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Caryl Churchill's Artificial and Orificial Bodies: Between Subjective and Non-Subjective Nobody's Emotion or Affect

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the shift from emotion to affect in Caryl Churchill's writing for the theatre, a process which becomes prominent in the later seventies and culminates in the production of *A Mouthful of Birds*, a project designed jointly with the choreographer David Lan. The effects of the transformation remain traceable in *The Skriker*, a complex play taking several years to complete. It is argued that there is a tangible and logical correlation between Churchill's dismantling of the representational apparatus associated with the tradition of institutional theatre—a process which involves, primarily, a dissolution of its artificially constructed, docile bodies into orificial ones—and her withdrawal from the use of emotional expression in favour of the affective. In the following examination, emotions are conceived as interpretative acts modelled on cognition and mediated through representations while the intensity of affect remains unstructured. Often revealed through violence, pain and suffering, affect enables the theatre to venture into the pre-cognitive and thus beyond the tradition of liberal subject formation.

Keywords: Caryl Churchill, body, emotion, affect.

This article seeks to examine the ways in which Caryl Churchill deploys emotions and addresses their use in a selection of plays which strive to transgress the traditional boundaries of *institutional theatre*. The playwright's exploration of the ways her art can dismantle these boundaries intensifies in the seventies, marked by the success of *Cloud 9* (1979),[1] and continues throughout the eighties and early nineties when *The Skriker* (1994) finally makes its way to the stage. This article isolates this particular period for discussion, excluding both the later 90s and the contemporary plays (written after 2000) which experiment with bodies in different contexts, for example scientific (*A Number*, 2002).[2] The distinction between artificial and orificial bodies, used in the following discussion, serves the purpose of pointing out the spectrum of dependence of the bodies we encounter in the plays on the rules of representation. As Elin Diamond observes, bodies can be either frozen in their subservience to character (artificial bodies) or make an effort to escape absorption into representation, remaining polymorphous or "orificial" ("(In)visible Bodies" 190). It is not the aim of this article to engage in a close reading of Churchill's plays. The article focuses primarily on a correlation between the dissolution of representation, and a shift from the use of emotion to affect.

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Churchill's writing for the theatre has been perceived as an on-going metamorphosis, an attitude which has rightly earned her the name of an "inventive" playwright whose succession of projects became witness to interrogation and change rather than a consolidation of style and methods. This attitude can be traced back to her early theatrical experience. It included work with such diverse groups as the Monstrous Regiment and The Joint Stock Theatre Company. Leaving aside the differences between the first being a workshopping all-female company and the latter a prevailingly male group, the essential pursuit of both ensembles was change. While the first was involved in a reaction to stereotypical representations of women on and off-stage, the latter addressed more comprehensive revisions (initiated by Max Stafford-Clark and David Aukin) of *institutionalized* writing for the theatre. Even if in significantly different ways, both companies disputed the authority of the text and, more importantly, addressed the essential domesticating discourses, notably those of representation and realism with their old claims of authenticity and promise of real experience. Both of the categories are in fact fluid and tend to be re-defined against

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[1] The date given in parenthesis refers to the first production of the play. The same applies to dates which follow the titles of other plays and they appear only when mentioned for the first time.

[2] An increasingly synergistic relation of the body with technology tends to be affectless. Good examples appear in J. G. Ballard's "steel and concrete" period.

the preceding legislations which are termed outdated and artificial (producing artificial textual bodies) as soon as the newly revised categories of authenticity have been safely absorbed into the current constructions of mimesis/representation, a process assisted by the inevitable and unstoppable semiosis. Concepts of average lives, uncompromising truth and humanity as authenticity criteria successfully mystify the process of theatrical signification against the preceding convention only to be pinned down as either generalization or fiction. In realism, the obscurity of theatrical signification takes off the theatrical mask to produce a seamless conflation of stage and audience expectations. This illusion of mirror-identity, in turn, collapses self-difference, completes the process of false subjectification and reinforces what Elin Diamond called "the arrangements" of the "objective" and "truth-making" world (*Unmaking Mimesis* 5). Both ensembles, though in different ways, revealed this genuine prison-house of representation as neither capable nor in need of circulating cognitive emotion. Resisting this mechanism, Churchill petrified and encased codified emotion by reducing it to a circulation in *aboutness*. There, it would become an object of investigation or a linguistic concept firmly located in the process of story-telling.

Dismantling representation, Churchill questions institutional theatre. By institutional theatre, I understand a national- or city-subsidized theatre model (Cohen 91). It is a theatre "protected because of the cultural values it seems to transmit" and therefore considered "noble" even if its aim is to entertain (Watson 18–19).[3] Seminal for the following discussion is the fact that the institution of the theatre, as Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf write, supplies "a model for mimetic social processes" (131) and takes responsibility for its maintenance. Hence the institutional theatre supervises the politics of representation, which includes the appearance of bodies on stage. In Foucauldian terms, mimesis contributes to this system of social discipline and controls the production of artificial, docile bodies.[4] On the other hand, revisions of this system enable the appearance of porous, orificial bodies on stage. Transformations of artificial bodies into orificial ones are often accompanied by violence (or pain) and, as a result, tend to produce what I would, provisionally, refer to as eruptions of emotion. Sights

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[3] The "institutional" quality can be traced in the melodrama favoured by the commercial West End, as well.

