

CARYL CHURCHILL

PLAYS: 2

SOFTCOPS • TOP GIRLS

FEN • SERIOUS MONEY



Introduced by the author

B L O O M S B U R Y

Caryl Churchill

Plays: 2

Softcops, Top Girls, Fen, Serious Money

The plays in this volume include some of the finest work seen in British theatre in recent years, including the international hit *Serious Money* which established Churchill as one of the most powerful and innovative satirists of her time.

Softcops 'is Foucault rendered as a music-hall turn and Victorian freak show . . . I can remember few evenings when theatre and history combined to give such intelligent fun.' *Times Literary Supplement*

'*Top Girls* has a combination of directness and complexity which keeps you both emotionally and intellectually alert. You can smell life, and at the same time feel locked in an argument with an agile and passionate mind.' *Sunday Times*

Fen scrutinises the lives of the low-paid women potato pickers of the Fen: 'The playwright pins down her poetic subject matter in dialogue of impressive vigour and economy.' *Financial Times*

Serious Money is a satirical study of the effects of the Big Bang: 'Pure genius . . . the first play about the City to capture the authentic atmosphere of the place.' *Daily Telegraph*

Caryl Churchill has written for the stage, television and radio. Her stage plays include *Owners* (Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, 1972); *Objections to Sex and Violence* (Royal Court, 1975); *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (for Joint Stock, Theatre Upstairs, 1976); *Vinegar Tom* (for Monstrous Regiment, Half Moon and ICA, London, and on tour, 1976); *Traps* (Theatre Upstairs, 1977); *Cloud Nine* (Joint Stock at the Royal Court and on tour, 1979, De Lys Theatre, New York, 1981); *Three More Sleepless Nights* (Soho Poly and Theatre Upstairs, 1980); *Top Girls* (Royal Court, London and Public Theatre, New York, 1982); *Fen* (Joint Stock, Almeida Theatre and Royal Court, London, and on tour, and Public Theatre, New York, 1983); *Softcops* (RSC at the Pit, 1984); *A Mouthful of Birds*, with David Lan (for Joint Stock at the Royal Court and on tour, 1986); *Serious Money* (Royal Court and Wyndhams Theatre, London, 1987); *Icecream* (Royal Court, London, 1989); *Mad Forest* (Central School of Speech and Drama, London, 1990); *Lives of the Great Poisoners* (Arnolfini, Bristol, 1991); *The Skriker* (Royal National Theatre, 1994); and a translation of Seneca's *Thyestes* (Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, 1994).

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Softcops
Top Girls
Fen
Serious Money

B L O O M S B U R Y
LONDON • NEW DELHI • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

Bloomsbury Methuen Drama
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

www.bloomsbury.com

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This collection first published in Great Britain in 1990 by Methuen Drama
Reissued in this series in 1996

This collection © Caryl Churchill, 1990

Introduction © Caryl Churchill, 1990

Softtops was first published in Great Britain as a Methuen Paperback original
by Methuen London. © Caryl Churchill, 1983, 1986

Fen was first published in Great Britain as a Methuen Paperback original in 1983 by Methuen London in
association with Joint Stock Theatre Group. © Caryl Churchill 1983, 1986

'Girls' Song' © Ilona Sekacz

Top Girls was first published in Great Britain as a Methuen Paperback original by Methuen London.
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Serious Money was first published in Great Britain as a Methuen Paperback original in 1987
by Methuen London Ltd.

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Ilona Sekacz's original music for Joint Stock's production of *Fen* is included at the end of the play.
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any performance/presentation whatsoever must be obtained from the respective copyright owners.

In *Softtops* Caryl Churchill has reflected some ideas from *Surveiller et Punir* by Michael Foucault,
published by Gallimard, Paris, for which she is most grateful.

In *Fen*, 'Girls' Song' is based on quotations from *Fen Women* by Mary Chamberlain
(Virago, 1977). The pitchfork murder story in Scene Ten is based upon material in an unpublished work
by Charles Hansford.

