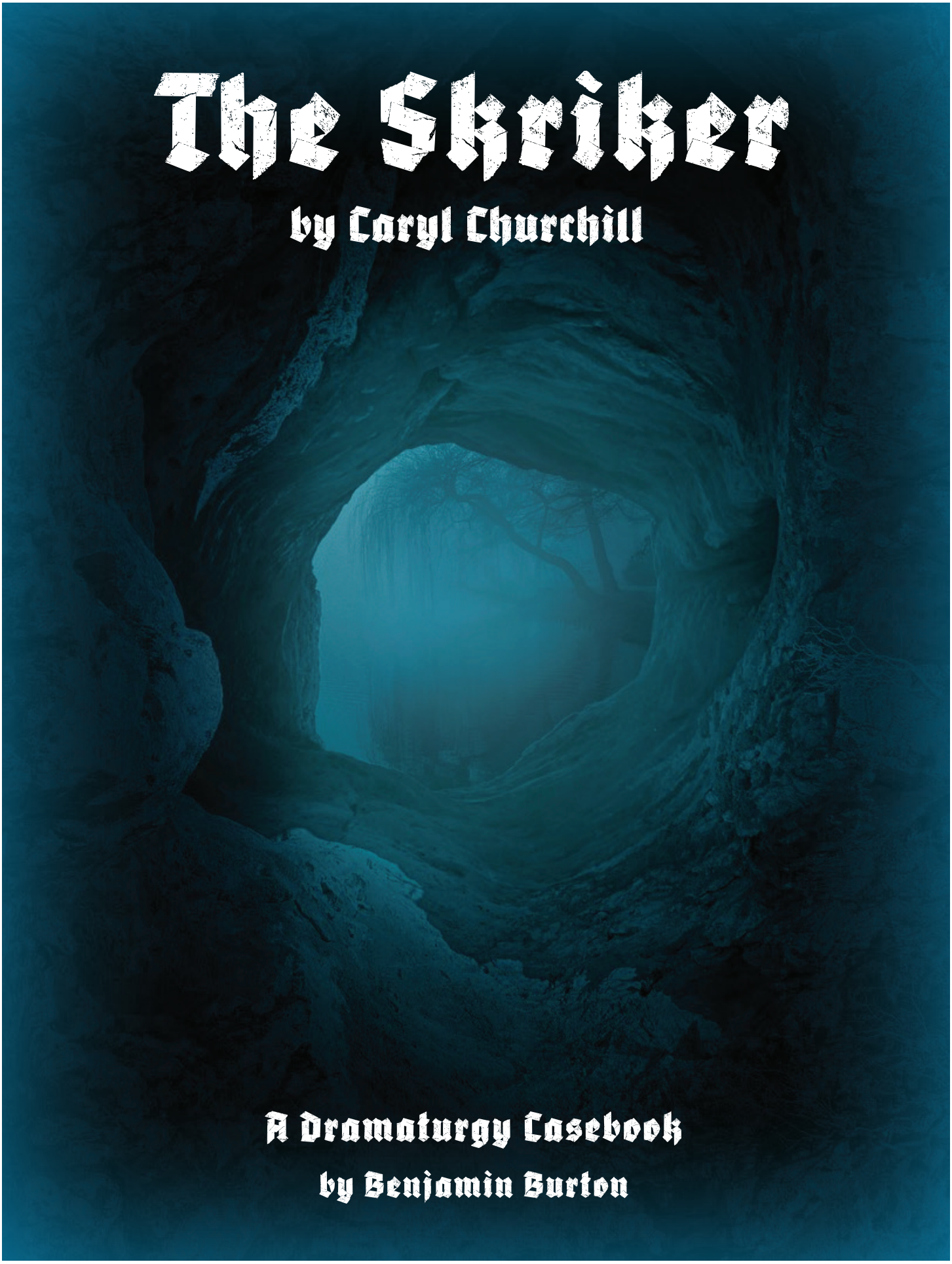
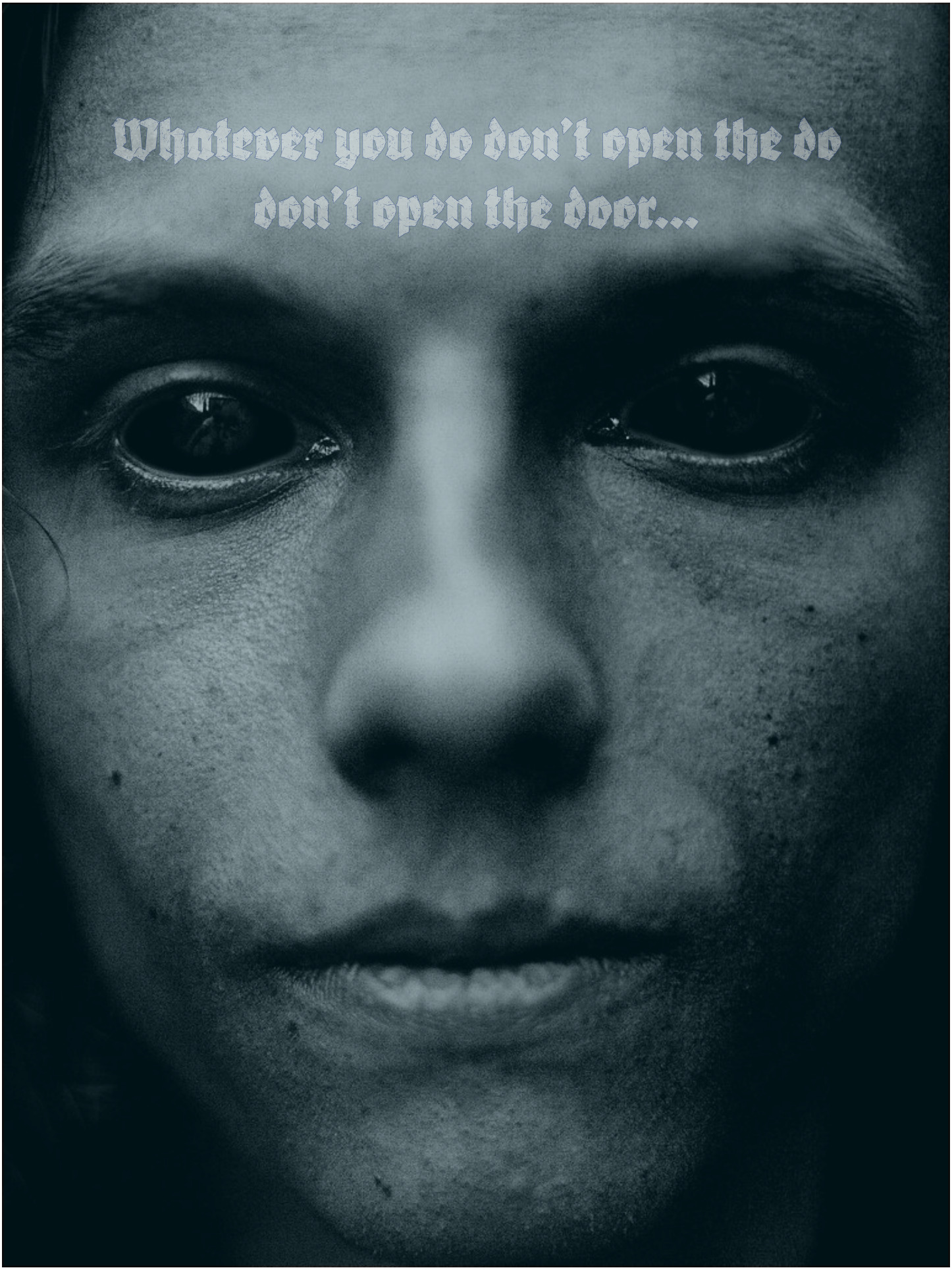
The Skriker

by Caryl Churchill



A Dramaturgy Casebook

by Benjamin Burton


Whatever you do don't open the do
don't open the door...

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Caryl Churchill

Introduction

Born in 1938 in London, England, Caryl Churchill has grown up to become one of the most revered playwrights of all time. At 81 years old, many of theatre's biggest names still call her our greatest living playwright, citing her "boundless imagination", her innovations in theatrical form, her mastery of language, and her connection to real-world politics.[1] Churchill is a formidable left-wing political activist, and her plays frequently push the boundaries of gender and sexual politics. Perhaps as significant as her politics, though, is her consistency in innovation. Churchill creates new forms and combinations of forms and then discards them, moving on to her next idea and carrying little to no baggage with her. In a 1989 interview, Churchill said, "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 in real time."[2] Her conceits are highly stylized, and her form varies as radically as her content from play to play. Perhaps the most telling characteristic of a Caryl Churchill play is that it's always a surprise what lies in store.

Churchill's earliest plays were written and produced in connection with students at Oxford University, where she received her BA. Most of Churchill's early professional works were scripts for radio dramas, which she could write from home while raising her children. These radio dramas had few technical limitations to hold back her imagination, and were likely precursors to her wildly unrealistic stage settings. After writing for radio, Churchill returned to writing for the theatre. Her first professional stage play, *Owners*, was written "in a three-day frenzy when Ms. Churchill had just come home from the hospital after 'a particularly gruesome late miscarriage.'"[3] She became the resident playwright with the Royal Court Theatre, through which she connected with Joint Stock and the feminist Monstrous Regiment - companies with whom she worked frequently throughout the '70s and '80s. Her notable work during this period includes *Cloud Nine* and *Fen*.[4]

Much like her sprawling theatrical worlds, Churchill's career is many-faceted and refuses linear form. However, *Top Girls* (1982) is her widest success, premiering in London and playing in New York City at The Public. *Top Girls* won her a second Obie Award (of four), and cemented her position as a leading feminist playwright in Western theatre.[5]

[1] Soloski, Alexis, "Who is the Greatest Living Playwright?" *The Village Voice*, November 2, 2011, accessed April 5, 2020, https://www.villagevoice.com/2011/11/02/who-is-the-greatest-living-playwright/.
[2] Lyall, Sarah, "The Mysteries of Caryl Churchill," *The New York Times*, December 5, 2004, accessed April 5, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/05/theater/newsandfeatures/the-mysteries-of-caryl-churchill.html.
[3] Lyall, "The Mysteries of Caryl Churchill."
[4] "Caryl Churchill," British Council - Literature, accessed April 5, 2020, https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/caryl-churchill.
[5] The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Caryl Churchill," Encyclopaedia Britannica, inc., August 30, 2019, accessed April 5, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Caryl-Churchill.

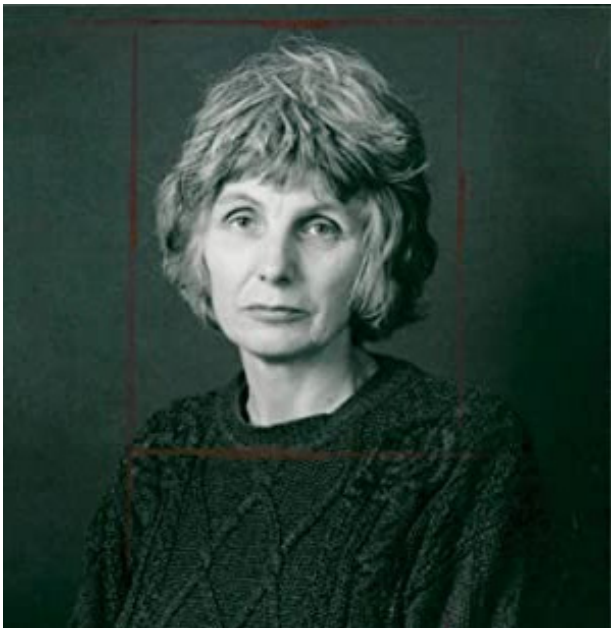
The Skriker was written in 1994 and is among the most linguistically audacious works in Churchill's repertory, and perhaps in the entire western canon. Recently, though, Churchill has deemphasized language as a primary dramatic device and focused more on embracing music, dance, and physicality. Her recent work is often shorter and minimalistic, apparent in her 2019 piece *Glass. Kill. Bluebeard. Imp.*, a quartet of short plays meant to be performed together.

Politics

Even as early as the 1960s, Churchill's writing explored gender and progressive politics, touching on gender, trans experience, mental illness, social inequity, and incarceration.[6] Her focus on the mutability of identity has maintained its relevance 60 years later in our current political conversation, making works like *Cloud Nine*, with its broadly theatrical role-reversals and sexual politics resonate far beyond their time. Much of Churchill's work is so broadly political it becomes hard to interpret singularly, resisting deconstruction and demanding the audience digest many layers simultaneously. Churchill's work is generally non-polemic in an unsatisfying way that brings the horrors of the world to light and provides no direct solutions for them. Sarah Ruhl has said that "[Churchill's] plays aren't confessional, they're not thesis-driven, they're not letters to the editor, so they're not opinion pieces. They have the austerity of a theatrical sculpture."[7]

Churchill is also a self-identified socialist, a political stance that is obvious in her work. Her first professionally staged play, *Owners*, portrays the greed and predation of landlords. In *Serious Money*, one of her most successful plays, Churchill "satirises the ferociously Bacchanalian behaviour of stockbrokers and City traders."[8] *Top Girls* also evokes socialist sentiment, questioning the "Thatcherite individualism that enabled Marlene's success" by contrasting it with under-educated laboring women left behind by Capitalist politics.[9] Although her socialism is perhaps less obvious in *The Skriker* than some of her other works, the titular character can be seen as a metaphor for capitalism itself, embodying many identities in its ravenous, bottomless consumption of the underprivileged. In *The Skriker*, Josie and Lily live in a world that has abandoned them (there's never a mention of their parents, families, or any kind of social support) and forces them to rely on their individuality alone in the fight against a world intent on consuming them.

[6]Dickson, Andrew, "Caryl Churchill's Prophetic Drama," *The New Yorker*, November 18, 2015, accessed April 5, 2020, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/caryl-churchills-prophetic-drama.



A vintage headshot of Caryl Churchill

[7]Dickson, "Caryl Churchill's Prophetic Drama."
[8]"Caryl Churchill," British Council - Literature.
[9]"Caryl Churchill," British Council - Literature.

