

Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: Poster-boy for contemporary masculinity?

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Two recent novels, Neil Arksey's *MacB* (1999) and Welwyn Katz's *Come Like Shadows* (1993) appropriate Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for juvenile readers. This paper reads these novels in order to investigate deployments of *Macbeth* as a gendered discourse. Specifically, it argues that these texts deploy *Macbeth*, not just as cultural authority, but as cultural authority on gender. Under the guise of offering *Macbeth* as a model, contemporary juvenile fiction offers his as a cautionary tale, a narrative through which to avoid the 'pitfalls' of listening to dangerous women, and a tool of negotiation between notions of an ideal masculinity and the realities of 'post-feminist' contemporary culture.

[R]etellings of canonical literary texts have a double edge: they serve in the transmission of cultural values, but also shape those cultural values according to dominant metanarratives through processes of discursive and narrative selection and modification. (Stephens and McCallum 1998, 255)

Shakespeare's character of *Macbeth* would appear to be a suspicious model of masculinity for contemporary boys. However, under the guise of offering *Macbeth* as a model, contemporary juvenile fiction has deployed his as a cautionary tale, a concept through which to avoid the 'pitfalls' of listening to dangerous women, and a tool of negotiation between notions of an ideal masculinity and the realities of 'post-feminist' contemporary culture. Here I wish to consider retellings and appropriations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for children as functional contributors to the cultural production and maintenance of 'hegemonic masculinity'. Specifically, I am interested in the intersections between Shakespearean authority and normative gender values enacted by two contemporary novels by Neil Arksey and Welwyn Katz; and the extent to which *Macbeth* becomes a projected ideal, or portrait, of masculine subjectivity. Close readings of these contemporary texts' uses of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as the embodiment of specific modes of masculinity reveal the extent to which these modes are

'offered' to male protagonists (and readers) as normative patterns of behaviour and attitude ultimately offering a potentially anachronistic understanding of masculinity.

Connell has influentially defined hegemonic masculinity "as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (1995, 77). Such a model, in articulating gender as a configuration of practices clearly offers a discursive model of gendered identity and subjectivity, thereby implicitly acknowledging Butler's notion of gender, which "cannot be understood as a *role* which either expresses or disguises an interior 'self,' whether that 'self' is conceived as sexed or not. As performance which is performative, gender is an 'act,' broadly construed, which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority" (Butler 1990, 279). Within such discursive understandings of gender, subjects 'become' gendered through cultural and personal exposure to a series of ideas about gendered behaviour and identity. Literature, as a specific cultural artefact, both forms and is informed by dominant discourses of gender. Given the broadly accepted educative aspect of children's literature as a genre, it is not surprising to find children's fiction functioning as a locus of exposure to such normative models of gendered subjectivity, thereby actively inculcating the reader in to specifically constructed genders. Such a strategic move is facilitated by the expectation placed on "children's literature" to be educational or informative, to provide "a sense of what is valuable in the culture's past" (Stephens 1992, 3). In practical terms, this expectation, when combined with the appropriation of Shakespeare as cultural authority, reveals and facilitates a commitment to a conservative liberal-humanist conception of subjectivity and social obligation. Laurie Osborne notes, "the production of Shakespeare for young children not only exposes how a culture imagines the education of its young people but also how reworking Shakespeare for children justifies a revealing degree of abbreviation, naturally only in preparation for the "real thing"" (1997, 103). Her proposition notes that children's Shakespeare has built into it an implied goal of preparation, an exaggerated version of the 'preparatory' or educational aspect presumed of 'worthwhile' children's literature in general, that it simultaneously achieves the 'cultural function' of retold stories, prepares the audience for 'authentic' Shakespeare in later life while using Shakespeare to *construct* the discourses that will dictate that later life.

Accepting this model, it is also worth thinking about Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) itself as a site of anxiety about masculine subjectivity, as well as a cultural tool used to construct it. The play may even be legible as a 'response' to a broader cultural anxiety about relational gendered

identities and hierarchies, in which:

Early Modern moralists continually reminded their charges that manhood was not a natural condition but a quality to be striven for and maintained only through constant vigilance, and even then with the utmost difficulty (Orgel 1996, 19).

