Alessandra Marino

Multicultural Shakespeare: Italian and British TV Series of the 9-11 pm Slot. 'Brand' Shakespeare and TV Adaptations

During the last twenty years, much of the critical debate on Shakespeare has revolved around how appropriations and adaptations of his plays have crossed different media and created new languages to 'contemporise' their content. With *Shakespeare and the Moving Image* (1994), edited by Antony Davies and Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare on Film* (1998), edited by Robert Shaughnessy, the two volumes of *Shakespeare the Movie* (1997 and 2003), edited by Richard Burt and Lynda Boose, and Tom Cartelli and Katherine Rowe's *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (2007), among other works, screen adaptations have been widely analysed with the intent to take account of the new forms of Shakespeare's 'survival' around the world.

Richard Burt's summary of this complex situation is particularly effective: "Shakespeare film adaptations significantly blur if not fully deconstruct distinctions between local and global, original and copy, pure and hybrid, indigenous and foreign, high and low, authentic and inauthentic, hermeneutic and post-hermeneutic".[1] In his writing on the production and circulation of Shakespeare-related cultural goods, Burt affirms that, in the two-scalar frame of 'glocalization', the process of re-localization inevitably triggers a productive differentiation.

In *Shakespeare after Mass Media* (2002), Burt uses the expression "mass culture" to refer to the enormous proliferation of Shakespearean quotations in every-day life and to the transformation of textual works into ordinary consumer goods.[2] Preferring "mass" to "popular" culture, Burt's reading distinguishes itself from works in the field of cultural studies, as the latter underline the relevance of antagonistic cultural forces shaping itinerant images of the playwright. Burt focuses on describing a hard-to-track archive of Shakespeare-related products and objects.[3] Mainly, he insists on Shakespeare's heterogeneous and hardly retrievable presence in texts and cultural objects, stressing that the massification of marketable bards on the global scene did not lead to an increased accessibility to Shakespeare. On the contrary, the use of Shakespearean references in brands, commercials and journalistic headlines, and its consequences remain largely unexplored.

I am stimulated by Burt's stress on mass culture to look at multiform reified Shakespeares travelling in a world environment. At the same time, I do not like the fact that the binary global/local is still so central to his argument: Burt zooms in and out of culturally specific contexts to insert the examined objects into a wider frame. Moreover, the passage from one dimension to the other seems to produce the dissemination of Shakespeare in various forms and places. When the process of appropriation and quotation is portrayed as the localisation of a global product, the theoretical standpoint does not let go of a linear logic that explains

[1] Richard Burt, "Shakespeare, 'Glo-Cali-Zation', Race, and the Small Screens of Popular Culture", in Richard Burt and Lynda E. Bose, eds., *Shakespeare the Movie II* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 16.

[2] Richard Burt, *Shakespeare after Mass Media* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

[3] He implicitly takes a distance from Douglas Lanier's explorations of Shakespop in *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), where the mythification and iconisation of Shakespeare appear as the ground both for affirming the playwright's cultural authority and for challenging it.

Shakespeare's process of becoming other. The model never completely uproots the idea of cultural change as a descent from a single and external source – even though it is as extended and porous as the global framework.

In his interesting critical work *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*, Mark Burnett underlines the inappropriateness of simply stating the mutual sustenance of local and global Shakespeares for understanding the complex phenomenon of their circulation in the marketplace.[4] Taking a cue from his argument and referring to the dissemination of Shakespeare on television, I want to further complicate the dichotomy of global and local haunting the latest Shakesperean criticism; to this end, I shall employ the concept of 'brand' identified by Scott Lash and Celia Lury in *Global Culture Industry* (2007), where the brand appears as a source of production for consumable commodities. Defining a topological theory of continuous movement, Lury and Lash examine the case of *Trainspotting*, in its transition from book to film and soundtrack, to explain the transformation of cultural products into various marketable objects.[5] They look at the brand as a virtual entity constantly redefined by the range of products generated in relation to its name.[6]

Shakespeare may be regarded as a 'brand', whose expansion takes place in the form of academic discourses, cultural events and objects such as posters, gadgets, CD or DVD. All these products, by becoming inextricably connected to the name of the English dramatist, remoulded his image as a polymorphic character. The innovation brought forward by a topological frame to Shakespeare's studies is that the poet's expansion beyond the text appears to be non-linear and generative: every new commodity produced under the name of the brand becomes a source of new, autonomous production. The close interrelation among these 'objects' destroys the linearity of creative passages and replaces it with a more complex model that destroys the very idea of 'origin'.