Controversy

As one might expect, Churchill's work is hardly without controversy. Critics often call her work too opaque and her experimentation distracting. Her politics are also controversial, especially due to the brutality with which she presents the world in her plays, refusing to shy away from the darkest and most unsettling facets of human behavior. Perhaps most controversial is Churchill's play *Seven Jewish Children*, written from the perspective of Israeli adults debating what to tell their children about the Gaza conflict. It received several high-profile accusations of anti-semitism from people who felt it was an attack on Israel. Churchill made the script and rights for the 10-minute play available for free to anyone who wants to produce it, the only requirement being that a collection is taken up afterward for medical aid in Palestine.

Dramaturgy and Themes

"Churchill's dramaturgy is above all the staging of desire, and more particularly the desires of those members of society who are least able to realise them. These desires are sometimes erotic, they are almost always political. They are desires which social and political structures are unwilling to accommodate - the desires of the oppressed, and most often, of women."

-- Dr Peter Buse, 2003[10]

"Like many of her generation influenced by Brecht, Churchill eschews suspenseful plotting, favouring instead an episodic approach to storytelling. Her plays, then, tend to be constructed from many loosely connected scenes which do not necessarily 'join up' seamlessly with each other, but rather build up, through patterning, a general picture. In this way, Churchill's audiences are encouraged, in Brecht's words, to have their 'eyes on the course' and not 'on the finish.'"

-- Dr Peter Buse, 2003[11]

Other common themes in Churchill's plays include relationships (notable for either their presence or their absence) between children and their parents; separation and longing; and the mutability of identity. Churchill is also usually less concerned with portraying the fate of individuals than the fate of groups, choosing to focus broadly on the characters in her stories instead of crafting first person narratives.

[10]"Caryl Churchill," British Council - Literature.
[11]"Caryl Churchill," British Council - Literature.

Body of Professional Work[12]

2019 - Glass. Kill. Bluebeard. Imp.
2016 - Escaped Alone
2015 - Here We Go
2013 - Ding Dong the Wicked
2012 - Love and Information
2009 - Seven Jewish Children – a play for Gaza
2008 - Bliss/Olivier Choinire
2006 - Drunk Enough to say I Love You?
2005 - A Dream Play
2002 - A Number
2001 - Thyestes
2000 - Far Away
1999 - This Is A Chair
1998 - Plays 3
1997 - Hotel
1997 - Blue Heart
1994 - The Skriker
1993 - Lives of the Great Poisoners
1990 - Churchill: Shorts
1990 - Plays 2
1990 - Mad Forest: a Play from Romania
1989 - Ice Cream
1987 - Serious Money
1986 - A Mouthful of Birds
1985 - Plays 1
1985 - Plays by Women Volume 4
1984 - Softcops
1983 - Fen
1982 - Top Girls
1979 - Cloud Nine
1978 - Vinegar Tom
1978 - Traps
1978 - Light Shining in Buckinghamshire
1973 - Owners

[12]"Caryl Churchill," British Council - Literature.

Production History

1994 British Premiere: Royal National Theatre

The first production of *The Skriker* was directed by Les Waters and performed at the Cottesloe auditorium of the Royal National Theatre, London. Its first preview was on January 20th, 1994, and it opened on January 27th 1994.[1] The play seems to have been a critical success, with critics specifically praising Churchill's originality and voice. The power of language in the play is specifically addressed in critiques: "Churchill imagines the Skriker as a monster of eloquence whose voice controls the play. [...] The phenomenal Kathryn Hunter, [...] delivers these tatters and torrents of text as a mixture of incantation and subconscious jazz riff, half possessed by the language and half possessing it."[2]. There is also an emphasis on the themes of motherhood and childbearing in a world that abandons women such as Josie and Lily. In his only negative remark, Erik Remshardt says that while the plots and actions of the background fairies give the play its depth, "they also pull focus from some scenes."[3] Finally, much emphasis seems to have been given in this original production to the music and choreography of the piece. Remshardt says that "Director Les Waters and choreographer Ian Spink have orchestrated the play to Judith Weir's haunted music rather than simply staged it," and describes the fairy feast scene as both a "cocktail party" and an "opera."[4]

[1]"*The Skriker* Original Production Information," TheatreDatabase.com, accessed May 4, 2020. https://www.theatredatabase.com/c/the_skriker.html.
[2]Remshardt, Ralf Erik, "*The Skriker* Performance Review," Theatre Journal 47, no. 1 (1995): 121-23, accessed May 4, 2020, doi:10.2307/3208809.
[3]Remshardt, Ralf Erik, "*The Skriker* Performance Review."
[4]Remshardt, Ralf Erik, "*The Skriker* Performance Review."

Spinning a strange fable . . . Kathryn Hunter as the Skriker

PHOTOGRAPH: HUGO GLENDINNING

The Skriker may look arresting, but what does it mean, asks MICHAEL BILLINGTON

Lost on a magic roundabout

NO, IT'S not — as newspapers have been suggesting all week — The Striker, which might be a play about Gary Lineker or the trade unions. Caryl Churchill's new work at the Cottesloe is The Skriker: an ancient word for "a shape-shifter and death portent". Like Shakespeare, the Brothers Grimm and J M Barrie before her, Churchill poses a world in which fairies and mortals consingle but, while it makes for eye-arresting theatre, I still found the play strangely opaque.

We first see the Skriker — the protean Kathryn Hunter — looking like some squat, hairy insect and plotting revenge for ancient wrongs in a dense, pun-packed Joycean prose. Cut to a mental hospital where inmate Josie, who seems to have killed her own child, is being visited by the pregnant Lily. And when the two young women flee to London they are ardently pursued by the shape-shifting fairy who turns up in various guises as American tourist, derelict hag, street urchin, ball-gowned queen and treasured, male wooer. Whisking Josie to the underworld and claiming the maternal Lily's love, she oscillates between evil spirit and fairy godmother; but incapable she remains a potent symbol of death.

My puzzlement stems from not knowing quite what the story signifies. Is Churchill spinning a fable about the strange otherness of the world around us, warning us about the danger of fulfilled dreams and desires, or reminding us that we are all born astride a grave? In the most potent speech in the play — because it touches on a common human fear — the Skriker even becomes an eco-prophet of doom forsseeing the death of the planet. As she says, "It was always possible to think that whatever your personal problem, there's always nature." Not, however, in a world of seasonal disturbance and apocalyptic meteorological phenomena. But in a classic fairy tale a simple story naturally gives rise to multiple meanings: here you have to impose the meanings on the story just to make sense of it.

What you do get, however, is a piece of skilful theatrical magic. Les Waters's production, Ian Spink's movement, Annie Smart's design and Judith Weir's music all create a world in which the co-existence of mortal and immortals seems perfectly natural. Toads, at one point, tumble out of Josie's mouth. A fairy hangs from the ceiling and the Skriker pops up through the sofa as the two women talk. And, as Lily casually kicks off her shoe, it is suddenly replaced downstage by a giant-size specimen in which sprites and goblins cluster.

Playing Lepage-like tricks with scale, the production has a free-floating supernatural. And, at the centre of it, there is Hunter's prodigious chameleon skill. Sandy McDade's spiky intensity as Josie, and Jacqueline Defferary's maternal protectiveness as Lily. As a theatrical experience, it is full of kaleidoscopic magic, but what I miss in the writing is that element of naivety that is common to all great folk-tales.

In rep at the Cottesloe. Box-office 071-928 2252

A clipping from *The Guardian*'s review of the Royal Theatre production of *The Skriker* in 1994.

A production photo from the 1996 production of *The Skriker* at The Public Theatre.

1996 American Premiere - The Public Theatre

The American premiere of *The Skriker* was produced at The Public Theatre and directed by Mark Wing-Davey, who had previously collaborated with Churchill as director of the 1992 production of *Mad Forest*.[5] This production was, according to *New York Times* critic Ben Brantley, absolutely terrifying. He focuses much of his praise-filled review on the feeling of horror the play inspired through its depictions of a corrupted underbelly to everyday life. Brantley calls it "her most unsettling indictment yet of an incurably diseased world. While it is also her most densely cerebral, difficult work, its enveloping chill isn't just intellectual,"[6] and presses on to assert that "the play's most disturbing element lies in its presenting itself not as a hallucination but as a slice of an everyday reality, bleeding at the edges."[7]

An interesting difference between this version of the play and the one produced two years earlier in Britain is descriptions of how the actor playing the Skriker handles the complex language. While Remschardt describes it in the British production as "half incantation, half jazz riff," Brantley provides a very different picture of how the Skriker speaks in the Public Theatre production: "In [Jayne] Atkinson's superb interpretation, [...] the Skriker seems to be choking on and vomiting words."[8] Brantley does describe *The Skriker* as an "unwieldy work," specifically because of all the technical stagecraft and the obscurity of much of the script, but he has almost exclusively glowing things to say about it: the script, the direction, the actors' performances, and the design of the production were all brilliantly executed, according to his review.

Jeremy Gerard reviewed this production of *The Skriker* for *Variety* magazine, as well, and provides many of the same thoughts as Ben Brantley: the production is astonishing and phenomenally executed, and Gerard even calls its run "shockingly brief." Gerard also gives an interesting look into how an audience should best experience to the convoluted language of the Skriker: "Try to parse it and you're lost; let it wash over you however, and you will be drawn inexorably into a world that turns every notion of home, safety and comfort inside out."[9]

[5]Gerard, Jeremy, "*The Skriker*" *Variety* (May, 1996), accessed May 4, 2020, https://variety.com/1996/film/reviews/the-skriker-1200445812/.

[6]Brantley, Ben, "THEATER REVIEW; A Land of Fairy Tales Creepily Come True," *The New York Times* (May 16, 1996) Section C: Page 15, accessed May 04, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/16/theater/theater-review-a-land-of-fairy-tales-creepily-come-true.html.
[7]Brantley, Ben, "A Land of Fairy Tales Creepily Come True."
[8]Brantley, Ben, "A Land of Fairy Tales Creepily Come True."
[9]Gerard, Jeremy, "*The Skriker*."

2015 Manchester International Festival: Royal Exchange

One of the most striking features of the Royal Exchange production of *The Skriker*, according to several reviewers, is the fact that it was staged with audience members sitting at "rough wooden tables amid the duskily lit action,"[10] "which the actors use in lieu of a stage."[11] Charlie Bennett's review for *Aesthetica* magazine explores the implications of this choice, noting that "the distinctions between the play's two realities – of our world, and of the Skriker's netherworld – are rarely clear."[12] Reviews from both *The Guardian* and *Aesthetica* speak of the central moment of the play - the fairy feast in the underworld - as the true centerpiece of this production (which makes sense, as it seems to have been designed and staged using that particular scene as a focal point). Bennett said the banquet scene was "made even more enthralling when audience members are removed from their seats beforehand, as they are only inches away from the tumult." Both *The Guardian* and *Aesthetica* agree on the great success of the production, and also emphasize the political themes of the piece (which were apparently recurring themes for its director).

Of particular note is that Bennet describes the opening monologue of this production as an "eight-minute opening segment," which differs wildly from the "dense, 20-minute monologue" Jeremy Gerard describes occuring in the 1996 Public Theatre production. This drastic difference in length could be due to differences in the lead actors' performance paces, but it's more likely the result of fundamentally differing staging approaches. It should be noted that the production Churchill was involved with (the 1996 Public Theatre production) was the one that employed the longer, 20-minute version.

Production photos from the 2015 production of *The Skriker* by the Royal Exchange Theatre at the Manchester International Festival

[10]Clapp, Susannah, "The Skriker review – extraordinarily prescient," The Guardian, (July 12, 2015), accessed May 4, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/jul/12/skriker-review-extaordinarily-prescient-caryl-churchill-maxine-peake.
[11]Bennett, Charlie, "Review: The Skriker at Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester International Festival," *Aesthetica Magazine,* (July 9, 2015), accessed May 4, 2020, https://aestheticamagazine.com/review-skriker-royal-exchange-theatre-manchester-international-festival/.
[12]Bennett, Charlie, "Review: *The Skriker*."

Analysis and Conclusion

Review of past productions provide fairly good guidelines on what parts of a show typically work well, as well as troublesome elements to look out for. *The Skriker* has gotten consistently positive reviews about the environments created in past productions. Mood and tone are effectively and successfully conveyed by the background folklore creatures, altough they can sometimes draw attention from the main plot (whether this is a good or bad thing might depend on the director you ask; Churchill herself seemed to think that the "main" plot might not always be the most important one).

We also get a sense from these reviews that the show seems to be almost reinvented with each new production. In one version, the opening monologue lasted 8 minutes; in another, it lasted a whopping 20. The choices directors and actors make about focus and tempo are some of the most significant ones for this script. There are few "right" answers passed on to us from either Churchill or others who have mounted this script, and even the two productions Churchill was directly involved with were wildly different from each other. Therefore, experiment boldly: you're in good company.

A production photo from the 1996 production of *The Skriker* at The Public Theatre.

Dramatic Analysis

The World of the Play[1]

What is space like on this planet?

The space of the "real world" (referred to as the Upperworld, hereafter) on this planet is mainly indoors, with a few outdoor moments - however, the space always feels urban. There are many confined spaces, like the mental health ward, Lily's apartment, and the hotel room. These are interspersed and connected by wider, less confined transition spaces - namely the city street, the park, and the beach. The landscape consists more of buildings, concrete, and asphalt than mountains and trees; there's little of nature as a refreshing presence, and more of the unyielding oppression of industry and city life. The space feels limited, even when it is expansive, as no one has ever had the thought to venture very far away from the city.

The space of the Underworld on this planet is less urban, and has a much more obvious presence of nature; sticks, twigs, leaves, and beetles all break through the glamour in odd places. It feels like a poorly patched drywall concealing the rotting jungle hovering behind the seams of the city. It is an ancient space, suspended away from all other space, connected by a very few bridges to the Upperworld (metaphorically speaking). It is large, but impossibly confined; even when there is space, it has absolute edges and goes no further.

How does time behave on this planet?

Time moves in two timelines on this planet: that of the Underworld and that of the Upperworld, and they do not have a consistent relationship with each other. A lifetime in the Underworld can be no more than a split second in the upper world, or it can equal several lifetimes in the Upperworld.

The time of the Upperworld moves at a moderate pace, and slowly skips more and more time with each step, moving forward in blocks of weeks, then months, then years at a time. It seems to leap forward, and then still pick up right where it left off. Time seems to be marked by generations, and centered around it as well; by pregnancy, birth, growth, and death. It is linear time, slowly slogging toward an end we never get to see, measuring one lifetime before the world burns itself out with its own industry.

