

# Love and Technology of Power: Politics of Information in Caryl Churchill's *Love and Information*

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## Abstract

In the contemporary society, digital technology has become a revolutionary force of human progress that transforms people's way of life. The impact of digital media and globalisation has shrunk the world and connected people across the globe together. However, the compressed world where exchange of information is unbelievably fast is not as free as commonly perceived. Although digital network brings people together in virtual communities, oppressive structure of the society still remains intact. This paper examines dramatic techniques in Caryl Churchill's latest play *Love and Information* (2012) through the lens of Marxist and poststructuralist theories. In this paper, I argue that Churchill appropriates Bertolt Brecht's dramatic elements of epic theatre as a tool to criticise a social condition of the digital culture. The play's distancing effects do not only expose the arbitrariness of social structure, but also gives voices to the marginalised and urge the audience to see their present condition more critically.

**Keywords:** *drama, epic theatre, technology, information, politics*

## 1. Introduction

Caryl Churchill has been widely-known as one of the greatest living dramatists who, since the 1950's, has written more than forty plays. She is recognised as a socialist feminist whose several plays such as *Vinegar Tom* (1976), *Cloud Nine* (1979) and *Top Girls* (1982) examine politics of gender. In 2011, Churchill has written *Love and Information*, a play that seems to shift her focus from feminism to a new dimension.

Despite a considerable number of researches on her famous works such as Mohammad Reza Modarres Zadeh's "Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom*: Beyond Feminism?" (2013), which explores how Churchill interrogates the notion of gender that moves beyond the strict division between men and women or Margaret Savilonis' "'She was always Sad': Remembering Mother in Caryl Churchill's *Not Enough Oxygen* and *A Number*" (2016) which examines the silence of women in a domestic sphere, there are only a few academic works on *Love and Information*. Caitlin Gowans's "Unstable identity in Caryl Churchill's *Love and Information*" (2014) investigates Churchill's portrayal of the construction of human identity through the philosophical concept of logical identity. However, Gowans' work mainly focuses on apolitical construction of identity that evades and destabilise logic. Thus, this paper attempts to investigate

power relations and politics behind the construction of human identity and relationship in the play.

The main theme of *Love and Information* is the connection between human relationship and information in the age of information and technology. Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, the accelerating pace of technological advancement and globalisation has transformed the world and its structure. Although the progress is associated with the betterment of democratic society, the hope that technology would bring about the advent of an egalitarian world might be false. Anthony Giddens, a British sociologist on modern culture, cautions about the double-edged power of digital media:

The media ... have a double relation to democracy. On the one hand the emergence of a global information society is a powerful democratizing force. Yet, television, and the other media, tend to destroy the very public space of dialogue they open up, through relentless trivializing, and personalizing of political issues. Moreover, the growth of giant multinational media corporations means that unelected business tycoons can hold enormous power. (Giddens 1999:np)

Thus, information technology does not liberate people from the oppression of socio-economic structure. It has instead become a new instrument of control that fortifies the status-quo of those already in power. According to Katherine Hayles in *My Mother was a Computer* (2005), the advent of the digital age has transformed a paradigmatic foundation of western philosophy from the opposition between presence/absence to pattern/randomness. Consequently, power politics of the twenty-first century has moved away from the fight for possession and accumulation of capital to the fight for access and control of information: "Information is not a presence or an absence and so does not operate within that dialectic. Rather, information emerges from a dialectic of pattern and randomness, signal and noise. With information, it is not a question of possession but access" (p. 66). However, because digital media inextricably permeates every aspect of lives, humans in contemporary society became so familiarised with the inundation of information that some might ignore the underlying power and oppression in a digital network. In this paper, I will examine the dramatic techniques in Caryl Churchill's play *Love and Information* (2012) in relation to power politics through the lens of Marxist and poststructuralist theories. I argue that Churchill employs different dramatic devices such as a non-linear and fractured plot, the use of multiple voices, as well as narrative gaps to create what is termed by Bertolt Brecht as distancing effects (*Verfremdungseffekt*) in order to instigate the audience political awareness. The play protests against the socio-political condition of the information society by laying bare the arbitrariness and absurdity of these

ideological constructions as well as rendering what is generally silenced by hegemonic discourses audible.

