In first refusing to transport Ada's piano and then in presuming it is his to trade with Baines for land, Stewart reveals himself as unforgiving. He swiftly alienates Ada and, despite his sorry attempts to start again, descends into a vortex of sexual jealousy, rape, incarceration and violent retribution.

The film draws a strong contrast with Baines the Celtic lover, who is more empathetic and more in touch with Māori people and his environment. His hut is tucked deep in the green forest, unlike Stewart's which stands amongst the forlorn stumps of felled trees. He speaks Māori, shares his house and washing routines with Māori friends and has an intimate friendship with a Māori woman, Hira. He is illiterate and has rough manners. Ada at first labels him an 'oaf' and considers her piano too good for his dirty fingers. His seeming quest for civility, 'tinkling the ivories', is mercilessly satirised by Stewart and other men of his class. His looks clearly distinguish him from these men in suits; he wears clothes of rough texture in warm reds and blues, an indigo shirt with scrimshaw buttons, a battered straw hat.¹⁸ His nose and forehead are textured with the blue-black marks of an unfinished Māori *moko* (facial carvings). And, unlike Stewart, we see him naked, in Ada's absence, polishing her precious piano with his night shirt as the dust motes circle in a shaft of light and then, in her presence, emerging from the pink curtain that shrouds his bed, revealing himself to her full frontal, if unerect.

Much has been made by Bruzzi and other feminist commentators about how *The Piano* challenges the 'voyeuristic male gaze' by portraying Ada as subject rather than object of the gaze. The camera does look longingly at her body (often from the point of view of Baines), sculpted by crinolines or bodices, and at her skin, her pellucid white neck,

the fine blue veins of her inner arms which Baines caresses. It also subverts the voyeurism of the male gaze through its searing satire of Stewart's scopophilia. We see his nervous blue eye through the camera lens, scrutinising Ada as she stands for her wedding portrait, bedraggled and furious in the rain, in a fake wedding dress summarily tied over her black gown.¹⁹ She rips the lace in her eagerness to take it off. At the very moment when Ada first willingly²⁰ makes love with Baines, we see Stewart peeking through the cracks of Baines' hut, mesmerised by the sight of her undressing and Baines pleasuring her beneath her petticoats. As he stoops lower to get a better look at them in bed, he stares so compulsively that he fails to notice Baines' dog licking his sweaty hand with appreciative slobbers.²¹ Undeterred, he steals under the floor to gaze up at them, now re-dressing. A loose button from Ada's bodice falls through the cracks onto his craning neck. His voyeurism has rendered him helpless and silly.

Ada is rather positioned as a forceful spectator, not just of Baines but Stewart. We look at Baines' naked body from her point of view; their caresses and lovemaking are bathed in a luscious orange light. This luscious light recurs in later scenes when, aroused by her newfound sexuality with Baines, but unable to see him (because Stewart has forbidden her and boarded up the house), she comes to Stewart at night. These sequences are deeply enigmatic. Is Ada compulsively initiating this in her novel state of arousal, is she tentatively exploring what love with her estranged husband might be like, or is she punishing him with those strokes of his exposed back, thighs and buttocks but her refusal to let him look at or touch her in return?²² Later in that same bed, as Ada lies delirious and sick after he has cut off her finger, Stewart stealthily takes advantage of her, caressing her calf and presaging more. He is undoing his belt when she awakens and fixes him with a defiant look that freezes his desire.²³

If Ada's dalliance with Stewart is enigmatic, the film's concluding sequences are even more so. Ada leaves with Baines and Flora, their departure from the black beach in a Māori canoe overloaded with cargo visually mirroring their arrival in the 'stinking tub' navigated by drunken white seamen. The Māori men warn that the piano is dangerously heavy and risks swamping the canoe; 'it's a coffin' one proclaims prophetically. Baines is adamant that Ada must have it, but she peremptorily orders that it be thrown overboard and it is. As the rope attached to the piano reels out, she insinuates her foot in its swirling coils and is dragged down with her instrument. 'What a death! What a chance! What a surprise! My will has chosen life!' (Campion 1993, 121). The exhilaration of her descent, the glee of her embracing doom is cut short as she chooses life, shakes off her shoe and, with the help of several lusty Māori men, resurfaces.

And so to her new life in Nelson, in that gleaming white space with lace curtains rustling in the breeze. Ada, dressed now in a grey floral gown, paces the verandah, her face covered by a black veil, her lips muttering submerged guttural sounds. Her mind's voiceover²⁴ declares that she is learning to speak, that Baines has bought her a new piano and fashioned her a new silver finger, and we hear the troubling tap-tap of the prosthesis as well as the melody of her theme. She is 'quite the town freak'. Yet Flora cartwheels in glee. Baines appears, lifts her veil,²⁵ she smiles blissfully, they embrace. This short scene of cosy heterosexual domesticity soon cuts to the final dream image of Ada floating with her crinoline balloon shrouding her face, like a jelly fish in the deep darkness of the ocean, attached by a taut rope to her piano-coffin, serenely embracing the silence of the deep and of death. The film's final coda is a poem by Thomas Hood: 'There is a silence where

hath been no sound / There is a silence where no sound may be / In the cold grave, under the deep, deep sea' (Campion 1993, 123).²⁶

What do we make of these contending endings, the one snugly attached to a new, blended happy family, the other embracing the dark forces of silence, the unconscious and death? Critics have made much of their conjunction and seeming contradiction.²⁷ That contradiction is central to the debate about whether Campion's film is, as Bruzzi proclaims, a feminist revisioning.