The time of the Underworld speeds in enormous leaps and bounds to an observer, but moves at a torturously slow pace - if at all - for those experiencing it. Time is marked in hunger and desire - what one needs or aches for is the only thing that

[1]The analysis here is derived from the questions posed in Elinor Fuch's article "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask A Play," cited below. Throughout the analysis, the dramatic reality of *The Skriker* is referred to as a "planet" or a "world," in keeping with Fuch's syntax.

Fuchs, Elinor. "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play." Theater 1 May 2004. 34 (2): 5–9. doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/01610775-34-2-5

passes the time, which is why it's so hard to tell if it moves at all. The Underworld's time is Eternal, and yet still moving toward eventual doom. It is the time of the fey, of the spirits, of the supernatural, and we see only small droplets of its ocean.

What is climate like on this planet?

The climate of the Upperworld is temperate. It's warm enough to go to the park or the beach, and there are no significant storms or extreme weather. The environment is somewhat stale and stagnant, doing little to interfere with the host of characters weaving their way through it.

The climate of the Underworld is cool and dark. Many of its creatures interact frequently with water, and the environment is probably damp and cloying. There's a sense of being deep underground or in a thick forest - lichen, moss, and decomposition creep through the world. There are no storms, and one could question if there is even a sky.

What is the mood on this planet?

The mood of the Upperworld is mysterious and foreboding, and the tone is unsettling and strained. The mood and tone in the Upperworld is mostly created through the actions and presence of the background mythological creatures and characters. The mood is also affected by the Upperworld's lack of awareness about the Underworld, creating the tense sense of danger that runs underneath the rest of its qualities.

The mood of the Underworld is dark and celebratory, and the tone is ominous and discordant. The tone of this planet is created primarily through music and language. The gaiety of the celebration scene conflicts with the dark words and message to create the unique tone and mood of the Underworld. The twisted, dark, fractured language of the Skriker in the opening monologue also sets the mood and tone of both the Underworld and the Upperworld.

Are there hidden or unseen spaces?

The main "hidden" spaces of this planet alternate with each other: the Upperworld and Underworld, each hidden when the other is revealed. The characteristics and interactions between them are explored in the other categories, with the exception of the idea that the Skriker and mythological creatures as bridges between the two, and are what brings the foreboding and dark atmosphere to the planet.

What are the characteristics of sound of this planet?

The sounds of the Upperworld are the sounds of the city, the background noise of the mythological creatures (or their silence), and the sounds of a baby. The sounds alternate between sounds of human and landscape, and conspicuous silence.

The sounds of the Underworld are raucous and celebratory. It is music and singing and chanting, sounding bright and ominous at the same time. It is the sound of fairies and spirits and memories and the ethereal and supernatural. There is also the sound of the shrieking and screaming in the transition between the two worlds. The sounds here alternate between human sounds and landscape sounds, as well as supernatural or unplaceable sounds.

The Social World of the Play

Is this a public world, or a private?

This is a private world full of voyeurs. There is little interaction between strangers or the public and the main characters, but there is always someone or something else present.

What are its class rules?

The class rules of the planet seem to be modern capitalist rules with a twist. There is a hierarchy of wealth, but it is not aristocratic nor sharply delineated, and the characters seem to move about and exist with relative freedom.

Even the interactions between fairies and humans seems to be fairly mixed, without a clear hierarchy. The humans have things like dreams, memories, and definite timelines that the fairies envy and seek, while the fairies have things like magic and power that the humans desire.

In what kinds of patterns do individuals arrange themselves on this planet?

Small groups and isolated individuals are both common on this planet. Most humans are accompanied, but many of the mythological and fairy creatures exist individually and have brief, if any, interaction with others.

The central figure of the Skriker is surrounded by Lily and Josie and Lily's baby, and then in another, outer ring, they are all surrounded by the many supernatural creatures of the play.

The tension of interlocking triangles and competitive pairs is almost always present in some combination between Lily, Josie, and the Skriker. It is always two against three or all against each other, and the shifting between these alliances drives most of their interactions.

How do figures appear on this planet?

Main characters on this planet are very verbal and expressive of their feelings and intentions, while background figures are extremely inward and often defined by only one or two characteristics, even if they appear in much of the play.

The characters are exaggerated and starkly individual. Many of the background characters appear as caricatures and stereotypes, defined entirely by a single action or situation. Lily and Josie behave almost like siblings, perpetually bickering and arguing yet fiercely protective of each other. The Skriker behaves like a dictator and an animal, unrelenting in its goals and amorally Macchiavellian.

How do figures dress on this planet?

Figures on this planet dress in symbolic and representative costumes. The Skriker dresses in many, many guises, each of which belies a facet of the personality and demeanor of that form of the Skriker. Many of the mythological creatures are defined by their costume, especially because of the theatrical transformation required of the actors playing them.

The human figures dress in a fashion similar to 1990s fashion, but with distinction; these characters must have significance to have attracted the Skriker, and their significance should be echoed in their clothing. However, their fashion must be heavily grounded in reality to allow the fairy costumes to float in the ethereal and otherworldly.

How do figures interact?

The main figures interact by fighting. The Skriker, Lily, and Josie are all confrontational and fight to get what they want, whether through words, tricks, threats or violence. The background figures interact mostly through touch whether it be aggressive and confrontational or loving and sweet.

Who has power on this planet?

On this planet, everyone with answers has power, and it is exercised over those who seek their answers. The Skriker is seeking information about how the Upperworld works, and is under the power of Lily and Josie, explaining how televisions work and providing memories.

Lily and Josie want to know how the fairy world works, what the Underworld's power is, and how to be free of the psychosis and neurosis it incites. The Skriker holds this power, and exercises it over the girls to get what she wants.

This power is imbalanced in the Skriker's favor due to her mysterious past and thousands of years of experience and observation. It is exercised over the girls in an attempt to gain answers about how to survive in a changing world and whether the ordeals of a polluted, corrupted Upperworld.

What are the language habits on this planet?

The language on this planet is both verse and prose, monologue and dialogue.

The language of the Underworld is full of Lacanthian logic, disconnected symbology and blended metaphor. It is primarily in monologue form, and is deviously twisted and tortured, yet effortlessly harmonious and free-flowing. Memory and feeling dominate over thought and reason, and language is often narrative and many-dimensional.

The language of the Upperworld is sharper, more clipped, grounded in dialogue. It is less metaphorical and far more logical, literal, and rational. It is less grammatically sound, and more natural. The language is far less colorful than that of the Underworld, and far more deliberate and immediate.

What Changes?

What changes in this world?

The first image of the play is of the damaged Skriker, weaving her history into a linguistic tapestry of need, hunger, confusion, and pain.

The last image of the play is of the Skriker tricking Lily through time, at last bringing her back to meet her granddaughter and great-great granddaughter, and to crumble to dust after accepting the food they offer her.

A striking image near the center of the play is Josie's trip to the Underworld and the mystical, magical celebration feast that she sees.

It is essential to undergo the trip to the Underworld to get to the last moment of the play because the Upperworld and Underworld have to be linked. Josie has to come back telling Lily of what happened to her to make Lily believe Josie understood how the Under- and Upperworlds interact, which lets Lily think she can survive going with the Skriker to the Underworld.

What changes in the landscape of this world?

The landscape of this world moves between interior rooms, parks and beaches to the dark, gloomy underworld. It moves from climate-controlled and urban to natural and organic.

The landscape moves back and forth between the Upperworld and Underworld. It settles in the Upperworld through the lens of the Underworld (the Skriker's story of what happened), and it begins in the Underworld through our lens of the Upperworld (our initial view of the Underworld is through our lens of the Upperworld that is yet to be shaken off by immersion in the play.)

What changes in time?

The play moves from the timelessness of the Skriker in the Underworld to a "recent past" of the 1990s in the Upperworld, to a distant future in the Upperworld where the world has crumbled and the youth has inherited the weight and sins of their ancestors.

The play moves through the stages of a human life - Lily's baby. It begins when Lily's baby is still forming in the womb, tracks the baby's birth, and ends with the connection of the baby's mother and the baby's daughter.

What changes in language?

The language changes from the fluid Lacanian logic of the prologue in the Underworld, to the structured and dialectic language of the Upperworld, and then back into the timeless, slippery language of the Underworld.

What changes in the action?

We have moved from birth to death in the Upperworld; from pregnancy to dust. We have also moved from threat to dual outcome - vindication and suffering. The traditional structure of the melodrama is inverted, though, leaving the evil (or at least inhuman) with vindication and the good (or at least human) with the suffering.

What doesn't change?

The stable, fixed point in this world is the Underworld; it merely continues, as do its inhabitants. It flickers and shifts, but still remains. The cycle of hunger, satiation, and hunger again also remains.

Is the world at the end of the play a transformed world, or has it returned to "normal" with only minor changes?

The world at the end has returned to "normal" with only minor changes. Lily's life is completely changed, and over. So is Josie's. But the world of the play is that of the Skriker, and the Skriker simply endures. She is momentarily sated, but will soon be hungry again.

Don't Forget Yourself

What has this world demanded of me?

This world has asked me for fear, judgment, and existential dread. It asks me for reason in the face of madness and acceptance in the face of the inevitable.

How does it make this intention known?

The mood and tone of the world make the fear and dread known. The reason in the face of madness and acceptance in the face of the inevitable are made known from the opening monologue. Madness is propelling the Skriker, and its stories are all the same - cyclical stories of greed and violence and momentary triumphs and failures, only to begin again. By revealing the cycle to us before submerging us, it makes known that we are not in control and can only accept what we are about to experience - both within the play and without.

Theatrical Mirrors

-

How many performances are signaling to you from outside this world?

Many, many performances signal to me from outside this world. The presence of so much English folklore alone signifies the incredibly intersectional and layered mythology and referential nature of this world.

There is infinite confinement and infinite expansion, and the conflict of inevitability with action that echoes Beckett; there are assaults on the senses and violent retaliations against (subjectively) false realities that echo Artaud; and there is metatheatricality, didacticism, and overt political thought that echoes Brecht.

How do these additional layers of theatricality comment on what you have already discovered?

These layers take traditional storytelling (the mythological creatures and stories) and combine them with the dread, despair, and nihilism of the modern world, weaving both the past and future through this story of the present. The vibrant mythology of the past, and the existential dread of the crumbling world-to-come land squarely on the shoulders of two very average women.

The Skriker is about our deteriorating world taking its revenge on us, and the small act of defending our own against the ravages of nature. In the end, it is a surrender to time and nature that bellows in rage and crumbles to dust.

Postpartum Mental Illness

Overview

Postpartum mental illness is a common occurrence where people who have recently given birth experience new or intensified mental illness. Over half of people who give birth report mild mood changes after having a baby, but these mood changes usually resolve on their own within two weeks. Between 10-20% of people who give birth experience postpartum depression, which lasts longer than two weeks and causes symptoms such as "low mood, sleep and appetite changes, fatigue, hopelessness, concentration problems, and anxiety, among others."[1] Depression is not the only mental illness that can be caused by changing hormones and chemicals after giving birth, and postpartum obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety, and exacerbation of other mental illnesses also occur.

Postpartum Psychosis

Postpartum psychosis is more serious than other postpartum mental illnesses, and occurs in about 1 in every 1000 people who give birth; postpartum psychosis is a medical emergency, and most people who experience it require hospitalization. Its cause is not known, but several biological and genetic factors are likely to contribute to susceptibility.[2]

The presentation of postpartum psychosis is often extreme, with symptoms developing as early as the first 48 to 72 hours after delivery. The majority of women with postpartum psychosis develop their symptoms within the first two postpartum weeks.[3]

In most cases, postpartum psychosis represents an episode of bipolar illness; "women with this disorder exhibit a rapidly shifting depressed or elated mood, disorientation or confusion, and erratic or disorganized behavior. **Delusional beliefs are common and often center on the infant. Auditory hallucinations that instruct the mother to harm herself or her infant may also occur. Risk for infanticide, as well as suicide, is significant in this population**."[4] However, not all postpartum psychosis leads to physical harm of the infant or the mother, as "medical researchers estimate that untreated postpartum psychosis leads to an estimated 4 percent risk of infanticide, and a 5 percent risk of suicide."[5]

[1]"What is Postpartum Psychosis?" Massachusetts General Hospital Postpartum Psychosis Project (MGHP3), accessed May 4, 2020, https://www.mghp3.org/.

[2]"About Postpartum Psychosis," Massachusetts General Hospital Postpartum Psychosis Project (MGHP3), accessed May 4, 2020, https://www.mghp3.org/about-postpartum-psychosis.

[3]"Postpartum Psychosis," Massachusetts General Hospital Center for Women's Mental Health (MGHCWMH), accessed May 4, 2020, https://womensmentalhealth.org/specialty-clinics/postpartum-psychiatric-disorders/.

[4]"Postpartum Psychosis," MGHCWMH. Emphasis added.

[5]Le Beau Lucchesi, Emilie, "When Giving Birth Leads to Psychosis, Then to Infanticide," The Atlantic, accessed May 4, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/09/postpartum-psychosis- infanticide-when-mothers-kill-their-children/569386/. Emphasis added.

There are also success stories of rehabilitation for women who commit infanticide in postpartum psychotic episodes. In 1923, Catherine Zalis killed her youngest daughter (of three) in a psychotic episode, and was sentenced to an asylum in Illinois. After two years of treatment--possibly including electroshock therapy--she was released, and went on to live an industrious life raising her two remaining daughters, working in a cannery, and managing her family's 80-acre farm. She died at the age of 86, well-loved by her family and friends.[6]

Josie's Postpartum Psychosis in *The Skriker*

In *The Skriker*, we learn almost immediately that Josie has murdered her ten-day-old infant, and has been admitted to a mental institution for recovery. It later comes out, after Lily wishes that Josie wasn't mad during their discussion of changelings and wishes, that Josie was terrified of something when she killed her baby, and she thinks she should have been the one to die instead. Josie says, "Don't let me feel it. It's coming for me. Hide me. This is what. What I killed her. What I was frightened. Trying to stop when I. It's here."[7] We can infer from this that Josie felt the presence of The Skriker or some other malevolent fairy energy or paranoia when she was driven to kill her child.

Whether this was true psychosis on Josie's part, or whether in the world of this play The Skriker personifies that psychosis is a question of interpretation. When we consider the characteristics of The Skriker discussed in the Mythology and Folklore section of this casebook, we see that "the play positions the Skriker as a Fury, a spirit of revenge brought into being by an act of violence, especially against a blood relative."[8] This would imply that the Skriker was not brought into Josie's life until this act of violence was committed (and, indeed, Josie only talks about recognizing The Skriker as an otherworldly creature in the Mental Health facility, after her infant's death). My inclination, then, is that Josie is not referring to the Skriker itself as the source of her paranoia, but the utterly terrifying feeling that something dark and powerful was coming for her.

