

The Double “Others” under Gender Oppression and Colonial Cultural Conflicts in *The Piano*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the complex intersection of gender oppression and colonial cultural conflicts in Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993), focusing on the protagonist Ada's dual “Other” identity in a colonial context. As a Scottish immigrant woman in 19th-century New Zealand, Ada experiences both gender-based subjugation under patriarchal norms and cultural marginalization as an outsider in colonial society. Using Homi K. Bhabha's theory of “cultural hybridity” and “Third Space”, the study analyzes how Ada resists oppression through the piano, a symbol that becomes her emotional outlet and a medium for constructing cultural identity. Ada's silence challenges traditional gender roles, while the piano serves as a “Third Space” where she survives between colonial and indigenous cultures. The paper highlights Ada's process of “mimicry and distortion”—imitating societal expectations of women while subverting them through musical expression—and critiques the film's Eurocentric narrative that sidelines Māori women's experiences. Ultimately, *The Piano* exemplifies how female identity under colonialism is shaped by dual oppressions, and how cultural hybridity enables resistance and self-formation. Ada's story underscores the power of art and silence as tools for reclaiming agency in patriarchal and colonial contexts.

KEYWORDS

The Piano; Jane Campion; Gender Oppression; Colonial Cultural Conflict; Cultural Hybridity; Third Space.

1. INTRODUCTION

Jane Campion is a renowned female director known for her delicate filmmaking style. She is the only woman to have won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and the first woman to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Director twice. Campion's distinct narrative approach and artistic philosophy offer significant insights for film studies. Nowadays, gender issues have become central to many contemporary discussions, with an increasing number of films highlighting these themes. Campion stands out for her unique ability to approach these topics from a female perspective, presenting complex female characters through subtle and nuanced storytelling. Her contributions to both the commercial success and artistic achievement of women in film have had a profound impact on the development of feminist cinema.

The Piano, released in 1993, quickly garnered attention worldwide. The film won the prestigious Palme d'Or at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival and received numerous accolades, including Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress at the 1994 Academy Awards, as well as the Golden Globe for Best Actress. *The Piano* marked a significant maturation in Campion's filmmaking career, with its narrative techniques, thematic depth, and aesthetic complexity serving as a model for both academic and industry analyses. The film is often hailed as a classic of feminist cinema, exploring the

awakening of female consciousness, the resilience, wisdom, and strength of women, and their unwavering love for life despite societal constraints.

Colonialism, as a political and economic force, also deeply affects gender relations and the social status of women. In colonial societies, women's roles are shaped not only by their gender but also by the power structures imposed by colonization, leading to a double oppression marked by both cultural conflict and gendered patriarchal domination (Loomba, 1998; Kaplan, 1986).

This paper will focus on *The Piano* to explore the complexities of female identity in a colonial context, examining how gender, cultural conflict, and colonial oppression intertwine to shape individual emotions and identities. The paper will address the following questions: How does the film portray the intersection of gender oppression, colonial cultural conflict, and the "Other" identity through the character of Ada? How do these influence Ada's emotions, actions and resistance?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This part will review studies related to Jane Campion and her film career, the Piano, the portrayal of female images.

2.1. Research on Jane Campion

Born in Wellington in 1953, Jane Campion grew up in a colonial context, shaped by both Māori indigenous and Anglo-Saxon cultures. The clash and integration of primitive and modern civilizations provided rich material for her work.

There is a significant body of scholarly research on Campion's films and their feminist dimensions. Du (2012) explores Campion's growing up experience as a filmmaker, tracing her development from early essentialist tendencies to a phase characterized by a fusion of diverse feminist perspectives. Du argues that this evolution culminates in Campion's unique artistic style, where she embraces freedom of expression rather than adhering to any particular feminist ideology. This development mirrors the broader shifts in feminist discourse, reflecting the changing ways in which women's roles are understood in society.

