This ointment disappointment: Caryl Churchill's The skriker and the struggle against patriarchy

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“This ointment disappointment”: Caryl Churchill’s *The Skriker* and the struggle against patriarchy

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English (Literature)

Program of Study Committee:
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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2005
Graduate College
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Signatures have been redacted for privacy
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Achieving things isn’t necessarily good, it matters what you achieve”

(Churchill interview, Betsko and Koenig, 78).

Achieving things is something that Caryl Churchill does well. A currently active playwright, she has a body of work that encompasses 60 plays stretching back to 1958 and continuing to her most recent production that premiered in 2002. Her work includes radio plays, traditionally structured dramas and collaborative productions that incorporate dance, song and puppetry (Dollee). Churchill’s plays have a decidedly political point of view, reflecting her feminist and socialist ideology (Betsko and Koenig, 78). As we will see in more detail when I begin my analysis of her play The Skriker, she uses both the content and form of the work to convey her message. The size of her oeuvre and length of her career allow us to chart evolutionary trends in her political, social and artistic growth.

By tracing the development of Churchill’s craft as a playwright over time I intend to establish a background for my in-depth examination of The Skriker. I will argue that in The Skriker Churchill portrays a world being destroyed by the enforcement of a social and political system governed by patriarchal binary oppositions. Her negative views of contemporary social systems are evident in her earliest plays and her pessimism about the possibility of change has grown over time and is reflected in a novel way in this play.

While Churchill’s earliest productions were student plays, written and produced as she was completing her degree at Oxford, it was as a writer of radio dramas that she honed her craft and “first learned to empower audiences,” using language and sound to engage their
imagination and enable her listeners to see the action (Kritzer, 17). These radio scripts also provided an early venue for Churchill to explore the themes of social identity, gender politics, economic and familial power structures, and systems of authority that are central to her better known works written for the stage. Although the radio dramas provided a medium that sharpened her skills at creating visually evocative language, there was also a practical reason for her decade (1962-1973) of radio scripts. As a young wife and mother she found that the radio provided a possibility for her to continue as a writer while dealing with the artistic isolation as well as the physical and emotional demands of family life (Aston, Caryl Churchill, 4).

In 1972 Churchill was commissioned to write the play Owners, produced that fall at the Theatre Upstairs in the Royal Court. This play marked the end of her experience as a radio writer and the beginning of her career as a playwright. Churchill describes her professional life as “divided quite sharply into before and after 1972, and Owners was the first play of the second part” (Churchill, Plays: One, xi). We can find another significant divide in Churchill’s work, which defines another kind of progress. Her earliest plays including Owners, Objections to Sex and Violence, Moving Clocks Go Slow and Perfect Happiness were written in a traditional manner as the work of a solitary author. In 1976 Churchill began working collaboratively with both The Joint Stock Company and Monstrous Regiment. In her work with these groups Churchill was introduced to new ideas and techniques for creating feminist theater, changing the shape and form of her work. Both of these evolutionary changes are key to the structure she uses in crafting The Skriker.
Chapter 2: The Evolutionary Development of Churchill’s Plays

1. Learning a Feminist Format for Playwriting

*Owners*, Churchill’s first play, produced at the Royal Court Theater, is written in a traditional theatrical style. The play consists of two acts: the first consists of six scenes while the second act has eight. There are parts for seven actors and the play is meant to be cast using people who physically match the descriptions written for the roles. There is no casting which crosses the lines of gender, age, race or physicality. The settings are realistic and include a butcher shop, a room in a flat, an office and a hospital cubical. Although this play conforms to traditional theatrical structure, it already shows evidence of the fluidity of form that becomes more common in Churchill’s later plays, as can be seen in the production note that Churchill includes at the beginning of the script.

Originally the play opened with Scene Two, followed by what is now Scene One. We swapped them round in rehearsal as it seemed a more effective opening to the play. Then we realized that causes a problem of chronology, since Scene Three follows directly on Scene One. It doesn’t seem to matter. But the play could be performed in the original order (*Owners*, 6).

That her plays consist of a variety of scenes that can be performed in almost any order, “it doesn’t seem to matter” (a stage direction I can not imagine George Bernard Shaw or Edward Albee ever writing) is a wonderfully post-modern idea that surfaces in her work even before she is influenced by her collaboration with Monstrous Regiment and The Joint Stock Company. Churchill not only follows the Brechtian call to destroy the fourth wall separating
the audience from the actors, she also destroys the logical flow of time with its linear movement of action through the play.

The post-modern, Brechtian elements of her plays’ structures changed in a more radical manner after she began working with Monstrous Regiment and The Joint Stock Company. The Joint Stock Company, known for its collaborative method of production, commonly held pre-writing workshops in which the actors, authors, and directors used improvisational exercises to establish the shape and tone of the play. Churchill found these workshops exhilarating. Discussing her experiences while writing *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* in 1976 for The Joint Stock Company, she stated:

I'd never seen an exercise or improvisation before and was as thrilled as a child at a pantomime. . . . In a folder I find a scenario I wrote for a day's work: a character for each actor with a speech from before the war, a summary of what happened to them and what their attitude should be at an improvised prayer meeting, and how they ended up at the restoration. This before-during-after idea was something I took forward into the writing . . . .This is a slight account of a great deal, and one thing it can't show enough is my intense pleasure in it all. (Churchill, *The Joint Stock Book*, 119-121)

In discussing her first work with The Joint Stock Company, Churchill notes that the play is not improvised, nor were the lines made up by the actors. Like any other play, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* consists of a written text, but the text was shaped by the improvisational workshops that preceded the actual writing. Indeed the play itself is presented as a series of improvised scenes, which Aston calls “Churchill's Brechtian montage” (*Caryl Churchill*, 56). The twenty scenes distributed through two acts are named,
rather like book chapters, instead of numbered (what would usually be labeled Act 1, Scene 3 is listed as “Margaret Brotherton is tried”). The six actors in the production not only play multiple parts, but the same part is played by different actors in different scenes. To Churchill this casting “seems to reflect better the reality of large events like war and revolution where many people share the same kind of experience. . . . When different actors play the parts what comes over is a large event involving many people, whose characters resonate in a way they wouldn’t if they were more clearly defined” (Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, 184-185).

Her other main collaboration occurred with Monstrous Regiment, which had been established “as a permanent collective committed to both feminist and socialist ideals (Goodman, 69). Although Monstrous Regiment did not use the workshop process employed by The Joint Stock Company, nonetheless Churchill felt that when she worked with this company “she was centrally and beneficially involved with the performers . . . and the benefits of that collaboration affected her approach to future work” (Goodman, 93).

Vinegar Tom, written for Monstrous Regiment and first performed in 1976, is set in seventeenth century England. The play contains a series of contemporary songs that are performed between several of the scenes by actors in modern day costumes. Feminist critic and playwright Michelene Wandor found this mixing of styles jarring (Aston, Caryl Churchill, 26) and David Zane Mairowitz complained that the play was not strong enough to withstand the force of estrangement created by the introduction of songs with “medically and physically graphic” lyrics delivered in a way that deliberately breaks the rhythm of the text (Merrill, 81). But other critics, including Ned Chailet and Gillian Hanna, saw this as Churchill’s attempt to escape the male canonical tradition and create a feminist aesthetic
For Lisa Merrill, Churchill's use of the musical interludes contributes to the break with the patriarchal forms of theater that she is exploring. Along with her final scene, in which two women dressed as the authors of a fifteenth century handbook, *Malleus Maleficarum: The Hammer of Witches*, perform a music hall comedy using the fifteenth century text, these musical interludes create a Brechtian epic theater production that embodies the "very estrangement or alienation which Churchill intends" (Merrill, 81).

Her work with the two companies made it possible for her to use the structure of her plays as well as their content to explore ideas of gender, economics, history, time and place. Churchill's work took on a new and freer form: Rather than the traditional two or three act play structure, she developed a more episodic mode of theatrical exposition. The episodic nature of her plays, the intertwining of different forms of theatrical experiences and her play with language in a non-linear discourse that began with *Vinegar Tom* and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, continues in plays that were written without the collaborative atmosphere of Monstrous Regiment or The Joint Stock Company. In *The Skriker*, Churchill has created a drama with no written scene or act changes. The action, which is made up of a series of short vignettes including dialogue, mime and dance, defies any of the traditional and comfortable categories of performance.

This Brechtian disconnect between the play and the audience, the mixing of styles, stepping outside the traditional definitions of canonical theater, are characteristics that Churchill continues to use in her exploration of ideas. *Cloud Nine*, written in collaboration with The Joint Stock Company in 1979, started as a workshop about sexual politics. During these workshops Churchill saw "the parallel between colonial and sexual oppression" (Cloud
To highlight this parallel, Churchill set the first act of the play in Victorian Africa and the second act in late 1970s London. In addition to the unusual use of time in the play, Churchill made some atypical choices in the character/actor selections. In Cloud Nine the mother/wife character of Betty and the black servant Joshua are both meant to be played by white males because both characters are trying to be what the white man wants them to be, this casting highlights the fact that neither character values his/her actual identity. When the characters from Act 1 reappear in Act 2, they are played by different actors, and while the characters have aged only 25 years, the historical placement of the play has moved 100 years, from Victorian Africa to 1970s England. Moving farther from the realism typical of traditional theater, Churchill has created plays that reject the linear progression of western narrative structure.

In A Mouthful of Birds, written collaboratively with David Lan for the Joint Stock Company in 1986, Churchill added dance to her production, using the choreography of Ian Spink to “assert [her] desire to keep experimenting with form” (Aston, Feminist Views, 19). Churchill and Lan’s use of dance, music and sound adds layers of texture and sensuality to a decreasing amount of text. The play consists of 32 short scenes that take up only 31 pages of print. Some of the scenes are as short as one line: “10. Possession: DIONYSOS appears to DOREEN. DOREEN is possessed by AGAVE. AGAVE. I put my foot against its side and tore out its shoulder. I broke open its ribs.” Ten of the scenes are partially or entirely dance: “11. Fruit Ballet: Whole company as their main characters. This dance consists of a series of movements mainly derived from eating fruit. It emphasizes the sensuous pleasures of eating and the terrors of being torn up” (A Mouthful of Birds, 28). Another scene enacts a murder through an escalating battle of sounds:
MRS. BLAIR turns her radio up.

DOREEN turns her radio up.

MRS. BLAIR turns her radio up and thumps.

DOREEN turns her radio up and thumps and shouts. (A Mouthful of Birds, 62).

The scene continues in this manner until Doreen murders Mrs. Blair. In these scenes, Churchill establishes meaning without dialogue or monologue. Using sound and movement, she connects with her audience in a visceral and unambiguous way. Her distrust of language, which is further developed in The Skriker, is emphasized here. The purity of the violence between Doreen and Mrs. Blair is not muddied by words or left open to interpretations. Eliminating words also eliminates the necessity to situate meaning in the signified and signifier; instead we are left with a direct representation of the sign.

Churchill continued to expand on her distrust of language in The Skriker, where she found herself writing dance into the play in the form of stage directions (Aston, Caryl Churchill, 97). Interwoven into the text of the play are instructions such as:

A MAN comes in carrying a white cloth and a bucket of water . . . . The MAN spreads the cloth on the floor and stands the bucket of water on it. He waits. He isn’t satisfied. He picks up the cloth and bucket and walks about looking for a better spot. Meanwhile the KELPIE goes . . . the MAN puts the cloth and bucket down in another place . . . . A PASSERBY comes along the street, throws down a coin, and then starts to dance to the music. (The Skriker, 10-11)

These create a series of dance/pantomimes that occur around the action of the main characters and highlight the other-worldly quality of the play. The dance that is written into this play is complementary to the overall musical quality of Churchill’s work. In addition to
writing dance into the stage directions, Churchill choreographs the language of her plays by incorporating a rhythmic base to the script including overlapping dialogue denoted by the use of diacritical marks in the text:

A speech usually follows the one immediately before it BUT: 1: when one character starts speaking before the other has finished, the point of interruption is marked / . . .

2: a character sometimes continues speaking right through another speech . . .

3: sometimes a speech follows on from a speech earlier than the one immediately before it, and continuity is marked *. (Top Girls, 52)

Commenting on the theatricality of Churchill’s work, Kritzer notes Churchill’s “continual imaginative challenges to the conventions of theatre” as well as her ability to bring a playfulness and “subversively comic rather than authoritarian and confrontational” (1) quality to works dealing with the most intractable aspects of contemporary life.