Feminists are deeply divided about the film. As Goldson (1996) notes, 'Those that argued for its feminism saw a story about an unwed mother, a woman shown to be literally muted by a patriarchal culture of arranged marriages, domesticity and male dominance' (Goldson 1996, 196). In this view, Ada's determined desires yield a subversive narrative; she transgresses the law of the father by refusing to be a good wife, and by being the subject, and not the object, of desire.

Others disputed the film's feminism, typically through a view of Ada as a perpetual victim. They saw rather a woman bartered between men—from father to husband, to lover—and destined for the domesticity of Nelson. As well as the film's emphasis on romance and the seeming 'happy ending', the depictions of coerced sex, not just between Stewart and Ada but Baines and Ada, appalled some, like Reshela DuPuis ([1996] 2000). She sees Ada's sexual self-expression as chronically trapped in patriarchal exchanges, from her arranged marriage to Stewart to his final 'gift' of her to Baines. Sequences depicting Ada's seduction and their subsequent lovemaking are for her an eroticisation of coercion. Baines' deal that she retrieve her piano in exchange for sex with him is, for DuPuis, male extortion and rape, ideologically re-presented as prostitution. In Baines' words, it makes her a 'whore' but him merely 'wretched'. So DuPuis ([1996] 2000, 368ff.) sees a sexist narrative at work, of the woman who falls in love with her rapist. DuPuis has little doubt about what the ending means: 'Just as Ada preposterously chooses to fall in love with her lustful perpetrator, she finally chooses to live with him (although without her now-violated piano) away from the dangerous, exotic, impassioned bush' ([1996] 2000, 371). As this hints, some feminist critics like DuPuis who do not identify with Ada and see her agency as perverse, also find the racial politics of the movie disturbing, and similarly preposterous.

The Racial Story—Romancing Colonialism?

In contrast to the copious, passionate debate about narratives of gender and sexuality in *The Piano*, commentary on its racial plots has been rarer and almost always critical. In several places Leonie Pihama, a Māori scholar of the media, has argued that the film is 'dangerous' and damaging in its representation of Māori (Smith and Pihama 1993; Pihama 1994, 2000). Despite Campion's avowed cross-cultural intentions and the engaging of influential Māori, like Selwyn Muru and Waihoroi Shortland as advisors, Pihama argues that the film portrays Māori as caricatures rather than characters akin to the white protagonists.²⁸ She is right. Māori are undifferentiated and unsituated, they are there, but as a choric presence, bearing witness to white actions.

Although the large Māori cast (of 33 actors) is named in the credits, only a few emerge as individuated characters: Hira (Tungia Baker), Chief Nihe (Te Whatanui Skipwith) and two Māori women Heni and Mary (Carla Rupuha and Mahina Tunui) who, as domestic servants in the mission house, are exemplary in their Christian decorum and sewing skills. Most of the Māori men rather appear as an undifferentiated ensemble, carriers of goods,

robust navigators and underwater divers. '[W]ithout these bodies, the film would have difficulty moving forward, for these bodies tangibly carry the burden of the story' (DuPuis [1996] 2000, 359).

The Māori character who is most fully realised—Hira, Baines' friend and confidante—is in all her quiet dignity represented as passive spectator to the unfolding horrors of the narrative. The original screenplay includes several more projected scenes where the relation between Baines and Hira is more developed.²⁹ Even when Hira is focal, as in her final farewell to Baines on the beach as he departs with Ada, the camera lurches back into a high position, which evokes grandeur but also distance from her person. She is a majestic presence walking across the black sands, in a European gown and a top hat, behind the departing canoe, but the chant she sings is not translated.³⁰

The problem in the representation of Māori is not just their being caricatures rather than characters with whom we might identify, it is in the deeper patterns of vision and sound that the film deploys. Several commentators have observed how the use of light and filters illuminates the white bodies and makes their whiteness shine, 'like angels', as Māori women observe when Ada and Flora first arrive on the beach.³¹ Although the white skin of the aunties, Morag and Nessie, is not so aestheticised, we see constant close-ups of Ada's face shimmering, evoking, if not beauty, refinement and rapturous elevation. Māori bodies are not only dark but shrouded, in the murk of the forest or the depths of the ocean. In her representations of the bush, Campion aspired to create an underwater feel, of immersion, clouded vision and obstruction.³² This was effected not just by lighting but by rearranging and re-creating landscape.³³ With a few exceptions, Māori are habitually seen either deep in the forest, around Baines' hut in dappled light or close to the ocean, navigating canoes with burdensome cargo or rescuing Ada. Māori people and place are thus merged, not in the positive sense of their being *tangata whenua* (the people of the land) but in the demeaning colonialist sense which reduces indigenous people to inert background for white settler action.³⁴

The film does not overtly endorse that colonial process. Especially in those sequences where Baines and Stewart are negotiating land deals with Māori men, the film stresses their rapacity and Stewart's ignorance of indigenous relations with the land, grounded in ancestral and spiritual connections.³⁵ In one sequence, Baines and Stewart are engaged in difficult negotiations with Māori men trying to secure land for blankets and guns. Negotiations break down and the Māori negotiator insists that they will talk no further and will only consider exchanging pigs not land. Baines accepts this and exchanges pleasantries in farewell, but Stewart, frustrated and enraged, exclaims 'What do they want it [the land] for? They don't cultivate it, burn it back, anything. How do they even know it's theirs?' (Campion 1993, 70). Baines, with his greater intimacy with Māori people and fluency in their language, is seen as open to arguments about prior possession, the need to respect *tapu* places and burial grounds and to hear complaints about the insulting frippery that Māori are offered in exchange for use of their land and labour.