Female characters play a central role in Campion's film (Yang, 2005). Almost all films focus on marginalized women, who are either actively distancing from or being passively excluding from the mainstream society. This is the important reason for Jane to create these female images. With the help of image language, she delicately presents the personal or societal factors that contribute to these women's marginalization, and actively explores the road of women's social survival, especially in the male-dominated society (Cui, 2016). Deb Verhoeven's *Jane Campion* (2009) examines how Campion has shaped her identity as a filmmaker within contemporary cinema. Verhoeven highlights Campion's distinctive audiovisual language and the symbolic use of imagery to portray women's emotions and life experiences. This book focuses on how Campion's work engages with complex gendered narratives, highlighting the director's innovative approach to portraying female subjectivity. Alistair Fox (2011) offers a deep analysis of Campion's influence on the representation of gender and identity in cinema. Fox argues that Campion's films reveal the evolving experiences of women across various historical and cultural contexts, demonstrating how her work showcases the diverse and nuanced expressions of female identity in different situations. In *In the Scene: Jane Campion* (2018), Ellen Cheshire explores how Campion addresses central themes such as female subjectivity, desire, gender, and identity. Cheshire argues that the female characters in Campion's films are often depicted as active agents in seeking self-fulfillment and freedom. They challenge traditional gender roles and societal norms, reflecting the rise of female power and self-awareness. These characters are not content to passively accept their positions in a patriarchal society but are instead brave in expressing their desires and will. Peng (2016) contends that the feminism presented in Campion's films is not radical or overtly adversarial to men. Rather, it acknowledges the legitimacy of women's resistance

to oppression while simultaneously recognizing the importance of harmonious gender relations. Campion's work strikes a balance between advocating for women's rights and promoting mutual respect between genders.

2.2. Research on the Film *The Piano*

The rise of feminist cinema has been accompanied by an increasing number of works that explore female identity and experiences. However, successful film practices remain relatively rare. Some female feminist directors' works risk portraying women in extreme ways: either as radical "female heroes" who try to overcome men but lose their femininity, or through an overemphasis on lesbian themes, which often exaggerate the emotional divide between women and men (Sun, 2015).

For over two decades, academic interest in *The Piano* has remained robust, particularly in its thematic exploration. Many scholars have focused on its representation of female awakening and the ways in which the film uses Ada's perspective to explore gender and cultural conflicts. Fan (2015) argues that Ada's muteness in the film represents a rejection of passive femininity, embodying a journey of self-discovery and feminist resistance. McNamara (2002) contends that Campion challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations, highlighting the complex process of female self-expression and subjectivity. The film's use of silence and the symbolic presence of the piano illustrate Ada's resistance to the oppressive social structures around her, with the piano serving as both a medium of communication and a symbol of her agency. Additionally, *The Piano* subverts traditional cinematic portrayals of the male gaze. Zhang (2016) and Li (2015) discuss the pivotal moment when Ada opens the curtains and gazes upon Baines' naked body. Unlike other female characters who might shy away from such an image, Ada confronts it directly, taking control of the gaze. This inversion of the traditional male gaze marks a significant departure from classical cinema, where women are typically objectified as subjects of male desire. In this way, the film empowers the female character by positioning her as the one who looks, rather than being looked at.

However, the film has also faced criticism. Li (2018), adopting a postcolonial perspective, critiques *The Piano* for its lack of a class-conscious feminist approach. She argues that the film's white, elite feminism fails to address the complexities of race and class within female identity, particularly in the context of colonialism. According to Li, the film portrays women as isolated from one another across racial and class boundaries, with Third World women remaining "silenced others" who are, in turn, objectified within this Western feminist framework.

Scholars have also explored the usage of elements such as music, the piano. Zhu (2003) offers a detailed formal analysis of the film, focusing on aspects such as composition, camera movement, color, and music. These elements are intricately woven into the film's narrative structure and thematic concerns, contributing to the overall storytelling. Zhu (2022), using Saussure's semiotics and Freud's psychoanalysis, interprets the feminist consciousness in *The Piano*. She discusses the metaphorical use of female symbols and the shifting dynamics of the female psyche, emphasizing how the film portrays the awakening of women's self-awareness within a patriarchal society. Through the character of Ada, the film explores the fluidity and reconstruction of the female psyche. Huang (2021) analyzes the use of camera language and its connection to Ada's awakening of female consciousness. Ada's pianistic performance serves as a literal metaphor for the constitution and construction of her subjectivity and self-expression (Knight, 2006). Chang (2020) focuses on the role of piano music in advancing the plot and shaping the characters' emotions. The piano music is both an emotional outlet for Ada and a means of conveying the film's thematic shifts. The theme music "The Sacrifice" underscores moments when Ada expresses her emotions explicitly, acting as an external manifestation of her inner conflicts (Qiu, 2015).

2.3. Research on Female Images in Films

Feminist film theory, as one of the significant manifestations of the feminist movement, centers on the crucial question of *what women are in film*. This question deeply explores the various challenges and dilemmas women face within films.