The play overtly thematises gendered behaviours and relations. Indeed, it could be read as a trajectory of declining masculine subjectivity on the part of Macbeth. He is introduced to the audience as an 'ideal' who excels in the categories of masculinity prescribed by his culture:

Captain. For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smok'd with bloody execution,
Like Valour's minion, carv'd out his passage,
Till he fac'd the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to th'chops,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.
Duncan. O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman! (I.ii.16-24)¹

Indeed, Duncan's valuation of Macbeth is such that Ross reports "His wonders and his praises do contend / Which should be thine, or his" (I.iii.92-93). Macbeth's significant position however, although gained through the sanctioned violence and nationalism of his culture, is effectively negated when Duncan disrupts the existing homosocial order by instituting a patrilineal rather than tanist system of royal inheritance.² In naming Malcolm "Prince of Cumberland" (I.iv.39) Duncan denies Macbeth's previously legitimate claim on the throne, and in extension, his privileged masculine status. Macbeth himself further undermines his own gender position in failing to sustain autonomy in the face of challenges, both linguistic and behavioural, from aberrant women most obviously Lady Macbeth and the Witches.

Such a reading of the play constructs Macbeth as a man unable to sustain his hard-won masculine status, or possibly failing to recognise the 'importance' of sustaining such status. Viewed within a patriarchal framework then it is possible to see the play as a cautionary tale for masculine subjects. If so, it is unsurprising that *Macbeth* should offer a usefully authoritative object for retelling and appropriation in contemporary children's novels that themselves appear to be responding to broader cultural anxieties about gender, especially masculinity.

Neil Arksey's *MacB* (1999) modernises and retells the narrative of *Macbeth*. Arksey never names his source but clearly marks his appropriation through the naming of his characters, and the appropriation of con-

cepts such as fate, prophecy and ambition as well as the plot. Hence, we meet two young footballing friends, Banksie and MacB, who both dislike the captain of their school football team, Duncan King. For any reader familiar with Shakespeare's play, the parallels are immediately obvious. Arksey essentially follows the central plot line of *Macbeth*'s rise to and fall from power by any means necessary, and systematically constructs parallels of character, event and setting. Knowledge of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* also informs understanding of relationships between characters within *MacB*, and helps to discern what is appropriate and what is inappropriate within these relationships. Within this context, patriarchal readings of *Macbeth* are never interrogated, but are rather 'imported' with the plot and re-articulated as the 'natural order of things'.

Arksey reconstitutes the play around the homosocial relationship between *Macbeth* and Banquo (here *MacB* and *Banksie*) two young footballing friends who each dislike the captain of their school football team, Duncan King. Here, the football field is inscribed as substitute for the political field in Shakespeare's play. The production of sport as an expression of 'legitimate' homosociality and codified violence is nothing new and within such a model, women are literally marginalised, left on the side of the field (the action), marked only as observers. This 'sidelining' of the feminine extends to the narrative itself. For example, the corollaries of the Witches, *Banksie*'s sister *Shanice* and her friends, have no actual power, beyond the ability to outsmart and humiliate *MacB*. The novel tends to erase or efface the feminine and the supernatural (as feminised force), elements central to *Macbeth*.

The novel opens with *Banksie* and *MacB* functioning as an effective football playing pair involved in a "ragtag game on the heath" (Arksey 1999, 1) they have infiltrated and taken control of. This opening, which focuses on "the two of them together tight as a drum" (Arksey 1999, 3), immediately differs from the Shakespearean opening which revolves around the witches, and sets the masculinist tone of the novel: one which privileges, amongst other values, "teamwork, loyalty, [and] honesty" (Arksey 2002).

Arksey's engagement with the feminine aspects of *Macbeth* is limited. The Lady *Macbeth* figure however, here transformed into the terrible mother, is clearly and consistently revealed as manipulative and dangerous. *MacB*'s mother, Mrs *MacBride*, offers a practical enactment of the infamous anti-maternal comment made by Lady *Macbeth* in Shakespeare's play:

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:

I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn
 As you have done to this. (I.vii.54-59)

Where Shakespeare's *Macbeth* could be criticised as criminally 'unmanly' for failing to adhere to general tenets of honourable masculinity prescribed by his society in the face of feminised challenges, Arksey's novel inscribes Mrs MacBride as the 'true' criminal of the piece, and MacB as a complicit victim. The power imbalances inherent in the parent-child relationship, combined with an absent father, are overtly deployed to excuse a great deal of MacB's behaviour.

