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„Involving the Playwright: Pastiche as a Technique of Cinematic Transposition in Recent Film Adaptations of Selected Plays by Noël Coward"

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"Suggestion is always more interesting than statement" (Coward qtd. in Day, *Words* 11).

Even if I was initially tempted to pastiche Coward in this respect myself, I came to the conclusion that this would have been very bad style indeed – especially since there are some people who definitely deserve to be thanked most sincerely at this point:

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1. Introduction

With the emergence of the electronic media, cinematic adaptations of literary works have become ubiquitous phenomena in contemporary culture. Therefore, it is not surprising that two well-established movie directors, Eric Styles and Stephen Elliott, recently decided to adapt two drawing-room comedies by British playwright Noël Coward, *Relative Values* and *Easy Virtue*, for 21st century cinema audiences – nor is it astonishing that both of these attempts have ultimately proved to be successful.

In spite of film adaptations' openly acknowledged rootedness in their source texts, they necessarily involve a certain amount of change, be it in terms of content, medium or structure. These ways of distancing texts from their sources occur in various degrees, depending on the artists' intentions or purposes. What all adaptations have in common, though, is the hypertext's asserting a valid claim on its recognition as a work of its own and thus openly manifesting its distance to the prior work.

However, this shift away from the source does not imply a negative attitude towards the hypotext and its author. On the contrary, "[r]ecognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure […] of experiencing an adaptation" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 4). This nostalgia has led to an enormous popularity of cinematic adaptations of literary works, manifesting itself in 1992 statistics which indicate that "85 percent of all Oscar-winning Best Pictures [are] adaptations" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 4).

Thus, it becomes evident that the successful transposition of literary works to the screen represents a balancing act for the adapter: can the author of the adaptation possibly create a product of his or her own without neglecting the audience's claim for nostalgia? And, more importantly: does the new authority imposed on the text in the form of the adapter inevitably entail a shift away from the style of the author of the original work?

The answers to these questions are by no means straightforward ones. However, since distancing a text from its source does not necessarily imply its dissociation from the original playwright, it can be said that the nature of the change involved in the adaptation may actually even be in favor of the respective master. One way of carrying out this reinforcement of

the association of a writer with a new version of one of his or her works is by means of the literary technique of pastiche.

Rooted in the culinary field, the most basic concept of pastiche describes a hodgepodge of various ingredients. More specifically, in the context of literature and media studies, the pastiched elements composing this hodgepodge are stylistic in nature. Both more formal elements of style, such as the language conventions of the time in question, and more subtle associations influenced by the historical period the work was written in are imitated by an artist in order to create a new work that contains elements which are perceived as stylistically characteristic of the original author.

In the context of this thesis, the pastiched writer is Sir Noël Peirce Coward. Both Styles' *Relative Values* (2000) and Elliott's *Easy Virtue* (2008) not only adapt the content and form of the respective plays but heavily draw on the imitation of aspects of Coward's style in order to achieve a pastiching effect. Even though *Easy Virtue* and *Relative Values* have not traditionally been classified among Coward's most successful plays, they are the only of his works that have been chosen to form the basis of screen adaptations within the last ten years. This may be caused by their treating issues of contemporary relevance: in spite of the changes in historical context – *Easy Virtue* and *Relative Values* were written in the 1920s and 1950s, respectively – the plays have particularly lent themselves to being adapted for the themes they cover are still accessible to a contemporary audience.

Not all changes that have taken place in the context of these cinematic adaptations are to be considered as attempts to remove the hypertexts from their hypotexts or their original author. On the contrary, many of them are rooted in respectful pastiche since both Styles and Elliott decidedly adopted the playwright's original spirit by including stylistic elements typical of the artist.

Actually, pastiching his style and thus inevitably further involving Noël Coward in adaptations of his works is presumably the most reasonable thing for a contemporary adapter to do since, as is generally assumed, "Coward was not a thinker […]. His genius was for style" (Lahr 3).

2. The Concept of Adaptation

2.1. Towards a Definition of Adaptation

From a pragmatic point of view the concept of 'adaptation' is presumably as eclectic as the processes it describes. At the present day, instances of adaptation can be found in practically every aspect of the arts – in music, as illustrated by the British rock group The Alan Parsons Project's basing part of their work on the writings of Edgar Allan Poe – in poetry, with Romantic poet John Keats' letting himself be inspired by a classical Greek artwork for one of his famous *Odes* – and, more recently, in drama, with Christopher Hampton's adapting Ödön von Horvath's popular inter-war novel *Jugend Ohne Gott* for a contemporary production at the Theater in der Josefstadt.

In spite of the versatility of these practical manifestations, there is one thing that all of the aforementioned examples have in common: they take a pre-existing source text and, on the basis of that given, arrive at something new which is subsequently defined as the outcome of the adaptation process. The notion of development evident from the examples implies a diachronic dimension which is in fact inherent to the concept of adaptation – and indeed, it is apparent that what French scholar Gérard Genette describes as the 'hypotext' of the adaptation has to exist beforehand in order for the adapter to be able to derive the 'hypertext' from it (see *Palimpseste* 10).

On these grounds, and especially in the field of film studies, numerous critics have been tempted to perceive adaptation as a relatively recent cultural phenomenon triggered by an excess of source texts from an enormously yielding literary past which lend themselves to be transformed in one way or the other. Consequently, "the cinema borrows from fiction a certain number of well-wrought, well-rounded, or well-developed characters, all of whom have been polished by twenty centuries of literary culture" (Bazin, *Adaption* 24).

However, adaptations have existed and been playing an important role in the arts throughout history. As Canadian scholar Linda Hutcheon states in the preface to *A Theory of Adaptation*, one of the most recent publications on the matter, especially people in the Victorian era took pleasure in and made use of the phenomenon of adaptation:

The Victorians had a habit of adapting just about everything – and in just about every possible direction; the stories of poems, novels, plays, operas, paintings, songs, dances and *tableaux vivants* were constantly being adapted from one medium to another and then back again. (*Adaptation* xi)

More recently, with the emergence of electronic media, adaptation has started to spread into popular culture and has thus become an essential part of daily life. It is a commonplace practice to use literary works as the bases for movies, which are in turn transformed into videogames, historical enactments, virtual reality games or theme parks and thus made available to a large public via different media (see Hutcheon, *Adaptation* xi). It can thus be assumed that everybody has at the present day at some point been confronted with a form of adaptation that they have recognized as such. However, in spite of their having virtually become ordinary phenomena in postmodern culture, a crucial point that is often neglected in this context is the question of what it actually is that people call adaptations.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word 'adaptation' was attested for the first time in the English language in the course of the 17th century (see s.v. adaptation). It derives from the French term 'adaptation' or the late Latin expression 'adaptationem', both of which generally describe "[t]he process or modifying a thing so as to suit new conditions" or, alternatively, "[t]he condition or state of being adapted; adaptedness, suitableness" (s.v. adaptation). Moreover, apart from describing these processes, the term 'adaptation' can also be used to denote their product or outcome: adaptation is "[a] special instance of adapting; and hence, *concr.* an adapted form or copy, a reproduction of anything modified to suit new uses" (s.v. adaptation).

It is in both of these contexts that the concept becomes of immediate relevance to the study of literature and film, where 'adaptation' is used to describe both the process of adapting a work and its final product. However, these literal explanations are still not sufficient to fully convey what is at the heart of this multifaceted concept.

One attempt at defining adaptation which is valid for both of the aforementioned domains would be to maintain that the high art of adaptation is predominantly based on the principle of distancing a text from its source in order to bring into being a work of its own. Especially in the context of film

adaptations, the nature of this transformation may thereby primarily affect the formal dimension of the original work: "The form changes with adaptation […]; the content persists" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 10). Even though Hutcheon immediately contradicts her statement by conceding that content is transformed in some way, too – content elements which lend themselves to adaptation are story, themes, characters, dialogue or the onset, development and closure of the action (see 10-15) – there is some truth to it as a formal aspect, namely a change in medium, is often presupposed when talking about adaptations. However, the question whether this is indeed always justifiable seems to cause some disagreement among theoreticians.

Basically, it can be said that there are two differing standpoints regarding the issue of medial change. In the context of literary studies, it is often argued that adaptation can occur within one and the same medium, for instance when a stage play is being adapted or translated for the stage. The necessity for the transposition of the original text may be caused by a change in cast, venue, audience or time of production, which requires elements of the original work to be changed in order for the work to suit the new purpose.

When speaking of film adaptation, however, a change in medium is usually implied as it is thus that adaptations are traditionally distinguished from remakes:

> Short stories and novels are often adapted for stage or screen; ballets are sometimes recreated or rechoreographed; comic strips are occasionally revived by new artists; plays are reinterpreted by each new set of performers; but only movies are remade. (Leitch 37)

According to Thomas Leitch, the reasons for producing remakes, and especially archival remakes[1], can be found in a positive reception by the critics, the intellectual value of the work or the prestige that the original film entails. Of course, the popularity of the original property which forms the basis of both films is not to be neglected, for "remakes differ from other adaptations to a new medium and translations to a new language because of the triangular relationship they establish among themselves, the original film they remake,

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[1] In his article "Twice-Told Tales: Disavowal and the Rhetoric of the Remake", Leitch defines archival remakes as Hollywood remakes of Hollywood originals. He juxtaposes them with Hollywood remakes of foreign films, a branch of remakes which has become popular only recently (see Leitch 38).

and the property on which both films are based" (Leitch 39). Sarah Cardwell takes up this notion of the triangular and, in the context of her quest for an alternative model of adaptation, introduces the concept of 'meta-text' in order to account for the complexity of the phenomenon:

> There is evidently the necessity for a more realistic, complex and nuanced understanding of adaptation. It would be more accurate to view adaptation as the gradual development of a 'meta-text'. This view recognises that a later adaptation may draw upon any earlier adaptations, as well as upon the primary source text. (25)

Leaving aside the fact that the latter does apparently not make a distinction between remakes and adaptations while the former does, one can draw the conclusion that Leitch's and Cardwell's views at some point express the same underlying thought. Both of them suggest that, in contrast to mere literary adaptations, film remakes have the privilege of being able to benefit from two presumably successful predecessors whereas adaptations can most often only draw upon one single source text. Moreover, adaptations and remakes are perceived by both critics as rather complex and challenging processes which cannot be reduced to straightforward artistic practices.

The divergent views on whether there is such a thing as a remake and the question to what extent this concept has to be considered different from adaptations illustrate the difficulties encountered when dealing with the theoretical discourse on the subject. If a distinction between remake and adaptation is made, the two concepts are hardly ever opposed to each other but their relationship is perceived in quite a different way. Leitch's aforementioned definition, for instance, serves as an illustration of the fact that secondary literature on adaptation studies rather thinks of remakes as a kind of sub-category of adaptations. Linda Hutcheon takes up this way of defining the difference between adaptations and remakes by means of a hierarchical relationship. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, she argues that remakes are adaptations in themselves as they bear one of the distinctive features of the genre: "Remakes are invariably adaptations because of changes in context. So not all adaptations necessarily involve a shift of medium or mode of engagement, though many do" (*Adaptation* 170). In other words, she

distinguishes between 'remakes' and 'literary adaptations', both of which she perceives to be sub-categories of a more general concept of adaptation.

However, as suggested before, Leitch and Hutcheon are some of the few who actually make the distinction between literary adaptations and remakes that is often said to be characteristic of film studies.[2] In other literature on the subject, there sometimes even is a strong tendency to use the concepts of 'remake' and 'adaptation' interchangeably[34], a fact which may easily lead to the confusion of the readers, but which at the same time confirms and highlights the aforementioned versatility of the concept as such.

In contrast to these contentious debates, there is consensus as to the defining generic feature of an adaptation which is the text's distance from the source. This implies that the process of adaptation is necessarily concerned with a minimum of two different texts, namely the source text and the adapted version, the latter of which has undergone some kind of transformation in order to be acknowledged as a separate work of art due to the distance it has established between itself and the source. The aforementioned transformation may be achieved in terms of language, medium or various aspects of form or content, heavily depending on the purpose of the adaptation – i.e. depending on the question why a text is adapted.

According to Hutcheon, the main reasons for artists to create an adapted version of a text may be "to economically and artistically supplant the prior works" (*Adaptation* 20). This is even more relevant in the context of remakes and is to be seen in close connection with purchasing the adaptation rights of a text:

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[2] However, even though Thomas Leitch initially maintains that a remake of a movie is "a movie based on another movie" (38), he ironically contradicts his rather straightforward definition at some point by stating that "[i]t is clear that remakes necessarily entail adaptation to a new medium, for a remake in the same medium would risk charges of plagiarism" (38).

[3] In his article "*Emma* in Los Angeles. Remaking the Book and the City", published in James Naremore's *Film Adaptation*, Lesley Stern argues 1990s movie *Clueless* to be a remake of Jane Austen's *Emma* (see Stern 221-238), by which it was undoubtedly inspired. However, people insisting on the fact that remakes occur within one and the same medium would probably rather describe Austen's inspiration of *Clueless* as an instance of adaptation due to the fact that its transposition involved a change in medium. It may be considered as a remake of earlier film versions of *Emma*, though.

[4] Sarah Cardwell defines what Hutcheon and others would call 'remakes' as "subsequent film or television adaptations draw[ing] on previous ones" (25).

Adaptation rights are something the producers of the original work are held to have a right to sell, with the understanding either that their sale will not impair the economic potential of the original property (a film-rights sale may actually increase the number of copies of a novel printed and sold) or that the price of purchasing adaptation rights reflects the probable loss of the original property's appeal (as in the case of musicals, whose runs are normally killed by the appearance of a film version). But of all the different types of adaptations, only remakes compete directly and often without legal or economic compensation with other versions of the same property. (Leitch 38)

This quotation stresses an important aspect with regard to the differences in purpose between remakes and literary adaptations. While remakes generally aim at outselling and usurping the movie they are based on and hence directly compete with it, literary adaptations often rely on the success of the original work and thus seek to reproduce it. What is more, adaptations frequently lead to an increase in sales figures of the original work for audiences may wish to refer to the literary source of the adaptation in order to be able to compare the two versions.

Another motive for adapters is the aesthetic or political value of a work of art (see Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 20). In this context, the decision between being true to the original work and changing it to a certain extent has to be faced. This decision is usually made on the basis of the purpose of the adaptation, i.e. staging a Victorian play in front of a contemporary audience will most probably require some changes of the original in order for the outcome to be successful. There will still be some similarities, but the adapted version will not be entirely faithful to the original.

For people arguing against such changes and in favor of the notion of fidelity, the most well-known historical source of argumentation can be found in Aristotle's vision of 'mimesis', which depicts the inherent need for imitation as a source of finding pleasure in their art among human beings (see Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 20). However, being faithful to a text does still not imply the adapter's total submission to it, for "[l]ike classical imitation, adaptation also is not slavish copying; it is a process of making the adapted material one's own" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 20). Thus, an adaptation is always to be distinguished from imitation and to be considered in relation to the adapter and not exclusively in relation to its source text. Consequently, as it is one of the defining features of the genre, the lack of success of an adaptation cannot be attributed to a lack

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of fidelity to the original. Rather, it may be rooted in the adapter's lack of talent in creating a work of his own (see Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 20).

A final consideration concerns the question of the context in which adaptation takes place. It has to be taken into account that not only the outcome of the adaptation process is influenced by a particular context, but that the source text, too, has been produced in certain temporal and spatial circumstances that are inherently subject to change. "An adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context – a time and a place, a society and a culture, it does not exist in a vacuum" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 142). Hence, it is essential to pay close attention to the context as "it can take very little time for [it] to change how a story is received. Not only what is (re)accentuated but more importantly how a story can be (re)interpreted can alter radically" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 142). Thus, context affects both the production and the reception sides of an adapted work. It is here that one can see the main difference to the classical concept of imitation that has been discussed before: whereas imitations or reproductions can basically be said to pretend to copy the original context a story is set in – and consequently are often not mindful of the audience they are aimed at – adaptations take contextual factors into consideration. The adapters themselves are situated within roughly the same context as their audience, and, in order to make the adaptation their own, they have to consider these particular circumstances, too, for they can affect the medium an adaptation uses as its channel as well as other elements of creation and reception like advertizing, press coverage and reviews (see Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 144) that are subsequently elements of the context on the side of reception.

One may safely claim that there is definitely a notion of omnipresence to adaptations in contemporary culture. Everything seems to be an adaptation today – and indeed, everything basically is. There are even two examples of the form of art which is traditionally most often subject to this phenomenon nowadays – namely the medium of film – which themselves thematize the topic on a meta-level: Terry Gilliam's *Lost in La Mancha* and Spike Jonze's *Adaptation*, two movies launched in 2002, whose plots revolve around the subject of adaptation. What is more, adaptations are not only ubiquitous, but also very successful: according to Hutcheon, 1992 statistics show that 85

percent of all Oscar-winners in the category Best Picture are indeed literary adaptations (see 4). However, the question remains why it is that the increasing popularity of the electronic media seems to challenge more traditional channels of literary communication. Even though theater has by no means been completely replaced by television today, it cannot be denied that the electronic media have seen an increase in popularity which is definitely made use of in the context of film adaptations.

2.2. Adapting Literary Texts for the Screen

2.2.1. The Principle: Distancing A Text from Its Source

An important consideration in the context of adapting literary texts for the screen is once again the conceptual differentiation between imitation and adaptation. While imitations do not seek to distance themselves from their source but rather aim at reproducing it, adaptations serve as tools for the screenwriter's or director's self-realization. By taking an original work, transforming it in terms of content and/or form and then suiting the outcome to the new context, the adapter makes the text their own work.

Hence, in order to be considered an adaptation rather than an imitation, a text necessarily has to be different from the original which was used as the basis of the adaptation. However, the question as to when such a distance is actually achieved remains a matter of interpretation. Basically, it could be argued that as soon as a new work can be compared to its source on the basis of differences that are perceptible, the former can be called an adaptation of the latter. Such differences, according to Hutcheon, can occur both in terms of content and in terms of form or medium (see 10). As discussed earlier, adaptations need not necessarily entail a change in medium. However, the process of adapting literary texts for the screen indeed implies a change in form, i.e. medium. Even if content elements basically remain unchanged, the undeniable circumstance that the content has been transposed to and is hence represented through a different medium already makes the outcome an adaptation rather than an imitation. As the change in medium is clearly discernible, the outcome can no longer be called a replication of the original work.

In spite of the challenges involved in literary adaptation, it seems to be a commonplace phenomenon nowadays to adapt novels for the screen: both Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* have been adapted into movies within the last year. The readiness of adapters to produce screen adaptations of novels is rather surprising for the visual aspect that is characteristic of films and that is not present in the novel supposedly renders the adaptation process quite difficult. As novels are not normally written with the possibility of their later being performed in mind, features inherent to the medium of film have to be added when turning the stories into screenplays. Similarly, characteristics of prose fiction, as for instance narration will have to be altered significantly in order to transfer the story to the new medium in a plausible manner. In his essay "Für ein 'unreines' Kino – Plädoyer für die Adaption", André Bazin describes the problematic nature of adapting novels into films as follows:

> Zweifellos hat der Roman seine eigenen Mittel, sein Material ist die Sprache, nicht das Bild, seine auf den einzelnen Leser vertraute Wirkung ist nicht dieselbe wie die des Films auf die Masse im verdunkelten Kinosaal. Gerade die Unterschiede in den ästhetischen Strukturen machen die Bemühungen um möglichst vollkommene Entsprechungen noch schwieriger. Sie verlangen sowohl mehr Erfindungen als auch mehr Fantasie [vom] Regisseur […]. (*Adaption* 38)

Similarly, dramatic texts that are transformed into films usually have to be altered to a certain extent to suit their new purpose. However, depending on the genre of the film, these changes will generally be less significant than those which are encountered when adapting prose texts for the screen. If a film in fact chooses to adhere to many theatrical conventions, its transfer into the new medium will most probably be less difficult than if the screenwriter and the director decide to transfer the original story entirely to the characteristic technical features and traditions of the new medium. On the one hand, in the context of a screen adaptation like the latter, dramatic texts may lose their artificiality and may be rendered more realistic by the possibilities of the new medium. Changes like the former, on the other hand, are closely related to the intended effects of the film. If an essentially serious story is turned into a

satirical new work, genre traditions can be employed to achieve the effect the adapter wants his or her text to have.[5]

In her monograph *Literature into Film*, Linda Costanzo Cahir describes three different variants of the nature of the translation of literature into film, namely literal, traditional and radical translation (see 16), which all have different effects on their audience. In spite of her restricting these three concepts to the transposition of literature into both a different medium and a different language, it can be argued that they are as well valid for and can thus be equally applied to adaptations which rest within the same language.

Literal translation or adaptation is defined by Linda Cahir as "[reproducing] the plot and all its attending details as closely as possible to the letter of the book" (16). According to this definition, literal adaptations are solely characterized by a change in medium whereas the content of the original work remains unaffected by the transposition.

The second of Cahir's categories, traditional translation/adaptation, "maintains the overall traits of the book (its plot, settings, and stylistic conventions) but revamps particular details in those particular ways that the filmmakers see as necessary and fitting" (16-17). Traditional translation involves what is probably most commonly associated with the process of adaptation. While the basic and thus most characteristic features of a source text are allowed to persist in order for its relation to the original work to be perceptible for the audience, minor features are changed to suit both the new medium and the new purpose.

The third category suggested by Cahir, that of radical translation or adaptation, "reshapes the book in extreme and revolutionary ways both as a means of interpreting the literature and of making the film a more fully independent work" (17). Even though Cahir's point of view is not entirely elusive, one could argue instances of radical adaptation to consist of a range of textual references to one source text rather than representing actual examples of adaptation.

It is important to note that the three aforementioned approaches to adaptation are not to be perceived as three distinct categories which do not allow for transgression. On the contrary, their boundaries are rather fuzzy and

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[5] In one of her earlier works, *A Theory of Parody*, Linda Hutcheon extensively discusses the issue of changing the genre of a text in order to achieve a certain effect.

according to Cahir "it is not unusual for a film to incorporate a combination of these approaches, for a traditional translation, for example, to include a radical sequence" (17).

However, she affirms her position on the importance of her three different categories by concluding that "[i]n assessing the merits of a literature-based film, an understanding of the three different translation [or adaptation] modes is crucial because any evaluation must take into account the mode used in making the film" (17). Thus, if these different ways of translating or adapting a text were ignored and adaptations were treated unsophisticatedly regardless of their purpose, it would indeed be difficult to perceive and subsequently judge the way in which the newly created texts have distanced themselves from the originals. Consequently, the adapter's intentions could easily be misinterpreted and a number of problems would be likely to arise.

2.2.2. The Problem: What Makes Adapting So Difficult?

2.2.2.1. Film Adaptations and the Notion of Inferiority

The devaluation of cinema is by no means a recent phenomenon for "[a]s early as 1926, Virginia Woolf […] deplored the simplification of the literary work that inevitably occurred in its transposition to the new visual medium" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 3). Attitudes like Woolf's have continued to exist from the early days of the cinema onwards. The prejudices the art of film is thereby frequently confronted with can be summarized as follows:

> Der Film als 'siebente Kunst' ist bekanntlich mit einem Geburtsfehler behaftet […]. Er ist ein reichlich verspätetes Kind der Künste, eklektisch und mechanisch, entstanden im Industriezeitalter und auf Massenbedürfnisse hin entwickelt. Seine Ursprünge im populären Spektakel […] haben ihn fast von Beginn an zu einem Vermarktungsprodukt der Unterhaltungsindustrie gemacht. (Schmidt 26)

In spite of its generally being recognized as the seventh art, the supposed inferiority of film with regard to other forms of art is rooted in the former's lack of tradition. However, this judgement and the resulting dichotomy of superiority and inferiority is indeed a common misconception based on the assumption that literature, having more tradition, is necessarily better than film. Even though it is evident that adaptations derive from some earlier text, it has to be stressed that

"an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 9).

However, the aforementioned prejudiced attitude with regard to the historicity of literature is also hinted at in Bazin's article on adaptations when he claims that while film is a relatively recent form of art, literature is as old as history (see *Adaptation* 34). And indeed, it cannot be denied that

> the cinema borrows from fiction a certain number of well-wrought, well-rounded, or well-developed characters, all of whom have been polished by twenty centuries of literary culture. It adopts them and brings them into play; according to the talents of the screenwriter and the director, the characters are integrated as much as possible into their new aesthetic context. (Bazin, *Adaptation* 24)

Even though cinema frequently draws upon literary traditions, it is the new aesthetics mentioned by Bazin that should not be neglected by the audience when judging a film. However, it is also among lay people and not only among scholars that

> [a] movie based on a literary source is often seen as a secondary work and, consequently, of secondary value. Literature, generally, still occupies a more privileged position in the cultural hierarchy than movies do; and readers often have a proprietary attitude toward the book, an attitude that influences their reception of a film based upon it. […] When a film does not square with the reader's ideas, images, interpretations – even simple recall – of the book, the movie is deemed de facto deficient and disappointing, spawning the general impression that *the movie just never is as good*. (Cahir 13)

What is more, readers show very emotional responses to adaptations and are frequently frustrated by the realization that their expectations have not been fulfilled by the adaptation:

> [Readers] often are disappointed when the movie does not match their concept of what they have read, not realizing that reading, itself, is an act of translation. Readers translate words into images and form strong, private, often vivid impressions of what the book's fictional world looks like and what it all means; words become translated into emotional experiences. (Cahir 13)

The last two quotations imply that it is not neutral judgment on the part of the reader, but a predominantly emotional response that directors are often faced with when their works are compared to the literary source. The exact nature of this response is illustrated by Stam, who identifies three essential factors contributing to the readers' deception. However, it is important to note that Stam does not attribute the reason for their emotional responses to the readers themselves, but rather blames the theoretical discourse on the subject to be at the origin of the following set of problems:

> Much of the discussion of film adaptation quietly reinscribes the axiomatic superiority of literary art to film, an assumption derived from a number of superimposed prejudices: *seniority*, the assumption that older arts are necessarily better arts; *iconophobia*, the culturally rooted prejudice […] that visual arts are necessarily inferior to the verbal arts, and *logophilia*, the converse valorization, characteristic of the 'religions of the book' or the 'sacred word' of holy texts. (Stam, *Fidelity* 58)

The assumption that what is older is necessarily better is thus combined with the unconscious preference of words over images, which is basically rooted in the fact that words have traditionally been considered holy in the context of religion. All those aspects combine to make people perceive the visual arts inferior to the verbal arts.

In order to counteract such negative opinions on the subject, *Les Cahiers du Cinéma* popularized the 'auteur' theory, making the director the author of the adaptation and thus suppressing any need for comparison resp. evaluation of source text and adaptation. Auteurism was largely influenced by Existentialism and mainly promoted by André Bazin, who held the Existentialist view that "*cinema's* 'existence precedes its essence'" (Stam, *Film* 83). The underlying philosophy was introduced by Alexandre Astruc, who in one of his articles "argued that the cinema was becoming a new means of expression analogous to painting or the novel" (Stam, *Film* 83). This was then further elaborated by Truffaut's claiming that "the new film would resemble the person who made it, not so much through autobiographical content but rather through the style, which impregnates the film with the personality of its director" (Stam, *Film* 84). In the American context, the Auteur Theory was developed in even more detail with Andrew Sarris' proposing "three criteria for recognizing an auteur: (1) technical competence; (2) distinguishable personality; and (3) interior meaning

arising from tension between personality and material" (Stam, *Film* 89). This put another complexion on the profession of the director. The new 'auteurs' compared themselves to novelists like Dickens and Woolf and thus did not perceive their task as the mere imitation of somebody else's work, but rather thought of it as individualizing the work of art and thus making the new version their own property. This contributed to the recognition of cinema as the 7th art and helped improve the cinematographers' reputation. However, as most movies nowadays are based on some literary source, there is still a certain degree of tension between the disciplines of literature and film studies in this respect.

