



[National College of Art & Design

Visual Communications]

An analysis of music
and it's concept as a
form of communication
in Jane Campion's film
The Piano ['93]

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I would like to thank **Ruth Barton** for her wisdom and patience and **Brian Hand** for his aggravation.

“ A sound must never come to the help of an image, nor an image to the help of a sound.
Image and sound must not support each other, but must work each in turn through a sort of *relay*. ”

Robert Bresson
Sight & Hearing
In Weis & Belton ('85) page 149

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“ Describing [film music's] functions
is rather like describing a beautiful
woman- there's no way of doing
it adequately. ”

Tony Thomas
Music for the Movies
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[Introduction]

“ Condemed to wires and hammers,
Strike every cord that you feel,
That broken trees,
and elephant ivories conceal. ”

Joni Mitchell
Ludwig's Tune
For The Roses ['72]

¹ Campion '93 page 92

This dissertation is the result of a curiosity that haunted me after viewing Jane Campion's, *The Piano* ('93). A curiosity that crept inside me; for what I took away with me from this film was Ada's (Holly Hunter) playing. "Her playing is strange, like a mood that passes into you. You cannot teach that, Nessie, one may like to learn but that could not be taught..... To have a sound creep inside you is not all pleasant." - Aunt Morag (Kerry Walker) ¹

What crept inside me was not a character made from words, but one made of musical notes.

To come away from a film with mainly music trapped inside, is surely proof that pure musical codes coupled with the moving image is a powerful marriage a marriage that plays upon our emotional system, as a pianist would play upon a piano.

The function of music in film has not been written on extensively, to put it mildly. Research on this subject has proved quite demanding. References on such a topic were hidden in unlikely articles, bibliographies and books that dealt with sound in film much more than music in film.

Robert Phillip Kolker has said:

"Film criticism has yet to develop an analytic vocabulary appropriate to the complexity of music's interaction with the narrative or its function in helping to create the narrative. (Eisenstein made a start many years ago, but certainly the difficulties in learning music theory have prevented film critics from carrying his work forward.)" ²

² Kolker '80, page 15

I wish to discuss film music as a form of communication in film, and to use *The Piano* as a vehicle for that discussion. In doing so I will attempt to answer the following questions:

**How is Ada's (Holly Hunter) character
formed when her piano is her voice?**

**What is it that Ada conceals or reveals
when immersed in her playing?**

**How do we (the audience), Baines
(Harvey Keitel), Stewart (Sam Neil),
and Flora (Anna Paquin) react to Ada's
form of communication?**

**Does music and its concept give any
insight into the film's conclusion?**

These topics will be answered in a progression of thought in three parts,
that will deal with:

Music on the Silver Screen:

The aesthetics of film music and its history.

Sexuality, diegetic and nondiegetic music:

How music can reveal and conceal sexuality.

Communication:

The third and final part of this dissertation will deal
with the characters' ability or disability to communicate
musically and the frustration behind such a mode of discourse.

Before I present the aesthetic and psychological discussions, I would like to
examine the historical and technological reasons for the presence of music in
film.

"By autumn 1930 Hollywood produced only 'Talkies'." ³

'Talkies': a type of film where the characters could talk to each other and in
turn disseminate a story to their audiences. The communicative force of this
relatively new medium (film, was only 35 years old) had blasted into a new
age. Sound, for all it was worth had come upon us, and the film industry and
its audiences embraced it with great fervour. The human voice had arrived

³ Weis & Belton '85, page 5

on the screen but music, on the other hand, was always there.

Music may be defined as a non-representational form of communication. It has long been linked to ancient Greek theatre. ⁴ William Fleming said of Euripede's *The Bacchae* -

" the emotional intensity of the individual scenes often rises to such a pitch that music had to take over where words left off; just as when a person is so overcome with feeling that words fail, and he resorts to inarticulate sounds and gestures." ⁵

Music has also been linked to the spirit world of Native American Indians. When coupled with dance, the bonding of spirit and body are a potent one. ⁶

Music has undergone various different marriages to dramatic illustration; starting, maybe, even before the Greeks, moving through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, with a revival in the late eighteenth century French Melodramē. ⁷ Music found its way into various fairground attractions of the late 19th Century, ⁸ and finally into film in 1895. Why music and film were wed cannot just be the result of a strong tradition.

"..... by the time the cinema was born the pianist and the orchestra had been long established in the living theatre. " ⁹

Norman O'Neill (1876 - 1934) a British stage composer said of what was then termed as "incidental music" -

"The musical accompaniment to a speech should steal in and steal out so quietly, that the audience are no more aware of it than they are of some subtle change in the stage lighting" ¹⁰

- premonition of what Hollywood would instill into their films.

⁴ This Greek connection was recently satirised by Woody Allens' *Mighty Aphrodite* ('96)

⁵ Fleming '57, page 33 - 34

⁶ A spiritual bonding illustrated by Kevin Costner in his *Dances with Wolves* ('90); as he danced around the fire while underscored by John Barry's music.

⁷ Gorbman '87, page 33

⁸ Robert Wiene's film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* ('19) illustrates cinema's origin as a fairground attraction.

⁹ London '70, page 16

¹⁰ London 70, page 16 - 18

¹¹ I will discuss 'why' in a later chapter called: **Music on the Silver screen**

¹² Improvising and interpreting sometimes had drastic effects, (I'm sure some were quite interesting) that is if the employed pianis or group of musicians were in a state of inebriation. Employed musicians of the day were also known to practise for their practical music college exams, while earning a few schillings.

¹³ Sabaneev '85, page 27 - 28

Films graduated to theatres in conjunction with live entertainment, such as vaudeville skits and musical numbers. Musicians were always in attendance, and it seemed natural that images would have music as an accompaniment.¹¹

When films left the theatre and found their own place of projection, the musician followed. Max Winkler and Bert Ennis and others all take credit for having invented the cue sheet (a simple list of musical themes on sheet music, to be played over various scenes) around 1911. Up until then the musician was said to have interpreted and improvised music for the cinematic rushes however he or she felt fit. ¹²

The teens saw studio executives hiring music researches to find suitable known pieces of music to fit over their films. By the mid teens they had even began commissioning composers for short opuses. While films in Europe where having scores especially composed before 1910, D.W. Griffith's, film, *Birth of a Nation* ('15) was said to have the first original composed score for an American feature.

If the evolution of music and the power of tradition throw some light on why music's presence is felt in film, technology projects a different view. The projector simply made too much noise.

" For in those times there were as yet no sound -absorbent walls between the projection machine and the auditorium. This painful noise disturbed visual enjoyment to no small extent. Instinctively cinema proprietors had recourse to music, and it was the right way, using an agreeable sound to neutralize one less agreeable." ¹³

The projectionist used music to distract the attention of audiences away from the workings of the projector. The director also used music to distract the attention of his actors and actresses away from the working of the studio:

".... to counteract the noise in the studio - after all, you often had two films being made at the same time, on the same stage." ¹⁴

But why? Why did music help both player and spectator focus and believe in the world they had trapped themselves in? Why was it that music seemed to bring some type of tranquil essence to this two dimensional surface?

