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Shapeshifting narratives: the metamorphosis of Robert Louis Stevenson's genre-crossing work in cinematographic, animated and radiophonic adaptations

Supervisor:

Ch. Prof. Lucio De Capitani

Assistant supervisor:

Ch. Prof. Shaul Bassi

Graduand:

Alessandro Ricciardi

Matriculation No.: 892707

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To the past that shaped me,
the present that nurtures me,
and the future that awaits me.

“Don’t judge each day
by the harvest you reap but
by the seeds that you plant.”
— *Robert Louis Stevenson*

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INTRODUCTION

“When a popular writer dies, the question it has become the fashion with a nervous generation to ask is the question, ‘Will he live?’” (Raleigh 1904: 7). This quote is taken from one of Sir Walter Alexander Raleigh’s books and can accurately function as a proper introduction for the research topic of this thesis. This thesis focuses, in fact, upon the Scottish figure of Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) – to whom Raleigh refers to when addressing the previously cited question – and takes into account the reception of his literary legacy. Bearing in mind that “it is one of the many vanities of criticism to promise immortality to the authors that it praises, to patronise a writer with the assurance that our great-grandchildren, whose time and tastes are thus frivolously mortgaged, will read his works with delight” (7), Stevenson represents an exemplary case-study for although in life he was seen as a respectable literary figure, it cannot be said the same for his posthumous reputation. As a matter of fact, soon after his premature passing, in the late 19th-century and early 20th-century literary panorama Stevenson was perceived as just a boy who never grew up. As a result, his works were roughly underappreciated and it seemed that Stevenson was doomed to be considered as a minor author, not talented enough to appear alongside his renowned contemporaries. Fortunately, at the end of the 20th century, Stevenson’s unfavourable status was destined to be dismantled through a meticulous reassessment, revival and re-evaluation of his work, which included the appreciation of the genre-crossing quality of his work, referred to in the title. Therefore, this thesis proposes to shed light upon two intertwined sides of Stevenson’s afterlife: to analyse the diversity of his written legacy, and to explore in what way(s) this very diversity generates likewise diverse adaptations and interpretations. Specifically, this thesis analyses the metamorphosis of Stevenson’s narrative inviting reinterpretations across various media, namely cinematographic, animated and radiophonic adaptations. In converting a selection of Stevenson’s written texts to visual and auditory representations, this thesis explores how Stevenson’s works undergo transformation, adapting them to the unique constraints and potential of each medium.

Providing a balance between theory and analysis, this thesis is structured and organised into four chapters, framed by an introductory and a conclusive section.

The first chapter lays the foundations on the artistic value of adaptation and functions as a theoretical support for the more specific following chapters. It starts by trying to provide a definition for the ambiguous term 'adaptation', an ambiguity that may lead to several misunderstandings and/or common misconceptions but that still plays an important background role behind the very process of adaptation. The chapter, then, proceeds to clarify the distinction between adaptation and appropriation with a brief worth-mentioning parenthesis on Genette's palimpsestuousness and Kristeva's intertextuality, two among the major contributions to literary theory. Ultimately, the theoretical discourse focuses upon the audiences, firstly, taking into account all the relevant factors that may cause wonderment or disappointment in their reception of a certain adaptative product, and secondly, highlighting their three different modes of engagement (i.e. telling, showing and interacting), officially recognised by Linda Hutcheon in her influential book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006).

The second chapter concisely retraces Stevenson's life and career and analyses the transition from his earliest success, the adventure novel *Treasure Island* (1883), to its related 1996 Muppet cinematographic adaptation, directed by Brian Henson and produced by Walt Disney. The novel, one of Stevenson's "boyhood adventure [novels]" (Saposnik 1974: 105), is accurately transposed into the cinematographic medium and faithfully represented in terms of plot and genre. As an adaptation, some slight changes are almost mandatory; however, in *Muppet Treasure Island* they do not radically dismantle Stevenson's original idea and, instead, they ensure ample entertainment for viewers across different age groups.

The third chapter begins with an inquiry into 18th and 19th century revolutionary debates on the nature of childhood. Childhood theory, in fact, greatly influenced Stevenson's childhood imagination and his children writing. Furthermore, this chapter aims at explaining the link between childhood theory and Gothic literature and takes into analysis Stevenson's most acclaimed Gothic novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), especially in terms of anticipating 20th century Freudian concepts of the uncanny. As far as the adaptative field is concerned, the adaptation chosen for this chapter is the animated version of *Jekyll and Hyde*, produced and distributed by Burbank Films Australia and first publicly aired in 1986, likely in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Stevenson's immortal novella.

Lastly, the fourth and final chapter revolves around Stevenson's exploration of the expansive region of the Pacific Ocean which led him to directly challenge travel writing in a continuous pushing of its boundaries in terms of style and content. With no doubt, the travel book *In the South Seas* – written from 1881 to 1891 and published posthumously in 1896 – is one of the most notable works of Stevenson's Pacific period. However, this chapter examines Stevenson's "first realistic South Sea story" (Stevenson in Colvin 1917: 342), that is, *The Beach of Falesá*, firstly published in 1892 and included the following year in the collection *Island Nights' Entertainments* (also known as *South Sea Tales*). Having gathered a wealth of material on South Sea culture, language, tradition and society, *The Beach of Falesá* officially marks Stevenson's final transition from romance to realism. The remaining two sections of the chapter will conduct an analysis of two adaptations of Stevenson's story starting from Dylan Thomas's rewriting into a screenplay format and ending with BBC Radio 4's radiophonic adaptation.

CHAPTER ONE:
THE ARTISTIC VALUE OF ADAPTATION

"The most important factor in survival
is neither intelligence nor strength but adaptability."
— Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (1859)

Ever since the dawn of time, humankind has adapted – or has been forced to adapt – in order to survive in particular, at times extreme, circumstances. And the process of adapting is, indeed, a natural and survival instinct as remarked and illustrated in the aforementioned masterwork by the English evolutionary biologist Charles Darwin.

Narrowing down significantly the field to that of the arts, the analogy might be easily spotted: the vast majority of artistic works has been likewise adapted and, thus, transformed in order to preserve its cultural legacy and value over time. Yet how does this precept apply to literature and its typical prose-written classics? This first chapter will try to unravel the mystery by mainly laying the foundations on the art of adaptation which will function as a theoretical support for the following chapters. The theoretical aspects will be, in fact, included in a more practical context that will conduct a thorough analysis on cinematographic, animated and radio adaptations based upon three of Stevenson's literary works.

1. Defining adaptation

Defining adaptation in literary terms has definitely been a difficult and challenging mission to accomplish. However, the term itself somehow still manages to lead to several misunderstandings and/or common misconceptions. Even among the sharpest critics, it gives rise to the most various and colourful arguments and points of view in an almost never-ending debate. The most evident reason that lies behind these in-depth dynamics is the ambiguous 'doubleness' the single term 'adaptation' carries alongside the multitude of meanings it already encompasses. Its 'double nature', as Linda Hutcheon defined it (2006: 6), is made prominent "because we use the same word for the process and the product" (15). On the one hand, adaptation as a (final) product is conventionally perceived

as a formal entity which openly declares its being based on an already existing text; adaptation as a process, on the other hand, is strictly linked to the actual process of creating something new based on the adaptor's personal interpretations and concerns. Nevertheless, both perspectives aim at reaching the same goal: to give a new updated and perhaps better life to texts belonging to the literary past.

Amongst art forms, adaptation tends to be compared or, worse, mistaken with translation. Therefore, where does the line need to be drawn?

The major difference is to be found in the rigorous technical process behind both practices: in converting a text or a speech from one language to another, the translator is held accountable for the level of faithfulness or equivalence the target language (TL) must have compared to the source language (SL); instead, in transposing any piece of work into a different medium, genre or context, the adaptor not only has to abide by the predetermined conventions the chosen adaptation requires, but also has to keep in mind its essential themes without losing them in the process. Hence, adaptors have to constantly seek a balance between the challenges of authenticity and the opportunities of innovation. However, remaining too faithful to the source material can limit the potential creativity and freedom the adaptor might want to experiment and pursue. Not wanting to discredit a meticulous linguistic textual conversion, there is clearly much more at stake in the latter presented scenario than in the former. And that is exactly why, when approaching an adaptation, we – as receivers – have "to move away immediately from any rigid concepts of fidelity or infidelity and towards more malleable and productive concepts of creativity" (Sanders 2016: 9). The strict relationship interposed between the notions of adaptation and fidelity will be dealt with in a more extended way in a dedicated section of this chapter, though it is crucial to lay great stress upon it from the very beginning: fidelity should not be "the criterion of judgement or the focus of analysis. For a long time, 'fidelity criticism', as it came to be known, was the critical orthodoxy in adaptation studies, especially when dealing with canonical works" (Hutcheon 2006: 6-7).

1.1 The importance of adaptation

As stated from the start, it is generally acknowledged that "art is derived from other art; stories are born of other stories" (Hutcheon 2006: 2), "texts feed off each other and create

other texts, as well as other critical studies" (Sanders 2016: 17). While Nietzsche's 'eternal recurrence' involves a looping repetition of the same events, adaptation has been considered to be a part of a repeating process that does not involve a mere copying from a pre-existing source but rather a significant variation within it. If it were to be explained in philosophical terms, this is not Aristotle's *imitatio*, the exact representation of reality. In the pragmatics of the adaptative discourse, "the 'rewriting' impulse is much more than simple imitation" (2); it is, instead, his *aemulatio* that prevails, representing a bridge between imitation and creativity.

Nonetheless, the tension between what is familiar and what is new is perhaps one of the most common problems when facing adaptations. There is always a certain hesitation that makes the wavering between repetition and change happen.

This brief foreword wished to constitute a prerequisite to a proper and full comprehension of the importance of adaptation. It is usually thought that the phenomenon of adaptation is temporally distant from the current postmodern world of the 21st century but, once again, this is another related myth that has to be debunked. Especially in Western societies, the adaptation industry started and flourished just a century ago, benefitting on a large scale from the emergence of new mass media communication. For instance, the world of filmmaking is nowadays a successful form of entertainment for all intents and purposes that dates back to 1895 marked by the experiments of the French Lumière brothers. With the invention of the *cinématographe* they were the first to display pictures in motion through a photographic lens (see De Angelis 2004: 33-45).

Notwithstanding, adaptation has never really enjoyed a highly respected position in the literary panorama; as a matter of fact, an increasing tendency of evaluating it as a minor and mediocre practice seemed to have made its way among literary critics for a certain period of time because of the strong implications between recreation and reinterpretation. However, it is fundamental to bear in mind that "to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative" (Hutcheon 2006: xiii).

Why is it so important to have knowledge of the background components behind the process of adaptation, then?

Besides the heartfelt desire to preserve the awareness and popularity of the so defined cornerstones of world literature, there are several equally valid reasons for adaptors to challenge their intellectual creativity and technical inclination(s). Undoubtedly, wanting

to gain fame and success and live a wealthy life is an unconscious and objective part of the multifaceted human nature that exists within all of us. As a consequence, the economic side will always have a certain leverage on anyone, regardless of the role that is being covered in society. Yet the economic appeal is often taken for granted, thus, blurring the overall criterion of judgement. In regard to the adaptative world, the minds behind it are not always driven (only) by the lure of money but also by the desire to expand their craft to the most reachable audience and with the most avant-garde tools. In doing so, they could gain respectability and have the occasion to shape whatever motive is pushing them forward: for example, they could pay homage or tribute to specific authors or pieces of work they feel more personally attached to; or they could take advantage of their privileged position to take sides in a particular political or social situation. In other words, they have ample space for artistic manoeuvre pointed at whichever direction they want to focus their attention on.

2. Adaptation versus appropriation

As it has been briefly introduced in the first section, the duality of adaptation is deeply embedded in the dichotomy product/process. To describe it more extensively, it is essential to first and foremost distinguish between adaptation as a product, a more conservative practice, and adaptation as a process, a decisive journey away from the text. Because it involves acts of creation and interpretation, this second component has also been called appropriation or salvaging, depending on distinct viewpoints. For a more proper and fluent progression on the current literary and adaptative discourse, the peculiarities of these two elements will be gradually and thoroughly analysed, alongside the solid interconnection that naturally flows within their definite structures.

Adaptation is a constant and ongoing practice that has built and based its practical roots upon the conservativeness of a single individual work; thence, from the very beginning it openly acknowledges the existence of an already fully established literary material placing it is as its primary source of inspiration so that it can act as a sort of ‘role model’ for the forthcoming adaption. In *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975), Geoffrey Wagner offered an interesting insight concerning text to screen adaptations identifying three broad categories that will consequently be resumed and revisited by many scholars, such as

Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan in *Adaptations: from Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (1999: 24).

Wagner suggested the following categorisation:

- transposition, "in which the novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum of apparent interference" (222). And adaptation is, indeed, a transpositional practice involving a generic shift (e.g. in medium, frame, genre, context, etc.) that makes the final result somewhat innovative from the original while still trying to remain as faithful as possible to it;
- commentary, "where the original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect… when there has been a different intention on the part of the filmmaker, rather than infidelity or outright violation" (224). The previously mentioned criterion of 'faithfulness' does not always have to be rated as the supreme evaluative indicator: the original, in fact, can be altered by adding or amplifying aspects that were lacking or that did not receive the proper attention in the first place. This is when an adaptation expands itself into a commentary. Julie Sanders (2016: 27) provides two notable examples: the film *Mansfield Park* (1999) directed by Patricia Rozema, based on the homonymous Jane Austen's novel (1814), employs the same historical time and characters though significantly altering their human behaviour and desires; and Shakespeare's tragicomedy *The Tempest* (1611) where the Algerian witch Sycorax is an unseen character on stage as opposed to later adaptations such as Derek Jarman's *The Tempest* (1979) and Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (1991);
- analogy, "which must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art" (Wagner 1975: 226). In this final category, the adaptation gains independence and singularity and can be conceived a wholly stand-alone work for it transfers so little of the original that it is barely recognisable in the adaptation. This is, for instance, the case of *Apocalypse Now* (1979) directed and co-written by Francis Ford Coppola. The epic war film is with no doubt based upon Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), although the events are completely recontextualised and transferred from the late 19th century African setting to the 1955-1975 Vietnam War.

Therefore, if the categorisation of the different types of adaptation were to be summarised, it could be firmly asserted that a transposition does not move away from the source, a commentary slightly reshapes it, and an analogy uses it as a point of departure, resulting in a quasi-total detachment from it. Focusing only on the relation between a film and a text, Dudley Andrew rephrased Wagner's categories to respectively rename them as transforming, intersecting and borrowing sources (1984: 98-104):

- transforming, i.e. the adequate reproduction of the core text in relation to the 'letter' and the 'spirit';
- intersecting, i.e. "the uniqueness of the original text is preserved to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation. […] All such works fear or refuse to adapt. Instead they present the otherness and distinctiveness of the original text." (99-100);
- borrowing, based upon a text's 'fertility' and not 'fidelity', especially in relation to those canonical works which have reappeared and readapted in copious times and ways (the so-called literary myths).

In defiance of all the attempts that have been hitherto made, it is necessary to not lose sight of the bigger picture and embrace the joyful revelation: the adaptative approaches and methods are limitless and cannot possibly be always squeezed into designated categories. What further complicates this process is the multitude of artistic forms through which adaptation can work. Although cinematographic adaptations are unquestionably the most common and widespread – Andrew claimed that "the making of film out of an earlier text is virtually as old as the machinery of cinema itself" (98) – stage and film musical play an equally significant role in this field. Not surprisingly, the father of modern English literature's immortal and ubiquitous presence proves to be useful once again. Many of his renowned works, including *The Comedy of Errors* (1594), *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593), *Love's Labour's Lost* (1597) and so many more, have been musicalised and brought on stage and movie theatres reinforcing the idea that "the musical genre finds much of its source material in the literary canon and now increasingly also the cinematic one" (Sanders 2016: 31).

At this point, it is time to present what is perhaps the most problematic and controversial practice and face the awaited troubles. After all, it is no coincidence that this riskier practice is called appropriation, literally hinting at a theft or an embezzlement.

> The broader notion of the process of adaptation has much in common with interpretation theory, for in a strong sense adaptation is the appropriation of a meaning from a prior text. The hermeneutic circle, central to interpretation theory, preaches that an explication of a text occurs only after a prior understanding of it, yet that prior understanding is justified by the careful explication it allows. (Andrew 1984: 97)

To what has been harshly declared to be the taking possession of another's story, Andrew opts for a more philosophical approach based on hermeneutics, i.e. the theory and methodology of interpretation, and finds a correspondence for the original and the adapted texts in the Saussurean well-established concepts of signified and signifier.

What seems to be the main issue rooted in the practice of appropriation is its frequent employment of a posture of critique, overt commentary and sometimes even assault or attack. This is what commonly happens when dealing with receptive processes. In *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2016), Julie Sanders highlights two prominent modes and operation of appropriation (36):

- embedded texts, which are based upon a skilful reformulation and re-elaboration of the intertext consequently encouraging an interplay between appropriations and their sources;
- sustained appropriations, which often suppress or obscure the relationships and interrelationships between the texts. Because of copyright law, this hazardous manoeuvre might have serious legal and artistic repercussions, such as the charges of plagiarism and censorship.

As outlined a couple of times in this chapter, there is a sustained scepticism towards adaptation and appropriation. Linked to this aversion is the undeserved criticism attached to both practices: many traditional critics believe in the superiority of the original written text because its elaborate structure and language is thought to be unaffected by actual shown images. Consequently, this rooted belief builds up a distorted perception of adaptors, often considered inferior and lacking in complexity compared to writers. As a result, adaptation studies theorists are always on the defensive in order to assert the right of an adaptation to be considered a "derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary" (Hutcheon 2006: 9). In response to this specific form

of criticism, Sanders suggests an overall view that portrays all adaptative processes as active contributors to the artistic field:

> Perhaps in a more celebratory recognition of richness and potential we need to view literary adaptation and appropriation from a vantage point that sees them as actively creating a new cultural and aesthetic product, one that stands alongside the texts that have provided inspiration, and, in the process, enriches rather than 'robs' them.
> (Sanders 2016: 53)

Nevertheless, all the highlighted strengths and weaknesses do not hinder the interconnected communication between both procedures and processes: as a matter of fact, they not only celebrate the cooperation and collaboration in the realm of creativity (for example, the author and the adaptor can coincide or differ) but are also fundamental to the enjoyment of literature and the arts in general. Either wanting to preserve the relevance and popularity of certain texts or wishing to reach new audiences and readerships, both adaptation and appropriation vouch for the endurance and survival of the original text in concomitance with its multiple versions and interpretations, a key part of the audience's expectations and reactions.

3. Palimpsestuousness and intertextuality

One of the major contributors to literary theory – and especially to the narratological branch – is undoubtedly the French Gérard Genette (1930-2018) who, strenuously embracing the structuralist movement, delimited the parameters of adaptation as "a text in the second degree" (1997 [1982]: 5), created and received in reference to a pre-existing text. This straightforward yet intricated definition has earned a place at the very heart of adaptation studies which have consequently leaned towards a kind of 'open Structuralism' that instead of proving a text's closure, praises and enquires into new lasting interactions. In *Palimpsestes. La Littérature au Second Degré* (1982), Genette conducts a rich study on the subject of literary criticism: what he firstly called 'paratextuality' is subsequently renamed 'transtextuality', i.e. "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (1). And it is for this specific purpose that he underlines five types of transtextual relationships namely intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality,

hypertextuality and architextuality. The most fruitful type of direct concern to the adaptative discourse is hypertextuality, i.e. "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (5). In other words, the 'hypotext' is the source text of any appropriation or rewriting while the 'hypertext' is the derivative text, regardless of its being an adaptation or an appropriation. Whilst it is true that having a certain acquaintance with the hypotext is crucial to the fullest appreciation of the hypertext, it is the latter that "invites us to engage in a relational reading" (399): as described by Genette, the act of writing a text, no matter the genre, is "a transgeneric practice that *includes* a few so-called 'minor' genres—parody, travesty, pastiche, digest, etc.—and runs *across* all the others" (395).

