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# 'Mon Petit Doit M'a Dit...' Referencing Shakespeare or Agatha Christie ?

Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin

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GLOBAL SHAKESPEARES

# Onscreen Allusions to Shakespeare

International Films, Television, and Theatre

*Edited by*

Alexa Alice Joubin · Victoria Bladen

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*Editors*

Alexa Alice Joubin  
George Washington University  
Washington, DC, USA

Victoria Bladen  
University of Queensland  
Brisbane, QLD, Australia

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*Dedicated to the late Mariangela Tempera (1948–2015), in loving  
memory.*

## “*Mon Petit Doigt M’a Dit ...*”: Referencing Shakespeare or Agatha Christie?

*Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin*

The aim of this chapter is to consider the specificities and difficulties of referencing and understanding the effect of allusions to Shakespeare’s plays on film when there is a double layer of mediation and quotation.<sup>1</sup> I am going to focus on the case of a French film version of Agatha Christie’s *By the Pricking of My Thumbs*, one of her detective novels that was published in 1968. This French film is entitled *Mon petit doigt m’a dit...*, an expression which is the equivalent of the English “by the pricking of my thumbs.” It was directed by Pascal Thomas and released in France in April 2005. This film refers to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* but is presented through the filter of Agatha Christie’s detective novel and its film adaptation. Our purpose is to explore this double layer of reference and to examine what a French audience may make of such a reference. What remains of Shakespeare when it is both concealed and revealed by Christie’s work and its afterlives? How do Shakespeare and Christie,

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N. Vienne-Guerrin (✉)  
Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, Montpellier, France  
e-mail: [nathalie.vienne-guerrin@univ-montp3.fr](mailto:nathalie.vienne-guerrin@univ-montp3.fr)

the two best-selling authors of all times,<sup>2</sup> share the seeds and roots of such a reference? This chapter will examine the meaning and scope of the Shakespearean reference in Agatha Christie's novel before presenting the remains of Shakespeare in the French 2005 film version. In assessing the treatment of Agatha Christie's Shakespeare in this French film, it will be useful to contrast it with another film that was broadcast on ITV in 2006 as part of a TV series known as *Marple*, starring Geraldine McEwan.<sup>3</sup> This will allow us to better identify the specificities of the Shakespearean tatters that are present in *Mon Petit doigt m'a dit...* and to study how they are integrated into a francophone context.

### LOOKING FOR *Macbeth* IN AGATHA CHRISTIE'S DETECTIVE NOVEL...

The source of the title of Agatha Christie's novel, *By the Pricking of my thumbs*, is identified as Shakespearean in the epigraph that opens the novel:

By the pricking of my thumbs  
Something wicked this way comes  
Macbeth.<sup>4</sup>

It is not the only time Christie uses Shakespeare in her novels<sup>5</sup> and the titles of her works. Her novel *Taken at the Flood* (1948) owes its title to *Julius Caesar* and quotes the passage from the play in the epigraph<sup>6</sup>; her very successful play *The Mousetrap* (first played in 1952<sup>7</sup>) is a clear reference to *Hamlet*; the title of her novel *Absent in the Spring* (published under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott in 1944) is a quotation from Sonnet 98, while *Sad Cypress* (1940) echoes the fool's song, "Come away, death," in *Twelfth Night*; the song is printed at the beginning of the novel. In *Agatha Christie's Murder in the Making. Stories and secrets from her archive*,<sup>8</sup> John Curran excavates one of Christie's letters to *The Times* entitled "Cleopatra as the Dark Lady," in which she describes her view of Shakespeare:

I have no pretension to be in any way an historian—but I am one of those who claim to belong to the group for whom Shakespeare wrote. I have gone to plays from an early age and am a great believer that that is the

way that one should approach Shakespeare. He wrote to entertain and he wrote for playgoers.