[Chapter One]

On the Silver Screen

" There are the mud-flowers of dialect
And the immortelles of perfect pitch
And that moment when the bird sings
very close
To the music of what happens.

Seamus Heaney
song
Selected Poems ['66-'87]

Kurk London has said that -

¹ London, ('70) page 35 - 36)

"Speech is the foundation of the whole civilisation." ¹

Music was speech's prosthetic in early film. It strengthened a belief in a two dimensional medium that depicted three dimensions. Sound exists after all in three dimensions.

² D. W. Griffith had to battle with studio executives when making *Birth of a Nation* ('15). His editing device called 'cross-cutting' gave great 'rhythm' and cohesion to the film, and it is something that we take for granted to-day; but initially studio executives thought it to be too confusing. It is interesting to note that the 'cross-cutting' of imagery was questioned and the 'cross-cutting', (the editing) of music was not.

Early film (to leave aside the point of early film lacking colour) needed rhythm to heighten the realist effect. This 'rhythm' I speak of is not the editing process, that later gave more physical rhythm to the diegesis of the filmic experience; ² but the innate rhythms (the metaphysical rhythms) of human nature and the hidden "inner harmony of the world" ³ something early film was trying to depict.

³ I speak of the 'inner Harmony of the world' in my conclusion with reference to Einstein

1928 Guido Bagier in *Der Kommende Film* (a film periodical of the day) elucidated that both film and music were rhythm, but each one had a different function.

"Film is rhythm - outwardly perceived harmonic movement!"

⁴ Bagier in Gorbman ('87) page 37

Music is rhythm - inwardly perceived articulated movement!" ⁴

Music was present to deepen the emotional and psychological experience film had to offer.

An interesting psychological and anthropological argument outlined by Hanns Eisler and Theodor W. Adorno defined the presence of music in film as a magical function, one that exorcised the evil spirit that inhabited moving *silent* pictures.

⁵ Eisler + Adorno ('47) page 75
I remember as a child visiting my grandparent's home and feeling it strange because they conversed while the sound on the television was turned down. It was like another presence occupied the room and they didn't notice it being there.

"The pure cinema must have had a ghostly effect like that of the shadow play - shadows and ghosts have always been associated. The magic function of music ... probably consisted in appeasing the evil spirits unconsciously dreaded. Music was introduced as a kind of antidote against the picture. The need was felt to spare the spectator the unpleasantness involved in seeing effigies of living, acting and even speaking persons, who were at the time silent. The fact that they are living and non living at the same time is what constitutes their ghostly character, and music was introduced not to supply them with the life they lacked ... but to exorcise fear or help the spectator absorb the shock." ⁵

⁶ Metz ('82) page 28

In the 'Imaginary Signifier' (1974) Christian Metz characterises the film image as signifying the "presence of an absence," ⁶ being, only the representation of what was present and not the thing itself.

⁷ When watching *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg '93) it is hard to separate the idea of the dinosaurs being computer generated from the imposed reality of the film.

This statement still applies today, but today we are more aware of, sometimes too aware, ⁷ of the medium and its limitations.

⁸ Eisler + Adorno ('47) page 59

Eisler and Adorno elaborate on their theory to say that music was a "cement that helped bind the audience together." ⁸ This anthropological argument in conclusion states that music helped the spectators identify as a group which chose to sit and experience the moving phenomenon.

But when the voice arrived, film took on a new reality and the function and presence of film music changed.

Background music disappeared altogether from the sound film in 1927 (28) to 1932 (33) due to studio executives' persistent perceptions of what made a 'realistic' film.⁹ After all the voice was brought to film for the sake of reality and studio profit.

So why in 1932 (33) did background music return to the screen, and with its return what did it bring?

The sound film used music intermittently where the silent film used it from beginning to end. Which in turn helped it play-

"a much more intimate and a much more emotionally effective part Music for the film, like the dialogue itself, needed to learn a new discipline, a new relation to the film drama." ¹⁰

New rules had to be made for what really was a new medium. The mixing of both music and sound (effects, voice etc) brought many problems to film and in turn, a new 'art form' was born. Nancy Wood defined the reality behind the problem for film-makers working with this transition.

"Compared to its silent counterpart, the talking cinema was considered an inflexible institution, above all because certain latitudes in spatial and temporal construction available to late silent narratives were not permitted in the early sound film. It was as if the introduction of sound caused an immediate 'densening' of the more permeable spatio-temporal field of the silent film, thereby requiring more concrete and exacting definitions of the spatial and temporal dimensions." ¹¹

These problems had to be dealt with for the studios had an agenda: one, to give film and the cinematic experience a stronger sense of realism. Two, to make money to support itself, as Comolli puts it -

"it is to the mutual reinforcement of an ideological demand (to see life as it is) and the economic demand to make it a source of profit that cinema owes its being." ¹²

Thus film needs to make money but music does not need to be present to heighten film's sense of reality. Sound (as in the human voice, effects etc) came to film gradually just as film came to the world in gradual cinematic experiments. Various machines for recording and exhibiting the human voice were invented around the nineteen twenties. ¹³

These machines made films that had only partial 'real' sound, and the rest of the film diegesis was filled with music. So music was still a must for film making.

When in 1927 Jack Robin in *The Jazz Singer* (Warners) turns to his mother and talks and then breaks into a jazzy version of 'Blue Skies'; David Cook writes -

⁹ Gorbman ('87) page 42

¹⁰ Manvell and Huntly ('75) page 35

¹¹ Wood in Gorbman ('87) page 42

¹² Comolli in Branigan ('79) (page 24)

¹³ Vitaphone & Movietone where the main companies promoting sound in the twenties; for more information on this topic see : Cook ('81)

¹⁴ Cook ('81) page 240
 'Vitaphone Short' was a 'short' 'talking' sound effect' interlude in a feature film in the twenties.

¹⁵ Sound was advertised as a novelty. "A typical ad in *Photoplay* (Nov '28) reads: *FAZIL* is indeed an amazing picture to see! And - it is also an amazing picture to HEAR! In *FAZIL* you will hear that astonishing movie miracle - FOX MOVIE TONE. It puts SOUND into the movies - realistic, true - to - life sound!!" Gorbman ('87) Page 44

¹⁶ Gorbman ('87) Page 49

¹⁷ Walker ('79) page 171

¹⁸ Schopenhauer in Knox ('58) page 162

"that it was not so much hearing Jolson speak as of overhearing him speak, and it thrilled audiences bored with the conventions of silent cinema and increasingly indifferent to the canned performances of the 'vitaphone' shorts." ¹⁴

While delighted by the sound interlude, if you will, the film returns to the conventional musical background. I believe that by giving audiences snippets of the proposed reality, and returning them to the convention of a musical background, it slowly altered the filmic discourse without shocking, boring or over-dosing the audience with the 'novelty' of sound. ¹⁵

As the presence of sound grew from part talkie, the dynamics of acting and the psychological verisimilitude of dialogue were scrutinised by both critics and audiences of the day.