As in Shakespeare's play, the relationship between the *Macbeth* figures is revealed via discussions of gendered identity. The first of these reveals the extent to which Mrs MacBride has gained total control over her son by articulating his failure to fulfil the maturing process as she has defined it. Unlike Shakespeare's text, where the audience is made privy to 'private' conversations between the *Macbeths*, in Arksey's text, the reader experiences communications between Mrs MacBride and her son through the eyes of the focaliser, Banksie. I have quoted extensively here to show the dynamics of the parent-child relationship which is implicitly blamed for MacB's aberrant behaviour:

A few parents had come at the end of the game to pick up their offspring, but Mrs MacBride had been there throughout. She shook her head. 'Just like your father was,' she said, stubbing out her cigarette.
 Mac glared. 'How am I?'
 'Too easy-going.'
 'You always say that!'
 'Well it's true.'
 'No one else thinks so.'
 'Then they don't know you,' said Mrs MacBride. 'You're soft: you've no nerve, no drive to get *on* in the world.' (Arksey 1999, 43)
 'What happened to "I'm going to be captain"?'
 'I am. I am going to be.'
 'Not if you don't score goals, you're not. Not if you don't get picked for a proper match.'
 'Give me a chance! I told you...'
 'No!' Mrs MacBride's tone silenced her son.
 Banksie shivered.
 'I am telling *you*.' Mrs MacBride's piercing dark eyes had Mac skewered to his seat. She advanced. 'I want to be *proud* of my son. I want you to make something of yourself. And I know you have it in you to do so. You're *not* your father. I say those things about you, because I want to make sure you don't turn out like him.' (Arksey 1999, 44-45)
 Mac's head dropped. 'I don't want to be a disappointment to you,' he croaked.

'Then *don't* be.' Mrs MacBride touched the back of his neck. 'Show me what you're made of, what you're *really* made of. Be a *man*.' (Arksey 1999, 45)

As with Shakespeare's Macbeth, the major cultural weapon at the female's disposal is the established construction of masculinity, and their interlocutor's failure to live up to its requirements. The extent to which these discussions are sexualised in Shakespeare's play is unsurprisingly erased in Arksey's novel. Rather, the power dynamic is refigured in psychological terms, enacted primarily via comparisons with the absent father. Mrs MacBride is here Lady Macbeth as single-mother filtered through contemporary sensibilities of the Freudian family-romance.

Under his mother's direction, MacB causes injuries to his teammates, and uses her money to hire 'thugs' to beat up opponents. He ultimately confesses to his transgressive actions, and in deferring responsibility to his overbearing mother, removes himself from her power:

Mac shrugged. Suddenly, he ducked and broke lose [sic] from his mother. 'Guess!' He laughed. 'Guess where the money came from!'

'Don't listen to him!' shrieked Mrs MacBride. 'He's sick! Don't listen to him!'

'Mummy darling!' Mac grinned. 'You look after me, don't you?' (Arksey 1999, 132)

'You are *stupid*!' Rivulets of mascara ran, like black tears, down Mrs MacBride's cheeks; her lank, bedraggled hair clung to her face. 'But worse,' she shrieked, struggling to make herself heard over the down-pour's roar, 'you're *gutless*. I didn't just give you the money, I gave you *fire*...*I gave you the strength to do the things you had to do.*'

Banksie watched Mac's face twitch.

Mrs MacBride pushed her son. 'So when I say shut up, you *DO IT*.' (Arksey 1999, 133)

The denouement of the novel is constructed as MacB's triumph over his domineering mother. He is ultimately led off the field by male police officers, thereby entering a masculine discourse of authority from which his mother is entirely excluded.

The seemingly open-ending in fact reduces *Macbeth* by implication to a moral fable about the maintenance of "hegemonic masculinity" in the face of aggressive and / or manipulative women. Where, in the Shakespearean text, the resolution of Macbeth's aberrant subjectivity comes in the form of his death, and the (albeit tenuous) restoration of acceptable social order, MacB is integrated into a normative patriarchal society having learned the lesson Macbeth 'failed' to.

