

A Hot Christmas in Africa: the Dismantling Climate in Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*

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At the end of the 19th century, Britain reached its peak of imperial power. As the British expanded their colonial power across the ocean, they expected resistance from the colonized peoples but they still succeeded in subjugating their colonized relentlessly. However, hardly had they foreseen the encounter with the natural environment would accelerate the precipitation of the collapse of the empire. Few British writers have tried to deal with the backlash of the colonial process against their country.¹ Contemporary British playwright Caryl Churchill not only exposes the oppression of British colonization in Africa in Act One of her *Cloud Nine* (1979) but also implicitly reveals the dismantling power of weather and climate in Africa as an empirical and metaphorical counterforce. On the hot Christmas in Act One the seemingly conventional British characters are stripped off their dogmatic masks to reveal their irrepressible sexual desires. This local natural power and the menace from the natives sabotage the Victorian patriarchal social codes in Act One and anticipate the full-blown emancipation of sexuality in Act Two.

Ever since *Cloud Nine* was staged in 1979, it has attracted great attention from audiences, reviewers, and drama critics. Although abundant research has based itself on this provocative play, the critic Apollo Amoko in his "Casting aside Colonial Occupation: Intersections of Race, Sex, Gender in *Cloud Nine* and *Cloud Nine* Criticism" notices that whereas a disproportionate amount of study on the play focuses primarily on its feminist accomplishment, there is "the near total exclusion of any in-depth or sustained examination of race and colonialism" (45).² He argues

¹ Besides Caryl Churchill (discussed in this paper), the critic Bart Moore-Gilbert mentions Daniel Defoe, Joseph Conrad, and Rudyard Kipling as some British writers who investigate the complicity of Western culture in the attitudes and values underpinning the process of expansion overseas(8). Other writers discussing this issue in their works include E. M. Foster, Doris Lessing, and the playwright Peter Shaffer who questions this colonial project in his *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*.

² Famous criticisms on *Cloud Nine* include John M. Clum's "'The Work of Culture': *Cloud Nine* and Sex/Gender Theory," Geraldine Cousin's "Possibilities Realized and Denied," Elin Diamond's "Closing No Gaps: Aphra Behn, Caryl Churchill, and Empire," "(In)Visible Bodies in Churchill's

that in these critical examinations, racism and sexism only occasionally interpenetrate and at best racism is only discussed to illustrate sexism (45-46). The critic Hsiao-hung Chang in her “Decolonizing the Dark Continent: Race and Sexuality in *Cloud Nine* and *The Hospital*” also stresses the danger or fallacy in appropriating the racial issue for the discussion of sexual issue or vice versa (125). Indeed, much has been said about the sexual and gender oppression depicted in *Cloud Nine*; however, little has been devoted to the racial and colonial repression in the play, particularly with reference to the postcolonial backlash from the perspective of climate. To illustrate this climatic counterforce in *Cloud Nine*, I will employ post-colonial theories expounded by Hommi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin to unravel the unheeded but disturbing sign of the African climate and natives and the effect following such a colonizing encounter dramatized in the play.

Cloud Nine, a play of two acts, is set in colonial Africa during the Victorian era in Act One and present-day London in Act Two. Act One depicts how Clive, the head of the British colonial subjects in Africa, dominates his family and the colonized in the colony, whereas Act Two mostly explores his grown-up children’s lives in London. Although Act One happens in 1879 and Act Two in 1979, the same characters appear in both time periods and they only age twenty-five years.

