

## The Body as Sensible Transcendence: Embodied Flux and Sacrifice in Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker*

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker* to theorize the destabilization of the liberal humanist subject through the intertwined concepts of sensible transcendence and the hysteric subject. It argues that the Skriker, as a shape-shifting, cross-gendered entity, materially embodies Luce Irigaray's notion of sensible transcendence, reconceiving transcendence not as disembodied escape but as an emergent process rooted in corporeal difference and intercorporeal flux. Simultaneously, the Skriker's fragmented language and protean identity perform the role of the Lacanian hysteric subject, exposing the economy of sacrifice inherent to liberal and neoliberal orders, which demand psychic fragmentation and the abjection of non-normative identities for their reproduction. By placing Irigaray's and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological frameworks in dialogue with psychoanalytic theory, this analysis demonstrates how Churchill's dramaturgy uses the Skriker's radical embodiment to subvert hegemonic gender binaries, challenge patriarchal symbolic structures, and render visible the psychic and social costs of a system sustained by sacrificial logic.

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### Introduction

Caryl Churchill, one of the most formally innovative and politically incisive playwrights of the contemporary stage, consistently deploys the theatrical medium to dissect the pathologies of the modern subject. In her 1994 play *The Skriker*, this critique takes on a mythic and terrifying form. The eponymous Skriker, an ancient, shape-shifting fairy from British folklore, descends upon modern-day London, becoming a corrosive force that preys upon two young women, Josie and Lily. Churchill uses this supernatural premise not to escape reality, but to plunge more deeply into its frayed edges, mapping the psychic fallout of a neoliberal, patriarchal world.

The Skriker is, in this interpretation, a violent theater laboratory for theorizing subjectivity in crisis. The play's relentless formal experimentation, its shattered language, malleable temporality, and disrupted character boundaries bodily instantiates the very terms that constitute the core theoretical toolset. Through Skriker's monstrous, cross-gendered transformations, the author explores Luce Irigaray's sensible transcendence, finding a form of existence beyond by not transcending the body but more in its extreme, sensual multiplicity. In parallel, the uncanny topography of the play and the sensory agonies of the characters are construed through Merleau-

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Ponty's phenomenology of the lived body and the field of perception. But this corporal flux finds itself in a savage tension with what a Lacanian psychoanalytic reading discloses to be an economy of sacrifice. The hysteric subject's relentless demand for meaning and the fluid self's precarious practicability are found to be double symptoms of a liberal order that sustains itself on consuming those at its periphery. In uniting Irigaray, Merleau-Ponty, and Lacanian theory in conversation, this interpretation clarifies how Churchill's visionary drama not only locates alienation in the current era but, in its own structure, gestures toward a possibility of a bodily, relational transcendence created within the deconstructed fragments of the coherent self.

## Theoretical Framework

### Sensible Transcendence

Luce Irigaray's notion of sensible transcendence constitutes a paradigmatic reconfiguration of traditional metaphysical dichotomies, notably those that bifurcate the sensible and the intelligible, the immanent and the transcendent, and the corporeal and the spiritual. In his essay entitled "*Dōgen on Language and Experience*" (Braak, 2021), states:

"Such a new understanding can help us to go beyond the immanent frame, with its rigid separation between an immanent natural order and a transcendent supernatural order, and its separation between theory and practice. Rather than present a new version of "the Zen experience" as a new attempt at radical transcendence, or a new conception of religious experience, Dōgen's thought can serve to overcome the implicit dichotomies in Western modes of thought between inner and outer, mind and body, individual and the world, immanence and transcendence, and theory and practice." (13)

Departing from the phallogocentric legacies of Western philosophy that have historically marginalized the feminine by relegating it to the realm of the merely sensible or corporeal, Irigaray posits sensible transcendence as an ontological and ethical horizon wherein divinity and embodiment coalesce. This concept envisions transcendence not as an inaccessible, disembodied ideal but as an emergent process intimately interwoven with the lived, sensuous experience of the body, particularly the female body, thereby challenging the prevailing epistemic order that privileges disembodied reason and hierarchical binaries. To elucidate the connection between the philosophical perspectives of Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray, careful consideration must be given to the following quotation:

In his article (2024) "*The Gap of Presence: Challenges in Describing Perceptual Phenomena*", André Dias de Andrade states:

"The attachment of the body and environment as both sides or developments of the unique operative intentionality enables phenomenology to describe the world and 'being as that which appears' (so not as something alien to subjectivity), as well as consciousness "as a universal fact" (so not an exclusive or ideal realm of meaning). The main gain here amounts to the unveiling of a new notion of transcendence in this phenomenological approach. Through motility and perception, precisely, the corps propre as a perceptive subject gathers the sparse meaning already motivated by passive syntheses in the environment." (3)

### Field

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological inquiry rearticulates the concept of the field as the spatial and perceptual horizon that conditions our visual engagement with the world. This field constitutes

the ontological backdrop against which objects manifest themselves, not as isolated, static entities, but as interrelated phenomena embedded within a dynamic, inexhaustible plenitude. The world revealed through what might be termed “pure vision” is not a mere aggregation of discrete, self-identical objects; rather, it is an ontic fullness imbued with a sacred positivity, wherein each entity participates in a holistic totality that transcends reductive objectification. Regarding Merleau-Ponty in *Visible and in Invisible* (1968) states:

" We come to realize that all that for us is called thought requires that distance from oneself, that initial openness which a field of vision and a field of future and of past are for us. In any case, since we are here only trying to take a first look at our natural certitudes, there is no doubt that, in what concerns the mind and truth, they rest on the primary stratum of the sensible world and that our assurance of being in the truth is one with our assurance of being in the world" (35).

### **Cognition**

In Maurice Merleau Ponty's philosophy, cognition is radically rethought, moving away from the traditional Cartesian view of a detached, intellectual mind processing sensory data. Instead, cognition is deeply embodied, perceptual, and situated within the lived world. Merleau-Ponty is in defense of the priority of perception as the foundation for all knowledge and understanding. Cognition is not a higher-order ability that operates independently of our experience by means of the senses; it is rather internally founded upon and governed by the way our body engages with the world. Perception is not receptive uptake of stimuli but rather active and embodied exploration of the world. Our bodies, with their sensory-motor functions, are the first way we experience and understand the world. Second, central to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is the concept of the lived body (*le corps propre*).

### **Hysteric Subject and Economy of Sacrifice**

"The agent of the discourse is the castrated shortage of the Hysteric; hidden beneath its bar is his/her object cause of desire. This barred Subject, driven by its object *petit a*, addresses the master signifiers of the other, which respond with the production of knowledge, beneath the bar." (Gadalla, 2022)

The hysteric's core demand can be understood as "Tell me who I am!", a command that compels speech and makes the hysteric entirely dependent on the Other for the master signifier that transforms it into a subject (Meylahn 2012). Central to the hysteric's structure is the fantasy that a sexual rapport can exist, even though "the sexual for a human being is in principle without relation" (Horbury, 2016). Economies of sacrifice operate through different mechanisms but share structural similarities with hysteria. In traditional sacrifice, there is an excessive spirit that suspends the profane order of individuality and capitalist progress, giving way to sacred instants of immediate experience where the self loses its status as an object accordingly in his article "*A kiss is the beginning of cannibalism: Julia Ducournau's Raw and Bataille Horror*" (2020), de Leeuw states:

"For the system's very basis is a tumultuous oscillation between explosion and subservience, the taboo inviting its transgression, the excess of its own making spent 'gloriously or catastrophically.' It breeds the excess that constantly threatens the stability of profane ground. It is in this way that transgression should be understood as an irrational indulgence of an instability inherent to the system's in-built failures, not a dialectical means to eradicate social codes once and for all." (226)

Contemporary manifestations show how the sacrifice made by the hysteric to reconstitute the world of the father has become a more generalized condition, affecting subjects who are "naturally" lost and without shelter (Costa et al. 2016). This has led to what theorists describe as collective hysteria, where subjectivities are organized more by participation in collective hysterical structures than by singular determination. The hysterics' discourse and capitalist discourse create an ideal fit, complementing each other in what has been called the explosion of hysterical capitalist subjectivity (Meylahn, 2012).

