

**Social Relationships in Time of Technology and
Information in
Caryl Churchill's *Love and Information*
A Research Paper**

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This research paper revolves around the kind of social relationships and the various representations related to postmodernism in Caryl Churchill's play *Love and Information*. Critics have shed light on the feminist concepts illustrated in this play, and little attention is allotted to what resources modern technology could endow the dramatist to achieve his purpose. Therefore, this study is mainly concerned with the kind of social relationships in a world where world-wide communications brought about by the latest breakthroughs that have their tremendous impact on not only mankind in general, but also on literary works, especially drama. Hence, *Love and Information* can be regarded as a very good representative of the new literary mode reflecting one significant aspect of the reality lived by man during the period of postmodernism.

الخلاصة

يدور البحث حول نوع العلاقات الاجتماعية والمعطيات المتنوعة ذات العلاقة بمسرحية مابعد الحداثة الموسومة (العشق والمعلومات) للكاتبة كار جيرجل. لقد سلط النقاد الضوء على جوانب مناصرة المرأة كما هو واضح في هذه المسرحية، وقد صب التركيز على تلك المصادر التي من الممكن ان تقدمها التكنولوجيا الحديثة وكيف لها ان تهيأ للكاتب المسرحي معلومات عن العلاقات الاجتماعية في عالم يحقق فيه التواصل الاجتماعي واسع النطاق من خلال آخر ماتوصل اليه العلم الحديث تاثيره الكبير على ليس الجنس البشري بشكل عام فحسب بل حتى على الاعمال الادبية سيما المسرح. ونتيجة لذلك تعد مسرحية (العشق والمعلومات) ممثلا جيد جدا لاتجاه ادبي جديد يعكس جانبا مهما من الواقع الذي يعيشه الانسان خلال فترة مابعد الحداثة.

April de Angelis

To the majority of people, the new technology related to viral communication assuming many and various means has become something very interesting. They so immensely immerse in and enjoy it that they become addicted to it. Addiction of any sort has its effects on the life of man as seen by many psychiatrists, especially his moral, social and familial relationships. The embrace of the internet, mobile and other modern social media represents a turning point in the lives of people who can now text one another while sitting in rooms of the same house and who can communicate with their relatives all round the world. People can communicate with whoever they like easily. This new technology has its impacts on the social relationships of humans—positive and negative. It is positive in the sense it facilitates communication, and it is negative on the grounds that it makes human isolated from one another. Actual communications by means of direct meetings seems to be scarce. Traditional social behavior has been affected to the extent that people may lose intimacy as they rely more on digital devices in their communication, not on face-to-face meetings. Churchill has been thusly considered an innovative in the art of modern contemporary drama in that what she gives the theater is something that has not been attempted before:

It's only fitting that American Conservatory Theater should inaugurate the Strand, its new second stage in the city's tech corridor, with a recent play by the inexhaustibly original British playwright Caryl Churchill — a writer who has embodied innovation far longer than any of today's reigning Silicon Valley geniuses....Churchill has been not only one of the most radically inventive dramatists of the modern era but also one of the most trenchantly observant.

(Charles McNulty, ٢٠١٥).

Therefore, human nature and their relationships have been greatly affected. Researches in this respect may show that nowadays there exist fewer intimate relationships and fewer confidants. Interestingly enough, users of the new communicative devices have more social relationships than nonusers of them. The new digital devices thus become part and parcel of our daily life. here come the responsibility and role of novelists, dramatists and even poets to deal with this new aspect of the human life for the sake of representing a realistic depiction of life and for the sake of meeting the needs and the taste of the new generation that has already been equipped with the new digital devices. Due to the representation of presumptive relationships among people, the dramatist is in a position to enact scenes of changing patterns according to what the situation and the people involved in communication are. In a word *Love and Information* can be said to have been a kaleidoscopic drama in which there are short scenes related to issues that concern contemporary society—issues pertaining to many and various subject matters

including love which is the concern of humanity as a whole. Hence, its scenes which are seven in number are given diverse titles such as "Affair," "Secret," "Fate," "Chinese Poetry," etc.

