

## Chapter One

### Introduction

British female playwright Caryl Churchill's experimental dramatic devices always challenge the tradition of theatre and society. Among her numerous works, *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* are described as "two of her best and most problematic plays" (Thomas 161). Such impression is mostly made because of the synchronism and the anachronism in these two plays. In *Cloud Nine*, a hundred years pass between Act One and Act Two, but the characters in Act Two only have aged twenty-five years. As to *Top Girls*, although the time of Act One is present, the characters come from different historical times. More surprisingly, the story of the last Act happens chronologically before those of Acts One and Two. Different from most critics who emphasize the stagecraft, such as cross-dressing and multiple casting, I argue that Churchill's unconventional dramaturgy about time and space in these two plays problematize the issues of gender, sexuality and capitalism. The chronotopes of the two plays articulate how people's states of beings interact with the external social and cultural conditions, especially during the 1980s in London. Both plays crystallize the space politics full of gender discriminations in the patriarchal society. In addition, Churchill's dramatic devices are the subversive spatial practice that transforms the gendered spaces into the sites of resistance in order to manifest her protest and seeks more possibilities for the gender roles in the future.

### About Caryl Churchill

Caryl Churchill was born in London, on September 3 in 1938. Her first play, *Downstairs* was performed at Oxford College, where she received a B.A. degree in English in 1960. In 1961, she married David Harter. Then, she began her literary

career by writing eight radio plays<sup>1</sup> for BBC Radio in the 1960s. Some themes appearing in these radio plays recur in her later stage works, such as confusion of identity, class resentment, and gender conflicts.

Her first theatrical break came when *Owners* was produced at the Royal Court Theatre in 1972.<sup>2</sup> This play talks about the issues of social class and power structures and the main character Marion is regarded as the prototype for Churchill's characters who ask the audience to question women's relationship to social hierarchies. During the 1970s and 1980s, she began to collaborate with theatre companies such as 'Joint Stock' and 'Monstrous Regiment.'<sup>3</sup> Through the workshop-style creation process, Churchill produced several experimental plays that deal with controversial subjects and developed her own creative performance techniques. In *Vinegar Tom* (1976), Churchill explores the victimization of intelligent and independent women during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1979, *Cloud Nine*, another play that she worked with 'Joint Stock,' gave her popular success because of her witty theatrical assault on empire, colonialism, oppressive sexual roles, patriarchy, and England in the post-colonial era. In 1981, its New York production also marks the beginning of Churchill's American reputation.

During the 1980s, Churchill's most successful period, she wrote *Top Girls* (1982), *Fen* (1983) and *Serious Money* (1987). Her stage works from the 1970s to 1980s are mainly concerned with "theatricalising a socialist and feminist critique of the injustices and inequalities produced by late 20<sup>th</sup> century western capitalism and

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<sup>1</sup> Between 1962 and 1973, Churchill wrote *The Ants* (1962), *Lovesick* (1967), *Identical Twins* (1968), *Abortive* (1971), *Not...Not...Not...Not...Not Enough Oxygen* (1971), *Schreber's Nervous Illness* (1972), *Henry's Past* (1972), and *Perfect Happiness* (1973).

<sup>2</sup> The Royal Court is a subsidized alternative theater in London. In 1975, Churchill was the first woman to have a residency at the Royal Court.

<sup>3</sup> Churchill collaborated with 'Joint Stock' in *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976), *Cloud Nine* (1979), *Fen* (1983) and *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986). Also, she cooperated with another feminist-socialist theatre company 'Monstrous Regiment' in two plays: *Vinegar Tom* (1976) and the *Floorshow* cabaret (1977).

patriarchy” (Aston, *Feminist Views* 18). In an interview with Kathleen Betsko and Rachel Koenig, Churchill explains, “socialism and feminism aren’t synonymous, but I feel strongly about both, and wouldn’t be interested in a form of one that didn’t include the other” (78).