Why does thinking about Shakespeare as a 'brand' help an understanding of the phenomenon of quotations of Shakespeare's plays and plots in contemporary TV series? Referring to the series *Butta la luna* (Italy, 2007-9) and *Second Generation* (UK, 2003) as case studies, I ask why and how two public channels – *Rai Uno* in Italy and *Channel Four* in Britain – have produced TV series, designated for the wide audience of the early night slot, using Shakespeare, both implicitly and explicitly, to talk about intercultural relations.

To answer the question, one should start by considering how the idea of 'branding' has recently gained relevance in critical theory and media studies: it refers to the transformation of TV channels into networks and at the same time it does not overlook the specificities of programs production. As John Caldwell explains in his recent essay "Convergence Television: Aggregating Form and Repurposing Content in the Culture of Conglomeration", drawing on Henry Jenkins' work on "convergence culture", the phenomenon of branding accounts for the status of contemporary TV: there is a production of diversity within a single main brand that derives from the strategy of media corporations to stamp their logos on a range of media related products. Lynn Spigel summarizes the idea of branding as

[4] One of the chapters of Burnett's book is entitled "The Local and the Global" and it explores the tensions between these two dimensions (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

[5] Topology is an area of mathematics dealing with how objects retain certain properties even when subjected to change and deformations. In network theory, it describes the interconnections between nodes and links. The notion was taken up and investigated by an interdisciplinary project based at Goldsmiths College (London) called *ATCD: A Topological approach to cultural dynamics* (2009).

[6] Scott Lash and Celia Lury, *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2007), 6. *Trainspotting* is a novel written by the Scottish author Irvine Welsh (1993), whose famous film adaptation was directed by Danny Boyle in 1996. After the movie, two soundtrack albums were released in 1996 and 1997, including hits by Iggy Pop, David Bowie, Blondie and Underworld.

the "increasing attempt of networks, program producers, and advertisers to stamp their corporate image across a related group of media products, thereby creating a franchise akin (if not as yet legally the same as) trademark and trade dress in the fast food industry".[7] As TV expands beyond the limits of linguistic communication and accesses the market with a range of consumables, channels become sources of material culture.

Rather than taking part in a merely linguistic hegemonic system, Shakespeare on TV is involved in the (re)production of cultural objects, whereby his global presence becomes concrete and tangible. The diffusion of TV products, and the status they gain in terms of visibility and presence, bears witness to the existence of differential channels of transmission and routes of propagation. Being among the productions labelled under Shakespeare's name, TV series can imprint a cultural change on the image of the brand as a whole and reshape his worldwide fame.

In a Foucauldian sense, TV is a "dispositif" acting on different levels, including cultural representation and corporeal affects, aiming at capturing a wide audience.[8] Foucault uses the term 'dispositif' to refer to an apparatus binding together heterogeneous elements, such as discourses, institutions, regulatory decisions, laws, statements and propositions. The analysis of the dispositif or apparatus helps exploring the changing relations between power, knowledge and processes of subjectivation. Here, however, I refer to Franco Berardi's use of the term "dispositif" in relation to the image in "The Image Dispositif", where he states: "We must be aware that images are today the basic political dispositive. By the word dispositive I refer to a semiotic engine able to act as the paradigm of a series of events, behaviors, narrations, and projections modeling social reality".[9] Since the Sixties, British critics in media and cultural studies have used different models to address the issue of power on TV and on the big screen. Stuart Hall studied media as hegemonic institutions securing social consent through the assimilation of dissent and conflict, while for Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart media are used by people as material sources of communication and for the creation of communities. Feminist critic Sara Ahmed has recently used the theory of affects, where the affective transmission of passions emerges as a means of possible control, to highlight how images on screen can capture the audience through stimulating positive passions.[10]