Commenting on the unusual styles her plays take on Churchill states: I do enjoy the form of things. I enjoy finding the form that seems best to fit what I’m thinking about. I don’t set out to find a bizarre way of writing. I certainly don’t think that you have to force it. But, on the whole, I enjoy plays that are non naturalistic and don’t move at real time. (Churchill, New Statesman interview, 42)

Beginning with Owners, produced using the time-honored conventions of solitary playwriting, and continuing through her collaborations with Monstrous Regiment and The Joint Stock Company, Churchill has established herself as an innovative writer. She has drawn on her experiences with the theater collectives to create a new style for her plays making the form of the production an integral part of the message. By deliberately crossing
the rigid linearity of the traditional binary oppositions of western culture, she has fostered a feminized and matriarchal structure in her plays to reflect her message.

2. The Creation of a Feminist/Socialist Ideology

In a 1984 interview Churchill stated: “Of course, socialism and feminism aren’t synonymous, but I feel strongly about both and wouldn’t be interested in a form of one that didn’t include the other” (Betskov, 78). Churchill’s ideologies grew slowly out of her life experiences: “what politicized me was being . . . a wife . . . at home with small children.” Churchill’s life changed more radically when she and her husband decided they could no longer “shore up a capitalistic system (they) didn’t believe in” (Itzen, 279). Following another miscarriage in the numerous series of miscarriages that Churchill had experienced, her husband had a vasectomy and the family took off for six months traveling to Africa and the wilds of Dartmoor. During this time Churchill was free from her family responsibilities to concentrate on her writing. The social and political content of her work at this time “was entirely to do with self-expression of my own personal pain and anger. It wasn’t thought out” (Itzen, 279) but grew out of her experiences and dissatisfactions with the life of a traditional middle-class wife and mother.

Elaborating further on the kind of society she would like, Churchill described a social order that is “decentralized, non-authoritarian, communist, nonsexist—a society in which people can be in touch with their feelings and in control of their lives” (Churchill, Ms., 56). Her plays, dealing with the conflict between the utopian society that she describes and the actual world that we live in, investigate societally pressing issues of gender, race, social and economic status and power. Churchill’s skillful use of text and theater turns topics that one
would expect to be heavy dramas full of Sturm und Drang into incredibly funny farces. Perhaps her understanding that the society she desires “always sounds both ridiculous and unattainable when you put it into words” (Churchill, Ms., 56) directs her pen to humor, albeit, dark humor.

This dark humor and sense of the absurd was evident in her years as a writer of radio plays. Writing for a media (radio) that relied solely on sound helped her develop a fluid use of dialogue and imagery while honing her feminist sensibilities. Her choice to write for the radio was largely based on the constraints of creating while fulfilling the role of full-time mother and wife. Struggling to combine her need to write with her role as mother Churchill hired a woman to care for her three young sons in order to gain the time she needed. This did not prove to be a satisfactory solution, because like so many other women in the 1960s she felt conflicted by the contradictory demands of work and parenting. Her guilt was exacerbated by an incredible pressure to produce, causing Churchill to state, “I felt guilty if I did not accomplish something while I was paying someone else to baby-sit” (Keyssar, 203).

Churchill’s earliest professionally produced stage play, Owners, was written in three days after her discharge from the hospital following “a particularly gruesome late miscarriage” (Keyssar, 203). This play deals specifically with an exploration of gender and economics growing from her socio-political beliefs. In Owners Churchill distorts the traditional order of gender and economic power to illuminate the illogic and inconsistencies of both capitalism and patriarchy. Also incorporated into this work is an exploration of clashes that arise from conflicts between eastern and western philosophies. In her introductory note to the play in Plays: One, Churchill wrote about “wanting one character with the active, achieving attitude of ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’, the other the ‘sitting
quietly, doing nothing’ of the Zen poem. The active one had to be a woman, the passive one a man, for their attitudes to show up clearly as what they believed rather than as conventional male and female behaviour” (4). Written 33 years ago, Owners is still a powerful and thought-provoking piece of theater according to a review of a 2005 production by Robert Hurwitt. He called the play “penetrating, provocative and shockingly hilarious at almost every twist and turn of its continuously surprising plot” (Hurwitt). Owners is an early example of Churchill’s ongoing fight against the restrictions imposed by the binary oppositions that create all aspects of western culture.

The binary oppositions between the roles of author and mother also carry over into her work. Her plays are populated by children and the conflicts that these children cause in the lives of the adult characters. In Owners Marion wants to take possession of Lisa and Alec’s youngest child and Alec dies saving a child that is not his. At the opening of Traps “SYL is walking up and down with a baby on her shoulder, getting it to sleep” (Traps, 73). When Alice is interrogated in Vinegar Tom, her only concern is for her son, “But what’s going to happen to him. He’s only got me” (Vinegar Tom, 171). Top Girls revolves around Marlene’s relation (or lack of) with her daughter Angie. A battle for the possession of a child is waged between two mothers and “an ancient and damaged fairy” in The Skriker. Even Churchill’s two most recent plays contain children and the exploration of parent/child relations: Far Away opens with a young girl’s visit to her aunt and then follows her into a surreal, horrific future, while Number explores the relationships between a father and several copies of his cloned son.

The theme of children becomes even more complicated in Cloud Nine where much of the play focuses on the lives of Edward and Victoria, revealing their experiences as both
children and parents. In act 1 of Cloud Nine, while Edward and Victoria are children, Edward is played by a woman and Victoria by a doll; in act 2, Cathy, a five-year-old girl, is played by a man. In discussing these casting choices, Churchill stated, “Edward, Clive’s son, is played by a woman . . . partly to do with stage convention of having boys played by women . . . and partly with highlighting the way Clive tries to impose traditional male behaviour on him” whereas “Cathy is played by a man partly as a simple reversal of Edward being played by a woman, partly because the size and presence of a man on stage seemed appropriate to the emotional force of young children and partly as with Edward, to show more clearly the issues involved in learning what is considered correct behaviour for a girl” (Cloud Nine, 245-6). Through her unusual casting, Churchill highlights the fragility of gender and age distinction. Children are both mirrors and sponges, absorbing the requirements society places on them and reflecting them back.

In her criticism of society Churchill often uses historical settings to foreground modern issues. Vinegar Tom deals with witchcraft in 17th century England, Light Shining in Buckinghamshire (Churchill’s first play for The Joint Stock Company, written in 1976) takes place during the English Civil War (1647-40), Act 1 of Cloud Nine takes place in Victorian Africa, and the opening scene of Top Girls gathers a historically disparate group of women for a contemporary dinner party. An analysis of Vinegar Tom can highlight the way Churchill uses the past to comment on the present.

In this drama Churchill wanted “to write a play about witches with no witches in it; a play not about evil, hysteria, and possession by the devil but about poverty, humiliation and prejudice” (Vinegar Tom, 129). This play, written for Monstrous Regiment, consists of twenty brief scenes separated by songs. The songs are sung by actresses in modern dress and
are written in a contemporary style. They serve not only as a Brechtian device to break the
traditional fourth wall and remind the audience that they are watching a play, but also bridge
the distance between the 17th century women depicted in the text and the modern men and
women of the audience. Speaking of the songs in Vinegar Tom, Sue Bearden, an
administrator for Monstrous Regiment, told Catherine Itzen, “We didn’t want to allow the
audiences to ever get completely immersed in the stories of the women in the play. We
wanted to make them continually aware of our presence, of our relationship to the material
... the songs had to contain what we sensed as a connection between the past of the play and
our present experience” (Itzen, 27).

The powerlessness and lack of autonomy for women in the seventeenth century is
demonstrated by the punishment they receive if they try to move out of sharply delineated
boundaries. In her attempts to be independent and sexually active, Alice is first labeled a
whore: “You’re not a wife or a widow. You’re not a virgin. Tell me a name for what you
are” (Vinegar Tom, 136) and then a witch. Economically, socially and politically
marginalized, the women in Vinegar Tom are considered aberrant for not conforming to the
societally proscribed roles allowed them. Additionally the women serve as an escape valve
in times of stress, becoming the scapegoats for the sins of society; these women relieve the
men of responsibility for creating or fixing the evils of their world. Using the hysteria of
witch hunts, Churchill was able to draw “connections between medieval attitudes to witches
and continuing attitudes to women in general” (Vinegar Tom, 129).

As Aston notes, “looking back at Owners and forward to Vinegar Tom it is possible to
see how important the experience of working with the feminist company Monstrous
Regiment was to the emergent ‘women writer’” (Aston, Caryl Churchill, 31). Both plays are
heavily imbued with Churchill’s growing socialist-feminist ideology. However, only after working with a group of avowed feminists could Churchill break out of the pattern of patriarchal narrative to develop her voice as a feminist author. In an interview with Lizbeth Goodman, Churchill said that her experience with Monstrous Regiment left her “stimulated by discovery of shared ideas and the enormous energy and feeling of possibilities in the still new company” (Goodman, 93).

Shortly after writing *Vinegar Tom* with Monstrous Regiment, and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* for The Joint Stock Company, Churchill was commissioned to write a second play for The Joint Stock Company. In accordance with the philosophy of The Joint Stock Company, Churchill participated in a series of workshops exploring sexual politics during the process of crafting *Cloud Nine*. These workshops involved the full company and took place before writing the play. In describing these events, Churchill states:

> The starting point for our research was to talk about ourselves and share our very different attitudes and experiences. We also explored stereotypes and role reversals in games and improvisations, read books and talked to other people. (Cloud Nine, 245)

Much of what Churchill finally wrote came out of these exercises. Writing this script, Churchill found herself returning to “an idea that had been touched on briefly in the workshop—the parallel between colonial and sexual oppression, which Genet calls ‘the colonial or feminine mentality of interiorized repression’” (Cloud Nine, 245).

To represent the parallel relationship between colonial and sexual repression on stage, Churchill created another juxtaposition of historical and contemporary periods. Act 1 of *Cloud Nine* is a period piece, set in Victorian Africa, but Act 2 takes place in London of
1979, an interval of 25 years in the life of the characters, but 100 in historical time. The play is almost the reversal of a popular ad campaign for Virginia Slims cigarettes, which began in 1969. "Phony sepia-toned photos, picturing the sorry lot of a circa 1900's woman, were juxtaposed against color photographs of a far happier modern woman wearing stylish contemporary clothing," and over the entire ad was the tag-line, "You’ve come a long way, baby" (Shaw). Contrary to Virginia Slims, Churchill’s play seems to be telling us “you haven’t come anywhere yet, baby."

By expanding her feminist awareness to include colonialism as well as gender repression, Churchill redefines Simone de Beauvoir’s Other to include everyone who is oppressed by the white male hegemony that controls western civilization. Women are Other not because they are not male, but because they are not the white-socially-economically-politically empowered males. As Churchill’s political ideology expands from her contact with groups like Monstrous Regiment and The Joint Stock Company, her plays expand in representing the disenfranchised and oppressed populations that are subjugated by capitalist white male dominance.

The mixing of time periods to universalize the conditions and treatment of women is taken even further at the beginning of Top Girls, written in 1982. The play opens with a dinner party that Marlene is throwing to celebrate her promotion at the Top Girls Employment agency. Her party is attended by a group of women drawn from history, myth and art, including:

ISABELLA BIRD (1831-1904) lived in Edinburgh, travelled extensively between the ages of 40 and 70.
LADY NIJO (b. 1258) Japanese, was an Emperor's courtesan and later a Buddhist nun who travelled on foot through Japan.

DULL GRET is the subject of the Bruegel painting, Dulle Griet, in which a woman in an apron and armour leads a crowd of women charging through hell and fighting the devils.

POPE JOAN, disguised as a man, is thought to have been Pope between 854-856.

PATIENT GRISELDALDA is the obedient wife whose story is told by Chaucer in the Clerk's Tale of The Canterbury Tales. (Top Girls, 52)

When these women, who are separated by a thousand years and 6,000 miles, coming from widely differing social, religious and economic backgrounds, discuss their lives they tell very similar tales. The overlapping dialogue that Churchill has written for this scene mixes with the overlapping tales of abuse, lost children and betrayal, but all told with humor and a sense of joy that fills the stage with life. Here Churchill establishes a connection between women from different times and places. What she hinted at with the insertion of modern songs in Vinegar Tom, and suggested by placing the family in Cloud Nine in two distinctly different time periods, becomes unambiguously clear in this dinner party. The constraints of patriarchal society and its concomitant degradation of women, from Chaucerian times to the present, from feudal Japan to medieval Europe to modern London, is met with acceptance, resilience and humor by women who often fail to realize the injustices to which they are subjected.