1. The Cold, Bright Britain vs. the Hot, Dark Africa

In Act One, Clive, the colonial governor, is the male pillar of the Victorian Empire and the patriarch of the Victorian family consisting of him (the patriarch), his docile wife Betty, their effeminate son Edward, their silent daughter Victoria (played by a dummy), his mother-in-law Maud, the lesbian governess Allen, and the black servant Joshua. His opening lines depict his roles: “I am a father to the natives

Theater,” and “Refusing the Romanticism of Identity: Narrative Interventions in Churchill, Benmussa, Duras,” and Helene Keyssar’s “The Dramas of Caryl Churchill: The Politics of Possibility,” all of which are primarily concerned with sexual politics in the play. Amoko also gives more examples by Austin Quigley, Janelle Reinelt, and Ann Herrman. For the disproportionate focus in *Cloud Nine*

here, and father to my family so dear.”³ In fact, both roles are closely related to each other because both the empire and family rely on a very strict top-down hierarchical structure. To buttress both structures, Clive needs to exercise surveillance, making sure all the subjects are in their assigned and allotted places.

Throughout Act One, he endeavors to maintain the world he wants to see. He has to impart to the colonized a fixed inferior identity so he can maintain superiority. Furthermore, he also justifies his colonization by the name of bringing civilization to these uncivilized savages. It is what Homi Bhabha calls “‘double duty bound,’ at once a civilizing mission and a subjugating force” (71). He wishes to see the tamed colonized reflecting and confirming his beliefs. Homi Bhabha contends this kind of stereotyping fetishizes the colonized other. Fetishism, Bhabha states, “is always a ‘play’ or vacillation between the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity...and the anxiety associated with lack and difference” (74). The colonizer wants to feel “complete and stable in his relation to the stereotyped colonized” (Finger 85). But the colonizer’s status possesses inherent instability because the repressed is never as tamed as he expects. Therefore, Clive has to subjugate the indigenous. Now placed in an exotic territory far away from the center of the empire, he is particularly preoccupied with the resistance of the natives.

At the beginning of the play, we immediately learn that he is threatened by the Dark Continent—Africa. His menace is from the rebellious indigenous people, including those natives off-stage and the converted native on stage, Joshua. Equally deceptive and unsettling is the exotic climate. Together these menaces strike back against the empire.

Extremely distant and different from the imperial center, Africa is a dangerous other. With threats unfamiliar to them in every way, Africa challenges things the British take for granted and menaces to shackle their recognition and faith. Africa is the embodiment of fear itself. Postcolonialism scholars Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin also see the unease and anxiety all colonialists had

criticism, please see Amoko, pp. 45-46, and his note 3, p. 57.

³ Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine*, Methuen’s World Dramatists Anthology Edition (London, 1985), 1.

experienced ever since the Spanish conquest of Central America: “Imperial conquest has always destroyed the land and often regarded the human occupants as disposable, almost as if they were a species of exotic fauna. But the conquerors themselves, the present controllers of the means of communication, those who have subjugated or annihilated the original occupants could not feel at home in the *place* colonized” (1989: 82). They use Heidegger’s term *unheimlichkeit* (1927) or ‘not-at-homeness’ to describe the colonizers’ sentiment.

No sooner have the British soldiers conquered the Dark Continent than they learn that it is impossible to sustain their victory in a foreign and exotic land. As Clive puts it precisely, this continent is “dark,” “mysterious,” and “treacherous” (16). Moreover, once they are far away from the imperial center, the imperial hold seems to diminish. When Harry confesses his love to Clive, the revolted Clive thinks it is because Harry has “been away from England too long” (41). The distance matters a lot here. Just as Clive has put it, everything in Africa “[has] never been right” and only the things from home, such as boots, are right (2). As if too far away from home where the sun is, Africa is deprived of sunlight and whoever visits or inhabits here is also vulnerable to deprivation of the sunlight.

2. Menace: the Local Rebellion

On the surface, the British are the colonizers controlling this vast territory; however, they are never certain if under the surface the colonized are truly docile, so they live in anxiety and fear, not knowing when the indigenous will rebel. Clive and other men do not talk about the rebellions openly especially in front of the women and children, but there is no question that the local people have been giving the British a lot of “trouble” (23-24; 37). As Clive at the outset of the play informs their family friend Harry, “there was trouble last night where we expected it. But it’s all over now” (37). In passing Clive mentions that the British soldiers “did a certain amount of damage, set a village on fire and so forth,” but in the disguise of this brief

description violent and brutal repression is conducted in company with mass murder and arson. As reported by their widowed neighbor Mrs. Saunders, Joshua's "father was shot" and "his mother died in the blaze" (42) and their whole village is extinguished. We can assume that the more diabolic the oppression is, the bigger the local rebellion is, and the stronger the colonizer's fear is.

