

Mad Voices: The Mothers of Welwyn Wilton Katz

Adrienne Kertzer

Résumé: *Adrienne Kertzer analyse les difficiles rapports mère-fille dans la production romanesque de Welwyn Wilton Katz: les relations conflictuelles génèrent un discours de la folie chez les protagonistes féminins où s'entremêlent de délicates questions de pouvoir, de colère et d'insanité. Selon elle, le pouvoir des mères devient si prégnant dans ces récits qu'il peut influencer sur notre perception de l'oeuvre littéraire; il n'en reste pas moins, selon elle, que les romans destinés à l'adolescence tendent à montrer un peu lourdement que l'exercice de ce pouvoir maternel s'avère destructeur.*

In the adolescent fiction of Welwyn Wilton Katz, daughters and mothers engage in a discourse of madness where issues of power, anger, and insanity are hard to separate, where daughters fear their own anger and are literally terrified of and by the possibility of maternal anger. When Bonnie McSmithers drives her mother dithers, everyone laughs, but madness in Katz, especially when it circulates around the figures of the mother and daughter, is no laughing mat(t)er. In Katz's fiction, mothers are often figures of madness, but they are more importantly voices of madness, voices that are repeatedly and ambiguously heard best when they are positioned outside common conceptions of the reasonable. Kinny, adolescent heroine of *Come Like Shadows*, struggles for a "reasonable, unmagical explanation" (172) of what is happening to her through the power of the witches' mirror. The implied oppositional relationship between the two adjectives tells us that what is magical may also be read as unreasonable, the location of madness. Fantasy, the place of magic, enables us to hear what reason is so anxious about, so eager to deny, so determined to name mad—the power of mothers' voices.

Whalesinger even jokes, "*In loco parentis*.... And you know how loco some parents get" (62). But not all parents are loco; it is mothers' voices that are most often heard as crazy, questionably human, their susceptibility to magic itself a threat to their daughters. Daughters, fearing that they are going mad simply because they have visions of mad mothers, cannot distinguish between anger and insanity. The slippage between madness as anger and madness as insanity, the need to situate this discourse (to dislocate it by calling it loco?) in the terrain of magic and fantasy, suggests how cultural suspicions of powerful mothers' voices continue to control our ability to listen to narratives that nevertheless

inscribe their voices.

Although my focus in this paper will be four novels by Katz, *Sun God*, *Moon Witch*, *False Face*, *Whalesinger*, and *Come Like Shadows*, I do not think that the pattern I explore in her work is unique to her (for example, Margaret Buffie in both *Who is Frances Rain?* and *My Mother's Ghost* also positions powerful mothers' voices and daughters' anxieties in a discourse of madness). Instead I focus on Katz as a particularly interesting example of a contemporary woman novelist, incessantly returning to a subject that is not only problematized by general cultural anxieties about powerful mothers' voices but by the particular expectations we have concerning point of view in the adolescent novel. Given that Katz named herself as a mother in her writing when she dedicated *False Face* to her then three-year-old daughter, her situating of powerful mothers in the discourse of madness seems itself duplicitous and intriguing. If writing is an act of power—then why does Katz use her power so often to undermine powerful mothers' voices?

Powerful mothers exist, don't they? Authors who inscribe their powerful mothers in a discourse of madness offer an ambiguous response to this question. Are the powerful mothers mad because their power is not acceptable in their society, or are they mad because they have given in to a desire for power that is more dangerous just because they are mothers (an essentialist argument about the nature of mothers that Shakespeare plays with ambiguously in his characterization of Lady Macbeth)? How do "we" read them in children's literature especially if "we" are mothers who were once ourselves adolescent daughters? One way to read the figure of the powerful mother is through the child-focused lens of psychoanalytic theory.

