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Shakespeare and Advertising

Sommario

La tesi presenta la relazione che intercorre oggigiorno tra la pubblicità e Shakespeare, inteso come repertorio di temi, figure e topos utilizzati dalla pubblicità all'interno della comunicazione contemporanea. La tesi si inserisce all'interno di un panorama critico che registra la tendenza ad ignorare il rapporto tra Shakespeare e la pubblicità a causa della presunta inferiorità di quest'ultima, data la sua natura fortemente legata all'aspetto economico e di intrattenimento popolare. La tesi analizzerà, infatti, l'ormai superata distinzione tra cultura alta e bassa, designazione destinata alla "popular culture" di cui la pubblicità fa parte, per affermare l'esistenza, nel panorama contemporaneo, di una cultura ormai ibrida formata, per l'appunto, dalla mescolanza di elementi pertinenti sia alla cultura "alta" che a quella "bassa." In particolare la tesi sosterrà come l'opera shakespeariana e la figura del Bardo, spesso associate alla cultura alta, siano ormai diventate parte della "popular culture." Il rimaneggiamento, la citazione e i riferimenti alle opere ed alla figura di Shakespeare creano, infatti, una complessa rete intertestuale che arricchisce e modifica la significazione non solo delle opere di nuova formazione (tra le quali si annoverano anche le pubblicità) ma anche di quelle originali. La citazione, anche se popolare, contribuisce infatti a perpetuare la fama del Bardo e ad aumentarne la già smisurata popolarità, sia a livello locale che internazionale. Shakespeare diventa parte di un bagaglio culturale collettivo, eternamente a disposizione del pubblico e conseguentemente della pubblicità. Quest'ultima sfrutterà tutte le possibilità

significative del succitato bagaglio culturale, attuando precise strategie per la persuasione dei suoi spettatori. Le strategie linguistiche e psicologiche messe in atto verranno analizzate dalla tesi al fine di dimostrare il funzionamento di questo tipo di comunicazione persuasiva che è in grado di influenzare, nello scenario contemporaneo di una società strutturata in massima parte dalla comunicazione dei mass media, sia il nostro modo di pensare che, in ultima analisi, le nostre azioni. Le pubblicità prese in analisi riguarderanno la figura di Shakespeare, ormai diventata un'icona della modernità, ad esempio la pubblicità *Someone has been on the Shakesbeer,* o le opere e i personaggi più emblematici del Bardo quali *Romeo and Juliet, Othello, A Midsummer Night's Dream*, e *The Tempest.* Tutti i testi pubblicitari presi in considerazione verranno analizzati nella loro composizione strutturale di testi multimodali, dati quindi dalla convivenza e interrelazione di immagini e parole, nel caso di pubblicità per stampa e di immagini video, parole e suoni nel caso delle pubblicità televisive. L'utilizzo di immagini o testi legati a Shakespeare verrà inoltre descritto al fine di illustrare il fruttuoso scambio che avviene tra la pubblicità e il padre della letteratura inglese. La modernità ed universalità di quest'ultimo diventa, infatti, tratto distintivo che ne giustifica l'utilizzo da parte di un mezzo così popolare e così capillarmente diffuso come la pubblicità. Attraverso questa analisi l'utilizzo di Shakespeare getta luce sui meccanismi comunicativi che influenzano la società contemporanea, la tesi, così, ha modo di indagare non solo la moderna percezione del Bardo a livello popolare ma anche l'evoluzione della cultura odierna in un amalgama di alto e basso che deve essere tenuta in considerazione all'interno della speculazione critica attuale.

Abstract

The thesis concerns the contemporary use of Shakespeare's works and of his figure as a collection of themes and scenes for advertising campaigns. The intertextual net stemming from Shakespeare's works covers many different fields from literature and theatre to film and television. The number of reproductions of the Bard's works is extremely high, ranging from the more faithful ones to mere quotations. However, the relationship of Shakespeare and advertising has been neglected and very little critical research exists on this subject. The thesis aims at presenting significant examples of the use made by advertising both of Shakespeare's works and of his figure which, as the thesis will show, has acquired a mythical stature epitomising commonly shared concepts. The thesis will try to elucidate the strategies developed in advertising communication and the relation between the theatrical and literary medium with the visual and audio-visual one of advertising. Moreover, the constantly changing relationship between high culture and popular culture will be further analysed in the light of the thesis' subject, in order to demonstrate that this relationship is not a degrading one but that popular culture can produce new and culturally valid meanings. The exchange between advertising and Shakespeare, indeed, inevitably creates new meaning enriching both the source and the target texts. The thesis will focus on the advertising formation and communication, on the linguistic and psychological strategies inherent to the highly persuasive messages. The creation of a wide intertextual net – not only linking advertisements and commercials but also the latter with Shakespearean adaptations and with Shakespearean works – will be described in order to give an account of the highly complex potential significance of the case studies taken into consideration. The thesis will consider advertisements and commercials concerning the figure of Shakespeare, such as *Someone has been on the Shakesbeer* and his plays, in particular *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest*. The project inserts itself in a critical space lacking a thorough development and elucidation of the relationship between Shakespeare and Advertising, due to the consideration of the latter as a lower cultural production, thus often neglected because of its principally commercial aim. The thesis aims at giving an account of the use of

Shakespeare in the contemporary communication which so highly affects our way of thinking and, ultimately, of behaving in the present-day scenario.

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Introduction

The following thesis stems from the need to fill a void in the critical debate which regards the treatment of advertising in relation to literature and in particular to Shakespeare. Shakespeare is frequently the subject of reflections and debates which connect him to the most disparate fields: Shakespeare and cinema, Shakespeare and musical, Shakespeare and song, Shakespeare and medicine and Shakespeare and the law, just to quote a few. The association with advertising, however, has often been neglected on the basis of the latter's inferiority which depends on the popular origin of advertising. Some studies on Shakespeare in advertising do exist but they tend to lack a critical or methodological approach, conceivably because of the classical distinction between high culture (epitomised by Shakespeare) and low culture (epitomised by advertising). This thesis aims at demonstrating that the differentiation cannot held anymore in the contemporary context in which culture has become a hybrid amalgam of the two apparently opposite components.

The first chapter, thus, will try to give a thorough elucidation of advertising in the contemporary scenario. The analysis of advertising will take into consideration its popular background, it will underline the strong influence advertising has on contemporary life and its capacity to shape the mechanisms ruling today's society:

> The culture we are born teaches us specific narrative practices and expectations. […] Through such practices we acquire degrees of communicative competency in the various spheres of professional, commercial, and personal interaction that make up our daily lives.[1]

Understanding popular culture as a cultural production coming from the people allows a reflection on the contemporary cultural practices which, more often than not, are reducing the divide between high and low culture. Giving a relevance to popular culture means putting its production, among which also advertising, on the same level as high culture, in a continuous dialogue which characterises also the relation between Shakespeare and advertising. Popular culture's ability to create stereotypes and symbols

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[1] Richard Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 205.

easily shared by a large group of people is inevitably exploited by advertising in order to reach the largest possible audience.

> Symbolic representation [...] can be a powerful source of meaning in texts of all kinds. Symbols are much more about associations of ideas than about any literal or straightforward equation, and much more about group convention than about individual personalised meaning.[2]

At the same time, advertising is able to give the impression of addressing the specific tastes of the individual, creating in the reader or spectator a sense of belonging and of personal gratification.

Advertising is not only popular but shapes popular tendencies. The overwhelming presence of advertisements and commercials in the contemporary mass media communication inevitably shapes the other messages surrounding them. It can, thus, be said that present-day advertising can affect the rhetoric and the structuring of the non-advertising discourses which exist alongside them. Thanks to the ingraining in contemporary reality and culture, moreover, advertising can also influence other artistic productions and the audience's perception.

> Any semiotic mode has to have the capacity to form *texts*, complexes of signs which cohere both internally with each other and externally with the context in and for which they were produced.[3]

The chapter will, thus, also take into consideration the strategies involved in contemporary communication in order to unfold them and to provide the audience with a critical thinking capable of deciphering complex mediated messages. In particular, the chapter will focus on the linguistic and psychological strategies employed by advertising.

Starting from the almost universally shared claim of language's ability of shaping people's consciousness, the thesis will analyse language's determinant role in the

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[2] Angela Goddard, *The Language of Advertising* (London: Routledge, 1998), 116.

[3] Gunther Kress & Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 43.

construction and interpretation of the advertising message. Advertisements and commercials are formed by a stratification of languages, the verbal and written one, but also the visual and sound language which all contribute to the construction of the overall meaning. Not only does the advertisements' and commercials' composition make them multimodal but also the possibility of re-working them through other modes:

> The ability to combine various semiotic resources is seen as one of the compelling functional reasons for the existence of multimodal artefacts at all. Meanings made concisely in one mode can be exported and re-used to enhance meanings made in other modes.[4]

Advertisements and commercials, hence, can be defined as medial hybrids: they are characterised by a multimedial construction and by an intermedial communication. The advertising subjects, indeed, often stem from an interaction involving other communicative modes and artistic fields from which advertising takes inspiration or of which it borrows the communicative strategies. The interpretation of the advertising message, thus, is complicated by the dialogue and intertwining of languages both internal and external to it. Moreover, language is often symbolic and hides subliminal messages, likewise, however, it commonly remains unquestioned due to an over-exposure of the public to contemporary mass media messages.

> In the concept of subliminal phenomena are included all those techniques now known to the mass media by which tens of millions of humans are daily massaged and manipulated without their conscious awareness. […] Any investigation of the techniques of subconscious communication involves first an investigation into one's own fantasy systems, self-images, illusions, personal vanities, and secret motives.[5]

The linguistic strategies analysed, nevertheless, do not only take into account the multimedial and intemedial nature of the message. The linguistic interpretation, indeed,

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[4] John A. Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre. A Foundation for the Systematic Analysis of Multimodal Documents*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 54.

[5] Wilson Bryan Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), 1.

is also determined by the context of reception and by the particular reactions of the audience. For instance, the national context of reception of the advertising texts will be taken into consideration and consequently also the intended effect of the advertising message along with its successful or unsuccessful outcome.

Particularly, the chapter will concentrate on the capacity of the language used of attributing meaning to the specific product or behaviour advertised:

> Language often has an important role within the stereotyping process, as it is a quick way for us to generate a whole set of ideas about how people are and what they are like. One area where this can be seen clearly is in accent variation, and here TV adverts have used our stereotypes to powerful effect: the cheeky Cockney market traders who sing the praises of their wares; the Yorkshire-accented, solid voice that stands for tradition and wholesomeness; the smooth RP (Received Pronunciation) accent that tells us about business and financial management.[6]

Language acquires a determining significance in the advertising communication which is often condensed in a single image or in few scenes. In this restricted timeframe the words used are charged with meaning and each word is meticulously selected. The sense of the words, furthermore, as already stated, is enhanced or modified by their relationship with elements of the other languages composing the advertisement or commercial, i.e. by images and sounds. The prominence of language is demonstrated also when catchphrases, slogans, and brand names are devised. Indeed, they constitute small significant units, highly communicative and formulated in order to convey an already extremely complex message, which adds to the overall significance of the advertising text:

> Materiality is given over or lost to the image, the sign, the brand; the emphasis in social practices shifts from production to consumption; the commodity as material form loses its impact upon society as the significance of images and signs rises exponentially.[7]

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[6] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 64.

[7] Anne M. Cronin, *Advertising Myths*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 79.

The advertising language's stratified composition and intricacy can also be found in Shakespeare's language: the highly connotative significance and elaboration of the Bard's words and lines recall those of advertising, outlining one of the many parallels between the allegedly culturally and theoretically distant subjects (Shakespeare and Advertising) elucidated by the thesis.

For what concerns the psychological strategies, advertising works on the subconscious of the audience: it exploits familiar notions and pre-existing feelings, instinctive desires and urges, it uses "Persuasiveness, or the mastery of an emotional or evocative style that helps lure the addressee into the desired course of action."[8] The advertising strategies which play with the psychological effect on the mind of the audience prove to be the most effective, and the toughest to detect and to unveil because of their subliminal nature. Hidden feelings and associations are triggered by the advertisement or commercial which exploits specific psychological mechanisms: "Emotional predispositions, often unknown to the consumers themselves, are exploited with precision."[9] The advertisements and commercials often create a dream-world speaking the language of the unconscious, thus talking to the innermost recesses of the spectator's mind, sometimes even getting to shape the hidden desires and fears of the individual: "Advertising seems immune to the (collective) principle of reality. It aims at the individual in his/her own personal dream-world."[10] The appeal to the unconscious is inexorably intertwined with the use of language, through which people express their thoughts, and which allows the advertisers to devise the most alluring and convincing messages appropriate for the widest possible audience. Through these strategies the advertisement or commercial aims at a large number of people while at the same time addressing the individual's subconscious world:

> Advertising is a source of reassurance for the conscience through a social semantics […] aimed at a unique meaning, which is the global society. The latter identifies, in this way,

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[8] Ira Torresi, *Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts*, (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2010), 8.

[9] Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, 146.

[10] Jean Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, ed. Vanni Codeluppi (Milano: Lupetti & Co., 1987), 118, [My translation].

with every role: it creates a multitude of images of which it successively reduces the sense. It raises anguish and it placates it. It satisfies and deludes, it moves and removes.[11]

The advertising message exploits all possible feelings, from the pleasurable to the negative ones, in order to achieve its commercial aim: "A very large proportion of ad content, aimed at the subliminal, involves a commercial exploitation of the consumer's secret miseries and self-doubts."[12]

The individual feels a sense of belonging when seeing an advertisement or commercial, which often, as in the case of Shakespeare, uses familiar and preconceived symbols and stereotypes, which prove reliable and undemanding: "Advertising is a buffet of symbolic imagery that advertisers hope will prove tempting and lead to the more difficult exchange of money for goods."[13] The advertisement or commercial constitutes, thus, a complex kind of message, one which creates a fictional world appealing to the subconscious of the individuals but which, at the same time, has an effect on reality. Psychological strategies create subliminal messages which, more often than not, are absorbed unconsciously and uncritically by the audience. It is for this reason that a thorough analysis of the psychological component of the advertisements and commercials will be undertaken in order to mature an unbiased and unrestricted approach to advertising.

The second chapter will deal with intertextuality, firstly giving an excursus of the different methodological and critical approaches concerning this subject and secondly applying them to advertising. Intertextuality comes into play when a new test is created (I use the term text in order to refer also to the advertising text). The new text, as the critical theory sustains, is indebted with the texts which came before which influence the new text's content and interpretation. The new text forms an intertextual net both with older texts and with contemporary ones, where the influence is mutual. In the case of advertising, not only does the new advertising text develop relationships with other advertising texts but also with other artistic productions, either pertaining to high or popular culture, thus creating an extremely complex intertextual net. The relationships existing inside the net create a new meaning capable of influencing both

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[11] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 123, [My translation].

[12] Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, 181.

[13] Jib Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, (Thousand Oax: Sage Publications, 1996), 165.

new texts and old ones: "Every message has first of all the function of referring to another message."[14] The advertisements and commercials, furthermore, establish relationships with other cultural productions pertaining to different media, thus also creating an intermedial net able to produce culture through the transmission of nuclei of meaning: the memes. The relationship between Shakespeare and advertising can be accordingly said to be both intertextual and intermedial.

Furthermore, not only is advertising influenced by Shakespeare's texts' reception but, in its turn, it also influences the contemporary reading and interpretation of Shakespeare. Additionally, all cultural and artistic productions bearing even the slightest link with Shakespeare will influence new advertising texts, which often, rather than being inspired by the original Shakespearean text, already derive from popular culture's manipulation of the work of the Bard.

In order to better understand the correlation of Shakespeare with advertising the remediation of the works of the Bard will be analysed in light of their nature of both literary and theatrical texts. The thesis sustains the importance of a consideration of Shakespeare's original theatrical spirit, which survives today alongside the reading of his plays as part of the English literary canon. Moreover, the intertextual net comprising Shakespearean advertising cannot neglect to consider other popular culture's revisions of Shakespeare. The popular texts will inevitably influence the contemporary fruition and interpretation of the works of the Bard and of the advertisements and commercials exploiting them. Present-day allusions to a Shakespearean text or to Shakespeare's figure have manifold purposes, from the reassuring one of the homage, to the desecrating one of the satire, which however all play on the recognition of Shakespeare by the audience. Shakespeare, is thus, popularised. The thesis will show the longstanding relation of the Bard with popular culture, all the way down to nowadays' reception of his works principally by means of the new mass-media, specifically television and cinema:

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[14] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 97, [My translation].

> Shakespeare's presence in television is related to an important aspect of the medium: its programming is the most deeply invested in remediating other media – radio, film, music, theatre, and other television programs.[15]

Furthermore television constitutes one of the most popular media of our time, communicating with a large audience and reaching people globally. Television rhetoric, highly influenced by the boundless presence of advertising, is nowadays often transferred to real life: the language used, borrowed from the mass media, shapes people's consciousness and interpretation of reality.

> Television, as Marshall McLuhan observed, is an inherently *social* medium: it invites groups rather than individual participation. […] As an oral and visual form it is accessible even to the unlettered, its complex visual dialect easier to learn than spoken or written language. […] television, requiring no […] privileged deviation from social activity, can be regarded as a peculiarly general and populist cultural form.[16]

The re-use of Shakespeare by popular culture leads to two apparently opposite processes: that of mythologisation, and that of fragmentation.

The former makes Shakespeare become a myth, a symbol with a familiar and immutable significance easily transferred on a product:

> The most common reason authors use Shakespeare […] is as a cultural authority. […] When Shakespeare is used as a cultural authority, the author is telling the reader something about the characters or sometimes about the genre itself, and therefore the author clearly signals the connection to Shakespeare (and sometimes to a specific character or play).[17]

The second process is that of fragmentation, which isolates characters, portions of plot, or quotations from their original stance, causing them to become infinitely

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[15] Richard Burt, "U.S. Television. Televising Shakespeares" in *Shakespeares after Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Burt, (London: Greenwood Press, 2007): 585-591, 585.

[16] Graham Holderness, "Shakespeare and Television" in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988): 158-203, 175, 176.

[17] Annalisa Castaldo, "Literature and Genre Fiction," in *Shakespeares after Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Burt: 408-505, 411, 412.

repeatable and re-usable: "Often quotes and characters referenced for the sake of cultural literacy are fragmented and isolated from the context of the play."[18]

Popular culture's large use and popularisation of Shakespeare is paralleled by a frequent presence of the Bard as a subject of critical thinking which has fostered its fame in high culture. The two developments will be examined in conjunction in order to demonstrate their relationship and interweaving in contemporary culture.

As an example of the popularising practices previously mentioned the thesis will also dwell on an analysis of the film *William Shakespeare Romeo + Juliet*, by Baz Luhrmann, which appropriately demonstrates the reworking of Shakespeare by popular culture in order to deliver it to the contemporary society saturated by advertising. The film constitutes a passage from the treatment of Shakespeare in popular culture to its usage by advertising. Not only has the film been influential for all the following cultural productions in various artistic fields, but it also abounds with references to contemporary advertising by which it has been influenced and whose rhetoric has been affected by the film itself – as will be demonstrated by the analysis of the advertisements and commercials in the last chapter.

The third chapter, indeed, gives concrete examples and analysis of the advertisements and commercial treating a Shakespearean subject. The advertisements and commercials are divided into those employing the figure of Shakespeare and those stemming from a particular character or play. The former exploit the worldwide renown of the figure of Shakespeare, which is exercised as a cultural authority, or which is made an object of ridicule. In particular, the advertisement "Someone has been on the *Shakesbeer*" will show how the figure of the Bard is exploited and comprised in contemporary discourses, how it becomes "less an author than an apparatus – that his name […] is merely metonymic of an entire politico-cultural formation, and thus more akin to 'Disney' or 'Rockefeller' than to 'Jane Smith'."[19] The advertising of alcoholic beverages, often exploiting the figure of Shakespeare, will be further investigated thanks to the analysis of two advertisements, Stella Artois and Hoppy Wheat, which have taken *Hamlet* as their source of inspiration.

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[18] Castaldo, "Literature and Genre Fiction," 409.

[19] Graham Holderness, "Afterword" in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness: 203-215, 204.

Furthermore, the second part of the chapter will take into account the use made by advertising of Shakespeare's plays and characters, in particular of *Romeo and Juliet* by Alfa Romeo and Nextel, of *Othello* by Dufur and Telit, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Levi's, and of *The Tempest*[20] by IKEA. I will try to demonstrate that Shakespeare's plays and characters often become symbols and types "characters like Romeo, Hamlet, or Lady Macbeth have become cultural types, instantly recognisable when their names are invoked."[21]

Additionally, all the aforementioned literary, theatrical, linguistic, psychological, intertextual, and intermedial readings will be applied to the analysis of the advertisements and commercials in order to describe their composition and, ultimately to detect their hidden meaning in an attempt to give the audience a new key to the interpretation of the contemporary messages which bombard everybody everyday:

> Willingness to use the media to manipulate desire, to conflate fantasy and reality, and to merge self-identity with self-gratifying acts of consumption – regardless of whether the commodity consumed is a product, a political candidate, or a matter of law – is contributing to a significant cultural crisis.[22]

The example of Shakespeare's works serves to unveil these mechanisms and, moreover, to show the intertwining of high and low culture in the construction of the message. The employment of the words of the Bard, a master of communication, in such a dense message as the advertising one, expands its potential meaning.

Through Shakespeare the thesis endeavours to unearth the communicative strategies which shape advertising as one of the tokens of popular culture used to influence people's perceptions and behaviours. The rooting and spreading of the advertising communication has reached all spheres of contemporary life and has influenced also other cultural productions which are formulated following the model of advertising. It is possible to say that we are living in an advertising society which we

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[20] All references to Shakespeare's texts are taken form *The RSC Shakespeare Complete Works*, eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007).

[21] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008), xiii.

[22] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 168.

need to confront critically in order not to be overwhelmed by its appealing messages and to decipher its well-devised discourses.

Chapter I

1. Advertising

1.1.   Advertising and Popular Culture

Although advertising, in the modern conception of the term, has accompanied people for many decades, it still tends to be considered as a lowbrow form of communication, to be ascribed mainly to the field of popular culture: "Advertising is one of the most ubiquitous manifestations of modern popular culture."[23] Its major commercial function relegates advertising to a secondary position if compared to other media such as cinema, theatre or literature. The purpose of advertising is unmistakably that of selling a product or that of engendering a particular behaviour in the audience:

> Advertising agencies' creativity serves marketers' attempts to represent products, brands and services in order to make them more readily acceptable and desirable to consumers. […] advertising works to increase (or maintain) the extent to which particular products, services and brand ideas remain or become *culturally* distributable.[24]

An important step in the analysis of advertising, thus, cannot disregard recognising it as part of popular culture. This claim, far from being debasing towards advertising, tries to consider how this particular kind of communication adapts and influences the context it is part of, with consequences on high and refined culture.

> As a culture, we tend to be aloof and a little snooty about advertisements, pretending that, while they may work on *some* people, they don't work on *us*, and dismissing advertising language as trite discourse written for the uneducated.[25]

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[23] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, xi.

[24] Iain MacRury, *Advertising*, (London: Routledge, 2009), 69.

[25] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 2.

However, the fame and social standing advertising has gained in the last decades testifies to its strength and power on consumers and on society in general. Advertising's belonging to popular culture is a determining factor in this process.

The term popular culture is, in itself, very hard to define, and it is often opposed to cultivated, high culture, and to art. However, the dividing line is not easily drawn: "In a sense advertising is the 'official art' of the advanced industrial nations of the west,"[26] because of the higher and higher level of refinement attained by contemporary advertisements and of the advertisers' work to render them more and more sophisticated. On the other hand, art is used as a tool for advertising: sometimes artists are called to take part in their creation, see, for example, John Everett Millais' picture *Bubbles* used for the Pears soap campaign,[27] or the more contemporary employ of famous photographers or directors for advertising campaigns. High and low culture, thus, interweave as part of a widespread communion of tastes, notions and trends: popular culture.

By contrast, popular culture's fluctuating relationship with the so called "mass culture" alternatively associates or opposes the two, testifying, once more, to the indeterminacy of the concept.

> When the story begins critics were divided on whether to call what they witnessed "mass culture," a generally derogatory term suggesting tastelessness, degradation, and imposition, or "popular culture," which denoted something more positive precisely because it was a genuine expression of creativity that emerged from below.[28]

The state of popular culture, and that of advertising as part of it, is difficult to define, but it results crucial in the understanding of the contemporary scenario. Popular culture, is part of everybody's lives and a critical approach towards it brings to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms ruling our society, leading to freer choices and behaviours: "A concerted effort to cultivate critical thinking skills of this sort is

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[26] Gillian Dyer, *Advertising as Communication* (London: Meuthen & Co., 1982), 1.

[27] See, for example, John Everett Millais, *Bubbles* (London: Lady Lever Art Gallery, 1886).

[28] Daniel Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 2.

essential to the continued flourishing of democracy in today's media-saturated world."[29]

Popular culture is a unifying cultural memory and practice shared by a large group of people, constantly changing, depending on historical and social factors: "popular culture refers to the beliefs and practices, and the objects through which they are organized, that are widely shared among the population."[30] Popular culture depicts reality by stereotyping and generalising it, it can be said to come from the people, from their customs and traditions, from their tastes and trends. Stereotypes play a key role in popular culture and in advertising. Stereotypes and shared ideas form a popular kind of "knowledge" which stems from media, memories, and popular culture as well as from lived experience: "Stereotyping is a process of selection, magnification and reduction."[31] Media and politics use stereotypes in order to communicate with the masses and, often, to influence their behaviour. Advertising partakes in this practice and uses stereotypes to appeal to shared ideas and beliefs which make the audience feel as part of a larger cultural group. This complex process plays on both individuality and inclusion. The individual is addressed in his/her specificity and peculiar tastes and desires, advertising makes him/her feel special, unique, the only addressee of the message. On the other hand, advertising's imperative is to attract the attention of the largest number of people, so ads contain general and almost universally shared concepts and messages,[32] or references to particular categories.

> The symbols must be comprehensible by the many, since the advertising strategy strives to enlist multitudes, and so must be composed of familiar elements that articulate commonalities within the society. Yet by the same token, the symbols must not be so overly familiar, so banal, that they elicit indifference or even rejection from consumers.[33]

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[29] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 252.

[30] Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, *Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 3.

[31] Andy Medhurst, "Tracing desires: sexuality in media texts" in *The Media: an Introduction*, eds. Adam Briggs and Paul Cobley (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 1998): 315-325, 315.

[32] See Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce* (Milano: Lupetti & Co., 1987), 124.

[33] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 167.

The inclusion in a group, a mass (people do what others do, buy what others buy), creates a sense of security in the individual, a sense of belonging to a community of people, while at the same time having his/her individuality emphasised and safeguarded. "Any advertisement or commercial overtly appeals to the individual consumer at the same time that it is covertly and contrarily appealing to the masses."[34] The apparently incongruous process is very effective allowing advertising, as well as popular culture, to address, at the same time, the masses and the individual who feels unique and special, differentiating himself/herself from others by buying a specific product, while, at the same time, associating with the group addressed by the advertising.[35]

The captivation of the masses develops from popular culture's use of generalising ideas and stereotypes, which can be shared by a large number of people and which appeal to their intellect and beliefs. Stereotyping in advertising can be compared to myth creation:

> advertising operates by selecting certain elements, things or people from the ordinary world and then rearranging and altering them "in terms of a product's myth to create a new world." This new world is the world of the advertisement.[36]

The process of stereotyping, thus, takes familiar and generally shared concepts, ideas or objects and transforms them into symbols, sometimes myths, carrying specific meanings or engendering specific emotions in the audiences:

> Thus, the "myths" of advertising are not falsehoods or misrepresentations in any straightforward sense: they function as mobile power-knowledge formations that allow for the rehearsal of understandings of social relations (including advertising's own influence in the social realm) and produce classificatory structures.[37]

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[34] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 94.

[35] See Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 125.

[36] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 26.

[37] Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, 113.

While the contemporary world is considered to allow all possible freedom to everyone, there are some hegemonic cultural constraints which people do not even realise are acting on them because they have a well-established role in everyday life and society. It is on these shared and unquestioned customs and habits that advertising works, in order to exploit them to achieve a wide consent.

The process of stereotyping is, thus, a sort of mythologisation, through which concepts are brought to their extremes to be easily recognised and grasped: "Myth produces shared rituals and social dramas. These are the means by which the values, beliefs, and aspirations of the community are self-reflectively made real."[38] This mechanism is largely exploited by advertising, which uses these preconceived and ready-to-use concepts to act on the highest number of people. The already known concepts, indeed, are part of everyone's culture, and represent a traditional knowledge, a reassuring and harmless understanding of reality, exploited by advertisers to conveniently introduce new concepts:

> A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral. […] it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defences we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy.[39]

While old information safeguards identity, at the same time it allows new information to establish itself and to enter people's everyday life, "persuasion and belief in this sense are often a matter of confirming what people already know, or of fitting new information into patterns of meaning that are already familiar."[40] Thus, new concepts or products are integrated in the already strengthened communication universe and swiftly become part of the information which is taken for granted.

Through advertising generalisations become concepts, standing for a particular product or behaviour, easily repeatable and shareable with others. Advertising and popular culture work with a mixture of acquired and new knowledge and participate

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[38] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 262, 263.

[39] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), 52.

[40] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 25.

in the everyday construction of meaning. "Meaning is constructed – given produced – through cultural practices. […] We map new things in terms of, or by extension or analogy from, things we already know."[41] Advertising becomes, thus, a cultural practice and inserts itself along all other cultural practices, modifying and being modified by them. Viewing an advertisement influences the interpretation of other advertisements and, at the same time, of other cultural products (such as films, books, television programs, newspaper articles etc.) that surround the advertisement:

> An advertisement or commercial does not stand alone but enters into a number of intertextual relationships, which supply further dynamics to the message. […] Individual advertisements are meaningless till they are put into a system of relationships with each other.[42]

However generalised, the meanings transmitted through advertising as part of popular culture are never univocal and steadily constructed, they are always the product of an interaction of the advertisement with the single addressee who will independently deduce the message from the advertisement. This Cultural Studies perspective frees popular culture from ideological constraints by making it a liberating practice in which meaning is not imposed but continually negotiated:

> [We need] to locate the sign beyond the signifying system as a site of ideological struggle. Meanings always function within the social system and as such are subject to the same struggle for possession as any other locus of power. Signs, through their multiaccentuality, are capable of different meanings for different people.[43]

For what concerns advertising, although many strategies are brought about, exploiting psychological and sociological manipulative techniques, the single person witnessing an advertisement or commercial is empowered with freedom of judgement and of

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[41] Paul du Gay, "Introduction" in *Doing Cultural Studies*, ed. Paul du Gay, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 14.

[42] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 90.

[43] John Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 69.

choice and has a personal reaction to the message which is impossible to be entirely controlled by the advertisers devising the message. The latter have to consider the:

> Powerful, interpretive role of the *user* of popular culture, so the valorisation of advertising awaits acknowledgment of the truth that advertising does not exploit consumers, but, rather, that consumers exploit advertising. […] consumers are, on the whole, adept social creatures, working to get the most from their resources in the interest of fulfilling their responsibilities and pleasures.[44]

The strength of advertising's hidden messages is that they often remain unquestioned by people who mostly fail to take a critical stance towards them. It is one of the purposes of this thesis to foster such a critical thinking which will allow an understanding of the persuasive intent hidden behind the symbolic world of advertising: "advertising and popular culture must be approached as economic entities as well as symbolic entities,"[45] and their messages have to be deciphered in order to disclose their latent meaning.

> This is why it is important to be aware not just of the content, but also of the structure of signs in ads, the way meanings are exchanged, […] and the way they structure us into the ad and call upon us to create meaning. Only in this way can we understand the way ideology works and ties advertising to existing conditions of society.[46]

The symbolic world constructed by advertising presents itself as problematic in its definition and analysis precisely due to its intermingling with reality. The latter, indeed, becomes an instrument of the advertising communication, which tries to reproduce it in advertisements and commercials to arouse the aforementioned reassuring feeling. At the same time, reality influences the advertising world from the outside providing the historical, social, and personal context which unquestionably shapes the advertisement's reception. As part of popular culture, any analysis of the advertising world inherits the difficulty of discerning between what is real and what is not. The

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[44] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 161.

[45] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 27.

[46] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 187.

distinction becomes more problematic when trying to determine if popular culture influences reality or if it is essentially an exaggerated depiction of it:

> Advertising in particular must be credited in this regard, for it has contributed significantly to the kinds of images we see, the expectation of easy comprehension and quick gratification that guides their selection, and the constantly accelerating pace of their flow. Advertising may be viewed as a practical site for the most advanced applications of postmodern ("constructive") theory. [...] Advertising operates by selecting certain elements, things or people from the ordinary world and then rearranging and altering them "in terms of a product's myth to create a new world." This new world is the world of the advertisement. [...]The commercial, persuasion-driven art of creating a new world has much in common with the storytelling process in general. In order to succeed, a narrative must establish a coherent framework for meaning. [...] When an event disturbs our ordinary expectations about how things happen in the world, or how people behave, or how a particular kind of story is supposed to go, we feel a strong need for resolution. Our sense of order demands that things be put right.[47]

It can be said that popular culture, and, thus, advertising, take their themes and modes of expression from reality which influences the trends and brings about new market needs. Reality itself has a twofold essence, it is divided between experience and representation. The individual, plunged into his/her own experienced reality, is, at the same time, surrounded by reality's double: its representation by the media.[48] According to Jean Baudrillard "in modern times, reality has capitulated and been obliterated by the hyperreality of the imagery conveyed through the mass media."[49] Furthermore, advertising and popular culture sometimes try to construct an alternative and imaginary reality or to forecast the demands of the audience, but the process is inevitably produced from reality itself, which is impossible to be disregarded.

Reality's representation is provided by the mass media, which have chiefly entered everyone's life. Mass media mediate between the everyday experience of the individual and the rest (i.e. news, artistic expressions, and information).[50] They become the lens

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[47] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 26.

[48] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 120.

[49] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 229.

[50] Laura Solito, *Media e Sviluppo*, (Napoli: Liguori, 1990), 138.

through which people observe and judge the surrounding world. People are, indeed, constantly targeted by different media messages and, while the latter originate inevitably from reality, they end up by influencing the frame of mind of the audience. The messages are accepted by the audience without questioning them, as part of an already existing reality whose rules are pre-constituted and immutable. They way in which media represent reality becomes the way in which people see and interpret it:

> To the extent that we are all naturally inclined to keep within the bounds of our own cultural tool kits, it becomes of interest to consider what's in the kit. What stories, what recurring images and metaphors, what stock scripts and popular stereotypes help us through the day?
>
> And where do they come from? For most people the source is not difficult to ascertain. It is the visual mass media: film, video, television, and to an increasing degree computerized imaging. This vast electronic archive provides us with the knowledge and interpretation skills we need to make sense of ordinary reality. From these familiar sources we learn the familiar plot lines, story genres, and character types out of which meanings are made. In a sense we "see" reality the way we have been trained to watch film and TV. The camera is in our heads. We've internalized the media's logic. In the case of film and television, that logic includes a system of cues, condensations, alterations, inventions, and anachronisms that we have come to take for granted. In fact, these cognitive tools for making meaning have grown so familiar they've become invisible. Like any other element of common sense, the meanings media logic produces are "self-evident." Nothing more need be said; it's just "the way things are." In this way, the tools that help us make sense of our lives and of the world around us simply disappear from view.[51]

Thus, the economic logic starts to shape and influence the perception of reality. Messages are wisely constructed so that "commercial culture [...] involve[s] symbolic communication."[52] This type of communication deeply permeates contemporary communication systems and comes to be used also when the mass media are not involved. Mass media and advertising culture inevitably shape the way people see reality and themselves.

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[51] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 21.

[52] Solito, *Media e Sviluppo,* 193.