The oppression, however, is never satisfactory in terminating the fear because there is always more subsequent fear or rebellion to come. When Clive avows "Everything is under control," he always betrays himself by adding a supplementary remark: "but nobody should leave the house today I think" (37). The "but" is the troubling twist to cancel out the confident tone, which reveals the colonizer's preoccupation with this dangerous continent full of, in Clive's words, "savages" (a preoccupation strengthened by Harry's report of one tribal king having a lot of skulls [13] and Clive's calling the natives, "cannibals" [15]). Clive's repetitive statement "Nothing to be frightened of" (28) only courts more suspicion about how hard it is to maintain their colonial occupation. Between men discussing the "spot of bother" (13) Clive can only say, "Not a word to alarm the women" (12). In fact, right at the beginning of the play, the characters, women and children, have already sensed the looming dangers around. Therefore, even if it is not openly specified in the play, the local menace is pervading.

Moreover, mentioned briefly in passing in the text is the potential trespassing and transgression of Mrs. Saunders's cook's tribe (16) and, more prominently, Clive's stable boys' misconduct with a possible intention to rebel (20). We are not told a lot about the threat to Mrs. Saunders but to this sensitive and independent widow getting away is the only thing she could do to eliminate her fear. In contrast, we learn more about the stable boys' threat. According to Joshua's report, "The stable boys are not to be trusted. They whisper. They go out at night. They visit their people" (20). Obviously, the stable boys' secret excursion is a menace to their white boss so that they deserve to be flogged. Even if there is no rebellious or evil intention behind their visit, the white boss still cannot allow this kind of transgression because it is the unknown that gives the oppressor limitless conjecture

and fear. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin remark, “The corpus of post-colonial literature is replete with examples of the fear that the dominated will gain knowledge and hence power” (1989: 85). Accordingly, punitive regulation to the extent of inhumanity is a necessary evil with which Clive justifies himself. Amoko notices that the flogging suffered by the colonized Africans for their “misbehavior” parallels “the beating suffered by Edward for transgressing prescribed gender roles” (49). Apparently, colonialism has to entrench itself through the materialization of subjects as “oppressed bodies.”

However, Clive knows clearly that colonizing this Dark Continent can bring about a boomerang effect. When commenting on flogging the stable boys, he tells Betty:

You can tame a wild animal only so far. They revert to their true nature and savage your hand. Sometimes I feel the natives are the enemy. I know that is wrong. I know I have a responsibility towards them, to care for them and bring them all to be like Joshua. But there is something dangerous. Implacable. This whole continent is my enemy. I am pitching my whole mind and will and reason and spirit against it to tame it, and I sometimes feel it will break over me and swallow me up. (33)

The Dark Continent, the uncivilized, the savage, is not as easily dominated as the colonizer has expected. However hard Clive tries to maintain order there, it can dismantle the colonizer’s power sooner or later. When analyzing slavery in British abolitionist poetry, Roland Finger also discerns a boomerang effect, which corrupts British culture and people. He believes that “the supposed civilizing mission de-civilizes Britain” (84). Likewise, in this “Dark” continent, the heart of darkness, in Joseph Conrad’s terms, creeps into the noblest mind, too.

When asked by Betty what they can do to the stable boys after their punishment, i.e. what they can do to the potential retaliation or rebellion, Mrs. Saunders replies, “I would do what I did at my own home. I left. I can’t see any way out except to

leave. I will leave here" (29). Mrs. Saunders suggests that the colonizers abandon their colonial occupation and ambition because they are now trapped in an impasse and because the indigenous people have become unpredictable. Unlike Mrs. Saunders, the colonizers at this stage cannot abandon their mission because they have "a high ideal" (87) and because if they do so, it will be a gesture to admit their failure in confronting the visible and invisible local rebellion.