[4] Churchill's interest in disciplinary technologies, explored by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, goes beyond influence. Elin Diamond notices "dozens of references" in her analysis of *Softcops* ("On Churchill" 134). Both Brecht and Foucault provided the playwright with conceptual frames that were to shape her concern with the body-limits of representation (Diamond, "(In)visible Bodies" 191).

of pain, communication and experience of pain are, according to Elaine Scarry, pre-linguistic—they resist and actively destroy language (4–5).

The present explorations, concentrating on the nexus of mimesis/representation and emotion, go beyond radical, *ex-negativo* definitions of the innovative. Among the numerous revisions of the mimetic tradition, the feminist and the postcolonial propositions take on a strongly negative approach. Churchill's affiliations with feminism and postcolonial concepts are unquestionable, for instance in *Cloud 9*. Still, her revisions seem to go beyond the radically negative, showing preference for the more complex. At the same time, her theatre remains at a distance from *par excellence* performance. This distance does not prevent a paradigm shift from the discipline imposed by the machinery of representation towards performance ontology. From a persistent interrogation of mimetic strategies, the playwright turns to emphasizing the effects of immediacy, liveness, non-verbal communication, and intense experience whose traces, as noted by Mateusz Borowski and Małgorzata Sugiera in a more general context, tend to "linger in the emotional and the corporeal memory of the audience" (viii). This suggests potential anchorage in the concept of affect and becomes a tendency interestingly prominent in *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986) and *The Skriker.* The novelty consists in Churchill's shift away from the institutional theatre and in her probing of the emotional potential of a thus expanding theatrical field.

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It can be argued that the spectrum of emotion involved in Churchill's plays ranges from subjective (Terada 19) to non-subjective (or nobody's) emotion, from cognitive to what can be called non-cognitive emotion (Chandan 89, Battaly 184). Studies based on the polarity of emotion and affect tend to eliminate the concept of *non-cognitive emotion* as redundant. Emotion is then defined at least as a "minimally interpretative experience" (Terada 4) modelled on cognition (Massumi, *Parables* 28; Anderson 735), mediated and felt through representations (Terada 21) and citational structures (Terada 40). Affect, on the other hand, follows a different logic[5] and should be conceived as an unformed, unstructured intensity "analyzable in effect" (Massumi, *Parables* 260). Assuming the disciplinary function of mimesis, I would argue that in Churchill's projects the emotion—affect spectrum functions in correlation with the process of unmaking the apparatus

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[5] Daniel M. Gross differentiates between the rhetorical understanding of emotion and the biological. Referring to the early modern theories of emotion, he attempts to demonstrate how they inform recent propositions (Judith Butler) by integrating politics and psychoanalysis. Social constructions of emotion (Michel Foucault, Stephen Greenblatt) are differentiated from affect-oriented research, e.g., Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Adam Frank (xiii–xv).

of representation (mimesis). It is Massumi who also refers to emotion (as opposed to affect) in terms of such a disciplinary strategy. Emotion, he claims, is a "sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience" (*Parables* 28) and thus, potentially, supportive of representation. Hence, by revising and eroding the representational apparatus, Churchill's plays shift towards non-representation—a radical obliteration or even dissolution of mimetic categories and matrices (*A Mouthful of Birds*, *The Skriker*) when emotion can be replaced by affect. Still, it should be emphasized that, in the earlier plays, before ultimately dismantling the apparatus, Churchill's plays employ and reveal the working of the theatrical system of representation, making its strategies clearly visible to the audience (especially in *Cloud 9* and *Top Girls*, 1982). It is later, in her densely choreographed *A Mouthful of Birds*—a blend of dance, music and words—that representation is swiftly marginalized, if not entirely eradicated, and where the playwright openly addresses a difficult sub-genre in transit. The process results in a dissolution of rhetorically definable and cognitive emotions. They are supplanted by what can be termed non-cognitive emotion or affect, where the latter is defined as "non-representational" intensity (Vermeulen 8) pertaining, according to McCormack, to a logic remaining beyond the "attention filter of representation" (496).

As opposed to the earlier plays, where representation and subjective cognitive emotion coexist, the sense of borderland experience, with its uncertain emotional geography, dominates both *A Mouthful of Birds* and *The Skriker*. This experience allows for a thin layer of "the old space of representation" (Foucault, *Pipe* 41), a phenomenon Foucault also traces in the surrealist work of René Magritte. Considering analogies, it is not surprising that Churchill brings one of Magritte's paintings on stage in the final scene of *A Mouthful of Birds*. This visual borrowing suggests that representation has been successfully dismantled and what is left are only its relics which, according to Foucault, linger "at the surface" (*Pipe* 41). Foucault compares this "surface" to "no more than a polished stone, bearing words and shapes," in fact, "a gravestone." What Foucault notices in his essay on surrealism, similitude and resemblance is that Magritte buries the strategies of *representation* beneath its illusion. Churchill, on the other hand, strives to either unmake or dissolve them. A denigration of the importance of representational apparatus is central for both the painter and the playwright. Becoming a source of uncanny sensation, the loss of representation matrices triggers what Wolfreys aptly defines as "an ongoing process of coming to terms with one's being" (18), a hardly tolerable state of mobility and anxiety which generates affect. This intensity, in a ghostly manner, "reascends and impinges upon the painting" (Foucault,

Pipe 41). Hence the sense of mystery: the result is a haunted painting in case of Magritte and a haunted stage in case of Churchill—a cultural text whose once artificial bodies become orificial by opening themselves for something from the past to enter and let itself be felt.[6] The spectrality invading the verbal space of representation points to a troubled relation with a lost text or a deeply buried "secret" which, for Magritte, is the invisible he compares to the invisibility of pleasure and pain.[7] In such projects neither images nor words *represent*, a condition Foucault comments on in *The Order of Things* (10).