John Gillbert a star of the early screen failed to make a smooth transition from 'silent' to sound film. Known for his romantic silent charm, audiences swooned as he mouthed the words, "I love you, I love you, I love you." But in his first sound film, *His Glorious Night* (M.G.M. '29), he wasn't so glorious; for when he spoke those same words the audience burst into a fit of laughter. His voice was that of Mickey Mouse. ¹⁶ Reality proved too powerful for poor John Gillbert.

"Hereafter the love passages will be suggested with the romantic note conveyed by properly pitched music. Metro, the first to learn by experience is heading that way, others will follow for their own protection." ¹⁷

Film producers realised that music could be used to help 'gloss' over certain 'love' scenes. Music has no distinct syntax so it features in emotional scenes due to its power for bonding, linking the spectator to spectacle in a harmonious space.

A romantic scene would be underscored by strings and would intensify in pitch; as the audience fell deeper and deeper into a particular love scene, the strings hypnotic power would overcome them; before they knew it, it was over. The love between two people had been disseminated to the spectator; and the spectator had not felt embarrassed to be a voyeur to the expressed love on the screen.

When an audience is watching a film they are involved mentally, physically and emotionally. They feel the cowboy jump from the carriage to the horses; they experience the shock, when a gun is pulled on them; they fall into the eyes of the beautiful glassy eyed film star up on the silver screen. Their senses/emotions act as an umbilical cord to the life on the screen. When music is turned on it taps right into their soul, right into their spinal cord.

"Music speaks not of things but of pure weal and woe, which are the only realities for the will: that is why it speaks so much to the heart, while it has nothing to say directly to the head and it is a misuse of it to demand that it should do so." ¹⁸

Roger Tallon, said of music -

¹⁹ Tallon ('76) page 106

"Music will always have this influence, because it does not pass through the same control circuits, because it is almost directly plugged into the psyche." ¹⁹

Music has a strange affect on us, it can take us by the heart and lead us down many - "a long and winding road." But the door it leads us to, can it be predetermined by its composer?

²⁰ Gorbman ('87) page 55

"Film music is at once a gel, a space, a language, a cradle, a beat, a signifier of internal depth and emotion as well as a provider of emphasis on visual movement and spectacle. It bonds: shot to shot, narrative event to meaning, spectator to narrative, spectator to audience. Overall, the two overarching roles of background music may be characterised as semiotic (as anchorage) and psychological (as suture or bonding)" ²⁰

In the following chapters I wish to discuss these aspects of music's behaviour and its use in Jane Campion's film - *The Piano*('93).

[Chapter Two]

[Part One Sexuality and diegetic music]

“ Lord I am a surgeon,
And music is my knife,
It cuts away my sorrow,
And purifies my life. ”

Paul Simon
God Bless The Absentee
One Trick Pony [74]

The Piano is a film about unveiling, the stripping of souls to their bare necessities. As we watch the film, the characters skin each other, their environment and the objects that make up both, down to their skeletons.

I wish to investigate how music and its concept are a knife that peels away the layers of nineteenth century sexuality.

In Stella Bruzzi's article: *Tempestuous Petticoats: costume and desire in "The Piano"*, she says:

"I intend to explore the sensuality as well as the sexuality of clothes in *The Piano* ('93), as both costume and body appear linked in this film to a complex feminist displacement of the conventionalized objectification of the woman's form dominated by scopophilia and fetishism. Ada's fierce independence is expressed through her repeated refusal to conform to the designated role of the pacified and distanced image of woman contained by the voyeuristic male gaze. In her muteness, her musicality and the expression of her sexual desire through touch, Ada represents the possibility of a radical alternative feminine and feminist mode of discourse, and clothes become this 'language's' most eloquent tools."¹

I believe that music and its concept also "become this 'language's' most eloquent tools."

The music in *The Piano* acts like the Victorian clothes in the film - "to function both for and against her (Ada) and are both internal and external signifiers of her desire and social position."²

Ada's (Holly Hunter) sexuality is concealed in the notes of her music. Thus when an outsider (us the audience and the other characters) listen to her play, she reveals and awakens her sexual potency to the listener.

George Baines (Harvey Keitel), a character unburdened by the archetypal nineteenth century colonial male duties and obligations (as Stewart [Sam Neill] is burdened) finds himself drawn to a music that liberates its player.

Baines finds himself in a musical world with Ada. This musical world is a place where Ada retreats to for pleasure. As he watches her receiving pleasure from the dark and winding tones she plays, he joins her in this forbidden land.^{2b} As Freud writes in the section, *Touching and looking in The Sexual Aberrations*:

"The progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilisation keeps sexual curiosity awake. This curiosity seeks to complete the sexual object by revealing its hidden parts"³

Baines cannot 'touch' (not as yet), but he can 'look' so touching is substituted for 'listening.' Ada's music is not a substitute for Ada, but it is a part of her and her body's sensuality. As he listens he plays around with "the allure of the prohibited."⁴

When it is time to leave the beach Ada shares her music with Flora. As Flora plays Ada's melody an octave higher it audibly signifies a departure - a closing of one's eyes to go to sleep, while the delicate notes of a music box melody lulls you there. It is the sharing of the prohibited that heightens Baines's expectations of sexual arousal, thus his jealousy and curiosity grow.

¹ Bruzzi '95, page 257 - 258

² Bruzzi '95, page 258

figure [1]

^{2b} I deal with why it is 'forbidden' in a later chapter called: Communication

³ Freud '77, page 69

⁴ Bruzzi '95, page 259

figure [2]

4b I believe that because we are constantly relating to 'pure musical codes' that the sound-track has the ability to hypnotize us.

5 A musical sforzando used to illustrate sudden dramatic tension.

figure [3]

6 Bruzzi '93, page 10

figure 4]

7 Coriat in Gorbman '87, page 61.

8 Eisenstein in Gorbman '87, page 131.

9 Bruzzi '95, page 264

10 Nichols ed '85, page 309

10b Ada may have superior skills (in being able to express herself through the piano) compared to Baines and all the other characters; but what is important here is the quality of emotional exchange between the characters, regardless of the instrument of their expression.