But, in a convincing analysis of that sequence, DuPuis suggests that although it purports to present Māori men as resistant to the incursion of colonialism and capitalism, its primary function is rather to illustrate the difference between Baines and Stewart (DuPuis [1996] 2000, 363). The camera focuses on the faces of each of the two white men, while the Māori characters are presented only in group shots, their actions and reactions collapsed into an undifferentiated Māori whole. Then, by jump-cutting to a sequence

which shows Stewart marking the land as his, we might forget that 'Baines' eyes, like Stewart's, look possessively at this land' (DuPuis [1996] 2000, 363).

Māori resistance to land alienation and colonial domination is portrayed, but these few 'resistant moments' (Goldson 1996) often appear as outbursts of defiant and momentary rage. There is no sense of the complex history of Māori resistance to land alienation before that document which promised bi-cultural peace, the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840, and in the protracted Māori wars, which raged from the 1840s to the 1870s (see Neill 1999).³⁶ Of course, *Campion* is not aspiring to historical realism (see also Goode 1996; Du Plessis and Fougere 1995). Although, as McHugh (2007) suggests, *Campion* delved deeply into the colonial archive, using diaries, children's books and photos of the period, these sources are rather used to melodramatic and surreal effects.

Moreover, Māori acts of resistance are often suffused with comic innocence. When Stewart attempts to pay the bearers of Ada's piano with a few buttons, one subversive Māori man seizes the whole jar and makes off with it. In this scene, Stewart is mocked but so are the Māori. As DuPuis ([1996] 2000) observes, they are reduced 'from angry warriors to petulant children' (DuPuis [1996] 2000, 364). The screenplay refers to the man who stole the jar as the Button Man.

We later see him, his coat festooned with buttons, pounding Ada's piano with clenched fists. DuPuis ([1996] 2000, 368) interprets this as the violation, even rape, of Ada. At several points in the movie, Māori incomprehension about how a piano makes music offers stereotypical colonial comedy. When Māori men drop the piano as they are hauling it through the bush, it resonates and a young man quickly assumes a defensive posture and utters a *haka* chant as if it is a noisy threatening stranger. The severed key engraved with Ada's message of eternal love, which she sends with Flora to the illiterate Baines, is not only inscrutable to him but to Māori. Two men are shown trying to fathom why, when separated from its box, it cannot sing. One of them puts it to another aesthetic purpose, as an earring. The old colonial jokes are not all in one direction; there is also subversive mimicry of whites by Māori. As Ada arrives on the beach, and Stewart is addressing her in his imperious loud voice, a Māori man stands behind him, twisting and turning his straw hat in unison with Stewart's agitated top hat. As Ada signs back her replies to Flora, a Māori woman assiduously copies her, again behind her back. Salacious and scatological Māori expressions offer satiric commentary on the hubris and stupidity of the whites (although most remain sequestered in the screenplay and untranslated, and can be relished only by those fluent in Māori).

If Māori are a chorus, they are at times like the canonical chorus in Greek drama, able to adjudicate on the action or even prophesy what is to come. Indeed, at one crucial juncture, Māori misrecognition proves more insightful than that of whites: the extraordinary performance of the *Bluebeard* story. Māori men and women are seen sitting in their best clothes at the back of a white audience as white children (including Flora) appear dressed as angels and a series of white women's heads appear as if severed and bloodied through a sheet, the past wives of Bluebeard. Then, as the silhouette of Bluebeard is seen behind the sheet, menacing his sixth young wife with his cardboard axe, young Māori men, oblivious to the cautions of the older, wiser Chief Nihe, burst forward to protect her. They tear the sheets of the illusion and upset the buckets of animal blood. To calm their violent intervention, the warriors are then politely introduced to the white women actresses who are manifestly still alive.

This might be seen initially as innocent misrecognition, a failure to distinguish life from art, reality from illusion. Yet, in the overall narrative of the film, it intimates that the Māori men were not so unknowing after all.³⁷ The *Bluebeard* story presages Stewart's attack on Ada (see also McHugh 2007, 97). Several visual portents hint at horror. We see Stewart's devastating acuity at chopping wood and the white lines of Ada's laundry around Stewart's house, echoing those bloodied sheets. The *Bluebeard* story predisposes us to expect the worst when Stewart drags Ada to the chopping block. He amputates her index finger rather than her head.³⁸

Questions of representation of Māori, then, are not just about how they are imaged in light and sound or as characters in the unfolding narrative, a not so 'nice white story' of sexual and racial oppression. Māori also act as metonyms: their presence marking differences between the white characters. The relations and tensions between the white protagonists are constructed through their presumed and differential relation to Māori and to the place of Aotearoa New Zealand. Most obviously this is clear in the differentiation between Stewart and Baines, the tight repressive white man set on patriarchal and colonial domination vs the looser, lower-class Celtic variation of a white man 'going native'. Dyson (1995b) and Goldson (1996) both suggest that the contrast between them is not just one of class but of an Englishman's relation to the home of the mother country and a Pakeha man's sense of being 'at home' in Aotearoa New Zealand. This difference relies on the prior difference created between them, as hostile or sympathetic to Māori.