According to this theory, the "phallic" mother is the ultimate fraud existing only in the child's imagination until the child learns the sexual "truth" of her lack of phallus, or perhaps the more important truth of her lack of social power. We expect then an absence of powerful mothers in narrative, but what we find in Katz's fiction is not the absence of maternal voices, but a presence so disturbing their voices can exist only in fantasy. The image of the false phallus is replaced by the image of duplicity, Katz's "false face," the mother who says one thing, but means another. The terror of what is not (the false phallus) is replaced by the terror of what might be (the false face), the mother whose power is not fraudulent and is therefore far more threatening than the Freudian "phallic" mother. Madness then becomes a way of containing the threat of her powerful voice.

A discourse of madness necessarily addresses issues of language. Who decides that what we say is mad? In a culture that tends to think of mothers as objects rather than subjects, as bodies rather than voices, in a culture that currently delights in theories of subjectivity that insist a child enters culture and language by embracing the father's law, there is no place for mothers' voices. According to Jacques Lacan, the mother exists outside language. Her voice can be silent (how can we hear what is outside language?), or it can be the voice of

the body, maternal murmuring to an infant who drinks her in but is unable to make sense of her language. Sense is always of the father.

Even Julia Kristeva's argument that the semiotic chora always remains a disruptive aspect within the symbolic does not change the way we tend to think of mothers' voices. Kristeva herself insists that the semiotic can only be theorized once we are in the symbolic, since to speak at all means that we are in the symbolic. There can be no retreat to a pure semiotic. If we hear maternal voices, then when we/they speak (as I, a mother, am doing now), according to the Lacanian argument and its feminist variations, we/they are not speaking as mothers. Given that I am writing and reading as a woman who is also a mother, this essay is not then just about madness; it is itself mad for pretending (ah, the duplicitous powerful mother) to do what the theory says cannot be done. And it is very much about power, for writing is, I repeat, an act of power; to write about Katz's discourse of madness is to recuperate not just the figure of the mother but her right to power, to challenge the gap between the subject who writes and the object, the m(other) who is written about.

Psychoanalytic models (Freud on hysteria, Lacan on the symbolic contract) may explain why mothers' voices are often associated with madness, but they are less useful in suggesting how to break free of this association. The absence of mothers' voices is noted, but the narrative model remains the same. As a result of this sameness, an essentialism of maternal voice results, the ironic consequence of the absence of maternal voices in the narrative. For the essential mother exists only in the ahistorical realm of psychoanalytic discourse; if we wish to break free of this essential model, omitting maternal voices in narrative is not the way to do it. Clearly adolescent readers schooled in this reading are likely to feel quite content at the maternal absence: all mothers sound the same, the argument goes, why should adolescents want to hear more of them? Note the "them," objects again.

The fantasies of Katz illustrate how recent adolescent fiction continues to work with and against this discourse. They also illustrate how adolescent fiction—because it takes for granted not just the need for an adolescent point of view, but also tends to take for granted the need for a maturity based on separation from the mother—results in a fiction in which mothers' voices in particular must be resisted, even in the work of a writer such as Katz who is clearly interested in the subject of mothers' voices. Obviously fathers are not outside the narratives of power relationships in Katz, but they are far less significant in the daughter's assumed need to separate. The narratives that result remain true to a doubly traditional model in which maternal voices are problematic either when they are repressed and absent from the narrative or when they are present and interpreted as dangerous to the heroine.

In addition, Katz's interest in power relationships results in greater emphasis on independence as separation from the mother than in, for example, Margaret Buffie whose narratives of mad mothers often work towards a reconciliation

between daughter and mother. Thus even though Katz's work is concerned with the need for a Jungian balance and the heroine's need to break free from the demands of both parents, the tension that Katz most often explores is between the heroine and a maternal figure of madness. In *Sun God, Moon Witch*, the heroine, Hawthorn McCall, is told by various characters that she needs to become "[her] own person" (123). Sent to England to visit her aunt and cousin when her father remarries, Thorny arrives at the moment that formerly tranquil Wychwood Mount threatens to become a "madhouse" (7) because a mysterious figure, Squire Belman, wants to tear down an ancient stone circle, Awen-Un, and replace it with a cement factory. The opening pages of the novel are filled with casual references to lunatics and the normal, thereby raising questions as to what is normal and reminding us that the root for lunatic is luna, the moon. Not only are the defenders of Awen-Un repeatedly called lunatics, but Katz pointedly includes passages in which Aunt Jenny defends the positive contributions of witchcraft and presents it as containing elements of an old religion later defeated by Christianity. And in a note "To the Reader" at the end of the novel, Katz praises Robert Graves's *The White Goddess* as an "outstanding book" (174).