I took my daughter and some friends to Stratford when she was 12 years old (...). One young schoolboy gave an immediate criticism after seeing *Macbeth*— “I never would have believed that was Shakespeare. It was wonderful, all about gangsters, so exciting and so real”. Shakespeare was clearly associated in the boy’s mind with a schoolroom lesson of extreme boredom, but the real thing thrilled him.<sup>9</sup>

Christie transforms Shakespeare into material for thrillers and mystery novels.<sup>10</sup> In *Macbeth*, the lines that the novelist isolates are delivered by the second witch at the end of the cauldron scene in act IV, scene 1 and are immediately followed by the arrival of Macbeth who thus appears as the “something wicked (that) this way comes.” This line, which conveys a sense of intuition and foreknowledge, is particularly adapted to the suspense that characterizes Christie’s detective novels. The origins of the expression are uncertain. All editions refer back to Steevens’ comment that “It is a very ancient superstition that all sudden pains of the body, and other sensations which could not naturally be accounted for, were presages of somewhat that was shortly to happen.”<sup>11</sup> The *Macbeth* quotation appears on the back cover of the book published in 2001 by HarperCollins *Publishers*, suggesting both that *Macbeth* is needed to elucidate the title of Christie’s novel and that this reference may attract potential readers. Putting the reference on the back cover is no doubt part of a marketing strategy to boost sales.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, it also draws the reader’s attention to the importance of the *Macbeth* motif in the novel and feeds a degree of Shakespearean expectation. Seeing this Shakespearean reference on the back cover, readers will tend to assume that *Macbeth* is going to play an essential part in the novel.

This, in fact, seems to exaggerate or to magnify the Shakespearean presence in Christie’s novel, since, beyond this epigraph, the novel only contains two explicit references to *Macbeth*. The first one is part of a dialogue between Tommy and Tuppence, the two main protagonists of the novel, a couple of amateur detectives. Tuppence, the wife, has the intuition that “something wicked” has happened at Sunny Ridge nursing home, where Aunt Ada, Tommy’s old aunt, has just died. Tuppence underlines the idea that she can see and feel things that others do not pay attention to:

[...] nobody will take any *notice at all*

‘Except Mrs Thomas Beresford,’ said Tommy.

‘All right, yes,’ said Tuppence. ‘I’ve taken notice –

‘But why did you?’

‘I don’t quite know,’ said Tuppence slowly. ‘It’s like the fairy stories. *By the pricking of my thumbs – Something evil this way comes* – I felt suddenly scared. I’d always thought of Sunny Ridge as such a normal happy place – and suddenly I began to wonder – That’s the only way I can put it...’<sup>13</sup>

This constitutes a misleading allusion or what Mariangela Tempera called a “pseudo-quotation.” Christie rewrites the original quotation mentioned in the epigraph into an approximate quotation that is both Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean.<sup>14</sup> The text here does not mention *Macbeth* but “fairy tales”<sup>15</sup> as the source of these two lines and misquotes Shakespeare’s text by replacing the word “wicked” with the word “evil.” It is as if the reference, having been properly quoted once by Christie in the epigraph, can now be handled more casually. Shakespeare’s text is thus blurred by way of approximation and generalization. However, as the readers have the epigraph in mind, they feel that they hear the text of *Macbeth* without really hearing it; thus, Shakespeare becomes a ghostly presence.

The second reference to *Macbeth* in the novel is longer and more precise as it constitutes a micro “explication de texte” or literary analysis within the novel, providing an interpretation for Macbeth’s famous reaction to Lady Macbeth’s death when he says: “She should have died hereafter” (5.5.17). The quotation appears in a dialogue between Tommy and Dr Murray who is in charge of the health of the elderly people at Sunny Ridge, where too many women have recently died:

‘This case of Mrs Moody, however, was somewhat different. She died in her sleep without having exhibited any sign of illness and I could not help feeling that in my opinion her death was unexpected. I will use the phrase that has always intrigued me in Shakespeare’s play, *Macbeth*. I have always wondered what Macbeth meant when he said of his wife, “she should have died hereafter.”’