Basically, one could draw the conclusion that, in order to avoid a film's being inferior to its literary source, the simplest solution for the adapter would be to stick to what is supposedly superior, i.e. the literary model, so as to be able to transfer its success to the adaptation – bearing this in mind, it may be worth having a look at the notion of fidelity to the original, which is a widespread concept in the context of adaptation studies.

2.2.2.2. The Principle of Fidelity: Being True to the Original

"*[I]nfidelity, betrayal, deformation, violation, vulgarization*, and *desecration*" (Stam, *Film* 54) – these are only some of the terms which have frequently been employed in the context of comparing a television film or movie to its literary model – and of course, the discourse in which they are usually found does not have a positive connotation. Adaptations are often considered to betray their source – but in fact, the preposterous allegations listed by Stam are made because adaptations do exactly what they are supposed to do – they distance themselves from the original text they are based on.

The subject of fidelity is not always very popular with critics, as it is for instance illustrated by Andrew, who holds the view that "[u]nquestionably the most frequent and most tiresome discussion of adaptation (and of film and literature relations as well) concerns fidelity and transformation" (31). And indeed, "[d]iscussion of adaptations has been bedevilled by the fidelity issue" (McFarlane 8):

> When we say an adaptation has been 'unfaithful' to the original, the term gives expression to the disappointment we feel when a film adaptation

fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic and aesthetic features of its literary source. The notion of fidelity gains its persuasive force from our sense that some adaptations are indeed better than others and that some adaptations fail to 'realize' or substantiate that which we most appreciated in the source novels. Words such as infidelity and betrayal in this sense translate our feeling, when we have loved a book, that an adaptation has not been worthy of that love. (Stam, *Film* 54)

Hence, like in the context of the alleged inferiority of an adaptation to its prior work, the spectators' emotions equally play a large role in the context of the fidelity discussion.

However, in contrast to other scholars, Stam does not seem to take the issue of fidelity in adaptations very seriously – and in fact, this seems to be a very reasonable thing to do because "[a] film or television adaptation of a prior cultural text – no matter how 'faithful' in intention or aesthetic – is inevitably an *interpretation* of that text: to this extent, every adaptation is an instance of textual *in*fidelity" (Carroll 1). Thus, as soon as a text is considered an adaptation, it can by definition no longer be completely true to the original and any claim on this part would definitely be unjustified. Consequently, as suggested by both Bazin (see *Adaptation* 37) and McFarlane (see 8), fidelity is not as important an issue in the context of adaptation as has been suggested by some critics. If, for instance, the adapter decides to focus his attention on one particular aspect of the source text and thereby hazards the consequences of losing some other features, this does not necessarily imply that the adaptation is less valid than if it had stuck closely to the original text. What is more, if this decision requires the original story to be altered in order for the adaptation to be plausible, this does not mean that the adaptation can no longer be considered an adaptation. The only thing it implies is that what is being dealt with is in fact an adaptation and not an imitation. Hence, it is basically only in the context of imitations that the question of fidelity to the original should become of relevance to the critic. Once the issue of imitation has been rejected, fidelity should no longer be a valid benchmark.

What is particularly problematic in this context, however, is the question of interpretation. Already when looking at people's readings of a literary text, there is a large variety of possible evaluations, all of which are equally valid from the point of view of reception– while, in terms of production, all of them are

entirely invalid at the same time. It is highly unlikely for the reader to infer from the text the exact message the author intended to convey. What is more, every single reader is likely to interpret the text in a different way. Therefore, imposing one 'correct' meaning on a text and then judging the quality of an adaptation on the basis of this meaning would be a rather presumptuous thing to do.

It is interesting to observe that adaptations that rest within the same medium are often more popular than adaptations which change media. On the one hand, Sir Tom Stoppard's taking a part of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and turning it into his well-received *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* has generally been judged favorably by critics in spite of its remoteness in terms of content from the original version. On the other hand, however, numerous film adaptations or literary works, as for instance the movies based on the *Harry Potter* series, have often been criticized for their detachment from the original works, as e.g. by *Washington Post* critic Dan Kois, who in general seems to be rather disappointed by the most recent adaptation of the series. However, he concedes that adapting a literary text for the screen is indeed not an easy task:

> While in my heart of hearts I imagine the perfect Potter adaptation as a 30-hour miniseries in which every scene in the book is reproduced verbatim, I'm willing to accept that Hollywood adaptation is the art of omission and collage. A screenwriter struggles to excise everything nonessential from a book and then assembles the rest into a shape that's pleasing to the eye. (1)

Quite ironically, in contrast to Kois' wish for fidelity to the novels, the movies of this series have also been criticized for their being too true to the novels:

> Movies and books are different media, and the best approach for adapting the latter into the former is not always an unvarnished translation. Columbus [the director of the first movie] doesn't use any imagination beyond that which J.K. Rowling previously supplied for her book. There's no denying that the film is diverting, but it isn't *inspired*. (Berardinelli 1)

Thus, it is difficult to say whether an adaptation will be received more favorably if it stays close to the text it adapts or whether this will result in its being criticized for a lack of inspiration. Evidently, there is a lot of disagreement regarding the question whether literary works should remain close to their

literary predecessors or whether they should acknowledge the fact that the change in media inevitably distances the story from its source. Generally, however, it can be said that in contrast to transpositions that remain within the realm of literature, film adaptations often have an acrid taste to them which is caused by their distancing themselves from the source in a manner that is more obvious to their audience for it involves a change in media. But why is it that films are generally perceived in a more negative manner than literary texts?

One possible answer to this question is the phenomenon that literary adaptations, in the eyes of the audience, do not lose value to the same extent as film adaptations do because they still allow for individual interpretations of the story. In other words, there is a psychological aspect to film adaptation: as a director, by taking a literary model and adding one's own interpretation to it, one automatically disillusions the audience. The spectators are presented with one out of the infinite number of possible individual interpretations of the source, which is definitely different from the one they had in mind. Thus, what they do is compare this interpretation to their own and take this comparison as a starting point for their judgments on the movie. Having a look at the matter from this point of view, what is being compared by the audience are not the actual versions of a text, but rather the different interpretations that are attached to them. If a story allows for interpretation on the part of the audience, people can relate two of their own interpretations and are thus likely to be less critical of the new version than if they had been presented with it by means of movies which do not normally offer much space for interpretation.[6]

The question as to what constitutes the 'correct' meaning of a story remains open and with that, the whole notion of fidelity is in fact reduced to absurdity. In order to be considered a 'successful' adaptation, it is frequently argued that a newly told tale has to be faithful to its point of departure – but faithful in terms of what? In terms of technical elements like character construction or plot? Or even in terms of conveying the true intentions of the writer? If so, how can one ever be sure about what these intentions actually

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[6] This may well be a reason for the recent trend to re-write Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* by adding Vampire or Zombie elements to it. Both Regina Jeffer's *Darcy's Hunger: A Vampire Retelling of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* (2009) and Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) take Jane Austen's 1813 work as their starting point and add fantastic elements to it. Those elements change the story as such, but they still allow for the audience to interpret the new version for themselves as the mode of presentation remains the same.

are? And how does all this tie in with the notion of the auteur as the creator of an individual work? When considered from this point of view, the auteur actually disappears:

> By elevating the writer of the source book […] and by positioning a direct relationship between source text and adaptation […], writers […] precipitate a strange elision: the author of the source book becomes the implied author of the 'version' of it – the adaptation. Adaptations are therefore often interpreted and evaluated as expressions of the source-text author's intentions […] [b]ut is it not more accurate to say that [the values expressed in the new version] foreground the *adaptation's* concerns, not those of the [source]? (Cardwell 22)

It is a case in point that adapting indeed involves an enormous amount of interpretation, as, in fact, does the process of reading, and evidently, there are various approaches to it. However, it is inherent to the very concept that adaptations can never be completely true to their source – and this is indeed a perfectly valid conception as fidelity is not and has never been the principle they are based on.

2.2.3. The Process: How are Literary Texts Adapted for the Screen?

Apart from the different variants of the nature of adaptations outlined in chapter 2.2.1., there are various techniques of film adaptation which are discussed in literature on the subject.

One of them is Dudley Andrew's distinction between borrowing, intersecting and transforming sources (see 30-32). Each of these three techniques is linked to the notion of fidelity discussed earlier; however, Andrew concedes that this aim is most difficult to achieve in the context of transformations (see 31).

According to Andrew, borrowing is the most popular technique as it enables the adapter to draw elements from a successful source which are meant to ensure the popularity of the adaptation as

> the adapter hopes to win an audience for the adaptation by the prestige of its borrowed title or subject. But at the same time, [the adaptation] seeks to gain a certain respectability, if not aesthetic value, as a dividend in the transaction. […] There is no question of the replication of the original […]. Instead, the audience is expected to enjoy basking in a

certain preestablished presence and to call up new or especially powerful aspects of a cherished work. (30)

In order to be recognized as a suitable basis for borrowing, the original text has to be a kind of archetype of the respective culture and be widely acknowledged therein. Examples of such archetypes are the myth of *Tristan and Isolde* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (see Andrew 30) or Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen*, which has been subject to adaptations of all kinds for nearly two centuries now (see Hutcheon *Adaptation* 153-167). Quite interestingly, in spite of the fact that Andrew considers transforming to be the biggest challenge in terms of fidelity, it has to be pointed out at that point that the very notion of borrowing already contradicts the concept of fidelity. However, this does not suggest that adaptations which are based on the technique of borrowing are less successful than others as it is something else they rely on: "The success of adaptations of this sort rests on the issue of their fertility, not their fidelity" (Andrew 30).

The second technique outlined by Andrew, intersecting, is opposed to borrowing in that "the uniqueness of the original text is preserved to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation. The cinema, as a separate mechanism, records its confrontation with an ultimately intransigent text" (30). Intersecting thus basically delineates the cinematic technique of filtering a source text through the medium of cinema and thereby highlighting some of its features while neglecting others. In spite of his calling intersecting a technique of adaptation, Andrew insists that "[a]ll such works fear or refuse to adapt. Instead they present the otherness and distinctiveness of the original text, initiating a dialectal interplay between the aesthetic forms of one period and the cinematic forms of our own period. [Thus,] [a]n original is allowed its life, its own life, in the cinema" (31). In other words, filmmakers make use of the new medium in order to transmit the original ideas and concepts of the literary basis by putting a focus on carefully chosen aspects which suit the new medium without changing the literary basis. In this context, it has to be pointed out that there is certainly a modernist touch to the technique of intersecting in that it assembles and highlights certain features of the original while neglecting others (see Andrew 31).

The third technique mentioned by Andrew is that of transforming, which is, with regard to the question of fidelity, "[u]nquestionably the most frequent and tiresome discussion of adaptation" (31). Adaptations which have come into existence via the transformation of a primary text rather than via borrowing or intersecting usually do not meet the expectations of people who perceive the need for fidelity in adaptations as they change rather than imitate. However, what remains true to the original text is "the spirit, the original's tone, values, imagery, and rhythm" (Andrew 32). Thus, the underlying spirit of the literary work remains the same whereas the mode of presentation is changed by transposing the text into a new medium. "Here it is assumed that the task of adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about an original text" (Andrew 31).

The trichotomy Andrew suggests is based on the tripartite division developed by Geoffrey Wagner, who in *The Novel and the Cinema* introduces three 'modes' of adaptation: transposition, commentary and analogy (see Wagner 222-223).

The first mode suggested by him is "transposition, in which a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference" (222). Transposition can be compared to Cahir's category of literal translation and Andrew's technique of intersecting as all three of them refer to adaptations which stay as close to the source text as possible.

The second mode defined within this trichotomy is commentary, which basically designates the phenomenon of taking a source text and changing it "either purposely or inadvertently […] in some aspect" (223). This can be seen in analogy to Andrew's category of borrowing and Cahir's notion of traditional translation because all of those categories involve taking over elements of the original work, but still imply some kind of altering of the source material.

Wagner's third category, analogy "may simply take fiction as a point of departure" (223). Similar to Cahir's radical translation and Andrew's transformation, fidelity to the original does no longer play a role, although it remains a point often to be criticized in this context.

Even though the classifications by Cahir, Andrew and Wagner seem to be quite straightforward concepts, it has to be pointed out that neither are the categories they describe to be seen as absolute nor are the boundaries

between the different modes quite clear. A point that has already been made in the context of describing Cahir's model is the question of whether it is always justifiable to consider radical translations/transformations/analogies as adaptations or whether sometimes it would be enough to point out the evident textual references and perceive the work as an original creation. What is more, it could be argued that an adaptation can contain elements of more than one of the categories, which would make it rather difficult to classify. Another aspect supporting this view is that the claims made in literature on the subject of the popularity of the different kinds of adaptations contradict each other: while Andrew argues that "[i]n the history of the arts, surely "borrowing" is the most frequently used mode of adaptation" (30), Wagner suggests that "[transposition] has been the dominant and most pervasive method used by Hollywood throughout its history" (222).

However, in spite of these flaws, it is quite useful to rely on categories in so far as they help to determine if, and if so, to what extent, a text is an adaptation of another text. However, what it really is that is defined by these terms will be the subject of the following chapter.

2.2.4. The Product: A Work of Its Own

Generally, the process of adaptation can never be systematized and as a consequence, neither can its outcome. Adapting a prior literary work is a process consisting of a huge number of different steps and, depending on the point of departure and the destination, the course of adaptation can vary significantly.

One major factor determining this variation is the medium of the original work and the medium of adaptation for "[e]ach medium has its own specificity deriving from its respective materials of expression" (Stam, *Film* 59). For instance, in the context of literary film adaptations, one can say that the work of art at first has to be re-written in the form of a screenplay which then serves as the basis of a film. However, the nature of the literary basis, i.e. whether e.g. a film is based on a play or on a novel, will influence the adaptation process as such and consequently also the outcome of the adaptation. Of course, it is also the medium that the adaptation is transferred to which influences the adaptation

process. If a novel is adapted to the stage, the transformation will be a different one than if the same story were adapted for the screen.

What remains the same, however, is the fact that the adapter inevitably creates a new work of art. According to Stam, it is particularly the diverse nature of the cinema which supports this view for "the cinema becomes a receptacle open to all kinds of literary and pictorial symbolism, to all types of collective representation, to all ideologies, to all aesthetics, and to the infinite play of influences within cinema, within the other arts, and within culture generally" (Stam, *Fidelity* 61). Stam thus suggests that the outcome of the process of adaptation is not something inferior, but that it is rather to be considered a fruitful combination of various aspects of the arts.

However, it is not only in their versatile nature but also in their distinctiveness from literature that adapted films distinguish themselves from their literary predecessors and thus can be considered as original works:

> It is [in terms of fidelity to the spirit] that the specificity of these two signifying systems [i.e. literature and film] is at stake. Generally film is found to work from perception toward signification, from external facts to interior motivations and consequences, from the givenness of a world to the meaning of a story cut out of that world. Literary fiction works oppositely. It begins with signs […], building to propositions that attempt to develop perception. As a product of human language it naturally treats human motivation and values, seeking to throw them out onto the external world, elaborating a world out of a story. (Andrew 32)

Whereas literary texts begin with signs that are expected to be perceived, films usually approach their viewers from the reverse direction by providing the viewers with perceptions they have to process in order to get their actual signification from them. Consequently, film adaptations must be considered distinct from their literary bases for it is already in their way of approaching their audience that they differ from literary texts.

From these discussions, we can draw the conclusion that what is expressed in the previous sentence is a truth commonly acknowledged in the context of literary and film studies. However, Linda Hutcheon makes an essential and indeed very interesting point when she suggests that "[a]lthough adaptations are also aesthetic objects in their own right, it is only as inherently double- or multilaminated works that they can be theorized *as adaptations*"

(Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 6). This basically suggests that if regarded in isolation from their source texts, adaptations can indeed be called works of their own – but at the same time, they cannot be perceived as adaptations. As soon as adaptations are recognized as adaptations of another text, the two texts necessarily have to be seen in relation to each other and this renders the individualization of the adaptation virtually impossible.

The need for adaptations to be perceived as works of their own is definitely rooted in the aforementioned discussion on inferiority. If newly adapted texts are constantly compared to their sources, they are likely to be considered inferior for they can easily be misinterpreted as mere 'copies' of the original. These 'copies' are different from each other in terms of the mode or the degree of distance from their source texts. What is evident from these notions of 'original' and 'copy' is the traditional superiority of the source.

However, when considered from Gérard Genette's point of view, it is the adapted text which is given priority already in terms of terminology: while in other texts the use of the word 'original' could be interpreted as a kind of evaluation in favor of the source text, Gérard Genette puts the focus upon the new version, which he calls 'hypertext', which is influenced by a text belonging to some subordinate category, namely the 'hypotext' (see *Palimpseste* 10). However, the scholar does not explicitly claim the hypertext to be superior.

Thus, apart from the French scholar, it can be said that already in terms of terminology, there is an indication of a pejorative notion of the adapted text which may easily lead people to consider it inferior to its source. Even though the relation of a film to an anterior text must definitely not be neglected, it should not be considered the most characteristic element of an adaptation so as not to devalue the work which actually forms the basis of investigation in the context of adaptations.

2.3. From Play to Film

Like adaptations, from its very origins in the early 20th century, film has not always been considered a genre of its own. In the same way as adaptations, film has often been perceived as a sub-category of the source which it derived from, i.e. the genre of theater. At first, "film appeared to be no more than the technological reproduction of a multimedial dramatic text, in which the three-

dimensional immediacy of live presentation was replaced by a two-dimensional image" (Pfister 24). Thus, from the early stages of cinema onwards, film has frequently been criticized for being dependent on the high art of theater. This is confirmed by Pfister when he says that "film, in its initial phases at least, was considered primarily a technological innovation that enabled theatre to be preserved photographically, and thus made accessible to a wider public" (23-24).

It is with regard to this tradition that, even though plays and films are to be considered as distinct generic categories today, at first glance they seem to have some essential points in common – at least on a surface level. With film actually deriving from the tradition of theater, both genres combine auditory and visual elements, i.e. speech and images, include movement on the part of the actors and, in the context of film, also on the part of the camera, and involve some kind of temporal progression that is clearly discernible to the audience. Manfred Pfister acknowledges the fact that theater and film are structurally related and in fact groups them together in order to oppose them to narrative texts like novels or short stories for "[t]heir shared characteristics – multimediality and the collective nature of production and reception – distinguish them from narrative texts" (24)[7]. This is also pointed out by Stam in *Literature and Film*, who, like Pfister, puts theatre on a level with film insofar as the two genres involve "sight and hearing simultaneously, linguistic audition and non-linguistic audition, movement, real temporal progression" (20). Admittedly, these are features that are indeed characteristic of both film and theater and at the same time distinguish them from mere narrative texts. However, it is exactly in these similarities that the differences between the two genres become most evident.

Basically, when transferring a text from the medium of theater to the medium of film, attention needs to be paid to how the generically specific aspects of theater need be transformed in order to convey the content to the new medium of film. For example, even though both plays and film combine auditory and visual aspects, they traditionally draw upon these resources to a different extent.

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[7] It has to be stressed at this point that both films and plays can include narrative elements. Thus, they should not be opposed to narrative texts solely on those grounds.

The focus of film definitely rests upon the visual aspects rather than upon the language. This is perfectly illustrated by the era of silent films, during which the technical limitations produced a focus on visual elements which has been maintained in the cinematic tradition up to the present day. In theater, however, words have traditionally tended to be more important than images: "Im Theater […] nimmt die Sprache eine Schlüsselfunktion ein. Durch sie kommen Ideen zum Ausdruck. Das menschliche Wesen offenbart sich im Dialog" (Seger 63). This suggests that even though both the stage and the screen to a certain extent make use of audiovisual aspects, "the essential basis of film lies in visual images, and that of drama in spoken literature" (Rotter 138). In other words, "Grundlage der Rezeption von Filmen ist das visuelle Erleben, bei Dramen hingegen steht die Interaktion zwischen Zuschauer und Darsteller bzw. Bühnengeschehen im Vordergrund" (Bleisteiner 57).

Thus, when adapting a play for the screen, particular attention needs to be paid to the requirements of these different media. For instance, the scenery on stage cannot be changed as quickly as the setting in a film can simply because the performance of a play takes place in real time. This aspect is also stressed by Linda Hutcheon, who discusses the differences in temporal relations of the two media. "The stage has different and perhaps more limited means at its disposal for dealing with temporal issues because […] a live performance takes place in real time" (*Adaptation* 65). Due to the limitations inherent to the medium of theater, the audience need not visually adapt to new settings, but can instead pay full attention to the auditory elements of the performance.

Apart from the temporal and spatial circumstances, this is facilitated by the interaction between the actors on the stage and the audience, which alleviates the audience's processing of the auditory elements of the performance. Plays are "actively produced […] by human beings or props which are themselves present […] on the same stage or 'scene' as the public" (Metz 214).

In the context of film, however, spatial and temporal aspects can be realized quite differently. With the frequent change in setting, the audience has to be able to integrate both language and images and thus needs to be spared from extensive and elaborate dramatic dialogue so as not to be overburdened.

Here, the interchange which is so typical of theater does not exist anymore for "[film] eliminated the constant interchange between the audience and the actors which makes each live performance in the theatre such a unique and gripping occasion" (Pfister 24). The reason for the impossibility of interchange is the spatial and temporal distance that the film inevitably establishes between the actors and their audience. According to Pfister, the time-lag is inherent to the medium of film as opposed to the medium of theater and this opposition has also been widely acknowledged in theory: "Apologists of the theatre, irritated by the success – including the financial success – of the new rival medium, differentiated between film and drama by pointing out the inevitable time-lag between the production and the reception of a film" (24).

Another important aspect is the reduction of the amount of language in film when compared to the medium of theater; on the other hand, some verbal elements are added in the new medium, too. This language is traditionally inserted in the form of a new level that has not existed – or if so, to a lesser extent – in the play version. And indeed, it is this narrative instance added to the dialogical nature of dramatic communication which opens up new perspectives to the screenwriters and directors of films for

> [t]he flexibility and mobility of the camera makes it possible to disrupt the chronology of the story (as in the flashback technique), to stretch or concentrate time, to introduce topographical superimposition and to change the perspective of the presentation. All these are features familiar to us from narrative texts. For, unlike dramatic texts, both film and narrative texts possess a 'mediating communication system' – which is what makes such manipulations of time and space possible in the first place. (Pfister 24)

Thus, it is by means of narrative elements which are added to the film that it distinguishes itself from its dramatic source[8]. However, it needs to be pointed out in the context of this quotation that even though the narrative instance indeed resembles the 'mediating communication system' of a narrative text in terms of its function, the very nature of this system, i.e. the fact that narration is in part realized by means of a camera, is quite a different one:

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[8] Pfister is not quite right in suggesting that dramatic texts cannot have a narrative instance since there are plays which have a narrator, for example works by Brecht and Piscator.

In dramatic texts, the plot of a single, closed scenic unit is presented within a time-space continuum […], whereas in film it may be – and generally is – dissolved into a sequence of non-continuous perspectives. It is in the nature of drama as a medium that it preserves time-space continuity and homogeneity within a particular scene. A film, on the other hand, affects the way a scene is perceived by the continual variation of focus and perspective, by cutting and editing, by the use of fade-ins and fade-outs, lighting and camera movement. (Pfister 24)

Again, it becomes evident from this quotation that some aspects of realization inevitably have to be changed due to the change in media. In the context of film, the camera can be used to select and highlight the information which is presented to the audience. In narrative texts, this function is often fulfilled by the fictional narrator:

[T]he flexible and mobile camera functions as a mediating communication system, fulfilling a narrative function that corresponds to the fictional narrator […] in narrative texts. The film audience, like the readers of a narrative text, is not confronted directly with the material presented, as is the audience in the theatre, but indirectly, via the selective, accentuating and structuring medium of the camera or narrator. (Pfister 24-25)

This emphasis on the structuring function of the camera ties in with the circumstance that plays traditionally lose their external structure when they are adapted into films. Some of the structural elements, as e.g. the climax, may still be discernible in the film version, but they are realized in a different way in the new medium due to the alteration of the structuring of the action.

Another change concerning the multimodality of plays and films is the fact that "in addition to the optical narrative function of the camera, film frequently inserts elements of verbal narrative (such as the use of titles and the voice-over), and […], unlike drama, it can also present space 'descriptively' without the use of characters" (Pfister 25). Quite in contrast to that, the aesthetic of the drama require the stage to be populated by actors and do not usually allow for empty stages (see Pfister 25). Whereas the theater only rarely allows for stages to be empty, shots showing only the scenery are actually quite popular in film. At the beginning of a new scene, they are often used to establish a possible change in setting and circumstances and enable the people

in the audience to orientate themselves without imposing any language upon them.

Pfister then concludes his comparison of texts on the stage and on the screen by stating that "[f]ilm […] has shown itself to be a form which combines structural features of both narrative and dramatic texts. The former is reflected in the existence of a mediating communication system, the latter in its multimediality and the collective nature of its production and reception" (25). By opting against the drawing of strict boundaries between literary genres, Pfister argues in favor of transforming plays for the screen as "[t]o the film maker it is no more than a welcome expansion of the repertoire of codes, channels and structuring processes available to him" (25).

Another point worth mentioning in this context is the question why drama is often considered to be closer to film than prose and poetry. "[T]he element which distinguishes drama from these types of fiction is […] that of 'performance', enactment" (Esslin 24). The literary script is thus closely linked to its implementation in live performance on the stage. Thereby, attention needs to be paid to both the primary text and the secondary text of the script, the latter containing stage directions which are essential for the play as they may contain parts of the action which cannot be conveyed solely by means of the dramatic dialogue. However, in contrast to film, action is traditionally not the most decisive aspect of a play: "[D]er Schwerpunkt aller Theaterstücke liegt eher auf den Zusammenwirkungen von Thema, Figuren, Subtext und Sprache als auf der Handlung" (Seger 63).

One may argue that the reason why in film the focus shifts away from themes, characters, subtext and language and towards the action lies in the loss of one of its aforementioned three dimensions when transformed to the screen. This is caused by the limitations that are inherent to the medium of film; due to a film's being presented to the audience on a two-dimensional screen, the performance inevitably loses part of its authenticity. In order to compensate for this, film makers traditionally make use of camera movement and perspective (see Cahir 144) and thus make the film the supposedly most realistic form of art for it combines the precise potential of visual arts with more elaborate narrative opportunities (see Monaco 49).

Hence, on the one hand, film is limited to a certain extent by the constraints of the medium itself. However, on the other hand, it is in the very nature of film to limit the perception of the audience to a certain extent in order to focus their attention on aspects the film maker wants the spectators to notice (see Monaco 49). For instance, the camera can be used as a means "to bridge [...] distance, bringing the viewer closer to the action and the actors, embracing a 'reality' that is simulated" (Erskine viii).

In theater, there is a certain spatial distance which cannot usually be overcome by means of camera technique, but which is reduced to a certain extent by means of more direct interaction of the actors with the audience. What is more, actors can alter their performance depending on the reactions of their audience (see Esslin 92). Thus, for the audience, watching a play performed on the stage is likely to be a more emotionally loaded and thus memorable event. This is generated by the presence of the actors on the stage and is thus of more immediate relevance for the audience than this could ever be the case in the context of cinema: "Die Möglichkeit des Theaters, frei und spontan zu improvisieren, in eine spannungsreiche, lebendige Beziehung mit dem Zuschauer zu treten, die getragen wird von der physischen Präsenz der Akteure, ist von zentraler Bedeutung für die Wirkung dieses Mediums" (Bleisteiner 58). Thus, one may argue that, whereas in the context of film, the audience only passively contributes to the experience of watching a movie, in the context of theater, it is actively involved for the mere presence of the actors makes the spectators perceive the experience as more immediate and thus relevant to their personal existence.