Given such praise, we might expect a positive portrayal of the moon goddess and Thorny's relationship to her, but this is not what Katz provides. Aunt Jenny's defence of witchcraft comes right after Thorny has admitted her suspicion that her name is unlucky since the "hawthorn was the favourite tree of witches" (23). Katz also reveals Thorny's conviction that her mother abandoned her when she was eight. This information is necessary to explain Thorny's vulnerability and subsequent behaviour. Already disturbed by the discovery of a hawthorn bouquet in her bedroom drawer (left there by the moon goddess who needs her help) and thinking that "it was all just too crazy" (31), Thorny immediately assumes that the strange woman she meets is mad. The description that Katz provides of the woman who proves to be the moon goddess is both maternal and destructive. Her eyes "held Thorny's gaze as securely as a mother holds a child. Mesmerized, Thorny stared into their depths, drowning in them" (34). When the woman speaks to her in an archaic, knowing language, Thorny dismisses her, "The woman was crazy as a loon" (36). Yet the loony woman knows of Thorny's dreams of a mother-substitute, and it appears that Thorny will now get her wish for such a substitute if she can overcome her rationalist resistance to the goddess's existence, a resistance signalled by Thorny's language that night: "it didn't make her other statements any less crazy.... A world gone mad.... It was all crazy" (43). Later Thorny further insists that belief in the woman means madness: "'All right, then, she's a mental case. Either she is, or I am'" (69).

Thorny's language sets up an equivalence, madness = mothers = destruction that is never rejected by the text. Thorny may miss her absent mother and wonder why she left, but the novel insists that to turn to the maternal moon goddess is a mistake, an exaggerated response to Thorny's feelings of earlier maternal betrayal. Thorny appears to be merely a pawn in the fantastic battle between the

moon goddess and Belman, the sun god, vulnerable because Belman represents many of the features that torment Thorny in her relationship to her own father. A daughter needs protection, and it is at this point that Katz's argument for balance shifts the balance of evil. Obviously Thorny's biological mother cannot help, and Aunt Jenny gets conveniently ill during the height of the action. So it is up to two males, Patrick, Thorny's cousin jealous of both her involvement with the moon goddess and her attraction to Belman, and the mysterious Alec, who gives Thorny a medallion, and warns her not to get involved with the moon goddess. Alec, who is later called the Old One and so is presumably someone long familiar with the non-human battle between the sun and the moon, takes for granted that Patrick might be able to keep Thorny away from Belman, but not from the moon goddess. This may be because Belman is in human form and so a weaker opponent than the moon goddess, but it may also reflect the bias of the text whose title certainly also reflects a traditional view of female power (why not *Sun God, Moon Goddess?*).

Not only does Thorny need help from male characters, but the evil of the female principle appears far worse than that of the male. Belman is a clear opponent; danger lies in Thorny's possible sexual attraction to him. But mother figures are worse because they are deceptive, ultimately betraying their children. Like other females in Katz's work (including Thorny who is able at a crucial moment to trick Patrick whereas Patrick has "a face that goes right to [his] soul" (163), mothers cannot be trusted. Early on Belman tells Thorny, "Mothers can be difficult.... They want their own lives, whatever *we* want, but in the end they still try to pull the reins on ours" (57). Belman, Alec tells the characters at the end, is the Moon Goddess's son; hearing this shocking revelation of parent-child hatred helps Thorny recognize that her response to Belman included an identification with his pain as a child.