In Churchill's theatre, the hysterical subject embodies the rupture between the individual and the symbolic order, perpetually demanding recognition from the Other and exposing the subject's inherent lack. This figure undermines the liberal ideal of autonomous self-mastery, revealing an economy of sacrifice that marginalizes non-normative identities. Simultaneously, the fluid self in Churchill's work challenges liberal humanism's fixation on stable identity through performative, mutable subjecthood. Theatrical strategies such as cross-gender casting and temporal discontinuity enact a self-defined by multiplicity and contradiction, functioning as both a vulnerable and resistant site within the liberal symbolic economy. Together, these figures highlight a dialectical tension within liberalism: the demand for a coherent subject necessitates the exclusion of those embodying excess or instability. Churchill's dramaturgy thus exposes the mechanisms through which liberalism regulates gendered and sexualized subjectivities, while inviting a reimagining of subjectivity beyond its normative constraints.

### Literature Review

This review integrates key critical frameworks, feminist, psychoanalytic, and phenomenological, bracketing their intersections, strengths, and limitations, and identifying ongoing gaps in theoretical integration.

#### **Feminist Strategies: Performativity, Motherhood, and Female Aggression**

Feminist theory has made *The Skriker* a hallmark of Churchill's oeuvre in its dismantling of maternal ideology and gendered subjectivity. Critics argue the play annihilates essentialist notions of motherhood through the fragmented subject positions of Josie and Lily beneath patriarchal and neoliberal duress (Adishesiah, 2009). Josie's infanticide and Lily's unwanted pregnancy are interpreted as acts of resistance to a society that pathologizes non-normative femininity, in this case, working-class single motherhood (Aston, 2003).

Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, certain analyses identify the Skriker's fluid embodiment—encompassing woman, man, child, and object—as a performative disruption of binary gender norms (Butler, 1990; Kritzer, 2008). The shape-shifting of the creature uncovers identity as a ritual of unstable acts' repetition rather than an essence, challenging phallogocentric symbolic structures (Gobert, 2014). In performance, this is amplified through cross-gender casting and non-human puppetry, as seen in the 2015 Royal Exchange Manchester revival, which used grotesque physicality to embody feminine aggression as chaotic, uncontainable excess (Billington, 2015). However, some feminist critics caution that the play risks reinforcing stereotypes of female violence as irrational or tied to psychosis, potentially re-pathologizing women's resistance within patriarchal frameworks (Diamond, 1997). Despite this, the consensus holds that *The Skriker* extends Churchill's feminist project—seen in *Top Girls* and *Vinegar Tom*—by linking personal trauma to systemic oppression (Aston & Diamond, 2009).

#### **Psychoanalytic Readings: Hysteria, Psychosis, and the Economy of Sacrifice**

Psychoanalytic interpretations, particularly through Lacanian lenses, frame *The Skriker* as a dramatization of the hysteric subject and the economy of sacrifice inherent to liberal capitalism. The Skriker embodies the Lacanian hysteric: a barred subject whose fragmented speech and insatiable demand, “Tell me who I am!”, expose the failure of the symbolic order to provide coherent meaning (Lacan, 1977; Meylahn, 2012). Its disjointed, Joycean language performs a regression to the semiotic (Kristeva, 1984), revealing the pre-symbolic chaos repressed by rational discourse (Rabey, 2003).

Josie’s postnatal psychosis and Lily’s liminal dream states are read as symptomatic responses to a socio-symbolic system that demands psychic fragmentation for survival (Luckhurst, 2006). The Skriker’s predation symbolizes how neoliberalism enforces a fluid self—adaptable, disposable, and perpetually self-sacrificing—particularly on women, who must internalize systemic contradictions to remain socially viable (Adiseshiah, 2009; Zanolla et al., 2018). This “economy of sacrifice” operates by abjecting non-normative selves to preserve hegemonic coherence (Kristeva, 1982).

Robust though they are, psychoanalytic interpretations tend to privilege individual psyche over material conditions, reducing ecological and class criticism to metaphor (Gobert, 2014). Contemporary hybrid accounts marry Lacanian theory with feminist materialism and place hysteria not as pathology but rather as body resistance against patriarchal control (Albert, 2020).