From the late 1980s to early 1990s, Churchill’s style turned to new directions that “moved more and more into using music and dance as alternative languages to dialogue, creating new forms of theatrical movement and an acoustical score of more varied registers” (Reinelt, *Caryl Churchill* 186). In 1986, Churchill wrote *A Mouthful of Birds* that adapts Euripides’ *The Bacchae*. From then on, Churchill began to use dance and music to expand her theatrical methods of breaking through the limits of representation by language. In *A Mouthful of Birds* and *Lives of the Great Poisoners* (1991), Churchill not only continues her successful collaborative creation, but also integrates the new elements of dance and music.

Her recent two plays are *Far Away* (2000) and *A Number* (2002). While *Far Away* is about the descent into barbarism in a bleak future world, *A Number* raises moral questions about human cloning. Churchill’s latest play is a new version of August Strindberg’s *Dream Play*, premiered in 2005. During her almost fifty years of writing career, her innovative dramatic devices, such as cross-dressing, multiple casting, and disruptive narrative, constantly provoke the audiences to ponder those controversial issues about class, gender, race and sexuality. Among her numerous works, I choose *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* because of their unique and intricate interrelation with space, time and gender. I intend to employ the spatial theories and Bakhtin’s concept of chronotope to analyze the interrelation between people, space and time, gender discriminations hidden in space and the subversive spatial politics in these two plays.

### **Plot Summaries of *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls***

*Cloud Nine* was first performed in 1979. Act One is set in the colonial Africa Victorian Age, where Clive, a British colonial administrator, lives with his wife, Betty, his mother-in-law, Maud, his two children, Edward and Victoria, the governess Ellen, and his black African servant, Joshua. The native tribes are rioting, and Mrs. Saunders, a widow, comes to them to seek safety. Harry Bagley, an explorer, soon follows after her arrival. Clive makes passionate advances to Mrs. Saunders, and Betty fancies Harry, who is, however, a homosexual who has sex with Joshua. Then, he mistakenly, assumes Clive to be offering him sex. After Mrs. Sanders has refused Harry's proposal, the governess Ellen, who reveals her love to Betty, is advised to marry with Harry. The first act ends with the wedding celebration. Clive gives his speech, but at this moment, Joshua readies himself to shoot Clive.

Act Two takes place one hundred years later on a winter afternoon in a London park. Some characters reappear but they only have aged for twenty years. Victoria is married to Martin and they have a boy, Tommy. In Act Two Scene One, Victoria encounters Lin, a lesbian mother who is divorced and lives with her four-year-old daughter Cathy. Betty arrives and announces that she is going to leave Clive. In the next scene, Edward is a gardener working at the park. His gay lover Gerry tells Edward that he is bored with their relationship, which is like between husband and wife. Lin falls in love with Victoria and Victoria decides to leave her husband in order to begin a lesbian relationship with Lin. Because of Gerry's departure, Edward moves to live with Victoria and Lin.

Victoria, Lin and Edward are drunk in the beginning of Act Two Scene Three. They hold a ceremony for having a sexual orgy. While Martin arrives, they jump upon

him and try to make love to him. They are interrupted by the appearance of Lin's dead brother Bill, a British soldier who has been recently killed in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In the final scene, Lin, Edward and Victoria now live together with their children. Betty reappears and soliloquizes about her sexual awakening. Toward the end of the play, Clive reappears and tells Betty that he doesn't feel the same way about her. At the last moment of the play, Betty from Act One enters and embraces Betty from Act Two.

In Act One of *Top Girls*, Marlene hosts a dinner party in a restaurant to celebrate her promotion and she invites five female guests from history, painting and fiction: the Victorian-era Scottish lady-traveler Isabella Bird; Lady Nijo, the Japanese courtesan turned Buddhist nun who traveled on foot through Japan; Dull Gret, from the painting by the 16th century Flemish painter Pieter the Elder Brueghel, who is a woman warrior charging through hell and fighting the devils; Patient Griselda, the obedient wife whose story is told in Chaucer's 'The Clerk's Tale' of *The Canterbury Tales*; and Pope Joan, who, disguised as a man, is thought to have been Pope between 854-856. In this act, these women relate their own life stories. After they compare their losses, the previous celebrating mood turns to drunkenness and weeping.