Welwyn Katz's 1993 novel *Come Like Shadows* engages metafiction-

ally with *Macbeth* as a narrative of historical and literary meaning. The novel tells the story of two teenagers, Lucas Cormier and Kincardine O'Neil, involved in a Canadian production of the play which appears to be plagued by the notorious *Macbeth* curse. In resolving this curse, each of them connect, literally and symbolically, with the figures of Macbeth and the Witches who become problematically gendered role models. The teenagers are the spiritual and symbolic inheritors of Macbeth and the Witches, and alternate as focalisers of the story, enabling clear divisions to be made between masculine and feminine understanding. Lucas's insights into Macbeth position him as privileged observer within the text and he operates according to the positive values attributed to masculine identity. It should be noted that the novel contains both feminine and masculine models of cultural consumption and authority. I will, however, be focussing on the Macbeth-Shakespeare-Lucas relationship as an obvious point of comparative reference to the Arksey novel. These three men operate throughout Katz's novel as embodiments of masculinity under attack from the aberrant feminine.

Significantly, where the Arksey novel offered the narrative of *Macbeth*, Lucas offers an example of self-reflexive reading of that narrative. As a result, the male reader is given, not just the cautionary tale, but methods for its integration into self-development. Lucas offers, through a process of thematised reading, a model of (limited) investigative reading that appears to lead to informed and autonomous decision making. That this is only really employed to 'save' Macbeth from imputations on his noble masculinity I would suggest is highly problematic, but it is worth noting that the juvenile masculine reader is a valorised figure here.³

Katz opens the novel with an imagined encounter between the 'actual' Macbeth and the 'actual' witches. Under the guise of an imaginary past, Katz inscribes her historical protagonists as representative of opposing forces in eleventh-century Scotland, and imbues them with very specific characteristics and associations in order to establish a binary gendered discourse that privileges the masculine. This masculine view is consistently endorsed as perceptive and objective, where the feminine is associated with emotive subjectivity, and instinctive rather than rational thought.

Sympathy is created for Macbeth by the mention of his "father's murderers" (Katz 2000, 2), and the extreme emphasis placed on his patriotism. It is his perspective through which the significant differences between himself and the Witches (as representative of their gender) and their cultures are offered to the reader. Presented here as a 'primal scene' for the novel, this encounter establishes a specifically gendered discourse that is confirmed and conformed to throughout the novel:

The three witches had often offered him help during the seventeen years of his reign. He had never accepted. He didn't trust them; their magic was old and dark, nothing to do with enlightened men and their laws and duties. (Katz 2000, 4)

Macbeth is literally drawn in to one of their spells when he attempts to save a young woman from being sacrificed. The witches in this novel are non-individual; rather, they are archetypes that need to be embodied in order to exist. This establishes the distance between the determinedly individualistic attitude of Macbeth, and the 'generic' form of the witches.

Having established a noble Macbeth, the novel now transports the reader to seventeenth-century England, and refocalises the narrative from the Hag's perspective.⁴ Here we meet Shakespeare the working playwright, who is demystified as a bearer of some unique genius, and shown to be an active 'pillager' of earlier texts. Shakespearean scholars know this to be true, but what has been accepted within the academy as ordinary practice is here transformed into a perversion of the 'natural' development of historical narratives. The Hag 'knows' that history has revered Macbeth as an ideal leader, and out of revenge she alters Holinshed's *Chronicles* so that Shakespeare will be working with her version of history as a source (incidentally 'saving' Shakespeare from any possible allegations of falsifying history) and helping him get over his 'writers' block':

Then he opened up the leather-bound Holinshed, turning to the marked pages. He read, gave an exclamation, and read some more. Then almost feverishly, he pushed aside the Holinshed, picked up his quill and a fresh sheet of paper, and wrote.

When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

"Whatever happens after this," he murmured happily as he scribbled, "my troth, but it begins well!" (Katz 2000, 22-23)

In these two opening vignettes, the feminine is consistently associated — from both their own and the masculine perspectives — with the perverse, that which is against the natural order of things, dangerously powerful, selfish and unpredictable. In comparison, the masculine, through the figures of the historical Macbeth and Shakespeare, is identified with strength, courage, integrity, honesty and responsibility.