> Writers [see] popular culture as a way people [convey] to one another information about their individual identities and common experiences, and [do] so through the evocation of rich, complicated, and multiple meanings. […] Society [comes] to understand itself through how commercial culture use[s] symbolic markers to convey broader dimensions of social meaning.[53]

The individual perception of himself/herself is inevitably influenced by the prominence, in contemporary mass mediated communication, of images and videos. "The body in the mirror is substituted by the video image, in an auto-referential representation of the self. In advertising, in particular, the body fixes on itself."[54]

People, moreover, start to define themselves in terms of the commodities they own, which have been advertised by the mass media. A commodity comes to stand for a series of values and concepts consequently attached to the person who possesses it. As for fashion, dresses are not simple garments but they are part of everyone's assertion of his/her own identity or state of mind.[55] Correspondingly, the objects advertised acquire a particular status conferred to them by the dreamscape created in the advertisement or in the commercial. Advertisers create a symbolic, fictional world to present the commodity they want to sell: "Advertising is a key social and economic institution in producing and reproducing the material and ideological supremacy of commodity relations."[56] Sometimes the product is not even shown but hinted at by the imaginary world created by the advertisement, "devices such as absence of the product, puns and puzzles, calligraphy and contradictory language are used to create space and a feeling of interpretive freedom."[57] In other cases, the advertisement produces a scenario, at first disconnected from the commodity advertised, which is only shown at the end, only finally acquiring all the characteristics described in the story previously presented. Likewise, when the product is at the centre of the advertisement's attention, it will be surrounded by a fictionally constructed and stereotyped world. The over-

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[53] Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures*, 4.

[54] Flaminia Cardini and Luisella Bolla, *Carne in scatola: la rappresentazione del corpo nella televisione italiana*, (Roma: RAI ERI, 1999), 105 [My translation].

[55] Bolla, Cardini, *Carne in scatola*, 105.

[56] Robert Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 2

[57] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 213.

exposure to mediated messages, in particular in the world of advertising, however, could provoke a reaction of repulsion opposite to that of attraction wished for by the advertisers: "Routinely bombarded by signifiers and signifieds detached from referent systems, spectators react by assuming stances of ironic detachment." [58] When the messages become too copious, the addressee decides which to pay attention to, even if, on the unconscious level he/she retains also some information from the neglected messages.

The world constructed around the product or behaviour advertised is, thus, transferred on the individual who decides to buy a determinate object or to display a particular behaviour. The addressee of the advertisement becomes, thus, its object.[59] Moreover, also the advertisement is objectified and becomes a commodity in itself. Advertisements and commercials come to symbolise specific concepts, they become objects of consumption thanks to their repeatability and recognisability.[60] The advertisement can stand on its own and sometimes audiences are attracted by it not because of the object advertised but by the appeal of the advertisement in itself. An advertisement can be compared to a literary fictional narration – conveyed in a very short time or even in a single image – which tells a wisely devised story endowed with a very dense content.

> Advertising [can be theorised] as a political economy of sign values, and advertisements as vehicles for producing commodity-signs. As a system of signification, advertisements compose connections between the meanings of products and images. [...]All meanings and activities exist in a social context – meaning is always relational and contextual. [...] Advertisements photographically isolate meaningful moments, remove them from their lived context and place them in the ad framework where their meaning is recontextualized and thus changed. [...] Ads arrange, organize and steer *meanings* into *signs* that can be inscribed on products – always geared to transferring the value of one meaning system to another.[61]

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[58] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 202.

[59] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 79.

[60] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 11.

[61] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 5.

Advertising, thus, can be said to occupy an intermediate position between culture and economy. It concerns the creation of a fictional and symbolic world depending on the utmost use of imagination and creative skills. At the same time, however, the use of creativity is devoted to an economic outcome, to the purpose of selling a product or convincing the audience of the validity of a particular behaviour. The disambiguation and eliciting of this duality, inherent to advertising, is crucial in order to understand its multifaceted and complex nature.

1.2. Advertising and communication

Advertising is considered, by Corinna C. Vellnagel[62] (following the classification by Charles Sanders Peirce of three categories of signs: icons, indexes and symbols) a means of symbolic communication because it is formed by signs which establish an arbitrary relationship with the concepts they refer to (she refers here to determinate words and images, which, by now, have become symbols in all respects). Additionally, advertising can be said to have an iconic nature because, in it, the sign also resembles what it represents. Advertising's double nature further complicates its analysis, but, at the same time, it can shed a light on the way in which the different mass media produce meaning.

Advertising represents the utmost evolution of contemporary communication, often condensed in a very exiguous number of words acquiring a significance depending on the context (the images or sounds to which they are correlated), on the addressees, and on its communicative intentions. In the light of a translational parallel, it is possible to speak of a completely *target-oriented* type of communication.

The original purpose of advertising was that of giving information about the products on the markets, through the use of a written text, appearing in newspaper pages. Advertising started with the diffusion of newspapers in the Seventeenth century and gave information on "prices, stocks, imports and exports."[63] In the Eighteen century simple illustrative devices started to be used to attract the reader's attention,

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[62] Corinna Colette Vellnagel, *Semiotics and Shock Advertisement*, (Norderstedt: Grin, 2011), 6.

[63] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 16.

while, for what concerns the content: "by today's standards most ads were straightforward and informative. Their style and language tended to be formal."[64] From the 1880s illustrations started to appear in magazines and advertisements became multimodal, mixing text and image. However, images had initially only an explicative role, their complexity increased over the ages and, from their origin as a simple corollary to the text, they became part and parcel of the message, often occupying almost all the space of the advertisement. Nowadays "readers do not simply read images in isolation from the verbal text that accompanies them; nor do they read the verbal text without reference to accompanying images."[65] Both text and image, thus, have their signifying role in contemporary advertising, and only the combination of the two conveys the complete message. Moreover, to unveil the strategies underlying such a multimodal artefact it is determinant to deconstruct the languages used by both modes: "[Il faut] traiter de la même façon l'écriture et l'image: ce qu'il retient d'elles, c'est qu'elles sont toutes deux des *signes*, elles arrivent au seuil du mythe, douées de la même fonction signifiante, elles constituent l'une et l'autre un langage-objet."[66]

As the relation between verbal text and image has changed, also that between news and advertisements inside newspapers has, due to economic and market rules.

> Advertising structures the newspaper into distinct categories and sections. Editorial space is, in practice, the space left over after advertising has taken its share of the newspaper. […] In addition to imposing its own needs on the medium, advertising has immense ideological implications. […] It […] masks and distorts real relationships of power and dominance.[67]

News and advertisements become interconnected and their messages inevitably mix in the fruition. The advertising presence does not only influence the layout of the newspaper but also its content. Advertisements in newspapers, on the other hand, are not spontaneous notices but become fabricated news, due to the influence of the surrounding environment. The same happens also with televised messages and

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[64] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 22.

[65] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 16.

[66] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957), 6.

[67] Delia Chiaro, *Translation, Humour and the Media,* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 68.

newscasts, the latter become more similar to the commercials which intersperse the broadcasting, while at the same time the commercials sometimes take the form of news in order to narrow the gap between the serious news and the commercial message in the mind of the spectator.

> Journalists and advertisers are *mythical operators*, they imagine a plot in which to place the object or the event, in order to stage it. They diffuse it reinterpreted – or, at worst, they deliberately construct it. An objective judgement of their work follows the application of the categories of the myth: the latter is neither true nor false, and the problem is not whether to believe it or not.[68]

Over time, and with the development of new technologies new modes have come to be part of the advertising text, heightening the level of multimodality "involving not just the visual, but also speech, sound and music."[69] Following these premises, an advertisement or commercial can be analysed as a complex kind of text, i.e. a multimodal text and, as such, it can be compared and enter in relation with other texts:

> the multimodal document [needs to be considered] as a carrier of meaning that draws on visual, spatial and verbal presentational modes in combination and co-operation.[...] In the fast-growing tradition of multimodal linguistics, for example, everything from book pages to films to art installations to museums to entire cities may be included as 'multimodal texts' to be analysed.[70]

The relation developed between texts, can thus be elucidated in the light of the concept of intermediality, comprising not only the multimodal construction of a text, but also its relationship with other texts through different media. The message derived from the advertisement, thus, often depends on its reading through intermediality:

> The term profits much from its Latin prefix 'inter,' which means 'between.' 'Being between media' stresses the idea of a message perpetually crossing the boundaries separating media; a message that *is*, i.e. *exists*, only *as* and *through* incessant movement,

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[68] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 103, [*my translation*].

[69] Kress & van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 265.

[70] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre. A Foundation for the Systematic Analysis of Multimodal Documents*, 7, 8.

never attaining an ultimate shape, and living as many lives as the number of the media crossed.[71]

Contemporary advertising uses a very complex form of communication. The media through which advertisements are conveyed should be taken into consideration and the mechanisms they involve should be analysed in order to understand how advertising signifies:

Nowadays […] [the] text is just one strand in a complex presentational form that seamlessly incorporates visual aspects 'around,' and sometimes even instead of, the text itself. We refer to all these diverse visual aspects as *modes* of information presentation. Combining these modes within a single artefact […] brings our main object of study to life: the *multimodal document*. In such artefacts, a variety of visually-based modes are deployed simultaneously in order to fulfil an orchestrated collection of interwoven communicative goals.[72]

The advertisements which will be further analysed are those transmitted via images i.e. via posters, billboards, newspaper pages, they are multimodal documents formed by verbal text and images. When considering, in particular, this kind of advertisements the words used have to be analysed in light of the linguistic strategies employed also taking into consideration the psychological and cultural inferences expected to be drawn by the audience. The verbal component is often present, be it the name of the brand, a slogan, or a catch phrase:

[An advertisement can be considered as] a semiotic unit, structured, not linguistically, but by principles of visual composition. In such a page verbal text becomes just one of the elements integrated by information value, salience and framing, and reading is not necessarily linear, wholly or in part, but may go from centre to margin, or in circular fashion, or vertically.[73]

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[71] Maddalena Pennacchia Punzi, "Literary intermediality: An Introduction" in *Literary Intermediality: The Transit of Literature Through the Media Circuit*, ed. Maddalena Pennacchia Punzi, (Peter Lang: Bern, 2007): 9-26, 10.

[72] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre,* 1.

[73] Kress and van Leeuween, *Reading Images*, 178

At the same time, the presence of an image involves an analysis in terms of its composition and of its main features. The verbal and visual component should be firstly analysed on their own and then in correlation with each other due to the strong interrelation of the two and of their potentiality of reciprocally changing and enhancing their respective meaning and of conjointly conveying the whole sense of the advertisement.

> Multiple images or images and text in juxtaposition hold the same potential for establishing meaning on the basis of their visual syntax. In such configurations the relationships among signs are as important as the signs themselves. [...] Today's images, through their deployment of culturally charged signs and compositions designed to foreground certain aspects of representation, introduce connotations that were previously the responsibility of the text.[74]

The commercial, more and more widespread in the contemporary World Wide Web era, adds to the previous mode sounds, music, and spoken language. All to be analysed in order to derive the overall significance of the message: "The orchestrated combination of modes lead[s] to *new* meanings, to a *multiplication of meaning*, to use a metaphor from Lemke, rather than simple addition."[75] In a commercial it is necessary to take into consideration the gestures (kinaesthesia), the distances (proxemics), and the gaze of the performances.[76]

The linguistic theories of Discourse Analysis, Social Semiotics (Kress and Van Leewen) and Mediated Theory (Norris), will give a basis for this research concerning advertising:

> In mediate discourse theory, modes are viewed as complex cultural tools, which build one part in the interconnected unit of social *actors acting with or through cultural tools*. Cultural tools [...] are viewed as an integral part in social action. [...] Whereas in semiotic theory (Kress, 2010) all modes essentially have the same properties as language, in mediated

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[74] Meredith Davis, *Graphic Design Theory* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 48, 49.

[75] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre*, 2.

[76] Marco Gargiulo, *Lingua e cultura italiana nei mass media* (Rimini: Aracne, 2014), 61.

theory (Norris and Jones, 2005) a language is a mode which social actors use to act in the world, but it is a mode that may essentially differ in property from other modes.[77]

These theories postulate an interrelation of semiotic modes not only lingering on the analysis of language but also of other signifying elements, such as sounds and images. For what concerns advertising through images "visual information, [...] is considered equally as important as discourse,"[78] while in commercials the analysis of "visual content, verbal text and soundtrack [...] has permitted the exploration of relations between the semiotic modes and their meaning-making integration in the subsequent discourse analysis of knowledge selection processes."[79] The reaction of the audience, indeed, depends on the use of particular multimodal strategies which, in their turn, depend on the medium used to convey them. Moreover, a particular multimodal structure will imply a particular expectation on the part of the audience. Advertising, for instance, is conveyed through complex multimodal supports whose functioning has to be analysed in order to show how advertising itself communicates: "The various modal contributions to a multimodal artefact work together to create the perceived meaning of the artefact as a whole."[80]

1.2.1 The Language of Advertising

As a multimodal artefact, an advertisement is composed by many different languages which have to be analysed and put in relation with each other in order to investigate the way in which the advertisement communicates. The language of the media through which advertisements and commercials are conveyed inevitably shapes the message itself and people's interpretation of it.

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[77] Sigrid Norris "Multimodality in Practice. Investigating Theory in Practice through Methodology," in *Multimodality in Practice*, ed. Sigrid Norris, (New York: Routledge, 2012): 222-226, 223.

[78] Denise Maria Conroy and Richard W. Brookes, "Storm over the Starship" in *Multimodality in Practice*, ed. Sigrid Norris: 174-189, 181.

[79] Carmen Daniela Maier, "Mediating Multimodal Environmental Knowledge across Animation Techniques," in *Multimodality in Practice*, ed. Sigrid Norris: 206-221, 209.

[80] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre*, 53.

> Advertisements saturate our social lives. We participate, daily, in deciphering advertising images and messages. Our ability to recognize and decipher the advertising images that confront us depends on our photographic literacy and our familiarity with the social logic of advertising and consumerism.[81]

Language as a cultural phenomenon determines the way people shape and interpret the world surrounding them, and advertisers exploit this mechanism in order to influence the reception of a determinate message and to direct people's understanding of it pursuing the goal of persuasion. The language of advertising becomes thus a cluster of natural language, media language and persuasive language:

> What we know about ourselves, others, and the world around us is inextricably embedded in cultural forms of understanding. The various language practices in which we engage every day are constitutive not only of social reality, but also of our own self-identity. As cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner has put it, our understanding of self is both "situated" and "distributed." In other words, the meaning we carry inside our heads are to a significant extent continuous with the cultural world around us. They are constantly being affirmed and negotiated anew in our various interactions with others. […] The universal autonomous self is […] contingent, multiple, and actively constructed in discretely contextualized narrative practices.[82]

Advertising, being conveyed through mass media, makes use of the communicative strategies of the latter, already deeply ingrained in people's everyday life and culture. "Popular culture, especially through its chief agency, the visual mass media, [...] is a source of both meaning and the meaning-making tools people use to think and speak with."[83] Mass media and, in particular, advertising, adopt a precise kind of language, interspersed with subliminal messages devised to be decoded, to a higher or lesser degree, by the audience. The long acquaintance with the mass media language allows people to recognise this intricate type of communication more and more readily:

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[81] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 1.

[82] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 209, see also Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 106.

[83] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 18.

Indeed, it might well be argued that today – in a modern world dependent upon and immersed within an environment dominated by the mass media – anyone who cannot read and understand the subliminal languages of symbolic illusion is functionally illiterate.[84]

Advertising has gone from describing a product and indicating where people could buy it to telling people what they want, shaping public needs. Advertising has extended its power on all communication fields, in a process that made it lose its specific commercial nature.[85] Undeniably advertising is faster and faster acquiring a status of its own, losing its referentiality and becoming a cultural object to be observed and enjoyed as a film would be. People are living in a media society which is transforming into an "advertising society" in which most of the messages advertise something. All means of expression, cultural forms and specific languages are tending towards advertising's expression mode because of its superficiality and instantaneousness. This inarticulate and ephemeral form, momentary while concurrently timeless, has a power over all other forms of communication.[86] The advertising language, moreover, does not need to be real, it is founded on a "*self-fulfilling prophecy*"[87]: the word realises its essence and meaning in itself, advertising reality speaks of itself, it plays on tautology "everything in it is a 'metaphor' of one and only one thing: the brand."[88] The fictive reality of the ad's language has the only purpose of seducing the audience:

In Baudrillard's view, our culture is rapidly slipping from communication with content into "simulation," what he calls the "ecstasy of the real." According to Baudrillard, this state of ecstasy is a state of empty form; it is reality aesthetically heightened to the point that it is stripped of all meaning and becomes pure seduction. […] But simulation is not the endpoint of the cultural development now under way. According to Baudrillard, we

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[84] Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, 18.

[85] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 9.

[86] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 59.

[87] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 104.

[88] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 105, [My translation].

are seeing a shift from pure "simulation" (the failed representation of the real) to pure "simulacrum" (the impenetrable commingling of fiction and reality).[89]

Nowadays the constant presence of advertisements permeating every aspect of life is taken for granted and a critical judgement is almost absent in the approach to the advertising message. It has become pure entertainment, sometimes even losing its aim of selling a particular product. Also the peculiar language that accompanies the advertising and its artificial nature as a persuasive tool are seldom questioned. "In the systemic-functional framework language is seen as inextricably related to society, ideology and culture"[90] but this relation seems to be hidden by the force of habit due to the over-exposure to the mass media communication typical of contemporary society.

> This postmodern phenomenon is the byproduct of an unprecedented convergence of cultural, social, and economic forces. It is what happens when constructivist theory, communication technology, and the gratification demands of the marketplace combine. According to constructivist theory, language does not simply reveal the world. Words and images are not like boxcars freighting reality around; they do not simply leave the scene once their load of meaning has been dumped in our minds. The language we use, like the technological forms of communication we inherit from the culture around us, helps to create the reality we live in. And as the means of communication change so too does our sense of ourselves, others, and the world around us.[91]

When concentrating on communication a twofold perspective is to be considered: both the construction and reception of meaning have to be taken into consideration. Thus, two theoretical backgrounds will sustain the analysis of advertising:

> French semiotics and British cultural studies. Semiotics (proposed by linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and realized in the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and cultural critic Roland Barthes) provides an intellectual aperture on human existence through its

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[89] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 128 based on Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1990), 24.

[90] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre*, 184.

[91] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 27.

focus on the communication of meanings. That which may be perceived as meaningful is formed from a wide variety of signs – linguistic, pictorial, and otherwise. Semiotics in its purest form is concerned with the symbols that enter into the encoding or construction of communicated content. Cultural studies (as developed by Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and John Fiske, among many others) is less concerned with the encoding process and more concerned with the decoding done by individuals at the receiving end. In particular, cultural studies explores how meanings, such as those drawn from popular culture offerings, are interpreted and used in everyday life.[92]

When applied to advertising, the first approach regards the work of the advertisers, the strategies brought about, the hidden messages inserted in advertising, and the preferred function of the communication. The purpose of the message is well established in the mind of the advertisers but its outcome is unpredictable and entirely depends on the recipients' reaction to the message: "The advertiser attempts to put forward a symbol set that most of the target market will find meaningful and in the nature of a personal affirmation."[93] An advertisement, indeed, can produce different reactions in different audiences and can sometimes be ineffective towards some individuals: "meaning is always negotiated in the semiotic process, never simply imposed inexorably from above by an omnipotent author through an absolute code."[94] In the advertising language, thus, the different components such as texts, images, and sounds are arranged to create meaning and to convey a particular message. All these components convey different significations and contribute to the overall interpretation of the advertisement or commercial. Moreover, the way an advertisement or commercial communicates depends on the medium it is inserted in and on the culture it belongs to:

Advertisers draw sociocultural meanings from viewers' life-worlds and the mass media themselves, and embed these meanings in images which are then returned to viewers – now framed in relation to meanings of products, services or corporate identities. [...]
The fundamental work accomplished within an advertising space is the connection and exchange of meaning between an object (a named product) and an image (another referent

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[92] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, xv.

[93] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 94

[94] Robert Hodge and Gunther R. Kress, *Social Semiotics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 12.

system). The form of an advertisement enables advertisers to translate "the language of objects to that of people, and vice-versa."[95]

As the language through which they are conveyed, advertisements and commercials are culture-specific and their interpretation chiefly depends on the cultural schemes of the audience's mind. Also the language used in advertising depends on that culture and thus:

> [These messages] will have no meaning to a cultural group who do not have these signs in their communication system. [...] The phonology, or sound system, of a language also plays its part in the creation of meaning – in, for example, sound symbolism, where we associate sounds with particular ideas. You can see the operation of sound symbolism in the way certain sounds often occur in the brand names of particular types of product. […] Although such associations are strongly felt by the users of a particular language, they are culture specific and often do not translate.[96]

These associations, hence, attach a determinate set of characteristics to the product advertised. All the inferences drawn from the different languages interconnected in the act contribute to transfer a particular set of meanings and of feelings on the commodity which is the object of the advertisement. The latter, indeed, does not only give information about a product or a preferred behaviour, but it furnishes them with a series of emotional connotations conveyed, indeed, through language.

> The aim of much advertising, which, as a symbolic medium, attempts to get audiences to engage more fully with the quasi-inert objects produced by factories and technology and then to connect us with them in elaborated cultural terms, to help tie products into shared meanings and 'living' value systems.[97]

Objects and behaviours become, consequently, symbols of the set of concrete and abstract characteristics associated with them by the advertisement or commercial:

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[95] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 61, 71.

[96] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 83.

[97] MacRury, *Advertising*, 154.

Thus [...] humans participate in the consumption of goods so as to participate in the world of meanings, outside of which they would be lost. Goods are the visible, material markers of invisible, immaterial, but highly significant, culture. [...] Goods, then, lie at the core of human existence because they make meanings palpable and provide a means for people to situate themselves within the larger culture.[98]

As a specific type of language, that of advertising associates specific symbolic meanings with definite objects. The concepts associated with the objects are fast spreading and consequently easily recognised by people, however, the advertisers may decide to vary a certain association due to market constraints or transformations. So the object's meaning may be modified depending on the new content or intended message of the advertisement or commercial.

The commodity-sign is a composite of a signifying unit and signified meaning. The signifying unit or signifier could be a word, a picture, a sound or an object. The signified is a meaning (a mental image, concept of impression) suggested by a signifier. The precise relation between signifier and signified is not fixed but emerges out of social practice.[99]

The attribution of meaning is, thus, always potentially changing depending on the cultural and social associations a product establishes over time and in different contexts.

This value-added process, based on a formula of rerouting meanings, is a process of assembling commodity-signs: associating a meaningful object with a symbol of something else. Ads draw on meaning systems that already have currency with an audience. Ads do not create meanings, but rather provide an arena in which to transfer and rearrange meanings. [...] Advertisements are message systems that organize perceptions and "create structures of meaning." Consumer advertising aims to provide a new image or meaning for a product.[100]

[98] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 28.

[99] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 18.

[100] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 38.

Moreover, the meaning is modified by the presence of the advertisement in an intertextual network putting it in relation with other advertising texts and with other cultural productions. The influence on the meaning and reception of an advertisement will not only depend on its relation with contemporary texts surrounding it synchronically in the moment of fruition but also on the presence and weight of precedent and successive productions. Also the signs that compose the advertising text, furthermore, are modified by these interactions and by the relations existing inside the advertisement itself: all different language systems modify the signs of the other languages composing the advertisement, in a dialogical relationship.

> The important thing to remember about signs is that their meaning can only be assessed in relation to their structure and their structural relationships with other signs. A sign not only means in and for itself but also through its place in other signifying systems, for instance the individual ad within advertising. The signified does not exist except as a function of a particular signifying system. Meanings are organized in 'chains' of signification and signifieds can become signifiers for further chains of signification. Advertising, like language, is a system consisting of distinct signs.[101]

The ever-shifting relationship between signifiers and signifieds in advertising signs and their overall meaning is undoubtedly determined by their interpretation by the audience. It is the latter's prerogative to determine the efficacy of an advertisement and whether it fulfils the intended meaning attached to it by the advertiser. The moment of fruition, in fact, can change the meaning of the message and readdress it to a new signification depending on manifold factors:

> No longer is there a single authoritative interpretation to a text but a multiplicity of interpretations which lead to a supposed cultural pluralism. Indeterminacy and ambiguity in postmodern texts elicit participation because ambiguity impels viewers to fill in interpretive gaps.[102]

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[101] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 123.

[102] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 213.

A need to understand the stance of the audience in the debate on the fruition of mass media messages becomes prominent. Indeed, while a critical approach would be beneficial for an unabridged fruition, often the masses are manipulated by the mass media. The subliminal manipulation applied on the audiences of advertising is arduous to detect because in advertising messages the coercive strategies are hidden, to a variable degree, depending on the skills of the advertisers and on the level of critical awareness of the individual. "Advertising language is of course loaded language. Its primary aim is to attract our attention and dispose us favourably towards the product or service on offer."[103] Particularly in advertising, the use of a specific word, image, colour, or sound has a determinate purpose and all elements are skilfully positioned in order to arouse certain feelings or to draw particular inferences in the recipient, "rhetoric, the effective or artful use of speech and writing, is used to clarify or add strength and impact to persuasive oratory."[104]

The appeal to a large number of people and the high degree of persuasiveness intrinsic to advertising, have, thus, to be confronted with a critical perspective taking into consideration the power of language which is exercised by shaping our understanding and our approach to the world. The linguistic strategies have to be deconstructed in order to understand the way in which they are able to influence our minds and behaviours.

> The challenge of analyzing the complexity of discourse and its underlying functions as social action has become an issue of relevance, especially in recent times, where the transmission of ideas and information through multimodal texts (e.g., language, image and sound) have emerged as principal players in the development, maintenance and destabilization of cultural trends. The rapid technologization and proliferation of diverse media platforms has facilitated such transmissions, giving rise to complex patterns of meaning between individuals and groups across space and time.[105]

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[103] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 139.

[104] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 158.

[105] Marissa K. L. E, Kay L. O'Halloran and Kevin Judd, "Combining Computational Tools with Systemic Functional Theory for Discourse Analysis," in *Multimodality in Practice*, ed. Sigrid Norris: 153-173, 153.

1.2.2. Psychology in Advertising

The comparison between the two main kinds of advertisements and commercials, those centred on objects and those promoting or discrediting a specific behaviour (social issues advertising) demonstrates that the actual aim of the strategies adopted is mainly, and in both situations, that of convincing the audience. The etymology of the word advertising further elucidates this principle: the word originates from the Latin verb *advertere* (formed by the prefix *ad:* to/towards and by the verb *vertere*: turn/ bring) which means "to turn towards," so, to attract the attention, to influence the behaviour. The process of persuasion, indeed, takes place in both kinds of advertisements and commercials, it is "persuasiveness, or the mastery of an emotional or evocative style that helps lure the addressee into the desired course of action."[106]

An in-depth analysis of advertising will, thus, not only take into consideration the textual, visual, and sound components of the advertisements and commercials, their organization and interrelation, but also the psychological implications of these elements and of particular communicative strategies developed by the advertisers.

The reference to the functioning of the mind leads to consider also the psychological reaction elicited by an advertisement and the strategies used to influence the psyche of the audience: "[in ads] hidden psychological feelings are being explored, subtle associations are made, strange, dream-like transformations enacted."[107] Not only do the advertisers exploit some intrinsic psychological mechanisms (associations of images with good and bad, stereotypes), but they also endeavour to influence the eventual behaviour of the audience: "Whereas advertising cannot be said to *create* consumers' needs, it is capable of *challenging* those needs by reshaping them into wants for specific products and services."[108] The power of advertising is thus, substantial, and the audience is influenced to a higher or lesser degree, not always being fully aware of the manipulation of his/her own mind by the advertising message.

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[106] Torresi, *Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts*, 8.

[107] Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 329.

[108] Bob M. Fennis, Wolfgang Stroebe, *The Psychology of Advertising*, (London: Psychology Press, 2010), 3.

> Il faut encore opposer à la publicité psychologique, la publicité psychanalytique […] on met en mouvement la vanité, le paraître social. […] [Autres publicités] engage[nt] ainsi le consommateur dans une sorte de mode vécu de la substance, le rende complice d'une délivrance et non plus seulement bénéficiaire d'un résultat: la matière est ici pourvue d'états-valeurs.[109]

Advertising, indeed, turns at the same time to people's consciousness and subconscious, influencing people's disposition both directly and surreptitiously, thanks to manifold strategies. When referring to Shakespeare and his works, for example, a series of notions and of pre-existing feelings are evoked in order to influence the audience's reaction to a particular advertisement or commercial.

According to psychoanalysis our subconscious is structured as a language and, as such, it can be analysed.[110] The subconscious speaks a complex hidden language which expresses itself through phenomena such as, among others, the slip of the tongue and dreams. Advertising tries to re-create or to influence those dreams, appealing to the same subconscious which creates them.

> Advertising is, in the first place, a technique for the commercialisation of conscious attention [...]. But conscious attention is not enough, for the most effective purchasing advisor is the psyche itself, as with hypnosis. If we hypothesize that advertising works largely unconsciously, and that it is an ambiguous representation, then it can claim to shape the unconscious like dreams, following the idea that "advertisements are dreams," or more precisely that "advertisements are structured like dreams."[111]

Dreams, according to Sigmund Freud, are often caused by "recent and indifferent impressions"[112] which acquire a fundamental importance in the dream. The familiar

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[109] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (Paris: Seuils, 1957), 30.

[110] Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire. Livre XI. Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la Psychanalyse*, (Paris: Seuils, 1964).

[111] Frédéric Forest, "Psychoanalysis of Advertising," *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, June 2015, 2.

[112] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* [1866], trans. A. A. Brill, ed. Janet B. Kopito (New York: Dover Publications, 2015), 124. "We may recall that there are three peculiarities of recollection in the dreams [...]: 1. That the dream distinctly prefers impressions of the few days preceding [...]. 2. That it makes its selection according to principles other than those of our waking memory, in that it recalls not

and the trivial are magnified in the dream and are used by people's subconscious in order to codify the latent messages of the individual's impulses. The everyday scenario, often used also in advertising, hides a message: "Image placement also works off another simple, but profound insight: we tend to like, and believe, what is familiar, that which makes us feel comfortable."[113] Also the unaware perceptions of the day come to constitute the dream material and, in contemporary society, a large portion of these perceptions come from the mass media messages:

> The eyes make about 100,000 fixations daily – only a small portion of the information in these fixations is consciously experienced. Somehow, subliminally perceived content is singled out and transformed for reproduction in dreams at a later point of time.[114]

In this sense, not only does advertising create a dreamlike experience and function as a dream, but it is also reproduced in dreams along with all other subliminally perceived messages. Moreover, the message of the advertisement or commercial lingers in the mind of the receiver also during his/her waking life and emerges in the most unexpected moments, (for example when a commercial's jingle or a slogan make an impression on the mind of a person and are repeated a long time after the fruition thus entering in people's everyday life) demonstrating how deeply ingrained in people the advertising message is. The latter is silently stored in the mind of the individual till the moment of purchase or of the displaying of a particular behaviour:

> Theories of the unconscious suggest that it actually dominates human behavior, controlling motivations, value systems, interpersonal relationships, personal identities, and, in effect, all major and minor aspects of life which differentiate humans from animals. [...]
> In advertising recall studies, for example, advertisements are rarely or never recalled by the conscious mind. Any ad that can be recalled by a significant number of readers is of doubtful value. The conscious mind values, differentiates and makes judgements. [...] Ads

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what is essential and important, but what is subordinate and disregarded. 3. That it has at disposal the earliest impressions of our childhood, and brings to light details from this period of life which again seem trivial to us, and which in waking life were considered long ago forgotten."

[113] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 144.

[114] Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, 20.

are designed to implant themselves within the unconscious where they will lie dormant uncriticised, unevaluated and unknown to the individual until the time a purchase decision is required. The buried information then surfaces as a favourable attitudinal predisposition. This phenomenon can produce some interesting and complicated situations.[115]

Advertising, moreover, not only speaks the unconscious language, but it also speaks people's conscious one, it is conveyed through the language people use to express themselves every day, thus shaping their personality, their world vision, and consciousness.

> What we know about ourselves, others, and the world around us is inextricably embedded in cultural forms of understanding. The various language practices in which we engage every day are constitutive not only of social reality, but also of our own self-identity. [...] In other words, the meanings we carry inside our heads are to a significant extent continuous with the cultural world around us. They are constantly being affirmed and negotiated anew in our various interactions with others. […] The universal autonomous self is […] contingent, multiple, and actively constructed in discretely contextualized narrative practices.[116]

The aim of advertising is always that of convincing the audience to buy a product or to exhibit a particular behaviour: "Most ads follow the advertising principle AIDA, which stands for Attract, Interest, Desire, and Action."[117] The commercial intent is the most widespread even if nowadays some advertisements are so complex, containing so many layered meanings that they seem to hide their real goal, frequently not even representing the product they advertise.

> There are two varieties of advertisements: *simple*, where all the content pertains directly to the commodity being sold (as a classified ad), and *compound*, where besides the commodity information, there exists noncommodity material (the symbolic elements that constitute

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[115] Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, 47, 48.

[116] Sherwin, *When Law goes Pop*, 209.

[117] Jen Green, *Advertising*, (London: Wayland, 2011), 24

that appeal). […] The task of the advertisement is to get consumers to transfer the positive associations of the noncommodity material onto the commodity.[118]

In this latter case the advertisement or commercial becomes autoreferential, it speaks of itself, the advertisement or commercial becomes the object of the interpretation.[119] The signs composing the ad have to be read and deciphered on their own, composing a signifying system used for the depiction of real objects which become symbols.[120] The objects and behaviours advertised, indeed, come to stand for something else, in a process of substitution typical of dreams. Images and object are sublimated representations of people's desires or fears. Most of contemporary advertisements and commercials do not attract consumers because of their informative value, but because they appeal to peoples' gratification, they rationalise people's desires and tell them what they want.[121]

One of the main feelings associated with the commodities advertised is pleasure, and its gratification through the object or behaviour advertised:

> Rapid image consumption and the immediate gratification it brings usefully model what commercial sponsors are after. The format trains viewers to equate consumption with pleasure. Whether the object of consumption is a particular product – or a particular identity or way of life that has been visually associated with it – the result is the same. Consumption, as a primary cultural norm, is reinforced.[122]

People's need for gratification is not only achieved but often constructed through psychological strategies. People feel they lack something and are encouraged to compensate for it by a purchase or a behaviour. "The task of the media is seen as being to provide the public with what it needs, and indeed to reshape its needs so that it wants what is normatively better for it."[123] Frustration and gratification are strongly

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[118] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 11.

[119] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 44.

[120] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 121.

[121] Jean Baudrillard, *Il sistema degli oggetti*, (Milano: Bompiani, 1972), 312.

[122] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 143.

[123] Cloeman Stephen, Ross Karen, *The Media and the Public. "Them" and "Us" in Media Discourse*, (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 29.

tied together and play a significant role in everyone's life. Advertising exploits these feelings through which it creates dissatisfaction and at the same time gives the means to escape it, it creates anxiety while suggesting the solution to relieve it.[124] It follows that advertising not only attributes a meaning to objects and behaviours, but by people's purchase or conduct the meanings are ascribed also to the individuals themselves, people are personalised by commodities:

> Advertising appropriates things from the real world, from society and history and sets them to its own work. In doing so it mystifies the real world and deprives us of any understanding of it. We are invited to live an unreal life through the ads. The more we are isolated from the real world by the media, the more we seek images from them to give us a sense of social reality. Advertising helps us to make sense of things. It validates consumer commodities and consumer life-style by aspirations and needs which are not fulfilled in real life. We come to think that consuming commodities will give us our identities. […] We become part of the symbolism of the ad world; not real people but identified in terms of what we consume.[125]

The play of advertising on people's desire's gratification has also a negative side to it: it shows people what they lack, what they are not, what their faults and flaws are, providing a fast and easy answer to correct them while at the same time neglecting to acknowledge their deeply complex nature which would need a more profound and thorough reflection. Concurrently, advertising represses more complex feelings, often of negative nature, because of their intricacy and of the difficulty to solve them with a mere gratification:

> Fantasy seems to be validated at a personal level but only at the cost of preserving the general unreality which it obscures: the real failures of society […] if the meanings and values generally operative in society give us no answers to, no means of negotiating, problems of death, loneliness, frustration, the need for identity and respect, then the magical system must come and mixing its charms and expedients with reality in easily available forms and binding the weakness to the condition which has created it.[126]

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[124] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 123.

[125] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 185.

[126] Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 191.

Negative feelings are often used by public issues advertising in order to shock the addressee, in order to provoke a reaction in the individual or in order to attract his/her interest for such a different kind of advertising communicative strategy:

> Adverts can sometimes want to shock the reader for very good reasons, however increasingly, charities and other fund-raising groups have used some of the traditional methods of commercial product advertising to get their campaign noticed, and one of these methods has been the disturbing image, as a way of presenting the case for the need for support.[127]

Advertising, in fact, does not play only on positive associations of values with products and behaviours, but also on the powerful feeling of lack, exploiting it to create further needs in the consumers. "One way of getting people interested in consumer commodities was to make them dissatisfied with themselves and to play with their insecurities."[128] The advertising message sometimes underlines the possibility of making up for a determinate lack thanks to a particular purchase or through the adoption of a determinate behaviour. The advertisement symbolically stands for the unconsciously repressed flaws and insecurities of the audience that the commercial promises to cure without any effort.