3. Menace: Joshua

The colonizers cannot completely subjugate the rebellious. Nor can they truly control those who appear to be subjugated. The best example for the seemingly dominated native is Joshua. On the surface, he seems to be submissive and faithful, a perfect convert to the British imperial mission. At the inception of the play this black African poses himself obsequiously echoing the postcolonial irony in "The Little Black Boy" by William Blake: "My skin is black but oh my soul is white. I hate my tribe. My master is my light. I only live for him. As you can see, what white men want is what I want to be" (2). We can detect Franz Fanon's "black skin white mask" in this convert's opening lines.⁴ The conflicts of his ethnic background, his skin color, his racial identity, and his oppressed body are further enhanced by cross-racial casting on stage.⁵ As has been pointed out, the noticeable consistency linking all the cross-gender and cross-racial casting in Act One effectively manifests Churchill's expressed authorial intent (Harding 264). The self-loathing, internalized inferiority complex, the envy of his colonizer, and the equation of his master's desire with his own prove how he is transformed by the colonial ideology. Thus he wins over his master's trust because he has always been a faithful servant to him for eight years.

⁴ Churchill has mentioned the influence of Franz Fanon on her playwriting, especially in *Cloud Nine* (playwright's preface, n.p.). Joshua's internalized inferior complex obviously corresponds to the Algerian doctors criticized harshly by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Mask*.

⁵ According to the playwright, "Joshua, the black servant, is played by a white man because he wants to be what whites want him to be" (playwright's preface, n.p.). According to Amoko, this use of cross-racial casting does "destabilize and problematize this conflation" (51).

However, this black African is an ambivalent sign; he is both the subjugated and subjugator. According to Bhabha, colonial mimicry is “the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as *a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage” (86). Therefore, in imitating his white patriarch Clive, Joshua disowns his skin color, his parents, his people, as he proclaims at the outset of the play, “My master is my light. I only live for him... What white men want is what I want to be” (2). However, under the faithful mask still lurks Joshua’s sovereignty over himself. He appropriates the trust from his colonizer master and subverts the subjugated role into a subjugating role. His autonomy is embodied in four things in the play. In the first place, he transforms himself from a subservient servant to a power broker and manipulator. While he appears to be a dutiful servant reporting everything clandestine to his master, he also in this way obtains some power over his master and other subjugated indigenous people. He informs Clive of the stable boys’ misconduct in visiting their people at night, hinting at some potential rebellion. Consequently, the stable boys are flogged and the executor of the punishment is Joshua, replacing the white head. His words now influential and manipulative, he can exercise his power over Clive and his people.

Secondly, he transforms himself from an obedient servant to a disobedient servant. Although he is supposed to be a black servant, he only takes orders from his ultimate master, Clive, and refuses to take orders from his white matron and young master. At the beginning of the play, Betty complains to Clive about Joshua, saying, “He is rude to me. He doesn’t do what I say” (5). Moreover, he defies them by teasing them disrespectfully. When Betty orders him to fetch things for her, Joshua does not move and uses a joke to refute and satirize her (“You’ve got legs under that skirt... And more than legs” [35]). He uses his white master’s ideology to discriminate against his matron simply because a white woman is supposed to be discriminated against by a white man. Refusing to take orders and ridiculing his less superior masters, he equates himself with his white boss. In fact, his defiance is also

indirectly acknowledged and encouraged by his master when Clive winks at him behind Betty's back (6). The secret winking and male bond not only cancel out the previous admonition but also empower the servant. Accordingly, he repeatedly rejects taking orders from lesser masters, regarding himself as their equal.