## 2. Churchill's appropriation of Brecht

The trace of Brechtian<sup>1</sup> dramatic strategies can be found in most of Caryl Churchill's plays. Safa Badreddine in "Brecht's Gestus within a Churchillian Context: Top Girls's 'Gestic' Characters" (2016) states that Brecht's devices are significant for Churchill to make her plays innovative and serve as a commentary on the absurdity of the society's hegemonic ideologies (p. 216). In *Love and Information*, Churchill's appropriation of Brechtian techniques to alienate the audience is apparent. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to give a synopsis of the play as it has no unified plot. Although the non-linear and episodic narratives can also be found in her other plays, Churchill pushes her dramatic experiment further in this play. It is divided into different disconnected scenes in seven sections with almost no stage direction. One of the play's very few stage directions indicates that certain scenes must be presented in order, but these scenes can be played in any arrangement within the same section. The multiplicity of different scenes results in the play's use of more than one hundred characters. However, almost none of them have names or personal details.

More explicitly, another anti-realist elements in the play is the lack of time and place. Although Brecht puts emphasis on the historicisation of theatre by situating the play with contemporary issues in the past in order to prevent the audience from being emotionally engaged with the play, the lack of any indication of time and place in *Love and Information* also invokes the same detachment among the audience. In spite of the reference of modern technology in the play such as Facebook in "Sleep" or a laptop in "Remote", most of the scenes can happen in any period. Furthermore, the use of episodic scenes invokes a feeling of disconnection of time among different scenes. Apart from the experimental structure, Churchill also utilises Brecht's technique of a repetitive conversation and subversion of cliché, which prompts the audience to rethink about the constructed structure of everyday life. For example, in the scene named "Manic", the dialogue between two performers is greatly different. While one performer maunders for almost a page, the other's line is only the word yes:

it means so much to me that you gave me red flowers because red is so significant don't you think? it means stop and of course it means go because it's the colour of energy and red cars have the most accidents because people are excited by red or people who are already excited like to have red, I'd like to have red, I'll buy a red car this afternoon and we can go for a drive...so we'll find a vase for the flowers/yes (p. 63).

The conversation ends with the rambling character neurotically ponders about which vase s/he should put the flowers in. The character starts by stating that a green vase is the best but changes his/her mind at the end of the scene with neither resolution nor response of the other interlocutor. Thus, this long conversation does not progress nor offer any meaningful conclusion to the audience. Churchill makes use of meaningless rambling to question the confidence of modern people that more information and technological progress would bring humans closer. Additionally, the subversion of cliché to expose the absurdity of modern life is explicitly portrayed in “The Child Who Didn’t Know Sorry”. In the scene, the audience see a character asking the other to apologise. “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” (p. 54). The character’s question on an everyday social conduct reveals the emptiness of modern communication, which is a recurring motif throughout the play.

### **3. Caryl Churchill’s Love and Information as a representation of identity construction and social condition in a digital age**

Dramatic art, as discussed in John Osborne’s play *The Entertainer* (1957), has experienced a sharp decline after the emergence of cinematic art. Theatre nowadays is facing even more difficult challenges in the twenty-first century. The rapid technological advancement paves way to variety of new forms of entertainment. However, digital technology does not render dramatic art irrelevant to our modern life. Despite the birth of digital entertainment, theatre is not yet obsolete. Gabriella Giannachi in *Virtual Theatres* (2004) points out the interrelationship between art and technology at the root of meaning: “The etymology of the word ‘technology’, *technē*, indicates that technology is also an art, a craft, and shows how profoundly technology and art are linked” (p. 1). Furthermore, the flexible nature of dramatic art enables theatre to be a fitting form of entertainment to represent a social condition in the age of information. Unlike movies, plays are spontaneously performed and improvised. As a result, it is impossible to have an identical reproduction of the same play. Plays are also more interactive than movies because the audience are included in every moment of performance. Some even require responses from the audience as a part of the show. On the other hand, the audience of movies take a more passive role by watching the mere recording of the performance as a finished product. Roland Barthes in his essay “Theatre and Signification” (1963) discussed the similarities between drama and information technology:

What is theatre? A sort of cybernetic machine. When not working, this machine is hidden behind a curtain; but as soon as it is revealed it begins to transmit a certain number of messages in your direction...At every point in a performance you are receiving (at the same second) six or

seven items of information (from the scenery, the costuming, the lighting, the position of the actors, their gestures, their mode of playing, their languages) (p. 340).

The instant transmission of information as well as the blurring of roles between the audience and the performers make drama an art that represents a new kind of media in the digital age. “New media”, a term for interactive digital media such as Virtual Reality games or social media, have replaced most of traditional forms of media such as radio or printing media. They allow the receiver of information to be the creator of the information spontaneously. As a result, the experimental narrative structure in *Love and Information* without clear stage directions leaves room for different interpretations from producers, performers, and the audience. The audience are obliged to create their own meaning of the play that does not yield to only one particular interpretation in the same way the contemporary world contains infinite information but does not offer a complete singular meaning of the information.

The lack of a complete meaning is illustrated by the lack of characterisation in the play. Churchill removes the names and descriptions from the play. The only scene in which the names of characters is mentioned is “Piano”, but a dialogue in the play itself destabilises the link between the name and the character. The audience is put in doubt whether the characters are really named Jennifer from the relationship between two characters in the scene. While Jennifer remains silent throughout the whole scene, one character is the only person who gives command to the passive one that the third character’s name is Jennifer: “This is Jennifer/ Hello, Jennifer/ Here’s the piano. You can play the piano/ I’ve never played piano/ You sit here/He sits. He plays well and JENNIFER sings. He gets up/ Hello/ This is Jennifer/ Hello, Jennifer” (p. 45). Therefore, the character’s complete obedience without any trace of self-recognition disturbs the veracity of the characters’ details.

The characters’ lack of names and specific personalities reflect the anonymity on internet, the largest system of digital information. The popularity of internet and websites enables people to create their alter personas under unidentifiable pseudonyms. Internet becomes both a new community where people recreate and multiply their identity and at the same time a site of conflict between contested identities. The contested boundary of human identity is portrayed in “Virtual”. This scene is a conversation between two characters about a relationship with a virtual person, the same trope with *Her*, a 2013 blockbuster directed by Spike Jones. In “Virtual”, two characters argue with each other about the realness of a virtual relationship of the other character with a computer:

She reads my mind she's sensitive to my every/but she's virtual/so?/so she's not/I can't believe just because someone's not flesh and blood you'd/she's just information/and what are you if you're not/ yes I know we're/so we're information our genes or/yes but she hasn't/ what?/hasn't got an inside to her mind she's not conscious she can't.../I don't care what you say/ I've never felt like this about anyone (p.69)

While one character argues that the relationship is not real because “she” lacks a tangible body and her consciousness is nothing but amalgamation of computer codes, the other insists that his/her relationship with “her” is real because of how “she” makes the character feel. The conversation in “Virtual” does not only illustrate human quality in computer but also computer quality in human. According to Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), the advent of digital technology does not have only spatio-temporal but also subjective impacts: “Like the landscapes they negotiate, the subjectivities who operate within cyberspace also become patterns rather than physical entities” (p. 36). Therefore, what constitutes human beings departs from a tangible body. This reinforces her claim that the opposition between presence and absence is not a dominant worldview in the new society. It is rather pattern of information that shapes human identity in digital society. In “Virtual”, the character points out the similarity between human beings and computers as units of information: “She's just information/ and what are you if you're not/yes I know we're/so we're information and our genes our.../ she's a computer she's a computer game she's not/and can you tell that from what she says?/ I don't need to” (p. 68). Therefore, physical presence is no longer a defining quality of humanity in the digital age where identity is now in flux. The importance of information in shaping human beings is also illustrated in “Wife”, where one character tries to convince the other, who supposedly has Alzheimer's disease, that s/he is his/her wife. Despite the character's attempt to convey his/her spouse by presenting physical evidence such as a birthmark, the character with a loss of memory refuses to believe that they are spouses: “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...You disgust me. You frighten me. What are you?” (p. 55-56). The last line of this scene that ends with a question what instead of who implies that biological or physical information is not the demarcation of human identity anymore. Moreover, the fact that the scene offers little information about the characters complicates the veracity of their claims. It is impossible for the audience to know whether the two characters are really spouses or not.