Foucault and Magritte view language and image production in terms of ghostly *simulacra* sequences. Like Magritte's paintings, Churchill's plays are also suffused with anxiety, an experience graspable only if it is linguistically fixed, resulting from and traceable to definite political or economic oppression (for example, in *Vinegar Tom*, 1976). However, the potentially graspable experience (accompanied by codified emotions) undergoes transformations which obliterate the familiar strategies rendering the experience increasingly un-graspable. This in turn generates anxiety surges, an early example of which appears in the closing scene of *Top Girls*, when the sixteen-year-old Angie is suddenly overwhelmed by a haunting sense of horror—a terrifying absence of protection within a familiar matrix. It is a state Marlene, the eponymous character and the girl's biological mother, tries either to belittle or to rationalize by diagnosing it in terms of the familiar pattern of a bad dream that comes and goes. In cultural and literary terms, the notion of dream offers a long list of interpretative options including, among others, literal and metaphorical indigestion, conventional theatrical intrusion, states of emotional imbalance, return of the *real* or, finally, traumatic mimesis.[8] Considering the crisis of established value systems *Top Girls* stages, Angie's condition is more likely to be understood as a state of being seized by affect than a socially or psychologically explicable emotional imbalance. Psychological development of characters is not a priority in *Top Girls.* On the

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[6] Margaret Wetherell distinguishes between affect and emotion by defining the former as "embodied meaning-making" and the latter as disembodied talk and texts (4). Feeling acts (Wetherell 24, 73) as opposed to seeing acts were of interest to the surrealists. Magritte provided a commentary in his *La Race Blanche* (*The White Race*), 1937.

[7] Letter 1, 23 May 1966. Two letters written by Magritte to Foucault are appended to *This Is Not a Pipe* (57).

[8] As opposed to the tradition of humanistic tragic narratives, which reconcile the subject with the universe's moral order via tragic mimesis and where trauma appears as an external and explicable event, traumatic mimesis offers only a temporary suspension of the experience and no reconciliation. Subjectivity, as valuable, is protected by the redemptive work of tragic mimesis which enhances the self-knowledge of both the hero and the viewers (Martin 44).

other hand, Angie's fear can be seen as a case of traumatic mimesis, a condition which precludes explanatory narratives, self-knowledge or epistemologically-charged response to such interpretative endeavours on the part of the audience. It is sheer horror that emanates from the phrase Angie utters, "Frightening" (*Top Girls* 141). The emotional impact of the confession is even more powerful because it lacks the conventional motivation that the Enlightenment and realistic mimesis would guarantee. The affective surge reveals a gap which renders the language of representation dysfunctional. Like Magritte's visual *non sequiturs*, the final scene is heterotopic and disorienting. Angie's intensely experienced fear refuses to be brought into representation[9]—it is non-representational (Pile 7) and non-psychological; it cannot be either grasped or made intelligible. In terms of affect-oriented analysis, the scene reveals what Pile would refer to as "aspects of the subject [traceable] in abject suffering and pain, when the subject has its cloak of subjectivity torn to shreds" (12). Angie's subjectivity is not restored since the chance for a restorative narrative has never been considered. The interpretative rationalizations of why and how the affective intensity emerges in the closing scene turn out ineffective.

Affect, as opposed to the rhetorically definable emotions, resists the terms set by representation matrices. The emanation of affect that the audience may experience in *Top Girls* can be related to traumatic mimesis, to the arrival of the revenant, a disruptive presence which underwrites, as well as interrogates the stories told, in addition, by Marlene's visitors: Pope Joan, Dull Gret, Lady Nijo, Patient Griselda and Isabella Bird (1.1). Marlene overtly incorporates these accounts into the economy of her promotion celebrated in a restaurant—altogether a story of success whose falsehood the closing scene reveals. Addressing the complex historical material of the testimonies—stories once suppressed by patriarchy—Marlene accommodates them in the contemporary narratives of the business and consumer world. In spite of these ordering efforts, *Top Girls* lets the incomprehensible exceed the established ontology and thus forces the audience to recognize the abyssal nature of being and knowing. The strongly affective ending of *Top Girls* invites a reconsideration of the opening celebration and compels the viewers to reflect on what remains invisible and incomprehensible, under the thin layer of the representation Marlene strives to support.

In an effort to define spectrality as "constitutive of the fear that haunts *Dasein*" (Wolfreys 18) and generates affect, Wolfreys brings to-

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[9] A purely political reading of the scene, in the context of the eighties, is more straightforward.