This expectation and sexual arousal prove too much for Baines, as he feels he must act on his desire. While Ada is playing at a 'high' tempo and Flora is moving with 'high' energy outside, we are caught up in the musical *ostinato*.^{4b} When Baines unleashes his pent up sexual expectations we are shocked just as Ada is. The music she was playing was not conducive to seduction so her yelp and the sudden stop of its flow act as a 'stinger' ⁵ to draw attention to Ada's disgust and the ensuing bargain.

The first black key is struck - Flora's energy has settled into 'patting' and not 'chasing' her dog - Baines is acknowledged by Ada as a receiver of her music and thus a slower more tranquil piece of music floats over the visual.

"Clothes seem liberating only when they come off, as when Flora dances and cartwheels across the beach in her petticoat." ⁶

Music becomes liberating only when it is shared and Baines has positioned himself as Ada's main audience. He is the sole receiver of her sexual music, while Flora is told to wait outside.

Before Baines physically touches Ada they connect in the metaphysical world that music creates.

"Music is a non-referential language which stimulates a temporary regression; it is a safe language in evading verbal logic and articulation, and it short circuits the defences and thus gaining access to deep emotions." ⁷

"It seems to me that it's precisely from the tonality and the timbre chosen for the image that the melody and orchestral musical equivalent emerges." ⁸

The music that Ada plays accompanies the camera movement. It slowly changes focus in the form of movement, from Baines to Ada. She plays a piece that intensifies as the camera and Baines draw closer. The piece begins quite frailly but gains strength from the heavy base notes; as it becomes more complex and dynamic so too does Ada's expression; an expression projected at Baines.

"*The Piano* suggests that Ada's progression from passivity to activity is related to her defiance of objectification and a sexual dialogue reliant on the hierarchical exchange of looks." ⁹

"The act of looking is closely affiliated with men and the expression of masculine sexuality, and in costume films a classic heterosexual dynamic has been constructed whereby the women are defined and confined by their 'to-be-looked-at-ness.'" ¹⁰

Here on the other hand Ada is 'defined and confined by her 'to-be-listened-to-ness' and Baines and Ada's sexual dialogue is reliant on a hierarchical exchange of musical expression and musical appreciation.^{10b} This communication has broken the glass box that surrounds Ada's sexual inhibitions. Baines has stripped back the fluidity of the dress to reveal the harsh hoops that hide, like the cardboard - cut outs in the shadow-play, what is underneath

- a woman - a man - a soul - a sexuality.

figure [5]

Baines is allowed by Ada under these hoops - past another layer - only to find a small hole in her tights. As Ada plays rhythmically her relationship with Baines changes from metaphysical to physical, as his finger caresses the tiniest bit of exposed skin. Ada chooses not to bolt, as she did before, but a slight pause in her music indicates to us her reasoning and her acceptance of another touching her. But she is not quite acceptive, for Baines has awoken in Ada, as she awoke in him - a sexual curiosity. Even though curious of touch she can not permit Baines to touch her too much, and so her music acts as a protective layer against the unknown; as the many layers of dress protected her and Flora on the beach from Stewart's attempted rape in the woods.

figure [6]

Baines, constantly pushing out of the metaphysical and into the physical, tells Ada that he wants to see her arms.

With this request Ada begins to play slowly and methodically; a rhythm that mirrors the hand movements or caress of Baines. But when the intensity of such a coupling becomes too sexual, Ada quickly changes her playing to a more whimsical and up tempo piece. Her music like the many layers of her dress protect her from the touching and violating hand.

figure [7]

This 'musical screen' cannot always protect her and frustration can tear it, as the Maori's frustration and curiosity tears the shadow play screen to reveal what is underneath or behind. Baines, sexually frustrated, tears Ada's musical screen and in doing so rips her dress.^{10c}

^{10c} I will deal with 'frustration' and its effect on the forms of discourse that form each character, in the later chapter called: 'Communication.'

"In Ada's piano playing scenes with Baines the emphasis is on proximity, as the (touching of) clothes and body are part of the same ritualistic process, leading not to distancing but sex."¹¹

¹¹ Bruzzi '95, page 264

"I want to lie together without clothes on."¹²

¹² Champion '93, page 72

figure [8]

Before asking this of Ada, Baines tells her to play what she likes. Musically she dives in deep; rich swirling tones turn round and round, but she cannot submerge herself like she could before, because now she needs the presence of Baines, she needs him to be in receipt of her music, she needs to know that she is 'touching' him with what she plays.

Curious of his whereabouts she 'surfaces', as she plays lighter notes, and as they fall away so too does her connection to her music. Leonid Sabaneev called this type of music "elastic or extensile music,"¹³ because of how its player can let it fit the feeling, or stretch over the scene's metaphysical dynamic. Ada agrees to Baines's proposition and in doing so silences the playing of the dark music that she created before she lay with Baines.

¹³ Sabaneev '85, page 30

figure [9]

Baines decides to give the piano back to Ada and as the Maoris carry it away we observe that what Ada and Baines had together and what seemed for Ada the fundamental reason for giving in to Baines (his understanding of her voice-music) have now been reduced to a confused banging of notes. This becomes a metaphor for the break-down of the metaphysical syntax that music had created for their relationship.

Ada is very confused. Does he, did he always reject my music which is

such a huge part of me? Is it such a huge part of me? What is it that he (Baines) has awoken in me? Can 'it' be stronger, more potent than the world I created with my music?

figure [10]

She answers these questions for herself musically, as she cannot sustain the 'feeling' for the music she plays and as she looks over her shoulder in search of the recipient (Baines) of her music. He is not there, so she cannot feel what she is supposed to play. He has set her free from the form of communication that she adopted at the age of six. (Whether this is a loss or gain for Ada is too complex an issue to go into due to the brevity of this Thesis. It would involve comparing her relationship with her music as a way of life to her relationship with Baines as a way of life.) She realises that her sexuality is stronger than the musical chains she had bound it up in.

figure [11]

When Morag (Kerry Walker) and Nessie (Genevieve Lemon) bring the news that Baines is packing up she plays a lament, not only for George Baines but for what he awoke in her. For it is clear to her now that she is about to lose the man and the sexuality that was awoken in her. The piece she plays is full of minor chords and the 'off' sound that they create bring a sadness to the air. It "creeps in", as Morag puts it, over the dialogue between Stewart and Morag and takes over the scene, drawing attention to itself. Music that draws attention to itself swings away from the hypothetical and towards the symbolic. The music Ada plays is symbolic of her losses.

We hear her play in this truly expressive form again because with the absence of Baines from her life she can return to a world less powerful than the one where she can share her sexuality.

figure [12]

The proof of this is when she is reunited with Baines and their 'New Life', has begun in Nelson, her music and its dark power have been reduced to drawing from the innocent song Flora hummed throughout the film. For the piece she plays, with her 'newly fashioned finger' is a light interpretation of Flora's innocent rambling mumbles. As we listen we realise that her music no longer looks to her sexual desire as a source. She has discovered her sexuality and domesticated her 'dark talent.'