The uncertainty of who we and other people are is accentuated in *Love and Information* to highlight a faceless condition of digital society that identity boundary is constantly contested. Yet, to claim that anonymity in the modern

world is emancipatory might be wrong. Although many people believe that the facelessness of internet advocates freedom of speech, internet does not liberate its users from power politics. In contrast, it has become a new site of power. Bennett, Kendall, and McDougall in *Identity after the Media: Culture and Identity in the 21st Century* (2011) suggest that it is impossible to think about digital identity without politics: “The openness of subject identity does not preclude the need to standardise; rather, it changes the modality of making judgements. Power is not eradicated or reduced; power works through different principles” (p. 107). Power in the digital age manifests itself less through visible institutions but more as networks of information which implicitly control and interpellate us to conform to certain ideology. Although we are now liberated from any stable notion of intrinsic identity, we are not yet free from being monitored and sorted into a particular discourse. The concept of sorting or naming echoes how the institutions interpellate us to respond to and recognise ourselves as subjects under hegemonic discourses. The naming and calling from the state has transformed itself from the explicit “performative utterance”<sup>2</sup> from institutions to more faceless, more transparent, yet more panoptic<sup>3</sup> sorting from invisible networks.

The idea of being told in relation to the construction of identity recurs throughout the play. Since Churchill does not assign names, genders, relationships, or occupations for her characters, characters in the play are like empty puppets. The characters’ details are even more vague in the performance because there is no title of each scene on stage as shown in the play script. Thus, the only clue about characters for the audience lies in the conversation between characters in each scene. The understanding of characters through surrounding contexts represents the concept of performativity propounded by Judith Butler. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler discusses how gender is not intrinsic but politically constructed. The self, according to Butler, is “not a ‘being,’ but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 177). Therefore, the recognition of one’s own identity comes into existence after one subjects oneself to power relations in the society.

The fabrication of performative identity by what is told is rendered apparent in “Mother” and “Schizophrenic”. In “Mother”, a character reveals a secret to the other character that she is actually not his/her sister but his/her biological mother: “Will you listen?/ I’m listening, fuck off. Is this going to take long?/Don’t pay attention then, I’m just telling you, you might like to know Mum’s not your mother, I’m your mother, Mum’s your nan, ok? Did you listen to that?” (p. 18). However, the conversation in this scene twists the expectation of the audience. The child does not respond to the revelation in a shocked manner. S/he nonchalantly accepts this fact but insists to treat the other character as his/her sister: “I don’t think I feel like you’re my mum though. I don’t have a

sister, I don't like that.../ I can tell her to leave you alone because I'm your mum./ I don't think that works" (p. 19). This scene emphasises the performativity of identity and indicates that identity is not intrinsic nor natural since a biological fact does not change the relationship between the two characters. The character remains the older sister because she is called as such by the other character.

Another scene that discusses the performativity of identity is "Schizophrenic". In this scene, one character claims that he allegedly receives "signal" to hurt the other character because s/he is evil:

I'm getting signals. The ones on the left as you go up from here./ Ok and what do they say?/ I won't tell you./ Why not?/ Because it's about you, it's what you're like, and you know that yourself I'm not going to say it.../ But you know when you take your medication that doesn't happen./ That's why I stopped because it was making it hard to get the information./ You do know you're ill./ I've been told that. (p. 24)

The notion of being told is apparent in this scene. Without any stage direction, there is no tangible manifestation of schizophrenic symptoms indicated except the fact that the schizophrenic character is told that s/he is ill. S/he is also told that the other character is evil. The audience do not know whether the schizophrenic character gets hallucinated or s/he actually receives the signals; therefore, a question of what the schizophrenic character does not lie in him/herself but depends merely on the information told by others.