Female images and representations in film exhibit several key characteristics. First, “typification” refers to the frequent portrayal of women in films as one-dimensional characters, confined to stereotypical roles such as the devoted wife, the nurturing mother, or the seductive femme fatale. These portrayals limit the diversity of female characters and hinder audiences from gaining a more comprehensive understanding of women’s roles in society (Mulvey, 1975). Such stereotypical depictions reinforce traditional gender norms and constrain the complexity of women’s identities on screen.

Second, “symbolization” is another pattern in which female characters are often reduced to symbols or signs within a narrative. Women in films are frequently assigned specific symbolic meanings, such as being the symbol of love or motherhood. This symbolic treatment reduces women to mere representations, stripping them of their individuality and autonomy (Lindsey, 2018).

Third, “absence” is a pervasive issue, with many films marginalizing or even silencing female characters. In numerous films, women’s stories are neglected, and their presence and influence are minimized. The marginalization of women reflects broader societal tendencies to overlook or undermine women’s voices, which often results in the erasure of their significance in personal and public spheres (de Lauretis, 1984).

Finally, “social construction” refers to the way in which female characters are shaped by societal gender expectations and cultural norms. These external influences are reflected in the roles women play in films, where they often embody the ideals and limitations imposed on them by a patriarchal society. Social biases surrounding gender frequently reinforce traditional portrayals of women, further cementing the dominance of male perspectives in both film and culture (Clover, 1992). In a patriarchal context, these portrayals not only reflect gendered power dynamics but also perpetuate them, restricting the potential for female characters to transcend traditional roles.

Thus, feminist filmmakers aim to challenge the traditional male-dominated cinematic gaze, offering alternative perspectives that allow women to reclaim their voices. Feminist film theory advocates for the dismantling of traditional representations of women and seeks to create space for female subjectivity and empowerment. Publications like *Women and Film*, founded in 1972, and influential writings such as Claire Johnston’s *Women’s Cinema as Counter-Cinema* (1973), have played pivotal roles in this effort. Johnston (1973) critiqued the narrowness of female representation in mainstream cinema, arguing that gender bias resulted in limited, one-dimensional portrayals of women as symbolic objects rather than complex characters.

2.4. Research Gap

While there has been substantial scholarly attention on Jane Campion’s *The Piano*, particularly focusing on the film’s emotional and romantic aspects, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the intersection of cultural and colonial influences on female identity, specifically in the context of immigration and gender oppression. Much of the existing research tends to emphasize either the emotional or the cultural aspects of Ada’s character, often overlooking how these elements interact and shape her complex identity.

Ada, as an immigrant woman in a colonial setting, experiences a dual layer of oppression - both from the patriarchal structures and from the cultural conflicts of her status as an outsider in the foreign land. This duality of her identity, caught between colonial cultural expectations and gendered oppression, has not been fully explored. A comprehensive analysis must consider both the gendered and the

cultural dimensions of Ada's experience simultaneously, in order to fully understand the complexity of her identity formation and the dual pressures she faces.

Therefore, this study will seek to fill this gap by examining how Ada in a patriarchal and colonial environment shapes her identity, and how this intersection of cultural and gendered oppression informs her emotional journey, so as to grasp the complexities of identity formation under dual pressures of gender and cultural conflicts.

3. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The concept of "hybridity" originates from biology but has been widely applied in the field of social science. It refers to a hybrid entity formed through the interaction of two distinct sides, retaining traits of both yet differing from both, while also possessing advantages that neither of the original sides could achieve alone. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha introduces the notion of hybridity in the colonial context. He argues that the cultural interaction between colonizers and colonized subjects is not merely a one-way relationship of domination and submission, but rather a complex, dynamic process of cultural collision and intertwining. This interaction does not produce fixed or clear-cut boundaries; instead, it leads to the creation of new identities and cultural forms, thus fostering an ongoing fluidity and change in cultural recognition.

Bhabha asserts that colonial culture is not simply determined by the colonizers or the native culture, but rather is formed through the interactions, conflicts, and fusion of both. This "hybrid culture" is not the mere merging of two cultures, but a new cultural form that emerges from the conflict and redefinition inherent in the colonial process. In this exchange, both colonial and indigenous cultures are continually recreated, altered, and made fluid. Furthermore, hybridity leads to the fluidity and uncertainty of identity, as cultural boundaries are no longer fixed. Bhabha contends that the colonized subject often, while imitating the colonizers, also shows tendencies to "distort" and "subvert" the colonial norms. This process of "mimicry and distortion" complicates identity, which is no longer a static "colonial identity" or "native identity," but a dynamic and evolving cultural expression formed through the continuous interplay of both cultures. Bhabha argues that cultural exchange cannot be simplified into binary oppositions, and that the purity of either culture is impossible to maintain in such exchanges. In areas of cultural contact, a "third space" inevitably exists, where cultural differences interact. This third space allows for the negotiation of identity, where both the colonizer and the colonized construct their cultural identity through this hybrid interaction (Liu, 2015).