> The gradual unveiling of the individual has heightened private anxieties regarding self-identity and psychological maintenance; it is to these aching concerns that the symbolic domains of advertising and popular culture have learned to speak because these are the concerns that audience members long to have treated.[129]

Not only are the negative feelings of individual lack exploited in this type of advertising, but also those linked with sadness and sympathy for the situation of others. The suffering of other people is shown in order to induce a feeling of empathy for the other's unfortunate situation to be eased only through the purchase of a certain

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[127] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 12.

[128] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 45.

[129] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 49.

product. The shocking advertisings include also those representing people's suffering, usually utilising distressing, extreme, and violent images which make an impression in the mind of the viewer and which are displayed in order to prevent socially dangerous behaviours.

Advertising shows a solution to a person's needs in the external world appealing to his/her desires or insecurities, often expressed only at an unconscious level: "effective persuasion requires gaining control over reality, and that the reality that counts most in this context is the one the prospect (the would-be consumer) carries around in his or her head."[130] The appeal to the subconscious needs the application of a series of strategies that take into account this hidden part of the human mind: "The modern social world dehumanizes and alienates people while modern mass culture, including advertising, attempts to conceal or compensate for the deficiencies in a person's real social and personal life."[131]

Not only does advertising play on desires or insecurities but also on the need for transgression, often repressed and removed from people's consciousness. They all imply:

> the notions of desire and censure. According to a Freudian interpretation, people will speak figuratively to satisfy a forbidden desire. […] This pretend or mock transgression of rules satisfies a forbidden desire, according to Durand's interpretation of Freud, and because it is only a pretence it remains unpunished. [...] Rhetorical figures, in Durand's view, should be regarded as mock violations of a norm. These violations could be against the 'normal' use of language or the norms of logic, morality, social rules and physical reality. Advertising frequently breaks the 'rules,' such as those of spelling ('Beanz Meanz Heinz') or grammar ('Winston tastes good *like* a cigarette should'). It also breaks the rules of physical reality by using the devices of dreaming and fantasy to induce 'trance-like' states in the audience.[132]

Advertising communication speaks through symbols, through metaphorical images that evoke a certain scenario which should provide the fulfilment of the needs or

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[130] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 38.

[131] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 81.

[132] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 159, 160.

desires of the audience. Stereotypes offer reliable concepts, an established and widespread knowledge that do not create distress in its addressees. The concepts used are simple and easily understandable and often make appeal to a common popular culture, with the intent of provoking the same reactions in the largest audience:

> Some critics of advertising have even suggested that it operates in the same way as myths in primitive societies, providing people with simple stories and explanations in which values and ideals are conveyed and through which people can organise their thoughts and experiences and come to make sense of the world they live in.[133]

Symbols can also be culture specific, they are reliable and allow a person to identify with a particular group, the use of determinate symbols in advertising allows the spectator to immediately associate it to a specific addressee and to understand whether the message is directed towards him or her.

> For example, if a company wants to target older people, playing on a slogan they will recognise from their youth will have at least two positive effects: it will create a sense of nostalgia in the target audience; and it will make them feel 'special' in that a code is being used that they recognise.[134]

Not all advertising messages, indeed, are addressed to a general audience, some are based on gender, others on age or class, and manifold other differentiations are possible. However, this distinction is not explicit, and it depends chiefly on the composition of the advertisement and on its symbolic system:

> Symbols are very useful to advertisers. Rather than the possible variations in meaning being a problem, they produce a useful fluidity. Loose associations are much more effective than watertight definitions. At the same time, symbols can be relied on to have predictable associations for particular groups, giving readers a sense of belonging and recognition.[135]

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[133] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 2.

[134] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 71.

[135] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 116.

The product can also stand for a particular way of life, superficially determined by the possession of certain commodities. The spectator is not buying an object but an entire lifestyle, to be exhibited in his relationship with others. The products advertised become symbols of identity, of how a person sees him/herself and of the way he/she wants to be seen by others.

> Though advertisers may seek the sale of objects, they accomplish this by situating the meaningfulness of objects in terms of meaningful images of social relations. As Williamson observes, when advertisements structure interchanges of meaning, they are really 'selling us ourselves.' Advertisers organize photography, narrative texts and viewers' knowledge of a sociocultural life-word to *frame* stylized accounts of 'desirable' social relations. Establishing correlations between stylized social appearances and meanings on named commodities generates a currency of appearances. Ideally, an advertiser seeks to make the positioning concept and the community 'interchangeable as signifier/signified'.[136]

The symbolism of the advertisement or commercial functions as the symbolic system inside people's minds and, at the same time, influences the mechanisms shaping everyone's needs. The advertising communication not only provides objects or behaviours for the needs of the audience, but, at the same time, it shapes the language through which these needs are expressed and sometimes creates these same needs. The mode of expression of the media becomes part of the individual:

> once the media's framework has been internalized it tends to be projected back into the real world. We see what we expect to see: the familiar stories and character types, the recurring scenarios and images we've seen before. When gaps arise we are prepared to fill them in. We do so based on our expectations regarding how this kind of story or situation, with this sort of character, is supposed to go.[137]

In this context, the exercise of a free and unconditioned judgement becomes highly problematic because the individual is surrounded by advertising messages that come to be part of his/her own everyday reality, and are not capable of engendering any

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[136] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 81.

[137] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 27.

feeling of incredulity because of the saturation of the world of communication by that kind of language. The language of the media is taken for granted and unquestioned because it is accompanying the individual on a daily basis.

> When popular images of reality control and untrammelled self-gratification prevail it becomes increasingly difficult to find a basis or means within the individual or collective imagination for critical judgement to occur. […] This also has the effect of suppressing the capacity for critical reflection. What we find instead are artificially heightened and strategically manipulated urgencies of emotion – the disguised, and at times unconsciously displaced, compulsions and needs of irrational fury, retribution, fantasy, and illicit desire. Here we enter the realm of the hyperreal, where image and story converge on gratification for its own sake. It is a realm in which the good, the true, the real, and the right come to be known on the basis of the feelings a particular story or image releases or the impulses it gratifies.[138]

Advertising messages, as part of the media communication, are shaped in the same way as other media messages, and the average person does not have a critical stance towards them but merely absorbs them both on a conscious and on an unconscious level:

> Data provided from studies in neurology and psychology strongly support the conclusion that all senses (including those yet undiscovered) operate on at least two perceptual levels. Information is collected at what might be called a cognitive or conscious level, a level where each human is consciously aware of what is going on. Information is also collected simultaneously and continuously at a subliminal level, a level at which there is no consciously apparent awareness of data entering the brain.[139]

The subconscious level operates, thus, in people's everyday life, in the collection of surrounding information not specifically directed towards the spectator, as well as of those present in advertisements and commercials a person is knowingly witnessing. In every advertisement or commercial, indeed, the elements that compose it refer to

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[138] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 242.

[139] Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, 15.

something else and messages are hidden behind the superficial level of reception, in the imaginary world created by the advertisement or commercial.

The creation of a fictional world, as the literary one, allows the audience to live experiences often forbidden or repressed, thanks to the representation taking place in the advertisement or commercial. The reality presented in the latter, as that of a dream, follows its own rules and, as in the approach to a literary text or to a film, the "suspension of disbelief" takes place during the fruition, becoming necessary to fully believe in the message. The advertisement or commercial, however, remains in a position in-between fiction and reality, because the stress on the imagination and on the unconscious has, afterwards, an effect on reality. The mixing, occurring in advertising, of familiar and imaginary elements is comparable to the "uncanny"[140] feeling aroused by representations where the audience is unsure and cannot decide on the truthfulness of what it is witnessing: "a phenomenon grounded in partial recognition of an archaic desire that has long been repressed and hence is experienced simultaneously as alien and as strangely familiar."[141] This feeling is actually linked both to what is familiar and to what is not, to the hidden and repressed and to the possibility of the extraordinary to enter the everyday reality. The uncanny feeling can be associated to advertising because of the latter's twofold nature of fictional narration immersed in imagination, and of media message with a strong effect on reality.

Advertising's complex and stratified meaning, moreover, perfectly represents the functioning of the mind and of human consciousness: "hidden psychological feelings are being explored, subtle associations are made, strange, dream-like transformations enacted."[142] As people's minds, advertising conveys a highly symbolical message whose superficial appearance conceals a subliminal message, which is, nonetheless, the most meaningful. Advertising communication works as human communication, often hiding impulses and feelings behind society's and personality's restrictions. As the individual often expresses his/her feelings through the use of particular expressions, words or movements, also the advertisement or commercial employs a series of stratagems to convey its latent message: "a text ceases to be a passive link in conveying

[140] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, [trans. David McLintock], (London: Penguin, 1919).

[141] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 78.

[142] Hall and Whannel, *The Popular Arts*, 329.

some constant information between input (sender) and output (receiver) […] [and becomes] a "thinking device."[143]

The elements of the dream universe can change and acquire alternatively different meanings, thus, an image evoking an uncanny feeling can afterwards be associated with positive feelings or with indifference in the constantly changing environment of the advertising world. The fluidity of the imagination and the possibility of ever-changing associations is exploited by advertisers in the creation of new stereotypes and symbols devised thanks to the reworking of old images charged with a new connotation, or to the ascription of unpredicted significations to everyday objects. "Un signifié peut avoir plusieurs signifiants : c'est notamment le cas du signifié linguistique et du signifié psychanalytique. C'est aussi le cas du concept mythique: il a à sa disposition une masse illimitée de signifiants."[144]

The psychological component is both individual and collective, dictated by manifold factors depending on circumstances, culture, language of expression, state of mind, and mood of the spectator. A forecasting and description of the psychological reaction engendered by the advertisement or commercial is, consequently, a crucial theme to be confronted. Moreover, the concentration on advertisements and commercials which use the figure and works of Shakespeare will need to consider the process of creation of the advertisement or commercial also in light of the aforementioned compositional, linguistic and psychological strategies, and the way they inevitably modify the interpretation.

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[143] Yuri Lotman, "Text Within a Text," *Soviet Psychology,* 26.3, 1988: 32-51, 35, 36.

[144] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 9

Chapter II

2. Intertextuality

The term intertextuality, coined by Julia Kristeva in 1976, was inspired by the concepts of Polyphony and plurality of voices, borrowed from Michail Bachtin and Fëdor Dostoevsky, demonstrating the ample and multifaceted signifying potential of every work of art and the possibility of a dialogue between these voices. Also the theorisation by Ferdinand De Saussure of the paragrammatical element, representing the recurrence of elements of a text in another, has been taken into consideration. The theorisation is based on the idea of the presence of different cultural codes which are intertwined and which establish different relations among each other at every new interaction, hence continually constructing and negotiating the meaning of the text. In this process, the presence of the reader or spectator is fundamental because, as stated by Michael Riffaterre, the reading corresponds to an interpretation of the text where the reader fills the interpretive blanks, also making unconscious use of information present in other already known texts.

According to Tynjanov every work of art, indeed, is constituted by elements, some of which are dominant over the others, and correlated with each other. The latter elements may enter in relation with those present in other works, forming a system founded on continually evolving relations. Also the social component, according to Tynjanov, acquires a determining role in shaping and influencing the relations among texts. The language used, as stated previously, mirrors the social and cultural environment and evolution. The same language is used to create the work of art, thus inevitably transferring part of the context in the creation of a new work and in the interpretation of previous ones.

Gérard Genette introduces, on the same matter, the concept of trans-textuality,[145] thus widening the concept of intertextuality which, according to him,

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[145] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982).

refers to the presence of a text inside another.[146] Trans-textuality, on the other hand, refers to every element which puts a text in relation with another one (be it the text or the paratext, for example the title, the preface and other "liminal" elements). The text, and its author, thus, establish a relation, sometimes conflicting, with previous texts and authors. The text is produced agonistically[147] (by a contrast, a fight with its predecessors). The relation with previous texts is often problematic, the anxiety of influence comes into play, while, at the same time, the reference to other texts becomes a device capable of demonstrating the capacity of the artist of rearranging and re-interpreting the already existing material:

> Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which […] involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.[148]

This theory, derived from literature but applicable to all arts, implies that the artist is indebted, to a more or less conscious degree, to the previous artistic tradition. The latter phenomenon will inevitably influence not only the technical and methodological approach to the work of art, but also the artist's point of view on the artistic creation and on his/her own existence in general, because always culturally mediated. The influence of previous texts, moreover, will be exploited, sometimes, as a legitimising factor, in a process in which the reference to a traditional text charges the derived one with meaning and authority. The derived text could also live on the fame and renown

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[146] Stefano Calabrese, *La comunicazione narrativa* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2010), 198.

[147] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[148] Thomas Stearns Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood* [1920] (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), 43, 44.

of the previous one. Moreover, also the interpretation of the "traditional" texts will be modified by the creation and subsequent fruition of a new text:

> what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them.[149]

The relationship established among the texts is that defined by Bloom in light of the Freudian concept of the Oedipus Complex. The older text may be compared to the figure of the father, while the new text represents the son who wants to kill the father while at the same time substituting himself to him to win the love of the mother. As the emblematic figures of psychoanalysis, thus, the relationship is that of dependence and simultaneous conflict, accompanied by renewal and substitution.

> Poetry in the post-Miltonic period, Bloom argues, stems from two motivations, or, to employ the Freudian terminology which Bloom adapts, *drives*. The first concerns the desire to imitate the precursor's poetry, from which the poet first learnt what poetry was. The second concerns the desire to be original, and defend against the knowledge that all the poet is doing is imitating rather than creating afresh. Bloom's vision of poetry is thus intertextual.[150]

The new text owes to the older one its existence, be it from a dialogic or agonistic point of view, but in its nature of something new it goes beyond the older text and struggles to differentiate from it.

However, not only does the work of the artist need to be taken into consideration, but also the role of the spectator (in this case intended as generally referring to every addressee of a work of art or of a popular culture production, thus also to a reader), which constitutes a determining factor in the interpretation of the work of art in intertextual terms. The reader/spectator, indeed, possesses an intertextual competence which is inevitably applied when interpreting a new text. The

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[149] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 44.

[150] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 131.

appearance of the latter produces an unlimited intertextual net, an apparently interminable chain of references from a text to another.[151] According to Jury Lotman, a sort of semantic explosion takes place, when the text enters in a pragmatic relation with another text, cultural context or new reader. New significations are actualised which were previously only possible or virtual.[152]

The relationship established among texts, moreover, has to be analysed in relation to the medium through which they are transmitted. The passage of a text from a medium to another, or through different media, establishes various intermedial relations among the texts which are thus interrelated. The term intermediality, firstly used by Aage A. Hansen Löve in 1983 to define the relationship between literature and visual arts, has now evolved and concerns "'heteromedial' relations between different semiotic complexes or between different parts of a semiotic complex."[153] The intermedial relationship is based on the conservation and transmission of the "memes," fundamental nuclei of the original narration, which are re-contextualised in a new media environment.[154] Intermediality refers also to those cultural productions which transcend media, which express themselves through different media (i.e. visual, verbal, gestural, musical etc).

> For Rajewsky, intermediality is an umbrella-term and hypernym for all kinds of phenomena that take place between media: […] "intermedial" designates those configurations which have to do with a crossing of borders between media. […] Intermedial phenomena can be studied from a synchronic research perspective, which allows scholars to develop typologies of specific forms of intermediality, and a diachronic perspective, which investigates the history of the media and their intersections and collaborations.[155]

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[151] Umberto Eco, *Lector in Fabula* (Milano: Bompiani, 1988).

[152] Nicola Dusi, *Il cinema come traduzione. Da un medium all'altro: letteratura, cinema, pittura,* (Torino: UTET, 2003), 88.

[153] David Herman, Manfred Jahn, Marie-Laure Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), *ad vocem* "Intermediality."

[154] Calabrese, *La comunicazione narrativa*, 208.

[155] Gabriele Rippl, "Introduction" in *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature – Image – Sound – Music*, ed. Gabriele Rippl, (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2015), 11.

This process creates a "medial hybrid"[156] in which different media coexist. Advertising images and commercials can be inserted in this category. Advertising, in fact, is, not only multimedial in its construction, but also intermedial due to its context of communication and to its way of communicating in which the content, the signifying nucleus, is often remediated.[157]

2.1.   Advertising and Intertextuality

"The term intertextuality refers to the way one text can point to or base itself on another,"[158] and to the relations existing between the two texts and all other texts stemming from them. In this case, and in all the following analysis the term 'text' is used in its broader sense "as an essentially *semantic* unit. [...] It is this starting point that has made it natural to consider extensions of framework to apply to semiotic artefacts more broadly."[159] In this sense, it is possible to speak of the advertisement or commercial as an advertising text which can interact with other texts of manifold natures such as literary texts, cinematic ones, and other advertising texts:

> Intertextuality can be an important component of an advert's meaning, in that the original text being referred to established a message which the second text can then use and elaborate on. In this way, the second text doesn't have to work so hard – it can take for granted that the original text has left a trace which it can use to its advantage.[160]

When speaking of intertextuality concerning advertising the relationships an advertisement or commercial creates with other advertisements, commercials, and with other artistic productions has to be taken into consideration. Not only is advertising

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[156] Calabrese, *La comunicazione narrativa*, 208.

[157] J. David Bolter, Richard Grusin, Richard A. Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, (Cambridge: MIT press, 2000).

[158] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 69.

[159] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre,* 38.

[160] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 69.

influenced by other texts but its way of communicating, which permeates contemporary society, influences the creation of all other media messages.[161]

> The whole aim of the copywriters is to get us to register their communication either for purposes of immediate action or to make us more favourably disposed in general terms to the advertised product or service. But increasingly, written advertisements have to compete with each other and with all sorts of other texts in our richly literate culture.[162]

The intertextual relation is, in fact, also influenced by intermediality: by the presence of the text inside an intertextual net and, at the same time, inside an intermedial environment, due to the multimodal nature of the texts surrounding it, but also to the nature of the contemporary context, in which almost all forms of communication are multimedial and influence each other. "Scholars of intermediality investigate how meaning is generated in/by inter-, multi- and transmedial constellations and cross-medial references."[163] Advertising, in particular, can boast a specifically intermedial nature, not only because advertisements and commercials are created by resorting to different media, but also because they often refer to other different media artefacts (such as literary texts, films and many others) to convey their messages: "in our digital age many works of art, cultural artifacts, literary texts and other cultural configurations either combine and juxtapose different media, genres and styles or refer to other media in a plethora of ways."[164]

In particular, the interest of this research lays in the relationship between advertising and literature: the way in which the two can be compared and how they can share meanings. The link between literature and popular culture creates a bridge between the former and advertising. Both "arts" indeed, come from popular culture and adopt it as a repository of themes, taking it as a point of reference for generally shared values and concepts.

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[161] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 97.

[162] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 11.

[163] Rippl, "Introduction," 2.

[164] Rippl, "Introduction," 1.

Advertising is a relatively young form of discourse compared with [...] literature. And yet it is now old enough to have a history in the same way that literature has. So, just as modern literary writers can base their stories on traditional texts, modern advertising copywriters can base their copy on older versions. The effect of this strategy in either type of discourse can be the same: we feel clever if we 'get' the connection. The difference is that not everyone may recognise a reworking of a Shakespearean plot, but many people are likely to remember an advertising slogan or jingle – they seem to stick in the mind, sometimes for irritatingly long periods of time.[165]

The insertion of literature in the multimedial contemporary scenario, comprising also advertising, inevitably modifies its fruition. The inclusion of literature in a world saturated by media communication influences the interpretation both of contemporary and past literature "Thus the rise of a new audiovisual literacy has the concomitant effect of establishing new expectations about what a good story is like and how it should be told."[166]

Audiences have notions and preconceptions linked to different genres, they mature expectations and assumptions about the content of a story, the narration mode and the way of conveying the message: "consumers cannot help but absorb present overtures in the light of exposure to past ones."[167] The influence of other media, moreover, inevitably affects the contemporary approach to literature and creates a lens through which people read both contemporary and old texts:

Literature's role and function must hence be appraised in a cultural field characterized not only by the competition and collaboration of different media, but also by medial interfaces. Our digital age also has an impact on how we think of "literature" today.[168]

New media also allow the reader to actually see the products of imagination in the multimedial representation, the latter, in fact, can show what before could only be created in the mind of the reader, who can enter and participate in the fictional story.[169]

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[165] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 70.

[166] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 9.

[167] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 90.

[168] Rippl, "Introduction," 4.

[169] Gargiulo, *Lingua e cultura italiana nei mass media*, 41.

The complex narrative potentially developing from a story has been defined by David Hermann as *storyworld*,[170] which influences other narrations either belonging to literature or to advertising. Also Italo Calvino introduced the concept of hyper-novel (iper-romanzo),[171] suggesting the virtually unlimited narrative potential of the novel, possibly establishing infinite interconnections: "A 'literary message' has been disseminated in many different media, undergoing a transformation, or *mediamorphosis* […]. We can refer to this general phenomenon as 'literary intermediality.'"[172]

The nature of advertising and literary communication is very similar, they are both conveyed by a narrator addressing a narratee, the former devises a message he/she wants to convey to the narratee and the latter has the ability and freedom of interpreting the message. They both are fictional instances, standing for their counterparts in reality:

> One aspect of literary study which can be useful when looking at written advertisements is the idea of the narrator, and narrative point of view within prose fiction. [...]In advertising texts, the real writers are the copywriters and artists who work in an advertising agency's creative department; but these people can construct all sorts of different narrators to convey to us the message of an advert. [...]
>
> We can call the people who appear to be being addressed narratees. These people might be specifically addressed, […] or they might be a much less specific group, defined less by explicit name and more by the qualities and values they are thought to possess. There can be more than one narrator, and more than one group of narratees.[173]

The experience of the fruition of a literary work, moreover, is not very distant from that of advertising. A person undergoes an individual experience when reading a book and when looking at an advertisement or when watching a commercial. Indeed, both the novel and the advertisement seem to be specifically addressed to the individual, in the precise moment of the fruition, and the latter feels unique and exceptional as the only target of the message. In addition, both the literary work and the advertisement

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[170] Gargiulo *Lingua e cultura italiana nei mass media*, 40.

[171] Gargiulo *Lingua e cultura italiana nei mass media,* 33.

[172] Pennacchia Punzi, "Literary intermediality: An Introduction," 9.

[173] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 28, 29, 31.

or commercial try to appeal to the largest number of people or to a group: "It is important to think about differences between real readers and the readers that are implied by the text. Advertisements, like literary texts, are not aimed at a single private reader."[174] A contradictory feeling of inclusion and exclusion arises from the fruition of literature and of advertising due to the simultaneous appeal to uniqueness (thus exclusion from the others) and, at the same time, to individuality. The latter experience is comparable to that of the spectator of a play in Shakespeare's times: the theatre experience, indeed, was both individual, because the plays could arouse the innermost feelings and, at the same time, collective, because of the imperative of sharing the space of fruition, and, consequently, of the perception of the play. When taking into consideration the works by Shakespeare, in fact, both the fruition of literature and that of theatre have to be taken into consideration. Shakespeare's works are, nowadays, often read as literary works: "with the publication of the First Folio in 1623 [...] Shakespeare was shifted out of the purely dramatic realm and began to be treated as literature."[175] At the same time, however, Shakespearean works are still represented in theatres and also adapted to the cinema and to advertising. When thinking of the original works creating the intertextual net which comprises also advertising, it results impossible to disregard the double nature of the works.

In order to give an exhaustive account of Shakespeare and his works a twofold perspective has to be adopted: on the one hand the original purpose of the works, which were to be represented in the theatre, has to be taken into consideration, while, on the other hand, it is indispensable to consider the reputation of Shakespeare's works as the literary canon which has influenced, in its turn, generations of writers, readers, and students from the standpoint of initiator of the English Literature, studied and read in paper form by the wider audiences and seldom known through its theatrical realisation.

The former approach takes into consideration the intentions of the author and the conventions of the period of creation. Shakespearean works, indeed, have seen a definitive written form just after the death of their author, whose original purpose was undeniably that of the theatrical representation and not of the reading, in an age where

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[174] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 30.

[175] Annalisa Castaldo, "Literature and Genre Fiction," in *Shakespeares after Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Burt: 408-505, 408.

oral and written culture were still not completely separate. Moreover, the words we read today were accompanied by gestures and music which are inevitably lost in the reading process. Needless to say, the interpretation of the actor could give a different meaning to the words written (just to name a few, for example giving a comic effect to very sad lines, or coupling the words with discordant gestures). The theatre, and in particular the three-sided Shakespearean one, was structured in order to establish a dialogue with the audience and it has become a social metaphor, resembling, in its structure[176] the hierarchical order of society. The shortages of the stage on which the plays were represented entailed a modification of the text which needed to justify them by describing the absent elements, supplying for them through the creation of a "verbal scenography."[177]

However, even if the intended destination of the Shakespearean plays was theatrical, the mode of reception of contemporary audiences has been, mostly, via reading. Not only because the books have come to be part of the literary modules in most of the United Kingdom's and Italian high schools and universities but also because of the economical reading solutions available to contemporary audiences.

> Studies on the "textuality" of Shakespeare's works consider the relationships between the plays and the complex network of social, cultural, and political forces in which those plays were originally situated as well as the impact of those same forces over the hundreds of years since.[178]

The reading, moreover, as an individual experience, allows the reader to take pauses, to re-read a specific passage and thus to fully appreciate the genius of the Shakespearean writing, whose lines can be sometimes lost in the theatrical fruition, due to a lack of attention or to the impossibility of hearing what the actor say in determinate

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[176] The circular structure of the playhouse was formed as follows: the *stage* (with the lower stage under and the upper stage above it) extended in the *yard*, where the people paying the lowest tickets were standing and surrounding the stage on three sides. The seats were positioned in three galleries: the low, middle and top gallery, which prices raised the higher the seat was positioned.

[177] Stefano Socci, *Shakespeare fra teatro e cinema* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2009), 20 [My translation].

[178] D. J. Hopkins and Bryan Reynolds, "The Making of Authorships: Transversal Navigation in the Wake of *Hamlet*, Robert Wilson, Wolfgang Wiens, and Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare after Mass Media*, ed. Richard Burt (New York: Palgrave, 2002): 265-286, 275.

passages. Moreover, the written text allows the reader to also view the stage directions, a possibility which partly supplies for the loss coming from the impossibility of seeing the actor's interpretation. In addition, the stage directions may possibly be a way for the reader of knowing the mind, the intention of the author, and of feeling closer to the moment of creation. Furthermore, the length of some Shakespearean productions make them more enjoyable in their reading form, due to the possibility of interrupting the reading and of resuming it in another moment, while the play's fruition has to last till its end.

> In 1630 […] Shakespeare was becoming separated from the playwrights of his age and treated as a canonical writer, an important step in preserving the works and Shakespeare's reputation as the theatres were being closed down and drama in general was being rejected by the culture at large. Shakespeare was relocated to the page. […] Even when the Restoration returned him to the stage, there continued to be a separation between Shakespeare the dramatist and Shakespeare the writer, as Restoration directors drastically altered the versions they staged while the first editors attempted to discover the true words of Shakespeare. This bifurcation of stage and page continues even today.[179]

Conjointly many of the contemporary readings and re-readings of Shakespeare come neither from the theatre nor from literature, but from that combination of popular culture and other media adaptations which have strongly influenced the contemporary reception of the work of the Bard, bringing the audience to the literary or theatrical fruition only in a second time.

> the present desacralisation of Shakespeare is due to a larger transformation in Shakespeare's reproduction, one in which visual culture has displaced literary culture and a modernist aesthetics has gone to the wayside. […] Most people […] now come to Shakespeare first not through his texts but through some visual representations of them – a film, an advertisement, or a subgenre of fiction such as teen comedies, science fiction, or Harlequin romances.[180]

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[179] Castaldo, "Literature and Genre Fiction," 409.

[180] Richard Burt, "Shakespeare and the Holocaust: Julie Taymor's *Titus* is Beautiful, or Shakesploi Meets (the) Camp," in *Shakespeare after Mass Media*, ed. Richard Burt: 295-330, 306.

This research will take into consideration all of the perspectives in order to understand in which way they have influenced advertising.

In particular, advertising and literature can be compared and can be said to influence each other on manifold basis. Firstly, the way of expression of the new media and, consequently, the rules of composition of advertisements and commercials, as above mentioned, inevitably influence literature, both in its new productions and in the reception of the works of the past.

> Many critics of modern consumer/popular culture argue that the real impact of advertising is on the cultural climate of society. For instance, there are indications that the language and values of advertising suffuse a variety of communication forms in modern society; that 'sales talk' and genuine communication have become intertwined in such media as the commercial cinema, in TV programmes and in popular literature.[181]

On the other hand, advertising chiefly uses memes – fundamental nuclei of narration – drawn from literature. Not only are the main themes of literary texts reproduced, but also plot developments, settings, characters and manifold elements pertaining to the literary world which are exploited by advertising to evoke alternatively different feelings and reactions in the addressees. "Advertising copywriters regularly produce texts which are as highly wrought as any piece of literature, using fully the resources of language and inviting creative and subtle readings from their users."[182]

In addition, the means of expression of the theatre, for instance, are easily adaptable to advertising and, in particular to commercials. Past and contemporary visual cultural productions, indeed, inevitably mutually affect one another and shape the advertising communication.

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[181] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 79.

[182] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 3.

2.2.   Shakespeare and Intertextuality

A series of works have taken the cue from the Shakespearean production, to varying degrees, establishing among them and with the previous works a dense intertextual network, which influences the signification of all the elements composing it.

The analysis of Shakespeare's work cannot fail to take into consideration the intertextual network concerning not only coeval and successive artistic productions but also previous works, and those taken as a model by Shakespeare. During the Renaissance, in fact, the practice of *imitatio* consisting in the explicit imitation of other author's works, was very frequent and also encouraged as an exercise in style and an homage to the original author, "establish[ing] as a common rule the principle of creative intertextuality."[183] Shakespeare drew inspiration from Greek and Latin classical authors, and from Italian Renaissance authors. All of these influencing works, in their turn, come to be part of the Shakespearean intertextual net, increasing its signification and influencing, in a more or less manifest way, also the newly produced works. "We cannot separate Shakespeare from the literature that came after (as well as before) him in our culture and that makes us respond to him as part and parcel of what that literature in the end involves."[184]

The intertextual net, according to contemporary criticism, is formed depending on two areas of influence. The first regards the textual type, themes, and motives, diachronically inherited from other texts. The second, on the other hand, concerns the synchronic passage of ideas and discourses inside what Michail Bachtin defined as a continuous socio-cultural and anthropological dialogue between the texts and their addressees. According to this approach, the context becomes an element influencing and modelling the writing of the work, which constitutes a distinctive point of view on the world and a place of polyphonic reading. Language acquires a determining role in the literary communication, as a means for the discourse's transmission, and as an element to be analysed in order to wholly understand the intrinsic signification of the text. An interpretation of the literary language has to take into consideration the

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[183] Michele Marrapodi, "Introduction" in *Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality*, ed. Michele Marrapodi, (Manchester: University Press, 2004), 1.

[184] Terence Hawkes, "Foreword: 'A Bigger Splash'" in *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now*, eds. Cary di Pietro and Hugh Grady (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): viii-xviii, xi.

stratification of signifying languages which form the literary text, defined by Bachtin as "heteroglossia."[185]

The emphasis laid on the socio-cultural component as an essential part of the text is sustained by Stephen Greenblatt's theories,[186] as a determining element in the new interpretation of the works inserted in the intertextual net. Umberto Eco claims, with regard to this issue, that:

> Every work of art, even though it is produced by following an explicit or implicit poetics of necessity, is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which causes the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal *performance*.[187]

Since their appearance, the works of Shakespeare have established an intertextual network in which successive texts are comprised. The latter, in their turn, modify the signification of all works connected by the intertextual net. Thus, not only do Shakespeare's works influence contemporary works, but the latter continually bestow new potentials and significations on the original.

> The significance of texts is never static or "timeless," but rather involves a negotiation and constant renegotiation between horizons of interpretation and an ever-shifting present, from which we view the past with new understandings, with different interpretative lenses, with different senses of what is important and relevant, and what is not.[188]

In the Sixties, Jan Kott stressed that "through Shakespeare's text we ought to get at our modern experience, anxiety and sensibility,"[189] a concept observable in

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[185] Michail Bachtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, (Austin: University Press, 1981), 272.

[186] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1: "works of art, however intensely marked by the creative intelligence and private obsessions of the individuals, are the products of collective negotiation and Exchange."

[187] Umberto Eco, *Open Work*, [trans. Anna Cancogni] (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989), 21.

[188] Cary DiPietro and Hugh Grady "Introduction" in *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now*, eds. Cary di Pietro and Hugh Grady, 2.

[189] Ian Kott, *Shakespeare our contemporary*, (London: Methuen, 1967), 59.

Shakespeare's rewritings and revisions produced in the following ages. In the Seventies and Eighties, for example, the overturning of the patriarchal perspective has brought to a feminist re-evaluation of Shakespeare's work, starting from a reassessment of the female figures.[190] In more recent times Shakespeare's works have been reinterpreted in light of the post-colonial theories re-reading British culture's founding works and seeing in Shakespeare a precursor.[191]

These processes of re-evaluation and re-interpretation have given place to many re-writings of Shakespeare's works from a contemporary point of view. Not only do the re-writings but also the parodies of Shakespearean texts bring to the works of the bard newer and newer connotations, widening the intertextual net in which they are inserted, and continually multiplying their possible interpretations.[192] The insertion of a new work in the intertextual net, in fact, determines the adoption of a new point of view for the interpretation of the original, influencing, in its turn, the meaning of the other works stemming from it. A text, indeed, is transformed when it enters a pragmatic relation with another text, context or reader, actualising some significations that were, until that moment, only potentially intrinsic to the text itself.[193] Contemporary critical theory is venturing more and more into a semiotic interpretation of the text, conferring an extreme importance to the pragmatic element. In line with this approach, a text has to be put in relation with the contemporary era and with the social and cultural context of reception. Taking Shakespeare as a model allows, indeed, the establishing of this relation thanks to the immense signifying skill and influence of his works on contemporary ones.

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[190] See, for example, the revision of the figure of Ophelia by Elena Showalter, and the in-depth analysis of the gender issues emerging, in particular, from the works in which women, thanks to their disguise, act in male roles, i.e. *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, or *As You Like it*.

[191] An emblematic figure of this process is Caliban in *The Tempest* interpreted by the post-colonial criticism as a representative of the indigenous people whose territory has been usurped by the foreign coloniser who made him a slave, imposing new customs and a new language on the colonised.

[192] A key example is constituted by the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard, a parodic revision of *Hamlet* narrated from the perspective of the two secondary characters. A reading of the work excluding any previous knowledge of *Hamlet* would result in a partial comprehension and enjoyment of the play. On the other hand, the interpretation of *Hamlet* and all works stemmed from it, will be affected by the presence of the new element in the net.

[193] Dusi, *Il cinema come traduzione. Da un medium all'altro: letteratura, cinema, pittura*, 88.

The Renaissance has strong seeds of anticipation of what was to reach its climax in the late twentieth century. What may sound as daring and scientifically impossible to sustain, given the large distance between the two periods, becomes evident if we look thoroughly into the social, philosophical and political characteristics that typify the Elizabethan period and the postmodern one. If the postmodern era is marked by a collapse of ideologies (Lyotard's famous *métarécits*), the Renaissance period witnesses the transformation of the medieval theocentric universe into a man-centred one, with the consequent loss of metaphysical certainties. […]

What level of ideological uncertainty the period had reached: the old beliefs were put into question and books no longer suggested harmonious coexistence between the metaphysical and the real, but marked a schism, a separation from the universe to its entirety. […] the written word […] [is seen] as estranged from reality, which is, as a result, in danger of becoming superfluous: the written tradition undermines the authenticity of experience.[194]

In this context, the development of the genius of Shakespeare took place, the Bard has been capable of representing his epoch and of anticipating the future ones, both through the topics he chose and the inventive language he made use of. Linguistic experimentation, once more, draws Shakespeare nearer to the contemporary era:

The twentieth century is marked by a schism between Word and Reality. The external world comes to be considered as an unattainable entity: what exists is a prismatic reality with as many facets as there are thinking subjects. Linguistic communication begins to be seen as a futile endeavour, one of mankind's many failures. It is exactly Hamlet […] who uses words to screen his real meaning under an explosion of apparently unconnected sounds, thus marking a chasm between words and communication.