Yet, less obviously perhaps, the erotic relation between Baines and Ada, with all its tensions between intimacy and distantiation, unbridled passion and sexual coercion, emancipation and renewed patriarchal domination, is visually concocted in close proximity to an image of Māori inhabiting a world of sexual licence and primordial bliss. Perhaps the most erotic moment of the film is when Ada is first lifting her skirts and Baines insinuates his grubby finger through the hole of her undarned stocking. The very next shot transports us to the river, where Baines is doing his washing, surrounded by chubby Māori girls, lying languorously in a canoe. Several older Māori women, including Hira, are teasing Baines relentlessly about the size and stamina of his penis and how his balls will dry up if he does not have more sex. A Māori man, sprawled out on the limb of a tree, flaunts his beautiful body at Baines and offers to help, but the Māori women scorn him and Hira sneers: 'Balls were wasted on you'.³⁹ The power of a Victorian passion born of repression is here contrasted with that weary old trope of erotic, exotic Polynesia.⁴⁰ The passion of Ada and Baines, through its proximity to an eros which is wilder and untamed, is thus seen as more 'natural', more irresistible.

This trope is later reinscribed in the play of Māori children with Flora, who 'goes native' in her own way by following her friends as they hug trees and rub themselves happily against their hapless trunks. Flora's glee in this arboreal embrace seems as much inspired by witnessing her mother enjoying sex as childish imitation. Her love of nature is summarily interrupted by Stewart, who not only insists that she never do it again, but that she scrub and whitewash the trees which she had so abused. He seems deserving of his Māori moniker, 'Old Dry Balls'.⁴¹

Although Māori are cast as easily sexual and possibly 'polymorphically perverse', they are not eroticised in the same intense and individuated way as the central white protagonists. The camera occasionally lingers on the shining skin and tight muscles of young Māori men, especially in the final underwater sequences when Ada is being rescued

(see DuPuis [1996] 2000, 358). But, for the most part, the camera does not follow and fondle Māori bodies, unlike the hyper-sexualisation of indigenous bodies in the long cinematic history of South Seas romances (see Jolly 1997a, 1997b; Sturma 2002).

The portrayal of Māori, then, though perhaps not quite so monochromatic as bell hooks' verdict of 'docile, happy darkies', is intimately entangled with the narrative of white passion and ultimately, through that I suggest, with white possession of place. Although seemingly marginal, Māori bodies and Māori land are thus central to the saga; they are not just an inert backdrop against which the story is told. So, let me compare two critics who suggest in different ways that the film 'romances colonialism': Lynda Dyson and Reshela DuPuis.

Dyson, in her twin essays on the film (1995a, 1995b), suggests that Campion 'represents the story of colonization in New Zealand as a narrative of reconciliation'. She sees it as a 'textual palliative' for the dominant white majority, assuaging 'postcolonial anxieties generated by the contemporary struggles over the nation's past' (1995a, 267). For her, the fantasy of colonial reconciliation is played out through the passion between Ada and Baines. 'They become born-again New Zealanders living in a gleaming white house where the mute Ada discovers her voice' (Dyson 1995a, 268).

By being born again, Ada and Baines become Pakeha rather than displaced Europeans. Dyson situates her analysis in the politics of contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand highlighting how, from the 1960s, the dominant white majority had to resituate itself as Britain shifted focus from former colonies back to Europe, and as Māori demands for justice forced them to reassess colonial history. Contemporary Pakeha claim white indigeneity by appropriating Māori things and values and by simulating Māori spiritual attachments to place. Thus, Dyson hears Ada's talk of 'a silence where no sound hath been' as an attempt to articulate 'the cultural emptiness which still continues to haunt white New Zealanders' (1995a, 269).⁴²

Now this may be a palliative that consoles Campion herself (she laments the lack of a Pakeha history and culture; see note 1), but was this a palliative for local New Zealand audiences? Goldson (1996) asserts that, instead of consoling white audiences, *The Piano* disturbed them, as it discomfited or enraged some Māori. Goldson suggests that Dyson's argument, like Campion's film, 'misses the subtleties of the political moment in this country' (1996, 193). The 'national' pride in the movie's success is said to have been tinged with uncertainty and shame (Molloy 1999). Reviews published in New Zealand from 1993 by both Pakeha and Māori often lament insensitivities in the representation of Māori. Later, in 2001, Māori sculptor Michael Parekowhai satirised the film and its relation to Mander's novel, by rendering anew *The Story of a New Zealand River* (see Figure 1) as a shining black grand piano adorned with *paua* shell and embossed with roses and black arum lilies, an 'archetypal European *taonga*' (valuable).⁴³

The most trenchant and extended analysis of how the movie 'romances colonialism' was written by Reshela DuPuis and first appeared in the Hawaiian journal *The Contemporary Pacific* ([1996] 2000; see also Norgrove 1998). Although she thinks the movie 'remarkable', 'haunting' and 'beautifully photographed' ([1996] 2000, 349) she claims that:

the film's sexual symbolism relies heavily on profoundly racist depictions of the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand, and on culturally coded, deeply racialized representations of their land ... Campion's twentieth-century story of liberating passion

FIGURE 1

Michael Parekowhai, *The Story of a New Zealand River*, 2001. Paua, capiz, lacquer and wood on a concert grand piano. The Auckland Triennial Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, on loan from the Thanksgiving Foundation 2001. Reproduced with permission of the artist, Michael Parekowhai, and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki.

both relies on and reproduces nineteenth-century western colonial mythologies of sex and race. ([1996] 2000, 350)

DuPuis argues that audiences are positioned obliquely to the colonial past and situated in an illusory postcolonial position ([1996] 2000, 351). Despite Campion's disavowal of 'modern politics', *The Piano* is patently no mere 'apolitical romance' ([1996] 2000, 351).

