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The Twin Who Came from Abroad:

***The Comedy of Errors* and Transcultural Adaptation**

Abstract:

This article traces some of the adaptation history of Shakespeare's twin farce, *The Comedy of Errors*. The play highlights some of the paradoxes inherent in Shakespeare's status in the field of adaptation, as it is often perceived as a rather derivative effort. By delivering a more detailed reading of *Angoor* (1982), Gulzar's film adaptation of the play, I want to argue for the significance of transcultural adaptations when it comes to upending some of the established hierarchies inherent in adaptation studies. Moreover, the chapter highlights the theme of dubious births and the problem of primogeniture to conceptualise adaptation itself as a form of twinship.

Keywords:

Shakespeare; *Angoor*; twinship; appropriation; originality

Transcultural film adaptations of well-known literary properties recontextualise the source by moving it across cultural borders, a process that frequently goes together with a temporal update, to bring the material closer to the target audience. In Linda Hutcheon's concise formula, "context conditions meaning" (145), but this does not simply mean that the source material is seamlessly adjusted into another stable framework, even though the term's frequently invoked biological, (pseudo-)Darwinian connotations suggest otherwise, what with adaptation being conceptualised as the transformative process "that increase the organism's chances of flourishing in a given environment" (Boyd 587). Quite on the contrary, transcultural adaptations (which frequently arise in postcolonial contexts) negate the idea of monolithic, coherent cultures one simply abandons and blends into. It is not only the adapting party itself that undergoes change, but the target culture itself and, for that matter, the source material.¹ When a powerful and contested property like Shakespeare, the ultimate "signifier for British cultural superiority" (Boose/Burt 346) who comes with his own long history of colonisation, partakes in that process, the resulting transcultural encounter has a transformative and hermeneutic potential, much like the process of translation: "an encounter

¹ Scholars of transcultural argue that all culture is *transculture* to begin with, as culture is not a monolithic entity but characterised by permanent, dynamic exchange and hybridity (Mae/Saal 9).

between languages, histories, and cultures viewed as heterogeneous and changeable *events* rather than as stable and normative entities” (Della Coletta 6).

I will outline this process by looking into the adaptation history of *The Comedy of Errors* (*CoE*), particularly Gulzar’s 1982 film adaptation, *Angoor*. But instead of simply assessing *Angoor* as secondary to Shakespeare’s somewhat controversial play, it is my aim to also draw attention to the problematic position of Shakespeare within the field of adaptation studies. In the transcultural context in particular, adaptations often “highlight the universal dimension of Shakespeare’s plays”, but they can also do the exact opposite and “rather denounce it in the focus on cultural specificity” (Glaap 272-273). It may not be his most popular comedy, but *CoE* has its merits – not only is it one of the few Elizabethan plays to celebrate “twinship in its own right” and without an academic agenda (Murray 144), it is also a very elaborately constructed farce. For some observers, though, this presents a drawback, as farce is a frequently maligned genre and the play itself has been criticised as derivative. Either way, the play certainly highlights some of the paradoxical aspects that make Shakespeare such a special case in the field of adaptation. Moreover, as a play about primogeniture and about undesired family baggage, *CoE* is also a suitable starting point for a discussion of the idea of transculturalism, a theme that is foregrounded in the (post-)colonial setting of *Angoor*. While it is not my aim to bestow any degree of originality upon the play in the sense of it having come ‘first’, *CoE* makes for a compelling case study in that it illustrates the very process of twinning inherent in adaptation: it is a text that is taken with the idea of multiplication and the problem of attributing primogeniture to one of two identical-looking properties (see Schwanebeck [forthcoming]).

