

Churchill's Personification and Embodiment of Nature's Wrath and Women's Infertility in *The Skriker* (1994)

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Abstract

Accepting the fact that women and nature share the same sufferings in a patriarchal realm is not an easy task. More perplexing, however, is facing people with the bitterness of globally accepted phenomena like "Globalization" and "Transculturalism". This paper concentrates on illustrating how Caryl Churchill who is a prominent British playwright defies the traditionally known and accepted "Patriarchal Capitalism." Simultaneously, she presents the theory of "Ecofeminism" through which she exposes the deterioration of nature and woman due to such concepts of openness. In this concern, the researcher offers a detailed analysis of Churchill's *The Skriker*; a play brings to light Churchill's claim that the present revolt of nature is due to human's crimes.

Key Words: Churchill, Ecofeminism, Globalization, Transculturalism, Patriarchy.

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1. Introduction

The Skriker is one of the greatest plays that were written by Caryl Lesley Churchill. This play explores the relation of the folklore creatures' realm and the two women's world, stressing the theme of women being abused and manipulated within the large system of patriarchy. Churchill is a prominent British playwright. She is popular for her interest in dramatizing the social and political manipulation of those in power; and hence, she is regarded as one of those feminists who took the mission of setting the principles and the themes of feminism on their shoulders. She was among the few female playwrights who could penetrate the canon of the British Theatre.

The Skriker is Churchill's most ambiguous play that was first performed in 1994. It revolves around the story of two girls, Lily and Josie, who are seduced by a mythical creature named the Skriker. The Skriker is a figure from the ancient past intended by Churchill to depict nature's response to humans' abuse and their unfair male-prejudiced hierarchy. Thus, it proclaims a fierce war against them in the pursuit for justice.

The following events present creatures (nature's lawyers) which manipulate and seduce the two female characters of the play. They strive to end humans' alienation to nature and their blind prejudice to the masculine and the technological thoughts. *The Skriker* is special in its inclusion of various art forms and

folklore creatures that shape a basic background in the play as they dance next to the dialogue.

2-The Figure of “The Skriker” as the Personification and Embodiment of Nature’s Wrath and Women’s Infertility:

The Skriker is a source for many of Churchill’s subsequent plays as well as a connection point where themes and styles of most of her drama are blended together. For instance, it connects the idea of women losing their femininity due to the patriarchal dominating world (as presented in *Top Girls*) to the idea of the world’s collapse due to human’s manipulation of nature (as in *Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen*). In *The Skriker*, the figure of the Skriker is presented as nature’s ambassador who comes to punish humans while the two female characters of Lily and Josie, have to suffer due to their femininity. Accordingly, *The Skriker* is seen as a play “about damage- damage to nature and damage to people” (Gobert 29).

The word “Skriker” is equivalent to “yeller” or “shouter”. In Churchill’s play, the character of the Skriker is a revolt against the devastations and deterioration of late capitalism, as a bad form of globalization. It has the ability to “penetrate any space and create desire that makes one abandon infants at home and friend” (Howard 49). This is embodied in many situations between the Skriker and the other characters as the former struggles to manipulate and seduce the latter. An example is when the Skriker

takes the form of a poor old lady asking Lily for “a hug and a kiss”. This is followed by the Skriker’s reward which is embodied in “pound coins come out of her mouth when she speaks” (16). This seduction included an urgent desire to be a member of Lily’s family members; either a sister for the baby or a godmother. However, the Skriker has a dark side where it avenges from those who do not come in terms with it. This is clear in its punishment of Josie by making “toads come out of her mouth” (Churchill 22). This highlights nature’s ability to respond to humans’ abuse.

As well as its shape shifting ability; the Skriker is presented as capable of manipulating time and space which enables it to manipulate both Josie and Lily. Gobert mentions it as “a fairy time... operates on its own logic” (23). This reflects nature’s capacity to respond to human’s deeds and its ability to change according to what occurs around. However, Churchill warns people that this ability has limits. For this, people need to be alert and stop harming their pure nature. Capitalism cannot be considered as an up-to-date phenomenon. It is as ancient as nature. This means that nature has a long history of resistance. Unfortunately, Churchill reveals to the reader at the closing lines of the play that nature’s death is imminent. This is revealed in the scene of the Skriker’s failure to obsess the baby. Accordingly, Churchill declares that people must stop destroying their nature.