Another feature of Genette's seminal work that is worth pondering upon is the very first term included in the title: a palimpsest is "a manuscript in roll or codex form carrying a text erased, or partly erased, underneath an apparent additional text. The underlying text is said to be 'in palimpsest' and, even though the parchment or other surface is much abraded, the older text is recoverable" (Britannica 2019). Thus, it is remarkable how Genette is able to associate his abovementioned hypotext/hypertext dichotomy to an activity that can be traced back to the Ancient Romans (8th century B.C.–5th century A.D.). Even the Germanic tribes of the Goths (1st millennium B.C.–6th century A.D.) were familiar with the overhauling practice of palimpsesting a manuscript and many practical examples can mainly be found in their *codices*. For instance, the *Codex Carolinus* (6th-7th century A.D.) owns the rarest fragments of Wulfila's Bible upon which are inscribed fragmentary sections of the New Testament. In this case, the underlying text, the Gothic language, is the *scriptio inferior* while the imposed text, the Latin language, is the *scriptio superior* (see Project Wulfila 2015).

And again, it is no coincidence that Genette, despite not coining the term himself, delivers a lecture on the "palimpsestuous nature of texts" (1997 [1982]: ix) stressing on his view of literature as a palimpsest for "one who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together" (399). Such statement implies not only an urgency to classify adaptation and appropriation and their cultural histories but also a desire to preserve and take care of the elements of pleasure detected by the receivers in the process. Actively affecting the reading experience is, indeed, the palimpsestuous writing with the

assistance of intertextuality – Genette's first type of transtextual relationship rooted in Kristeva's work – which underscores either an openness or a closure to the various interpretative possibilities.

The coinage of the term 'intertextuality' is usually attributed to the Bulgarian-French literary critic Julia Kristeva (1941-living) who, in an attempt to introduce Mikhail Bakhtin's works to the French audience, wrote in her essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel" that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*" (Kristeva in Moi 1986: 37). Making such a statement in the late 1960s surely hastened the transition from the Saussurean Structuralism to a more liberal-minded Post-structuralism. Kristeva assiduously participated in the French cultural life and collaborated with other respected literary theorists, such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. The latter was one of the first to dig deeper into the field of intertextuality: "This 'I' which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost" (Barthes' *S/Z* [1970] in Kiebuzinska 2001: 11). In his essay *The Death of the Author* (1967), Barthes argued that all literary works were allowed to come into being only through the typical ongoing relations of intertextuality. As Kiebuzinska comments in reference to Barthes:

> […] intertextuality is also one of the terms that reflects poststructuralist preoccupations with the idea of the author, for the 'death' of the author means the liberation of the texts from the authority of presence behind it, releasing texts from the constraints of a monologic reading, and thus making the text available for the production of polyglot, plural, contradictory, and indeterminate readings. (Kiebuzinska 2001: 26)

Taking into account everything that has been underlined, it is perhaps easier to understand and perceive that 'doubleness' mentioned at the very beginning of this introductory chapter as the result of the looping interconnection running within each aspect of the adaptative process which "inscribe themselves on the surface of the text in great concentric circles in which the other texts become visible" (31). Intertextuality, hypertextuality and palimpsestuousness can, then, be considered as single puzzle pieces

that, joint together, allow the metaphorical sight of the bigger picture and the functioning of the whole adaptative procedure.

4. Pleasing the audience(s): creation and reception

As previously highlighted in Andrew's category of borrowing sources, canonical works have gained the worthy role of embodying significant cornerstones in the literary field. Needless to say, their canonical status has led to endless rewritings, reinterpretations and readaptations. When dealing with these classics in film adaptation theory, audiences tend to be more exigent of fidelity and more sceptical towards the adaptative choices in fear of losing the integrity of their cherished novel. As a matter of fact, it is common for audiences to often feel disappointed or discontented after watching a film adaptation of a popular novel.

On this premise, the inevitable intertwining of creation and reception within the process of adaptation should be clearer: the adaptors create, the audiences receive. But the audience – also referred to as 'fans' or 'community' – constitutes, indeed, an integral part of the whole process and can be considered as the ultimate test for the creative minds behind an adaptation. Because audiences could react in so many manifold ways to different transpositions, adaptors deeply treasure their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. As Hutcheon argues:

> Many professional reviewers and audience members alike resort to the elusive notion of the 'spirit' of a work or an artist that has to be captured and conveyed in the adaptation for it to be a success. The 'spirit' of Dickens or Wagner is invoked, often to justify radical changes in the 'letter' or form. Sometimes it is 'tone' that is deemed central, though rarely defined; at other times it is 'style'. But all three are arguably equally subjective and, it would appear, difficult to discuss, much less theorize.
> (Hutcheon 2006: 10)

Tracing back to Andrew's transforming sources, Linda Hutcheon points out the common belief that an adaptation is successful if it manages to combine spirit, letter, tone and style of a specific work or artist. But adaptation studies theorists have also ascertained another key parameter that plays a crucial role in the potential satisfactory outcome of an

adaptation and that relies upon the audience's knowledge and familiarity of the adapted text. If the adaptors succeed in fulfilling the requirements of both the knowing and unknowing audiences, i.e. familiar or unfamiliar with the source text, then it can be firmly claimed that the adaptation is likely to be successful. However, if it does not reach the craved success, it is easier to blame it on the creators rather than on the receivers. This must not be misleading because audiences do not often accept that a literal adaptation is unachievable and, therefore, that a compromise always has to be found. It is a subconscious impulse to prioritise the adapted text for it bears the author's stamp and legacy; this is what Genette calls "movement of proximization" (1997 [1982]: 304), extremely common in screen adaptations of classic novels because it "brings the text closer to the audience's personal frame of reference" (Sanders 2016: 26).

Due to the multi-layered nature lying within an adaptative work, its very experience may induce mixed and contrasting feelings in the audience's selves: adaptations have got, in fact, a formal identity (as a product) but also a hermeneutic identity (as a process). The difference should be clear yet the addition of a third perspective seems almost mandatory at this stage: to ultimately reconnect with what Genette and Kristeva long fought for, adaptation is also a process of reception precisely because of its intertextual and palimpsestuous form. If the reader, spectator or listener is acquainted with the adapted text, then, his experience of the adaptation will inevitably be based upon more than one text, thus, extendedly engaging with all its layers. As a matter of fact, wavering between the comfort zone of the already known work and the wonderment (or disappointment) of the related unknown adaptation is completely natural; therefore, experiencing an adaptation might be pleasant and risky at the same time. The pleasure comes from the conservative elements of accessibility, repetition and familiarity whereas the risk is to be found in the difference, change and novelty. For its knowing audience, adaptation involves "an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing" (Hutcheon 2006: 139).

Audiences have, of course, different reactions to the variety of changes an adaptation might be showing. While it is true that an adaptation involves a shift of some sort that makes it authentic and different from the original, it does not necessarily have to be a radical dismantling of its basic structure. For instance, a rewriting of a literary classic may shift in genre and still maintain its original medium and context like Dylan Thomas did

in 1963 when he wrote the screenplay for Stevenson's novella *The Beach of Falesá* (1893) discussed at length in the last chapter of this dissertation. There could be a joined transposition of genres, media or framing contexts, or it could only concern a limited adaptative aspect. Either way, the combinations are quite a few and are at the adaptor's discretion.

The story is always going to be the common denominator, perhaps the only one steadily travelling across all those shifting combinations and parallel transpositions yet, to some extent, the elements that get adapted are of a considerable number, too:

- themes are the most flexible to adapt across media, genres and contexts and are of great importance in novels and plays putting the right emphasis and liveliness on the action of the story;
- characters are fundamental for both narrative and performance texts; they take an active part in the receivers' imagination shaping their empathic side by letting them focus on the human subject and its respective psychological development;
- separate units of the story, such as the fabula, i.e. the chronological order of events, and the plot, i.e. how the events are narrated. Sometimes the adaptative changes are more visible in terms of plot patterning because time is paced, compressed or expanded;
- focalization or point of view represents the clearest contrast between telling and showing, two out of the three modes of engagement that will be the main topic of interest of the next section: in telling a story, on the one hand, the narrator not only describes, explains and summarises the events but also has his own point of view, allowing him to travel across time and space and, at times, even into the characters' minds; in showing a story, on the other hand, the sensorial sphere prevails, allowing the spectators to hear and see in real time.

4.1 Modes of engagement: telling, showing, interacting

Tightly holding onto the common thread mentioned in the preceding and last bulleted point, of extreme relevance to the audience's receptive discourse is the different level(s) of immersion, that is to what degree we – as receivers and critical judges – become physically, intellectually and psychologically immersed in an adaptative transposition.

This growing interest in the process of the receivers' identification or distance from the experienced adaptation has been fuelled by the most various of critical traditions. Among them, reader-response criticism was the one that enormously flourished and spread in Europe and North America in the 1960s-70s culminating in a theory that focused on the reader rather than the author or the work. American literary critic Stanley Fish (1938-living) is usually associated with reader-response criticism because he laid great stress primarily upon the reception in the telling mode and the consequent role played by the readers: "the introduction of new categories or the expansion of old ones to include new (and therefore newly seen) data must always come from the outside or from what is perceived, for a time, to be the outside" (Fish 1980: 314-315). Thus, the readers are no longer passive but active receivers, creating, instead of discovering, the multiple meanings a text may encompass.

Fish is an incredibly outstanding figure in the vast theoretical area of literary criticism, for he swam against the tide of his contemporaries not only because he promptly claimed that "there are no determinate meanings and that the stability of the text is an illusion" (312) but also because he firmly believed that linguistic competence was vital for readers to create, rather than confer, any meaning on an utterance: "Indeed, 'confer' is exactly the wrong word because it implies a two stage procedure in which a reader or hearer first scrutinizes an utterance and *then* gives it a meaning" (310).

Notwithstanding the fact that reader-response criticism can be approached in so many diverse ways and interpretative viewpoints, they all comply with the same rooted belief, that is, the reader creates the meaning of a text through the reading act itself. Scholars have, indeed, struggled to try and narrow this broad field down to some kind of respectable categories but, as it often happens, it is easier said than done. However, in the second edition of *Critical Theory Today: a User-friendly Guide* (2006), Lois Tyson proposed a five-type classification of these approaches though with a careful warning regarding their artificial nature and possible overlapping:

- transactional reader-response theory probes the transaction between the text and the reader, both necessary in order for meaning to be produced. The reading process "acts as a *stimulus* to which we respond in our own personal way" (173), thus, building the creation and interpretation of the literary work upon the reader's personal emotion and knowledge;

- affective stylistics establishes the literary text as

> an event that occurs in time—that comes into being as it is read—rather than an object that exists in space. […] many practitioners of affective stylistics do not consider the text an objective, autonomous entity—it does not have a fixed meaning independent of readers—because the text consists of the results it produces, and those results occur within the reader (175);

- subjective reader-response theory promotes an experience-oriented paradigm in which the readers' reactions comprise the text and their interpretations are their written responses: "They discuss the reader's reactions to the text, describing exactly how specific passages made the reader feel, think, or associate. Such response statements include judgments about specific characters, events, passages, and even words in the text." (180);
- psychological reader-response theory perceives the readers' interpretation not as an intellectual but, instead, as a psychological process. Behind it and reinforced by the fact that "we react to literary texts with the same psychological responses we bring to events in our daily lives" (182), are the readers' motives and how they affect their reading;
- social reader-response theory contrasts the third type of reader-response theories because "our individual subjective responses to literature are really products of the *interpretative community* to which we belong" (185) meaning that each group of people – each community, to be precise – uses and shares dynamic interpretive strategies evolved over time and brought to texts during the reading phase.

These introductory statements on reader-response theory took into meticulous consideration the very first way a literary text is experienced and engaged with, that is, of course, the act of reading, and how it affects and moves its readers.

The degrees of immersion briefly mentioned in the very first lines of this paragraph find their truest shape in the audience's different modes of engagement related to the adaptation that is being experienced. Three in particular have been officially recognised by Hutcheon (2006: 22): telling, showing and interacting.

The telling mode is most commonly associated with the literary tradition and with the reading process generally speaking, as it narrates a story to a target audience or to a singular reader. Through the complexity of the language, the reader is guided by the words

flowing on the pages while being completely immersed in the unfolding of the events. The telling mode is undoubtedly the realm of imagination or, in more philosophical terms, Descartes' *res cogitans*, i.e. the space of the mind.

Most certainly, language is not the only solving mechanism to express meanings or to relate stories and that is exactly when the showing mode becomes particularly appropriate. This mode is to be regarded comparatively across all performing arts, including music (e.g. opera), dance (e.g. ballet), theatre (e.g. drama) and cinema (e.g. film) and engaging with its audience specifically through imagery and sound. Aural and visual acts are, thus, fundamental for the spectator or the listener to be immersed. As opposed to the telling mode, the showing mode is the realm of direct perception, the Cartesian *res extensa*, i.e. the material and physical dimension.

The last recognised mode of engagement, the interacting – or participatory – mode, is peculiarly to be found for instance in videogames, where players actively interact with the story, or even in immersive exhibitions, if a second thought is given, where the viewers literally become a tiny detail in their favourite artists' paintings. However, this latter mode is not particularly relevant to this study, as the focus of attention is primarily on prose works and their subsequent television and radio adaptations.

The difference between being told a story and being shown a story is significant, which is the reason why the receivers have to employ dissimilar "mental acts":

> Telling requires of its audience conceptual work, showing calls on its perceptual decoding abilities. In the first, we imagine and visualize a word from black marks on white pages as we read; in the second, our imaginations are pre-empted as we perceive and then give meaning to a world of images, sounds, and words seen and heard on the stage or screen.
> (Hutcheon 2006: 130)

Hutcheon explicitly reports the concepts Kamilla Elliott has developed and respectively called "mental imaging", that is the arousal of cognitive and linguistic processes and the evoking of mental images (2003: 210), and "mental verbalising", that is the signalling of "the quasi-linguistic cognitive effects aroused by pictures" (211). In other words, a story requires that the reader imagines the narrative elements of the story itself alongside its dialogues and images, whereas a performing art like a film conveys its message through

openly showing the action, imagery and dialogues and, thus, compensating for the intricated verbal play mastered by the telling mode.

Moreover, the two modes differ in the emotive connection between the receivers and the portrayed characters, too: while literature has got a skilful expertise in interiority which allows the creation of an emotive bond, film and television series bring the characters, the story and its world to life displaying the characters' exteriority, actions and emotions.

Nonetheless, "all three modes are arguably 'immersive', though to different degrees and in different ways […] each mode, like each medium, *has* its own specificity, if not its own essence" (Hutcheon 2006: 22-24).

The related shift from the telling to the showing mode will be the core object of this study as it will take into analysis some of Stevenson's literary works and some of their selected cinematographic and radio adaptations. Hence, the following three sections will further explore the intrinsic implications this specific transposition involves and its pertaining conventions in terms of genre, medium, time and space/place. As it has been already underscored multiple times in this theoretical journey, it is crucial to keep in mind that there cannot be a literal adaptation and that a trade-off is always needed.

4.1.1 Clashing conventions

In adaptation studies theory, the change in genre and medium has been long debated especially in the last century because of the hierarchical pyramid structure established in the artistic field in terms of prestige and cultural value and heritage. Although each art is peculiar in its own formal and material way, a shift in genre and medium will eventually feature a shift in the audience's expectations as well. Of course, in order to experience the palimpsestic and intertextual doubleness at its fullest, the audience has to be a knowing audience whose knowledge will provide the most diverse perspectives on adaptations.

Functioning as an extended palimpsest, an adaptation comprises a set of conventions to which are usually assigned the role of ensuring that the essence and key elements of the adapted text are effectively translated and transposed in the brand-new adaptative work. However, these conventions are more likely to clash rather than merge.

Starting from the fact that an adaptation is always conceived within a specific social and cultural context, even slight contextual changes can significantly impact the receptive process, either putting more emphasis on targeted aspects or leading to different interpretations of the narrative. The pragmatics of adaption also sees the involvement of other external elements which influence and contribute to its reception, such as the cast or director's renowned notoriety, advertising campaigns and reviews on respected magazines. Transforming previous works into new contexts means changing the setting or the time period. In the chapter concerning the *where* and *when* of adaptations, Linda Hutcheon claims that "context can modify meaning, no matter where or when" (147) explicitly referring to the so-called phenomenon of 'transculturation', a term coined by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) in his essay *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y del Azúcar* (1940, transl. *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*) to describe the "process of cultural transformation marked by the influx of new culture elements and the loss or alteration of existing ones" (Merriam-Webster/c, n.d.). In adaptation studies, a 'transculturated' adaptation frequently includes alterations in cultural associations or in racial and gender politics, which is why adaptors strive to find the appropriate resetting or recontextualization in their final product.

Across various media and genres, audiences perceive time and space in unique manners, creating distinct experiences. This is clearly argued in the following passage:

> I argue thus. If it be true that painting employs wholly different signs or means of imitation from poetry,—the one using forms and colors in space, the other articulate sounds in time,—and if signs must unquestionably stand in convenient relation with the thing signified, then signs arranged side by side can represent only objects existing side by side, or whose parts so exist, while consecutive signs can express only objects which succeed each other, or whose parts succeed each other, in time.
> (Lessing 1776 [1887]: 91)

This brief parenthesis on the tongue twisting nature of Lessing's *Laocoon* (1776) wished to sustain his statements concerning the artistic specificity of literature and painting and apply them to the interested field: literature is an art of time, painting is an art of space but performing arts succeeded in incorporating both. Taking into account the temporal aspect, "prose fiction alone, by this logic, has the flexibility of time-lines and the ability to shift in a few words to the past or the future, and these abilities are always assumed to

have no real equivalents in performance or interactive media" (Hutcheon 2006: 63). In the telling mode, the unfolding of time is achieved spontaneously and straightforwardly while in the showing mode, the visual and aural immediacy and instantaneity often evoke a "sense of a continuous present" (67). Despite this common stereotypical perception of showing media, they can actually make anything visible to their audience using the right tools; in this particular case, they create a mutual link between past, present and future timelines through cinematographic expedients such as flashbacks and flashforwards.

After what has been hitherto stated, it is perhaps easier to comprehend not only the real challenge behind the adaptation of time to a different medium, but also remarks how the contexts of both creation and reception are equally important: "there is a kind of dialogue between the society in which the works, both the adapted text and adaptation, are produced and that in which they are received, and both are in dialogue with the works themselves" (149).

4.1.2 From telling to showing: cinematographic adaptations

Cinematographic adaptations of already existing literary texts have always been the most common and widespread and have always had a tendency of recurring in much larger number compared to the others. Beware, though, this has nothing to do with the fact that they are more legitimate or meritorious but is simply the result of what has been defined as

> both a synesthetic and synthetic art, synesthetic in its capacity to engage various senses (sight and hearing) and synthetic in its anthropophagic capacity to absorb and synthesize antecedent arts. A composite language by virtue of its diverse matters of expression—sequential photography, music, phonetic sound, and noise—the cinema 'inherits' all the art forms associated with these matters of expression. Cinema has available to it the visuals of photography and painting, the movement of dance, the decor of architecture, and the performance of theatre.
> (Stam 2000: 61)

Scholars had been trying to uncover the sudden spreading and increasing popularity held by the growing cinematographic industry; after some time, they eventually found a match and started to shape and develop its respective theory. The ability for literary fiction to

accomplish interiority best is by now widely acclaimed yet, used unwisely, it turns into a double-edged sword. What once was a solid and strong point, in the early 20th century becomes vulnerable and weak. At the time of that particularly fragile turn of the century, the novel was exposed to an identity crisis in terms of linguistic inadequacy allowing the performing cinematographic art – mastering exteriority best – to make its way into the market taking advantage of the unfavourable position literary fiction was slowing sinking into.