It is particularly due to this lack of emotional response on the part of the audience that adapting a play for the screen becomes a challenge for the film makers. In order to transfer the matter into a new medium, it is not sufficient to simply film a play for "[t]he movie must negotiate specific ways of eliminating the stagy feeling that would seem disruptive and discrepant in film" (Cahir 145). In order to avoid the 'stagy feeling', one needs to pay attention to the particularities of the relevant media. If a film sticks to a wide range of theatrical conventions, the outcome is very likely to be perceived as artificial and constructed by the audience.

So as to be able to classify the nature of the adaptation, Albersmeier has suggested three distinct of types of dramatic adaptations (see 17-18). The first category can be compared to Andrew's notion of borrowing as it refers to films which are inspired by plays. This inspiration may originate in the dual capacity of the film maker as director and playwright. Category two involves the most artificial type of dramatic adaptation, namely that of filmed theater. In this form, the only actual change is the adding of the camera as a kind of narrative instance; all other aspects remain within the context of theater. The third category contains films which are not based on a play but which are characterized by dramatic elements in terms of structure, techniques and dramatic language (see Albersmeier 18).

In conclusion, it can be said that even though the screen and the stage definitely show some similarities, "theatre is one medium, and film quite another. The two [media] are not entirely interchangeable" (Erskine vii). Therefore, the film adaptation of a play cannot be considered a mere imitation of the original work, but rather an adapted version since it is already the change in medium which implies that it is in fact a new and independent work of art that is being created. However, this newly created work always and inevitably remains intertwined with its source. The scope and extent of this relation is what will be the focus of investigation in the subsequent chapter.

2.4. Particularities of Adaptation in a Postmodern Context

2.4.1. The Postmodern Notion of Adaptation

Jean Baudrillard, one of the gurus (see Storey 177) in the context of the discussion on postmodernism strongly supports the postmodern notion of adaptation. "[F]or [him], postmodernism is not simply a culture of the sign, rather it is a culture of the 'simulacrum'" (Storey 177).

Baudrillard challenges Walter Benjamin's theory that mechanical reproduction has led to the destruction of the 'aura' of the work of art by extending it to the boundaries between original and copy. According to Baudrillard, it is not only a given that these boundaries are blurred, but also the notion of 'originality' no longer exists for mass culture. This has made it difficult, if not impossible, to make a valid distinction between what is original and what is not (see Storey 177-178).

What is more, for Baudrillard, "[h]yperrealism is the characteristic mode of postmodernity" (Storey 178) because simulacra have often become more real to us than actual reality. The most prominent example of hyperrealism for Baudrillard is Disneyland. According to him, Disneyland does not only represent America, but America *is* Disneyland. "[Baudrillard] claims that the success of Disneyland is not due to its ability to allow Americans a fantasy escape from reality, but because it allows them an unacknowledged concentrated experience of 'real' America" (Storey 178).

Thus, "Baudrillard's general analysis supports Lyotard's[9] central point about postmodernism, the collapse of certainty, the dissolution of the metanarrative of 'truth'" (Story 179). There no longer exists one central truth, but rather a variety of different individual realities and experiences.

Similarly, Frederic Jameson, in *Postmodernism and Consumer Society*, paves the way for a postmodern view of adaptation. He claims that the distinction between high and low culture, the latter often being described as mass or popular culture, can no longer be made in postmodern society. For him,

> [t]his is perhaps the most distressing development of all from an academic standpoint, which has traditionally had a vested interest in preserving a realm of high or elite culture against the surrounding environment of philistinism, of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and *Reader's Digest* culture, and in transmitting difficult and complex skills of reading, listening and seeing to its initiates. (Jameson 112)

In his view, "postmodernism expresses the inner truth of that newly emergent social order of late capitalism" (113), as opposed to market capitalism and monopoly capitalism (see Storey 183). For Jameson, the emergence of postmodernism thus simultaneously marks the end of individualism (see Storey 185).

These two fundamental approaches to postmodernism are of particular importance in the context of adaptations. Jameson's approach is especially fruitful with regard to the aforementioned notions of fidelity and inferiority. If a distinction between high and low culture no longer exists, sources are not likely

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[9] Jean-François Lyotard's basic claim is that the formerly well-established large narratives are not valid in postmodern culture for people no longer believe in them as adequate to represent the diversity of human existence.

to be considered superior to the works that have been inspired by them. Rather, the process of adaptation can be considered a kind of pastiche in that it imitates the model without actually expressing any kind of judgment on it, putting both source and adaptation on the same level. Thus, in accordance with Baudrillard, in postmodern culture, it is no longer the original work that is perceived as a universal truth, but other versions of a story are equally valid because they testify to the diversity of postmodern culture. However, this is not to say that original works lose their value: there may still be some elements of truth in the meta-narratives which can be incorporated as elements into the larger construct of the adaptation. The particular ways in which this can be done will be discussed in the context of the following chapter with regard to Gérard Genette's concept of transtextuality.

2.4.2. Gérard Genette's Concept of Transtextuality

French scholar Gérard Genette devotes part of his extensive work on literary theory to defining the nature of the relationships that can exist between two different texts. In his view, already existing definitions of intertextual relations, for instance Kristeva's concept of 'intertextualité', developed in 1967 (see Plett 3), are in fact rather loose and ambiguous and can thus only be applied to a limited set of texts.
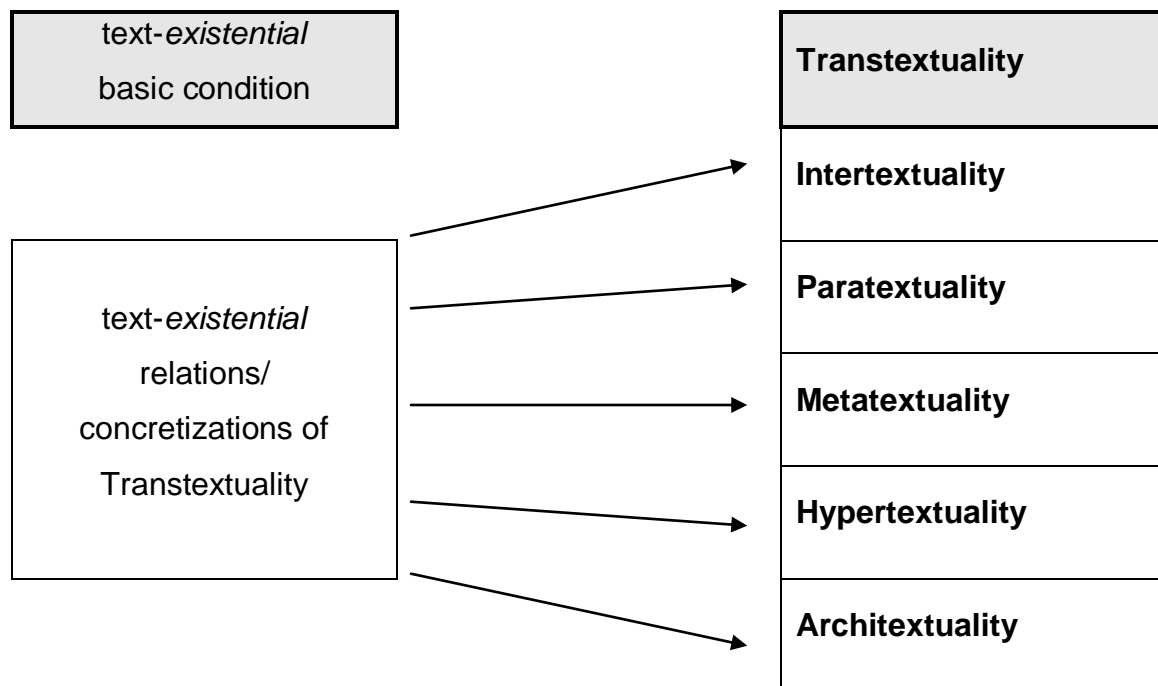
Hence, in order to provide a more practicable definition of the concept for the field of literary studies, Genette redefines the notion of intertextuality in his work *Palimpsestes: La litterature au second degré* by extending and refining the existing terminology. Firstly, due to his interpreting the concept of intertextuality in the narrowest of ways, he has to distinguish it clearly from the related phenomena of paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality and architextuality. Secondly, on the basis of being confronted with this abundance of terminology, he perceives the need to introduce a more global category encompassing all the aforementioned sub-categories. However, in contrast to other scholars[10], Genette does not perceive intertextuality as a meta-concept: basing his terminological decisions on the assumption that every literary text inevitably

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[10] Charles Givel's assertion "Il n'est de texte que d'intertexte" (Givel 240 qtd. in Plett 17), which suggests that all textual relations are intertextual and not – as with Genette – transtextual, illustrates this aspect. According to him, texts are at all times connected to a whole universe of texts and cannot exist in isolation from each other (see Plett 17).

possesses 'textual transcendence' (see Middeke 235), he entitles the overarching concept 'transtextuality'. He claims that the basic condition of a text's existence is rooted in its relations to other texts. These relations can be open, as for instance in the case of quotations, and they can be hidden, as e.g. illustrated by plagiarism.

A simplified summary of Genette's conceptual differentiations is provided in Table 1 below:

text-*existential* basic condition	**Transtextuality**
	Intertextuality
text-*existential* relations/ concretizations of Transtextuality	**Paratextuality**
	Metatextuality
	Hypertextuality
	Architextuality

Table 1: Gérard Genette's Concept of Transtextuality (see Middeke 235)

In contrast to earlier models, Genette's concept of intertextuality considers the actual presence of a text in another text. This presence can be achieved by means of marked quotations, plagiarisms and allusions. Quotations can but need not necessarily refer to their source and can but need not be marked by means of quotation marks. However, if quotations are not marked, they are likely to be confused with plagiarisms, whose only difference to unmarked quotations is the fact that the former do not want the reader to notice that the passage has been taken over verbatim from some other work. Quite in contrast to quotations and plagiarism, allusions are not usually presented in the form of verbatim references, but rather connect a text with another text by means of relations on a content level (see Middeke 236).

The second sub-category established by Genette is that of paratextuality. Paratextual relations basically concern everything that surrounds a text and which simultaneously raises certain expectations in the reader. For instance, the simple presence of the word 'novel' on the cover page of a literary work arouses expectations as to what it is that the work contains. The label that is thus literally put onto the work makes the audience expect from the work features that the genre of novels usually entails. The example cited by Genette is James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which in its original version included chapter headings referring to the *Odyssey*. However, Joyce had those chapter headings removed before the actual publication of the novel and thus the question of the extent of their paratextual relations to the *Odyssey* has been a matter of extensive discussion for quite some time (see Middeke 236).

Genette's category of metatextuality illustrates the relation of a text to another one that takes place by means of commentary. On the one hand, this includes a fictional text's commenting on itself or on the genre it belongs to. On the other hand, metatextual references are traditionally found in literary criticism where a text openly deals with the creation of another text.

The fourth and most extensively elaborated category discussed by the French scholar is that of hypertextuality, which basically outlines the relation between two texts one of which has been turned into a version of the other. This change can take place in the context of imitating, adapting, creating a sequel or parodying a text and is to be distinguished from metatextuality due to the fact that the former does not involve commentary. Rather, one text is derived from the other one. This implies that the source text has to exist beforehand in order for the new text to be derived from it (see Middeke 236). The pre-existing text is called 'hypotext', whereas the newly developed text is called 'hypertext' (see Genette, *Palimpseste* 14). According to Genette, there are two ways in which hypertextual relations can be established: by means of imitation and by means of transformation. Whereas imitation implies the exact reproduction of the hypotext in the form of the hypertext, transformation involves the transferring of a style or matter to another text, i.e. the deformation of the hypotext. The French scholar distinguishes six ways in which hypertextual relations can find their realizations. Those are defined according to the functions they fulfill as well as according to their 'attitude':

playful hypertexts		satirical hypertexts		serious hypertexts	
parody	*pastiche*	*travesty*	*persiflage*	transposition	imitation

Table 2: The Six Realizations of Hypertextual Relations (see Genette, *Palimpseste* 44)

First of all, there are 'playful' hypertexts, as realized for instance through parody and pastiche, both of which, according to Genette, seek to imitate an author's style. However, whereas parody transfers the exact wording of the original work into a more modern context, pastiche aims at creating a work that could theoretically be attributed to the author of the original due to similarities in style.

The second category established by Genette is that of satirical hypertexts, including the sub-categories of travesty and persiflage. While travesty can be considered the exact opposite of pastiche by transforming the style of the hypotext while maintaining the topic, persiflage can be seen as a combination of travesty and pastiche, slightly altering the style of the hypotext and applying it to a different topic.

The third group of hypertexts, namely that of serious hypertexts, includes transposition and imitation. Transposition describes the transformation of the style or theme of a hypotext which does not have a comical or satirical touch to it. Imitation, or, in other words, plagiarism, describes the imitation of a hypotext without actually acknowledging the relation, most often with the aim of copying the commercial success of an original work.

It is worth mentioning in the context of Genette's category of hypertextuality that the scholar seems to have approached the question from a different angle than has usually been done. Whereas new versions of texts are traditionally considered inferior to their sources by many people, Genette takes the opposite direction by calling the new version hypertext, an overarching construct that is in its essence influenced by some underlying text, but this does not imply that the underlying model is in any way superior to the new creation.

The last category of transtextuality to be touched upon is that of architextuality. Architextuality basically marks the membership of a text to a certain genre, which can either be announced openly or remain covert.[11] The

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[11] For an extensive discussion on the subject of architextuality, see Genette's *Introduction à l'architexte*, in which the scholar compares the Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of genre and links them to the concept of architextuality. The concept of architextuality is of particular importance at this point because it is from this notion that the scholar actually started to develop his theory of transtextuality (see Genette, *Palimpseste* 9).

acknowledgement of a text's belonging to a certain genre is usually done by means of paratextual references which have been discussed above.

According to Gérard Genette's model, it is the notion of transtextuality that brings a text into being. A literary text has to be linked to other texts by means of a combination of transtextual relations (i.e. intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality and architextuality) which serve to concretize its transtextuality and thus can be said to be preconditions of the creation of any literary work. However, in order for these concepts to have the desired effect, one needs to be aware of the fact that it is not only in terms of creation, i.e. production, that these concepts are essential, but also in terms of the reception of a text. Transtextual relations of a text need to be perceived and deciphered by the audience in order for them to be able to make the most of a text and fully grasp the author's intentions – and this insight is what postmodern adaptations increasingly take into consideration.

2.4.2.1. The Audience's Point of View: The Intertextuality of Adaptation
It is a fact commonly acknowledged that the transition from one period to another does not lead to entirely new developments, but rather highlights aspects which have been in existence before, but which have up to that point remained subliminal.

When applying this to the phenomenon of intertextuality, one can say that it holds very true, for it was only in the context of postmodernism that literary criticism actually put the concept into words. Coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966, the notion of 'intertextualité' had already existed for a long time alongside other related phenomena:

> There are many ways by which one text can refer to another: parody, pastiche, echo, allusion, direct quotation, structural parallelism. Some theorists believe that intertextuality is the very condition of literature, that all texts are woven from the tissues of other text, whether their authors know it or not. (Lodge 89-90)

According to Lodge, intertextuality has been a ubiquitous phenomenon in literature for a long time. Attitudes towards this literary device, however, have traditionally been rather diverse. For instance, when writing *Pamela*, Samuel Richardson tried to develop an entirely new way of writing literature which does

not show any influences of earlier modes of fiction. However, his novel soon proved to be heavily influenced in terms of intertextuality by the tradition of fairy-tales. In contrast to that, Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* includes elements of *Pamela* in form of a parody, an adaptation of the parable of the Good Samaritan and passages written in mock-heroic style (see Lodge 99). This shows that

> [i]ntertextuality, in short, is entwined in the roots of the English novel, while at the other end of the chronological spectrum novelists have tended to exploit rather than resist it, freely recycling old myths and earlier works of literature to shape, or add resonance to, their presentation of contemporary life. (Lodge 99)

The best-known example of intertextuality in modern literature is probably James Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which the author used the *Odyssey* as a device for structuring his work.

Thus, even though intertextuality is by no means a recent literary phenomenon, it can be said to have gained particular importance in the context of postmodernism where it has quite enthusiastically been exploited in the context of the emergence of the new media – and particularly with regard to adaptations.

In fact, adaptations are intertextual by definition. The mere circumstance of being a derivate of an anterior text inevitably links adapted versions to their source in some way, and a number of these links can be said to be what Gérard Genette describes as intertextual. The literary device of intertextuality can also be realized in terms of quotations and allusions. Plagiarisms, however, are practically impossible in adaptations for an adaptation openly acknowledges its relation with a source and with that, any kind of plagiarism would inevitably be turned into a quotation. Of course, an adaptation may still plagiarize other sources that it has not openly acknowledged as such, in which case plagiarism would indeed be possible.

The view that adaptation necessarily involves intertextuality is also expressed by Linda Hutcheon. However, she approaches the issue from the audience's point of view. "[S]een from the perspective of its *process of reception*, adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 8). Thus, it is not only in

terms of the production of an adaptation that intertextual elements are included, but also in terms of the reception of the text by the audience.

Actually, it is in the latter context that these elements even become of particular importance. Intertextual references are only able to achieve their intended effect if the audience is familiar with the source of the intertextuality; if not, intertextual devices are not perceived as what they actually are and thus either seen as original and inherent to the new work or simply neglected and ignored.

Even though adaptations necessarily involve intertextual elements, this does not imply that the mere presence of intertextual elements necessarily makes the text an adaptation (see Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 9). A film may well include intertextual references to one or more literary or filmic sources without being an actual adaptation of any of them.

The reason for the popularity of intertextual references nowadays is the following: from a psychological point of view, when confronted with a new work, the audience does not actually want to be presented with something completely new, but rather strives for a combination of familiarity and novelty. Consequently, it can be said that "[w]ith adaptations, we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change" (Hutcheon, *Adaptation* 9). Intertextual elements in adaptations are what makes people relate to a text. Filtering the new text through their minds, which have, ideally, earlier on been confronted with the source texts the adaptation has been derived from, will inevitably make people recognize elements they know and at the same time make them notice the differences to the source.

However, it has to be pointed out that intertextual devices are only effective when the audience is familiar with the original work; if not, intertextuality simply does not work. The same is true for the phenomenon of hypertextuality, one particular aspect of which shall be dealt with in the context of the subsequent chapter.

<u>2.4.2.2. A Special Case: Pastiche</u>

As mentioned in chapter 2.4.2., Gérard Genette's category of hypertextuality encompasses the six literary phenomena of travesty, persiflage, transposition, imitation, parody and pastiche. Even though all of these categories are relevant in the context of adaptation, only the concept of pastiche, will be the focus of attention in this chapter.

2.4.2.2.1. Historical Origins and Development of the Concept of Pastiche

The modern term 'pastiche' is said to derive from the Italian term 'pasticcio', which, having its roots in the Common Romance term 'pasta', describes "a hodgepodge of meat, vegetables, eggs, and a variety of other possible additions" (Battaglia 791 qtd. in Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 1).

From its origins of the domain of food, the concept was soon transferred into the arts, where 'pasticcio' was used "as a metaphor to describe a genre of painting of questionable quality that was the product of a 'pittore eclettico che dipinge con techniche e stili diversi'" (Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 1), i.e. a painter drawing upon a number of different styles and techniques. The intentions of such a painter were not always quite decent, and consequently, what people associated with the concept of pastiche sometimes had a rather negative touch to it (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 1-3).

During the Italian Renaissance, however, and particularly in the context of the visual arts, there was a lot of dissent on the subject of pastiche which partly lost its negative connotation in favor of a more positive one:

> Appreciation for the genre wavered between admiration for the superbly executed copy of a masterwork, the fraudulent copy made for a 'mass market,' and the ambivalent reception of the pasticcio as stylistic medley. The second, mass-market copy was by definition anti-classical, since it bastardized the acknowledged achievement of classical art rewritten by the Renaissance, whereas pasticcio as quasi-homage to and assimilation of a great master received a positive reception that was to spill over into developments in literature in France a century later. (Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 3-4)

Hence, it was basically the purpose or intention of the pastiche that determined its reception by the critics. As the aim of Renaissance artists of any field was to copy the masters of Classical Antiquity, their pastiches were perceived in a

favorable light for they openly acknowledged their source and pastiche was perceived as a homage to the original artist rather than as plagiarism which merely aimed at financial gain. Thus, in this period, the concept of pastiche experienced a rather positive turn due to the change of the purpose of production.

Apart from the visual arts and architecture, another branch of the arts that makes use of the concept of pastiche is music. Similar to the other branches, the term 'pastiche' experienced extreme fluctuations of positive and negative connotations there. Traditionally, the technique of pastiche was perceived rather negatively in the musical domain until

> [a] new positive value became attached to the genre as a result of the pragmatics of the music scene in the eighteenth century: the commercial exploitation of 'favorite arias,' which were assembled in quasi-operatic works billed as new. […] The creation of a pasticcio, more than that of an original opera, depended upon a balance of interests among the impresario, the singers or their managers, and the musical director, all of whom had to agree on the selection and arrangement of the work […]. The pasticcio enabled wandering opera troupes to offer attractive novelties wherever they went, although they had only a limited musical repertory. Music historians claim that without these pasticcio performances, the Italian opera would not have gained a foothold in France and elsewhere in Europe. (Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 8)

Thus, as pastiche can be said to have promoted the spreading of the Italian opera in Europe, it is a logical consequence that the concept experienced a rise in popularity in this field. This is for instance apparent from the presence of pasticcio structures in music until today, as for example in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* and Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 8).

However, in spite of this important development, the reception of pastiched works has not always been favorable in the domain of music. This is discernible, for instance, in a 20th century musical definition of the term which describes pastiche as "the self-conscious emulation on the part of a major modern composer of an earlier one or an earlier style" (Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 8). This self-consciousness is often said to be true of Prokofiev's imitating a work by Haydn in his Classical Symphony No. 1 in D-minor (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 8). Ironically, the pastiched composer himself employed the technique of

pastiche in his work: Haydn had a tendency of quoting his own compositions in other works (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 8).

2.4.2.2.2. The History of Pastiche in the Domain of Literature

Due to the more positive connotation the concept of pasticcio acquired in the context of the Italian Renaissance, it was transferred to France about one century later. There, the associated technique became generally known as 'pastiche' and was applied to the field of literature for the first time in approximately 1677. The first dictionary entry describing the concept established the notion of 'neither original, nor copy' that is said to have remained the predominant description of pastiche until today (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 4-5).

During the period of the Enlightenment, there was considerable concern about the devaluation of the practice of pastiche due to its fraudulent and often artificial connotation. Already a commonplace practice among the Ancient Greeks and Romans, at the time of the Enlightenment pastiche was considered to be reprehensible if its affectedness was clearly discernible to its critics (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 7). Thus, similar to Renaissance conceptions mentioned above, it was primarily the purpose of the pastiche that determined whether the pastiche was to be considered favorably or not.

In accordance with that, to the French poetician Marmontel, the art of pastiche was not to be perceived entirely as negative for it definitely has some potentially positive aspects to it. One of them is the moment when the pasticheur finally arrives at truly imitating the style of the master and thus produces something that can be said to equal an antecedent work of art (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 7). This more positive perception of pastiche accounts for the popularity of literary pastiches which emerged in 19th century France (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 7) and was already discernible in late 18th century Germany (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 81). For instance, Goethe's *Die Leiden des Jungen Werther* is said to contain stylistic pastiche structures rooted in *Ossian*, a collection of English songs which was at the time of Goethe's writing believed to be a work of a medieval bard writing in the Gaelic language (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 80). After having deceived many people, among others French pre-romantic writer Madame de Staël, the songs turned out to have been written by

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the Scottish author James Macpherson whose reasons for writing were financial rather than idealistic.

This popularity of pastiche structures finally incited Marcel Proust to introduce a redefinition of the concept in literature in the early 20th century in which he, among other things, makes a distinction between 'pastiche volontaire' and 'pastiche involontaire', the former describing "an exercise for becoming literary, for becoming productive through rigorous interaction with the style and work of an important author and the literary system represented by him" (Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 85) while the latter basically describes the avoidance of the former.

What is more, Proust makes an essential point as regards pastiche when, in a footnote on the first page of *Pastiches et Mélanges*, he states that:

> [b]ien qu'en donnant sur des pastiches la moindre explication on risque d'en diminuer l'effet, je rappelle pour éviter de froisser de légitimes amours-propres, que c'est l'écrivain pastiché qui est censé parler, non seulement selon son esprit, mais dans le langage de son temps. (11)

> ([e]ven though one risks diminishing the effect of pastiches by offering the least explication on the subject, I would like to call to mind, in order to avoid destroying any legitimate feelings of self-confidence, that it is the pastiched writer who is meant to speak, not only according to his mind, but also in the language of his time.) (my translation)

In this respect, Proust stresses the fact that it is not the content level, but rather the stylistic level that should predominantly be affected by pastiche. It would thus not be sufficient to create the new work according to what the author of the original would have written in terms of content, but that it is the language and the style, too, that have to be affected by the conventions and traditions of the author of the original work.

What is more, by shifting the focus from what the writer does to what the reader perceives Proust points at the fact that it is not so much the production, but rather the reception that defines the concept of pastiche (see Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 9). This change in point of view is basically what redefined the pre-existing notion of pastiche and has had an enormous influence on the conception of pastiche until today where "[t]he Proustian pastiche is seen […] as constituting the intertextual play that is literature. It is this dialogical mode of

pastiche that becomes a major focus of cultural production in postmodernism"
(Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 9).

2.4.2.2.3. Pastiche as a Postmodern Literary Technique

Hence, moving away from the historical implications of the concept and towards a more practically applicable level, it can be said that at the present day, the term 'pastiche' is generally employed to describe the imitation of the style of a particular author or text:

> [U]nter Pastiche versteht man eine dem Original möglichst nahe kommende Imitation des Stils eines Autors oder auch nur eines bestimmten Textes. Der Pastiche ist eine Art der Intertextualität[12], bei der im Gegensatz zur Parodie nicht von vornherein die Absicht besteht, sich vom wiederaufgegriffenen Text ironisch zu distanzieren bzw. eine komische Wirkung […] zu erzielen. (Kuester 513)

However, the sub-categories are omitted in this definition. Dyer points out that the imitation mentioned above may occur in various shapes: "[A]n entire work may be a pastiche […]. However, just as commonly […], pastiche is an aspect of a work, something contained inside a wider work that is not itself pastiche […] or a formal operation used within a work" (1-2). The extent to which a work is characterized by pastiche of course depends on the purpose of the pasticheur. When using the technique of pastiche for screen adaptations of literary works, the latter two possibilities seem the most pertinent to apply, though.

On the other hand, as illustrated in the definition by Kuester provided in the *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*, critics tend to agree that the term 'pastiche' is to be distinguished conceptually from the related notion of parody. However, the two concepts are definitely related as they are both comprised in the sub-category of hypertextuality which Genette describes as 'playful'. Due to this relation, parody and pastiche share the characteristic of being difficult to produce: in order for the creator of an adaptation to do justice to Genette's notion of a playful hypertext, he or she has to perceive and be able to transform the subjacent and most often subtle aspects of a hypotext:

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[12] The notion of intertextuality expressed in this quotation is definitely not to be seen in accordance with the narrow concept employed by Genette and outlined in chapter 2.4.2. In this particular context, intertextuality is rather to be perceived as synonymous with Genette's notion of hypertextuality.

