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# Jane Campion's *The Piano*: The Female Gaze, the Speculum and the Chora within the H(y)st(e)rical Film

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Jane Campion's *The Piano*:

## The Female Gaze, the Speculum and the Chora within the H(y)st(e)rical Film

Female specificity in narrative films is a topic as illusive and controversial as it is incredibly rich with potential for analysis and research. Particularly illusive is scholarly research on the *female gaze* in mainstream filmmaking. Male specificity in the movies is far less illusive and controversial. So pervasive is the male presence in mainstream film form that the term the *male gaze*<sup>1</sup> has become institutionalized in theory and practice. The female gaze, perhaps unavoidably so, eludes institutionalization.<sup>2</sup> My paper presents a *glimpse* into the traces (*semios*) of the female gaze in Jane Campion's historical film, *The Piano*. Campion's filmic text creates a space in mainstream movies where cinematic enunciation intersects with the linguistic and psychoanalytical innovations of the last half-century. I have chosen *The Piano* because it presents an overwhelmingly clear demonstration of the female gaze and does so within the limitations of mainstream film conventions.

In order to discuss the female gaze and the historical film, we must first examine certain aspects of the mainstream movie industry and its relationship to the phallogentric hegemony.

### HOLLYWOOD, THE HISTORICAL FILM AND PHALLOCENTRISM

The historical film genre is defined primarily by its representation of an earlier time period than the one in which the film was actually made. This definition consists of at least three subcategories of films: those representing reclaimed events actually recorded in the historical record, those adapted from fictions originally published during a specific historical period (as in another Campion adaptation, *The Portrait of a Lady* adapted from the Henry James novel), and lastly, a newly conceived narrative set in the past as is the case of Campion's *The Piano*. Historical films may focus on one or any combination of these categories.

In the film industry, the great majority of films, including the historical film, construct themselves under the stylistic umbrella of the dominant mode of filmmaking. This style is comprised of production practices systemized in American mainstream movies that have originated primarily in an economy of Euro-phallogentricism in Hollywood.<sup>3</sup> The terms I will use to signify this style of filmmaking are Classical Hollywood Cinema (CHC) and mainstream movies.

If we conclude that males of European descent have affected a mastery of the film industry since its inception, the dominant mode of filmmaking, CHC, necessarily privileges a phallogentric economy. Insofar as phallogentricism stems from the concept of the possession of the phallus as primary signifying agent and rooted in traditional theories of psychoanalysis, we must explore a brief review of the Freudian canon. This discussion will also speak to the inherent incongruity in attempting to

define or to represent female specificity within a phallogocentric hegemony that runs as deep as language itself.

## **OEDIPUS-MIRROR-SPECULUM-CHORA: The Decline of the Phallus**

I'd like to introduce this segment with a brief account of the usual and the uncanny (suspects) <sup>4</sup>. Jacques Lacan, a major proponent of Freud's theories, established L'ecole Freudienne at Vincennes in Paris, which provided a fertile ground for innovations in psychoanalytic theory. Lacan refined Freud's theories with his concept of the Mirror Phase in child development as well as his integration of linguistics to the psychoanalytic canon. In the 1970s, post-structuralist psychoanalyst and philosopher Luce Irigaray broke with her mentor Lacan and denounced the Freudian school for its patriarchal bias. Other post-structuralist philosophers of the post-Freudian school, including Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva, and in America, Alice Jardine, followed suit. A brief discussion of Freudian theories leading to the innovations of these post-structuralist philosophers will shed light on approaches to female specificity in psycho-linguistic theory, arguably the most substantive analytical tool in the verification and institutionalization of the female gaze.

As a launching point in the discussion, the Oedipal Complex, speaks to the child's desire for the mother coupled with the awareness of the mother's lack of a penis and the subsequent (mortal) fear that the father, as a presence outside the mother-child symbiosis might be the cause of the castration in the mother. For the child this signifies the superiority of the phallus/penis and results in the child's entry into the Symbolic order, that is, the cultural construct specifically manifested in language. This process causes the repression of the pre-lingual developmental stage and its association with Kristeva's maternal semiotic. As Emma Parker so aptly explains:

In *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), Kristeva offers a psychoanalytical analysis of language and establishes a distinction between the symbolic and what she calls the semiotic. The semiotic is a pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic realm associated with the maternal and the feminine (because at that stage in its psychological development the child is unable to distinguish between subject and object, itself and its mother) and characterized by fluidity, multiplicity, possibility, heterogeneity, rhythms, and pulses. Entry into the symbolic, characterized by law, order, coherence, stability, and rationality, occurs at the time of the Oedipal crisis and acquisition of language and depends on separation from the mother and submission to the Law-of-the-Father. The semiotic continues to exist within the symbolic but is repressed. As the feminine principle is constantly repressed so it constantly threatens to erupt. <sup>5</sup>

In repressing the maternal semiotic, the Symbolic order privileges the father as master of the phallus since the mother is recognized as signifying biological and Symbolic lack and so in opposition to law, order, coherence, stability and rationality.

Lacan posits that the child experiences the Mirror Phase (as reflected typographically and psycho-linguistically in the juxtaposition of the terms ideal ego and the ego ideal) when s/he distinguishes he/herself definitively as separate from the m/other. This developmental stage involves complex relationships of narcissism, misrecognition and alienation that lead to the child becoming a speaking subject and so subject to the Law of the Father, i.e., the primal patriarchal prerogative dominant in Western culture. Based on the Lacanian concept regarding the splitting subject's recognition of the

father in pre-lingual development as the model for separation and the Oedipal meta-narrative, the Law of the Father seals the separation process of the speaking subject from its imagined self-object (m/other) by establishing the former's subjectivity to the Symbolic order. This in turn establishes the phallus attached psychically (and in some circles, biologically) to the father as the primary signifier. For the most part, Lacan's theories support Freudian psychoanalysis including the Oedipal Complex and voyeurism from which theory on the male gaze in mainstream films has been extracted.

For Lacan, the Symbolic order organizes itself linguistically and in opposition to the Imaginary, defined as the desire of the pre-lingual, pre-Oedipal entity. The unconscious then is posited as the space for the repressed remains of the imagined wholeness between the child and maternal body that the pre-lingual child experiences during the series of physical and psychological losses prior to he/r entry into the Symbolic order. The Freudian canon, including Lacan's work, however, disregards the pre-lingual maternal influence on the speaking subject in favor of the more phallogocentric coherence of language and the Law of the Father.

Rather than dismissing the pre-lingual stage, Luce Irigaray, takes up the challenge of exploring the semiotic potential of the pre-Oedipal experience. She argues that the Freudians were derelict in substantiating the role of the maternal in sexual difference and identification. Irigaray proposes the (meta)morphosis of Lacan's mirror into the Speculum, metaphorically a mirrored tool for probing the depths of female specificity. Irigaray also calls for a feminine syntax,<sup>6</sup> and for women to compete with "the phallosensical hommologue..."<sup>7</sup> Moreover Irigaray posits that the current socio-philosophical issues regarding sexual difference and FEMININITY<sup>8</sup> amount to a new frontier in artistic and critical pursuits:

Sexual difference would represent the advent of new fertile regions as yet unwitnessed, at all events in the west. By fertility I am not referring simply to the flesh or reproduction. (...) ...it would also involve the production of a new age of thought, art, poetry and language; the creation of a new *poetics*.<sup>9</sup>

Alice Jardine concurs with Irigaray. She developed a hybrid word from the concepts of genesis and the suffix gyno- which designates the female reproductive organ/woman. Her term *gynesis* connotes

...the putting into discourse of "woman" as that *process* diagnosed in France as intrinsic to the condition of modernity; indeed, the valorization of the feminine, woman and her obligatory, that is, historical connotations, as somehow intrinsic to new and necessary modes of thinking, writing, speaking.<sup>10</sup>

Linguist and psychoanalyst, Julia Kristeva, also working in Paris, expanded on Irigaray's poetics. Much of her work focuses on the semiotic<sup>11</sup>, and its origins in the pre-symbolic stage of human development. Kristeva's use of the word "chora" expands on the pre-lingual developmental stage Lacan calls the Imaginary Wholeness. Kristeva appropriated the term from Plato's *chora* that possesses "linguistic connotations of an enclosed space or womb..."<sup>12</sup> Martha Reineke cites Kristeva on the chora:

It is a matter of opening, in and beyond the scene of linguistic representations, pre- or

trans-linguistic modalities of psychic inscription that one could call semiotic, in recovering thus the etymological meaning of the Greek *semion*--trace, mark, idiosyncrasy [distinctivite]. At the foundation of philosophy, before our mode of thinking was enclosed in the horizon of language understood as a translation of the idea, Plato, recalling the atomists, spoke in the *Timaeus* of a *chora*--archaic receptacle, mobile, unstable, anterior to the One, to the father and even to the syllable, metaphorically identified as nourishing and maternal.<sup>13</sup>

Here Kristeva refers to the *chora* and its semiotic as "pre- or trans-linguistic" which we can refer to as the unspeakable because it consists of expressions prior to language and therefore is excluded from the phallogocentric language-dependent economy. Nevertheless, the *chora* produces traces or marks, i.e., "modalities of psychic inscription." Inasmuch as the influence of the *chora* precedes the symbolic, it is also a/the nexus of lost/found desire and found/lost inscription. The multiplicity of the *chora* is uncanny. On the one hand, the archaic memory of the *chora* is overwhelmingly attractive and secure reflecting the Imaginary Wholeness and the maternal semiotic. On the other hand, it is overwhelmingly terrifying in its potential for deconstructing and splitting the univocal tendency in the interpretation of the Symbolic:

...the maternal body is the place of a splitting. Through a body destined to insure reproduction of the species, the woman-subject ...[is] more of a filter than anyone else--a thoroughfare, a threshold where 'nature' confronts 'culture.'<sup>14</sup>

According to Kristeva, exploring the traces of the *chora* remains a threat to the stability of Lacan's Law of the Father, because the womb/*chora*, "a threshold where 'nature' confronts 'culture'," disrupts the prevailing phallogocentric systems. Kristeva's implications ascribe to woman, as the maternal body, an authenticity "more than anyone else" for being a "filter" for the pre-lingual semiotic. Functioning as a sieve between the maternal semiotic and the symbolic order, women are privileged in terms of trans-semiotic enunciation.