‘Yes I remember wondering once what Shakespeare was getting at,’ said Tommy. ‘I forget whose production it was and who was playing Macbeth, but there was a strong suggestion in that particular production, and Macbeth certainly played it in a way to suggest that he was hinting to the medical attendant that Lady Macbeth would be better out of the way.’

Presumably the medical attendant took the hint. It was then that Macbeth, feeling safe after his wife’s death, feeling that she could no longer damage him by her indiscretions or her rapidly failing mind, expresses his genuine affection and grief for her. “She should have died hereafter.”

‘Exactly,’ said Murray. ‘It is what I felt about Mrs Moody. I felt that she should have died hereafter. Not just three weeks ago of no apparent cause.’ (Christie 207)

*Macbeth* is here used to refer to the mystery of a patient’s death and to suggest that murder or unnatural death is in the air. “She should have died hereafter” sounds like a motto illuminating all suspicious deaths in all detective novels. This quotation throws into relief the kinship between *Macbeth* and the detective story in which it is embedded: the two stories are based on mysteries that need to be solved, a similarity that explains that *Macbeth* has notably been used in a *Columbo* episode entitled “Dagger of the mind.”<sup>16</sup>

By invoking *Macbeth* as an intertext for Christie’s novel, Shakespearean readers may gain the impression that they see *Macbeth* everywhere and have to deal with what Christy Desmet termed a “drama of recognition.”<sup>17</sup> *By the Pricking of My Thumbs*’ opening paragraph concludes with “It looked as though it might rain but wasn’t quite sure of it” (Christie 13) which recalls the “Thunder, lightning and rain” (1.1) of *Macbeth*. When reading Tommy saying “Being a woman you’re more ruthless” (Christie 22), a Shakespearean reader may think of Lady Macbeth’s lack of pity in the play. The obsessive repetition of the enigmatic question “Was it your poor child?” (Christie 40, 255, 337) seems to bring us back to the presence of children in *Macbeth* that has been harped upon for so many years, notably since the publication of L. C. Knight’s article “How many children had Lady Macbeth?” in 1964.<sup>18</sup> This obsession with the absent or lost child that L. C. Knight found in *Macbeth* seems to find its counterpart in what François Rivière, a specialist of Agatha Christie, sees as her obsession with the lost child.<sup>19</sup> The allusion to a “prophecy of some kind” (34) and the recurrent motif of the poisoned milk (37) seem to echo Shakespeare’s script. In Christie’s novel, milk is omnipresent and it is the milk of human un-kindness (1.5.16).<sup>20</sup> Having been put on the track of a Shakespearean intertext by the paratext (title, epigraph and cover) that Gérard Genette describes as the “thresholds of interpretation” (“seuils”),<sup>21</sup> the readers then become detectives looking for any trace of Shakespeare in Agatha Christie’s novel. Through this

filter, such a banal word as “Knock” (51) becomes an allusion to the porter scene, or such a common phrase as “it’s like ghosts” (52, 171) recalls the banquet scene in *Macbeth*. When we come to Chapter 7 entitled “The friendly Witch,” we cannot but see the witches in the play, and yet Agatha Christie challenges our expectation by explicitly referring not to *Macbeth* but to the fairy story of Hansel and Gretel (106). “Dead children, too many dead children” (Christie 106) seems to call us back to the play, both to Lady Macbeth’s murderous imagination and to the murder of Macduff’s children. Quoting Marjorie Garber, we could say that Shakespeare “haunts” the novel as “a ghost who returns again and again to interrogate modern life”<sup>22</sup> and here to interrogate and comment upon Agatha Christie’s novel. Thus, the main question that we ask in this volume, which applies even more to the film medium, is how can this ghostly presence and these “spectral” traces<sup>23</sup> be spotted and referenced? The basic problem is that ghosts exist only if you see them. While clear fingerprints are easy to store and reference, how can one retain, identify, stabilize and reference impressions?

This leads us to examine how the French film version of Agatha Christie’s novel erases, captures, retains and restores these Shakespearean remnants.