> [E]inen Prätext nachzuahmen [setzt voraus], dass man in ihm eine bestimmte typische Manier erkennt, dass man seinen Tonfall oder seine Metaphorizität trifft, was das Verfahren der Nachahmung weitaus vermittelter erscheinen lässt als bloße Transformationen. Für diese Ausprägung von Hypertextualität sind Formen wie die Travestie, die Parodie oder das Pastiche besonders ergiebig sind [sic]. (Middeke 237)

However, even if a text's style and metaphors have been grasped, this does not imply that the outcome of the adaptation is already predetermined. Here, an essential factor comes into play, namely the intention or purpose of creating a hypertext. If the creating process is satirical in intention, the playfulness of the outcome is of a different nature than if the hypertext is not meant to be satirical. According to Genette, this is what eventually distinguishes pastiche from the related concept of parody:

function	satirical: 'parodies'			non-satirical
genre	PARODY IN THE NARROWER SENSE	TRAVESTY	SATIRICAL PASTICHE	PASTICHE

Table 3: Opposing Parody and Pastiche (see Genette, *Palimpseste* 39)

In accordance with what Genette says, Richard Dyer, one of the few scholars who actually devoted a whole book to the concept of pastiche, makes a similar distinction between what he calls "different kinds of imitation" (see 22):

CONCEALED		UNCONCEALED	
NOT TEXTUALLY SIGNALLED		TEXTUALLY SIGNALLED	
EVALUATIVELY OPEN			EVALUATIVELY PREDETERMINED
plagiarism	copies	*pastiche*	emulation homage
fake forgery hoax	versions		travesty burlesque mock epic
	genre		parody

Table 4: Different Kinds of Imitation According to Dyer [emphasis added] (24)

Thus, according to Dyer, pastiche is unconcealed and textually signaled, phenomena which distinguish it from plagiarism and copies. By openly announcing its relationship to an anterior text, it does not pretend to be completely autonomous but acknowledges its connection to some other work. What is more, pastiche is evaluatively open, which implies that it neither positively nor negatively judges or comments the work it is based on.

Genette's and Dyer's distinctions in terms of function, however, are not sufficient as they only illustrate why a hypotext is transformed into a hypertext, but not how the two texts are then related to each other. In order to produce an answer to this question, Genette further develops his line of thought and finally arrives at the following model:

function *relation*	non-satirical	satirical
transformation	PARODY	TRAVESTY
imitation	PASTICHE	PERSIFLAGE

Table 5: Genette's distinction function/relation (see Genette, *Palimpseste* 43)

Thus, for Genette, apart from the non-satirical intention intrinsic to pastiche, another defining feature of the technique is that it involves a certain degree of imitation. In accordance with Genette's perception on the subject, Linda Hutcheon states that while "it seems to [her] that parody does seek differentiation in its relationship to its model; pastiche operates more by similarity and correspondence […]; [that] parody is transformative in its relationships to other texts; pastiche is imitative" (Hutcheon *Parody* 38).

Thus, according to the three scholars,[13] the modern concept of pastiche basically refers to a non-satirical imitation of another work. But then, the question arises as to what it is that connects pastiche with the concept of adaptation, which has been defined as opposed to the concept of imitation in chapter 2.2 of this thesis.

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[13] Richard Dyer does not openly make a conceptual distinction between imitation and transformation in the context of pastiche. Thus, the conclusion has been drawn that for him, it is a matter of fact that pastiche is a particular kind of imitation. What he does acknowledge, though, is the fact that "imitation is not the same as unmediated reproduction" (Dyer 23).

In order to stifle criticism on this issue, it has to be pointed out that quite in contrast to the aforementioned discussion on adaptation and imitation, the focus of Genette's discussion about the relation between two texts is the style and not the content or form of a work. Hence, it is valid for a work to be an adaptation on the level of content and form, on the one hand and, simultaneously, to be an imitation on the level of style, on the other hand. Even though the actual distinction of these levels may sometimes not be easily perceptible, it is essential to be aware of the fact that it is two different phenomena of hypertextuality that are being treated with regard to the technique of pastiche in adaptations.

Apart from characterizing pastiche as imitation, Dyer points out that it also always inevitably involves a particular kind of combination, namely one that while combining individual elements in order to arrive at a new product still allows these elements to maintain their particular characteristics:

> The particular principle of combination implied by pasticcio is suggested by its culinary source. A pie mixes things together such that the identities of the different ingredients remain largely intact, albeit modified by their interaction and by being eaten all together. So too artistic pasticcio. The central notion is that the elements that make up a pasticcio are held to be different, by virtue of genre, authorship, period, mode or whatever and that they do not normally or perhaps even readily go together. Moreover, pasticcio are mixtures that preserve the separate flavour of each element, not melting ingredients together indissolubly, nor taking bits so small that any other identity is lost […]. (9-10)

From a more philosophical point of view, the elements which are most often drawn on for this sort of combination are historical elements. This ties in with the historical notion of pastiche. According to Dyer, pastiche is practically inherent to art as "a given work is like others that preceded it and, even while transforming those, is also imitating them" (3). As characteristic of all kinds of techniques of adaptation, pastiche is thus inevitably linked to some diachronic aspect, which is in fact already implied in Genette's categorizing it as a hypertextual phenomenon. When regarding a pastiche as the hypertext that is closely related to some hypotext, in order "to understand what any given pastiche is doing one has to return it to its historical context" (Dyer 131) for "a pastiche imitates what it perceives to be characteristic of its referent, perceptions that are temporally and culturally specific" (Dyer 128). This implies

that it is not only the historical context of the hypotext, but also the context of the hypertext, i.e. the pastiche, that has to be considered when looking at what it is that a pastiche does.

As regards the production of the hypertext, Dyer enumerates several factors which are likely to promote the use of pastiche structures in works of art: a multitude of traditions and cultures which are brought together, technical and medial innovations facilitating communication, the feeling that an era is coming to an end, the fact that imitation is not universally recognized as a proper form of art, a form-oriented society and the simultaneous longevity of the form, the importance of repeating and recognizing works in a culture as well as the fact that a group of people does not perceive social norms to speak for them (see 131-132). Dyer points out that one has to be careful about attributing pastiche solely to the era of postmodernism on those grounds because it has also played an important role in other periods (see 131). However, what is strikingly evident from all of the aforementioned factors is their traditional association with Western culture in postmodernism.

A critic strongly associated with this postmodern notion of pastiche is Frederic Jameson. According to him, pastiche does not have its origin in the area of postmodernism, but it is already discernible in modernist literature such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* and works by Thomas Mann. However, for Jameson, this does not prevent pastiche from being a technique associated with postmodern culture, for it is the fact that "features that in an earlier period or system were subordinate now become dominant" (Jameson 123) that indicates the emergence of a new period, which in this context is postmodernism.

Jameson basically takes over Proust's definition of pastiche when he states that

> [o]ne of the most significant features or practices in postmodernism today is pastiche [which is often confused with or assimilated to the] related verbal phenomenon called parody. Both pastiche and parody involve the imitation or, better still, the mimicry of other styles and particularly of the mannerisms and stylistic twitches of other styles. […] [While] parody capitalizes the uniqueness of […] styles and seizes on their idiosyncrasies and eccentricities to produce an imitation which mocks the original […], [p]astiche is […] a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic. Pastiche is

blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humor […]. (Jameson 113-114)

However, in strong opposition to Proust's notion of pastiche, in Jameson there is a rather gloomy touch to the concept of pastiche for its existence is only justified due to the fact that

in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum. But this means that contemporary or postmodernist art is going to be about art itself in a new kind of way; even more, it means that one of its essential messages will involve the necessary failure of art and the aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past. (Jameson 115-116)

He goes even further by saying that "[t]he allusive and elusive plagiarism of older plots is, of course, also a feature of pastiche" (117).

By calling pastiche an artistic and aesthetic failure, plagiarism or blank parody, Jameson clearly presents a rather prejudiced point of view. A possible reason for his negative attitude on the subject may be the common misconception that in the context of postmodernist pastiche, a distinction between high and low culture can be made. In *Das postmoderne Pastiche*, Ingeborg Hoesterey clarifies any misunderstandings on the subject by saying that in contrast to modernist art, it is not the aim of the postmodern art of pastiche to be part of high culture:

Pastiche als Kunst insistiert nicht darauf, 'high culture' zu sein wie die moderne Kunst dies tat, sondern etabliert sich als Meta-Diskurs, als Kunst *über* Kultur. Der Betrachter bildender Kunst wird zum Leser, denn ohne eine Dekodierung der Intertext offerieren viele postmoderne Arbeiten nur eine banale ästhetische Erfahrung. (Hoesterey, *Postmoderne* 228)

Thus, the art of pastiche is art on a meta-level, art about art, art which is inevitably linked with reality. "[P]astiche is not something superficial, disconnected from the real and, especially, from feeling. It is rather a knowing form of the practice of imitation, which itself always both holds us inexorably within cultural perception of the real and also, and thereby, enables us to make a sense of the real" (Dyer 2). However, for this link to reality to work, it is

indispensible for the audience to understand the pastiche as pastiche. By perceiving pastiche as such, in inevitably becomes an aspect of irony in that it "intends that it is understood as pastiche by those who read, see or hear it. For it to work, it needs to be 'got' as a pastiche" (Dyer 3).

However, it is not always so easy to categorize pastiche as pastiche as there is always a notion of closeness involved which may make it difficult to distinguish pastiche from other forms of imitation or even from the source of the pastiche. "Pastiche is close, close to other kinds of imitation […], close to what it imitates. This is why it can both be hard to determine whether such and such is pastiche […] and also why it is sometimes easy to mistake a pastiche for what it pastiches […]." However, "[p]astiche embraces closeness: it accepts the possibility of being seduced, penetrated, dependent or venriloquised, without seeing this as a significant and anxiety-producing loss of autonomy" (Dyer 179). Thus, even though this closeness may sometimes cause difficulties, it is in fact one of the most characteristic features of pastiche.

However, the implications of the aforementioned closeness may not be neglected since,

> [a]s a result […] pastiche is unstable in relation to the expression of a fixed or certain point of view. In broad terms, it affirms the position from which it is produced […], but its attitude towards what it is imitating is all the same not clear-cut. Even when the judgement that may frame the pastiche is hardly in doubt […], the pastiche itself is liable to get out from under – in getting close, the pastiching work is liable to give the pastiched form its head, even while keeping its own. (Dyer 179)

Thus, as becomes evident from this quotation and as it is characteristic of the concept of adaptation as such, the technique of pastiche is hard to define. Whether something is indeed a pastiche or not may very often remain a matter of discussion. However, there are certain factors which constitute pastiche and on the basis of these factors, a number of well-known films and literary works have been identified as instances of pastiche. One hypotext that particularly seems to lend itself to pastiche is the *Odyssey*, which was pastiched in both the *Aeneis* by Vergil and in Joyce's *Ulysses*. Another very prominent example are the Sherlock Holmes stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, which have formed the basis for a large number of hypertexts pastching it. A third example worth

mentioning in this context is David Lodge's *The British Museum is Falling Down*, which is a pastiche of works by Kafka, Joyce and Woolf.

Even if all of the aforementioned examples remain within the literary domain, this does not imply that pastiche cannot occur across genre borders. The phenomenon Ingeborg Hoesterey charmingly entitles "genre-hopping" (cf. Hoesterey, *Pastiche* 104) is evident for instance in films by Quentin Tarantino who pays homage to a number of different non-cinematic sources. Interestingly, it is evidently also possible to pastiche academic discourses in films (see Harrod 29).

Summing up this discussion, it can be said that pastiche is, even though rarely pointed out explicitly, a widespread phenomenon in the fields of literature and film. In spite of the fact that what it is that constitutes pastiche often remains a matter of interpretation, pastiche is still an important literary and filmic device in that it enables the pasticheur to link two different worlds – the world of the pastiched and the world of the pastiching work. It does so by taking the contextual elements typical of the hypotext and embedding them into the context of the hypertext. Thus, the historical material in a way experiences a revival in a contemporary context. And this basically describes what the phenomena of pastiche and adaptation are all about – taking an original from a particular context and making it original once again – in a different environment, for a different audience.

3. Adapting Noël Coward's Plays

3.1. Easy Virtue

Written in 1924, Noël Coward's drawing-room comedy *Easy Virtue* premiered at the Broad Theatre in New Jersey in 1925. In December of the same year, the play moved to New York where, running for several months, it saw considerable success (see Day, *Letters* 118). In the following, *Easy Virtue* was brought to London via Manchester one year later (see Fisher 76) where it premiered at the Duke of York's Theatre in the West End and was generally received favorably by the audience and the critics (see Day, *Letters* 119).

However, there seem to have been quite a number of misunderstandings in relation to the performance of the play in Britain: firstly, "[…] John Hart, who own[ed] the [Manchester] theatre, refus[ed] to sign the contract for a play of the title *Easy Virtue*. He sa[id] he thought the title was *Easy Money*!" (Day, *Letters* 119) and was taken aback by the sexual connotation of the actual title. Secondly, after the first misunderstanding had been sorted out by agreeing on the compromise of calling the play "*A New Play in Three Acts*" (Day, *Letters* 120), James Agate, a critic for the *Sunday Times*, wrote a rather misleading but still influential critique about *Easy Virtue* and Noël Coward:

> The higher the brow the narrower the mind. That is if one is a fashionable young playwright familiar with the tawdry round of the Riviera and unable to conceive a world elsewhere. Give your aesthete a horse he can't ride – and farewell Leicestershire … there are no moments, apparently, in which Mr Coward, the playwright, refrains from thinking in terms of sex. (qtd. in Fisher 76-77)

Even though Agate's critique regarding the main theme of *Easy Virtue* is not exactly to the point, it still attracted the audiences and hence largely contributed to the success of the play in the West End, where it ran for 124 performances (see Day, *Letters* 120). However, it were not only the favorable critiques and the success abroad but also the general attitude towards Coward's work at that time that allowed for a positive reception of the from a stylistic point of view old-fashioned play (see Fisher 77):

> Cowards frühe Bühnenwerke wurden von der Kritik allgemein wohlwollend aufgenommen, auch wenn manche Kritiker meinten,

> Zugeständnisse an das jugendliche Alter des Dramatikers machen zu müssen. Gelobt wurden neben der jugendlichen Frische der Stücke bereits Cowards geistreiche Dialoge und saubere Konstruktion. Fast einhellig gilt das Lob der zwanziger und dreißiger Jahre auch den ernsteren Stücken Cowards, wie zum Beispiel *The Vortex* und *Easy Virtue*. Vor allem der Theaterkritiker James Agate lobte den jungen Autor und versprach sich viel von ihm, insbesondere auf dem Gebiet der *comedy of manners* [...]. Konservativere Stimmen prophezeiten, dass Cowards zu sehr auf den Zeitgeschmack ausgerichtete Themen nur kurze Zeit modisch bleiben würden [...]. (Hahn 5)

Along these lines, Cyril Connolly predicted Coward's plays to remain popular for only a limited amount of time. In a notice in *The New Statesman*, he concedes that the immediate success of the playwright's work has been widely acknowledged by critics,

> [b]ut success is all there is, and that even is temporary. For one can't read any of Noël Coward's plays now [i.e. in 1937]... they are written in the most topical and perishable way imaginable, the cream in them turns sour overnight – they are even dead before they are turned into talkies, however engaging they may seem at the time. (qtd. in Morley xi)

What supposedly turns the cream in *Easy Virtue* sour is the tradition Coward decided to pay tribute to when writing the play. After having composed one of his earlier plays in honor of George Bernard Shaw, Coward chose to draw on the technique of homage once again when working on *Easy Virtue*. However, his focus was considerably more challenging this time for it encompassed a long-established tradition:

> Coward had written one early play, *The Young Idea*, in homage to one of his mentors, Shaw.[14] Now he decided to write another in homage not only to a specific playwright, Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, but also to the tradition of drawing-room drama exemplified by Pinero's best-known work, *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, of 1893. (Fisher 77)

In spite of Coward's awareness that drawing-room drama was less favorably received at the time of his writing *Easy Virtue*, he decided to write one more play in this literary tradition. Even though he admitted that the themes this genre

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[14] In contrast to the general assumption that Shaw was Noël Coward's most important role model, "the greatest influence on the early Coward was undoubtedly W. Somerset Maugham [...]. [Both] Maugham and Coward chose the basic drawing room drama genre and then proceeded to go beyond its traditionally accepted boundaries" (Day, *Letters* 225).

drew upon could no longer be classified as contemporary issues, Coward still considered his decision valid since he saw no better way of illustrating the progressive attitude of his time than by juxtaposing it with more conservative ways of thinking. However, apart from the progress, Coward also perceived a kind of loss and saw himself overcome with nostalgia at some point:

> It is easy nowadays to laugh at these vanished moral attitudes but they were poignant enough in their time because they were true. Those high-toned drawing-room histrionics are over and done with. Women with pasts today receive far more enthusiastic social recognition than women without pasts. The narrow-mindedness, the moral righteousness and the over-rigid social codes have disappeared but with them has gone much that was graceful, well-behaved and endearing. It was in mood of nostalgic regret at the decline of such conventions that I wrote *Easy Virtue*. (qtd. in Fisher 77)

In fact, retrospectively affirming reasons of this kind was a rather unusual thing to do for the playwright who was known to write for reasons of modernity (see Fisher 77). Thus, people tend to seek Coward's motivation for writing *Easy Virtue* elsewhere. John Lahr, one of Coward's best-known biographers, suspects the playwright's reasons to lie in his similarities to Larita, one of the main characters of the play as

> Larita, like Coward, is an outsider with an unconventional sexual past. […] [S]he admits to the habit of 'watching ourselves go by' and the need to be popular. […] Larita is a model of style and taste. Her entrance at the end of Act One is in showy contrast to the stodgy and 'repressed' Whittaker women. (Lahr 26)

Whatever Coward's true reasons for making *Easy Virtue* a drawing-room comedy may have been, the popularity of the play encouraged a young film maker to adapt the story into a silent movie in 1928. Relatively unknown and inexperienced at that point, Alfred Hitchcock kept the play's title and the essential elements of the plot but significantly altered the chronology, shifting the focus from Coward's depicting and deconstructing old-fashioned family life in Britain to Larita's literally being a woman of easy virtue. In the first scenes of the film, the audience witnesses Larita's divorce trial, in which she is accused of adultery. At a later point, the audience is led back to court, where Larita again has to face a judge.

In contrast to the film, the trial and the divorce are only touched upon as side-issues in the play which are used as tools to establish Larita's role as a woman with a past. Generally, *Easy Virtue* has been considered rather atypical of Hitchcock and has thus been received quite critically and is hence often only touched upon in a side commentary in biographical works on the master: "[…] Hitchcock, before he established himself, made odd little films that don't fit, like his silent 1928 adaptation of Noël Coward's play Easy Virtue" (Patterson 1). In retrospect, the unfavorable reception may be attributed to the nature of the film rather than to Hitchcock's lack of talent. Michael Balcon, the producer who acquired the film rights for both *Easy Virtue* and *The Vortex* for Gainsborough Pictures, concedes in his autobiography that there is a considerable flaw to the thought of adapting Coward's plays in the form of silent movies:

> It was no doubt wrong of us to seek to bask in the reflected glory of people like Noël Coward; we followed trends and did not try to make them. It was doubly a mistake to lean on stage plays because we were making *silent* films, so the plays were deprived of their very essence, the words... Our policy did not always pay off. We filmed Coward's *Easy Virtue* and *The Vortex* and both were financial, failures. (qtd. in Robinson 1)

Ultimately, not even the director was convinced of his film. In 1940, he admitted that "[*Easy Virtue* was] [t]he worst title [he] ever wrote" (Robinson 1).

In spite of the lack of success of the first film version, Coward's play was once again adapted as a movie in 2008, starring Colin Firth, Ben Barnes, Jessica Biel and Kristin Scott Thomas. This time, in contrast to Hitchcock's attempt at adapting the play, director Stephen Elliott took into account that "Coward's original play [...] relies wholly on its words" (Robinson 1). In spite of his adding, removing and changing a variety of other aspects, Elliott decided to stick to Coward's original dialogue to a large extent. As he stresses in an interview with the *Advocate*, the director's task was particularly challenging since he had two influential sources to draw upon and "[…] two masters to answer to: Coward, the master of wit, and Hitchcock, the master of suspense" (Voss 1). Considering that both versions of *Easy Virtue* were early works of the respective masters, Elliott came to the conclusion that there still remained some room for improvement of the work on his part. However, keeping the spirit of *Easy Virtue* in mind, his way of approaching the adaptation was to do what he

thought Hitchcock and Coward would have done if they had had the chance to re-write their works at a later stage in their lives (see Voss 1).

In this context, a rather convenient aspect of adapting the play as a contemporary movie was the similarity of the historical surroundings that Elliot perceived:

> When Coward wrote the play they'd just come out of a hugely unpopular war. There was a mass unhappiness with the government and a huge recession looming. If you look at the times then and the times now, they're almost frighteningly identical. Coward said he wanted to write it for a younger audience, and at the time it was a dangerous, modern piece of work. So we wanted to contemporize it with the use of music, special effects, and the casting of Jessica Biel. (qtd. in Voss 1)

Due to this contemporizing, the film was received favorably. Box office returns for *Easy Virtue* were at approximately $ 2.6 million and £ 1.1 million in the US and in the UK, respectively (see IMDB *Easy Virtue*).[15]

3.1.1. Narration in the Play

When adapting Coward's *Easy Virtue* for the 2008 film, a number of interesting phenomena have taken place. Most of these phenomena affect the levels of action and characters, which are the subject of analysis in the present chapter of this thesis.

3.1.1.1. Action[16] Analysis

Noël Coward's drawing-room comedy *Easy Virtue* is written in the tradition of the well-made play, but divided into three instead of four acts, the first and last of which are of approximately equal length whereas the second, containing the main part of the dramatic action, is considerably more elaborate.

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[15] Even though the film has been released in a large number of countries since the time of its production in 2008, it is due in the German-speaking world only in June 2010.

[16] The terminology employed in this paper is based on a tripartite distinction between story, plot and action which is maintained, among others, in Manfred Pfister's influential work *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*. According to the critic, "[w]hilst story consists in the purely chronologically arranged succession of events and occurrences, the plot already contains important structural elements, such as causal and other kinds of meaningful relationships, segmentation in phases, temporal and spatial regroupings etc." (197). Action is traditionally defined as "[t]he sum of events or action units occurring on a play's level of action" (Jahn D 7.1).

At the beginning of the first act, the audience is introduced to the Whittaker family and the family manor in an extensive secondary text:

> The WHITTAKERS' house is typical of wealthy upper-middle-class England. The furniture is good and the chintz obvious, but somehow right for the atmosphere. There are three French windows down the right-hand wall. A flight of stairs up L., with the lobby leading to the front door. Down L. double doors open into the dining room. A big bureau where MRS: WHITTAKER does her accounts, etc., occupies a space between two of the windows. There is a comfortable sofa set in the centre, with a table behind it, on which are books and papers and flowers of some sort. A statuette of Venus de Milo on small pedestal L. When curtain rises, it is a morning in early April. The hall looks quite gay with spring flowers, but rain can be seen beating against the windows. (Coward, *Virtue* 499)

In the following, the female family members are specified in quite some detail, whereas the character of the Colonel is sketched in a rather rudimentary way.

When the actual action sets off, the female characters confirm the initial expectations of the audience: they prove to be old-fashioned and superficial, tending to take themselves too seriously. The overall rather hostile atmosphere within the family is set and the main themes of the play, such as religion, social and moral values, love and marriage, are introduced in the expository part of the first act.

The most significant problem of the play, however, is quite interestingly alluded to in a rather abrupt way. After having discussed trivial side-issues extensively, Mrs. Whittaker suddenly brings up the topic of the prodigal son:

> MRS. WHITTAKER. It couldn't have been John's upbringing altogether – could it? (Coward, *Virtue* 503)

The audience is slowly led to understand that John Whittaker has married an American woman without the approval of his family some three months previously. Now, the family is waiting to be introduced to the woman, whom the female characters rather perceive as an intruder into than as an enrichment for the family. The presentation of John's wife is assumed to be further complicated by his former fiancée's attending the family supper in the evening of the young couple's unexpectedly early arrival. However, Sarah Hurst does not seem to be hurt by John's marriage at all and brings another guest, Charles Burleigh, to dinner.

During the hurried preparations for the prodigal's arrival, there is some quarreling between the female Whittakers and the Colonel due to their different attitudes regarding the arrival of John's wife. Whereas Mrs. Whittaker and Marion are skeptical about Larita, Hilda is very much looking forward to getting to know her for she is curious about what her brother's wife will be like. The Colonel straightforwardly intends to welcome the new family member with open arms.

As he is clearly not prepared to adopt a more hostile attitude, Marion attempts to act as intermediary between her parents, trying to convince her father of his wife's sentiments. He, however, remains firm in his point of view:

> COLONEL. As I said before, I'm waiting with an open mind, and whatever John's wife is or has been, I shall do my utmost to make her happy and comfortable here. (Coward, *Virtue* 514)

In this statement, Larita's problematic past is already foreshadowed on the first pages of the play. What is even more noticeable is that this allusion is presented by one of the few characters in the play who will actually not judge Larita by her past but by her character.

Immediately after this discussion, John and his wife Larita finally arrive at the family manor. From the outset, the atmosphere between the two Mrs. Whittaker is decidedly cold, even though Larita initially does her best to comport with her mother-in-law. However, she quickly senses old Mrs. Whittaker's attitude towards her. When John encourages Larita to call Mrs. Whittaker 'mother', she is well aware of the fact that she had better not do so:

> LARITA. I want Mrs. Whittaker to show it [i.e. the house] to me.
> JOHN. Oh, Lari darling, not Mrs. Whittaker. It's mother now.
> LARITA. Not quite yet, Johnnie – I don't think. (Coward, *Virtue* 517)

The situation becomes even more unpleasant when the family learns that Larita has been married before and has divorced her first husband. John actually wanted to avoid telling his family about Larita's past for he was well aware of how they would react to a revelation like this.

After this brief discussion, Larita is taken to her room by Hilda in order to prepare for lunch. This gives the rest of the family time to talk about her in

absentia. From this polylogue it becomes clear that the individual attitudes have not changed much. The only objection the Colonel voices in his dialogue with John is the difficulty for the couple to have children due to Larita's age. However, when John affirms his love for his wife, the Colonel is satisfied and they both leave the stage.

After Sarah's and Charles' arrival, Sarah is led to the garage by Hilda while Charles is left in the hall where he encounters Larita, who has returned from her room. The two of them discover mutual acquaintances abroad and animatedly talk about them until lunch is ready. In Charles, Larita seems to have discovered an ally at last.

The second act takes place three months later. Waiting for her husband to finally make the decision to move to London, Larita seems to bore herself to death, spending her days reading Marcel Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah*, which particularly upsets Mrs. Whittaker and Marion. Larita refuses to take part in social activities; it is only the Colonel who manages to cheer her up a bit. The rest of the Whittaker women are busy with preparations for a dance they are giving. All along, however, they comment on Larita's inappropriate behavior and make plans for shaping her for their society. Thus, the conflict is built up and the climax is prepared by means of the rising action which has already started in the first act.