Apart from the discussion of identity in relation to digital culture, *Love and Information* also examines a social condition in the digital age. Churchill's appropriation of Brecht's epic theatre corresponds with the postnational tendency of the digital culture. In the play's background pack by Royal Court Theatre, the play is described as "an unusual and unique state-of-the-nation play" (p. 9). However, despite the mention of Brighton and Tony Blair once, there is nothing in the scenes indicating that this play takes place in modern-day England. The annihilation of time and space reflects the condition of the contemporary society where, according to David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), time and space is compressed by the force of globalisation (p. 240). If *Love and Information* is regarded as state-of-the-nation play, the English nation in Churchill's view resonates the concept of nation in the globalised and postnational world where the country is no longer a fixed territory but rather changeable and comprised of heterogeneous identities.



#### **4. Love and Information and Defamiliarisation of Technology of Power and Reclaiming the Excluded narratives**

While it may be true that technology and art are inseparable, politics is also extricably intertwined with the two. Information technology in this play is not only a means of communication but also what Michel Foucault terms “technologies of power”, which “determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject” (p. 18). Thus, technologies of power do not refer to material inventions but the ways the state turns a human being into a subject through discipline and knowledge. Foucauldian analysis of power has influenced how power is perceived as it is no longer concentrated in institutions but diffuses and discursively operates on physical and epistemological level. The production of knowledge becomes discursive formation, which, according to Foucault, is definitely political. The state can exercise its power via the fabrication of knowledge to determine what is true or false, or what is normal or aberrant: “It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together.” (p. 100). As a result, information technology functions as a consolidation of state power that discursively controls people through restriction of information and manipulation of knowledge.

In *Love and Information*, the relationship between the state’s hegemonic discourses and its people is subtly mentioned although the institutions are not present. Brechtian elements in the play are strategically employed to dismantle the power structure of the state. One of the techniques is the use of dialogues. Conversations and arguments between two characters with different points of view are incorporated to question the totality of the play’s narrative. For example, the characters in “Census” discuss about an unknown organisation requesting information. While one character knows that the inquirer is from the government, the other does not: “They’re doing research. It guides their policy. They use it to help people/ They use it to sell us things we don’t want/ No that’s the people who phone up...You’ll get into trouble if you don’t do it./ They won’t know/ They know you exist” (p. 6). The character’s comparison of the government’s call with that from companies does not only suggest that s/he is unaware about census-making but also implies the propagandist nature of the government. The clash between the character who believes that the inquirer wants to “help” people by gathering personal information for policy development and the character who believes that the caller is from a direct selling organisation points out the similarity between the government’s policy and marketing strategies. The state might not want to help people as much as to increase its popularity by an attractive campaign that sometimes ends up as an empty promise. The blurring between the government and a selling organisation is emphasised by the fact that the audience do not see a title of the scene and the conversation does not reveal that the gathering of information is really for a

census. Furthermore, the last line of the scene exhibits the panoptic nature of the state, in which its subjects are under constant surveillance.

Census making, according to Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), is considered a disciplinary power on a biological level: “The drawing up of ‘tables’ was one of the great problems of the scientific, political, and economic technology of the eighteenth century: how one was to arrange botanical and zoological gardens...It is the first condition for the control and use of an ensemble of distinct elements: the base for a micro-physics of what might be called a ‘cellular’ power” (p. 148-9). Therefore, the biological information of the subjects is put into the arrangement for categorisation and supervision. The state’s manipulation of information can also be seen in “Spies” and “Censor”. In these two scenes, Churchill highlights the use of narrative gap to distance the audience as well as deconstruct the totalised power of dramatic and political narrative.

