

Chapter Two

The Chronotopes of Churchill's *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*

*Women constitute **half** the world's population, perform nearly **two-thirds** of its work hours, receive **one-tenth** the world's income and one less **one-hundredth** of the world's property.*

United Nation Report in 1980

Before the 1970s, modern western theorists emphasized time, and regarded it as “the dynamic of social change” (Barker 347). On the contrary, space was considered as “dead, fixed and immobile, traversed by the movement of history” (Barker 347). Since the 1970s, the radical geographers began to discuss the interrelations between space and society and questioned the assumption that time and space are held absolutely opposed to each other. However, during the 1930s to the early 1940s, the famous Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, paid attention to the interacting relation between time, space and the image of a person in literary texts.

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin creates the literary term, the chronotope, which literally means time-space, as a metaphor “to express the inseparability of time and space” (Porter 369). According to original meanings in Greek, “chronos” means time and “topos” means space. Thus, the literary meaning of chronotope is “time-space” which “conveys the inseparability of these two factors in any work of art” (Vice 200). The chronotope in the literary texts shows “how particular aesthetic forms, including conception of human subjectivity, come about at certain times” (Vice 201). In other words, Bakhtin's chronotope elaborates the inseparable relations

between time, space and the image of a person in literary texts. Although Bakhtin only uses the term of chronotope in analyzing the novel, he also says, “any and every literary image is chronotopic” (251). Therefore, his concept of chronotope is also fruitful to apply to Churchill’s two plays, *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. This chapter attempts to make use of Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope for the purpose of reading Churchill’s *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. The problematic synchronicity and the anachronism within these two plays lay bare the complicated interrelations among time, space and the image of a person, especially during the historical turning point around the 1980s in Britain.

Bakhtin’s term of the chronotope is inspired by Einstein’s physics theory of relativity and he further explains, “we are borrowing it for literary metaphor (almost, but not entirely)” (84). By following Einstein’s theory of relativity, Bakhtin proclaims that time and space are not simply neutral “mathematical” abstractions (Morson and Emerson 367). Time and space are not to be regarded as “separate entities,” but as “inextricably interwoven” (Barker 349). Based on the previous thought, the chronotope specifies a “fused” sense of time and space (Morson and Emerson 367). The ways that time and space are fused indicate different social activities and the representations of human images. In literature and culture generally, time is always “historical and biographical” and space is always “social” (371). Based on Einstein’s discovery that crystallizes the relative relation between time and space, Bakhtin elaborates how those different articulations of time and space interact with human culture and society.

In the study of chronotope, Bakhtin not only concerns about various combinations of time and space, but also the image of a person, which is related to the process of history and the dynamic of society. Each particular relation between time,

space and the image of a person provides a particular kind of chronotope. According to Sue Vice, Bakhtin defines 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” (200-1). Different from the formalists who emphasize the fictional time and space in a literary text, Bakhtin’s chronotope pays more attentions to the internal connection in both actual history and the fictional time and space. Gary Saul Morson also explains, the chronotope is a bridge, not a wall, between the actual world as source of representation and the world of the represented (279). The analysis of the chronotope in the literary texts perpetuates the dialogical relations between the literary and the actual worlds and it also provides the access to the understanding of the human subjectivity at certain historical, social and cultural conditions.

Apparently, the fictional worlds in Churchill’s *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* have close interrelations with their historical, social and political contexts. Due to the unique differences of the historical, social and spatial backgrounds, the past and the present in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* manifest different chronotopes. *Cloud Nine* includes two different acts which are two kinds of chronotopes present how sexual politics radically changed after 1968. When *Cloud Nine* was produced in 1979, the social movements since 1968 in Britain had already forced the government to legislate some laws to guarantee the equal right for the suppressed social minorities, including women and homosexuals (gays and lesbians) and people were facing an upside-down world in which the traditional gender role and family structure were changing swiftly.