Love and Information was enacted for the first time at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre located in London on September ٦th, ٢٠١٢. Because those subject matters are different from one another as seen in the published script, the scenes can be played in any order or in the order specified by the dramatist. Besides, random scenes attached at the end of the play can be played at any interval within the sections given.

Due to the changing roles of characters and the random scenes witnessed by many and various characters in *Love and Information*, the play comprises more than one hundred characters that figure in contextless scenes with the exception of some stage directions which delineate clarifications necessary for the understanding of them that are embedded within the narrative created by the characters involved. Historically speaking, *Love and Information*, premiered in the United States by the New York Theater in ٢٠١٤, was directed by James Macdonald.

Critical Analysis

A drama is a representation of an action occurring in a certain place and at a certain time, telling of human life and experience. It is often related to contemporary life and intended to deal with the problems of the individual and society as well. The kind of plays written in the age prior to the modern age—the age of optimum technology and communications and information—usually deals with the social themes such as love, marriage, education, adventures and other subject matters, realistic and fictitious, being expressive of the age in which it is written. The modern age has already witnessed another kind of drama, this time the drama that is closely related to the new themes and problems arising from a new age—the age of communications and information. Due to the appearance of a new era characterized by novel developments, the problems of the individuals with his/her aspirations have changed to into something else. This research paper is mainly concerned with the impact of the new technology on the life of man as reflected in Caryl Churchill's (١٩٣٨-) play entitled *Love and Information* (٢٠١٢). For literature is regarded as being very important to society in that it can be a mirror of the things and events which are found in a particular age within a particular society. In a word, literature, especially drama, is a reflection of the past, present and future of the world with all its merits and demerits. It can also give people the kind of solace and comfort to reduce their pains and anxieties.

The play under consideration can be an immediate reflection of the world in which we are living for the time being, being related to a human experience related to our modern age which is the age of information. A review on *Love and Information* shows that Churchill's new play consists of ٥٧ scenes which exhibit ١٠٠ characters. One of the important yet exciting theatrical perspective, according to Michael Bellington is that "we live in a world where information bombardment is in danger of leading to atrophy of memory, erosion of privacy and decay of feeling" (Michael Bellington, ٢٠١٢).

Love and Information is regarded as being an extraordinary work and an indication of Churchill's innovative imagination as a playwright dealing with a subject matter that is closely and intimately related to man living at this moment. Her plays as a whole show a sense of experiments, which bear resemblance to the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein (Wikipedia.https://.wikipedia > Ludwig). It has been suggested that a profound sense of worried and unhappy future concerning man living in a society in which actual human relationships are replaced with a speedy communicative process represented by the new technology in this respect. In the play in question, there is a reference to a woman who is concerned about the present catastrophes on successive generations of the future. For instance, a man tries to record to a woman his impressions about the recent tsunami during his sitting in a bar, which she considers to be mere images of TV (Wittgenstein, ٢٠١٦). Moreover, it is noticeable that Churchill tackles in this play many and various themes related to general and private subject matters related to contemporary man "living in a dizzyingly changing world" (Wittgenstein, ٢٠١٦) as it is pointed out by Billington who proceeds to reveal one of the ironies of modern technology that a man declaring his ideal love, saying "she's beautiful, she's intelligent, she understands me" only to show that he is speaking to a computer (Wittgenstein). One may come to the conclusion that the main moral to be detected from the play that Churchill aims to recognize among people men who themselves control the new technology rather than be controlled by it, and as Belington puts it in his wording of this theme: "This doesn't mean Churchill's play is some attack on technology; she is saying that we have to be master rather than its slave and learn how to live with the cascade of fact and opinion" (Wittgenstein). It is significant to notice, therefore, that the play can be taken

as a documentary yet historical record of the kind of life lived by contemporary man. Churchill may suggest that man's aspirations for knowledge and experience needs to be mingled with the desire for love, as the title of the play indicates.