### **Phenomenological and Ontological Analyses: Embodied Flux and Sensible Transcendence**

Though less dominant, phenomenological readings offer a compelling framework for understanding the play’s radical ontology. Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962), critics interpret the Skriker’s shape-shifting as an enactment of embodied flux within the perceptual field, where identity emerges through dynamic intercorporeality rather than fixed essence (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Andrade, 2024). Lily’s struggle to distinguish dream from reality exemplifies perceptual faith—the pre-reflective trust in the world’s coherence—disrupted by liminal experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

Integrating Luce Irigaray’s concept of sensible transcendence (1984), scholars argue that the Skriker reconfigures transcendence as an imminent, corporeal process rooted in sexual difference and intersubjective porosity, not disembodied ascent (Irigaray, 1993). Its hybrid body—neither fully subject nor object—challenges Cartesian dualisms and patriarchal metaphysics (Gobert, 2014). This reading aligns with recent phenomenological studies of perception as active, embodied engagement with an ambiguous field (Andrade, 2024). Critics note, however, that phenomenological approaches can abstract the play’s political urgency, focusing on ontological hybridity while underplaying structural violence (Luckhurst, 2006). Emerging work counters this by linking embodiment to ecological critique, viewing bodily flux as analogous to environmental instability (Aston, 2025).

### **Synthesis and Critical Gaps**

*The Skriker* also appears as an intervention that is a multifaceted critique of liberal humanism, revealed by feminist, psychoanalytic, phenomenological, and ecocritical readings to have complementary aspects of its intervention. Feminist and psychoanalytic readings explain the gendered psychic cost of neoliberal subjectivity (Adiseshiah, 2009; Albert, 2020), while phenomenological and ecocritical readings reveal embodied and ecological alternatives (Andrade, 2024; Aston, 2025). Formal innovation of the play—disjointed language, temporal dislocation,

ontological hybridity—are not stylistic fripperies but performative assertions of its theoretical arguments (Kritzer, 2008).

Despite this prosperity, however, there are still significant lacunae. Theoretical models are typically treated discretely by most works: feminist criticisms rarely engage with phenomenology, psychoanalytic readings exclude ecology, and ecocriticism neglects embodiment (Gobert, 2014). The integration of Irigaray, Merleau-Ponty, and Lacan—as attempted in the provided document—remains rare in theatre studies, yet offers a powerful model for understanding how Churchill's dramaturgy instantiates an alternative ontology (Irigaray, 1993; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Lacan, 1977). This synthesis moves beyond critique to affirmative vision, using the Skriker's monstrosity to gesture toward a relational, embodied subjectivity beyond sacrificial logic.

## Result and Discussion

### Embodied Flux: Sensible Transcendence and Field in *The Skriker*

Irigaray's theorization of sensible transcendence rewrites transcendence as an emergent process grounded in embodied *différance*, rather than an abstraction grounded in disembodied, idealist metaphysics. In *The Skriker*, the title figure's body-shifting transformations, presenting as multiple genders, ages, and states of being, enact this type of transcendence by reversing fixity in identity categories and desisting hegemonic patriarchal symbolic structures. The Skriker's permeable body engages an embodied, sensuous process of becoming that affirms multiplicity and intersubjective relationality, thereby emphasizing the female body's transcendent capacity in *différance* and intercorporeal porosity. It is a practice which endorses Irigaray's speculation that transcendence is not an escapist de-substantiation but heightened ontological presence achieved by recognition and acceptance of embodied alterity.

To elaborate further, the Skriker's ontological hybridity, its urgencies of being simultaneously male and female, young and old, human and nonhuman, overcomes impenetrable normative systems of gender binarism, thereby demonstrating the modality of sensible transcendence since it realizes itself within the phenomenological space of bodily divergence and multiplicity. Moreover, the character's angry and frequently violent behaviors also function as an extreme negation of hegemonic patriarchal discourses mandating passivity to women, one that instead speaks to a form of transcendental agency intrinsically connected to an embodied alterity.

The ontological hybridity of the Skriker is most effectively seen in its ubiquitous shape-changing, which goes far beyond mere disguise or magical metamorphosis to constitute a fundamental crossing of categorial boundaries. The character appears in rapid succession as a shape-shifter and death omen; a derelict woman; an American woman; a shabby patient; part of a sofa; a fairy from a Christmas tree; a small child; a baby; Fairy Queen; Monster. This sequence of morphings illustrates that the Skriker does not simply change into something new but is an amorphous body that cannot be described by any single identity or category. The ability of the character to be part of a sofa particularly illustrates how its hybrid exceeds the animate-inanimate binary, challenging even the most fundamental ontological splits between subject and object, being and thing.