Shakespeare the adapter

Like no other Shakespeare play, *CoE* challenges the obligatory assumption driving so much of the idolatrous criticism surrounding the playwright: that he was an original genius who only adapted in order to *improve* upon his sources. This popular yarn suggests that Shakespeare (by virtue of *being* Shakespeare) moved far above the spheres of such mundane activities as appropriation or, God forbid, plagiarism: if he ‘borrowed’, he paid back with interest. It is on these grounds that Harold Bloom excludes Shakespeare from his well-known monograph, *The Anxiety of Influence* (1975), arguing that the author’s “absorption of the precursor” (in this case, Marlowe) was “absolute” (11). At the same time, *CoE* is proof that Shakespeare was a versatile adaptor himself and that he remained acutely aware of the arithmetical nature of his profession. He not only ‘multiplies’ a pre-existing literary property

by writing a new version of it, he also duplicates its key ingredients (which are ‘double’ to begin with), expanding Plautus’s play *The Brothers Menaechmus* and doubling its number of twin pairs. This notion of multiplication forms the basis for an on-going struggle that permeates the field of adaptation: that of the sibling rivalry between two or more spins on the ‘same’ narrative material, which mirrors the conflict between the first-born who tries to establish his patrimonial rights and the younger one (cut from the same genetic material, as it were) who harbours an inferiority complex. This is particularly true in the case of Shakespeare, whose reputation is one of “unsurpassed originality” (Fischlin/Fortier 1), in spite of everything we know about the vivid adaptation culture of the literary scene of the Renaissance, where the appropriation of previously published material was quite common.

Recent studies of adaptation have followed the example of Julie Sanders and have quite deliberately embraced the spectre of illegitimacy that invests the adaptor with a degree of criminal energy. Thomas Leitch has argued for the criminal energy inherent in *all* adaptation (see Leitch, “Dark Side”), while Julie Grossman borrows the metaphor of ‘hideous progeny’ from Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* (1818) to argue that creative forms of adaptation constitute a “shocking violation of original and organically pure matter when adapted or reshaped in new contexts” (Grossman 2). In her conceptualisation of adaptation as monstrous, Grossman emphasises the idea that adaptations are “difficult offspring” (8), which resonates with the stain of illegitimate appropriation. Insofar as appropriation is about forcefully taking possession of something, it always borders on “abduction, adoption and theft” (Marsden 1). Adaptation scholars usually absolve Shakespeare himself of such crimes against his literary forerunners. Either they implicitly accept that his signature simply overwrites everything in the process of adaptation, or they limit themselves to assessments of how other authors have appropriated *his* work.

Nowhere could this double standard be more evident than in the critical history of *CoE*, a play that Shakespeare scholarship often sidelines due to its heavy intertextual debt to Plautus. In a stellar chapter on the Shakespearean appropriation of Plautus, Gary Taylor shows what bizarre consequences follow from the fact that Shakespeare is the privileged nodal point through which all adaptation traffic must pass. For many decades, critics (in spite of better evidence) called *CoE* Shakespeare’s first comedy, which allowed them to sketch a straightforward narrative of growing refinement and of authorial emancipation from the derivate towards the original, culminating in *The Tempest* (1611), one of the few Shakespeare plays without a known source text. This narrative resonates strongly with farce’s dubious reputation as a somewhat adolescent genre that allegedly favours lack of restraint and

immaturity. One typically reductive account suggests that farce is a play-ground reserved for “authors in their formative years” before they evolve into “more dignified” stylists (Bermel 15). According to the predominant view that follows this narrative, Shakespeare starts out as a mere apprentice who (depending on whom you consult) *translates* or *adapts* the Plautus play in order to use it as a trial-run for his own dramatic production. Yet far from being content with merely adding a few jokes here and there, Shakespeare “outPlautuses Plautus” in the process (Taylor 396) and allegedly makes the *Menaechmi* more complex and nuanced. The underlying logic dictates that Shakespeare cannot lose, no matter what he does to the source, as “the same critics who here praise implausible complication will elsewhere applaud Shakespeare’s efforts to simplify and plausify the stories he stole from other sources” (ibid.).