What is peculiar about this narrative is that the entire fantasy appears as a pedagogic device to free Thorny from her strained relationship, not with her mother, but with her father. (Patrick is stunned by the revelation that Belman is the son of the Moon Goddess; as a secondary character and male at that, Patrick has a remarkably tension-free relationship with his own mother.) The argument for balance as stated by Alec in his hurried lecture at the end, the need to see that *any* parent can manipulate a child, seems a thin excuse for the mother hatred that the text exploits. Although Thorny mid-way through the text sees the moon goddess as "the mother of the world" (102) restoring order to the stone circle, by the climax she sees her as the ultimate betrayer, the one who made her father the way he is. When the moon goddess orders Thorny to shoot Belman, he appeals to her: "She is your mother, Thorny! She is all our mothers! And in the end she abandons us all" (150). Thorny appears to heed his warning and proceeds to shoot the moon goddess rather than Belman. Although Alec later insists that Thorny knew she could not kill a non-human and so only pretended to kill the moon goddess, Patrick, who appears to function as the gullible implied reader

of the text, believes that Thorny has joined Belman's side. He is horrified at her apparently mad action. And it is worth noting that Belman has warned Thorny that if she joins the goddess and shoots him instead, she will end up in an asylum (150). So regardless of whether Thorny is pretending at this moment, to believe in a mother's voice is to enter the discourse of madness. Thorny may, in the clichéd language the text adopts "become her own person," but she does so by maintaining the dominant culture's suspicion of maternal voices, ironically setting aside the different language about witches spoken by Patrick's mother.

Katz's next novel, *False Face*, moves from a mythical to a biological mother-daughter relationship, but does not abandon the connection between anger and the discourse of madness. *False Face*, the only one of the four novels under discussion that focuses on a human mother-daughter relationship, is so extreme in its portrayal of a powerful mad mother that it may explain why Katz avoids human mothers in her more recent fiction. The novel begins with thirteen-year-old Laney angry at her divorced mother, Alicia McIntyre, who seems to blame Laney merely for looking like her father. The mother is quickly characterized as a successful antique dealer, whose marriage is her only failure (11). When Alicia blames her ex-husband for not being more successful in his own career, Katz appears to be rejecting a traditional association between women and both the sentimental and the irrational. Everything that Alicia does appears to be coldly calculated and reasonable, from the way she takes over the small mask Laney discovers in the bog to her determination to profit by this discovery and ignore ethical guidelines.

Yet the mother's behaviour from the moment she sees the mask is presented as treacherous and deceptive: mother as false face, the one who pretends to love. When Laney first sees the mask, she screams in terror, a scream that brings in Alicia, "Looking very concerned" (19), and soon herself wearing a psychological mask that makes Laney feel sick: "Laney blinked up at her mother, at the bland face with its brilliant blue eyes regarding her so narrowly" (22). All Laney initially understands is that "Mom was mad" (23), a phrase that Katz uses twice on the same page. Laney is terrified by her mother's anger; even before it is evident that the mother has been affected by the larger, more powerful, false face mask that she has secretly removed from the bog, there are repeated references to the possibility of the mother's anger and Laney's anxiety; thinking that her mother will "have a fit" Laney is comforted by "the normalcy of the thought" (32). Mothers and madness, the norm.

What is also the norm is that both Laney and the male protagonist, Tom, prefer to confide in their fathers rather than their mothers. Tom, whose Native father has just died, specifically misses conversations with him (36). When Katz implies that Tom cannot speak with his mother because she is white and he constructs himself as Native, the situation is fairly easily remedied; Tom makes a trip to the reserve, sees that Natives living there construct him as white and realizes that his obsession with race has prevented his responding to his mother.

The tension between Laney and her mother is less easily resolved, if at all, and requires Tom's intervention. Laney is so paralyzed by her mother wearing the mask of *Gaguwara* that she can say nothing; it is Tom who tells Alicia that her daughter loves her. The scene does not result in any contact between mother and daughter. Alicia touches Tom's cheek and then she removes the mask (145). Mother-daughter love remains only a far-off possibility at the end of the novel; when Laney speaks to her father about that love, she uses the past tense.