Globalization is a modern phenomenon which encourages surpassing the boundaries among nations, but it also includes

domination and elimination of cultures and identities of other weaker nations. Due to globalization and schemes of openness, capitalism overwhelmed people's lives. Its effect is felt everywhere, but it is negative and destroying on both woman and nature. It is managed by the tyrant system of patriarchy which privileges men over women and humans over nature. Therefore, both movements of globalization and transculturalism have been included within diverse academic and human studies of the play; especially when The Skriker, as a representative of nature, says "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" (11). The second is during its conversation with Lily when it reveals to her the miserable position that it has to experience due to humans' manipulation and devastation, "The Skriker: 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" (Churchill 19).

Churchill has always been preoccupied with the social, the political and the ecological. In her plays, she mixes all the three to present the best solutions for humans generally, and women specifically. In doing this, she employs ecofeminism because it is regarded as the first movement to create a potential relationship

between feminism (socialism) and ecology, highlighting the theme of how political issues affect both women and the surrounding nature. Churchill's writings may be judged as a reflection of her own experience. Her interest in class differences and the impacts of the patriarchal decisions is established basically on real events in her actual life and her mother as two females in patriarchal capitalist world. After getting married and having kids, Churchill had to retire from 1963 to 1969 and wrote only limited radio plays for the BBC. Similarly, her mother was a housewife for a long time, and in her striving to have a career she had to conceal her marriage to the degree that she had never wore her wedding ring at work fearing she might be fired. This patriarchal regime, which confined Churchill and her mother due to their femininity, was the basic impulse that inspired and created her concern with feminist-political themes. Churchill writes, "I mostly remember my mother at home, but she did talk to me about working, and the fact that she used not to wear her wedding ring to work. I had the feeling, rather early on, that having a career was in no way incompatible with staying married and being very happy" (qtd. in. Aston, *Caryl* 4). Accordingly, Churchill is searching for freedom; freedom from patriarchy and its authority which expanded everywhere and in diverse shapes in the recent era. This includes sex differences, capitalism as a dark side of the global age, and domination of other weaker territories for their false claim of reformation. In this respect, Lizabeth Goodman

describes British feminist dramatists as “in essence counter-cultural, that is they are enacted partially through a strategy of constructing alternative sets of values and definitions ... this alternative eventually becomes the mainstream as other alternatives emerge” (196). In this quotation, Goodman assimilates Churchill to British feminist dramatists, past and present ones. Churchill looks for alternative views, rules, and beliefs of the position of woman in patriarchal capitalist realm and wants to draw her unique utopia where women and nature may enjoy better positions.

Because of her fascination in experimental techniques, Churchill presents a unique experimental style that mixes the past and the present. This is embodied through the mythic character of the Skriker and the other folklore spirits, presenting them with a verbal speech of arranged words. She deliberately employs this technique to serve her pursuit for a new possible form of drama which inspires women and men to live peacefully with each other and with nature simultaneously. Churchill plainly mentions this point when she said, “I wanted to get away from words” (81). She introduces *The Skriker* as collaboration with “Second Stride”; a literary piece includes a stress on cross disciplines and experimentation “of song, dance, music, elaborated-set designs and multimedia projections on stage” (Aston, *Caryl* 91-2). For example, during the Skriker’s prologue, the Skriker speaks as if it plays “a word association game” where words have similar words,

but different meanings. The Skriker says, “boast beast a roast beef eater, daughter could spin span spick and spun the lowest form of wheat straw into gold” (Churchill 9). The alliteration of the sound “b” and “s” creates unusual musicality in the Skriker’s speech which strengthens the idea of being a different creature from another world. This is strengthened by the multiplicity of narratives which enables Churchill to reveal the chaos and devastation of the external world of humans. Worth comments, “dance and music are employed to hold open the spaces within a more linear narrative; to interrupt and intrude” (82). Churchill alludes to the notion that just as the play is constantly interrupted by music and fairies’ interactions, the realm of the Skriker is conquered and destroyed by human’s greed. It is a play of a changeable rhythm resembling nature in its seasons’ changing. This changeability of the rhythm assists the Skriker in its shape shifting because each character requires different rhythm. For instance, the Skriker’s language when it was “a woman of about 40 who is slightly drunk” (Churchill 17) is ultimately different from its language when it disguised in the form of a small child lost in the garden.