Four years after Top Girls Churchill again collaborated with The Joint Stock Company on A Mouthful of Birds. Although this was her fourth play with them, Churchill chose a different process in its creation, working collaboratively with co-writers David Lan.
In her previous collaborations, Churchill would withdraw following the group workshops to write her play in isolation. For *A Mouthful of Birds* there was no period of withdrawal; rather the “improvisations and movement exercises went on continuously, and text was written and given to the actors from day to day after the initial five weeks” (Kritzer, 173). This was also the first time that Churchill collaborated with choreographer Ian Spinks.

In *A Mouthful of Birds* Churchill and Lan created a modern retelling of Euripides’ *The Bacchae*. As Kritzer states “the revision of myth constitutes a major element of feminist writing” (172). Classical mythology, a basis of modern society, provides narratives, characters and examples for the possibility of human action and interaction. Inherited from the ancients, these stories provide support for the existent patriarchal society. In order to create a feminist/matriarchal counterpoint to our contemporary male-ordered society it is necessary to revise these myths and endow them with feminist/matriarchal interpretations. In her previous plays Churchill reached back into historical time to create a link to modern social and gender issues; with *A Mouthful of Birds*, she finds ancient and mythological origins for the difficulties of modern life.

In the workshop where this production was developed, Churchill focused on the idea of violence and women. The traditional societal view maintains that women are passive and peaceful while men are violent. Churchill wanted to challenge this stereotype by exploring violence in women: “There is a danger of polarizing men and women into what becomes again the traditional view that men are naturally more violent and so have no reason to change. It seems important to recognize women’s capacity for violence and men’s for peacefulness” (*A Mouthful of Birds*, 5). Her co-writer Lan, an anthropologist and writer, was interested in spirit possession and states of ecstasy. He “chose to see possession as any form
of behaviour that is not entirely under one's own control" (A Mouthful of Birds, 6).

Focusing on seven individuals who all experience a moment of "ecstatic possession," this play explores the relationships among ecstasy, violence, self-control and gender.

A Mouthful of Birds is divided into three parts. The first opens with the "visually ambiguous presence of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and theatre" (Kritzer, 174). "Dionysus dances. He is played by a man. He wears a white petticoat" (A Mouthful of Birds, 19). Second comes a series of brief scenes that introduce the seven major characters in ordinary situations. This section of the play ends with each of the characters offering a series of three excuses. The first sets of excuses are ordinary and unassuming, reflecting the scenes that introduced the characters: "I'm sorry I can't make the conference. I've sprained my ankle" but each set of excuses escalates. The final set, "I can't go to the disco. The army's closed off the street" (A Mouthful of Birds, 23), expresses a character in the grip of an ecstatic experience and thereby provides a segue into the next section of the play.

In the third part of A Mouthful of Birds each character experiences an ecstatic possession, participating in what Churchill calls an "undefended day," a day "in which there is nothing to protect you from the forces inside and outside yourself" (A Mouthful of Birds, 5). Included in this part is a retelling of The Bacchae with Agave and her Bacchae performing a ritualistic dismemberment of Pentheus, along with a recitation of the life of Herculine Barbin, a nineteenth century French hermaphrodite. Not only does the "undefended day" free the characters from the constraints of moral or social responsibility, but it also seems to eliminate the narrative restrictions of time, place, and gender. Freed from the constraints of linear and patriarchal binary oppositions, A Mouthful of Birds employs dance, comedy, narrative and violence to create a feminist revision of The Bacchae.
Over the years, Churchill’s social and political consciousness has expanded, from reflecting her personal pain to encompassing the pain and marginalization of all people existing outside the power base of patriarchy. Her plays have moved farther from the traditional narrative base of western theater to find new forms of non-linear feminist productions that incorporate a variety of creative media into their structure. Her plays have moved from contemporary settings to historical and mythological ones and dramas that include a mixture of elements from contemporary life, historical times and mythology.

In the next section of this paper I will focus specifically on Churchill’s 1994 play, The Skriker. Understanding Churchill’s development as an artist and feminist will make it easier to analyze this play. In The Skriker Churchill combines narrative text with dance and pantomime to create a performance that incorporates many of the elements associated with feminist drama. Set partly in modern London and partly in a mythic underworld, The Skriker is populated by characters from English folklore who interact with the young women of London, and paints a picture of a bifurcated world that is unsuccessful on all levels. The Skriker is Churchill’s funny but ultimately bleak vision of a world destroyed through patriarchal practice.
Chapter 3: Who or What is The Skriker?

The three main characters in Churchills’ play are the Skriker, “an ancient and damaged fairy,” and two young women, Josie and Lily. While this is not a plot-driven play, the basic story follows the Skriker as she stalks the two young women. As the play opens, Josie is in a mental hospital, presumably for murdering her infant daughter. She is visited by Lily, her pregnant friend/sister. Another patient in the hospital appearing in the guise of a middle-aged female patient is the Skriker. Throughout the course of the play, the Skriker attempts to attach herself first to one, then to the other of the two girls. A shape-shifter, the Skriker appears to the girls in a variety of personae including male and female, young and old, human and non-human, as she tries to get them to accompany her to the underworld.

In addition to these three main characters, the play is also populated by a host of creatures taken from British folklore: Yallery Brown, Kelpie, Jennie Greenteeth, Rawheadandbloodybones, Black Annis, and the Spriggan. These creatures use dance, mime, and tableaus to provide an ongoing counterpoint to the main activity of the play. They are the citizens of the Skriker’s underworld; they accompany her on her journeys to the upper world. The Skriker’s minions are silent, but she is very verbal, spouting several long rambling monologues, including the five-page monologue that opens the play. Her language is disjointed, filled with word associations based on sound that cause her meaning to continually shift and slide, “here you stand in an enchanted wood you or wouldn’t you” (51).

In articles, reviews and critical evaluations of The Skriker, the title character has been called an “archetype”, without much agreement as to what this archetype signifies. To
Istevan Nagy she represents Satan while Claudia Barnett sees her as the personification of the Mother archetype of Jung combined with the Great Goddess. In either of these manifestations she should possess a power that I will argue does not exist in the character of the Skriker. The overall feeble and defenseless nature of the Skriker becomes evident when explained by Katherine Perrault using the methodology of chaos theory. As the mention of chaos theory would indicate, this play does not present an easy analytic task to critics, theorists or reviewers. Key productions of the play offer a first set of commentary on these issues.

The production, which opened in London on January 20, 1994, at the Cottesloe auditorium of the Royal National Theater, was met with mixed and mediocre reviews. "The Skriker stands in the Churchill canon as arguably the play the critics least understood and were most hostile to" (Ashton, Feminist Views, 28). The reviewers did not know how to react to a play which did not fit neatly into their preconceived notions of what theater should be. John Peter in the Sunday Times pondered on this point when he wrote:

I'm not sure what it is I am involved with. What sort of play is this? Critics like to be able to classify things, partly because it shows how much they know and partly because they like to guide their readers. With The Skriker, I just don't know. (97)

Peter concludes that the play is "a magic play-poem about magic" (98). Other critics were less generous in their conclusions. Benedict Nightingale in the Times states that "she has not quite succeeded" and David Nathan in the Jewish Chronicle ends his review by claiming that "she cannot be serious" (93). Charles Spencer in the Daily Telegraph is so confused by this play that he speculates about "what Caryl Churchill was taking when she wrote The Skriker"
and then suggests that “it might be as well to issue the audience with some of the same stuff” (96).

Not all reviewers were so negative. Judith Mackrell credits Churchill’s language with creating a “brilliantly shifting center of reality” in a performance where “movement and language don’t just complement each other, they are luminously inseparable” (TR, 95). In an interesting review in the Mail on Sunday, Louise Doughty starts by stating her initial dislike of the play, but ends by commenting, “I found that for days afterwards images from it kept popping into my mind. I have now concluded I liked it very much indeed” (TR, 98). Interestingly, the more positive reviews were written by women. It is possible that the feminist nature and structure of the play, which I will discuss at length later, makes this play more accessible to women.

The play did not appear in New York until May 1996, and there the production again met with mixed reviews, but on the whole the critical reception was friendlier. The headline in the Daily News stated “The Skriker Strikes Out” and Howard Kissel, after comparing the play to “an attempt by college students to create experimental theater,” concludes his review by calling it “the worst sort of artsy-craftsy twaddle” (273). However, Kissel’s dislike of the play did not stop him from admiring the production. He called “the acting suburb, especially by Angie Phillips and Caroline Seymour as the girls and Jayne Atkinson as the Skriker. The production is full of haunting stage pictures and sound effects” (273).

Michael Feingold found nothing admirable about the play. Not only did he dislike the script (“I’m never wholly convinced that Caryl Churchill knows how to write a play”) but he decried the production’s
pretensions and arbitrariness . . . underscored by Mark Wing-Davey’s expectably coarse, loud production. . . . You’ve never seen so much crap on stage in your life, all as trite and ugly as it is unnecessary; more of Marina Draghicis’ crummy abandoned-warehouse set pieces; more of John Groumada’s ear-wounding spasms of construction noise; more of Christopher Akerlind’s slash-and-shadow lighting that does everything but illuminate . . . little acting survives the onslaught. (274)

At the other end of the critical spectrum, Jeremy Gerard calls the play “at once a major achievement and unlike anything else seen on stage.” Gerard ends his review in *Variety* by lamenting the shortness of the run for this “truly original work” in which “the presentation . . . is astonishing” (275). A positive response to the production is provided by Ben Brantley, who calls the technical production “dazzlingly ambitious” (272) and lauds the “crack design team” (273) that put it all together. Although not split along gender lines (there were no reviews written by women for the New York production), the New York reviewers were just as divided in their opinion of the play as were their London counterparts. I am not surprised to find such a mixed attitude on the part of the critics towards a play that (as I intend to argue) attacks the concept of binary opposition. In attempting to shun the divisive polarities of patriarchal binaries the play makes it inevitable that just such divisiveness will be stirred up.

Consistent in the reviews of both the London and New York productions was praise for the actress playing the title role (Kathryn Hunter in London and Jayne Atkinson in New York). Hunter was called “mesmeric, chameleon-like” (Coveney), “a triumph of style over content” (Hirschorn), “an astonishing performance even for this protean artist” (Wardle). In New York Ben Brantley called attention to “Ms. Atkinson’s superb interpretation, as notable
for its command of a very difficult language as for its amazing changes of character” (272) while Gerard commends Atkinson for playing the Skriker “in a performance of mesmerizing loquaciousness” (273).

A command of difficult language and loquacity is required at the opening of The Skriker when the title character delivers a four and a half page monologue. The monologue flows in a poetic outpouring of Joycean stream of consciousness illogic. Words and phrases follow each other suggested by similarities in their sounds (“enchanted orchard, cherry orchid, chanted orchestra”) creating a seemingly nonsensical stream of verbiage. Breaking the connections between Saussure’s signified and signifier, the Skriker’s speech has no apparent semantic meaning, existing as a purely auditory experience. On closer study, however, the text of a children’s story—a fairy tale—emerges; the Skriker is reciting a twisted version of the Rumpelstiltskin legend:

So I spin the sheaves shoves shivers into golden guild and geld and if she can’t
guessing game and safety match my name then I’ll take her no mistake no mister no
missed her no mist no miss no me no. (Skriker, 1)

These sound linkages which are nicely described by John Gross as “verbal paper chains—or perhaps a better analogy would be hooks and eyes” (Gross, 96) are dismissed by other reviewers as “a massive mouthful of words” (Taylor, 94). It is this “massive mouthful of words” that drives much of the play. The slipperiness of the language mirrors the slipperiness of the Skiker. The text veers in unexpected directions, taking its cue from the sounds of the words rather than their meanings, just as the Skriker resurfaces in new and unexpected forms: “a shapeshifter fairy . . . of whom it is very difficult to say anything certain” (Nagy).
In spite of the above referenced statement, Istevan Nagy, Claudia Barnett and Katherine Perrault manage to find a lot to say about The Skriker. In three very different essays, that I will discuss now, they conclude that the Skriker is either the devil, a parasite, or an illustration of the ultimate powerlessness of women.

Nagy he regards the opening monologue as a traditional prologue, seeing elements of prediction as well as biblical and literary allusions in the evasive text that "puts the spectator or reader in a mood in which they are able to tune into the plot and the lives of the characters to be presented... the Skriker's monologue is able to create the strange, half-rational, half-irrational aura of the scenes to come" (Nagy). Reading this monologue as an "unhindered flow of words" that "addresses the readers' subconscious rather than their conscious, rational mind" Nagy extracts meanings that foretell the action of the play and define the character of the Skriker as a demonic presence.