In *False Face* only women wear the masks, whether it is the thick makeup Laney's sister Rosemary puts on, or the *Gaguwara* mask Alicia puts on in the novel's Hallowe'en night climax. Granted that Tom is familiar with Native culture and so is aware of the mask's power, the narrative's focus upon a mother who cannot give up power draws attention to the problematic of the powerful mother. If magic is what makes the mother powerful, then is she really powerful? Does Alicia turn to the mask through her frustration as a single mother? Katz's fiction always emphasizes choice, but it is not clear how much choice Alicia has, given both her anger prior to the appearance of the mask and the mask's power once it is in her hands. Laney is herself uncertain whether her mother controls the mask or vice versa (130). The mask functions through inflicting illness, either physical (as with Rosemary and the dog) or mental (Alicia wishes her rival in the antique business would close and he promptly has a nervous breakdown). Upon its owner, the danger is specifically that the owner comes to enjoy power.

It might be easier to accept the abstract thesis that the enjoyment of power is evil if the focus were not so relentlessly female and ultimately maternal. The power of the mask may be "more than any human should handle" (32), yet only a mother and daughter experience this dangerous power. Laney experiences the power of the small mask when she nearly wishes her sister dead and sees her wish take effect, but Laney can learn to control her anger in a way Alicia cannot. Is this simply because Laney has more information about the danger of the mask than her mother does? That reasonable conclusion is at odds with the constant attention drawn to the mother's anger. When the family dog ends up like the sister violently vomiting, Laney's tentative conclusions, "Could the mask actually be magical?" focus on an image of the mother's face, "a mask of power and rage" (78). When Laney struggles to separate the "facts" from Tom's "superstitions" (107), her analysis again focuses on the production of hatred and lack of control; the mask has driven the mother over the bounds, from divorced mother, powerless but angry, to mad mother, obsessed with the mask that is now controlling her. The solution, Tom tells Laney, is that she give her mother the small mask to protect her from her own power and thereby restore her sanity (118). It is a solution that unavoidably draws attention to the way madness empowers the mother's voice. Restored to sanity, no longer possessing the mask, Alicia speaks in a voice that is "hoarse ... brittle" (146) and her hand shakes (147). In the novel's final speech, she tells her other daughter what to do, and Rosemary ignores her.

That mothers' voices are problematic in Katz's work is further demonstrated by *Whalesinger*, a novel where there is definitely a central mother's voice, but she is non-human, the mother whale with whom only the female protagonist, Marty Griffiths, can communicate. Human mothers are marginalized; the male protagonist, Nick, never refers to his mother. Marty barely mentions her own mother except in the memory of the mother's defensive apology for failing to read to her child regularly when Marty's learning disability was assessed. The only other biological mother in the text is Marty's employer, Lynda Niven, a scientist who has hired Marty to babysit her children so that she can do her research. Lynda too is rarely heard in the text except to display her anxiety before the boss about bringing her children to the job site, and during her daughters' illness when she reads to the girls. Thus the human biological mothers are restricted to minor roles that demonstrate their relative powerlessness and anxiety about power in a male world.

The absence of narrative participation by the biological mothers heightens our sensitivity to both the mother whale's voice and her position as a liminal, non-human figure. For if human mothers are marginalized, making the mother non-human in itself marginalizes her even when she is in effect the main character. How does Marty communicate with the whale? What kind of language do they share? Nick observes the whale both with her calfling, and with Marty, but he does not communicate with her. Why not? Marty's first words in the text are "I'm probably wrong" (21). Constantly berating herself for stupidity and lack of verbal ability, Marty responds to her ability to communicate with the whale as to a miracle. She does not use the language of madness to categorize it, perhaps because her need for the whale's emotional support is too strong. She is the sole example of a female adolescent who wants a powerful mother's voice in all of Katz's work and significantly the whale addresses her as Calfling.