Churchill uses The Skriker and other spirits to “criticize how when people are not bothered to do anything it will lead to the end of our world” (Folkson 8). They are injured spirits and monsters from the English folktales “who have become wounded and alienated by a contemporary world seemingly bent on capital

accumulation, environmental degradation, and general anomie” (Mitchell & Moore 96). On the one hand, *The Skriker* is regarded as a feminist embodiment, highlighting various subjects related to women’s problems. On the other, it is concerned with a collection of other social problems like the environmental pollution, the devastating effects or poverty and homelessness, the mental illness, and finally how all of these outcomes affect each other. *The Skriker* is a wonderful play depicting queer ecologies and deplorable femininity in addition to providing a better understanding of what ecofeminism is really and how nature and women are interrelated in different ways.

In *The Skriker*, Churchill stresses the great significance of myth in the English theatre. “Myth” is basically a Greek word (from “mythos”). It equals in meaning the English word “story”, but the former may contain some fabulous inspirations. For this, myth, in English theatre, is known as a legendary tale about a certain incident or a hero, and is often devoid of any factual interpretations. In other words, myths are “symbolic tales of the distant past (often primordial times) that concern cosmogony and cosmology (the original nature of the universe), may be connected to belief systems or rituals, and may be serve to direct social action and values” (MaGoulick 1). In *The Skriker*, Churchill employs several mythological creatures on her stage to obsess the spectator’s entire attention and awareness. Though the Skriker is the most dominating among them, those creatures embody and

represent many themes that might be explored by the thorough uncovering of the play's underpinnings. Those creatures came from the underground world as avengers for nature. This includes Yallery Brown, Nellie Long arms, Jenny Greenteeth, The Kelpie, Black Dog, Raw Head and Bloody Bones, the Radiant Boy, Jimmy Square Foot. Their names are partially deprived from their shapes and roles.

To support her claim that the present revolt of nature is due to human's crimes, Churchill makes use of the stories of those creatures. Their stories not only expose men's abuse of nature but also their humiliation of women, foregrounding the theme of patriarchal capitalism as an ancient dominating phenomenon. As for the Green Lady, Rosen reads her as a feminization of "the Green Man" who is a "symbol of rebirth, fertility and regeneration that takes place in the natural world" (247). This corresponds with the play's theme of "the uncertain continuation of fertility" which is represented in Josie's dead child and Lily's baby (who is viewed by Josie as a monster that is must be killed). The parallelism between the Green Lady on one hand and Lily with Josie on the other reaches its climax at the closing lines of the play when the Green Lady reappears with "Bucket and Cloth Man" and "Black Dog".

As for the creature called "Black Dog", it is intended by Churchill to symbolize death and this supports her efforts to draw the gloomy atmosphere of a world totally captivated by

technology. Accordingly, the researcher suggests that Black Dog is an embodiment of the phenomenon of globalization of the 20th and 21st centuries, that phenomenon which devours everyone and everything. Noteworthy here is that this Black Dog resembles the gate keeper of the Hell or the Barguest of English folklore. Both of them are symbols of death and loss. Rosen writes, “Those who saw the creature clearly would die soon after, while those who caught only glimpse might live for few months before succumbing” (Rosen 184). Thus, Black Dog in Churchill’s play is an imitation of the Gate Keeper and both are omens of death and decay. It is the decay of fertility and the ancient peaceful life that may be eliminated only by getting rid of technology which the Skriker (as a representative of nature) is unable to cope with.