The novel then moves to the contemporary Canadian production of *Macbeth*, in which broad issues of historical and textual fidelity compete with individual interpretation. Lucas Cormier must learn to negotiate between the cultural authority of Shakespeare, as 'misappropriated' by the director, and the example of Macbeth, as influences on his self and society. Lucas has a very specific reverence for the character of Macbeth:

there were things Lucas admired about Macbeth. Dullards can commit murder and not worry about it; but Macbeth knew what he was doing and knew what it would do to him, and he did it anyway. That took courage, Lucas thought, and he admired courage, especially when it came from a man as totally alone as Macbeth. He admired his imagination too. And though he didn't admire Macbeth's actions, he could understand what caused them. (Katz 2000, 46)

This production is going to be "political dynamite" (Katz 2000, 36) because it is being made to make a statement on British and French-Canadian history and politics. Katz broadens her interest in historical fidelity from the history of Macbeth to Canadian history, and openly critiques the director's intent to appropriate Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as allegorical propaganda. At this point, the canonisation of Shakespeare becomes quite complex, for although the novel has already dismissed Shakespeare's play as historical *document* it still adheres to the acceptance of the play as historical *artefact*. Any sense of inaccuracy on the part of Shakespeare is here subordinated to the importance of fidelity to Shakespeare exemplified by Katz's awarding of descriptive knowledge of Shakespeare's play, rather than direct citation: the protagonists and readers learn language *about* the play, rather than *from* it.

Like the historical Macbeth, Lucas is shown to be insightful, and interested in the 'greater good' rather than individual. In comparison to Kinny, his perspective is characterized by analysis, where hers is characterized by observation, reinforcing the dynamic of masculine as active, and feminine as passive. Given the problematic shift in Macbeth's character in Shakespeare's play, Lucas decides to research the 'real' Macbeth for himself, deciding that "as history, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was apparently not much more than a pack of lies" (Katz 2000, 115). However, this does not lead him to reject Shakespeare, rather, he splits his understanding of Macbeth into the historical and the theatrical. In doing so, he replicates the approach of the novel, providing more evidence that Lucas's voice is privileged by authorial identification. This re-canonises Shakespeare as playwright if not historian, circumventing the Hag's interference.

The director, Jeneva Strachan, functions very specifically as the transgressive or monstrous feminine embodying the values assigned to Lady Macbeth – "shadows swirled beneath her" (Katz 2000, 75) – and her transgression is enacted by her wilful refusal of fidelity to either of the two discourses of authority in the novel: history or Shakespeare.

"I can cancel the play, if I choose; I can change it; I can drop scenes; I can make it say something about Canada when the playwright barely knew such a place existed. I'm not under the play's control, and neither are any of you. On the contrary, we control it." (Katz 2000, 78)

This feminised disregard for Shakespeare is countered by the (I would argue authorially-endorsed, yet implicitly masculine) views of Lucas, whose view of Shakespearean appropriation is reverent:

A year ago [Lucas] himself had been in a terrific modern-dress *King Lear* set in the Southern US, and once on TV he'd seen a *Henry V* set during the First World War. Both of these had been exciting non-traditional productions that used the plays' truths to make statements about their unusual settings. But Jeneva was trying to do it the other way around. She had her own statement to make, and she was trying to mould the play to fit it. (Katz 2000, 91)

Lucas' perspective on, and understanding of, Jeneva's actions and intentions are legitimised by the novel as a whole, just as the historical Macbeth's perception of the Witches is privileged and borne out by the text as a whole. Via their connections with Lady Macbeth and the Witches, Jeneva and Kinny become obstacles for Lucas's personal development: Jeneva in the theatre, and Kinny in the 'real' world. He cannot simply ignore them, as the protection of the feminine is constructed as an important aspect of masculinity.

The production seems to fall victim to the 'curse of the Scottish play'; actors die in mysterious circumstances, the theatre catches fire, and there are numerous injuries and accidents. It becomes clear that Lucas and Kinny are so inherently connected with the historical and textual witches and Macbeth as to have created a kind of nexus-point in this production where all of the discourses and influences of both history and the play are brought to bear on the two teenagers. Jeneva is sacked, censured, and ultimately destroyed by her ambition, but as a victim Kinny needs to be saved by Lucas. Hence, where Lucas grows stronger and more knowledgeable through communication with the historical Macbeth, Kinny begins to lose her sense of self.