In the beginning of Act Two, Marlene is interviewing Jeanine at Top Girls Employment Agency. Marlene tells her that if she is to be sent on a job with prospects, she must not tell them that she is getting married or might have children. The second scene is set in the back yard of the house belonging to Marlene's sister, Joyce. Angie, Joyce's sixteen-year-old daughter and a younger friend Kit are playing in a shelter they have built in the backyard. Angie tells Kit that she desperately wants to go to London in order to visit her aunt. In the following scene, Marlene's female associates, Nell and Win, are interviewing Louise and Shona. At the same time, Angie has come

to meet Marlene by herself. Mrs. Kidd interrupts the conversation between Angie and Marlene. Mrs. Kidd is the wife of Howard, the man who cannot accept that Marlene has got the managing director position over him. She asks Marlene to turn down the promotion, but Marlene coldly refuses. While Win is telling her life story to Angie, Angie falls asleep. After Marlene returns, Win tells her Angie's decision to stay for working in Top Girls Employment Agency, but Marlene doesn't think that Angie has much of a future there.

Act Three takes place a year earlier in Joyce's kitchen. After Angie leaves to get ready for bed, Joyce and Marlene talk about their lives. Marlene learns that Joyce's husband left her three years ago. Marlene and Joyce have very different views of the world and their discussion turns into an argument. Marlene believes that Joyce is jealous of her success while Joyce criticizes Marlene's decision to leave her home and her own daughter, Angie. When they talk about politics, Marlene is excited about a future under the new female Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, but Joyce coldly disagrees with Marlene. When the curtain closes, Angie walks in and "Frightening," is all she says and it seems that she just has had a nightmare.

### **Critical Review**

The uniqueness of form and content of both *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* certainly has drawn the critics' attention for decades. Her unconventional techniques and controversial subject matters constantly arouse different comments after their first productions. On the one hand, some reviewers, including B. A. Young of *Financial Times* and Michael Billington of *The Guardian*, gave their unfavorable comments on the ending of *Cloud Nine*.<sup>4</sup> Frank Rich of *The New York Times* criticizes that the plot

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<sup>4</sup> B. A. Young criticizes the ending of *Cloud Nine* and doubts the meaning of the comparison of two acts. He notes, "*Cloud Nine* is full of good lines and effective little situations, but at the end of it, I felt we had seen nothing more than an enjoyable exhibition of the splendid acting of the Joint Stock Group.

of *Top Girls* is unconvincing at all in his 1982 commentary.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, other reviewers praise the theatricality of both plays. For example, Robert Asahina of *The Hudson Review*<sup>6</sup> praises the dramatic device of the cross-dressing in *Cloud Nine*; Michael Coveney of *Financial Times*<sup>7</sup> applauds Churchill's usage of the overlapping dialogue in *Top Girls*. As the time goes on, Churchill's innovative stagecraft and philosophical subject matters in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* continuously provoke numerous analyses based on different theoretical approaches. In addition to play reviews, scholars have also studied these two plays from different theoretical perspectives, including gays/lesbians study, French feminism, post-colonialism, social feminism, and Foucauldian readings for the past two decades.

The critics who resort to gays/lesbians study contend that *Cloud Nine* successfully lays bare the discrimination toward gays/lesbians and women in male-dominated heterosexual society. John M. Clum states that *Cloud Nine* is "a representation of the life and death of a patriarchal sex/gender system as it is critiqued in classical feminist and gay writings" (91). According to the conversations between Harry and Clive, homosexual desire is accused of being sinful and diseased. Clive believes that surrendering to homosexual desire is equal to surrendering his manhood because such surrender is contagious, like feminine weakness and sexual desire (Clum

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[...] Should we learn something from the comparison of the two worlds? I learnt nothing. I'm afraid...if the aim is to show, as the theme song suggests, that any kind of sexual union may be blissful, this is old news by now" (qtd. in Fitzsimmons 42). Billington also claims, "I am...sorry that Ms. Churchill's play opts not for a detailed exploration of one area, but for a frivolously superficial jog around the whole complex and fascinating territory of sexual relations" (qtd. in Fitzsimmons 42).