When Edward (the young "idealizable" white subject) orders him to do things, Joshua rejects doing his bidding by teasing Edward for his effeminacy. Again, he transplants the white ideology of binary opposition to oppress his white but underage master whose conduct deviates from expected gender roles. By refusing to take Edward's order, he also assumes he is the whites' equal. When Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Triffin define mimicry, they point out the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized: "When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to 'mimic' the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits" (1998: 139). They further explain that the result of such mimicry is "a 'blurred copy' of the colonizer that can be threatening." Joshua's refusal to take orders from his masters on account of the white ideology he is expected to mimic is a pertinent example to illustrate the ambivalence of mimicry.

Thirdly, by retelling and appropriating Christian theology in his own way, he transforms himself from a supposedly devout Christian to a parodic pagan. Although he declares that Clive is his parent and his parents are not his true parents, he still puts earth on his head upon hearing of his parents' deaths (41). Verbally speaking, he claims to have severed himself from his old ties, family and tribe alike, but behaviorally speaking, he still practices his tribal beliefs. Another thing to show the inconsistency of his words and behavior is the tribal creation myth he fabricates for Edward. Instead of narrating Genesis, he tells a creation story of the great goddess and a tree monster, both of whom later engender mankind (36). We do not know if this story is his tribal myth but it is certainly tinted with Christian elements because of the involvement of "the great spirit" and a bad woman. He also distorts the Bible, especially the origin of man, to suit his purposes. When asked whether his creation story is true or not, he replies, "Adam and Eve is true. God made man white like him

and gave him the bad woman who liked the snake and gave us all this trouble” (36). In a sense, his reductionism also reflects how his teachers, Clive and the Victorians, are Eurocentric and misogynist. Nonetheless, his creation myth serves to reveal how he can “appropriate” the “master narrative.”

Finally, he transforms himself from an oppressed servant to an assassin. His rebellion is concretized and perpetuated by this act of shooting his master. In shooting his white master at the end of the act, Joshua makes himself conversely the oppressor. We are not given much information about the build up of Joshua’s shooting, which has been criticized as “a decontextualized act of violence” (Amoko 54);⁶ however, we do find the bond and trust between Joshua and his master weakened not long before the shooting incident. When Clive is told about the relationship between the governess and his wife, he chides Joshua in disbelief. The critic Hsiao-hung Chang regards this conflict as the major reason for Joshua’s shooting, which is an appropriation of Oedipus complex (133). However, I would like to argue that it is partly because Joshua is discouraged by his master’s distrust, partly because he is encouraged by the wine he keeps drinking at the wedding of Harry and Allen, but mostly instigated by his will, that he raises his gun to shoot Clive at the end of Act One. This reading is based on the theory of colonial mimicry as consistently demonstrated in the previous discussion and to be further explained below. Although, as we learn in Act Two, Clive is not dead, Joshua’s act of shooting has actualized the reversal of the roles in their binary opposition.

This external submission with internal violation in different degrees of rebellion is, as the critic Apollo Amoko suggests, the “colonial mimicry” which Homi Bhabha classifies (52). As discussed previously, Joshua also enjoys power over his master, his matron, his young master, and his people. Furthermore, he appropriates the dominant ideology to suit his purposes as revealed in the hybridized creation myth. His secret narration to Edward about a creation story directly

⁶ Apollo Amoko criticizes Churchill’s arrangement of Clive’s shooting and regards it as “a contrived re-enactment of the stereotype of the randomly violent and murderous African” (54). Different from his comment that the shooting “undermines its dissident potential,” I contend in this paper that there are three reasons behind Joshua’s act of shooting, which also illustrate the menace of mimicry.

contradicts the biblical story they are both required to proclaim. Although he corrects himself by concluding that it is “a bad story” (56), his conspiratorial distortion and its influence on Edward illustrate the menace of mimicry. When Bhabha describes this kind of “mimic man,” he also points out that the discourses of colonialism have inevitable discursive failure by dramatizing the inability of these discourses to contain difference; hence, he claims, “mimicry is at once resemblance and menace” (86). In spite of his submission and subservience, Joshua possesses some power and he embodies “the threat or menace of mimicry” (Amoko 53).