The strategies for applying these insights are quite different for Kristeva and Irigaray. On the one hand, Irigaray stresses the essentialism of FEMININITY and proposes an autonomous and equal sphere of empowerment for women in a largely political articulation based on female-constructed parameters of FEMININITY. Kristeva, on the other hand, rejects the politicized construct of FEMININITY and suggests empowering FEMININITY through an emphasis on the inherently symbiotic traces in language of the maternal semiotic. Moreover, the apparent ambiguities and the multiplicity that Kristeva proposes in her theories are very consistent with the problematizing multiplicity in enunciating FEMININITY within the Symbolic order programmed to privilege males and establish homogeneity<sup>15</sup>.

The writings of Irigaray and Kristeva, are useful in the analysis of the historical film and the phallogocentric functioning of the film industry at large. Both "French feminists" acknowledge the extent to which culture neglects the valorization of the maternal semiotic. Moreover, their emphasis on the maternal semiotic in language correlates strongly with the semiotic aspects of the movies further substantiated by the silent film era, the film industry's own pre-lingual developmental stage.<sup>16</sup>

## UNVEILING THE FEMALE GAZE: The Female Voice in Mainstream Film

While the Freud-Lacanian sphere of influence on critical theory has led to an emphasis on FEMININITY and post-structuralism, as we see in Irigaray and Kristeva, the univocal, phallogocentric sphere of influence on the American film industry has remained. This is evident if we accept that the CHC style presents and represents the phallogocentric or male gaze.

...a theoretical orthodoxy has arisen which declares that the cinematic look, at least in the classical film, is patriarchal and works only to satisfy the fetishistic and voyeuristic pleasure of the *masculine look*.<sup>17</sup>

As a reaction to the dominance of patriarchal specificity in the cinematic apparatus, a feminist imperative has arisen and made substantial in-roads in the film industry since the 1980s. The efforts of women in the mainstream movie industry have consisted primarily in establishing an articulation/voice of political activism. Strategically pragmatic, the female voice replicates the strategies of the established mode of filmmaking. The mimetic process, however, presents a homogeneous, univocal facade hiding female/feminine specificity.<sup>18</sup> It can be argued that to imitate an economy that is homogenous and univocal is to subscribe to and reinforce that economy, in this case, phallogocentrism. It follows then that FEMININITY is masked over by the hegemony inclusive of the female voice that seeks to refute the phallogocentric economy via mimesis. The female voice in mainstream movies replicates CHC codes resulting in female produced films that are indistinguishable from male-produced films.<sup>19</sup>

The feminist movement in the film industry has functioned to establish women in the highest positions of control in the production of mainstream films. These positions include executive producers, owners of studios and star performers with box office clout and have resulted in stronger female presence in the film industry. Recent female-oriented devices that mirror their male counterparts include female action heroes (*Alien*) and female buddy movies (*Thelma and Louise*). These enhancements in the opportunities for women in the industry have functioned well in spearheading an atmosphere for the surfacing of FEMININITY in mainstream movies. The female gaze is the trace of FEMININITY that lies behind the female voice.

In so far as the FEMININITY signifies a break from the Law of the Father, by denoting the strategic deconstruction of phallogocentrism within the arts, it connotes the enunciation of the maternal semiotic in a transcended (transcendental) Symbolic order. The enunciation of FEMININITY in mainstream movies therefore necessitates the unveiling of the female gaze through the displacement/replacement of the maternal semiotic always already repressed within the Law of the Father. A clear *apprehension* of the transcended Symbolic order is at the horizon of the (I)magina(ry)tion.

In order for the female gaze to manifest itself, a re-evaluation/re-visioning of the Symbolic order and its masking of FEMININITY must occur, if only intuitively for the filmmaker and the spectator. The emergence of post-structuralist theories on psychoanalysis, linguistics, and FEMININITY, as found in the writings of Irigaray and Kristeva, offers an innovative and crucial step in the re-evaluating and re-visioning process. However, the pervasiveness of the Law of the Father, with its "unconscious structured like a language" as Lacan posits, hampers the post-

structuralist process in mainstream movies. Laura Mulvey in her text, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, references the linguistic difficulties that the enunciation of FEMININITY encounters within the constraints of the Symbolic order, when she explains:

It gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression, it brings an articulation of the problem closer, it faces us with the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a language (formed critically at the moment of arrival of language) while still caught within the language of the patriarchy.<sup>20</sup>

The female gaze in mainstream movies, is not only Symbolic and very much an "unconscious structured like a language" but also pre-lingual and expressive of the maternal semiotic. The female gaze is necessarily multiplex, problematic, ambivalent and progressive in terms of its potential for deconstructing the Symbolic order. Furthermore, the female gaze poses a primal threat to phallogocentric subjectivity, because it (re)asserts an uncanny and non-linear link to the repressed pre-(and extra-)lingual Imaginary Wholeness. If we delineate the female gaze in terms of the multiplex spirit that is intrinsic to the enunciation of m/other and the maternal semiotic, the work of Jane Campion is a(n) (in)tangible effort in the institutionalization of the female gaze in mainstream movies.

### ***THE PIANO: An Ekphrasis***

Jane Campion wrote and directed *The Piano*. In 1993, the film was nominated for eight Oscars and awarded three including Best Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen. These awards affirm Campion's welcome under Hollywood's deceptively motley umbrella and her acceptance into the mainstream. Further, Campion's use of Hollywood stars as well as her adherence to current Hollywood production values and distribution channels bolster Campion's mainstream classification, a much broader category in terms of style since the box office success of the American Independent film scene over the past two decades. To deviate from the mainstream requires a construct that works against these strategies in order to cultivate a non-commercial niche in the industry. American examples of non-mainstream films include the work of Jim Jarmusch, John Sayles and many films produced by John Waters. Campion's work is at the cusp of the non-commercial market, and, given the phallogocentricity of CHC, it is surprising that the film industry has chosen to recognize a movie that is a prim(e)al example of the emerging female gaze in mainstream movies.

Campion exhibits a post-structuralist verve in her film *The Piano*. She deconstructs Freud-Lacanian canon in a manner that questions and pokes fun at the self-absorption of the phallus/penis in phallogocentrism. She also enunciates cinematically the liminal quality of the m/other as well as the pre-lingual pulsations and colorful sensations of Kristeva's maternal semiotic. The integrity of Campion's vision in terms of the enunciation of FEMININITY positions her work as a manifestation of Irigaray's *Speculum*--affording us a glimpse of the unspeakable: a primal death and desire colliding/meshing with the Symbolic order.

The film takes place in the early 1800s in New Zealand. A single m/other, Ada, has been obligated by her father to marry Stewart, an English ex-patriot in colonial New Zealand. Opening the film, a young sounding female voice-over announces that the voice we hear is her mind's voice and that she has not spoken since she was the age of six.<sup>21</sup> No explanation is given and we are left to

wonder if the protagonist has tapped into the power of passive aggression, and/or simply is displaying an extraordinary quirk of character.<sup>22</sup> The film has begun its dis(play) of polysemy. Ada's chosen non-vocal state deconstructs the dominance of the spoken language in the symbolic order and references obliquely the unspeakable nature of the repressed m/other. In the spirit of the multivalent relevance of the maternal semiotic, Ada is as much passive as aggressive, as much heroine as victim, as much, and so on. Moreover, she and her daughter communicate in the tactile polysemy of sign language--a para-linguistic (and extra-linguistic) dis(play) that connotes the lack of hearing (in Ada's case a rejection of hearing/listening to phallogocentric speech) as much as a lack of speaking--not to mention the kinesthetic visual sphere of communication involved in signing that is analogous to motion pictures.

The tension between Ada's semiotic<sup>23</sup> inclination and Stewart's Symbolic order is highlighted from the beginning. Ada's one passion--far exceeding her attachment to speech and Symbolic subjectivity, is to play her piano. Her musical penchant references the maternal semiotic as per Kristeva who posits that musicality in language and the arts represents traces (*semios*) of the chora. Stewart, Ada's contract-husband, meets the mother and daughter on the beach in New Zealand where they have been crudely deposited by burly seamen quick to relieve themselves and depart. Much to Ada's consternation, and against her protests, Stewart decides to abandon her piano on the beach.