DuPuis alludes to the temporal and spatial indeterminacy of the setting: some time in the mid-nineteenth century, somewhere in the New Zealand bush and the lack of differentiation of Māori characters ([1996] 2000, 369).⁴⁴ Such indeterminacies and silences mean that international audiences bring to the film their pre-existing preconceptions of British colonial history in New Zealand. Sexist and racist oppression is 'misted over by Campion's provocative romantic fiction of erotic self-discovery' ([1996] 2000, 354).

White possession of Māori land is, for her, naturalised from the moment that Ada talks of going to Stewart in 'his own country' (cf. McHugh 2007, 79, who hears this phrase as critically ironic). Campion has, in DuPuis's view, failed to acknowledge the brutality and the trickery inherent in British invasion and, in the way that she films both Māori bodies and landscape, naturalises rather than historicises them. The aerial photography of landscape from a helicopter converts Māori homeland into evocative scenery and allows Western viewers to possess this other place at a comfortable distance, away from the mud and the squelch and the colonial guilt. DuPuis argues that the film raises the spectre of colonial guilt only to resoundingly refute it; through converting conquest into romantic spectacle, Māori land is, for her, appropriated again as a cinematic resource (DuPuis [1996] 2000, 359–61; cf. Reid 2000; Neill 1999; Ramsey-Kurz 2007).

Such trenchant criticisms of how the film 'romances' colonialism perhaps fail to fully register the ironic, critical way in which Campion approaches the mythology of her own Pakeha genealogy. McHugh believes such critiques occlude the narrative complexity of the film and Ada's ambiguous ethical positioning (2007, 80). Campion's exploration of her Pakeha inheritance as strange, even exotic, transforms harsh realities into surreal fantasies, as McHugh suggests. Yet it is not just a question of romance or surreal fantasies misting over the violent realities of *both* sexist and racist oppression but how Campion images the connections *between* patriarchal and colonial subordination. More persuasive analyses have been offered by those critics who attend to Campion's *twin* narratives of gender and sexuality and of race and colonialism and who try to connect them. Let me single out an early analysis by Neill (1999; but see also Orr 1999; Margaroni 2003).

Like other critics, Neill emphasises the parallels, the isomorphism between the subordination of Ada as a woman and the Māori as a colonised people, and the constant parallels between Ada's body and sexuality and Māori land, alike vulnerable to trade and exploitation. Neill (1999, 139) suggests that Campion conflates 'colonial and patriarchal abuse', portraying women and Māori as equal victims of a colonial patriarchal order (cf. Orr 1999, 157). Yet, as Neill observes, they are clearly not given equal voice in the film. In giving voice to the white female colonial subject, Campion silences the Māori. Rather than portraying Māori as historical actors in the struggle for sovereignty in 1850s Aotearoa New Zealand, Campion freezes them in a sacred pre-history.⁴⁵ Campion's mythic foundations for the story of the New Zealand nation thus project Māori into a 'dreamtime', while Pakeha claim a new beginning, a break with their colonial past, by proclaiming their own indigeneity.

McHugh has recently argued the contrary, that Campion has historicised the Māori and mythologised Pakeha, thus confounding the cliché whereby indigenous people are situated in a mythic, prehistoric past (2007, 83). She celebrates Campion's gestures towards historical realism in her representations of the struggle between Māori and Pakeha over land, in representations of Māori women like Hira combining indigenous and European clothes, and those Māori women like Heni and Mere who are Christian converts and domestic servants in a mission household. Yet, although the Māori appropriation of European clothes is treated sympathetically by Campion, their Christianity is not, but rather seen as shallow and silly (see Jones 2007, 28).⁴⁶

In my view, Campion portrays Māori as *both* mythic and historical personae. In certain sequences, and especially apropos their sexual lives, they do appear as 'frozen in time', while in other sequences they are cast as agents and not just victims in the devastating drama of colonialism (e.g. in their choice to sell land to buy guns used to defend that very land). At crucial points, like many early anthropologists, Campion does deny Māori a co-eval presence with whites, and most graphically in their sexual lives (see Fabian 1983).

By focusing so relentlessly on the figure of Ada, and soliciting spectators who identify with her point of view, Campion effects a 'looking back' which challenges and disempowers a male gaze.⁴⁷ This identification with the white woman as colonial subject simultaneously disallows a 'looking back' in which Māori might constitute a self rather than an 'other', a subject rather than an object. In the overall narrative of the film, Ada's coming into being, into possession of her self, ultimately depends on her eclipsing Māori. The consummation of Ada's desire is thus predicated on some slippery moves, some perverse couplings between pasts and presents.⁴⁸

'Always Worth Another Look'

The Piano offers us a paradox: it is a 'historical' film yet in its representation of history, it generates heat around two very contemporary issues, feminism and Māori/Pakeha relations. In this way, *The Piano* is always worth another look. (Goldson 1996, 193)