This Shakespeare is somebody who only requires source-texts in order to *improve* them and who never makes mistakes, and he is thus no longer an adaptor in the traditional sense but rather a cosmetic surgeon who performs miracles with his craftsmanship. This dubious logic allows Shakespeare’s disciples to come to terms with a fundamental contradiction: that an allegedly unique writer owed his exalted status to “his ability to assimilate the texts of many others into his work” (Fischlin/Fortier 8); in 2018, a simple plagiarism software established that more than 20 passages in Shakespeare’s plays could be traced back to a 1576 manuscript by George North (see Flood). The fact that recipients conveniently overlook adaptive work that went into *CoE* has a significant impact on the play’s continued adaptation history, and may account for a certain double standard that is at work in assessments of Shakespearean adaptation. While the creators of the highly successful hip-hop show, *The Bomb-itty of Errors* (1999), were criticised for merging a canonical classic with an appropriated version of contemporary African-American hip-hop culture (see Schwanebeck [forthcoming]), Shakespeare himself arguably employs a similar method, updating a well-known classic to the stage conventions and comic register of his time. It is somewhat fitting that this pattern recurs throughout the play’s adaptation history, what with various appropriators of *CoE* refusing to disclose their source and to acknowledge Shakespeare in the process of the transaction.

The Comedy of Errors and its offspring

In a brief foreword to the published version of Charlie (and Donald) Kaufman’s script for *Adaptation* (2002), Susan Orlean (whose book *The Orchid Thief* served as the film’s point of departure) likens the idea of having her book adapted into a screenplay to the process of putting up a child for adoption, only to have it raised by smart yet slightly mad guys who completely “turn it upside down and inside out, dress it up in funny clothes and even change

its name". She admits to having had ambiguous feelings about seeing the finished film, which was not at all "the baby [she] remembered" (Orlean vii). This reaction is certainly understandable given the way *Adaptation* (a twin fable in its own right, and one that illuminates many points about the adaptation industry) treats the author herself, picturing the fictionalised version of her as stuck between a desire to (pro-)create and to crawl back into the womb.

Orlean's worries about her creative 'baby' eerily resonate with the plot of *CoE*, where Emilia loses her two sons at sea and is only reunited with them decades later, when the two Antipholi present themselves to her as the fully-formed products of other people's upbringing and education. If Orlean is worried about her creative off-spring eluding her grasp and repudiating its roots, Shakespeare's play is quite confident about the power of the matriarch to restore order by recognising her offspring as legitimate (even though the very ending of the play suggests that the filial troubles may only really be starting here) and by providing a definite genealogical narrative. However, *CoE*'s further adaptation history does not read like a sustained 'happy family' narrative. It is full of 'black sheep' who were either disowned by the family or who were more than happy to put themselves up for adoption. Unlike more revered Shakespearean comedies, *CoE* has not been very frequently adapted for the screen, as its 'see-it-in-order-to-(dis)believe-it' panache as well as its elaborate time-table of exits and entries are usually regarded to be best realised on stage; in fact, most of the existing 'adaptations' listed on the Internet Movie Database are stage productions filmed for television. Paradoxically, the play's unique selling proposition simultaneously acts as the biggest drawback when it comes to mounting new productions, as the twin effect is hard to achieve in performance and difficult to fuse with cinema's preferred *modus operandi*: mimetic realism. Moreover, farce continues to be thought of as a genre that provides little opportunity for directors to leave their mark upon the play. In order for the frantic plots of twin comedies to work properly on stage, there is less room for digging into layers of subtext. This reduces directors to competent stage hands who arrange smooth transitions between scenery changes and who point the quickest way towards the dénouement as discreetly as possible. It has only been in recent years that themes like Shakespeare's nuanced take on the topic of twinship (which departs considerably from the predominant early modern attitudes towards the phenomenon) have been discussed in critical analyses (see Murray; Schwanebeck [forthcoming]).