gether Freudian *repression* and Heidegger's *forgetting.* His proposition points to a weakly self-reflective, vaguely cognitive process. In Wolfreys's approach, *being* becomes a permanently haunted location while the haunting process puts into play a "disruptive structure" compelling the subject to an unbearable self-reflective mobility that Terada locates and explores in the story of self-difference.[10] This sense of a tangible disruptive structure becomes crucial in Churchill's *The Skriker* and *A Mouthful of Birds*, where the ancient fairy on the one hand and the Dionysian spirit on the other enter through a theatrical gate whose meaning is hardly definable. It is their fluid mobility that produces a sense of what Anna Gibbs refers to as "an overreaching *movement* which draws what it traverses into active relation" (52). Here mimesis ceases to be a property of either subject or object (as in Terada) and becomes a mode of action, a sequence of transformations, a form of corporeal copying or "mimetic communication" (Gibbs 52) involving a sharing of movement and form in which affect plays a significant role. Affect-oriented theatre seems to move away from resemblance to the Magrittean similitude where conjunctions propel the metamorphic mobility. Representation, Michel Benamou writes, evoking the old strictly ocularcentric concepts, relies on "two vanishing points: God absent in the wings, the King present in his box" (6). In *A Mouthful of Birds*, Male Prison Officer conforms to the transformative mode by giving up the ocularcentric authority: "God makes and destroys. I make and destroy nothing. I do man's work. I transform" (Churchill 25). Male Prison Officer comments on the machinery of discipline but, at the same time, redefines theatre as performance where the spectacle becomes "a succession of intensities rather than symbolic action" (Benamou 6).

Certain modes of expression in particular, for example surrealism and Gothicism, dismantle mimetic discipline to assist the liberation of non-cognitive emotion or affect. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that the Gothic mode liberates feelings[11] transcending via its mobility the social patterns of "institutionally approved emotions" (3), i.e. codified emotions. It is a potentiality Wolfreys comments on when referring to the reciprocity of desire and

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[10] Terada reflects on the closing of self-difference by classical philosophers, a proposition based on the claim that the process of subjectification has been completed. In realism, she says, self-difference (thinking versus being) is dismissed as chimera (23). Cognitive emotions, as opposed to affect, belong to the Cartesian theatre.

[11] Feelings are what Terada calls a "capacious" term, which may connote both affect and emotions (4), but feelings may be defined as a bridging concept, as well, i.e. including body and mind. It is not very clear whether Kosofsky Sedgwick refers to such a common ground or not. From the viewpoint of what the present article assumes, Kosofsky Sedgwick's references involve affect. Benamou uses the term intensity.

interdiction, an interplay which congeals characters in a state he calls "affective tension" (164). Wolfreys notices its effects on character. Churchill's affiliations with the Gothic as a liberating mode are tangible but have not been really investigated. Among a few cursory observations, Mary Luckhurst notices the Gothic landscapes (4) and the darkly catastrophic atmosphere (5). It does not come as a surprise that more recent theatre reviews and blogs reveal further affinities between Churchill's "desolate urban world" and China Melville's "gritty realities" (Croggon). The possibility of bringing affect and the Gothic together is significant since Gothic texts, productions and films have powerful "underlying transgressive potential" (Aldana Reyes 20), rely on non-cognitive reactions (12) and, as a result, threaten the integrity of the artificial bodies by creating an unbearable sense of anxiety (Nelson 3) definable as affect. These eruptions of affect—meaning also the "ability to affect and be affected" (Massumi, "Notes" xvii)—are simultaneously rooted in and bring about the dissolution of representation through endless transformations.

To liberate emotions—not only in her earlier work—Churchill falls back on methods already used by G. B. Shaw, Henrik Ibsen and Bertolt Brecht. One of the inherited methods, facilitating a release of emotion, consists in placing on stage an empirically or a discursively-situated hysteric object, for instance Shaw's Kitty Warren (in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*[12]). The character is neither a governess, a nurse nor a fallen woman but a former prostitute in the role of a successful businessperson and thus a confusion of imaginable social roles. The discursive oscillation between the decent and the indecent, the feminine and the masculine disturbs the current grammar of representation (analogously in Churchill's *Cloud 9*) so that Kitty's textual body becomes a *limit text* disrupting the theatrical contract—an "unpleasant" breech of genre convention resulting in a disintegration of the false accomplishments of subjectification. The hysterical symptoms the unruly body provokes in the audience is a quasi-*catharsis*— a release of violent emotion whose effect is some "knowledge" rather than the expected "truth." Shaw's historical comment on the way the audience reacted reveals the anger but also the anxiety caused by the collapse of a socially significant institution:

> *Mrs Warren's Profession* has been performed at last, after a delay of only eight years; and I have once more shared with Ibsen the triumphant amusement of startling all but the strongest-headed of the London theatre critics clean out of the practice of their profession. No author who

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[12] Written in 1893. First production in 1902.

has ever known the exultation of sending the Press into an hysterical tumult of protest, of moral panic, of involuntary and frantic confession of sin, of a horror of conscience in which the power of distinguishing between the work of art on the stage and the real life of the spectator is confused and overwhelmed, will ever care for the stereotyped compliments which every successful farce or melodrama elicits from the newspapers. . . . But dearer still . . . is that sense of the sudden earthquake shock to the foundations of morality which sends a pallid crowd of critics into the street shrieking that the pillars of society are cracking and the ruin of the State is at hand. Even the Ibsen champions of ten years ago remonstrate with me just as the veterans of those brave days remonstrated with them. Mr Grein, the hardy iconoclast who first launched my plays on the stage alongside *Ghosts* and *The Wild Duck*, exclaimed that I have shattered his ideals. Actually his ideals![13] (vii–viii)

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On the other hand, telling stories *about* fallen and hysterical women rather than speaking (or acting) from within hysteria, leaves the audience relatively unaffected—e.g., in Arthur Wing Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893), a melodrama. The play makes use of characters firmly anchored in a genre which employs predefined cognitive emotions.