Josie's treatment in the mental health facility aligns very closely with the way most postpartum psychosis-driven infanticide is treated in the United Kingdom (both in today's world and in the world of the 1990s). A profile about infanticide in *The Atlantic* in 2018 states:

> The United Kingdom's Infanticide Act of 1938 [...] limits the charge against a postpartum mother to manslaughter if the killing occurred while the mother's mind 'was disturbed by reason of her not having fully recovered from the effect of giving birth to the child.' In such a situation, a manslaughter charge could lead to life in prison. **But in the past few decades almost all UK women convicted of infanticide are given hospital orders, probation, or supervision.**[9]

The only unique part of Josie's experience with the justice system post-incident is her lack of probation and supervision after getting out of the mental health facility (probably because Lily wished her

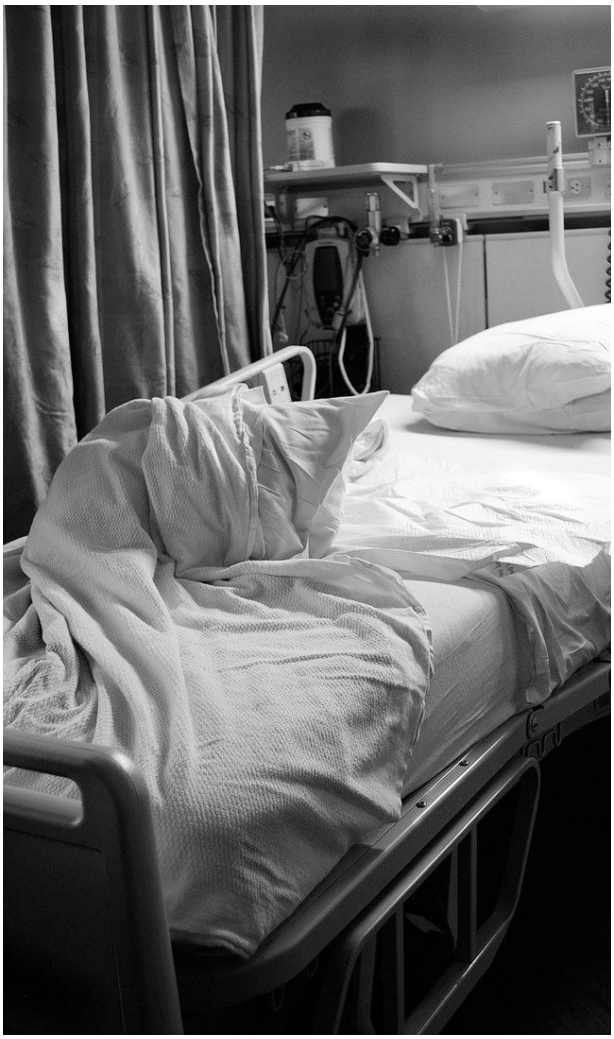
[6]Le Beau Lucchesi, Emilie, "When Giving Birth Leads to Psychosis, Then to Infanticide."
[7]Churchill, Caryl, *The Skriker*, Theatre Communications Group, Inc, 1994, page 40.
[8]Howe Kritzer, Amelia, "Damaged Myth in Caryl Churchill's The Skriker," *Dramatic Revisions of Myths, Fairy Tales, and Legends*, accessed April 23, pp 114.
[9]Le Beau Lucchesi, Emilie, "When Giving Birth Leads to Psychosis, Then to Infanticide."

out using The Skriker).

Another notable aspect of the prosecution of infanticide is that "for women with postpartum psychosis, the specifics of [...] definitions can lead to convictions. Windows of lucidity can be interpreted later in court as sanity and used to demonstrate premeditation."[10] This information doesn't relate directly to any prosecution Josie undergoes in *The Skriker*, as that aspect of her journey is never depicted on stage, but it does give us an interesting concept to explore with this script--windows of lucidity that can be interpreted as sanity. The ebb and flow of the Skriker as innocuous bystander vs. the Skriker as malevolent otherworldly entity throughout the script could potentially be read as a theatrical manifestation of postpartum psychosis. This raises three possible scenarios of reality in *The Skriker*:

1. The folkloric realm in *The Skriker* is "real" and is simply revealed to the girls because of Josie's psychosis;
2. The folkloric realm is entirely a figment of Josie and (later) Lily's psychoses, and doesn't actually exist (I'm unconvinced by this theory); or
3. The folkloric realm is real and postpartum psychosis doesn't exist in this world; rather, postpartum psychosis is simply the way the rest of humankind explains the seemingly psychotic actions of the women who gain the ability to see the folkloric world after childbirth.

Of these options, I am inclined to subscribe to the first. I think there is the possibility of some success in an interpretation that buys into the third option, but it would seem to invalidate the very real mental illness of many women, and that's uncharacteristic of Churchill. I'm uninterested by the second option from a dramatic perspective (I think it would destroy the urgency and importance of the story), but it can be supported logically, so I included it here.



[10]Le Beau Lucchesi, Emilie, "When Giving Birth Leads to Psychosis, Then to Infanticide."

Folklore and Mythology

Introduction

Folklore and mythology is everywhere in *The Skriker*. You would be hard pressed to find a single page of the script that doesn't contain references to two or three different folklore creatures and stories. Not only are the references prevalent, but they are often very specific and niche. To top the whole cake off with a cherry is the fact that these stories are almost exclusively pulled from British folklore, and American artists and audiences have little to no exposure to many of the stories in question. In the section that follows, I have done my best to break down references to folklore and mythology stories present in the script, as well as provide my own analysis as to their significance to the story and its themes. Keep in mind that there are often many versions of each story and creature that exist in these stories, since much of folklore has been passed down by oral tradition; therefore, different sources could provide you with slightly different information than what you find here. That doesn't invalidate these stories (or the versions not represented here), it merely speaks to the beautiful variety of British tradition and the very tricky nature of trying to pinpoint definite identity - which is itself a motif present in *The Skriker*.

Apart from the academic enlightenment of a creative team, I hope directors, designers, and actors could use this information to inform their physicality, backstories, character choices, and the choices they would make about the multitude of silent stories occurring in the background of the main, verbal plot. These stories and descriptions provide insight into tone, mood, ambiance, and themes of *The Skriker*, but they also provide specificity of terms for various creatures' physical and spiritual qualities.

Folklore Story References

"The Kind and the Unkind Girl"

The story of "The Kind and the Unkind Girl" actually refers to any of several fairytales; the one in question here is known as "The Fairies (Toads and Diamonds)" in the original French version as written by Charles Perrault. In the story, there is a widow who had two girls. The eldest looked like the widow and had a surly, disagreeable personality; the youngest looked like her father, and was kind, sweet, and beautiful. The widow hated her youngest daughter, and forced her to do many chores, including drawing water from a well far from the house. One day on her way back from drawing water, an old beggar woman stopped the young girl and asked for a drink. The girl happily obliged, and the old woman transformed out of her disguise into a Fairy. The Fairy blessed the young

girl so that every time she spoke, diamonds, flowers, and precious things fell from her mouth. When the young girl returned home, the widow sent the older daughter to the well to get the same blessing. However, when the older daughter arrived, a princess was waiting for her. When the princess asked for a drink, the older daughter rudely refused her. The princess transformed into the same Fairy as before, and cursed the older daughter so that every time she spoke, vipers and toads fell from her mouth. The younger daughter went on to marry the prince of the land, and the older daughter became so despised that even her own mother turned her away, and she wandered alone until she died.

This story bears strong resemblance to that of the Green Lady described in the following section. It also provides the source for the Skriker's curse on Josie and blessing on Lily. This could give us a clue as to the kinds of girls Lily and Josie were based upon - one kind and trusting and pure, the other distrustful, rude, and protective. Additionally, the girls in Perrault's story were named Fanny and Rose[1] - names which parallel Josie (in rhyme) and Lily (in flower symbology) respectively. The twist in this story is that the Fairy involved here is the Skriker, and is not benevolent like the Fairy in Perrault's story, muddling the moral and complicating the relationships and interactions.[2]

"Tom Tit Tot" / "Rumpelstiltskin"

"Tom Tit Tot" is the English version of a fairy tale analogous to the Grimms' fairy tale of "Rumpelstiltskin." In the English story, a girl is taken by the king upon her mother's boasting that she can spin flax into gold, and locked in a room until she can spin all the flax inside into gold. Depending on the version of the story, Tom Tit Tot is variously described as "a small little thing with a long tale"

[1]"Diamonds and Toads," Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, April 3, 2020, accessed April 23, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diamonds_and_Toads.
[2]Lang, Andrew, ed, *The Blue Fairy Book*, New York: Dover, 1965, (Original published 1889) accessed April 23, 2020, http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/authors/perrault/fairies.html.

and a "green imp." Regardless, the creature arrives and tells her he will spin all the flax into gold for her. In trade for his labor, he will carry her off with him at the end of the month unless she can guess his name. By chance, he is overheard boasting "Nimi-ny niminy not, my name's Tom Tit Tot," so the girl guesses his name correctly and the imp disappears.

This story is one of the first referenced by the Skriker, apparently in reference to herself as Tom Tit Tot, during her opening monologue. This adds a layer to the character of the Skriker, who is already a combination of several mythologies all wrapped up into one creature (see the Skriker's profile in the next section for more information). This adds to the theme of abduction running through the play, and provides us with a glimpse at the Skriker's experience in abducting (or at least attempting to abduct) her victims. Another layer of depth is then present when the Skriker abducts Josie - and later Lily - and takes them to the Underworld with her.[3]

[3]Simpson, Jacqueline, and Steve Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp 363.

Changelings and Children

Changelings are a classic concept in many folklores and myths wherein fairies or fey folk will abduct an infant child and replace them with one of their own, fey children. The child grows up to be different, aloof, and distant, never engaging with other humans on a full level and always on the outside of society. The child may also remain small, weak, or particularly sickly. Many speculate the idea of changelings were created to help explain the behavior of neuro-atypical or particularly delicate children that seemed typical at birth but whose atypical qualities became noticeable soon thereafter. This could have been a particularly common myth to explain children on the autism spectrum at a time when the concept of the autistic spectrum had not been developed.

Changelings were said to be driven away by treating them poorly or putting them in danger - for example, by setting them on a paddle and putting them into the oven over a fire, as Josie suggests Lily do to her baby after Josie suspects it of being a changeling. Other proposed ways to drive away the changeling and bring back the human baby include whipping it, or in one region of England, putting it on a pile of ashes and beating it with a broom, then leaving it naked "under a church-way stile... till the turn of night."[4]

Additionally, the Kelpie, the Spriggan, Rawheadandbloodybones, Jennie Greenteeth, Black Annis, and several of the other creatures and myths referenced in *The Skriker* involve the death or abduction of children (see their individual profiles in the next section for details). This is likely a function of myths and folklore often being used to scare children into behaving well or to shape their views of the world, meaning the victims of the tales' lessons were wont to be children. However, removed from the

[4]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore,* pages 54-55.

context of the specific stories and lessons itself and placed into a play about (at least in part) the deterioration of the future and mankind, these creatures take on a darker, more foreboding symbology: the death of the future. This motif is present throughout the play (Josie's baby as died just before the play starts, the Girl With Telescope as attempts suicide, the Skriker kicks and punches Lily's pregnant belly), and the presence of these dark, child-killing creatures only emphasizes the point. When the play ends, Lily's daughter has died, her granddaughter is old, and her great-granddaughter has nothing to do but bellow "wordless rage" at her; Lily herself turns to "dustbin", and the human background character of the Passerby finally stops dancing. Here, there is almost nothing left of the future. Humanity has been doomed by the death, abandonment, and abduction of its children.

Mythological / Folkloric Character Breakdown

The Skriker

"Though her name comes from British folklore, the Skriker, as an ancient figure, connects with several mythical currents that extend back to the earliest of human societies. The Skriker at different times manifests as Persephone of classical and much earlier myths, who personified the fertility of nature and the yearly changes of the seasons, but who also reigns as queen of the underworld and who is associated with the retreat of the sun and the loss of vegetation in the winter months. First appearing in the form of a large spider,[5] the Skriker also presents the image and some of the behavior of the West African trickster figure Anansi, who is associated both with nourishing humans and exploiting them. The Skriker's magic is like that of the English folklore character Yallory Brown: the wishes she grants turn to curses. Finally, the play positions the Skriker as a Fury, a spirit of revenge brought into being by an act of violence, especially against a blood relative. In Greek mythology, the Furies relentlessly pursue and torment the wrong-doer, driving him or her to insanity and death. The Skriker hints at her wounding and mission in the first monologue: 'they poison me in my rivers of blood... Revengence is goldmine, sweet.' The

[5]This is in reference to the original production of *The Skriker*, which Kritzer describes - per Churchill's words - as "using multiple levels of communication, most of which were nonverbal" (Kritzer, 113). The question must then be asked: how many non-verbal (or non-textual) artistic "choices" in the first production are actually essential to Churchill's storytelling intentions? Should later productions feel bound to the choice of the Skriker's first form as a spider, or should they iterate their own interpretations? Regardless, the choice to make the Skriker a spider in the original production was made under Churchill's eye and should be considered in our analysis of the play.

Skriker's name, an archaic form of the word *screamer*, thus joins an emblem of fatality to the concept of terrible and unavoidable consequences of previous action."

-- "Damaged Myth in Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker*" by Amelia Howe Kritzer[6]

ANALYSIS: The Skriker is not tied to any singular mythology but kaleidoscoped from many - like another mythological figure mentioned tangentially in Amelia Howe Kritzer's analysis above: the Triple Goddess. Present in many cultures and mythologies throughout history, the Triple Goddess lives in stories as a parallel to the Skriker. Manifestations of the Triple Goddess referenced by Kritzer above includes Persephone (sometimes considered one of the Greek god Hecate's three forms) and the Furies of Greek mythology. The Triple Goddess is a shapeshifter associated with fertility and femininity who cycles through her forms (different cultures provide different timetables for her changes: morning, noon, and night; waxing moon, full moon, waning moon; etc.). The Triple Goddess is also typically associated with three archetypal forms: Maiden, Mother, and Crone. The Skriker embodies some aspects of all three forms, but "ancient and damaged" as she is, exhibits those of the Crone most distinctly. The Crone represents death, dissolution, the underworld, and the bridge of the cycle to find its beginning again, all of which are core elements of the Skriker.