[…] The postmodern period theorises about the crisis of the word, in the sense of crisis of communication. Philosophers speak about the schism between outer reality and language: it is impossible to reproduce reality because language only creates a parallel universe.[195]

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[194] Daniela Carpi, "Renaissance into Postmodernism: Anticipations of Legal Unrest," in *Liminal Discourses*, eds. Daniela Carpi, Jeanne Gaakeer (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2013): 177- 189, 177, 178.

[195] Carpi, "Renaissance into Postmodernism: Anticipations of Legal Unrest," 181.

Language, moreover, undergoes a postmodern manipulation in Shakespeare's works. The texts speak of themselves, of their fictionality, of the environment of the stage and of the performance:

> The postmodern turn is also characterised by experiments in form, and in particular by the self-reflexivity of writing, as most Elizabethan and Jacobean plays are characterised by meta-elements, that is the theatre denounces the machinery […] [which] sustains the whole theatrical action and the construction of the play itself (for instance the play-within-the-play technique, the asides through which the public is involved in the dramatic action, the instructions to the actors in *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) these devices suggest a deep self-reflexiveness of literature.[196]

The renown of the Bard's work creates such an intricate intertextual network which nowadays influences the interpretation of all of his production and of new works. Old and new texts partaking in the network enter in an interrelation in which they modify and are modified by each other. Shakespeare's texts, for example, influence the interpretation of the new texts stemming from them and provide a series of presuppositions on which they are based. The new texts, indeed, being inspired, to a certain extent, by older ones, take them as a repository of themes and elements. The latter are often taken for granted and the audience is generally already aware of them:

> These passing references [to Shakespeare], so marginal to the narrative […], often serve to articulate or reinforce central themes. But they also offer the audience a number of pleasures. Sometimes the pleasure is of sheer recognition, that is, membership in the selected group capable of identifying a given reference as Shakespearean and, sometimes, recognizing the specific source. At other times, pleasure springs from sensing how a Shakespearean passage or character's meaning has been altered by its being placed in a new context; irony, a favourite effect, typically depends upon our prior familiarity with the Shakespearean original. […] A handful of certain scenes recur with special regularity – Hamlet holding Yorik's skull […]; Romeo and Juliet's balcony scene; and, in older films, the assassination of Julius Caesar. To be sure, these moments are favourite parodic targets, but they are also powerful memorial centres in popular culture, […] with each repetition encapsulating for their audiences the essence of Shakespeare and his main concerns – the

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[196] Carpi, "Renaissance into Postmodernism: Anticipations of Legal Unrest," 182.

poet of love, the purveyor of philosophical reflection, the proto-democrat antipathetic for tyranny. That is, these kinds of allusions, perhaps each negligible in itself, concatenate in mass culture to shape how popular audiences understand Shakespeare and hold in place certain conceptions of his work.[197]

The audience's ignorance of the so called source text is also taken into consideration, in this case, the fruition will not be impeded but the possible enjoyment of all its multifaceted aspects and references to the original text will be reduced.

The complexity of the intertextual relation, furthermore, is heightened by the influence also the new text has on the older one. The insertion of a new element in the intertextual net, inevitably modifies the source text and all other texts part of the net, and is, in its turn, modified by them. The case of Shakespeare's works, and of those variably inspired by it, is an emblematic example of a very wide and constantly evolving intertextual net.

> [The] Shakespearean artistic tradition […] created a recognised iconography of Shakespeare, a series of classic scenes to which artists returned again and again, and to which any future illustrator was more or less compelled to acknowledge and respond.[198]

The intertextual relation between an older text and the new one can be compared to a translational relation. Shakespeare's works can, thus, be considered as source texts and the advertisements and commercials stemming from them as target texts. The use of these terms, however, must not hide the complexity of the advertisement or commercial, sometimes not originating from a Shakespearean work, but from the figure of Shakespeare himself, who has become a sort of mythical and stereotyped figure of popular culture:

> The name 'Shakespeare' has come to signify differently, long after that man's death, within a variety of contexts: as the name of a poet-playwright, as shorthand for a body of work

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[197] Douglas Lanier, "Film Spin-offs and Citations," in *Shakespeares after Shakespeare,* ed. Richard Burt: 132-365, 136.

[198] Peter Whitfield, *Illustrating Shakespeare* (London: British Library, 2013), 12.

central to the literary canon, as the title of the most widely taught course in English departments.[199]

Shakespeare himself has, thus, become an emblematic figure, the reference to which brings to the mind a series of ideas and presuppositions, a series of characteristics to be attached to the product or behaviour advertised. Not only the figure of Shakespeare, but also his works, or part of them, have become, in contemporary culture, detached from the original work. They have been singled out from their context to stand for determinate concepts and notions ready to use for advertising. Shakespearean themes and characters have now become symbols, very often independently from their source which is unknown or known just through the contemporary re-writings of Shakespeare (i.e. films and telefilms or contemporary novels).

> The practice of citing Shakespeare as a cultural enforcer can sometimes obscure both the irony and the wit of the original. […] It is no longer the case that a knowledge of the playwright necessarily precedes quotation from them…. Today Shakespeare is more likely to be a citation, a tagline, an adage, or a slogan.[200]

This trend demonstrates the importance of the consideration of the intertextual network and relations between works in the analysis of Shakespeare's legacy and on its influence on contemporary advertising.

2.3.   Shakespeare and Popular Culture

Shakespeare can boast a longstanding and varying relationship with Popular Culture. The beginning of the relationship between Shakespeare and the image can be traced back to the opening of the Shakespearean Galleries by John Boydell at the end of the Eighteenth Century in London. Boydell collected paintings of Shakespearean subject, later reproduced in engravings in order to be sold in illustrated editions, thus

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[199] Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, 54.

[200] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare after All* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008), 40, 41.

contributing to the mass diffusion of a visual Shakespearean culture[201]. The arts already started to intertwine and the most famous Shakespearean actors where depicted impersonating the Shakespearean characters they played in the theatres, to create an immediate recognition of the play represented. The relationship with the theatre is, thus, undeniable, but it has been observed that many paintings represent scenarios stemming from the experience of the painter as a reader more than as part of the theatrical audience,[202] thus through the approach to the Shakespearean work as a literary text: "The aim of […] [the] Shakespearean pictures […] [is] to create a parallel world, a visual equivalent to the plays that we have before us as text on the page."[203] The first encounter of Shakespeare with a different medium and with a relative massification involves, thus, its reproduction via images, and its consequent diffusion for the enjoyment of the largest possible audience.

The circulation of Shakespeare's works and figures as emblems of literary and refined English culture, has, however, continued since that early visual onset and has spread across all the other media. Shakespeare and his works have been reproduced, among others, by the most popular media such as: radio, cinema, and television.

> Shakespeare was a significant presence in British radio and television from its earliest days, not only as part of the process by which the new media explored their powers and discovered their limitations, but also as a constant reference point for the creation of the theory as well as practice of what its pioneers believed could become both a national institution with international influence, and an art form capable of experimentation and innovation.[204]

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[201] See Stanley Wells, *Dictionary of Shakespeare*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 22: "Alderman John Boydell (1719-1804) commissioned paintings of scenes from Shakespeare by the leading British artists of the day, including Henry Füssli, William Hogarth, Sir Joshua Reynolds, George Romney, Robert Smirke, Richard Westall, and Francis Wheatley. A gallery for their exhibition was opened in Pall Mall, London in 1789. About 170 paintings were completed, and many of them engraved, but Boydell had money troubles, and the collection was sold by auction in 1805."

[202] See, for example, the works by Füssli, inspired by the reading of the works and not by the theatrical performance.

[203] Whitfield, *Illustrating Shakespeare*, 6.

[204] Susanne Grenhalgh "U.K. Television. 'True to you in my Fashion': Shakespeare on British Broadcast Television" in *Shakespeares after Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Burt: 651-673, 651.

In the cinema, the first Shakespearean adaptation, *Hamlet* directed by Svend Gade, with Asta Nielsen in the leading role,[205] dates back to 1920. The cinematic adaptations, from then on, have followed one another, almost incessantly. As previously observed, not only does the transposition of an entire work, but also a quotation or reference to the main units of the plot or to Shakespearean characters enrich the intertexutal net stemming from Shakespeare's works, and maintain a link with the original in the contemporary approach to Shakespeare. As such, thus, also the revisions, remakes and parodies of the Shakespearean "canon" boasting a higher or lower vicinity to the original, share with it some signifying elements, some characteristics which convey the Shakespearean spirit and intention to the masses.

For what concerns the radio, the first productions (for example *Macbeth* by Orson Welles[206]) date back to 1937 and are continuing nowadays (among the many 2016 production, see, for example *King Lear* by Gaynor Macfarlane for *Drama on 3*).

The relationship of Shakespeare and Television starts in 1936 with the first television broadcasting in the United Kingdom, it was:

> The first experimental television transmission shown at the Radio Olympia exhibition. Two programmes were transmitted from Alexandra Palace daily throughout the Radio Show to September 5th. The programme included excerpts from films including AS YOU LIKE IT (1936) directed by Paul Czinner […]. Interestingly neither Shakespeare's name, nor Olivier's were mentioned.[207]

The first interrelation with such a popular medium as television is associated, thus, with radio and cinema. However, television has developed, through the years, its own way of communicating and of fashioning its productions and Shakespeare has

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[205] Socci, *Shakespeare fra teatro e cinema*, 11.

[206]For a catalogue of Shakespearean radio production see for example: http://bufvc.ac.uk/shakespeare/search.php/title?q=&date_start=1907&date_end=1937&title_format=4&play=&sort=&page_size=10 (last access September 23, 2016). See also "An International Database of Shakespeare on Film, Television and Radio" available at: http://bufvc.ac.uk/shakespeare/

[207] "First Television Broadcast: Demonstration at Radio Show," British Universities Film and Video Council, available at: http://bufvc.ac.uk/shakespeare/index.php/title/av67536 (last access November 4, 2016).

constantly accompanied this development. The reproduction of his works or of parts of them, the parodies and re-writings, with a pop take on the Bard's work have spread in the televisions all over the world, creating a global phenomenon.

When speaking of Popular Culture it is hard to place Shakespeare (intended as a term referring to his emblematic figure and to his works) because of its presence both in high and low culture. Shakespeare is part of the school programmes both in high schools and universities in many countries, thus, ascribed to the refined and high cultural baggage reserved to the cultivated classes.

> Clearly the canonisation/professionalization of Shakespeare within the discourses shaped through national institutions of education is crucial as is the impact of the mass media industries especially as they have developed in the post-war era. It is surely undeniable that the dominant figuration of Shakespeare within the institutions committed to the reproduction of the values of high culture is articulated around his texts as embodiments of literary genius constituted in a coalescence of the "flowering" of the English language and the (consequent?) "universal" truths of human experience.[208]

The endorsement reserved to Shakespeare by the institutions and its association with British national identity have fostered the subject's diffusion in schools and elite cultural environments as a symbol of Englishness and of exclusive culture. On the other hand, however, high culture has been, over the years, re-appropriated by the masses through the aforementioned popular media which have exploited the fame of the Bard, while, at the same time, trying to make it appealing, enjoyable by and available to the so-called low culture: the mass media have thus appropriated the elevated canon.

In the present epoch Shakespeare is, indeed, often still considered a symbol of archaic learning and language, of complex and philosophical communication and as a kind of bookish knowledge reserved to cultured people or to theatregoers, because the theatre is nowadays considered by many as a place for a refined entertainment, as opposed to the more popular cinema and television. The acquisition by the institutional and hegemonic powers of Shakespeare as their representative, moreover, has brought, along the decades, a reaction in the masses, which have started to consider

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[208] Derek Longhurst, "'You Base Football Player!': Shakespeare in Contemporary Popular Culture" in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness: 59-73, 60, 61.

Shakespeare as an instrument of the ruling class, and, thus, as an object of dissent and desecration:

> [In the sixties] Britain attained a new identity as the international capital of popular culture, certainly in terms of urban youth culture, rock music and associated sub-cultural styles. To this newly affluent and […] self-confidently aggressive generation Shakespeare […] [was] identified with establishment and "school" culture and often therefore the target of subversion and rebellion.[209]

On the other hand, in the late period the association of Shakespeare with the establishment has been paralleled by the huge use made by popular culture of such a meaningful symbol: "Straddling 'high art' and 'popular culture' at one and the same time, precisely because, […] these distinctions no longer hold as indicators of traditional social arrangements."[210] Shakespeare, in fact, has entered Popular Culture in manifold ways. It is a symbol of British Popular Culture, both nationally and abroad. It represents, in some way, the nostalgia, typical of British Popular Culture, for a mythical past, a Golden Age, often represented also in his plays. It is also a figure exported abroad as a symbol of the English values and identity, and diffused in all different media. The considerable amount of references, quotations and hints to Shakespeare present in films, books, television programmes, radio, musicals, and advertising fragment his production and his figure, and "cut him out in little stars,"[211] appropriating and, at the same time, reshaping that which by now has become a universal heritage. A "movement from an entrenched, establishment-bound veneration for the dramatist to a much freer, more playful engagement with Shakespeare [has been observed] in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries."[212] The relationship and dialogue of Shakespeare and Popular Culture have developed through the decades and highly increased in the latest period. "The more recent Bard is an

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[209] Longhurst, "'You Base Football Player!'", 63.

[210] Mark Thornton Burnett, "'We are the Makers of Manners': The Branagh Phenomenon," in *Shakespeare after Mass Media*, ed. Richard Burt: 83-106, 95.

[211] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Scene II, 24.

[212] Thornton Burnett, "'We are the Makers of Manners,'" 83.

amalgam of a host of interpenetrating cinematic, televisual and musical vernacular influences."[213]

The divide between high and popular culture starts to reduce in the contemporary age, also due to the development of the mass media (radio, television, cinema and internet in the latest years) in giving access to the world knowledge and to the so called "high-culture," previously economically precluded to the masses. The mass media, moreover, adapt their subjects to the audience they want to attract and to move, hence creating a hybrid form of high and low culture which makes high culture more accessible. As a consequence of the latter's blend with popular culture, the combination and hybridization of the two constitutes contemporary culture in the general sense. Also a reconsideration of the very concept of Popular Culture has narrowed the gap of the latter with high culture:

> much more complicated permutations in capitalist production in the last twenty years of a more broadly "mass" culture have forced us to reconsider the extent to which such ideas of aesthetic taste and distinction are not themselves outmoded by an intensified consumerism that calls into doubt the high-low boundaries implied in the idea of a "popular" (as opposed to a "elite") culture.[214]

Shakespeare becomes a token of popular culture, also because he represents a reference to high culture. The alleged detachment of Shakespeare due to his inclusion in high culture, is, consequently, erased, and Shakespeare and his works become part of the contemporary hybrid culture with full rights.

Shakespeare, moreover, as a representative of British Popular Culture is interpreted through new media, and is exported worldwide:

> Being English used to be so easy. They were one of the most easily identified peoples on earth, recognised by their language, their manners, their clothes and the fact that they drank tea by the bucketload. It is all so much more complicated now. When, occasionally, we come across someone whose stiff upper lip, sensible shoes or tweedy manner identifies

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[213] Thornton Burnett, "'We are the Makers of Manners,'" 95.

[214] Craig Dionne, "The Shatnerification of Shakespeare: *Star Trek* and the Commonplace Tradition" in *Shakespeare after Mass Media*, ed. Richard Burt: 173-194, 177.

them as English, we react in amusement: the conventions that defined the English are dead and the country's ambassadors are more likely to be singers than diplomats or politicians.[215]

Shakespeare could be added to the list as one of the defining factors of British culture and consciousness:

> Shakespeare one gets acquainted with without knowing how, it is a part of an Englishman's constitution. His thoughts and beauties are so spread abroad that one touches them everywhere; one is intimate with him by instinct.[216]

The relation with popular culture, however, is not clear-cut in its delineation. Shakespeare ends up representing different aspects of popular culture. It is both a symbol of the institutions, of the great past and nostalgia of England, of refined, school culture, "Shakespeare, as a central component of British culture, has inevitably been incorporated into the dominant ideology and made an instrument of hegemony."[217] At the same time, Shakespeare has become a renowned representative and subject of contemporary Popular Culture: its reuse and manipulation by Popular Culture represents the rebellion against the earlier forms of traditionalism, and a reflection on its own modes of communication:

> Modernity is witness to a proliferation of Shakespeares unparalleled in recent memory. If it takes us away from Shakespeare, it also takes us back and, in particular, alerts us to the variety of technological instruments through which the Bard now communicates.[218]

Due to the worldwide diffusion and appreciation of the works of the Bard, his figure has started to be linked both with the local context of the United Kingdom and, at the same time, with the international context. This indefinite, multiple nature of the fruition of Shakespeare's works has caused him to become a global phenomenon,

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[215] Jeremy Paxman, *The English. A Portrait of a People* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2001), iii.

[216] Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, [1833] (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1998), 300.

[217] David Margolies, "Teaching the Handsaw to Fly: Shakespeare as a Hegemonic Instrument" in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness: 42-53, 43.

[218] Thornton Burnett, "'We are the Makers of Manners,'" 102.

leading to the conception of the Bard and of his works as possible representatives and metaphors of all contemporary feelings and historical controversies. Shakespeare constructs, in the words of Harold Bloom, the human.[219]

Shakespeare is not only part of Popular Culture and of its interpretation and manipulation of high culture, it is also mediated by Popular Culture through which it influences and has an impact on the audience. Popular culture, indeed, has become the most featured channel of fruition of Shakespeare's works: "Shakespeare is most likely to be encountered today by television and moviegoers, not theatregoers."[220] It is, in fact, through contemporary media that a wide audience develops its knowledge of Shakespeare. The relation with Popular Culture is, therefore, double: on the one hand Popular Culture uses Shakespeare because of his wide circulation and renown among universal audiences, while, at the same time, the continual reworking of Shakespeare perpetuates his memory and participates in its wider and wider diffusion, also among new audiences.

The contemporary approach to Shakespeare is, thus, influenced by continual mediations and re-mediations, engendering, in the wide audience, a fragmented knowledge, which concerns only the most popular characters or the most repeated or memorable quotations. Both characters and quotations become, often, self-sufficient: "Quotations in modern performances are no longer context-bound, not because they are unrecognized but because of their hyper-familiarity."[221] Their use, in this case, is disconnected from the original work, with the consequence of, sometimes, having their meaning distorted:

> Famous lines ("let slip the dogs of war"), titles (*All's Well That Ends Well, Much Ado about Nothing*), and character names, are now so much a part of the language that, […] they have become "post-hermeneutic"; that is, they no longer have any meaningful relation to Shakespeare.[222]

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[219] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: the Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998).

[220] Burt, "Shakespeare and the Holocaust," 318.

[221] Richard Burt, "Shakespeare, More or Less? From Shakespeareccentricity to Shakespearecentricity and back" in *Shakespeares after Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Burt: 1-9, 3.

[222] Burt, "Shakespeare, More or Less?," 3.

In other cases, instead, Shakespeare's quotations legitimise or provide a certain authority to other works, often through misquotes.

> Shakespearean references serve to highlight, intensify or verify some theme, elevating it to the level of profundity. And sometimes they offer forms of iconoclasm in which Shakespeare in his 'proper' or high cultural guise is treated as an object of burlesque, often with the intention of making popular culture by contrast seem all the more modern, entertaining, accessible, or inclusive.[223]

The misquotes depend, thus, on two opposite tendencies: that of taking Shakespeare for granted as a cultural canon easy to be used and modified, and, on the other hand, that of changing Shakespeare's words in order to establish a relation with the audience, of creating a sensation of recognition despite the difference, thus playing with Shakespeare as a common ground on which to construct a dialogue with the audience.

Shakespeare's fame is often also due to its mythologisation, to the elevation of certain themes and characters to the symbolic level, which leads them to express truths and concepts which alternatively apply to different epochs and to the most disparate audiences:

> The source of Shakespeare's enduring appeal, not just in his native land but in countries all over the world, has been widely regarded as the result of his genius for dramatizing the timeless truths of the universal human condition.[224]

Shakespeare's diffusion and popularity depends, in the first place, on the use of the English language, which has determined a reutilisation of the themes and characters by one of the most popular media capable of shaping contemporary tastes and trends since its early days: Hollywood cinema. Shakespeare's plays, moreover, have been considered as more adaptable to the contemporary screen than other Elizabethan plays. The themes, main nodes, the timeless quotations and, most importantly, the

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[223] Lanier, "Film Spin-offs and Citations," in *Shakespeares after Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Burt: 132-365, 134.

[224] Ryan Kiernan, *Shakespeare's Universality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), x.

language, have become, thus, universal, and have established a strong link with the contemporary context:

> The "timelessness" attributed to Shakespeare is thus neither a mark of excellence of the dramatist nor a neutral principle of interpretation; it is part of the ideological use of the plays. The plays are treated as models of behaviour, the acceptance of which is implied to be a part of becoming a "cultured" person, but the selection of material and construction of the model are part of the dominant culture. […]Shakespeare is elevated above history; to challenge the timelessness of the plays is at once to call into question the whole ideology in which they are so deeply embedded.[225]

As Ian Kott claims Shakespeare is "our contemporary."[226] The critic asserts that the Bard's timelessness depends also on the depiction of history as circular and always recurring: in Shakespeare every story starts and ends at the same point, the kingdoms follow each other in a timeless present which can be easily compared to the ensuing historical moments till the contemporary one.[227] Shakespeare himself introduced the postmodern idea of circularity, of everything having already been written, and of literature as a continuous repetition:

> No! Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change:
> Thy pyramids built up with newer might
> To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;
> **They are but dressings of a former sight.**
> Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire
> What thou dost foist upon us that is old;
> And rather make them born to our desire,
> Than think that we before have heard them told.[228]

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[225] Margolies, "Teaching the Handsaw to Fly," 51.

[226] Kott, *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, 1966.

[227] See, for example the film adaptation of *Richard III* staged by Ian McEllen during the Third Reich, and, at the same time, the possibility of comparing the rhetoric and political strategies of Richard to those of contemporary politicians.

[228] William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 123*, in *William Shakespeare, Complete Works*, eds. Jonathan Bate, Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007), 2456, 2457.

Shakespeare's popular fame has also been influenced by its regular treatment by literary criticism. Shakespeare had a varied reception in literary theory, itself an emanation of the high culture running parallel to popular culture in a relation of mutual influence. Among the Formalists, for example, "Bachtin enlists Shakespeare to theorize an anti-authoritarian politics of form, a transformative conception of language that recognizes the protean nature of being."[229]

The Structuralists, on the other hand, who were interested in the structure of meaning and in the linguistic construction praised "Shakespeare['s] […] fascinat[ion] with signs, understood as meaningful marks in the world-as-text, and how to read them."[230] Also the idea of the language as a system of differences, typical of structuralism, has been seen as possibly linked to Shakespeare: "René Girard […] notes how Shakespeare is well attuned to the breakdown of meaning that haunts language and its capacity for infinite substitutability."[231] As a consequence, also the deconstructionist definition of the word as containing in itself what it is not, differing and deferring meaning, could be seen as one of the features of Shakespeare's writing:

> Shakespeare's texts lend themselves to deconstructive reading, and not just because of their famous open-endedness that allows one to think two different things at once. It's also because of their language. […] The Shakespearean pun is not merely an indulgent tic; it discloses the properties of language and the social realities it produces and unsettles.[232]

Derrida himself claimed: "I know that everything is in Shakespeare: everything and the rest, so everything or nearly."[233]

Deleuze, Serres, and Latour, on the other hand, go against Derrida's assertions, claiming that an analysis of what is outside the text is necessary in order to understand its overall significance. The text, what has been written and what could have been written – the text in potentia – and its context are part of a system that comprises disparate elements which combined give a different significance to the text itself.

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[229] Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, 25.

[230] Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, 28.

[231] Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, 36.

[232] Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, 45.

[233] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature,* ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), 67.

Shakespeare's works are seen in this light, and, thus, re-interpreted also taking into account what they are not, what is not in the text, considering the ever-changing connections a contemporary audience can create with the Shakespearean production.

Some psychoanalytical theories have been used to interpret Shakespeare's works, in particular, they have taken into account peculiar characters or situations inserted in complex dynamics or displaying behaviours which can retrospectively be considered from a psychoanalytical point of view. Alternatively Psychoanalysis has also used the Bard's works in order to give examples and to support certain theories, seeing in the intricate elements of the plays the precursors and the representatives of later "cases": "as the central figure in English literary canon Shakespeare is at the receiving end of many of our most compulsive projections."[234] Think, for instance, of Freud's treatment of Hamlet as a literary representative of the Oedipus complex, or of the reflections on language and on desire dealt with by Lacan and inspired by the same work: "The play comes to stand for, to intercede on behalf of, to bear the weight of, our most profound hopes, fears, identifications, and desires. Shakespeare has become the 'other scene' (the unconscious) of modern life."[235]

The ensuing conclusion is that "Shakespeare's books have no singular place; they materialize diverse orientations and disorientations,"[236] they can be – and have been – adapted to the most disparate contexts and to the support of the most diverse theories. The address to almost every aspect of human life and of human passions and desires makes them suitable to be infinitely repeated and re-used. Thus, Shakespeare can be said to belong concurrently to the academic and to the popular world, which are mutually influencing each other in the creation of their "trends":

> The literary text is a great 'melting pot' which echoes current trends in society: from painting to music, from science to sociology, from anthropology to philosophical conceptions, from architecture to linguistic structure.[237]

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[234] Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, 78.

[235] Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, xxix.

[236] Richard Halpern, *Shakespeare among the Moderns* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 207.

[237] Daniela Carpi, "Introduction," in *Literature and Visual Arts in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Daniela Carpi (Bologna: Re Enzo Editrice, 2001), 7

It is, therefore, possible, to claim that Shakespeare has gone Pop[238]: "When art goes *pop* we witness a breakdown of the traditional boundaries that separate art from fashion or from mass-produced, commercial commodities."[239] The divide between high and low culture is more and more attenuated. Pop culture becomes a subject of study of high academic culture: "Eco and Barthes used sophisticated literary criticism to illuminate and at time appreciate popular culture. […] [turning to the] deployment of literary analysis to understand popular culture."[240] At the same time, popular and high culture melt in an undefined context influencing contemporary society:

> Advocates of new ways of looking at consumer culture challenged the division between high and low that had long held sway, replacing hierarchical approaches with parallel ones. They shifted from an idealistic, elitist view of Culture with a capital 'C' to an anthropological outlook on culture, with a lowercase 'c.'[241]

All artistic and popular productions collaborate, thus, to create people's present-day tastes: "Contemporary aesthetic communication, in fact, relies on a play both with languages and expressive forms as well as with their reciprocal contamination."[242] An exchange is established between every form of culture which has Shakespeare as one of its representatives:

> Shakespeare unifies a public sphere without simply erasing boundaries of discrimination, as mass culture is held to do. […]Shakespeare's overcoming of stratification and his appeal to a unified public space has as its terrifying double mass culture's collapse of stratification and its creation of an undifferentiated public.[243]

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[238] See, Sherwin *When Law Goes Pop*, theorising the popularisation of the law, due to the new media and their interference and influence on the legal process. The same concept can be applied to the popularisation of Shakespeare.

[239] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 28.

[240] Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures*, 5.

[241] Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures*, 1.

[242] Chiara Battisti, "Between Verbal and Pictorial: 'Shadow' Play in the *Draughtsman's Contract* by Peter Greenaway," in *Literature and Visual Arts in the Twentieth Century*: 147-218, 147.

[243] Halpern, *Shakespeare among the Moderns*, 63.

When speaking of Popular Culture, however, it is important to distinguish it from mass culture, underlining, in the former, the independence of the audience in shaping its own opinions and tastes, and in its active role in the creation of and influence on cultural productions:

> popular culture is regarded as something produced from below, by the people. It is 'good' because it supposedly involves active listening, reading and interaction. By contrast mass media are imposed from above by what Theodore Adorno called the culture industry on the people. Mass media is 'bad' because it supposedly dilutes literature, dumbs it down, and makes readers and listeners into passive consumers of products.[244]

The tendencies in both popular and mass culture influence the popularisation of Shakespeare, which consists, in particular, in its fragmentation and in the consequent detachment of the fragments from their original meaning. They become signifying units which stand on their own, and which can be placed, and misplaced, everywhere:

> There is a general tendency towards a new eclecticism, to quoting, paraphrasing or re-elaborating previous styles and works. A certain amount of humor and irony is always implicit in this act of recycling, while the prior work is seen as a source of creative re-elaboration.[245]

Shakespeare's massification and fragmentation enjoy of and take part in the aforementioned amalgam of high and low culture. As part of this process of abstraction Shakespeare becomes a symbol, a myth, to be displayed in order to give a refined significance to the works in which it is quoted:

> to quote random passages of Shakespeare has always meant – at least in the American context of nineteenth- and twentieth-century oratorical pedagogy and the ensuing industry of middle-class conduct manuals – to signify one's erudition, one's middle-class status as "educated," "refined," and one's affinity with the larger mission of liberal culture to shape a narrowly defined consensus through formal diction.[246]

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[244] Burt, "Shakespeare, More or Less?," 3.

[245] Carpi, "Introduction," in *Literature and Visual Arts in the Twentieth Century*, 8.

[246] Dionne, "The Shatnerification of Shakespeare," 181.

On the other hand, the excessive splintering, selection, and removal from the source may deprive the quotation of its actual meaning and of its connection to Shakespeare: "Shakespeare is already not only modern but postmodern: a simulacrum, a replicant, a montage, a bricolage. A collection of found objects, repurposed as art."[247] The fragments still maintain a relationship with the source but, at the same time, they give it a new interpretation and, concurrently, they can stand on their own, creating a whole new signifying net: "Shakespeare after mass media, then, may appear ripe for extinction even as he is also multiplying, diversifying and expanding, constructively reaching the attention of a newly polymorphous consciousness."[248]

In the case of the Bard's mythicisation Shakespeare becomes an all-encompassing concept, an abstract construction, comprising different significants:

> There is Shakespeare the historical human being (but then there are biographical difficulties and debates), Shakespeare the writer (but also the authorship controversy), Shakespeare the cultural icon (with positive and negative assessments of that role), Shakespeare as shorthand for a body of texts.[249]

By the name of Shakespeare goes his emblematic figure (as depicted in the engraving by Droeshout) representing English culture and old fashion literature, and, obviously, his works, which treat the most disparate subjects ranging from history to triviality, form love to death and revenge: "'Shakespeare' often becomes a standardized plot, a stereotypical character, and, especially, a moral or ethical choice."[250]

> [Shakespeare's] name and the texts we associate with it have mythic status: they represent truths that transcend particular circumstances. That is the idealist conception of myth.

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[247] Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, xvii.

[248] Thornton Burnett, "'We are the Makers of Manners,'" 102.

[249] Mark Robson, "The Hour is Unknown: *Julius Caesar*, et cetera," in *Shakespeare and the Urgency of Now*, eds. Cary di Pietro and Hugh Grady: 188-208, 191.

[250] Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, xix.

[…] To the materialists, Shakespearean texts are identified, understood and accorded status by us in our social structure; they are part of our story-making.[251]

The mythicization of Shakespeare, brought at its extreme, entails a sort of "nullification," the quotations are emptied of their original meaning and detached from the original work, Shakespeare disappears or becomes a symbol completely inserted in popular culture and disconnected from its original meaning for those who have never read his works:

> Sometimes the Shakespeare quotation has moved so far into the mainstream that there is little or no acknowledgement of any connection with the source. […] Shakespeare sampled, Shakespeare quoted without quotation marks, has become a lingua franca of modern cultural exchange.[252]

This tendency testifies, thus, of the conspicuous propagation of Shakespeare in Popular Culture, to such an extent that it becomes part of it losing its definite lines of demarcation, and mingling with other cultural productions in the contemporary multifaceted global conscience. "Shakespeare in this case is, once again, a kind of inspirational sound bite aphoristic, provocative, disseminated, and scattered far from its source."[253] Shakespeare and his works are "nullified" in the reference-less and unwitting quotation which only retains an aura of refinement or erudite knowledge (although its source is unknown, it is a knowledge taken for granted and whose origin is unquestioned). On the other hand, this rootless quotation participates in the diffusion of Shakespeare's works and in their circulation in the widest cultural contexts.

Both the mythologisation and the "nullification," however discordant, bring and have brought to the large diffusion and success of Shakespeare. "Shakespeare has shaped not only the reception and reconception of his own (and other) artworks, but also the very possibility of social analysis and cultural conversation in the present

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[251] Alan Sinfield, "Making Space: Appropriation and Confrontation in Recent British Plays" in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness: 128-144, 129.

[252] Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, xviii.

[253] Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, xxii.

day."[254] Popular culture influences the reception of Shakespeare and, at the same time, Shakespeare influences and is part of popular culture. "What we know of Shakespeare is inevitably colored and shaped by the times in which we live."[255] When confronted with Shakespearean material, a sort of subconscious recognition takes place in the mind of the audience, what Alexa Huang calls citation[256]: an allusion to what is assumed as reference point without naming the source (think, for example, of the Hamletic quotation "to be or not to be," worldwide known, even though not all audiences will probably be familiar with the source). With Shakespeare's well-known quotations, in addition, a large part of the audience will experiment the pleasure of recognition.

On the whole, Shakespeare's quotations become movable items, easily reassembled and merged, and working out of context. The use of the quotation develops a double narration: the one of the author quoting and that of the author being quoted, it is an appropriation not only of the voice but also of the intention of Shakespeare, and, at the same time, a recognition, by the audience, of being addresses by a dual voice, one of which they recognise as part of their cultural baggage.[257]

2.3.1 Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* in between cinema and advertising.

Popular Culture, thus, intertwines with and is enriched by the Shakespearean quotation. The Bard's work, on the other hand, is fostered and endorsed in multifarious ways. One of the most effective of the interchanges between Shakespeare and Popular Culture is that with cinema. Contemporary audiences, indeed, often come in contact with Shakespeare for the first time through its re-writings by means of

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[254] Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, xxx.

[255] Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, xxxiv.

[256] Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin, "Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation," in *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*, eds. Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 1-21.

[257] Huang and Rivlin, "Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation": 1-21.

different contemporary media, and mostly through cinema, Shakespeare has, thus, lately become a "fetishized media spectacle."[258]

This thesis is not intended to describe and analyse the cinematic reproductions and adaptations of Shakespeare's works; the examination of a film which strongly influenced both the world of the cinema, that of popular culture in general, and that of advertising in particular, appears, however, to be not only interesting but also crucial in order to elucidate the contemporary reading of Shakespeare through Popular Culture, thus facilitating the passage to the analysis of advertising in relation to the Bard and to his production.

The film in question is *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* by Baz Luhrmann. The film perfectly exemplifies Shakespeare's popularisation and the link of this process with advertising. It constitutes, thus, an apt example elucidating the transition from cinema, the most well-known and studied medium reproducing Shakespeare, to advertising, often neglected and relegated to a background level also in the field of popular culture. The film, moreover, stands as a milestone in the contemporary treatment of Shakespeare in popular culture: it has influenced the successive fame and diffusion of Shakespeare, also in advertising. The film can be said to epitomise the relation between Shakespeare and Popular Culture. Indeed, the film combines the plot, the characters and the words of the Bard's play with a quintessence of contemporary commercial and visual culture, influencing also the advertising world when it comes in contact with Shakespeare.

> It's a good thing that Shakespeare gets his name in the title, or you might mistake the opening scenes for Quentin Tarantino's *Romeo and Juliet*. No dialogue, just gunshots, as two gang families – the Montagues and the Capulets (each has its name in lights on the roof of a high-rise) – go to war. Welcome to mythical Verona Beach, where the gangs fire on each other, and soldiers in choppers fire on them. Shot in Mexico in a style that might be called retrofuturistic, since it encompasses castles and armor, as well as bulletproof

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[258] Peter S. Donaldson, "'In Fair Verona': Media, Spectacle, and Performance in *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*," in *Shakespeare after Mass Media*, ed. Richard Burt: 59-82, 77.

vests and boomboxes, the film reworks Shakespeare in a frenzy of jump cuts that makes most rock videos look like MTV on Midol.[259]

In spite of its modernity the film respects the words by Shakespeare, the dialogues of the play, indeed, even if cut to some extent, are reproduced in their original form and transferred intact to the contemporary setting:

> Of course, messing with *Romeo and Juliet* is nothing new. It's been made over as a ballet, as a Broadway musical and Oscar winning movie (*West Side Story*), and as a 1987 Abel Ferrara gang film (*China Girl*). But all those productions threw out Shakespeare's language. Luhrmann and his Aussie co-writer, Craig Pearce, stick with the Bard's funny way of talking. Iambic pentameter in this pulp context may throw you at first, but hang on. […] Luhrmann cuts the text as well, though not as damagingly. His point is not to distract you from the words, as Zeffirelli did, but to lead you to them.[260]

The lines are spoken by a combination of actors of different origins (Mercutio and the Prince are African-Americans, the Capulets boys are Latino-Americans, and the Montagues are white-Americans), a casting choice which demonstrates the universality of Shakespeare and goes against the tendency of staging Shakespeare only casting British and mostly white actors. The pronunciation of the Shakespearean lines by a contemporary tongue is a parallel of the globalisation of Shakespeare and of its appropriation by popular culture (and also by advertising). At the same time, it is an appropriation of the original which tries to maintain its spirit, mostly conveyed through the choice of words in which the Shakespearean genius stands, and, at the same time, to bequeath it to the contemporary generations:

> For us it was about maintaining the integrity of the language. The other thing was to embrace the language for poor people, for the actor's own voice. Because the Elizabethan actors spoke basically with an American accent and a rolled "r," you know. What is great is that a lot of young actors, particularly Latin actors, and black actors, they already use

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[259] Peter Travers, "Review of *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet,*" *Rolling Stone* November 1, 1996, available at: http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/william-shakespeares-romeo-juliet-19961101, (last access December 15, 2016).