<sup>5</sup> Frank Rich criticizes, "We're never quite convinced that women's choices are as limited and, in the play's final word, 'frightening' as the stacked case of *Top Girls* suggests. Even in England, one assumes, not every woman must be either an iron maiden or a downtrodden serf" (qtd. in Fitzsimmons 59).

<sup>6</sup> Robert Asahina praises the cross-dressing device in *Cloud Nine*. He declares, "By mismatching the performers with their stage rules, Churchill underscores the artificiality and conventionality of the characters' sex roles" (qtd. in Fitzsimmons 41).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Coveney comments on Churchill's dramatic device of overlapping dialogue in *Top Girls* and he states, "Overlapping dialogues is a brilliant technical feature of the play, and emerging from precisely organized cross babble we hear competitive stories of rape, childbirth, transsexual disguise, ambition realized through learning, pregnancy and hunger..." (qtd. in Fitzsimmons 58).

97). The same homophobia is also revealed when Betty regards Ellen's lesbian love for her as inconceivable. Clum asserts, "Lesbianism does not exist in Clive's empire" because women never demand an existence apart from the male domination (98). The marriage in the end of Act One becomes the eternal strategy to keep Harry and Ellen in the heterosexual social order.

Based on the French feminist perspective, some critics, such as Elin Diamond and Marc Silverstein, direct their attention to woman's body as representation in the sign-signifier sense in *Cloud Nine*. Diamond examines Churchill's works by using French feminist Cixous' concept of *écriture féminine* in two of her essays, "Refusing the Romanticism of Identity: Narrative Interventions in Churchill, Benmussa, Duras" and "(In)Visible Bodies in Churchill's Theatre." In the former article, she analyzes works by three female playwrights, including Churchill's *Cloud Nine*. Diamond criticizes, "Having tampered with diachronicity, she [Churchill] now plays with synchronicity, bringing characters from Act One into Act Two without motive or narrative logic" (*Refusing* 98). This weakness makes the ending of *Cloud Nine* become "comic closure and narrative teleology rather than a decentered play" (Diamond, *Refusing* 98). In the latter article, Diamond examines the utilization of body that is used to show the powers of theatrical illusion on stage among Churchill's works.

In "Makes Us The Women We Can't Be: 'Cloud Nine' and The Female Imaginary," Silverstein agrees to Diamond's statement that "the representation of dramatic character foregrounds the ideological nature of representation" (9). Silverstein analyzes how the cross-dressing method challenges the logic of male gaze by using the French feminist Irigaray's term of *female imaginary*. In this regard, Betty in Act One describes herself as "a man's creation as you see" (*CN* 1). The



cross-dressing here manifests that “woman’s body unable to achieve authentic symbolization is invisible within the male dominant representational economy” (Silverstein 15).

Recently, a new approach to combine feminism with post-colonialism has been used to explore the close tie between the two in reading *Cloud Nine*. In his 1999 critical essay “Casting Aside Colonial Occupation: Intersections of Race, Sex, and Gender in *Cloud Nine* and *Cloud Nine* Criticism,” Apollo Amoko attempts to “parallel the sexual and gender oppression with colonial and racial oppression” (45). Amoko explores how Churchill’s stagecraft of cross-gender and cross-racial dressing crystallizes the oppressed female and racial identities in the male dominated colonial society. For instance, Amoko defines Joshua, the black servant played by a white man, as a typical figure of mimic man according to Homi K. Bhabba’s concept of colonial mimicry. Moreover, Betty’s cross gender dressing perpetuates the fact that the domesticated women parallel those docile and obedient slaves who are useful in the patriarchy and the colonial economy.

Three years after *Cloud Nine* was written, Churchill produced *Top Girls*, another play that has aroused numerous researches. Most of them emphasize the social feminist perspective and the stagecraft, including the overlapping dialogue and the all-female casting on stage. During the 1990s, many critics, including Janet Brown, Lisa Merrill and Geraldine Cousin, unfold Churchill’s censure on the bourgeois feminism in *Top Girls*. In “Caryl Churchill’s *Top Girls* Catches the Next Waves,” Brown declares that *Top Girls* catches the next wave of feminism, which is “a feminism that focuses on not the individual woman’s struggle for autonomy, but on the need for a radical transformation of society” (117). In “Monsters and Heroines: Caryl Churchill’s Women,” Merrill refers to Simone de Beauvoir’s term that “the

ambitious women and the heroines are strange monsters” (de Beauvoir 122). By geographically and emotionally distancing herself from her family, Marlene successfully gets her autonomy and social mobility. Unfortunately, she has “concentrated her energies on climbing the capitalist ladder” (Cousin 95-6). The whole play becomes the process about how this ambitious career woman Marlene is transformed from a heroine into a strange monster.