Based at least partially on the biblical references to Satan that he finds in the opening monologue—"but if the baby has no name better nick a name, better Old Nick than no name" (2) and "out came my secreted garden flower of my youth and beauty and the beast is six six six o'clock in the morning" (1)—Nagy argues that the Skriker is a personification of the devil. The Skriker's attempts to bribe Josie and Lily with love, glamour and wish fulfillment are further evidence of her demonic nature. Even the love she offers is suspect, according to Nagy. "The borderline between good and evil is dependent on what we love. The love the Skriker is so desperate to have seems to be the love of evil and destruction." According to Nagy's interpretation "the Skriker bears a frightening resemblance to another great tempter of history, Satan" (Nagy).
Nagy finds further support for his interpretation of the Skriker as devil in what he calls “the ‘subplot’ of dumb shows” that takes place around the main action of the play. In these pantomimes, human characters interact with fairies from the Skriker’s realm. The humans are searching for something, but contact with the fairies invariably leaves them damaged; one girl returns with a bandaged wrist, a man ends up in a wheelchair, another women is dismembered.

Everyone who is weak enough to get in touch with a fairy comes to grief. So do Josie and Lily. However, it would be far too easy and unjust to blame all the miseries on the Skriker and her company. They may appear as beautiful, kind and amiable beings to Josie and Lily but ultimately the choice is whether the sisters should embrace them or reject them. They fail to make the right choice and they fall. (Nagy)

Nagy’s theological interpretation of Churchill’s play, though interesting, fails in several ways. Recasting Satan as “an ancient and damaged fairy” seems to disempower the force of evil he is meant to represent. Western imagery in general and Christian representations specifically, show Satan (as well as God) as masculine/patriarchal creations. As a shape shifter the Skriker inhabits male and female persona (she even appears as an inanimate object), yet in all of her appearances she exemplifies feminine/matriarchal power, making her an unlikely choice for a representation of Satan. As I intend to offer a feminist interpretation of this play, I do not accept the Skriker as a representation of the patriarchal image of evil.

A struggle between good and evil without any representation of good (God) lacks the tension necessary to drive the moral value implied in such a struggle. Neither Josie nor Lily has the power to represent the force of good that is fighting the encroaching and seductive
evils offered by the devil. In a biblical reenactment of the struggle between good and evil, Josie and Lily should represent the souls being fought over, buffeted between the extremes of the heaven/hell possibilities. Without a God, there can be no devil and *The Skriker* does not present us with both sides of the equation. The patriarchal equation that Nagy uses requires an equation with two sides: if there is hell, there must be heaven, if there is a god there must be a devil and if there is evil, then there must be good. By replacing the patriarchal reading with a feminist one, we can eliminate the binary oppositions that are needed to maintain the tension between polarities in Nagy’s reading. The Skriker becomes free to shapeshift through manifestations that cross opposing binary lines without being labeled evil or deficient. She can in all honesty state, “I am a good fairy” (17).

A related interpretation is proposed by Claudia Barnett in her 2000 essay: “Reveneangance is gold mine, sweet’: Alchemy and Archetypes in Caryl Churchill’s *The Skriker.*” Rather than a struggle between good and evil with the Skriker representing Satan, Barnett interprets the play as depicting a struggle between the natural and supernatural worlds. This interpretation still leaves us with a basic struggle between bifurcated needs. In this case the Skriker, rather than representing pure evil, represents the needs of one community in conflict with another community. In this interpretation the Skriker gains moral footing. Her actions stem not from a desire to harm or destroy, but from a need to preserve one population by exploiting another. The Skriker, an inhabitant of the supernatural realm, moves between the two worlds searching for ways to enhance her domain.

For the Skriker, the two worlds she inhabits are diametrically opposed . . . the two worlds do not comfortably coexist; their relationship is not symbiotic, but parasitic, and rebirth in the under world depends upon a sacrifice in London. (Barnett, 45)
Barnett's Skriker is not Satan, but an incarnation of Jung's archetype of the Mother and the Great Goddess, with all of the contradictory characteristics that both convey. Quoting from Jung, Barnett describes the mother archetype as having

maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason; any helpful insight or impulse; all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility. The place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its inhabitants, are presided over by the mother. On the negative side the mother archetype may connote anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate. (48)

It is easy to find examples of these traits in the character of the Skriker. Maternal solicitude can be traced to her desire to have a baby;

SKRIKER: You keeping the baby:

LILY: Yes of course.

SKRIKER: Because I'm looking for one. (15)

Her use of magic proliferates, she can grant wishes and uses magic to reward her favored girl by making coins come out of Lily's mouth, or punish the one out-of-favor, making toads come out of Josie's mouth. In her use of language she creates connections that defy and transcend reason, changing the ordinary "listless and pale" into the extraordinary "listless and pale beyond the pale moonlight of heart sore her with spirits with spirit dancing the night away" (3). At the same time she is hidden, we never really know who she is. Is she the old woman, the little child, the young man or some form we have yet to see? She seduces the two girls, coercing them into her hidden abyss, tempting them and terrifying them at the
same time so that they are miserable with her, but as Josie explains, want her back when she is gone: “But when you’ve lost her you want her back. Because you see what she can do and you’ve lost your chance and it could be the only chance ever in my life” (28).

Along with the Jungian Mother, Barnett sees elements of the Great Goddess in the Skriker. Using terms from Barbara G. Walker’s *The Crone: Women of Age, Wisdom and Power*, Barnett says of the Great Goddess that she is “both ugly and beautiful, Virgin and Crone, darkness and light, winter and summer, birth giver and death bringer” (47). Incorporating the binaries that are used to illustrate feminine attributes, the Great Goddess becomes an incarnation of feminist power.

For Barnett the Jungian mother aspect of the Skriker fuels her need to nurture her world, but in order to accomplish this task, she requires a sacrifice from the natural world. By seducing first Josie and then Lily into entering her dark, hidden underworld, she takes from them the nourishment that she needs to sustain her own people. She is able to capture Josie and Lily by using her powers as the “many-named, multi-formed Goddess. Changeable as nature itself” (47). As a shape-shifter, the Skriker crosses the borders of gender (appearing as man and woman), age (coming to Lily and Josie as a young child, a middle-aged woman, an old man and everything in between), and life (appearing as both animate and inanimate objects). The power of the Great Goddess and the Jungian Mother combine to create a powerful and malignant feminist force bent on protecting her supernatural and matriarchal society from the destructiveness of the natural/patriarchal world.

This elevation of the matriarchal society over the patriarchy creates what Barnett calls “a revisionist fairy tale with a feminist twist” (55). Basing her analysis of fairy tales on
Bruno Bettelheim’s work, Barnett describes the traditional function of these stories to initiate children into societally accepted roles and behaviors and concludes:

The child learns, from the fairy tale, to be good. *The Skriker* teaches a different lesson: Virgin, mother, and crone are terms describing a progression (or regression) rather than alternatives. The child cannot maintain her innocence, for every girl grows old and becomes the fairy tale witch. The fault is society’s rather than the girl’s. (55)

I agree with Barnett that the world of the Skriker contains two separate but connected societies. I disagree, however, with her assessment of these two worlds as antagonistic. Instead of the parasitic relationship she describes, I would suggest a more symbiotic relationship. It is obvious that the Skriker’s world is damaged and suffering:

*It looks wonderful except that it is all glamour and here and there it’s not working—*

*some of the food is twigs, leaves, beetles, some of the clothes are rags, some of the beautiful people have a claw hand or hideous face.* (28-29)

It is also obvious that the Skriker is stalking Josie and Lily because she needs the energy and life force that she can extract by bringing them into her realm. But things are not so wonderful for life above ground either. The Skriker is searching for help in a society that abandons its young women. Lily and Josie have no older females to guide them; there are apparently no social services, family, friends or relatives to provide help. They have only each other and neither of them is strong enough to support them both. They need the Skriker as much as she needs them. If a symbiotic bond could be established, nourishment could flow to and from each realm. Unfortunately, Churchill does not hold out much hope for establishing such a bond.
Katherine Perrault is less interested in the relationship between the Skriker and the two young women she pursues, but is intent on using chaos theory to reveal “underlying structures of integration and order—creating a representation of the feminine experience that is true to nature” (45). Recognizing Aristotelian poetic structure as the primary basis for narration of “the story of the world according to men” (46), Perrault rejects linear narrative as a means of creating feminist literature and theater. Just as modern science has called into question traditional scientific and historical beliefs in the linearity and regularity of the universe, so must feminist literary expression reject the same concepts in narrative.

Citing Stephen Kellert’s definition of chaos theory as “the qualitative study of unstable aperiodic behaviour in deterministic nonlinear dynamical systems,” Perrault identifies *The Skriker* as just such a qualitative study, calling it “an analysis, indeed, an indictment—of the damaging patterns and processes of the past perpetuated in contemporary society” (48). *The Skriker* takes themes that seem familiar to us and defamiliarizes them by presenting them to the audience through a seemingly nonsensical manipulation of language, overlapping and intersecting planes of reality. The resultant chaos serves to create “a dynamic re-visioning of history that manifests the necessity for change with language [that] does not contain, [but] carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible” (52).

The chaotic world that the Skriker creates when she abandons linear narrative and replaces it with circular dialogue (linking words by sounds instead of meaning) forces the audience to make connections outside of the normal course of history. The “dynamic re-visioning of history” that Perrault discusses is embedded in the Skriker’s world, where the natural and the supernatural are interwoven and inseparable. By ignoring the constraints of Aristotelian poetics which require a restoration of balance, *The Skriker* demonstrates a
different kind of order with a chaotic system having no initial balance and no corresponding catharsis and/or sense of closure. In *The Skriker* Churchill’s “intent is to disrupt the typical response of the audience on multiple levels, through associative language, music, movement, mythic/archetypal images . . . to engage them not just for the ‘moment’ in the theatre, but for also the future, to evoke continuing thought and active response in reaction to the alarum she is raising” (Perrault, 55). Using chaos theory as her methodology, Perrault deconstructs *The Skriker* to illuminate the ultimate helplessness of the women (the Skriker as well as Josie and Lily), their inability to overcome the “overwhelming constraints of patriarchal ideology,” exposing “the image of the damaged feminine psyche, which in turn impairs society as a whole” (57). The damage done to women (and other disenfranchised members of society) by patriarchal rule is so deeply entrenched in our society that we cannot see it unless we remove the controls of Aristotelian narrative. In *The Skriker* Churchill has fashioned a world without the restrictions of linear narrative, revealing the deadly trajectory that patriarchal society is following.

Starting with the articles by Nagy and Barnett I have examined possible explanations for the relationships between the Skriker and Josie and Lily. Although Nagy and Barnett provide different characterizations for the Skriker—Nagy as devil and Barnett as Jungian Mother and Great Goddess—they both regard the Skriker as predatory. While I agree in part with Barnett’s description of the Skriker, I do not agree that she is predatory. Even as the Skriker victimizes Josie and Lily, so she too is a victim. As Perrault demonstrates through her application of chaos theory, all of the women in the play are damaged. If we accept Barnett’s version of the Skriker as a Great Goddess and Mother archetype, then she is a damaged version of the archetype. I will argue that her need for Josie and Lily does not
represent an opposition between the natural and supernatural worlds, as suggested by Barnett, but rather reflects an interaction between these worlds that is necessary to the health of both. In a healthier time (a matriarchal time) the contact between the two worlds benefited everyone. The Skriker, still believing that she can heal the rift that is harming both worlds, thinks she is moving along a safe path, when in fact she is heading over a cliff. Just as Nagy sees the Skriker’s opening monologue as a prologue that foreshadows the action to come, I will argue that the damage and decline in the Skriker’s supernatural world foreshadows the damage and decline in the natural world.
Chapter 4: The Skriker and the Failure of the Ethic of Caring

In the beginning there was only Chaos, the Abyss,

But then Gaia, the Earth, came into being.

Her broad bosom the ever-firm foundation of all. (Hesiod, Theogony, 88).

According to one reading of Greek mythology the universe was the creation of Gaia, a feminine force who assembled the unformed and chaotic primordial energies into land and sky, earth and sea, human and animal, male and female. In this creation myth Gaia includes “all levels of the cosmos within herself” (Harris and Platzner, 152). She separates herself in her act of parthenogenetic construction from the masculine elements in her nature and establishes the male/female binary tensions that underlie the character of Western civilization from the archaic Greek period to the present.

Gaia’s rule as head of a matriarchal society was violently supplanted by her male creations. In a struggle for control Gaia, who “clearly identifies with her children and her commitment is to the continuity of the cycle,” is overthrown by Uranus, “whose interest is in the acquisition of personal power.” Defeated first by Uranus and then by Zeus, Gaia the Great Goddess is “transformed by the patriarchal system into a hideous old hag” (Harris and Platzner, 153). The patriarchy removes the generative power from the Great Goddess and she is left with her chthonic, death-wielding aspect as the primary expression of her abilities.