My approach focuses on the dispersion of origin resulting from the brandization of Shakespeare, viewed through the lens of media cultural studies dealing with affect. Through this combination, I argue that some TV series funded by public channels, based on Shakespeare's plays and dealing with multiculturalism and migration, are significant examples of how Shakespeare is recreated in relation to identity struggles and, on the other side, to the crystallization of identity through the use of affective politics. The conversion of tragedies into TV comedies taking place in the cases of *Butta la luna* and *Second Generation*, respectively reminiscent of *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*, raises an interesting question: to which objective does this transformation of genre respond?

[7] Lynn Spiegel, "Introduction", in Lynn Spiegel and Jan Olsson, eds., *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.

[8] See Michel Foucault, "The Confessions of the Flesh", *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. by Colin Gordon (London: Harvester, 1980), 194-228.

[9] See Franco Berardi, "The Image Dispositif" (2004), <http://www.uibk.ac.at/peacestudies/downloads/peacelibrary/imagedispositif.pdf>, 8 December 2011.

[10] Sara Ahmed works on gender, queer theory and cultural studies. Interested in the racialization of sexuality and nationalism, amongst other things, she is author of *Strange Encounters* (2000), *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) and *The Promise of Happiness* (2010).

Questioning the use of Shakespeare in TV series in this way does not entail deciding whether it is dominant or anti-hegemonic, as Burt polarizes the Bard's position in his study on the quotations in Black American culture. Instead, the intention is to decide which meanings, affects and social bonds are propagated through the dissemination of 'Shakespeare'.[11] This question underpins the development of my article. Approaching Shakespeare from the point of view of material culture makes it possible to trace the formation of a network of Shakespearean uses, references and quotations actualizing forms of politics.

[11] Burt, *Shakespeare after Mass Media*.

Like a Football Match: Shakespeare and Postcolonial Italy

The first series I want to analyze is *Butta la luna* ("Throw the moon away"), directed by Vittorio Sindoni and aired on *Rai Uno* from 2007 to 2009 at 9 p.m.; the two seasons comprised eight and thirteen episodes respectively. Migration and interculturalism are the main themes that the series engaged with: 'hot' issues in postcolonial Italy, where after the Bossi-Fini law approved in 2002 by the first Berlusconi government, increased restrictions were placed on migrants and asylum seekers.[12]

Starring the athlete Fiona May as main character, *Butta la luna* tells the story of Alyssa, a black, single mother giving birth to a white and blond baby-girl named Cosima. Once grown-up, Cosima becomes a social worker and fights for the rights of children and migrants, while her mother opens a shelter for immigrant women. The interweaving of the main plot with subplots presents Alyssa as a leading figure, facing her personal problems of integration and supporting the rehabilitation of other immigrants in Rome. The Italian capital and its 'multicultural' environment, full of conflicts and tensions, is the set for a number of personal stories opening onto key social themes like adoption, intercultural relations and prostitution.

[12] The management of migration has been a contentious issue on the agenda of recent Italian governments, due to the increased flows of people from of Eastern Europe and Africa. The Bossi-Fini law restricted the access to work visas and decided the expulsion of illegal migrants or the detention in temporary centers of those found without documents.

The episode I am going to analyse is the eleventh of the second series, on air on 14 May 2009; it deals with the story of a young couple, Kamila and Davide, who escape their disapproving families in order to be together. Aged fifteen and sixteen, the two lovers decide to run away when their fathers prohibit their relationship on the basis of religious hostility: the boy is a Roman Jew, while the girl is a Muslim of Arab origins, and their families run two competing food shops on the same street in the lively, popular area of San Lorenzo.

The episode opens with Alyssa reading a newspaper article entitled: "Romeo e Giulietta di San Lorenzo" ("Romeo and Juliet in San Lorenzo"), which renders explicit the reference to Shakespeare's quintessential love tragedy (fig.1).

Fig.1: Still from Vittorio Sindoni, Butta la luna 2, episode 11, 2009, Rai Fiction and LDM Comunicazione S.p.A.