[260] Travers, "Review of *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet.*"

simile and metaphor and a sort of a rhythm in their language. "This does not forgive you boy for the injury you have done me," is rap. Shakespeare was a kind of rap, the rhyming couplet is definitely a rap form, you know? So actually I found the young actors took to it really, really easily.[261]

The two families are rival companies exerting their power in the city of Verona Beach, an undefined American seaside city inevitably reminding of Venice Beach for its name and of Miami for the Californian atmosphere (a city which has nothing in common with the actual Italian city of Shakespeare's play).

The first image the audience sees is that of a "dead TV set [which] crackles to life and a newsreader somberly begins, 'Two households, both alike in dignity in fair Verona where we lay our scene…'"[262] The whole film, thus, is framed by television, and adopts this medium's way of communicating and imagery, the director claims, on this purpose: "Because we are so used to zapping, I have used the idea of television as the story teller. TV is the chorus of our lives. I wanted to zip through the city and through any boring bits." Moreover, as in the televisual communication, multiple advertisements are interspersed in the scenes, often alluding to Shakespeare. One of the characteristics correlating cinema and advertising and shortening the distance between Shakespeare and the latter is the amount of cuts the cinematic texts undergo, paving the way for the fragments displayed by advertising.

The first advertisements presented are that of *Montague Constructions*: "Retailed to Posterity by Montague Constructions," a quotation form *Richard III* Act 3, Scene 1 and that of *Phoenix gas* "Add more fuel to your fire," a quotation from *Henry VI*, Act 5, Scene 4.

While the activities of the two families are somehow concealed and the message is just that they are rival companies, their behaviour and rivalry suggest some kind of illegal undertaking, as claimed by the journalist Antony Johae, the film is set in "a

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[261] Erik Bauer, "Re-revealing Shakespeare: Baz Luhrmann on Romeo + Juliet," *Creative Screenwriting*, January 7, 2015, available at: http://creativescreenwriting.com/re-revealing-shakespeare-baz-lurhmann-on-romeo-juliet/, (last access December 10, 2016).

[262] Sophie Monks Kaufman, "Six Reasons Why Baz Luhrmann's Romeo + Juliet Still Rocks," *Little White Lies*, February 2, 2016, available at: http://lwlies.com/articles/baz-luhrmann-romeo-and-juliet-20th-anniversary/, (last access December 10, 2016).

postmodern world in a process of *deformation* where the apparatus of law and order [...] operates only nominally because it has been supplanted by a Mafia-type law and *dis*order."[263] Indeed the Capulet and Montague boys, as they are called in the film, resemble two rival gangs and quarrel in the streets menacing each other with their contemporary swords: the guns. Also these latter representations of modernity make the film resemble the more contemporary and popular action movie genre. The guns, in their turn, are branded with the symbols of the families to which their owners belong. The Capulets' ones display a lion and crossed swords, the Montagues' ones show religious subjects, guns and skulls. The transformation of the swords into guns draws the story closer to the contemporary scenario and enhances the identification of the audience with the events taking place.

Since the first encounter of the Capulets with the Montagues an advertisement will accompany the whole film, (in addition the image is a distinguishing feature of Luhrmann's poetics appearing also in other films such as the previous *Strictly Ballroom* and the following *Mulin Rouge*) that of "Wherefore. L'amour," a white word written in italics on a red background, patently referring to the Coca-Cola logo. The recognition of the popular brand is inevitable, and the reference to it increases, once again, the popularisation of the Shakespearean subject and its link with advertising. The vision of the billboard in the film, even if its content is completely changed, brings to an immediate recognition of the Coca-Cola advertisement, this process could be paralleled with the manipulation of Shakespeare enacted by the director: in this case, the content remains the same and the audience recognises it, even if in a different shape, similarly, as the famous drink, Shakespeare is recognised even if in a different form. The reference is also to one of the most globalised and universal products and to the advertising linked to it, possibly relatable to the same ubiquity ascribable to Shakespeare.

For what concerns the main characters, the first appearance of Romeo is at the seaside on an old carousel surrounded by crumbling walls on which some fading billboards are still visible. One, still intelligible, reads "Shoot Forth Thunder. ThunderBULLETS," a quotation from *Henry VI*, Part 2, Act 4, Scene 1. While, few

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[263] Antony Johae, "'Thy drugs are quick': Postmodern Dissolution in Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*," in *Literature/Film Quarterly,* 44.2., 2016: 106-119, 109.

frames later, the motto of the Capulets appears on the background of the dialogue between Juliet's father and Paris "Experience is by industry achiev'd," from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act 1, Scene 3. Juliet's parents moreover, are dressed as *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Capulets' party. Concomitantly popular entertainments and symbols of popular culture compose the background of almost all scenes: for instance, the Globe has become a pool hall in which the logo of "L'amour" (reminding of Coca-Cola) is ever-present, the Capulets' mansion is lit by a myriad of artificial and fluorescent lights, and Capulet's party is opened and closed by a fireworks show.

One of the most representative popular media, television, is a crucial element of the film, not only does it constitute its chorus, but it also announces the Capulets' party, listing the participants and inviting all but the Montagues. In the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet, moreover, they see each other through a fish tank, a metaphor of a screen deforming the two lovers' images and "mediating" their encounter. At the same time, the fish tank becomes a sort of mirror containing colours and shapes, reminding of the television's garish colours and forms, and of its tendency to mirror people's tastes and desires. The image, moreover, is distorted, as television communication often is.

Manifold other elements of the film are borrowed from popular culture: Romeo and Juliet kiss in a lift; the balcony scene is transposed to Juliet's pool; the Capulets and Montagues drive expensive cars and use guns; the most tragic or moving moments are interspersed with pop music, whose lyrics comment or laugh at them (providing a sort of contemporary comic relief); Benvolio tries to reach Romeo through a payphone; when the Nurse speaks with Juliet of Romeo's decision of marrying her she delays her revelation by looking in the refrigerator and making herself a sandwich.

When Tybalt fights with Romeo he pushes him on a couch, surrounded by cinema or theatre chairs abandoned on the beach, an immediate reference to television and film culture; the fight, moreover, takes place in front of the ruins of a theatre which frames the view of the ocean, reminding, once again, of the idea of decay and of popular culture. In this decadent scenario all walls are marked by graffiti with the names of the Montagues and of the Capulets; lastly, the letter of the friar is delivered to Romeo through priority mail and remains undelivered because the postman could not find him at his Mantua "house": a caravan. Also the figure of Friar Laurence is very contemporary: he works shirtless – showing a big cross tattoo on his back – to

produce the potion Juliet will drink to feign her death, but the alembics resemble those used to produce drugs. The figure of the priest opening his arms during the mass, moreover, is suddenly exchanged with that of a man standing by a car, trying to sell something. The following frame displays the sign "The Merchant of Verona Beach," probably the name of a shop (only the sign is shown and not the nature of the business), in some way alluding to the church as a sort of commerce. The scene comprises a series of advertisements and shop names, always linked with Shakespeare: the advertisement of "Prospero Scotch Whiskey. Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On," referring to *The Tempest* is displayed alongside those of "ThunderBULLETS" and of "L'amour" here repeated, and constituting a sort of leitmotif of the film. The shops' names, furthermore, remind of Shakespearean characters or plays: a stall is called "Rosenkrantzy's" (recalling the characters of Rosencrantz and Guildernstern in *Hamlet*), and another is called "Pound of Flesh," (referring to the pact in *The Merchant of Venice*). The advertising style is mimicked also through different strategies: at the beginning written words quoting Shakespeare or naming the characters appear on the screen, also the title is reproduced in order to emphasise the link with the Shakespearean production: "The title 'William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet' is then overtaken in a wipe from right to left reminiscent of a 70's TV Cop Show. This introduces the Montagues Boys."[264] The use of the written words, as the slogans or brands used in advertising, serves to fix ideas and to memorise the main concepts:

> In this section, the editing is fast starting off. There are approximately 80 shots including titles. Most of the edits here are less than a second. When we are introduced to the characters the edits are longer so we can almost memorize who is who. As the minute and a half of this part of the sequence comes to a close, the editing speeds up, creating tension and anticipation. The most interesting thing I find about this piece is it was never scripted, never thought about, it was just something the editor, Jill Billcock, did.[265]

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[264] Vanessa Monaghan, "Romeo & Juliet Moving Image Analysis," in *Nessimon.com*, May 2009, available at: http://nessymon.com/writings/college-writing/romeo-juliet-moving-image-analysis/, (last access December 12, 2016).

[265] Monaghan, "Romeo & Juliet Moving Image Analysis," in *Nessimon.com*.

Even though the reference might remain empty for some, the intertextual allusions to Shakespeare's other works are unremitting. The continuous intertextual references testify to a way of representing and reproducing previous works and draws a parallel with the creations of advertising, constantly alluding to something else, borrowing from other rhetorics to convey its own message, using, as the film does, "the hyperkinetic vocabulary of post-modern kitsch."[266]

The characters surrounding Romeo and Juliet are exaggerated, they are represented as types, sometimes even as stereotypes, the only way of making the story plausible in the contemporary scenario. The pace of the film is video-clip like, it is accompanied by music, and sometimes delivered in very fast shots (sometimes accelerated in the peculiar style of Baz Luhrmann):

> And as for the quick editing, that comes from the fact that I do not like to be bored. It's about rhythm. The opening sequence is very fast and it's trying to keep ahead of the audience. Even if you look at the play, the style of the piece is you come out and say this is what's gonna happen, they're gonna die. Then you introduce all the characters and they're actually little vignettes.[267]

The music, moreover, plays an important role in the construction of the significance of the film. The director claims:

> Everything we did was about being inspired by Shakespeare. So, for example, the use of pop songs–Shakespeare used pop music in his productions. He would just stick the popular song of the day into the middle of the show. You know, to advance the story, but also to engage people through song. We followed the idea that Shakespeare was really a pop storyteller, that he was absolutely not pressured.[268]

The songs, as it often happens in advertising, have a meaning which is added to that of the original play; the sound and the imagery, thus, are the director's original and personal contributions deployed in order to convey the spirit of the Shakespearean

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[266] Janet Maslin, "Review of *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*," *The New York Times*, November 1, 1996.

[267] Paul Adamek, "Interview with Baz Luhrmann," November 03, 1996, available at: http://peggy8_8.tripod.com/baz.html, (last access December 10, 2016).

[268] Bauer, "Re-revealing Shakespeare: Baz Luhrmann on Romeo + Juliet."

play. For what concerns the songs, besides the popular and more recent ones by Radiohead, The Cardigans, Des'ree, and Prince,

> We are also surrounded by the tune of 'O Verona' by Craig Armstrong. Carmina Burana's O Fortuna is no longer available for license for film so a new 'version' inspired by the original was created. What is interesting here is that the prologue has been translated into Latin and that is what the choir is singing. The sonic environment here is all comprised of non-diagetic sound.[269]

The film itself has become part and parcel of present-day popular culture, and of the contemporary, post-modern, intertextual, and intermedial interpretation of Shakespeare. In 1997 "Detachable angel wings became a default prom accessory; blue-tinted fairy lights were resourcefully draped over household fish tanks […] So, yes, two decades on, stray sounds and images from Luhrmann's film remain entirely vivid, if not entirely undated."[270]

The film develops into a set of quotations and objects of modernity which become simulacra of our contemporary world and popular culture, conveyed through a pastiche of images and sounds, typical of the present-day communication saturated by advertising, which is able, ultimately, of deconstructing and, at the same time, of reproducing Shakespeare for our age: "Amid the clamor from outraged purists and Shakespeare spinning in his Stratford-on-Avon, England, grave, you should notice that Luhrmann and his two bright angels have shaken up a 400-year-old play without losing its touching, poetic innocence."[271]

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[269] Monaghan, "Romeo & Juliet Moving Image Analysis," in *Nessimon.com*.

[270] Guy Lodge, "Romeo + Juliet at 20: Baz Luhrmann's adaptation refuses to age," *The Guardian*, November 1, 2016, available at https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/nov/01/romeo-juliet-baz-lurhmann-leonardo-dicaprio-claire-danes-20th-anniversary, (last access December 12, 2016).

[271] Travers, "Review of *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*."

Chapter III

3. Shakespeare and Advertising

Advertising, as previously demonstrated, is influenced and draws inspiration from different artistic expressions. Indeed,

> Advertising makes use of techniques of construction of the image, discursive framings, and narrative repertoires, coming from other media: cinema, fashion, comics, music. And it constitutes in this way a new contemporary mythology in which everyday life and fiction are intertwined.[272]

What derives from this process is a sort of hybrid form, borrowing the communicative framings from other media and the narrative potential from other artistic productions:

> Examined in the light of narrative semiotics by Greimas, advertising texts acquire such a dignified position which in some way equates them to literary texts, showing as their main characteristics the dominant and fundamental narrative structure which reveals their status of narration.[273]

Advertising's narration could be compared to that of a postmodern fairy tale[274]: as the latter, advertising relies on a constant repetition in order to make a concept memorable

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[272] Bolla, Cardini, *Carne in scatola*, 108, 109, [My translation].

[273] Giovanni Alessi, "Parte I. Per una storia della letteratura 'promozionale'," in *Scrittori e pubblicità*, ed. Giovanna Zaganelli (Bologna: Fausto Lupetti Editore, 2011): 16-56, 52 [My translation].

[274] Daniela Carpi, *Fairy Tales in the Postmodern World* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2016), 13, 16: A hybrid form is created, which is founded on memorability and on the repetition of the identical, but also on the subjective additions of the author; he/she plays with the changes in the time between the creation of the fairy tale in the past and its contemporary re-writing. […] The rewriting of fairy tales entails a high frequency of intertextuality. Like all postmodern literature, it is a "borderline" experience, the ultimate experimental writing which, by crossing the borders between genres, creates something new. However, we may consider the main feature of postmodernism to be its relationship with tradition. As advertising "fairy tales are part of the collective unconscious, they are rooted in the fundamental

and adopts all available communicative strategies in order to impress the audience. As in fairy tales, not only does the repetition regard the internal structure of the advertisement or commercial but it also concerns traditional works of art – such as Shakespeare's – which are often reproduced and at the same time reworked. The postmodern approach considers everything to have already been written: therefore it envisages the pastiche and the re-writing as the only viable forms of expression: "Tradition is confronted, challenged, subverted, and revised, in an agonistic struggle to impose one's own perspective."[275] The commercial aim of the message, however, relegates advertising to a second-class level in comparison with other arts, both in the common awareness and from a theoretical point of view. The lack of an extensive critical discussion on the matter of the transposition from theatre and literature to advertising allows this thesis to borrow from cinema and television transposition studies, and from theatre and literary criticism.

When working with Shakespeare's figure and works in advertising, the source material will be considered not only in its theatrical form, but also as a literary production[276] constantly bearing in mind the influence of other more contemporary media on the final outcome:

> Advertising and literature are two kinds of discourse habitually considered as very far apart, and often opposite to each other. [...] When they collaborate, then, they give life to a new language, a veritable code in which the contributions of both converge. What they create, actually, is an intertextual space in which they become, the one for the other, an awareness of a way of being, of an identity to which they can be referred: advertising as literature and literature as advertising. […] Each of them is part of a system, of an operative horizon through which they speak and through which they are understood.[277]

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structures of the imagination, and reflect common experiences of human societies, even in the absence of contacts or exchanges among peoples. For this reason fairy tales represent one of the best ways to reach the widest possible audience." Carpi, *Fairy Tales in the Postmodern World*, 162.

[275] Carpi, *Fairy Tales in the Postmodern World*, 16.

[276] For what concerns the theatrical and/or literary nature of Shakespeare's works see Ch. II, paragraph 2.1., page 66 of this dissertation.

[277] Zaganelli, "Introduzione," 57-58, [My translation].

My analysis will concentrate mostly on some British and Italian advertisements and commercials and, when possible, on the presence of the same advertisement or commercial in both cultures and on the variance observable in the passage from one culture to the other.

Advertisements and commercials are condensed forms of narration which have to evoke an idea or a feeling. The use of Shakespeare is very apt to this process due to manifold factors. Firstly, his well-known and semantically charged figure assumes the role of a sort of additional brand testifying to the quality of the commodity advertised; secondly, some plays, characters, and quotations have become so popular that they have acquired a life of their own, easily adapting to the limited space of the advertisement.

> Shakespeare […] appears at times as if he has been reduced to a series of sound bite passages, bits and pieces of it meant to represent unspoken wholes, his work emptied of anything that might look like a theme and condensed to an icon that signifies the brute value of cultural capital itself.[278]

Shakespeare, in this sense, becomes post-modern, representing a past to be continuously re-written: "Derrida sees 'the space or heritage of Shakespeare' less as one to be deconstructed than as itself a model of deconstructive thought."[279] As Umberto Eco claims, in the Postscript to *The Name of the Rose*, indeed, in contemporary cultural productions everything has to be reworked: "the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its deconstruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently."[280] Through popular culture and advertising Shakespeare undergoes a postmodern redefinition and interpretation, evolving and adhering to the trends typical of the contemporary period.

> This incessant wavering between meaning and non-meaning, ideological certainties and nihilistic uncertainties, between *signifiant* and *signifié*, social hierarchies and social upheaval,

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[278] Dionne, "The Shatnerification of Shakespeare," 179.

[279] Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, 53

[280] Umberto Eco, "Postscript," in *The Name of the Rose* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1984), 539-579, 570.

illusion and reality, law and its miscarriage, form and formless represents the liminal zone in which the comparison between Renaissance and Postmodernism takes place.[281]

From a compositional point of view, furthermore, the objects and props used in the Elizabethan theatre stood for higher concepts or set of objects: a candle could stand for the moon, a chair for a throne and a picture for an entire army. The same happens in advertising: the object represented carries in itself a series of connotations and values which often go beyond the mere appearance of the object whose purchase and possession stand for the symbolic concepts attached to it by the advertisement. The connotative potential of contemporary objects can thus be equated to those appearing on the Shakespearean stage, which the author had to charge with meaning through his verses, which are thus so suitable nowadays to be re-used by advertising: "objects are dramatic signifiers of the everyday which is related to familiarity and repetition,"[282] they serve as a simulacrum of a series of further meanings and attributes the consumer wants to possess through the purchase: "the roots of advertising are, after all, the same of fashion: the desire of constructing one's own identity through the communicative and symbolic value of the consumer goods."[283]

Conjointly, the use of Shakespeare and of his works can depend on the intention to legitimise and ennoble the product advertised or, on a completely opposite basis, to satirise and desecrate Shakespeare as a symbol of high culture:

> [often showing] the mismatch between Shakespeare and some aspect of the contemporary pop scene. Usually that mismatch is played for comedy, with the butt of joke being either Shakespeare, who is presented as if flummoxed or upstaged by modernity, or more often pop culture itself, on whose inadequacies Shakespeare is made to stand in judgement. In the latter case Shakespeare serves as an artistic or ethical standard from which pop culture can offer self-critique.[284]

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[281] Carpi, "Renaissance into Postmodernism: Anticipations of Legal Unrest," 189.

[282] Karen A. Machleit, and R. Dale Wilson, "Emotional Feelings and Attitude Toward the Advertisement: The Roles of Brand Familiarity and Repetition." *Journal of Advertising* 17. 3(1988): 27-35, 32.

[283] Bolla, Cardini, *Carne in scatola*, 105, [My translation].

[284] Lanier, "Film Spin-offs and Citations," 135.

The advertisement or commercial can also play on the renown of a particular element of the Shakespearean canon in order to use it to establish a communication with the audience based on presuppositions: think for example of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* or the graveyard scene in *Hamlet*, which will naturally bring with themselves a series of connotations which will be inevitably applied when deciphering the message of the advertisement or commercial. An ingenuous fruition seems almost impossible, the words of the Bard can also be hinted at by the music, the sounds, and the movements of the actors. Only an awareness of Shakespeare's words can, thus, help relate the advertising representation and the intended effect. The advertisers play with – and rely on – the previous knowledge of the audience, which is often taken for granted as part of a mass cultural baggage from which Shakespeare cannot be excluded. This process of recognition also revolves around the idea that some aspects of the Shakespearean heritage are so well known that it is possible to modify them and to play with them. This type of Shakespearean quotations must actively speak to the audience, they become re-purposable, and can be used in different genres. Shakespeare's quotations, indeed, tend nowadays to transcend the genres in which they had been categorised, furthermore, some of them have become part of the everyday-life, while some others still sound as elitist; the reference to Shakespeare is, thus, every time adaptable to different and new advertising purposes.

Through advertising Shakespeare's figure and words are transferred and adapted to the contemporary culture in which the approach to and interpretation of reality has changed:

> The proliferation of visual images in contemporary society has been accompanied by a significant cognitive shift. The linear thinking style (or interpretive fluency) characteristic of print-based culture is now in competition with what may be called as "associative" cognitive style, a style that is characteristic of our current image-saturated culture.[285]

Contemporary visual culture evidently influences the treatment of Shakespeare's references in advertising: the latter, indeed, are nowadays often associated with particular images and symbols pertaining to popular culture. Along with the culture also the language undergoes an evolution from which Shakespeare's words – and their

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[285] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 6.

original referents – are rarely excluded, they undergo a process of modernisation, mostly associated with condensation and fragmentation.

> The mass media use an abridged or condensed language […] which short-circuits thinking and suppresses cognitive evaluation. Advertising in particular uses hypnotic and intimidatory language and imagery. Its propositions assume the form of suggestive commands, and at the same time language is tinged with false familiarity which, according to Marcuse, is the result of skilfully managed popular directness and constant repetition.[286]

The former processes of visualisation, condensation and fragmentation are possible because Shakespearean quotations and references are deeply rooted in the culture with which it has evolved and of which it has absorbed the ways of communicating:

> The place, use, function and valuation of language in public communication is changing. It is moving from its former, unchallenged role as *the* mode of communication, to a role as one mode among others, to the function, for instance, of being a mode for comment, for ratification, or for labelling, albeit more so in some domains than in others, and more rapidly in some areas than in others.[287]

Furthermore, the audience's familiarity with Shakespearean plots, characters and quotations allows the advertisers to take them for granted and to heavily manipulate them while at the same time being sure of obtaining a recognition of the Shakespearean material even if presented in a post-modern form: "advertisements often rely on the fact that readers approach texts in an active way, being prepared to work to decode messages. This principle can operate at many different levels."[288] The participation of the audience in the construction of the meaning of the advertisement or commercial is, thus, of fundamental importance. The advertisers construct the advertisement or commercial basing it on the possible and expected reaction of the receiver, in contrast to the theorists of mass culture's passive reception as resulting "from the breakdown of a dialogical system, rendering individuals only the receivers rather than the senders

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[286] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 81.

[287] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 36.

[288] Angela Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 103.

of opinion and information."[289] "A popular mode of consumption which is itself critical"[290] is the object of this dissertation. Not only the present-day popularisation but also the long-lasting connection of Shakespeare with high culture have to be taken into consideration as existing synchronically, in order to fully understand the complexity of the contemporary advertising works and the kind of dialogue they establish with the audience: "Cultural materialism draws upon the […] analytic sense, and therefore studies 'high' culture alongside work in popular culture, in other media and from subordinated groups."[291]

When analysing Shakespeare in connection to advertising, thus, a consideration of manifold key factors is desirable. Not only does the use of the language need to be thoroughly examined but also the use of visual images and the overall compositional methods and elements (including colours) have to be taken into consideration when approaching an advertisement, "[the] visual aspect of the page [is given] a particular priority, as it is through this that any user of the page necessarily comes into contact with the page's content and organization."[292] For what concerns commercials, furthermore, a determinant role will be played by the sounds and music in constructing the overall meaning of the latter. In both cases contemporary audiences are aware, to a certain extent, of the implied meaning of particular compositional practices usually associated with the advertising communication, which are already part of the cultural background taken for granted in the construction of the commercial message. Advertisers profit from this awareness when devising an advertisement or a commercial: they either follow the implicit rules of the canonical composition in order to elicit a particular expected reaction in the audience or disrupt them in order to evoke

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[289] Halpern, *Shakespeare among the Moderns*, 71. The author refers to Jürgen Habermas' theory of the absence of dialogue in mass culture between the work and the receiver: the dialogue, according to the critic, only occurs in popular culture, while mass culture is characterised by an uncritical fruition. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* [1962], trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

[290] Halpern, *Shakespeare among the Moderns*, 85. The latter is the position held by Bachtin who proposes "an active, critical mode of consumption that makes him valuable to theorists of mass culture who wish to avoid the pitfalls of Frankfurt School theories of passivity and manipulation."

[291] Jonathan Dollimore, Alan Sinfield, "Foreword" to *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness: ix-x, ix.

[292] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre. A Foundation for the Systematic Analysis of Multimodal Documents*, 115.

feelings of distress and/or amazement. The latter reactions derive precisely from the alteration of the expected development of the advertisement or commercial: "Reading paths are also now known to be susceptible both to the knowledge that a reader has concerning how a visual image/page is to be interpreted and to the purpose the reader has in using the image/page."[293]

"Shakespearean" advertisements and commercials, moreover, insert themselves in different intertextual nets. Firstly, in the one comprising other contemporary advertisements or commercials – also those of no Shakespearean derivation – which, indeed, do not appear in isolation. Synchronically, in fact, advertisements and commercials of all kinds are influenced by contextual elements that surround them, in particular by trends observable in advertising which are typical of the time of broadcasting or publication. The Shakespearean advertisement or commercial can comply with the latter trends or be put in contrast with them in order to convey a distinct message: "when readers allocate documents to particular classes of document, those classes bring with them certain interpretive frames and expectations."[294] Secondly, diachronically, also other Shakespearean advertisements may influence the constitution and fruition of the new advertisement. More generally, in addition, as previously stated, also other cultural products (in cinema, TV, radio, theatre) involving a reworking or reproduction of the Shakespearean material will influence its treatment by advertising: "Whenever we analyse a multimodal document, we need to consider the sets of documents that it resembles and the sets of documents with which it stands in contrast."[295] The enormous amount of material pertaining to Shakespeare, thus, goes today under the "Shakespearean" label:

> Many scholars prefer, nowadays, to focus their critical efforts no longer or not only on Shakespeare but, rather, on the "Shakespearean," that is to say on that dark wood of references, quotations, parodies, hybridations which are not traceable back to an author figure.[296]

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[293] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre*, 64.

[294] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre*, 178.

[295] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre*, 177.

[296] Sara Soncini, "Shakespeare Graffiti: la ricerca" in *Shakespeare Graffiti, il cigno di Avon nella cultura di massa*, eds. Mariacristina Cavecchi, Sara Soncini (Milano: CUEM, 2002): 11-15, 12. [My translation].

Likewise, the cultural context of fruition has to be taken into consideration, also in view of the contemporary widening of the media's potentiality of reaching a larger and larger public and of the advertising message of circulating globally:

> geographical and national boundaries cease to exist, replaced by the endless transmissions and recirculations of fragments of texts "in the nowhere and everywhere of a forever expanding universe we know as the global media."[297]

The considerably enhanced circulation of the media message, however, has always to be taken into consideration in relation to the different cultures of fruition which will eventually change and influence the interpretation of the "protean (trans-national, trans-cultural, and trans-ideological) potential of Shakespeare"[298] and of the advertising message.

3.1 The figure of Shakespeare

The figure of Shakespeare can be said to have become alternatively: a myth of the contemporary world, concurrently developing into a symbol of British national identity and culture; an emblem of popular culture rebelling against the same tradition he stands for; a representative of the English literary canon; and a figure entering fashion, cinema, and television because of its almost universal renown: "Using Shakespeare as a source also potentially offers […] a measure of cultural prestige […] buffing its image as a provider of wholesome, edifying animated 'classics.'"[299]

The meaning of his figure has exceeded that of the real man behind it and it has reached such a popularity to be compared to contemporary celebrities advertising a particular product:

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[297] Michael A. Anderegg, *Cinematic Shakespeare* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 174.

[298] Pasquale Barbella "Shakespeare in Spot" in *Shakespeare Graffiti*, eds. Mariacristina Cavecchi, Sara Soncini: 79-84, 79. [My translation].

[299] Lanier, "Film Spin-offs and Citations," 134.

> What advertisers thought they were getting in celebrities were figures familiar to the public who could in turn make the product familiar; the star was performing the social tasks of an introduction and a recommendation.[300]

Shakespeare's figure's representations and reproductions, thus, have maintained all the connotations linked with the traditional figure of the Bard while, at the same time, evolving under the "Shakespearean" label. The latter reference to the contemporary symbolic Shakespeare both retaining the traditional characteristics associated with it and detaching form them to acquire its own particular meaning, testify to the appropriation of Shakespeare – and of everything even remotely related to it – by popular culture:

> the word 'Shakespearean' today has taken on its own set of connotations, often quite distinct from any reference to Shakespeare or his plays. [...] 'Shakespearean' is now an all-purpose adjective, meaning great, tragic, or resonant: it's applied to events, people, and emotions, whether or not they have any real relevance to Shakespeare.[301]

Contemporary re-uses and manipulations of Shakespeare live an independent life in modern-day perspective: the connection with Shakespeare can be acknowledged; it can be only relatively suggested; or it can remain silent. In the latter case the reference to Shakespeare would have enhanced the signification of the message and of the series of connotations attached to the final product, but its potential meaning is not fully enjoyed by the receiver. What the receiver of the message infers from the use of Shakespeare in advertising depends, therefore, on manifold factors. Firstly the interpretation is influenced both by an individual (cognitive) and by a collective (cultural) evaluation of the creative production,[302] secondly:

> Everything perceived by humans can be considered either symbolic, functional, or both. Symbolic meaning operates within the unconscious either verbally or nonverbally. Symbols involve what an object or situation *means* to us, rather than what it might *say* to

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[300] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 126.

[301] Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, xiv.

[302] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York: Dover, 1946).

us. Symbolic meanings appear to form the basis upon which perception becomes deeply meaningful.[303]

"Will has become the *logo* of an entire theatrical epoch."[304] Shakespeare has become and image, an icon to be used by advertising:

The Martin Droeshout engraving of the poet has stared at us from a thousand advertisements and is instantly recognizable, a gift for marketing agencies wishing to endow their client's products with a specious old world authenticity.[305]

At present, the figure of Shakespeare, the moustache, the hairstyle, the Renaissance dress, are all part of the contemporary cultural consciousness and baggage of knowledge regarding the Bard and British culture in general. Shakespeare's figure is so well known that it has also been the object of desecration and satire, as it often happens to institutionalised and very renowned images. "Shakespeare is a powerful cultural token, and hence a place where meaning is established and where it must be contested."[306]

The reason behind the use of Shakespeare's figure is both cultural and economic: "for endorsement purposes advertisers find images of the famous artists of the past more useful than images of living artists. Dead artists cannot object […]. Another advantage is that dead artists do not require a fee."[307] Shakespeare is also a representative of imaginative creativity which is replicated in the advertisements and commercials in which his figure is included:

Artists are creative beings: this is a characteristic that advertisers – particularly advertising agencies – are keen to appropriate. […] From time to time, therefore, advertisers will

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[303] Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, 57.

[304] Socci, *Shakespeare fra teatro e cinema*, 21. [My translation]

[305] David Hornbrook, "'Go Play, Boy, Play': Shakespeare and Educational Drama" in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness: 145-159, 157.

[306] Sinfield, "Making Space: Appropriation and Confrontation in Recent British Plays," 140.

[307] John Albert Walker, *Art in the Age of Mass Media* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 54.

represent anonymous or fictional artists simply in order to exploit the image of the artist as a social type.[308]

Shakespeare might have been chosen in the first place mostly as a result of this practice in the earlier advertisements which used his figure, thence engendering a concatenation of effects by which the more his figure and plays acquire popularity the more they are used by advertising, thus becoming familiar to a larger and larger audience. The Bard benefits from "a chain reaction, due to a popularity which self-feeds itself in time."[309] Shakespeare becomes, thus, what could be defined as a sort of modern myth: "Being *real* and *sacred*, the myth becomes exemplary, and consequently *repeatable*, for it serves as a model, and by the same token as a justification, for all human actions."[310] In the contemporary scenario the Shakespearean myth superimposes itself on the figure of Shakespeare, it takes its own shape and its own meaning:

> Le mythe est un système de communication, c'est un message. On voit par là que le mythe ne saurait être un objet, un concept, une idée ; c'est un mode de signification, c'est une forme. […]Puisque le mythe est une parole, tout peut être mythe, qui est justiciable d'un discours. […] Chaque objet du monde peut passer d'une existence fermée, muette, à un état oral, ouvert à l'appropriation de la société, […] [l'objet vient] adapté à une certaine consommation, investi de complaisances littéraires, de révoltes, d'images, bref d'un *usage* social qui s'ajoute à la pure matière. […]
> Le discours écrit, mais aussi la photographie, le cinéma, le reportage, le sport, le spectacle, la publicité, tout cela peut servir de support à la parole mythique.[311]

From this prospect, Shakespeare has become a contemporary myth, comparable to the ancient ones with which it shares the abstract nature, the wide diffusion in countless cultures, and the capacity of epitomising a series of concepts, presuppositions, and beliefs almost universally shared:

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[308] Walker, *Art in the Age of Mass Media*, 54.

[309] Barbella "Shakespeare in Spot": 79-84, 79. [My translation]

[310] Mircea Eliade, *Myth, Dreams and Mysteries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 23, [emphasis in the original].

[311] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 181, 182.

Myth […] is a real and powerful form of human consciousness, holding some significant place within a culture. […] The figure of Shakespeare is actually very similar to the "culture heroes" of anthropology: figures which may be legendary heroes, fabulised historical characters or mythological deities; but which exhibit, throughout the countless mythologies of world culture, certain common structural characteristics.[312]

The symbolisation and mythologisation of Shakespeare has become possible also as a result of the scarcity of information regarding his life:

This is the point about all the many imagined portraits of Shakespeare: through the incomparable richness of his dramatic works, he is intensely present to our mind and imagination, and yet as a man he is a complete enigma, a phantom. […]Shakespeare […] [is] a name and a spirit rather than a man.[313]

The partially documented time he spent in London and the period of silence following his return to Stratford-Upon-Avon before his death have allowed for speculations on his identity and on the paternity of his works, thus creating the most disparate conjectures which, even if largely discarded, still have a durable appeal, and have contributed to his enduring fame.[314] The indeterminacy of his figure has allowed the advertisers to work on the only available pieces of information and to expand them or to adapt them to every possible purpose:

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[312] Graham Holderness, "Bardolatry: or, The Cultural Materialist's Guide to Stratford-Upon-Avon" in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness: 2-15, 11.

[313] Whitfield, *Illustrating Shakespeare*, 156, 157.