In Churchill's *Cloud 9* and *Serious Money* (1987), melodrama and restoration comedy must be defamiliarized as modes and sub-genres subservient to representation matrices in order to enhance the sense of their claustrophobic constrictions symbolized by the Victorian corset, where "a boy's best friend is his mother" (*Cloud 9* 30). In *Serious Money*, a dangerous equivalent of the corset is found in the increasingly virtual operations of the global exchange rendered in the bound language of seventeenth-century couplets and prompted by the intertextual intrusion of Thomas Shadwell's *The Volunteers, or the Stockjobbers* (1692).[14] As a result, the emotional spectrum becomes more problematic. In *Serious Money* genuinely cognitive emotion is ultimately eradicated by the market and reduced to the intensity of sexy greed, a measurable market factor called *demand*:

> Starr: "There's ugly greedy and sexy greedy, you dope.
>   At the moment you're ugly which is no hope.
>   If you stay ugly, god knows what your fate is.
>   But sexy greedy *is* the late eighties." (*Serious Money* 287)

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[13] From "The Author's Apology" preceding the 1902 production of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1894).

[14] For a comprehensive discussion of Churchill's use of the Shadwell play, see Judith Bailey Slagle (1996: 236ff).

As opposed to the scandal of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, the reception of *Serious Money* was more complex. While insider audiences of stockbrokers and yuppies claimed that the stage show seamlessly blended with their experience, representing it correctly, outsiders were confused by the discovery of a world which affected them but remained entirely incomprehensible.[15] Overwhelmed by the spectacle of financial operations that they were unable to follow, viewers could only sympathize with the conclusion of the character Jake that greed is good (because comprehensible) but that "[f]ear's a bitch" (*Serious Money* 257). Greed as codified emotion can be translated either into consumer demand or into the well-defined concept of gluttony, a Deadly Sin—hence safely "fixed." What the audience found difficult was the affective intensity caused by confusion and fear. Among the affects distinguished by Baruch Spinoza and elaborated on by Deleuze/Guattari and Massumi ("Notes"), Nelson selects fear, despair and consternation as useful for contemporary Gothic writing (17) in its production of affective encounters. In *Serious Money* Churchill evokes a sense of mystery to let the audience experience their own vulnerability in the incomprehensible matrix of the modern stock exchange.

In the activist climate of the seventies, Churchill focuses on gender but becomes increasingly interested in the erosion of mimesis and the body as limit-text and site of inquiry. Her policy follows two lines of development. While unveiling and denaturalizing the character-role-actor relations and revealing the political and economic straightjackets, Churchill tells stories *about* oppression, physical exploitation of women and pain, notably in such plays as *Objections to Sex and Violence* (1975), *Owners* (1972), *Fen* (1983), *Vinegar Tom* (1976) and *Softcops* (1984). These issues are present, to some extent only, in the later *Serious Money* and *Top Girls.* Even if, somewhat mechanically, she tries to stretch the logocentric representation by problematizing the homogeneous artificiality of the body. The pleasure of the narrative is retained at least in the earlier plays. The other policy consists in a foregrounding of theatrical illusion and drawing attention to the intricacies of representation in order to question it. This involves various forms of corporeal violence (*Top Girls*, *Cloud 9*) reaching the extreme cases of hurting, hacking, eating bodies, and shape-shifting in the later projects, *A Mouthful of Birds* and *The Skriker*. These attacks on the artificial body liberate intensities that transgress *subjective* emotions—they become nobody's emotions. In addition to the shocking physical attacks, discursive hysteria assists a further body fragmentation, rendering characters in terms of *assemblage.* This shows also in the alienation of an

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[15] On reception, see Stephen Lacey (442).

actor's body from character (in terms of gender; actors taking more roles; actors speaking as actors or as audience). Attention no longer focuses on stories (a change of interest a two-act structure supports, e.g., in *Cloud 9*) but on matrices which regulate representation: while in *Softcops* it is the theatre, in *Cloud 9* it is the subjectification process itself. The character Clive announces the process in the introductory phrase, "as you can see," and Betty confirms admitting, "I am a man's creation as you see" (*Cloud 9* 7). In this way they reveal the governing Cartesian conflation of knowing and seeing. As the basis of representation, knowing and seeing is exploded in subsequent transformations which, in turn, help restore self-difference. The circulation of emotion prevails as a valid source of knowledge over visual access. This explains why Harry's "effeminacy" is not reflected in "signs of degeneration" in his face (*Cloud* 9 33). Ironically, however, the reconciliation of Betty from Act One with Betty from Act Two dismantles self-difference once again and completes subjectification in a melodramatic style, a solution which sponsors artificial bodies and codified emotion.

Churchill struggles to maintain a sense of ambiguity in her deployment of emotion, a policy which rests on oscillation between cognitive emotion, related to representation, on the one hand and the unqualified intensity of affect on the other. Due to this oscillation, Marlene from *Top Girls* can be viewed as a discursively hysterical body probing the monolithic image of the "iron lady" she seems to promote. The interrogation proceeds via the historical and quasi-historical life-stories of the women Marlene summons and tries to "manage" in an effort to control her own image. It is an ambiguity which goes back to Judy Chicago's installation of *The Dinner Party* (1974).[16] In line with the dominant mood, the same stories delivered by the forgotten women can function as ghostly visitations Marlene is unable to master. Hence the eponymous character can be seen as possessed by the fear and anxiety accumulated in the ghostly lives whose disputable success hides traumatic experience. As a result of this spectrum, Marlene's body on stage no longer represents the homogeneity and disciplined artificiality of a successful woman—"the cloak of her subjectivity" is torn to shreds.