Stewart marries Ada on a rainy day. Campion painstakingly shows Ada getting fitted with her white wedding gown over her dark dress. Later Ada is led to a photographer's backdrop out in the pouring rain. She wears her wedding dress, analogous to a veil in this instance, sloppily in place over her stark attire of everyday. The emphasis on Ada's costume is a critical reference to the female masquerade.<sup>24</sup> The gloomy, claustrophobic scene ends with an extreme close up shot looking from the position of the camera lens towards the aperture as the eye of the photographer appears and then is ousted by another male eye asserting itself at the opening--this latter eye appears to be Stewart's. Stewart and the male photographer before him are comfortable with scopophilia--the male desire in observing sexual difference from a safe distance. Curiously, we are not shown the CHC convention of Stewart's POV, i.e., his exact point of view, back out through the lens. Surprisingly, Campion retains Stewart's eye on the screen gazing eerily back through the lens and the aperture. In this shot, Campion deconstructs the male gaze and makes a pun of scopophilia and its mediating device, the camera and lens. She isolates the b(eye)ological apparatus of the male gaze without completing the look in the conventional way via an eyeline match (traditionally consisting of a subject's eyes glancing out of frame and then a cut to the object of that glance). Stewart's gaze, oblique and ambiguous in its isolative framing, remains unfulfilled.

Campion emphasizes Stewart's unfulfilled gaze in a particularly disruptive sequence of cinematic signs. And yet the disruptive force mirrors the semiotic function within the Symbolic order: Campion's emphasis on the chora in this scene brings on an explosion of connotation that furthers and displaces the narrative linearity of the movie in a tension that disrupts as much as it sutures. At one scintillating shrapnel point in this explosion of meaning, Campion creates a space that becomes analogous to the chora on one side of the mediating object, the camera. The profilmic camera in this series of images is needed to capture and to frame Stewart's eye from the problematizing angle of the (un)known, the figurative viewpoint of the m/other's. Further, Campion's uncanny use of the camera attaches itself to Irigaray's concept of the Speculum, the metaphorical device for probing the



essentialities of the womb. In this short sequence, Campion deconstructs the male gaze at the threshold of the Imaginary, the chora, the speculum, the unspeakable. Although the maternal semiotic remains restrained within the narrative, the liminal and polysemic quality inherent to the female gaze in the cinema, is superbly articulated. The camera becomes emblematic as a device for probing FEMININITY at the liminal space. The male subject/spectator is suddenly confronted with an unfulfilled gaze and the trace of the unspeakable m/other mediated by the *Speculum* of the camera-inversa. The *spectators* find themselves in the uncanny position of the m/other probed and disavowed by the male gaze reflected in the *Speculum/camera*. Campion has accomplished in one or two edits an acute display of *difference*.<sup>25</sup> Campion's filmic (de)construct draws out and highlights the symbiotic/destructive relationship between Kristeva's semiotic and the univocal linearity of the CHC narrative. But Stewart disavows non-fulfillment and the film slips back into the narrative. After his (non)glance through the looking glass, Stewart takes his soggy place next to Ada in front of the photographer's backdrop in the pouring rain.

Not long after the wedding, Ada gathers the courage to ask her neighbor, Baines, to take her to the beach to play her abandoned piano. Baines appears to have incorporated native culture into his life, at least superficially, as the tattoo markings on his face imply. He consents to her request and, on the beach while she plays the piano through a dislodged plank in its shipping crate, he bombards her with glances in a terse yet relentless manner. The emphasis of the scene is on Ada's love for her music, and we realize that Baines is attracted to her passionate abandon. By highlighting Ada's own non-transcribed music, Campion references Kristeva's chora/womb filled with pre-lingual rhythms and pulsations. Richard Allen concurs stating:

Music seems to short-circuit language and somehow evoke raw, unmediated feeling. The relation to the mother's body and a pre-rational body centered subjectivity is evoked both by the character of Ada's relationship to the piano, her music making, and the connotations that are attached to it.<sup>26</sup>

Soon after this scene, Baines requests of Stewart a trade of land for the piano and accompanying lessons to be given by Ada. When Stewart enthusiastically agrees, Ada protests writing adamantly on a note: "The piano is mine. It's mine."<sup>27</sup> Stewart pounds on the table stating that "We are a family now. We all sacrifice and so will you." He storms out of the room. Ada glances sullenly into the camera abruptly making eye-contact with the spectator. Campion now plays with illusionism (the creation on the screen of an illusory world of the narrative), the hallmark of CHC. Within the univocal context of mainstream conventions, her glance directed at us has pierced the "invisible" fourth wall (the camera lens/screen), and so invites an interruptive and multiplex reading. Suddenly the narrative is arrested and we are confronted by the female gaze directed at us as we begin to squirm in our voyeuristic position--we cannot disavow the stare of the m/other as she gazes down from the screen. The splitting of the narrative from its illusion of wholeness threatens dissolution of the story. And yet remarkably, Campion does not fully disengage from the functionality of the narrative. Strategies for interrupting and deconstructing narrative illusionism necessarily privilege the maternal semiotic exposing uncanny fissures in the Symbolic order/Law of the Father and (re)presents a primary characteristic of the female gaze in mainstream movies.

Soon Ada is giving piano lessons to Baines while her daughter waits outside his shack. Baines states that he wants only to listen and to watch her play under the ruse that he will learn by

observing. One day, however, after much gazing and hovering, Baines lunges at Ada's neck awkwardly landing a kiss. She jumps up and away startled from her trance at the piano. She has been stirred from her ambiguous communion with the chora. Baines quickly proposes a way she can earn her piano back. He offers her the equivalent of one white key per visit with the eventual repossession of the piano if she permits him to perform "things I'd like to do while you play." Ada circles her piano and barter for more keys per visit. Baines concedes and the deal is made.<sup>28</sup>

During subsequent piano lessons, Baines continues to circle Ada as she plays for him. One day however, his actions venture into the carnal. He crawls under the piano then requires her to lift her skirts higher and higher. He gazes at her stocking covered legs then reaches past her elaborate hoopskirt frame to a hole in her black hose and puts his finger tip on her exposed skin.<sup>29</sup> He has now explored beyond the fetish of her garments and has inserted himself metaphorically into this deconstructed portal to discover the trace of the body of the m/other. The experience alters him. His active desire of the speaking subject diminishes rapidly as he seeks to become the object of Ada's desire, the m/other's desire. He tries to re-enact plenitude, the subject/object splitting stage of the Imaginary Wholeness. He performs a semblance of the repressed pre-lingual subject/object relationship. The phallus is now displaced for him.

Soon thereafter, Baines displays his alterity by presenting his object-self to her in full frontal nudity--he has resituated his identification with the phallus/penis and has gained an inkling of *jouissance*.<sup>30</sup> Baines appropriates a state of ambiguity: He feigns the active while (re)presenting the passive posture. Do we read that he is at once lost and found in multiplicity--or is he just love sick?<sup>31</sup> Or both? Is love-sickness residual separation anxiety, that is, separation from the m/other? Is Baines regressing and re-staging the Imaginary Wholeness of the splitting subject? The polysemy of his actions remain consistent with the enunciation of the female gaze. Depicting Baines as transformed after tactile contact with Ada, Campion concurs with Kristeva that the separation of the subject from the body-centered object is always already incomplete and that the source of the subject-in-process is the m/other.<sup>32</sup> As a subject-in-process, Baines has become unstuck from the linearity of the Law of the Father in this display of Other than subjectivity.

Hesitantly and matter-of-factly, Ada lies with Baines in compliance with their transaction agreement. Both are naked as Flora spies on them through a crack in the outside wall of Baines' cabin. He embraces her awkwardly as we look on with difficulty through the crack. Campion's pun in this sequence results from her decision to give Ada's daughter the traditionally voyeuristic handheld POV shot gazing through the crack in Baines' cabin. The male gaze is effectively deconstructed by attributing it to a pre-pubescent female. The choice of the handheld camera use in this shot replicates the male voyeuristic convention in filmmaking, and yet Campion clearly designates Flora as the originator of the profilmic look. Flora is not capable of actuating the desire of the adult subject. The sequence dis(play)s voyeurism at once present and absent. The photo(play) is simultaneously humorous and iconoclastic. And the object of that deconstructed gaze is the awkward robotics of two naked bodies that lack: Baines lacks objectivity because the m/other (Ada) does not desire him and Ada lacks subjectivity because she is m/other--they are subjects-in-process, the one feigning wholeness in a clumsy false-intimacy, the other fulfilling her empty contract. Verification of Ada and Baines' unrequited intimacy will be born out when Baines gives back the piano in abject dismay.

In the next scene, Stewart disciplines his step-daughter when he catches Flora mimicking the Maori children as they hug and kiss tree trunks with lewd hip movements. He makes her wash all the tree trunks with soap and water. The adult Maori's who observe Stewart's unease at Flora's lascivious imitations are bewildered by his prudish admonishments. Campion's imaging of the Maori reflect obliquely the female gaze in terms of the double bind: The Maori are colonized, objectified and co-opted by the European males. They can only mimic the colonizers in order to achieve a semblance of empowerment.