In “Spies”, two characters, who are presumably spies, talk about confidential war information: “So we went to war on a completely/ yes but how were they to know/ they did know, they knew, he’d already admitted it wasn’t true/ he said it to the Germans/ and the CIA knew/ but Bush and Blair didn’t know/didn’t want to know” (p. 25). The dialogue reveals different levels of access to the “real” cause of war, which is also concealed to the audience. The audience can see the juxtaposition between the real reason of the war that is limited to a group of people and a public reason everybody knows in the next line: “They wanted it to be true/ they thought it was true, everyone thought” (p. 25). The dialogue also refers to Bush and Blair, the president of the United States and the prime minister of the United Kingdom during Iraq War. Hence, the unnamed war in this scene might refer to the controversial “war on terror” in 2001. The dialogue implies that Bush and Blair are not unaware of the real reason of the war or lack the access to information. Instead, they refuse to acknowledge the information in order to propagate another reason why they went to the war to the public. Foucault in his collection of lectures, “Society Must Be Defended” (2004), noted that the discourse of warfare or terrorism has been often exploited by the state as the justification of imposing violence on the target and a rhetoric to create a collective enemy in order to govern its people: “The role of political power is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals (p. 30). In “Spies”, the real reason the two countries went to war is not as important as any reasons that instigate a collective feeling of people that the states are under threat. The concealment of the real cause of war is stressed at the twist ending which reveals that both spies are not certain about their assumption about the reason of war either: “They thought it was true, everyone thought/ not everyone no, plenty of people, I didn’t, I always knew it wasn’t true/ you can’t have known/ I knew it

was all made-up stuff/ and how did you know?/ because what America's like, what it wanted to do" (p. 25). The spies' speculation suggests that they are not people in power but another subjects of state power who are also restricted from knowing the real reason behind the war.

"Censor" directly deals with the state's manipulation of information through censorship. In the scene, two characters discuss the decision to erase some content in a book: "Page forty-two/ Page forty-two/ The sentence beginning 'On the 21st of May...'/ Yes, I've got it./ I'm afraid that's going to have to go (p. 55). The censored information, with the indication of the date, might be an event in the past that the state wants its people to forget. The act of erasing history in this scene suggests that history is not absolutely factual. It is often manipulated by the state in the guise of factual information in order to distort people's collective memory. Since the past is usually appropriated to serve the state's ideology, the state does not allow its grand narrative to be contested by any alternative version of the history as seen in the next lines: "The Ministry of Defence considers it a breach of security/ It's not classified information/ That is nevertheless their view (p. 55). The rhetoric of security and threat is used again in this scene to justify the erasure of information to reinforce a sense of collectiveness. Through censorship, the validity of the erased information is not officially confirmed and therefore excluded from the national narrative of the state. As evidenced in many countries across the globe including Thailand, digital technology cannot guarantee more freedom of information. The government still constantly manipulate and silence the unwanted information through censorship.

Thus, the exclusion and silencing of discourses are always political. Gayatri Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) extensively examines the notion of silencing on a deeper level and develops a concept of "epistemic violence" to refer to silencing and othering of marginal discourses by hegemonic discourses. In *Love and Information*, Churchill interrogates the issue of silencing in many of the scenes. Apart from "Censor", another scene that directly criticises the silencing of information is "Irrational". In the scene, two characters talk about the validity of an irrational number and the story of Hippasus, who discovered an irrational number and the diagonal of a square: "I'm not comfortable with the whole idea [of irrational numbers]/ There was someone called Hippasus in Greek times who found out about the diagonal of a square and they drowned him because no one wanted to know about things like that/Like what?/ Numbers that make you uncomfortable and don't relate to orange" (p. 16). The story of Hippasus reflects power politics of the production of knowledge in the way different knowledges can be accepted as true in different contexts. Hippasus' mathematic theory that was once rejected and deemed blasphemous is now widely accepted nowadays. His death by drowning is an evidence of how epistemic violence from the exclusion of marginalised

voices can morph into physical violence, which leads to the character's question about being silent at the end of the scene: "Maybe he should keep quiet about it if he knew they couldn't understand it/ Is that what you do?" (16). Therefore, the scene suggests that there is still a similarity between the past and the present in which information are not equally heard. Some are treated as knowledgeable information while some are treated as noises or threats.