Additionally, this paper will use several research methods. First, textual analysis will be used to closely examine the scenes, dialogues, and character interactions in the film. Second, semiotic analysis will be employed to examine the symbolic role of the piano in the film, which serves as both an emotional and cultural symbol for Ada's identity. The piano reflects her struggles with both her gendered oppression and her cultural dislocation. Finally, cross-cultural comparative analysis will be utilized to explore the tension between Ada's native culture and the foreign, colonial culture she is immersed in.

In sum, through these theoretical and methodological approaches, this study will delve into the complexity of Ada's identity as a "double other," exploring how her gendered struggles intersect within the colonial context.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Immigrant Identity and Cultural Clash

19th-century New Zealand was a typical colonial environment, where the conflict and interaction between British colonial culture and indigenous Māori culture formed the social background in the

film. British colonial culture was characterized by patriarchy, hierarchy, and individualism, while Māori culture emphasized collectivism, strong family ties to the land, and a particular respect for women. The colonial process brought about a profound cultural erosion in Māori society, as well as significant shifts in gender roles. Māori women, who once held a certain degree of social power, found their roles oppressed and restricted with the onset of colonization. In the film, many Māori women are depicted as subjugated and marginal figures.

Ada's experience is not merely about "adapting" or "assimilating" but rather about forging a unique identity within the clash of these two cultures. Her identity is shaped by both the colonial forces that oppress her and her own attempts to assert her independence through cultural expression.

Ada, a Scottish immigrant in 19th-century New Zealand, faces a complex cultural collision within the colonial context. Ada's immigrant identity places her in a dual role, not only as a "victim" of colonial culture but also as an active participant in seeking self-identity. Her experience is defined by more than just her gender conflict with Stewart; it is also a profound exploration of her personal identity in relation to the cultural forces surrounding her. Stewart, representing the patriarchal order, imposes control over Ada's body and emotions, reinforcing the cultural dominance of British colonialism. Ada's sense of self and identity appears fragile under this cultural suppression. However, Ada is not merely a passive victim of colonial oppression. Through her attachment to the piano, the film shows her seeking personal independence and emotional expression. In her relationship with Stewart, Ada does not merely submit to colonial culture but uses the piano as a symbolic tool to express her innermost desires and emotions. The piano becomes a channel through which she explores not only her emotional state but also her cultural identity. As a symbol of Western culture, the piano provides Ada with a means of resistance and self-expression in a patriarchal and repressive colonial environment.

4.2. The Duality of "Otherness"

Ada, as both a woman and an immigrant, experiences a heightened sense of "otherness" in the colonial island. As a Scottish female immigrant, her appearance, language, and customs are distinct from both the Māori culture and the British colonial settlers. Her immigrant identity places her in a double marginalized position within colonial society: on one hand, she is "the Other" in the eyes of the colonial culture, and on the other, she faces further "othering" due to her gender.

Stewart, as a typical colonial male figure, represents the traditional male authority in the colonial society. He not only imposes gender oppression on Ada within their family but also attempts to control her emotions and actions in the name of maintaining family "stability and order." His control is not limited to her speech or emotional expression but extends to his expectations of Ada's "submissive" role within the family. He demands that Ada confine her role to that of a wife and mother, thereby stripping her of her freedom as an independent individual. Under the patriarchal system, representations of mothers in cinema are often portrayed as self-sacrificing symbols of love. The mother's life is depicted as revolving entirely around her children, willing to sacrifice everything—even her life—for their benefit. This portrayal reinforces the idea that when a woman is defined as a mother, she is stripped of her own desires and autonomy, and her individuality is often ignored; her existence seems solely to serve the needs of the family and children.