Instead of analyzing the subject matter in *Top Girls*, some other critics elaborate on Churchill’s dramatic effects by her stagecraft on stage. In *After Brecht*, Janelle Reinelt analyzes how Churchill makes use of Brechtian techniques to construct her own social feminist plays. For instance, she thinks in order to historicize the incidents in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*, Churchill “manages to create realistic fragments of life and then alienate them through skillful juxtaposition and arrangement” (*After Brecht* 89). In both plays, what happened in the past is both different and the same as the present state. Moreover, Reinelt points out that Churchill’s dramatic devices, such as cross-dressing and doubling, are “powerful social gestures in Brecht’s sense of the term” (*After Brecht* 89).

Some other critics, including Elizabeth Goodman and Lisa Merrill, applaud the overlapping dialogue in *Top Girls*. From their point of view, this stagecraft not only creates the effect of the musical rhythm in the conversations, but also provides dramatic connections between all of the characters within the play. Merrill regards those dialogues as “an elaborately orchestrated score” (83). Goodman asserts in “Overlapping Dialogues in Overlapping Media: Behind the Scenes of *Top Girls*,” those overlapping dialogues become “the textual equivalent of a musical score” (71). This unconventional dramatic device not only gives voices to those female characters, but also implies the overlapped life stories among all of those women in the play at

the same time.

While some critics pay attention to the dramatic devices of the overlapping dialogue, some critics, such as Joseph Morahl and Paul Rosefeldt, note another feature of Churchill's innovative stagecraft in *Top Girls*, the absence of male characters on stage. Marohl argues in his 1987 critical essay "De-realised Women: Performance and Identity in *Top Girls*," that Churchill's all female casting reveals the prejudice that "women should be political only about women's issues" (382). In *The Absent Father in Modern Drama*, Rosefeldt declares, "the daughters in *Top Girls* are truly obsessed with the bodiless or absent father" (132). Marlene is trapped by the control from the absent father because she shares many similarities with her father. Ironically, in order to achieve the manager position, Marlene abandons her mother and daughter, and plays the role of an oppressor in the office.

Although many critics analyze *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* separately, several reviewers disclose the similarities between these two plays from their materialist feminism and the Foucauldian readings. Based on the materialist feminist perspective, Sue-Ellen Case argues that class conflicts and differences have great influences on the characters in both plays and she regards these two plays as "examples of a happy marriage of materialism and feminism" (85). Case asserts the cross casting in *Cloud Nine* "reproduces the hierarchal, oppressive structure of class and gender privilege" (85). Besides, Case stresses the importance of class differences between Marlene and Joyce in *Top Girls*. Such differences are "dramatised in several kinds of interactions: questions of personal style and politics, attitudes towards other members of family, hopes for the future and regards for the past" (Case 86).

Different from the previous critics' gender and class approaches, some critics, including Jane Thomas and Michael Swanson, examine the power discourses, not

only those of apparatuses, institutions and individuals, but also those about the mother-daughter relation in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. According to their Foucauldian readings, the characters in both plays are “constituted within a web of power-relations which they unconsciously perpetuate” (Thomas 163). She points out that most characters in the ending of *Cloud Nine* release their sexual pleasure, but there is not any absolute truth or liberation. Those characters “do not escape the operation of power,” but they just “succeed in changing the strategic situation they are in” (Thomas 179). From this regard, Thomas claims that the hierarchy in *Top Girls* is headed by the successful male with women and girls marking its lowest position (Thomas 184). Both plays analyze the operation of power through Churchill’s dramatic devices.