The Skriker and *A Mouthful of Birds* are witness to a more radical shift towards Dionysian productions[17] where emotional balance tips violently in favour of non-conceptual emotion/affect. Combining terror and desire,

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[16] The background history of Judy Chicago's installation throws more light on the ironic potential of its carnal complexity.

[17] The influence of Hinduism is also traceable in *The Skriker*. For the political uses of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Taoism, see Churchill's drama in Megson (105–06).

these projects launch a violent attack on all the vestiges of representation. The process of dismantling the emphatic formal body in favour of the orificial takes place on several levels commencing with the basic elements of drama. *The Skriker* opens with a long monologue, a verbal act which fails as either a set speech or a prologue. It develops into visceral torrents of words-things, a wasteland inhabited by its speaker, an amorphous body of an old fairy defined by Elaine Aston as the "damaged semiotic" (97). The one-act play unfolds in a series of transformations experienced by the monstrous body, a sequence of mirroring scene-fragments which prevent narratives. Cutting across established institutions, including the theatre, Skriker's amorphous body transcends socially recognized categories (such as gender), dismantles cultural codifications of genre and character. Skriker is a shape-shifter and death portent (243); a derelict woman (252); an American woman (253); a dowdy patient (251); part of a sofa (260); Lily feel cold (261); a fairy from a Christmas tree (262); a small child (263); a baby (265–66); Fairy Queen (269); Monster (271); a water baby (273); woman in her mid-30s (275); a Man about 30; a Man about 40; an old woman in a hospital (288); Skriker from the beginning (288); Skriker full of energy (299); and Ancient Skriker (290). The incessantly mobile creature travels as an omen of semiotic exhaustion whose fluid condition blurs the borders between the human and the non-human, the animate and the inanimate, undoing in that way the familiar emotional codifications buttressing social institutions, such as the family, which the audience seeks in vain to find on stage. Both the institutions and the audience are left unprotected. Josie, locked up in a mental ward for killing her baby, and the pregnant Lily echo the analogously unprotected condition sensed by Angie and Kit in the earlier *Top Girls.*

In *A Mouthful of Birds* the two-act division renders plotting difficult and reduces the pleasure of potential narratives. The flow of scenes which promises to re-tell the lives of seven Londoners, traditionally identified by social and professional roles (a Switchboard Operator, a Mother, an Acupuncturist, a Vicar, a Businessman, an Unemployed [man], a Secretary), subscribes neither to the matrix of Seven Deadly Sins nor to the topos of seven ages. Underwritten by a three-stage logic of sacrifice,[18] the play's structure becomes even more complex. Due to this double structuring,

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[18] Dancing Dionysos and the scene of skinning the rabbit (*A Mouthful of Birds* 3) open the sacrificial frame whose parts (production, killing and decomposition) could be traced in the project and might signal an attempt to withdraw objects from public/social circulation (Buchli 19). Hauntologically, sacrifice marks a return of the lost knowledge conveyed by Bacchae, at the same time avoiding purely intertextually logocentric indebtedness to the text.

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the circulation of socially nameable emotions is weakened. The sacrificial eliminates realistic illusion and invites the inexpressible haunting visitation of the Bacchanalian which, overtly, enters via the pre-text of Euripides' *The Bacchae*. However, more important than the obviously intertextual anchorage in the classic is the dissolution of *stasis* in *dynamis*, an effect enforced by the double, non-overlapping structure. As a result, the narratives are merely announced while instances of transformation (and possession) dominate. Hence, the experience Churchill stages blurs the distinction between subject and object, as well as between objects which remain in a state of continual mobility merging into one another and expanding what *is* as, for instance, in the "Fruit Ballet" (16) or in Paul's relation with the Pig, where the animal treated at first as meat and object of commercial exchange becomes a subject and object of genuine affection—not a parody of quasi-subjectivity resulting from a humanization of animals. The subsequent scenes obliterate boundaries, which cannot be defended. In the gym, Derek is hopelessly involved in the body-shaping process of weightlifting to boost his masculinity but the dialogue informs about the dissolution of criteria for gender differentiation. Permanently unemployed (assuming that masculinity and employment are inseparable), Man 1 no longer imagines working (5). Later, he admits: "My skin used to wrap me up, now it lets the world in. . . . I have almost forgotten the man who possessed this body" (52). The audience is exposed to further puzzling transformations. In response to the Spirit who (like Skriker) becomes a frog, lover, animal, train, bird, roaring animal, Lena also transforms (into a snake, a baby bird, a panther) and transgressing further boundaries begins to eat the Spirit (10–12). Human subjectivity becomes a disputable and uncertain concept. In his essay on the contract between the poet and the myth, referring to Rainer Maria Rilke[19] and Thomas Merton, Wiesław Juszczak argues for

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[19] Diamond mentions an analogy between the way Churchill and Lan imagined the "turbulent bodies" of dancing women and quotes from Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies* (*Elegy 1*) where the poet compares the dancers to birds that "feel the extended air in more fervent flight" (*Unmaking Mimesis* 96). However, she is more interested in the movement and visual effect and the effort to avoid the production of artificial balletic bodies. What Juszczak writes, exploring Rilke's *Elegies* in a broader context, pertains to the nature of perception. And so, in the translation by James Blair Leishman and Stephen Spender, the image of movement is different and becomes an "intimate flight" (Rilke, *The Duino Elegies*). Still another translation (by Alfred Poulin Jr.) from German, where it is "die erweiterte Luft fühlen mit innigerm Flug" (Rilke, *Duino Elegies and The Sonnets to Orpheus* 6), offers: "feel the air thinning as they fly deeper into themselves" (7). In light of the whole collection of elegies, the translations seem complementary and, indeed, only a juxtaposition of the versions conveys the effect of extended liminality and interfusion. Both categories seem vital for *A Mouthful of Birds*.