However, apart from Larita, the Colonel seems to be a major source of the family's problems with John's wife, too:

> MARION. […] [F]ather's always encouraging her, and saying ridiculous things, and making her laugh.
> MRS. WHITTAKER. Your father has a certain horrible streak in him that nothing will eradicate – no one's more aware of that than I. It's caused me years of suffering. (Coward, *Virtue* 543-544)

In spite of her worrying about the Colonel's attitude towards Larita, it becomes clear that Mrs. Whittaker is not taking her son's marriage too seriously when she says that "[it] was never anything but a mad infatuation – and mad infatuations don't last" (Coward, *Virtue* 544).

Indeed, John starts to have second thoughts about his decision and soon regrets not having married Sarah Hurst, who, however, discourages his advances towards her by telling him that he's "not fit to wipe Lari's boots"

(Coward, *Virtue* 550). In fact, John's only attempt to reconcile with his wife results in a rather long dialogue, in the course of which they discuss their love for each other as well as Larita's past, which John has obviously not learned everything about so far. After having ended their discussion, John returns to the garden to play tennis while Larita intends to take a short nap before dinner. However, Marion prevents her from doing so by having a straight talk with her. She wants Larita to adapt herself to her own moral and religious views, particularly regarding her conduct towards the Colonel. Larita is not really enthusiastic about this idea as she perceives Marion's ideas to be rooted in hypocrisy rather than religion. When Marion leaves the room, Larita is once again prevented from going to her room; this time it is Philip Hurst who compliments her and makes her promise to dance with him that night. However, Larita seems rather reluctant to give in to Philip's advances since she knows that Hilda has cast an eye on him.

When the family returns to the stage, the habitual quarrelling is taken up again and finally finds its climax in Hilda's procuring a newspaper cutting indicating that Larita once caused an admirer to kill himself. The female Whittakers immediately sense the scandal and feel confirmed in their views of Larita. Once more, it is exclusively the Colonel who sees Larita's character rather than her past, a fact which Larita acknowledges gratefully:

> COLONEL. Do you think it's quite fair, Mabel, to set ourselves up in judgment on Larita? We know none of the circumstances which led to these bygone incidents.
> MRS. WHITTAKER. You've failed me too often before, Jim, so I'm not surprised that you fail me now.
> LARITA. The Colonel's not failing you – it's just as bad for him as for you. You don't suppose he *likes* the idea of his only son being tied up to me, after these – revelations? But somehow or other, in the face of overwhelming opposition, he's managed to arrive at a truer sense of values than you could any of you ever understand. He's not allowed himself to be cluttered up with hypocritical moral codes and false sentiments – he sees things as they are, and tried to make the best of them He's tried to make the best of me ever since I've been here. (Coward, *Virtue* 579)

After this revelation of her past, Larita openly confronts the Whittakers with their hypocrisy and concedes that her marriage to John was indeed a mistake "but not from [the Whittakers] point of view – from [her] own" (Coward, *Virtue* 581).

She reaffirms that she is by no means a woman of easy virtue, but Mrs. Whittaker still accuses her of being "lost to all sense of right and wrong" (Coward, *Virtue* 583). The act ends with Larita's settling on the sofa and smashing a statuette of the Venus de Milo, burying her face in the sofa cushion with laughter or tears.

Act III takes place in the evening of the same day and represents the dénouement of the play. The Whittakers inform their guests that John's wife does not feel fit to attend the dance. However, the guests, and particularly Sarah Hurst and Charles Burleigh, sense that something is wrong. They are proved to be right when

> [...] LARITA appears at the top of the stairs. Her dress is dead-white and cut extremely low; she is wearing three ropes of pearls, and another long string twined round her right wrist. Her face is as white as her dress and her lips vivid scarlet. Her left arm positively glitters with diamond, ruby and emerald bracelets; her small tiara of rubies and diamonds matches her enormous ear-rings; she also displays a diamond anklet over her cobweb fine flesh-coloured stocking. She is carrying a tremendous scarlet ostrich-feather fan. (Coward, *Virtue* 595)

Having achieved the desired effect, she tells her confidante Sarah about her intentions to leave her husband. However, she does not do so without finally exposing the Whittakers' hypocrisy to their guests. She admits to Charles Burleigh, a fellow American, that she is not fit for English country life and even though she loves her husband, it is best for her to leave. She asks Sarah to take care of John, who appears on stage for the last time and apologizes to her for his behavior. Knowing about Larita's intentions, Sarah takes him into the dance-room and Larita leaves while the dance is still in full swing.

3.1.1.2. Characters in *Easy Virtue*

Even though Coward decided to write *Easy Virtue* in the tradition of drawing-room drama, he still altered the genre to a certain extent, and particularly with regard to his characters:

> Coward updated drawing-room drama by introducing both a new pace and new people. His characters are still rich. They are still an elite; but their status comes not only from birth but also from some exceptional

quality of mind. A talentocracy mixes with the aristocracy. They use manners; but they are not bound by them. (Lahr 42)

His modifications of the long-established tradition were triggered by the altered circumstances people of the Lost Generation were confronted with at his time:

> Instead of acting out the pre-war sense of continuity in English life, Coward's characters register the post-war isolation. They are, like the indulgent 'Children of the Ritz' in Coward's song (1932), 'only half aware/That all we've counted on is breaking into bits'. In the pre-war formula, the character's sense of self is defined by society. But in Coward's best early comedies […] the 'exigencies of the world' no longer apply. The character's worlds are defiantly private and self-obsessed. (Lahr 42)

This deconstruction of the country and the image people had of it went hand in hand with the questioning of old social and moral values people seemed to cling to excessively. However, in *Easy Virtue,* the playwright's intention was not to completely deconstruct the old-fashioned values, but rather to challenge their validity:

> The pre-war drawing-room drama was built out of people acting against strict moral/social principles. In Coward's comedies, the drama is built around people testing principles. Unlike their plot-heavy antecedents, Coward's characters live comparatively plotless lives. Although Coward's comedies are well-made, the life they depict has lost its thru-line. (Lahr 42)

This enabled him to bring in the nostalgic aspect he was aiming at and which has been mentioned in chapter 3.1. of this thesis. As a result, In *Easy Virtue*, Coward does not altogether abandon the moral and social attitudes of his time, but points out their strengths and weaknesses to an equal extent.

The technique Coward employs to achieve this critical effect is rather that of implicit than that of explicit characterization. Even though his characters are introduced explicitly by means of the secondary text, which is usually exactly to the point, the characterization is much stronger and effective when it can be deduced from the dialogue and actions of the characters. For instance, in spite of the fact that the audience has a vivid picture of Mrs. Whittaker right from the onset of the action, the sarcasm and bitterness underlying her utterances and

her endless jaundiced struggle with her husband strongly reinforce the initial image suggested by the secondary text.

In spite of his nostalgic approach, Coward to an extent ridicules English country life by depicting the Whittaker family in general and its female members in particular. An example is his illustration of the Whittakers' expectations with regard to John's wife in the short extract from the first act below:

> HILDA. It's too exciting for words – wondering what she'll be like.
> MRS. WHITTAKER (*bitterly*). I wish I could share your feelings.
> HILDA. And it's so romantic – the old schoolroom being turned into a boudoir for John's wife.
> MRS. WHITTAKER. Sitting-room, not boudoir.
> HILDA. Sitting-room, then. Do you think she'll be dark or fair?
> MRS. WHITTAKER. I don't know.
> MARION. Do be quite, Hilda.
> HILDA. I think fair and larky!
> MRS. WHITTAKER. I see no reason to suppose anything of the sort.
> HILDA. But guessing at people is such fun – Jacky Coryton and I do it lots – she's awfully good at it. What do *you* think she'll be like, Marion?
> MARION. Stop asking absurd questions.
> HILDA. I'm dying to see. I wonder if she drinks.
> MRS. WHITTAKER (*sharply*). Hilda!
> HILDA. Well, you never know – living abroad like that.
> MARION. Can't you see mother's upset and doesn't want to be worried?
> COLONEL. I fail to see the object of working yourself up into a state before you've set eyes on her.
> MRS. WHITTAKER. You wouldn't see, Jim, because you don't care – you never have cared. As long as you're comfortable you don't mind if your son goes to the dogs. (Coward, *Virtue* 507-508)

While Mrs. Whittaker and Marion are already skeptical from the outset and do not intend to give Larita a fair chance, Hilda is curious about her new sister-in-law. The Colonel, refusing to give in to his family's speculations, is presented in the most favorable light in this excerpt.

Mrs. Whittaker's attitude towards her daughter-in-law is already prepared in the initial description of her character in the secondary text on the first page of the play:

> MRS. WHITTAKER, attired in a tweed skirt, shirt-blouse and a purple knitted sports-coat, is seated at her bureau. She is the type of woman who has the reputation of having been 'quite lovely' as a girl. The stern repression of any sex emotions all her life has brought her to middle age

with a faulty digestion which doesn't so much sour her temper as spread it. She views the world with the jaundiced eyes of a woman who subconsciously realises she has missed something, which means in point of fact that she has missed everything. (Coward, *Virtue* 499)

It is clear that a woman fitting this description can only disapprove of a daughter-in-law like Larita.

Similarly, her daughter Marion is not very likely to welcome Larita with open arms. The secondary text describes her as "[being] seated on the sofa, reading her letters. She is largely made and pasty, with big lymphatic eyes. In fifteen years' time, she will have the reputation of having been 'quite lovely as a girl'. Her clothes are slightly mannish" (Coward, *Virtue* 499-500). Already at the beginning, it is suggested that Marion is a foil of her mother, even though it has to be pointed out that the latter generally proves to be more subtle and sophisticated in her ways throughout the rest of the play.

The third female Whittaker, Hilda, is basically described as a rather naïve character. She enjoys guessing what Larita will be like and is very much looking forward to meeting her. At first, she likes Larita, but then she becomes jealous of her because Philip Hurst, whom she intends to marry, has obviously fallen for Larita. At the end of the second act, Hilda is ashamed of her behavior towards her sister-in-law and asks for her forgiveness:

> HILDA (*hysterically*). Lari – Lari – forgive me! I didn't mean it – I didn't mean it ----
> Larita (*pushing her gently away*). Don't be a little toad, Hilda. Try to have the courage of your convictions. (Coward, *Virtue* 584)

Thus, the female Whittaker characters basically form a unity opposed to Larita. Mrs. Whittaker and Marion openly loathe her and consider her unfit to be married to John whereas Hilda is initially excited by the thought of getting to know her but ultimately envies her just as much as her mother and sister do.

In contrast to Coward's rather extensive description of the female members of the Whittaker family, his depiction of the Colonel, Larita's only ally within the family, remains rather limited: "COLONEL WHITTAKER is reading 'The Times'. He is a grey-haired man of about fifty – his expression is generally resigned" (Coward, *Virtue* 500). While his wife and daughter are described rather extensively, two sentences seem to be enough for Coward to

characterize him. Indeed, the character of the Colonel implicitly characterizes himself throughout the play mainly by means of his attitudes and reactions towards the other characters. Even though there seems to be some affection left for his family, he clearly enjoys annoying and teasing them to some degree. However, his resigned attitude bears witness of the endless fights he is carrying out with them. For instance, when Marion talks herself into a rage over Larita's reading Marcel Proust, he tries to make her see reason:

> COLONEL (*gently*). Don't be sweeping, Marion. Marcel Proust happens
>   to be one of the few really brilliant novelists in the world.
> MARION. Pity he chooses such piffling subjects, then.
> COLONEL. Have you ever read him?
> MARION. No – but all French writers are the same – sex – sex – sex.
>   People think too much of all that sort of tosh nowadays, anyhow. After
>   all, there are other things in life.
> COLONEL. You mean higher things, don't you, Marion? – much higher?
> MARION. I certainly do – and I'm not afraid to admit it.
> COLONEL. You mustn't be truculent just because you've affiliated your-
>   self with the Almighty. (Coward, *Virtue* 542)

The Colonel does not share his daughter's religious views, but he tries to serve as a mediator between Larita and his family. However, his efforts are not successful for his intrinsic opposition to their old-fashioned values is too strong. His attempts of reconciliation are mostly met with sarcasm from other characters:

> COLONEL. Larita's an extraordinarily pretty name.
> MRS. WHITTAKER. Excellent for musical comedy. (Coward, *Virtue* 519)

It is this attitude that the prodigal son sees himself confronted with at his arrival. Being feeble in character, he does not succeed in convincing anyone but his father of his love to Larita and is merely looked down upon. His character loses some more of its strength in the course of the play. Even his former fiancée Sarah Hurst realizes that the picture of John she had in her head is slowly crumbling. She says that "[…] [she] used to be awfully fond of him, but he's shrunk over this beyond all recognition – gone tiny" (Coward, *Virtue* 590). It actually becomes clear that John is a weak character when he regrets having married Larita after his family's initial opposition instead of standing up to them. He needs his father's approval to be sure of what he is doing, and as soon as

the first problems with his wife arise, he has second thoughts about not having married Sarah Hurst from the start.

Larita does not fit into the Whittaker family for, already as regards her appearance and behavior, she is utterly different from the rest of the female characters: "[Larita] is tall, exquisitely made-up and very beautiful – above everything, she is perfectly calm. Her clothes, because of their simplicity, are obviously violently expensive; she wears a perfect rope of pearls and a small close travelling-hat" (Coward, *Virtue* 515). However, "[…] like Coward, [she] is an outsider with an unconventional sexual past" (Lahr 26). Similar to what is true of the playwright, Larita as a woman with a past does not stick to traditions and moral values of English country life. Rather, "[she] is easy with men and money. She has a restless intelligence, and the charm of her flippancy allows her to say hard things bravely" (Lahr 27). What Coward actually intends Larita to do is to charm the people around her. "[He] is at pains to show off Larita's charm at the end of Act One. His spare dialogue allows a mood, a glance, the handling of an object to convey Larita's confident sophistication" (Lahr 27). This is exemplified by Charles Burleigh's offering Larita a cigarette, which she refuses. Instead, she takes one out of her own case and the two characters have a supposedly desultory conversation which ultimately illustrates Larita's "ability to gauge the reaction of others to her. Her charm is a knowing sensitivity to the people around her. By the end of the scene, she and Charles 'both laugh a good deal'. Through charm, she promotes intimacy" (Lahr 28) with Sarah, Charles, the Colonel and, initially, with her husband John. She soon realizes that her way of dealing with things is not particularly appreciated by all of the characters, though:

> LARITA. I ought to be so much more adaptable – but it's difficult. I've tried terribly hard during the three months I've been here, but I've only succeeded in making everyone more or less used to me. I've established a sort of truce, that's all.
> COLONEL. That in itself is an achievement. We're an insular, hidebound set.
> LARITA. Nobody really likes me – except you.
> COLONEL. Sarah does.
> LARITA. Yes, I'd forgotten Sarah. It's queer of her, isn't it?
> COLONEL. She places a high value on intelligence where no one else recognises it. (Coward, *Virtue* 541)

Throughout the whole play, it is evident that Larita's charm is what distinguishes her from most of the other characters and what allows her to voice her opinion in an unconcealed way without facing serious consequences. However, she is well aware of the fact that she does not quite fit in and alludes to this with some sarcasm when discussing the color of her dress for the evening dance with the Colonel:

> LARITA. I must be careful – it will be my social début.
> COLONEL. What will you wear?
> LARITA. Something non-committal and austere.
> COLONEL. Not black?
> LARITA. No – that would clash with the Dowager's.
> COLONEL. White?
> LARITA. Too *ingénue*.
> COLONEL. There's always lavender.
> LARITA. Yes – much more appropriate. (Coward, *Virtue* 539-540)

Eventually, however, Larita does not bear to be attacked by her in-laws any longer and it becomes evident that it is her charm which makes her unfit for the society she wanted to enter for reasons of love. She prepares her escape from the situation by admitting her initial mistake and, after having been accused of being unfit to be John's wife, explains herself to the family as follows:

> LARITA. Unfortunately, I don't consider John worthy of me in either ca-
> pacity [i.e. as a husband or as a lover] – I realized a long time ago
> that our marriage was a mistake, but not from your point of view –
> from my own.
> MARION. It's easy to talk like that now.
> LARITA. It isn't easy – it's heartbreaking. I love John more than I can
> ever say, but it's not blind love – unfortunately – I can see through
> him. He's charming and weak and inadequate, and he's brought me
> down to the dust. (Coward, *Virtue* 581)

However, by acknowledging the power love has on human beings, Larita stresses that it is not out of a lack of affection for John that she cannot continue living with him:

> LARITA. Love will always be the most dominant and absorbing subject in
> the world because it's so utterly inexplicable. Experience can teach
> you to handle it superficially, but not to explain it. I can look round
> with a nice clear brain and see absolutely no reason why I should
> love John. He falls short of every ideal I've ever had – he's not

particularly talented or clever; he doesn't know anything, really; he can't talk about any of the things I consider it worth while to talk about; and, having been to a good school – he's barely educated. (Coward, *Virtue* 605).

Rather, her growing awareness of her initial mistake is what makes her angry at herself. She alludes to her own feelings when playing cards with the colonel by saying:

> LARITA. There's an angry Queen of Hearts secreting herself under the sofa. (*She retrieves it and rises.*) I feel better now, thank you. (Coward, *Virtue* 539)

Ultimately, Larita thus decides to remain true to herself rather than to the society she married into. Being a quite liberal American, she does not enjoy conservative English country life and hence decides to leave her husband and his family for good.

3.1.2. Narration in the Film

<u>3.1.2.1. Changes in Structure and Themes</u>

Already at the beginning of the film, it becomes clear that it is quite different from the play in terms of structure. In contrast to the way exposition is presented in Coward's version, Elliott starts his film by introducing the young couple. The audience learns how Larita and John got to know each other in Monte Carlo and then immediately follows them on their trip to visit John's family. From then on, the structure of the film loosely follows the play, even though the 'act' structure is not as clear as in the play. Moreover, there are some significant changes regarding the themes and structure of the work which are presented in the form of added scenes.

As regards the themes, it soon becomes evident that religion is no longer as important a topic in the film as it is in Coward's version. Except for some minor allusions to the subject, e.g. when the Colonel announces the return of the prodigal at the beginning of the film, Marion cannot be considered to be as religious as she is or pretends to be in the play. This might also account for the substitution of the intertextual element of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* for Marcel Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah*, which goes along with the shift away from the religious focus towards a more secular perspective overall.

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However, it has to be pointed out that actually, the substitution of the intextual element represents a goof in the film: whereas the historical context the movie is situated in is the year 1924, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was only written in 1928.

Moreover, there are added scenes, for example at the very beginning of the film, which serve to introduce new topics or reinforce themes which are not as prominent in Coward's version. For instance, in contrast to the play, Larita is introduced to the audience as a successful female race-car driver winning the Grand Prix in Monte Carlo. Even though in the play version, there are some tendencies towards emancipation. Especially with regard to Larita's being a woman with a past, it is still worth mentioning that these aspects have been strongly enforced in the film. These changes, however, have been deliberate: director Stephen Elliott conducted extensive historical research on the subject of emancipation in order to ensure the authenticity of his film. He found out that at the time when Coward wrote the play, the first woman race-drivers appeared in public and thus decided that winning a Grand Prix would be a plausible thing for Larita to do (see Elliott audio commentary 3'19".

Being a woman who enjoys velocity, Larita further upsets the female Whittakers by participating in the traditional fox hunt. However, the actual problem is not her attendance but rather the circumstance that she refuses to mount a horse. Instead, she rides a motorbike and thus brings some turbulence into the social event. Seeing no sense in killing innocent animals, the Colonel supports her endeavor by providing his daughter-in-law with the motorbike. Once again, the director insisted on the historic plausibility of the scene: he had a motorbike designed the way it would have looked in the 1920s. It was not possible for him to take a real motorbike from the 20s, though, because it would have been too slow and it would not have been possible for Larita to overtake the horses with it (see Elliott audio commentary 53'30").

Another theme which has been added to the movie is money. In the play, the Whittakers do not once allude to monetary problems, but in the film version, it seems to be one of Mrs. Whittaker's biggest concerns. The family has already lost a great part of their fortune, and at the time of John's return, the family manor is about to be sold to one of the Whittakers' wealthy neighbors. This is particularly interesting with regard to character motivation: the audience

perceives Mrs. Whittaker's concern about the financial situation of the family while John is not even aware of the financial problems of his family. It is only when he is confronted by his mother that he realizes that his family is about to lose the house he grew up in.

Another scene added to the 2008 version is the war widows' revue Hilda, Larita and Marion take part in. In the film, the scene is used as a tool to establish the conflict between Hilda and Larita which is going to make Hilda reveal Larita's secret to the family. In the play, her antagonistic actions are mainly caused by her jealousy of Larita.

Another very prominent difference regarding the action is the ending of the film. While in the play Larita simply leaves the family to go to Paris, she is accompanied by the Colonel in the film. It is left open whether they will become lovers, but it would be a valid interpretation on the part of the audience to suppose that they are more than friends. The most plausible reason for Elliott's changing the ending is the different context of reception: for a 2008 audience, the simple fact that Larita leaves her husband would not have been as shocking as it may have been for a 1925 audience. Thus, in order to create an effect similar to what Coward wanted to achieve, the director had to include a scene which the audience does not necessarily expect.

As regards the presentation of the events, there are two aspects which are worth paying particular attention to: the verbal and the visual presentation of the events. Firstly, as regards dialogue, it is interesting to note that in the play version, even when more than two characters are present on the stage, the preferred mode of dialogue is that of the duologue rather than the polylogue. In the film version, the focus is slightly shifted and there are by tendency more instances of polylogue. Secondly, concerning the visual presentation, location is an interesting aspect to be investigated. Even though the settings in the film often remind of a stage, there are scenes which would have been rather difficult to produce on a stage, as for instance the scenes which take place outside in the large grounds of the manor. What is more, the camera movement contributes to the changed perspective the audience has on the film. In contrast to attending a performance of the play in the theater, the hypothetical observer, i.e. the camera, manages to accompany the actors much more closely and thus involves the audience much more immediately in the story.

One of the most obvious changes in character constellation is the omission of Larita's ally Charles Burleigh in the 2008 version of the film. This lack of companionship is compensated by Larita's closer relationship to the Colonel, who in the end even elopes with her.

The Colonel is a very interesting character to investigate for his bitterness is expressed differently in the film. Being part of the Lost Generation, he suffers from having lost all his men in the war. He actually did not want to go back home from France but wanted to forget what had happened in the war by killing his time in opium dens; it was only when his wife came to retrieve him from such a den that he returned to England. In the play version, it is only his infidelity that is alluded to, but not so much the brokenness of his character.

The Colonel does not have many lines in the film but it is still he who seems to keep the family together almost until the end. Like in the play, he is the only one who tries to integrate Larita into the family by supporting his son John in his decision. However, his actions seem to be much more passive in the film than in the play. Likewise, the way of depicting the Colonel's nature and problems has been adapted to the new medium. By using reflecting surfaces like windows, mirrors, silver spoons and sunglasses to illustrate what is going on within the Colonel and props such as sunglasses and newspapers to stress his need to hide from the outside world, his inner life is turned to the outside and thus made graspable for the audience. In spite of the Colonel's leaving his wife in the end in order to elope with a younger woman, it can be said that the character is depicted in a rather favorable light in the film. The audience is inclined to feel relieved when he finally manages to leave his metaphorical prison.

The woman he escapes from is constructed differently, too. The differences are already obvious when looking at her name: whereas she is called Mabel Whittaker in the play, her first name in the film is Veronica. Veronica seems to be much crueler than Mabel, for example when she forces Larita to go to the greenhouse with her even though she is aware of her allergy to flowers. Later on, she even distributes vases with flowers all around the house in order to make her daughter-in-law ill. However, her bitterness and cruelty are in a way more understandable to the audience. In the play version,

Mrs. Whittaker does simply not want Larita to be married to John for reasons of status and social incompatibility. In the film, however, she seems to be working hard in order to ensure her family's survival. The Whittakers have grave financial problems which Mrs. Whittaker tries hard to overcome. She would have liked her son to marry the daughter of her wealthy neighbor in order for the family to be able to keep their manor.

The characters of Marion and Hilda are basically similar to their counterparts in the play version. However, as the theme of religion has been avoided in the film, Marion seems to be a bit less fanatic about moral and religious principles. Instead, she is depicted as naïve character, a woman who waits for her fiancé to return from the navy. However, it is quite clear to the other characters and to the audience that Edgar has left her for good. She is made fun of by showing Larita pictures of celebrities which supposedly resemble her fiancé, but only if you remove the ears and the eyes (see Elliott 32'30"). In Coward's play, Hilda is constructed as the naive young girl who takes Larita as a role model but ultimately fails to imitate her because she is not as sophisticated in her ways as she should be in order to be able to keep up with the quick-witted American.

Similar to the two sisters, the characters of Sarah and Philip Hurst match their equivalents in the play. Sarah is smart, charming and understanding, whereas her brother Philip rather resembles a country bumpkin born into a higher class, enjoying the company of horses (see Elliott 14'22"). His attempts at approaching Larita are consequently even more ridiculous than they are in the play.

Larita's husband John is generally rather child-like in the film. He is unaware of the financial difficulties of his family and he does not know about Larita's past. When he finally learns about it, he is angry at her and thwarts her last attempt at reconciliation by refusing to dance with her. However, in contrast to the play, he is granted a final act of emancipation from his mother. When Larita leaves the house and Mrs. Whittaker continues to talk badly about her, John tells his mother to 'shut up' (Elliott 86'42"). According to Stephen Elliott, it was actor Ben Barnes' wish to make his character appear at least marginally stronger: even if he is left by his wife, he at least manages to stand up to his mother in the end (see Elliott audio commentary 86'16").

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The character of Larita Whittaker is altered to a rather large extent, too. Like in Coward's play, she is a beautiful American woman with a sharp mind who quickly starts to be bored out of her wits by the stupor of English country life. Being a race-car driver, she is much more emancipated in the film and it soon becomes obvious that she is in control of her husband and that her power over him is much stronger than in the play. However, quite interestingly, Larita seems to take much more effort to be on friendly terms with her in-laws at first. She does her best to improve their relationship, but ultimately does not stand a chance even though the Colonel supports her even more than he does in the play.

Larita's relationship to the servants is much more prominent in the film. In the play, her French maid is alluded to twice and she has brief chats with Furber, the butler of the Whittakers, but there is no relationship of any significance between her and the domestic staff. In the film version, however, she seems to be appreciated very much by them and receives a lot of help, which she generously rewards at the end by offering Furber a large sum of money as a leaving present.

One even more substantial difference to the play version is Larita's past. As mentioned before, in the play, the family finds out that Larita is a divorcée who has been in court for the investigation of the suicide of one of her admirers. In the film, however, she is not divorced, but a widow who has been tried for assisting the suicide of her late husband. She ultimately admits that she is guilty to the family, explaining that she did it out of love since she could not bear to see her late husband suffer from his illness any longer. Quite obviously, apart from issues of censorship, such a confession would have caused a considerable uproar in Coward's times. Then, it was enough for Larita to cause scandal by being a woman with a past, having divorced one and being responsible for the death of another man. Nowadays, the divorce would no longer be considered as dramatic, but the added instance of euthanasia is definitely a topic that is likely to arouse the interest of the audience.

In conclusion, it can be said that in the course of the adaptation, a lot of changes have been made in order to distance Elliott's hypertext from Coward's hypotext. However, this does not necessarily imply that the traces of Noël Coward's influence have been reduced – quite on the contrary, significant

aspects of the playwright and his work have been integrated into the new version and these instances can be interpreted as examples of the technique of pastiche.

3.1.2.3. Pastiche in *Easy Virtue*

3.1.2.3.1. Integrating the Original Dialogue

What could be more significant of a playwright's style than the language he or she uses when writing a dramatic text? Drama heavily relies on words, and thus it is essential for the dramatist to use the right language to express the meaning he or she wants to convey.