When *Top Girls* was staged in 1982, Margaret Thatcher just won her second election of the prime minister, but her strong belief in capitalism and free market policy pushed those underprivileged women who had no chance to change their lives

back to the more miserable situations. Churchill's dramatic devices about time and space in both *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* create two different chronotopes that present social changes and ideologies at a particular historical time. Moreover, her various theatrical strategies, including time contraction, synchronism, anachronism, and cross-dressing demonstrate the concrete examples of fused time, space and the image of people in terms of Bakhtin's chronotope. Furthermore, Churchill's usage of the chronotopes conveys her censures on the present society during the 1980s, including the slowness of the improvement about the stereotyped gender roles and the possible backlash in the future.

I . The Chronotopes in *Cloud Nine*: The Radical Changes of Sexual Politics

Since 1968

The chronotopes in *Cloud Nine* represent the historical moment at the end of the 1970s. Like what Susan Bennett observes, *Cloud Nine* is "very much about the lives of women in England at the end of the turbulent 1970s" (30). According to Morson and Emerson, "Different social activities are also defined by various kinds of fused time and space" (368). Therefore, the different temporal and spatial elements in the two acts of *Cloud Nine* construct two kinds of chronotopes: Act One represents the patriarchal and heterosexual society before the social movements in 1968 and Act Two portrays the changing sexual politics and family structure around the 1980s. The personal lives of the characters in *Cloud Nine* interact with the transformations of the sexual politics since 1968. Besides, Churchill's dramatic devices, such as time contraction, synchronism and cross-dressing, articulate how the physical and mental conditions of people interact with the changes in the external environment. In terms of representing such time compression between Act One and Act Two of *Cloud Nine*,

Churchill conveys her censure about the slowness of progress in the liberation of the rigid gender roles in the patriarchal heterosexual society.

As the 1960s is regarded as a decade of radical politics, 1968 is a year “when a ‘democratic opening’ for different oppressed people was thought to be possible” (Aston and Reinelt 10).¹ Before *Cloud Nine* was first produced in 1979, there were many social movements voicing for the right of the oppressed groups in British society, especially for women and homosexuals. During this period of time, two important liberation movements sprang up in Britain, the Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM) in the spring of 1970² and the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in the autumn of 1970. While the Women’s Liberation Movement raised women’s self-consciousness against the sexism prevailing in patriarchal society, the main concern of the Gay Liberation Front was to “encourage open and proud demonstration of male homosexual relationships, in reaction against the shadowy ghetto-like culture of their pre-1967 lifestyle” (Wandor 18). At the end of the 1970s, these social movements have achieved a clutch of legislative victories because the Labor Party government also began to stipulate some laws that caused positive influences on personal and sexual life.³ Like what Aston and Reinelt proclaim, this period of time seems to promise “a more progressive future socially and theatrically” (12).

As shown above, those radical changes in political attitudes and personal lifestyles intersect with each other in *Cloud Nine* and the contrasts between two chronotopes of Act One and Act Two stress the transition that interact with people’s

¹ In Europe and the United States, 1968 and 1969 were the turbulent years when sexual and political issues were discussed in various ways in many public occasions. For instance, 1968 was the fiftieth anniversary for British women to gain the right to vote. At the same year, theatre censorship was abolished by the Act of Parliament.

² The Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM) held its first national conference at Ruskin College in Oxford during the spring of 1970. After the conference, they announced their four basic demands: equal pay, equal education and opportunity, 24-hours nurseries, and free contraception and abortion (Wandor 12-3).

³ These laws include an Abortion Act and an Act for the Partial Legalization of Male Homosexuality stipulated in 1967, the Divorce Reform Act in 1969, and the Equal Pay Act in 1970.

body and mind. The chronotope of Act One spatially and temporally constructs the male dominated and firmly structured society in political and sexual politics before a time of those changes. In this heterosexual patriarchal society, the gender roles and family structure are fixed and traditional. By using African colony as the spatial setting of Act One, Churchill attempts to highlight the parallel relation between colonial and sexual oppression. The Victorian Age not only represents the golden age of the British Empire, but also the most conventional moral system of gender roles in British history.