### LOOKING FOR AGATHA CHRISTIE’S SHAKESPEARE IN *Mon Petit Doigt M’a Dit...*

The film was directed by Pascal Thomas and stars Catherine Frot (Prudence, the French version of Tuppence) and André Dussollier (Bélisaire, the French version of Tommy), two very popular French actors.<sup>24</sup> It is considered as an adaptation of Agatha Christie’s novel as appears from the film’s opening credits, which read “D’après un roman d’Agatha Christie” (after a novel by Agatha Christie). When you listen to the comments on the film by director Pascal Thomas and director of photography, Renan Polles, in the supplement to the film on DVD, you notice that they never refer to Shakespeare but constantly to the process of adapting Agatha Christie’s novel and notably to the choice of simplifying its very complicated plot so that the whole story can make sense. When you read reviews of the film, you see that the reference to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is not thrown into relief but that the adaptation of Christie’s novel undoubtedly prevails over the allusion to Shakespeare.

Yet the original trailer<sup>25</sup> gives the spectators an idea of the tone and atmosphere of the film. It first throws into relief the humour of a film that is usually described as a “comédie policière,” a comic detective film. It opens with comic equivocation when we discover Catherine Frot (Prudence), in bed, saying to her husband “je suis une femme comblée” (“I am in paradise”). The next shot reveals the double entendre and that she playfully means that it is not for sex that he is the best but for ironing. The trailer is based on a comment delivered in voice-over by the husband, Bélisaire, about his wife, Prudence, and insists on the mysteries of the story and on his wife’s intuition.<sup>26</sup> What is striking is that the 85 seconds of the trailer contain the only explicit reference to *Macbeth*, thus allowing the spectators to understand the meaning of the title, as if Shakespeare were the key to the whole story. Here is the script of the trailer:

I’ve got a wonderful wife. She is... how could I say this?... full of curiosity..., invention... and intuition.... What she likes most is mystery..., crime..., poisoning..., disappearances..., and travels by train.... To help her in her investigations, she’s got one major asset...

[Shot of Prudence saying:] *I’ve had the same revelation as the witches in Macbeth...*

It’s her thumb.

[Shot of Prudence saying:] *By the pricking of my thumbs something wicked this way comes/ (Bélisaire translating) Mon petit doigt m’a dit, quelque chose de mauvais vient par ici.*

At the start of the whole story – by the way, how did it all start? ...

The trailer is the equivalent of the back cover of the book. It magnifies the Shakespearean intertext and alerts us to Shakespearean allusions in the film.

In the ITV version, the characters refer to *Macbeth* in the very first minutes of the film. During the opening credits, the spectators see Tuppence (Greta Scacchi) fetching a book before leaving her home with her husband, Tommy (Anthony Andrews). Once they are outside, about to leave for Sunny Ridge, we have the following dialogue:

Tuppence. Can’t you drive? I want to read my book.

Tommy (seeing the book cover, saying in disgust). *Macbeth?*

Tuppence. *Macbeth.*

Tommy (laughing with contempt). I was in *Macbeth* in my prep. school. (Playing bombastically) “Tomorrow, and Tomorrow and tomorrow,/ Creeps in this petty pace from day to day...”

Tuppence. I heard you were marvellous.

Tommy. Who from?

Tuppence. You.

Tommy (after starting the car). "By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes."

From the first minutes of the film, this explicit reference elucidates the title derisively. This sequence follows a cold opening which shows two kids standing behind a window, watching what looks like a child-witch hunt and commenting: "They won't find him. He should be in the witches' house by now. Do you know the story of the witch, Ethan? My dad says she used to take children from the village, back in the olden days." This is followed by another clear reference to *Macbeth*, when Tommy and Tuppence leave Sunny Ridge and are waved good bye by three old women. Tommy, giggling, asks Tuppence: "Look at that. What does that remind you of? Act one, scene one: 'When shall we meet again,/ In thunder, lightning or in rain?'" (clip or/and image). Later on, Miss Marple and Tuppence discover a doll behind a mantelpiece and say: "Miss Marple. This is a warning. Tuppence. Something wicked this way comes." The ITV film wants to elucidate the title of Christie's novel as soon as the film starts, and the Shakespearean root is made material and objectified by the book that is handled by Tuppence at the beginning of the novel and by the very explicit allusions to the text of *Macbeth*.