[314] Remarkably, also the issue of Shakespeare's identity has been explored and exploited by popular culture. See, for example, the film *Anonymus* directed by Roland Emmerich, suggesting that Shakespeare was actually only an actor lending his name to Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, who wanted to remain anonymous. The latter theory has been, however, rejected by several scholars in Shakespearean subjects. See on this: Stanley Wells, *Dictionary of Shakespeare*, 10, 11: "In more recent years splinter groups have attempted to replace Shakespeare with many different names, including those of the Earl of Derby, the Earl of Essex, Queen Elisabeth, Christopher Marlowe, the Earl of Oxford, and the Earl of Rutland. […] All alternative claims depend on conspiracy theory: that, for example, Marlowe's death – one of the best authenticated episodes in literary history – was a cover-up, and that he lived on writing plays for another twenty years, otherwise leaving no trace of his previously colourful personality, and generously

> In marketing, images trump words. The familiar "received" image of the Bard, which adorns countless advertisements worldwide, has become iconic, an instantly recognisable signifier […] (Shakespeare metaphorically endorses those products he vicariously and posthumously endorses).[315]

Even though the participation and endorsement by the Bard are fictitious, because they are only based on his mythical figure, on a subconscious level he seems to be approving the product advertised, as a celebrity would do, thus recommending it in the mind of the addressee of the message. An extensive variety of conceivable advertising initiatives, in particular, is made possible by Shakespeare's recognisability:

> Many advertising references to authors falling within the school study programmes [...] are justified, besides their straightforward recognisability, also by a cognitive certainty which grants more freedom of action to advertising manipulation.[316]

Thus, not only does Shakespeare's figure allow for a series of connotations to be attached to the product – ranging from the high status linked to his traditional figure to a series of more popular features his figure has acquired through time – but it also provides a cultural authority capable of endorsing the product even if on a mythical and symbolic level.

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giving credit for his work to Shakespeare (whose supposedly early works have to be redated), and that Shakespeare co-operated in the conspiracy by pretending to be the author of works he had not written, and by somehow concealing their authorship from all his theatrical and literary colleagues, and from those who published them. [However] evidence that the plays were written by someone called William Shakespeare […] abounds, occurring in title-pages, in printed tributes and allusions, in manuscripts not intended for publication, and elsewhere. [Numerous are also the] evidence[s] that the Shakespeare who wrote the works was the Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. [...] Evidence for authorship may be both internal or external."

[315] Graham Holderness and Bryan Loughrey, "Ales, Beers, Shakespeares" in *Shakespeare's Cultural Capital*, eds. Dominic Shellard and Siobhan Keenan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 99-125, 106.

[316] Zaganelli, "Introduzione," 79 [My translation].

3.1.1 Someone has been on the *Shakesbeer*

> Boy: Would I were in an alehouse in London! I would give all my fame for a pot of ale, and safety.
>
> (*Henry V*, Act 3, Scene 2, 8-9.)

The *Shakesbeer*[317] campaign, of 2010, profusely exploits the aforementioned highly recognisable iconology associated with the figure of Shakespeare, and, at the same time, plays with it. The advertisement has appeared on newspapers and billboards in the United Kingdom. The communicative potential of the advertisement is reached through the use of both image and text. Although the first detail which attracts the audience's attention is the close-up picture, the text contributes to the overall understanding of the message:

> Advertisements [...][like] most texts now involve a complex interplay of written text, images and other graphic or sound elements, designed as coherent (often at the first level visual rather than verbal) entities by means of layout.[318]

People, indeed, often require a narration in order to understand a particular image, the understanding of advertising has to be directed through words or at least through symbols (those referring to a particular product, i.e. the brand) and in this case both are present.

The first line of text "Someone's been on the *Shakesbeer*" immediately sets the tone of the advertisement, it is a humorous incipit, also due to the play on the different typefaces. It also focuses on the word in italics which is, indeed, the one with a denser signification. Firstly, the use of the italics gives it a certain old-fashioned taste, it immediately refers to handwriting thus linking the signifier, the word *Shakesbeer*, with one of its signifieds, Shakespeare, only from a graphical perspective, since the word resembles the signature of the Bard:

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[317] Advertising campaign: *Shakesbeer Campaign 1, 2, 3*. "Someone's been on the *Shakesbeer*." Church End Brewery, Reese Bradley Hepburn (RBH), UK, March 2010.

[318] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*, 17.

> One sharp distinction in how writing appears is whether it is handwriting or typed print, since we are likely to read handwriting as more to do with human agency and therefore more personal and individualistic than machine-produced typeface.[319]

The word Shakesbeer, afterwards, plays on the combination of the words "Shakespeare" and "beer" thus referring to the second line of text on the bottom left of the page: "The Bard's birthday ale." However, the second remark seems redundant when the first line is read in connection with the image. The word "Shakesbeer" is unequivocally referred to a specific beer and to Shakespeare: "a popular identifying technique is the deliberate misspelling of words in brandnaming to give a product uniqueness while at the same time allowing it to retain some recognizable elements."[320] The word, moreover, is very similar to the name of Shakespeare: on a phonetic level, indeed the sounds /p/ and /b/ have the same place of articulation, they are both bilabial plosives, the first voiceless and the second voiced, so it is easy to confuse the two terms when pronounced rapidly. The recognition of the pun, also a typical Shakespearean strategy, will surely increase the audience's enjoyment and involvement with the message:

> Polysemy (one word having more than one meaning) is often exploited consciously in advertising: one example of this is the pun. […] The phonology, or sound system, of a language also plays its part in the creation of meaning – in, for example, sound symbolism, where we associate sounds with particular ideas.[321]

The meaning of the first sentence acquires its full significance when put in relation to the image. The sentence, in fact, suggests that someone, the people portrayed, have drunk the Shakesbeer, the particular product advertised. In a real-life situation, the image would be noticed first and the reading of the sentence would follow, the latter constitutes a deduction depending on the aspect of the people portrayed. The hook, the initial sentence catching people's attention, has to be interpreted in relation to the

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[319] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 16.

[320] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 141.

[321] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 83.

image, and, after the hilarious effect of the pun, the reader has to work out the overall meaning of the advertisement:

> [The hook is] the prelude to a more cognitive appeal, where the brain is engaged in working out a puzzle. […] Word play is likely to occur frequently in that position because of the hook's function as an attention-getter. Sometimes the play involves alterations of conventional spellings; sometimes changes in sounds are suggested (for example, phoneme substitution, where one sound is replaced by another); sometimes written elements regroup when spoken, producing new configurations and therefore new meanings.[322]

The message to be deduced from this advertisement is twofold: the audience may infer either that it is possible to tell who has drunk this particular kind of beer from their appearance, or that everyone can feel like Shakespeare when drinking "his" beer.

The people portrayed are, in fact, ordinary people, but they display some features typically associated with the Bard's iconology and almost universally recognisable. As stated before, indeed, Shakespeare has become a sort of symbol, almost a brand, which can be used for manifold different purposes. The people portrayed have acquired – after drinking the beer – the same hairstyle and/or the same moustache which has become a distinctive trait of Shakespeare's numerous portraits. Interestingly enough the people portrayed are characterised by different age, sex and ethnicity in order to represent and consequently reach the widest demographic target:

> It is impossible to include a character in an ad that cannot be classified as belonging to some group. Indeed the humour may depend on stereotypes associated with a group or icon that has a shared meaning for an audience.[323]

The advertisement, thus, also implies that everyone can drink the Shakesbeer. It is not an elitist product, as the reference to the Bard may imply. The people portrayed do not possess particularly distinctive features and they are dressed in an ordinary way. The first figure is an old man, the second a woman, and the third figure is black, wears a

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[322] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 108.

[323] Chiaro, *Translation, Humour and the Media*, 18.

tank top and has many tattoos, in order to signify that everyone can have that particular beer and feel like Shakespeare.

> Images, like verbal text, do not arrive on the page by accident. Copywriters give careful consideration to the type of people they want to represent – or, it would be more accurate to say, to re-present, as every image is a re-presentation of something; it is never a 'natural' phenomenon. As soon as people are pictured, they become representative of the social groups they are seen to represent – groups such as gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, social class, occupation and region. But people are also not simply static pictures. They are part of the way the text interacts with us, the readers.[324]

Also the text, furthermore, supports the hypothesis of the potential popular diffusion of the beer because of the contracted form of the verb "has been" typical of the spoken language and thus moderating the reference to the father of English literature: "written adverts, despite being page-bound, often use aspects of spoken language in order to achieve their effects."[325]

The reference to Shakespeare, thus, depends on his status of cultural token, embodying concepts of reliability, wealth, and luxuriousness, shared by the popular audience but which have become so well established that it is possible to play with them and to debase them in order to elicit a reaction of amusement. The latter process is comparable to the mythical method which uses a traditional, high-brow sort of reference in order to narrate ordinary adventures, thus lowering the myth and, at the same time, stimulating the memory and participation of the audience, which, in the process of recognition also acknowledges the irony intrinsic in the use of such a source: "[the mythical method] is the way of juxtaposing and telescoping the past and the present and under-scoring the timeless quality of the myth."[326]

For what concerns the commercial aim of the advertisement the actual product is not even represented, only its name and the brand are displayed at the bottom left part of the advertisement. The brand name is a text itself, sometimes, as in this case, accompanied by an image, and it conveys the producer's identity. In this case, however,

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[324] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 114.

[325] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 37.

[326] Vikramaditya Rai, *The Waste Land. A Critical Study* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), 146.

the brand has a much reduced size in order to emphasise the name of the beer advertised.

> Advertising plays less and less on the immediate readability, on the instantaneous transparency of the product. It attracts attention on itself, gaining its own profundity and constituting itself as an auto-referential system. Finally, it sells less the brand of a product than its own brand, its own signature. [...] Advertising signs [...] refer to real objects as one refers to an absent world. [...] They are signs imposing a specific activity: reading.[327]

The advertisement aims more at representing the effect of the beer than the product itself, it aims at creating an atmosphere which will frame the moment of consumption of the product: "This picture [...] [represents] 'what using the product will be like' as fantasy or promise, as 'what might be,' rather than reality, as 'what is.'"[328]

Also Shakespeare's name is actually never mentioned, but the advertisement plays on all the characteristics usually attached to his figure: the physical features, the idea of the handwriting, and its renown as the Bard of Avon. Such a process testifies, once again, to the possibility of fragmenting Shakespeare and of displaying just a few traits of his famous figure which, however, are easily recognised, thus demonstrating the deep entrenchment of the Shakespearean image in contemporary popular culture.

> Neither the rhetoric language nor least of all the informative message on the virtues of the product do decisively affect in any way the consumer. The individual is sensitive to the latent themes of protection and gratification, to the attention with which he/she is being stimulated and persuaded, to the proof, illegible to conscience, that somewhere an instance exists [...] which accepts to inform him/her on his/her desires, to anticipate and rationalise them to his/her own eyes.[329]

The aforementioned process is particularly in vogue in the field of alcoholic beverages' advertising, which, additionally, maintains a longstanding relation with Shakespeare due to historical and cultural reasons:

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[327] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 44, 121, [My translation].

[328] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*, 159.

[329] Baudrillard, *Il sistema degli oggetti*, 312. [My translation]

The association, in the popular culture of pub names and signs, between Shakespeare and alcohol was established at an early stage: partly on the basis of his status as a great historical character, but also on account of the presence within his work of portrayals of tavern culture and of copious drinking, which in turn fuelled the growth of those legends of Shakespeare as drinker and frequenter of pubs.[330]

The United Kingdom is, indeed, nowadays, studded with pubs whose names relate to Shakespeare and his works, thus projecting the Shakespearean heritage more and more inside popular culture.

The references to alcoholic beverages present in Shakespeare's works, in addition, were linked to specific concepts which maintain a durable significance in popular culture also today, becoming thus easily reusable by advertising: "Shakespeare's various references to 'ale' frequently bear similar associations with patriotism, local loyalties, and a demotic entitlement to popular pleasure."[331] Shakespeare, in the words of Orson Wells, has been deemed to be the first advertiser of Sherry[332] on account of the words pronounced by Falstaff in *Henry IV*, Part 2, Act IV, scene III:

> **A good sherris-sack hath a two-fold**
> **operation** in it. It ascends me into the brain; dries me there
> the foolish and dull and crudy vapours which environ it;
> apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and
> delectable shapes; which delivered o'er to the voice, the
> which is the birth, becomes excellent wit. The second
> your excellent sherris is the warming of the blood; which
> cold and settled, left the liver white and pale, which is the
> badge of pusillanimity and cowardice; but **the sherris warms**
> and makes it course from the inwards to the parts extremes.
> **illumineth the face**, which, as a beacon, gives warning to all
> rest of this little kingdom, man, to arm; and then the vital

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[330] Holderness and Loughrey, "Ales, Beers, Shakespeares,": 99-125, 106.

[331] Holderness and Loughrey, "Ales, Beers, Shakespeares,": 99-125, 99.

[332] Orson Wells at the "Dean Martin Show," (1968). The actor says "This is Shakespeare's first and greatest of all commercials on the subject of booze." Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJ6v7GHYDbM (last access: June 20, 2017).

commoners and inland petty spirits muster me all to their
captain, **the heart, who, great and puff'd up with this**
doth any deed of courage – and **this valour comes of sherris.**
that skill in the weapon is nothing without sack, for that
it a-work; and learning, a mere hoard of gold kept by a devil
till sack commences it and sets it in act and use. Hereof
it that Prince Harry is valiant; for the cold blood he did
naturally inherit of his father, he hath, like lean, sterile,
bare land, manured, husbanded, and till'd, with excellent
endeavour of **drinking good** and **good store of fertile sherris**,
that he is become very hot and valiant. If I had a thousand
the first humane principle I would teach them should be to
forswear thin potations and to **addict themselves to sack**.[333]

Differently from the Shakespearean rhetoric, however, contemporary advertising does not focus on the characteristics and on the actual effects of drinking, but it concentrates on persuading an audience already consuming alcohol and on underlining the difference and better quality of one brand over another:

> Advertising messages focus on further differentiating one brand from another in an effort to reinforce or disrupt existing behaviour. […] advertisers in the alcoholic beverage market, […] apparently do concentrate their advertising efforts on attracting to their brands those consumers who have already made the decision to drink. In this context, the message strategy might be summarized as, "If you drink, drink our brand because…" […] Alcohol advertising has been observed not to influence people in their decision on whether to drink or not, but on which brand to choose. Alcohol advertising does not PUSH people to drink or increase their consumption of alcohol, it only presents a brand as more appealing than another.[334]

Advertising in alcoholic beverage market, in fact, often includes "industry-sponsored responsibility messages"[335] which aim at a more conscientious consumption of alcohol

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[333] William Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Part 2, Act IV, scene III. [My emphasis]

[334] Debra Jones Ringold, "Responsibility and Brand Advertising in the Alcoholic Beverage Market: The Modeling ofNormative Drinking Behavior," *Journal of Advertising*, 37.1 (Spring, 2008):127-141, 128, 129. [Emphasis in the text].

[335] Ringold, "Responsibility," 127.

associated, in more recent advertisements, with concepts of companionship, fun, and sharing. The advertising message involves an image of drinking which does not need to result in excessive consuming: "The implicit message in the vast majority of alcohol advertisements [is] moderate drinking."[336] The latter message is inserted in advertisements not only to convey the aforementioned feelings but also to prevent censorship or legal issues.

Shakespeare's figure is frequently associated with alcoholic beverages but also his works and characters are often the subject of this type of advertising. An emblematic work, often linked with alcoholic beverages' advertising is *Hamlet*, whose monologue "to be or not to be" is suitable to almost infinite re-readings and re-writings.

The association of a brand with a particular Shakespearean play or character is aimed at differentiating the latter from other brands, to endow them with an elevated power of signification, with a sense that drinking that particular kind of beer will put the consumer in contact with the fictional world created by Shakespeare in his plays. The reference to the Bard, moreover, entails a recognition of a character, and, in the case of Hamlet's monologue, of a specific Shakespearean line which has become worldwide known. "Hamlet is one of mankind's great images. It turns a new face to each century, even to each decade. It is a mirror which gives back the reflections of the age that is contemplating it."[337] The evocative sentence "To be or not to be" has been appropriated by popular culture; the sentence has detached from its original meaning, from the original monologue, and from the original play, overlooking on the fact that: "like Shakespeare's other highly intellectual drama, *Troilus and Cressida*, [*Hamlet*] is a play that debates the great questions of epistemology, ethics and metaphysics."[338] The monologue, its meaning, and its content are often ambiguous to

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[336] Charles K. Atkin, William Dejong, and Lawrence Wallack (1992), *The Influence of Responsible Drinking TV Spots and Automobile Commercials on Young Drivers* (Washington: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 1992), 10.

[337] Peter Hall, "Hamlet in Performance: the RSC and Beyond," in *Theatre at Work: Playwrights and Productions in the Modern British Theatre,* eds. Charles Marowitz and Simon Trussler (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967): 171-219, 185.

[338] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008), 2.

the contemporary audience who often associates them with a general philosophical question on existence. The latter vagueness in the popular consciousness allows the sentence to be debased, thus converting it into a "philosophical" choice among commodities. The adaptability and repeatability of the sentence in different contexts and its applicability to the most varied circumstances makes it almost universal, the sentence gains that mythical status achieved by its creator:

> Because of the play's 'greatness,' its universality of meaning, it cannot be tied down to any particular time or place in history; or if it can, that history serves only as a background to illuminate the text's transcendence of context, which enables it to speak, in different ways, to all generations, since those generations ultimately share not only a consistent human nature, but a stable system of beliefs and values. Shakespeare's plays are assumed to transcend history: and are thus transformed into myth.[339]

The mythicisation, is, however, accompanied by commodification and debasement. The use and distortion of the famous line in everyday speech and in advertising make it detach from its original source and purpose. The sentence stands on its own while its source is often unknown, its origin either remains unquestioned or taken for granted. The sentence in itself already owns a set of connotations derived from its exploitation by popular culture and the audience does not need to be familiar with the source text to appreciate them.

> *Hamlet* is the best-known and most discussed of all Shakespeare's plays. It is also one of the most frequently performed. […] There is then a remarkably full stage history which reveals a certain continuity and predictability by way of a perceptual focus on the figure of the prince himself, claims for the "naturalistic" quality of the actor's performance, a sense of the play's special capacity to catch the contemporary *Zeitgeist*, cutting and rearranging of the text, and the international dimension and appeal of the play.[340]

In both "Stella Artois" and "Hoppy Wheat" advertisements, the name of Shakespeare and the title of the play are not mentioned. In the first case, as already argued, the

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[339] Christopher J. McCullough, "The Cambridge Connection: Towards a Materialist Theatre Practice" in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness: 112-121, 113.

[340] Hall, "Hamlet in Performance: the RSC and Beyond": 171-219, 185, 172.

reference to the play is not immediate because the sentence "to be or not to be" stands alone and has its own significance, at this point independent from its source. The advertisement, moreover, uses the pun, a strategy very dear to Shakespeare and often used in advertising (as in the previous "Shakesbeer" example).

Also the "Hoppy Wheat" advertisement displaying Ophelia just mentions her name, which, in the consciousness of the audience, is immediately linked with the play of *Hamlet*, thus endowing the message with a series of connotations. Also the composition of the image matches the usual iconography linked with the character, in particular the depiction of her death: indeed the girl is surrounded by flowers and her eyes are closed. In the advertisement she only seems to be fainting or sleeping but the reference easily inferred is that to the madness scene in which Ophelia refers to flowers in her delirious song: "Ophelia (sings): Larded all with sweet flowers, /Which bewept to the ground did not go/ With true-love showers."[341] The scene, moreover, has many similarities with the description of the death of Ophelia, which has become very well-known due to the many representations in visual culture[342] – possibly depending on the strong evocative power of the image created by Shakespeare's words:

Gertrude

There is a willow grows aslant a brook

That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.

There with fantastic garlands did she come

Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,

That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,

But our cold maids do "dead men's fingers" call them.

There, on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds

Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke,

When down her weedy trophies and herself

Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,

And mermaid-like a while they bore her up,

Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds

As one incapable of her own distress,

Or like a creature native and indued

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[341] *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene V, 31-33.

[342] See, for example the emblematic image: John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851-1852, Tate Britain, London.

Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.[343]

The employ of such a complex and articulated play in beverage advertising testifies to the possibility of playing with well-known tragic characters and very profound and philosophical lines in order to create a comic effect, which draws amusement and is capable of distancing the advertisement from the tragic development of the play. The comic alteration will stimulate the audience's intellect in order to detect the quotation and to decipher the message.

3.2 The Plays and Characters

Due to the uncertainties regarding the life of the "real" Shakespeare, his figure and frame of mind have often been defined and outlined by means of his artistic production allowing his works to speak for him. Shakespeare's works and characters have been considered as expressing not only his poetics but also his identity. The reference to Shakespeare's plays and characters has been a practice often characterising popular culture in general and advertising in particular. Shakespeare has been used as a repository of aphorisms since the beginning of the XVII century, and his popularity is partially due to the possibility of isolating short quotations with a dense content. Then quotations can also be, and have often been, misquoted or misplaced: "Shakespeare's citation has become increasingly disembodied and dislocated from [the citation's] context,"[344] keeping a slight reference to the original and becoming increasingly part of the previously described "Shakespearean" assemblage of cultural tokens more or less vaguely referring to the "actual" Shakespeare:

The aphorism – a pithy quote lent authority by its contexts […] yet capable of being endlessly repeated and given a new life long after its initial iteration. […] the aphorism

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[343] *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene VII, 162-180.

[344] Garber, *Shakespeare after All*, 39.

opens up to the possibility of accidental diversion and countersigning even as it seeks to deliver a fixed meaning.[345]

The use of Shakespeare's works and characters in advertising has manifold purposes. The traditional legitimising and elevating outcome is still often expected by advertisers, but the quotations become, in contemporary advertisements and commercials, growingly related to the induction of a sense of recognition in the reader/spectator and to the establishment of a relation with the latter in the moment of the fruition of the text.

> Each of the plays interacts with our culture as if it were what psychoanalysis calls a *sujet supposé savoir*, the "subject supposed to know" – as if the play (not the historical Shakespeare, but the imminent, all-pervasive, numinous *play*) knew and knows something about us.[346]

Not only does the quotation of Shakespeare regard the textual component of his plays but it can also involve other elements of the representation, ranging from the visual and physical portrayals of characters and stories in the theatre to a more literary approach. In advertising, thus, not only are the lines written by Shakespeare quoted but also his characters and some recurrent *topoi* which are easily recognisable as Shakespearean.[347]

Furthermore, the use of Shakespeare often creates a dream world, a scenario of which the object advertised is only a corollary which has lost its prominence at the centre of the advertisement or of the commercial:

> The ad conjures a familiar positive feeling or experience (comfort, affluence, sexuality) and then compellingly associates it with a product. The act of consumption consummates the feeling, bestowing possession by way of the product. In the process, the viewer is also taught to think associatively (from image to memory/sensation to product) and to seek

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[345] Harris, *Shakespeare and Literary Theory*, 54.

[346] Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, xxix.

[347] Whitfield, *Illustrating Shakespeare*, 273.

the promised payoff, immediate gratification, in concrete terms (the act of consumption).[348]

The present success of Shakespeare's characters and themes is due to their contemporary resonance, to the choice of narrative and linguistic paradigms which nowadays still strike people's consciousness, to the treatment of characters which more often than not resemble contemporary people, or of plots which are emblematic of present-day situations; all easily applying to popular communication: they have the power to strike people's consciousness and to meet their tastes. Shakespearean plots become a sort of screen-play for contemporary advertising: "Not only can the writer be employed as a screen-writer, but existing literature, the stories already circulating, can be exploited as screen-plays and offered […] to the spots' audience."[349]

The effect of the advertisement depends thus chiefly on the Shakespearean quotation which entails a series of presuppositions and of familiar images automatically appearing in the mind of the audience when confronted with such an evocative material. They become part of the advertising message which, due to space and time constraints, has to be reduced to only an image – in the case of an advertisement – or to a few minutes scene – in the case of a commercial. The condensation affects also Shakespeare's plots, characters and themes.

Every performance […] is eccentric in that it more or less decentres Shakespeare's language and plot by cutting, rearranging lines and scenes, and adding new signifiers through gesture, costume, lighting, narrative, and so on. On the other hand, citations and adaptations of Shakespeare return us to Shakespeare as a centre, even if the Shakespeare imagined as central proves to be fantasy.[350]

Some characters, elements or themes are not only condensed but also isolated and detached from their original source to fit the needs of popular culture, thus acquiring an independent significance which brings them farther and farther from their intended purpose. The reference to Shakespeare, however, is always recognisable causing an

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[348] Sherwing, *When Law Goes Pop*, 144.

[349] Toni Marino, "Parte II. Gli spazi intertestuali della pubblicità", in *Scrittori e pubblicità,* ed. Giovanna Zaganelli: 57-92, 92.
[350] Burt, "Shakespeare, More or Less?," 5.

enhancement of the meaning of the work and of the Shakespearean intertextual net which is every time enriched and amplified by the new popular connotations.

3.2.1 *Romeo and Juliet*

Romeo and Juliet is perhaps the Shakespearean play which has mostly influenced – and has chiefly been manipulated and exploited – by popular culture.

> With its volatile mixture of adolescent passion, lyrical poetry and poignancy, *Romeo and Juliet* has always been a favourite amongst Shakespeare plays for performance and in school syllabuses. Memorable film adaptations […] have given it wider currency as part of international popular culture.[351]

The story of the "two star-crossed lovers"[352] is very renowned and often referred to in common conversations and in media messages. The two rival families, the endless and hindered love, have become tropes infinitely repeated and repeatable.

> Others have suggested differing central themes for *Romeo and Juliet*, ranging from a literal insistence on the lovers' star crossed fate, to a Freudian view of their experience as an embodiment of the death-wish; from a neo-orthodox-Elizabethan lesson in the dangers of passion, to a providential triumph of love over hate.[353]

Also famous quotations and scenes form today an integral part of popular culture's baggage. Due to its extreme popularity *Romeo and Juliet* is also one of the most undervalued of Shakespeare's plays only lately drawing a new critical interest:

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[351] R. S. White "Introduction: What is this thing called love?" in *Romeo and Juliet. Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White (London: Macmillan Education, 2001):1-47, 1.

[352] Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Scene I, 6.

[353] Douglas Cole "Introduction" in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Douglas Cole (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970): 1-19, 12.

> According to Kristeva and countless Shakespeareans, the play constitutes a universal legend of love representing elemental psychic forces of desire and frustration purportedly characteristic of the human condition in every age and culture.[354]

Its popularity has inevitably influenced also the use made of it by advertising which has played on the familiarity of the scenes, characters and quotations. The play, moreover, due to its structure is very apt for an advertising adaptation. The story takes place in very few days, noble emotions are put into words and reach their climax within a couple of days: after Romeo and Juliet's first encounter, indeed, their secret marriage takes place only after a day and the marriage with Paris is arranged right after Tybalt's death, taking place on the same day of the secret ceremony, "This sense of the marriage looming but three days ahead is dramatically important; later to intensify it, [Capulet] even lessens the interval by a day."[355] The story, influenced by Bandello's and Brooke's longer versions extending over various months, is very condensed, as an advertisement would be. Similarly, the love between Romeo and Juliet may appear sudden, especially because of Romeo's love profusions for Rosaline at the beginning of the play, but the audience swiftly feels engaged with the story, the suspension of disbelief is easily attained, and, as in the restricted time of the advertisement, there is no inconsistency, in the eyes of the audience, in the high speed of the events.

The main characters of *Romeo and Juliet* are so well designed and always present to the mind of the audience that they are easily isolatable to stand on their own in an advertisement or commercial, and their lines have become memorable, so much so that they can be often reproduced even if fragmented. The themes of love, rebellion against the system of the society and of the family, death, fights, and youth are part of contemporary popular culture and constitute one of the reasons of *Romeo and Juliet*'s never-ending success.

Alfa Romeo

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[354] Dympna C. Callaghan, "The Ideology of Romantic Love: The Case of *Romeo and Juliet*" in *Romeo and Juliet. Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White: 85-116, 87.

[355] Harley Granville-Barker, "*Romeo and Juliet* – The Conduct of the Action" in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Douglas Cole: 19-40, 19.

The Italian automaker Alfa Romeo easily plays on its own name when advertising the new car Giulietta. The firm had already used the theme of *Romeo and Juliet* in a previous advertisement in which the car, however, played the part of Romeo.

In this case the setting was the well-known balcony scene, in which a girl leans out of the balcony while the car waits below it. The car is an Alfa Romeo, in this case representing Romeo. Not to leave anything unexplained the advertisers placed the name of the characters in English next to the participants of the advertisement to underline the evident connection of the girl with Juliet and of the car with Romeo. The only other written words are the sentence "February 14ᵗʰ. Valentine's Day," the brand name, and the model of the car "Brera" written on the license plate of the car itself.

The composition is that of the typical balcony scene reproduced in infinite theatre, cinema, musical, and ballet representations, such that the juxtaposition of the car with the male character is almost immediate. Indeed, it is the car – and not the person inside it – the object of desire of the advertisement.

The main colour is red, referring to the brand colours and to the tint usually linked with love and passion, and with Valentine's Day. The other dominant colours are white, grey, and black, and they seem to divide the scene between Juliet and the car. White could be seen as a symbol of purity and light while the black surrounding, which is in some way approaching the two lovers, somehow reminds us of the tragic end of the story. As follows, it perfectly replicates the atmosphere of the original scene:

> The emotional richness of the [balcony] scene is partly a product of the lovers' feelings, and partly of the way Shakespeare makes us relate those feelings to the play's earlier atmosphere, which has been largely comic, and to the already predicted tragedy to come.[356]

Romeo and Juliet's potentiality has also been exploited in 2010 when the automaker decided to advertise the new Alfa Romeo Giulietta. The advertising campaign was composed of both a video commercial and of billboards and newspaper advertisements.

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[356] Cole "Introduction," 8.

The commercial,[357] famously stars Uma Thurman, who is the only person on the screen: she is the main character, along with the car, and each one is the double of the other. The woman speaks and acts for the car, and is identified with it, through a juxtaposition of shots showing alternatively the car moving in different locations, and the woman performing different actions and speaking of the qualities of the car itself; while the actress is also simultaneously driving the car. The commercial shows the woman in different situations during which her own voice-over enunciates the adjectives associated with the car, and the latter is shown thus metaphorically possessing those characteristics:

> The interpretive words of an advertisement come normally in the textual copy of a print ad or in the announcer's voice-over for a commercial; their function is to constrain the range of possible meanings that might be found in the pictorial matter and to facilitate the transfer of meanings from the pictures to the product.[358]

When the woman enters a waterhole of spring water, the car is shown covered in water drops and the word "purity" is uttered. The woman runs into a wood, the driver accelerates and the car runs faster while the voice over pronounces the word "freedom." The actress's face and hands are shown in a close shot and the parts of the car are juxtaposed to these images, while the word "beauty" is uttered. "Power" is represented by the car covering a long distance and by the woman with boxing gloves. A play of lights encircles the actress while the car enters a city fully illuminated by artificial lights coming from the lampposts and from the windows of the buildings peopling it, in order to represent "technology." There the car stops and the woman, who was driving it, gets off, holding a red ribbon which has accompanied her for the whole commercial and the voice over recites "Giulietta. Such stuff as dreams are made on" while the same words appear on the screen in Italian, followed by "W. Shakespeare."

The main colours are white, red, and black as in the previous advertisement. The woman is dressed in white at the beginning and is thus further identifiable with the

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[357] Kevin Fitzgerald, *Alfa Romeo Giulietta* commercial (Milan: Egg Films, Leo Burnett advertising, 2010), available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM4VDlyNG9Q (last access: May 26, 2017).

[358] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 83.

white car; the colour of her dress, however, changes and becomes grey, then an opaque green and, finally black. The woman moves in different settings, from a wood to a more metropolitan location, once again holding a red ribbon, which is also shown at her neck when she is driving the car. At the end the two women, separated at first, become one when the car arrives in the city and the woman gets off, taking off the ribbon which represents the item linking the various plans of the commercial, indeed: "'Colour coordination,' rather than the repetition of a single colour, can be used to promote textual cohesion."[359]

The same colours are represented in the advertising campaign which appeared on newspapers and billboards, while the only words reproduced are the ones ending the commercial: the words "I am Giulietta" followed by the Shakespearean quotation taken from *The Tempest*.

> Billboards have a long history in marketing communications. Traditionally, they are two dimensional mediation means which conform to a *grammar of visual design*. [...] Marketing suggests that a billboard should be designed to mediate its message in "mere seconds." In order to do this, it should contain no more than seven words and/or an arresting picture. It is essentially, then, a potential site of very little engagement, in terms of the time spent by and the amount of attention required from any social actor to receive its message.[360]

Also in this case the advertisement juxtaposes the figure of the woman with that of the car: they are characterised by the same colours, the predominant white interspersed with black details, and they are linked by a *fil rouge* – an actual red stripe – which recalls the colour of the lips of the woman and of the back lights of the car. The words "I am Giulietta" further emphasise the identification of the two participants in the advertisement.

> Many written adverts exist as still-life versions of their TV counterparts, and the copywriters of written adverts can therefore assume that readers will bring their knowledge of the TV version with them when they read the written one.[361]

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[359] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 230.

[360] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 139.

[361] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 64.

The same happens with the Giulietta advertisement: the set of information present in the commercial is projected onto the written advertisement if the former is known; if not, however, the reader will still be able to grasp the main stimuli present in the message. As previously stated white represents purity, a concept replicated by the representation of water and by the utterance of the word in the commercial. Red represents passion, the passion between the two lovers metaphorically transposed on the passion for the car. Black is always present, even if to a lesser extent than in the previous advertisement. It may suggest the dark sides of the play, and shows the dark evolution of the pure character of Juliet, bound to death after she has known passion. In contrast with the previous advertisement, in which the car was identified with Romeo, now it is identified with Juliet not only due to the previously stated compositional strategies of the advertisement but also thanks to the assonance of the name of the car with that of the character, which in Italian is exactly the same, but which is similar to the English Juliet, and the same inference can be easily drawn also in other languages. The whole advertisement, thus, seems to unequivocally be linked with *Romeo and Juliet*, and in particular with the character of Juliet, since no other elements of the play are retrieved. However, the last quotation disrupts the system of reference since it is taken from *The Tempest* Act 4, scene 1, 156-157 "We are such stuff as dreams are made on." The alteration of just two words of the quotation, the "we are" becomes "I am," is very significant because it is acted as if the sentence was uttered by Giulietta the car, till that moment identified with Juliet. The possible interpretations depends, in this case, on the level of familiarity of the audience with Shakespeare's plays. The first, and more plausible, interpretation is also corroborated by the presence of what may be seen as Shakespeare's signature at the end of the sentence in the video commercial. The latter, indeed, unquestionably links this sentence with the Bard. The audience has probably inferred the reference to Shakespeare from the names Romeo and Giulietta which are very well known characters worldwide: "the phrase 'Romeo and Juliet' has become proverbial, two names fused into a single concept signifying a certain kind of love and a certain kind of tragic destiny."[362] The quotation from *The*

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[362] R. S. White "Introduction: What is this thing called love?" in *Romeo and Juliet. Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White: 1-47, 2.

Tempest, although a famous one, is however less recognisable, and a large part of the audience – in particular of the Italian audience – would not know it is taken from a different work, thus, the immediate connection will be that with Shakespeare and with Romeo and Juliet, the advertisers' goal being only to take advantage of a quotation easily attachable to the product advertised. Only few will spot the incongruity in the advertisement, "to the scholar of mass-Shakespeare […] the "relics" he/she finds are of difficult interpretation from a genealogic perspective and seem to maintain with Shakespeare not only a post-ideological relationship, […] but also, maybe, a post-hermeneutical one."[363] The commercial and advertisement's goal is to link the car with a dream and its features with abstract feelings more than with actual characteristics. The use of the literary technique of the pastiche and the explicit reference to the name of the author is just pointed at making sure the audience will grasp the allusion to the Bard's work and the identification of the car with Juliet. The reference to Romeo and Juliet – denied by some critics according to whom the name Giulietta only depends on the model of the car being an evolution of the previous Giulia[364] – is in fact sustained by the allusion to Shakespeare at the end which ensures the audience will recognise the reference of the commercial.

> Barthes finds three message levels: the linguistic (the few recognizable words in the ad), the denoted image (exactly what has been photographed), and the connotative. Because "all images are polysemous," the linguistic material serves to fix or anchor the imagery. Photography, as the mode of denotation, "naturalises the symbolic message" by making it appear uncontrived. The meanings suggested by the imagery are extensive and, in the end, individually determined.[365]

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[363] Sara Soncini, "'Shakespeare Graffiti': la ricerca," in *Shakespeare Graffiti*: 11-15, 12, [My translation].

[364] Giovanna Intra defines them "casual" brands: "Usually cases of homonymy with producers and managers of commercial activities, which can however originate ironic effects. […] Another case in which the "shakespeareanity" of the brand is doubtful is that of Giulietta, the car produced by Alfa Romeo, the re-enactment of the Shakespearean heroine may not be a coincidence since it comes from a carmaker connected to the name of the male protagonist of the tragedy but, on the other hand, the name is justified as being an evolution of the previous model Giulia (the diminutive points to the filial relationship)": Giovanna Intra "Uno Shakespeare di marca" in *Shakespeare Graffiti*: 276-286, 278.

[365] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 169.