Moreover, Churchill mentions about the reason why the temporal setting of Act One is in the Victorian age:

When we discussed our backgrounds it occurred to us it was as if everyone felt they had been born almost in the Victorian age. Everyone had grown up with quite conventional and old-fashioned expectations about sex and marriage and felt that they themselves had had to make enormous break-aways and leaps to change their lives from that. That was why it was an appropriate image for that to set the people's childhood in Victorian times. (qtd. in Aston, *Caryl Churchill* 35)

The people in Churchill's age personally experience the radical transformations about the issues of sexual politics since 1968. Compared with the much more open way of conduct in the society of 1979, the way that they were taught in childhood is the same as the conservative moral system in the Victorian age. Therefore, Churchill chooses the temporal setting in the Victorian age, rather than in Africa during the 1950s. This temporal setting causes synchronism and time compression that all the characters have aged by only twenty-five years after one hundred years have passed in Act Two. Such synchronism also marks the slowness of the progress for the issues of gender

roles. Besides, the seasonal shifting and the spatial arrangement not only construct the conservative and claustrophobic chronotope, but also indicate characters' oppressed mentality. Most of Act One takes place in "constant sunshine without seasonal change, or nighttime scenes"⁴ and it reflects "the stasis in the lives of the characters" (Patterson 170). The whole Act One takes place in a domestic place, a household where the father Clive dominates the whole family. Just like what he says in the beginning of Act One, "This is my family. Though far from home We serve the Queen wherever we may roam. I am a father to the natives here. And father to my family so dear" (CN 1). The family is Clive's property and he represents the patriarchal and colonist system that rules both the African native tribes and his family members. In the chronotope of Act One, Churchill uses a colonial setting to critique the Victorian values of Empire and family.

Moreover, the dramatic device of the cross-dressing underlines the artifice of gender roles in the patriarchal society. As Marjorie Garber claims, transvestism provides a critique of binary sex and gender roles because it "denaturalizes, destabilizes, and defamiliarizes sex and gender *signs*" (147). Clive's wife Betty is played by a man because she wants to be what Clive expects her to be. In the beginning of Act One, Betty declares to the audiences, "I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life is to be what he looks for in a wife. I am a man's creation as you see, and what men want is what I want to be" (CN 1). In Act One, Betty is a traditional woman who devotes her whole life to the family and suppresses her sexual desire toward Harry. A dummy doll plays Clive's daughter, Victoria, because she is too young to have the right to speak in this family. A woman plays Clive's son Edward

⁴ In Act One of *Cloud Nine*, the spatial settings of Scene One, Scene Four and Scene Five all take place in the same verandah. Act One Scene Three happens inside of the house. Contrasted with the shifting seasons in Act Two, the environment in Act One lacks bright lightness and temporal shifts. For example, the blinds are down in Act One Scene Three.

and it suggests that Clive wants to impose the conventional male behavior on him. The dramatic device of cross-dressing not only accentuates the artifice of traditional gender role-playing, but also suggests women's growing self-awareness after women have experienced those social movements.

Act One of *Cloud Nine* reflects that the homosexuals were seriously discriminated in the Victorian times and the marriage became the method to guarantee the heterosexual social order. When a law was passed against homosexuality in 1885, it was only male homosexuality that was made criminal (Wandor 17). From the Victorian moral point of view, female homosexuality was completely denied while male homosexuality was regarded as a threat to the image of the virile heterosexual male and the foundation of family. This general antagonism is evidenced in the play: When Harry Bagley expresses his admiration to Clive, Clive says, "My God, Harry, how disgusting" (CN 40). Harry also reveals his pain of living in the Victorian times. He says, "There is no way out" (CN 41). Harry's adventures are his secret way to escape from the heterosexual society, but ironically, Clive regards him as a model of great masculinity as being a great explorer.

Likewise, another homosexual character, the governess Ellen has an equally oppressed life. She is rejected by Betty and finally marries Harry. In the Victorian times, the female homosexual was completely invisible because "late-Victorian moral stringency assumed that women did not associate with each other" (Wandor 17). Being a governess and lesbian, Ellen's homosexual identity is completely oppressed in the patriarchal society.