Notable productions and adaptations of *CoE* have counted on the reputation of their virtuoso performers or the allure of their stage spectacles to draw an audience, not on the good

names of celebrated directors: there was the Laurel/Hardy slapstick version (*Our Relations*, 1936), the Rodgers/Hart musical (*The Boys from Syracuse*, 1938), several Bollywood versions (including *Do Dooni Chaar* [1968] and *Angoor* [1982]), the acrobatic vaudeville extravaganza staged by the Flying Karamazov Brothers (*The Comedy of Errors*, 1987), the female makeover (*Big Business*, 1988), the hip-hop show (*The Bomb-itty of Errors*, 1999), not to mention the respectful BBC adaptation starring The Who's Roger Daltrey, who, as Dromio, riffs on his band's notorious reputation for smashing guitars when he has to endure the severe beatings of his master (*The Comedy of Errors*, 1983).² Notably, the filial struggle for primogeniture and legitimacy is mirrored in the play's adaptation history, as not all of these adaptations identify themselves as part of the family. Movie audiences may not always have been aware of seeing a version of the play, because the producers have occasionally obliterated their indebtedness to *CoE* and have thus abstained from cashing in on Shakespeare's cultural cachet. Due to its highly debated status ('only' a farce, and 'only' a Shakespearean exercise with an allegedly negligible degree of originality), the play problematises two typical prejudices that permeate the field: that film adaptations are likely to flash the prestige of their literary source in order to borrow some of the other medium's cultural capital, and that the literary source is always original and the (film) adaptation but a secondary phenomenon, an undesired 'afterbirth', as it were.

The case of *CoE* also serves to highlight several of adaptation studies' twinned ideas and concepts. Adaptation arguably sets the stage for a power struggle that bears some resemblance to the prenatal struggle of two twins *in utero*. The elder twin is usually thought of as the one who keeps the upper hand, as his primogeniture is privileged over the rights of his fraternal company, and adaptors come with the stigma of second-born children who are suspected of always emulating their elder siblings and of following jealously in their footsteps. Gilbert Adair, having adapted his own twin novel *The Holy Innocents* into the screenplay for Bernardo Bertolucci's film *The Dreamers* (2003), argues that both properties amount to twins, though "not identical [ones]" (Adair 193). He writes this in the afterword to a subsequent edition of his novel, which is now sold under the title of Bertolucci's film, the 'latter-born' thus having absorbed the elder. Shakespeare's 'bastard' Edmund in *King Lear* (1606) comes to mind – not a twin of the legitimate son, Edgar, but a mischievous, jealous sibling nonetheless. The cultural work of adaptation is often associated with the stain of the illegitimate and of the criminal (see Leitch, "Dark Side"), and it is no surprise that even

² There has also been Frederick Reynolds' opera (1819), which incorporates music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and thus comes with its own history of appropriation (see Miola 28-37).

Shakespeare adaptations sometimes do not openly identify as Shakespearean offspring but rather *appropriate* the source-text. Teenage comedies like *10 Things I Hate about You* (1999, based on *The Taming of the Shrew*) or *She's the Man* (2006, based on *Twelfth Night*) thus do not run the risk of scaring off the target audience (while still catering to the needs of those who enjoy spotting the plot similarities), whereas Laurel and Hardy's version of *CoE*, *Our Relations*, simply overwrites the Shakespearean dialogue with their own trademark brand of slapstick humour. Paradoxically, it is the American film industry that usually accuses Bollywood of plagiarising and of camouflaging its sources, especially when one of their blockbusters has been ripped off, but in the case of Shakespearean adaptation traffic, it is exactly the other way around, as my reading of *Angoor* will show.

A transcultural family reunion

Angoor starts with simple mathematics. The credit sequence duplicates the head of its lead actor, Sanjeev Kumar, in a manner akin to cell division, and repeats the exercise several times until there are sixteen heads on the screen, which subsequently flock together like a cluster of grapes, to visualise the literal meaning of the movie title. The remainder of the credits extends the idea of messing with the characters' heads, as it superimposes them over one another, dissects them and pastes parts of them together, before it re-establishing the correct proportion in a (grape-coloured) egg from which two twins hatch. Evidently, the film's credits bring together grapes and eggs to suggest similarity (as is borne out by food idioms in a variety of languages), and they playfully assert that, once planted, the seed will take root, grow, and multiply.