Love and Information, according to Ben Brantley (٢٠١٤), presents a subject matter that mirrors contemporary society in that it is a topical one. She "ingeniously and exhaustively mirrors our age" (Ben Brantley, ٢٠١٤), and he proceeds to say that the play shows that form and content in it are inseparable, whose segments all tell of how people deal with bits of knowledge and information which the characters have strong desires to learn them, process them and eventually reject them; the play may be considered sentimental in that each individual in it is trying to communicate with another for the sake of mutual understanding, which points to daily struggles in this regard (Ben Brantley, ٢٠١٤).

Love and Information is centered on a scene-by-scene basis, each with a familiar situation representative of another to be found in our daily life. for instance,

A family gathered to watch home videos; friends debating the existence of God, or discussing natural disasters like tsunamis; a couple considering dinner plans. A more exotic moment, in which a man describes falling in love with a computer voice, brings to mind the current movie "Her," and there are portraits of individuals grieving over loss and failure that could slide right into a Lifetime movie.

(Ben Brantley, ٢٠١٤)

It may be suggested that the many and various scenes are exhausting. Nevertheless, they give us a particular point of view about the way how we consider the world and the universe around us. It is indicated that the first short scene of the play displays a man and a woman involved in a conversation. The woman keeps a secret which the man wants her to disclose, an idea which she does not approve, and she finally tells him what the secret is. This process does not affect their relationship. What matter most here in this respect is the familiar situation one can experience with one's husband or wife in actual life. The scene alludes to what will happen next, and the performers of the other scenes are to embody people of many types of relationships—friends, lovers and strangers "for whom knowledge is received and perceived quiet differently" (Ben Brantley, ٢٠١٤).

Such a play as *Love and Information* should project characters speaking the language of many and various sciences such as subject matters related to maps, chickens, mathematics. For instance, there appears a man who thinks profoundly of the philosophy of real numbers. Others talk about their long-lived relationships or friendships, and some other people may think whether they knew one another in the past. This can be a bit of the kind of life inflicted by the use of computers and other modern technological devices devised for the benefit of man in general. Of course the languages employed by people are many and the subject matters talked about or perceived are many and various. For instance, a woman talks with a young man about matters related to sex and other subject matters related to love experiences. As a conclusion, Churchill aims to show in this drama a topical subject matter which illustrates what modern technology has done to man. In a word, it changes his way of life, his way of thinking, and his way of doing things, not to mention the interest and joy one can feel when ancient methods of communication have been changed into optimal ones serving man in one way or another:

With a title like *Love and Information*, Forum Theatre's newest show grants itself a wide warrant, delivering quite a bit of the former and volley after volley of the latter. The show really gets fun when you follow along with the meta-theatrical game Forum plays with the playwright, but whether there's more than just a game here is hit and miss.

(Marshall Bradshaw, ٢٠١٧)

It is not surprising that Churchill's *Love and Information* does consist of a series of nameless because the audiences are introduced to "voices ... in a collection of encounters circling around the central preoccupation" (April de Angelis, ٢٠١٢), and therefore the spectators decide what conclusions may be obtained from their communications in relation to the sense obtained from the scenarios, connected and disconnected, that are possibly to occur. The play's main concern is to set the audiences in two positions where they have characters want to know and want to love. The scenarios exposed to the spectators and the readers pose certain demerits as to the understanding of conversations made by people who could sometimes let the audiences make grounding for what they are hearing. Hence, the stage directions made by the dramatist are very necessary in so far as they create the kind of context and environment to encompass the dialogues and make the audiences have immediate understanding of what they are listening

to. This may be the main reason why Churchill is sometimes of inserting ambiguous representations and as explicated by de Angelis (٢٠١٢):

In the scenario entitled "Lab", the most precise scientific rendering of the slicing of a chick's brain in order to understand the pecking mechanism is particularly brutal for being conveyed in unemotional scientific jargon. One starts to wonder – what is information without love? Is it a madness like the obsessive fan in "Fan" where the need to know everything, disguised as love, threatens in another way?