The ecofeminist globalized approach of the play invites the researcher to concentrate on analysing the character of the Skriker, highlighting its relation to Josie and Lily. Through this relation, Churchill makes an extraordinary mix between the present and the past. This mix is a double-faced one. On one hand, it exposes the side effects of technology on nature. On the other, it examines the sufferings of women in a dystopian patriarchal world. Specifically, Churchill presents Josie and Lily as two women suffering due to their confrontation with the Skriker which condemns both for their inclusion in this patriarchy, even if they are basically victims. This mix between

the past and the present alludes to the notion that the current dilemma is an ancient one and it is the time for nature to revolt.

Churchill draws a new imaginary mythological world where the non-human interferes to judge and reform the human. In *The Skriker*, a non-human being appears in the lives of both Lilia and Josie to embody nature's revolution against humans' corruption. Churchill takes her readers far from the visible world to another different world, hoping to find new alternatives for the factual patriarchy she lives in. This proves in different ways the importance of what might mean "not to be human". She wants to say that there is a hidden force that judges the world and carefully watches us, but interferes when necessary. In this concern Bennet and Royle write, "Literature is, above all, about the human, about what it means to be human, and therefore about what it might not be human" (254). The non-human in Churchill's play is introduced through the character of the Skriker and its allies. The Skriker is "a shape shifter and death portent, ancient and damaged" (Folkeson 243) fairy who can change her shape into diverse people or even objects in order to achieve her schemes. It seeks revenge on the humans, from whom she and the other fairies are alienated. This revenge is reflected in its attempts to ensnare the girls and steal Lily's baby which can be fulfilled only by generating a painful intimacy with the girls. (Folkeson 243). It appeared in their lives to convey and personify nature's anger. Its first appearance was in the hospital. It appeared to Josie in the

form of a very old patient woman. Josie informs Lily about her acquaintance with a woman who “looks about fifty but she’s ... may be five hundred a million” (*The Skriker* 14). The Skriker is tightly created by Churchill to prove the assumption that sometimes it is important to be cruel with humans to save the world and stop catastrophic destruction. In addition, by presenting the Skriker with an ability to alter its shape, Churchill makes it a superior being able to encounter and conquer humans.

The Skriker tries to take revenge on people; not only due to the latter’s ignoring of the imaginary folklore creatures, but also because of the past and present crimes that people have intentionally or unintentionally chosen to forget. *The Skriker* is an untraditional play which discusses contemporary political, social and environmental problems. Through this play, Churchill indirectly compares the past to the present, nature to industry, and women to men. She seeks to evoke in her readers “continuing thought and active response” towards the issues she offers, hoping that this may bring some change in reality (Perrault 55).

Every element in this dramatic work seems to be untraditional: Characters, setting (time and place), events, and themes. All of these elements are introduced as “incoherent from the point of view of the conventions of classical storytelling” (Zanetic 7). As Perrault notes, “Churchill provides a relative, subjective view of the world, in which history is not necessarily objective, space is not necessarily static, and time is not necessarily linear” (56). In

addition, in his *Performance Studies*, Schechner explains this in a more simple way. He attributes this diversity and nonlinearity of the play's elements to Werner Heisenberg's theory. Heisenberg is a German physicist who believes that "the subatomic particles do not in fact abide by any rigidly defined, pre-established rules; on the contrary, what governs the way they act appears to be probability, i.e. chance" (qtd. in. Schechner 108-9). Heisenberg challenges the old view of sticking to classic roles as the most elegant thing to follow, gives space for diversity according to the context of literary work and its purposes. In *The Skriker*, this technique serves Churchill's assumption that if nature works irregularly, art also works disorderly. Furthermore, Churchill is conversant with the audience's feelings of alienation and estrangement which are deliberately intended by her to serve her general indirect theme.

As an ecofeminist play, *The Skriker* is written to advocate the rights of the marginalized neglected group represented by the Skriker and the other female fairies as they try to avenge their oppressed nature. For this, the incidents of the play merge the present with the past and vice versa, alienating the play from the Aristotelian theory which asserts the linearity of plot. Those angry fairies find themselves responsible for their nature represented by England which was previously "a country of snow and wolves where trees sang and birds talked and people knew we mattered" (*The Skriker* 23). Now it turned to "a toxic waste paper basket

case, salmon elephantiasis, blue blood bad blood blue blood, blah blah blah” (Churchill 37). Accordingly, Churchill unintentionally presents an ecofeminist play with ecological themes and objectives. She provides an answer for the popular question: How can the academic ecofeminism affect the environmental realm and ethically set it free from the restrictions of human abuse? As an ecofeminist play, *The Skriker* present the fairy women as responsible for protecting nature and are ready to sacrifice their lives while fighting nature’s invaders.