The author gratefully acknowledges use of the following books as background research for *Top Girls*:
The Confessions of Lady Nijo, translated from the Japanese by Karen Brazell, and published by Peter Owen Ltd,
London; a *Curious Life for a Lady* (about Isabella Bird) by Pat Barr, originally published by Macmillan, London.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: PB: 978-0-4136-2270-9

ePDF: 978-1-4081-7750-1

ePUB: 978-1-4081-7749-5

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

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A Chronology of Performed Plays

PLAY	WRITTEN	PERFORMED
		[<i>s</i> =stage, <i>r</i> =radio <i>tv</i> =television]
Downstairs	1958	1958 <i>s</i>
You've No Need to be Frightened	1959?	1961 <i>r</i>
Having a Wonderful Time	1959	1960 <i>s</i>
Easy Death	1960	1961 <i>s</i>
The Ants	1961	1962 <i>r</i>
Lovesick	1965	1966 <i>r</i>
Identical Twins	?	1968 <i>r</i>
Abortive	1968?	1971 <i>r</i>
Not . . .not . . .not . . .not . . .not enough oxygen	?	1971 <i>r</i>
Schreber's Nervous Illness	?	1972 <i>r</i>
Henry's Past	1971	1972 <i>r</i>
The Judge's Wife	1971?	1972 <i>r</i>
Owners	1972	1972 <i>s</i>
Moving Clocks Go Slow	1973	1975 <i>s</i>
Turkish Delight	1973	1974 <i>tv</i>
Perfect Happiness	1973	1973 <i>r</i>
Objections to Sex and Violence	1974	1975 <i>s</i>
Traps	1976	1977 <i>s</i>
Vinegar Tom	1976	1976 <i>s</i>
Light Shining in Buckinghamshire	1976	1976 <i>s</i>
Floorshow (contributor to)	1977	1977 <i>s</i>
The After Dinner Joke	1977	1978 <i>tv</i>
The Legion Hall Bombing	1978	1979 <i>tv</i>
Softcops	1978	1983 <i>s</i>
Cloud Nine	1978	1979 <i>s</i>
Three More Sleepless Nights	1979	1980 <i>s</i>
Crimes	1981	1981 <i>tv</i>
Top Girls	1980-2	1982 <i>s</i>
Fen	1982	1983 <i>s</i>
Midday Sun (with Geraldine Pilgrim and Pete Brooks)	1984	1984 <i>s</i>

A Mouthful of Birds (with David Lan and Ian Spink)	1986	1986 <i>s</i>
Serious Money	1987	1987 <i>s</i>
Fugue (with Ian Spink)	1987	1987 <i>tv</i>
Icecream	1988	1989 <i>s</i>
Hot Fudge	1989	1989 <i>s</i>
Mad Forest	1990	1990 <i>s</i>
Lives of the Great Poisoners	1991	1991 <i>s</i>
The Skriker	1993	1994 <i>s</i>
Thyestes (trans. Seneca)		1994 <i>s</i>

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INTRODUCTION

Softcops was written in 1978, after reading Foucault's *Surveiller et Punir*. It fitted so well with what I was thinking about that I abandoned the play I was groping towards and quickly wrote something that used Foucault's examples as well as his ideas. I put it aside and years later showed it to Howard Davies, who encouraged me to both cut and expand it, and it was done by the RSC in 1984.

After *Softcops*, *Cloud Nine* (Plays: One) and then *Top Girls*, which came slowly. I recently found a reference to Dull Gret in a notebook from years before, and in 1979 I started thinking about a play that would have a lot of women characters doing various jobs and of course the same year Thatcher got in for the first time. It took '80 and '81 to work it out. Meanwhile I wrote *Three More Sleepless Nights* for Les Waters, which he directed at the Soho Poly in '80, and used overlapping dialogue in a quarrel; it seemed the answer for the dinner scene too.

Top Girls was directed by Max Stafford-Clark at the Royal Court in '82, and immediately after it opened I went to the fens with Joint Stock. *Fen* is a play with more direct quotes of things people said to us than any other I've written – 'I wouldn't want my mother to think she'd bred a gibber', 'Jarvis, come and make my coffin', – almost everything Ivy says was said to us but by several different people. The murder story of Frank and Val was taken from a newspaper cutting and the murder story of the man in the coffin from the unpublished memoirs of farmworker Charles Hansford. Most of what the ghost says is taken from a threatening letter written at the time of the Littleport riots. It's a play where I have a particularly lively sense of how much it owes to other people, those who talked to us of course, the actors and Les Waters, and it will always be inseparable in my mind from Annie Smart's set of a field in a room.