Moreover, the wedding in the end of Act One significantly further reveals the patriarchal society's surveillance and control of sexual behaviors, so as to ensure the firm family structure. According to Jeffrey Week's research, "marriages, at least the

properties, in fact lasted longer during the Victorian period than ever before or since” (25). Because of the new marriage laws, especially those after 1836, the solidity of heterosexual family structure was enhanced. Since the Victorian Age, marriage increasingly became “the gateway of respectability and stability” (Weeks 24). From Clive’s perspective, homosexuality is a kind of horrible sin and disease that would damage the family structure and betray the Empire. Therefore, when Clive knows about Harry’s homosexuality, he says, “You must save yourself from depravity. You must get married” (CN 41). In this regard, heterosexual marriage becomes the strategy not only to produce more legitimate sexual relations, but also to create easy manipulations for the homosexuals.

Like what Bakhtin claims, at any given time, literal text offers various chronotopes that conceptualize the “image of people, the process of history, and the dynamics of society” (Morson and Emerson 371). As a contrast to that of Act One, the chronotope of Act Two represents the changing and uncertain gender roles and family value in the 1980s when Churchill wrote this play. Both its spatial and temporal arrangements interact with the mental and physical transformations of these characters in Act One, especially Betty, Victoria and Edward. The park setting and the seasonal changes are the significant spatial and temporal elements in Act Two. Unlike the static chronotopic setting of Act One, Act Two quickly proceeds from winter afternoon, spring, summer night, to afternoon in the late summer. Like what Petterson comments, in Act Two of *Cloud Nine* the move from winter to late summer indicates “the flux in the lives of the contemporary figures” (170). While Act One takes place in an African colony and a domestic home place, Act Two occurs in a park in London, an open area where people with different sexual identities encounter with each other. Just like what Aston describes, the park in Act Two is “a site of contradiction: 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 the beginning of Act Two, the lesbian single mother Lin encounters Victoria in the park. Also, Edward meets his homosexual lover Gerry in the park. The park becomes a spatially and spiritually open space for all kinds of sexual orientations.

Corresponding to the openness and fluidness of time and space in the chronotope of Act Two, all the characters played by their own sex and they are loosened from the restrictions of conventional gender roles. The female characters in Act Two not only begin to have more autonomy to express their sexual desire, but also obtain more economical and physical mobility in life. They are getting out of the traditional gender role as a faithful housewife and mother at home. For instance, Betty who appears to be a traditional housewife in Act One decides to leave her husband Clive and begins to work in Act Two. Betty responds to her mother Maud in Act Two Scene Four, “But mother, I have a job. I earn money” (*CN* 82). The economical independence provides her a chance to live alone and the courage to live alone without Clive. Having the economic independence, Betty also gains the physical and mental mobility. When her son Edward informs Victoria of Betty’s coming, he says, “Victoria, mother’s in the park. She’s walking round all the paths very fast” (*CN* 52). Betty’s appearance in the park indicates that she has conquered her fears and begun to step into the space outside of the household.

Betty’s spatial and physical mobility interacts with her autonomy of enjoying her sexual life. In Act Two, she talks about the experience of masturbation in childhood, “I used to touch myself when I was very little, I thought I’d invented something wonderful. [...] And one night in bed in my flat I was so frightened I started touching

myself. I thought my hand might go through space” (CN 82). Her bold soliloquy reveals the self-discovery about her sexual subjectivity as a woman. Moreover, Betty encounters Gerry in the end of Act Two and invites him to be her guest at home. She says, “Or don’t wait to be asked to dinner. Just drop in informally. I’ll give you the address shall I? I don’t usually give strange men my address but then you’re not a strange man, you’re a friend of Edward’s. [...] I am married for so many years it’s quite hard to know how to get acquainted” (CN 86). Different from the oppressed and faithful wife in Act One, Betty, taking the initiative in dating, is going to be herself as a woman, not a mother or wife anymore.