Campion features two Maori: a matronly bi-lingual woman who courts Baines from time to time with lewd insinuations; the other Maori is a multi-sexual, bi-lingual male who also directs explicit suggestive remarks to Baines. The bi-lingual status of both these Maori characters connotes the false empowerment inherent in the colonial double-bind but also at a subtextual level, it references Kristeva's maternal semiotic. Campion engages in the representation of native peoples as a means to further highlight the symbiotic/disruptive relationship between the maternal semiotic and the Symbolic. The noble savage masters the European vernacular at once reinforcing both the dominance of phallogocentrism as well as the derivate concept of the Euro-centric dominance over primitivism. And yet, paradoxically, the cross-language facility of the cultural other signals a fissure in difference and separation for the Euro-centric speaking subject. This ethnographic incongruity mirrors the incommensurable symbiosis between FEMININITY and the symbolic order. The filmmaker's imaging of the Maori not only speaks to the maternal semiotic within the Symbolic order, but also references the double bind for the female voice in the realm of language and mainstream movies.<sup>33</sup>

When Baines sends back the piano to Stewart's house, he tells Ada: "The arrangement is making you a whore and me wretched. I want you to care for me." At first Stewart rejects the piano supposing that Baines will try to break their deal and get his land back. But Baines explains that the piano is for Ada and has nothing to do with the land deal. Once appeased, Stewart accepts the return of the piano. But he is bewildered when Ada loses her passion for the piano now that it has been returned. He sees Ada leave the house and walk to the edge of the forest outside his window. At this point Campion cuts to a full shot of Ada from behind and then dollies the camera towards Ada's back while craning up into the back of Ada's head. The camera continues to dolly in to an extreme close up of the circular braids of Ada's hair. A dissolve occurs repositioning the camera to the forest. The forward movement continues gently into the foliage as the camera cranes higher. Ada's spirit has transcended from her body into the unspeakable space: the chora. The images are sublime and abject. An overflow of the maternal semiotic permeates the colony.

In the next scene, Ada walks through the forest toward Baines' house with her daughter following. At one point, Ada refuses to allow Flora to accompany her and sends her daughter back home, signing angrily. This is the first time we see Flora rejected by her mother. When Stewart finds Flora stomping through the woods alone and swearing out loud passionately, she notices him and suddenly ends her tirade on the word "bleed..." He asks Flora where her mother has gone. Angrily, Flora answers: "To hell!"

In the meantime, Ada finds Baines in his bed supine, passive, desolate. His sensitivity to the unspeakable semiotic, his lovesickness, has discouraged him. He has no hope for her affections. He guides her to the door admonishing her for not caring. She slaps his face and sinks to the floor. As

he squats beside her, she embraces him and clings to his neck. They are released to their desires, their defiling, disrupting bodily-centered jouissance. Outside Baines' cabin, Stewart arrives. He peeks through crack in the cabin and notices Baines kneeling before Ada as she takes her clothes off. Baines reaches under the framework of her hoops, raises her white undergarments and crawls under and up into her m/other-ness. Stewart pulls himself back from the sight. Still, he remains active and pursues voyeuristic pleasures. When he returns to the peephole, Campion completes the eyeline match with a handheld view through the crack towards the interior. Baines is no longer visible. It is as if he has disappeared into Ada's threshold of m/other-ness. Campion deconstructs the voyeuristic scene with quirky humor and image play. A dog licks Stewart's hand and he brings his hand up in a daze, then rubs the fluids from the dog's muzzle off on the outside wall of the cabin before continuing his gaze at the exchange of body fluids in Baines cabin.

Baines and Ada consummate their desire. Subjectivity and objectivity oscillate between them like polarities of alternating current. At one point they look into each other's eyes and Baines pleads: "Whisper it." And she places her face next to his, her mouth at his ear as if whispering something to him. Is she entering the Symbolic order or is she speechlessly communicating the maternal semiotic? Is she accomplishing both? As depicted by Campion, the silence we observe and the mimetic gesture of Ada's moving lips indicates that an exchange beyond the Symbolic is taking place.<sup>34</sup> Both lovers are experiencing the jouissance at once underpinning and destructing language. Campion has thus foiled and fulfilled Baines' plea for the spoken word from Ada. Baines and the spectator are both satisfied and frustrated with Ada's silent communiqué. Ada simultaneously complies and disregards his request. A symbiosis between the phallus and jouissance, that is, a reciprocity between the Symbolic and the semiotic, synthesizes, materializes. The multiplicity of the sequence belies, misreads and (de)(re)constructs masculinity/femininity and spectatorship.

After their lovemaking, Ada re-attaches her garments. She approaches the foreground and leans down to pick up a button that slips from her fingers and drops through a crack in the wood floorboards. It lands on Stewart who is now watching from below the planks (an awkward and most likely unsuccessful voyeuristic position). We are surprised to see Stewart there. He is supine and vulnerable now as his voyeurism appears satiated and the possibility of Ada discovering him seems for a split second inevitable. As a nexus between the illicit lovers and Stewart's surveillance of them, the displaced button brings to the spectator a pun on the fetish, Lacan's *small objet a*--penetrating Stewart's voyeuristic space, and creating a sight gag: at once a blatant contrivance of the cinema while presenting an illusion of narrative spontaneity. CHC, as an illusory strategy, is at once disrupted and sutured. The button rolls down his pale neck into his shirt and his fingers feel for it. The scene asserts closure as the loose thread of Stewart's whereabouts is resolved, and yet the knowledge Stewart acquires from his whereabouts under the floor boards designates narrative irresolution: What will become of Ada's betrayal of the marriage vows?

Baines traipses across his cabin after Ada and asks her if she loves him while the borders of the screen resituate to enclose the frame of a small mirror on the wall that provides a surface for Ada's face as she completes her toilette. She pauses in her grooming, almost a freeze frame making eye contact with the m/other in her own reflection. Baines insists on knowing if Ada loves him. Her eyes then wander ever so slightly. With a final glance, her eyes return to the mirror. She then turns to Baines and takes up his shirt and rubs her mouth and face on his bare chest. This scene marks the beginning of the portrayal of a duality for Ada that features, on the one hand her identification

with the Imaginary Wholeness consisting of the pre-lingual self-sufficient narcissism, and, on the other hand, an identification with the applied narcissism of active desire within the Symbolic order. Via image-play between lingering glances in the mirror and the display of Ada's sexual desire, Campion deconstructs Lacan's Mirror Phase, the developmental stage that signals the start of the subject's entry into the Symbolic order and the repression of the maternal semiotic.<sup>35</sup> Ada does not relinquish the Imaginary, she does not repress the maternal semiotic and still she partakes of the desire of the speaking subject. Again, the multiplicity of the images belies the phallogocentric construct.

Later, Stewart surprises Ada in the jungle and wrestles her to the ground. As she struggles, he pulls and tugs at her garments. Encumbered by his groping, Ada pulls herself along the ground and the foliage around them is full of vines and supple branches graphically accentuating the birdcage appearance of her hoops. Stewart continues grappling after her attempting awkwardly to mount her on the run. Flora's off-screen voice calling out in the distance for her mother finally puts an end to this pathetic display of the hysterical, emasculated subject.

In the next scene, Stewart (re)establishes order by sequestering the *unheimlich*<sup>36</sup> m/other within the *Heimlich* structure, his house. Arms crossed, Ada stands helpless with the backside of her body reflected in a full-length oval mirror as Stewart hammers wood planks over the windows of his cabin, barricading her inside. Flora jumps on a chair near a window, places her hand on a top section that has not yet been covered and shouts: "Here, Papa." The word papa resonates because it is the first time that Flora calls her stepfather papa and it signals the growing disparity between her identification with her m/other and a new identification with the Law of the Father. A plank goes up in that space closing little Flora in as well.

Ada's time barricaded in Stewart's cabin is depicted in an extremely sensual and tactile manner creating a reversal in the patriarch's intent: instead of a prison, his enclosure becomes the chora/womb. One night, Ada surreptitiously enters Stewart's room and caresses him provocatively as she strips him of his bedclothes. The explicit sensuality continues as Ada visits him over the course of several nights. Stewart is overwhelmed and submissive as if in shock at her sexuality and his sexual fastidiousness. One night, Stewart breaks from his apprehensions and reaches for her. She immediately draws back from him. Questions arise for the spectator. Is Ada disavowing her apparent desire? Is Ada re-enacting the uncanny and distantly familiar separation from the m/other? Stewart starts grasping at the straws. He imagines that she desires him, and that eventually she will play her part in his household. He interprets her actions in a phallogocentric manner because he cannot recognize literally, figuratively or even intuitively her m/other-ness. We, the spectators, are also reluctant to acquiesce to Ada's display of disruptive multiplicity. We are tempted to react with disavowal at the maternal semiotic and to consider Campion's direction obtuse even quirky and cruel. Campion laces her re-enactment of the maternal *jouissance/abjection* with the implication of the double bind: How can Ada hope to communicate the tactile, sensual and pulsating maternal semiotic to Stewart, the speaking subject, within the cultural stronghold that is the lingual constructs of the Law of the Father?