In '86 another Joint Stock show with Les Waters and Annie Smart, *A Mouthful of Birds*, co-written with David Lan and choreographed by Ian Spink. Our starting point was possession – Euripides' *Bacchae* and David's work with spirit mediums in Zimbabwe. As soon as it opened I joined Max Stafford-Clark for a two-week workshop on the City – the Joint Stock way

of working but set up by the Royal Court. The idea to do a show about the City came from Max, and I'd done no preparation at all before we started. As usual the group opened the subject up in a way one person couldn't possibly have done in the time or in many times the time, and gave me a sense of that appalling and exciting world that carried me through weeks of reading and researching alone during Big Bang, the Guinness scandal, Boesky, all of which, with extraordinary timing, happened between the workshop and the beginning of rehearsal. With so much to learn I put off writing the play till the last minute, till, almost submerged with documentary material, I got the idea of writing the play in verse and was able to move. The play was still very ungainly by the first day of rehearsal, and we all owed a lot to Max's clarity and optimism, as I came and went with new versions of scenes which the actors took on with dazzling flexibility. British Telecom refused to provide telephones for the Wyndham's production, writing to say 'This is a production with which no public company would wish to be associated.'

SOFTCOPS

Softcops was first presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican Pit on 2 January 1984, with the following cast:

DUVAL		Christopher Bowen
MINISTER		John Carlisle
VIDOCQ		Geoffrey Freshwater
ELOQUENT RICH MAN		Hepburn Graham
LAFAYETTE		Tom Mannion
MAGISTRATE	}	Pip Miller
BENTHAM		
CONSPIRATOR		
SCHOOLBOY	}	David Shaw-Parker
OLDER BROTHER		
WARDER		
BOY		Brian Parr
HEADMASTER	}	Bill Stewart
HOLIDAYMAKER		
LACENAIRE	}	Malcolm Storry
CONSPIRATOR		
PIERRE		Ian Talbot
MAN ON RACK	}	Philip Walsh
WARDER		

Other parts: WORKERS, SCHOOL CHILDREN, RICH MEN, CHAIN GANG etc., played by members of the cast.

The Medici String Quartet: Paul Robertson *violin*, David Matthews *violin*, Ivo van der Werff *viola*, Anthony Lewis *cello*

Directed by Howard Davies

Designed by Bob Crowley

Music by Nigel Hess

Lighting by Michael Colf

Movement by Stuart Hopps

Sound by John A. Leonard

Stage Manager Michael Dembowicz

Deputy Stage Manager Jill Macfarlane

Assistant Stage Manager Stephen Dobbin

The play takes place in Paris in the nineteenth century, mainly in the 1830s.

Author's Note

Vidocq and Lacenaire are the original cop and robber, Vidocq, the criminal who became chief of police using the same skills of disguise and cunning, and Lacenaire, the glamorous and ineffectual murderer and petty thief, who was briefly a romantic hero. They both wrote their memoirs, and from the London Library you can take home the original edition of Vidocq's, each volume signed firmly with his name.

I read them after reading Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, which fascinatingly analyses the change in methods of control and punishment from tearing the victim apart with horses to simply watching him. Jeremy Bentham comes in here, the inventor of the panopticon, the tower from which one person can watch and control many, an idea that goes right through the way society is organised.

I had had an idea for a play called *Softcops*, which was to be about the soft methods of control, schools, hospitals, social workers, when I came across the Foucault book, and was so thrilled with it that I set the play not here and now but in nineteenth century France, where Vidocq puts on half a dozen disguises and Lacenaire is feted by the rich in his cell, while the king's assassin is quietly disposed of. There is a constant attempt by governments to depoliticise illegal acts, to make criminals a separate class from the rest of society so that subversion will not be general, and part of this process is the invention of the detective and the criminal, the cop and the robber.