When the production travels to Scotland, Lucas's identification with Macbeth intensifies. Katz draws heavily on traditional understanding of the power that place and names can wield; hence, the climax of the book takes place at Macbeth's supposed death-site. In a repeat of the opening scene, Lucas mimics Macbeth's intentions, attempting to sacrifice himself in order to save Kinny. He is stopped by Macbeth himself, and during this final encounter, readers have reinforced for them the essential natures of both the historical Macbeth and the Hag, in a final endorsement of the roles they have played in the novel, and the gendered lessons exemplified by them.

Macbeth said sadly, *I can never accept your offer. I no longer know the*

truth of what I am, and I will not find it out in a world I can enter only by dishonour. But I thank you for what you would have done. I thank you mightily. (Katz 2000, 301)

[Hag:] *You are a fool, Lucas Cormier. Do you think anything you have done with this mirror has been of your will? It was I who made you see Macbeth and admire him and want to be him, I who had it in my mind all along that you would do what you have done here!* (Katz 2000, 301-02)

Here the positive masculine and negative feminine are finally boiled down to two statements in which the masculine is associated with honour and honesty, the feminine with manipulation and dishonesty.

While Kinny is instructed to embrace plurality "there are always more truths than one" (Katz 2000, 318), Lucas's achievement of maturity is marked through his ability to learn from Macbeth without replicating his fate – in other words, to maintain the space *between* the 'truths' of the theatre, and the 'truths' of the real: "You will be a great actor one day, Lucas Cormier, but you will never play Macbeth" (Katz 2000, 316).

Macbeth fell victim to the Witches, and Shakespeare in unproblematically accepting the textual authority of Holinshed also fell victim to the Hag. Their 'failures' are educational for Lucas; yet in splitting his understanding of them between the historical and the literary / theatrical he 'redeems' them, in that he is nonetheless able to maintain a broad cultural veneration of these male role-models while not necessarily accepting wholesale the play that symbolically was born of their errors. This patrilineal model of cultural authority predicated on the exclusion of the feminine is precisely that which marks the reinstatement of order at the conclusion of Shakespeare's play – a play which itself illustrates the danger of listening to transgressive women – and which is enacted by Arksey's novel.

As with *MacB*, the entrance into masculine maturity in *Come Like Shadows* comes in the repudiation of the feminine and explicitly those qualities that have been negatively associated with it. Ironically, Lady Macbeth's instruction to Macbeth in I.vii can be misappropriated here, as a way of thinking about these repudiations: "When you durst do it, then you were a man; / And, to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man." (I.vii.49-51).

These novels do not challenge 'hegemonic masculinity' but challenges to it. They collude with, and reproduce as natural and authoritative, patriarchal constructions of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in order to circumvent any broad notions of the impact of feminism. While the over-determined repudiation of rethinking gender may in fact speak to its progress, these texts implicitly privilege the Macbeth of Act I, and offer strategies to young male readers for avoiding Macbeth's fate.

NOTES

1. All citations from *Macbeth* are drawn from Kenneth Muir's *Arden* edition of the play.
2. Tanistry is "A system of life-tenure among the ancient Irish and Gaels, whereby the succession to an estate or dignity was conferred by election upon the 'eldest and worthiest' among the surviving kinsmen of the deceased lord." (*OED*) In the Scottish tradition tanist inheritance passed from uncle to nephew or cousin.
3. Arksey has also commented on the importance of constructing juvenile male readership as positive, "I was aware however through doing drama work with schools and teachers for the Globe Education projects that motivating boys to read and in particular to read Shakespeare had become a big issue" (Arksey 2002).
4. The object that facilitates these movements through time, and the survival of the Hag and Macbeth through centuries is the mirror. Being present throughout all historical periods represented in the novel, enabling communication between the past and the present, and participating in play itself, the mirror acts as a central reference point for the novel, as well as mediating the relationship between Lucas and Kinny. The mirror functions as the familiar 'magical object' trope of children's literature, but it also functions as a symbol of the novel's overt interest in mirror-images, doubles, opposites, images and the imaginary. Laurie Osborne notes of the mirror that "the 'truth' is anchored magically in a prop that is itself authenticated by its presence in a Shakespearean play" (Osborne 2002, 146) drawing on the circularity that often accompanies Shakespeare as authority in popular culture.

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