Thus *Whalesinger* signals a major change in Katz's discourse of madness as she clarifies both who has the power to label a discourse mad and emphasizes that a mad mother need not be an angry mother. There are significant differences between the whale and Katz's other mothers beyond the biological. The whale's voice is not angry except for one brief moment after her calfling's death when she reprimands Marty who "shrank back, dismayed by the whale's anger" (196); indeed in this text anger is primarily an emotion felt by the male protagonists, both Nick and his earlier sixteenth-century version, John Doughty, a sailor who accompanied Sir Frances Drake. At times Nick wonders if he is himself insane, but he most often uses the discourse of madness in relation to both Marty and the whale. Repeatedly Nick warns Marty that what she is doing with the whale is "crazy" (152). Unable to understand why the whale saves his life, he never hears her explanation, "*Could any mother among the People have turned away*" (68). He also labels the whale's behaviour when she attempts to save her calfling's life as inexplicable and irrational, an act of madness (178). Nick is male, a future scientist, clearly college material. For these very reasons, when he is faced with

the behaviour of a mother, he has only one category to place it in.

The whale too worries that Marty is trying to cross boundaries and by the end of the novel puts an end to their communication. After a magical night under the full moon when Marty swims with the whales, the mother whale refuses to swim with her again. Superficially the boundary the whale insists on may appear to be that between the human and the non-human, but the swimming suggests another boundary is being broached, the pre-Oedipal mother-daughter relationship that cannot be communicated in words. The mother-daughter sing a love song that is non-verbal, "like nothing she had ever known... Movement like a dance, like music heard far off, bodies brushing, faces, hand-to-fin, gentle" (122). The next day Marty is still caught within the rhythm, suggestive of Kristeva's semiotic, "cadences and tonalities and sweet, winding rhythms, repeating and expanding and dying... It was whalesong she danced to, inwardly, dreamily" (128). No wonder Nick is furious and jealous. If Marty swims with the whales, then how can she be other for him, a place where he can "[feel] drowned in her darkness" (153)? When Nick and Marty make love, the whales are silent, their song replaced by the "high music ... no need for words" (156) of lovemaking. And when the whale leaves Marty so that she can return to her own People, it is clear that the pre-Oedipal mother-daughter relationship will now be replaced by the heterosexual relationship of Marty and Nick in which Marty appears to function for Nick as the whale functioned for her, as a way of testing the limits of "what it was to be human" (166).

Clearly in comparison to *Sun God, Moon Witch*, there is far more sympathy for the mother in *Whalesinger*. When a character attempts to kill the mother whale and succeeds in killing her calfing, there is no doubt that he is the villain and retribution is swift. Yet this sympathy comes at what cost? If Marty functions occasionally as "something not quite human" (163), the whale mother is always non-human. Her voice, though accessible to the reader, is only temporarily available to the heroine and is constantly problematized, "whalesong, words ... it was all the same, it couldn't be more different" (162-3). Although such ambiguity challenges the discourse of madness, the whale is never quite free of the association with madness. Urging peace between Nick and his enemy, Dr. Pembroke, the whale sees herself as a figure of disruption, even blaming herself for the earthquake that in turn makes the world go "mad" (172). She may be given the last line of the novel, a line that focuses on her voice, but in the end we must also ask how powerful this maternal whale ultimately is. Her calfing dies and she blames herself, in particular her voice, "*my singing made things happen that might not, had I not sung*" (196). Her attempt at intervention, at the exercise of power is seen as a mistake, and she and Marty are more observers than participants in the drama of anger and power that Nick and Dr. Pembroke enact. Thus if *Whalesinger* represents Katz's attempt to separate anger and maternal madness, it also suggests that such separation also demands a maternal loss of power.

In her 1993 novel, *Come Like Shadows*, Katz returns to the figure of the maternal goddess but in a far more sympathetic and complex way. The title a quotation from *Macbeth*, the novel is itself a rewriting of Shakespeare's play that emphasizes the centrality of power in the workings of the play, the responsibility of choices, and the necessity of remembering that all narratives exist through excluding other versions. Dana Sloe, originally one of the three witches whom Katz rewrites as three stages of woman—Maiden, Mother, and Hag—loses her supernatural power in the dramatic climax of the text, but she still has the last word as she tells Kinny, "But remember, there are always more truths than one" (289). The structure of the novel reflects this conclusion as it is organized not just in different time periods and locations, but through multiple points of view, for example, beginning first with the historical Macbeth's experience and then switching to the point of view of the Hag witch. The difference between the historical Macbeth and Shakespeare's tragic figure is even explained as the result of the Hag witch's revenge-driven revision of Holinshed, another reminder that every narrative is driven by a subjective point of view.