By discovering her sexuality she has covered her strong sense of sensual creative musicality.

[Part Two

Sexuality and Nondiegetic music]

“ When the song that is in me is the
song I hear from the world
I'll be home. It's not written down
and I don't remember the words.
I know when I hear it I'll have made
it myself. I'll be home. ”

Paula Meehan
Home
Reading the Sky [93]

Nondiegetic music helps to connect Ada to her piano (her music), Ada to Baines (her sexuality) and helps Ada to disconnect herself from Stewart (patriarchal mid nineteenth century law).

figure [13]

¹ Campion '93 page 9

As Ada leaves her piano (her music) on the beach her own music plays nondiegetically. Because this music is her voice - "I don't think myself silent, that is because of my piano," ¹ and she expresses herself through this music it automatically becomes a 'voice-over' to the ensuing facial expressions and images of disconnection from the piano, as they leave it behind (on the beach).

For Jaubert the function of film music

"is not to be expressive by adding its sentiments to those of the characters or of the director, but to be decorative by uniting its own rhythmical pattern with the visual pattern woven for us on the screen ... let it finally make physically perceptible to us the inner rhythm of the image without struggling to provide a translation of its content whether this be emotional, dramatic or poetic." ²

² Jaubert in Davy ed. '37 page 101-102

This juxtaposition of music with image does "provide a translation of its content," because the "inner rhythms" of the image portray to us - a loss, a departure, a leaving behind, a moving away, we question 'what' is being left behind?

The music and Ada's attachment to it, and need for it - "She needs it, she must have it!" ³ is the answer.

³ Campion '93 page. 117

While it plays it exists in her imagination and carries us and her seamlessly to her destination. She uses 'the memory' of her music to block out the harsh muddy journey, and the thought of being without her music, as her instrument of discourse sits lonely on a beach.

figure [14]

This music sounds again in a more orchestrated fashion, to highlight her emotional attachment to her music, as she peers teary-eyed from a rainy window of sentimentality. Reality only hits when the music stops.

figure [15]

For Ada of course, she plays her music to retreat from the world, to cover up her sexuality. When she is robbed of her piano - her music by Baines, it sits out of tune, while Ada, too sits in a state of dissonance. To resolve her melancholy the piano must be tuned, so that she can return to her harmonious world.

While the piano-tuner is tuning the piano he plays keys together which results in 'musical dissonance.'

This dissonance (Ada's [figuratively] and the music's) must be resolved. It is resolved with non-diegetic music. This music sutures the piano tuning session to Ada's lonely and solitary image in the forrest as it runs from musical dissonance to a lonely clarinet cadenza.

Ada believes that she has lost the musical world she had immersed herself in since the age of six. She created I believe a musical world that she could retreat to and extract pleasure from. Thus she could exist without her

⁴ Flora's father is cloaked in mysticism, thus we cannot assume that Ada had a previous relationship.

⁵ I believe Baines is intrigued by Ada's playing on the beach. When he has the piano tuned he retreats with Ada to the 'world' she has created for herself, but he ultimately pulls her from this metaphysical world into a physical existence. He does this by awakening her sexuality.

⁶ Stein '60 page 75

figure [16]

⁷ Campion '93 page. 79

⁸ "The camera continually fetishizes her elaborate coils at one point the camera literally draws us into the coil at the back of Ada's head, as if giving us access to her emotional world. She finally 'lets her hair down' after her first sexual liaison with Baines. We see her and Flora, with their gleaming hair swirling around them as they tumble on the bed, bathed in a golden glow."
Dyson ('95) page 271

figure [17]

⁹ Gorbman '87 page 89

sexuality. ⁴ I believe her music represents her undiscovered sexuality. For when Baines has the piano tuned he gives back to Ada the opportunity to exist in that musical world again. Thus he connects with Ada. ⁵

Jack M. Stein commented on the result of using a musical theme previously used in the same film over a different scene -

"There often occurs moments when the immediate expression is influenced by the thought of something living in the past which continues to have an emotional effect on the speaker. The presence and consequently the influence of this reminiscence can be communicated by the repetition of the characteristic musical line which was part of the original musical expression. The melodic line alone is sufficient to inject this idea as a conditioning element of reminiscence into the new situation. It thus appears as a realisation and representation of what was just thought of by the character on the stage." ⁶

Ada questions her sexuality. She questions the strength of her connection to her music against the strength of her sexuality. For now she must choose between something that represented her undiscovered sexuality - music, and her actual sexuality.

She finds herself lost and alone as she was before when she thought her piano had lost its tune forever. Lost for the answers to her questions she can not play, "She just wanders off," ⁷ as the same lonely clarinet cadenza awakens in us (the audience) the same emotions that was once felt on viewing Ada's lonely image in the forest.

Only this time as we (the audience) listen and look Ada does not mourn for her tuned piano, but for her sexuality. For she is forced by the man (Baines) that awoke her sexuality to return to sexual repression, to a man (Stewart) who cannot understand her sensuality, symbolised by his blundering hand banging out of time on the piano (of all places) to Flora's song. Simultaneously Ada's hair has returned to the nineteenth century, tied-up state. ⁸

This same music, as it did before, sutures Flora's song to an image of Ada alone outside with her back to the world; it:

"smooths discontinuities of editing with scenes and sequences. This discontinuity of a cheat cut or a temporal ellipse will be slightly less jarring or noticeable because of music, this flexible and pleasurable auditory substance (this "cohesive") in the background. As an auditory continuity it seems to mitigate visual spatial or temporal discontinuity." ⁹

As the camera draws closer to Ada's hair coils it cuts to: 'a - floating - over - the - forest - scene', and returns to Ada in a different situation. By placing nondiegetic music over this sequence we (the audience) are drawn back to the last 'journey' we made through (or over) the forrest, here music signifies, as it did before, a time lapse. Due to the music sending our minds into a temporal spin we now become sympathetic towards Ada - 'How long has she suffered this sexual tyranny?'

figure [18]

"Significantly, the only element of filmic discourse that appears extensively in nondiegetic as well as diegetic contexts and often freely crosses the boundary line in between, is music. Once we understand the flexibility that music enjoys with respect to the film's diegesis we begin to recognise how many different functions it can have - temporal, spatial, dramatic, structural, denotative, connective - both in the diachronic flow of the film and at various interpretative levels simultaneously." ¹⁰

¹⁰ Gorbman '87 page 22

The music that accompanies Ada's decision to send a message to Baines has many functions. It sutures shots together seamlessly, it injects a temporal time omission but most importantly it instills an urgency into the situation that Ada has found herself in. The situation being that she must act on her feelings while Stewart is away working. She also must act now! for Baines is packing up to leave and it is her last chance to rediscover the sexuality awoken by Baines.