Churchill has been praised for her ingenious conflation of multiple but inter-related sites of white patriarchal oppression: the colonization of Africa and the enslavement of African bodies, and the metaphorical colonization of women and children (Amoko 49). She intersects the discourses of race, gender, and class in the colonial arena and makes them parallel each other. Therefore, the potent menace for each dominant regime is equally salient. In addition to the menace from the rebellious indigenous people, Clive also experiences menace from inside his family and his own irrepressible sexual desire. Throughout Act One, he tries to maintain the Victorian family he wants to see, a dutiful husband, a faithful wife and a manly son (and a silenced daughter) because family is the chief enforcer of patriarchal values. But now he himself is a husband seeking sexual pleasure with another woman, his wife desires an affair with an explorer, and his son refuses to be manly and wants to have sex with a man. This topsy-turvy state is further fostered by their gay family friend, lesbian governess, and sexually aggressive, behaviorally independent widowed neighbor. As if challenging the rigid, hypocritical, and in Elin Diamond's term, “hallowed” (1985: 277) Victorian codes on gender and sex, Clive, Betty, Edward, Harry, Ellen, Joshua, and Mrs. Saunders liberate themselves in this cloud nine chaos of gender roles and sexual conduct.

4. A Hot Christmas

Clive's wife puts the blame of the chaotic state on the confusing climate (39).

Although it seems she is only finding an excuse for her (sexually) transgressive attempt to confess her love to Harry, Betty is correct in pointing out the dismantling effect of the climate in Africa, especially in its amazing power to strip off one's "civilized" countenance. The best manifestation of such climatic counterforce is their hot Christmas picnic on the African prairie in Act One scene two where the traditional cold and snowy Christmas is subverted by the hot and dry African Christmas.

The traditional Christmas, normally white and cold outside the house, warm and joyful inside the house, is a holiday for Christians to celebrate Christ's birthday and for family members to gather together. Through Christmas, religious spirit and family's social and ethical functions are celebrated and reinforced. As depicted in the Christmas carol the characters sing in *Cloud Nine*, the backdrop of a British Christmas should be cold and white:

In the deep midwinter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone.
Snow had fallen snow on snow
Snow on snow,
In the deep midwinter
Long long ago. (27-8)

This snowy, white, cold Christmas, a scene with which we immediately associate traditional British Christmas, is now far from them and is something "passed" ("long long ago"). Instead, it is replaced by a hot and veldtish Christmas.

Moreover, hidden in the Christmas carol is the difficult natural conditions for the British to make a living. The cold weather, the frosty wind, the iron earth, and stone water all add to the difficulties of surviving to them; hence, these British people have developed a very practical, rational, and aggressive philosophy of life,

which was further justified by Darwin's theory of evolution. This also causes their ambition to invade and conquer others' land. However, in a place whose climate is radically different from that of their homeland, their philosophy of life, their way of doing things, their ideology are challenged and corrupted. Africa and its natural environment are simply not like home.

The "not-at-homeness" and "uncanny" essence of Christmas in the form of picnicking on the prairie thus marks the difference of Britain and Africa with regard to climate, natural landscape, and culture. It seems when one is in cold England, one is rational about and abiding by the social norms; however, when one is in hot Africa, one is loose and the repressed (sexual) part emerges to take action thanks to the local climate.

The African climate is distinguished in its unbearable heat and its glaring sun. As a crucial factor in this play, the heat in Africa is the dismantling power. Throughout Act One, the characters unwittingly mention the overwhelming power of heat. Clive is glad to be home because it has "[t]he coolth, the calm, the beauty," (4) which implies that the outside—the African world—is hot, disquieting, and ugly. The "heat" of the day is so overwhelming that these British colonizers are driven into the "gloomy and solemn" house (32). Furthermore, the southern sun is so bright and glaring that at home "the blinds are down so the light isn't bright though it is day outside" (28). The African sun forces these northerners into the house, but compared to the open bright outdoor world, their manmade closed gloomy indoor life is suffocating. Even Clive cannot bear the dead house so he has to demand to "have some light" (32).