The Roman(ce) drama of the run-away couple, hiding in streets and parks, is depicted against the backdrop of their families' antagonism. Cesare and Nagib, their fathers, face each other in a scene that reminds one of spaghetti westerns and gangster movies; the implicit references to Luhrmann's *Romeo+Juliet* and Wise's *West Side Story* exemplify how multiple quotations and the remediation of films on TV cause the dispersal of a textual origin. Having received a strongly worded letter from their children, the two men run out of their shops and meet in the street. After entering from two opposed parts of the screen, they stop by an invisible central line, a close-up on their profiles increases the tension. Instead of showing their guns, though, they start running after each other to reach the closest police station and create an inevitable comic effect. The exposed proximity between films and TV results in parody and irreverently underlines the 'law of honour' that triggers religious clashes. The alienating effect of laughter differentiates the TV series from big screen Shakespearean appropriations but also highlights the existing link among them.

The language of transmediality opens a window onto some of the key formal aspects of contemporary series. Hybridity is one of them: TV quotes films borrowing from their aesthetics and, on the other side, the interweaving of a complicated net of plots and subplots, recalling Elizabethan plays, produces a "soapization" of the television series.[13] *Butta la luna* presents both these characteristics; in the episode under discussion there is also a reflection on the specificity of TV and its viral power of communication. After having seen the couple during a walk downtown, Alyssa decides to help them by talking to their families. She approaches the teenagers' mothers and persuades them to participate in *Chi l'ha visto?* ("Missing") – an Italian TV show on mysteriously missing persons – to send them a message of mutual reconciliation (fig.2).

[13] For more information on the narrative techniques of contemporary TV series, see Cinzia Scarpino, "Introduzione. L'America in serie (Tv)", *Acoma,* 36 (Summer 2008), 5-13.

Fig 2: Still from Vittorio Sindoni, *Butta la luna 2,* episode 11, 2009, Rai Fiction and LDM Comunicazione S.p.A.

The scenes depicting Alyssa speaking from several TV screens located in people's houses, bars and restaurants show again a transition between cinema and television. They almost faithfully quote the aesthetics of Luhrmann's film's prologue, where a news presenter, who plays the part of the chorus, introduces the plot. This remediation of a cinematic work also introduces a meta-narrative reflection on the status of contemporary TV, where talk shows and news are preferred channels of transmission of affects.

In *Butta la Luna*, while the two lovers write letters declaring that they will not go back home until their relationship is accepted, the fathers stop their wives from appearing in the talk show side by side. Patriarchy and religion cooperate to reinforce social division. On the other hand, Alyssa decides to intervene and invite the two families and the young couple to meet again and discuss on the ground of 'love'. She decides to take action after reflecting on the 'intimate democracy' of television, which "accesses any house at the same time" (quote from the episode) and spreads a contagion of feelings. The focus on missing persons stimulates fear but also positive feelings, such as love and solidarity, and it paves the way for a happy ending.

The plan is successful, all the hearts mellow and the controversy is set to be resolved after the teenagers play the balcony scene in front of their parents. A bridge is the setting for this climactic moment: Kamila jumps on the parapet, but, instead of imploring the boy to repudiate his name, she threatens her parents to reject her own religion for love (fig.3).

Davide jumps on the other edge of the bridge and swears the same in front of the rival families. Their parents come to fear at one and the same time the threat of the children's conversion and their drowning into the river. The tragic ending of Shakespeare's story seems to be present in the collective memory and reminds the characters that the greatest possible danger is the children's death. A menace implicit in the repetition of the iconic lovers' destiny eventually facilitates the happy ending: the families decide to step back and accept the teenagers' love.

Fig 3: Still from Vittorio Sindoni, *Butta la luna 2*, episode 11, 2009, Rai Fiction and LDM Comunicazione S.p.A.

The iconic bridge joins everybody together on the basis of human affection. Ideological choices fall in the background, while what emerges is an emotional sphere that pre-exists culture and religious indoctrination and is now targeted by the viral power of TV. In this teen story, predictably Romeo and Juliet live happily ever after.