In the French film version, the *Macbeth* sequence lies in these few words delivered by Prudence: *J'ai eu la même révélation que les sorcières de Macbeth*, "By the pricking of my thumbs something wicked this way comes" and immediately translated by her husband as "*Mon petit doigt m'a dit, quelque chose de mauvais vient par ici.*" The spectators are given both the original text in English and its translation into French in a kind of duet sequence which shows the intimacy between husband and wife who obviously share the same sophisticated literary culture. The quotation sounds strange in the francophone background of the film but the incongruity fits a character who is presented as full of originality and eccentricity.<sup>27</sup> Obviously, the director wanted to quote Shakespeare's precise words but as Agatha Christie's story is transposed into a French context<sup>28</sup> and as the audience of the film will be French, one needed to make sure that Shakespeare's words would be understood. In the context of the film, this quotation is a marker of the high culture of the characters and hearing

it in English suggests that "Shakespeare's language is essential to Shakespeare."<sup>29</sup> This *Macbeth* quotation is the only one in the whole film where the "she should have died hereafter" we found in the novel is not explicitly mentioned.<sup>30</sup> The reference to *Macbeth* only occurs after the first 28 minutes of the film, and yet it irradiates and haunts the whole film.

Prudence's voice delivering the quotation is heard again in a fantastic ghostly sequence later in the film.<sup>31</sup> Bélisaire, worried about his wife's disappearance, hears her voice while looking at himself in a mirror. The sequence is part of the fantastic dimension of the film that includes strange dream sequences and cultivates an atmosphere of mild folly.

Yet the mode of irradiation is mainly musical in this film. The 85-second trailer also includes a song sung by a choir of children and the lyrics of that song are the Shakespearean "By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes."<sup>32</sup> The tune that can be heard in the trailer is an essential part of the film score composed by Reinhardt Wagner<sup>33</sup> which contributes greatly to the eerie, weird atmosphere that pervades a film that combines comic eccentricity and dark, nightmarish, ambience.

The first time you hear it, after seven minutes and 32 seconds,<sup>34</sup> is when the witch-like character, Tante Ada (Aunt Ada, played by Françoise Seigner), whistles it in an enigmatic way, and it seems that part of the suspense of the film will be to discover the meaning of that tune, in the same way as the suspense of *Macbeth* is based on the quest for the meaning of the witches' prophetic words. One can hear variations on the same tune again and again in the film, notably, around minute 22,<sup>35</sup> when Prudence examines a mysterious painting, looking for clues to find Rose Evangelista (the equivalent of Mrs. Lancaster in the novel). The tune has spread from Aunt Ada's whistling to Prudence's whistling, and it is associated with the enigma that is at the heart of Christie's plot.

When you hear it again, around minute 35,<sup>36</sup> you feel that, like a rumour, the tune is disseminated throughout the film as it goes from one mouth to another and builds the whole atmosphere of the film. Twenty minutes later, it is made more spectacular<sup>37</sup> as the tune is a key that opens a secret part of Aunt Ada's "harmonium." It is again associated with the mystery of the film; it is a clue that needs deciphering in the same way that the witches' words need to be interpreted. Then, the audience hear the tune in one of the final sequences in the open air where it is played by a little orchestra at a fair where we discover stands of "game of slaughter" (jeu de massacre) and the race of witches ("cours des sorcières") and