We might ask why, even 16 years later, *The Piano* is still 'worth another look' (see Klinger 2006; Jones 2007). The answer, in part, is how the film connects colonial history to issues that remain 'contemporary'. So, I return to some of the questions about temporality and positionality I posed at the start, in relation to 'looking back'. This film is patently 'set' in the mid-nineteenth century in Aotearoa New Zealand. Or is it? We need to interrogate the effects of both its temporal and geographical situation, of the 'then' in relation to 'now', and the 'there' in relation to here. Its temporal and geographical locations are intimately related. Campion has spoken many times about her reasons for both choices:

I have enjoyed writing characters who don't have a twentieth-century sensibility about sex. They have nothing to prepare themselves for its strength and power. (Campion 1993, 135)⁴⁹

Here and elsewhere Campion (e.g. Wexman 1999, 99, 104, 118, 124–25) stresses the difference between the sexual sensibility of her epoch and the alleged sensibility of the Victorian period, here imagined as an epoch of greater repression, when paradoxically passion was more extreme, more pure. The 'erotic impulse', its raw power, is seen to be the same between past and present, although differently realised. In the minds of director and producer, Ada is *both* archotypically Victorian and 'thoroughly modern' in her sensibilities (witness her anachronistic piano playing and her capacity to treat men, as they treat her, as sexual objects). Ada is portrayed as an early Pakeha New Zealander, an ancestor to Campion, but also as a figure who embodies universal themes about women's agency.

Beyond authorial intention, what are the cinematic effects of these temporal and geographical translocations? The film visually encodes a narrative of repression and release in the central figure of Ada, rendered mute in the face of the tyranny of male domination, but expressing the 'dark talent' of her will and desire, first in a mediated way through her piano and then through her body in her negotiations of sex and power with both Baines and Stewart. The story of Ada's sexual 'awakening' is linked with a broader narrative of the sexual awakening of all 'women', between Ada's time and our time.

But we might ask how Ada becomes 'women' or, more crudely, what kind of woman she is. She is indelibly white, heterosexual and of a certain class. This matters in how past–present relations are enacted, in the imagining of 'our time' and 'their time', especially apropos sexuality. Despite Campion's gestures towards historical realism noted above, Māori women for the most part are imaged in a prior sexual epoch rather than a shared 'nineteenth century'. Contra Jones (2007), I do not see Campion as so clearly valuing the frankness and fluidity of Māori sexuality. Rather, through pointed juxtaposition Campion concocts an extreme contrast between the romantic eroticism of Baines and Ada and the playful sexuality of Māori, whose conversations are saturated with constant sexual innuendo. Ultimately, a state of primordial promiscuity, of easy eroticism, is imputed to them (Pihama 2000, 128).

Ada is seen to absorb a more 'primitive passion' through her mediated relations to Māori—through Baines—since she is singularly apart from, and impervious to, Māori women and men. Moreover, she absorbs sensual vitality through her passion for place. The

voice of her music is constantly paired with the dark power of the black sand beach and huge headlands of Karekare and the soaring aerial views of the majestic rainforest. Campion avows the inspiration of Gothic romances like Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. It is not just that the black sands of Karekare offer a more romantic and exotic location than most beaches in England. Her romance is not just 'set' in New Zealand but proclaims to an international audience Pakeha possession of that place.

Her being and place are slowly merged. The film does not, as some critics suggest, merely construct the landscape as alien and menacing; it is also cast as alluring and uncannily homey from Ada's view.⁵⁰ In one extraordinary sequence, in a rapturous glissade, the camera cuts from the dark tangle of her coiled hair to the mysterious darkness of the forest, in seeming illustration of how notions of a 'dark continent' simultaneously articulate both the enigma of feminine sexuality and the colonial landscape (see Doane 1991), connecting the 'nature' within Ada to the 'nature' without, embodied in people and place (see Jones 2007, 46). The white space of her home in Nelson is both a space of domestic fulfilment and a place without Māori. The darkness of the forest and Māori being has been eclipsed by the darkness of the ocean of Ada's unconscious and penetrated by that subsequent white light. Through her strengthening attachment to place, the primordial presence of the Māori is challenged. Her interiority transcends their anteriority.

Her piano tells it all. The piano is a polysemic and perhaps overburdened symbol in this movie, from that iconic moment in which it stands abandoned on a windswept beach to that final sequence when, tossed overboard, it sinks to the bottom of the ocean. The piano is not just a metaphor for, but is attached to, Ada's body, expressive of what her body cannot do: speak and make love. It is also colonial cargo, an encumbrance borne by Māori men and, finally, a coffin. In pitching it to the depths of the ocean, Ada not only recuperates her body but attaches her body anew to the now white place of Aotearoa New Zealand. This is a feminist retelling of a pioneering 'Birth of a Nation' saga (Goldson 1996; Orr 1999) but surely a saga which, in celebrating the settler woman's rebirth from a near-death experience, unsettles the relation of the first people with that place.

NOTES

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1. This Māori word currently refers to foreigners of European ancestry, and is especially used by those who affirm bi-culturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand (see King 1985; Phillips 1987). On Campion's perception of Pakeha as having 'no history' see Campion (1993, 135) and interviews in Wexman (1999) and McHugh (2007).