Whereas Shakespeare's play emphasizes a human point of view that makes the witches' power ambiguous, Katz's novel does not minimize the witches' voices or their power. What Katz does share with Shakespeare is a positioning of the witches' voices in a discourse of madness; Banquo's words after first hearing the witches would not be out of place in Katz's novel:

Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten on the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner? (*Macbeth* I.iii.83-85)

The witches are definitely real and their power considerable, but Kinny, the adolescent heroine, is still convinced that to choose their power is an act of madness. Thus despite the multiple points of view, *Come Like Shadows* is ultimately an adolescent novel whose closure celebrates Kinny's escape from the power of the witches.

The contemporary action of the novel is initiated when Kinny, an aspiring actress, gets a summer job at Stratford. The job brings her in contact with two powerful women: Dana, a real witch who is hired to play a witch in *Macbeth*; and Jeneva Strachan, the controversial director, who wants to stage *Macbeth* as a replay of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. Both women have and want power; in a novel where once again the biological mother does not appear, Kinny's response to Dana and Jeneva returns us to the problematic of daughters, mothers, power, anger, and madness. Given that Dana is the most sympathetic of Katz's maternal witches (in the plot she is the Maiden witch who really should be Mother witch by now), her relationship to Kinny seems to signal a new stage in Katz's exploration of maternal voices. Like other mothers in Katz, Dana is a manipulator, wanting to use Kinny for her own needs; unlike other mothers, she is conscious of what she does and warns Kinny that all power has a price. In stark

contrast to Dana is Jeneva who hires Kinny as a favour to Kinny's mother. Jeneva is very interested in power and thinks that she can control her own destiny. As a director, Jeneva is characterized as a magic-maker, a false face known for her makeup and flamboyant clothes (26), a high priestess (67), a woman who characterizes herself as "more powerful than the play" (70). After an actress playing a witch is killed (Dana is hired to replace her) and the cast worry that the curse of the Scottish play is again in effect, Jeneva lectures them on *Macbeth* as a play about power. She insists that the play has power over them only if they allow it to have that power. Jeneva's speech (her voice) is very effective. Jeneva is thus characterized as a highly powerful woman—definitely witch material—but she is notably not maternal, greeting Kinny's arrival as "Totally insignificant.... Nuisance value only" (43).

If Jeneva's desire for power is unambiguous, what she discovers is that the only way to have power is to become one of the witches. Indeed, her anger at the way her staging of *Macbeth* is regarded (a staging that is itself an angry response to her treatment as an English director in Quebec), is what drives Jeneva to choose the witches. Immediately after her speech on power, the actress playing Lady Macbeth enters and Jeneva directs her, but in this rewriting of *Macbeth*, both the novel as a whole and Jeneva's Stratford production, Lady Macbeth plays hardly any part. The woman who in Shakespeare's play defines herself as a mother who would kill her baby if necessary and therefore seems in her drive for power more horrific than her husband has hardly any voice at all. The sliding over Lady Macbeth's speech suggests that in rewriting *Macbeth* as well as her earlier portrait of the witch in *Sun God, Moon Witch*, Katz is still unable to recuperate the powerful human mother's voice. Jeneva's non-maternal speech on power, a director's speech, replaces the more disturbing speech in Shakespeare of a powerful mother, the words of Lady Macbeth:

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)

Given Lady Macbeth's gradual slide into madness and silence, Shakespeare's treatment of powerful mothers' voices is itself intriguing, but in *Come Like Shadows* the powerful human mother does not frighten because she is simply no longer there.