Johnny Squarefoot

"Broadly speaking, Jimmy Squarefoot was a man with a pig's head and face, "and he had two great tusks like a boar." He haunted all round the Grenaby district. In a purely porcine shape he had belonged to the giant living on Cronk yn Irree Lhaa, who, in the course of an altercation with his wife on South Barrule, pelted her unsubmissive head with rocks of which one is now the Creg yn Arran.

[...] This giant, whose name is regrettably forgotten, rode Jimmy in his pig-form about the country and over the sea, for "he could stramp the waves as easy as he could the ling." After their quarrel the giant and his wife both disappeared, leaving their pet behind, whereupon he came down to the Grenaby district and has infested it ever since in his various modifications.

Whether it is due to his friendly name or not, there is something engaging about Jimmy when he used to charge out at wayfarers with gleaming tusks and gnashing fangs. How he got the sobriquet of "Squarefoot" I have never been able to learn. Has he despoiled some human ghost of its rightful name, or is it that his spoor has been detected in the moist soil of his favourite haunts?"

-- A Manx Scrapbook by W Walter Gill (1929)[7]

"Jimmy Squarefoot can also be found in English folklore, and he's said to haunt the Isle of Man. He's a ghost with a man's body and a pig's head. However, he also has tusks, like a wild boar. He grew the porcine features after

[6]Kritzer, A. H., "Damaged Myth in Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker*," *Dramatic Revisions of Myths, Fairy Tales and Legends: Essays on Recent Plays*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2012, page 114.

[7]Weyde, Bernadette, "Jimmy Squarefoot - Isle of Man Folklore," As Manx as the Hills, September 28, 2015, accessed April 23, 2020, https://asmanxasthehills.com/jimmy-squarefoot/.

his wife left him for throwing stones at her. He seems to have kept them now that he's a ghost.

The Legend of Jimmy Squarefoot probably derives from an older story about an enormous pig, also named Squarefoot, who was carried about by a giant who threw stones."[8]

-- *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Ghosts and Hauntings* by Tom Ogden

ANALYSIS: Johnny Squarefoot is referred to as such throughout most of Churchill's text; however, in the scene in the Underworld, she refers to him as "Jimmy Squarefoot," which is also the only name I have found him referenced under anywhere else. I don't know if Churchill had a source I haven't found naming him as Johnny, or if that was simply a choice that she made to change it. Either way, it doesn't impact his function in the story.

Johnny Squarefoot is the first creature that we see in *The Skriker*. He appears in the Underworld, throwing stones, and then rides off. The references to Johnny come from very, very old stories and refer to him as an ancient creature who may have even been responsible for shaping some sacred spaces with his rock-throwing. Introducing such an ancient creature at the beginning of the play, just before the Skriker (another ancient creature), could help establish the sheer weight and length of existence these creatures have undergone. Their longevity and length of experience is an important part of the story, so Churchill using Johnny as a device to help establish that (whether the audience perceives it or not) is a possibility. Johnny also appears in both the Underworld and the Upperworld of the play, implying free-movement between the two. His main interactions with other creatures include throwing stones at the Black Dog, dancing with Nellie Longarms, and tangling with the Passerby after rushing him with RawHeadAndBloodyBones and the Kelpie.

One interesting thing to note is that Johnny Squarefoot does not appear in the original cast list. I don't know whether the role was cut or the creature was played by a puppet or some other device, but both possibilities deserve consideration.

[8]Ogden, Tom, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Ghosts and Hauntings*, Penguin via Alpha Books, Indianapolis, IN, 1999, page 155.

The Kelpie

"This is the fearsome and malevolent water spirit of Scottish folklore. ... It would appear to unsuspecting young women as a lover, eventually abducting them and devouring them under the water. The Kelpie would also entice wandering children or unwary young men to mount him in the guise of a sleek horse on the shore of the loch. The fiend would then gallop off into the water, dragging down his victims and devouring all but the entrails, which would float to the surface."[9]

--Spirits, Fairies, Gnomes, and Goblins: an Encyclopedia of the Little People by Carol Rose

[9]Rose, Carol, *Spirits, Fairies, Gnomes, and Goblins: an Encyclopedia of the Little People*, 1996, page 178.

"Kelpies are [...] said to aid water mills and dispose of trash in the sea. Kelpies may hate humans for ruining their home.

The Kelpie was also known to lure humans, especially children, into the water to kill and eat them. It usually does this by encouraging children to ride on its back, where its skin becomes sticky - almost adhesive - and it then drags them to the bottom of the water to devour leaving only the heart or liver. A common Scottish tale is the story of nine children lured onto a Kelpie's back, [...] the tenth child simply stroked the Kelpie's nose, but when his finger became stuck to it he took a knife from his pocket and cut off his own finger. He saved himself, but was unable to help his friends. Commonly known as spirits of the dead, Kelpies are not benevolent creatures and some folklore even says that they will not come unless summoned, or to eat."[10]

-- MythicalCreaturesGuide.com

ANALYSIS: The Kelpie is an elusive figure, depicted in many different ways in different myths. It's also one of the central folkloric characters in *The Skriker*, existing in many scenes and playing out a full onstage arc with the Woman With Kelpie. The Kelpie isn't scripted to ever directly interact with Josie or Lily, and seems to be absorbed in its own world; however, it's also the only folkloric character present at the mental hospital, and is the first we're introduced to in the "real world" of Lily and Josie.

[10]"Kelpie," Mythical Creatures Guide, October 2013, accessed April 23, 2020, http://www.mythicalcreaturesguide.com/page/Kelpie.

Yallery Brown

"British folkloric figure. This evil fairy was named for its yellow-brown hair, which made an odd frame around its withered and aged face. Yallery Brown worked mischief even to those who tried to help or befriend him; he was a fairy to be avoided. As he lived in the British Fens, which have long since been drained, he may be no longer a danger to anyone."[11]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan

"This Lincolnshire tale is a sinister variation on the brownie theme. The man who told it, a farm labourer, claimed that it had happened to himself in his youth. One day, he had freed a little man with yellow hair and brown skin, trapped under a large flat stone. The creature asked what reward he would like; the man asked for help with his work, and Yallery Brown agreed, on condition he was never thanked. Things turned out badly, for though the man's work was magically done for him the others found theirs spoiled and their tools blunted, so they accused him of being a wizard. So he was sacked, and raged at the fairy: 'I'll thank thee to leave me alone, I want none of thy help!' It screeched with laughter because it had been 'thanked', and told him he would be poor now to his dying day."[12]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

ANALYSIS: Yallery Brown is present in *The Skriker* only on the street, playing music (Scene 3) and in the Underworld at the feast (Scene 8), where he interacts directly with Josie, trying to get her to eat and drink.

Yallery Brown is also referred to in the Kritzer article excerpt in The Skriker's character entry above: "The Skriker's magic is like that of the English folklore character Yallory Brown: the wishes she grants turn to curses." This brings a good amount of illumination as to why he may be included in *The Skriker*, as his mythology helped shape and guide the Skriker's magic.

[11]Monaghan, Patricia, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, New York, NY: Facts on File, Inc., 2004, page 476.
[12]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 401.

Green Lady

The following is my summary of the folktale presented in "The Green Lady: A Folktale from Hertfordshire" by A.B. Gomme, told to him in his childhood by Mary Ann Smith, a nursemaid in Hertfordshire:

The story of the Green Lady dancing with the Bogle in *The Skriker* is a version of a folktale from Hertfordshire. In this tale, a little girl leaves home to work for a pretty Green Lady in a cottage in the woods. The girl is told "you must be a very good girl; sweep the house well, make the dust fly; and mind you don't look through the keyhole, or harm will befall you." She is also told to fetch water from the well to cook with, but if the water isn't clean, to change it and change it until it is. When the girl goes to the well, the water in the first bucket is dirty and contains a silverfish who asks her to clean it. She does, and tries again; the same thing happens, but this fish is gold. She tries again, and the same thing happens with a third fish. Then, the water finally comes up clean, and the fish tell her:

> "They who eat the fairies' food
> In the churchyard soon shall dwell.
> Drink the water of this well,
> And all things for thee shall be good
> Be but honest, bold, and true,
> So shall good fortune come to you."

After the girl returned from the well, she made dinner with the Green Lady, who then retired to the parlour. Curious, the girl looked through the keyhole and saw the Green Lady dancing with a bogey! Astonished, she cries out, and the Green Lady blinds her for looking through the keyhole, but sends her away with a bundle of money because she was "a good girl and made the dust fly." On her way home, the girl meets a man who says the fish from the well sent him, and tells her to bathe her eyes in the water. She does, and her sight returns, and she returns home with the man, her sight, and her money to be married and live happily. The story then continues with the girl's sister seeking the same fate, but not showing the fish kindness and not cleaning well, and so when she sees the Green Lady dancing with a bogey, " she [does't] get a bag of money and a bundle of clothes for her wages, because she hadn't made the dust fly, and she [has] no one to help her and take her home. So she [wanders] about all night and all day, and she [dies]; and no one knows where she [is] buried or what became of her."[13]

[13]Gomme, A., & Gerish, W. (1896), "The Green Lady: A Folktale from Hertfordshire," Folklore, 7(4), 411-415, accessed April 18, 2020, from

"Dames Vertes [literally "Green Ladies"]: French folkloric figures. In areas of modern France that were once Celtic territory, we find folktales about these "Green Ladies" who lurk in the forests, luring travelers into ravines by their beauty and their sweet voices, then tormenting them by holding them upside down over waterfalls and laughing at their terror. Such elemental spirits are found in many cultures; in the case of the Dames Vertes, they were especially associated with the wind, on which they traveled across the land, making plants grow with their breath. They could also take human form, always being dressed in green, a color known in Ireland to be the favorite choice of the Fairy people."[14]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan

ANALYSIS: There are many more references to versions of the Green Lady in folklore, some of which refer to her as a benevolent household spirit similar to a brownie, some as a witch or a blood-drinker. The version of her presented in *The Skriker*, however, is most similar to the Hertfordshire story summarized above.

The folktale of the Green Lady offers us a clue about the well in the Underworld of *The Skriker* in the song the fish sing after the well has been cleaned: eating the food of fairies leads to death, but drink the water from the well and all things shall be good for you. Josie is trapped in the Underworld after eating the food offered her at the party, and escapes by putting her hands in the well the Skriker warns her away from.

This story also offers us a clue about the character of Girl with Telescope, who in the play sees the Green Lady dancing with the Bogle (taken from the Bogey in the folktale). The Girl with Telescope only sees them once, and then cannot ever find what she is searching for again throughout the rest of the play - blindness, of a sort. She may be meant to represent one of the girls in the story, or she may be a new representation of the girls' voyeurism in the folktale created by Churchill, since she doesn't seem to fit neatly into either girl's mold.

Bogle

"**BOGIE (bogle, bug, bug-a-boo)** Scottish mythological figure. A class of trickster figures found in the Scottish Highlands, where March 29 was Bogle Day, as well as in England, where bogies could go about in troops [...] or alone [...] . Bogies tended to settle in trees, attics, lofts, and other high places. There are many categories of bogie, depending upon attire and attitude; these included the helpful brownie, the tormenting boggart, and the destructive nuckelavee, as well as various goblins who appeared in devilish skeletal form."[15]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan

"**BOGLE, BOGGLE** A variant on the terms 'boggart' and 'bogy', used for particularly frightening and evil specimens. Mrs Balfour said it was 'a not uncommon theory' in part of Lincolnshire that bogles are really the dead, still able to appear and to act, un-

www.jstor.org/stable/1253313.

[14]Monhagen, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, pp 116-17.

[15]Monhagen, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 53.

til the time their corpses are fully decayed. Jessica Lofthouse describes those of north Lancashire and Cumbria as 'spine-chilling' creatures, which could appear as 'a light, a ball of fire, a ghostly shape, a phantom hound or bull or calf, or red hen or black cock'. They guarded buried treasure, punished the wicked, and 'could uncover the graves of the dead' (North-Country Folklore)."[16]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

[16]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 29.

ANALYSIS: The Bogle is only ever seen in the play once, where he dances with the Green Lady (see the Green Lady for the story of her and the Bogle dancing together). His sole purpose seems to be fulfilling the role of the Green Lady's fey dancing partner for the story of the Green Lady and the Girl with Telescope. The part of the Bogle was originally doubled with RawHeadAndBloodyBones and the Dark Fairy. The physical presence of the actor playing this role, then, was likely similar to that of those other creatures, and could be a clue as to how to visually interpret the Bogle (at least as far as stature is concerned).

Spriggan

"**Spriggans.** These are small, ugly, and malicious fairies found in wild places in Cornwall, where they guard treasures. They steal babies and leave changelings, and blight crops. According to Robert Hunt, they are the ghosts of giants, and therefore able to swell from their usual small size into huge figures. Both Bottrell and Hunt tell local legends in which spriggans are described as merrily playing music and dancing, and attack men who spy on them. Anyone who digs for their treasures will find himself surrounded by hideous and terrifying figures till he flees in panic; if he is brave enough to return, he will find the pit he dug has closed up again."[17]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

"***spriggans*** Cornish folkloric figures. These ghosts of the ancient race of giants were transformed into fairies, who served as bodyguards

[17]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 340.

to other fairies. They were mischievous, though not usually dangerous, preferring to scare off those who might intrude upon fairy gatherings rather than, for instance, murdering them. Like many fairies, they were inveterate thieves, slinking about the countryside stealing butter and other valuables."[18]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan

ANALYSIS: The Spriggan is one of many examples in *The Skriker* of folkloric creatures who steal babies and leave changelings - childbirth and pregnancy is one of the most central themes of the play, so this is hardly insignificant. The Spriggan is also violently responsive to human spying. This is an interesting combination with the Girl with Telescope and the Green Lady, the combination of which sets up an interesting theme of voyeurism in the story (which can also extend to a metatheatrical lens - we as the audience are voyeurs witnessing people being punished for voyeurism). Another notable fact about Spriggans is their identity as the ghosts of giants. In *The Skriker,* the Spriggan appears at one point as towering over a row of tiny houses, illustrating the forces of nature and magic far more powerful than and beyond the scope of individual human activity. This concept of the giant creature towering over houses has been used as a core design concept in past productions, where miniature houses and tiny representations of human life cropped up all around the stage.