The happy ending takes place in a police station, where a Catholic priest, Alyssa's friend, quotes Shakespeare, again. He replicates Shylock's monologue on discrimination and human embodiment:

> I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. (III, 1, vv. 58-68) [14]

[14] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, The Arden Shakespeare 2nd Series, ed. by John Russell-Brown (London: Methuen, 1964).

The Jew's position in *The Merchant of Venice* is actualized and imbued with new humanism, when the priest says: "Tutti gli esseri umani hanno due occhi, un cuore; se ti pungo con uno spillo non esce il sangue?... che differenza c'è tra te e me? Che differenza c'è?" ("All the human beings have two eyes, a heart; if I prick you, don't you bleed? What's the difference between me and you? What's the difference?"). Despite the fact that the quotation closely follows the original lines, the whole idea of "revenge" animating the tension in *The Merchant of Venice* is cut out of the scene. With the cultural conflicts being smoothened, the comedic nature of the serial can be preserved.

The stereotypical images of the Jewish restaurant owner struggling against the Arab kebab seller, introduced in the first part of the episode, parodying popular mafia and gangsters movies, seem to be temporally deconstructed by the textual quotations from Shakespeare. Nonetheless, a quite banal ending refocuses on flat representations of difference: the Muslim and the Jew, quarrelling until the final scene, and the Catholic priest as well, eventually discover that they are all football fans, supporting the same team, Rome (fig.4).

Fig 4: Still from Vittorio Sindoni, *Butta la luna 2,* episode 11, 2009, Rai Fiction and LDM Comunicazione S.p.A.

The reference to football here plays a double role: on one level, the introduction of a lighter subject releases the tensions introduced with the obstructed love story; on a second level, it is a way to subtly introduce the issue of national belonging while avoiding any overt exploration of cultural and social problems connected to it. It refers to the popular opinion that the performance of patriotism is nowadays confined to football matches during the World Cup and puts forward a parallel between national identification and the association with a football team.

Presenting flat characters, like the patriarchal Arab and Jewish men, and depriving intercultural communication of its complexities, *Butta la luna* reasserts cultural stereotypes and uncritically equates the image of postcolonial Italy with 'mixed' football teams or fan communities. The image of a fictitiously undifferentiated and 'convivial' football community diminishes the political and critical impact of the story and reverberates with a hardly credible positive ideal of multiculturalism.

In "Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness" (2007), Sara Ahmed notes that this kind of transformation of the national body into a football team takes place in Gurinder Chadha's famous movie *Bend it Like Beckham* (UK, 2002; starring Praminder Nagra, who is also the main actress in *Second Generation*), where the

final joyful image of the heterosexual woman of colour, able to achieve her dream of playing professional football, orients the audience towards multiculturalism, promising happiness as a final result.[15]

In the Italian TV series the happy resolution largely fails to resolve the issues of generational difference, the persistence of inter-religious struggles and cultural prejudices, which are core questions to address in multiculturalist societies. Since the tragic epilogue is controlled, the characters' plural belonging – living between linguistic, cultural and religious dimensions – is not appropriately questioned. The sense of 'community in difference' brought forward through Shakespeare's verses becomes a way to reassure a generalist audience of the early night slot, supposedly white and catholic, that integration is possible and multiculturalism can be the subject of a family comedy.

The language of the series uses textual quotes from different plays, references to other cinematic appropriations; the creation of hybrid aesthetics highlights the links among many works constructing the multifaceted brand 'Shakespeare'. On the other hand, the association between Shakespeare and football, allied in knitting together different cultures and ethnic groups, and the genre transformation, from tragedy to comedy, affectively propagate a positive image of Shakespeare as a bridge between cultures, facilitating dialogue and knowledge. With its happy story, *Butta la luna* dissipates any active transformative potential in order to reassure its white audience on the persistence of the 'essential' values characterizing their old, conservative country. If a Catholic priest is willing to let Muslims pray in 'his' church, why should they build a mosque in the centre of Rome?

[15] Sara Ahmed, "Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness", *New Formations*, 63.1 (2007), 121-137.