Referring to an earlier display of body-centered communication in the movie, Richard Allen speaks to Ada's "tactile form of communication" with her daughter Flora in terms of Kristeva's maternal semiotic:

Campion links Ada's and Flora's private sign language with the body of the mother when, in the liminal space of the beach between the sea (mother) and the Bush (adult desire), we spy Ada engaged in an animated act of story-telling. She communicates with Flora in her private sign language in a womb like tent constructed out of one of Ada's hooped petticoats that is surrounded by a little mound of sand decorated with white shells no doubt sculpted by both mother and child. This scene serves as a visual figuration not only of Kristeva's idea of the chora: the container that encases and defines a body-centered "feminine" subjectivity where the child is a part of the mother's body, but of the "semiotic," non-linguistic, tactile, form of "communication" which defines it.<sup>37</sup>

Allen positions Ada as the m/other. He observes that Campion's work (re)presents "a visual figuration (...) of Kristeva's idea of the chora." Allen further suggests that her work also serves as a figuration of the maternal semiotic. Allen's position speaks directly to the concept of the female gaze in the movies: The female gaze is indeed a visual figuration of the chora including its semiotic expression.

To recap, Ada's unexpected display of sensuality towards Stewart, transforms the "homely" cabin of Stewart's into the "unheimlich" space. Even the lighting in this makeshift prison becomes a warm glow. Ada (re)stages the primal event via caresses and rejection. Tactile communication (re)produces the uncanny sensuality and severity previous to and inclusive of human sexuality. Directed at Stewart, Ada/Campion (re)enunciates abjection/jouissance, as if performing remedial lessons of the pre-lingual developmental stage.

In Stewart's mind Ada has realized several cultural transgressions. She does not display the lack that the Symbolic order designates for the other-than-male. She does not defer to the Law of the Father. Moreover, Ada displays the active desire associated with the phallus/penis. Stewart indicates to Ada that he can reconcile these transgressions if only she will stay away from Baines. Ada acquiesces, so he takes down the barricades. However, once freed, Ada professes her desire for Baines by attempting to send him a sign, which, paradoxically, is suggestive of castration: Ada dislodges a key from the piano and etches upon it her words of love. However, when Ada forces Flora to deliver the piano key to Baines, Flora delivers it instead to her stepfather. Stewart's reaction is to "clip (Ada's) wings." He grabs up an ax, pulls Ada from his cabin and chops off her index finger causing a spurt of (m/other's) blood to fall on the screaming Flora.

Later, in Ada's recovery bed when Stewart attempts to rape her, the maternal semiotic is brought home to him in a surprisingly extra-lingual communication. Campion signals Ada's speechless enunciation by means of a sequence of eyeline matches back and forth from Ada's eyes to Stewart's now vulnerable gape as he backs away from her. Bewildered, he asks: "What?" but she does not speak. She gazes at him with serenity. Later, with musket in hand, Stewart informs Baines that he "heard" Ada "speak" inside his head of the power of her will. Neil Robinson interprets Ada's extrasensory projection as retaliatory and sufficiently threatening as to cause Stewart to re-inscribe the ending of their marriage as an articulation of his own will.

...she [Ada] retaliates with a(n) extra-linguistic threat which Stewart later names to Baines: 'She said, 'I am afraid of my will, of what it might do, it is so strange and strong.' Whether these words are Ada's or the voice of patriarchy's unspoken fear of

women, the intimation that the patriarch might have to pay with his body for the desires he inscribes onto the woman's body is more than Stewart can stand, so he masquerades that he chooses to end the relationship ('I wish her gone. I wish you gone'), and gives into Ada's desire to be free from him.<sup>38</sup>

Previous to this scene, *Campion* foreshadowed Ada's extrasensory skills and its effect on patriarchal agents. Earlier in the movie, Ada explains in sign language that Flora's father became afraid when he began 'sensing' her thoughts, that is, her telepathic pulses. It is implied here that her former lover abandoned her due to his misgivings of her extra-linguistic abilities. Baines is not shown to be vulnerable to her semiotic, telepathic pulses. In fact, he seems to be liberated from phallogocentric phobias. As spectators, we find it easy to collude with *Campion* as she depicts Baines to be, at the very least, a worthy mate. He appears to have distanced himself from the patriarchal prerogative, that is, the univocal posturing of the speaking subject.

There is an outcome to Ada's telepathic address: she and Baines depart together for the mainland. They take the piano with them balanced in the middle of their narrow boat powered by Maori oarsmen. Unexpectedly, Ada makes them throw the piano over the side and impulsively steps into the coil of rope attached to the piano. She is pulled overboard. Sinking fast, she does not struggle for the longest time as if complacent in her return to the primordial abjection/chora represented by the ocean brine. When she suddenly, squirms, kicks her shoe off and surfaces, Ada's voice over announces that she is surprised that her "will" has "chosen life." Despite overt signs of having survived her ordeal, covert filmic signs suggest multiple readings. These cinematic signs include: slow motion (re)presenting hyper-reality; Ada's narration exclaiming "What a death! What a chance! ( ...) My will has chosen life." enunciated as if a question; then, as her inanimate body is grappled from the sea, Ada's eyes appear closed; and lastly, the camera moves up and away from the boat to a birds-eye-view suggesting that her spirit is departing. These filmic techniques indicate the deconstruction of Ada's apparent survival while suggesting a heightened, transcendental experience for both the protagonist and the spectator who become one: subject/object.<sup>39</sup> The subsequent scenes further this multiplex reading and results in a deconstruction of closure.

### THE FINALE/OVERTURE

The film's ending is striking in its concise enunciation of FEMININITY linked to m/other, intertextuality and the extra-lingual. It is an epilogue consisting of a summary of narrative film techniques coalescing into pronounced traces of the female gaze. The five final shots of *The Piano* are linked overtly by Ada's voice over affording the narrative an implied Symbolic closure. The implied univocal ending, however is compromised by Ada's final voice over. She recites a strophe of a poem while the spectator views comfortingly disconcerting visuals. Ada's final (re)citation celebrates the abjection/jouissance venerated in a 19th century male poet's ode to the bottom of the sea.<sup>40</sup> The following discussion of the last images in the movie serves as an overture to and a coalescence of the female gaze applied to mainstream movies.

The five final shots of *The Piano* are as follows:

1. Close Up on Ada's hand playing the piano. The silver prosthesis replacing her index finger is ornate and prominent in the frame. Ada's Voice Over: "*I teach piano now in Nelson. George has*

*fashioned me a metal fingertip; I am quite the town freak, which satisfies."*

2. Medium Shot of a female whose features are veiled in a dark kerchief walks towards the camera along a white exterior wall. Ada's metal finger with its leather binding clicks the wall as she guides herself along. In the background through the white lace drapes of an open patio glass door, a bookshelf with many volumes is visible. Two other such doors are visible on the wall Ada is using as her guide. The lace curtains from these windows blow outward in the breeze like petty-coats or the lace dresses of period bridesmaids. Ada turns and walks away from the camera uttering consonants under her veil. Ada's Voice Over: *"I am learning to speak. My sound is still so bad I feel ashamed. I practise only when I am alone and it is dark."*

3. Medium Shot of Flora with a rich green foliage background doing cartwheels in slow motion. Ada's Voice Over continues pronouncing phonemes.

4. Continuation of (2) above. Ada is returning towards the camera along the porch wall. Baines enters from frame right and positions himself against the white wall waiting for the veiled Ada to reach him. Just as she reaches him, she pronounces the phoneme "pa" twice in sequence: "pa-pa". She pauses, and then slowly passes him dragging her hand across his chest. As she starts moving past, he lifts his hand to secure hers and a short dance occurs as he twirls her to the wall and caresses her face over her dark veil. He then folds back the black kerchief from her face and they kiss. As Baines continues to kiss and nuzzle Ada, the camera moves back from them. The piano melody in the background fades out. Ada's Voice Over: *"At night..."*

5. Medium shot of the ivory keys of Ada's piano under the sea. The camera pulls back and up to reveal the rope, Ada's shoe and finally Ada still attached to her piano floating above with her gowns transforming her into a giant dark balloon. The camera continues to float farther and farther away. The figure of Ada attached to her piano becomes increasingly difficult to see until every trace disappears into the blue saline sea of the uncanny. Ada's Voice Over: *"...I think of my piano in its ocean grave, and sometimes of myself floating above it. Down there everything is so still and silent that it lulls me to sleep. It is a weird lullaby and so it is; it is mine."*

*"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."*<sup>41</sup>

### (FADE TO BLACK)

In the first shot described above, Campion plays intertextually with the myth of castration. Baines has fashioned a prosthesis to make up for Ada's digital lack after suffering a metaphorical castration at the hands of Stewart. On the one hand we have the image of Ada's recovery and return to piano playing, albeit in a more socially functional manner, on the other hand, the image of the prosthetic finger replacing lack while creating a quirky fetish object, as well. Ada's voice over refers to herself as a freak in the eyes of society, which satisfies her. Ada's satisfaction is a reflection of Campion's allusion to *difference* that she has cultivated throughout her film from the non-speaking Ada and her maternal semiotic, to the deconstruction of the Law of the Father and the male gaze.

Before advancing to the next shot of the sequence, we should consider that this first of the final five shots was predicated by an edit and that there is a prior shot of bearing to its meaning. Between this



shot of Ada's prosthetic finger and the previous shot of her pulled from the sea, we have colluded with the filmmaker by (co-)constructing a jump in time and space. What this jump signifies is up for grabs despite Ada's reassuring narration. It is up to the spectator to (re)construct meaning from this abrupt edit. Following the suggestion of Ada's voice over, most spectators will be tempted to collude with the semblance of closure. However, the filmic signs in this rescue shot, imply an excess of meaning as I suggest above.