In the case of this commercial the denoted image is that of the car but the connotative level associates it with a character (interestingly enough in the previous commercial with Romeo and in the latter with Juliet) and with all the features associated with her.

In this case the product advertised is represented, but the comparison with the literary character and the reference to Shakespeare serve to highlight the dreamlike atmosphere of the advertisement, which aspires to elicit a feeling rather than to inform on the characteristics of the object advertised. The message tries to strike the subconscious of the audience and to arouse his/her desire of possession of an object which also becomes a bearer of a series of connotations:

> [In] an analytical picture [...] gaze dominates: the gaze of represented participants directly addresses the viewers and so establishes an imaginary relation with them, while more schematic analytical picture invite impersonal, detached scrutiny. A similar argument can be made about advertisements showing the advertised product – the overall impression of an abundance of parts (or ingredients, or varieties of product), or the alluring sensory quality of the advertised product as a whole (the streamlined sheen of the car, the vivid colour and texture of a canned soup) take precedence over more dispassionate scrutiny of the Possessive Attributes. Persuasion is foregrounded, instruction and exposition are backgrounded.[366]

The link with Shakespeare implies the exceptionality of the prospective buyer, who has understood the play on the name of the car and on the Shakespearean character, but also of the refinement of the product advertised whose possession will entail and project on the consumer "purity," "freedom," "power," and "technology." The terms are willingly vague in order to appeal to the largest possible audience. At the same time, the reference to Shakespeare brings with it a sensation of exceptionality in the audience:

> To have the greatest chance of doing this, the message of the advertiser must be constructed so as to make the fullest contact with the mind of the consumer. The human mind has two components of interest to the creators of advertising: One is the area of the mind governing the individual as a social creature, and the other is the area of the mind

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[366] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 89.

housing basic instincts, impulses, drives, and needs. The most successful advertising will incorporate symbolizing appeals to both.[367]

Interestingly enough, the advertisement and commercial have been reproduced in English and in other languages, demonstrating the virtual universality of the effect expected by the advertisers, and also the assumption, dictated by the cultural trends of the period, of the recognition of the Shakespearean story and of the set of connotations attached to the characters. The advertisement and commercial, once again, demonstrate the diffusion and appeal Shakespeare has and continues to maintain in innumerable countries.

Nextel[368]

A 2003 Nextel thirty-second cell phone commercial involved a fast- paced parody of *Romeo and Juliet* with the dialogue modernized and spoken into cell phones held by each of the characters. The ad contrasts what looks like an iconic scene from Shakespeare done in traditional period dress with (initially hidden) modern technology. Beginning with increasingly short shot-reverse-shots of Juliet smiling at Romeo and Romeo smiling, looking up at her, the ad sets up the joke as Juliet pops open her cell phone and says,
JULIET: Romeo!
ROMEO: Juliet!
JULIET: I love you.
ROMEO: Ditto.
The rest of the commercial reduces *Romeo and Juliet* to one-word lines as Tybalt, Paris, Romeo, and Juliet all die in quick succession, and the curtain drops to thunderous applause.[369]

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[367] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 93.

[368] Joe Pytka, *Nextel* commercial, (New York: TBWA/Chiat/Day, 2003), available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-cZtWefN8s, (last access: May 28, 2017).

[369] Richard Burt, "Shakespeare, More or Less? From Shakespeareccentricity to Shakespearecentricity and Back" in *Shakespeares after Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Burt: 1-9, 5.

The commercial is set in a theatre, and a part of the audience in the theatre is included in the first large shot. Afterwards, when the curtain is raised (a theatrical device used also in other Shakespearean commercials) a Renaissance setting is displayed, and the balcony is discernible from afar: "In the development of imagery, the garden scene and the balcony scene are of importance, because it is here for the first time that 'nature-imagery' derives from the characters as their own expression of mood."[370] Also the time of the day is respected thanks to the yellows and pinks and reds of the lights surrounding the scene, suggesting "the dawning day" which, in the Shakespearean plot "becomes to [the main characters] a symbol of parting."[371] The frame, subsequently, changes into a close-up on a girl's face, moving then to the man she is looking at. When the gaze of the camera, and thus that of the audience, is oriented once again towards the girl the frame expands and it is possible to recognise her traditional dress. She immediately reveals a mobile phone and says "Romeo." From then on the lines of the play are condensed at their maximum and in the thirty seconds of the commercial all the main events of the play are shown.

The iconographical balcony scene was hinted at by the initial setting from whence the audience could have inferred, since the beginning, which play the commercial was referring to. The initial impression is further endorsed by the actress uttering the name of Romeo – thus confirming her identity as Juliet – at the same time validating the Shakespearean reference and debasing it when she simultaneously opens her phone to call Romeo. The fast succession of the events mirrors and in some way accentuates the abbreviation Shakespeare had produced of Brooke's story[372]. Shakespeare's play, thus, already very condensed, is further abbreviated by the 21st century version, in which the communication is enhanced by a highly technological

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[370] W. H. Clemen, "*Romeo and Juliet*" in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Douglas Cole: 73-117, 73.

[371] Clemen, "*Romeo and Juliet*," 74.

[372] Arthur Brooke, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, [1562] (London: Cassel and Company, 1895). On the many sources of the play see: Stanley Wells "The Challenges of *Romeo and Juliet*," in *Romeo and Juliet (Norton Critical Editions)*, ed. Gordon McMullan (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2016): 159-179, 159: "Already when, around 1594, Shakespeare decided to base a play on the story, he was able to consult more than one version. He worked closely from *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, by Arthur Brooke. […] Brooke had used a moralistic French adaptation, by Pierre Boaistuau, of a story by the Italian Matteo Bandello."

medium which allows the story to take place in only thirty seconds. The commercial, even in such a restricted time, is able to also include the episode of the death of Paris, which is often excluded by popular culture's adaptations of the play (see for example its omission from two major films: Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, and in Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*).

All of the main characters are on stage, the only two explicitly mentioned are Romeo and Juliet in order to unquestionably indicate – along with the presence of the balcony – the play which is being referred to by the commercial. At this point, the advertisers decided not to mention the names of the other characters undoubtedly to save time but also deeming it useless owing to the ensuing recognition by the audience of the characters of the Nurse, Tybalt, Capulet and Friar Laurence, supporting the thesis of at least a partial familiarity of the audience with Shakespeare's characters and of the Bard's works' effectiveness in popular communication: "[The play] perpetuates an already well-known tale, [and] the possibility of endless retellings of the story – displacing the lovers' desires onto a perpetual narrative of love."[373]

Romeo and Juliet undergoes, in this advertising transposition, a satirical treatment which aligns itself with the aforementioned interpretation of Shakespeare's works as highly communicative and recognisable by contemporary audiences: the high familiarity of the audience with Shakespeare allows the advertisers to cut some portions of the play, to take them for granted, and to ironically play with the elements of the drama. The latter stratagem, furthermore, is in line with Shakespeare's treatment of the play with a comic slant.

> In Shakespeare's work, conventional style and a freer, more spontaneous mode of expression are not opposite poles which may be definitely assigned to different periods. […] *Romeo and Juliet* is the best example of this co-existence of two styles.[374]

In the commercial the Bard's words – the main innovative contribution of Shakespeare to the already existing story – are completely distorted and abbreviated: when Juliet says "I love you" Romeo answers "Ditto," in order to underline the rapidity of the conversation and the need of preventing any waste of time; after Juliet has drunk the

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373 Callaghan, "The Ideology of Romantic Love: The Case of *Romeo and Juliet*," 87.

374 Clemen, "*Romeo and Juliet*," 66.

poison and Romeo has died the girl recovers and gets a laugh with her line "better now," and the audience's laughter is actually audible reminding the real audience of the presence of the fictive one – also signalled by random coughing audible during the execution of the play. The last and only word pronounced by Friar Laurence is "kids" in order to make allusion to the play's nature as a mere children's play and to follow the tragicomic development of the plot. The play itself, however, had been devised as possibly being developed as both a tragedy and a comedy: "The comic texture of the play is also kept under a fine control. Roughly one-sixth of the total dialogue can be called comic, and practically all of it is confined to that part of the play before Mercutio's death."[375] If compared to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, the main themes are very similar: a hindered marriage, a daughter disobeys her father, the lovers flee to marry against the society's constraints. The two works start in a similar way but their outcome is completely opposite. It has been argued that also *Romeo and Juliet* could have been concluded with a happy ending if just a few particulars of the plot had been altered: "there is nevertheless a comic vein in this tragedy, as if Shakespeare wanted to maintain a belief in vitality beyond the disastrous passion."[376] The tragedy, indeed, is interspersed with comedy, not only in order to fulfil the need of the audience for a comic relief, but also to portray real life, which is inevitably a combination of the two:

> passion and sentiment are modulated with both comic gusto and tragic irony. Mercutio and Juliet's Nurse, for example, are original comic developments of characters mentioned in the source story; in the play they not only become vital and amusing in themselves but also help to link the romance of Romeo and Juliet with an earthy sense of reality. […] Shakespeare uses both comedy and tragedy to enhance each other in one play.[377]

The combination of tragic events and comic elements, indeed, denotes the need of relating the play to real life, the latter correlation is further underlined by the presence of "comic" counterparts for the main characters:

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[375] Cole "Introduction," 11.

[376] Lloyd Davis "'Death-marked love': Desire and Presence in *Romeo and Juliet*" in *Romeo and Juliet. Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White: 47-68, 66.

[377] Cole "Introduction," 5.

Shakespeare must convince us of their reality, must assure us that they are creatures of flesh and blood. He does so by placing characters of the utmost vivacity by their side – the Nurse beside Juliet and Mercutio beside Romeo. […] He is proving that the marvellous blossom of love which forms the main theme of the story is not a mere poet's dream, a pleasing fancy, but a piece of real life rooted deep in the crude common soil of human nature.[378]

The presence of the fictional audience and the comic relief stressed throughout the whole, though short, commercial, resemble the strategies employed when applying the literary mythical method, which endeavoured to distance the audience from the work being represented.

There are two types of participants involved in every semiotic act, *interactive participants* and *represented participants*. The former are the participants in the act of communication – the participants who speak and listen or write and read, make images or view them, whereas the latter are the participants who constitute the subject matter of the communication; that is, the people, places and things (including abstract 'things') represented in and by the speech or writing or image, the participants about whom or which we are speaking or writing or producing images.[379]

The actual audience, the interactive participants, is aware of being in front of a work of fiction when the represented audience is showed in the very first shot. On the other hand, not only do the comic nuances establish a privileged relationship between the audience and the advertiser based on the tacit assumption of the audience's recognition of the play and of its satirical alteration, but the commercial also harps on the effect of estrangement produced by the ironic treatment of a tragic subject. Along with the detachment from *Romeo and Juliet*, the use of the stratagems ascribable to the mythical method point to foregrounding the product advertised. The latter, indeed, must remain the main character of the commercial, which is all directed to the final words "Nextel. Done" closing the commercial and elucidating its purpose: the advertising of a mobile phone company which promises very fast performances.

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[378] J. Dover Wilson, "The Elizabethan Shakespeare," in *Proceedings of the British Academy, XV* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), 123.

[379] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images,* 48.

In this case the product is represented, but its characteristics are not listed, the main feature, the swiftness of the communication, is highlighted but never mentioned, the audience infers it also depending on the choice of such a complex and intricate work as *Romeo and Juliet*. The condensation and modernisation of Shakespeare's original communication, seen as refined and lengthy, demonstrate Nextel's being a company in line with the times and of easy use and comprehension by the popular audience in order to provide the fastest and most effective possible communication.

> After all, Shakespeare himself wrote his tales of Roman and British history in what was for him and his audiences a contemporary idiom; arguably, then, a recasting of his plotlines in modern language may be more faithful to the spirit of Shakespeare's enterprise.[380]

The words of the Bard nonetheless, are those which granted him his popularity and eternal fame and the ones still recognisable today as peculiarly Shakespearean. The commercial both displays the old-fashioned and traditional way of representing the play and, while disrupting and modernising Shakespeare's work, it plays with it and pays the Bard an homage by adhering to the original penchant of the play:

> When you see what is called a traditional cinematic version of *Romeo & Juliet*, it tends to be a filmed version of the nineteenth century theater. The action is from left to right, progressing very sort of slowly and lyrically. That's not how the play was written. It was written as an outrageously kind of rambunctious, violent, sexy, energetic, comic, tragic love story.[381]

The commercial thus partially follows the usual approach of popular culture which does not only modify the settings or the costumes but also heavily intervene on the language. In this case, the setting and costumes are not altered in order to stress the incongruity of the representation with the use of a mobile phone which is thus foregrounded as the disturbing element of the play. The foregrounding serves, indeed, to remind the audience of the main object of the message, "Nextel" company. Through

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[380] Lanier, "Film Spin-offs and Citations," 133.

[381] Bauer, "Re-revealing Shakespeare: Baz Luhrmann on Romeo + Juliet," online.

the introduction of the discordant element of the mobile phone the attention of the audience is inevitably drawn to the technological object. The speed of the communication, allowed by Nextel, is demonstrated by the abbreviation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Also the last words, "Nextel. Done," the only written words appearing in the commercial – a white font on a black background – underline, in their essentiality, the rapidity of the communication, both on a visual and on a semantic level: "Brand names are texts in themselves. They convey the brand's carefully constructed image and identity."[382] The completion of the message, thus, depends chiefly on the decoding of the concepts linked with the brand name and with the slogan. The brand name already contains in itself the word "next" implying the idea of a brand of the future, which comes after the old fashioned ones, which brings what is newest to the consumers. The slogan accompanying the brand implies that the future has already come thanks to the brand itself; it is already "done" thanks to the rapid interactions allowed by the brand.

Also in this case, the choice of the Shakespearean play does not seem casual, *Romeo and Juliet*, indeed, chiefly plays with language, with signified and signifiers. The Balcony scene has become emblematic of the process of questioning the words' meaning and referenciality when Juliet argues on the substance of the name:

> The name is merely the external cover of the object, which would still be the same under a different name ("Thou art thyself"). This is the arbitrariness of the sign with respect to the signified: Romeo and Juliet are enemies only by convention. Below this verbal duel, we can perceive a sliding of the two levels of the signifier and the signified, an impulse to go beyond the system of social conventions which have crystallised the situations in a certain way.[383]

The metaphorical substitution of a character with a set of features very well adapts to the metaphorical language of the commercial which charges an object, the mobile phone, with multiple significations through the use of the play, which in its turn:

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[382] Torresi, *Transalting Promotional and Advertising Texts*, 21.

[383] Daniela Carpi, "Law and its Subversion in *Romeo and Juliet*" in *Shakespeare and the law*, ed. Daniela Carpi (Ravenna: Longo, 2003): 119-133, 129, 130.

puts on display the hopeless longing to escape the confines of the signifier, to encounter directly, immediately, the rose that exists beyond its name. And to this extent *Romeo and Juliet* suggests the degree to which the named, differentiated lover is always only a stand-in for something which cannot be embraced.[384]

Communication in the play is of foremost importance and tragically influences the ending of the story. The stress put on the communication in the Shakespearean work is thus enhanced by the commercial. Oddly enough the swift communication does not save the lovers' lives and the shortened play ends as its predecessor did.

The young lovers live in an era that would not accept their love, their tension towards the future and their fight against time are also part of the connotative baggage attached to the commercial. "*Romeo and Juliet* in fact foretells the demise of the dispensation that produced it. In the estranged idiom of the lovers can be read the tragedy's estrangement from its era, the imprint of its commerce with futurity."[385]

3.2.2 *Othello*

Othello is one of the Shakespearean tragedies which is more apt to the transposition to advertising because of the presence of outstanding images which have come to be part of the popular culture baggage and which strike the mind of the audience with their strong communicative power:

As a practical man of the theatre, actor as well as playwright, Shakespeare seems to have conceived his dramatic designs as much in visual as in narrative terms. The great tragedies, in particular, stamp themselves in the imagination through a series of powerful theatrical images in which the whole meaning of a play can sometimes seem to be compacted.[386]

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[384] Davis "'Death-marked love': Desire and Presence in *Romeo and Juliet*," 65.

[385] Ryan Kiernan "The Murdering Word" in *Romeo and Juliet. Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White: 116-129, 126.

[386] Stanley Wells, *The Oxford Shakespeare Othello* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 36.

The images thus created perfectly adapt to the advertising's limited space and time. Advertising, moreover, makes use of these nuclei of signification already present in the Bard's composition and intention. They have become, through time, the most recognisable images bequeathed and transmitted both in high and popular culture, constructing the cultural baggage necessary to detect the references to them in advertising. The striking images devised by Shakespeare are reproduced in new shapes but conserve their recognisability because they have become, at this point, part of the iconological representation of the works and characters of the Bard easily identifiable by contemporary audiences.

For what concerns *Othello*, the "green-eyed monster" of jealousy, the black complexion of the Moor, Iago's manipulation, and the handkerchief are only some of the clearly separable elements of the play which advertising has been eager to play with:

> In the twentieth century, however, when the photographic documentation of stage and screen productions largely replaced commissioned engravings in the visual record, the balance of visual representation showed a marked change. The murder scene continued to receive its share of attention; but more often than not it was the temptation scene that was now chosen to represent the tragedy.[387]

Othello is one of the most debated Shakespearean plays because of the racial issue linked with the role of "the Moor" often played, in the past, by white actors painting their faces black: "Generally speaking, however, it was only on those very rare occasions when a black actor, such as Ira Aldridge or Paul Robeson, was cast in the leading role that race would be identified as a central issue in the play."[388] The violence of Othello towards Desdemona and the rapid leaning of the moor to violent jealousy have been deemed as symptoms of a racist treatment of the character. However, the consideration of race in the historical context in which the play was devised differed greatly from the contemporary one:

> The simple fact that neither 'racism' nor any equivalent term was available to Shakespeare – while 'race' itself was a term whose connotations had more to do with lineage than with

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[387] Wells, *The Oxford Shakespeare Othello*, 37.

[388] Wells, *The Oxford Shakespeare Othello*, 50.

biology. […] For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the relationship between ethnicity and subordination was by no means clear.[389]

The violence of the character, moreover, is justified by the prominent persuasiveness and manipulative skills of Iago's words which demonstrate the faith in the power of language often manifested by Shakespeare. Iago "who is, after all, given more lines than the hero – can all too easily become the animating spirit of the whole performance."[390] He is often compared with contemporary advertisers, he uses his words and with them shapes the images Othello sees in order to "sell" him an idea, a feeling. He uses an object – the handkerchief – to tie his strategy to reality, and finally successes in persuading his target. "Iago is the prime agent of the play's drive to concealment: a compulsive histrion and soliloquizer, he is like a deformed version of Hamlet."[391]

The strong and passionate temper of Othello, moreover, is ascribable also to other characters which do not have any racial connotations. The latter controversies, nevertheless, have been resumed by popular culture and have contributed to the circulation of the play's images. As in the previously mentioned handling of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* by advertising, the popular genre tends to change the genre of the play in order to suit to the inclination of the advertising message, which, in most cases, is charming and alluring, and often rather comic. The aforementioned process applies also to *Othello*, and finds its roots, once again, in the treatment of the character already devised by Shakespeare:

Othello is in certain structural ways a "comic" character: he lacks self-knowledge, he thinks himself a cuckold, and he is tricked by simple gulling devices such as the trick of the stolen handkerchief of the overheard conversation between Iago and Cassio, which Othello misapplies to his wife. […] According to the traditional theories (those purported by Donatus, Robortello, and Castelvetro) – subjects like marriage, infidelity, low-class characters, and mix-ups about handkerchiefs, all belonged in the realm of comedy.[392]

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[389] Wells, *The Oxford Shakespeare Othello*, 123, 124.

[390] Wells, *The Oxford Shakespeare Othello*, 40.

[391] Wells, *The Oxford Shakespeare Othello*, 132.

[392] Bart Van Es, *Shakespeare's Comedies. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 101.

In this sense the *Doufur* commercial becomes a romantic story and the *Telit* one subverts the original ending.

     Othello is such a powerful and communicative work that the audience feels the need to enter into the action: "this absolute suspension of disbelief can express itself as an irrational compulsion to intervene in the action of the play."[393] And it is this need of participating and changing the fate of the narration which occasions the advertising's manipulation and revision of the story to be so effective.

Otello Dufur

The commercial taken into consideration has been devised to advertise an Italian product, Dufur's Otello chocolate, it has thus been broadcasted only in Italy and the voice over and slogan are in Italian.

     The commercial immediately starts by mentioning, with a voice over, the name of the product: a chocolate candy called Otello (the Italian translation of Othello). The name of the product creates an immediate reference to the play, which is further enriched by the setting of the advertisement, immersed in a Renaissance music which conveys a sensation of refined entertainment and a direct allusion to a Renaissance atmosphere enhanced by the presence of Renaissance objects and costumes.

     The uttering of the name of the product is accompanied by the image of a black hand offering the chocolate to a white hand, hinting at the characters of Othello and Desdemona. There is no necessity of giving extra details because the audience is well aware of the story. The voice over then, starts listing the characteristics of the chocolate: it is extra dark with a cream filling, covered in Royal hazelnuts[394]. The colours of the extra dark chocolate and of the cream recall the black and white opposition distinguishing the whole play, an opposition concerning not only the exterior colour of the skin, but also that of the inward self of the characters. If dark

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[393] Wells, *The Oxford Shakespeare Othello*, 11.

[394] The voice over says: "Otello, raffinato cioccolato extra fondente, tenera crema, regale nocciola del piemonte intera," available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4sB2MuhkZQ (last access July 07, 2017).

stands for evil and white stands for purity and fairness, Othello the character is like his chocolate counterpart, dark on the outside but pure on the inside. The adjective royal qualifying the hazelnut, furthermore, recalls the high social status of the characters. The reference to the character, indeed, ennobles the product and loads it with a series of potential meanings.

The visual component aligns itself with the text pronounced by the voice over and gives, in just few seconds, a very accurate account of the play of *Othello*. The girl in the scene, the only one whose face is shown, whereas only the hand of the Moor is portrayed, takes the chocolate in her hands and unwraps it, but, when she is about to bite the chocolate, the black hand stops her, takes the chocolate, and feeds her. The brief scene aptly reproduces the main themes characterising the plot of the play: the idea of gifting the beloved one and the openness, naivety, and obedience of Desdemona:

> There is something saint-like about Desdemona's endurance under the lash of Othello's jealousy; and it is the resolute maintenance of her submission in the face of private abuse and public humiliation, even after her husband has struck her in public.[395]

Her choice of tasting the chocolate parallels her decision of marrying the Moor: the dark character who had "corrupted [her]/By spells and medicines" (*Othello*, Act 1, Scene 3, 65-67), and, at the end, the power Othello exercises on her. The hand gesture of Othello, in the advertising linked with passion, can also denote the violence Othello imposes on the innocent Desdemona, and on his mistrust in her.

The main colours displayed, additionally, are linked with the play: they are black, white, and red. As previously stated, black and white are referred to the characters, in the play Desdemona is referred to as "fair Desdemona" (*Othello*, Act 4, Scene 2, 197), while the Moor represents darkness, he is the "old black ram" (*Othello*, Act 1, Scene 1, 91) whereas Desdemona is the "white ewe" (*Othello*, Act 1, Scene 1, 92). Red, instead, is referred to passion: the last line pronounced by the voice over is "Otello, ritorna la passione" ("Otello passion returns" [My translation]). Red, however, is also the colour of blood, and it refers, once again, to the darkest hues of the play,

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[395] Wells, *The Oxford Shakespeare Othello*, 172.

implying a violent passion ending in murder and suicide. The advertisement, however, endeavours to hide the tragic slant of the play and to stress the perception of love and passion also revealed by the half smile of Desdemona as she eats the chocolate. The three colours are also repeated in the packaging of the product which is, in its turn, shown both at the begging and at the end of the commercial.

Peculiarly, the main character is not represented, possibly in order to further enhance the identification of the product with him. Otello can be defined as a "Justified brand":

> [They] are brands actually referred to the Shakespearean world, applied to products associated with places like Verona, the city of Romeo and Juliet, or to characteristics of the Shakespearean characters, the chocolate Otello is black as the character of the same name.[396]

Not only the colour but many of the characteristics often related to Othello the character are transposed on Otello the product: the former is strong and passionate, and the decision of loving – and marry him – is for Desdemona a transgression as eating the chocolate might appear. Also the more general association of the product with the whole play, thus, gives it a set of further meanings. In this case, the link with a classic Shakespearean play – the costumes and setting strictly respect what the general audience's perception of the original is – serves to ascribe an idea of high quality to the product, it also links it with the impression of wealth: the dresses and setting are luxurious and the simple action of eating a chocolate takes the whole scene, implying the latter is an indulgence in pleasure, in a sort of prohibited and private experience which produces high satisfaction.

Telit[397]

Telit's commercial shares many features with Nextel's *Romeo and Juliet* commercial. They both play on a very fast communication, and the dialogues occur between many

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[396] Intra, "Uno Shakespeare di marca": 276-286, 277 [My translation].

[397] Olivier Venturini, *Telit* commercial (Filmmaster: Milan, 2000).

people by means of the mobile phones advertised. The play is narrated by four people on the phone telling the story to each other or to a person on the other end of the line, meanwhile some scenes of the story are represented. At the beginning Othello's Desdemona's and Iago's characters are displayed in freeze-frames and their image is accompanied by their names written down in order to unequivocally delineate the main characters of the story from the start. Also Cassio is present but his name is only once mentioned and his character is seen as only passing by. Emilia is missing from the advertising story and there is no trace of the emblematic handkerchief, possibly because of the different ending devised for the commercial. The latter indeed – differently from Nextel's one – shows the impact the new technologies can have on people's lives, and changes the tragic ending: "Othello believed in Desdemona."[398]

The product is shown since the beginning, a woman is calling a friend and telling him/her the story of Othello. The communication is fast and the lexicon is familiar and down to earth. The woman says that Othello and Desdemona have married "even though the **old man** didn't want them to"[399] and that "Othello **kicked** Iago out of the band"[400] of which they are all part in the commercial. The everyday talks are interspersed with Shakespearean quotations which increase the impression of assisting to a film, to a story which is in some way detached from the telephone communication. At the same time, the Shakespearean words reproduced are some of the most powerful of the play: they emphasise the importance of language and of communication.

> The authors of the Telit commercial, fascinated by these hints of virtual reality, stage a (advertising) communication dealing with (telephone) communication, narrated by means of an exemplary (theatre) drama on communication.[401]

The audience is asked to fill in the blanks left by the brief commercial. As in the *Nextel* one, indeed, the advertisers play on the knowledge of the original work already possessed by the audience. The latter is able to deduce the content of the message by putting together the few pieces of information.

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[398] *Telit* commercial.

[399] *Telit* commercial. [My emphasis]

[400] *Telit* commercial. [My emphasis]

[401] Barbella, "Shakespeare in Spot": 79-84, 81, [My translation].

The commercial addresses precisely the fastest spectators [...]. Fast is the message suggested: the spectator is asked to collaborate with the intuition, of filling with free mental connections the distance which separates the story of Othello from the mobile phones' brand.[402]

Some of the most important images of the original play are there: the marriage against the father's will, Iago's deceit, and Othello's jealousy and violence. The commercial works through a juxtaposition of frames, of very short scenes which replicate the images associated to the original play.

The commercial is divided between the people speaking at the phone and the characters of the story being told. The Shakespearean characters are dressed in contemporary clothes: they are a band of jazz musicians of which Desdemona is the lead singer. The people on the phone are represented while performing ordinary activities – a person in the tube, one at the hairdresser's, another in the steam room, one at work – and the framing is taken from a distance as if somebody was spying on a private moment, which is, indeed, the mobile phone communication. Othello, Desdemona and Iago, on the other hand, are fully depicted by means of close-shots, as if they were the protagonists of a film being narrated. The main colours associated with the latter characters are black for Othello, white for Desdemona and yellow for Iago. As already mentioned, the first two colours are often associated with the two characters and with the ideas of interior "darkness" as opposed to purity. The yellow colour, often associated with envy underlines a component of the character of Iago, envious, in the original play, of the preference bestowed by Othello on Cassio. The latter interpretation, once again, can be adopted only if the story is already known thus enhancing the fruition of the commercial and the enjoyment of it by the audience.

The product is, in this case, represented since the beginning but it is not mentioned nor are its characteristics detailed or its performances illustrated. The intention of the commercial is fully manifested only at the end with the slogan "The new mobile phones by Telit" and the image of a mobile phone next to the sentence "Telit, the mobile generation." The mobile phone company's most important feature is its newness as compared to other brands: "Packagers are today merchants of

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[402] Barbella, "Shakespeare in Spot": 79-84, 81, [My translation].

symbolic images which supply significance and fictional delusions of variety and value to a multitude of competitive products."[403] The story narrated is an old one, which has acquired a new development thanks to the use of the mobile phone.

> The Telit campaign [...] is an experiment of the construction of an *Explorer Brand*. It does not provide explicit descriptions of the product. It is a message open to free interpretation. And it is a pot bursting with quotations, languages, narrative genres and subgenres. It alludes to theatre with Shakespeare and the choir of the Greek tragedy: the characters exchanging phone calls have the function of choir.[404]

The enhancement of the communication saves the destiny of Desdemona and of Othello. The sentence "the mobile generation," moreover, plays on the double meaning of the word mobile: in the first place alluding to the ever present mobile phone of the commercial, but, secondly, also to a generation always on the move who needs to communicate in the most disparate places and circumstances and, as the commercial suggests, Telit can allow that.

3.2.3 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

A Midsummer Night's Dream is one of the plays, with *Romeo and Juliet*, which mixes comedy and tragedy. As previously stated, it starts with the same tribulations of the Veronese play, but it will end in a completely different way: with reconciliation and marriage. The comedy, although very joyful and humorous, hides a number of dark sides mostly elicited in the wood where the lovers elope, in which the social conventions are suspended along with the rules of reality: "in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Puck is connected with the forest, that is to say, with the unconscious,"[405] in the subconscious all the passions and secret desires can be liberated and the instincts are given free rein. Magic can take place and administer a sort of superior justice on the unaware Athenians:

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403 Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, 18.

404 Barbella, "Shakespeare in Spot": 79-84, 82, [My translation].

405 Daniela Carpi, *Fairy Tales in the Postmodern World* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2016), 105.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is […] simply the ultimate instance of the conjunction of worlds that Shakespeare creates throughout his fiction, combining aristocrats with commoners, the magic with the prosaic, and the ancient with the contemporary.[406]

"Historically Shakespeare has often both depended upon and furthered the intercontamination of different cultural realms."[407] The play undeniably makes a large use of the structural and content features of the fairy tale. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare makes "frequent references to the modality of popular literature […] [and] [turns to] the imitation of the fairy tale genre."[408] The development of the events, ranging from the departure from the father's house, the wood, the meeting with magical creatures and the use of magical arts, to the subsequent happy ending and return to society parallels that of a fairy tale. Also the characters, the heroes and heroines, the peasants, the fairies, and Puck as the magical helper resemble those of the fairy tales.[409]

The reference to the dream, present since the title, moreover, suggests that the story could be read as a figment of the mind of the characters and the intervention of magic as a mere projection of their secret desire of transgression. When the characters wake up, indeed, they feel as if they have dreamt all that happened to them and are unsure whether it was a dream or reality, a sensation often accompanying the awakening from a dream.

The high renown of the play, the parallelism with the popular genre of the fairy tale – and its rhetoric of repetition and of fixed characters – and the dreamy atmosphere, appealing to the subconscious, make this play a repository of themes, characters, elements, and situations to be successfully exploited by advertising.

Levi's 501[410]

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[406] Van Es, *Shakespeare's Comedies. A Very Short Introduction*, 22.

[407] Halpern, *Shakespeare among the Moderns*, 66.

[408] Alessi, "Parte I. Per una storia della letteratura 'promozionale',": 16-56, 53 [My translation].

[409] Vladimir Propp, *Morfologia della fiaba,*[1928] ed. Gian Luigi Bravo (Milano: Einaudi 2000).

[410] Noam Murro, Levi's 501 Jeans, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (London: Bartle Bogle Hegarty, 2005).

Similarly to the Nextel commercial, the Levi's 501 one starts with the opening of the red curtain of a theatre or of a cinema – in this case the space surrounding the scene is not shown – and with the text "A Midsummer Night's Dream. Act 3. Scene 1." written in white on a red background appearing before the opening of the curtains. The scene begins in a modern setting, probably the suburb of an American city, a car is displayed which, along with the modern clothes worn by the people in the scene, immediately brings the story forward to the present of the audience watching the commercial. A young man is walking on the pavement and starts delivering Bottom's lines when he encounters a group, seemingly a gang. One of them speaks the lines of Snout, but in a very aggressive tone, as if in order to start a fight, to which the man replies, with Bottom's words: "What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you?" and then leaves them. In the meantime a girl, a waitress in a nearby bar, hears Bottom's lines and, uttering Titania's words, approaches him; when they finally meet, she repeats the words of the queen of fairies "I love thee." The encounter somehow appeases the boys of the gang and ends the commercial. The last images show the two lovers staring at each other while the frame enlarges and distances itself till reaching the final overhead shot.

In this case – as had happened in the previous examples – the genre of the play is slightly reversed in the commercial. In this occasion the original comic relief constituted by the mechanicals' interlude is transformed into a dark romance: it starts with a potential fight, and the male character seems in danger through the whole time. Also the love of the commercial becomes more romantic and turbulent while the one depicted in the original play was comic and hilarious: the love of the queen of the fairies for an ass-head creature, indeed, was devised to generate laughter and derision. An interesting difference between the English version[411] of the commercial and the Italian one[412] is that the latter begins with the words "Sogno di una notte di Mezz'Estate di William Shakespeare," ("*A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare") and presents a dubbed Italian version of the dialogues. The first change sheds a light on the assumptions made by the advertisers on the different stocks of

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[411] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPyD4jyiObo, (last access: May 28, 2017).

[412] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqM8zqqz2Xg, (last access: May 28, 2017).

knowledge of the two audiences. The Italian one is assumed not to know who the author of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is, and is reminded of it since the beginning. Likewise, the act and scene number are deleted due to their pointlessness because the reference to Shakespeare has already elicited the inference to the theatrical source intended by the advertisers.

> A television variant of the author's signature on the billboards seems to appear as a caption, signaling to the audience a piece of information otherwise impossible to represent in the image. Naturally this caption, simple and linear, influences the way of reading the figure and the discourse it pronounces […]. The indication is the work uniquely of advertising, of its way of understanding the figure of the writer, of his/her capacity of recognizing in that image a literary author.[413]

The gap between the English and Italian audience is a cultural one, the play is for the English audience "probably the most performed of all Shakespeare's plays, not least because, in schools, it is so often the way children encounter Shakespeare."[414] The English audience is thus deemed better-versed in the Shakespearean matter to know who the author is, and also to be aware of which point of the play is being represented. The expansion of English language television, cinema and advertising which reach also other countries, often with no translation (in particular in the case of advertising) is responsible for the diffusion of contents especially created for a British audience, which are then released in the international market and often left unchanged. The referent becomes thus, different, or less specific, and what would have been obvious for an English recipient is unclear for an Italian one and requires sometimes a further explanation. "Shakespeare, whether adapted or simply alluded to, remains a part of that cultural ground on which changing ideas of national identity and the subjects of that national conversation are played out."[415]

The Italian dubbing also eliminates one significant connotative element linked to the English commercial. The Standard Italian reproduction of the verses of the Bard

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[413] Zaganelli, "Introduzione," 91. [My translation].

[414] Peter Holland, "Introduction" in *The Oxford Shakespeare. A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Peter Holland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1.

[415] Grenhalgh, "U.K. Television," 671.

does not take into consideration the use of a contemporary American accent in the original commercial.

> One way of getting an audience to recognise who an advert might be aimed at is to provide some language in the text that will be connected with a particular group. This connection doesn't have to be real in being language that is actually used by that group; it is enough that the readers think there is some connection – a loose association is all that is required for advertising purposes. It is at this point that the process of stereotyping is clearly at work.[416]

The latter strategy – already masterfully developed by Baz Luhrman in his *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, of which this commercial displays many echoes: from the dresses of the characters to their racial connotation, to the contemporary city setting – modernises and appropriates the Bard's words detaching them from their original significance: Shakespeare's words are accompanied by different actions which change their meaning. The commercial, indeed, very effectively plays on the pun on the word "shape," and also possibly on the name of the character Bottom. The commercial is advertising a pair of jeans, which have to be worn on the lower part of the body, the "bottom" part, hence the ironic effect created for the English-speaking audience who knows the name of the character of the play.