2. See McHugh (2007, 163–67) for a full filmography of Campion's corpus, although French (2007) notes some errors in chronology and attribution.
3. It shared the Palme d'Or with *Farewell My Concubine*. Campion had earlier won the Palme d'Or for Best Short film at Cannes in 1986 for her film *Peel* (McHugh 2007, 1).
4. Campion portrays the novel as one of several sources (alongside *Wuthering Heights* and Emily Dickinson) and as not sufficiently interesting to finish (Bilbrough and Campion 1996, 184). I did finish the book, a melodramatic romance of far greater historical than literary interest. Hoeveler's claims (1998) of crucial similarities between novel and film are unfounded (see Hardy 2000; Jones 2007). Belated international allegations of plagiarism perhaps diffused that antipodean habit of cutting down 'tall poppies' (see Duff 1994; Margolis 2000b, 4).
5. Compare Reid's suggestion that Baines' *moko* is akin to blackface, which allows whites to indulgently identify with, but also to mock, blacks. See also Roscoe and Hardy (1996).
6. The antipodean reception was not identical between Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, perhaps reflecting divergent colonial histories and the fate of indigenous peoples. See Margolis' (2000a) rival claims of the film as Australian or New Zealand and Annabel Cooper (forthcoming) on Campion as an antipodean.
7. See Jacobs (1994) for a compelling analysis of this opening scene and how Campion consummately connects vision and voice and self-consciously plays with the border between reality and fantasy. Compare McHugh on how the opening scene confounds the intra- and the intersubjective, the speaker and the spoken to (2007, 79) and Jones' (2007, 13) analysis of this 'glorious opening image' as blurring touch and vision.
8. The sequences set in Scotland which follow the opening scene are telegraphic and darkly enigmatic. Some see herein suggestions of sexual abuse by Ada's father as the origin of her muteness (e.g. Rothermel 2007, 267). Both here and in later sequences there are suggestions of trauma (see Jones 2007, 54), if not abuse by the father and an incestuous child, then familial rejection because of an illegitimate child with Flora's 'fantasy father'.
9. The animated image of Flora's father being struck by lightning was derived from Campion's reading of children's books of the period (McHugh 2007, 82).
10. Knight (2006) discerns a collision between models of women's piano playing as performing a genteel femininity and a dangerous female appropriation of the Romantic model of the male artist as passionate virtuoso. Baker (1997) argues that Campion's portrayal of Ada conforms to a Romantic paradigm of creative art as expressive of deep, repressed emotions and the 'true inner self'. Knight's analysis, inspired by Butler, sees no truth of self but competing performances of femininity (2006, 28). Campion performs an 'absurdly literal' (Baker 1997, 192) or, rather, a knowingly ironic enactment of French feminist theory apropos Ada's muteness, eroticised music and mutilation (Attwood 1998; Baker 1997; Jacobs 1994).
11. Jones astutely perceives how the 'hypnotic score' 'swells and rises, ebbs and flows, saturates the crucial scenes in an irresistible tonal wash' (2007, 3) consonant with the underwater palette of the cinematography.
12. McHugh discerns a tension between the aural register which dissolves differences between subjects and the visual register which highlights differentiated points of view (2007, 86–87).
13. Knight (2006) perceives the piano both as prosthesis and love object. See McHugh on the mimesis between Ada's fingers and keys as digits (2007, 79).
14. This scene, like the final sequences, has been obsessively discussed.

15. See Janet Patterson, the costume designer, quoted in Bruzzi (1993b, 9).
16. This pertains to Ada's relation to Flora and to her piano, in the drowning sequence, where the rope connecting her to the piano mimics an umbilicus to a maternal body (see Jacobs 1994; Haraway 2001).
17. See Attwood (1998) on the male gaze as self-reflexive: Ada's portrait becomes his mirror (cf. McHugh 2007, 84).
18. See Patterson, costume designer, as quoted in Bruzzi (1993b, 9).
19. We first see their wedding portrait in a tight frame, with Ada and Stewart in front of a sunny, romantic painted background; the camera then pans out to reveal the rain and an ineffectual parasol (Bruzzi 1993b, 8). Compare McHugh's (2007, 87) and Jones' (2007, 44, 47) analyses of this scene.
20. DuPuis ([1996] 2000) disputes this.
21. McHugh perceives this tactile mimesis between cunnilingus and the dog's licking as a meta-narrative joke (2007, 88); we 'get it' but Stewart does not.
22. Campion comments: 'Ada actually uses her husband as a sexual object ... to see a woman actually doing it, especially a Victorian woman, is somehow shocking' (1993, 139). Jones finds this scene 'audacious and unexpected', full of gentle erotic possibility from which Stewart recoils (Jones 2007, 48).
23. McHugh suggests that Frida Kahlo was a model for Ada's relentless female gaze (2007, 81; cf. Wexman 1999, 100).
24. See Jones (2007, 34–37) and Margaroni (2003) on the particular, even peculiar, character of the voiceover.
25. The veil has been interpreted variously as bridal veil and funeral cloth; it surely suggests both.
26. See Klinger's (2006) scintillating analysis of this 'arresting image' in relation to affect, dream and memory. Campion's mother suggested the poem by Hood (Wexman 1999, 104).
27. Jacobs (1994), 775–79) and Jones (2007) suggest there are three rather than two endings: the drowning, as Campion originally intended; the scenes of domestic contentment; and the unsettling coda of Hood's poem when we see Ada's dead body lurking in the deep. Rather than contradiction or narrative irresolution it concludes with a deeply unsettling haunting of death in life, of 'death and not-death, a cinematic moment of meditation' (Jones 2007, 72).
28. Campion expresses her intentions thus: 'Even though it's a European story, which is what I am—European—I determined that it would involve having Māori people in the film ... It wasn't without tears and difficulty ... In the end the cross-cultural quality of it was one of the deeply moving aspects of being on the production for us all, cast and crew' (Campion 1993, 142–43).
29. I do not know whether those sequences were never shot or discarded. In the screenplay, Hira alludes to an earlier relationship with a whaler just like Baines, hinting at sexual interest (Campion 1993, 55), while in the film she suggests he seek other younger Māori women. Norgrove (1998, 52) suggests that another scene in which Hira and Baines discuss the exchange of land for guns (Campion 1993, 104–05) was edited out.
30. Norgrove observes how the representation of Māori in European clothes for New Zealanders evokes images of nineteenth-century Māori by the artist C.F. Goldie (Norgrove 1998, 48). McHugh (2007, 81) notes how colonial photographs in the Turnbull Library in Wellington were an important source. The untranslated chant is by Selwyn Muru and