Churchill uses this amorphous quality to create what has been described as the damaged semiotic, where the Skriker's transformations transcend socially recognized categories (such as gender) and dismantle cultural codifications of genre and character. The Skriker's shape-shifting

thus becomes a form of ontological rebellion against fixed categories of existence, representing a being that exists in the spaces between established classifications rather than within them.

To elaborate further on the phenomenological Field, A pertinent passage from the text reads as follows:

What is electricity?

LILY. I'm telling you, hang about, how it gets sent, I can't quite, through the air, if it's live, or even if it's not of course, if it happened before and they recorded – say it's live, it's coming – not the whole picture in the air obviously, it's in bits like waves like specks and you need an aerial

ILY. catch it, and this changes it back into the picture / and it's not a solid thing, it's all dots

SKRIKER. But how for fuck's sake?

LILY. and lines if you look, I can't help it. If it's on the other side of the world they bounce it off a satellite yes, I'm explaining satellite which is a thing a thing they put up in space ok, they put it up I'm explaining that too and it's going round like a star, stars don't go round, like a moon but it looks like a star but moving about you sometimes see it at night, and it bounces off the satellite / all right –SKRIKER. What bounces off?

LILY. The picture.

SKRIKER. The picture bounces off?

LILY. The waves, the – what is this?

SKRIKER. You're holding out on me (Churchill, 1998).

The excerpt from the *Skriker* where Lily explains how television signals travel through the air as waves and specks, bouncing off satellites, can be fruitfully interpreted through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological concepts of the field and horizon. Besides, the TV image is not a solid, concrete entity but a dot-star, wave-pattern that's disseminated around space, requiring an aerial to pick them up and reconstruct them back to an image. This metaphorically illustrates the phenomenal field as a vague, dispersed space from which percepts are built.

The waves and specks represent the ambiguous, partial givenness of phenomena within the field, elements that are not fully present but exist in a state of potentiality, awaiting the perceiver's embodied engagement to coalesce into a meaningful whole. The satellite's orbit, "like a star," further evokes the horizon, the ever-present but shifting background that frames and limits what can be perceived. The horizon is not a fixed boundary but a relational and temporal context that shapes the perceptual field.

Lily's frustration at making the process of experience explicit, "I can't quite... what is this?" (Churchill, 1998), is characteristic of the phenomenological presumption that the perceptual field and its horizon are pre-reflective through and through and often ineffable; they are the pre-reflective grounds of perception, which typically go unnoticed through consciousness due to the forgetting inherent in perception in the process of object-directed intentionality. The intercession of the image as dispersed electromagnetic waves, coupled with the work an aerial device must do to receive and transduce said signals into a unified vision, is an allegory for perception as an active bodily act of engagement with a fundamentally partial and variable experiential horizon. The

horizon serves as a contextual limit. So, the motion of the satellite, like a star, is symbolic of the horizon as an environment, always present but never fully understandable, within which things emerge and disappear. This is in agreement with Merleau-Ponty's contention that perception is always found and not whole, placed in a horizon that defines and delimits experience.

Furthermore, the aerial's role of catching waves emphasizes the body's material structure of perception as not one of passive reception but of an active, contextually dependent mode of encounter with the field of perception. Such an awareness is in accord with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological contention that the body is the prime medium through which the world is revealed and brought to presence. Electricity has often been employed metaphorically to characterize the dynamic and transformative nature of perception. The diffused, wavelike nature of electricity corresponds to the diffused but integrated structure of perceptual experience. Since the picture on the television screen is constructed by the interrelation of diffused signals and embodied reception, perception is constituted by the interrelation of the phenomenal field and the embodied subject.

Lily's inability to distinctly mark procedural dynamics exemplifies the phenomenological principle that the constitutive conditions of perception, i.e., the field of perception and its horizon, are largely tacit and resistant to reflective articulation. This is because of the naturally object-directed tendency of perceptual consciousness to inhibit reflexive awareness of its own functioning conditions. This perception fits with Merleau-Ponty's philosophical argument that all intellectual acts of knowing and mental scrutiny rely upon some antecedent, pre-reflective perceptual faith. This original belief involves an unreflective reliance on the ontological coherence of the world and the experiential truthfulness of it before ever engaging in subsequent analytical or explanatory work. The other salient illustration is as follows:

JOSIE. It's not a dream. She made me / speak toads.