What is puzzling about Churchill’s play is the way the opposing force is introduced. In *The Skriker*, the characters of Josie and Lily become targets of the Skriker. Any reader finds himself suggesting the following questions: Why does Churchill present a feminist play where women fight women? Which party is innocent and which is guilty?

The Skriker imitates a particular sort of performance was introduced in the 1930s by Bertolt Brecht, a German playwright and director. Brecht invented a type of realistic performance called “Verfremdungseffekt” (the estrangement effect). He was inspired by a performance of *Dan*, a role of a female played by a male Chinese actor in neither special makeup nor clothing. This technique distances the actor from the role which he embodies, making it possible for both the actor and the audience to examine the political and social implications contained within a particular act or character played. (Schechner 181-2)

The intention of this technique is to reveal the view that the world - like the characters- is chaotic and deteriorated. Though this technique results in incomprehension for the audience, it enables the writer to reveal his ideas precisely. Only through this estrangement effect, the reader comes to believe in the belief that performance is mimic of the actual tangible world. Katherine Perrault notes: “the very purpose of alienation and deconstruction techniques is to produce continual reactions in the audience, namely those of doubt, questioning, and discomfort upon the sight of that which is normally considered familiar turn into the unfamiliar” (57).

Churchill employs female characters in her play to embody male dominating roles. This is reflected through the two female characters of Josie and Lily. In its mission to reveal nature’s wrath to humans, the Skriker decides to punish both women for their involvement in nature deterioration. Both women are essential part and parcel of the up-to-date capitalist revolution which corrupted the old revered nature. In one of Lily’s conversations with the Skriker, the latter finds difficulty in believing Lily’s explanation of the value of technology revealed through the television, “LILY: it’s in bits like waves like specs and you need an aerial to/ SKRIKER: This is crap/ LILY: catch it and this changes it back into the picture / and it’s not a solid thing, its all dots /SKRIKER: But how for fuck’s sake?” (Churchill 19).

Despite its abilities and super powers, the Skriker fails to switch on the TV, representing nature's failure to adapt with humans' technological advancements which exist everywhere. Churchill makes use of this scene to convey to her readers the idea that globalization's side effects exceed its merits. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Churchill abhors the phenomenon of globalization and the unprecedented development of technology which overwhelm the 20th and 21st centuries. She deliberately presents the Skriker as a superior figure who is unable to be content with this type of progress in humans' lives and struggles to terminate or at least limit it. This includes the return to the ancient revered nature in addition to the past traditions which respect and dignify the natural rather than the artificial. This is embodied in the Skriker's multiple endeavors to seduce both Josie and Lily to go with it to the underground peaceful world because (from the Skriker's own point of view) it is the only secure place for them and for their fertility. Despite the Skriker's seduction and continual disguise (in eight different shapes), Josie constantly exposes it. Josie reveals her involvement in the spirits' world which makes it uneasy to include her in it. Though she travels to the underground world (willingly) temporarily, she returns again to her friend Lily to warn and protect her (despite her earlier request from the Skriker to take Lily instead of her). She wants to save Lily's spirit from being captivated by the underground world which "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” (Churchill 29). Josie's act proves her loyalty to her friend; but at the same time exposes the weakness of the figure of the Skriker (nature), as the latter loses the battle against humans. In other words, it represents nature's failure to face human's new mechanism. The Skriker plainly admits, “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 has been a comfort to people as long as they've existed. But it's not available any more” (Churchill 40).