Asian-British Identities and Cut' n' Mix

The Italian multicultural happiness finds a counterpart in a British TV serial whose apparent joyful ending does not annihilate the tragic impulse underlying the actualization of Shakespeare's play. I refer here to *Second Generation,* a 2003 TV mini-serial in two episodes, a remake of *King Lear* produced by Channel 4. This was the first original work written by Neil Biswas (co-writer of *In a Land of Plenty*). Directed by Jon Sen, it featured an exceptional cast of actors, including Parminder Nagra, Christopher Simpson, Danny Dyer and Om Puri (fig.5).

The story revolves around the character of Mr. Sharma (King Lear), an immigrant of Indian origin who owns a food factory in South East London. His family tale recalls the plot of *King Lear*: in

Fig 5: Still from Jon Sen, *Second Generation,* 2003, Channel 4.

a nuclear family with a dying father, three daughters struggle to decide about their parent's life and the destiny of the 'empire', in this case an Indian food factory. Even though the series was openly advertised as a remake of *King Lear* by the scriptwriter himself, the references to Shakespeare are never explicit quotations, instead they are subtle resemblances in the plot.

Mr. Sharma is in a coma and Heere, his youngest daughter, challenges her sisters' choice to turn off the machine and take control of the family business. Once Mr. Sharma recovers, he rejects Heere and her English boyfriend, while Priya and Reena, the Goneril-like and Regan-like sisters, secretly try to sell the factory. Heere suddenly falls in love with an old flame, the DJ and music producer Sam, son of Mr. Kahn, a Muslim family friend. After Khan commits suicide, Sharma starts suffering with hallucinations and is forced to face the return of ghosts from his past; his surfacing madness awakes nostalgic feelings for a mythic origin. Mr. Sharma/King Lear joins Sam/Edgar and Heere/Cordelia to start a new life in Calcutta, while in the UK the other daughters witness the destruction of their marriages and family life.

Suggesting an exploration of the conflicts faced by second generation immigrants, the name of the TV serial has a double meaning: on the one hand, *Second Generation* refers to the controversial relation of British-Asian citizens with their ethnic origins; on the other, the work is a 'second-generation tape' dismissing the purity of the original *King Lear* to promote its circulation as a work of popular culture. As Biswas explains:

> *Second Generation* not only describes the children of immigrants, but also a copy of a videotape. Looked at positively, a second-generation tape is a useful way of promoting and spreading culture, making it available to a wider and more varied cross-section of people. Yet its quality is usually poorer, and some would say that the purity of the original master tape has been eroded.[16]

[16] Sukhdev Sandhu, "It's Asian life but not as we know it", *The Telegraph*, 13 September 2003, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/3602568/Its-Asian-life-but-not-as-we-know-it.html>, 10 August 2010.

With the dissemination of a tape in a wider environment, its regeneration and dispersion cause the erosion of the master tape. *King Lear* undergoes a similar process: in different forms and media, works are continuously reproduced under its name, but, instead of being faithful representations of the original, they have the effect of modifying it. This act of transformation disrupts the very conception of origin as pure and immutable, while the arising interconnectedness among (re)produced works and objects exposes the contingent status of the network constituting the brand Shakespeare.

Biswas's work puts forward an example of the possible link between forms of Lear's existence. His choice of a Lear-like pattern, where the tragedy is reduced to the essential core of a family conflict, may be reconnected to the existence of a similar Shakespearean story in the Indian imaginary, where it is a well known fairy-tale.

In establishing a link between Shakespeare and the Eastern cultural tradition, Amitava Roy summarizes the Indian story as follows: "In the Eastern version the two evil daughters tell the foolish king that they love him as or like the sky and the Himalayas, while the youngest daughter tells him that she loves him like, and as much as, salt. The stupid old king does not realize that it is salt that gives a

taste to all food, and allows us to relish all that we eat, and foolishly kicks out the good daughter".[17] If we look at *King Lear* through the lens of South-Asian popular culture, the play seems to expose a relation between East and West. The accent on parent-child relationships paves the way for an exploration of the conflicting communication between two generations of migrants and the reconfiguration of authority in a new social environment.