Brownie

"**brownie** [...] cheery, helpful household spirits of Scotland and the English midlands. Usually seen as a housebound and friendly member of the fairy race [...]. Most observers claimed the brownie was a stout hairy man, while others said that although short, the brownie was not necessarily rotund, and his hair was fair and flowing. In either case, he usually wore ragged brown clothes. [...] the brownie was typically male.

The brownie specialized in doing barn work at night: threshing, tidying, currying horses, and the like. Outdoor work was not beyond his domain, for he would also help with sheepherding, mowing, and running errands. Obviously, a household with a brownie was a happy one; the brownie was not always invisible but could serve as a confidante and adviser if necessary. Sometimes the brownie was offered a libation of milk, left in a special pitcher or bowl, but as with other resident aliens, it was important not to make a fuss over his needs. It was especially crucial never to notice his raggedy clothing, for to offer him a suit of human clothes would result in the offended brownie leaving to seek employment elsewhere."[19]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan

"**brownie.** [...] A vicar of Beetham (Westmorland), making notes on local lore in 1777, stated firmly 'A Browny is not a Fairey, but a tawney colour'd Being which will do a great deal of work for a Family, if used well.' Sir Walter Scott agreed: 'The Brownie formed a class of beings distinct in habit and dis-

[18]Monhagan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 425.

[19]Monhagan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 62.

position from the freakish and mischievous elves'. In modern scholarly terminology, the category of 'household spirit' to which the brownie belongs is regarded as a subdivision within the fairy species, but one which has very distinctive features of its own. Such beings live alongside humans in their own homes and farms, bringing them luck and helping them in various ways, and there is only one per house; in contrast, other types of fairy are more remote, often dangerous, and often thought of as living in groups.

Beliefs and tales about brownies are everywhere similar. They work by night, doing housework and farm tasks, and their presence ensures prosperity. As a reward, a bowl of cream or porridge, or a small cake, is regularly set out for them, often on the hearth. They punish lazy and slovenly servants by upsetting and breaking things, pinching them as they sleep, and so on; they may also rummage about noisily and create untidiness out of pure fun. Brownies should not be spied on while working, criticized, or laughed at, or they will take offence and either leave forever (taking the luck of the house with them) or turn into angry and troublesome boggarts."[20]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

ANALYSIS: The Skriker speaks of the brownie during her lengthy opening monologue, saying "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 fast and master."[21] This reference to the brownie speaks of the common interactions between humans and brownies in folklore: the appreciation of brownies when humans would leave out milk in a saucer for them, as well as the offense they would take to being offered human clothes. The Skriker speaks of these interactions as sequentially moving from mutualistic (the brownie helping the man, and the man offering the brownie milk) to offensive (the human offering the brownie a pair of trousers) to outright violent ("they hate us and hurt"), which can be seen as a synecdoche referring to the devolution of all human-fairy relations over the centuries. The brownie and the bogie are two of the biggest stock types of fairy, with many other folkloric creatures riffing off of their concepts, and both are included in the play. The brownie is generally good to humans, but is fickle and quick to shift between helpful and harmful. This temperamentality can be seen in most of the fairies, and even in the Skriker herself through her interactions with Josie and Lily.

[20]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 36.
[21]Churchill, *The Skriker*, page 4.

Fair Fairy & Dark Fairy

ANALYSIS: In my research I've found no specific references to who these two fairies might be. Their sole action in the play is to attempt, unsuccessfully, to eat the cake made by Man with Cloth and Bucket. Perhaps there is a fair and a dark representative of the fairies to show that it is not the quality of the fairy that prevents them from taking the cake but rather simply the identity of being fairy at all. Man with Cloth and Bucket draws a circle around the cake, perhaps as part of the ritual he has been implementing through the whole play up until this point (careful selection of location for the cloth and bucket, the skimming of the gold off of the bucket, the making of the cake, and now the protection of the cake). This circle could be seen as a traditional ward against fairies and fey folk. The question then becomes: what quality, history, or purpose does the Green Lady possess that makes Man with Cloth and Bucket give her the cake after refusing to give it to the Fair Fairy and Dark Fairy?

SEELIE AND UNSEELIE: One parallel to these two fairies might be the idea of the Seelie and the Unseelie Court in British folklore. The Seelie Court (the ancestor of the modern word "silly") of fairies was said to be made up of "good" fairies who would dance, sing, help with housework, and generally cause the betterment of life for humans (although they were not immune to mischief). The Unseelie Court (meaning "unholy" or "unseemly") was said to be composed of dangerous fairies who "screamed through the world on their wild hunt" and were often the perpetrators of abductions and kidnappings.[22] While these distinctions don't compare directly to the Fair Fairy and the Dark Fairy (adjectives which could just as easily refer to physical description as to temperament), this mode of classification could give an insight as to one direction to go with these characters.

[22]Monhagan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 462.

Rawhead And Bloody Bones (Rawheadandbloodybones)

"**Tommy Rawhead (Rawhead-and-Bloody-Bones, Old Bloody Bones)** British folkloric figure. Informants in the last century differed as to where this frightening BOGIE lived, some contending that he was a water demon who haunted BOGS and other somber places, while others believed he lived under stairs and in unused cupboards. The creature was ugly beyond words, seated on top of a pile of bones with blood dripping out of his mouth."[23]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan

[23]Monhagan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 450.

"Raw-Head and Bloody-Bones. A traditional bogeyman; also used allusively for robbers, etc., whose rumoured activities created panic. The earliest citation in the Oxford English Dictionary, from 1550, lists 'Hobgoblin, Rawhed, and Bloody-bone', with punctuation implying that the latter are two distinct beings; other early quotations seem to support this, but in the 19th century the whole phrase is generally a hyphenated unit. In East Anglia, Lincolnshire, Warwickshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire, children were told there was an ogre lurking in deep ponds and marlpits to drown them, known as Tommy Rawhead, or Bloody-bones (Wright, 1913: 199)."[24]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

"Rawhead is unquestionably one of [Britain's] champion contributions [to bogeymen]. He's also known as "Rawhead Bloody Bones", "Old Bloody Bones", "Tommy Rawhead", "Tommy Rawbones", or just plain "Bloody Bones." Stories about him seem to have originated somewhere around Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, or Lancashire, and he dates back to at least the seventeenth century.

He takes his name from his appearance, which is suitably ghastly. He's a lean, naked giant, with pale skin and great, grasping hands. His head is a mangled nightmare, all pulped flesh and wide, staring eyes, rivulets of blood running down his face and dripping on his chest. He has a den, hidden somewhere, piled high with the gnawed bones of children, where he sits and waits, his long arms clasped about his long legs, which he keeps tucked under his chin. When he senses prey, he unfolds his limbs like a waking spider.

[...] Old Bloody Bones has [...] a certain directness and simplicity [other bogeymen] lack. He comes for children who lie or say bad words. He can lurk anywhere, from the basement to the attic, from the stagnant pond to the crumbling old well. Most of all he favors dark cupboards, especially if they're located under the stairs. Nothing can keep him away. You never know where he'll appear, and once he does those long, pale hands can slip through any crack or keyhole, and their grip is as hard and cold as iron."[25]

-- Taken from www.OgresVsTrolls.Wordpress.com's "Monster of the Week" column (while not a peer reviewed source, the information corroborated well with several other sources I looked at).

ANALYSIS: Probably one of the most terrifying creatures included in *The Skriker* from a visual standpoint, if nothing else. Like many of the other creatures, Rawhead has a distinct connection with the abduction and murder of children--a trait that makes his presence watching over the pregnant Lily and later, her baby, all the more ominous. In *The Skriker*, Raw Head is also first seen with the Spriggan, and paired with it on more than one occasion. This combination of creatures is particularly unnerving - perhaps Rawhead eats the children and the Spriggan replaces them with Changelings? Or perhaps they are associated with each other purely for their grotesque appearance and intimidating presence?

[24]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 291.

[25]"MONSTER OF THE WEEK: Rawhead & Bloody Bones," Ogres Vs. Trolls, Dec 30, 2013, access April 23, 2020, https://ogresvstrolls.wordpress.com/2013/10/30/monster-of-the-week-rawhead-bloody-bones/.

We should be careful to emphasize that this is the British version of Rawhead and Bloody Bones, and not the American one. The American story is as follows, and speaks of a very different creature than the one invoked by Churchill in this play:

"Rawhead starts out as a big, ferocious boar, who is kept as a pet by a strange old woman, often reputed to be a witch. Usually Rawhead is caught by a butcher or hunter and gets slaughtered, but his bloody bones and skinned head are left behind. Either through the powers of the old woman (who is in fact a witch in this take) or through his own terrible will, Rawhead comes back to life. His bones rearrange themselves into a standing position, and place the skinned head on top, and then he takes off into the woods, where he acquires the teeth of a mountain lion, the claws of a bear, and the tail of a raccoon from various corpses and attaches them to himself. Rawhead Bloodybones then hunts down the men or men who killed him, murders them, and then collapses into a pile of bones and meat or escapes into the wilderness to kill again."[26]

[26]"MONSTER OF THE WEEK: Rawhead & Bloody Bones," Ogres Vs. Trolls.

Black Dog

"**Black Dog** Irish, Scottish, and British mythological figure. This spectral creature, usually shaggy and as big as a calf, was familiar throughout the insular Celtic world as an indication of great change and probable death. Occasionally Black Dogs could be helpful, but it was necessary to be wary of them, for one glance of their eyes could kill.

In northern England this beast was sometimes called a barguest and thought to be a portent of death; the barguest led all the dogs of a district on a rampage through an area where death was about to occur, all howling and creating a memorable disturbance. In East Anglia the dog is called 'black shuck', **while in Cumbria it was 'shriker'.** The Black Dog is also familiar to Irish folklore and has been sighted at Irish sacred sites as recently as

the 1990s."[27]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan

"**Trash.** A sinister Lancashire black dog, once widely feared in the Burnley area as a sure omen of the death of a member of one's family. It was large and shaggy, with 'eyes as big as saucers', and got its name from the noise made by its feet, like 'that of a heavy shoe in a miry road'. **It was also called Skriker, from the sound of its howling voice on occasions when it was invisible.**"[28]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

"**black dogs.** The many phantom dogs of local legend are almost invariably large black shaggy ones with glowing eyes; those which appear only in this form are simply called 'the Black Dog', whereas those that change shape often have some regional name such as bargest, padfoot, or Shuck. A few are said to be ghosts, but the majority are either supernatural creatures in their own right or manifestations of the Devil. They [...] usually patrol specified lanes, but some are associated with churchyards, streams, pools, gallows sites, and barrows. In some districts (e.g. Lincolnshire) it is said that they are harmless, or even friendly, if they are not disturbed, though in others it is an omen of death to meet one. Occasionally they guard treasure."[29]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

ANALYSIS: The fact that the black dog is sometimes called "Skriker" in folklore should give us a clue as to its significance in this play as a source for the title character. The black dog's most consistent defining characteristic in legends is its status as an omen of death - which is precisely the opening description of the Skriker: "a shapeshifter and death portent."[30] The Black Dog is also sometimes associated as being the guardian of Hell or the Underworld. This could be of particular note to this story, as the first appearance of the Black Dog is just before Josie is first taken to the Underworld. After her return, the Black Dog seems more connected to her than Lily, and Josie even leaves with it after she attacks the Skriker (in her guise as the 30 year old man).

[27]Monhagan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 47. Emphasis added.
[28]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 366. Emphasis added.
[29]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 25.
[30]Churchill, *The Skriker*, page 1.

Nellie Longarms

"**water-spirits.** Several rivers were said to be inhabited by beings who dragged people (especially children) into the water to drown them. These include the Ribble and the Tees (both in Lancashire), homes of Peg o' Nell and Peg Powler. Several northern and western counties used the name **Nelly Long-Arms**; there was also Jenny Greenteeth in pools in Lancashire and Cheshire, and a male figure called Nicky Nye in Somerset."[31]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

"**NELLIE LONG ARMS, NELLIE LONG-ARMS** This is the name of a vicious female monster in the folklore of Derbyshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, Shropshire, and Yorkshire in England. Nelly Long-arms is described as a humanoid monster with long, green hair and teeth, and enormously extended arms and spidery fingers. She would lurk beneath the surface of stagnant water, waiting for any unwary or naughty children to wander too close. Then she would catch hold of the child and drag it under the water, never to be seen again. She is, of course, a Nursery bogie used by anxious parents to curb the overadventurous [sic] child and prevent it from coming to harm."[32]

-- *Giants, Monsters, and Dragons: An Encyclopedia of Folklore, Legend, and Myth* by Carol Rose

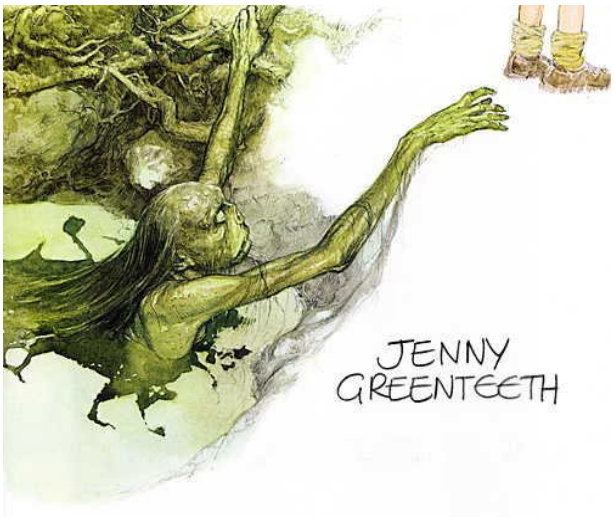
ANALYSIS: Nellie Longarms is an interesting addition to *The Skriker*. She continues the theme of water spirits present in the play, all of whom have a proclivity to abduct/drown/murder children. Very similar to Jennie Greenteeth (see below), they are cross-referenced with each other in most places, and indeed some sources draw no distinction between the two. Including both could be a deliberate choice by Churchill to emphasize the importance of these water spirits, or it could be because both have very striking physical features, and since the audience will likely not know the names of the exact creatures as they appear on stage, this could be potentially more important for the actual performance than any redundancy it may cause from a critical standpoint. The dramaturgy for Nellie and Jennie should be focused not attempting to puzzle through the semiotic redundancy of including both creatures, but instead on the audience's perceptions of them as individuals, and how the visual effect or actions of each creature can contribute to the story being told in its own way.