the need to replace the concept of *homo sapiens* with *homo spiritualis* explaining that the understanding of a boundless reality requires a different perception (57–60). The same pursuits, I would argue, pervade both of Churchill's productions where, as Juszczak proposes, this new perception takes place in the sphere of emotion-intensities. In the boundless alternative world, notably following the death of Pentheus, the voyeur, lack of mimetic protection acquires a different meaning (*A Mouthful of Birds* 50). Protection is no longer needed in a world which has no institutions to defend. On the contrary, extreme happiness and violence blend into moments of "severe physical pleasure" (33) suspending or bursting the need for clear distinctions. This includes the subject/object dichotomy underpinning artificial bodies in the apparatus of representation. The loss of distinctions and boundaries eliminates cognitive emotion and invites affect.

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The persistent marginalization of verbal coding undermines the representational apparatus, which, in turn, creates space for non-logocentric forms of expression, such as pain, possession and glamour. In *A Mouthful of Birds*, Marcia, the black medium, standing in opposition to the logocentric white Sybil, refuses to articulate words (scene 13/VI). Not speaking (with the exception of the word "Horror," 52), she uses her *voice* by hyperventilating in order to communicate pre-linguistically. Further on she communicates by emanating pain with her "writhing" convoluted body (18) which becomes a sight of struggle. Daniel Schulze notices that such forms of expression and communication involve "analogous empathy" (115), a form of coding which "speaks to the gut, not to the brain" (124). In the modern dance of her convulsive body (Batiste 222), through pain, Marcia emanates affect rather than cognitive emotion. In the conflict between the white and the black medium, the logocentric Sybil struggles to dominate her opponent by stealing her *voice*. To deprive the black medium of her voice the white medium makes an effort to write down Marcia's hyperventilation as codified music and, in that way, to suppress its emotional expression. Sybil makes an effort to render elements of structure audible and prominent.[20] In the phase of post-possession, the black medium withdraws from the human/logocentric world of representation and finds its true "interlocutor" in a speaking "rock." Ultimately, her communication relies on a painfully emotional relationship of her body with the land, which she defines as "longing" (52), a mixture of nostalgia and affect.

The orificial body becomes central in *A Mouthful of Birds*. The sacrificial process, which opens dramatically with the skinning of the rabbit

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[20] References to Clifford Curzon, an English pianist who studied at the Royal Academy of Music, reveal the sources of the pertinent juxtaposition of structure vs. emotion.

(a violent opening of the body), followed by scenes where human bodies are also violated and destroyed,[21] finds its counterpart in Yvonne's transformation. The former acupuncturist redefines her attitude to the body and becomes a butcher. She spends "all day sawing and hacking" to *feel* the strength of her own body better (51) and in that way experiences self-possession. In spite of tempting analogies with scenes 17/I and 17/VII, which reduce body to meat, in the final scene Yvonne (scene 26) is not a compassionless murderer who should be excluded from the Juries of Life and Death.[22] Her transformation involves a liberation from the strictures of discipline and the ocularcentric regime, a shift towards *haptic vision* (Deleuze and Guattari 544–45). When feeling replaces seeing, the seminal difference between sleep and wake disappears (Deleuze and Guattari 551). Giving in to carnal desires (non-specific desires; definite addictions including drugs, sex and consumer dependence), the figures rather than characters experience possession by non-cognitive emotion/affect which penetrates the whole spectrum of their transsexual, androgynous, gender-bending, post-human bodies which, finally, enter a stage of liberated *post-possession*. In the experience of possession bodies are decomposed and transformed so that the conventional gender and human boundaries either burst or are extended. The act of possession becomes, paradoxically, a form of escape from the former system of body control. Hence possession becomes as cure (Babagge 118). "The Death of Pentheus"[23] engages the whole company in a dance repeating *moments of extreme happiness and of violence* (*A Mouthful of Birds* 33, 50). This expression of joy, ecstasy and danger takes place through what Stephanie L. Batiste defines as the matrix of kinetic affect whose target is the resistance of "external applications of self and community" (199). Dance in both *The Skriker* and *A Mouthful of Birds* gestures towards an "unscripted subjectivity," making use of the radical possibility in modern dance to speak the "unspeakable" (Arzumova 169) the body can emanate. Dance becomes a constant performance which strives to avoid subjection to the script of representation. Thus, possession, in the case of Lena, Marcia and Yvonne, leads to the recognition of strength that the women sense by re-possessing their bodies.

Ultimately, there is glamour which (like possession) is related to forms of addiction or captivation. Churchill seems to bring together the

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[21] *A Mouthful of Birds* stages and recalls acts of violence, e.g., Doreen slashes Mrs. Blair in the face with a knife (47); Lil reading the paper quotes cases of violence (45); Mother recalls her own experience of domestic violence, provoking at the same time her daughter (42); suicide (37); Woman dies and Dan hauls out her body (26).