The idea of looking for one's roots drives all versions of *CoE*, but it acquires a particular significance in the context of (post-)colonial adaptation. Adaptation always implies a degree of colonisation insofar as progenitor texts serve as "vessels to be filled with new meanings" (Leitch, *Film Adaptation* 109), and it is up to the individual adaptation to either camouflage this endeavour or to flaunt it. *Angoor* chooses the latter path and directly acknowledges its intertextual debt to the Shakespeare play, repeatedly alluding to the theme of illegitimate appropriation. The latter has a very distinct flavour, given the history of Anglo-Indian relations and British imperialism. In spite of the "anxiety of influence" that often permeates Shakespeare adaptations in India (Verma 243), *Errors* has enjoyed a rich adaptive history in this territory, with *Angoor* being only one member of a quite diversified family that includes Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's play, *Bhranti Bilas* (1869), its 1963 film adaptation, and *Do Dooni Chaar*, a musical co-written by Gulzar, the director of *Angoor* (see Allen 168-

181). It is not a coincidence that Thea Buckley singles out *The Comedy of Errors* to highlight how “Shakespeare has long been assimilated culturally by India’s major artists” (Buckley 79).

Though critics emphasise that Hindi Shakespeare films are rarely subversive postcolonial endeavours but rather tend to celebrate their source texts in order to popularise them for big audiences (Shahani/Charry 162), the colonial prehistory is evident throughout *Angoor*, which emphasises that Shakespeare’s story is not only that of a happy family reunion several decades in the making, but also that of a foreign intruder who is grudgingly granted a place at the family table.³ Transcultural adaptations always come with their own migration history, and their reception can often be read in terms of xenophobic prejudices against the Other. After all, could the idea of ‘adaptation as illegitimate appropriation’ be any more pronounced than in the implicit suggestion that the adaptor is an interloper who comes from far away, steals things that are not his, and usurps existing structures in order to fill them with his own values and traditions? And could this be better subverted than by revealing the intruder to be an actual, unacknowledged family member? The notion of twinship intensifies the effect, making the black sheep of the family a virtual identical. Some of the early detective narratives of the Victorian era – Charles Dickens’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) or Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Sign of Four* (1890) – illustrate this problem by tying the problem of twinship to that of unwanted reverse colonial traffic that threatens to pollute the British establishment (see Schwanebeck, “It’s Never Twins”).

Angoor is rich in (post-)colonial baggage but does not simply contrast one monolithic culture with another; instead, in the spirit of *transculturalism*, it remains sceptical of the authenticity and coherence of both. The film updates the Shakespearean plot, but it also comments on the history of Hindi cinema, and it implicitly criticises the Indian caste system as the root cause of new master-slave relationships. At the same time, *Angoor* pays homage to its “bastard lineage” by framing the story with a Shakespearean cameo (Shahani/Charry 166). The author may be notably absent from the posters for the film, a decision that reflects the overwhelming tendency in Bollywood cinema not to market adaptations of literary classics as such (Krämer, “Adaptation” 255), but the film opens with a photograph (!) of the Bard and returns to this image in the closing shot, revealing the image to be a *moving* picture when Shakespeare winks at the audience and raises his index finger as if to assert his authority. The end-credit freeze-frames the shot, like a school bell that rings just as the stern teacher is about to embark on a tedious lesson. The positing of Shakespeare as a quasi-divine authority,

³ This problematic subtext of Shakespeare’s play itself tends to be dismissed in critical discussions of *CoE*. Daisy Murray, for one, emphasises that Shakespeare’s play presents an unusually happy account of twinship and thus goes very much against the cultural mainstream of its time (Murray 159).

framed like an icon on the wall, is thus undercut with some degree of irony, and this benign mockery of the coloniser's most treasured cultural icon resonates throughout the film. *Angoor* is one of the longest adaptations of *CoE* because it never fully subscribes to the frantic speed and urgency of the source text's farcical plotting, drawing out several scenes with drug-induced clowning and musical interludes that serve as literal showstoppers.