[31]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 381. Emphasis added.
[32]Rose, Carol, *Giants, Monsters, and Dragons: An Encyclopedia of Folklore, Legend, and Myth*, W. W. Norton & Company, June 13, 2000, page 264.

Jennie Greenteeth

"**Jenny Greenteeth** British water spirit. A boggart or threatening sprite known until the 19th century, Jenny was said to haunt the streams of Lancashire, seeking to drown passersby. Such spirits may descend from early water divinities and may encode a faint folk memory of human sacrifice. Some scholars theorize that Jenny was only a nursery tale told to quiet unruly youngsters; the threat of a green-toothed monster hiding in pools would have kept adventurous children away from potential danger."[33]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan



"Jenny Greenteeth. In Lancashire, Cheshire, and Shropshire, from the 19th century to within living memory, children were threatened that if they went near pools the water-spirit Jenny (or Ginny) Greenteeth would catch them; some said she also lurked in the tree-tops, where she could be heard moaning at night. According to Charlotte Burne, this bogey was 'an old woman who lurks beneath the green weeds that cover stagnant ponds; Ellesmere children were warned that if they venture too near such places, she will stretch out her long arms and drag them to her'. A Lancashire contributor to N&Q recalled: 'Further, I have often been told by my mother and nurse that if I did not keep my teeth clean I should some day [sic] be dragged into one of these ponds by Jenny Greenteeth, and I have met many elderly people who have had the same threat applied to them'.

As recently as 1980 a Merseyside woman aged 68 recalled what she had heard about her as a child: 'pale green skin, green teeth, very long green locks of hair, long green fingers with long nails, and she was very thin with a pointed chin and very big eyes.' Another informant, however, said Ginny 'had no known form, due to the fact that she never appeared above the surface of the pond.' She was especially associated with stagnant water deceptively covered with thick algae or duck-weed; in fact, to some, 'Jenny Greenteeth' was simply a name for duckweed itself, and the horror consisted in the way this weed would close over anything that fell in."[34]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

ANALYSIS: Jenny Greenteeth is a curious addition to the story. She appears only once in the script, as part of the dancing creatures in the Underworld, and is not given any specific, individual action in the stage directions. The part is doubled with that of the Green Lady,

[33]Monhagen, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 267.

[34]Simpson and Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 199.

and green is a color coded very distinctly to fairies and fey folk. Beyond that, there is great similarity to the creature of Nellie Longarms (see her entry above). Perhaps there was a more specific role for the creature in the original production, but there aren't any records of it that I could find. Regardless, she is a unique and terrifying visual presence, and may have been included for that purpose as much as anything else.

Black Annis

"**Black Annis.** Until recently, there was a cave called Black Annis's Bower in the Dane Hills on the outskirts of Leicester [...]. It was said that long ago a skin-clad, blue-faced ogress with 'vast talons, foul with human flesh' had lurked there, preying on sheep and children. A light-hearted poem of the late 18th century mentions her, in a way which implies that the story was well known; other writers give the more likely names 'Anna' or 'Anny'. Correspondents in the Leicester Chronicle in 1874 describe how adults used her as a bogey to alarm their children: Little children, who went to run on the Dane Hills, were assured that she lay in wait there, to snatch them away to her 'bower'; and that many like themselves she had 'scratched to death with her claws, sucked their blood, and hung up their skins to dry'. Black Anna was said to be in the habit of crouching among the branches of an old pollard oak which grew in the cleft of the rock over her cave or 'bower', ever ready to spring like a wild beast on any stray children passing below. The cave she was traditionally said to have dug out of the solid rock with her finger nails."[35]

-- *A Dictionary of English Folklore* by Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud

"**Black Annis** British mythological figure. Outside Leicester rise the Dane Hills, named after the ancestral goddess Danu and said to be haunted by the fearsome blue-faced Black Annis, a degraded goddess figure who may derive from Danu. In a cave known as Black Annis's Bower, she was said to ambush children and eat them. She was sometimes pictured as a hare (spring ritual hare-hunting is known in the area) or a cat (dragging a dead cat in front of hounds was another spring ritual of the area). In other stories, she is said to have been a nun who turned cannibal. She may be a form of the weather-controlling ancient goddess, the Cailleach."[36]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan

ANALYSIS: Black Annis is only described in the script as "with a blue face and one eye."[37] A quality of Black Annis that may

[35]Simpson and Round, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, page 24.
[36]Monhagan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 47.
[37]Churchill, *The Skriker*, page 28.

have been used by Churchill in creating the Skriker is the propensity to drink blood (like the Skriker does from Josie's wrist in the Underworld). The only place she appears in the story other than in the Underworld is when she slowly fills a glass aquarium containing miniature houses with water. She is yet another creature that preys on children, and is an arresting visual presence with her blue face and singular eye. She could also be considered an iteration of the crone stage of the Triple Goddess; in the original production, she was double cast with the Granddaughter, who appears at the end as an old woman.

Hag

"**hag** Irish and Scottish folkloric figure. Old, blind or one-eyed, humpbacked, with rheumy eyes and hairy chin, the hag of Irish and Scottish legend was not beautiful at first look. But kiss her, and she became a gorgeous maiden in full bloom of youth. This unlikely reversal is found in many stories of the great goddess of Sovereignty, of war goddesses like the Morrigan and Macha, and the pre-Celtic creator goddess, the Cailleach."[38]

-- *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* by Patricia Monhagan

ANALYSIS: The Hag is a common figure, and also a vague one; many creatures appear in the likeness of an old woman, as do most witches. Several witches in myths and fairytales are cut up into pieces, but there doesn't seem to be a specific reference to the way that the Hag in *The Skriker* is chopped up. This could be another manifestation of the Crone iteration of the Triple Goddess, just like Black Annis (see above), especially when paired with the myth of the hag's transformation into the maiden after being kissed. The Hag is the only creature that is turned against by the other creatures in the underworld. A possibility for this is that she may not be a true fey creature or a true human creature, but something else entirely - a witch or a goddess, as implied in the definition above. That could explain her lack of belonging in the Underworld and initiate the other creatures' aggression toward her.

[38]Monhagan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 238.

Thrumpins

"**Thrumpin** In old Scottish folklore, there is a belief in a species of sprite known as a thrumpin; each person was said to have had one of these vengeful spirits assigned to them. Thrumpin had the ability to take a person's life, but only on nights when a series of specific natural events occurred during the midnight hour, such as the moon being in her latter half, owl chicklets restless in their nests, and hawks flying in the night sky to name but a few. On these rare nights, the thrumpin are able to take life and leave the person's body in such a way as to be an unsightly carcass."[39]

-- Encyclopedia of Beasts and Monsters in Myth, Legend and Folklore by Theresa Bane

ANALYSIS: The Thrumpins are included in the play only in one scene, where they appear on the backs of businessmen. They are quite a niche folkloric creature, and most audiences - even ones well-versed in folklore - likely would not know what they are or what they represent. The dramatic effect of including the thrumpins, then, lies in their parasitic appearance and their invisible presence. The businessmen they attach themselves to do not feature in the plot of the play in any significant capacity, but seeing ordinary people being tagged by invisible folklore heightens the aura of otherness surrounding the world of this play, and also raises questions of what else might be lurking, unseen, in the world - both that of the play, and in our own world, as well.

Blue Men

"**Blue Men of the Minch** Scottish folkloric figures. Scotland's coastal waters between the inner and outer Hebrides, known as the Minch, are haunted by blue-skinned beings who may descend from seals or who may be fallen angels. The Blue Men control the weather in that region and, therefore, ship traffic as well. Even on calm days, it is said, the Minch can be turbulent because the Blue Men are swimming about, stirring the waters. The Minch is sometimes called the Blue Men's Stream or the Current of Destruction because its waters are so unpredictable and dangerous. Skippers who are not fast-witted are not encouraged to traverse the passage, for the Blue Men call out rhymes to them, and if another good couplet is not sung back to them, they capsize the boat."[40]

-- The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore by Patricia Monhagan

[39]Bane, Theresa, *Encyclopedia of Beasts and Monsters in Myth, Legend and Folklore,* McFarland, May 22, 2016, page 315.

[40]Monhagan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, page 50.

ANALYSIS: The only mention of the Blue Men in the story is that the beach where the Picnic Family is having their picnic is "covered with Blue Men." Again, these are background characters that don't interact directly with the main plot. Shortly after they appear, Black Annis fills her glass aquarium of small houses with water. The connection of these two water motifs - the Blue Men who swim in the water and cause turbulence and the symbolic drowning of suburbia - have strong evocations of global warming. Rising sea-levels and rough waters go hand and hand with environmental catastrophes. The environmental threat is not directly referenced, but the threat is still perceived and the danger still palpable, even if subconsciously: humankind is soon to be destroyed by nature and nature's personifications.

Analysis and Conclusion

Some of the strongest themes present in the stories and creatures explored above include: child abduction and endangerment, revenge of fairies (or nature) on mankind, and the deep connection between fairies and nature. There is also extreme mutability of identity (especially present with the Skriker and other shapeshifters) and temperament (i.e. brownies and bogles). These elements all dovetail to create a deep feeling of an unsettled world consistently on edge and at war with itself. The ominous tone provided by nearly all of these stories hints at danger that may not be immediate but is always looming. All of these feelings should be embraced, as reviews of past productions have praised their ability to create and impart this very quality to their audiences (see the Production History section for more details).

Glossary

Unless otherwise noted, all definitions are taken from the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.[1]

PAGE	TERM	CHARACTER	DEFINITION
1	beef eater	The Skriker	A popular name for the Yeomen Warders of Her Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress the Tower of London, the ceremonial guards of the Tower of London. The name comes from the supposition that these men feasted on beef every Sunday after church.
1	spick and span	The Skriker	Like new; spotlessly clean
1	Lyonesse	The Skriker	A country in Arthurian legend that bordered Cornwall, and was home to the hero Tristan (of Tristan and Iseult). In later tales it is said to have sunk beneath the sea. There are several similar sunken or lost lands in Celtic mythology that are similar to Lyonesse.
1	dungeonesse	The Skriker	A pun on one of Britain's nuclear reactors; "Dungeonesse under the castle" and "Never marry a king size well beloved" refer to the Dungeness and Sizewell nuclear power plants.[2]
1	adders	The Skriker	A pun on addition and subtraction "adders and takers away", but also a group of venomous snakes who swallow their young when in danger and vomit them up when the danger has passed. An adder coming to the door of a house is a death omen (like the Skriker herself)[3]
1	may pole	The Skriker	a tall, flower-wreathed pole forming the center for May Day sports and dances
1	pole axe	The Skriker	a battle-ax with a short handle and often a hook or spike opposite the blade; also an axe used to slaughter cattle

[1]*Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary,* s.v., accessed May 6, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/.
[2]Ben-Zvi, Linda and Moorjani, Angela, *Beckett at 100: Revolving it All,* Oxford University Press, accessed April 30, 2020, pages 294-295.
[3]Simpson, Jacqueline, and Steve Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000, page 2.

1	sheaves	The Skriker	a quantity of the stalks and ears of a cereal grass or sometimes other plant material bound together (in this case, the sheaves of grain is what the woman is expected to spin into gold)
1	Golden guild and geld	The Skriker	"Golden guild" implies something gilded, or covered in gold; gild is a homophone of the actual word used, guild, which is a medieval association of merchants or craftspeople. "Geld" is a verb that means to castrate something. This is a strong juxtaposition of the violence of castration with the elegant imagery of gilded sheaves
1	Gwylliam	The Skriker	The Welsh version of the name William.
1	Guillaume	The Skriker	The French version of the name William.
1	ladder in your stocking	The Skriker	What Americans call a "run in your stockings"
1	Alexander Sandro	The Skriker	Possibly a reference to a Russian Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich who was one of the last Romanovs during their reign and witnessed the collapse of the Russian Empire. He was mostly known as "Sandro" in life.[4]
1	Andrew Drewsteignton	The Skriker	Not a significant figure; likely just a pun on "Andrew" and "Drew." Drewsteignton is a small village in West Devon, England.
1	Mephistopheles	The Skriker	The chief devil in the Faust legend
1	Toffeenose	The Skriker	"Toffee-nosed" is British slang for "snobbish"
1	Timothy Mossycoat	The Skriker	Mossycoat is a British folklore story similar to Cinderella in which a poor girl puts on a coat made of moss and is transported to a ball.[5]
1	Tim tit tot	The Skriker	A British folklore story similar to Rumpelstiltskin. See the Mythology and Folklore section for more information.
1	lippety	The Skriker	A corruption of the word "lip"
1	morning becomes electric	The Skriker	A corruption of the Eugene O'Neill play *Mourning Becomes Electra*, which is itself a parallel to the Greek *Oresteia* trilogy written by Aeschylus.

[4]Mikhailovich, Sandro, *We, the Romanovs*, Winter Palace Books, accessed April 30, 2020.
[5]Pullman, Phillip, "The Fairytale of Mossycoat," The Guardian, accessed April 30, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/oct/11/fairytales-mossycoat-philip-pullman.

1	stormy petrel	The Skriker	A Storm Petrel (sometimes colloquially called a Stormy Petrel) is an oceanic species of bird. Common superstition says that they are omens of terrible storms.[6]
1	petrel bomb	The Skriker	Petrel is the British word for what American call gasoline. A petrel bomb is a gas bomb.
1	shuck off	The Skriker	To remove and throw aside.
1	skelter	The Skriker	To scurry.
2	botch	The Skriker	An inflammatory sore; to foul-up hopelessly.
2	bombastic	The Skriker	Speech or writing that is given exaggerated importance by artificial or empty means.
2	poppet	The Skriker	A British word that means "puppet." It can be used as an affectionate term of endearment.
2	see saw marjory	The Skriker	From the English nursery rhyme "See-Saw Marjory Daw": See-saw, Margery Daw, Sold her bed and lay on the straw; Sold her bed and lay upon hay And pisky came and carried her away. For wasn't she a dirty slut To sell her bed and lie in the dirt?[7]
2	vicar	The Skriker	An ecclesiastical agent; commonly used in Britain to refer to an Anglican (Church of England) parish priest.
2	seventh heaven	The Skriker	A state of extreme joy.
2	hellcat	The Skriker	A violently ill-tempered or temperamental woman; a witch.
2	higgledy pig	The Skriker	"Higgledy-piggledy" is an adverb describing a confused or disordered manner. Here, The Skriker turns it into a noun by referencing (or creating) the namesake pig.
2	loch	The Skriker	A pun on the lochs, or lakes, where the Kelpie lives and the lock, stock, and barrel of a gun

[6]St. Nicholas, "The Stormy Petrel. Some of the Superstitions of Old Sailors About the Bird," *Healdsburg Tribune, Enterprise and Scimitar,* Volume 11, Number 30, 12 October 1893, accessed April 30, 2020, https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=HTES18931012.2.19&e=-------en--20--1--txt-tx-IN--------1.