Despite the abovementioned Stam's description of cinema, who defines it as the most inclusive and synthesising of performance forms, the adaptative process behind a transposition from a literary piece to a screen product is definitely not one of the easiest. While it is true that adaptors "use the same tools that storytellers have always used: they actualize and concretize ideas; they make simplifying selections, but also amplify and extrapolate; they make analogies; they critique or show their respect, and so on" (Hutcheon 2006: 3), one should not forget that in order to actualise the text, they have to reinterpret and recreate it for a world shown on screen and for a movie theatre audience who relies entirely on the visual and aural aspects. Ergo, the adaptative operation should be done very carefully, taking into account the complexities and risks elaborated by the narrative structure. The inescapable starting point is to make visible and audible in the screen adaptation as many elements written and told in the prose text as possible: themes, plot, characters and their ideological conflicts must be reemphasised and readjusted; descriptions, narrations and expressed thoughts must be dramatised and developed into speech and actions; the literary text must be filtered, reduced in size and its typical excessive wordiness must be replaced by narrative pertinence.

The visual and aural dimensions are, then, placed in the foreground in cinematographic adaptations moving from the world of imagination of the telling mode to the actual direct perception of the showing mode. On the one hand, the visual dimension is rendered by camera associations, either for a third-person narration, displaying the characters' different point of views, or for a first-person narration – though rarely occurring –, displaying only the main protagonist's point of view. As would be expected, in the visual dimension audiences rely not only upon the voice but also upon the appearance, acknowledging that there might be more to what is showed on screen than meets the eye. The aural dimension, on the other hand, is of useful support for the many conversations

held and the many events succeeded in a film and is rendered by dialogues, background or ambient sounds, sound effects and soundtracks. Music, generally speaking, strengthens the relationship with the audiences addressing their direct reaction to the action they are currently experiencing, though in a less explicit way than camera associations. Through the five senses, and especially through sight and hearing, cinematographic adaptations aim at gaining and nurturing the audience's recognition and admiration by building a strong and engaging emotional bond.

4.1.3 A different form of telling: radio adaptations

With particular regard to mass media communication, postmodern civilisations are much more inclined to study and privilege the visual rather than the aural. The reason behind this preference of the one over the other lies in the intricated and paradoxical nature of sounds. In *Aural Objects* (1980), French film theorist Christian Metz (1931-1993) investigated the motives behind the human perception of the aural by means of objects claiming that "ideologically, the aural source is an object, the sound itself a 'characteristic'. Like any characteristic, it is linked to the object, and that is why identification of the latter suffices to evoke the sound, whereas the inverse is not true" (26-27). Sound is often left aside, Metz argues, because the visual generate a direct recognition while the aural is doomed to an incomplete recognition. In other words, once an object has been visually identified it remains as such because the process of identification relies upon the eye; on the contrary, if a sound is heard, it will only be finally identified after discovering where the sound is coming from and what is producing it.

In film theory, this represents one of the major traditional issues:

> In a film a sound is considered 'off' (literally off the screen) when in fact it is the sound's source that is off the screen, therefore an 'off-screen voice' is defined as one which belongs to a character who does not appear (visually) on the screen. We tend to forget that a sound in itself is never 'off': either it is audible or it doesn't exist. […] the nature of sounds is to diffuse themselves more or less into the entire surrounding space: sound is simultaneously 'in' the screen, in front, behind, around, and throughout the entire movie theatre. On the contrary, when a visual element is said to be 'off', it really is: […] it is not seen.
> (Metz 1980: 28-29)

Now, this concise introduction on the peculiar prominence of the aural component served as a technical support for the specific case of radio adaptations of literary fiction. Since nothing is shown and everything is heard, the aural dimension is literally the only aspect standing out and put to the fore in order to engage with the audience psychologically and emotionally through the setting up of the proper rhythm and tempo. Music and sound effects are added to the verbal written text to provide a realistic context and to give meaning and a sense of location for the listener's imagination; the linguistic structure of the literary work is highlighted so that the words the listener hears come directly from the novel but, naturally, are recontextualised and read by different voices; because the listener must be able to aurally distinguish all the characters, they are greatly reduced in size selecting only those who actively carry on the story and give rhythm to the timeline.

As previously said, this chapter wished to provide some basic yet fundamental notions regarding the art of adaptation and its functioning processes. The following chapters will apply all these theoretical concepts to a more practical environment by gathering three of Stevenson's literary works – *Treasure Island* (1883), *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and *The Beach of Falesá* (1893) – and analysing some of their respective cinematographic and radio adaptations.

CHAPTER TWO:
FROM ADVENTURE NOVEL TO PUPPETRY PARADE

In the 1979 preface to one of Stevenson's short stories, *The Isle of Voices* (1893), the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), one of the most important and influential writers of the last century, proudly affirmed that "from childhood onwards, Robert Louis Stevenson has been for me a form of happiness" (Borges in Dury 2008: 5). Despite the general critical neglect towards Stevenson, this quotation is highly emblematic for it perfectly embodies in just a few words the whole literary debate on Stevenson's reputation and reception and their consequent contribution to the shaping of his legacy. During his brief but prolific life, Stevenson certainly enjoyed a respectable literary reputation. However, immediately after his premature passing away he was underappreciated and labelled as a minor author because of his detachment from the established and ruling conventions of the 19th century Victorian period. As a matter of fact, "in the general eclipse of Victorian reputations no one possibly has suffered more than Stevenson" (Muir 1982: 228); indeed, in the literary Victorian panorama Stevenson found himself to be in a disadvantageous position in comparison with his contemporaries such as Dickens, Thackeray or Hardy, to name just a few. However, at the end of the 20th century Stevenson's unfavourable status was destined to be dismantled through a meticulous reassessment and revival of his works, thus, building an almost exemplary posthumous popularity. In 1927, Gilbert Keith Chesterton dedicated an entire biography to Stevenson going against "the Victorian whitewashers and the Post-Victorian mudslingers" (75) that were standing in the way of Stevenson's progressive relevance in literary history. Chesterton portrayed him as "a highly honourable, responsible and chivalrous Pagan, in a world of Pagans who were most of them considerably less conspicuous for chivalry and honour" (76) and as an unaware defender of truth stating that "Stevenson stood for the truth and did not quite understand the truth he stood for" (200). Chesterton's is just one of the many early testimonies that affirm Stevenson did receive some favourable opinions, predating the later re-evaluation of his works. It was, in fact, in the late 20th century that Stevenson's writing was closely examined, leading to the conclusion that it anticipated literary trends associated with Modernism and even Postmodernism. For instance, the elements of Stevenson's modernity are meticulously

argued by Alan Sandison in his book entitled *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism: A Future Feeling* (1996) and even by more recent scholars: in *Relocating Stevenson: from a Victorian to a Post/Modern World* (2020), Kemaloğlu takes into account Stevenson's 1886 Gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and analyses it in terms of identity and space highlighting its common points with modern and postmodern ideas:

> Stevenson's novella appears to be a Victorian novel yet, [it] experiments with traditional concept of dualism and rejects the notion of dependent entities within a single body. Stevenson portrays two separate bodies embodying two separate attributes of human beings constantly in fight over power. This power relationship is reinforced by the fragmented spaces depicted by the novelist. Dr. Jekyll's decentred house with two ambiguous entrances is read as an extension of his fragmented body in a postmodern context. In this respect, the novella suggests possibilities, impossibilities and multiplicities in terms of geographical, temporal and cultural experiences. Stevenson attempts to show how modernist assumptions about the perfectibility of mankind are perverted as the novella rejects the relationship between reality and appearance celebrating a postmodern duality.
> (Kemaloğlu 2020: 90)

Stevenson was, then, ahead of his time, which is the reason why early scholars like Chesterton affirmed that his career was deeply affected by a turn of the century that was still fraught with Victorian precepts. Along the same line of thought, in the introduction to *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson* (2010), Penny Fielding continued to lay great stress on the period – from the mid-1870s to the early 1890s – in which Stevenson's career most flourished:

> Robert Louis Stevenson remains one of the most famous, yet, paradoxically, one of the least well-known writers of the second half of the nineteenth century. […] One particular difficulty that confronts us today is the decade in which the majority of Stevenson's works were written: the 1880s. Literary and cultural historians are quite used to separating off 'the 1890s' as a separate period, also called *fin de siècle*, in which new forms of literature were born.
> (Fielding 2010: 1)

The late 19th century *fin de siècle* was particularly prominent in literary history because it simultaneously witnessed the emergence of the French Decadent and the English

Aesthetic movements invoking “a sense of the old order ending and new, radical departures” (Livesey 2017). As a result, these newer forms of literature were more concise, innovative and versatile and would soon overcome the traditional Victorian schemes in terms of novel writing. Therefore, the so called ‘mass century’, the 1900s, was characterised by several economic and social factors such as the rapid change of the reading public and the advent of mass media communication, which all contributed to a larger and more diversified literary market (see Duncan 2010: 14).

Perhaps Stevenson was just born in the wrong era which accused him of bringing simplicity and childishness into his works without fully understanding nor properly recognising his literary potential and his natural enthusiasm towards innovation and experimentation. As Saposnik observes: “Stevenson’s fictional world is tempered by a childlike imagination because he would not admit to the despair which logic dictated. Instead, he chose an alogical world, a fantasized reality whose grimness was less apparent though no less certain” (1974: 19). With this idea in mind, the main aim of this chapter and of the following sections is to comprehend how Stevenson’s actual intricated complexity allowed him to be gradually rediscovered and to become a critically acclaimed writer. In particular, this study will investigate his establishment as a popular author in the literary field focusing on the adventure novel *Treasure Island* (1883) and its cinematographic adaptation *Muppet Treasure Island* (1996).

1. Robert Louis Stevenson: a case-study

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in 1850 in Edinburgh and died in 1894, at only 44 years old, because of a cerebral haemorrhage. At first, he tried to follow his father’s footsteps studying engineering and then switching to law but all attempts proved to be unsuccessful. He was not destined to lead this life for his inclination towards literature, both in poetry and prose form, was definitely too significant to ignore. Although his career lasted roughly 20 years, he was rather prolific: mainly writing for magazines and periodicals, he published novels, short stories, essays, three poetry collections, travel books and even plays. He was also a traveller throughout his life: his journey among the Pacific Islands led to his final settlement in Samoa where he not only played an active role in Samoan

politics fighting against colonialism but, as Fielding argues, where he also inquired his relationship with his country of origin, Scotland:

> Stevenson himself admitted to a vexed relationship with his native country, even as it provided an insistent source of material and inspiration for his writing. Writing from his adopted home in Vailima, Samoa, it strikes him that to be truly Scottish is to experience a sense of displacement from Scotland. […] This sense of dislocation was to result partly in Stevenson's poetic investigation of the nature of home when it is caught up in questions of global time and space. (Fielding 2010: 7)

As a matter of fact, many of his poems offer a richness in nostalgic themes such as the loss of home and of childhood, as well as a longing for the past that must be shared and remembered (see 110-111) "for a child is somewhat deaf to the sentimental" (Stevenson in Phelps 1906: 102). Daiches also remarks Stevenson's essential Scottish nature and his tormented relationship with Scotland claiming that

> the influences under which Stevenson matured as a novelist derive from the history and topography of his own country. […] Stevenson learned to know his native country best and to make the most effective use of it in literature only after he had left it never to return. […] Stevenson is essentially Scots and cannot be fully understood without some appreciation of his Scottish background. (Daiches 1947: 187)

Although Stevenson never stopped thinking outside the box – and outside Scotland –, he still continues to stand on the podium with the greatest of Scottish literature, albeit significantly breaking with the preceding literary tradition pioneered by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). The father of the modern historical novel was, in fact, harshly criticised by Stevenson in terms of stylistic matters which "so often fob us off with languid, inarticulate twaddle" (Stevenson in Phelps 1906: 117). His grounded criticism reaches its most explicit form in his essay *A Gossip on Romance* (1882) focusing on the dichotomy novel/romance. Unlike Scott, Stevenson was, indeed, more interested in romance; therefore, in his essay he praises Scott for being "a man of the finest creative instinct touching with perfect certainty and charm the romantic junctures of his story" (116) yet accuses him of finding him "utterly careless, almost, it would seem, incapable, in the technical matter of style, and not only frequently weak, but frequently wrong in points of drama" (116), which is the reason why, Stevenson states, that "the same strength and the

same weaknesses adorn and disfigure the novels” (114). This is perhaps the most meaningful motive that incited Stevenson to push the formal boundaries attached to the norms of his period replacing the long, large, multi-plotted and realist Victorian novel with a fractured narrative with multiple points of view.

An aspect that is worth pondering upon in terms of essayistic productions is that “his development as an essayist parallels his career as a novelist, and, as he matured, his essays, like his novels, came more and more to be serious interpretations of his own youth where the subject-matter arose unbidden as a result of memory and imagination together supplying new insights” (Daiches 1947: 150). Stevenson’s early prose writing is, thus, a series of attempts to demonstrate his status as a professional writer.

It was, however, in the literary discussions he took part in during his life that Stevenson’s adaptability in different social roles mostly stood out; he, in fact, took very personally and seriously the experience both reading and writing practices induced. This tendency probably originates from the fact that “ever since as a sick child he had discovered the contrast between physical inaction and the adventurous world of imagination” (4), allowing him to focus on how a writer should lead his life and on how life, generally speaking, can be represented in fiction: “one of the main functions of literature had always been for him the escapist and compensatory one of presenting a thrilling, exciting, yet essentially moral life to writer and reader” (4). As Daiches pointed out, the vast majority of Stevenson’s writings are characterised by a clear optimistic morality clashing with the conventional and pessimistic Edinburgh one and by a sense of escapism from his childhood and youth which is going to increase through his later adult experiences (see 10, 18). Hence, Stevenson was not escaping from contemporary life but rather eventually settled with contemporary society diversifying his fictional works by experimenting with different styles, genres and narratives.

The next section will take into account Stevenson’s earliest success, the adventure novel *Treasure Island* (1883). The main focus will be on its artistic value and on the type of legacy that will leave to future generations. Further on, the novel will be inserted into a more specific context analysing the related Muppets cinematographic adaptation.

2. The adventure novel *Treasure Island* (1883) and its cinematographic adaptation *Muppet Treasure Island* (1996)

> "Adventure is the hope of freedom; it is the 'call of the wild' which echoes from beyond the confines of civilization and envisions a journey backward into an unknown future."
> (Saposnik 1974: 104)

Although Stevenson's written production has been extremely rich and prolific, he is mainly remembered and celebrated for two classic works of popular fiction: the adventure novel *Treasure Island* (1883) – here the main topic of discussion – and the urban Gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) which will be dealt more at length in the next chapter.

Treasure Island is Stevenson's earliest success, the one which brought him fame and popularity marking the official transition from the (semi)-autobiographical writing to the pure adventure story. Specifically, this transition was from travel writing to fictional writing and was profit-moved. It is true that at the very beginning of his career Stevenson followed the path of travel writing to stop being financially dependent on his father but, unfortunately, it did not lead him to the desired fame. He wanted to reach literary success and turning to fiction was the only way he could have achieved it (see Buckton 2004: 138-139).

Before conducting a more thorough examination of the novel itself, it is extremely important to remember that during his childhood and youth, Stevenson immersed himself in numerous readings that had a lasting impact on his already vivid imagination. Stevenson himself affirms that "from my earliest childhood it was mine to make a plaything of imaginary series of events; and as soon as I was able to write, I became a good friend to the paper-makers" (Stevenson 1894: 79). Nevertheless, when experiencing adulthood, the aspect of childhood memories undergoes several changes; this adult perspective is more consistently evident in Stevenson's short stories – characterised by irony and various stylistic devices – than in his novels. Therefore, *Treasure Island* was

"written primarily for boys, and the main tone derives from his recollection of what had appealed most to his imagination as a boy" (Daiches 1947: 11).

Although he "was not one of those aesthetes who professed to view all life as simple material for art [and that] his tendency was rather to view his art as an activity capable of continually profiting from life" (17), Stevenson was constantly undervalued, seen just as an adventure writer for the young. It is, indeed, true that *Treasure Island* was originally entitled "The Sea Cook, or Treasure Island: a Story for Boys" as Stevenson himself explicitly wrote in an 1881 letter to his friend William Ernest Henley (1849-1903), yet the qualitative aspect of his writing, as explained by David Daiches in his revised approach of Stevenson's works, has been rarely debated: "interest where it survives concentrated on him as a literary figure rather than as a writer, and as a result the nature and value of his works get small attention" (2).

Alongside *Treasure Island*, Stevenson published three other novels of "boyhood adventure, the purest form of Stevensonian romance" (Saposnik 1974: 105): *The Black Arrow* (1883), *Kidnapped* (1886) and its sequel *Catriona* (1893), also commonly named after the central character, *David Balfour*. Pertaining to the same genre and written in a ten-year time span, analogies between the four adventure novels are easy to spot: the main character is always a young man who "must undergo a journey into experience before achieving even partial self-knowledge" (105) and the narrative is typical of the *Bildungsroman* "in which the child's physical adventure is translated into moral lesson" (105). This type of narrative is of particular interest to Saposnik who, in his 1974 book dedicated to Stevenson, promptly puts Stevensonian narrative in the foreground describing it "of shocking brutality yet playful innocence" (105). Furthermore, Saposnik lays great stress on the consequent impact this specific narrative has on his readers recreating "a childhood vision of life in which the child is removed from his native isolation and placed among crude experience" (105).

In other ways, Daiches observed the incidental pattern and the retrospective aspect occurring in Stevenson's adventure stories: on the one hand, incidents switch the emphasis from the hero's luck to the hero's fate because "the 'I' of the stories is not gifted with any unusual qualities or exceptional abilities; he simply *happens* to become involved in picturesque adventures appropriate to the setting in which they are enacted" (1947: 26); on the other hand, stories are retrospective and finished, meaning that they begin and end

as a recollection, "from the comfort of the present, of the adventures and discomforts of the past" (50), thus, bringing together the present talk and reminiscence and the actual past adventure, defined as "two aspects of Stevenson's bohemian ideal" (50).

Taking a closer look at the adventure genre in terms of fictional writing, it can be firmly asserted that its versatility and its perfect functioning even when mixed with other genres has always been appealing to the point that from the mid-19th century onwards it became a very popular literary subgenre. In adventure books it is most likely to find the main protagonist going on an epic journey – either personally or geographically – with a precise mission in his mind and many obstacles along his way constantly testing and hindering the final completion of the mission (see Malatesta 2018). Moreover, adventure stories often take place in remote or exotic settings; in the case of *Treasure Island*, however, the inhabited island functions not only as a faraway location where the protagonists are alone but also as a confirmation of "the naturalness of social hierarchy, precisely because that naturalness was far from obvious at home" (Irvine 2010: 27).

Such insightful statement requires a reflection upon the ways in which social classes were perceived and hierarchies were constructed during the last decades of the 19th century. Already mentioned in the title of her essay, "Gold Standards and Silver Subversions: Treasure Island and the Romance of Money" (1998), Naomi Wood defines Stevenson's novel as a romance about money and class.

The economic myth that flows between the lines of *Treasure Island* was examined by Saposnik as well who pointed out that the ruling principle of the whole story is the treasure, i.e. the money, which "at the end of the book is an epitome of all the world's currency" (1974: 105). The economic aspect is intertwined with the social aspect: as a matter of fact, *Treasure Island* not only highlights the class differences of the time but also reinforces the already established ideas concerning social classes. Hereto, Stevenson wrote for *Scribner's Magazine* the essay *Gentlemen* (1888) considering not only "the nature of that elusive and quintessentially British term of approval for the ideal man" (Katz 2006: 51) but also examining the ways in which "social change creates confusion about class, manners, character, and gentlemanly behaviour" (54).