That the film attempts to establish some degree of Shakespearean authority in the first place is interesting in itself, not just because Shakespeare's exclusion from the credits could easily be justified. After all, legal impediments do not apply any more (Shakespeare by now being situated "helpfully outside copyright law", Sanders 60), and Bollywood has its own rich history of long-lost sibling plots, not to mention its various "*judwa bhai* (twin brothers) films" (Shahani/Charry 165) and its lost-and-found melodramas (Allen 166). Yet *Angoor* acknowledges Shakespeare, unlike the existing Hollywood adaptations of *CoE* (*Our Relations* and *Big Business*), which omit his name from their paratextual frameworks and simply adjust the material to the comic personas of their prominent lead actors. While Bollywood has a well-known history of unacknowledged remaking – a practice that has been read as a subversive practice that explicitly refutes the Western capitalist paradigm of originality and innovation (see Krämer, "End of Hollywood") –, *Angoor* foregoes this path of resistance and never cuts the umbilical cord with "the ultimate dead white male" (Hulbert/Wetmore/York 150), relying on a curious mixture of updating and reiterating Shakespeare's plot. While the four twins use taxis and trains to navigate their way around the city, archaic tropes like the shipwreck (in the story's exposition) and the gold chain are carried over from the play, as are various stage conventions. Close-ups of the Ashok twins voicing their bewilderment at yet another curious mix-up function as asides, and the use of doubles compensates for the lack of trick photography in some of the film's closing shots.

The physical co-presence of the two stars and their doubles, whose profiles are partly obscured in the *mise-en-scène*, is also an implicit comment on the history of colonialism. As if to drive home the point, Ashok and his servant, Bahadur, check into the city's *Imperial Hotel*, from where they gradually usurp the existence of their twins. *Angoor* dares its viewers to tell the difference, going so far as to include a prologue that underlines that even the parents have trouble telling the twins apart. Before he decides to adopt the two Bahadurs, Raj Tilak is already convinced that his sons are "the children from *The Comedy of Errors*", and he suspects his wife of accidentally feeding one brother twice and leaving the other one hungry. The parents' lack of certainty in establishing the identity of their children serves as a justification strategy to retain Shakespeare's bizarre naming, as Tilak explains to his wife that

it makes no sense to give the children different names as long as they *look* identical. He extends his twisted logic to the naming of the Bahadurs, two ‘undesirable’ twins whom he adopts from the local orphanage to serve his precious sons, thus supplementing the film’s two Antipholi with their two Dromios. If Tilak, with his thick glasses, is unable (or even *unwilling*) to distinguish between the twins, then the same goes for the rest of the family. References to seeing and flawed vision abound: Ashok’s sister-in-law wears glasses, and Sudha, his wife, hears about his alleged madness while taking her eye medicine, which results in the optical gag that she cannot fathom two-ness while seeing with only *one* eye.⁴ Meanwhile, the visiting Ashok is introduced as a lover of suspenseful detective novels whose voracious reading severely affects his grasp on reality.

Where one man’s flawed vision is attributed to his vivid imagination, that of another one is taken as a sign of his excessive consumption of cannabis. It is telling that Bahadur’s master would disapprove of how much *bhang* his servant consumes, and some of the arguments associated with late-19th century imperialist discourse on drugs are implied in the process. Typically, exotic drugs are metonymically taken as threats to the imperial body politic, which must keep out all foreign contaminants; look no further than Conan Doyle’s own twin tales, *The Sign of Four* and *The Speckled Band* (1892). No wonder, then, that Ashok should be as uncomfortable with the idea of taking drugs as the guardians of the Empire. Not only is he to the manor born, but he also displays the mimicry of the colonial subject; a twinned constellation that will later resurface in the Magid/Millat pairing in Zadie Smith’s novel *White Teeth* (2000). This set-up resonates at the filmic meta-level, as *Angoor* is a Bollywood homage to Shakespearean comedy which simultaneously *denounces* a number of Bollywood tropes, subverting conventions of Bollywood romance and domestic melodrama (Chakravarti 232-233). The film thus prefigures a number of controversial *British* films that came under fire for appropriating and whitewashing Indian culture, including Mira Nair’s adaptation of *Vanity Fair* (2004) or Danny Boyle’s *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) – *Angoor*’s director, Gulzar, won an Academy Award for having co-written “Jai Ho”, the latter’s popular theme song.