While Thomas emphasizes the network of power relations between apparatuses, institutions and individuals, Swanson unearths the oppressor/oppressed relation between mother and daughter in both plays. He argues in his 1986 article that the mother-daughter relationship in these two plays is based on power rather than on mutuality. In *Cloud Nine*, such oppressor/oppressed relation mainly appears in the relations between Maud, Betty and Victoria. While Maud constantly reminds Betty of her duty in the family, Betty often refutes Maud’s statements to her in order to resist her mother’s attempt to be dominant and maternal (Swanson 50). The same “dominant mother/disrespectful daughter” model continues in the relation between Betty and Victoria in Act Two. In *Top Girls*, the same relation reveals in the relations of Marlene and Joyce to Angie. Joyce’s power over Angie is “one of the only ways that she can feel enough to live” (Swanson 55).

From the above critical survey, a fact can be gathered—most analyses and researches about these two plays are based on various kinds of feminisms. The

research on the interrelations between gender, space and time in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*, especially in the new spatial theory perspective, still leaves to be explored. Although many critics, including Elin Diamond, Lisa Merrill, Amelia Howe Kritzer and Janelle Reinelt elaborate on Churchill's stagecraft about time, most of them simply emphasize how Churchill questions the validity of time and dismantles the coherence and continuity of the traditional narrative in the contextual study of feminist drama. Diamond praises the illogical time shifting in *Cloud Nine* for its frustration of social narratives (*Refusing* 104). Kritzer claims that Churchill "experiments continually with the concept of time, testing both the materiality of stage time and the linearity of assumption about historical time" (13). Such disrupted stage conventions about time and character portrayal "highlight the social and economic conditions which govern and restrict human possibility" (Merrill 88). Although Reinelt discusses Churchill's dramatic device of temporal rupture in both plays, she only focuses on how such decoupage represents "the discontinuous and dialectic nature of history" (*After Brecht* 89). From this regard, the meaning of such temporal arrangement mainly serves to reach the purpose of Churchill's social feminist criticism.

Few critics, except Elaine Aston and Jasbir Jain, analyze the significant meanings of the spatial setting in these two plays. While Aston states how the park setting in the second act of *Cloud Nine* echoes the confused sexual orientation among characters, Jain explores how those women in *Top Girls* struggle for creating their own feminist space in the patriarchal society. Aston describes the setting of the park in Act Two of *Cloud Nine* as "a site of contradictions: where characters desire to be socially and sexually different to the heteronormative, but where children and an outmoded, traditional view of the family lay claim to their lives and time" (*Feminist*

*Views* 29-30). In other words, this park becomes an open space for displaying the confrontations between the homosexuals and the conventional heterosexual family values. In “Feminist Drama: The Politics of the Self: Churchill and Keatley,” Jain analyzes how Churchill writes a feminist world to create an emotional space which explores the universal experiences of women. She is insightful in pointing out women’s desperate need “for a new understanding of space, a shifting and loosening of boundaries, of creating more space and moving out of territorial claims” (Jain 330). However, critics only treat those issues about time, gender and space separately and functionally. I cannot see a comprehensive perspective to display how time and space are integrated together with gender politics within these two plays. Therefore, I choose *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* as the focus of this thesis, with the spatial theory perspective, to offer a social, contextual, and spatial reading of both plays.

### **Purpose of This Thesis**

The lack of the research on both time and space in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* may be partly explained by Churchill’s own explanations for the synchronism in *Cloud Nine* and anachronism in *Top Girls*. When working on *Cloud Nine*, the members in the workshop of ‘Joint Stock’ all agreed the attitude to sex and marriage that they received in childhood was very conventional, almost like the Victorian ways. Churchill also states in the introduction to *Cloud Nine* that “all characters in this act change a little for better” (CN 89). This is why she chose synchronistic arrangement for this play. But the anachronism in Act One of *Top Girls* is based on an idea for a play about some people from the past appear and have a cup of tea with someone alive in the present.<sup>8</sup> Although some critics, including Diamond, Merrill, Kritzer and

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<sup>8</sup> In the interview with Lizbeth Goodman in 1995, Churchill explained her original concept about the anachronism in Act One of *Top Girls*: “*Top Girls* was a play whose ideas came together over a period of time and in quite separate parts. I think some years before I wrote it. I had an idea for a play where a