meditates on evanescence and mortality. The effect of not translating Māori language is debatable; it also evokes a world beyond colonial knowledge.

31. See Dyson on whiteness as beauty and spiritual purity (1995a, 273), and Norgrove on Ada's whiteness as eroticised (1998, 50).
32. Campion said: 'The bush has got an enchanted, complex, even frightening quality to it ... It's mossy and very intimate, and there's an underwater look that's always charmed me ... its dark, inner world' (1993, 139). See Jones (2007, 1–2) on the compelling visual connection of sea and forest.
33. The film deploys montage of North and South Island bush, primary rainforest and regenerating scrub and artificially created landscape (Andrew McAlpine quoted in Campion 1993, 140–41).
34. Compare Dyson on Māori as backdrop for the drama of the principal white characters (1995b, 119).
35. In an early scene, Māori guides take another path from beach to bush so as not to breach a *tapu*. Baines understands but Stewart is suspicious that Māori simply want to make more money by making the journey home longer (see Campion 1993, 27).
36. See Belich (1996), King (2003) and Kawharu (1989).
37. Jones observes how both in the 'Bluebeard' sequence and the final sequences, Māori men are depicted as saviours of white women and manifest 'assertion, wit and resistant autonomy' (2007, 23).
38. See Jones' superb account of the scene of the mutilation (2007, 54–60).
39. For DuPuis ([1996] 2000, 366), Baines is portrayed as virile and hyper-masculine while the Māori man is 'feminized, impotent and childlike'. For me, the feminisation of the Māori man evokes gender crossing or homoerotic interest rather than colonial emasculation (see Campion's statement in Wexman 1999, 104). In other scenes Māori men appear as virile, even hyper-masculine warriors, porters and navigators.
40. Jones' analysis of this scene is more generous, portraying Māori as 'sexually emancipated and physically open' (2007, 27). On eroticism and exoticism in the Pacific, see my essays (Jolly 1997a, 1997b), books by Matsuda (2005), O'Brien (2006), Tcherkézoff (2004), Wallace (2003) and Trevor Graham's film *Hula Girls* (2006).
41. See McHugh's analysis of Stewart's punitive correction of Flora's tree-love through whitewashing as a visual pun (2007, 88).
42. For me, the Thomas Hood coda rather evokes universal themes of mortality and death.
43. The website of the Auckland Art Gallery depicts the sculpture as a meditation on 'the weight of celebration, mourning and loss' (http://www.aucklandartgallery.govt.nz/bright-paradise/artists/michael_parekowhai.asp).
44. The epoch is not so vague. Campion herself (Wexman 1999, 97) and most critics suggest it is about 1850.
45. Neill notes the lack of reference to the Treaty of Waitangi, contracted in 1840, a decade before the story is set and the anachronism that Baines and Stewart are engaged in private land acquisition in a period when the British Crown had assumed a monopoly (Neill 1999, 143; Kawharu 1989). Neill suggests the silence about the struggle for sovereignty in that period implies a silence about similar struggles in the era of the film's making.

46. Jones notes the parodic effect of their singing *God Save the Queen* as they sit sewing on the floor as diminishing both 'the British monarchy and Christian authority' (2007, 28).
47. Jones notes the length of many face shots of Ada, not the usual six or seven seconds, but thirty-three seconds or more (2007, 46). This might partially explain the strong identification which many feminist critics report. Gillett (1995) proclaimed: 'I was entranced, moved, dazed', while Laleen Jayamanne (2001) reported a profound pain in her own index finger, after writing about the film, echoing Ada's pain after her mutilation (cited in Klinger 2006, 19).
48. Margaroni (2003) deploys Kristeva in an archly theoretical analysis, alleging that Māori people, like Kristeva's 'daughter in crisis', are trapped and must enact a matricide on the mother/land to achieve status as mature and autonomous 'post-contact' subjects capable of change and global interactions beyond the mother/land. This claim is innocent of any evidence from Māori sources.
49. Campion suggests: 'I feel a kinship between the kind of romance that Emily Bronte portrayed in *Wuthering Heights* and this film ... it's very harsh and extreme, a gothic exploration of the romantic impulse. I wanted to respond to those ideas in my own century ... My exploration can be a lot more sexual, a lot more investigative of the power of eroticism' (1993, 140).
50. Several critics discern a dichotomy of nature/culture at work in the film but few stress the dynamic relation between the 'nature' imputed to the wild landscape, to Māori people, and that within Ada herself. Jacobs suggests a celebration of both 'the sunlit beauty of the outdoors' and the 'indoor sexuality of sexual passion' (1994, 759). I further suggest that the 'nature' of Ada's passionate interiority ultimately transcends the 'nature' of the anteriority imputed to Māori people and place.

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