love in this play is a relationship between two persons which requires communication and communication is made according to the kind of information which they exchange during the course of the development of their love. Sometimes, a bit of information may destroy the love relationship or may seem odd, and therefore the kind of information should necessarily be as significant as love itself is. At the same time, it can be realized that the characters may refer, discuss and ponder various subject matters, giving their own point of view according to their schemata as a particular point such as the concept of evolution. Moreover, haphazard scenes are presented on the stage due to the fact that the subscriber of the website are of different personalities and different countries, whose identities do not make a unified character that contribute to a unity in the drama presented, each with its likes and dislikes, distinct way of thinking and distinct aims and aspiration, not to mention their distinct intentions:

There are random scenes, see at the end, which can happen any time. The characters are different in every scene. The only possible exception to this are the random Depression scenes, which could be the same two people, or the same depressed person with different others. This text went to press before the end of rehearsals and so may differ slightly from the play as performed.

([Canberra Critics Circle](#), ٢٠١٥)

The characters themselves are made types, being given abstract names such as "The Child Who Didn't Know Pain," and "Wife," and so on. Even the scenes are given general titles such as "Earthquake," "Wedding Video" and "Depression" (see the Appendix). Besides, the scenes presented show a sense of "jump" mode, with absolutely no connection from one to the next" ([Canberra Critics Circle](#), ٢٠١٥). Thus, the element of discussion cannot be overlooked, which can be regarded as realistic representations in so far as it is often practiced by characters representative of those actors on the stage:

In one scene, someone tries to explain our behavior as the result of the "random" nature of evolution – but, interestingly enough, evolution is not mathematically random in fact, even if we are not able to predict from one state of a species what the next step will be to another state. Since we can't even predict who we will fall in love with, we might think our genetic make-up is random, but looking back we can see there's a process involved (as Mendel found out about peas in a pod).

([Canberra Critics Circle](#), ٢٠١٥)

It may be assumed that one may enjoy the production of *Love and Information* due to the skilled design set by the dramatist and the pleasurable improvisation made by the actors when witnessed by spectators. The information given in the play is supposed to be very brief and the characters are nameless with the exception of the character of Mr. Bradshaw, and at the same time the characters are not given a clear-cut description of their personalities as is case in the real world where people are often conservative concerning the aspects of their personalities. This is the reason why the director Michael Dove has been left to behave and give roles to them according to what he considers to be suitable (Marshall Bradshaw, ٢٠١٧).

As a conclusion, Churchill has been cleverly a pioneer in the field of the kind of drama piercing deep into the societal relationships that are closely related to the contemporary individuals and societies as well, which culminate into making touches upon global issues. This technique is reminiscent of the dramatic monologue technique that allows the speaker to think loudly and express himself/ herself freely, apart from the dramatist who stays hidden behind the curtain and irresponsible of a character declares or states. Furthermore, Churchill's works in general and *Love and Information* in particular is an attempt to unfold not only simple issues and relationships, but serious matters, public and private, such as capitalism, jingoism and totalitarianism, which do not set them aloof from the universal tinge of the theater: "It was only a matter of time before Churchill addressed our smart phones. In *Love and Information* she explores with characteristic insouciance the way an endless stream of data — some of it dazzling, much of it banal — has altered our relationships to one another and to ourselves (Charles McNulty ٢٠١٥).

“THE CHILD WHO DIDN’T KNOW SORRY: You have to say you’re sorry. I’m not sorry. But you know you hurt him. You have to say you’re sorry. I don’t feel sorry. You have to say it.

CLIMATE:

I’m frightened. Just walk instead of driving and don’t take so many hot baths. I’m frightened for the children. There were those emails those scientists, I can’t remember the detail no it didn’t make any difference in the end no I think you’re right, most scientists all agree it’s a catastrophe. The question is how bad a catastrophe. It’s whether they drown or starve or get killed in the fights for water: I’d choose drowning. Are you really not going to take it seriously? I don’t know how to. I don’t know how to.

CENSOR:

Page forty-two. Page forty-two. The sentence beginning ‘On the ١١st of May. . .’ Yes, I’ve got it. I’m afraid that’s going to have to go. Why is that? The Ministry of Defence considers it a breach of security. It’s not classified information. That is nevertheless their view. About thirty. Let’s hear the next one then.