It is this chthonic quality of Gaia that Churchill emphasizes when she introduces the Skriker as “a death portent, ancient and damaged” (1). The Skriker describes herself as “hundreds of years old as you people would work it out . . . been around through all the stuff”
you would call history . . . one of many, not a major spirit but a spirit” (16). I contend that
the Skriker, though calling herself “not a major” spirit, is actually a modern representation of
Gaia, the Great Goddess. Damaged by the patriarchy, her powers of generation and
regeneration minimized and devalued, her negative qualities exaggerated, she has been so
deformed that her attempts to nurture and heal have become perverted and dangerous. I will
explain this reading through reference to Carol Gilligan and her work on the different bases
for male/female systems of morality. Gilligan posits two different tracks of moral
development. The traditional track, based on the concept of justice, is associated with male
behavior. An alternate track, that Gilligan identifies as based on the principle of kindness
and caring, is associated with female behavior. Gilligan offers these two tracks as different
but equal, and she does not establish a hierarchical ranking or any other system of evaluative
positioning. It is my contention that the Skriker is acting in good faith based on a moral
system that values caring. Her behavior only seems evil or immoral when it is appraised
from a justice-based moral system.

Although Gilligan is proposing multiple systems of moral development that are of
equal value, traditional assessments of moral development have accepted only one system.
The traditional interpretations of moral development, rooted in our patriarchal society, have
placed a higher value on characteristics associated with male moral development. The
ascendance of patriarchal rule altered the direction of human history and society. The
dictionary definition of patriarchy as “social organization marked by the supremacy of the
father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of
descent and inheritance in the male line” (Webster’s, 863) only touches the surface of the
meanings inherent in the concept of patriarchy. The inclusion of the words “supremacy” and
"legal dependency" in the common definition hints at the political power implied by the concept. Changing the gendered words in this definition so that father becomes mother, wives become husbands and male becomes female, does not result in the definition of a matriarchal society. Binary divisions between genders that influence power and status are not deeply embedded in the definition of matriarchy, defined by the same dictionary as "a system of social organization in which descent and inheritance are traced through the female line" (Webster’s, 733). This definition with its emphasis on descent and inheritance depends upon familial connections rather than power. Matriarchal societies are less invested in the concepts of linear progression and universal truth. They see the world as cyclical rather than linear and accept multiplicities of truth rather than focusing on one. The idea of multiple manifestations of truth allows matriarchal societies to step out of the boundaries imposed by viewing the world as a series of binary oppositions. In order to understand the Skriker and her actions, we must first understand that she is working under a different set of social and moral regulations that cause her to act and react in ways that seem wicked and immoral.

A comparison of patriarchal and matriarchal systems can be found in Appendix A. This list of values is divided into sections comprising philosophy and world view, community interaction, religious systems, moral systems, and sexuality, taken from a website titled The Witches Well: A Witches Community Resource. This site provides information about and for the modern day practice of Wicca, the religious practice associated with nature and witchcraft, and it clearly identifies with a matriarchal worldview. Although witchcraft and matriarchy are not synonymous, there is a significant connection. All matriarchal societies are not ruled by witches, but all witch/wiccan societies are matriarchal. There is
also a connection between witchcraft and Churchill’s plays. *Vinegar Tom* is about a witch hunt in seventeenth century England and certainly the Skriker has witch-like powers.

A similar comparison of matriarchal/patriarchal traits (see Appendix B) is included on the web site Matriarch.info. Both these two lists are evidence of the popularization of ideas about matriarchal/patriarchal conflict first voiced by Johann Jakob Bachofen and then elaborated on by Erich Fromm. From Bachofen’s insights, Fromm came to believe that “woman's nature develops from social practices; specifically, how the activity of mothering produces certain nurturing, maternal character traits associated with women” (Kellner). It was from Fromm’s analysis that matriarchal society became associated with positive attributes like caring, sharing and earthly happiness, while patriarchal society was associated with negative characteristics, including aggression and the accumulation of material wealth. The traits reflected on these lists are useful to us in our exploration of the struggle between the matriarchy and patriarchy as it is played out in *The Skriker*.

Centuries of patriarchal social and political rule have resulted in the devaluation and vilification of traits associated with matriarchal/feminist philosophy. Labeled as witches, women who tried to follow a matriarchal pattern of living were reviled, tortured and murdered in the past and are mocked and demeaned in current culture. Using this resource, published by a self-proclaimed witches’ community, helps us distinguish the primary differences between the two disparate worldviews in terms developed outside of patriarchal control.

Since Churchill is a self-identified feminist, it is not surprising that themes of witchcraft enter her plays. In an earlier play, *Vinegar Tom*, she had “dismissed witchcraft as a means of demonizing social outcasts” (Wardle, 95), leading some reviewers to see her
acceptance of the demonic in *The Skriker* as a contradiction. The Skriker and her cadre are social outcasts. They are as unsuccessful at breaking through the societal structures as the women in *Vinegar Tom*. Whether her characters are supernatural creatures or merely women who are destroyed by unfair accusations of witchcraft, they all represent females who are demonized, marginalized and socially unsuccessful. Rather than a contradiction, the two plays illustrate the same lack of feminine authority.

The Wiccan list of values mentioned above includes a binary for the matriarchal/patriarchal definitions of morality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral System</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P—Regulated by law from God, prophets, priests, ministers, or others in authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M—&quot;An ye harm none, do what thou wilt&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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This closely parallels the difference between male and female morality as described by Carol Gilligan. The patriarchal system of morality is monolithic and unchangeable. Behavior is controlled by laws set in stone, literally in the case of the code of Hamurabi, with no consideration given to underlying causes of behavior. “Situation ethics” are considered suspect and unreliable. The matriarchal system, however, focuses on situations. The goal in this system is not to uphold a pre-established set of rules, but to create rules that function for the best outcome possible in any given situation.

What then is the moral and ethical base to which the Skriker belongs? Her universe is non-linear and her method of communication and behavior shuns logic and progression. It seems inappropriate to judge her motivations using linear logic and morality. Before we can make a judgment on her motivation and influence we need a better idea of what she is seeking to accomplish. If we judge her using traditional masculine moral strategies, then it is
easy to see how Nagy could decide that she represented the devil and how Barnett thought her to be dangerously parasitic. We need to look for ways other than the masculine to evaluate her behavior. Gilligan is helpful in this arena.

Carol Gilligan’s work on female moral development grew from her dissatisfaction with the stages of moral development posited by Lawrence Kohlberg. Using Kohlberg’s stages of moral development as a starting point, Gilligan explores the reasons why women are often seen “as either deviant or deficient in their development” (Gilligan, 549). Kohlberg’s system is grounded in the concept of a universal underlying truth that guides the morally developed individual to select the only correct response in situations that appear to be morally ambiguous. Kohlberg believes that people pass through six phases of moral development. Moving from pre-conventional to post-conventional moral reasoning, Kohlberg’s classification system as outlined by Robert Barger is shown in Table 1.

According to Kohlberg very few people ever reach the sixth level of moral development.

Table 1: Kohlberg’s classification system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Social Orientation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-conventional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Obedience and Punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Individualism, Instrumentalism, and Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Good boy/girl!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Law and Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-conventional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Principled Conscience</td>
</tr>
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</table>
At this level moral and ethical behavior is based on "respect for universal principles and the demands of individual conscience." Most ethical behavior remains in the conventional level of development. This stage is characterized by an orientation "to abiding by the law and responding to the obligations of duty" (Barger). Normal moral development in men generally brings them to Kohlberg's fourth level. For women, however, "moral judgment leads them to be considered as typically at the third of his six-stage developmental sequence. At that stage, the good is identified with 'what pleases or helps others and is approved of by them'" (Gilligan, 552). Gilligan goes on to state that women fall largely into this level of moral judgment is hardly surprising . . . that prominent among the twelve attributes considered to be desirable for women are tact, gentleness, awareness of the feelings of others, strong need for security and easy expression of tender feelings. And yet, herein lies the paradox. For the very traits that have traditionally defined the "goodness" of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them deficient in moral development. The infusion of feeling into their judgments keeps them from developing a more independent and abstract ethical conception in which concern for others derives from principles of justice rather than from compassion and care. (552)

The problem here, as Gilligan goes on to establish, is that the description of morality comes from two separate definitions. "This repeated finding of developmental inferiority in women, may, however, have more to do with the standard by which development has been measured than with the quality of women's thinking per se" (Gilligan, 557). Masculine morality, as characterized by Kohlberg, stems from patriarchal ideas about right and wrong and the pursuit of justice. Using the matriarchal/patriarchal dichotomies identified on the chart in
Appendix A, we can see how patriarchal individuals are goal-oriented, striving to move in a straight line and to find the universal truth that the quest for knowledge will unveil. This description dovetails nicely into Kohlberg’s moral system with its idea that justice is an absolute, a universal knowable and attainable good. In a feminist perspective, such as Gilligan’s, with an acceptance of a multiplicity of views that situates morality in whatever decision does the least harm, the idea of a single, knowable and attainable moral good is irrelevant.

In her studies of women, Gilligan found that rather than a search for justice, the prominent force for women is “the wish not to hurt others, and the hope that in morality lies a way of solving conflicts so that no one will get hurt” (553). Gilligan’s studies point to kindness and caring as the primary factors underlying female moral and ethical development. Responses to moral and ethical dilemmas that come from a system based on kindness would differ significantly from responses that grow from a justice-based system. The differences would be great enough to make the adherents of the kindness-based system seem morally backwards to the followers of the justice-based system. In a patriarchal society, the male system by default represents the correct response, while women’s responses are easily labeled as not only different but “as either deviant or deficient” (Gilligan, 549). Gilligan notes the ubiquitous nature of the concept of female moral inferiority when she cites the following observation from Freud:

I cannot evade the notion (though I hesitate to give it expression) that for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is in men. Their superego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men. Character-traits which critics of every epoch have brought
against women—^that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less likely to submit to the great exigencies of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility—all these would be amply accounted for by the modification in the formation of their super-ego which we have inferred above. (Freud, in Gilligan, 551)

Although Gilligan would not have any argument with Freud’s statement that women are different from men, it is the automatic assumption that this difference equals moral inferiority that is problematic. Freud “hesitates” to state that women are different, because they lack traits “required” in men, traits whose absence leave them open to criticism “brought against” women in “every epoch.”

In our binary society, with its insistence on a positive and negative aspect for all concepts, it is impossible to have a difference that is not value-laden; it must be right or wrong, good or evil, superior or inferior, male or female. In our patriarchal society, the characteristics accompanying male behavior are superior; the male is the societal default setting against which all behavior is judged. As Simone De Beauvoir states, “to pose Woman is to pose the absolute Other, without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being” (1407). Traits that vary from the male ideal are therefore indications of delayed development at best, or, more likely evidence of inherent inferiority.

Looking at the world view through the popularization of Fromm’s ideas on matriarchal society, it seems inevitable that a patriarchal society would define difference as negative. The patriarchal world view with its linear hierarchy polarizes existence into good/bad binaries and cannot avoid polarizing gender into good/male and bad/female. If,
instead, we were to apply a matriarchal philosophy emphasizing the circularity and cyclical nature of the universe where differences are embraced as dualities (or even triplicities and beyond) rather than binary oppositions, we could view male and female characteristics as different in nature but not in value. Of course one of the ironies of the "Comparison of Patriarchal and Matriarchal Systems" chart is that the system itself, which purports to promote matriarchal systems, is constructed as a patriarchal binary that implicitly vilifies masculine characteristics. The chart is still useful if we reread it as a listing of traits valued by the patriarchy as opposed to traits devalued. A more fully matriarchal system would incorporate all of these traits in a value-neutral system that accepts all modes of experience. Escaping the patriarchy is not an easy task.

Escaping the patriarchy, at least in its narrow definition of appropriate moral development, is what Gilligan attempts. "Gilligan sets out to demonstrate that there are two trajectories of moral development—the justice track, which is followed by many males and some females, and the care track, which is followed by some females" (Meyers, 547). Gilligan does not contend that one track is superior to the other, merely different. She also does not state that one system is always female and the other male, rather her research shows "that one-third of her female subjects focus on care, one-third of her female subjects focus on justice and one-third switch back and forth between justice and care. However, of her male subjects two-thirds focus on justice, one-third switches back and forth between justice and care, and none focus on care" (Meyers, 547). The Skriker is not only a shape shifter, but a moral system shifter as well. As an opportunistic fairy, she uses whichever system is most advantageous at the moment.
At the time of Gilligan’s studies in the late 1970s women had full admission to both levels of moral development, but men were not able to access fully the care track. One of the side effects of the women’s rights movement, along with opening paths for women into previously all-male professions, was to create openings for men in previously all female ones. In 1950 less then 1% of the nurses in the United States were male, and no military nurses were male. Currently 6% of the nurses working in the general population are male, and over 35% of the nurses in all branches of the military are male (Boivin). As men gain entry into female professions, they also have more opportunity to fall into the caring track of moral development. I suspect that if Gilligan’s studies were redone today, the care track would reveal more male participants.