LILY. You would say that because you're just somebody in my dream. LILY. I can't wake up yet, but I can make it stop being a nightmare (Churchill, 1998).

Josie's persistence that what she is undergoing "is not a dream" demands the bodily existence of her suffering and transformation, however strange or unreal that experience happens to be. Josie's "speaking toads" is a bodily and linguistic transgression, an event of becoming-other that overcomes normative symbolic orders and demands a transformative, embodied subjectivity.

Josie's emphatic denial that her experience constitutes "a dream" foregrounds the embodied veracity of her suffering and metamorphosis, despite the uncanny or surreal phenomenology that characterizes it. This insistence underscores a lived reality that is not abstract or illusory but deeply grounded in corporeal existence. Such a stance resonates profoundly with Luce Irigaray's concept of sensible transcendence, wherein transcendence is reconceived not as a detached, disembodied ideal but as an emergent phenomenon inseparable from the embodied, sensuous engagement with difference and otherness.

In this context, Josie's "speaking toads" constitute an intense symbolic and corporal transgression: they violate traditional linguistic and semiotic orders, performing a becoming-other that resists essentialized identity and traditional means of signification. This is an experience that is paradigmatic of an ethical and ontological rupture that insists on a transformative subjectivity—one that is both embodied and linguistic, based in the flesh yet beyond it. Following the discussions

on Field and Sensible transcendence, the hysteric subject and its significance in the economy of sacrifice are the other issues under scrutiny.

### **Hysteric Subject in *The Skriker* as an Economy of Sacrifice**

The constructs of the hysteric subject and the fluid self within Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker* may be apprehended as pivotal theatrical and psychoanalytic signifiers that elucidate the economy of sacrifice intrinsic to liberalism, a socio-political apparatus predicated upon incessant processes of self-negation and disposability requisite for the perpetuation of its ideological hegemony and economic regime. The psychoanalytic understanding of liberal sacrifice reveals how subjects become complicit in their own subjugation through internalized mechanisms of self-negation. The subject who adapts through coercive means to socially instituted mechanisms without reflection perpetuates a reified rationality, creating a paradox where denying sacrifice to endorse self-conservative rationality becomes itself a form of self-sacrifice (Zanolla et al. 2018). Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, the hysteric subject is characterized by a paradoxical position: she simultaneously demands knowledge and exposes its limits, posing a question that compels the Other symbolic authority to respond, yet is never fully satisfied by any answer. This endless deferral produces a riddle-like symptom, a site of both resistance and entrapment.

In *The Skriker*, the hysterical subject is manifested through characters with disrupted identities and split speech, most notably the Skriker. The Skriker's split language and shifting forms mirror the split subjectivity forged by late capitalism and patriarchal liberalism, necessitating sacrificial self-destruction and psychic splitting as preconditions for survival. The hysteric's function is thus to demonstrate the contradictions and failures of hegemonic knowledge systems like liberalism's promises of autonomy and rationality by embodying the excess, the unassimilable remainder that liberalism has to sacrifice or repress. The symptom of the hysteric is a place of both subversion and containment in that it reveals how liberalism responds to dissent through cycles of repetition of sacrifice, psychic, social, and ecological.

The fluid self is the mutable, unstable identity demanded by neoliberal capitalism, in which fixed identities dissolve into commodified, market-ruled performances. Women, particularly, are invited to be fluid, flexible, and continually remaking themselves, a correlation of the neoliberal valorization of entrepreneurial selfhood. Fluid identity constitutes a break with traditional notions of the self as established and coherent. Contemporary theoretical understandings envision "the self as always 'in process', fluid and unstable" (Smith et al. 2018). Such fluidity is therefore not a freedom but one of disposability and precarity, where the self has to give up stability, coherence, and embodied integrity so that it continues to be socially and economically meaningful. It is worthy of special notice that the fluid self-shows how liberalism's gender roles impose a perpetual economy of sacrifice, in which women must internalize social contradictions and systemic inequalities through self-alteration.