As Wood argues, "*Treasure Island* breaks down the differences between 'gentlemen born' and 'gentlemen of fortune'" (1998: 63), i.e. between the upper class, *born* wealthy, and the middle class, *becoming* wealthy. Given a second thought, it is no coincidence that

there are no women in the novel with the exception of Jim Hawkin's mother because "the woman is seen as a threat to the romance of the boyish collaboration with Lloyd [Stevenson's stepson], and so must be 'excluded' from it" (Buckton 2004: 143). In addition to the social clash between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, Wood observes another influential theme in Stevenson's novel, that is, the complex debate on the value of gold and silver that was taking place in Europe and America:

> Understood as representing competing socioeconomic interests and ideologies, the silver standard was associated with populist politics, whereas the gold standard was advocated by conservative establishment types. In England, silver was associated with counterfeit value and the commoner; gold-standard advocates justified their stance by making essentialist arguments about the transcendent value of gold, linked explicitly with claims for the transcendent value of the aristocratic classes and their virtues.
> (Wood 1998: 62-63)

On this premise, what strikes the most about *Treasure Island* is that no matter if gold or silver, aristocrat or bourgeois, "the reactions of gentlemen born and gentlemen of fortune to the idea of seven hundred thousand pounds of buried treasure is strikingly uniform" (69) because they are all moved by greed and capitalist decision-making. The novel, thus, rejects moral judgement and class disparity. On the nature of the treasure itself, Daiches claims that it is "neither good nor evil; it is in itself, in fact, of no importance whatsoever. It serves only as an excuse for the story, as a supreme motivation" (1947: 34). Nevertheless, the treasure gains importance when it starts to be noticed and yearned not only by threatening pirates and sailors but also by respectable figures such as Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney, radically determining the searchers' behaviour and eventually changing the possessor's life.

In the previously mentioned essay *A Gossip on Romance* (1882), which focused on the literary categories of novel and romance, Stevenson, addressing the ideal writer, suggests that "his stories may be nourished with the realities of life but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of the day-dream" (Stevenson in Phelps 1906: 106). A few pages later this concept is developed in a more articulate way and reads as follows:

> Fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child; it is there that he changes the atmosphere and tenor of his life; and when the game so chimes with his fancy that he can join it with all his heart, when it pleases him with every turn, when he loves to recall it and dwells upon its recollection with entire delight, fiction is called romance.
> (Stevenson in Phelps 1906: 114)

In so doing, Stevenson links "the appeal of romance to the world of make-believe and day-dream inhabited by the child" (Irvine 2010: 28). His 'adventure romance', as it came to be defined, represents "the bridge which transforms childhood incidents from what they were to what in a romantic age they might have been" (Daiches 1947: 24-25).

The inspirational element that brought to life the adventure novel *Treasure Island* is, indeed, the imaginary map – "the map was the chief part of my plot" (Stevenson 1894: 86) – which "serves as a guide both to the buried treasure in the story and to literary success" (Buckton 2004: 139). The map was drawn by Stevenson and his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne (1868-1947), while staying in a cottage in Scotland and it can be considered in some way a trace of Stevenson's early travel writing. To this end, Buckton affirms that Stevenson wrote a book "that was a recycling of his own rejected travel writings" (144) differing in their nature (treasure hunts are guided by a map leading to profit whereas travel journeys are not structured) yet sharing the same disillusion with the outcome of the journey.

As Saposnik points out, the story of the treasure hunt is narrated in the first person by Jim Hawkins who

> is in many ways the prototype of Stevenson's youthful adventurers. He is not only the first, but the least complex; and his story is without many of the intricacies which are found in the subsequent adventures of Richard Shelton in *The Black Arrow* and David Balfour in *Kidnapped*. Although Jim Hawkins's story in *Treasure Island* is not without its structural subtleties and moral ambiguities, Stevenson has him present his adventures in a great rush, with a maximum of excitement and with a minimum of analysis.
> (Saposnik 1974: 105)

As a matter of fact, from the very first chapter, the reader not only can easily identify with the main protagonist of the novel but is also "plunged directly into action" (106) because of the immediacy of the events narrated. This narrative directness is a part of that narrative

shift to which the readers have to adjust, as Katz states: "no longer a youth, Jim offers a narrative that is complicated by the adult's retrospective account of the boy's point of view" (Katz 2006: 59). The opening paragraph reads as follows:

> Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey, and the rest of these gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island, from the beginning to the end, keeping nothing back but the bearings of the island, and that only because there is still treasure not yet lifted, I take up my pen in the year of grace 17—, and go back to the time when my father kept the "Admiral Benbow" inn, and the brown old seaman, with the sabre cut, first took up his lodging under our roof.
> (Stevenson 1883: 1)

The fact that Jim is asked by Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney to write down everything about their adventures makes explicit that the 'hero' and the 'good men' have survived and can now tell the whole story. The retrospectiveness of *Treasure Island* is a result of the prolonged editorial process behind it, especially when the serial was being prepared to become a book: the novel, in fact, had to undergo several acts of revision and change. What must not be forgotten is that the serial version was published weekly from 1881 to 1882 on the *Young Folks*, a literary magazine addressed to a young audience (the title is here pretty self-explanatory), whereas the hardcover version was destined to reach more adult readers. Therefore, as David Angus asserts in his 1990 essay on the first publication of *Treasure Island*,

> in the *Young Folks* version we seem to look through the eyes of Jim Hawkins the *boy*, despite the fact that the language of his narrative is sometimes a good deal too sophisticated for that. The story, of course, is for the most part meant to be told by the *mature* Mr. Hawkins in retrospect.
> (Angus 1990: 97)

In light of this young/adult behavioural dichotomy, it is not unexpected to notice drastic alterations of targeted characters and of the general tone in the *Young Folks* version that definitely differ from the final published novel we are all acquainted with. Yet, "as popular as it has become, *Treasure Island* is possibly the strangest adventure story ever written, for it is a boy's book without a hero and without a satisfying conclusion" (Saposnik 1974: 107). Here Saposnik raises an interesting argument on Jim Hawkins' unheroic nature that will be resumed by Angus, too:

> In *Young Folks* we find a Jim Hawkins who is unexpectedly nervous, unheroic, and given to a rather hollow bombastic swagger. Stevenson himself would scarcely have passed for a boy's boy when young, being a sickly, molly-coddled invalid more often at home than at school. The sensitive and susceptible Jim of this version represents, I fancy, a memory or projection of those unhappy days of his Edinburgh childhood.
> (Angus 1990: 86)

Therefore, it is no coincidence that when encountering dangerous situations, Jim's reactions are often rooted in self-preservation rather than heroic bravado. His hesitation and expressions of fear are scattered throughout the early chapters including chapter 11, where he overhears Long John Silver's plans and witnesses the pirates' actions. These moments emphasise his unheroic nature when facing danger:

> You may fancy the terror I was in! I should have leaped out and run for it, if I had found the strength; but my limbs and heart alike misgave me. […] Terrified as I was, I could not help thinking to myself that this must have been how Mr. Arrow got the strong waters that destroyed him.
> (Stevenson 1883: 92)

As a consequence of the fact that the boy in Stevenson himself is "no physical hero" (Angus 1990: 98), his prototypical protagonist in the novel, Jim, is not characterised by an outstanding heroism because of his humility in celebrating both victories and defeats.

All the focal elements in Stevenson's prose novel *Treasure Island* that have been hitherto highlighted can now be inserted into the more specific context of adaptation studies and analysed in relation to the selected Muppets adaptation. In popular culture, certain entities transcend the boundaries of entertainment, leaving an indelible mark on the collective consciousness. Such is the case of The Muppets, a beloved cast of puppet characters in the American entertainment landscape which are widely known for their distinctive personalities and comedy antics. The Muppets have undoubtedly become cultural icons: their creation dates back to the late 1950s when Jim Henson (1936-1990) – American puppeteer and Disney legend – stated that "it was really just a term we made up. For a long time I would tell people it was a combination of marionettes and puppets but, basically, it was really just a word that we coined. We have done very few things connected with marionettes" (Henson in Jones 2013: 41-42).

Laying the theoretical foundations of adaptation studies, it is now important to recall what has been explained in the first chapter, that is, while it is true that an adaptation involves a shift of some sort that makes it authentic and different from the original, it does not necessarily have to be a radical dismantling of its basic structure. Indeed, *Muppet Treasure Island* (1996), the Muppets film adaptation of Stevenson's classic, falls within these parameters: the medium has been, of course, transposed from the telling mode of the prose to the showing mode of the film but the main genre remains untouched for it is still fraught with adventure and action. And for this exact reason *Muppet Treasure Island* has been praised and appreciated because it "does the single most important thing a *Treasure Island* adaptation can – it embraces the adventure and the spirit of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel whole-heartedly" (Manente 2021). The mind behind this bright idea is no less than Brian Henson (1963-living), son of the abovementioned Muppets creator, who not only inherited his father's art but also decided to keep it alive by directing and producing many other Muppets films.

Muppet Treasure Island is produced by Walt Disney and distributed by Buena Vista; the music is composed by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, with contributions from the famous German composer Hans Zimmer; the screenplay is written by James V. Hart, Jerry Juhl (co-screenwriter) and Kirk R. Thatcher (creature-maker). It is preceded by four other theatrical films featuring the Muppets – *The Muppet Movie* (1979), *The Great Muppet Caper* (1981), *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (1984) and *The Muppet Christmas Carol* (1992) – and followed by three more – *Muppets from Space* (1999), *The Muppets* (2011) and *Muppets Most Wanted* (2014) (Wikipedia 2023).

It is interesting to notice that *Muppet Treasure Island* is not the first Muppet adaptation of an English literature classic: *The Muppet Christmas Carol* is, in fact, an adaptation of Charles Dickens's 1843 novella *A Christmas Carol*. Because the latter adaptation is narrated by the iconic Muppets duo made up of Gonzo the Great and Rizzo the Rat, the writers of *Muppet Treasure Island* initially thought of making them the heroes of the story by naming them 'Jim' and 'Hawkins'. However, "the Muppet movie maestros soon realised that any retelling of *Treasure Island* needed to center on a young boy experiencing the adventure of a lifetime" (Fanning 2021). Therefore, Gonzo and Rizzo became the "silly but loyal sidekicks of Jim Hawkins" (Fanning 2021).

As previously mentioned, *Muppet Treasure Island* is rendered in a way that is nevertheless able to capture the main genre of the original source, i.e. the adventure genre. The term 'main' is here used to put the right attention to the other internal genres added to the original pirate tale everybody is acquainted with and, thus, making the film "still feel like a true, respectful version of the classic novel despite all the madcap changes and puppeteering" (Manente 2021). Speaking of 'madcap changes', director Brian Henson himself explained that after the success brought by *The Muppet Christmas Carol,* they wanted to adapt another classic story: "we wanted this one to be a lot funnier, more absurd and with a lot more action […] we really twisted the story in order to make it funnier" (Henson in Fanning 2021).

Embedded within the adventure genre of the Muppets film is, firstly, the action genre which "typically include fighting, gun or swordplay, chase scenes, and extraordinary feats" (Hellerman 2023/a); secondly, is comedy, "defined by the type of response it elicits from its audience, namely, laughter; and marked by a lightness of tone and a resolution governed by harmony, reconciliation, and happiness" (Kuhn and Westwell 2012: 91); and thirdly, is musical, "an internationally popular film genre, featuring music, song, and dance in varying combinations, often intertwined with a romance plot with a happy ending" (274).

By introducing humour into a scene, comedy can help provide insights into a character's emotional state or even supporting extensive speeches and explanations. Nonetheless, because of its malleability, it "might be the hardest thing to pull off, and it's certainly one of the riskiest things to pitch or develop. A comedy that doesn't work is super cringe-y" (Hellerman 2023/b). In *Muppet Treasure Island*, the comic element is rendered even in the smallest, at times subtlest, details as in the case of the rats aboard the *Hispaniola* which perceive their journey to Treasure Island as a contemporary Caribbean cruise, documenting with photographs every significant event happening during their voyage and even charging other tourist rats to get on board; or, for instance, when Billy Bones is dying of a heart attack, Rizzo exclaims with a slighter high-pitched voice denoting concern and bewilderment: "He died? And this is supposed to be a kids' movie!" (*Muppet Treasure Island* 1996, 13:42-13:44). In doing so, the film not only provides "fodder for parody, slapstick and the vaudeville revue formula of The Muppets' television shows"

(James 1996: 48) but also does “the fantastic and difficult thing of both being a very serious performance and not taking itself too seriously” (Manente 2021).

As far as the musical genre is concerned, it was born in the United States of America in the second half of the 19th century taking as its primary source of inspiration the European operetta. As a matter of fact, in theatres and movie theatres the action of the story is carried onto the scene by the uniform coming together of acting, dancing and singing which flow in a spontaneous and natural way without sounding annoying or excessive (see Britannica 2023/b). For example, this is to be seen in the very opening of *Muppet Treasure Island* which introduces the upcoming adventurous journey in musical form with the song “Shiver My Timbers”. The song title is certainly not random: ‘shiver my timbers’ is, in fact, “a mock oath attributed in comic fiction to sailors” (Oxford English Dictionary 2023) and explicitly refers to the same words uttered by Long John Silver several times in the novel. Moreover, its lyrics are extremely accurate for they even echo Billy Bones’s old sea-song and the words learned and repeated by Long John Silver’s parrot as the following excerpt shows:

“Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum! Drink and the devil had done for the rest Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!” (Stevenson 1883: 7)	“And those buccaneers drowned their sins in rum The devil himself would have to call them scum Every man aboard would have killed his mate For a bag of guineas or a piece of eight” (*Muppet Treasure Island* 1996, 2:28-2:42)

Therefore, as Kristina Manente observes, “the opening to *Muppet Treasure Island* with its chanting totems and pirates lugging treasure to Flint’s secret burial spot emulates exactly the danger and excitement of the original tale in the book” (2021) and prepares the spectators – and the loyal readers of the novel – to what they are going to experience next.

Approximately in the middle of the novel, the crew realises – due to the lack of wind – that despite sailing for so long to Treasure Island, they are now lost at sea. Managing to render visually something that in prose form is usually so long-winded constituted a real test for the film authors and their adaptative techniques. To this end, Thatcher explains:

> We didn't want there to be the typical lull in the middle of the film that many adventure stories fall victim to. […] We needed something really just to suddenly go 'trust me, it's not going to be boring'. So 'Cabin Fever' came up to let's do a nutty song about just losing your mind.
> (Thatcher in Manente 2021)

Indeed, the song "Cabin Fever" represents not only an expedient to incite the spectator to continue watching the film with the promise of a better unravelling of events but is also a smart and comic solution that fills the gap. Some funny lines of the song read out as follows:

- "Been stuck at sea so long we have simply gone bananas" (45:15-45:20);
- "We were sailing, sailing the wind was on our side / And then it died" (46:05-46:12);
- "I've got cabin fever / I think I've lost my grip / I'd like to get my hands on / Whoever wrote this script" (46:13-46:20);
- "This one small vessel has become a floating psycho ward" (46:37-46:40).

As might be expected, the main protagonists of the story are played by Muppets: Kermit the Frog as Captain Smollett, Sam the Eagle as Mr. Arrow, Fozzie Bear as Squire Trelawney, Dr. Bunsen Honeydew as Dr. Livesey and Miss Piggy as Benjamina Gunn. Typical of the Muppet-style, these funny characters share the scene with real life actors: young Kevin Bishop (1980-living) as Jim Hawkins, Tim Curry (1946-living) as Long John Silver and Sir William Connolly (1942-living) as Billy Bones. To these already existing Stevensonian characters, actress Jennifer Saunders (1958-living) has been added in the role of Mrs. Sarah Bluveridge, the owner of the Admiral Benbow, an English inn on the Bristol Channel where Jim lives with his best friends Gonzo and Rizzo. Despite employing strict manners with them, Mrs. Bluveridge is actually a very lively and caring woman: as a matter of fact, she even helps the boys escape from the pirates who assailed her inn looking for the treasure map and confronts them on her own. She is also characterised by an overdeveloped hearing to the point that several times at the beginning of the film Jim, Gonzo and Rizzo wonder how she manages to hear everything even at a further distance. And it is, indeed, in the figure of Mrs. Bluveridge that the first significant adaptative change can be spotted: in the novel Jim lives with his parents at the Admiral Benbow whereas in the film he is a young orphan. Mrs. Bluveridge can be, then, seen as the cinematographic replacement of Jim's mother remaining, just like in Stevenson's

novel, the only female character of the story in addition to Benjamina Gunn, as will be explained in the following pages.

Other meaningful variations from the original Stevensonian prose work are:

- in the first chapter of *Treasure Island* Billy Bones is addressed simply as 'the Captain'. Most likely to streamline the plot, this small detail has been omitted in the film. His identity is, in fact, revealed in the novel only afterwards when Black Dog, a former shipmate on Captain Flint's crew, recognises him:

> 'Is this here table for my mate, Bill?' he asked, with a kind of leer.
> I told him I did not know his mate Bill; and this was for a person who stayed in our house, whom we called the captain.
> 'Well,' said he, 'my mate Bill would be called the captain, as like as not.'
> (Stevenson 1883: 11)

- in the novel the treasure map is found by Jim and his mother in the Captain's sea chest after his death whereas in the film it is Billy Bones himself who, narrating Captain Flint's adventure tales, hands the map over to Jim on the deathbed urging him to pursue the treasure. Again, this adaptative choice has been probably made in order to make the story flow in a more natural and clear way since it is addressed to a young-adult audience;
- Long John Silver's parrot is replaced by Polly the lobster. The animals differ but the words recur. Polly even mocks the common belief associated to sailors having parrots as pets:

"And the parrot would say, with great rapidity, 'Pieces of eight! pieces of eight! pieces of eight!' till you wondered that it was not out of breath, or till John threw his handkerchief over the cage." (Stevenson 1883: 81)	"Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!" […] Gonzo: "But I thought sailors had talking parrots as pets." Silver: "Talking parrots?" Polly: "Heh! What an imagination. First pirates, now talking parrots?" (*Muppet Treasure Island* 1996, 25:05-25:23)

- on the novelistic journey of the *Hispaniola* Silver and his crew become the mutineers with only one plan in mind: to murder everyone else and keep the treasure for themselves. On the island, Jim hides into the woods and encounters the marooned Ben Gunn, a former member of Captain Flint's crew;
  on the cinematographic *Hispaniola* the atmosphere becomes full of tension after some members of the crew are discovered to be pirates kidnapping and torturing the poor Gonzo and Rizzo. Captain Smollett feels threatened and locks the treasure map in his cabin. When the *Hispaniola* reaches the island, Captain Smollett leaves Silver and his crew of pirates on the island in order to have by his side on the ship only his loyal travel companions. However, Silver takes Jim hostage as a way to gain power over the captain. Consequently, Captain Smollett, Gonzo and Rizzo come to the rescue but are held captive by the native tribes of pigs, whose queen is Benjamina Gunn, Captain Smollett's former lover. The two are finally reunited;
  Therefore, the boars on the island are replaced by the native tribes of pigs and while it is true that in the novel Ben Gunn is not Captain Smollett's former lover, Benjamina Gunn has, indeed, a connection to Captain Flint, just like the original story makes it clear. Ben Gunn – and consequently, Benjamina Gunn – are the *deus ex machina* of the story, as Daiches hereto comments:

> Stevenson has used one of the favourite recipes of writers of adventure stories: he has set the protagonists alone on an uninhabited island. The recipe requires, however, that one new character be introduced on the island, some unexpected and unpredictable character who will be able to play a *deus ex machina* part in the plot if necessary. Such a character is Ben Gunn, who plays a minor yet decisive role in the story. His unknown history and unforeseeable actions prevent the story from degenerating into a mere conflict between good and bad characters of which the outcome can be calculated in advance.
> (Daiches 1947: 45-46)

The remaining part of the film – approximately the last 20-30 minutes – does not present out-of-the-ordinary variations, thus, keeping its link to the source text as effectively as possible. In both Stevenson's novelistic work and its related cinematographic adaptation the reader/spectator discerns a sequence of alternating truces and attacks between Captain Smollett's 'good' crew of sailors and Long John Silver's 'bad' crew of pirates. Eventually,

they all find the treasure cache; however, its contents prove to be absent as Ben Gunn had previously located and safeguarded the treasure within his cavern. As might be expected, this unfortunate event once again gives rise to hostilities and conflicts between both crews, culminating in Silver emerging as the sole survivor.