In the second shot on this epilogue, we read the deconstruction of the marriage ceremony. The veiled bride's leisurely march down the aisle during a lace-strewn ceremony with the Good Book on display, if discreetly positioned in the background. With this allusion to marriage, a comedy is signaled in the traditional poetics of narrative. However, since the bride is arrayed in a black veil, we find ourselves conceding that an element of death is manifest. In the spirit of infinite semiosis,<sup>42</sup> other more religious-based connotations arise from the dark veil that covers her face and reaches down her back.<sup>43</sup> It is sardonic and (Krist)evanesque on Champion's part to mix the allusions of marriage, death and religion. The overt peculiarity of the image is subdued by Ada's soothing extra-diegetic narration. Nevertheless, the dark veil becomes a multi-metaphor. To punctuate the allusion to marriage, Baines, the groom figure, will soon enter the frame to lift the veil and kiss the bride.

However, before Baines walks down the aisle, the ceremony is interrupted by a cutaway to Shot 3 in the sequence. The cutaway is reminiscent of a prior scene in which Flora performs joyous cartwheels in "real time" while screeching out gleefully to her mother who is totally immersed in playing piano on the beach. This time, however, Flora is seen performing silent cartwheels in slow motion reflecting an altered state indicated by the filmic technique reserved for (re)presenting memories and occasions of heightened realities such as fancy, hallucinations, dreams and dying thoughts. The heightened state of the final sequence in the film, is particularly coalesced in this oddly playful shot, and yet attenuated once again by Ada's voice over. This time Ada's voice, still pronouncing phonemes, is a diegetic bridge over the curious, perhaps extra-diegetic, insert of the cutaway depicting Flora's ethereal cartwheels. Again, we collude with the filmmaker who has crafted the guise of closure and yet, barely below our consciousness, we fear the worst.

Shot 4 perfunctorily continues the wedding deconstruction and seals it with a kiss--not before deconstructing the Law of the Father with Ada's phoneme-play. The 'plosive' "papa" voiced under the dark veil is diverse in its meaning and tone--an indictment/conspiracy at once playful as it is clinical.

The final shot of the movie pays homage to the intertextual inclination of the female gaze. Ada's narration overlays the visual of the bottom of the sea and ends with a male-originated intertext. The construct of the film is itself an intertextual homage as it references traditional narrative and contemporary mainstream filmmaking practices while enunciating traces of a post-structuralist feminist discourse. The last shot contains many layers of punctuation many of which are communicated aurally via speech: Ada's language is suggestive of narrative closure, her poignant and cryptic musings, as well as the recited poetry from the film's chosen historical period. Ada's voice over creates multi-metaphors: she refers to silence as a lullaby (songs associated often with music to calm the pre-lingual entity); she claims ownership of the weird lullaby that is the silence of her own watery grave; and finally, the overall sense of Ada's identification with the Imaginary Wholeness of her final/inchoate resting place in the chora/womb of the ocean.

Within the final five shots, and based on a consistent use of these strategies throughout her film, Campion affords us a concise abstract for the female gaze in mainstream movies. Her strategies include deconstruction, which, for the purposes of our discussion, designates image-play and word-play of which the function is to circumvent phallogocentrism. The purpose of circumventing phallogocentrism is to (re)present the multiplicity in signification, which, in turn, valorizes the maternal semiotic enmeshed and colliding with the univocal Symbolic order.

In conclusion, filmmaker Jane Campion in her film *The Piano* opens a significant portal for the analysis of FEMININITY in mainstream movies consistent with post-structuralist feminist theory. This threshold had appeared closed in the commercial film industry. After *The Piano*, the portal and its multivalent space beyond now appear open to mainstream artists and audiences.

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## Notes

1. See the writings of Annette Kuhn, Laura Mulvey, Teresa de Lauretis and Kaja Silverman.

2. Toril Moi, focusing in on FEMININITY (See note 8 below) and the patriarchal economy, states: "Why should feminism remain faithful to the patriarchal project of gendering the world? (...) My own vision of feminism--not of 'femininity'--is for a politics which would abandon every attempt to set up restrictive ideals for female practice, be it textual or sexual. Or to put it radically and polemically: femininity is a patriarchal problem. Feminists must therefore be able to analyze the phenomenon more persuasively than any patriarch could ever do. In their different ways, Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva and Beauvoir all help us to do so. But let us make no bones about it: in the end, femininity is not--and ought never to become--a feminist question." Moi, Toril. "Femininity Revisited." *Journal of Gender Studies* 1 (1992): 324.

I hope to stay within the spirit of this vision. The difficulties in establishing the concept of the female gaze in conventional theory are indicative of the controversies surrounding FEMININITY. To begin with, scholars must come to terms with the double bind in analyzing FEMININITY founded in pre-lingual human development deciphered (decoded/encoded/meta-coded) within the phallogocentric constrictions of language. The post-structuralist reflections on FEMININITY in Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous, contribute to a revolutionary stage in human self-reflexivity indelibly signaled by a body-centered (post-)modernism.

3. Refer to David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. New York City: Columbia University Press, 1985.

4. The usual suspects include Freud and Lacan whose works tend to concentrate on the Symbolic order, i.e., the Name of the Father, and so the phallogocentric hegemony. Further, Lacan and Freud are "usual" suspects in that they are frequently cited in film theory especially in relation to the male gaze, and so are suspect. The uncanny suspects include Kristeva and Irigaray whose works tend to feature extra-symbolic traces of the human condition and so are frequently dismissed.

5. Emma Parker, "From House to Home: A Kristevan Reading of Michele Robert's Daughters of the House." *Critique* 41 (2000): 153. (11).

6. Irigaray: "...what a feminine syntax might be is not simple nor easy to state, because in that 'syntax' would no longer be either subject or object, 'oneness' would no longer be privileged, there would no longer be proper meanings, proper names, 'proper' attributes...Instead, that 'syntax' would involve nearness, proximity, but in such an extreme form that it would preclude any distinction of identities, any establishment of ownership, thus any form of appropriation. (...) There are also more and more texts written by women in which another writing is beginning to assert itself, even if it is still often repressed by the dominant discourse. From my part, I tried to put that syntax into play in *Speculum*, but not simply, to the extent that a single gesture obliged me to go back through the realm of the masculine imaginary. Thus I could not, I cannot install myself like that, serenely and directly, in that other syntactic functioning--and I do not see how any woman could." Whitford, Margaret, ed. *The Irigaray Reader*. 1st ed. (Oxford, England & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991): 136.

7. "Opaqueness of matter, fleeting fluid, vertiginous void between two, a mirror in which the "subject" sees himself and reproduces himself in his reflection, a shutter set up to allow the eye to frame its view, a sheath-envelope that reassures the penis about the mark made by its solitary pressures and imprints, a fertile soil to bear his seed...Never is she one, either male or female.

Unless she competes with the phallosensical homologue..." Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. 1st American Edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985): 240.

8. The term FEMININITY is signaled in this article with capital letters in order to reinforce the latent trace of m/otherness. This word distances itself from the male in (fe)male while retaining a residual fe(male) implication in phallogocentric terms. FEMININITY also suggests to me a quality that is independent of woman-ness, despite and owing to having originated in m/otherness. As distanced from woman-ness via the extra-gender experience of the pre-lingual Imaginary, FEMININITY, as implemented in this article, is positioned outside the binary opposition of man and woman and so free to be explored without essentialist impediments.

9. Margaret Whitford, ed. *The Irigaray Reader*. 1st ed. (Oxford, England & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), 165.

10. Alice A. Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 1985), 25.

11. Leon Roudiez, in his introduction to Margaret Waller's translation of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, explains the differences between Kristeva's semiotic and semiotics: "Her concern does lie within the field of *la semiotique* (i.e., "semiotics" as a general science of signs) but it involves a more specific domain that she calls *le semiotique* ("the semiotic") seen as one of the two components of the signifying process--the other being "the symbolic." While this division is not identical with that of unconscious/conscious, id/superego, or nature/culture, there are analogies here that could be usefully kept in mind. In all four instances there is a constant dialectical process at work, one that has its source in infancy, and is implicated in sexual differentiation. Such a dialectic comprises drives and impulses on the one hand, the family and society structures on the other. One

difference, however, is that the semiotic/symbolic opposition as envisaged here operates within, by means of, and through language." Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* Trans. Margaret Waller. (New York: Columbia University Press: 1984), 4.

12. David R. Crownfield, ed. *Body/text in Julia Kristeva: Religion, Women, and Psychoanalysis*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 96.

13. Martha Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence*. (Bloomington, IN & Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 23.

14. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Trans. Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press: 1980), 238.

15. Kelly Oliver explains: "Part of what makes Kristeva's semiotic chora difficult to read is that it is not homogeneous or univocal. Rather, its meaning and function shift throughout her writings. The fact that the semiotic maternal chora is interpreted in such completely contradictory ways by Kristeva's critics might be proof of this. Kristeva claims that she is concerned with discourses in which identity breaks down. She is concerned with discourses that call up a crisis in identity. For her the discourse of maternity is such a discourse. It is a discourse that, possibly more than any other, points to a subject-in-process." Oliver, Kelly. *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*. Bloomington, IN & Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 48. It is this shifting and identity breakdown that demarcates the innovation of FEMININITY within the realm of the Symbolic.