Ashok, whose struggle to maintain a facade of respectability and to adapt to British standards is evidenced by his white garments, disapproves of the jeweller addressing him in Urdu and frequently incorporates English lexemes and phrases (“very good”, “keep the change”, “I’m sorry”) into his Hindi diction. He struggles to retain his authority over his

⁴ It echoes an earlier scene in which Sudha, while serenading her man, stares at him teasingly through one of her golden bracelets, though the erotic subtext seems to be lost on the visibly bored Ashok.

servant and is thus abhorred by the democratising effects of intoxication. Needless to say, his nightmare comes true when the whole family eats fries that have been spiced with *bhang*. Sudha and her maid Prema, as well as the two men whom they erroneously assume to be their husbands, succumb to the relaxing and aphrodisiac effects of the drug, which leads to a night of adultery and romantic complications. Two subsequent flashbacks focalised through the eyes of the two women indicate that the marital stain is unlikely to simply vanish, which puts additional strains on a household where the maid is pregnant but the mistress is not.

Conclusion: adaptation-as-twinship

I have tried to highlight some of the paradoxical aspects inherent in any discussion of Shakespeare in the field of Adaptation Studies. Many of these are highlighted by the adaptation history of *CoE* in particular, a play that seems to put into question Shakespeare's status as an original genius, who only used source material to improve upon it and to fully make it his own. It is when the content of *CoE* is transferred to the postcolonial environment that the problem of transculturalism is added into the mix, but it is worth reiterating that the idea of the unwelcome intruder (the brother 'who came from abroad') is written into the play to begin with, and mapped onto the dynastic constellation of twins and their struggle for primogeniture. Medical treatises of Shakespeare's time, as well as sermons and broadsides, frequently debated the question of whether or not twins shared an identity or whether they had to be seen as separate individuals (Murray 19), and this controversy continues to haunt the topic of twinship throughout literary history (see Schwanebeck [forthcoming]).

I have used the example of *Angoor* to suggest that the process of adaptation contains structural similarities to twinning, particularly with regard to overtones of usurpation, monstrosity and illegitimate appropriation. Unlike various other adaptations of the Shakespeare play, which overwrite or simply omit the material's Shakespearean (and Plautine) origins in order to reduce it to a gimmick, *Angoor* proudly wears its badge as an adaptation proudly. At the same time, *Angoor* is neither a reverential adaptation which is primarily interested in celebrating its source material, nor is it a fully-fledged appropriation or a prototypical Bollywood film. Instead, it retains a typically transcultural form of skepticism for the coherence of monolithic cultures and avoids a completely neat resolution that might dispose of all family troubles. In discussions of postcolonial adaptation traffic, scholars are often quick to point to the legacy of 19th-century imperialism and to deduce that the respective adaptations follow the traditional paternal configuration of colonial hierarchy. On the surface, *Angoor*'s adaptation politics appear to emulate the fraternity model suggested by Gitanjali

Shahani and Brinda Charry, but the latter's implied egalitarianism does not do justice to the film's various unresolved tensions. Some of the concluding trick shots may put the twins into the same frame to facilitate a kind of "re-bonding of the split self" (Shahani/Charry 175), but the invisible demarcation line between them remains, thus reemphasising the inherently split condition of twinship and, in a wider sense, of subjectivity. Some branches of psychoanalysis suggest that the subject is always twinned to begin with, and if identity really is "a matter of two who can never be one", then being must be "a function of splitting and attempting to recuperate that loss in further splits" (Freedman 284).