As far as the ending is concerned, it slightly deviates from the original at two key points:

1. Silver's perseverance in getting away with the treasure – or even with a part of it – even under unfavourable circumstances is a common feature of both works. However, in the novel Silver manages to steal a bag of money and escape; in the film his vain attempts to steal the treasure and load it onto his ship only result in him being marooned on the island due to the unseaworthiness of his ship;
2. in both works the rest of the crew members sail back to Bristol but while in the novel the treasure previously loaded onto the *Hispaniola* is equally divided among them – "All of us had an ample share of the treasure, and used it wisely or foolishly, according to our natures" (Stevenson 1883: 291) –, in the film the treasure is retrieved from the ocean by a group of rat tourists engaging in scuba diving.

All the core features of *Muppet Treasure Island* that have been hitherto underscored in this chapter are of great help in order to draw the most well-defined conclusion, that is, that "taking these moments from the novel and transposing them into Muppet-style not only makes the film ring true as an adaptation, but also allows it to keep its namesake style" (Manente 2021). *Muppet Treasure Island* received, in fact, generally positive reviews for its witty humour, music and the Muppets' unique take on the classic tale. "Blending the real world with puppetry magic," – Gilliam states – "*Muppet Treasure Island* seamlessly creates a vibrant and immersive pirate universe" (2023) showcasing a riveting blend of puppetry and live-action that ensures ample entertainment for viewers across different age groups.

CHAPTER THREE:
FROM GOTHIC ALLEYS TO ANIMATED REALMS

In his 1895 lecture at the Royal Institution of London, English scholar Sir Walter Alexander Raleigh (1861-1922) portrayed Stevenson as “a finished literary craftsman, who had served his period of apprenticeship and was playing with his tools” (Raleigh 1904: 13) and defined his “romantic ability” (45) as “a piece that his own childhood never ended” (46). This perception of Stevenson as a boy who never grew up is deeply rooted, as Reid notes, in “the critical turn against Stevenson soon after his death, when he became remembered chiefly as a children’s author” (Reid 2010: 41). Yet this idea of his everlasting boyhood does not necessarily have to be approached in a negative way for it allows his writings to be mostly concerned with childhood imagination.

As it has been previously mentioned in chapter two, Stevenson had a vivid imagination that continued to be nurtured by exposure to various forms of reading. Indeed, Stevenson laid great stress upon the importance of reading and the pleasure derived from it; yet at the same time ‘reading for pleasure’ was always accompanied by a certain preoccupation for the actual cost of that gained pleasure, and how it ethically affected the reader. To this end, Fielding asserts that

> the problem of the cost of things runs throughout his writing: the price Henry Jekyll pays for his experiment in morality (he mistakenly believes the potion will separate out his good and evil sides) is his life; Jim Hawkins pays for his share of the treasure with the nightmares of the ‘accursed’ island that continue to haunt him as an adult; the parabolic tale ‘The Bottle Imp’ threatens to set the cost of the satisfaction of desire at eternal damnation.
> (Fielding 2010: 4)

It is, however, in the very act of reading that Stevenson identifies the main *locus* for the preservation and perpetration of those childhood modes of engagement that should not be outgrown: his statement “fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child” (Stevenson in Phelps 1906: 114) strengthens his relevance in the process of theorising children’s curiosity and propensity for play.

The long history of debates on the nature of childhood traces back to the Romanticism. The Romantics, in fact, started to question – and later criticise – their Enlightenment

predecessors who firmly believed that the child was a part of the natural worldly order. And it was, indeed, the Romantic Age and the following evolutionary theories pioneered by Charles Darwin that laid the foundations for the development of the science of child psychology, i.e. "the study of the psychological processes of children and, specifically, how these processes differ from those of adults, how they develop from birth to the end of adolescence, and how and why they differ from one child to the next" (Britannica 2023/a). For instance, by affirming that "the natural being is the untutored child" (Irvine 2010: 31), it becomes evident how the perception of childhood drastically changed from the Age of Enlightenment; this transformation now embraced an idealisation of childhood innocence, coupled with a vision of childhood as a recreation of primitive life. As observed by Julia Reid, in this atmosphere of change "Stevenson's thoughts were influential, and this was perhaps because evolutionist ideas about play and the imagination stood at the heart of the new child psychology" (Reid 2010: 42). Undoubtedly, the most influential work of the period in this field is *Studies of Childhood* (1896) by the English psychologist – and Stevenson's friend – James Sully (1842-1923). His *Studies*, as Sully himself affirms in the preface of his book, "are not a complete treatise on child-psychology, but merely deal with certain aspects of children's minds which happen to have come under my notice, and to have had a special interest for me" (Sully 1896: v). Sully argues not only that children's play is "the working out into visible shape of an inner fancy" (35) but also that what fuels their imagination is "the fundamental impulse of play, the desire to be something, to act a part" (36). Therefore, "the child's 'acting' is an unconscious art. The impulse to be something […] absorbs the child and makes him forget his real surroundings and his actual self" (38). It is impossible not to notice how Freud's theories on the conscious/unconscious echo in Sully's work. As a matter of fact, what Sully suggests is that children preserve 'primitive' impulses and behaviours that are concealed in adults due to societal and moral constraints:

> Child thought, like primitive folk-thought, is saturated with myth, vigorous phantasy holding the hand of reason — as yet sadly rickety in his legs — and showing him which way he should take. In the moral life again, we shall see how easily the realising force of young imagination may expose it to deception by others, and to self-deception too, with results that closely simulate the guise of a knowing falsehood.
> (Sully 1896: 28)

Most certainly, all these elements not only rapidly increased the development of children's imagination, will and instinct – now seen as natural processes detached from moral principles –, but also became the main topics of discussion in several debates on children's literature.

These debates enquired on the suitability of literary materials addressed to a young audience. After the 1870 Elementary Education Act that "established a system of 'school boards' to build and manage schools in areas where they were needed" (UK Parliament, n.d.), and the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act that "provided for the establishment of a Board of Education for Scotland and for local school boards to maintain elementary and secondary schools, set out arrangements for the appointment and employment of teachers, and made elementary education compulsory" (Gillard 2019), literary genres such as fairy tales or nursery rhymes that were previously disapproved of, were now not only approved but also encouraged.

And it is in this revolutionary climate that Stevenson's writing on and for children can be inserted. His primary concern revolved around the significance attributed to childhood imagination which was for him "a survival from 'savage' times" (Reid 2010: 43-44) and was represented "ambivalently, as either invigoratingly primitive or dangerously morbid" (43): on the one hand, the 'invigoratingly primitive' representation culminates in 1878 with the publication of *Child's Play*, an essayistic work on the celebration of the childhood primitive heritage which survives in the adult in romance form. Stevenson's statement that "it is when we make castles in the air and personate the leading character in our own romances, that we return to the spirit of our first years" (Stevenson in Fowler 1925: 140) can be definitely interpreted as a forerunner of later Freudian concepts of the unconscious. In a 1907 informal talk, published in 1908 under the title *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming*, Freud affirms that "the growing child […] instead of *playing*, he now *phantasies*. He builds castles in the air and creates what are called day-dreams" (Freud in Gay 1995: 438); on the other hand, the 'dangerously morbid' representation is to be found in Stevenson's acclaimed collection of poetry specifically designed for children, *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885). Indeed, the poems of the *Garden* evoke childhood yet childhood is to be intended as a reconstruction of the past from an adult perspective. To this matter, David Daiches defines the poems of the *Garden* as "a deliberate attempt on Stevenson's part to recapture the sights, sounds and emotions of his childhood, made at

the time when the peace he had finally achieved with his family sent him back to explore those recollections which hitherto he had, in some degree, been forced to suppress" (Daiches 1947: 181-182). Hence, as it might be expected, the childhood evoked in the poems is marked by illness, over-stimulation and over-imagination, thus, affecting the already vulnerable child and leading to manifestations of irritability and a sense of isolation.

Stevenson's emphasis on the childhood experience aligns with the psychological and unconscious connections prioritised by 19th-century childhood theories and culminated with 20th-century Freudian notions. During this period, childhood began to be perceived "in an increasingly positive light" (Georgieva 2011: 80), as observed by Georgieva, who notes the emerging idea that in childhood "the concepts of imagination, sensibility and nature are joined in one" (80). Furthermore, the Freudian-psychological approach closely links childhood theory to Gothic literature, a connection extensively explored in Margarita Georgieva's book *The Gothic Child* (2011), in which she examines how Gothic literature influences the representation of childhood and the subsequent interpretation of Gothic themes by children.

The first section will further explain the link between childhood theory and Gothic literature, providing a general overview of Gothic fiction and of Stevenson's most acclaimed novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). The novella will be taken into analysis mainly focusing on its belonging to the Gothic genre and on its early anticipation of 20th century Freudian notions of the uncanny.

The second section will outline the main principles of the theory of animation and analyse Stevenson's novella in relation to its cartoon version produced and distributed by Burbank Films Australia and first publicly aired in 1986, likely in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Stevenson's immortal work.

1. Gothic literature and the urban novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886)

The advent of Gothic fiction occurred during the 1790s; nevertheless, it experienced periodic revivals in the centuries that followed. Gothic literature typically employed "dark and picturesque scenery, startling and melodramatic narrative devices, and an overall

atmosphere of exoticism, mystery, fear, and dread" (Kennedy 2020) and, as Botting states in the introduction to his book *Gothic* (1996), "Gothic signifies a writing of excess. It appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth-century rationality and morality. It shadows the despairing ecstasies of Romantic idealism and individualism and the uncanny dualities of Victorian realism and decadence" (Botting 1996: 1). By experimenting with narrative and stylistic elements, Gothic writers investigated the complexity of human consciousness in order to portray human beings as realistically as possible, that is, "human beings in their involuted individuality as well as in the intricacies of their social relations" (Arata 2010: 54). Moreover, in light of that previously mentioned intertwined relationship between childhood theory and Gothic literature, Georgieva also highlights that "Gothic authors became concerned both with the untainted innocence and the potential corruptibility of the child" (Georgieva 2011: 64). Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that child psychology and Gothic fiction share common thematic elements such as fear, mystery, and imagination. In Gothic literature, childhood is often depicted as a moment of vulnerability and discovery, wherein children confront a dark and mysterious outside world. Similarly, child psychology explores how children interpret and react to Gothic elements, and examines how these experiences may impact their cognitive and emotional development.

In the matter of the beforementioned 'writing of excess', Stevenson chose to distance himself from it and instead characterised his Gothic writing with restraint. In his essay *A Note on Realism* (1883), Stevenson himself claimed that "the artist […] must suppress much and omit more. He must omit what is tedious or irrelevant, and suppress what is tedious and necessary" (Stevenson in Phelps 1918: 250-251). Remaining faithful to his statement, Stevenson steers clear of stylistic and thematic excesses and instead maximises the use of silence and subtlety allowing his Gothic fiction to be more focused upon "the strangeness of what we like to call 'normal' consciousness" (Arata 2010: 55).

The last decades of the 19th century witnessed a profound interconnection between Gothic literature and Freudian philosophy with an increasing interest in the human psyche that eventually gave rise to the new science of psychology. With no doubt, Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) represents a significant cornerstone in the field; as Freud himself asserts: "it is merely necessary to observe that our doctrine is not based upon the estimates of the obvious dream-content, but relates to

the thought-content, which, in the course of interpretation, is found to lie behind the dream" (Freud 1900 [1899]: 45). To this end, Freud distinguishes two different contents which are parts of the dream: the manifest content, i.e. the dream as it is remembered consciously, and the latent content, i.e. the unconscious hidden meaning that lies behind the conscious dream. And this is precisely the reason why in dreams, our true selves are most completely unveiled.

Throughout his life, Stevenson was already intrigued by the psychic mechanisms by which uneasiness towards ordinary objects or occurrences is developed and consequently attached to; the 'uneasiness' Stevenson mentions is later associated in dream analysis by Freud to a process of displacement that happens as a "manifestation of dream-distortion" (81):

> In this process it is as though, in the course of the intermediate steps, a displacement occurs—let us say, of the psychic accent—until ideas of feeble potential, by taking over the charge from ideas which have a stronger initial potential, reach a degree of intensity which enables them to force their way into consciousness.
> (Freud 1900 [1899]: 81)

Stevenson as a forerunner of later Freudian concepts of the unconscious has already been mentioned for the 'invigoratingly primitive' representation of childhood which reached its most explicit form in his essay *Child's Play* (1878). Yet, in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Stevenson anticipates Freud once again in terms of uncanniness. The concept of the uncanny has been developed and theorised by the father of the psychoanalysis only in his 1919 influential essay entitled, as a matter of fact, *The Uncanny*. Freud defines it as "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud 2003 [1919]: 124). According to him, in fiction, the uncanniness can only be inserted within the realistic context, thus, obliging the story-teller to make a choice, either to deviate from reality or to become its mirror:

> Among the many liberties that the creative writer can allow himself is that of choosing whether to present a world that conforms with the reader's familiar reality or one that in some way deviates

> from it. […] Not so, however, if the writer has to all appearances taken up his stance on the ground of common reality.
> (Freud 2003 [1919]: 156)

Indeed, uncanny effects manifest as an inherent characteristic of Gothic literature which operates within the framework of realism. In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Stevenson evokes the second Freudian approach making it "a good instance of a Gothic work whose episodes of uncanniness emerge from 'the ground of common reality'" (Arata 2010: 57). The uncanniness in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is not merely represented within the text; rather, it is an effect generated by the text itself; for instance, the large mirror that "was brought there [in Jekyll's laboratory] later on and for the very purpose of these transformations [into Hyde]" (Stevenson 1886: 112) represents the 'unconscious' side of the story, that is, what the story is 'aware' of but refrains from explicitly articulate, in this case, Jekyll's secret that was meant to remain undisclosed but is now revealed. In the chapter entitled "The Last Night", when Poole and Utterson are searching the entire laboratory hoping to find a trace of Jekyll, they are 'involuntarily horrified' by the mirror – "the searchers came to the cheval glass, into whose depths they looked with an involuntary horror" (87) – due to its unusual placement within a scientific laboratory.

Hence, through the intentional contrast between the content and the style of his novella, Stevenson creates a unique uncanny effect, inviting the interpretation of *Jekyll and Hyde* as more of a psychological drama.

As mentioned in the second chapter, although Stevenson's written production has been extremely rich and prolific, he is mainly remembered and celebrated for the adventure novel *Treasure Island* (1883) and the urban Gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).

The novella has been acclaimed for "the striking nature of its theme and the picturesque boldness with which it is treated" (Daiches 1947: 13) and which make it "a rough-hewn and crude piece of work" (13) with an extremely well-managed narrative. "That man is not truly one, but truly two" (Stevenson 1886: 108) is perhaps the easiest utterance to summarise the central idea in Stevenson's enduring fictional work. As a matter of fact, Saposnik observes that

> no work of Stevenson's has been so popular or so harmed by its popularity as *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). As pulpit oratory, as a starring vehicle on stage and screen, as a colloquial metaphor for the good-evil antithesis that lurks in all men, [however,] it has become the victim of its own success, allowing subsequent generations to take the translation for the original, to see Jekyll or Hyde where one should see Jekyll-Hyde.
> (Saposnik 1974: 88)

The apparent simplicity of this short story belies its underlying complexity as it unfolds into a psychological drama disguised as a romance. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* serves, in fact, as a model example of his transition from the romantic to the dramatic phase of his career. In *A Gossip on Romance* (1882), Stevenson writes that "drama is the poetry of conduct, romance the poetry of circumstance" (Stevenson in Phelps 1906: 103); in other words, while romance lacks predictability and moral implications, drama requires a more heightened psychological sensitivity for a deeper and more accurate exploration of the human psyche. Thus, Stevenson's narrative evolution parallels his embrace of the nuanced complexities related to dramatic storytelling. For example, the romantic effect is evident in the decisions – and in the motives that fuelled them – taken by Jekyll. These decisions are described with speed and boldness directing the reader's focus solely only on the action itself rather than on its connection to the characters or the surrounding environment. The narrative of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* does not, then, present a close linkage of incidents to the environment; instead, it is measured upon the characters' actions and, most importantly, relies upon the narration of those very actions. To this matter, Saposnik argues that "unlike conventional narratives in which the action usually develops with a continuous depiction of incidents, the matter of *Jekyll and Hyde* ends only after the several incidents have been illuminated by subjective comment" (Saposnik 1974: 93-94). Saposnik's argument takes its most explicit form in Jekyll's final narrative that reveals – and explains – his secret experiment but can also be noticed in the following passages:

> And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot, and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly

shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maid fainted.
(Stevenson 1886: 36-37)

[Utterson] was shocked at the change which had taken place in the doctor's appearance. He had his death-warrant written legibly upon his face. The rosy man had grown pale; his flesh had fallen away; he was visibly balder and older; […] And yet when Utterson remarked on his ill-looks, it was with an air of great firmness that Lanyon declared himself a doomed man. 'I have had a shock,' he said, 'and I shall never recover. It is a question of weeks. Well, life has been pleasant; I liked it; yes, sir, I used to like it. I sometimes think if we knew all, we should be gladder to get away.'
(Stevenson 1886: 56-57)

'Why then,' said the lawyer, good-naturedly, 'the best thing we can do is to stay down here and speak with you from where we are.' 'That is just what I was about to venture to propose,' returned the doctor with a smile. But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They saw it but for a glimpse, for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word.
(Stevenson 1886: 64)

These three passages are extracted from three different chapters, namely 'The Carew Murder Case', 'Incident of Dr. Lanyon' and 'Incident at the Window', and respectively feature a narrative balance between the maid servant's witnessing of Sir Danvers Carew's brutal murder at the hands of Hyde, Dr. Lanyon's despairing and lamentable condition after the quarrel with Dr. Jekyll, and Dr. Jekyll's gradual inability to control the metamorphosis process.

Already underscored by Daiches, the extremely well-managed narrative and the consequent formal complexity of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* have been taken into analysis by Saposnik, too, who stated that

as a narrative, it is the most intricately structured of Stevenson's stories; as a fable, it represents a classic touchstone of Victorian sensibilities. […] With characteristic haste, it plunges immediately into the centre of Victorian society to dredge up a creature ever present but submerged; not the evil opponent of a contentious good but the shadow self of a half man.
(Saposnik 1974: 88-89)

By adeptly employing duality as both a structural and thematic device, Stevenson manages to transcend mere juxtapositions of moral contrasts or physical elements. This duality, in fact, mirrors that inevitable and consuming sense of division experienced by the Victorians, elucidated at length in the final chapter entitled 'Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case'[1]:

> I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. […] and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature. […] With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. […] I, for my part, from the nature of my life, advanced infallibly in one direction and in one direction only. It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved daydream, on the thought of the separation of these elements.
> (Stevenson 1886: 106-109)

By exposing and explaining the events that occurred, Dr. Jekyll's final statement represents not only an appropriate conclusion to the story but also the climax of the multiple-narrative technique, thus, directing its structure towards "an often inadvertent self-revelation which proves conclusively that his selfishness and moral cowardice released the horrible personification of his hidden drives" (Saposnik 1974: 95).

If the beforementioned romantic side of the story plays a considerable part in Stevenson's Gothic work with its lack of predictability and morality, it would be improper not to acknowledge its interconnection with the dramatic side, too, fraught with moral depth and symbolic topography. Besides belonging to the Gothic genre, *Jekyll and Hyde* is an urban novella, too; it is, in fact, set in modern London and peopled entirely with

[1] It is interesting to notice Stevenson's precise choice of words: 'statement' and 'case' are two terms generally associated with the legal world.

English male characters.[2] It has been, however, argued that Edinburgh would have been a more proper setting for "there is something decidedly Caledonian about Dr. Jekyll; and especially something that calls up that quality in Edinburgh that led an unkind observer (probably from Glasgow) to describe it as 'an east-windy, west-endy place'" (Chesterton 1927: 69). Nonetheless, the city of London represented with no doubt the geographic and symbolic centre par excellence and the ideal *locus classicus* of Victorian conduct: "London was much like its inhabitants, a macrocosm of the necessary fragmentation that Victorian man found inescapable. Unlike Edinburgh with its stark division of Old Town and New, London represented that division-within-essential-unity which is the very meaning of *Jekyll and Hyde*" (Saposnik 1974: 89).