Not only do women depart from the conventional female role in the patriarchal society, the whole family structure is completely upside down in Act Two. Compared with Act One, there is no traditional marital relationship in Act Two. Both Lin and Betty get divorced. Although Martin, a writer who is writing a novel about women from women’s point of view, “helps with the washing up and everything” (CN 51), Victoria still decides to leave him and go to stay with Lin. As to the condition of Edward and his lover Gerry, Gerry doesn’t want to keep the regular relationship with Edward.

Take the only “family” in Act Two as example. This family is composed of a gay, two lesbian mothers, and the children. Like what Edward tells to Gerry:

GERRY. Whose wife are you now then?

EDWARD. Nobody’s. I don’t think like that any more. I’m living with some women.

GERRY. What women?

EDWARD. It’s my sister, Vic, and her lover. They go out to work and I look after the kids.

GERRY. I thought for a moment you said you were living with women.

EDWARD. We do sleep together, yes. (CN 81)

Edward doesn't work as a gardener in the park any more and he does the housework and babysitting for Lin and Victoria. Apparently, Edward plays the traditional mother role while two mothers, Lin and Victoria work outside. Just like what Gerry once told Edward, "I'm not the husband so you can't be the wife" (CN 71). Act Two reveals how the traditional family structure and gender roles are radically changed and reversed after those liberation movements in the 1980s.

Moreover, the park scene in Act Two significantly portrays the geography and nature of homosexuals in the 1980s.⁵ The park in Act Two becomes a kind of playground where these characters try out different roles and possibilities (Cousin 44). Different from people in Act One, lesbians and gays in Act Two obtain more freedom to express their sexual identities and acquaint with their lovers in public. In the beginning of Act Two, the single lesbian mother Lin flirts with Victoria by asking her to go to movies together on Friday night. In Act Two Scene Two, Lin even boldly asks Victoria:

LIN. Will you have sex with me?"

VICTORIA. I don't know what Martin would say. Does it count as adultery with a woman?"

LIN. You'd enjoy it. (CN 57)

Lin never tries to hide her sexual identity as a lesbian and her admiration to Victoria, an apparently heterosexual married woman.

Act Two of *Cloud Nine* also presents typical gays' sexual experiences during the 1980s. According to Edward's lover Gerry, he occasionally acquaints with different

⁵ In Chapter Four, I will explore more the significant meanings of this park in Act Two of *Cloud Nine*, especially its interrelations with the family space in Act One of *Cloud Nine*.

lovers in public places, such as pubs, saunas, train station and the park. For instance, in Act Two Scene Three, Gerry describes, “I come here sometimes at night and pick someone up. Sometimes I come here at night and don’t pick anybody up. I do also enjoy walking about at night” (CN 77). His soliloquy indicates the common experiences among gays in the 1980s; they used to encounter their playmates in terms of wandering in these certain public spaces. In *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600*, Randolph Trumbach recounts Joe Orton’s diary that was shown to him in 1978. Orton illustrates vividly the life in London’s homosexual world. In the 1980s, gays used to meet each other in saunas, although they were not allowed to have sex on the premises. Moreover, they also encountered each other late at night in some places of central London, such as Russell Square where they sometimes had sex in the bushes, or went home together (Trumbach 109-110). What Orton writes in his diary is similar to the life style that Gerry experiences in Act Two. Different from the oppressed and branded homosexuals in Act One, the spatial fluidity of physical body in the environments of gays and lesbians during the 1980s indicates the autonomy of expressing their sexual desire and identity.