What is more, in drama, dialogue is a means of steering the action towards the intended goal:

> In situations that involve giving an order, betraying a secret, uttering a threat, making a promise, persuading another figure to do something or any other similar speech act, a dramatic figure completes a spoken action which changes the situation and thus the relationships of the figures to one another intentionally. (Pfister 118)

Hence, it is evident that in order for a film adaptation of a play to stay close to its hypotext, it necessarily has to make use of the language in a similar way as it has been made use of in the play.

When writing the screenplay for Elliott's *Easy Virtue*, particular attention has been paid to integrating as much of Coward's original dialogue as possible. The following excerpts from the play bear witness to the fact that pastiching Coward by means of language features is a common technique in the adaptation under investigation. In spite of the fact that what occurs on only four pages of the play has been transferred to two entirely different parts of the film – the first part around minute 20 and the second part around minute 61 – the original language Coward used has been taken over to quite a large extent.

> JOHN. **I wish she wouldn't slack indoors so much.**
> SARAH. I don't see that it matters, if she wants to.
> JOHN. It's all very well in the winter, but in this sort of weather ----
> SARAH. You mustn't be grumpy just because people don't like doing exactly the same things as you.
> JOHN. I'm not grumpy.

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SARAH. Yes, you are – a little.
JOHN. **It's annoying, though.**
SARAH. Don't let it be.
JOHN. **You're such a sport, always ready for anything.**
SARAH. **But I haven't got Lari's beauty or charm or intelligence.**
JOHN. Here, I say!
SARAH. I mean that.
JOHN. **She is clever, isn't she?**
SARAH. **Yes, and being clever she's a little bored.** (Coward, *Virtue* 547)

Two pages later, the play continues as follows:

JOHN. **I've often meant to ask you something, but I hadn't the courage.**
SARAH. **Well, don't then.**
JOHN. I must.
[…]
SARAH. […] Go ahead.
JOHN. **Did you think I behaved like a cad, marrying Lari like that, without letting you know?**
SARAH. **Of course not.**
JOHN. Are you sure?
SARAH. Quite. I understood perfectly.
JOHN. It's been on my mind rather.
SARAH. **You took your opportunity and married for love, John, and I respect you for it. If we'd married, it would have been for friendship and convenience.**
JOHN. **Would it?**
SARAH (*firmly*). **Yes – we knew one another far too well.**
JOHN. Do you think that's a disadvantage?
SARAH. In married life, certainly.
JOHN. I don't.
SARAH. It would have been so dull and ordinary – no excitement at all.
JOHN. I don't want excitement.
SARAH. I do. **I want thrills** and glamour and **passionate love-letters** – all the trappings.
JOHN. **I could have written you love-letters.**
SARAH. **Well, why didn't you?**
JOHN. I don't know, I -----
SARAH (*triumphantly*). The fact that you didn't proves that you couldn't – you didn't feel that way about me, ever.
JOHN. It was a different sort of feeling.
SARAH. Don't be a hypocrite, John, and try and deceive yourself.
JOHN. **I did love you all the same.** (Coward, *Virtue* 549-550)

The parts printed in bold have been taken over in the film. As mentioned before,

these scenes are by no means the only ones which closely stick to the

language of the play, but they are illustrative of most of them. As the technique is very much the same everywhere, other scenes will not be discussed in more detail here.

However, it needs to be stressed that it is rather striking that comparatively large parts of the dialogue have been taken over, for usually, as films tend to rely more on images than on words, one would suppose that only a minor part of the dialogue can be transferred to the new medium so as not to make the new work too difficult to digest for the audience. Bearing this in mind, it can be concluded that taking over much of the original dialogue is probably done as a means of stylistic imitation. Even though the new work is definitely very much shaped by the director and the screenplay writers, it cannot be denied that Coward's influence is still perceptible in the way language is used, even if the context of the new work is significantly different from the original context.

3.1.2.3.2. Adding Humorous Elements

As becomes evident from various biographies, Noël Coward was considerably more than simply a playwright. Actually, it was his versatility that prevented his disappearance from the public in times of little or no success. "Als Dramatiker, Schauspieler, Regisseur, Komponist, Autobiograf, Romanautor, Librettist, Sänger oder Kabarettist hat er seine Zeitgenossen zu jeder Zeit beschäftigt, auch wenn er einmal vorübergehend an den großen Theatern weniger erfolgreich war" (Hahn 1). However, even though "[d]espite his many talents, writing plays was what he did first and last and what he always came back to" (Day, *Words* 11), his other talents are equally important for they contributed greatly to his dramatic success.

In his function as a comedian, Coward entertained a large number of audiences. This aspect has been drawn upon in the 2008 version in a number of different ways. There are new sequences, which are not part of the original work, but which match Coward's style. One such humorous scene occurs when Larita accidentally sits on the family dog and kills it. According to the director's commentary, this scene has been added to the film because it is based on a real-life event that occurred to one of the director's friends who was supposed to have dinner with her new boyfriend's family when she sat on the family dog

(see Elliott audio commentary 29'47"). However, it is not only the real-life event that is traceable in the scene but also Coward's work as a comedian.

Another example of an entertaining scene that has been added to the 2008 version is based on a short dialogue between Larita and the Colonel in the 1924 play:

> LARITA […]. I feel my nostrils quivering like a war-horse.
> […]
> COLONEL. Are you preparing to have a run?
> LARITA. Certainly. (Coward, *Virtue* 538)

In the film, Larita actually has a run. However, it is not a horse she is mounting but a motorbike. Symbolically, she is escaping the domestic terror her in-laws impose on her by breaking with and ridiculing their English traditions. Her accomplice, the Colonel, indirectly contributes to her first metaphorical escape by providing her with the motorbike.

An interesting detail that has been altered to some extent in the adaptation is the depiction of the female Whittakers. Already in Coward's version of *Easy Virtue*, Mabel, Marion and Hilda are not to be perceived by the audience as sympathetic characters for they are ridiculed and generally presented in a rather negative light. For instance, at the beginning of the first act, they show a rather narrow-minded attitude towards a woman with a past, which already foreshadows the development of their relation to their son's and brother's wife. Elliott reinforces the picture the audience gets from the play underlining the negative character traits of the female Whittakers to such an extent that they acquire a humorous dimension. Mrs. Whittaker's cruelty is reinforced by having her stage a passive-aggressive fight with her daughter-in-law. For example, while Mrs. Whittaker tries to annoy Larita by positioning flowers which her son's wife is allergic to everywhere in the house, Larita irritates the traditional English woman by surprising the family with an American Thanksgiving dinner. Hilda is depicted as equally naïve but even more clumsy than in the play. When dancing French Can-Can in a war widows revue with Larita, she exposes herself – both literally and to ridicule – assuming that Larita is about to do the same. Larita, however, had only jokingly suggested dancing without knickers, a humorous remark which Hilda awkwardly misinterpreted. In general, Hilda seems to be prone to dropping a clanger at each of her

appearances in public. Her sister Marion's character is altered according to Coward's spirit, too. The dullness of her existence, which Coward already hints at by means of the secondary text on the first page by suggesting that she will inevitably become like her mother, is even reinforced by her clinging to the idea of her fiancé's return from the sea in order to marry her. However, she does not even have a picture of Edgar to show to Larita, but rather looks for pictures of celebrities in the newspaper which she uses in order to illustrate what Edgar looks like (see Elliott 32'30").

Quite clearly, these examples bear witness not so much to an alteration of the matter presented in the 1924 play, but rather to a reinforcement of certain aspects which are already quite prominent in the original version. As Elliott affirms in the audio commentary to *Easy Virtue*, it was his aim to think about what the two masters, Hitchcock and Coward, would have done if they had had the chance to re-write the story at present and to integrate these thoughts into his film (see Elliott audio commentary 58'10"). Altering the female characters in such a humorous manner was most definitely a successful way of putting his plan into practice.

3.1.2.3.3. Biographical, Historical and Cultural References

One very prominent technique of integrating additional historical details into the film was Elliott's focus on emancipation. It cannot be denied that emancipation is to a certain degree present in Coward's play, for its main character is a woman with a past who manages to free herself from the chains her husband's family wants to impose on her. However, the emancipation aspect is much more prevalent in the 2008 version, where Larita's profession is that of a successful female race-car driver. This affection for cars can also be detected in Coward's play. In order to make his wife feel better, John takes her for a long ride in his car (see Coward, *Virtue* 548). Even though Larita is not a driver in the play, Coward had a certain image of Americans which could have made Elliott decide on emphasizing Larita's love of speed the way he did. In his unproduced play *Time Remembered* (1941), one of the characters points out that "Americans have a passion for speed… and yet no idea of time whatsoever – it's most extraordinary" (Day, *Words* 85).

It becomes evident that Coward's own experiences and attitudes with regard to the cultural differences between Britain and America have found their way into the 2008 version. For instance, by inserting a scene in which Larita organizes a Thanksgiving meal for her in-laws in order to annoy John's mother, the English and their old-established traditions are made fun of in a subtle way. This is done in Coward's spirit for he himself did not entirely believe in the greatness of his native country even though he used to try to convince others of it: "I continue to tell foreigners how great we are. Before I die, I would like once again to be able to believe it myself" (Day, *Words* 72). Of course, being English, he was prone to making fun of the Americans to a certain degree, either:

> We British are an island race,
> The sea lies all around us,
> And visitors from other lands,
> With different sets of different glands,
> Bewilder and astound us. (qtd. in Day, *Words* 77)

Ultimately, however, Coward always affirmed that he liked America and the Americans:

> I like America
> Its Society
> Offers infinite variety
> And come what may
> I shall return some day
> To the good old U.S.A. (qtd. in Day, *Words* 87)

Another historical aspect which can be attributed to the technique of pastiche are the characters' outward appearances. By situating the film in the historical context of the hypotext, director Stephen Elliott decided to adapt the character's appearances, behavior and the props they use to the requirements of Coward's times. For instance, in order to make the film more authentic, he had his technicians adapt a motorbike in the style of the 1920s in order for the audience to believe that the film is set in the suggested period. Moreover, the costumes, the setting and the characters' conduct are exactly what one would expect from this period. An additional element establishing the historical context is the painting Larita has made of herself. In the film, it is suggested that some young

Spanish artist has been asked to draw it. Interestingly, the style of the painting very much reminds of some of Pablo Picasso's works.

Finally, the camera technique employed at the very beginning of the film equally establishes the historicity of the movie. By providing the audience with black and white images of Larita's winning the Grand Prix which seem to have been taken by a rather old-fashioned camera the film once again suggests that the story is set in the 1920s.

Integrating all these elements into a larger whole, one can assume that what Proust laid down as the major principle of pastiche, namely writing according to both the pastiched writer's mind and the language of his time, has been realized by Elliott in a convincing manner.

3.1.2.3.4. The Role of Coward's Music

Even though it has not been mentioned in greater detail so far, music constitutes a major part of Coward's work. In honor of his musical achievements, Dominic Vlasto and Alan Farley have created an Internet site which is fully devoted to the artist's musical career.[17] Apart from information on musical plays written by Noël Coward or musicals based on his work, it provides a list of his twelve most popular songs (see Vlasto *Music*), four of which are of particular importance here since they have been integrated into the 2008 version of *Easy Virtue*.

The task director Stephen Elliott set his staff with regard to music is the following: "[…] 'Think 1924 but open up your brain at the same time'" (Voss 2). The outcome of this instruction was a soundtrack including adaptations of Noël Coward's 'Mad About The Boy' (1932), 'A Room With A View' (1928), 'Mad Dogs And Englishmen' (1931) and 'I'll See You Again' (1929) as well as songs by other musicians of the 1930s. Moreover, there are some recent songs which have been adapted to the style of the 1920s or 1930s in order to suit the purpose.

Quite interestingly, even though the director's instruction was to 'think 1924', all of the Noël Coward songs that have been included in the 2008 version

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[17] In addition to www.noelcowardmusic.com, there is *The Noël Coward Musical Index* (http://www.noelcoward.net/ncmiindex/m.html) a website providing in-depth information on Coward's musical oeuvre. Among other things, his songs are ranked according to their popularity and there are detailed musical interpretations of Coward's pieces.

actually represent instances of temporal incoherence for they were written quite some time after the play and in the context of different works. However, the songs can still be said to be in striking accordance with the parts of the film they have been integrated into.

For instance, 'Mad About The Boy', which was first performed in the context of Coward's musical review *Words And Music* some eight years after *Easy Virtue*, perfectly illustrates Larita's feelings for her younger husband. She perceives that her love and affection for him do not have a chance due to external circumstances and ultimately also due to their differences in character. Still, she is literally mad about him. There would actually have been no better way for Elliott to express this for "[l]ong before its emergence as the pre-eminently known and performed song in the Coward catalogue, critical musicians were apt to consider this among his finest songs" (Longford *Mad About The Boy*).

In a similar way, Coward's famous song 'Mad Dogs And Englishmen' has been integrated into the film at some point. The song was written in 1930 during a car journey from Haiphong to Saigon in Vietnam (see Longford *Mad Dogs And Englishmen*). This song proved to be very popular, too: "Possibly this is the most tautly-constructed high-speed comedy list-song ever composed" (Longford *Mad Dogs And Englishmen*). However, in contrast to 'Mad About The Boy', the lyrics of the song are not as important in the film as the melody, even though they support the general picture of the English in *Easy Virtue*.

'I'll See You Again' was published in the context of *Bitter Sweet* and written from scratch by Noël Coward in a taxi in New York City (see Longford *I'll See You Again*). "The song was Coward's biggest immediate 'hit' of his career, and thereafter has remained at the top of his musical successes" (Longford *I'll See You Again*). Performed by Ben Barnes, 'I'll See You Again' is another of Coward's most popular songs which have been chosen to be included in the 2008 version of *Easy Virtue*.

Finally, 'A Room With A View', written in 1927, was originally written for *This Year of Grace* (see Longford *A Room With A View*). In the context of *Easy Virtue* (2008), it is again performed by Ben Barnes, the actor playing John. John uses the song to convince his wife of staying with his family for some more weeks.

By integrating a selection of Coward's masterpieces into the film, director Stephen Elliott has managed to transfer an aspect of the playwright's style into the work which has not been present before. Thus, including additional evidence of Coward's style in the 2008 version by means of musical references can definitely be considered a very sophisticated and creative approach to pastiching the playwright.

3.2. Relative Values

Whereas *Easy Virtue* and many of Coward's earlier works were received favorably by the critics, his popularity decreased significantly after World War II. Hahn seeks the reason for this development in the general change in dramatic technique at the time:

> Dass Cowards dramentechnische Fertigkeiten zu einer Zeit gelobt wurden, in der das *well-made play*, das *pièce bien faite*, die Londoner Bühnen beherrschte, verwundert nicht. […] Erst nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg beginnt eine Phase, in der Noël Coward nicht mehr dem herrschenden Zeitgeist entspricht und von den Kritikern fast einhellig abgelehnt wird. (Hahn 6)

However, unlike many of his contemporaries, Noël Coward assumed that it was not impossible for a playwright to have success by sticking to the tradition of the well-made play. Actually, "Coward bestritt, dass die Zeit der *well-made plays* vorüber sei, und unterstrich seinen Standpunkt mit Komödien wie *Relative Values*" (Hahn 114).

This drawing-room comedy, opening at the Savoy Theatre on November 28, 1951, ultimately proved the playwright to be right: his play received favorable reviews and "for the first time in a long time the majority of the London critics were kind" (Day, *Letters* 571).

However, his success cannot be attributed exclusively to his courage. Rather, he owes some of it to one of his friends, who, after having read a preliminary draft of the play, suggested some improvements, which the playwright willingly integrated into his play and later openly acknowledged as having been most helpful in a letter:

> Binkie's criticisms of the play were very intelligent and quite gentle. One was that the characters of Peter and Odo should either be differentiated more or made into one. Another was that the balance of the play would be improved by making it in three acts instead of two and the third criticism was that Moxie was rather indistinct as a character. Having digested all this carefully, I have lengthened and improved the first act, finishing on the 'She's my sister' line. I have turned the two men into one character, which is a great improvement and have made Moxie, I think, more consistent and more true. (Day, *Letters* 570)

In spite of his conviction that the well-made play was not yet an outdated genre, Coward was indeed worried about the general popularity of the comedy of manners with a 1950s London audience. He was not the only one to have perceived it that way: even today, critics still consider Coward's endeavor a rather daring one:

> […] [W]hen it was written, *Relative Values* belonged to a bankrupt tradition. Drawing-room comedy has always depended for its vitality on an unquestioned and hierarchical society, and by 1950, with the welfare state a fact of life, there was little point to a new comedy about servants and masters when fewer of either sat in the audience. (Fisher 199)

Obviously, Coward was still willing to take the risk. In order to demonstrate his awareness of the problem, though, Coward has Frederick Crestwell, one of his characters in *Relative Values*, observe the following:

> CRESTWELL. [Moxie's being Miranda Frayle's sister is] [a] coincidence in the best tradition of English high comedy, my Lady. Consider how delightfully Mr Somerset Maugham would handle the situation!
> PETER. I can think of other writers who wouldn't exactly sneeze at the idea.
> CRESTWELL. If I may say so, sir, our later playwrights would miss the more subtle nuances. They are all too brittle. Comedies of manners swiftly become obsolete when there are no longer any manners. (Coward, *Values* 296)

In spite of his awareness of the receding popularity of the genre, "Noël had his fingers crossed that his own prediction would be proved wrong in this case" (Day, *Letters* 570). Eventually, the playwright should not be disappointed by the public's reception of the play.

Not only the audience but also the playwright himself received the play favorably. Coward was particularly delighted by the performance of his actors: "We had a sensational opening night; Gladys [Cooper] gave a perfectly brilliant performance and knew her words for the first time; the whole cast was good and it is a smash hit and nobody can get seats, which is all very satisfying" (Day, *Letters* 571). The potshot at Gladys Cooper was triggered by her peculiar habit of learning the lines she had to perform at the rehearsal, which drove Coward mad (see Hoare 390). Ultimately, however, all disputes were settled and the play was also a financial success (see Day, *Letters* 637). Critics tended

to write positive reviews on the play, as for instance Harold Hobson did for the *Sunday Times*:

> Happily, [Coward's] latest play [is] the best he has written for several yeas […]. He is about to enter 1952 as much as a rebel as he was in 1925. Though not, of course, against the same things… In *Relative Values*, democracy and social equality have a very bad time, and the audience a very good one. (qtd. in Hoare 390)

According to Clive Fisher, however, this critique cannot be relied upon for Harold Hobson is "the dullest of drama critics" (199). A similar appraisal of the situation might be at the origin of Coward's reluctance to be grateful for the critics' approval. He wrote "Rave notices. Quite a lot of them irritating and ill-written but all, with the exception of the dear little *Daily Mirror*, enthusiastic and wonderful box office" (qtd. in Hoare 390-391).

The general perception at the time of its production was that "[t]he play was a hit" (Hoare 391). However, more recently, Coward's biographer Clive Fisher would interpret the success of *Relative Values* as

> a popularity based on nostalgia rather than novelty [since] the epigrams ring hollow, and the wonderfully polished dialogue, which none of his contemporaries could match, proves nothing, except that Noël Coward, when young so imitated and so innovative, became the Canute of his generation. (199)

However, not all critics are as reticent as Fisher. Quite on the contrary, *Relative Values* is often even considered to be outranking *Easy Virtue*. "Trotz der (im Gegensatz zu *Easy Virtue*) dargestellten konservativen Werte ist *Relative Values* das bessere Stück, auch wenn seine Aussagen nur deshalb vom Publikum akzeptiert werden, weil sie dramaturgisch gut dargeboten werden" (Hahn 106).

Interestingly enough, even though written more than a quarter of a century earlier, *Easy Virtue* is indeed often compared to *Relative Values*:

> [O]f all his plays, it is the much-earlier *Easy Virtue* which provides the most interesting comparison. In that work, in which the snobbish Whittackers [sic] had refused to accept the unconventional Larita, Coward had attacked the inflexibility of English society. In *Relative Values*, written twenty-six years later, it is that very inflexibility which we

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are called upon to admire. Over the intervening years of his success, self-invention and social-climbing, Coward had become an apologist not only for the paralysis of the working class, but also for what he saw as the birthright of the more privileged. (Fisher 197)

Thus, in the 26 years that lie between his writing *Easy Virtue* and *Relative Values*, Coward changed his point of view on the peers as he got more and more integrated into their society himself. Therefore, from an objective point of view, the opinions he voices in *Relative Values* are often criticized:

> It would be interesting to know what credentials Coward felt he had either for making prophecies, or for advocating social orders and conditions. He himself certainly contradicted most of what this play represents. […] And a few years later, the contingency which his play had refused to contemplate occurred when an aristocrat, Prince Rainier, married a film star, Grace Kelly. (Fisher 199)

In spite of all critiques, in 1995, the play was once again performed at the Savoy Theatre in London, where it proved to be very popular (see Hahn 106). In fact, "[ist *Relative Values* eines] der wenigen Coward-Stücke der fünfziger Jahre, das bis heute immer wieder inszeniert wird" (Hahn 114).

However, it is not particularly easy to produce the play at present for some elements have proved to be rather problematic with a contemporary audience. "Das Stück […] leidet heute hauptsächlich an den Weisheiten des Butlers, egal wie gut formuliert sie sein mögen" (Hahn 106). However, there are not only negative aspects: "*Relative Values* ist [zwar] inhaltlich veraltet, überholt und verstaubt, aber es ist sehr gut geschrieben und kann deshalb noch heute – als Kostümstück und am Boulevardtheater – unterhalten" (Hahn 106). Clive Fisher once again objects to reviving the play for a contemporary audience since in his view "[f]or all its polish […] it is now unrevivable, except as a literary curiosity piece" (196).

Thus, one can consider it a rather ambitious and risky project to adapt *Relative Values* into a film, a task which was eventually carried out by director Eric Styles in 2000. Styles' cast includes Julie Andrews as Lady Felicity Marshwood, Edward Atterton as Nigel Marshwood, William Baldwin as Don Lucas, Colin Firth as Peter Ingleton, Stephen Fry as Frederick Crestwell, Sophie Thompson as Dora Moxton and Jeanne Tripplehorn as Miranda Frayle. This all-star cast would actually suggest that the film had the chance to become

an international success; however, this has ultimately not proved to be true for the movie was only released in eight countries, among others in the United Kingdom, in France and in Spain. Accordingly, box office data for Styles' *Relative Values* is rather disappointing: the film only earned £ 88,000 in Great Britain and approximately twice as much in Spain (see IMDB *Relative Values*).

In accordance with these results, some reviewers consider the film to be rather modest for it supposedly lacks some of the play's original strengths. "Unfortunately, the hidden depth and compassion of Coward's play only occasionally surfaces" (Pepper 1). Others perceive the adaptation to have been rather successful, though. "Eric Styles […] has kept Coward's play evenly balanced between satire and farce, and for every waspish line there is an outbreak of running around and door-slamming" (Thomson 1).

Understandably enough, much of the film's quality is attributed to its all-star cast:

> [Julie] Andrews savours every vowel as the kind of woman who appears to be nice even when being highly offensive, Colin Firth is increasingly hilarious as the cousin who has an objective view of the spiralling lunacy, Stephen Fry is predictably (but no less amusingly) cast as the urbane, intelligent butler, and Sophie Thompson has a grand old time feigning airs and graces. (Thomson 1)

The reviewer concludes that Styles' *Relative Values* is "[f]un in every frame" (Thomson 1) and thus definitely pays tribute to Noël Coward's hypotext.

3.2.1. Narration in the Play

3.2.1.1. Action Analysis

> *Relative Values* ist wie schon *Easy Virtue* von Coward bewusst als ein traditionelles *well-made play* angelegt. Beim Personal der Komödie greift er daher auf ältere Traditionen zurück: Es sind hier wieder die *peers* (Adel) die die Gruppe der Protagonisten ausmachen, in die eine Außenseiterin, eine Tief- statt Hochstaplerin, einzudringen versucht. (Hahn 107)

This short summary basically provides a good overview of the action as it is presented in the play. Similar to *Easy Virtue*, the action revolves around an English family and its invasion by a woman with a past.

Relative Values is a drawing-room comedy in three acts, the first two of which are divided into two scenes each. The first act covers nearly half of the play whereas the second and the third act are comparatively short. The action presented in the play covers the time from Saturday afternoon after lunch until Sunday morning.

The main setting of the play, the library of Marshwood House, is described as follows in the secondary text:

> The most important feature of the library of Marshwood House is that it is not a library. It may have been in the past and it may be in the future, but now it is quite definitely the family living room. There are books about of course; it is furnished comfortably and charmingly but without any particular design. The chintz covers are old and a little faded and all the furniture, which is of mixed periods, gives the impression that it has drifted into the room at one time or another, taken a liking to it, and decided to settle down. (Coward, *Values* 261)

This description already hints at the slow deconstruction of the aristocratic society as it is experienced and above all feared by most of the characters. The peers are afraid that class distinctions are about to become eradicated when Hollywood star Miranda Frayle is about to marry the Earl of Marshwood.

When the action sets off, the domestic staff can be observed discussing the latest gossip on film star Miranda Frayle while busy with the preparations for the imminent arrival of the young couple. A sharp contrast between the young domestic staff and the older generation including Crestwell and Moxie is easily perceptible for the latter seem to be worried rather than excited about the recent developments. As Crestwell observes, Moxie appears to suffer excessively from the engagement:

> CRESTWELL. Ever since the news came you've been behaving like a tragedy queen. It can't matter to you all that much.
> MOXIE. It does matter to me. It matters to all of us. (Coward, *Values* 265)

This cryptic hint at the problem remains unexplained at this point in the play. Rather, Crestwell supposes that it is Moxie's conservative class-consciousness that is at the origin of her attitude towards Miranda Frayle and tries to comfort her on these grounds.

It appears that Lady Marshwood, in contrast to the staff, has been able to conceal her worries so far, but, having been her maid for more than 20 years Moxie is convinced that she is equally upset by the circumstances:

> MOXIE. Her ladyship's just as upset as we are, inside.
> CRESTWELL. Has she said so?
> MOXIE. No. But I can tell.
> CRESTWELL. Have you discussed it with her?
> MOXIE (*snappily*). No, I have not. (Coward, *Values* 267)

However, when the family enters the stage, Felicity seems to be much more concerned about the Church Fête than about her son's wedding. When she realizes that Moxie is upset, she sends her to her room to have a rest and questions Crestwell about the reasons for Moxie's behavior. He explains that "it is the social aspect of the situation that is upsetting her more than anything else" (Coward, *Values* 271). It soon becomes evident that the aristocrats are not happy about the recent developments, either. However, Felicity decides not to take action yet.

When she is alone with Peter Ingleton, she openly admits that she has grave doubts about her son's plans:

> FELICITY. I'm upset […]. The last three days have been hell. I've had Cynthia Hayling rasping my nerves like a buzz saw, Moxie plunged in gloom, Crestwell looking sardonic and an insufferable letter from Rose Eastry telling me to stand firm. (Coward, *Values* 278)

Initially, she denies the real reason for her worries. For reasons of political correctness, she prefers to blame her reservations on her son's spontaneity:

> FELICITY. It's the suddenness of the whole thing that's really upsetting me more than anything else.
> PETER. Is it?
> FELICITY. Yes, Peter, it is and you needn't look quizzical either. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. (Coward, *Values* 279)

Finally, Peter manages to make her admit openly that it is due to class that she does not want Miranda Frayle to marry her son.