16. The movies also went through a (semiotic) silent period of development--aurally and even graphically in terms of the written word. Moreover, intertitles (text) preceded the spoken word in film. Silent films dominated the industry from its inception in the early 1890s until the late 1920s. In keeping with the traces of the semiotic, film is referred to as comprising a language and yet still functions as "other" in the sense of its excesses and gaps in syntax. This last concept is implied by Teresa De Lauretis in her book *Technologies on Gender*: "The object of narrative and of film-narrative theory, redefined accordingly, would be not narrative but narrativity, not so much the structure of narrative (its component units and their relations) as its work and effects; it would be less the formulation of a logic, a grammar, or a rhetoric of cinema and to the establishment of film criticism as a humanistic discipline on a par with literary criticism, (...); and it would be less the description of a rhetoric of film narrative than the understanding of narrativity as the structuring and destructuring, even destructive, processes at work in the textual and semiotic relations of spectatorship." de Lauretis, Teresa. *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. 1st ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987): 118. As a structuring, destructuring, even destructive process for the spectator, narrativity and narrative film in particular is closely linked to the pre-lingual otherness of the maternal semiotic chora.

17. Elizabeth Cowie, *Representing Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 166.

18. Irigaray's description of women mimicking the desires of the patriarchal subject speaks to the veil-like quality of the female voice that constructs a mimesis of the phallogocentric address in film. "And when she also openly displays their power fantasies, this serves as a re-creation to them in

their struggle for power. By setting before them, keeping in reserve for them, in her infancy, what they must of course keep clear of in their pursuit of mastery, but which they yet cannot wholly renounce for fear of going off course. So she will be the Pythia who apes induced desires and suggestions foreign to her still hazy consciousness, suggestions that proclaim their credibility all the louder as they carry her ever further from her interests. By resubmitting herself to the established order, in this role of delirious double, she abandons, even denies, the prerogative historically granted for her: unconsciousness. She prostitutes the unconscious itself to the ever-present projects and projections of the masculine consciousness. (Irigaray, 1984, Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the other woman*. 1st American Edition ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985): 141. Furthermore, Kristeva speaks to a devotion some women have to the Symbolic order as a defense/assault against the m/other. She links feminism with this defensive strategy. In *Reading Kristeva*, Oliver states: "As a defense, some women devote themselves to the Symbolic order. Kristeva identifies feminism as one such defense." Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*. (Bloomington, In. & Indianapolis, In.: Indiana University Press, 1993), 62.

19. Exemplar films include [Awakenings](#), [Valley Girl](#), [Fast Times at Ridgemont High](#), and others produced and/or directed by women within the commercial film industry infrastructure. Many of these women producers and directors continue for the most part with the same mimetic strategies.

20. Constance Penley, ed. *Feminism and Film Theory*. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 58.

21. Harvey Greenberg in his article on *The Piano* makes note of Ada's youthful trill in her narration. "The camera peers at the emerging world through the lattice of a child's fingers, while Ada's six-year-old voice tells us she ceased speaking at that age, and does not remember why." Harvey Greenberg, "The Piano." *Film Quarterly* 47 (1994): 46. It could very well be that the filmmakers raised the pitch of Holly Hunter's voice over slightly to give an impression of a six-year-old voice. It is very likely that Ms. Hunter herself, in an interpretive gesture, assumed a higher pitch.

22. "Ada is not so much unable as *unwilling* to speak. She suffers, or, depending upon one's viewpoint, practices elective mutism. This rare, puzzling condition usually develops in early childhood and occurs rather more frequently in girls than boys." Harvey Greenberg, "The Piano." *Film Quarterly* 47 (1994): 46.

23. "The semiotic, on Kristeva's account, is not that which falls outside of language: a state of nature, and eternal feminine. (...) The semiotic, a modality of language, is shaped necessarily by the Symbolic. Consequently, the unconscious, whose legacy the semiotic preserves, is not presented topographically by Kristeva as a wordless mother-land; for the unconscious emerges only in the space of words, in the gaps and fissures of language that mark the speech of the "I," belying its coherent, seamless self-representation as a subject fully in possession of itself." Martha Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence*. (Bloomington, IN & Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 39-40.

24. For more on masquerade and the masking of FEMININITY with the material of phallogocentric directives on FEMININITY, see Jane Ussher's *Fantasies of FEMININITY: Reframing the Boundaries of Sex*, specifically see the pages describing "Doing Girl." Ussher, Jane. *Fantasies of FEMININITY: Reframing the Boundaries of Sex*. 1st ed. London: Penguin Books; New Brunswick,

NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997. 359. Two articles also worth seeing are "Outperforming FEMININITY: Public Conduct and Private Enterprise in Louisa May Alcott's Behind a Mask" by Mary Elliot in *ATQ*, Dec94, Vol. 8 Issue 4, page 299; and "Pretending In "Penelope": Masquerade, Mimicry, And Molly Bloom by K. Devilin published in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* (Fall91), Vol. 25 Issue 1, page 71. See also Mary Ann Doane's article "Film and Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator." In *Screen*, Number 23 (September-October, 1982).

25. "...the systematic play of differences, of traces of differences, of the spacing [espacements] by which elements relate to one another. This spacing is the production, simultaneously active and passive (the *a* of differance indicates this indecision as regards activity and passivity, that which cannot yet be governed and organized by that opposition), of intervals without which the "full" terms could not signify, could not function." Derrida, Jacques. *Positions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 27. Derrida's word-play defending the post-structuralist freedom of the signifier is very much manifest in *Campion* but in the form of image-play rather than word play. Via the deconstruction (active) of and the adherence (passive) to mainstream production practices while featuring the image-play between the profilmic camera (the photographer's still camera), the unfulfilled eyeline match and the filmic camera (the camera which records what we see on the screen), *Campion* effectively demonstrates *difference*.

26. Richard Allen, "Female Sexuality, Creativity, and Desire in *The Piano*." In *Piano Lessons: Approaches to "The Piano"*. First ed., edited by Felicity Coombs and Suzanne Gemmell, 44–63. (Sidney, Australia: John Libbey & Company, 2000), 54.

27. This is an example of intertextuality and lends itself strongly to Ada's extra-lingual condition. Ada is creating a disposable literary corpus via her written word on sheets from a notepad she carries periodically around her neck on a chain. Although her written word is used to communicate with non-signing persons such as Stewart, within the context of *Campion*'s movie, Ada's oeuvre is slightly anterior to its display, and therefore an intertext that is "self-quoted" on the screen. Furthermore, the self-quote is deconstructed because although the definition of Ada's 'text' is literally valid and emphasized by inclusion in the filmic text, it is invalid as a text if we determine that a text should not be disposable. Kristeva, who coined the term intertextuality, addresses the meaning of the term intertextuality in the following way: "The word's status is thus defined horizontally (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as vertically (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus) ... each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read ...any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another." Moril, Toi. *Kristeva Reader*, 1986, 37. The female gaze highlights this multi-textual exchange both as a stylistic choice and as an (appropriately) oblique reference to the intertextual relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic. In this scene, *Campion* is featuring the written (disposable) text linked to the m/other within a motion picture text (linked to narrative structure(alism) which, in turn, is linked to the Symbolic order). In addition, *Campion* uses filmic technique as a text used to reproduce and so render indisposable Ada's written 'disposable' text while referencing music as a (m/other's) text/discourse via Ada's attachment to her piano (...).

28. This barter for sexual favors has caused controversy. Is the exchange a manifestation of Eros or soft porn? bell hooks in her ideologically charged manner suggests that *Campion* is promoting misogynist imagery in her depiction of the relationship between Baines and Ada. She writes that

Baines "...is Norman Mailer's 'white negro,' seducing Ada by promising to return the piano that Stewart has exchanged with him for land." See bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), 119-120. A similar read was made by Robert Kolker in his book *Film Form and Culture*. He writes about Campion and her film: "Jane Campion, a New Zealander, who made a few very strange, interior feminist films in her native country, broke into the American market by mixing soft-core pornography with some stylistic peculiarities in *The Piano* (1993)..." See Robert Kolker, *Film, Form, and Culture*. 1st ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill College, 1999), 174. In another less disparaging vein, Richard Allen, writes: "...the exchange between Ada and Baines involves a certain reciprocity. However, it is a reciprocity conditioned by the terms of a contract. Ada does indeed begin to take pleasure in Baines' attention as her piano playing seems increasingly to become a solicitation, but it is a pleasure that does seem to be conditioned by her willingness to be objectified within a perverse scenario of control and submission. Of course, whether or not the relationship between Ada and Baines is accurately described as perverse is just what is at stake in interpreting these scenes. (...) It is certainly possible to view the "perversity" staged in the film as an hyperbolisation of romance, as a way of portraying the frisson, the electricity of erotic fantasy." See Richard Allen, "Female Sexuality, Creativity, and Desire in *The Piano*." in *Piano Lessons: Approaches to The Piano*. First ed., edited by Felicity Coombs and Suzanne Gemmell, 44-63. (Sidney, Australia: John Libbey & Company, 2000), 59. Cyndy Hendershot also reads less perversity and more eros into Baines and Ada's contract: "Baines has seen the piano from Ada's perspective and hence has come to see it as an object of desire. What he desperately tries to do after this is to place himself in the structural position occupied by the piano vis-a-vis Ada: he tries to make himself the object of Ada's desire. By recognizing Ada's desire and placing his desire within her context, Baines has recognized a fundamental tenet of Lacanian subjectivity: my desire is the desire of the other. Baines is hence decentered, forced to find his desire through Ada's." Hendershot, Cyndy. "(Re)Visioning the Gothic: Jane Campion's *The Piano*." *Literature Film Quarterly* 26, (1998): 97, 4.