Using two biblical stories to underscore the difference between an ethic of justice and an ethic of caring, Gilligan compares the story of Abraham and Isaac with that of the women who confront Solomon over the parentage of a child. Abraham, following a masculine ethic of justice, is willing to sacrifice his son to “demonstrate the integrity and supremacy of his faith” (Gilligan, 581). Contrarily, the true mother who faces Solomon is willing to abandon the truth and even forsake any hope of justice in order to insure the continued health and safety of her child.

Embedded in the ethic of justice is the idea of fairness. Our social-political justice system is based on the concept that if you transgress, if you break the rules of social conduct, then you will be punished and your punishment will be commensurate with your crime. In a moral system based on caring, however, fairness has a very small part to play. The biblical parable of the prodigal son illustrates of these points. In this story the younger son asks for his inheritance in advance. He takes the money, squanders it and is reduced to abject
poverty. In desperation he returns to his family, asking only to be allowed to live as a servant in his father's house. In a moral system governed by justice he might have been allowed a place in the servants' quarters, or he might have been turned away completely. His father, however, welcomes him home with open arms, dresses him in fine clothes, provides a feast to celebrate his return and restores all of the luxury and comfort he had enjoyed before leaving home. The older son, who had stayed home and had worked hard for his father, is outraged by this reception, and pleads with his father, for the sake of justice, to turn his brother out. Overjoyed at his son's return, the father, working from a moral track based on kindness and caring, celebrates the return of his son instead of punishing him.

The moral track of kindness is not without its pitfalls. Integral to moral development is the concept of choice and responsibility. Women who believe they are powerless are unable to make a choice or take responsibility. As we shall see with Lily and Josie (and to a lesser extent with the Skriker also) they become "childlike in the vulnerability of their dependence and consequent fear of abandonment, they claim to wish only to please but in return for their goodness they expect to be loved and cared for" (Gilligan, 555). The emphasis within this moral track includes a need for others: you may be able to have solitary justice, but you cannot have solitary kindness. Kindness and caring require a giver and receiver; it is not an independent system. The push/pull that Josie feels in both wanting to be rid of the Skriker and wanting to keep her at the same time, as well as the Skriker's need to be wanted, can be seen in this interaction:

SKRIKER. Please, please keep me.

_Pause_

I'll give you a wish.
JOSIE. I don’t want a wish.

SKRIKER. I’ll be nice.

JOSIE. It’s cold all around you.

SKRIKER. I can get you out of here.

JOSIE. No. Where to? No.

SKRIKER. Josie

JOSIE. All right, I’ll have a wish.

SKRIKER. Yes? Wish.

JOSIE. I wish you’d have her instead of me.

*Pause. SKRIKER turns away.*

Wait. I don’t mind you any more.

SKRIKER. No, I’m not after you.

JOSIE. You won’t hurt her? What do you want from her?

The Skriker pleads and begs not to be sent away. She needs the companionship that Josie offers and she is willing to pay for it with wishes. Josie is scared of her and wants to be left alone, but when that happens she changes her mind. No matter how bad the Skriker is she still wants her back. Josie is also concerned for Lily; she needs to be reassured that her wish did not harm her friend. Entrenched within the caring system is a need for community and a concern for the members of that community which complicates moral choices. The necessity to make choices that benefit yourself, others and the community as a whole can create conflicts which are capable of imploding the system and preventing the individuals from progressing to the higher stages of moral development.
As with Kolhberg's stages, Gilligan's model of moral development through the ethics of caring involves various steps, and it is possible for moral growth to stop or become delayed at several places. In addition to the ability to make choices and accept responsibility for those choices, moral growth requires the "recognition of the psychological and moral necessity for an equation of worth between self and other. Responsibility for care then includes both self and other, and the obligation not to hurt, freed from conventional constraints, is reconstructed as a universal guide to moral choice" (Gilligan, 574). This requirement places the Skriker in a precarious position that she is not always able to maintain. In order to comply with the moral restraint of caring she must find ways to behave that will result in no harm to herself, her world, or to Josie and Lily. This is a requirement that she can not accomplish.

By examining Kohlberg and Gilligan's work we can see two different tracks for moral development and behavior. The traditional masculine idea of justice and fairness still functions within a feminist framework, but only as one of many options instead of the only available option. Gilligan's caring track establishes an alternative way of measuring moral development and evaluating behavior. Gilligan, in a feminist move, chooses not to elevate one system as superior, but to suggest that both systems of morality can co-exist (even in the same individual). Using the caring system as the basis for most of the Skriker's behavior, we can uncover decent motivations behind actions that seem evil and/or reprehensible.

The Skriker is presented with a situation in which her responsibilities to provide care for herself, for Josie and Lily, for the inhabitants of her supernatural world and, to a some extent, the inhabitants of the natural world, are in conflict—an impossible moral dilemma. The modern, natural world no longer believes in the supernatural world and this alienation,
combined with the misuse of nature, has damaged and is destroying the Skriker's world. She complains in her opening monologue:

They used to leave cream in a sorcerer's apprentice. Gave the brownie a pair of trousers to wear have you gone? Now they hate us and hurt hurtle faster and master. They poison me in my rivers of blood poisoning makes my arm swelter. Can't get them out of our head strong. (Skriker, 4)

In *Peter Pan* a fairy dies every time a child says he or she doesn't believe in fairies. Likewise in the universe of the Skriker, the supernatural world becomes sick and weak, without the belief and devotion of the natural world. The relationship between the two worlds is neither parasitic as Barnett suggests, nor antagonistic as Nagy believes, but rather symbiotic. Following Perrault's ideas about chaos theory and feminist theater, *The Skriker* rejects patriarchal linear structures in narrative, history and social representation, in favor of "an attempt to find organized principles in a diversity of forms" through "the deconstruction of linearity and introduction of difference as disrupting influences of societal norms" (Perrault, 58-59). As we have already seen, within the ethic of caring we find a need for other people. In the world of *The Skriker* this need transcends the interactions between people to encompass the interactions between different realms, the natural world and the supernatural world. In order to create connections between these two realms it is necessary to bypass the logical constraints of patriarchic science and embrace a world open to possibilities that defy sense and reason but are included in a more primitive understanding of nature.

The creatures that inhabit the Skriker's world are associated with nature and the home, and while they are often dangerous, they can sometimes be benevolent or helpful.
Rawheadandbloodybones, the Spriggan and Jennie Greenteeth are all associated with water. The Spriggan and Jennie drown people who wander too close to the water they inhabit. Rawheadandbloodybones lives in the pipes under the sink connecting him to both nature and the home; he drowns naughty children, but rewards the good ones. Brownies and Bogles are also involved with home and hearth and while the brownies are primarily mischievous, the bogles could be evil, but they can be helpful as well. Both brownies and bogles will leave if you give them something (usually clothing for a brownie, but something small and personal, like an eyelash, will work for a bogle). Black Annis, a female crone associated with the forest, will eat children who wander into her woods. These creatures are all rooted in a pre-technological existence with matriarchal connections. The dangers they pose come from nature, instead of manufactured weapons associated with war and aggression; they use water, teeth, and claws to cause damage.

It is easy to see how these stories could function as warnings to children: don’t go too near the river or Jennie Greenteeth will get you, don’t wander alone in the woods or you will be snatched by the Spriggan, behave well at home or Rawheadandbloody-bones will drown you. But Churchill invests these fairies with a larger, more global meaning: don’t pollute the waters, don’t deforest the earth, don’t destroy the delicate balance of our ecological system. Modern abuse of the environment weakens and damages the fairies and their world (“they poison me in my rivers”). Churchill describes the Skriker’s underworld as:

*Wonderful except that it is all glamour and here and there it’s not working—some of the food is twigs, leaves, beetles, some of the clothes are rags, some of the beautiful people have a claw hand or hideous face. But the first impression is of a palace.*

SKRIKER is a fairy queen, dressed grandiosely, with lapses. (28-29)
The decay and damage evident under the fake glamour of the Skriker’s world is a prediction of what lies ahead for the natural world. Just as a canary taken into the mines succumbs to the noxious fumes before the miners and serves as a warning, so the destruction of the Skriker’s world is a forecast of what will happen in the natural world if changes are not made.

The centuries of neglect and abuse have taken their toll not only on the Skriker’s world but on the Skriker herself. From her start as the Great Goddess with “the whole of Western culture in her unconscious” (Nagy) she has been reduced to “one of many, not a major spirit but a spirit” (16). In this guise she is still attempting to salvage her own world, which by extension would also save the natural world. In her diminished capacity it is difficult to establish the connections she needs in order for a symbiotic relationship to function. Both organisms in a symbiotic relationship must participate as givers and receivers. The Skriker, serving as a representative of the supernatural world, wants to establish (or more accurately, re-establish) the connections that allowed both worlds to thrive. However, the relationship between the natural and supernatural worlds was broken when the modern, industrial, logocentric world ceased to believe in fairies. The long-term effects of this disruption are creating havoc and disintegration in both worlds, but the effects have become evident first in the supernatural.

To heal both worlds, the Skriker attempts to reestablish their connection by stalking two young and powerless women. As the play opens she is after Josie who is in a mental hospital recovering from a breakdown, during which she apparently killed her baby (possibly under the influence of the Skriker). Responding to Josie’s wish, the Skriker turns her attention to Lily, Josie’s pregnant friend/sister. The Skriker is seeking love and acceptance,
she wants to nurture and be nurtured, she wheedles, whines and begs. There is no sense of power or control in her relentless pursuit of the girls. She is proceeding from a distorted and damaged version of Gilligan's ethics of caring. Even her choice of victims is tainted by her inability to understand the power dynamics of modern life. Josie and Lily represent two sides of the Great Goddess as she might exist in the natural world. Lily, a young pregnant woman is an icon of youth, birth and regeneration, while Josie, having recently killed her own child presents the chthonic, death-wielding side of the goddess. Between the two girls, the Skriker has found a form that mirrors power as she understands it from her realm. But in the world of modern London, the girls are poor, weak and powerless. They attract the Skriker from the strength of their emotional needs.

- The Skriker is emotionally needy. She wants to be liked. She begs Josie "please, please keep me" (10) and when the girls fight over her she is delighted, "So you both want me. That's nice" (27). She wheedles and cajoles, promising gifts to the girls, "I'll give you a wish" (10), "I might give you nice things" (27), "Here I am as you can see, A fairy from a Christmas tree. I can give you heart's desire. Help you set the world on fire" (22).

But what the Skriker gives rebounds to her. Josie wishes her away, so she goes to Lily, Lily wishes for flowers and in granting the wish the Skriker absorbs sustenance:

*Flowers fall from above. SKRIKER takes LILY's hand and puts it against her face.*

SKRIKER. I'm warmer now, feel. (22)

There is power in the interchange: the Skriker and her world are nourished through an interaction with the natural world. The Skriker's need for the natural world is demonstrated in this interchange. Not only does she require spiritual nourishment, but the Skriker and her minions face serious physical disability without acknowledgement and encouragement from
the natural world. When Lily accepts the Skriker's gift, she is also giving a needed and helpful gift to the Skriker. In this one exchange there is a positive benefit to both the giver and receiver.

But most of the gifts the Skriker gives to Lily and Josie are not helpful to them; they either impose requirements or are hurtful. Pleased with Lily, the Skriker arranges for coins to fall out of her mouth when she talks. Vexed at Josie, she makes her bring up toads when she speaks. The gifts or curses have more to do with the Skriker than with the girls, as Josie realizes when she says, "Toads, what you do that for, I'm not toads inside, it's you that's toads" (21). For accepting the Skriker's gift (even though she had no choice) Lily has incurred an obligation: "she's for you now" Josie tells her, "you took her money" (21). Controlling through gifts, obligations, and punishment, the Skriker follows a circuitous route to power. Incorporating both the positive and negative aspects of the Great Goddess and the Jungian Mother Archetype, the Skriker's dealings with Lily and Josie are based on need and emotion, eschewing logic or any desire for justice.