Churchill attempts to reclaim the marginalised voices in the society by various dramatic techniques in the play. Apart from the use of narrative gaps and fragmentation of plot to disrupt the totalisation of a linear narrative, Churchill adds the last section of the play as the interruption of the whole play. The interruption of scenes in *Love and Information* with the scenes from the section "Random" disrupts the pattern of representation in the play. There are not only dialogues and stories but also noises, non-verbal communication and even silence. There are incomprehensible codes such as Morse code, sign languages, and genetic codes. The insertion of different kinds of voices that disrupt the homogeneity of the text both distances the audience and at the same time accentuates the present of the voices that are normally silenced by hegemonic discourses. The incomprehensibility of genetic codes, sign languages, or Pig Latin does not mean that these codes are meaningless. Instead, these languages require different paradigms to understand. Genetic codes are comprehensible if the receiver of information is a genetic specialist, sign language is a lingua franca for people with impaired hearing, and Pig Latin makes sense for people who know alternative grammatical rules. As a result, Churchill's strategic use of fragments of voices reflects her political stance. The multiplicity of voices to undermine the dominant ideologies is termed by Mikhail Bakhtin as "heteroglossia". According to Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*, each language contains its hegemonic ideologies. Thus, the clash between different languages and discourses is vital as a tool to subvert the unification of power. By incorporating different voices and information, Churchill is able to transform her theatre into a heteroglossic play, a space where every voice is allowed to be heard.

The multiplicity of speeches in "Depression" in the section "Random", in which Churchill specifies that it is "an essential part of the play" (p. 74) encourages the audience to pay attention to different voices, languages, and ideologies in the society. The stage direction of the scene is the longest direction in the play. Churchill states that the scene is comprised of random items that are "said by one person to another who doesn't respond" (p. 74). The subject-matters of the items range from political conflicts to mundane issues such as the decision between white or red wine. However, the lack of response from the other character in this scene both disturbs the audience and draws their attention to political problems in reality. The play points out that socio-political power of the state can shape people's perceptions and reactions towards different voices that oftentimes results in people's ignorance of marginalised voices.

The focus on silence as a tool to reclaim minority voices is also associated with Churchill's appropriation of experimental dramatic structure. The use of narrative gaps and the lack of stage direction in *Love and Information* can be considered a political strategy that defies the authoritative power of the author by encouraging the director, actors, and the audience to take part in creating the play together. The audience are constantly reminded that they do not, and will never, receive a complete and coherent meaning of the play. What they are able to do is to be aware of both the incompleteness of the information and the participation of all the audience in creating different subjective meaning of their own to fill in the gap, which, according to Brechtian aspiration, lead to an ethical awareness of the society where some voices still remain unheard.

## 5. Conclusion

*Love and Information* might be one of the best contemporary plays to discuss the politics of information society. Churchill is successful in weaving mundane topics of modern life and human relationships with the exercise of state power in the age of information. The play illustrates the complexity of human communication but at the same time encourages the audience to see through the state's manipulation and be more aware of what happens in the society. By incorporating experimental dramatic devices, the audience become emotionally detached with the play but more critically engaged with social problems, which might lead to the better future where every voice is recognised and included.

### **Notes**

1. A German dramatist known for his experimental drama and the use of distancing effect (V-Effekt)

2. According to J.L. Austin's speech-act theory, a performative utterance is a speech that does not function as a report of facts but rather as an action that affects the condition of reality: "When I say 'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth', I do not describe the christening ceremony, I actually perform the christening" (qtd. in Leitch, 2010: 1291).

3. The word panopticon is used by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) to describe the state of surveillance where space becomes "enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point...in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead – all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism" (p. 177).

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