II. The Chronotopes in *Top Girls*: Women’s Dual Roles in the Thatcherite Years

The chronotopes in *Top Girls* represent the essential contradiction between women’s dual roles as domestic mothers and as waged career women in the public sphere and it comes to the climax in the Thatcherite years of the 1980s. Commenting on his 1982 production of *Top Girls* in 1991, Max Stafford-Clark asserts,

Caryl wrote [*Top Girls*] immediately following the first Thatcher election victory, and it was first performed in 1982, so it captures a moment when opportunities for women—to become executives, to have business career,

etc.—were expanding. [...] *Top Girls* captures a particular moment of history. (Goodman, *Overlapping* 76-7)

As shown above, the actual historical time and space have great influences on the fictional world of *Top Girls*. Margaret Thatcher, the first female prime minister from 1979 to 1990 in British history, can be regarded as the most representative example of being an outstanding career woman. Her electoral victory since 1979, however, is a fortunate and unfortunate thing for women. It's fortunate because as the supreme head of British government, she resembles the paradigm women can aspire to. It's unfortunate because Thatcher's firm belief in capitalism doesn't benefit those women who are not so resourceful and ambitious.

Like what Bakhtin declares, "our particular totally integrated sense of space and time shapes our sense of reality" (Morson 279). Different chronotopes reflect Marlene and Joyce's different temporal and spatial senses about their lives. Moreover, Churchill's usage of the chronotopes in *Top Girls* indicates her criticism on the society around 1982. Although the anachronism in Act One provides a historical review about the repression on women, the temporal arrangement of Act Three, which happens one year earlier than Act Two, reveals that those men-like women still give the same oppression to their underprivileged sisters. There are more and more outstanding women who have great achievements in their careers and they even occupy the positions that were originally privileged to men only, but their success is not equal to the progress of those underprivileged women. In such social and political contexts, the chronotopes in *Top Girls* are constructed by the temporal and the spatial representations between two sisters, the remarkable career woman Marlene and the working class single mother Joyce.

Top Girls' setting in wide history is the Thatcherite years of the 1980s. Just like

what Stuart Hall states in *The Hard Road to Renewal*, Thatcherism is “a historical turning-point in postwar British political and cultural life” (1). After WW II, British Labor Party, the principal centre-left political party in the United Kingdom, won the election three times for seventeen years and established a social welfare system.

British Labor Party assumed itself as a Democratic Socialist party and was a member of the Socialist International. It followed the Keynesianism that encourages having more public spending in order to stimulate the economic development. However, after Margaret Thatcher, the leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990, won her first election in 1979, she began a decade of radical changes in Britain. The changing political environment turned the ‘social-welfarism’ of the first two decades to the ‘market individualism’ of the 1980s (Meehan 189). Thatcher’s right wing ideology is called “Thatcherism” which emphasizes controlling public expenditure and promoting opportunities for personal achievement. It is characterized by a free market economy which encompasses Thatcher’s policies of strengthening the powers of central government, curbing the powers of trade unions and local government, and promoting individualism and private enterprises.

Under such political and cultural circumstances, Churchill’s *Top Girls* represents her observation of and criticism on “the uncaring nature of capitalism and the market values championed by Thatcher’s government” (Chang 162). In 1984, when Churchill talks about her ideal feminism in an interview, she restates the necessary connection between socialism and her opinion about Thatcher:

Thatcher had just become prime minister; there was talk about whether it was an advance to have a woman prime minister if it was someone with policies like hers: She may be a woman but she isn’t a sister, she may be a sister but she isn’t a comrade. And, in fact, things have got much worse

for women under Thatcher. (Betsko and Koenig 78)

Compared with British Labor Party, which has stipulated some laws to improve women's right, Thatcher's government rarely publicly addresses about women's issues and "there has been little legislation directed specially towards women" (Chang 163). Churchill crystallizes the similarity between Thatcherism and Darwinism for women. Therefore, she writes *Top Girls* in order to express her worries about the bleak future for those underprivileged women.

In order to represent Churchill's observation and worry about the political and cultural circumstances in the 1980s, Marlene and Joyce, the two main characters in *Top Girls*, stand for two different chronotopes: Marlene is the successful career woman who just gets the promotion in 'Top Girls' Employment Agency; her sister Joyce is the working class single mother who lives in the country and takes the responsibility of taking care of their mother and Marlene's daughter Angie. The spatial and temporal construction of their lives and how time and space interact with their mental and physical status constitute two different chronotopes in *Top Girls*.