In an attempt to fulfill her emotional needs the Skriker brings her connection to magic, mysticism and nature into the relations she tries to establish with Lily and Josie. The technology of the modern world is as mystifying and unknowable to her as the magic of her realm seems to us. In the guise of a middle-aged American woman, she shares a drink with Lily in a hotel bar and demands that Lily explain television to her, "So how does this work?" (13). Lily tries to explain the practicalities of TV, "It has to be plugged in so it's got power, right, electricity, so it's on so you can turn it on when you press the button" (13). The explanations are meaningless to the Skriker. The unknowable power of modern technology
is a poison to her and her world. If she could only understand, she might be saved, but as she
tells Lily, modern technology and society is killing her:

You people are killing me, do you know that? I am sick, I am a sick woman. Keep
your secrets, I’ll find out some other way. I don’t need to know these things, there
are plenty of other things to know. Just so long as you know I’m dying I hope that
satisfies you to know I’m in pain. (15)

The science and logic of technology with its linear methodology, the use of observable data
to perform repeatable experiments that always provide the same result, these things are
destroying the Skriker. She comes from a world connected to nature, which is unpredictable
and varied. The same experiment will produce different results each time it is undertaken.
Not scientifically observable data, but mystical ties to nature influence the results. She
cannot understand the workings of television, but she can see the unborn baby that Lily is
carrying:

Look at it floating in the dark with its pretty empty head upside down, not knowing
what’s waiting for it. It’s been so busy doubling and doubling and now it’s just
hovering nicely decorating itself with hair and toenails. But once it’s born it starts
again, double, double, but this time the mind, think of the energy in that. (16)

Electricity may be unknowable for the Skriker, but nature, the life-force, is easily seen. The
power in the supernatural world does not come from electricity, motors, and machinery, it
comes from the mind, “think of the energy in that.” The energy of the mind can create
magic.

As Barnett points out, the Skriker becomes an alchemist, able to create wealth from
dross. Unlike medieval alchemists (who were all male) the Skriker can produce nourishment
from gold. One of the Striker’s followers has placed a bucket of water on a cloth, “he skims a gold film off the top of the water in the bucket which he makes into a cake” (18). Twisting the Rumplestiltskin story that the Skriker recites in her opening monologue, instead of spinning straw (useful for animal feed and insulation) into gold (shiny and pretty but with no value as nourishment), water is turned into cake. The cake is reserved for a specific recipient. After fending off several fairies who tried to take it, “the GREEN LADY comes for the cake. The MAN gives it to her and she eats it. They go off together” (22). The mating ritual revolves around the provision of food rather than a gold ring, the hard, shiny and useless symbol of patriarchal ownership. Here is another example of an exchange of gifts, just as the Skriker gained nourishment from granting Lily’s wish, so the MAN is gifted with companionship in exchange for a cake, and the GREEN LADY is obligated to accompany the MAN as the price of accepting the cake. The currency in the Skriker’s world revolves around gifts and obligations. No currency changes hand, no technology is used, nature and personal interactions, tempered with magic, are the economy of the Skriker’s realm.

An economic system that functions around gifts and obligations is difficult to quantify. Does a cake always equal a mate? How many wishes are necessary to get warm and then how long will one stay warm? Are all wishes of equal value? Consistency does not seem to be valued in the underworld and there is danger in a world that lacks predictable reliable responses to the same or similar stimuli. When Lily decides to follow the Skriker to the underworld, it is largely because she knew what happened to Josie when she went there. Josie “had a whole life” in the underworld, she was there for “years and years, longer than I lived here” (35), but when she returned, no time had past in the natural world. She believes
“because of what Josie did I’ll be back in no time. It could feel like hundreds of years and I wouldn’t leave the baby for five minutes but when I get back she won’t know I’ve gone” (51). But when Lily makes it back from the Striker’s realm, she finds her baby “lost and gone for everybody was dead years and tears ago, it was another cemetery, a black whole hundred yearns” (51-52).

Of course, in order for the Skriker to entice Josie and Lily to follow her to the underworld, she must go through a fairly involved process of seduction. To gain their trust and compliance the Skriker uses her ability as a shape shifter, appearing to the girls in a variety of different persona, covering different genders and ages and including non-human and inanimate versions of herself. The Skriker is described as “a shapeshifter and death portent, ancient and damaged” (1). But to Lily and Josie she is a “WOMAN about 50 . . . dowdy, cardigan, could be a patient” (9), “a poor old lady” (11), “an American woman of about 40 who is slightly drunk” (12), a “derelict WOMAN muttering and shouting in the street” (19), “part of the sofa” (20), wearing a short pink dress and gauzy wings” (22), “a SMALL CHILD” (23), “a fairy queen” (29), “a MONSTER” (31), “a smart WOMAN in mid thirties” (36), “a MAN about 30” (41), “a young woman about LILY’s age” (46), “a MAN about 40” (48), and “a very ill old woman” (49). Identity is as fluid as everything else in the Skriker’s world. The binary oppositions of patriarchal society disappear as the Skriker recreates herself in images that replace the static nature of the binaries with a multiplicity of possibilities.

Our language does not have the words necessary to describe the Skriker’s formations of herself. The breaking down of social systems that is occurring in both the above and below realms of the play is mirrored in the breaking down of language.
between the binaries of male/female, young/old, human/inhuman and animate/inanimate the Skriker breaks free of the linear constriction of patriarchal space. Even though two of the forms she inhabits are male, the essence of her being is feminine. The intensity of her alterity can be achieved only in a space that does not acknowledge the binary divisions of patriarchy. But how do we move out of our patriarchal system? If we try to establish a matriarchal rule, we are left with the same binary that we sought to escape. Matriarchy and patriarchy are trapped in a traditional social system that divides the world into sets of oppositional and antagonistic poles. These poles of opposition are maintained by a language system that does not give us words to reinvent society in a different form. Churchill, as she plays with language in *The Skriker*, provides clues and models for language structures that will break the bonds holding us in the patriarchy.

To Monique Wittig, “matriarchy is no less heterosexual than patriarchy: it is only the sex of the oppressor that changes” (2015). In this definition we have reached an impasse, a place where our language fails to provide useful terminology for matriarchal space, free of binary oppositions. Talking about matriarchal/patriarchal spaces, about masculine linearity and feminine circularity, we have only examples that demonstrate binary oppositions. Wittig uses the term oppression to describe societal segregation based on gender, stating that “consciousness of oppression is not only a reaction to (fight against) oppression. It is also the whole conceptual reevaluation of the social world and its reorganization with new concepts, from the point of view of oppression” (2020). A radical revision of language is necessary to destroy the “social system which is based on the oppression of women by men and which produces the doctrine of difference between the sexes to justify this oppression” (2021).
Wittig’s understanding of the need for language revisions is relevant to the play with its ongoing struggle with language. The Skriker’s speech is filled with verbal associations that destroy and restructure traditional meaning. Examples of this abound: when the Skriker introduces a new scene her statement “and now in the hotel bar none but the brave” starts out as a description of a setting (“and now in the hotel bar”) and turns into a character description (“bar none but the brave”) (12). The acceptable structures for English do not allow a change of meaning in the middle of a sentence via a transitional word that unites the two sections and carries multiple meanings. Meanings are also manipulated by the Skriker using words that sound alike. When she says “your Jung men and Freud eggs” (32), the meaning of the young men and fried eggs become complicated by the association with Jung and Freud.

Through this verbal play she aligns Freud and Jung along gender lines. Freud is associated with female reproductive function (eggs), while Jung takes the masculine role through his juxtaposition with men. Churchill has cast Freud, founder of modern psychiatry, as the mother, giving birth to a new science that opened language and human behavior to multiple interpretations. Jung serves as Churchill’s father, who restricts the interpretations by defining them as his archetypes. The act of definitions is also an act of limitation, since for every quality that the definition includes there is a there a throng of qualities excluded.

The title of Wittig’s well-known essay discussing the restrictions of language, “One Is Not Born a Woman,” comes from Simone De Beauvoir’s text, The Second Sex. Beauvoir argued that the Western gender binary was not equal and complementary, as in the Yin and Yang of Taoist philosophy, but weighted in favor of the masculine. Our language is organized around the assumption that gender is masculine unless specifically denoted as female. Woman as Beauvoir’s Other must always be separately defined in order to be
included (the doctor will be presumed to be male unless she is explicitly called the woman doctor). The Skriker in her continual morphing, changing gender, age and economic status, is the personification of the Other in her quest for connection and acceptance. Josie and Lily as disenfranchised young women existing on the fringes of their society are also manifestations of the Other. While Beauvoir uses this term for all women, the characters in *The Skriker* exist at the lower levels of the social/political power structures.

Because they are outside of the masculine locus of power, the Skriker and her world are oppressed by the rigid definitions and constraints of patriarchal society. In an attempt to create agency, the Skriker takes on and discards personae, crossing the uncrossable borders of our culture. She demonstrates through gender, age and economy the performative traits of all of these aspects of life which Judith Butler considers crucial in describing gender. "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results" (25). When the Skriker appears to Lily as "a MAN about 30" (41), it is not a drag act, the Skriker is male because the behavior is male, the “expressions” of gender are enough to create the gender.

To ask whether the Skriker is male or female is meaningless; the Skriker is whatever the persona of the moment calls for. She is “an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings” (Anzaldúa, 182). The Skriker is attempting to function as a link between the two worlds. Her interactions with Lily and Josie are designed not to destroy the girls, but to use them to create a mixture and blending that allows one to navigate both worlds. It is in this joining that the possibility of salvation occurs, but the joining can only occur in matriarchal space. It
requires a relinquishing of the linear binary polarities embedded in the patriarchy. Thus, the Skriker, Josie and Lily become mixed, carrying the imprint of many different possible incarnations within themselves.

Anzaldua brings us the term mestiza (originally used as a perjorative description for Latin American woman of mixed Native American and European ancestry, but used by Anzaldua in as a positive descriptor) to describe a woman caught between many worlds, all pulling her in different directions and none allowing her to achieve her full human potential. Constricted by the “borders and walls that are supposed to keep undesirable ideas out” (Anzaldua, 180), the mestiza and the Skriker are stuck in the spaces between the borders, spaces that Anzaldua calls the borderlands. The mestiza’s “role is to link people with each other—the Blacks with Jews with Indians with Asians with whites with extraterrestrials. It is to transfer ideas and information from one culture to another” (Anzaldua, 184). Like the mestiza the Skriker attempts to forge a link between worlds; the natural and supernatural worlds—a link that would bring a feminine ethos back into a world ruled by the masculine logos, and reconnect the cyclical qualities of nature to the linear scientific character of modern life.

As we see at the end of the play, the world above ground has continued to deteriorate during the time that Lily and the Skriker are underground. The attachment that would have been beneficial to both worlds has failed. The Skriker is too weak and damaged to effectively heal a world so far entrenched in patriarchal policies. Her failure seems obvious from the beginning of the play. “A shapeshifter and death portent, ancient and damaged” (1), speaking in twisted speech that does not follow the logical flow of normal narrative, is not a figure to give the audience much hope for a glorious finale.
The logical scientific progress of the modern world has created dangers and has removed the old consolations that once were provided for the misfortunes of life. In a more benign past with an agrarian culture it was always possible to think whatever your personal problem, there’s always nature. Spring will return even if it’s without me. Nobody loves me but at least it’s a sunny day. This had been a comfort to people as long as they’ve existed. But it’s not available any more. Sorry. Nobody loves me and the sun’s going to kill me. Spring will return and nothing will grow. (43-44)

The rupture between the natural and supernatural worlds, between men and women, between old and young, all binary oppositions enforced in patriarchal society, have destroyed hope. Hope was God’s gift to mankind; crawling out of Pandora’s Box after all the evils that plague the world were set loose. Without hope you can still have an ethical basis rooted in justice. Rules can be made and laws established and enforced. Behavior can be judged and the appropriate punishments and awards meted out. But once hope enters the equation, behavior can alter based on the ‘hope’ of a future benefit. Hope brings in the ability to justify behavior that flouts rules in the interest of achieving a better outcome. The kinder, gentler nation is a fiction exposed by the warrior response, which requires revenge and retaliation.

The lack of hope expressed by Churchill’s Skriker can be interpreted using the texts of several feminist writers and theorists. Churchill has created in her Skriker a creature that is a reflection of the absolute Other, disenfranchised and cut off from power and influence along with the other inhabitants of her realm as well as anyone above ground who is not part of the white-male-economic-socio-political power base. Skulking in the shadows and corners of the modern world, the Skriker is a supernatural seamstress trying to stitch together
the growing rift between the two realms. Her stitching is damaged and inefficient. The seams unravel and the gap widens faster than she can mend them. The best she can do is provide a temporary infusion of energy to her realm: "Now I’ve some blood in my all in veins, now I’ve some light in my lifeline, nightline, nightlight a candle to light you to bedlam" (51). But it is only a candle, a small and temporary aid in the darkness, a mild palliative rather than a substantial healing. The ethic of caring fails, even though it is as strong morally as the justice ethic, because our language does not support it. As the Skriker tries to navigate through the play using a matriarchal disregard of narrative progression and the logic of justice, she is confronted by language that demands the expression of binary oppositions. She is good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust. She cannot understand the language used to explain the everyday elements of the technology of the natural world, like television:

SKRIKER. So how does it work?