But the situation is more complex and the very division between East and West in the reproduction of Shakespeare is eroded once the focus is not on the dramatist's identity but on his movement. The recourse to Lear to express the tensions and the tragicity of family relations resonates with works of criticism and popular appropriations of the play produced under Shakespeare's name, as Srinivasa's *Shakespeare His World His Art* or Roy's *Colonial and Postcolonial Shakespeares*.[18] These recent texts recalling the colonial relation that brought into being the proximity between *King Lear* and the Indian families, though presenting numerous contradictions, do not merely celebrate the Bard's universality but expose the antagonism inherent in the process of appropriation.[19] Biswas' production itself focuses on new articulations of Shakespeare in its journey from the multicultural, urban set of London to postcolonial Calcutta, overlooking the issues of the playwright's belonging. Shakespeare's emerging image is of a multiform construct in the process of being rewritten, with hybridity becoming one of its key features. This element is subsumed by the work of the brand.

Second Generation engages with King Lear in its global hybrid form, equally Eastern and Western in its historical and colonial legacies, showing conflicts and contradictions arising from this position. Through *King Lear*, the serial exposes the bankruptcy of the concept of assimilation, as the Asian community in London has weak relations with other groups and preserves its traditions and distinctive culture; all the characters portray themselves as a mix of tastes and sounds: Pryia and Reena, the rapper Uzi and the others that keep on living in South East London claim to inhabit a hybrid world.

The aim of *Second Generation*, in Biswas' words, is to create a mini-serial recalling his own experience as a second generation immigrant in the English capital, starting with the stories of his parents travelling to England; this way of mingling autobiography with Shakespearean references modifies the figure of the playwright, his belonging to England and the image of England itself. As the scriptwriter underlines: "With *Second Generation* I wanted to write something truthful – not something representative. My reason for making this distinction is that as second-generation Asians we have gone past representation".[20] This British-Indian version of *King Lear*, where first and second generations get together in an exploration of post-diasporic settling in the UK, responds to Biswas' desire for storytelling and gives up the idea of representing the Indian community as a whole. One of the tools employed to challenge the danger of monolithism implicit in the representation of peripheral identities is music and its affective quality.

Music in *Second Generation* is a battlefield where identity is questioned. Through music, defined by Paul Gilroy as "a non-representational, non-conceptual form",[21]

[17] Amitava Roy, "Here to Stay: Shakespeare, the Bengali Stage and Bengali Culture", in *Colonial and Postcolonial Shakespeares* (Kolkata: Avantgarde, 2001), 24.

[18] K. R. Srinivasa, *Shakespeare His World His Art* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1994); Roy, "Here to Stay".

[19] Even when assessing the privileged relation of India with Shakespeare, Roy's essentialist view of culture results in discrediting the playwright for not being able to speak anymore to the English public.

[20] Neil Biswas, "Conflict between cultures can be positive", *The Guardian*, 8 September 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2003/sep/08/raceintheuk.broadcasting>, 16 August 2010.

[21] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 76.

Asian-British identity emerges as prismatic and multifaceted. A famous expression coined by Stuart Hall to refer to the process of hybridization is taken from music: the never-ending differentiation of identity, central in Biswas' work, is labeled by the Anglo-Caribbean scholar as "cut-and-mix", a DJ technique and editing procedure of cutting and fusing tracks together.[22] Using Hall's words, one could say that music in *Second Generation* brings forward the Asian-British "process of unsettling, recombination, hybridization and 'cut-and-mix' – in short, the process of cultural diaspora-ization (to coin an ugly term) which it implies".[23]

The serial's soundtrack was created by underground artist Nitin Sawhney, whose hit "Uzi's rap", featured in the serial, was created in collaboration with UK Apache.[24] Mixing rap with the rhythms of bhangra, Sawhney's track reacts to the fetishization of the Asian culture and to the Bollywood-ization of cinematographic products and promotes a fusion between Eastern and Western sounds. In the heart of London the sound of bhangra, with its hybrid nature fusing a Punjabi origin with the trends of underground British music, shapes and modifies Shakespeare's England.[25] In the reconstruction of a set for a family drama, Sawnhey's soundtrack fluctuates between genres in the same way people's existence escapes crystallization.[26]

In this 'hyphenated' *King Lear*, music provides a new key for understanding identity and becomes the basis for constructing hybrid cultural codes. Affective aural contaminations tell the stories of the characters' multiple belonging and avoid any stable definition for their being. Music propagates the experience of hybridity, but its fusions and contaminations also replicate the language of the brand, as different worlds and textual echoes get together in what can be considered as 'cut'n'mix *King Lear*'.