The spatial elements in Marlene's life chronotope are the restaurant in Act One and the office in Act Two. They indicate not only Marlene's close attachment to these public urban spaces in daily life, but also her outstanding achievement in the public domain. In both spaces, Marlene is the one who owns the definite control of economy. While she has the money to hold up a party in the restaurant for herself in Act One, she has the power to provide people with jobs in Act Two. In a word, Marlene's life seems affluent and promising.

The restaurant in Act One is the place where Marlene invites five female guests to celebrate her promotion. Two of her guests are actual historical women, Isabella Bird, a Victorian traveler, and Lady Nijo, a Japanese courtesan in the 13th century. In

this surrealistic act, they have a chance to have conversations with three other guests of the fictional time and space, such as Lady Joan who reigned the church during AD 854-856, Dull Gret, the subject in Pieter Brueghel the Elder's painting, Patient Griselda, an obedient wife from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. The anachronism of these female guests "defies the logic of historical, chronological, and spatial representation, as Churchill plays with the dramatic conventions which traditionally govern time, place and character" (Aston, *Caryl Churchill* 38). Churchill's dramatic device of anachronism in Act One temporally and spatially constructs women's oppressed history. The conversations between them and Marlene in Act One break the boundary of time and space because these women from very different historical times, cultural background, literary texts and even painting share with Marlene about their similar experiences of being daughters, wives, mistresses and mothers. Just like what Marlene toasts to her guests, "We've all come a long way. To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements" (*TG* 13). From this regard, Marlene is not only celebrating her promotion in the career, but also the progress in women's long oppressed history in patriarchal society.

The second significant space for Marlene's chronotope is the office, 'Top Girls Employment Agency,' in London city. Apparently, Marlene is a workaholic woman who spends most of her time in the office and work. Significantly, Marlene, but not the male employee Howard, is appointed to be the managing director of the office, so she becomes the person who has the power to dominate this office space. In fact, Marlene's job in the employment agency is definitely influential at this particular historical moment when unemployment in Britain is the highest in Western Europe. According to the research, the unemployed population during this time rose to 3 million (Lane 67). To illustrate further, between 1971 and 1982 in London city, Roy

Porter also points out that “manufacturing jobs fell from 1.09 million to 0.63 million – a drop of 42 percent” (348). Under such circumstances of high unemployment, her life is full of appointments with those people who seek job opportunities. When Kit asks what’s so special about Marlene, Angie answers, “She gets people jobs” (*TG* 41). The chronotope here temporally and spatially represents the life of being a successful career woman in the 1980s. Like what she says, “I think the eighties are going to be stupendous” and she is going “up up up” (*TG* 83).

Different from Marlene’s, the other chronotope spatially and temporally presents the life of her sister Joyce. The spatial elements, which contribute to this chronotope, are the backyard and kitchen. Compared with Marlene’s urban, competitive and wealthy life, Joyce’s is rural, poor and pessimistic. She is a single mother who lives in the country and takes care of their mother and Marlene’s daughter Angie. Although Act Two is mostly about Marlene’s office life in London, there is one scene located in Joyce’s backyard. In Act Two Scene Two, Joyce’s nagging Angie about cleaning up her own room. Her daughter Angie wants to leave home and goes to find her aunt Marlene in London. The spatial arrangement of the backyard scene in Act Two not only indicates her embarrassing situation, but also highlights the contrast between Joyce and Marlene’s lives. In Act Three, Joyce says, “I’ve got four different cleaning jobs. Adds up. There’s not a lot round here” (*TG* 82). Joyce is unable to be like any of those middle-class career women who can pay for babysitting. Moreover, she unfortunately loses her own child because of taking care of Angie, “Listen, when Angie was six months I did get pregnant and I lost it because I was so tired looking after your fucking baby / because she cried so much – yes I did tell you - / and the doctor said if I’d sat down all day with my feet up I’d’ve kept it / and that’s the only chance I ever had [...]” (*TG* 81). Being a single mother and a typical working class

woman living in the country, Joyce represents those women whose lives are more afflicted while facing the decreasing social welfare aids and the increasing unemployment rate under Thatcher's government.