Fittingly, the nearly speechless montage that leads up to the twin reunion reiterates the idea of isolation and confrontation. From the moment that Ashok and Bahadur enter the house as though they had been conjured via a magic door, the viewer is treated to a rather dramatic succession of disjointed close-ups, cut together much more rapidly than any other sequence in the film (with 31 shots in only 63 seconds). The dominant mode of twinned representation is thus linked to the idea of the split, and this suggests that *Angoor*'s ending does not resolve all the filial tensions, and neither, for that matter, did Shakespeare's own play, which makes a point of *not* having the brothers embrace in the final scene. This understated climax has been a point of contention for centuries. Thomas Hull, who adjusted *CoE* for the 18th century stage and cleared up some of the lewd jokes and references to the demonic, speculates that "so nice and complete master of the human heart" as Shakespeare would certainly have wanted the brothers to embrace, concluding that "some small portion of the original text [must] have been lost" (Hull iii). Most of the film adaptations, however, tend to go with Shakespeare here. Whether this happens out of respect for the play-text or because of cinematic limitations is debatable – mirror trickery and body doubles can give the illusion of physical co-presence of two people played by the same actor in the same shot, but it was only with CGI wizardry of the new millennium that more complex physical interaction became possible for on-screen twins: see *The Social Network* (2010) or *Legend* (2015), where Tom Hardy fights 'himself' in the dual role of the Kray twins.

The idea of adaptation as a battle with the (spectral) twin may, on the surface, resonate with the fraternity model of adaptation that was briefly referenced in my discussion of *Angoor*, but its semantic implication is a quite different one, more in line with an idea put forward by Thomas Leitch. In his reading of Gus Van Sant's shot-by-shot remake of *Psycho* (1998), Leitch suggests that Van Sant's film is not so much "an attempt to duplicate Hitchcock's [film]; instead it poses as its double, its twin, its mirror image" ("Ethics" 73). Undoubtedly, the notion of *twinning* is helpful in the field of adaptation, where cultural

properties are duplicated and where questions of resemblance, progeny, primogeniture, and originality are negotiated. Leitch suggests that some degree of twinning applies to *every* adaptation, even those which, unlike *Psycho*, do not reveal the notion of fidelity to be psychotic (ibid. 74). There is something to be said for twins standing emblematically for adaptation itself, as in the Charlie Kaufman-scripted film *Adaptation*, though the metaphor may be, at first glance, of limited applicability. After all, adaptations usually stem from different parentage than their elder siblings, which is not usually the case when it comes to twins. But then again, it is not always as clear-cut as this, and never was. According to a Hippocratic idea that still found extensive support throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, multiple pregnancies were caused exclusively by superfetation: two consecutive carnal acts. Superfetation, a rare though possible phenomenon in humans, thus provides a welcome cautionary tale to teach women not to give in to their sexual impulses, and it is easy to link this debate to the obsession with fidelity that haunts adaptation studies. The fidelity paradigm “constructs a gendered possession of authority and paternity for the source text within adaptation: the film as faithful wife to the novel as paternal husband” (Cobb 30).

One could probe the idea even further and argue for the presence of several other twin effects in the realm of adaptation, for instance in the all-too-familiar debate surrounding fidelity and a film’s alleged duty to resemble the literary property it is based on, or the link between twinship and the intertextual practice of quotation, which Marjorie Garber investigates with characteristic Derridean aplomb in her insightful study, *Quotation Marks* (2003). As a device that manages both to *incorporate* a pre-text and to introduce a moment of doubt and distancing towards it, the quotation mark is an ambiguous tool of appropriation, and insofar as it serves as a guarantee of exact duplication while simultaneously attenuating the original into “a shadowy revenant, a ghost” (Desmet 45), it is twinned appropriation writ large. The idea that twins can embody citation finds its most iconic illustration in Adair’s *The Dreamers*, where the incestuous twins sit in a bathtub together with their friend Matthew, framing him, the ‘foreign body’, as quotation marks, “encirc[ing] his waist with their matchingly long legs” (Adair 123). Without allowing a breath of fresh air to disturb their supplementary arrangement, they content themselves with a fully citational, self-sufficient existence throughout the weeks of revolutionary turmoil in 1968’s Paris.

Finally, the idea of adaptation-as-twinship also brings us full circle, back to Shakespeare himself: not so much because he himself was a father of twins, a fact that is frequently invoked in scholarly discussions of *CoE* (see Murray 159), but because Shakespeare himself ultimately emerges as the monstrous sibling who refuses to share and

who absorbs his twin (the adaptor) *in utero*. It is through transcultural adaptations and appropriations of the source material that the second-born sibling finds a way to challenge some of these well-established hierarchies.

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