LILY. How?

SKRIKER. How does it—

LILY. You want to turn it off?

SKRIKER. No, how does that picture get here, From wherever.

LILY. How does it work?

SKRIKER. Yes.

LILY. Oh you know, I don’t know, you know, it’s—isn’t it the same in America?

SKRIKER. Take your time. In your own words.
But there are no words that work. Her expressions are embedded in a language that wants to limit the acceptance of numerous realities and funnel meaning into a narrow channel mandated by patriarchal power.

The play ends on a bleak note. Lily returns from the Skriker’s world to find that 100 years have past, “it was another cemetery” (52). The world that she had “hoped to save . . . hoped I’d make the fury better” (52) had become even worse. “They were stupid stupefied stewpotbellied not evil weevil devil take the hindmost of them anyway” (52). Lily is met by “an OLD WOMAN and a DEFORMED GIRL sitting together” (51); they are her granddaughter and great-great-great granddaughter. “The GIRL bellows in wordless rage at LILY” (52). Language, which throughout the play has been struggling to retain meaning, is lost entirely. Patriarchal language with its narrative driven logic is broken by the vast injustices in the world, but there is no matriarchal language to replace it. In the end, Churchill holds out no hope for the future, but instead shows how the linear projection of a patriarchal, justice-based society can result in a world of deformed and silent and enraged children. As the absolute Other, the Skriker and her followers are not strong enough to break the hold of the patriarchy. Unlike Anzaldua’s mestiza, she is not able to maintain her place in the space between the matriarchy and patriarchy to establish a nurturing place. The connections that the Skriker sought to forge, uniting the upper and lower worlds, have failed to hold. The Skriker, a death portent, is foretelling the demise of our culture without offering hope for a new beginning.
Appendix A: Comparison of Patriarchal and Matriarchal Systems

Taken from The Witches Well (http://witcheswell.com/text/lessons/matri-patri.txt)

P= Patriarchy
M= Matriarchy

Philosophy & world view

P- Linear, hierarchal, atomistic, dissecting
M- Circular, cyclical, spiral, egalitarian, Holistic

P- Separation of God/man, body/spirit/mind
M- Integration of total self, and of self/community/nature

P- Polarization of world vs. god, good vs. evil, heaven vs. hell, love vs. hate of extremes, absolutes
M- All is seen in many harmonious forms, dualities, triplicities, etc.

Community Interaction

P- Private ownership of property, inheritance: father to son
M- non-ownership of property, inheritance: mother to daughter

P- private ownership (by males) of: name, wife, children, land, slaves, accumulated wealth
M- private ownership (male & female) of special, "magickal" objects, household items, etc.

P- Nature and lesser beings are seen as objects to be exploited
M- Nature is seen as being in balance and needs to maintain that balance

P- Consumer oriented fi things to be used up (destroyed) leaving waste products such as trash, Sulphur dioxide, radiation
M- Human/Nature oriented, non-destructive energy sources (solar, wind, water, methane, etc.)

P- Seemingly limitless food supply, energy, resources to be used up
M- Conservation, recycling

P- resistance to research and experimentation. Approach is by dissection. "Rational", scientific
M- Encourage research and experimentation by personal experience, observation, holistic approach, "empirical"
Religious Systems

P- SkyñFatherñGod (thunder-fire-sun)
M- Earth, Mother Goddess (Water, Earth, Moon)

P- Monotheistic or modified monotheistic (major god-lesser god, or nebulous ideas such as the trinity)
M- Pantheistic, polytheistic, emphasis on Goddess (mystery of childbirth) and Her consort.
(Gods as archetypes)

P- God in high or inaccessible places: clouds, heaven, mountain tops, fire
M- Gods/Goddesses are in low and accessible places, erp, caves, springs, wells (womb of the Goddess) and from within

P- An intermediary is needed
M- Approachable by all

P- Worship is extremely serious
M- Joyful: "All acts of love and pleasure are my rituals"

- Moral System

P- Regulated by law from God, prophets, priests, ministers, or others in authority
M- "An ye harm none, do what thou wilt"

Sexuality

P- Sexually repressive, sin, guilt
M- Sexually open, sometimes religious expression

P- Sex is seen as either extremely sacred (for procreation only) or animal lust
M- Sex is seen as a joyful expression

P- Monogamy (except males)
M- Monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, open relationships

P- Heterosexual (homophobic)
M- Heterosexual, homosexual, bi-sexual, acceptance of others

P- Maximum difference in dress and appearance, especially hair
M- Much cross dressing, uni-sexual clothing, much ornamentation

P- The body is seen as ugly, to be covered, something of shame
M- Little body covering, much nudity, coverings accents body
P- Rape used for power and control
M- No rape

P- Possibility of illegitimate children, bastards
M- No illegitimacy, a mother always knows her child

P- Virginity (in females) considered to be a virtue
M- Self-determination is seen as a virtue
Appendix B: Matriarchal Point of View
Taken from Matriarchy.info
(http://www.matriarchy.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2&Itemid=1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matriarchal Point of View</th>
<th>Patriarchal Point of View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life proceeds in cycles.</td>
<td>Life proceeds linear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through a constantly repeating rhythm—day for day, year for year, life for life—you have the opportunity to do, what has to be done, again and again. There are no missed chances. You are focused on the future with it's new possibilities.</td>
<td>In linear progression you'll miss opportunities, because the past doesn't come back. Therefore you don't have a choice: you have to do it now/today/this year/this life—otherwise it's over. You are focused on the past with its lost possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Pessimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The individual is free to act, when 'the time is right.'</td>
<td>The individual is under pressure to neglect something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result: New creative decisions arise from inner freedom.</td>
<td>Result: Inner and/or external intimidation upon failure makes blame possible and therewith manipulation and control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No hierarchy at all.</td>
<td>Everything is hierarchical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every person takes responsibility—first for her/himself, second for the others und third for the whole 'living together.'</td>
<td>The responsibility is always on others: superiors. That is so in the family, in your club, at school, in the community, in the company, in your country...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The only rule is: You can do everything but not harm anybody or anything.</td>
<td>I leave responsibility to the &quot;more powerful&quot; and let go self-government out of my sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With that every being is autonomously in charge for oneself.</td>
<td>The topmost is a god who at last is getting caught in everything. Consequently nobody takes on responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proverb &quot;Do unto others as you would have others do unto you&quot; comes alive and is not just told to little kids.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no lawmaking.</td>
<td>General laws for every matter.</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without hierarchy there are neither judges nor other authorities who can establish or execute statutes. That means: nobody is this presumptuous to define what is right or wrong for others.</td>
<td>A handful of rulers define laws which are functional for themselves (all persons can only have themselves as criterion).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At misbehavior all community members work together to figure out, what is the source behind and how such trouble could be avoided in the future. Everybody tries to integrate the causer and by doing this kids learn the skills of integration.</td>
<td>At misbehavior the causer will experience violence of some kind as is: required money, humiliated, locked up, become killed. S/he will be convicted in accordance with the norms of others and then kicked out of the community instead of being reintegrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They feel responsible for the malfunction all together.</td>
<td>Nobody feels responsible for any misbehavior, no parents for their kids, yes and even not the offender for himself!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The power of wisdom is the basis for custom and habit. From there comes a enormous strength which establishes order and makes social relationships possible.</td>
<td>In patriarchy wisdom is not a big value. Wisdom is not taught to children, neither by role models nor by explanation. Therefore adults don't know what to do with this term, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No laws are necessary for acting wisely, but rather experience.</td>
<td>Or could you tell the last time when you got in touch with true wisdom?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The status of women is equivalent.</th>
<th>The status of women is of low rank.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free and self-ruled.</td>
<td>Restricted liberty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal blood is seen as neutral or often as sacred.</td>
<td>Vaginal blood taboo (blood from defloration, menstruation and birth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of partner, spouse or husband, besides the choice of lover(s).</td>
<td>No free choice of husband; lovers are not allowed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economical relationship with husbands. Emotional relationship with lovers.</td>
<td>The mixture of economical and emotional relationship in one makes every decision a compromise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce at any time.</td>
<td>No divorce of free will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clan takes care of the kids, whatever the mother is doing.</td>
<td>Nobody cares about the kids, while or after the fights of divorce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women have control over reproductivity.</td>
<td>Men have control over reproductivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No more kids than the clan can feed.</td>
<td>Overpopulation, hungry and starving people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physical condition of the mother is decisively.</td>
<td>The female body is a bearing machine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Religion&quot; (cult) is in accordance with &quot;Mother Nature&quot; (earth and mother as a symbol of caring for, avoiding unnatural manner).</td>
<td>Religion is in accordance with the will of the father, (obedience to &quot;God the father&quot; or the &quot;head&quot; of the family, subduing nature).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lust is wanted, welcomed and institutionalized.</td>
<td>Avoidance of lust; asceticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneity, adoration of nature.</td>
<td>Hindrance to and fear of nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No professionals.</td>
<td>Religious professionals, &quot;Priests&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacral and profane is identical.</td>
<td>Separation of the sacral and profane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female or male shamans.</td>
<td>Male shamans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy-going guidance.</td>
<td>Severe code of conduct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting and encouraging sexuality.</td>
<td>Limiting and devaluing sexuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No traumatizing of any kind.</td>
<td>Genital mutilation (circumcision, infibulation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female initiation with first menstruation (menarche): &quot;Becoming a woman&quot;.</td>
<td>Female virgin taboo; a penis penetrating the hymen: &quot;Becoming a woman&quot;. (Rape counts, too!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masturbation, love between girls and boys and then teenagers is not limited and accepted.</td>
<td>Love between kids and masturbation is rigidly suppressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No homosexuality.</td>
<td>Love between teenagers is strongly controlled or forbidden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No incest.</td>
<td>Homosexual tendencies: either open and ambitious or rigorously taboo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Incest tendencies with rigid taboo.
<p>| Absence of concubinage, prostitution or pornography. | Concubinage, prostitution and pornography belong to everyday life. |
| Supported unboundedly and accepted sex life from childhood to youth to adulthood to age. Freely flowing lustful energies lead to a healthy body and spirit. | Prudish, suppressive, limiting sexuality, appearance of sick behaviors, trimming the genitals (circumcision and infibulation), lead to traumas and their aftereffects: suffering people, who need to compensate. |
| Absence of enforced monogamy. | Lifelong enforced monogamy. |
| Polygamy is unusual. | Polygamy is common. |
| The difference will be appreciated. | The difference will be turned down. |
| Individuals, who differ from others in their personal attributes or characteristics are comprehended as inspiring and impulse giving, or attract at least interest. Their company is welcomed. Diversity is regarded as enrichment. Newborns are expected to bring &quot;gifts&quot; to the society. The personality of babies and children will be studied, in order that the community is able to help them develop their special abilities and talents for the advantage of everybody. From the first moment on each person gets what s/he needs to succeed her/his personal tasks in this life. Science tries to understand nature to get adjusted to. Women have control over fertility. | Individuals, who differ from &quot;the norm&quot; are treated poorly as &quot;unsuitably&quot;, they are humiliated, insulted, ridiculed, tortured, outcast, discriminated, excluded: Redheads, homosexuals, such of different faith or race, dissidents, disabled, foreigners, &quot;lunatics&quot; of every kind. They are treated badly. Children—siblings or students—are not supported according to their personality and individual needs, but treated primarily identically. Egalitarian adjustment is called &quot;fair&quot;. Parents don't know their children. They only know facts about them. Science tries to understand nature to get control over. Men have control over fertility. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature/the universe is viewed as a gift.</th>
<th>Nature/the universe is viewed as consumer good.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That is worshipped in every days cultural life—in spiritual spheres as in artistic.</td>
<td>Those who have money grab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All creatures are included and getting benefit of it.</td>
<td>The life itself and the natural circulations are disregarded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are committed to life.</td>
<td>People are committed to death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The symbol they pray to is a vivid pregnant woman.</td>
<td>The symbol they pray to is a tortured dead body on a cross.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New life is blessed.</td>
<td>Swords and soldiers are blessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principle element is sharing.</td>
<td>The principle element is fighting for power, against the evil, for money, against cancer, for acknowledgment, to survive, against the enemy, for a husband, for a divorce and getting the kids, for an intact facade...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribute, spread out, draw in, take part, involve, partition, give and take.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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