Liberalism, based on principles of individualism and freedom, necessarily demands an economy of sacrifice, the institutionalized dispossession and denial of some bodies, identities, and knowledges in order to maintain its hegemonic regime. Liberalism's theoretical foundation is based on individualism as a necessary element, a complete system of values in which all values are man-centered and the individual is considered an end in himself and of transcendent value, society merely a means to individual ends.

The hysterical subject and fluid self in *The Skriker* dramatize this economy by embodying the excesses and failures of liberal rationality. Concisely, the hysteric subject performs the

articulation of the overwhelming demands and inherent contradictions that liberalism systematically represses, thereby unveiling the epistemic and autonomous limitations imposed by the regime. Conversely, the fluid self exemplifies the precarious and commodified subjectivity engendered by liberalism, one obliged to forfeit coherence, stability, and embodied integrity as conditions of survival within the neoliberal order. This fluidity is not liberating but a disposability and precarity in which the self must relinquish stability, coherence, and embodied integrity to be socially and economically competent. Significantly, the fluid self-portrays liberalism's gender roles as enforcing a perpetual economy of sacrifice that requires women to internalize social contradictions and systemic inequalities through self-reinvention.

It is noteworthy that the Skriker, an ancient, shape-shifting fairy who preys on vulnerable women, embodies the hysteric subject in several ways: One is the manifestation of hysteria in fragmented Language and Identity; the Skriker's disjointed, Joycean stream-of-consciousness speech reflects a fractured psyche, symbolizing the psychic and social fragmentation experienced by those marginalized and sacrificed by neoliberal capitalism and patriarchal structures. The other is relentless demand and resistance. The technique creates what can be understood as an experimental psychosis, where language regresses to an infantile state that reveals the semiotic musicality beneath rational discourse, representing a subject who is fundamentally on trial. As a hysteric figure, the Skriker persistently haunts Josie and Lily, exposing their vulnerabilities and the societal pressures they endure, single motherhood, mental illness, and economic precarity. This relentless presence dramatizes how society demands continual sacrifice from women, who are caught between survival and erasure. The following is the embodiment of excess and otherness. That is, the Skriker's monstrous, liminal nature signals the excess that liberal society represses, the unassimilable remainder of its logic of sacrifice. She is both a symptom and a critique, revealing the costs of social and ecological neglect. Fluid self as mutable identity within sacrifice economy is also significant to observe; shape-shifting and instability: the skriker's ability to take multiple forms, woman, man, child, and object symbolizes the fluid self-demanded by neoliberalism, where identities must be endlessly adaptable, performative, and disposable. A paradigmatic example is precarity and commodification of individuals. Josie and Lily's vulnerable positions as young, single, unemployed mothers reflect how neoliberal globalization enforces a precarious, commodified female subjectivity that must sacrifice stability and coherence to survive.

The dialectical tension between vulnerability and power is worthy of scrutiny. The fluid self is caught in a constant negotiation between agency and dispossession and oscillates precariously between empowerment and victimization within a system founded on the imperative of sacrifice for its reproducing on-goingness. To speak more expansively, the disjointed and fragmented subjectivity is a striking illustration. The disjunctive, often incoherent talking of the Skriker and the body that is constantly changing exemplify the psychic dislocation and fragmentation that neoliberalism's requirements of ongoing adjustment and self-optimization create. This is the hysteric's psychoanalytic position as a subject who always questions and demands but is never contented, embodying the impossible demands which are placed upon the subject to be compliant and yet autonomous. The symptomatology and interrogation of the hysteric subject, in turn, reveal the breakdowns and contradictions of liberal ideology, the inability to incorporate or satisfy the subject's demands for recognition, security, and coherence. The ghostly apparition and coercion of the Skriker reveal the repression and sacrifice demanded to preserve the liberal capitalist order. The Skriker is also utilized as a nemesis character for nature's revenge and social deterioration, linking the economy of sacrifice to environmental destruction and social abandonment. The

"sacrifice zones" concept reveals how neoliberal capitalism structurally outsources environmental harm to specific people, groups, and geographical spaces that are considered disposable by society (Iles, 2019). This generalizes the hysteric's role to embody the interrelated sacrifices of humanity and Earth in neoliberalism.