WIFE:

But I am your wife. You look like my wife. That’s because I am. Look, even that little birthmark behind my ear. Look. Yes, I see it. It’s me. Darling sweet, it’s me. I’m here. No, she’s gone. They’ve all gone. Who’s gone? Everyone I know. Everyone who loved me. No, I love you.

LOVE AND INFORMATION

I don’t want you to love me, I don’t know you. There’s things only we know, aren’t there. That day on the beach with the shells. You remember that? Yes, of course. And cabbages. Why is cabbages a funny word, we’re the only ones who have cabbages as a joke because of what happened with the cabbages. Cabbages is a joke, yes? Cabbages was a joke I shared with my wife. I miss my wife. But I am. . . Let me touch you. If you’d see what it feels like to touch me. If we made love you’d know it was me because there are things we like to do and no one else would know that, if I was a stranger pretending to be her I wouldn’t know those things, you’d feel you were back with me, you would I know, please. You disgust me. You frighten me. What are you?

DECISION:

I’ve written down all the reasons to leave the country and all the Reasons to stay. So how does that work out? There’s things on both sides. How do you feel about it? No, I’m trying to make a rational decision based on the facts. Do you want me to decide for you? Based on what? The facts don’t add up. I’d rather you stayed there. Does that help?

THE CHILD WHO DIDN’T KNOW PAIN:

But what is it? Pain is pain, it’s just if I pinch aah, get off. But if I pinch you nothing nothing at all but stop because I get bruises. How come you don’t I never did when I was a baby you were born like yes and I used to chew my fingers you mean chew? and they got bandages put over or I’d chew them to the bone because you know how babies put everything in their mouth I’d put myself in my mouth because I wasn’t any different. And if you fell down I threw myself down because it didn’t hurt jumped down a whole flight of stairs because that was a quick way and you were all right boke both les and once when I went swimming there were rocks under the water and when I came out my legs were pouring blood because I hadn’t felt so you can’t feel anything emotions I feel feelings but physical not pain, no. And why not? because there’s no signal going up to my brain from your legs from anywhere to my brain to say there’s damage, it’s hurting so you never know what hurting is so tell me what it’s like. Hurting is well it’s pain, it’s like uncomfortable but more, it’s something you’d want to move away from but you can’t, it’s an intense sensation, it’s hard to ignore it, it’s vey but why would you mind that? because it hurts. But no, sometimes pain’s all right if it’s not bad like if your gum’s sore and you keep poking it with your tongue or you might cut your finger and you hardly notice, yes if you’re doing something exciting, soldiers can lose a leg and not even know it. that’s like me yes but why, what is it? if someone’s tortured if they give them electric shocks it’s unbearable or if they’ve got cancer sometimes they want to die because my uncle yes but I still don’t know what it is about pain it’s just pain but what is it? You’ve been unhappy? Yes if someone you love doesn’t love you, you thought they loved you and they don’t yes or you’ve done something you wish you hadn’t done it’s too late now and you’ve hurt someone and there’s nothing you can do to put it right yes does that help? So it’s like being unhappy but in your leg? But it’s also just what it is, like red is red and blue is blue. But red isn’t red, it’s waves and it’s red to us. So there you are, that’s what it’s like. Can I pinch you again?

Have you seen the earthquake? There's this building my god you think things are solid but they just break. Yes I've seen it. Imagine being in it, imagine you're lying on your back and there's this wall a few inches above your face and you can't sit up even an inch and if you do it might come down on you. And the air running out, you keep trying to get a deep breath but you can't breathe deeply enough because very soon there's going to be no more oxygen. And if you were injured if you're in pain while all that's going on and where are you family are they dead or in agony and will anyone come to get you out and how many hours or days, I'm just so upset by it. But you don't care.

LOVE AND INFORMATION:

I can't say I feel it, no. You really feel it? I cried. Of course I feel it. I cried. Ok. And imagine the wave coming, imagine hearing it coming and running away and you can't get away, it came fast did you see how fast it came? Yes, I saw it. You're not upset though. That black wave with the cars in it was awesome." (Churchill, Caryl, ٢٠١٢)

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