Just as nature is introduced as a victim of human's exhaustion of its sources, Josie and Lily may be read as victims as well. They are included within the large system of the rival. Churchill employs the character of Josie to reveal this catastrophic effect on humans, especially women. Josie may be read as a representative of the after-technology world. Through Josie Churchill embodies both the crimes of technology and late capitalists as well as the outcomes of these crimes on the criminals themselves. Just as capitalism led to the elimination of many nations and entities, Josie is presented as a woman killing her innocent child and spending a long period in a mental hospital. This reveals the fragility of the globalized world and its deficiency to confront or heal its own mistakes. This is very clear at the conclusion of the

play when Josie loses her spirit and her mind in nonsense. This damage extended to include others; especially Lily. Josie claims that Lily's baby is a "changeling" one who must be killed. She insanely tells Lily, "JOSIE. That's not your baby. They've put one of theirs and taken yours off /LILY. Don't say that, don't. /JOSIE. Changeling. / Changeling. ...They'll keep yours down there. It makes them stronger. They'll breed from it. And you'll always have this one watching you. Look at its little slitty eye" (13).

Josie is fully captivated by the spirits that may be felt from the very beginning when Lily asks her about the reason for killing the baby and the latter replies, "You wouldn't kill a baby because it annoyed you" (13). Josie's words reveal her regret for killing her baby and also her unwillingly killing. She seems to be captivated by an exterior power. This force may be the same one that made her view Lily's new born baby as a monster brought by the evil spirits from the underground world. This behavior reminds Lily of Josie's ancient crime and she imagines Josie threatening her to murder her, "I warn you, I'll kill you/ don't say that" (Churchill 36). In this way, the play starts and ends with Josie as suffering from mental problems, symbolizing the chaos of the external world of humans as a whole. Accordingly, Churchill engages us to the conclusion that if the world did not wake up and stop its violent acts against nature, the latter would revolt fiercely causing unquenchable devastation.

The Skriker as a spirit from the ancient times has found itself lost in the recent cultural world. Thus, it expresses its anger in different ways, hoping to spoil the human reality just as what happened previously in the pure old nature. First, the Skriker seduces Josie to put her daughter to death, an act which drives it to psychiatric institution. Next, it terrifies them and changes into a child, piercing Lily's stomach, and also threatening to seduce the other spirits to kill them. Thus, the Skriker suggests that humans are in danger and therefore in need for a force that can defend and guard them. It arrogantly declares, "We'll be under the bedrock bye and bye. We'll follow you on the dark road at nightingale blowing. No but they're danger thin ice pick in your head long ago away ... Revengeance is gold mine, sweet. Fe fi fo fumbledown cottage pie crust my heart and hope to die. ... Ready or not here we come quick or dead of night tight sleep tightarse" (Churchill 13).

Churchill's language in *The Skriker* is "a mix of language from English folk tale and nursery rhyme" (Mitchell & Moore 96). This language is introduced from the first lines of the play through The Skriker's soliloquy in which it reveals its displeasure and frustration at the neglect and decay of nature because of atrocities by humans and technology: "They poison me in my rivers of blood poisoning makes my arm swelter. Can't get them out of our head strong" (Churchill 12). This human act, which the Skriker and the other fairies regard as insulting, drives them to act as

lawyers avenging their injured nature. For instance, the Skriker plans to deprive humans of everything uncivilized and non-corrupt as punishment for taking so much of nature's sustenance away. This is introduced through the Skriker's scheme to have Lily's baby as its own, hoping it can protect the baby from the evils of globalization. Here, Churchill seems to suggest that technology and its consequences are a big mistake and unnecessary in humans' realm. There are various beneficial things need to be discovered rather than that destructive technology.

As an ecofeminist play, *The Skriker* stresses the ecofeminist emphasis on language's role in discovering both the oppressor and the oppressed. This occurs when certain patterns and words are adhered to one sex and not to the other one. According to this statement, Caard writes, "one emotion is allowed to men and denied to women: anger. In order to experience anger and focus it at its source, one must be able to name directly the source of one's anger, but the language for anger is denied to women and to other oppressed groups" (159). In *The Skriker*, this is evident in the relation of the Skriker to the two women and Josie specifically.