the wheel of fortune.<sup>38</sup> The music of the fair turns “foul” in the next sequence<sup>39</sup> when we switch from the festive performance of the music to a thrilling atmosphere made of the combination of strange images of children and eerie music. It is only in this sequence, at the very end of the film, that the lyrics of the song are introduced and that we discover that they are Shakespeare’s words. Thus retrospectively, the recurrent musical motif becomes Shakespearean and all the musical moments that we have just isolated and referenced become evanescent Shakespearean allusions. This example shows how when it comes to studying Shakespeare in tatters, we deal with ghostly figures, Shakespeare being there without being there. The end of the film, by putting lyrics on the tune that we have recurrently, almost obsessively, heard, provides a key and constitutes a first stage in the *anagnorisis* or recognition that is orchestrated in the final sequences.<sup>40</sup> When we recognize the lyrics, the tune takes on a new meaning in the same way as the witches’ words take on a new meaning at the end of *Macbeth*, inviting the audience to re-consider the whole story. The lyrics that are *in fine* added to the tune thus allow the spectators to put the pieces together and to reconstitute a new picture and a new story.

Once we have identified the Shakespearean motto of the film, we feel we are, again, as with Christie’s novel, invited to find Shakespeare here, there and everywhere. Like Prudence, we imagine that the red bottles received by her husband in a parcel are “blood” (du sang) and when Bélisaire identifies these bottles as bottles of Swiss wine, we may have the feeling that our visions of Shakespearean figments are as ridiculous as Prudence’s anxious intuition. In the film, Prudence sees witches everywhere before realizing that these witches are the products of her interpretation. Yet, the dagger that we see at the end of the film is not a dagger of the mind. The Shakespearean motto of the film is an invitation to proceed to a Shakespearean reading of the film: in a comment on the film, Pascal Thomas refers to the symbolism of dark nativity that the film cultivates, through images of statues of the Virgin, through the presence of an important bestiary, notably the donkey and the “billy goat” that he sees as a symbol of evil, an embodiment of the devil. Pascal Thomas reveals in the DVD commentary that if he put the goat in his film, it is just because he loves that animal. It is only afterwards that he realized the coherent symbolism that was running throughout the film.

Once we identify and put the Shakespearean “tatters” together, it seems clear that we can offer a Shakespearean reading of the whole film and that Shakespeare provides tools to understand, read and interpret the

film. At the end, while dancing at the fair with her husband, Prudence is thoughtful and we are given access to her thoughts thanks to the use of a voice-over:

Everybody seems so agreeable. What secrets and what dark thoughts are hidden behind these smiles and banal discussions? What monstrosity is hidden behind these sweet faces and landscapes? There is no peaceful village in this world.<sup>41</sup>

When we have *Macbeth* in mind, this comment cannot but remind us of one of the quotations of Shakespeare’s play that has become a sort of motto: “Fair is foul and foul is fair.” This cannot be considered as an explicit reference but it is certainly part of the fleeting, almost subliminal presence of Shakespeare throughout.<sup>42</sup> *Mon Petit doigt m’a dit...* is no doubt a film that appropriates Shakespeare through a quotation, as the reference to *Macbeth* is explicit. Yet as Shakespeare’s name is not uttered, one cannot be sure that *Macbeth* will be identified as a Shakespeare play by all people in the audience. *Anagnorisis* will not be effective for every viewer but referencing such an allusion enables us to see how such a famous and popular writer as Agatha Christie can communicate (with) Shakespeare. *Mon Petit Doigt m’a dit...*, by including the Shakespearean quotation in English, pays tribute both to Christie and Shakespeare. In this film, the witch’s words are transformed into a nursery rhyme that remains in your mind long after the film ends. The Shakespearean fragment is absorbed into a skein which combines *Macbeth*, Shakespeare, Christie...The suspension points that are in the title reveal that the quotation is just the beginning or exterior sign of a deeper dialogue with Shakespeare’s play. A few words permeate the whole film through musical sequences that keep Christie’s allusion and Shakespeare’s words alive from the beginning to the end of the film. The ellipsis (...) is in fact perhaps the best way of revealing and hiding the ghostly presence of *Macbeth* in this film and it is also emblematic of the rich and endless forms and processes of quotation that one can observe when it comes to Shakespeare’s works.