"By reaching the mind via the route of emotion, music must help clarify the passions without which political revolutions are impossible." ¹¹

¹¹ Betz '82 page 103

The music we hear is very repetitive and very aware of its phrasiology, and so it is played and heard acutely and confidently. This repetitiveness gives an urgency to the piece, much like an emergency siren; it constantly taps on our eardrums forcing us to realise something must be done. The confidence in which it is played and heard reflects Ada's assertiveness.

The music and the sentiments bestowed on the scene reach a critical point, nerves are on end as the butterflies dance to the growing weeping and energetic violins that have just joined the discourse. The violins insist on taking the melody over as Ada insists on Flora's defiant errand.

figure [19]

Because Ada's search for her sexuality is a defiance of patriarchal law, we hear the music that was used to signify her loss and disillusionment now associated with the continued sexual repression of the society Baines and Ada leave behind.

figure [20]

If when we hear nondiegetic music, it represents the thoughts of Ada, then this music is also used to block out the reality of Stewart and his sexually frustrated actions.

"Stewart is isolated, in a feminine world, by his dependency on voyeurism, being consistently identified with the act of looking: squinting through the camera lens, spying on Ada and Baines through the cracks in the timber and floorboards." ¹²

¹² Bruzzi ('95) page 261

Stewart constantly asks Ada to play for him so that he can satisfy his voyeuristic qualities audibly. Because Ada refuses to play for him he is emasculated. Stewart is deprived of a look through a window at Ada's audibly sexual soul.

While Stewart watches Baines strip the layers of clothing from Ada's body,

Ada's music plays nondiegetically. This is the same theme that broke the 'glass box of her inhibitions.' It is used to mark a shift from one sexual state to another.

It also separates, but at the same time connects Ada to and from the physical act of making music, to the physical act of touching. For Ada and Baines can hear the music metaphysically and we can physically hear it, but Stewart's ears lie deaf to the music. He is locked outside the walls of musicality and sexuality. He can look but he cannot touch, he cannot even listen.

figure [21]

Frustrated by what he cannot touch and resentful of what he cannot hear, Stewart confronts Ada in an attack where the physical confronts the metaphysical.

Because Stewart cannot access the metaphysical world to which Ada retreats, he must attack the problem on a physical level. (I deal with Stewart's desperate attempt to understand Ada's metaphysical world after he executes his most physical act against Ada - by cutting her finger off in a later chapter called communication page (33)*).

The music that surrounds the attack appears earlier in the film, only now it is nondiegetic. When used earlier the music signified Ada's out-pouring of desire in being reunited with her piano (her music) on the beach. Now; the same music for our benefit plays to contrast Stewart's out-pouring of desire.

¹³ Eisler and Adorno '47 page 71

"All music belongs to the sphere of subjective inwardness." ¹³

Because Ada can hear the music internally or metaphysically and Stewart can not; she uses her music to block out the reality of Stewart's physicality. Thus this music has two functions, to highlight the out-pouring of desire and to act for Ada as a metaphysical protective screen.

Ada, like us, is shocked by the sudden presence of Stewart. The music highlights this shock and saturates it, as the piece becomes palpably instrumentated.

By instrumentating the piece of music it strengthens its presence on the screen. The result of this is that we (the audience) are hypnotized by its rhythm and composition.

We are still conscious of the imagery, but the music accesses our subconscious thus adding a 'third meaning' to the sequence of events. We are hypnotised by the semiotics of the film the way one is hypnotized by the syntax of a novel.

"In other words 'the third meaning' structures the film differently, subverting the story and for this reason, perhaps, it is at the level of the third meaning, and at that level alone, that the "filmic" finally emerges. The filmic is that in the film which cannot be described, the representation which cannot be represented. The filmic begins only where language and metalanguage end." ¹⁴

¹⁴ Barthes in Sontag ed. '82 page 329

figure [22]

We are woken to this 'fictional reality' as the 'Maori banging' upsets the flow of our musical hypnosis, much like when someone sings off-key while singing harmoniously.

Ada and Stewart too are awoken to the reality of their situation by the sound of this unharmonious thrashing of the piano. This is so because Ada has sublimated herself with the memory of her music, by doing so she erects the same musical screen that initially protected her from Baines.

By internalising her music, by placing it in her memory banks she knows that Stewart cannot access it. She knows that by not sharing her music she gives no clue to her sexuality. By internalising her music she gets to keep the music she played before expressing her sexuality; only now (at the end of the film) she cannot, and does not play it; but 'lulls' herself to sleep, with it and the image of its death. In doing so she gives the film an alternative ending.

figure [23]

The music that she created by using her repressed sexuality as a creative source can no longer be heard in reality; but Ada can still hear the memory of it. She can still visit the world it created for her, for part of her life. She is content to do so, but from now on it can never be real; but its strange sound and the image of its death are hers and hers alone.

15 Campion '93 page 122

"It is a weird lullaby and so it is; it is mine." ¹⁵

16 Bruzzi '95 page 266

"Although functioning in relation to patriarchal laws Ada is not subsumed by them and despite all the potential for restriction, oppression and unhappiness, she is the controlling force of both the narrative and how the film is to be perceived." ¹⁶

17 Bruzzi '95 page 266

Ada gets to keep her new found sexuality and the music that represented it for so long.

"Ada defines and communicates differently unbalancing those traditions and instating female subjectivity." ¹⁷

[Chapter Three]

[Communication Diegetic and Nondiegetic music]

“ Heard melodies are sweet, but those
unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes,
play on... ”

Keats
Ode on a Grecian Urn

Communication Diegetic and Nondiegetic music

¹ Their experiments were conducted by using a known piece of music, the performing musician created different expressive levels: Powerful, Beautiful, Deep, Bright etc. and registered the audiences opinion on each performance.

They concluded that the experiments would have been more successful if the chosen music was composed for experimental purposes, due to the audience having an emotional relationship with the chosen piece prior to the experiments.

² Mariko Senju and Kengo Ohgishi '87 page 323

³ Campion '93 page 150

⁴ Campion '93 page. 150

⁵ In 1990 Roger A. Kendall and Edward C. Carterette conducted a series of experiments that had World class musicians play the same piece of music on their instrument as competent amateur musicians. When asked for three different levels of expression "an interesting finding was the lack of tuning correlation among expressive levels for the piano. The world class pianist, given the task of creating three different expressive levels, was able to do so in terms of timing deviation profiles yet the other, less experienced instrumentalists did not do so." Kendall R A and Carterette E '90 page 320.

Had the music been especially composed as Nyman did for Hunter (an amateur) the result I'm sure would have been different.