Reinelt, focus on how Churchill's experimental stagecraft about time subverts the traditional linear narrative, they ignore the inseparable interrelation between time, space and society within these two plays. None of the critics pays attention to the interrelation between people's mental and physical conditions, and the external circumstances inside or outside the play. Moreover, only few critics, such as Aston and Jain, have mentioned about the significant meanings of the place settings, but they don't pay attention to the interrelations among those social spaces. I argue that the synchronism and the anachronism in these two plays demonstrate Churchill's observation about the relativity between time, space and gender. Because she is a social-feminist, her political concerns about the oppressed homosexuals and women are not only conveyed through the controversial subject matters, but also her dramatic devices that produce subversive social spaces in both plays. Therefore, in this proposed study, I will examine *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* by emphasizing the gendered social space in England of the 1980s from the perspectives of spatial theory and Bakhtin's chronotope.

Bakhtin's term of chronotope is insightful to discuss the relation between people's image, the spatial and temporal conditions in the literary texts. In this regard, Churchill's theatrical devices, especially the temporal and spatial settings, demonstrate how Churchill unifies people's states of being and the external cultural circumstances together at a certain historical moment. During the 1980s in London, the traditional images of women and homosexuality were challenged and destabilized. *Cloud Nine* was produced in 1979 and Churchill wrote *Top Girls* in 1982. The historical events during this certain period of time intersect with the fictional characters within these two plays. The chronotopes in *Cloud Nine* articulate this

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whole lot of people from the past, a whole lot of dead women, came and had a cup of tea with someone who was alive now [...]" (Goodman, *Contemporary Women's Theatre* 234).

crucial turning point in history when the patriarchal heterosexual empire and the restricted gender roles were facing the fate of dissolving. As to *Top Girls*, the chronotopes portray women's impasse between public and private spaces.

Since the 1970s, a new generation of Marxist geographers began to discuss the production relation between society and space. They refute the traditional perspective to simply regard space as a neutral void that has no connection with life experiences and emotions. By following their argument, the feminist geographers explore the hidden discriminations and oppressions toward women in the spatial metaphors and experiences. From this regard, Churchill reveals the fact that the spatial experience and metaphors in the patriarchal society are mostly heterosexualized and gendered in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. The spatial experiences of men are accumulated by the knowledge of space and the ability to name the usage of spaces. On the contrary, women's spatial experiences are always limited in domestic space under male's surveillance.

In addition, Churchill transforms the ordinary setting into the sites of resistance. The access to space is essentially related to social status and power relations. Through the radical strategy of occupying certain spaces, Churchill voices for the oppressed homosexuality and women in society. In the second Act of *Cloud Nine*, the park becomes an open space where lesbians and gays freely meet their lovers. In *Top Girls*, the representation of the employment agency office dominated by female workers boldly confronts the long existence of the male dominated public space. Consequently, the analyses based on the spatial theory perspective should not be absent in the scholarship on Churchill's *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*.

### **Theoretical Framework**



In order to analyze the gendered social space in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*, I adopt the spatial theories, especially chronotope, the feminist geographical theories, and the subversive theories of spatial practices. Bakhtin's concept of chronotope discusses the close interaction between time, space and the image of people in literary works. In "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," the third essay in *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin defines chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relations" (84). Based on Einstein's theory of relativity, Bakhtin adopts the idea of chronotope for use as a metaphor to express the inseparability of time and space.

Bakhtin believes that in a literary text, 'spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete one' (84). Clark and Holquist also point out that "time and space are always intertwined, but some of the ways they combine are more significant than others for revealing the specific world views from which they spring" (280). The subtitle of Bakhtin's another article, "Notes towards a Historical Poetics," indicates that he is interested in "how texts relate to its social and political contexts," rather than "in simply drawing up a typology of how time and space relate to each other within different texts" (Vice 201). Bakhtin describes the chronotope as "the means of measuring how, in a particular genre or age, 'real historical time and space' and 'actual historical persons' are articulated" and also "how fictional time, space and character are constructed in relation to one another" (Vice 200-1).