> As well as having different structural rules about how texts work, different cultures bring different attitudes and values to the reading of any text. […] Translators know that the essence of good advertising copy is not about simply translating the words; it is about encoding the right concepts, and those concepts may well vary from culture to culture. […] This process is called copy adaptation – adapting the text to fit the culture of its targeted group.[417]

The more evident wordplay – which is reproduced also in the Italian version – however, is on the word "shape," the leitmotiv of the advertisement, promoting a new pair of jeans "with anti-fit," as the written words appearing under the brand and model

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[416] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 62.

[417] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 80.

number specify in the last shot. The Shakespearean dialogue referred to Bottom's unawareness of the transformation of his head into that of an ass, and to his friends scared words when seeing his shape changed. In the commercial the paralinguistic gestures and the intonation of the actor uttering the lines: "O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?" (*AMND*, 3, 1, 55) denote a different referent for the words, they refer, in fact, to the jeans.

The second exchange involves the girl playing Titania. In the Shakespearean dialogue, as previously stated, the queen of the fairies was under a spell obliging her to fall in love with the first creature she would have seen, the spell made her blind to Bottom's deformity, so much so that her eye is "enthrallèd to […] [his] shape" (*AMND*, 3, 1, 66). Yet again, in the original play the line was intended to make fun of the queen's debasement when she falls in love with a peasant and on the hilarity of the scene of such a comic creature being praised for its shape. In the commercial the words stick to their literal meaning and the girl – this time not a queen but a waitress – is genuinely attracted by the boy also thanks to the new shape of his jeans, the same model she is wearing.

Thus, the commercial works on a double level: the audience less acquainted with Shakespeare will only deduce to be in front of a Shakespearean play from the opening title. The recognition will create a dreamlike and refined atmosphere for the product advertised, also enhanced by the music opening the scene – very similar to those introducing Disney cartoons – and by the reference to the dream in the title of the play. The reproduction of the Bard's words, furthermore, give a poetic air to the dialogues. The recognition and familiarity with the play, on the other hand, will entail the reaction of the audience whose wit is stimulated in the wordplays which underline the aim of the commercial.

The identification of the Shakespearean material, thus, increases the effectiveness of the communication. The use of the Bard's words in a contemporary setting, moreover, demonstrate the appeal his works still have on contemporary audiences and also their almost universal diffusion. It also testifies to the intention of popular culture of continually reworking them and bestowing them with newer and newer significations and interpretations.

The product advertised, the jeans, is represented and plays a role in the commercial but, in line with the latest trends in advertising, its characteristics are not

listed, the audience infers them form the discourses and atmospheres of the commercial. As in previously analysed commercials, the scenario created by the advertisers projects a series of attributes on the objects, which are more linked with the sensibility of the addressee than with tangible traits. The commercial is not only selling a product but a set of impressions which will be attached to the product in the moment of the purchase and in the moment of wearing the jeans. The latter become a status symbol, the members of the audience are told that with those particular jeans they will be part of the dreamlike world of the commercial. The urban setting helps this identification and implies that everyone could live such a marvellous adventure and be a Shakespearean character: "The *Identity brands* are interested in establishing a relationship of complicity with the audience, representing its real world and trying to promote a process of identification [...]"[418]. The creation of advertising is nowadays comparable to an artistic creation taking on a life of its own. "If once the commodity advertised itself […] today advertising has become its own commodity."[419] Particularly in this case, the commercial looks like a film and the object advertised only plays a role in it, the commercial is enjoyable in itself also due to the Shakespearean reference and reworking.

3.2.4 *The Tempest*

The Tempest is considered by many as representing Shakespeare's will and last words to his audience. The character of Prospero, magically deciding the fortunes of the other characters thanks to his books, parallels the figure of the playwright, the master of the puppets of the whole story:

> *The Tempest* will give its audience flying spirit, an artificial storm, a disappearing banquet, and a magician (who to some extent represents the playwright) capable of freezing men's movements and stopping their speech.[420]

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[418] Barbella, "Shakespeare in Spot": 79-84, 82, [My translation].

[419] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 62, [My translation].

[420] Van Es, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, 68.

As in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the presence of magic and of various references to sleeping and dreaming underline the impossibility of deciding on the real essence of the work. The audience may think it is in front of magic or of a dream.

> The […] texts of *The Winter's Tale* and of *The Tempest* already show that Shakespeare's interest in comedy was becoming still broader, blending laughter with a sense of magic in an immersive musical experience that combined dramatic revelation with a real sense of threat. Following on from the so-called "problem comedies" written at the turn of the century and the "festive comedies" that preceded them, these late plays can be seen as simply the last of a long series of experiments determining what can be done with a plot that ends on marriage.[421]

The peculiarity of the play also stands in the role Shakespeare has attributed to his main character: while the mind of the author has created the fictional reality, the latter is directed and shaped by an internal "master," Prospero, whose mind, imagination, and power act and direct the same reality he is part of.

As the advertising world, the whole narration is directed to the fulfilment of Prospero's initial plans, everything has been devised in advance. Prospero, as a good advertiser, works thanks to the help of words, knowledge – his books – and art, metaphorically represented by magic. The qualities distinguishing Prospero make him a character easily singled out by popular culture.

Also other characters, in particular Ariel and Caliban are figures recurring in popular culture, because of the magical power and appeal of the first and because of the controversial depiction of the second. The latter has represented the usurped colonised whose land has been robbed from him by the coloniser Prospero.[422] Caliban claims the island as his inheritance from the witch Sycorax, his mother, subdued by Prospero to take possession of the island while making Caliban his slave. In one of the most striking passages Caliban accuses Prospero "You taught me language, and my

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[421] Van Es, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, 109.

[422] Patrick M. Murphy, "Interpreting *The Tempest*: A History of Its Readings," in *The Tempest: Critical Essays*, ed. Patrick M. Murphy (New York: Routledge, 2001), 10-65.

profit on't/ Is, I know how to curse."[423] The passage, source of various contemporary criticisms, remarkably exemplifies cultural colonialism and also demonstrates the importance of language in the construction of the individual and of his/her perception of him/herself.

Shakespeare's words in the fourth act of the comedy: "we are made of the same stuff as dreams are made on"[424] are some of the most appropriated by popular culture. They have become an independent sentence – as previously demonstrated for other famous lines – detached from its original context as often happens to Shakespearean quotations. The epilogue of the play, furthermore, is generally regarded as Shakespeare's farewell to his audience and to the theatre world.

IKEA "Beds" [425]

The commercial opens with a close shot of the actress' face, in particular her eye is shown as if opening after a dream. She finds herself in a bed suspended in mid-air, surrounded by a clear blue sky at dawn. She sits on the bed and sees the clouds below her and decides to jump. The voice over starts delivering Shakespeare's lines: "Our revels now are ended…" while the woman falls on another bed, next to other beds with different linens and of different shapes. She then falls on a mattress and she sees other beds floating in the clouds, while the voice utters "cloud-capp'd towers," then, at the words "gorgeous palaces" a double sofa bed is shown. The words "solemn temples" are accompanied by the image of a canopy bed with sumptuous drapery and decorations. Then the dream-like atmosphere is somehow debased by the appearance of a rocket, of a dog also floating in the air, of an air bed, and of a boy sleeping in another bed. The woman falls through the clouds and a city is shown.

Her fall seems to accelerate and also the music, before only a sound softly accompanying the words, becomes more menacing. The woman seems to be destined to hit the floor, but her scream is covered by the music. When the voice over says "our

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[423] *The Tempest*, Act I Scene II, 366, 367.

[424] *The Tempest,* Act IV, Scene I, 156, 157.

[425] IKEA, "Beds", in *The Wonderful everyday campaign* (London: Mother London agency, 2014), available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hi7HTNtEyVs, (last access August 30, 2017).

little life," however, the details of a bedroom, some books, some plants on a shelf, and a flower vase, are shown. At the words "is rounded with a sleep" the woman falls on the bed in the bedroom which is now shown in its whole. The frame then moves on a close-up of the dog's face in the moment it wakes up opening its eyes, as if waken up by the woman's fall. The gesture of the dog corresponds with the voice over's word: "sleep." The woman, then, acts as the dog, she suddenly wakes up, looks around, and goes back to sleep. The frame widens and the woman, previously falling on an empty bed and dressed in white, is shown with a red pyjamas and under the covers with a men sleeping next to her, thus implying she woke up in her own bedroom, which is now fully shown, comprising all the details previously only suggested. The white words "there's no bed like home" appear, then the frame suddenly changes to a wide one of the city at dawn, suggesting that many people might be getting up in a similar scenario. The brand IKEA in yellow and blue is shown, and underneath it the slogan "The wonderful everyday" is displayed, in the same typeface as the previous words and also in the same colour: white.

The main colours are, indeed, light and delicate, in order to describe the dream world above the clouds and that of the bedroom. The woman is dressed in white, the world above the clouds is mainly light blue and pink, the clouds are white with pink and blue shades, the light of the rising sun filters gently through them faintly illuminating all the objects with a dim light. The same ethereal light filters through the windows of the bedroom irradiating the delicate colours of the furniture. The city, on the other hand, is described through the use of more defined and darker colours. The greys and browns show monotony, real life, underlined by the sounds of the traffic underneath.

The visual description of the city, a landscape of skyscrapers, offices, and people driving to work, conveys the idea of a chaotic life in which we do not want to fall after the marvellous dream in the clouds. Conversely, the house is characterised by pastels, by a glaring atmosphere of familiar things. The awakening is not disturbing, the protagonist can go back to sleep because it was only a dream but even if she woke up she found herself in a wonderful environment similar to that of the dream, and, in addition, in the comfort of her own home surrounded by familiar objects which give a sense of reassurance and tranquillity while the dream could also have become threatening.

The presence of the voice over leads the audience inside the dream, it is a woman's soft voice, as that of a mother telling a bedtime story to her children:

> Advertising often uses literary devices; it often uses aspects of scientific technology to carry its messages to a commercial marketplace for purposes of trade; adverts can employ a 'voice' which appears to be speaking personally to the reader; advertising texts can sometimes be considerably more dramatic than the programmes or articles they punctuate.[426]

The words visible on the bedroom background "there's no bed like home," however, are not pronounced by any voice. Also in this case, the audience is presented with a reference to popular culture: to the book and film of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*[427]. Once more, the reference to the source is superfluous, the original quotation "there's no place like home" is slightly modified but it is devised to surely have an impact on the audience whose cultural baggage is here exploited by the advertisers.

The last words, "IKEA, The wonderful everyday," on the other hand, are uttered by a male voice and marks the passage to the more commercial aim of the advertising message. The name of the brand is specified and put in a central position, it is the only coloured word and stands to the fore, it is, thus, charged with all the allure of the commercial, making even more apparent the idea of purchasing a product which makes everyday life special and wonderful:

> By themselves, images are, [Barthes] thought, too 'polysemous,' too open to a variety of possible meanings. To arrive at a definite meaning, language must come to the rescue. Visual meaning is too indefinite; it is a 'floating chain of signifieds.'[428]

The commercial gives the idea of living in a dream, the protagonist is asleep at the beginning and wakes up in a surreal situation – floating in the sky and falling on other beds – the world she inhabits is dream-like, the audience is uncertain on the real nature of the representation. However, the dream-world converges into the ordinary,

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[426] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 28.

[427] Lyman Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Chicago: George M. Hill, 1900).

[428] Kress and van Leeuween, *Reading Images*, 18.

everyday world recognisable by the audience who will feel also its everyday reality can be transformed into a dream thanks to IKEA's products: "The *Icon brands* represent symbolic worlds in which to project oneself; they are the brands of the dream, of the aspiration."[429]

The commercial parallels *The Tempest* from which it borrows the voice over's lines. The play is suspended, in the audience's perception, between its nature of a play, of a fictional reality, and the idea of a world created by Prospero's magic. In the IKEA commercial the words used are Shakespeare's, more precisely Prospero's lines, which have remained unaltered:

The Tempest, Act IV, scene I, 148–158.

Our revels now are ended. These our actors
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into **thin** air:
And, like the **baseless fabric** of this **vision**,
The **cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces**,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this **insubstantial** pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As **dreams** are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a **sleep**.

Not only were Shakespeare's words devised to describe the atmosphere of the dream, of the incredulity of the awakening, but they are used, in this commercial, to indirectly describe the product advertised. They seem to describe the landscape of the commercial and emphasise visual and tactile sensations. The air is "thin" a word easily associated with textiles, with the "fabric of this vision." The "cloud-capp'd towers" give an idea of softness and lightness. Everything is "unsubstantial," everything is "rounded with a sleep," suggesting the idea of a comfortable bed with its blankets accompanying the sleep of the customer. Furthermore, the well-known reference to

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[429] Barbella, "Shakespeare in Spot": 79-84, 82. [My translation]

dreams suggests that IKEA objects and furniture surrounding people's sleep favour their dreams:

> [Advertising] creates a dream world […] it mystifies the real world and deprives us of any understanding of it […] we become part of the symbolism of the ad world; not real people but identified in terms of what we consume.[430]

Shakespeare becomes the advertiser of this commercial, his words are unaltered, but their meaning changes thanks to the new images which are associated with the old lines: "commonplacing Shakespeare means that speakers can reorder and transfigure the signification of these lines to fit any topical context."[431]

As in *The Tempest,* these lines represent the passage from the magical dream-like world created by Prospero to reality. Also in the commercial there is a vertical and descending movement from the world above the clouds, the world of the imagination and of the dreams, to the 'real' everyday world in which, however, the dream lingers because "our little life is rounded with a sleep."

The Shakespearean quotation associates the product advertised with a sense of high-quality and of refinement. The association with the magical, dreamy and fantastic play, and with the sophisticated words of Shakespeare, makes the house become a place of dream in which to escape reality, in which the everyday life becomes wonderful: "It is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order *in* reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation."[432]

Interestingly enough, Shakespeare is never mentioned, nor is the title of the play or the name of the character speaking. The effect is, thus, twofold: the audience will either recognise and appreciate the Shakespearean quotation or they will just consider the voice-over as uttering some very erudite lines giving a high cultural sensation:

> In this case advertising constructs references and associations with literature without revealing the source. In fact, the feebler is the direct reference to works and authors, the

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[430] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 184, 185.

[431] Dionne, "The Shatnerification of Shakespeare,"185.

[432] T. S. Eliot, "Poetry and Drama," in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957): 71-87, 87.

stronger is the weight of the reference to literature in general. [...] The specific references to the literary text and author are missing, and what remains of literature is absorbed by a common knowledge, or better, by an air of literacy.[433]

Shakespeare's words prove to be eternal, of enduring significance also for the contemporary generations, to be linked to present-day concepts and objects. Shakespeare becomes a modern day advertiser capable, with his words, of selling every kind of product.

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[433] Marino, "Parte II. Gli spazi intertestuali della pubblicità": 57-92, 79, 80, [My translation].

Conclusion

In conclusion the thesis has elucidated the use made by advertising of Shakespeare's figure and plays. It has tried to demonstrate the strong engraining of the Bard's figure and works in popular culture with which it establishes a relationship of mutual exchange.

Departing from the idea of the importance of popular culture in shaping contemporary consciousness, the thesis has tried to shed a new light on popular culture as a subject which can be studied along with and on the same level with other artistic subjects.

The thesis has tried to dismantle the old-fashioned distinction between high and low culture which relegated advertising to a minor position, thus considering also the reworking of Shakespeare as a debasing practice of a highly cultural material.

> The distinction between 'high' and 'low' forms is now everywhere in crisis, and new ways of maintaining cultural hegemony are required, for instance the development of different and differently valued ways of *talking* about forms which, themselves, are no longer differentiated in the old way (the 'discourses' of different 'audiences').[434]

The thesis has demonstrated the complexity of the advertising process when dealing with the "Shakespearean" matter, a term indicating all contemporary re-workings of Shakespeare which maintain a link with the Bard even if mediated by popular culture. The resulting advertisements and commercials, indeed, become composite cultural products which have been analysed from multiple points of view. Not only does the complexity of the advertising communication come into play, but also its intertwining with the extremely intricate Shakespearean communication. As it has been demonstrated, the implications of this type of multimodal and intertextual communication are multifarious. From a structural point of view, the collation of words, images, and – in the case of commercials – sounds and acting already establishes a highly complex communication in which all elements are signifying and have to be taken into consideration one by one and in their interrelation. The different languages

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[434] Kress and van Leeuween, *Reading Images*, 179.

intertwining in advertising and in Shakespeare, and establishing afterwards a dialogue in the advertisement or commercial, then, also convey a very intricate and layered message. An overall understanding of the message derives from the connection of such languages but also from the assumptions and cultural baggage of the audience and from the correlation of the new material, advertising, with the old one, Shakespeare. The thesis inserts itself in the latest trend which has observed "a shift from seeing consumer culture as dangerous to understanding it as a source of pleasure and symbolic communication."[435]

The language used in advertising and that employed by the Bard allow for a significant parallel to be drawn. Certainly, both use a highly communicative language constituted by words dense with meaning. In both, words do not have a straightforward signification but puns and double entendre are often used in order to generate laughter or in order to render the interpretation more puzzling and ambiguous. This results not only in the creation of highly articulated messages but also in the empowerment of the recipient of the Shakespearean advertising, to whom the final interpretation is left:

> Such a role is completely in line with the sociocultural claim that signs, principally language, largely mediate human cognition. It is in this […] function that we begin to see language, texts, objects and visualizations as engines of meaning making.[436]

Shakespeare gave voice to the individual's imagination and workings of the mind which were masterfully put on stage and expressed particularly through language, for instance also in the verbal scenography created to supply for the often limitedly equipped Elizabethan stage. The same process of expression of one's imagination, desires, and subconscious feelings takes place in advertising.

Advertising, furthermore, involves also the blanks, the voids the audience has to fill in in order to understand the message, which are often more signifying than what is on the page or in the commercial. In the processes studied which bring to Shakespeare's symbolisation, mythicization, and fragmentation numerous particulars

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[435] Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures*, 359.

[436] Shawn M. Rowe, "Scientific Visualizations as Discourse Nexus: Transmission of Content or Context for Making Meaning?," in *Multimodality in Practice*, ed. Sigrid Norris: 50-65, 53.

are left out and the audience must infer or evince them because advertising "show[s] us not only what is in the page but also what is not on the page *but could have been*."[437] Nothing, indeed, attracts and engages the audience more than an absence, or a pause. People are confronted with different types of advertisements and commercials in which the product may be represented or, as it often happens, absent. In the latter case, the advertising message has acquired a status of its own, it has become a creative exercise in style: "In the advertising world this is sometimes referred to as 'vampire creative' – the creative execution has drained the blood from the featured product."[438] With regard to Shakespearean advertising absence becomes significant, not only because it plays on an almost universally shared knowledge of the Bard, but also because missing information is what makes people understand more through the process of inference. Also the absence of the object advertised, furthermore, becomes noteworthy for the advertising strategy. This strategy has been observed in some of the advertisements and commercials taken into consideration and demonstrates a trend in advertising which tends to charge the message with meaning and to consider it as the product to be sold, then inevitably transferring all its connotations to the actual product. The advertisement or the commercial becomes an artistic product which can stand on its own while commodities are not represented or they become a corollary of the advertising message.

The popular origin and destination of Shakespeare's works moreover, contributes to reduce the divide between the Bard and advertising and to further justify the choice of the Shakespearean texts as particularly apt for the advertising reproduction. The public theatres of Shakespeare's time were an entertainment destined also to the lower classes and they were located on the South Bank of the river Thames, out of the City law, thus constituting part of a reality including prostitution and gambling, which inevitably influenced the construction of the plays, devised to entertain and to amaze a heterogeneous audience. At the same time Shakespeare's plays were also represented in front of the court, thus producing that combination of high and popular culture which binds it so effectively to contemporary advertising:

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[437] Bateman, *Multimodality and Genre,* 27.

[438] Fowles, *Advertising and Popular Culture*, 81.

Going to university, as Christopher Marlowe did, was all well and good for honing the arts of rhetorical elaboration and classical allusion, but it could lead to a loss of the common touch. To stay close to a large segment of the potential audience for public theatre, it was necessary to write for clowns as well as kings and to intersperse the flights of poetry with the humour of the tavern, the privy and the brothel: Shakespeare was the first to establish himself early in his career as an equal master of tragedy, comedy and history. He realized that theatre could be the medium to make the national past available to a wider audience than the elite who could afford to read large history books.[439]

Moreover, also the concept of popular culture was feeble at the time of Shakespeare and the blend of high culture with low culture and entertainment was regarded as a virtue by the Bard's contemporaries:

Popular art represented authentic, challenging, creative, and from-the-bottom-up expressions of the experiences of urban Britons. Because of the connection of the popular to both high and folk, it was worthy of respect and serious analysis rather than simplified condemnation. When popular arts used conventions, they did so to surprise and delight, not to pander. […] it relies on a dynamic relationship between performer and audience.[440]

Also the frequent use of contemporary costumes in advertising dealing with Shakespeare – a trend observable in many present-day popular culture's examples – testifying to its popularisation, paradoxically shows a respect for the spirit of the original plays and of the intentions of the author who had to conform to practical constraints and to the popular demands:

No matter the period of the play, actors always wore contemporary costume. The excitement for the audience came not from any impression of historical accuracy, but from the richness of the attire and perhaps the transgressive thrill of the knowledge that here were commoners like themselves strutting in the costumes of courtiers in effective defiance of the strict sumptuary laws whereby in real life people had to wear the clothes that befitted their social station.[441]

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[439] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, 221.

[440] Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures*, 264.

[441] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, 228.

Most of the advertisements and commercials analysed, indeed, show Shakespeare's characters and settings adapted to contemporary scenarios, with contemporary costumes. In the Alfa Romeo's advertisement and commercial, for instance, respectively Romeo's and Juliet's characters are represented by cars, one of the archetypal symbols of contemporary society, demonstrating, once again, Shakespeare's modernity. Also this characteristic, which has been substantiated in the thesis, contributes to Shakespeare's popularity, due to the adaptability of the themes and discourses to the contemporary scenario. The Bard's plays' capacity to adjust to the most disparate contexts depends on the:

> Immanent verity at the heart of the Shakespeare play: a cultural token that contains, no matter how many different interests may temper with it, encoded, unchanging truths about human nature.[442]

The universality at the heart of the plays remains unquestioned, and it is fostered by the continuous re-workings of Shakespeare by popular culture. According to Richard Burt a sort of Bardolatry derives from the popularisation and contemporary mythicisation of Shakespeare. The plays are often fragmented and the characters detached from their original play to signify something new, they are singled out and become symbols. On the other hand, this manipulation is only possible because of the affinity of Shakespeare's culture with the contemporary popular one:

> The plays continue to provide us with examples against which our own lives are sorted, judged and given meaning, not *despite* the bardolatry but *because* of it. We inhabit a culture which just happens to have been shaped by the economic and moral collisions of Elizabethan England.[443]

The parallel with Elizabethan England is also observable in the aforementioned experience of the theatre at Shakespeare's times, which can be associated to the

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[442] McCullough, "The Cambridge Connection: Towards a Materialist Theatre Practice," 114.

[443] Hornbrook, "'Go Play, Boy, Play,'" 156.

modern-day mass media, in particular to television, one of the most influential media of the contemporary era, and one of the mostly exploited channels for advertising:

> Some writers […] [drew] comparisons between television *as a medium* and the Elizabethan popular drama. […] The television medium [has been proposed] as a successor or reconstitution of the cultural potentialities of the Elizabethan playhouse. Both television and the Elizabethan theatre offer *communal* rather than solitary experiences, permitting active and simultaneous discussion and response.[444]

The popularisation of Shakespeare by advertising happens, indeed, mostly through this medium. The choice of Shakespeare depends on its affinity with advertising, on a similar sort of hybridity, on their capacity of producing a highly meaningful communication and on the mixture of high and low culture which, as previously demonstrated, characterises both advertising and the Bard:

> Television often registers as the heart and soul of postmodernism because of its relentless scrambling of signifieds and signifiers, mixing and matching meanings. […]
> At the intersection of art and commerce, advertisements are packed with the relations and contradictions between aesthetics and economics, signs and commodities, spectators and cultural producers – all within an arena governed by the logic of corporate capital.[445]

The commercial nature of advertising is what causes the resistance of critics to accepting it within the critical debate: particularly they think that Shakespeare as a representative of high culture cannot be popularised and allegedly debased by popular culture. However, the re-working through popular culture is the most successful and seminal way to perpetuate the work of the Bard in contemporary culture, to make it known by a large audience and to preserve its immortality. While in the contemporary scenario, indeed, Shakespeare's popularisation may correspond to a diminution of the refinement of the Bard or to a fragmentation of his works, at the same time, it demonstrates the familiarity of the audience with Shakespeare and it may also engender a curiosity and a renewed interest in his works. The latter can, thus, live a new life in

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[444] Holderness, "Shakespeare and Television," 176.

[445] Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially*, 202, 203.

popular culture and it can reach a wider and wider audience thanks to contemporary popular media. In this sense Shakespeare has become immortal and has come to be part of the collective unconscious. So much so that the advertisers can use minor and isolated elements and the audience will immediately recognise the quotation.

> Although advertisements are ephemeral in that each one is short-lived, their effects are longstanding and cumulative: they leave traces of themselves behind, which combine to form a body of messages about the culture that produced them. [446]

The latter assumption has been exploited in the *Shakesbeer* commercial, in which only few traits commonly associated to the popular figure of the Bard – such as the moustache and the haircut – become attributes of ordinary people, and the recognition is immediate. The advertisement taken into consideration shows the complexity of the message involving a representation of the figure of the Bard and all the connotations it brings to the image and to the product advertised. Not only have the compositional practices of advertising been analysed – the structuring of the image and the use of the words – but also the implications of the use of the Shakespearean figure as a legitimising authority, providing a sense of refinement and of reliability to the product advertised, which interestingly is not even represented. Shakespeare becomes a symbol ready to use in different circumstances. In this case, the association of Shakespeare with alcoholic beverages, with beer in particular, has allowed me to take into consideration two advertisements linked with the *Shakesbeer* one on a content level, Stella Artois and Hoppy Wheat, both using *Hamlet* as a source. While the first plays on the famous "to be or not to be" line, the second makes Ophelia the protagonist of the advertisement.

This analysis is the bridge to the second section of the chapter, concerning the advertising re-workings of Shakespearean plays and character. The scrutiny of the advertisements and commercials of this section has taken into consideration the following levels of interpretation:

> 1.The first level is that of primary or natural subject matter consisting of lights, colour, shape and movement and the elementary understanding of representation, whether of

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[446] Goddard, *The Language of Advertising*, 3.

people, objects, gestures, poses or expressions, and the interrelations which comprise events.

2. The second level is that of secondary or conventional subject matter which relates to the wider culture. At this level, motifs and combinations of motifs are linked to themes and concepts. […] Certain motifs (which carry secondary meanings) may be called images, and combinations of images may be called stories or allegories.

3. At the third level we come to intrinsic meaning or content, which is discovered by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitudes of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophic persuasion – unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work.[447]

In the present analysis a further level of meaning influences the interpretation of the advertising message and it is, indeed, the use of Shakespeare's texts and characters. The development of the analysis has been undertaken in order to demonstrate which elements are mostly used by popular culture and which assumptions are implied in the use of the Bard's plays. The reference to Shakespeare's plays and characters in advertising, indeed, entails a series of presuppositions:

In Barthes' sense the spectacle is a significant cultural event in which deeply shared values, beliefs, and emotions, in conjunction with familiar genre and character type expectations, may be publicly played out.[448]

This characteristic is aptly epitomised advertising's use of *Romeo and Juliet*. Advertisers have often re-read and heavily manipulated this play while still maintaining the reference to the source text and to its meaning.

Alfa Romeo has often played with its brand name in order to create Shakespeare-related advertisements and commercials. The two examples taken into consideration are the advertisement of the "Brera" model released on St. Valentine's day, and that of the "Alfa Romeo Giulietta." While the former transforms Romeo into a car and exploits the highly romantic balcony scene along with specific colours to suggest ideas of passion and love, the latter displays a Juliet with various souls. In the commercial,

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[447] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 93.

[448] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 68.

indeed, she is represented at the same time by a woman and by the car. Interestingly enough, the commercial ends with a quotation from *The Tempest*, a highly significant passage, which testifies to the existence of a "Shakespearean" aura which characterises the popular perception of the Bard: "quotations of Shakespeare appear as rather gratuitous attempts at self-fashioning a genteel character more than thematic commentary on plot."[449] The "Nextel" cell phone commercial, on the other hand, mocks *Romeo and Juliet* and condenses it to its extremes, maintaining some elements such as the costumes, the balcony, and the plot line in order to unequivocally show its intended reference, while updating it thanks to the use of the product advertised, another symbol of modernity: the cell-phone.

The advertising use of *Othello* allows the thesis to dwell on two examples of Italian commercials, one destined to the Italian audience and the other intended for an international public. The first, that of "Otello Dufur," advertises a chocolate which embodies all the characteristics of the Shakespearean Moor. The commercial manages to condense – as the "Nextel" one – the whole story in few scenes, skilfully conveying the predominant feelings of the play, those of passion and jealousy. The second commercial taken into consideration is that of yet another mobile phone company "Telit," which intersperses scenes of contemporary lives with scenes from *Othello* performed by actors in contemporary costumes speaking Shakespeare's lines. The enhancement of the communication by contemporary media, however, changes the original ending, transforming the tragedy into a comedy. The change of genre, applied also to the Levi's commercial, demonstrates that the familiarity of the works allows a heavy reworking based on the expected recognition by the audience of the Shakespearean original, even if presented in a new shape.

The "Levi's 501" commercial showing scene I of act III of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* demonstrates the cultural specific assumptions which come into play when the same commercial is broadcasted in different countries. The adaptation of the Shakespearean reference is conducted in distinct ways in the different countries taken into account, Italy and the UK. In the former country the commercial needs to be shaped in view of the limited familiarity with Shakespeare which results in the Italian audience's acquaintance with the most famous quotations and characters while the

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[449] Dionne, "The Shatnerification of Shakespeare," 184.

works they belong to remain unidentified. The U.K. audience is, on the other hand, more acquainted with the Shakespearean plays and the different handling of the two commercials demonstrates the advertisers' attention to the specificity of each popular culture, which tends to universality but maintains some local and specific features.

> Visual language is not – despite assumptions to the contrary – transparent and universally understood; it is culturally specific. […]The 'universal' aspect of meaning lies in semiotic principles and processes, the culture-specific aspect lies in their application over history, and in specific instances of use.[450]

The possibility of overcoming the cultural differences, however, demonstrates the extreme adaptability and universality of Shakespeare, which remains a joining element of contemporary culture: "Shakespeare stands at the historical threshold of a unified cultural public sphere."[451] The commercial, furthermore, bares a series of similarities with Baz Luhrmann's film *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*, demonstrating the influence of the latter on popular culture, and the insertion of the commercial in a complex intertextual net comprising different artistic productions.

The last analysis concerns *The Tempest* employed by IKEA for its "beds" commercial. The latter uses Prospero's lines, spoken by a voice over, but the setting and characters are not related to Shakespeare, who is never mentioned along with the name of the play or of its protagonist. The missing reference depends on the renown of the Shakespearean lines ending with the famous "we are made of the same stuff as dreams are made on" interestingly used also in the "Alfa Romeo Giulietta" commercial because of their immediate allusion to Shakespeare. It also demonstrates the adaptability of the Shakespearean texts to contemporary advertising and thus to contemporary taste. This commercial represents the use of the Bard as apt to create a dream world, operating on the subconscious of the spectators and thus enhancing the effect of the psychological strategies developed by advertising:

> The reason why advertisements are rarely dishonest in any 'legal' sense is that they don't function at the manifest level but at the level of the signifier. […] And it is at this level

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[450] Kress and van Leeuween, *Reading Images*, 4.

[451] Halpern, *Shakespeare among the Moderns*, 53.

that ads are hard to resist because they offer the chance to obtain perfect relationships, handsome lovers, luxurious surroundings, appreciative husbands and happy children.[452]

The commercial creates a Shakespearean "halo" around the brand advertised and charges it with the connotations expressed in the lines which are then enriched and modified by the visual elements referring to the IKEA products.

The analysis of Shakespearean advertising becomes a means to show the contemporary prominence and universality of the father of English literature but also to give an account of the evolution of contemporary culture, which has become a mixture of high and low culture and as such has to be investigated and studied. The use of Shakespeare by advertising also provides several case studies which have allowed me to elicit the linguistic and psychological strategies often hidden behind advertisement and commercials. The art of advertising has reached such power that it not only influences people's tastes and choices, but its rhetoric, fostered by the mass media, shapes people's consciousness and their approach to reality: "It is as if the familiar images, categories, and story lines disseminated by the visual mass media are supplying cognitive heuristics for society as a whole."[453] The unveiling of the strategies implied in advertising aims at questioning them in order to prompt a reaction against indifference and aloofness to the wave of messages and information people are constantly exposed to in contemporary society. One risk of the saturation of our society with media messages and with advertising is, indeed, insensitivity. Advertising accompanies our daily lives so much that people do not notice it anymore, it becomes background noise: "the constant noise is leading to an entire society with a form of attention deficit disorder."[454] The messages, however, even if unnoticed, strike peoples' minds on a subconscious level[455] and are, thus, still capable of influencing peoples' perceptions and thoughts. Moreover, the insensitivity to contemporary discourses leaves them unquestioned thus creating an inert audience of unaware recipients of

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[452] Dyer, *Advertising as Communication*, 186.

[453] Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop*, 167.

[454] Kress and van Leeuween, *Reading Images*, 138.

[455] See footnote 112 p. 47 of this thesis, on *The Interpretation of Dreams*, elucidating Freud's theory that, in dreams, we re-elaborate "what is subordinate and disregarded" which can be applied also to advertising messages, in particular, and to contemporary mass media communication in general.

these powerful messages. The potential of the advertising communication of shaping and influencing reality is exploited also by other discourses which need a popular consent. Thus, the analysis of the advertising discourses gives the means to examine the communicative strategies also used at higher ideological levels, such as the political one:

> [It demonstrates] the centrality of the media for the public. They are the means by which the public acquires information about the world and, more importantly through which the public derives its knowledge and perceptions of current political and social problems and the means to their resolution.[456]

Mass media, and advertising messages, thus, have a strong influence on the development of the individual both on a private and on a social plane. Consequently, the capacity deciphering the hidden strategies beyond media messages provides people with an active and critical thinking which prevents them from remaining mere receivers of the messages. The interpretation of advertising, therefore, is not a simple and useless exercise in style, it helps decode present-day messages and thus comprehend the contemporary world.

> The media organizations which facilitate [the] reordering of time, space, and experience assume an almost sacred status, not simply producing publications or programs which the public receives and try to make sense of, but producing schedules, norms, skills, tones, taboos, and worldviews which contribute to the public's sense of self-identity, routine, and security. In short, the media do not merely transmit messages, they contribute significantly to shaping the social, ethical, and affective conditions of message reception.[457]

The analysis and decoding of advertising unveils the strategies behind contemporary communication and endows the reader or spectator with unbiased interpretative skills. This process is of crucial importance because people's behaviour derives from the

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[456] Ralph Negrine, *Politics and the Mass Media in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1989), 1.

[457] Ross Cloeman, *The Media and the Public*, 47.

interpretation they give of the world: the media provide "the informational building blocks to structure views of the world […] from which may stem a range of actions."[458]

Contemporary advertising communication can be paralleled with propaganda, in both, indeed, the economic and political language intertwine and exchange meaning, finally influencing and shaping each other: "[Advertising and propaganda] [...] are mass languages, born from the mass production of ideas or commodities, whose registers, previously separated, progressively tend to get together again."[459]

The case studies taken into consideration demonstrate that the Shakespearean advertisements and commercials are a determining part of the aforementioned process: "Shakespeare's works denounce a world that has to cope with the loss of all its certainties, a world on the brink of the collapse of civil order."[460] As often observed, the capacity of advertising of speaking to the public corresponds to the same communicative potential of the Shakespearean texts and of the Shakespearean figure which constitute nowadays a signifying ensemble, "an icon of perduring artistic value,"[461] capable of having an impact on the contemporary description and perception of the world. Through advertising, Shakespeare still emerges as our contemporary.

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[458] Herbert Blumer, "The Political Effects of Mass Communication," in *Culture Society and the Media*, Eds. M.Gurevitch, T. Bennet, J. Curran, J. Woollacott (London: Meuthen, 1982): 236-267, 260.

[459] Baudrillard, *Il sogno della merce*, 59, [My translation].

[460] Carpi, "Renaissance into Postmodernism: Anticipations of Legal Unrest," 180, 181.

[461] Dionne, "The Shatnerification of Shakespeare," 178.

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