⁶ "Stewart, the archetypal nineteenth century colonial husband bound by a burdensome sense of his position within patriarchal history and Ada, the transgressive wife who creates alternative discursive strategies to counter such intended subjugation." Bruzzi '95 page 259

⁷ "With their bold, sexualised chat, the Maori provide their textual echo for all that has been lost through 'civilisation.' Baines bridges this nature/culture divide." Dyson '95 page 271

⁸ "Mudstuck girl, blood thick stories stick to our boots. Perform you dance around me, my seahorse and speak in all our tongues. We have always spoken and yet we must learn to speak, to each other and outside our circle." Gillett '95 page 287

⁹ At the beginning when we hear Ada's 'mind' voice say that she does not know 'why' she has not spoken since she was six. Then we see a mule being stubborn. This stubbornness represents a side of Ada's personality.

Michael Nyman's music for the Piano is new to its audience so no-one has formed a relationship to it prior to the films initial screening; as one might have a relationship with a Mozart, Beethoven, Bach etc. concerto etc.

Mariko, Senju and Kengo Ohgishi of the 'University of California' conducted experiments on 'How Players' ideas are conveyed to an audience?' ¹ They concluded in short that "there should be mutual understanding between, the performer and the audience, resulting in an emotional exchange! The ideal is to achieve unbiased transmission of the musicians emotions to the audience." ²

Jane Campion and Michael Nyman built a character on these grounds and in doing so personified film music.

The music that Nyman composed for Holly Hunter has its roots in Scottish folk and popular songs of the mid 1850's ³

He had quite a task to compose music for a woman who had lived in Scotland, then in New Zealand, and was obviously not a professional pianist or composer, but had her own repertoire of piano music and also had to appear as it she had composed it herself.

Nyman composed a modern score for a film set in the past to communicate modern emotions to a modern audience. (due to the size of such a topic and the brevity of this thesis, I am unable to elaborate on such a subject as it would involve discussing the reasons why and how such a device works).

Nyman's genius was not only in composing such heart-felt music, but his decision to compose for Holly Hunter directly placed the music (and its structure) and all its dynamics inside the heart and emotional system of the actress. Thus Hunter found the character through the music rather than finding the music through the character.

By doing so Nyman and Hunter added an intensity and a sincerity to the film music that would not have worked in any other way for a character whose voice and emotion was music. ⁴

The result dynamic music, processed and communicated by the actress playing the character and not by the composer who composed for the character. ⁵

All the characters in the Piano have communication problems. Ada is mute, but uses her hands to communicate both in sign language and through touch (by physically playing the piano and by touching the other characters). Stewart is tone deaf and fails to 'feel' (or is afraid to feel) the inner rhythms of sensuality and musicality. ⁶ Baines is illiterate and relies on more primal instincts. ⁷ The Maori people appear to rely on a more primal form of communication, but due to their spirituality their communication is ultimately very complex, and only seems to compromise its primal and primitive roots when their culture comes in contact with western colonialism and its baggage. Flora seems to float in and between the syntax of communication, borrowing from every semiotic. ⁸

They all struggle to communicate with each other, Ada, the most stubborn among them, opted out of conventional communication at the age of six. ⁹ Even though Ada adopted the piano, we are lead to believe that she even has reservations about who she allows listen to her music.

figure [24]

¹⁰ Campion '93 page 10

¹¹ Initially her music is her 'true' form of communication but her sexuality is awoken and it becomes stronger.

figure [25]

¹² A note on how it has been found that music can access the subconscious irrespective of one's conscious. "Medical literature since the 1930's documents a rare disorder called musicogenic epilepsy in which epileptic seizures are brought on by hearing specific melodies" Daly, P.D. & Barry ('57) page 399

figure [26]

¹³ Gillett ('95) page 285

* Ref from page 28

figure [27]

¹⁴ Campion ('93) page 112

figure [28]

¹⁵ Hira's song when 'understood' lyrically is less powerful due to us (the audience) having a direct translation of her thoughts and feelings: "you are like seaweed drifting in the sea, Baines, Drift far away, drift far beyond the horizon. A canoe glides hither, a canoe glides hither thither, But you though will journey on and eventually be beyond the veil." Campion ('93) page 117

"In the dim light she begins to play strongly, her face strains, she is utterly involved, unaware of her own strange guttural sounds that form an eerie accompaniment to the music.

An old maid in a night-dress looks in. Abruptly the woman (Ada) stops playing. The emotion leaves her face, it whitens and seems sold like a wall." ¹⁰

This is the first time we hear Ada's playing.

Ada fears what she shows when she plays, so to abstain from playing in the presence of another, is to renounce her only 'true' ¹¹ form of communication.

It has been said that fluency in a language is achieved when a person not only thinks but dreams in the newly acquired language, thereby integrating the language into more than one dimension of existence. "All music exists in three dimensions, Ada by playing in her sleep projects her form of communication into a fourth dimension - the subconscious." ¹²

The dream sequence in *The Piano* has an eerie essence, due to the music not having continuous rhythm. It appears that we have accessed her subconscious in her absence, and due to the music not having a continuous rhythm and flow, and because it fluctuates in tone and volume, it tells us of how confused Ada is emotionally.

Songs demand attention when sung in film. The sentiments of Flora's 'Grand Old Duke of York' annotates Ada's interpretation of the consequences of her actions: she does not know where she stands if Stewart finds out that she has communicated, with Baines. Stewart also sings. "Music; an expression of passage to places which cannot be seized or owned." ¹³

*To Stewart's frustration he cannot grasp what it is he feels he must obtain (due to his social conditioning). When Ada chooses not to play for him, when she denies him right of 'passage', he realises that he cannot obtain or even understand music and its concept. In a desperate attempt to communicate, to condition Ada as he has been conditioned (by his English roots), he sings to macabre effect, two lines from an old 'English' love ballad to Ada: "We will be together, you will see it will be better...." ¹⁴

Hira (Tungia Baker) as a representative of the Maori culture sings her good-byes to the parting boat that contains the couple. As the boat cuts one path in the sand Ada, Baines and Flora leave behind the many planks of wood, the many paths in the mud, signifying a departure from a colonial society of discordant communication.

Hira's song untranslated ¹⁵ sounds like a primal keening for her lost friend, this signifies a return to a more primitive and primal musical discourse, it reflects Baines's cathartic reaction when told of Stewart's violent act towards Ada. I believe the Maoris are unburdened by the superficial social values that the colonialists are burdened with. Thus the Maori's form of discourse is purer than that of the colonists.

"The Maori reinforces the discourses of primitivism in the film which construct the indigenous people as

¹⁶ Dyson '95 page 275

figure [29]

¹⁷ Bunuel's *Un Chien andalou* ('29) illustrates the weight of music on society as the character is held back from 'progressing' due to him being physically tied to a piano.

¹⁸ Gorbman '87 page 61

¹⁹ The oedipus complex refers to young males but in this case I believe that because there has, as of yet, not been any female form of the oedipus complex defined that it does not necessarily mean there is not some type or form of oedipal 'passage' related to the young female. I use this analogy to represent the female's 'smother' passage through a phase (repressed sexuality) commonly referred to in the case of males.