## NOTES

1. Many thanks to Sarah Hatchuel and Victoria Bladen for their help and suggestions. Many thanks to Mariangela Tempera for organizing a wonderful conference in Ferrara (2013) where a first version of this paper was delivered.
2. Jerome Taylor, "The Big Question: How Big Is the Agatha Christie Industry, and What Explains Her Enduring Appeal?" *The Independent*, Wednesday February 25, 2009, accessed September 15, 2020.
3. Stewart Harcourt, writer, *Marple*, Season 2 Episode 3, "The Pricking of My Thumbs," dir. Peter Medak. Aired 19 February 2006.
4. Agatha Christie, *By the Pricking of My Thumbs* [1968] (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001, *Agatha Christie Official Website*), accessed 15 September 2020.
5. Lisa Hopkins, *Shakespearean Allusion in Crime Fiction, DCI Shakespeare* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 17–61.
6. "There is a tide in the affairs of men,/ Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune:/ Omitted, all the voyage of their life/ Is bound in shallows and in miseries./ On such a full sea are we now afloat,/ And we must take the current when it serves,/ Or lose our ventures" (*Julius Caesar*, 4.3.216–22). Contrary to the quotation from *Macbeth* in *By the Pricking of my thumbs*, this one is not identified in the epigraph.
7. It was adapted from a radio play, *Three Blind Mice*, written by Christie in 1947. It was Agatha Christie's son-in-law, Anthony Hicks, who suggested the new title. See <http://www.agathachristie.com/christies-work/stories/The-Mousetrap/525>, accessed September 15, 2020.
8. John Curran, *Agatha Christie's Murder in the Making. Stories and Secrets from Her Archive* (London, HarperCollins, 2011).
9. *The Times*, February 3, 1973, in Curran, 370.
10. John Curran notes that "Agatha Christie was a lifelong fan of William Shakespeare" and he spots Shakespeare's presence in the titles of Christie's novels as well as in their plots. *Macbeth*, for example, "provides some of the background of *The Pale Horse*" and the line "Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him" is quoted in *Hercule Poirot's Christmas*, following the discovery of a body. Curran, 366.
11. See note Arden 2, edition by Kenneth Muir, 109; John Brand, *Observations of the Popular Antiquities*, vol. 3 (London: Bell & Daldy, 1872), 179.
12. The same commercial strategy appears on the Agatha Christie website, which is presented as the "official home of the best-selling author of all time," where the Shakespeare quotation is thrown into relief: <http://www.agathachristie.com/christies-work/stories/by-the-pricking-of-my-thumbs/153>, accessed September 15, 2020.

13. Christie, *By the Pricking of My Thumbs*, 79.
14. Christy Desmet, Natalie Loper, Casey eds. *Shakespeare/Not Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
15. There are notably references to Hansel and Gretel and fairy tales in Christie, *By the Pricking of My Thumbs*, 106; 295.
16. Sarah Hatchuel, and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, “‘Is This an Umbrella Which I See Before Me?’: *Columbo* Goes to Scotland Yard,” in *Shakespeare on Screen: Macbeth*, edited by Sarah Hatchuel and Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, 397–410 (Rouen: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2013).
17. Christy Desmet, “Dramas of Recognition: *Pan’s Labyrinth* and *Warm Bodies* as Accidental Shakespeare,” in *Shakespeare/Not Shakespeare*, ed. Christie Desmet, Natalie Loper and Jim Casey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 275–91.
18. L.C. Knights, “How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth? An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespeare Criticism,” in *Explorations* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 15–54. See also, Rutter, “Remind Me: How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?” (esp. 45–53).
19. See DVD supplement. See also François Rivière, *Agatha Christie, La Romance du Crime* (Paris: Éditions de La Martinière, 2012).
20. On the milk motif in Christie’s novels, see Hopkins, 30–36.
21. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, originally published in French as *Seuils*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987).
22. Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare’s Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* (First published in 1987 by Methuen. New York: Routledge, 2010), xv (preface).
23. Maurizio Calbi, *Spectral Shakespeares: Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
24. The two actors played Tommy and Tuppence (Prudence and Bélisaire) in two other adaptations of Agatha Christie’s detective novels, directed by Pascal Thomas, *Associés Contre le Crime* (2012) and *Le Crime est notre Affaire* (2008).
25. 8audreyrose, “Mon petit doigt m’a dit 2005 Trailer.flv,” 8 October 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3SSVBIcKRE>, accessed 15 September 2020.
26. “J’ai une femme formidable. Elle est, comment vous dire, curieuse, inventive, intuitive. Ce qu’elle aime le plus, c’est le mystère, les crimes, les empoisonnements, les disparitions, et les voyages en train. Pour l’aider dans ses enquêtes, elle a son atout majeur, si j’ose dire.  
*J’ai eu la même révélation que les sorcières de Macbeth, c’est son petit doigt, By the pricking of my thumbs something wicked this way comes/ Mon petit doigt m’a dit, quelque chose de mauvais vient par ici. Quand*