[7]"See Saw Marjory Daw," All Nursery Rhymes, accessed April 30, 2020, https://allnurseryrhymes.com/see-saw-margery-daw/.

3	bluebell	The Skriker	One of the most iconic British wildflowers. Folklore surrounding them says that when they ring, they call the fairies to gather, but if a human hears the ringing, they will be visited by a malicious fairy and die soon after. It is also said that if a child picks a bluebell in a bluebell wood, they will never be seen again (which continues the theme of child abduction prevalent throughout English folklore and *The Skriker*).[8]
3	listless	The Skriker	A lack of interest, energy or spirit.
3	pig bag	The Skriker	A corruption of "big bad" as in Big Bad Wolf
3	bluebeard's one bloody chamber maid	The Skriker	A reference to the French and German fairytale of Bluebeard and his wife. Bluebeard's wife opens a room she is told not to, only to find the bloody corpses of Bluebeard's past wives. She drops the key to the room, which becomes permanently stained with blood, and alerts Bluebeard to her transgression. He is about to kill her when her brothers show up and kill him instead.[9]
3	ointment disappointment	The Skriker	A reference to the British fairytale "Fairy Ointment" in which a midwife rubs ointment into a baby's eyes, and steals some for herself. This allows her to see fairies, but when they discover her deception they blind the eye she rubbed it in as retribution.[10]
3	bob's your uncle	The Skriker	An informal British expression used to say that something is easy to do or use
3	amorphous	The Skriker	Having no definite form; shapeless.
3	b	The Skriker	Refers to a baby
4	cat o' nine tails	The Skriker	a whip made of usually nine knotted lines or cords fastened to a handle; its scars resemble the scratches of cats.
4	a cock horse	The Skriker	A reference to a traditional nursery rhyme: Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross, To see a fine lady upon a white horse; Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, And she shall have music wherever she goes.[11]

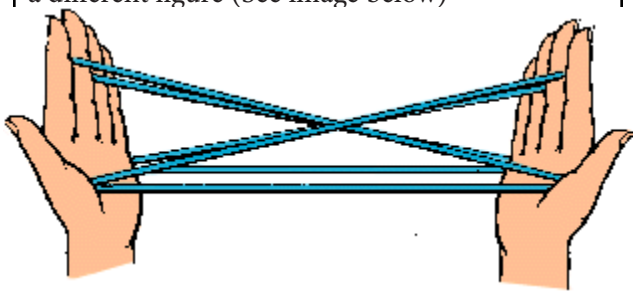
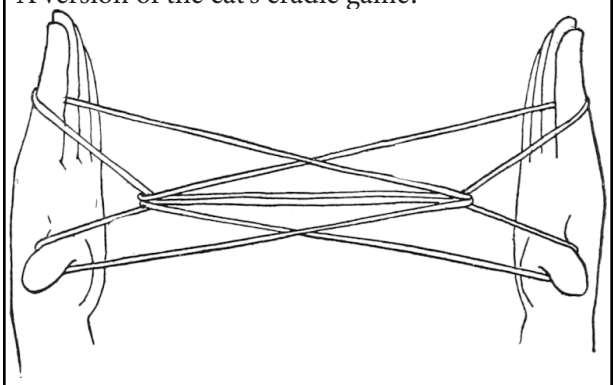
[8]"Bluebell folklore and traditions," The National Trust, accessed April 30, 2020, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ightham-mote/features/bluebell-inspiration-and-myths.
[9]The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Bluebeard," Encyclopaedia Britannica, inc., accessed April 30, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bluebeard-literary-character.
[10]Ashliman, D.L., "Midwife (or Godparent, or Nurse) for the Elves," University of Pittsburgh, accessed April 30, 2020, https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/midwife.html#bray.
[11]"Ride a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross," *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, accessed April 30, 2020, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/ride-a-cock-horse-to-banbury-cross.

4	moribund	The Skriker	Being in a state of dying; approaching death.
4	paththime	The Skriker	A pun on path and "past time"
4	gutterbed	The Skriker	A corruption of "guttered" into "gutteréd" and then into "gutterbed". In reference to candles, guttered means "to melt away through a channel out of the side of the cup hollowed out by the burning wick," or else simply for the flame to incline downward in a draft.
4	dough re me fa	The Skriker	A pun on the solfege scale "Do Re Mi Fa"
4	swelter	The Skriker	To suffer, sweat, or be faint from the heat.
4	bedrock	The Skriker	Used for its constituent words "bed" and "rock" to connect "under the bed" and "rock a bye baby"; bedrock is the solid rock underlying unconsolidated surface materials (like soil).
5	roast cats alive	The Skriker	Ritualistic cat burning was used in Britain and throughout western Europe during the Middle Ages as a way to rid villages of evil spirits and misfortune, due to cats' association with such things.[12]
5	matterhorn	The Skriker	The Matterhorn is a mountain of the Alps, in this case used as a pun to finish the phrase "oh dear what can the matter be" in an unexpected way that connects it to "horn piping." A hornpipe is a reed instrument or a lively British folk dance that is accompanied by hornpipe playing.
5	fe fi fo fumbledown	The Skriker	A pun on the giant's phrase "fee fi fo fum", the world fumble, and the word tumbledown, which means dilapidated or ramshackle (in this case, a tumbledown cottage).
5, 19	my mother she killed me and put me in pies	The Skriker, Dead Child	A rhyme from an old folktale called "The Juniper Tree" that tells the whole story: My mother, she killed me. My father, he ate me, My sister, Marlene, she made sure to see my bones were gathered secretly, bound nicely in silk, as neat as can be, and laid beneath the juniper tree. Tweet, tweet! What a lovely bird I am!
5	wishy washy	The Skriker	In context, a corruption of "three wishes" into a pun. Wishy washy means lacking in character or determination; ineffectual.

[12]Holmes, Tao Tao, "Ritualistic Cat Torture Was Once A Form of Town Fun," Atlas Obscura, accessed April 30, 2020, https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/ritualistic-cat-torture-was-once-a-form-of-town-fun.

5	an open grave must be fed	The Skriker	A reference to a folkloric rhyme: "Gold and Silver and all the world's wealth, Who leaves a grave open will fill it himself."[13]
5	gobbledegook	The Skriker	Wordy and generally unintelligible jargon; nonsense.
5	gook	The Skriker	In this case, probably oozy sloppy dirt or debris. Also a slur used as an insulting and contemptuous term for a nonwhite, non-American person and especially for an Asian person.
5	tightarse	The Skriker	The British spelling for "tightass."
9	dowdy	Stage Directions	Not neat or becoming in appearance; shabby.
10	derelict	Stage Directions	a destitute homeless social misfit.
11	white heather	The Skriker	A plant native to Scotland and said to be a sign of good fortune.
12	pound coins	The Skriker	A pun on the British Pound currency and the fact that coins are pounding the ground.
12	alphabetter	The Skriker	A corruption of "alphabet" with "better."
14	an aerial	Lily	An antenna.
16	roundhead	The Skriker	A member of the parliamentary party in England at the time of Charles I and Oliver Cromwell; a puritan.
16	Alfred and the cakes	The Skriker	One of the best known stories in English history is that of King Alfred and the cakes. Children are taught the story where Alfred is on the run from the Vikings, taking refuge in the home of a peasant woman. She asks him to watch her cakes – small loaves of bread – baking by the fire, but distracted by his problems, he lets the cakes burn and is roundly scolded by the woman.[14]
16	Arthur and the table	The Skriker	A reference to the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

[13]Tongue, R. L. "The Open Grave." Folklore 73, no. 2 (1962): 106-08. Accessed April 30, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/1258611.
[14]Johnson, Ben, "King Alfred and the Cakes," Historic UK, accessed April 30, 2020, https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/King-Alfred-the-Cakes/.

23	cat's cradle	Lily	A game in which a string looped in a pattern like a cradle on the fingers of one person's hands is transferred to the hands of another so as to form a different figure (See image below) 
23	fish in a dish	Lily	A version of the cat's cradle game: 
24	scrounger	Josie	Someone who scrounges (forages, scavenges, borrows).
27	toads	Josie	An expression; also calls up the memory of the toads coming out of Josie's mouth
29	meringue utang	Spirits	A difficult-to-decipher phrase, but one that evokes the word "orangutan" in phonic similarities.
30	Myselfish and chips	The Skriker	A corruption of "myself," "selfish," and "fish and chips," the last of which is a common British meal
30	chilly shally	The Skriker	A pun on the phrase "shilly-shally," which means an irresolute, undecided, or hesitating manner.
31	tit for tattle	The Skriker	A pun on "tit for tat" (retaliation in kind) and "tattle."
31	arsy versy	The Skriker	Backside forward; head over heels; topsy-turvy.
31	rout	The Skriker	To defeat decisively or disastrously.

31	aids party	The Skriker	An AIDS Party are organized orgy events associated with bug-chasing, thrown with the intention of passing on the HIV/AIDS virus. Bug-chasing is an underground world" in which HIV-negative men who want to be infected with the virus have sex with HIV-positive people "willing to infect" them. The HIV-negative men, or the "bug-chasers," who seek the virus from infected men, or "gift givers," do not view the disease as "horrible or fearsome," but rather as "beautiful and sexy" and treat HIV-infected semen as "liquid gold," *Rolling Stone* reports. The bug-chasers seek sex with HIV-positive people because it is the "ultimate taboo, the most extreme sex act left on the planet," and because many "feel lost and without any community to embrace them" and view those living with HIV as a "cohesive group," according to *Rolling Stone*.[15] [NOTE: Many advocates deny the existence of bug-chasing and claim it is an easy way to vilify homosexuals and lacks medical data to back it up. The existence and prevalence of bug-chasing remains highly controversial and contested by most respected LGBTQ health institutions.]
31	uppety	The Skriker	A corruption of "up" - in this case, the Skriker is referring to when she goes up to the Real World.
31	toxic waste paper basket case	The Skriker	A corruption of three phrases into each other: toxic waste, waste paper basket, and basket case.
31	salmonelephantiasis	The Skriker	A corruption of "salmonella," a disease often passed by eating undercooked eggs or meat, and "elephantiasis," a disease caused by the filarial worm that causes extreme swelling in specific body parts and results in disability or death if left untreated.
31	shitpandemonium	The Skriker	This does not appear to reference anything specific, and it likely just used for its particularly potent phonic effect.
32	Chocolate screams	The Skriker	Likely a sinister corruption of "chocolate creams."

[15]"*Rolling Stone* Examines Practice of Seeking HIV Infection Through Sex Called 'Bug-Chasing,'"
References to *Rolling Stone Magazine*, February 6th, 2003, via Kaiser Health News Morning Briefing, accessed April 30, 2020, https://khn.org/morning-breakout/dr00015641/.

32	Jung men	The Skriker	A pun on 20th century psychiatrist/psychoanalyst Carl Jung and the phrase "young men." An audience likely wouldn't not get this reference as they are homophones, but it is an extraordinary bit of wordplay when combined with "Freud eggs."
32	Freud Eggs	The Skriker	A pun on 19th-20th century founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud and the phrase "fried eggs." See above.
32	Nickneck. Give a dog a bone.	The Skriker	A pun on "neck" (in reference to the scarf) and the "This Old Man" nursery rhyme: This old man, he played one, He played knick-knack on my thumb; With a knick-knack paddywhack, Give a dog a bone, This old man came rolling home.
33	Bran tub new	The Skriker	A bran tub is British, and is a tub filled with bran (think Bran Flakes) in which presents are concealed. This is a pun on "Bran tub" and "brand new."
33	water baby	The Skriker	In an English accent, this sounds like "What a baby" making The Skriker's demand into a pun, as well.
36	celebrity knockout drops	The Skriker	Knockout drops are drops of a solution of a drug put into a drink to produce unconsciousness or stupefaction.
36	stardomination	The Skriker	A pun on "stardom" and "domination."
36	market farces	The Skriker	A corruption/pun of "Market forces" which are the forces that affect an economic market. This turns them into farces, a commentary on the ludicrousness of the factors and people running the economic market.
36	peaces and quite	The Skriker	A corruption of "peace and quiet."
36	mad as a hitter	The Skriker	A corruption of "mad as a hatter," a phrase that came about due to hatmakers frequent work with mercury that sometimes led to mercury poisoning and its corresponding psychosis
39	cooker	Josie	A British word for a stove.
41	pram	The Skriker	A British word for a stroller.
44	snuff movies	The Skriker	Snuff movies are a genre of films in which people are actually murdered or commit suicide. They are an extremely dark form of entertainment and usually only circulated in small circles of people who enjoy them.

47	waste ground	The Skriker	An empty piece of land (similar to a wasteland).
47	Sherbert lemons	The Skriker	A British lemon candy with a hard outer shell and a soft, fizzy core.
48	telly	Josie	A British abbreviation for "television."
48	motorway	Josie	The British word for "highway."
48	biscuits	Josie	The British word for "cookies."
49	besotted	The Skriker	Blindly or utterly infatuated.
49	gobbets	The Skriker	A piece or portion (as of meat); a lump or mass.
49	doolalley	The Skriker	Temporarily deranged or feebleminded.
49	worried and sorried	The Skriker	"Sorried" possibly refers to "sorry" in the past tense; although it's not a real word, Churchill may have invented it for her own use.
50	dialling 999	The Skriker	The British equivalent of calling 9-1-1 in the USA.
51	hearthrobber baron	The Skriker	A pun on "hearthrob" and "robber baron" (a business owner or executive who acquires wealth through ethically questionable tactics).
51	bedlam	The Skriker	Used here as a pun to continue the phrase "to light you to bed," likely using the definition of bedlam as an asylum for the mentally ill.
52	heroine distress	The Skriker	A corruption of "heroine" (a female hero) and "hero in distress," possibly also invoking imagery of the drug heroine
52	stupefied	The Skriker	To make stupid, groggy, or insensible.
52	stewpotbellied	The Skriker	A pun on "stew pot" and "pot bellied."
52	grin dafter	The Skriker	A corruption of "granddaughter";

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you or wouldn't you?