²⁰ Rosolato and Anzieu in Gorbman '87 page 62

figure [30]

²¹ Gillett '95 page 280

²² W.B. Yeats *Stolen Child*

²³ Campion '93 page 121

the repository of unchanging traditional values." ¹⁶

As the boat travels across the water the Maori row to the rhythm of their chant. Ada is enlightened by the sound of its primitive and primal beat.

This beat coupled with the sound of the groaning boat, due to the metaphysical and physical 'weight' of the piano ¹⁷ upon it, returns us and Ada to the "pre-oedipal, preverbal period when the boundary between self and other does not exist" ^{18 19}

"Guy Rosolato and Didier Anzieu theorize the role of sound in the development of the subject. Auditory space, they claim is the first psychic space. Even before birth, sound such as the mother's heartbeat, digestion, and voice - and why not voices outside the mothers body? - constitute the sonic environment." Anzieu speaks of "a 'sonorous envelope', in which the infant exists." ²⁰

Ada retreated into this 'sonorous envelope' at the age of six. She existed in this sonic environment due to her umbilical connection to her piano - her music. It is time to cut this umbilical cord. When she severs her connection, she also severs our umbilical connection to her life on the screen, for she is no longer the 'dark' talented Ada that we knew and her 'true' form of communication, her 'true' music has ceased. Her 'true' but infinitely complex form of discourse has been drowned by an ocean of convention.

"I have felt the tension in the rope which joins us.
It is time to connect, to swim to the waiting boat. I
have been to the soundless depths. It has taught me
much. My lips part to gulp in breaths of light and sound.
Hands meet, skins contact. I have berthed." ²¹

"Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a fairy, hand in hand
For the world's more full of weeping
Than you can understand." ²²

She has chosen to try and understand. She has chosen to try and communicate.

"My will has chosen life!?" ²³

[Conclusion]

“ Jazz music was not originally for anyone but its players. It was always clear what its painful sources were. And yet it does what art is supposed to do - it makes another thing possible. It is a private thing for public consumption. ”

Toni Morrison
Jazz [93]
Preface

"We used to say we should make sound films, but not talking films. We should invent an international language which would be no language at all. The actors would never explain things, but would emit sounds. You know, like a bird has sound or a dog: quee - euee, que - que, pa - pa, kee - kee, woo - woo, wee - wee. That would be the dialogue. But not at all logically built words and sentences. Of course that cannot be done." ¹

¹ Pasternak in Weis and Belton '85 page 312

I believe music comes closest to Pasternak's ideology. The dynamics of film direction, editing and performance are infinitely complex. When sound (voice, sound effects) joined the discourse they became even more so. Ideas and emotions can be communicated effectively without the appearance of synthetical or syntathical structure.

Charlie Chaplin resolves the predicament of his blind flower girl believing that her gentleman friend is a 'gentleman' by making a slamming car door signify wealth in *City Lights* ('31). Bogart finds himself at the end of an emotional cul-de-sac as Sam plays 'As Time Goes By' in Curtiz's *Casablanca* (41). Fred Astaire and Nanette Fabray in Minnelli's *The Bandwagon* ('53) resolve their personality clash through the dynamics of dance. In Fleischer's *The Boston Strangler* ('68), Tony Curtis communicates his transformation from man to monster by expressive and dynamic facial acting. Ryan O'Neal and Marisa Berenson both feel the tension of seduction as Bach plays to O'Neal's slow approach on Berenson in Kubric's *Barry Lyndon* ('75). John Travolta is on top of the world in both *Saturday Night Fever* (Badham '78) and *Staying Alive* (Stallone, '83) when he 'struts' to the Bee Gees. It's a 'Perfect Day' as Ewan McGregor slides into a heroin over dose in Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* ('95). All are perfectly well communicated in any decade, without the use of a syntax common to spoken or written language, but one that relies on the semiotics of emotion and the way it is transcribed.

"The important point here is that as spectators we are drawn to identify not with the film characters themselves but with their emotions, which are signalled pre-eminently by music which can offer us emotional experience directly. Music is central to the way in which the pleasure of cinema is simultaneously individualised and shared." ²

² Frith '84 page 86

Walkmans and car stereos have given film makers and film spectators great insight into the music/image correlation and the new syntax it creates. The 'maker' creates/defines with this new knowledge and the spectator understands the creation due to a common experience.

For me, early morning Dublin has never appeared more homely than it did while Tom Waits songs of sentimentality were playing on my earphones. A bike ride through the west of Ireland never felt more liberating when shades Michael O'Suilleabhain's piano playing haunted the hills that surrounded me. While flying above the clouds I seemed to reach greater heights as Prokofiev's *opus 19 (concerto for violin and orchestra)* filled my light head.

Today it seems that we can experience nondiegetic music diegetically, due to our awareness of what a certain type of music can do to the listener and his or her actual surrounding reality. Film music today with the use of both

scored and source music has a much broader emotional canvas to work on. This is due to the audience having a much deeper awareness of the innate rhythms of anthology, juxtaposed with the innate rhythms of music and how both seem to fit seamlessly together.

When we experience grandeur, both visually and audibly it forces us to contemplate the sounds and images that dwarf us. Albert Einstein while speaking of 'Time and Space' said -

³ Lynch ed *Horizon* B.B.C ('95)

"I feel the insignificance of the individual
and it makes me happy." ³

Film exists in 'time and space' and our only reaction to the cinematic experience is to sit back and enjoy our own insignificance in the dynamics and structure it creates.

Einstein also said -

⁴ Lynch ed *Horizon* B.B.C ('95)

"In my life I have always sought to gain just a
glimpse of the order that lies hidden in nature.
All science requires faith in the inner harmony
of the world, our longing for understanding is eternal." ⁴

I believe that we all long for understanding, and to be understood; we all long for a glimpse at the structure that holds us together, that holds everything together; we all strive to find a structure that fits our own existence. We all strive to find an individual structure that defines our physicality, metaphysicality, sexuality, sociability; a structure that defines our own individuality.

Music and film separately have structures, but when coupled together they define an infinitely complex structure, which two bodies form when forced together. Underneath they may have a 'hidden order' to the one structure they both create. But if we try to deal with the morphology of the music/image correlation we destroy the mystery and the magic it creates with the answers. Maybe we are afraid to ask the question - do specific answers to metaphysical questions destroy or heighten reality?

For Mam and Dad

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“ My reaction to a book is intimate and viseral, and it begins before I've read a single word. Browsing in a bookstore, I am taken by the lure of a jacket, the texture of the pages, the interior layout, or the choice of typeface. ”

Rita D. Jacobs
Graphis Book Design
page [9]

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