The African climate is not only different from its British counterpart but also subversive to the British ideology and behavior. When the characters refer to the climate in Africa, they describe it, especially the night air, as "deceptive" (7). When Ellen fears to be separated from Betty, Betty comforts her by saying, "It's the loneliness here and the climate is very confusing" (39). The sun and the heat in Africa are so permeating that, to the British colonizers, they are unbearable. However, paradoxically, whereas the sun and the heat are driving them insane, this

African climate at the same time is emitting its disarming and dismantling power. The hot climate “confuses” these Victorians and gives them a liberating power to unmask them or to uncover what they dare not express in a cold, rational, and familiar geographical context.

In addition to befuddling the characters and stripping them off their masks, the climate further exposes the logocentric nature of Western imperial thought. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin also find such biased binary views in western travel writers’ works: “Despite their detailed reportage of landscape, custom, and language, they inevitably privilege the center, emphasizing the ‘home’ over the ‘native’, the ‘metropolitan’ over the ‘provincial’ or ‘colonial’, ...At a deeper level their claim to objectivity simply serves to hide the imperial discourse with which they are created” (1989: 5). Now confronted by the “different” climate, the logocentric nature of imperialism is made manifest. Therefore, the climate of the colonized land in this play serves not only as an empirical difference but also as a metaphor to unsettle the colonizer’s logocentricism.

The juxtaposition of the Western colonizer and the exotic colonized can also be found in Rudyard Kipling’s poem “Christmas in India.” Like Clive and other characters in *Cloud Nine*, the narrator in the poem also compares Christmas in Britain and Christmas in India and places the former as the home, the center, the worthy one and the latter as the alien, the marginal, the worthless other. As the narrator describes and bemoans how the colonizers pass their Christmas in India, we detect a strong sense of difficulties in adjusting to the alien land because the poetic diction is filled with exotic or negative words about India. Contrasted with “at Home they’re making merry ‘neath the white and scarlet berry—,” Christmas in India, with tamarisks, parrots, stench, cattle crawling, and hymns, is exile.⁷

The narrator in “Christmas in India” fears to be trapped in a foreign land and to be forgotten by the center. After all, this is not his home. As “Home” is capitalized in the poem, it is easy to discern his worship of the Empire and denigration of India.

⁷ For Kipling’s poem, please see
< <http://www.allthingschristmas.com/stories/ChristmasInIndia.html> > .

The binary opposition is reinforced by the metaphor of Mother for Britain and Stepmother for India. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin hold that the evocative description of Christmas day in the heat of India is contextualized by invoking its absent English counterpart: "Apparently it is only through this absent and enabling signifier that the Indian daily reality can acquire legitimacy as a subject of literary discourse" (1989: 5).

However, in the concluding lines, the narrator sadly proclaims that their toil overseas is doomed: "With the fruitless years behind us, and the hopeless years before us, / Let us honor, O my brother, Christmas Day!" The narrator simply requests "a truce" to their labors so that they may return home to "feast with friends and neighbors" (implying those in India are not friends and neighbors). Otherwise, he thinks Christmas in India is merely "one mocking Christmas." The retrospection in Kipling's poem corresponds to Mrs. Saunders's proposition to leave Africa. Both Caryl Churchill and Rudyard Kipling suggest in their works that colonization soon confronts such vital problems as whether the colonizers themselves would be swallowed up by the darkness, by the lack of justification for their imperial mission, and by the collapse of their own ethical and moral values. When elaborating on the definition of mimicry, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin also contend that mimicry "reveals the limitation in the authority of colonial discourse, almost as though colonial authority inevitably embodies the seeds of its own destruction" (1998: 140).