- cette histoire a commencé, d'ailleurs comment a-t-elle commencé cette histoire ? *Mon subconscient essaie de m'envoyer un message. Oh que je n'aime pas ça.* Un mystère d'Agatha Christie.”
27. Catherine Frot is known for playing eccentric characters. She is notably famous for her part in *Un air de famille* (dir. Cédric Klapisch, 1996) in which she plays Yolande who is offered a necklace by her husband and describes it as a dog collar. She also played the part of a very independent and original woman in *La Dilettante* (dir. Pascal Thomas, 1999).
  28. Pascal Thomas reveals in the DVD comment on the film that what motivates him to make films is “to preserve images of a France that is disappearing” (“fixer une France qui disparaît”).
  29. For a discussion on the linguistic, verbal dimension of appropriation and citation, see Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, 62.
  30. It is erased but when you know Christie’s book, you can recognize it in the dialogue between the doctor and Bélisaire, in the boat sequence.
  31. Time code 1.8.38–1.9.13.
  32. Interestingly, one finds a choir sequence with lyrics from *Macbeth* including “Double double toil and trouble” and “something wicked this way comes” in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004, dir. Alfonso Cuarón): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6I1P1Vml8WM>, accessed September 15, 2020. Thanks to Alfredo Michel Modenessi for signalling this sequence to me.
  33. Available at: <https://itunes.apple.com/fr/album/mon-petit-doigt-ma-dit.../id76971739>, accessed September 15, 2020.
  34. Pascal Thomas, dir, *Mon Petit Doigt m’a dit*. (2005; Ah! Victoria! Films), Time code: 7.32–8.01.
  35. Thomas, *Mon Petit Doigt m’a dit*, time code: 22.27–22.43.
  36. Thomas, *Mon Petit Doigt m’a dit*, time code: 35.50–36.21.
  37. Thomas, *Mon Petit Doigt m’a dit*, time code: 56.31–57.03.
  38. Thomas, *Mon Petit Doigt m’a dit*, time code: 1.22.06–1.23.44.
  39. Thomas, *Mon Petit Doigt m’a dit*, time code: 1.25.58–1.26.48.
  40. Aristotle notably defined *anagnorisis* as “a change from ignorance to knowledge” (Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. Penguin, 1996, 6.4, p. 18).
  41. In French: “Tout le monde a l’air si convenable. Quelles arrière-pensées, quels secrets et peut-être quelle noirceur derrière ces sourires et ces propos anodins. Quelle monstruosité se cache derrière la douceur des visages et des paysages. Il n’y a pas de village tranquille.”
  42. This Shakespearean allusion is included in the “Shakespeare on screen in francophonia database” <http://shakscreen.org/>. This database records and analyzes Shakespeare adaptations and allusions on cinema and television screens in French-speaking countries, accessed September 15, 2020.

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