Since the 1970s, a new generation of Marxist geographers, such as Henri Lefebvre, and Edward Soja, initiated the argument about how the relation between space and society should be reconceptualized. Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* claims, "the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence" (129). Following Lefebvre's concern about space, Soja

states in *Thirdspace* that humans have been “intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatiality” (1). His research focuses on “the simultaneity and interwoven complexity of the social, historical, and the spatial” and “their inseparability and interdependence” (Soja 3). In this regard, Lefebvre and Soja perpetuate the inseparable relation between spatiality, historicity and sociality in human life. Space not only is a kind of social result that reflects and produces the social relations, but also constructs the hegemonic social relations.

Like other space theorists who crystallize the inseparable relation between space and society, Michel Foucault particularly focuses on displaying the interrelations between different social spaces. The term heterotopia first appears in the article “Texts/Contexts: Of Other Spaces” which is based on a lecture given by Foucault in March 1967 and published in 1984. According to Foucault, heterotopias are “something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (24). Heterotopias function as a mirror for self to see one’s absence and reconstitution. Therefore, in relation to other spaces, heterotopias explore two extreme poles. On the one hand, their role is “to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory” (Foucault 27). On the other hand, heterotopias play the role to “create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (Foucault 27).

Although the male Marxist geographers emphasize the interrelations between space, time and society, their remarkable researches lack the discussions about gender power relations in postmodern geographical theories. The gender dualism that defines

women as others or the unknown still exists in the researches from the male Marxist geographers. Since 1989, a series of feminist geographical theorists, such as Doreen Massey, Nancy Duncan, and Geraldine Pratt, have explored the gendered spatial metaphors and experiences through analyzing the dualism of private and public, the rhetoric of mobility, and the feelings toward environment in everyday life, and they have presented a much fruitful insight.

Massey asserts that the urban space is gendered in the very general sense of the distinction between the public and the private (233). Duncan also explores the ideology of the private-public distinction. She asserts that the private as an idea type has traditionally been associated with “the domestic, the embodied, the natural, the family, the property, the shadowy interior of the household, personal life, intimacy, passion, sexuality, ‘the good life,’ care, a heaven, unwaged labor, reproduction and immanence” (128). On the contrary, the public as an ideal type has been traditionally related with “the domain of the disembodied, the abstract, the cultural, rationality, critical public discourse, citizenship, civil society, justice, the market place, waged labor, production, the polis, the state, action, militarism, heroism and transcendence” (Duncan 128). Moreover, in “Spatial Metaphors and Speaking Positions,” Pratt mentions about three sets of spatial metaphors: the rhetoric of mobility, the position of marginality and the borderland as a place (241). Those spatial metaphors, such as traveling, migration and the flâneur, are tied to “a desire continually to displace the boundaries between centre and margin, as a neverland strategy to displace controlling reference points” (Pratt 242).

Since the access to space is related to the social apparatuses, the geographies of resistance are produced by the oppressed that attempt to change the social meaning of certain spaces. Steve Pile asserts, “struggles for power are spatialised and constructed

in space in specific ways” (*Geographies* 26). Thus, for those people who are positioned in unequal power relations, geographies of resistance are constructed by subversive spatial practices to occupy certain social space and to radically change the original meanings of certain spaces.

As shown above, spatial reading can better explicate the complicated relation among gender, space and time in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. Therefore, in Chapter Two, I discuss how Churchill unifies people’s internal states of being and the external political structures together at certain historical movements in these two plays. Bakhtin’s chronotope is useful to our understanding of the relativity between time and space within *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. In Chapter Three, I adopt feminist geographical theories to explore the hidden gender discrimination in the spatial experiences and metaphors in Act Ones of both plays. How the distinction of public and private is related to the gendered spatial experiences, sexuality and the mobility in the patriarchal society will be scrutinized and analyzed.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I will utilize the perspectives of geographies of resistance and Foucault’s heterotopia to discuss how some social spaces become the sites for women and homosexuality to manifest their autonomy and identity under the social oppressions. In Act Twos of *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*, the activities within these social spaces of resistance become a kind of performance that disturbs the hierarchy of power system and transgresses the boundaries of social classes and gender roles.