Moreover, the symbolic topography encompasses the central metaphor of the story, i.e. the 'doubleness' of Jekyll's house. Starting from its entrances, Jekyll's house has got two doors: the back door, through which Hyde usually walks in and out, and the front door, "which wore a great air of wealth and comfort" (Stevenson 1886: 26); in addition to this, Jekyll's house offers a dynamic contrast between the exterior, characterised by social strolls and terrible crimes, and the interior, with its elegant living rooms and secret laboratories. Hence, it is no coincidence that the very first chapter is entitled 'Story of the Door', shifting the reader's attention to the mysteries and the deception concealed behind it: "'Did you ever remark that door?' he asked; and when his companion had replied in the affirmative, 'It is connected in my mind', added he, 'with a very odd story'" (5). Even what the reader is later going to identify as Jekyll's home is depicted in the first chapter with images of the aged and vandalised door:

> Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point, a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and

[2] The decision to not have any female characters is not something that goes unnoticed. Despite being governed by Queen Victoria, the Victorian Era revolved around a male-centered culture. On account of this, Stevenson wilfully dictated that a story specifically addressed to Victorian morals should have been narrated from a male point of view. Hence, the four predominant male characters embody the best prototypes of Victorian gentlemanliness and are all professionally designated from the very beginning of the narrative action: "Mr. Utterson the lawyer" (Stevenson 1886: 1), "Mr Richard Enfield, the well-known man about town" (3), and the two doctors, Dr. Jekyll and "the great Dr. Lanyon" (16).

> distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.
> (Stevenson 1886: 4-5)

In his book *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism: a Future Feeling* (1996), Alan Sandison investigates the symbolic potential of this single piece of domestic architecture associating it with later Modernist trends: "the chapter-heading teases us with a question: is the door subject or object? […] we could reply that if it could rightly be said to be either, it is only because it is radically both. And what could be more modernist?" (Sandison 1996: 216). The door is apparently always shut, yet in the unfolding of the events are inserted several hints to an alleged key in the hands of a mystery man: as a matter of fact, Mr. Enfield himself, in the narration of his story, claims that "'The fellow had a key; and what's more, he has it still. I saw him use it, not a week ago.'" (Stevenson 1886: 13). The supposed key, however, does not reveal any secrets but is found broken in two inside Jekyll's laboratory. To this end, Sandison argues that "the broken key has much the same function as the door, which, when broken down, reveals only the dead body of Hyde" (Sandison 1996: 220). Most certainly, all these fictional dead-end components contribute to the inscrutability of the story, a "bad story" (Stevenson 1886: 9), as Mr. Enfield defines it, that is "far from explaining all" (10) and that only leads to other undisclosed stories in the fictional labyrinth created by Stevenson. Even when Mr. Enfield says "'that story's at an end at least. We shall never see more of Mr. Hyde'" (62), not only does the reader understand that the story is definitely not at an end, but also that the figure of Mr. Hyde is expected to reappear.

Sandison identifies yet another narrative aspect in *Jekyll and Hyde* that could be, indeed, linked to later Modernist trends, that is, the representation of the city; a city that features "double standards, a lascivious and disorderly subterranean life, and a preoccupation with façades and frontages" (Sandison 1996: 225). And it is precisely because "the city is far from being mere background to the tale: to the contrary, it is a very active presence – or *presences* for it has multiple voices, some of them altogether menacing" (226) that Stevenson's urban portrayal of the city overcomes the humanising precepts of Realism to align itself with Modernist pluralism. As Malcolm Bradbury explicates:

> Modernism seems to substitute for the 'real' city – that materially dominant environment of sweat-shops and hotels, shop-windows and expectation, that Zola or Dreiser, for example, convey so well as the total field of action for human will and desire – the 'unreal' city, the theatre of licence and fantasy, strange self-hoods in strange juxtapositions that Dostoyevsky and Baudelaire, Conrad and Eliot, Biely and Dos Passos convey as an unresolved and plural impression. The modern urban novel, Raymond Williams tells us, reveals an awareness 'intense and fragmentary, subjective only, yet in the very form of its subjectivity including others who are now with the buildings, the noises, the sights and smells of the city parts of this single and racing consciousness' (Williams 1970: 164). Realism humanizes, naturalism scientizes, but Modernism pluralizes, and surrealizes.
> (Bradbury 1976: 99)

Among all the focal elements that have been hitherto taken into analysis, the one that must be strongly acknowledged when approaching Stevenson's major Gothic novella is, to resume Saposnik's initial observation, that one should see Jekyll-Hyde instead of seeing Jekyll or Hyde. This particular aspect had been, in fact, already highlighted by Chesterton in his biography of Stevenson:

> The real stab of the story is not in the discovery that the one man is two men; but in the discovery that the two men are one man. After all the diverse wandering and warring of those two incompatible beings, there was still only one man born and one man buried. […] The point of the story is not that a man *can* cut himself off from his conscience, but that he cannot. The surgical operation is fatal in the story. It is an amputation of which both the parts die.
> (Chesterton 1927: 72-73)

The following section will lay the foundations on animation film theory and will discuss the selected adaptation of Stevenson's work. Its homonymous cartoon version will be analysed in terms of faithfulness to the original, visual and auditory elements, potential clarifications, and how it caters to its targeted audience.

2. Animation theory and practice: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*'s (1986) cartoon version

In the first chapter of his book, *Understanding Animation* (1998), Paul Wells prompts the reader to consider that "to animate, and the related words, animation, animated and

animator all derive from the Latin verb, *animare*, which means ‘to give life to’, and within the context of the animated film, this largely means the artificial creation of the illusion of movement in inanimate lines and forms” (Wells 1998: 10). Therefore, the term ‘animation’ has to be understood as a technical process. To this end, in *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (2012), Kuhn and Westwell provide the following definitions of the term ‘animation’:

> 1. The use of a range of non-photographic methods, including hand drawing, silhouette animation, cel-animation, model work (known as stop motion animation), and computer animation to create film images. The effect of movement is simulated through making slight progressive changes from one frame to the next.
> 2. Films produced using animation techniques, often given the label **cartoons**, and aimed at a young audience.
>
> (Kuhn and Westwell 2012: 11)

The origins and the consequent development of the animated form are not as recent as one might think: as a matter of fact, they can be traced back to the 1st century BC as attested by the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius who, in his philosophical work *De Rerum Natura*, described a mechanism through which hand-drawn moving images were displayed on a screen. Subsequently, in the 16th century, Europe witnessed the emergence of the flipbook, i.e. “a book of drawings which change only gradually through the book, intended to be made to seem animated by flipping pages rapidly” (Collins Dictionary/b, n.d.), thus, providing a medium shift from the act of ‘drawing’ to that of ‘looking’. The late 1890s saw the establishment of comic – or cartoon – strips, i.e. “a short series of funny drawings with a small amount of writing, often published in a newspaper” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Comic strips represented a medium of great importance, not only for their early contributions to the lexicon of cartoon films (e.g. using a light bulb to represent an idea, a balloon puff to express a thought, or onomatopoeias like ‘Zap!’ and ‘Pow!’) but also for their increasing popularity, which ultimately made them the primary sources for the adaptation into animated films (see Wells 1998: 11, 17). Nonetheless, the term ‘cartoon’ has not always been associated with the animated film: during the Middle Ages, ‘cartoon’ was used to categorise artistic techniques such as frescoes, mosaics and tapestries; during the 19th century, it was a reference to the

humorous and satirical cartoons published on the *Punch*, a British weekly magazine founded in 1841. It was only with the advent of the cinematographic medium in the early 20th century that the term ‘cartoon’ assumed the connotation we are all familiar with (see Becker 1959: 2).

Wells also investigated the issues related to realism in both live-action and animated films. Starting from the fact that reality is subjective, Wells argues that while live-action films are more likely to be questioned for their verisimilitude, the field of animation is already a medium embodying a self-evident and organising principle: “Animation does not share the same method and approach of the live-action film. Rather, it prioritises its capacity to *resist* ‘realism’ as a mode of representation and uses its various techniques to create numerous styles which are fundamentally *about* ‘realism’” (Wells 1998: 25). However, American film historian William Moritz (1941-2004) proposed an alternative perspective that viewed animation as an experimental abstractism: “No animation film that is not non-objective and/or non-linear can really qualify as true animation, since the conventional linear representational story has long since been far better done in live-action” (Moritz 1988: 21). Hence, Moritz makes a distinction between the use and development of the distinctive lexicon of animation and any alternative styles or approaches to filmmaking.

It is generally acknowledged that animated films are primarily targeted at a young audience. For this reason, they often feature happy endings, didactic messages and flat characters so that the children’s appreciation of the film is weighed upon their aesthetic values (suffice it to think of Disney classics such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950) or *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), to name just a few). Nevertheless, animated films are not exclusively targeted at children but have, indeed, reached audiences of all ages. It is evident that adults have a different approach to these films, frequently interacting with them at a subconscious level. For instance, a family-friendly film can serve as an ‘escape hatch’ from the chaotic demands of daily adult life and can evoke a nostalgic reminder of the carefree nature of childhood; additionally, they impart valuable life lessons to all audiences regardless of age or experience. However, adults may find themselves particularly drawn to the morals due to their age and accumulated life experiences; they also are able to grasp the layer of more discreet and mature humour subtly embedded between the lines.

Moreover, these subconscious interactions can be implemented through three main ways of engagement, namely:

1. intertextuality: "animated films make many allusions to other films, some animated, some not and often, many which children will not be familiar with. These references are sometimes used to create humour" (Hairianto 2014) and include specific allusions to characters, actors and even subtle musical cues;
2. references to world knowledge:

> Animated films are also created based on existing structures or assumed prior knowledge on the part of the audience. This is done through the use of stereotypes and archetypes, which the audience is presumed to be familiar with to provide a more complete understanding of the films. When characters, which physically embody these stereotypes or the archetypes themselves, are introduced, an informed audience will be able to immediately identify the inherent qualities associated to the characters without the filmmakers having to explicitly reveal them.
> (Hairianto 2014)

3. language use: in animated films, language "is manipulated to speak in a seemingly unequivocal way to children, while, in actuality, also communicating with adults in a significant different manner" (Hairianto 2014). This is accomplished through the use of word-play (e.g. puns and sexual innuendos), cultural slang, and sarcasm — subtle details that children may not grasp.

Considering all factors, the world of animation targets both youthful and adult audiences. However, while children primarily derive enjoyment from the overt and straightforward aspects, adults appreciate the nuances presented in these films. Such subtleties demand a more mature mindset and a broader understanding of worldly knowledge.

After establishing the fundamentals of animation theory, the focus will now shift to the animated adaptation of Stevenson's novella, exploring how animation principles are practically applied in bringing *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to life on screen.

Among Burbank Films Australia's cinematographic productions, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1986) is perhaps the most unique adaptation, presented as an animated retelling of Stevenson's classic horror tale. In the cinematographic field, its relevance stands out not

only because it is the only animated adaptation of the story but also because it remains almost entirely faithful to the original. Most certainly, it is crucial to remember that it is a cartoon that is being examined and, thus, it is addressed to a young audience. Despite the narrative complexity as Stevenson conceived it, the Burbank production company did not get discouraged and managed to render in cartoon style the Gothic novella as effectively as possible, conveying the main meanings and recurrent themes with the help of a simplified language and a streamlined plot. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a 50-minute animated film directed by Geoff Collins, with a screenplay by Marcia Hatfield and starring Max Meldrum as Dr. Jekyll, David Nettheim as Mr. Hyde and John Ewart as Mr. Utterson.

Before conducting a more detailed examination of the film, it is worth pondering upon Hyde's original appearance in the novella and its commonly misinterpreted rendition in the adaptative field. As a matter of fact, in adaptations, Hyde is usually characterised by an exaggerated monstrosity: "in many, his skin is green. He often has a humped back. He is balding – or hairy – and has crooked teeth on display on a constant leer" (Ellis 2023). Yet in the original work Mr. Enfield provides the following description of him:

> 'He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him. And it's not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment.'
> (Stevenson 1886: 12)

It is, indeed, true that Mr. Enfield depicts Hyde's appearance as something 'detestable' and that provokes a 'strong feeling of deformity' in whoever who looks at him. Yet, Hyde makes people feel unsettled because he has "some intangible quality that repulses people, but it's not anything particular about how he looks" (Ellis 2023). At the same time Mr. Enfield implicitly admits that he 'really can name nothing out of the way', meaning that Hyde presents no particularly out of the ordinary physical features. In the novella, Hyde is also portrayed as a "little man" (Stevenson 1886: 6), "small and plainly dressed" (22), "pale and with a displeasing smile" (25), significantly differing from the gigantic monster

encountered in various adaptations. With regard to this matter, the Australian cartoon version proves once again to have followed the guidelines of the original tale: the animated version of Mr. Hyde is, in fact, small, with a pale skin tone, and wears a long purple coat that almost completely covers the classic black suit beneath.

As explained in detail in the first theoretical chapter, visual and auditory elements are of extreme support to the viewing – and interpretation – of the animated film, directing the targeted audience to an accurate distinction of its themes. Some examples are the screechy scream at the very beginning of the film allowing the audience to immediately identify its genre in order to be prepared during the viewing, with the gained knowledge that it is going to be a scary and creepy story; the jazzy beat "characterised by propulsive syncopated rhythms and polyphonic ensemble playing" (Merriam-Webster/a, n.d.) playing in the opening credits but can be heard throughout the film. Jazz music often uses higher tones to make the listener feel positive emotions, hence, its employment might have been chosen to provide the film with a more lively and relaxed tone that contrasts the brutalities of the events narrated; the visually explicit way in which Hyde's coercion of Jekyll has been rendered. The intimidating words uttered by Hyde – "I have an important task for you, Jekyll. First, I want you to write a will leaving all your money to me should anything happen to you like disappearing. […] Do as I say, Jekyll! Obey your stronger self! I command you!" (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 1986, Part 1, 12:00-12:30) – are combined with a psychedelic and hypnotising effect that gradually zooms from Hyde's pale face to his compelling eyes and culminates with a flamy background in front of his impressive shadow.

As it has been highlighted, the 1986 animated adaptation of *Jekyll and Hyde* is a rather faithful adaptation compared to other retellings. Nevertheless, it is still a reinterpretation of the original Stevensonian novella and, per se, presents relevant adaptative changes that make it different and unique and, naturally, more suitable for a young audience. Some of these changes include additions and expansions.

Additions are represented by Dr. Jekyll's adorable kitten, the first witness of the doctor's transformation into Hyde. Differently from Jekyll, Hyde mistreats it by scaring it, trying to hit it or throwing dangerous objects at it. Hyde's abuse of the poor kitten hints at animal cruelty and culminates with the vague implication of its killing; and by Jekyll's concoction, in which the main ingredient that allows the final separation of the good and

evil sides is a certain pink drug. In the cartoon, it is placed inside a voluminous black sack with a red skull embroidered on it – likely to make even more evident the deadliness and toxicity of that specific ingredient. Regardless, a mouse accidentally ingests a small part of it and is subsequently transformed into a Hyde-like creature (see *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 1986, Part 1, 14:55-15:30). The added scene, however, generates what can be defined in technical terms as an adaptation-induced plot hole, i.e. "an unexplained gap between the pretence of one plot point and the contradicting result of another" (Heckmann 2021): if the pink drug is the only ingredient that causes the transformation, then the whole process of making the concoction seems unnecessary or incomplete.

Expansions are represented by the embedded state of Jekyll and Hyde's story, meaning that the producers transposed the classic literary technique of the story-within-a-story into a cinematographic framing device. As a matter of fact, in the animated film, the story is narrated as a bed-time story by a nanny to her two grandchildren. The nanny is able to recount the events because she used to work for Dr. Jekyll as a maid servant in her younger years. Just like in the original tale, she witnessed Sir Danvers Carew's murder from her window and identified Hyde as his murderer. But in the adaptation her figure is expanded not only by assigning to her the primary role of the narrator but also by naming her Annie (in Stevenson's work she remains unnamed). The only issue that seems to emerge from Annie's narration is the ambiguous time period: undoubtedly, the events take place in the Victorian era but the framing device takes place twenty years later, thus, telling the main story first and then showing the manner and purpose of its narration. Another aspect that has been expanded in the animated cartoon is the number of people Hyde murders. In the original work, Hyde murders only one man, Sir Danvers Carew, whereas in the adaptation he kills at least four or five people. The amount of murdered people at the hands of Hyde may have been increased to reinforce that idea of extreme villainy usually associated with the 'bad guy'. Therefore, both the good and the evil side are well-defined and their distinctive contrast is well-balanced: the tropes of tenderness and harshness recur in the two leading characters. Notwithstanding, in the film Dr. Jekyll is portrayed as a morally pure man who truly wishes to "remove the evil from man, the creation of the perfect human being, a being without the influence of evil, a whole society based only on good" (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 1986, Part 1, 5:11-5:26), whereas in the novella he devises the

formula with the ulterior motive of engaging in sinful acts without tarnishing his esteemed reputation.

As one might expect from an animated film, comedic elements play a fundamental part, too. Their main function is to lighten the mood and to make some scenes more acceptable for young audiences. For example: the mouse who ingested the pink drug and turned into a Hyde-like creature loses consciousness after seeing its reflection in a laboratory flask; the murders are often characterised by old-fashioned cartoony antics (e.g. when one of the victims is kidnapped by Hyde, a cloud of dust trails behind them as they move forward); Dr. Lanyon's extreme nail-biting with its typical crunchy sound effect is a humorous way to show his stress, sweat and fear. Even his reaction to the 'awful secret' – "Henry! Oh my God! It's you!" (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* 1986, Part 2, 8:41-8:46) – is of the utmost realism, thus, making him more authentic and believable.

Presenting a combination of thoughtful and child-friendly elements, the animated adaptation of Stevenson's modern myth *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) managed to find a balance between engaging contents that stimulate thinking and ideas while also being appropriate and accessible for children. This has been achieved through a careful concern for the themes, the language, the visuals, and the storytelling techniques and directly results in an experience that is both educational and enjoyable for young audiences.

CHAPTER FOUR:
FROM SOUTH SEA REALISM TO
LITERARY AND DRAMATIC ADAPTATIONS

Nearly one-third of Stevenson's professional writing career revolved around the exploration of the expansive region of the Pacific Ocean. His travels to the Pacific islands began in 1887 shortly after his father's passing, and ultimately led to his settlement in Upolu, the main island of the Samoan Islands, where he lived for only four years (1890-1894) before his premature death. One of the most notable works of Stevenson's Pacific period is the collection of travel narratives entitled *In the South Seas*, written from 1881 to 1891 and published posthumously in 1896. However, these writings were not Stevenson's initial foray into travel or travel writing. As a matter of fact, his geographical explorations and travel experiences made Stevenson the pioneer of late 19th-century travel literature, continually pushing the boundaries of the genre in terms of style and content. His experimentation reached its highest peak in *The Silverado Squatters* (1883), a travelogue chronicling his two-month honeymoon trip to Napa Valley, California, wherein he wrote "I think we all belong to many countries" (Stevenson 1883: 32). Through such words, it becomes evident that not only did Stevenson challenge the style and the content but even reshaped the very essence of travel writing, allowing it to become "a genre capable of travelling not just across place, but in inner space, and of adjusting the human relationships within which, Stevenson shows, it exists" (McCracken-Flesher 2010: 98). This reshaping of the actual meaning behind the genre originates from the dichotomy between tourist and traveller. Both terms refer to a person going to new places. However, a tourist travels for leisure, typically visiting popular attractions and destinations for a limited time period; a traveller may not come back to his starting destination for his journey is meant to explore and experience different cultures to result in a personal enrichment (see LanGeek 2020). Counterintuitive as it may seem, in the late 18th century the terms 'tourist' and 'traveller' were synonyms and used interchangeably; however, over time, the term 'tourist' began to acquire a negative connotation which culminated from the early 19th century to the 1930s, resulting in a firm opposition between the two terms (see Buzard 1993: 1). For instance, in 1849 the literary journal *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* made this distinction explicit by describing a character

as “rather a tourist than a traveller” (Vol. 40 1849: 375); in 1930 the British writer Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) wrote to his compatriots that “every Englishman abroad, until it is proved to the contrary, likes to consider himself a traveller and not a tourist” (Waugh 1930: 44). Considering that Stevenson’s travel writing was addressed not just to enthusiastic tourists but especially to future authors seeking an appropriate literary style, it is fundamental to understand that “our voyage lies not across the land, but across the shifting terrain of Robert Louis Stevenson’s mind. Stevenson himself changes through his encounter with unknown places and people, and his involved sensibility reconfigures the literary landscape for travel writing” (McCracken-Flesher 2010: 86).