Instead, Katz turns to the mother-aspect of the two witches who seek to free their sister, the Hag witch, from her entrapment in the magic mirror. Given the passage of time, both witches, both Mother and Maiden (Dana Sloe), are seen as mothers. When Lucas, the contemporary male protagonist, first sees the elderly Mother witch, he not only thinks that "she looked ... like someone who had given birth to too many children" (44) but recognizes her resemblance to his

own mother the times she was angry and frustrated. In the climax she reappears as Mrs. Maugham, a name Lucas mocks as Mrs. Ha-Ha-Mom. And despite the sympathy Katz creates for the witches who must find a young body to free their Hag witch, their power is still located in a discourse of madness. Everytime that Kinny looks in the mirror and sees either the witches or herself as a participant in their ritual, she resorts to a language of madness, "It didn't make sense" (119); "I'm hearing things and I'm seeing things and I think I'm going out of my mind" (126). The third time that she looks in the mirror, she is hoping that her suspicions about its power to grant her unspoken desires are false: "Wishes granted! It was the stuff of fairy tales. Things like that just didn't happen ... the whole idea was crazy" (160). Far worse than madness is discovering that the maternal, powerful witches are indeed real, not just figures of madness.

Significantly, only Kinny uses this language of madness, a use that seems to relate to her function as a daughter. After Kinny is distraught because a wish has resulted in the death of an actor, Dana embraces her maternally. Lucas is horrified by the mother-daughter image: "Kinny was in Dana's arms ... Dana was comforting her in a soft, private, almost singsong voice that he didn't want to listen to" (196). In direct contrast to Kinny, Lucas, whose sympathy for Macbeth enables him to see the king trapped in the mirror, does not fear that he is going mad. And if Jeneva is described as "mad enough to commit murder" (217), language that returns us to the connection between madness and anger, only Kinny worries incessantly over power and tries to avoid it. When she uses the mirror's power she always rationalizes that she is not merely out for power. Although Dana in the conclusion implies that the witches can take advantage of more than the desire for power, the fact that Kinny survives, but Jeneva does not, suggests that the desire for power remains problematic, particularly for the daughters and mothers of Katz's texts. If Dana insists that the power offered by the mirror is always a trap, that Jeneva's belief in her freedom of choice is illusory once she chooses power, Dana also insists that the desire for power is part of being human regardless of one's sex or age. Returning to the imagery of drowning that pervades Katz's discourse of mad mothers and daughters, Dana tells Kinny "You are still water, Kincardine O'Neil. You can live on the surface and be safe, or dive deep and begin to discover the truth" (288). It is left unclear whether Kinny understands that one of the submerged truths she has yet to discover is that powerful mothers need not be imprisoned in the discourse of madness. Dana's adult knowledge about power and Kinny's adolescent fantasy of living free of the taint of power are not reconciled, but we are told in the conclusion that Kinny seems more interested in becoming a director than an actress. Does this mean that she recognizes finally that power cannot simply be avoided? If Kinny will one day be another Jeneva (and what other model for a powerful human woman is there in the novel? Dana's power disappears when she is no longer a witch), will she rationalize that the exercise of power is legitimate so long as she is not a mother?

The latter question is clearly absurd as it takes us outside the bounds of the novel, but it points to a problem implicit in the dynamics of Katz's fiction. Granted that we live in a world where the exercise of power leads to atrocities and adolescents often suffer the power of adults, to teach female adolescents that the exercise of power is (a) always bad, or (b) particularly bad when mothers have it, seems of questionable value. If women who embrace power may end up simply endorsing the status quo, women who abhor power ensure its continuance even more. Power exists and some mothers sometimes exercise it. Whether female adolescents choose one day to become mothers or administrators or both, power exists. To pretend otherwise is to enter truly into a discourse of madness.

WORKS CITED

- Alderson, Sue Ann. *Bonnie McSmithers You're Driving Me Dithers*. Illus. Fiona Garrick. Edmonton: Tree Frog, 1974.
- Buffie, Margaret. *My Mother's Ghost*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1992.
- . *Who is Frances Rain?* Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1987.
- Katz, Welwyn Wilton. *Come Like Shadows*. Toronto: Viking Penguin, 1993.
- . *False Face*. Groundwood. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987.
- . *Sun God, Moon Witch*. Groundwood. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1986.
- . *Whalesinger*. Groundwood. Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990.
- Shakespeare, William. "The Tragedy of Macbeth." *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974. 1306-1342.

Adrienne Kertzer is head of the English Department at the University of Calgary where she teaches fiction and children's literature .