Ada, as a "non-traditional" woman, challenges these gender norms. Her silence, her dependence on the piano, and her emotional independence are all acts of defiance against the societal expectations. Within the relationship with Stewart, Ada does not actively participate in the domestic duties or embrace the traditional role of wife. Her neglect in caring for her daughter further challenges traditional gender expectations. In a conventional context, these actions would be deemed unacceptable, yet Ada's isolation on a remote island provides her the space to listen to her inner voice. She does not completely succumb to the norms and constraints imposed by society, but instead, she bravely struggles and resists.

Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, discusses how women, within a patriarchal context, occupy the position of “the Other.” Women are not only viewed as subordinate but are often placed in positions of powerlessness and silence. In the film, when Stewart strikes a deal with Baines, exchanging Ada’s piano for 80 acres of land, he does so without hesitation, completely disregarding Ada’s feelings and dissatisfaction—her rage, throwing the cup, and discarding her clothes. He views her actions as a threat to his authority as the head of the household. His identity and decisions are not to be questioned or undermined, as shown in his statement: “*You can’t go on like this. We’re a family now. We all make sacrifices, and so will you. You will teach him and I will see to it.*” From this, it is clear that Ada is viewed as an instrument for Stewart’s own benefit. Also, when Baines returns the piano to Ada, Stewart’s furious reaction reveals this: “*This isn’t yours. What are you doing with the piano? Hmm? Put that down. Put it down. You’re very cunning. Ada. I’ve seen through you. I’m not going to lose the land this way. Stay there.*” Stewart instinctively fears that Ada’s actions will interfere with his interests.

Women’s consciousness is a cross-cultural and cross-racial concept (Mulvey, 1975), and emphasizes the experiences and awareness of women as individuals. In a patriarchal society, female consciousness manifests in the rejection of the traditional definitions of “woman” imposed by the male-dominated society, as well as in the challenge and subversion of patriarchy. This concept also includes the concern and expression of women’s living conditions, emotions, and experiences. In Victorian society, it was generally believed that a respectable woman should not desire to control her own fate; rather, she should regard “love, devotion, and obedience” as her greatest joy (Shi, 2004). In other words, women living in that era were not allowed an independent sense of self. They were seen as subordinates to their fathers and husbands, and both society and women themselves suppressed and denied female consciousness. Rather than accepting the gender roles assigned by patriarchal society, Ada expresses and resists her oppression through silence and music (the piano). Her dependence on the piano as a means to express suppressed emotions is not only an assertion of her right to self-expression but also a silent protest against her husband’s control. Furthermore, most of the film is shot from Ada’s perspective, allowing the audience to experience her emotional and psychological state directly. At critical moments in the film, Ada’s emotional expression is conveyed non-verbally—through her piano playing, physical gestures, and body language—further emphasizing her “muted” status and the confusion of her cultural identity.

4.3. The Construction of the “Third Space”

In Homi Bhabha’s “cultural hybridity” theory, the “Third Space” refers to the space where two or more cultures intersect and create new meanings. This space does not solely belong to one specific culture, but rather emerges from the conflict and interaction between different cultures. For Ada, the piano becomes a central symbol in constructing her Third Space. Throughout Ada’s journey of immigration and cultural identity, the piano serves not only as a tool for personal emotional expression but also as a “Third Space” where she seeks to find her position amidst cultural clashes.

The piano appears frequently throughout the film, and much of the plot is driven by its presence. Ada views the piano as her spiritual refuge, using it to express her emotions. It becomes the primary means of emotional communication and the lifeline she depends on (Huang, 2021). For instance, at the beginning of the film, when Ada arrives on the island, her inner world is filled with anxiety and fear, surrounded by desolate and bleak landscapes. The piano offers her a means to alleviate this solitude and anxiety. It becomes the only way for her to converse and express her feelings in this foreign land. The piano, thus, becomes a channel for Ada to release her suppressed emotions. While waiting for her husband Stewart’s arrival, Ada plays the piano to ease her tension. The music, at this moment, is not just a sound—it conveys the emotional fluctuations and psychological state that Ada is experiencing. The piano’s melodies mirror her feelings and help her find a sliver of comfort and self-recognition in an unfamiliar, isolated world. In this sense, the piano is not only a vessel for Ada’s

emotions but also a symbolic “Third Space” where she constructs her cultural identity and emotional release.