29. Mark A. Reid in his comments on the male gaze in terms of strategic camera angles during this sequence: "The audience is complicit in Baines' voyeurism since they view Ada through the perspective of Baines' upskirt low-angle shot." See Mark A. Reid, "A Few Black Keys and Maori Tattoos: Re-Reading Jane Campion's *The Piano* in PostNegritude Time" *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* (Vol. 17, No. 2), 108. Campion successfully mimics the male gaze in this strategic scene that elicits complicity from the spectator. As well as eliciting simultaneously from the spectator the troubling and soothing memory of the Imaginary Wholeness.

30. Stephen Heath in translating Barthes, proposes this definition: "...*jouissance* is specifically contrasted to *plaisir* by Barthes in his *Le Plaisir du texte*: on the one hand a pleasure (*plaisir*) linked to cultural enjoyment and identity, to the cultural enjoyment of identity, to a homogenizing movement of the ego; on the other a radically violent pleasure (*jouissance*) which shatters - dissipates, loses - that cultural identity, that ego." See Roland Barthes and Stephen Heath, eds. & trans. *Image, Music, Text*. 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 9. Kristeva goes further with this violent pleasure that shatters. She associates it with the transgression and euphoria of the maternal semiotic. Martha Reineke explains: "By *jouissance*, Kristeva refers to an excess and surplus of being--inassimilable alterity--that establishes for humans the possibility of creation, communion, newness, pleasure, and transgression." Martha Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence*. (Bloomington, IN & Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 24.

The "inassimilable alterity" refers to the alterity that originates in the space of the maternal other, the m/other.

31. Jacques Lacan is exacting when it comes to defining the psychic space of love, a liminal space equally shared by the Law of the Father and the m/other: " (...)--at the junction of the symbolic and imaginary, this fault line, if you will, this ridge line called love--... Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*. Trans. John Forrester. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company: 1988), 271.

32. Kelly Oliver explains Kristeva's departure from Lacan in this transitional stage in human development: "The discourse of psychoanalysis postulates the fundamentally split subject, both conscious and unconscious, a subject-in-process/on trial. Her notion of subject-in-process, however, challenges Lacanian psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the mirror stage and the Name of the Father as the initiation into subjectivity. For her, subjectivity is a process that begins with the material body before the mirror stage. It is a process that has its beginnings in the maternal function rather than the paternal function. The maternal body itself is a primary model of the subject-in-process." See Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*. (Bloomington, In. & Indianapolis, In.: Indiana University Press, 1993), 13.

33. Alison Weber in her wonderful study of FEMININITY and rhetoric as represented by the writing of Saint Teresa of Avila, suggests that the double bind is conducive to a form of meta-discourse which she calls meta-communication: "Although the double bind was originally formulated as part of the etiology of schizogenic family structures, subsequent research has explored the salutary and creative responses to the bind. Double bind dilemmas can be handled without despair if the subject is able, in some way, to distinguish and acknowledge the interwoven components of the message. This may be done by giving a manifestly dual message in reply: instead of being paralyzed by the attempt to reconcile conflicting demands, the subject can reply illogically, with paradoxes of his or her own. A sufficiently resourceful subject can also break off or redefine the emotional dependency of the binding relationship. Finally, the subject can learn to meta-communicate--to appreciate and articulate the logical paradox in the bind..." See Weber, Alison. *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of FEMININITY*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 48. There is a certain parallel in Campion's post-structuralist feminist discourse in film vis-à-vis the double bind in mainstream cinema and Saint Teresa of Avila's "metacommunicative" writings vis-à-vis the double-bind in mainstream Catholic religious practices during the 16th century.

34. In the spirit of infinite semiosis, and the uncanny polysemy of the maternal semiotic, we are driven to consider several possibilities from the signs that Campion displays. Given that previously Ada told Flora that she has communicated telepathically with Flora's father, it is conceivable that Ada communicates telepathically with Baines during their interlude and that he is asking for a whisper to verify her thoughts reaching his mind. If this is the case, it speaks for Baines as he is the only male who does not express fear of her extrasensory abilities. This scene lends itself to multiple readings and is consistent with Campion's deconstruction of the Law of the Father.

35. In contrast, Richard Allen argues that Ada actually enters the Symbolic order like an awakening to her 'lack' of Imaginary Wholeness which is essentially what transpires for a child during the Mirror Phase. Allen states: "Insofar as Ada's subjectivity in the film is defined by a bodily



narcissism, her awakening to the world of sexual desire comes at a great cost, for she is also awakened to the fact of her own lack of self-sufficiency." Richard Allen, "Female Sexuality, Creativity, and Desire in *The Piano*." In *Piano Lessons: Approaches to The Piano*. First ed., edited by Felicity Coombs and Suzanne Gemmell, 44–63. (Sidney, Australia: John Libbey & Company, 2000), 60. Campion, however, has indicated in the film that Ada has experienced sexual desire in the past and has retained her bodily narcissism while sharing in the speaking subject's adult desire. She has and has not entered the Symbolic order.

36. Emma Parker references an etymological polysemy in Freud's use of the word uncanny. "In his essay "The Uncanny" (1919), Freud explains that the uncanny or unhomely (the literal translation of the German *unheimlich*) is related to what is frightening, to what arouses dread and horror and gives rise to feelings of repulsion and distress, and he gives death, dead bodies, the return of the dead, spirits and ghosts as prime examples (17:219;241). However, he expands that definition by adding that, rather than deriving from the unfamiliar (as the term itself might suggest), the uncanny "is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (17:220). It is the return of the repressed, as Freud explains: "[T]his uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it through the process of repression. ...the uncanny is something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light. ("The Uncanny" 241)" Emma Parker, "From House to Home: A Kristevan Reading of Michele Robert's *Daughters of the House*." *Critique* 41 (2000): 153.7. In a manner of speaking, Ada's connection to the chora and her outlaw affair with Baines ought to have remained hidden but instead have come to light. Stewart tries to hide her/it away within the phallogocentric construct (re)presented by his barricaded cabin.

37. Richard Allen, "Female Sexuality, Creativity, and Desire in *The Piano*." In *Piano Lessons: Approaches to The Piano*. First ed., edited by Felicity Coombs and Suzanne Gemmell, 44–63. (Sidney, Australia: John Libbey & Company, 2000), 55.

38. Neil Robinson, "With Choices Like These, Who Needs Enemies?: *The Piano*, Women's Articulations, Melodrama, and the Woman's Film." In *Piano Lessons: Approaches to The Piano*. First ed., edited by Felicity Coombs and Suzanne Gemmell, 44–63. (Sidney, Australia: John Libbey & Company, 2000), 33.

39. Silverman expands on Kracauer to convey this special connection between the spectator and filmic (re)presentation: "The life for which this spectator yearns is, of course, his or her own. Kracauer makes that clear not only through his emphasis upon the cinephile's self-alienation, but through the natal metaphor by means of which he articulates the ideal relationship between the cinematic apparatus and the profilmic event. Films, he writes, conform most rigorously to our dreams when the camera seems as if it has "just now extricated [its objects] from the womb of physical existence as if the umbilical cord between image and actuality [has] not yet been severed." (p. 164). Kracauer's viewer longs not only for the restoration of this "actuality," but for the return of a presubjective condition, as well. Significantly, the life line leading back to fusion and nondifferentiation is the indexical relation of the camera to its object." Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 8. Silverman compares the disavowed connection between the camera and the profilmic object to the umbilical cord connecting the subject with the m/other and nondifferentiation. And this in turn affords the viewer an oblique link to the maternal semiotic in

the Imaginary. We receive pleasure from many levels of awareness while experiencing the filmic event, one of which coincides with the vicarious uncanny fusion of our subjectivity and objectivity as experienced prior to language, prior to the Symbolic order, prior to the mirror phase.

40. In juxtaposing a male subject's poem interpreted vocally by the mute female protagonist in a voice over accompanying the undersea visuals (re)presenting the maternal semiotic, *Campion* signals an inclusive, non-essentialist FEMININITY in the semiotic underpinnings of the Symbolic order. The implied continuum of difference /differance in the signification of FEMININITY/masculinity is substantiated by the pre-lingual, pre-oedipal stage in human development indelibly marked by the maternal economy. In this shot, *Campion* engages in intertextual practice emphasizing the free exchange of masculine and feminine enunciation, as well as man and woman enunciating, within the sphere of FEMININITY.

41. Thomas Hood (1799-1845): 'Sonnet: Silence'. Jane Campion, *The Piano*. New York: Miramax Books(London: Hyperion; Bloomsbury Publishing, Ltd.Hyperion, 1993), 123.

42. See the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce.

43. Including perhaps, in a more deconstructive manner, Irigaray's call for the display of veiled Virgin Mary icons as emblematic of differance in feminist circles. "...her recent recommendation that women hang pictures of the Virgin Mary and her mother in their houses in order to produce the 'sexualized culture' [culture sexuee] desired by Irigaray (see Je, tu, nous, Paris, Grasset, 1990, p. 58)." Moi, Toril. "FEMININITY Revisited." *Journal of Gender Studies* 1 (1992), 324.