Considering the complexity of cultural belonging as exposed by Biswas and the music in the serial, a question arises on the sense of the final scenes where Sharma reconstructs his family with Heere and Sam in India. The apparent happy ending portrays the triumph of love and genuine family bonds, together with the punishment of the evil actors. Given the political meaning of the transmission of happiness underlined in the preceding section, I do not want to overshadow the significance of the final nostalgic scenes in which Heere, Sam and Mr. Sharma find new vitality migrating back to the country left fifty years earlier or never seen at all. The joy that this travel provides is not of any consolation to the audience; on the contrary, the ultimate escape to the aestheticized and anaesthetized city of Calcutta casts a dark shadow on the unattained and perhaps impossible happiness of British multiculturalism.

Second Generation materializes the dissemination of King Lear's story in time and space, juxtaposing colonial and postcolonial contexts; it exposes the difficulties of family relations, and deals with issues of identity and community building. The remediation of the play into a television product, and later a DVD, further enhances the transmission of these themes complying with the logic of the brand's dissemination. If Shakespeare's authority is reconfirmed with every new use of his name, its appearance gets modified by the emergence of specific meanings

[22] In *Cut 'n' mix: Culture, Identity, and Caribbean Music*, Dick Hebdige presents cut'n'mix as an Afro-Caribbean style of the 80s: "Cut'n'mix is the music and the style of the 1980s just as rock'n'roll and rhythm'n'blues formed the bedrock for the musics and the styles that have made such an impact on our culture since the 1950s" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 10.

[23] Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities", in Ali Rattansi and James Donald, eds., *Race, Culture and Difference* (London: Sage Publications, 1992. Reprinted in *Anglistica*, 1.1 (1997), 22.

[24] The hit is available on the website: <http://www.reverbnation.com/tunepak/song_587758>, 10 August 2010.

[25] Bhangra is a "style of music which has singing and the beat of the dhol drum... Its raw traditional sound is often supplemented with contemporary musical styles". See Rupa Huq, "Asian Kool? Bhangra and Beyond", in Sanjay Sharma, John Hutnyk and Anshwani Sharma, eds., *Disorienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music* (London: Zed, 1996), 61.

[26] Biswas remarks: "The truth is that there are many Asian communities, all of which have thousands of stories. None of them on their own can explain or encapsulate what it is to be Asian in Britain. There is no one answer. The definition, like us, is constantly evolving". Biswas, "Conflict between cultures can be positive".

increasingly connected to it. Such is the case of the appropriations that transform multiculturalism into an attribute for Shakespeare.

To summarize, *Butta la luna* and *Second Generation* present enormous differences in terms of genre, use of stereotypes and preferred modes of communication, with music playing a prominent role in the second case. However, both the TV shows affirm an explicit connection to the 'brand Shakespeare'. Because of their common reference to conviviality and identity struggles in a multicultural environment, these works show that TV adaptations addressing urgent contemporary issues place the 'postcolonial' question at the core of Shakespeare's texts, thus contributing to the emergence of a 'multicultural Shakespeare'. On the one hand, the Italian series fails to investigate the complex forces in play when cultural communication and inter-generational interaction occur; it imports quotations from Shakespeare with the effect of (re)proposing a homogenizing humanism, using the deceitful touch of happiness. On the other hand, exploiting the affective power of Asian British music, *Second Generation* opens a battlefield where the crisis of British familial and political normativity, addressed through *King Lear*, is echoed and amplified. To the fictitious image of a 'happy', coloured Italy, *Second Generation* opposes a much deeper family drama. Its refusal of any simplistic image of British conviviality calls for a radical reconsideration of multiculturalism.