Concerning the structure of this play, it reflects Churchill's exceptional talent and justifies her inclusion in the canon British Theatre. It may be seen as an extraordinary structure where Churchill creates a peaceful track of the events of the uncountable fairy stories in its opening lines which presented in the form of a revealing monologue. In this opening monologue, the Skriker

rebels against the recent world and its destructive tendencies. It is established carefully by Churchill to establish the background for all the subsequent events. The power structures in *The Skriker* enable the reader to find out the hierarchy used in it and consequently differentiate between the oppressor and the oppressed. In addition, it helps to anticipate the kind of separation that causes the problem under discussion. Caard writes, “the fundamental realization of ecofeminism, namely, that our cultural, economic and ecological crises stem from a separation of self from another” (170). In *The Skriker*, the separation and devastation of nature which resulted from the technological achievements of the globalized world is what creates the problem and causes the chaos that were foreshadowed since the very beginning.

This unconventional structure of *The Skriker* makes it so mysterious that its interpretation takes on different forms. As mentioned before, Churchill's play is an ecofeminist one, meaning that it has female fairies defending environmental issues as their own, while the opposing force is untraditionally represented through the characters of Lily and Josie who (according to Brecht's estrangement effect) are manipulated to embody the masculine oppressor. However, the play can be read as an ecofeminist but from another different perspective, reflecting the same idea of the interdependence between women and nature. This perspective highlights the patriarchal system as a destructive

force causing nature and women to suffer equally as one consolidated entity: “Churchill uses the biological aspect of the women’s bodies as the vehicle by which they are contained, constrained or dominated by the patriarchy” (Perrault 49).

Perrault points to the ecofeminist belief that woman and nature are similar in their biological structure. Just as women are mothers with infinite kindness, nature is always believed to be “a nurturing mother” whose supplies are endless. In *The Skriker*, the two female characters of Lily and Josie suffer like nature due to their gender. In addition, the incidents of the play present them as victims of the dominance of patriarchy, despite the seemingly absence of the latter. However, this male absence is substituted by the Skriker and other fairies that are reflecting and perpetuating the containment of a patriarchal world by seducing and eventually dominating Josie and Lily (Perrault 50). This is revealed when the Skriker takes Lily to the apocalyptic future where she sees herself losing her baby due to human’ manipulation of the natural system. Hence, woman and nature are introduced as suffering equally due to globalization that is imposed upon them by the fake patriarchal system and eventually caused their doom. The play “anthropomorphises a damaged natural world in the form of an ancient folklore faerie – the Skriker – who reels off playful and often perturbing word association monologues reminiscent of the Northern political punk poetry of John Cooper Clark” (The Skriker 2).

In addition, when the Skriker takes the form of a derelict woman muttering and shouting in the street, it sheds light on another effect of the previously mentioned phenomenon. Churchill attributes some wars to globalization which resulted from the uncontrolled desire for more expansion. The derelict woman plainly claims:

I know my son is writing me letters all the time and the army is stopping them because the officers are devils and do what you tell them because they are DEVILS and the letters are in sacks in the Bank of England waiting for the Day of Judgment when you will go to HELL and lose sight of me and stop moving me about but you can't move me now because my fingers are just so because I'm in charge of the devils and if I keep it up the devils will let my son go LET MY SON GO. (Churchill 20)

The play ends with the idea that though woman, like nature, is the fertile mother who gives hope and life, man's manipulation deprived her from enjoying this privilege. At the end of *The Skriker*, just as nature loses its fertility and pure substance, Lily (like Josie) loses her baby. The play ends horribly as the Skriker changed from its human figure into its actual form (the ancient mythical creature), "describing a dystopian distant time in which Lily, like a character from a fairy tale, wakes up from a long sleep to discover that the Skriker herself has become Lily's own great-granddaughter" (Mitchell and Moore 99). Lily's

grandsons, just as nature's pureness, are deformed by pollution and Industrial Revolution that is managed by patriarchy. "The girls are always somehow confined and unable to escape their supposed natural role of motherhood, which haunts them throughout the play by the means of the Skriker" (Zanetic 10). Josie surrenders to the mythical creatures and goes with Black Dog, hoping to save her friend Lily. She "went further and murder in the dart, trying to keep the Skriker sated seated besotted with gobbets, tossing it giblets, to stop it from wolfing, stop it engulfing" (*The Skriker* 44). However, Lily accepts to go to the other world thinking she may come back in no time and save other innocent humans simultaneously. She tells the Skriker, "If it's what Josie did I'll back in no time" (*The Skriker* 43). No sign in Churchill's *The Skriker* alludes to the change or even the possibility of removing capitalism and its great expansion, "gobbling and gabbling, giggling and gagging, biting and beating, eating and hating, hooting and looting and lightning and thunder in the southeast northwest northeast southwest north south crisis" (*The Skriker* 44). Confusion, disorder, chaos and death are the dominating modes of the new world.