After having spoken to her son on the telephone, Felicity decides to have a straight talk to Moxie in order to sort out the problem before the arrival. Her

maid tells her that she is obliged to leave for she has to take care of her aunt, but Lady Marshwood catches her telling a lie and

> [i]t becomes clear at the end of Act One [sic] why Moxie feels so strongly about the arrival of Miranda Frayle and her enforced acceptance by the family: she is her sister. This coincidence, and the fact that it might have remained a secret until that moment, is naturally wildly improbable; but drawing-room comedy was built on improbabilities as much as on a firmly established social order [...]. (Fisher 197)[18]

This rather unexpected turn actually fits in quite well with the requirements of the genre. The problem that has been subliminal to the whole scene is finally exposed and the further development of the rising action is prepared.

The second scene takes place two hours after Moxie's revelation with Felicity's and Peter's discussing the problem in the library. Felicity gives a brief account of Moxie's past and Peter finally suggests promoting and subsequently disguising Moxie in order to make her feel more comfortable in the presence of her sister as Lady Marshwood's secretary companion. Having agreed on this, the two of them let Crestwell in on their plan. After he has voiced his approval, he is sent to ask Moxie to come down. While Felicity and Peter wait for the servants to return, Felicity regrets not having got to know Moxie better during the past 20 years. At first, Moxie is not convinced of the plan but ultimately agrees when Crestwell suggests pretending that Moxie has inherited some money and is thus staying with the family as a personal friend rather than a member of staff. As the couple arrives, Moxie rushes off to prepare for the encounter.

The second act takes place two hours after the first. Nigel and Miranda have already been welcomed and Nigel is surprised at the developments concerning Moxie but ultimately agrees to come into the picture. When their conversation turns to the topic of Miranda, Nigel accuses his mother of not supporting him in his decision. She points out that Mr. Don Lucas' arrival in England could prove to be problematic for the young couple as the fellow film star used to date Miranda. When Nigel puts her off, she starts questioning him about Miranda's past until he reluctantly admits that "[t]here was a sister [...]. A good deal older than she was. Miranda does not like to talk about her much"

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[18] It is not at the end of the first act, but at the end of the first scene that Moxie reveals her secret to Lady Marshwood.

(Coward, *Values* 314). He even assumes that Miranda's sister is dead by now. Miranda's presence at the manor has in the meantime aroused some interest with the local people who are waiting for her autograph at the gates.

When Miranda finally enters the dining room, there is some small-talk and the two sisters are faced with each other for the first time in 20 years. However, Miranda does not recognize her sister immediately and takes Moxie for a friend of the family whom she offers to address by her Christian name:

> MIRANDA (*with charming impulsiveness*). Won't you call me Miranda?
> MOXIE. Certainly. I should adore to.
> MIRANDA (*sincerely*). Thank you for that. Thank you a great deal. I know how difficult this must be for you – for all of you. After all, you none of you know what I'm really like. You have to judge by appearances. And appearances can be deceptive, can't they? (Coward, *Values* 320)

This instance of dramatic irony is illustrative of what Coward does throughout the play. While Miranda and Nigel are unaware, the audience and most of the other characters present on the stage already suppose that Miranda is about to face a revelation which will prove her statement to be true in a way that is different from what she actually meant to say. Still unaware of her sister's presence, Miranda talks about her childhood, adding some fictitious details:

> MIRANDA. […] You see [my sister] short of started off on the wrong foot. I was the lucky one. I always had a conviction, deep down inside me, that somehow or other I should get on, hoist myself up out of the mire, escape from the poverty and squalor of my surroundings. I suppose I must have been born with the will to succeed. That's what's so unfair, isn't it? I mean that some people should feel like that from the very beginning and that other people shouldn't? I think that's why Dora hated me really. Because I had so much and she had so little. (Coward, *Values* 322)

Confirming Nigel's account of Dora's death, Miranda abandons the conversation on her family and turns to commenting on her feelings for her fiancé instead:

> MIRANDA. […] It's just that I love Nigel. I love him with all my heart. And I'm absolutely determined that the Countess of Marshwood shall be the longest and the greatest part I ever played. (Coward, *Values* 325)

This unfortunate allusion to her acting skills ironically stresses the inauthenticity of her character.

Due to the fact that the Haylings are not aware of Moxie's disguise, there are some comic scenes based on Moxie's seemingly inappropriate behavior towards them. They are let in on the secret and the party leaves for dinner. Moxie stays behind to get some moral support from Crestwell.

The second scene takes place after dinner. Crestwell tells Alice off for behaving inappropriately when serving Miranda Frayle. Alice, however, is primarily puzzled about Moxie's status, which Crestwell explains as follows:

> CRESTWELL. It's a social experiment based on the ancient and inaccurate assumption that, as we are all equal in the eyes of God, we should therefore be equally equal in the eyes of our fellow creatures.
> ALICE. Oh!
> CRESTWELL. The fact that it doesn't work out like that and never will in no way deters the idealists from pressing on valiantly towards Utopia.
> ALICE. What's Utopia?
> CRESTWELL. A spiritually hygienic abstraction, Alice, where everyone is hail-fellow-well met and there is no waiting at table.
> ALICE: Oh, I see. Fork lunches? (Coward, *Values* 331)

When Miranda's ex-lover Don Lucas arrives, it becomes evident that the climax of the play is imminent. He demands to see Miranda so as to prevent her from marrying Nigel. In order to lure her out of the dining room, he asks Crestwell to tell her that a journalist from *Life Magazine* is waiting for an interview.

The two of them have a vivid discussion about their relationship. Initially, Miranda refuses to reconcile with Don but finally, he kisses her. Embarrassingly, at this very moment, Felicity enters the room. Miranda tries to explain the situation by introducing Don Lucas as an old friend. Being a Lady who knows her manners, Felicity does not allow Don to return to London but, sensing the opportunity, invites him to spend the night at Marshwood Manor. Don gladly accepts, but Nigel and Miranda are not happy about it. When Don joins the party, they talk about the film he will be working on next:

> DON (*looking fixedly at* MIRANDA). […] It's an old story – the oldest story in the world. It's about a bum.
> FELICITY. What an odd subject for a moving picture!

> PETER. Felicity, 'bum' doesn't mean quite the same in America as it does in England.
>
> DON (*unsteadily, still staring at* MIRANDA). A bum is a guy who hasn't any place to go, who hasn't got anything to live for, who just bums around wishing he was dead. (Coward, *Values* 342-343)

Upset by this conversation, Don Lucas rushes into the garden followed by Peter. Nigel slowly comes to realize that his mother is plotting against his wedding and confronts her with his suspicion. When he continues to insist on his marrying Miranda, Moxie angrily blats out her secret. Miranda and Nigel are shocked and Moxie decides to leave Marshwood Manor for good.

The third act, which represents the resolution of the play, takes place in the morning of the following day. Moxie is packing and Don and Peter have a short conversation on the dilemma when Felicity comes in and demands to talk to Don alone. She convinces him of sticking to his plan of winning back Miranda. When Nigel enters, Don and Peter leave the stage and Felicity tells him that she is going to talk to the press before going to church. Nigel defends his fiancée but at the same time asks himself how he can possibly marry Miranda in these circumstances. Felicity again announces her plan of leaving Marshwood Manor once Miranda and Nigel are married. Nigel is getting increasingly annoyed by the situation and "slams out of the room" (Coward, *Values* 358).

On Miranda's entrance, the two women have a short conversation in which Miranda announces her departure. Felicity pretends to be willing to support her in any way if she decides to remain but deliberately does not tell her about her plans to leave. Rather, she plants some doubts of Nigel's loyalty in her head. Thus, when Nigel returns, Miranda tells him about her intention to leave. His objections are not very convincing and finally she bursts into tears. Seeing his love all in tears, Don takes his chance of winning her back and she decides to leave her husband and go back to the United States. Nigel is angry at his mother for having manipulated his relationship and they have a brief discussion. When Moxie appears, ready to leave. Felicity tells her to unpack her suitcase again. The family leaves for church as if nothing had happened.

The most intriguing character in Coward's *Relative Values* is Lady Marshwood. "FELICITY is a well preserved woman in the fifties. She has obviously been a beauty in her day, indeed a vestige of the maligned, foolish 'Twenties still clings to her" (Coward, *Values* 268).

Being a peer, she does not approve of her son's plans to marry a Hollywood film star. However, she pretends to be indifferent to the whole story:

> FELICITY. […] After all, it isn't the first time an English peer has married an actress. In the old days they never stopped. Of course I expect there were always family rows and upsets, but it nearly always turned out all right in the long run. […] I think the aristocracy, what's left of it, owes a great deal to the theatrical profession. (Coward, *Values* 275)

However, it soon becomes obvious that she does not approve of the situation. Subtly manipulative to a comic degree, she manages to steer the development of her son's relationship to the final break-up. Miranda finally realizes that her future mother-in-law is responsible for the disaster:

> MIRANDA. I […] know that you planned all that business of Dora dressing up, just to belittle me in front of Nigel, just to make me look a fool.
> FELICITY. I had no idea that you yourself would contribute so generously to the final result. (Coward, *Values* 361)

However, Felicity is not the only one who is against Nigel's marrying Miranda. The Haylings, friends of the family, openly disapprove of his plans, not without exposing their own hypocrisy:

> LADY H. I am perfectly aware that nowadays all social barriers are being swept away and that everybody is as good as everybody else and that any suggestion of class distinction is laughed at […] [but] I don't believe it, any more than you do really in your heart. You know as well as I do that if Nigel is allowed to marry this synthetic, trumped up creature it will be just one more nail in all our coffins… (Coward, *Values* 274)

Felicity, still pretending to be open-minded on the subject, does not agree with her:

FELICITY. Do take Cynthia away, John. She's getting quite hoarse from
    barking up the wrong trees.
LADY H. I'm merely saying what I think.
FELICITY. Well don't, dear. It's so exhausting. (Coward, *Values* 274)

Her husband, too, is convinced of the fact that Nigel cannot possibly wish to
marry Miranda for reasons of love:

ADMIRAL. It's fairly obvious to me that Nigel must have been tricked into
    this in some way. After all, he's no fool.
FELICITY. But, John dear, he *is*. He's my own son and I ought to know.
PETER. I agree that Nigel has always been fairly idiotic about women.
    It's reasonable to suppose that there must be something nice about
    her for him to have fallen in love with her in the first place. (Coward,
    Values 274-275)

The last speaker in this polylogue, Felicity's nephew Peter Ingleton, is
introduced as being "anywhere between thirty-five and fifty. He is impeccably
dressed and has a quizzical gleam in his eye" (Coward, *Values* 268). In spite of
this rather short presentation in the secondary text, Peter proves to be an
essential character throughout the play, mediating between the others and
offering snide and sarcastic remarks at crucial points in the play. When asked
by Felicity to have a seat in order for them to discuss Moxie's problem, he dryly
comments:

PETER (*sitting*). All right. I feel as though we ought to have pencils and
    paper. (Coward, *Values* 298)

Similar to the description of Peter, the explicit initial characterization of the
domestic staff is carried out in a rather rudimentary way: "CRESTWELL; the
butler, a good-looking man in the middle fifties, is collecting used cocktail
glasses and placing them on a tray preparatory to taking them away. ALICE, a
young housemaid of about eighteen, is emptying ash-trays into a dustpan"
(Coward, *Values* 261). However, like Peter, they are characterized implicitly
throughout the play by means of utterances and actions:

FELICITY. […] I don't know what I would do without Crestwell. Do you
    remember how all through the war he and Moxie and I ran this house
    and dealt with all those brisk W.A.A.Fs. and he never turned a hair.

He was an A.R.P. Warden, too. I shall miss him horribly. (Coward, *Values* 272)

It becomes evident that Felicity could not live without her butler for

FELICITY. Crestwell is not emotional […], he's also very adaptable and knows more about what's going on in the world than all of us put together. You should hear what he has to say about Social Revolution and the United Nations and the Decline of the West. It's fascinating. (Coward, *Values* 280)

Her perception of the butler is in accordance with what he does and says throughout the play. When Peter Ingleton asks Crestwell how much he knows about Moxie's situation, he answers rather cryptically:

CRESTWELL. In common with most of the human race, sir, I know very little but imagine I know a great deal. (Coward, *Values* 295)

He obviously prefers not to discuss his opinion openly with his employers. He generally avoids being direct. In the second act, this peculiar manner of speaking is referred to openly by Don Lucas:

DON: With your fancy dialogue you could make a fortune in Hollywood as a script writer. (Coward, *Values* 333)

Even though not only Crestwell but the staff in general can be said to avoid discussing the matter with their masters, they definitely do not approve of Nigel's choice of fiancée:

MOXIE. Why couldn't he pick someone of his own class?
CRESTWELL. Class! Oh dear, I've forgotten what the word means. Remind me to look it up in the crossword dictionary.
MOXIE. You may have forgotten what it means but I haven't.
CRESTWELL. That, Dora, is an admission of defeat. It proves that you have willfully deafened yourself to the clarion call of progress. (Coward, *Values* 266)

Interestingly, "[t]he servants are more disconcerted […] about social mobility and the erosion of class barriers [than the peers]" (Fisher 196).

However, Moxie does not only object to Nigel Marshwood's decision on the basis of class-consciousness but also due to the fact that Miranda is her sister. She does not want her to marry her employer for she does not think Miranda suited for the position of Lady Marshwood. Initially, Moxie is described as "a pleasant looking woman of forty-six […] [who] is simply dressed as befits a superior lady's maid. Her expression, however, is grim" (Coward, *Values* 263).

When Moxie talks herself into a state on the matter, Crestwell tries to comfort her by suggesting that "Miss Miranda Frayle may not be all that common, she's English born anyhow" (Coward, *Values* 267). At this point, however, Crestwell is not yet aware of Moxie's relationship with Miranda and is thus of no real comfort to her.

After Moxie's secret has been revealed and in order to avoid her being embarrassed in front of her sister, the family decides to pretend that she is a devoted friend staying with them for reasons of mutual sympathy. Consequently, when she enters for dinner, Moxie is presented in a quite different manner from how her appearance is initially described in the play: "[Dora Moxton] is dressed in a plain deep blue dinner-dress. Her hair is becomingly done. She wears two strings of pearls and an obviously expensive bracelet on her right wrist. She also wears large horn-rimmed glasses" (Coward, *Values* 319).

Soon after Miranda's arrival, it becomes clear that Moxie's initial objections to her sister are justified. The description of her outward appearance in the secondary text is still rather neutral to favorable: "MIRANDA comes in. Her appearance is impeccable. She is wearing a simple dinner dress, her jewellery is discreet and she is carrying a large chintz work bag" (Coward, *Values* 318).

However, as stated by Hahn, when it comes to the actual personality of the characters „[n]ur eine einzige Figur [in *Relative Values*] ist stereotyp unsympathisch gehalten: Miranda Frayl [sic] selbst, denn sie allein ist nicht ehrlich" (Hahn 106). In accordance with Moxie's perception of Miranda, she proves to be the "common, painted hussy from Hollywood flaunting herself as the Countess of Marshwood" (Coward, *Values* 267). For instance, in spite of a perfectly respectable childhood, she pretends to have left a terrible upbringing behind:

> MIRANDA: I was born in the gutter, within the sound of Bow Bells. I'm a London Cockney and I'm proud of it. (Coward, *Values* 321)

These lies are what finally make Moxie expose her secret even though she had initially agreed to avoid revealing her own identity to her sister.

In contrast to Miranda, her lover, Hollywood actor Don Lucas, is generally presented in a rather favorable light:

> [Mirandas] liebes- und scheinbar auch alkoholkranker Verehrer, der Schauspieler Don, ist […] eine eher bedauernswerte Gestalt; er kann sich die Sympathie des Publikums bewahren, weil er tatsächlich in seiner gespielten Welt lebt. Seine überdramatisierte Leidenschaft für Miranda scheint auf echten Gefühlen aufzubauen. (Hahn 106)

Already in the initial description, the reader has a vivid picture of the actor. "DON LUCAS is extremely handsome and in the late thirties. His skin is accurately tanned, his sports clothes are impeccable within the bounds of the best Hollywood tradition. He is also very slightly drunk" (Coward, *Values* 332). In fact, being an American, his language is dramatically different and his manners are much less conservative. In spite of his function as an intruder to the relationship, Don Lucas still proves to be a rather sympathetic character for he lives up to his convictions and refuses to give up the woman he loves even though the situation initially seems to be rather unpromising.

In contrast to Don Lucas, Nigel Marshwood is a rather weak character throughout the play. The fact that he is ridiculed at various points by his own mother does not make him appear in a respectable light, either.

> FELICITY. Nigel […] like his father before him […] has one ingrained temperamental defect. He loathes disharmony, detests scenes and runs like a stag at the first sign of a domestic crisis. (Coward, *Values* 362-363)

Or, more subtly:

> LADY H. […] [W]hy should he want to marry this woman? He hasn't wanted to marry any of the others.
> FELICITY. That's where you're wrong. He wanted to marry *all* the others. He has a tremendous sense of moral responsibility. Fortunately most of them were married already. (Coward, *Values* 273)

In fact, Nigel once married one of 'these women', Joan. However, she was not very popular with her mother-in-law. Initially, Felicity thus hopes for Miranda in her function as an actress to meet the requirements of her new role in a better way than Joan did, at least in terms of her conduct:

> FELICITY. […] Miranda Frayle is a good actress and she has excellent legs, which means that she will probably move well, at any rate. Joan used to walk across a ballroom as though she were trudging through deep snow. (Coward, *Values* 273)

However, in spite of Joan's inadequacy for the position as Lady Marshwood, Felicity does not perceive her son's first marriage as a total catastrophe:

> FELICITY. Nigel's first marriage was not a disaster, it was a triumph. To begin with, it lasted only two years, it produced a son and heir and disintegrated painlessly in the nick of time. (Coward, *Values* 273)

Eventually, Nigel's new plans are about to be sabotaged by Felicity in the same subtle and cunning way as it was the case with his first marriage.

However, the audience does not commiserate with Nigel too much for he proves to be a hypocrite at various instances. For example, his hypocrisy becomes evident when he is upset about Moxie's new status with the family:

> FELICITY. I still don't see why you're making such a dreadful fuss. Moxie's been with us for years, she's part of the family. Why shouldn't she have meals with us and call us by our Christian names?
> NIGEL. Why shouldn't she? Really, Mother!
> FELICITY. Well, give me one valid reason.
> NIGEL. To begin with it's unsuitable. It's also extremely embarrassing. You must see that. (Coward, *Values* 308)

While Felicity is perfectly willing to pretend that Moxie is a friend of the family, Nigel cannot accept the new circumstances for he does not consider her appropriate for the society he belongs to. However, he does not seem to have any objections to marrying Moxie's sister, a woman born as a member of the same class as Moxie who has made a fool of him by telling him lies about her past.

3.2.2. Narration in the Film

3.2.2.1. Changes in Action

In contrast to the movie version of *Easy Virtue*, the 2000 adaptation of *Relative Values* has roughly stuck to what has been suggested by the playwright in terms of plot.

Basically, the overall structure of the play has been maintained even though some scenes have been added in order to create a shift in perspective from a rather limited presentation of events in the play to a more omniscient point of view in the film. In the play, the audience is exclusively confronted with the events as they occur in Marshwood House; all other elements are only alluded to. Indeed, this is quite natural in the play for the only setting of Coward's *Relative Values* is the library of the house in East Kent. In the film, however, there are several scenes which depict life outside the family manor, for example in the hotel in the south of France, in London or simply in the garden of the manor or in front of the church. Quite obviously, it is the different nature of the two media that makes the change in setting both possible and plausible.

In the play, the only way in which Nigel is present before his actual arrival at Marshwood is by means of a telephone call he gives to his mother. In the film, apart from short takes showing Peter and Felicity in the garden, the first added scenes are those accompanying Nigel and Miranda on their way from their hotel room in the south of France to England. The scene in the hotel (see Styles 08'44") grants the audience some insight into the relationship and already establishes some kind of artificiality to it. Moreover, Miranda's lover Don Lucas does not appear out of the blue as he does in the play. Rather, one bears witness to his calling Miranda before she even arrives at Marshwood.

Another scene which does not exist in the play is Don Lucas' playing a Cowboy at the shooting of his latest film. The audience witnesses that he suffers a lot from being separated from Miranda and thus decides to win her back. By including this scene, the director makes explicit that it is merely due to Miranda and her wedding plans that Don Lucas comes to England, a circumstance which is not as obvious in the play at first.

A third scene that has been added to the film is the reception Nigel and Miranda receive when they arrive. In the play, their arrival is only alluded to and

Miranda is first encountered by the audience after her having taken a short nap. Her role as a film star is less prominent in the play than in the film for her arrival is not as artificially staged as it is in the 2000 version.

Apart from added scenes, it is mainly the setting of the film that distinguishes it from the play. As mentioned before, the only setting Coward employs is the library of Marshwood House. However, in Styles' movie, the audience is presented with scenes at various other locations. However, these scenes are comparatively rare. One could even go so far as to say that in its general outline, the film is shaped very much according to the play it is based on. Apart from the aforementioned exceptions, the scenery strongly reminds of a stage in the theater. As soon as people are inside, there is basically no transition to the outside world; doors are closed, windows are made from milk glass and the glass door leading out into the garden is concealed by a curtain.

What is more, the swimming pools encountered throughout the film remind of theatrical stages. First of all, Don can be observed walking alongside his pool in Hollywood when he calls Miranda at the hotel. Secondly, immediately after her arrival at Marshwood, Miranda decides to have a swim in the pool of the manor and the audience sees her slowly descending the stairs before seeking refreshment in the pool. While she does that, Nigel and his mother closely observe her. Similarly, when Don Lucas and Miranda have a vivid discussion next to the pool, the staff watches them from the window and when Miranda is upset about Nigel's behavior and Don tries to comfort her, it is Felicity who surprises the two of them sitting at the pool.

Another feature that adds to the theatricality of the play is the transitions between the scenes treating Moxie's problem as they are outlined in the film. In the film, these transitions are illustrated by means of an added comical element. The audience is offered a panoramic view of Marshwood House which is complemented by one of the maid's quite unsuccessfully taking the dogs for a walk. There are three of these scenes throughout the play. Even though they do not exactly structure the film according to the act structure outlined in the play, they represent important structural devices in the new medium for they frame the problem.

3.2.2.2. Changes regarding Characters

Again, it can be said that in *Relative Values*, characters are depicted in a similar way to their equivalences in the play. However, there are some slight changes.

First of all, in contrast to the film, Miranda Frayle is introduced quite late in the play, namely on page 318. Before that, she is only alluded to in absentia and thus not really graspable for the audience. In the 2000 movie, however, the viewer already gets pictures of the actress in the trailer. Subsequently, Miranda is presented comparatively early (see Styles 8'44").

The aforementioned scene does not only introduce Miranda but equally contributes to altering her character to a certain extent. Even though she is a rather unpopular character in the play, too, it is in this added scene that her vanity and artificiality are stressed to an even larger extent in the film. When Nigel surprises her with a present, a beautiful pearl necklace, her reaction is rather artificial and it becomes evident that she is an actress indeed.

Her husband Nigel is presented in a slightly more favorable light in the film, though. In spite of his extremely weak character, he seems at least to be loved by his mother, who in the film is equally worried about Miranda's inadequacy for her future role in a higher class but who does not seem to perceive her son in such a pitying manner as she does in the play. Actually, this is caused by the altered circumstances: whereas in the play, Nigel has been married before and has a son, there is no mentioning of similar biographical details in the film. It becomes evident, though, that he changes his mind quite often; for instance, the audience is likely to be surprised when, some five minutes after having been left by his fiancée, he starts flirting with a woman who strikingly resembles Miranda in terms of looks but who seems to be much more appropriate for Nigel in his mother's view as she is a member of the same social class.

Another alteration in terms of character that has taken place concerns Crestwell. Whereas in the play, he has a lot of rather heavy lines, these are reduced quite significantly in the film. He does not lose his wit and general attitude but especially as regards his conversation with Don Lucas, it becomes evident that the character of Crestwell as the audience knows him from the play has been adapted to quite a large extent in order to fit into the 2000 movie.

Otherwise, it can be said that the distribution of the lines among the characters as well as the character constellation in dialogues roughly remain the same. Even though the setting is changed on a number of occasions, for example from the drawing room to the garden, the characters appear and leave the screen at approximately the same time and in the same sequence as they do in the play.

A lot of the text that has been lost in the context of the adaptation is substituted by means of other channels of communication. For instance, most of the time there is some other character in the background who observes the speakers. The audience can perceive their opinion by watching their looks and facial expressions. Thus, by means of facial close-ups, the audience follows the intrigue without being confronted with seemingly endless lines of witty dialogue.

It is obvious that the requirements of the new medium allowed the director to alter aspects of Coward's original work in a way that changed them on a superficial level but still imitate the effect they have on the audience.

3.2.2.3. Pastiche in *Relative Values*

Again, even though the technique is definitely more subtle than in *Easy Virtue*, there are quite a few instances of pastiche in the movie adaptation of *Relative Values*. Some of them draw on aspects that have already been discussed in the context of the first analysis; others are only to be found in the adaptation of *Relative Values*. Basically, however, their function remains the same: transferring Noël Coward's style as it is perceptible in various sources, among others in the actual hypotext of the adaptation, into the work of another master.

3.2.2.3.1. Integrating the Original Dialogue

Dealing with an adaptation that has stuck rather closely to the original play, it is reasonable to suppose that the director decided to integrate as much of the original dialogue into his hypertext as possible.

Actually, such a decision is particularly reasonable when adapting one of Coward's plays since the general opinion on the playwright and his stylistic skills is that

> […] you'd be hard put to name anyone in the twentieth century who employed the English language with the same precision, concision and

consistency as [Noël Coward] did. And his range was remarkable. In the dialogue of his plays, in verse, song lyrics, essays, stories, letters, autobiography, interviews – and perhaps most particularly in private conversation – words were his weapons, and 'wordsmith' both his occupation and preoccupation. (Day, *Words* xi)

In contrast to the language in some works of the famous contemporaries he used to be compared with, Noël Coward's application of language is much more suitable to be pastiched in a contemporary adaptation of his works for it is supposed to be close to what people have really thought and felt:

[…] Coward's use of words is significantly different from that of the two writers with whom he is most often compared. A Wilde epigram may have a greater surface shine, but drop it and all you are left with are fragments. Pick up one by Shaw and you may well cut yourself, for it lacks kindness. Coward is altogether more comfortable company because his is the language of the good conversationalist and the kind man; his *bons mots* deal with the stuff of all our lives, and perhaps what defines him most is that you feel you have thought these thoughts and might have expressed many of them yourself – if only the words had fallen in the right order. (Day, *Words* xiii)

Even though Coward has often been criticized for and accused of being a second-rate playwright aiming merely at commercial success, it is in the context of the recent adaptations of his plays that the merits of his conversational style become evident.

The following excerpt illustrates quite well the approach to pastiching Coward by means of language that director Eric Styles' took. Again, the parts of the dialogue that have been made use of in the 2000 film version are printed in bold.

FELICITY (*kindly*). **You look dreadfully grim, Moxie. What is it that's worrying you?**
MOXIE. **The thought of what I have to say to you, milady. That's what's worrying me.**
FELICITY. **Surely** whatever you have to say to me **can't be as awful as all that?**
MOXIE. **I'm afraid it is.**
[…]
MOXIE. […] I'm afraid **I have to leave you, my Lady.**
FELICITY. **Leave me? Why, Moxie – what on earth?...**
MOXIE: **At once, my Lady – today. I've had some bad news.**
FELICITY**. Oh, my dear, I'm so awfully sorry – what is it?**

MOXIE. **It's my aunt, my Lady** – my mother's sister – **she's very seriously ill and she's all alone…**

[…]

MOXIE. **Her husband looked after her, my Lady – but – but – he died suddenly two days ago.**

[…]

FELICTIY. And her husband who looked after her – **what did he die of so very suddenly?**

MOXIE. **He was run over, my Lady. By an Army lorry ----**

[…]

FELICITY. **Moxie, how long have you been with me?**

MOXIE. **I came to Marshwood as housemaid twenty years ago.**

FELICITY. **And you became my personal maid a year later**.