To furnish additional insight, the hysteric subject performatively enacts the demand within liberalism for the perpetual aim of stable identity, social solidarity, and embodied well-being, a demand excessively accepted by marginalized constituencies. This sacrificial dynamic manifests across multiple registers: psychically, as fragmented subjectivity; socially, as precarity and disposability; and ecologically, as environmental degradation. Such manifestations reveal liberalism's structural dependence on processes of exclusion and negation as mechanisms for its own reproduction. The hysteric's symptomatic expression thereby functions as a locus of resistance and critical disclosure, subverting the apparently coherent narratives of liberal freedom and progress by rendering visible the repressed and sacrificed dimensions foundational to these ideological constructs.

To amplify the discussion, Caryl Churchill's representation of the hysteric subject in *The Skriker* intricately challenges the fluidity of selfhood through theatrical modality and characterization, thereby subverting essentialist identity constructions and accounting for the fragmented, liminal form of female subjectivity in postmodern socio-cultural reality. In addition, the hysterical subject is a locus of resistance and disruption. In Churchill's dramaturgy, the hysteric is not merely fragmented but actively resists containment within hegemonic symbolic orders. Such a reading situates hysteria not within the domain of pathology but as "an embodied index of forms of oppression" those marks "feminist reaction and resistance to the patriarchal oppression it indexed" (Albert, 2020). *The skriker's* fragmented, associative discourse, then, operates as a form of semiotic subversion, resisting actively the integration into conventional psychoanalytic or cultural frameworks and thereby enacting a refusal of fixed signification and stable subjectivity. Such performative resistance has an echo within feminist discussions addressing essentialist identity models, celebrating rather the performative, constructed nature of gender and subject formation.

The hysteric subject's fluid selfhood also occupies a liminal and marginal positionality, neither fully integrated within nor entirely excluded from dominant socio-structural formations. This state of in-betweenness renders the subject unclassifiable and inherently disruptive, challenging normative regimes predicated on categorical clarity and social regulation. Such liminality constitutes both a site of vulnerability and a potential wellspring of empowerment, as it destabilizes hegemonic narratives and engenders possibilities for alternative ontologies and modes of existence.

### Conclusion

This study situated Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker* as a profoundly theoretical and theatrical intervention, utilizing its mythic form to stage a radical critique of the liberal humanist subject. Through a conjunction of Luce Irigaray's philosophy of sensible transcendence, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, and a Lacanian psychoanalytic understanding of the hysteric subject, the play foregrounds the profound tensions in modern configurations of identity, gender, and power. The shape-shifting, monstrous body of the Skriker serves as the centerpiece for exploring how transcendence may be re-embodied in the flesh and how the demand for a fixed self is symptomatic of a poisonous economy of sacrifice informing neoliberal and patriarchal regimes.

A primary finding of this study is that *The Skriker* bodily embodies Irigaray's concept of sensible transcendence. The play powerfully demonstrates that transcendence is not an escape from the body but a process emergent through it. The Skriker's incessant shape-shifting across gender, age, and ontological categories subverts the stable terms of patriarchal symbolism. This "embodied flux" affirms a mode of being that finds its potency in multiplicity, intercorporeal permeability, and sensuous contact with alterity, thereby providing a model of subjectivity that actively resists disembodied, phallogocentric ideals.

Secondly, the drama brings to the fore the Lacanian hysteric subject in order to illuminate the psychic and social costs of the liberal order. The Skriker, through its fragmented speech and hungry demand for recognition, embodies the excess that would need to be repressed or sacrificed in this system in the interest of coherence. The hysteric's speech, therefore, is both a symptom of and an urgent resistance to this sacrificial logic.

Lastly, Churchill's dramaturgy achieves its most forceful critique in the tactical coordination of phenomenological and psychoanalytic paradigms of analysis. The play demonstrates that the lived body (Merleau-Ponty) and the symbolic order (Lacan) do not represent separate realms but are closely engaged with one another. Lily's struggle with perceptual faith and the border of dream and reality is shown to be inseparable from her position in a socio-symbolic economy that pathologizes her experience. This methodological synthesis illustrates that the path to a transformative, sensible transcendence must pass through a confrontation with the hystericized structures of desire and sacrifice that constitute the modern subject. In total, then, *The Skriker* is less a critique than it is a visionary work that, in its own form, gestures toward the possibility of an alternative subjectivity, one that opens up space for ambiguity, is populated by relationality, and begins to imagine a world beyond the sacrificial logic of the liberal individual.

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