The temporal contrast between the chronotopes of Marlene and Joyce is the historical setting about Thatcher's first victory in election in 1979:

MARLENE. And for the country, come to that. Get the economy back on its feet and whoosh. She's a tough lady, Maggie. I'd give her a job. / She just needs to hang in there. This country

JOYCE. You vote for them, did you?

MARLENE. needs to stop whining. / Monetarism is not stupid. (*TG* 83-84)

After Marlene admits her support for Thatcherism, Joyce gives her comments, "What good's first woman if it's her? I suppose you'd have liked Hitler if he was a woman. Ms Hitler. Got a lot done, Hilterina. / Great adventures" (*TG* 84). What matters is what she has done, not her gender. Although Margaret Thatcher is the first female prime minister in British history, her political achievements rarely concern about those women who comparatively lack the necessary ambition and resourcefulness.

Moreover, the temporal arrangement of Act Three, which happens one year earlier than Act Two, indicates Churchill's prediction about the pessimistic future for those underprivileged social groups in the Thatcherite years. Apparently, the uncaring nature of Thatcherism might pull back the progress of women's right in British society. Marlene, like Thatcher, has a "firm belief in a class system that favors those who most profit from it, and suppresses those who aren't 'going to make it'" (Lane 67). Marlene's strong belief in Thatcherism is revealed in her conversation with Joyce in the kitchen:

MARLENE. If they're stupid or lazy or frightened, I'm not going to help them get a job, why should I?

JOYCE. How about Angie?

MARLENE. How about Angie?

JOYCE. She's stupid, lazy and frightened, so what about her? (TG 86)

Both Marlene and Thatcher believe that the poor have to take the responsibility of their own poverty and hard working is the only way to change their lives. Joyce's anger speaks for herself and Angie. It is obvious that Angie is not a smart student at school because she "has been in the remedial class the last two years" (TG 77).

Different from Marlene, Joyce and Angie would suffer the fate of not being 'first-rate' (Aston and Reinelt 14). Under the circumstance of high unemployment in the 1980s, Joyce can never put down her responsibility of taking care of the family and go to seek better job opportunities in London. Angie doesn't want to live in the static environment with Joyce, so she decides to run away from home. She attempts to work in Marlene's office in Act Two, but the cruel fact is that there is no chance for her to be like Marlene. As shown above, the strong belief of capitalism in Thatcherism benefits the bourgeoisie Salariat. Joyce, being a working class woman who takes care of her daughter and mother alone in the Thatcherite years, has to face a more pessimistic future where there is not much chance for women to change their lives. It is difficult for Angie, such a girl who is not very resourceful and ambitious in the 1980s, to have a chance to enter Marlene's office in London in the future.

In conclusion, Churchill's time and space devices on stage construct two different kinds of chronotopes in both *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. In a word, the chronotopes in both plays reveal how Churchill has unified people's internal states of being and the external political structures together at certain historical moments.

Moreover, the chronotopes also convey Churchill's observations of and censures on some social problems while writing these two plays in 1979 and 1982. The time contraction in Act Two of *Cloud Nine* only from 100 years to twenty-five years indicates the little improvement about the rigid gender politics. However, although the chronotope in Act Two represents the more open and various gender roles in 1979, the shadow of the old system is still lurking. The chronotopes in *Cloud Nine* reveal how people are confused by the extremely different types of gender roles between the Victorian way in their childhood and the much opener one after 1968. As to *Top Girls*, Churchill presents two kinds of chronotopes that articulate two different women's lives under the Thatcher government, especially about women's impasse between personal career and family duty. While the anachronism in Act One provides a spatial and temporal connection between Marlene, Margaret Thatcher and other outstanding women in history, the temporal and spatial arrangements of Act Three relate to Churchill's criticism about the possible backlash in the Thatcherism. For those disadvantaged women in the 1980s, such as Joyce and Angie, they might have to face a bleaker future under such circumstances.