MOXIE: **Yes**.

FELICITY. **And you've been my personal maid and my personal friend and part of the family ever since.**

MOXIE (obviously in distress). **Yes, my Lady.**

[…]

FELICITY. **Can it be that during all that long time, Moxie, you have looked upon me as a driveling idiot?**

[…]

FELICITY. **I think it was the Army lorry that did it really. You're a terribly bad liar** – I've noticed it on the telephone. **You're upset about His Lordship's marriage. That's the trouble, isn't it?**

MOXIE. **Yes – yes, that's the trouble.**

FELICITY. **You seriously wish to leave me because of it?**

MOXIE. **Yes please, my Lady.**

FELICITY: **But why**, Moxie dear? **Why should it matter to you so desperately?**

MOXIE. Please let me go, my Lady, and don't ask me to explain. I can't stay here – **really I can't.**

[…]

MOXIE. It's impossible, my Lady. **I must leave at once.**

FELICITY. **But why?**

MOXIE. **I have my reasons.**

FELICITY. **And you won't tell me what they are?**

MOXIE. **I can't my Lady, I really can't.**

[…]

FELICITY (*soothingly*). **We're all worried about this sudden engagement. But we really must all make an effort to face the situation calmly and sensibly**. […] **For all we know Miranda Frayle may be simple and kind and absolutely charming, and the only really important thing is that she should make him happy, isn't it?**

MOXIE. **She won't.**

[…]

MOXIE. **If you searched the whole wide world** with a tooth-comb **you couldn't find anybody less fitted to be His Lordship's wife and the mistress of this house.**

FELICITY. **Why are you so sure? How do you know?**

> MOXIE. **Because, my Lady, Miss Miranda Frayle happens to be my young sister.** (Coward, *Values* 282-287)

Similarly, the following scene has nearly been taken over verbatim from the original play:

> NIGEL. **Miranda! I thought you were still asleep.**
> MIRANDA. Still asleep! I haven't closed my eyes all night.
> NIGEL. Darling – I'm so sorry.
> MIRANDA. **I'm going away, now, this morning. I'm catching the eleven-fifteen from Deal**.
> NIGEL. **You can't possibly.**
> MIRANDA. **And why not**, I should like to know?
> NIGEL. **It's an awful train. You'll have to change twice. Ashford and Maidstone.** (Coward, *Values* 363)

By means of integrating large parts of Coward's dialogue, the director manages not only to pastiche the historical context the film is set in, but also the style of the playwright.

However, it is not only the kind of language but also the purpose he uses the language for in the play which is transferred to the film. Coward's sense of humor is largely conveyed by means of the words he supplies his characters with and this circumstance is what has successfully been made use of in the context of the 2000 adaptation. As Noël Coward was well-known for his wit, it is only a sensible decision for Eric Styles to draw upon these particular features by means of the technique of pastiche when adapting Coward's works for the screen.

3.2.2.3.2. Adding Humorous Elements

As regards humorous elements included in the film which are not present in the play, it can be said that most of them have still been designed according to Coward's spirit.

For instance, one scene from the play has been extended to quite a comic extent in the film. It starts when "[…] CRESTWELL ushers DON LUCAS into the room. ALICE stops dead in her tracks and stands staring at him with her mouth open" (Coward, *Values* 331-332). In the film version, Alice's staring is prolonged until Crestwell leaves the room again, which happens some three to four minutes later. The audience assumes that Alice has spent the past few

minutes staring in disbelief at the door that Don Lucas has just walked through and a comic effect that would certainly have pleased the playwright is created.

However, it is not only Alice but the domestic staff in general that is depicted in a rather comical way in the 2000 movie. For instance, throughout the film, there are three scenes in which a maid is seen taking the dogs for a walk, or rather, in which the dogs are seen taking the maid for a walk. What is more, one of the male servants obviously tries to make an impression on Miranda and the staff is often observed reading magazines and gossiping about the Earl's fiancée and even Crestwell, who pretends putting a stop to the whole business, can be observed enjoying a bit of gossip.

Crestwell is in fact a special case here: while he has been deprived of many of his witty lines from the play, which have indeed often been criticized for being too heavy for a contemporary audience[19], some visual comic elements have been included. For instance, the butler can be observed checking his appearance in the mirror quite a few times and when he parks Don Lucas' car he wears sunglasses in order to resemble the American womanizer. He quite obviously enjoys the compliment he gets from Don Lucas about his 'nice shades'.

A detail that has been exaggerated in the 2000 movie is Moxie's getting drunk during the meal. Being nervous about the encounter with her sister, she drinks far too much alcohol and is in imminent danger of making a fool of herself or exposing her secret. While in the play the actual dinner is actually only alluded to, Eric Styles decided to make one more humorous occasion out of it in the context of the adaptation. While Moxie quickly gets drunk, Peter Ingleton particularly enjoys pushing Miranda into telling even more untruthful details about her childhood 'in the slum', as she puts it.

3.2.2.3.3. Biographical, Historical and Cultural References

In contrast to *Easy Virtue*, where only some additional biographical references to the playwright are detectable, this aspect can be said to be rather prominent in Eric Styles' *Relative Values*.

One very subtle historical reference to the play itself appears in one of the conversations Felicity has with her nephew Peter. Talking about Moxie's

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[19] For some opinions of critics on this subject see chapter 3.2. of the present thesis.

and Nigel's relationship, she mentions that they used to go to the theater on Sundays and then usually had tea at the Savoy (see Styles 21'11"). Interestingly, this line is not taken over from the play but still alludes to it in quite a significant manner for the Savoy is the theater where Coward's *Relative Values* premiered. Therefore, this statement of Felicity's can be considered an instance of historical pastiche.

Another of these references, even though already present in the play, has been developed further in the film. Miranda Frayle, a British actress who has found success in America, returns to Britain in order to marry into the aristocracy and is faced with a number of problems there. In terms of biographical references, it is interesting to note that Coward himself went to America and, on his return to Britain, was faced with a number of prejudices and problems, as has become evident from the discussion of the difficulties he faced with regard to the premiere of *Easy Virtue* in Manchester in chapter 3.1. However, in his case, these problems were of a professional nature rather than a personal one as it is the case with Miranda. Still, Styles' highlighting the circumstance that a lot of Miranda's identity and personality is based on her being a film star is crucial to the notion of pastiche. By adding the scenes in the hotel in France and at the airport in London, Styles stresses Miranda's status as a *celebrity*, a concept which Noël Coward himself is said to have introduced in the British context:

> Die *celebrities* des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts sind keine Helden oder einflussreiche Persönlichkeiten mehr, sondern Stars. Im Gegensatz zu anderen Stars, vor allem aus dem noch relativ jungen Filmgeschäft, war der Star Noël Coward seine eigene Kreation, stand sein öffentliches Auftreten ganz unter seiner eigenen Regie. Während andere Stars auf den Zeitgeschmack und die Bedürfnisse des Publikums hin zurechtgeschnitten wurden, beeinflusste Coward in der Zeit zwischen den Weltkriegen diesen Publikumsgeschmack und wird damit zu einem frühen Verwandten moderner Stars wie Multitalent Madonna […]. (Hahn 14)

By making Miranda invent herself even in the most private of moments, Coward and his attitude towards being famous have been integrated into the film version in a very subtle manner. The change of personality he attested for himself in the context of his becoming a star has quite obviously been imposed on Miranda Frayle, too. "My personality only really changed once, and that was when I was

twenty-four and I became a star and a privileged person" (qtd. in Fisher 260). Similarly, "Miranda Frayle is self-made, like Coward, and she too escaped her background through the theatre" (Fisher 197).

Another concept that Noël Coward is said to be representative of is the notion of Englishness. This concept, too, has been integrated into the film at a number of points. For instance, the scene in which Felicity is out in the garden of Marshwood House cutting roses while being informed about Moxie's plans to leave quite clearly illustrates aspects of Englishness as they are traditionally associated with the country. First of all, there are roses, which have been a symbol of England since the time of the Tudors. Moreover, cultural stereotypes like vast English landscape gardens and large family manors are included into the 2000 movie and serve to stress Coward's association with the idea of Englishness.

Another aspect of Englishness expressed in *Relative Values* is class-consciousness. Going against the general perception of the 1950s, Coward tried to depict English society as he perceived it in *Relative Values*; i.e. a society in which class distinctions were actually still largely perceptible:

> The Earl of Marshwoood's imminent marriage to a movie actress is the focus for this question of social station, set against the faded aristocratic patina of Marshwood House, East Kent, in the early summer of 1951. *Relative Values* represents the two worlds between which Coward was caught: English tradition and American glamour, a case of Hollywood meets Hambleton Hall. (Hoare 389-390)

By opposing his conception of Englishness with the American way of living as represented by Miranda and Don, Coward's English identity is stressed to an even larger extent. Nigel is shown to be a hypocritical Englishman with a stiff upper lip whose status depends solely on the long-established position of his family in society whereas Don Lucas is the self-made American womanizer who in the end stereotypically gets the girl.

Another biographical allusion that has been reinforced in the movie, this time by altering the character of Peter Ingleton, is Coward's homosexuality. Particularly during his lifetime, Coward's sexual orientation was a taboo subject which was generally not alluded to. However, his outing took place posthumously and, thus,

[wird] [d]er von Lahr angesprochene Aspekt des homosexuellen Subtextes […] besonders in den neunziger Jahren verstärkt aufgegriffen. Nachdem Coward zu Lebzeiten und das Coward-Estate auch noch einige Jahre nach seinem Tod darauf bestanden hatten, dass Cowards Homosexualität in seinen Biografien nicht erwähnt wurde, erfährt Coward seit den achtziger Jahren ein posthumes *coming out* als homosexueller Dramatiker. (Hahn 13)

The homosexual subtext in Coward's *Relative Values* is admittedly rather hard to detect at first. The only reference to a man fancying another man is Peter's comforting Don Lucas in the morning after the disastrous events with Miranda:

> DON. Calling you Pete…it kind of slipped out.
> PETER. I don't mind a bit.
> DON. There's only one Pete in the world for me.
> PETER. I'm sure it's very charming of you to say so.
> DON. You were wonderful to me last night, just wonderful, and if you think I'll ever forget it, you're plumb crazy! We're friends, aren't we? (Coward, *Values* 349-350)

Even though one might at first not perceive Peter's flirtatious intentions in the play, the homosexual subtext becomes quite obvious when having a look at Coward's oeuvre as a whole. "[I]n Coward's 1951 play *Relative Values*, […] the homosexual aristocrat Peter Ingleton flirts with [Don] Lucas" (Hoare 289), who, quite interestingly, also appears in one of Coward's short stories, *What Mad Pursuit?*. It is striking that, "[c]onsidering the prescriptive climate in which it was written, the overtness of [homosexual] references in Coward's prose is extraordinary" (Hoare 289) whereas in his dramatic work, it is still rather subliminal.

His reticence on this subject was of course caused by the general attitude regarding homosexuality at the time. "[Coward's] love life was necessarily shrouded in secrecy. In the more broadminded world of the theatre, he could afford to be relatively unguarded about his affairs, but homosexuality was illegal, and indiscretions could have terrible consequences" (Fisher 69).

Fortunately, times have changed and so have people's attitudes towards the subject of homosexuality. Nowadays, it is no longer as problematic to depict a homosexual character and openly refer to his being interested in another man, as it is obviously the case with Peter Ingleton in the 2000 movie. Thus,

here again, the more subtle subtext proposed by Coward has been taken up and transformed into a pastiche.

Another instance of pastiche can be found in the fashion, the language and the music of the 1950s. Set in 1953, the 2000 version of *Relative Values* clearly aims at pastiching the historical context the story takes place in as has already been elaborated in the analysis of *Easy Virtue*.

Finally, the 'persona' of Noël Coward can be said to be integrated in the 2000 movie to a certain degree.

> Noël Coward war vielleicht nicht der bemerkenswerteste Dramatiker des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts; auch als Komponisten oder Schauspieler kann man nicht zu den Größten zählen. Einzigartig an ihm ist jedoch neben der erstaunlichen Vielfalt seiner Begabungen die Inszenierung seiner öffentlichen Person. Dieses von ihm selbst geschaffene, über Jahrzehnte kultivierte Konstrukt hat sich mit seinen Werken, vor allem den Komödien, stetig weiterentwickelt und hat dennoch eine zeitlose Qualität, die immer wieder auf die *very Noël Coward sort of person* verweist. (Hahn 25)

Noël Coward had the habit of integrating this 'persona', i.e. a character mirroring the playwright himself, into his earlier works as "Coward's plays and songs were primarily vehicles to launch his elegant persona on the world" (Lahr 1).

However, according to most of his critics, this tendency of self-reflection slowly declined in the course of time until it completely disappeared after World War II:

> Zwar lassen sich Ansichten und Äußerungen Cowards in einzelnen Rollen wiederfinden, die der *persona* zugeordnet werden können, aber die *persona* selbst taucht in keinem der Stücke ab 1945 und in den fünfziger Jahren auf, weder in Komödien noch in ernsten Stücken oder musikalischen Werken dieser Periode. (Hahn 73)

Written in 1951, it should be evident that there is no 'persona' in Coward's *Relative Values*.

However, this did not prevent Eric Styles from integrating a cowardesque 'persona' into the 2000 version. Again, it is Peter Ingleton who takes over this role to a certain degree – quite clearly, the feature is not as prominent as in

earlier works but it is detectable. Tying in with the discussion on his homosexuality,

> [ist die] *persona* […] einerseits das Bild, das Coward von sich für die Öffentlichkeit zeichnete, sein Image, und in diesem Zusammenhang – angesichts der drohenden strafrechtlichen Verfolgung aufgrund seiner Homosexualität – eine Maske, hinter der der Künstler sein Privatleben verbergen konnte. Die Coward-*persona* verschmilzt jedoch darüber hinaus mit dem Mann hinter der Figur und gleichzeitig mit einigen der Figuren in seinen erfolgreichsten Dramen. (Hahn 22)

Hahn would even go so far as to say:

> Es ist möglich, Cowards Werk zu behandeln, ohne sich intensiv mit seinem Privatleben zu befassen, das er trotz mehrerer Autobiografien weitestgehend für sich behielt, aber es ist unmöglich, seine Stücke, insbesondere die Gesellschaftskomödien, zu analysieren, ohne sich mit dem öffentlichen Coward, der persona, zu befassen. Die persona ist mehr als nur eine Maske des Autors und Schauspielers, die seine Privatsphäre schützen sollte: Sie bildet eine zusätzliche Ebene der Dramen, die über die dargestellte und eindeutig fiktive Handlung hinausgeht. (Hahn 28-29)

Along these lines, Peter Ingleton, who, sitting at the piano, enjoying his drink and his cigarette and talking animatedly but still in a distanced way to a young woman (see Styles 5'13") represents the Coward 'persona' in *Relative Values* (2000) for he strikingly bears the characteristics of the 'persona' as they are outlined in Hahn: wit, flippancy, patriotism and loyalty (see Hahn 43) – the only aspect that is missing is the dressing gown – but Noël Coward would definitely not have had his characters appear at a cocktail party in an outfit as inappropriate as that, either.

3.2.2.3.4. The Role of Coward's Work

In contrast to *Easy Virtue* (2008), in *Relative Values* (2000) there are no direct musical references to Coward's works. However, there is one aspect that could be interpreted as an indirect reference to one of his songs and two more aspects referring to examples of his dramatic work.

The indirect musical reference can be interpreted as a metaphor based on Coward's song 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen' (1931), which has already been discussed in some detail in chapter 3.1.2.3.4. In contrast to E*asy Virtue*, in

Relative Values it is not the music of the song that is pastiched, but rather the content that serves as a tool to create some kind of transition between scenes when some 'mad dogs' can be seen pulling a maid across the lawn at various instances in the film framing Moxie's problem.

Another and perhaps more convincing pastiche of Coward's work can be found at the moment of Miranda's and Nigel's arrival at Marshwood House (see Styles 27'13"). Very much in the manner of *Easy Virtue*, the young couple is welcomed by the whole family immediately after their arrival, and the young woman does her best to present herself in a favourable light in front of her new relatives. In Coward's *Relative Values*, the arrival of Nigel and his fiancée is only alluded to and the audience first gets to know Miranda when she descends from her room after having taken a short nap.

The third and most obvious instance of pastiching Coward's work in the movie is the scene depicting Nigel and Miranda in their hotel room in the south of France. The setting strikingly reminds of the scenery in Coward's *Private Lives* (1930) where the action sets off in a hotel in France, too. What is more, Don's call to Miranda reminds of the triangular relationship between Amanda, Elyot and Sybil.

In this way, director Eric Styles managed to include not only language and historical aspects that are typical of the playwright but he also assembled various aspects of Coward's dramatic work and by doing so pastiched the playwright's style in an unmistakable manner.

4. Conclusion

> For who is to say with any certainty which of an artist's works are his best? Everyone knows that contemporary judgment is not to be relied upon and in fact it is a fairly safe rule to take the opposite view to the current one. Even Time will not tell, for an artist is sometimes remembered and loved for his more popular works rather than his best… (Coward qtd. in Day, *Words* 43)

This is what Noël Coward thought of contemporary reactions towards his work. Along these lines, is there a better way of avoiding the accentuation of one of his works than by pastiching the overall style of the master?

In order to do justice to the author, it has to be acknowledged that adapting plays by Noël Coward includes more than what is traditionally described in the context of adaptation studies. The creation of a new work involves the conscious imitation of aesthetic features such as linguistic, musical, historical, biographical, cultural, personal and literary particularities that serve as tools to include more in the adaptation than can be transferred directly from the hypotext.

In this respect, one very prominent feature of Coward's style that has been taken over in both film adaptations is the language he uses in his plays. Generally, his lines are witty and to the point and very often they are delivered by the characters with a considerable amount of irony. Therefore, even if the cultural and historical context of the adaptation may actually require a different kind of language, it has definitely been a wise decision on the part of Styles and Elliott to integrate as much of Coward's original use of language as possible. In both films, parts of the dialogue have been taken over verbatim whereas other instances of speech have been devised according to the spirit of the playwright. Employing this technique has various advantages: on the one hand, it comfortably facilitates the directors' attempts at situating the movies in their original historical and cultural contexts. On the other hand, it has proved to be a subtle yet artistically yielding way of integrating Coward's style into the hypertexts.

Similarly, the inclusion of references to Coward's musical oeuvre contributes to the overall harmonious picture of the cinematic adaptation of Elliott's *Easy Virtue*. The songs that have been included were chosen very

carefully in order to suit the scenes they appear in. Coward was well-known for the particular kind of music he produced and his songs can therefore be said to be enormously characteristic of his overall style, expressing the flippancy, wit and flamboyance he was renowned for. In the context of pastiche, the temporal incoherence briefly discussed in chapter 3.1.2.3.4. basically loses any real significance for it is not the time of Coward's writing but his style that is decisive.

As regards instances of historical, biographical and cultural pastiche in the works of Styles and Elliott, it becomes evident from the analyses that they are basically omnipresent. There are numerous references to phenomena such as emancipation, class differences, cultural particularities driving a wedge between representatives of the British and the Americans and historical events such as the premiere of *Relative Values* at the Savoy Theatre in London. What is more, the directors of both films paid close attention to historical details such as fashion, vehicles and furniture. Most of these references are detectable in Coward's plays, too, but have been elaborated further in the context of the cinematic transpositions in order to situate the films in the respective historical period and cultural setting in a convincing manner. It is here that the historical and cultural context of the adaptations has the largest influence on the way the technique of pastiche is employed in the sample texts.

An aspect that ties in with biographical references in particular is Coward's persona as it is represented in the film adaptations. There are various hints at the fact that Noël Coward and the image the public had and still has of him have been integrated in the new versions by means of pastiche. Characters which echo Coward's public persona in his plays have been developed further so as to serve as vehicles for depicting the life and character of the playwright himself – be it in terms of his status as a celebrity and film star, in terms of his perceiving himself as an outsider or, even more openly, as regards his sexual preferences. Again, the change in cultural and historical context of production and reception enabled the adapters to draw upon these aspects in a different way than Coward did for the audiences have generally become more tolerant since the time of Coward's writing.

Similar to the musical references discussed above, links to other aspects of Coward's work can be found in the adaptations. Both of them use settings which remind the audience of theatrical stages and can thus be considered to

stress the pastiche of Coward's dramatic work. What is more, some of the scenes, for instance the scene showing Miranda and Nigel in their hotel room in the south of France, remind of other dramatic works by the playwright, for example of his comedy of manners *Private Lives* (1930).

The instances of pastiche as they have been discussed in the context of this thesis serve as tools to involve the spirit of the playwright in the creation of the new work. Thus, the audience is presented with a more comprehensive picture of the master than they could ever have been in the context of a traditional adaptation. This involvement has positive effects for connoisseurs of Noël Coward as well as for the general public: those who are familiar with his oeuvre are likely to appreciate the references whereas the novices benefit from the entirety of the work as such, even if they may not always realize what has formed part of the original hypotext and what has not.

What all members of the audience are likely to appreciate regardless of the extent of their acquaintance with the totality of his oeuvre is Noël Coward's versatility as an artist. During the celebrations of Noël Coward's 70th birthday at the Savoy Hotel in London, Lord Louis Mountbatten, an old friend of the artist, publicly acknowledged that

> [t]here are probably greater painters than Noël, greater novelists than Noël, greater librettists, greater composers of music, greater singers, greater dancers, greater comedians, greater tragedians, greater stage producers, greater film directors, greater cabaret artists, greater TV stars. If there are, they are twelve different people. Only one man combined all twelve labels – The Master. (qtd. in Day, *Letters* 3)

Along these lines, it can be concluded that it is definitely not sufficient for a contemporary adapter of Noël Coward's works to simply transfer them to a new medium since this would not do full justice to the artist's many talents. Therefore, particularly when adapting works by a master as stylistically unique and artistically influential as Noël Coward, relying on the general definition of adaptations as distancing themselves from their source texts is by no means adequate. Rather, it is the nature of the change that needs to be investigated closely with regard to the concept of pastiche.

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6. Index

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7. Deutsche Zusammenfassung[20]

Heutzutage sind Adaptionen jeglicher Art allgegenwärtig. Man findet sie in der Kunst und in den neuen Medien, in den kulturell prestigeträchtigen Konstrukten unserer Gesellschaft gleichermaßen wie im Kontext einfacher Alltagsphänomene. Dabei wird jedoch ein essentieller Punkt oft außer Acht gelassen: die Frage nach einer validen Definition des Begriffes ‚Adaption'.

Grundsätzlich befasst sich das Phänomen Adaption mit einem ursprünglichen Text oder Hypotext, der im Kontext der Adaption in einen Hypertext, also eine veränderte Version des zu Grunde liegenden Materials, transformiert wird. Dieses Begriffspaar wurde vom französischen Literaturtheoretiker Gérard Genette im Kontext seiner Theorie der Transtextualität definiert und in der Kategorie der Hypertextualität subsumiert. Im Gegensatz zu anderen Kritikern nimmt Genette Adaptionen dabei nicht als intertextuelle, sondern vielmehr als hypertextuelle Phänomene wahr.

Trotz konzeptueller Divergenzen scheint im Bezug auf die Tatsache, dass sich eine Adaption von ihrem Ursprungstext entfernt, Konsens zu herrschen. Jedoch muss an dieser Stelle die Notwendigkeit, die Art und Weise dieser Distanzierung genauer zu untersuchen, hervorgehoben werden. Auch wenn der Originaltext im Kontext der Adaption zu einem gewissen Grad den neuen Gegebenheiten angepasst wird, handelt es sich bei diesem Prozess nicht notwendigerweise um eine kritische Distanzierung vom ursprünglichen Werk oder dessen Schöpfer. Vielmehr kann sich eine Adaption auf einer bestimmten Ebene durchaus dem Originalkontext oder -autor annähern.

In diesem Zusammenhang ist es eine besondere Herausforderung für den adaptierenden Künstler, den zu Grunde liegenden Hypotext inhaltlich und formal zu verändern, während der Stil des betreffenden Autors gleichzeitig reproduziert wird. Diese stilistische Imitation ist es, die die Analysegrundlage der vorliegenden Diplomarbeit darstellt und im Begriff des literarischen – und in diesem Kontext auch filmischen – Pastiche ihre Definition findet.

Das Pastiche ist ein Konzept aus den Künsten, das seit jeher die Imitation des Stils eines Meisters beschreibt. In der Vergangenheit war der

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[20] Um einen ungehinderten Lesefluss zu gewährleisten wird im Zuge dieser Zusammenfassung ausschließlich das generische Maskulinum verwendet. Es sei jedoch darauf hingewiesen, dass grundsätzlich immer Personen beides Geschlechts angesprochen sind.

Terminus oft negativ konnotiert und wird auch heute noch häufig mit verwandten Begriffen wie Parodie und Plagiat verwechselt. Um eine solche Verallgemeinerung zu vermeiden, ist eine genaue Definition des Konzeptes unumgänglich, die wie folgt formuliert werden kann: unter einem Pastiche versteht man die wertungsfreie Imitation des Stils eines Autors im Bezug auf dessen Sprache, dessen Denken und dessen Schaffen. In anderen Worten, ein Pastiche beschreibt das Werk eines Künstlers, das im Esprit eines anderen Meisters konstruiert wurde.

Diese Technik wurde im Kontext der jüngsten filmischen Adaptionen zweier Stücke Noël Cowards zum Einsatz gebracht. Sowohl Stephen Elliotts *Easy Virtue* (2008) als auch Eric Styles *Relative Values* (2000) weisen stilistische Merkmale auf, die zweifellos auf den Meister Noël Coward zurückzuführen sind, aber nicht oder nur zu einem geringeren Ausmaß in den Originalstücken aus 1924 beziehungsweise 1951 vertreten sind und daher nicht als in der Adaption begründet verstanden werden können. Bei diesen Merkmalen handelt es sich beispielsweise um musikalische Stücke, die auf glaubwürdige Art und Weise in das Gesamtkonstrukt der Adaption eingeflochten wurden, obwohl sie erst Jahrzehnte nach der Erstaufführung des Stückes in einem völlig anderen Kontext von Coward publiziert worden waren. Des Weiteren ist Cowards Esprit im Humor der Filme, in deren theatralischer Konzeption und in den Charakteren erkennbar, die allesamt von der Person Noël Coward inspiriert wurden. Das wohl auffälligste Merkmal ist jedoch die einzigartige Sprachverwendung des Dramatikers, die trotz der zeitlichen Distanz von 80 beziehungsweise 50 Jahren zu einem überraschend großen Ausmaß in den Filmen erkennbar ist.

Es ist folglich nicht die Intention der beiden Regisseure, den Dramatiker aus neueren Versionen seiner Werke auszuschließen. Vielmehr soll der Esprit des Künstlers durch das genreübergreifende Pastiche in den Adaptionsprozess integriert werden. Dadurch wird ein Gesamtkunstwerk geschaffen, das der Vielseitigkeit Cowards als Komponist, Sänger, Dramatiker, Romancier, Tänzer, Humorist, Regisseur und Filmstar in jeglicher Hinsicht gerecht wird – und das geschieht in raffinierterer Art und Weise, als es durch eine einfache Adaption seiner Werke jemals möglich gewesen wäre.

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