Based upon the previous statements regarding the tourist/traveller dichotomy, it almost instinctively seems appropriate to label Stevenson as a traveller; yet, with the complete exclusion of the ‘tourist’ aspect comes the automatic exclusion of the social aspect as well. This occurs because Stevenson maps an “inward landscape” (87) that transcends the simple opposition between tourism and travelling and, thus, renders the literary space between the two primarily one of the mind.

Even before directly challenging travel writing, Stevenson came to realise that questioning the genre would inevitably lead to questioning the writing itself: in an 1869 letter to his mother, he attempted to describe “the grand Old Cathedral”[3] (Stevenson in Booth and Mehew 1994: 177), yet he ultimately conceded that “here I must fairly give up any hope, and my hope from the first has been feeble, to give you any idea of this delightful old church” (178). Thus, Stevenson became aware of the impossibility to wholly make descriptions using the conventional language of travel. Indeed, this is precisely why Stevenson’s depiction of the landscape does not emphasise its outward appearance but is rather focused upon the introspective perception of “a complex, unpredictable and self-critical viewer” (McCracken-Flesher 2010: 89). This is, in all respects, the ‘inward landscape’ previously mentioned.

Finding the perfect balance between the world, the text, and the reader was, undoubtedly, no easy task for Stevenson who, although trying to personally engage with his surroundings, struggled to achieve such engagement. His struggle is particularly evident in his portrayal of his birthplace, Edinburgh: as highlighted in the second chapter, Stevenson grappled with a love-hate relationship with Edinburgh – a ‘vexed relationship’

[3] i.e. St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall (Mainland, Orkney Islands).

compounded by Edinburgh's dual role as both his home and a tourist attraction. With regard to this matter, he consistently situates himself outside the city, introducing it from an external perspective supported by an infrequent first-person narration and a unique narrative style focused on discovery and exploration.

Far from his own country and continent, Stevenson gathered a wealth of material on South Sea culture, language, tradition and society. Alongside his personal impressions, these anthropological, historical and sociological elements would coalesce into what has been considered one of the finest travel books of the 1800s, *In the South Seas*. Written from 1881 to 1891 and published posthumously in 1896, *In the South Seas* is, with no doubt, a forward-looking manifesto for it already provides a clear and harsh critique on themes that would later become subjects of widespread debate. These include the exploitation of nature, the corruption of indigenous populations and the indifference of the 'civilised' world towards imperialist and colonial enterprises. The emergence of Stevenson's poignant critique is to be found in his careful and objective observations of the surrounding realities. These observations enabled him, firstly, to draw comparisons between the Scottish and English worlds and the South Sea world, and secondly, to develop a shifting perspective on the European continent. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Stevenson's encounters with 'unknown places and people' reshape both him and his writings due to the diversity – across geography and nature, people and culture – he finds himself confronting; a diversity he never imagined could exist. Nevertheless, Stevenson did not let this diversity daunt or frighten him; instead, he openly embraced and cherished it. As a result, by truly listening to "not just the landscape but the people" (McCracken-Flesher 2010: 101), Stevenson acknowledged that "for better and for worse, he made part of the human landscape" (101). This acknowledgement is precisely what compelled him to defy the conventions of traditional travel writing, "whether the bounds between writer and experience, or author and audience [...] he made the genre mobile, a site of exchange between place, persons and perceiver" (99, 101).

Most certainly, Stevenson's South Sea writings played a significant role in his re-evaluation as a writer during the late 20th century. They have been, in fact, acclaimed for their literary qualities and their exploration of universal themes. Moreover, they have left a lasting impact on literature and popular culture, inspiring numerous adaptations, analyses and interpretations. His writings have also influenced subsequent generations,

who eagerly followed in his footsteps and carried out a recent re-evaluation of his Pacific works. This re-evaluation may be attributed to Stevenson's unique case in English literature, as noted by Jolly, where he is described as "a writer transplanted, in middle age and mid-career, into an environment so alien and new to him as to constitute a perpetual challenge to his intellect, imagination and senses" (Jolly 2010: 133).

In particular, this final chapter is going to take into account Stevenson's short story *The Beach of Falesá*, firstly published in 1892 and included the following year in the collection *Island Nights' Entertainments* (also known as *South Sea Tales*). The collection comprises two other stories – namely, *The Bottle Imp* and *The Isle of Voices* – and is among the last completed works before his passing. Furthermore, the chapter will also analyse Dylan Thomas's 1963 screenplay adaptation of Stevenson's story, consequently adapted into a radio play by BBC Radio 4 in 2014.

1. "The first realistic South Sea story": *The Beach of Falesá* (1892)

Stevenson started working on his short story, *The Beach of Falesá*, from the small mountainous village of Vailima. In an 1891 letter to his friend Sir Sidney Colvin (1845-1927), Stevenson reflects his intentions and thoughts regarding its style and its portrayal of South Sea life, defining *The Beach of Falesá* as

> the first realistic South Sea story; I mean with real South Sea character and details of life. Everybody else who has tried, that I have seen, got carried away by the romance, and ended in a kind of sugar candy sham epic, and the whole effect was lost—there was no etching, no human grin, consequently no conviction. Now I have got the smell and look of the thing a good deal. You will know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale than if you had read a library.
> (Stevenson in Colvin 1917: 342-343)

This assertion has been already anticipated in his 1883 essay *A Note on Realism*. Previously mentioned in the third chapter in regard to his restrained approach to Gothic fiction, Stevenson also makes a distinction between the "tendency of the extreme of detail" (Stevenson in Phelps 1918: 248), that is, what characterises realism, and the "fundamental truth of a work of art" (249), achieved through specific means. Thus,

Stevenson emphasises the realistic quality of his story, basing it upon the successful capturing of 'real South Sea character and details of life'. Moreover, as argued by Liam Connell,

> Stevenson's willingness to interpret the stories that he was told as informative about the nature of Pacific culture seems to derive from two sources. In the first instance it is a consequence of his earnest desire to testify to the veracity of his accounts, to present himself as a reliable witness to the South Seas and a singularly gifted chronicler of what he saw there. But, perhaps more importantly, it appears to be born of a profound belief in the revelatory potential of fiction.
> (Connell 2004: 154)

Therefore, in *The Beach of Falesá* Stevenson skilfully integrates both his desire to demonstrate the truthfulness of his accounts and his view of fiction not merely as a source of entertainment but as a means of uncovering truths about aspects of Pacific culture.

Another feature worth pondering upon is Stevenson's hostility towards modern civilisation; at first, during his Pacific years, he embraced ideals associated with Romantic primitivism, characterised by "a belief in the superiority of a simple way of life close to nature and of nonindustrial society to that of the present" (Merriam-Webster/b, n.d.). These ideals fuelled his perception of indigenous and non-western populations as innocent and uncorrupted, leading to a tendency to view such cultures as more harmonious, morally pure and spiritually rich compared to modern industrialised societies. Nonetheless, as already underscored, Stevenson embraced and cherished this new kind of otherness to such an extent that he "sought to unravel the closely entwined strands of law, custom and religion in island life, and to understand the functions in civil society of religious and legal institutions" (Jolly 2010: 120). His Romantic primitivism was, therefore, replaced by functional anthropology, i.e. "a theory stressing the importance of interdependence among all behaviour patterns and institutions within a social system to its long-term survival" (Columbia Encyclopedia, n.d.). As a consequence, in comparing Pacific societies with other cultures that had not been conquered by the Romans, "his focus shifted from the evaluative (which is better, 'civilisation' or 'savagery'?) to the functional (how does a custom or institution function within a society and to what effect?)" (Jolly 2010: 120).

The Pacific, with its array of social and natural phenomena, deeply stimulated Stevenson's imagination and productiveness. This influence prompted him to explore non-fictional literary forms such as travel writing, personal essay and cultural criticism. Thus, upon his encounter with this 'new and alien environment', Stevenson's identity as a writer transcends the realm of fiction, marking a significant professional transformation in his authorship.

On the one hand, social features include traditional indigenous societies, colonialism, existing political structures between Pacific nations and world powers, and the bustling contact zones of trade between whites and islanders. Indeed, the mutual reciprocity in the buying and selling of material goods among members of different societies was the pivotal mechanism that regulated most facets of Pacific life. They exchanged tropical products such as coffee, cacao, copra (dried coconut meat), pearls and shells, as well as manufactured goods such as jewellery, cotton print, metal tools and machines.

On the other hand, natural features encompass the islands' morphology, with their tropical climate, flourishing vegetation and invigorating ocean. The distinctive physical features of the Pacific islands are just as relevant as the social aspects in stimulating Stevenson's imagination and contributing to his consequent writings. For instance, the opening of *The Beach of Falesá* reads as follows:

> I saw that island first when it was neither night nor morning. The moon was to the west, setting, but still broad and bright. To the east, and right amidships of the dawn, which was all pink, the daystar sparkled like a diamond. The land breeze blew in our faces, and smelt strong of wild lime and vanilla: other things besides, but these were the most plain; and the chill of it set me sneezing. I should say I had been for years on a low island near the line, living for the most part solitary among natives. Here was a fresh experience: even the tongue would be quite strange to me; and the look of these woods and mountains, and the rare smell of them, renewed my blood.
> (Stevenson 1893: 1)

From this brief introductory passage, several elements emerge: the detailed descriptions provide a sensory framework within which the reader becomes completely immersed; Stevenson's understanding of the geography of Pacific islands – in particular, the distinction between low (coral) islands and high (volcanic) islands – allows the reader to grasp all the different elements of a vast range of natural environments; and his

exploration of ways of life and states of mind, leading him to perceive every new island as a new world, as a 'fresh experience' (see Jolly 2010: 118-133).

In addition to all the natural peculiarities that have been hitherto discussed, it is also important to highlight another aspect of Stevenson's Pacific life that powerfully impacted his imagination: his final settlement in the small mountainous village of Vailima. Interestingly, it was Stevenson himself who made the deliberate choice to reside not by the beach, but near the forest instead. This decision sort of unlocked a dual perception of the wilderness for Stevenson, operating on two parallel levels: the natural and the supernatural. While Stevenson was genuinely astounded by the fertility of the tropical wilderness on the natural level, on the supernatural level, this astoundment could easily transform into fear and horror, amplified by the majestic nature of the woodland landscape. Stevenson's dual experience of the wilderness in Vailima embodies two fundamental categories of 19th-century sensibility: the sublime and the beautiful. This distinction, attributed to the Anglo-Irish politician and philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797), is elucidated in his highly influential treatise entitled *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), providing the following definitions for the sublime and the beautiful:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a force of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience.
> (Burke 1757: 13-14)

> I call beauty a social quality; for where women and men, and not only they, but when other animals give us a sense of joy and pleasure in beholding them, (and there are many that do so) they inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons; we like to have them near us, and we enter willingly into a kind of relation with them, unless we should have strong reasons to the contrary.
> (Burke 1757: 18-19)

In short, according to Burke, the sublime evokes a feeling of tension through the contemplation of danger, leading to a reaction of delight, whereas the beautiful elicits a feeling of quiet through the experience of harmony, resulting in a reaction of pleasure. Therefore, Stevenson's experience of the wilderness in Vailima encompasses elements of both the sublime and the beautiful. The lush and fertile nature environment represents qualities that are pleasing, harmonious and serene, which are characteristics of Burke's notion of the beautiful. Yet, at the same time, the physical properties of the forest evoke feelings of astonishment and awe in Stevenson, which align with Burke's concept of the sublime as something vast, powerful and potentially overwhelming. In Stevenson's case, the supernatural level is also heightened by the local legends attached to the forest. Notwithstanding, both levels are reflected in *The Beach of Falesá* and are experienced by Wiltshire, the story's narrator and main protagonist. Upon his arrival on the fictional island of Falesá, Wiltshire is befriended by Case, a fellow white trader. However, Case's friendliness is short-lived as he soon begins to behave in a rivalrous manner both to Wiltshire and to his South Sea wife, Uma. Case's rivalrous behaviour impedes Wiltshire from conducting his trading business and leads to his consequent exclusion as an outsider. With the unfolding of the events and, most importantly, with the direct engagement with local beliefs and societies, Wiltshire discovers that not only is Case suspected of having murdered his previous competitors, but also that he had constructed a "place of worship, where he worshipped Tiapolo, and Tiapolo appeared to him" (Stevenson 1893: 96) and where someone "had heard him speak with the dead and give them orders" (96). After this discovery, Wiltshire resolutely decides to embark one night on the ultimate destruction of Case's 'place of worship' located in the forest – referred to as 'the high bush' in the story. At the beginning of his journey, Wiltshire is amazed by the vitality of the surrounding flora and fauna (aligning with Stevenson's natural level and Burke's category of the beautiful):

> The beginning of the desert was marked off by a wall, to call it so, for it was more of a long mound of stones. […] Up to the west side of the wall, the ground has been cleared, and there are cocoa palms and mummy-apples and guavas, and lots of sensitive. Just across, the bush begins outright; high bush at that, trees going up like the masts of ships, and ropes of liana hanging down like a ship's rigging, and nasty orchids growing in the forks like funguses. The ground where there was no underwood looked to be a heap of boulders. I saw many green pigeons which I might have shot,

> only I was there with a different idea. A number of butterflies flopped up and down along the ground like dead leaves; sometimes I would hear a bird calling, sometimes the wind overhead, and always the sea along the coast.
> (Stevenson 1893: 102-103)

Yet, Wiltshire's point of view quickly shifts to the gloomy atmosphere around him and to the overwhelming and upsetting effect it has on him, a lone human intruder (corresponding with Stevenson's supernatural level and Burke's category of the sublime):

> But the queerness of the place it's more difficult to tell of, unless to one who has been alone in the high bush himself. The brightest kind of a day it is always dim down there. A man can see to the end of nothing; whichever way he looks the wood shuts up, one bough folding with another like the fingers of your hand; and whenever he listens he hears always something new—men talking, children laughing, the strokes of an axe a far way ahead of him, and sometimes a sort of a quick, stealthy scurry near at hand that makes him jump and look to his weapons. It's all very well for him to tell himself that he's alone, bar trees and birds; he can't make out to believe at; whichever way he turns the whole place seems to be alive and looking on.
> (Stevenson 1893: 103)

Furthermore, just like Stevenson began to be influenced by the local legends attached to the forest, so too is Wiltshire, who initially dismissed 'native talk' as trivial – "I don't value native talk a four-penny piece" (103) – but now finds himself irresistibly drawn to it, acknowledging its innate significance in the wilderness – "it's a thing natural in the bush, and that's the end of it" (103-104). As Jolly argues, Wiltshire gradually realises that "nature and culture cannot be divorced, and that the human geography of a place is as real as its physical geography" (Jolly 2010: 128). Wiltshire concludes his aesthetic journey by stating that "it's my belief a superstition grows up in a place like the different kind of weeds" (Stevenson 1893: 105), validating the indigenous perception of the 'high bush' as a mysterious and eerie environment. Eventually, Case is defeated after a heated fight with Wiltshire, whose victory, as previously underscored, is achieved by directly engaging with local beliefs and societies.

Although the island is a product of Stevenson's fervid imagination, the story of *The Beach of Falesá* is "well fed with facts and true to the manners" (Stevenson in Colvin

1917: 309) and the customs of the Samoan culture, thus, marking Stevenson's final transition from romance to realism.

The following two sections will conduct a double-level analysis of *The Beach of Falesá*, starting from Dylan Thomas's rewriting of Stevenson's short story into a screenplay format, and ending with BBC Radio 4's radiophonic adaptation.

2. Dylan Thomas's potential screenplay (1963)

Dylan Thomas (1914-1953) was a Welsh poet and writer whose work stood out for "its comic exuberance, rhapsodic lilt, and pathos" (Britannica 2024). His contribution to poetry and prose include some of his most celebrated works, such as the poems "Do not go gentle into that good night" (1947) and "And death shall have no dominion" (1933), as well as the stories *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (1952) and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (1940). Interestingly, the latter is not a mock-version of James Joyce's *Künstlerroman A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) but rather an autobiographical collection of short stories. Despite its resemblance, the "flippant title [was] kept for—as the publishers advise—moneymaking reasons" (Thomas in Watkins 1957: 79). Another work worth mentioning is the radio drama *Under Milk Wood* (1954) defined by scholars and critics as a 'play for voices' for it is primarily intended to be performed as a radio play rather than a traditional stage play, thus, allowing the audience to focus solely on the voices and sounds without distractions.

From this brief introduction to Dylan Thomas's works it is, indeed, evident how his versatility as a writer stands out. In particular, this section is going to examine in which way(s) Thomas skilfully interconnects Stevenson's realist narrative in *The Beach of Falesá* with his own poetic and prose imagination, reimagining Stevenson's story as a potential screenplay. Here, the word 'potential' is not random: Thomas's rewriting was, as a matter of fact, first issued as a novella in 1963, ten years after his death, in association with a planned but ultimately unrealised film project, which was intended to feature British actor Richard Burton (1925-1984) in a guest-starring role. In regard to this matter, Alison Hindell, director of the BBC Radio 4's adaptation, comments on Burton's potential role in the film as follows: "I'm fairly sure he was imagining himself in the central role. It is a very Burtonesque role" (Hindell in Brown 2014).

As highlighted in the first chapter, while it is true that an adaptation involves a shift of some sort that makes it authentic and different from the original, it does not necessarily have to be a radical dismantling of its basic structure. This is precisely what Thomas achieved: his adaptation, in fact, shifted in genre (from novella to drama) but not in medium (both are literary works). And Thomas masterfully reflected the genre's different modes of engagement. For instance, while Stevenson divides the story into five chapters, Thomas opts for a division into parts, a division that typically corresponds to play or film scenes; additionally, as shown in the next excerpts, while Stevenson uses dialogue tags after direct speech such as 'I asked' or 'said I', Thomas instead adopts the format of preceding the line with the speaker's name followed by a colon, akin to scripts and written plays for actors to read and memorise:

"What's he been saying" I asked, when he had done.
"O, just that they're glad to see you, and they understand by me you wish to make some kind of complaint, and you're to fire away, and they'll do the square thing."
"It took a precious long time to say that," said I. […] "You tell them who I am. I'm a white man, and a British subject, and no end of big chief at home; and I've come here to do them good, and bring them civilisation; and no sooner have I got my trade sorted out than they go and taboo me, and no one dare come near my place! Tell them I don't mean to fly in the face of anything legal; and if what they want's a present, I'll do what's fair."
(Stevenson 1893: 43-44)

Wiltshire: "What's he say?"
Case: "They wish you good morning."
Wiltshire: "Took a long time."
Case: "Also that they are ready and willing to hear your complaints."
Wiltshire: "Tell 'em. […] Tell them I've come to do them good. Tell him I've come to bring them trade and civilization." […]
Case: "He says they have quite enough civilization, thank you. They have more guns, gin, and disease than they know what to do with." […]
Wiltshire: "Tell him I bring no guns, or gin, or disease. I come to do honest trade."
(Thomas 1963: 64)

These excerpts not only highlight the clear distinction between the novella and drama genres in their use of direct speech, but also demonstrate how Thomas streamlined

Stevenson's language by either shortening or breaking up longer lines to achieve a more concise dialogue.