Similarly, the Skriker appears at the ending of the play as "a very ill old woman" (45) who decides to return to the peaceful underground world where it may be relieved from the evil it has experienced on the earth for many years. The conclusion of the play is a disappointing one; because neither the Skriker nor the

two girls could achieve their targets. It proves *The Skriker* as an ecofeminist play where nature and woman are damaged by the centuries of outrageous effects of patriarchy. The play raises many questions attempting to regain woman' and nature's revered past. It ends with the same hierarchal structure (the hierarchy that is reflected through the Skriker's divergent shapes) which unjustly dignifies the oppressor and underestimates the oppressed majority. Aston explains, "the Skriker plays low status (a needy child, an old woman) and high status roles (business woman, would-be lover) – but always in relations that are hierarchical, vampiric and never mutual" (*Feminist Views* 31). The researcher believes that Churchill, intentionally or unintentionally, fails to avoid or beat this hierarchy even in her play's text. Consequently, she fails to create her own utopia of a peaceful world devoid from the dominance of patriarchy and the capitalism of globalization.

3- Conclusion:

In addition to its ecofeminist tendencies, Churchill's *The Skriker* is a striking example and an embodiment of the negative tendencies of the phenomena of transculturalism and globalization. It exposes the acts of domination of some nations on other weaker nations; and consequently, the latter find themselves obliged to embrace another foreign culture to survive. Ganyi explains, "Transculturalism is the meeting and intermingling of different peoples and cultures which could result in the production of a mono-cultural universe. This intermingling

would naturally result in many consequences which are positive and desirable as well as negative and detestable” (31). Usually, the negative side is reflected in the domination of some groups over other weaker ones. In *The Skriker*, the negative consequences may be subdivided into two parts revealing two divergent perspectives. Firstly, in the Skriker’s complaint from the humans who force nature to cope with their new globalized and technological realm; a realm that the latter does not accept. Secondly, in the Skriker’s numerous attempts to seduce Lily and Josie to accompany it to the underground world which they, like the Skriker toward the humans’ world, are unfamiliar with. For this, Ecofeminism came to fight the radical views of globalization and transculturalism simultaneously because both “are as such simply two sides of the same coin; they complement and reinforce each other and are aimed at the subjugation of the cultural identity” (Ganyi 5) and accordingly the suppression of nature and woman. Ecofeminism came to terminate the deterioration of woman and nature which caused by man, represented in *The Skriker* by the “Passerby” who is, despite the multiple chaotic incidents that occur around him, “dance to music”

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ملخص

إن قبول حقيقة أن المرأة والطبيعة يتشاركان نفس المعاناة في عالم أبوي ليس بالمهمة السهلة. لكن الأمر الأكثر إرباكًا هو مواجهة الناس بمرارة بعض المفاهيم المقبولة عالميًا مثل "العولمة" و "التعددية الثقافية". تركز هذه الورقة البحثية على توضيح إلى أي مدى تتحدى الكاتبة المسرحية البريطانية كاريل تشرشل ما هو معروف ومقبول باسم "الرأسمالية الأبوية". في الوقت نفسه ، يقدم الباحث نظرية "النسوية البيئية" التي من خلالها تكشف عن تدهور الطبيعة والمرأة بسبب مفاهيم الانفتاح هذه. في هذا الصدد ، يقدم الباحث تحليلاً مفصلاً لمسرحية "السكرير". تُسلط هذه المسرحية الضوء على ادعاء تشرشل بأن ثورة الطبيعة الحالية هي ف الحقيقة ناتجة عن جرائم الإنسان اتجاهها. و هو شئ لا يمكن إنكاره.