Moreover, the piano carries significant symbolic meaning. It is contrasted with the indigenous Māori culture, which represents the primitive and natural world. In this context, the piano symbolizes civilization, while Māori culture represents the “other”-the untamed, indigenous world. Through this contrast, the film showcases Ada’s identity conflict during this cultural clash: she cannot fully integrate into colonial culture nor can she return to her Scottish traditions. The piano offers a cultural buffer and a transitional medium between these two worlds. The piano also symbolizes Ada’s longing and pursuit of love. It is through the piano that Ada finds the courage to pursue her desires, and it becomes a means for her soul’s rebirth. Baines, through the piano, gradually connects with Ada’s inner world, with the piano forming a bridge between them. The piano thus allows Ada to release long-suppressed emotional desires. Simultaneously, the piano represents Ada’s attachment to her homeland’s culture. For Ada, the piano is more than just a musical instrument; it carries her nostalgic yearning and emotional dependency on her Scottish roots. In the foreign environment, the piano becomes her sole emotional anchor, a link to her homeland’s culture.

The piano thus functions as Ada’s “Third Space”, and offers Ada an independent means of self-expression, one that is separate from gender and societal norms.

4.4. The Process of “Imitation and Distortion”

The emotional relationships between Ada and Stewart, as well as between Ada and Baines, illustrate a dual process of “imitation” and “distortion.” Ada’s emotional dependency on her husband and her emotional projection onto Baines exemplify this hybrid identity. She both imitates the familial roles prescribed by colonial society and subverts these roles in a distorted manner-such as using the piano to express emotions.

Ada’s relationship with Stewart can be seen as the beginning of this imitation and distortion process. Stewart, as a typical male figure, embodies the authoritative control over women and the expected familial roles. Initially, Ada is forced into this marriage, conforming to colonial society’s traditional expectations of women-as mother, wife, and subordinate member of the family. Her emotional dependency on Stewart, especially her silence and subordination, reflects her “imitation” of these gendered roles. However, Ada’s subordination is not entirely passive. Through “distortion”, she subtly resists the patriarchal structures that oppress her. While outwardly obedient, she uses the piano as a means of emotional expression and desires-an act of defiance against the traditional family roles. The piano becomes her only tool to articulate her suppressed emotions, reflecting her resistance through a non-verbal and artistic distortion of the domestic roles expected of her. This “imitation and distortion” duality makes Ada’s identity more complex and fluid: she is neither fully submissive nor fully rebellious, but exists in a liminal space between the two, embodying a fluid identity.

4.5. The Awakening of “Some” Women

However, the film is primarily told from the white perspective, neglecting the presence and perspectives of the indigenous Māori people, and erasing the colonial history. Māori women remain marginalized in the narrative, but fully internalize patriarchal and colonial norms. Feminism is not just about the awakening of women’s self-awareness but also about turning the gaze toward the marginalized-those who are overlooked by mainstream narratives. The film still operates within a Eurocentric narrative. Ada’s awakening and rebellion represent the experience of white women, but they do not address the struggles of indigenous Māori women, who are effectively sidelined in the colonial context.

5. CONCLUSION

The Piano deeply explores the complex intersection of immigrant culture and gender oppression through Ada's character. Ada faces dual "Other" identities in colonial island-she is both an "outsider" due to cultural differences and a victim of gender oppression for rejecting the traditional role of wife. Through the piano, Ada creates a "third space," which serves as both a medium and space for emotional expression and cultural identity. The piano not only helps Ada resist her husband Stewart's authority but also becomes a tool for her to struggle with and reflect on her identity in the face of oppression. In her relationship with Stewart, Ada's submission and resistance demonstrate the dual processes of "mimicry and distortion." She mimics the colonial society's expectations of women while using music, through the piano, to distort these roles. In doing so, Ada forms a complex and fluid identity.

As Wang (2002) noted, "If a film is a product of a particular social and cultural context, it must reflect certain social contradictions and ideologies." Although *The Piano* is set in the Western colonial culture, the cultural conflicts and gender oppression it depicts hold universal relevance. The film portrays a woman's resistance and struggle under oppression, revealing the hidden passions and desires. Ada's story is not only a symbol of female awakening in her era but also illustrates how she maintains her agency by refusing to speak, thereby resisting the deprivation of her voice.

Throughout film development history, female characters are often "demonized" or "distorted," marginalized and objectified. However, Jane Campion redefines the female images through her unique perspective and storytelling techniques to explore the problems and oppression faced by women. *The Piano* refuses to present women as objects to be scrutinized or defined, nor as tools or accessories to men. The female characters, especially Ada, have independent personalities and courageously pursue their ideal worlds. By deconstructing male-dominated discourse, Ada's silence and resilience become the film's central themes. Her independence is not only a subversion of traditional female roles but also an affirmation of her self-worth.

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