Placed in the southern hemisphere, the Victorian colonization is forced to undergo its retrospection and disarmament. It is on this hot Christmas that these seemingly conventional British are stripped off their masks to reveal their irrepressible sexual desires. Caryl Churchill employs gender and sex as the most dynamic issue to examine whether the westerners' logocentrism, both in imperial and patriarchal ideologies, is valid or not. Therefore, in Act Two of the play, any possible representations of gender and sex are manifested to present a full-blown stage, and to contrast the rigid phallogentrism of the Victorian and/or colonial world in Act One. It is quite significant to see it is Africa and its tropical climate which "confuse" the characters; it is Africa and its heat and sun which liberate the

conservative Victorians; it is the savage which strips off the civilized masks; it is the marginal which enlightens the center. To be specific, distance, climate, or the other's culture, is but a catalyst which triggers the collapse of the Empire because the subjugator is himself the subjugated in ethics, moral, and sexual hierarchy.

Since colonial Britain was history by the 1970s, there is not much depiction of it in Act Two, except the ghostly appearance of Lin's dead brother, Bill, and the appearance of Clive at the end of the play. Bill is killed as a soldier in Northern Ireland, the only officially colonized territory of Britain left on earth. "From the 1970s through the 1990s, many British soldiers were killed by the Irish Republican Army, a terrorist organization fighting to free Northern Ireland from British rule" (Aubrey).⁸ With none but Ireland left, Churchill naturally devotes little to the colonial oppression, with the exception of the residual imperialism in Northern Ireland. But even so, Churchill still satirizes the remaining colonial ideology and practice through a dead soldier who complains about the absurdity of his death (76).

At the end of the play, Clive, who has been absent in Act Two, comes to tell Betty how amazed he is to see the great change of Betty. Refusing to accept her radical changes, Clive utters, "I cant' feel the same about you as I did. And Africa is to be communist I suppose" (87). Referring Betty's change to Africa's change, he seems to doubt the belief he had before. The patriarch at the end of the play seems to interrogate and forsake his past colonialism. He continues to say, "I used to be proud to be British. There was a high ideal. I came out on to the verandah and looked at the stars" (87). Churchill indigenously employs Clive's retrospection as closing lines to link with and satirize the opening lines when all characters gather to sing their imperial chorus:

All (sing). Come gather, sons of England, come gather in your pride.

Now meet the world united, now face it side by side;

⁸ When Churchill worked with Joint Stock Theatre Group in 1978, she noted "that when the actors in *Cloud Nine* conducted workshops about the play, they suggested that Britain's relations with Ireland were much the same as a stereotypical male/female relationship." See Bryan Aubrey, "Critical Essay on *Cloud Nine*" in *Drama for Students* <<http://galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>>.

Ye who the earth's wide corners, from veldt to prairie, roam.

From bush and jungle muster all who call old England 'home'. (1)

The British take it for granted that they can take others' land as theirs and their act to conquer more is to glorify their home, old England. But Africa and African people are not theirs, as the African climate has dawned on them. Echoing what he has said in Act One, this high ideal and imperial project are mocked and deconstructed. The play then ends in a coda blatantly ridiculing the high idea of colonialism.

Postcolonialism critics (Bhabha, Spivak, JanMohammed, etc) "have sought to offer ways of dismantling colonialism's signifying system and exposing its operation on the silencing and oppressing of the colonial subject" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989: 177). Likewise, Caryl Churchill also successfully dramatizes the colonial oppression in her *Cloud Nine*; moreover, she also exposes the menace of mimicry in the colonial arena. In addition, Churchill uses this climatic counterforce as a postcolonial counter-hegemonic device to challenge the white regime and dominant ideology. Confronted with the totally different and deceptive climate in Africa and the indeterminate Africans, the British colonizers inevitably lose the hold of and claim on their colonized subjects as well as themselves.

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