[22] Colleen Glenny Boggs quotes from John Locke (140).

[23] Part 24 of *A Mouthful of Birds*.

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old and the more recent concepts of glamour. More in *The Skriker* than in *A Mouthful of Birds*, glamour functions as the old "fairy enchantment" which ceases to work (Diamond, "Caryl Churchill" 484) or as "outward magic" which masks decay (Meldrum 40). Affect theories, addressing contemporary consumerism, put forward a more comprehensive understanding of glamour which appears to reflect its use in Churchill's plays. Discussing contemporary glamour, Nigel Thrift emphasizes desire and possession (it is the nineteenth-century conviction that glamour means "deception" and "bewitching beauty") but defines the concept as a "spell cast by unobtainable realities" (297). To produce captivation, glamour needs an environment in which the human and the non-human are mixed, and the distinctions between alive and non-alive, material and immaterial are blurred (296), generating desire and curiosity. In *The Skriker* and *A Mouthful of Birds*, scenes of pain, possession and captivating glamour take the form of a modern ballet which tries to resist the pressure of semiotization. Moreover, the fruit ballet in the latter project, putting on stage the human and the non-human, may evoke the threat of the human becoming the non-alive (e.g., by being eaten). In the corporeal performance the play employs, dance choreography is not pictorial but affective.[24] As a result, dance withdraws from creating aesthetically-pleasing images. It is affective in its reliance on locating in the body and articulating through the body the basic modes of affect: joy, pleasure and challenge, e.g., in the scene of Paul dancing with the pig (31, 32). Dancing with the non-alive and the non-human involves the "discovery" of movement from within the body—not from a script. This leads to a revalorization of both the pre-symbolic, Juszczak calls *homo spiritualis*, and the body of the hysteric where the latter ceases to be the other.

To conclude, addressing current social and political issues, Churchill's earlier writings made an effort to transcend the constricting discourses of representation and realism. The pursuit of new forms of expression influenced the playwright's use of bodies on stage and resulted in a shift from artificially emphatic to orificial bodies. This shift, in turn, enabled the playwright to reconsider the use and importance of emotion(s). By challenging the codified body images, Churchill had to withdraw from fixed emotions anchored in the discourses of representation. These codified emotions have been increasingly perceived as means of buttressing institutions such as the family, the nation and the individual, which contradicted the intentions of a playwright whose aim has been to revise these institutions. Trying to

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[24] Churchill and Lan seem to follow the logic of modern dance Elizabeth Dempster explores emphasizing its distinctly affective quality (230–31).

eliminate the usage of codified emotions, the playwright commenced with their defamiliarization, e.g., in *Cloud 9.* In *Cloud 9* Churchill articulated institutionalized emotions to enhance the process of self-discovery whose limits the play probed. The process of discovery involved also knowing what one was not. Further transformations involved a shift from cognitive emotion to affect which reached beyond representation. And it is affect that enabled Churchill to stretch (or transgress) the limits of what *is* when in both *The Skriker* and *A Mouthful of Birds* "I am" becomes impersonal (fruit, pig, rock speaking to Marcia). Moving beyond the subject-object duality of emotional circulation, undermining egoic identity, Churchill made space for what had already been present in the theatre, the Beckettian *not I*, for the witnessing awareness.

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Affect, if conceived in biological terms, as Massumi propounds (*Parables* 28), resists critique but renders the relation with materiality difficult by claiming its priority: affect dismantles the binarization between the human and the animal. Indeed, in *The Skriker* and *A Mouthful of Birds*, Churchill's drama shifts decisively towards an obliteration of differences between materiality and the immaterial, the living and the non-alive. At the expense of verbal expression and traditional scopic *regime*, the shift invites affect-based dance. Such an inevitable, though puzzling, conflation of word and vision, appears in the closing scene of *A Mouthful of Birds*: it is a shocking juxtaposition of Doreen's "mouth full of birds" and Magritte's 1927 painting, *A Young Girl Eating a Bird (The Pleasure)*. The scene delivers a powerful emotive charge. More than once, Magritte challenged the representational apparatus, the privilege granted to logocentrism and ocularcentrism. *The White Race* (*La Race Blanche*, 1937) provides an example. Churchill arrives at analogous conclusions rendered in terms of the bird symbolism Magritte also uses. When symbolizing logos, birds penetrate everywhere with true and false meaning representing the spiritual nature of man. As carriers of meaning the birds are humanized and become, like human beings, "code fixers." In *A Mouthful of Birds*, an excess of language-produced meaning—sponsoring the codes of representation—suffocates the woman with its meaninglessness. On the other hand, the unheard-of songs of the body that Cixous refers to (162) and Churchill implements in her image of Marcia, are found in silence, in "speaking rocks" and the exchange of affective intensities, as well as in the feeling acts. The real value of the birds singing, writes Valérie Baisnée (51), is in the act of singing and not in its meaning. By analogy, the real value of dancing is in performance rather than in the conveyed message (meaning).

Radical inquiries of the representational apparatus grant privilege to orificial bodies enforcing the replacement of the traditional spectrum

of emotion-concepts by affect. Affect, in turn, becomes responsible for a new ontology of the human body that, as Boggs claims, "is constantly open and renewed" (37). Pressed beyond the tradition of sovereign or liberal humanist subjectivity, the audience is asked to accept that subjectivity is not only human. It is the death of a thus defined subject and its humanist frame, seminal for the mimetic legislation, that enables Churchill to put affect on stage.

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