Although Thomas's screenplay maintains a certain degree of faithfulness in relation to Stevenson's original novella, as an adaptation it still presents both differing and additional elements. Among the main differences, the chaplain Black Jack becomes Little Jack, with the surname remaining the same except for a single letter change (Blackamo**a**r-Blackamo**o**r), as indicated in the wedding document he signs, granting the illegal marriage between Wiltshire and Uma:

Stevenson	Thomas
This is to certify that Uma, daughter of Fa'avao of Falesá, Island of ——, is illegally married to Mr. John Wiltshire for one week, and Mr. John Wiltshire is at liberty to send her to hell when he pleases. JOHN BLACKAMOAR Chaplain to the Hulks. (Stevenson 1893: 18)	This is to certify that Uma, daughter of Faavo of Falesá, is illegally married to Mr. Wiltshire, and that Mr. Wiltshire can send her packing to hell whenever he pleases. John Blackamoor CHAPLAIN (Thomas 1963: 35)

Another slight difference is to be found in the five tribal chiefs governing the Island of Falesá. In Stevenson's story, Faiaso, the oldest, is described as an "old rascal [who] has been all his life turbulent and sly, a great fomenter of rebellions, and a thorn in the side of the mission and the island" (Stevenson 1893: 79). Wiltshire goes to see him when he is being ostracised but, as Mr. Tarleton, a missionary who often visits the islands, affirms, "his influence is much reduced, it has gone into Maea's hands, and Maea, I fear, is one of Case's jackals" (88). Maea, "the young chief, the big one" (47) is, indeed, initially aligned with Case but ultimately helps Wiltshire. In addition to these two mentioned chiefs, there are three others who remain unnamed. In Thomas's version, the chief likely to be recognised as Faiaso is described as "one very old and puckered chief, in the center of the group, wears elegant, painted shoes" (Thomas 1963: 63) but remains unnamed. Maea is described as "one of the young chiefs, handsome, proud, is clad in white kilt and jacket. He has a very intelligent face" (63). Two of Stevenson's unnamed chiefs remain as such in Thomas's adaptation but while one "is clad in pajamas. His cruel face is tattoed. He is

soddenly corpulent" (63), no description is provided for the other. The third one is replaced by Tahuku, referred to as "the wizard" (63) and described as a "tall, powerful, tattooed native" (46).

Furthermore, themes of colonialism, power and cultural clash emerge from the conflicting relationship between Wiltshire and Black Jack. Stevenson's narrative narrows their conflict down to business dealings and cultural disparities, avoiding physical confrontation. They become business rivals as they both seek control over local trade and resources, leading to a series of confrontations and power struggles in their attempts to outmanoeuvre each other. Perhaps Thomas, with his screenplay idea in mind, felt it necessary to incorporate more action into the screen adaptation. Indeed, Wiltshire and Little Jack do engage in a physical fight after Little Jack begins sneering at him, Uma and Faavo (Uma's mother) while they are making copra in the coconut grove:

> "It does mah eyes good. See Mr. High and Mighty, boys, working like a black." […]
> "Never seen a white man sink so low pick his own copra." […]
> "Make his women work too. That's lower'n a bush rat. Make his lady wife slave all day in the sun. Mighty bad! Yes, sah, his *lady wife*, married all neat and holy. By me!"
> (Thomas 1963: 102)

The three of them are trying to keep their calm and ignore Little Jack's remarks while continuing their work. However, when he says, "Better she stays with Mister Case, but he throw her out when he finish–when we all finish, Daddy Randall and me–" (102), Wiltshire loses control and throws a coconut at him. As expected, they quickly being to "exchange heavy, cruel blows to the body without giving an inch" (103), resulting in a physical fight that is not about winning, but about being violent and ruthless: "no hero-who-must-win, but a violent and vicious fighter who never thinks of losing" (103).

As far as the conclusion is concerned, Thomas's work markedly differs from Stevenson's, whose story ends on a sombre note, with Case's burial, Captain Randall's death, Black Jack's banishment from the island after getting caught stealing from white men, and Wiltshire's questioning of his children's upbringing. By contrast, Thomas's story ends on a note of closure and reflection evoked by the literary *topos* of the deathbed scene, a cathartic moment that often serves as a moment of introspection and as a means to eventually unveil the truth. As a matter of fact, during the last physical confrontation

with Case, Wiltshire manages to stab him twice. Due to the severity of the inflicted wounds, Case becomes aware that his time is limited and admits that

> I wanted to make a clean sweep of you all tonight. It was my birthday. I wanted to kill you and Uma and Little Jack and Daddy Randall. Old friends–all of you. I poisoned Daddy's drink before leaving, I hope he shares the bottle with Little Jack. I think he will. He was always a generous man. Did I tell you it was my birthday today? I keep forgetting. Do you know how old I am?
> (Thomas 1963: 124)

Although present in lesser quantity, it is worth mentioning two subtle additional elements that inevitably stand out to the attentive reader. The first is how Case refers to himself when speaking to the missionary – unnamed in Thomas's story – belittling his faith:

> Case: "You with your sun-brolly and your Bible, your tracts and your gimcrack chapels, spreading your message over the islands like a bucket of white-wash, hymning and ha-ing, what could *you* know?"
> Missionary: "So you have turned savage."
> Case: "I was savage from birth."
> Missionary: "You must have been a very nasty baby."
> Case: "I was Caliban's son brought up for the church. I was a child suckled by wolves, brought up to brush my fangs and wash my paws before meals. I was a savage brough up to say 'sir', respect my elders, kowtow before the law, learn to read and write, suffer the classics in a rathole for the sons of gentlemen, proceed to hallowed university, take a worthless degree . . ."
> (Thomas 1963: 87-88)

The reference to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610-1611) is unmistakable: the character of Caliban is vividly depicted in the play as "a savage and deformed slave" (Shakespeare 1610-1611: 2) and as "a freckled whelp, hag-born–not honour'd with a human shape" (16). However, in Thomas's story, Case identifies himself as 'Caliban's son', drawing attention to animalistic imagery such as 'suckled by wolves', 'brush my fangs' and 'wash my paws'. Despite this parallel, the theme of savagery embodied by Case diverges from Shakespeare's original intention. While Shakespeare employs savagery as a lens to critique the injustices of colonialism and to reflect upon the complexities of power,

control and human nature, Case's interpretation of it takes a different direction. His detachment from it is evident in his adoption of a proud and haughty demeanour, fully embracing his insatiable thirst for power and control. In doing so, Thomas "emphasises the evil of Case [making the] reader 'feel' the depths of his depravity and deceptiveness" (Corbett 2013). Case's violence and ruthlessness are, in fact, more explicitly portrayed in Thomas's story and more subtly concealed in Stevenson's, where he is depicted as an extremely discreet and mysterious character, hiding his plans and initially behaving in a rational and relaxed manner.

After Wiltshire triumphs over Little Jack in the aforementioned physical fight, the second additional element becomes apparent. His victory earns him the trust of some young native boys who had previously sided with Little Jack. Seizing the opportunity, Wiltshire asks them if there is a road leading to "the seemingly impenetrable wall of bush where Case disappeared" (Thomas 1963: 106):

> "No road through there?"
> First Native Boy: "One time one road."
> Second Native Boy: "Now the road dead."
> And a third boy speaks in native: The others nod their heads vigorously, their eyes wide.
> Wiltshire: "Nobody go there?"
> Again he gestures down.
> First Native Boy: "Nobody, nobody."
> Wiltshire, softly to himself: "*I* saw somebody go through there all right. Somebody I know very well." To the natives: "Why does nobody go there?"
> First Native Boy: "Too much devil stop there."
> Third Native Boy: "*Aitu, aitu.*"[4]
> Wiltshire: "Oho!"
> Second Native Boy: "Man devil, woman devil, baby devil."
> Wiltshire: "Too much devil."
> The boys mutter in native.
> First Native Boy: "Devil stop there all time, man go there, no come back."
> And a murmur of awed agreement rises.
> (Thomas 1963: 106)

[4] In Polynesian culture, *aitu* is a term referring to a ghost or a spirit with an evil intent (see Collins Dictionary/a, n.d.).

Even though the native boys strongly advise Wiltshire against going into the bush, Wiltshire persists, eager to explore further. He questions them about their perception of Uma and himself as potential 'devils' and inquiries about the reason of the taboo placed upon them:

> Wiltshire: "You think *I'm* a devil?"
> Second Native Boy: "No, no! *E le ai!*"[5]
> And the others laugh; laughter of friendship.
> Wiltshire: "Uma, she a devil?"
> With murmurs of *'E le ai'* they all shake their heads.
> Wiltshire: "Why are we taboo then, Uma and me?"
> And the murmurs fade. The native boys look abashed.
> First Native Boy: "People savvy[6] nothing in Falesá. Man no devil. Man plenty fool all-e-same."
> Softly, "Devil there."
> And he indicates the bush below them.
> (Thomas 1963: 106-107)

The last quoted lines spoken by the first native boy are a deliberate addition by Thomas. These additional sentences not only clarify that the 'devil' referred to is Case but also offer Wiltshire a sense of solace as they underscore the passive nature of the people in Falesá, who, instead of confronting Case's delusions of grandeur directly, opted to yield to his authority with the hope of maintaining peace on the island.

Having taken into consideration all the key aspects of Thomas's adaptation of Stevenson's novella *The Beach of Falesá* with regard to the style and the content, it comes quite spontaneous to assert that

> Thomas re-writes the story quite well. The story is a classic struggle of good and evil, with evil being quite sophisticated as evil and good just as naïve about the world as evil is wise. Nonetheless, goodness wins out in the end. […] [And] when the final confrontation of good and evil comes it is swift, brutal, hair-raising and final.
> (Corbett 2013)

[5] Samoan words expressing something that is untrue, literally translated into 'it won't' or 'it does not exist'.
[6] Informal slang verb, meaning 'to understand' or 'to get the sense of' (see Collins Dictionary/c, n.d.).

Indeed, Dylan Thomas's adaptation offers an intriguing interpretation and a fresh perspective of Stevenson's original work as he brings into the story his unique style and point of view. Known for his poetry and prose, Thomas focuses more on the lyrical and poetic aspects of the language which consequently lead to a different emphasis of the narrative elements and to an exploration of themes and motifs closer to his own artistic sensibilities.

Remotely echoing the contrast between good and evil, the central theme of Stevenson's Gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), the next and final section of this dissertation will explore Thomas's adaptation of Stevenson's short story into a radio play, as promoted by the British national radio station BBC Radio 4.

3. Stevenson's short story as a radio play: the case of BBC Radio 4's dramatic adaptation (2014)

On the centenary of Dylan Thomas's birth (1914-2014), BBC Radio 4 first broadcasted the unfilmed screenplay of *The Beach of Falesá. Based on a Story by Robert Louis Stevenson* (1963), which was published as a novella ten years after the Welsh poet and writer's passing. Following the trail of his 1954 'play for voices', *Under Milk Wood*, the radio adaptation can be considered, in all respects, a 'film for voices', for it completely removes the visual input, prompting the audience to rely solely upon the auditory input (voices, music and sounds). With regard to this matter, the last section of the first chapter investigated the tendency for mass media communication to privilege the visual rather than the aural, identifying the paradoxical nature of sounds as the most logical explanation. In *Aural Objects* (1980), French film theorist Christian Metz had already described the aural source as an object and the sound itself as its characteristic, independent of the voyeuristic effects the visual might generate. Exactly ten years after Metz's essayistic publication, another prominent French film theorist, Michel Chion (1947-living), released his influential work *L'Audio-vision: Son et Image au Cinéma* (1990). The book delved the relationship between sound and image in cinema, exploring the concept of sound-image, which involves the perception or representation of auditory elements within the audience's mind. Chion distinguished three distinct listening modes: the causal listening, "the most common [and] the most easily influenced and deceptive

mode of listening" (Chion 1994 [1990]: 26), consisting of "listening to a sound in order to gather information about its cause (or source)" (25); the semantic listening, which refers to "a code or a language to interpret a message: spoken language, of course, as well as Morse and such codes" (28); and the reduced listening, which focuses "on the traits of the sound itself, independent of its cause and its meaning. [It] takes the sound [...] as itself the object to be observed instead of as a vehicle for something else" (29). After laying the foundations to these three different listening modes, Chion examined the natural connection between auditory and visual stimuli when experienced simultaneously, thus, developing the concept of *synchresis*. Chion coined himself the term from the combination of 'synchronism' and 'synthesis' to indicate "the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time" (63). Notwithstanding, both Metz and Chion's reflections on aural objects and sound-images challenge traditional perceptions of visual dominance, at the basis of the enduring entertainment industry. To this matter, play producer and actor Cyril Wood stresses upon the fact that

> it would, in any event, be undesirable, not to say impossible, to talk about the radio play without constant reference to the stage play, for while the two differ materially in many respects, they both share certain fundamental principles. It is important, however, to grasp the fact that *radio drama is not an apology for stage drama*—it must not be regarded as a pale imitation, a second best. It is a play form with a life and individuality of its own.
> (Wood 1938: 23)

Returning to the abovementioned 'film for voices', it has been adapted for radio and directed by Alison Hindell, whose encounter with Thomas's script happened almost serendipitously. As a matter of fact, she herself recounted that when her "stepdaughter moved into a new house in Sydney, the only thing the previous owner had left was the published edition of this screenplay" (Hindell in Brown 2014). Hence, Hindell saw a significant potential in Thomas's screenplay: not only did she aim to produce a dramatic radio adaptation for a station not widely associated with broadcasting drama, but also sought to breathe new life into both Stevenson's original novella and Thomas's screenplay rendition of it. As Hindell herself affirms:

> I realised that, with some cutting down, it was a gift for a radio production because the narrative voice is very much the voice of Dylan Thomas. You can really hear his intonations, his imagery, his vocal mellifluousness. That itself is going to be a plum role for somebody, I hope.
> (Hindell in Brown 2014)

Indeed, some cutting down was necessary in order to make the drama fit within the preestablished duration of an hour and forty minutes. Moreover, because the listener must be able to aurally distinguish all the characters, they are greatly reduced in size selecting only those who actively drive the story forward and contribute to the pacing of the narrative. As a matter of fact, in the radiophonic version of *The Beach of Falesá*, the listener can easily distinguish the characters of Wilshire (voiced by Matthew Gravelle), Uma (voiced by Fiona Marr), Case (voiced by Nicky Henson) and Little Jack (voiced by Steve Toussaint). In addition to these main characters, a narrator (voiced by Matthew Rhys) is included. It is, in fact, common for radio plays to employ the figure of a narrator to establish the tone of the story, to facilitate smoother transitions between scenes, and to keep the action going between characters' dialogues. As argued by Cyril Wood in his essay *The Technique of the Radio Play* (1938), "there are few things more difficult than acting in a radio play" (33). Indeed, the radio actor faces unique challenges, required "to act in a bare room which is quite devoid of any of the aids to illusion to which he is accustomed on the stage […] any illusion must come from the actor's own imagination" (32-33) and it is his duty to visualise the character and the story of which he is a part. Furthermore, the radio actor must learn "to regard the microphone as a living person, and when he is called upon, say, to make love, his passion must be directed at the piece of metal, and not at the beautiful lady beside him" (33). In other words, to provide the listener with a pleasant auditory experience, radio actors need consistency in voice characterisation, clarity in enunciation, the ability to convey emotions and physical gestures through vocal performance, and should also synchronise their performance with music, sound effects and other audio elements. Music and sound effects are added to the verbal written text to provide a realistic context and to give meaning and a sense of location for the listener's imagination. In the BBC radio play adaptation of *The Beach of Falesá*, the original music is composed by Roger Goula whereas the sound effects are conceived and developed by Nigel Lewis. To enhance the cultural clash between Pacific and Western civilisation, the music blends traditional Pacific instrumental melodies and

rhythms with Western musical arrangements. Additionally, to fully immerse listeners in the island's ambiance, the background music incorporates sounds of the surrounding natural environment, such as the rustle of palm trees, the crash of waves, or the calls of tropical birds. Furthermore, the evocative, dramatic and reflective aspects of the music serve as a powerful complement to the storytelling: they mirror the tensions, mysteries and conflicts depicted in the plot, as well as the characters' introspection or the contemplative state of the narrative. The music also builds tension and suspense or emphasises moments of revelation or resolution by swelling to intensify dramatic pivotal moments.

On the whole, despite the cutting down of some scenes and the replacement of unconventional terms with more appropriate 21st-century options (e.g. 'gay' music changed to bright music, 'negro' to black man, 'native' to islander), the radiophonic adaptation of Dylan Thomas's script, which itself is an adaptation of Stevenson's South Sea novella *The Beach of Falesá*, can be considered as the most effective rendering of Thomas's re-writing, conveying both Thomas's and Stevenson's intentions. The reason why Thomas's rewriting remains an unproduced film is still unknown. Hindell supposes that "maybe it was just too expensive to make. They would have had to go somewhere that looked like Tahiti. It is a great story… a murder mystery" (Hindell in Brown 2014) and hopes that "maybe someone will make a film of it now" (Hindell in Brown 2014).

CONCLUSION

The thorough analysis of Robert Louis Stevenson's prose-written works across cinematographic, animated and radiophonic adaptations perfectly embodies the shapeshifting and dynamic nature of his literary narrative genre. In particular, Stevenson's narrative "of shocking brutality yet playful innocence" (Saposnik 1974: 105) has proved to be strikingly adaptable and versatile, hence, the several metamorphic processes it has undergone mirror the evolving storytelling panorama through different media. The adaptable and versatile nature of his narrative is a solid example of his social adaptability, which stood out the most in the literary discussions he took part in during his life. As a matter of fact, by diversifying his fictional works through the experimentation with different styles, genres and narratives, Stevenson did not flee contemporary society but rather eventually settled with it. Moreover, the metamorphic nature of his work tends to be further transformed into likewise diverse adaptations and interpretations.

It is no coincidence that Stevenson chose the adventure genre to achieve literary success, a genre acclaimed for its versatility and its perfect functioning even when mixed with other genres. Through the analysis of the Muppets cinematographic adaptation (1996) of Stevenson's adventure novel *Treasure Island* (1883), it becomes evident how filmmakers have reimagined Stevenson's narrative to properly fall within the parameters of the visual medium, emphasising upon the Muppets' distinctive personalities and comedy antics while preserving the original core themes of adventure and action.

Analogously, the 1986 animated adaptation of Stevenson's urban Gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) showcases how Stevenson's stories can be reinterpreted through the employment of both visual and auditory elements and demonstrates that even an elaborate horror story like Stevenson's has the potential to be made suitable for children or youths – besides appealing to audiences of all ages. And it is for this exact reason that the Australian Burbank production company did not get discouraged by the Stevensonian narrative complexity and eventually managed to render in cartoon style the Gothic novella as accurately as possible, conveying the main meanings and recurrent themes with the help of a simplified language and a streamlined plot.

Moreover, the examination conducted upon literary and dramatic adaptations of Stevenson's South Sea story *The Beach of Falesá* (1892) highlights once again the versatility of Stevenson's narrative, in this case converted and adapted firstly into a screenplay by Dylan Thomas and subsequently into a radio drama by the BBC. Particularly, the latter adaptation underscores the vital importance of auditory elements such as voices, music and sound effects, which enrich the listener's narrative experience and engage with them through the immersive medium of radio. With the complete removal of the visual input, the listener has to rely solely upon the auditory input, which is why in radio plays sound and the actors' vocal performance are responsible for evoking mood and atmosphere as well as expressing emotions and physical gestures.

By tracing the metamorphosis of Stevenson's narratives and underlining the relevance of his genre-crossing work, the analysis carried out throughout this thesis wished to emphasise the ways in which adaptations reshape literary texts in order to give them a new updated and perhaps better life. Their persistence over time preserves their awareness and popularity and ensures their enduring appeal across different media.

Most certainly, the field of adaptation studies has already been established as a fruitful and productive research area and, looking ahead, it is almost entirely guaranteed that it is going to be taken into great consideration for future research. With the emergence of new avantgarde technologies and the development of storytelling techniques, the interplay between prose-written literature and mass media communication is going to drastically increase over time, continuing to captivate audiences across generations and inspire innovative and stimulating adaptations.

In conclusion, through the lens of the selected cinematographic, animated and radiophonic adaptations, not only the everlasting appeal of Stevenson's narratives and their ability to transcend boundaries of genre and medium stand out but also a deeper and heartfelt appreciation for his literary legacy is gained.

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