Caryl Churchill (First published in *RSC News*, Winter 1983)

Further note

Softcops was originally written in 1978, under a Labour Government, when the question of soft controls seemed more relevant than in 1984, the year of its first production, when Thatcher was dismantling the welfare state. That year, audiences were particularly alive to the connection between Bentham's panopticon and Orwell's Big Brother. In 1985, as this edition goes to press, the Government are attempting to depoliticise the miners and the rioters by emphasising a 'criminal element'.

Caryl Churchill 1985

Production note

The production was developed by the director, designer, composer, choreographer, actors, musicians and myself in a way that I have not attempted to describe — I have for instance kept the original stage direction I wrote for the rescue of Lafayette from the scaffold rather than try to convey the choreography by which it was done. Nor have I stipulated that the set is a neglected room in a great house, that the actors are in evening dress, or that there is a string quartet on stage throughout. These things come from Howard Davies' production and it does not seem right to appropriate them as part of the play.

Caryl Churchill 1985

A high scaffold is being erected. PIERRE is anxiously supervising and helping drape it in black cloth and put up posters and placards. A crocodile of young BOYS in uniform crosses the stage with their HEADMASTER, circles and stops in front of the scaffold.

PIERRE. Ah, you've brought them for me. I need children with their soft minds to take the impression. More folds this side.

Yes, the minister will see them learning. More, more, it hardly reaches the ground. Not long now. It's worth waiting for.

HEADMASTER. They can stand as long as necessary. They have stood three hours.

PIERRE. I can't hold the nail steady. Thank you. My hands are shaking. I want it to be perfect.

HEADMASTER. While you're waiting, examine your consciences.

PEOPLE go by, stop, go on, come back, gather some distance from the scaffold. The CHILDREN stand motionless.

PIERRE. I hope the rain keeps off. The dye isn't fast.

HEADMASTER. The design is excellent.

PIERRE. There is a balance if I can get it. Terror, but also information. Information, but also terror. But I dream of something covering several acres and completely transforming – as you know. I won't bore you. But if the minister is impressed today I hope for a park.

HEADMASTER. I'm sure it strikes terror.

CHILDREN. Yes, sir.

HEADMASTER. And makes us love our duty.

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CHILDREN. Yes, sir.

HEADMASTER. It's a better lesson than talk. Saves the throat.

PIERRE. Help them with the balance. The event will be horrible but the moral is there. Learn while you're young to worship Reason. Reason is my goddess. Fall at her feet. Unfortunately the minister has happy memories of sheer horror. That sign is crooked. Would it be better lower down? Can the children read it?

The HEADMASTER indicates a CHILD, who reads.

CHILD. 'Jean Lafayette murdered his employer by strangling and will himself be strangled by hanging by the neck.'

PIERRE. Good, leave it there. Where are the red ribbons? Look, children, red is a symbol of blood and passion, the blood shed by passion and the blood shed by Reason in justice and grief. Grief is symbolised of course by the black.

The WORKMEN are putting red ribbons on the scaffold.

Or does it look more striking without the ribbons? Should grief be the dominant theme? Blood can be represented by itself. The procession comes down the hill so the crowd can watch its approach. Doleful music specially composed. I've written a speech for the magistrate and one for each of the condemned men. There are three, I hope you can stay. No, take the ribbons off.

The WORKMEN start taking the ribbons off.

When the minister sees the children it will help him grasp the educational —

Music: wind and drums.

They're coming. They're early. Get the ribbons off. Stand back.

The WORKMEN go. One ribbon is left on. PIERRE is watching the procession approach.

See, see the effect. Where's the minister? We can't start. It's fine in the sunlight, the pigeons fly up. The minister is missing the procession.

The procession comes in: the MAGISTRATE in black; the EXECUTIONER in red; the MUSICIANS and GUARDS in black and red; black-draped cart; the PRISONER in the cart in black except for his right hand in a red glove which he holds up. A placard round his neck: Jacques Duval, thief.

PIERRE (*to the MAGISTRATE*). Welcome, welcome, sir. It's very good of you to take part in this experimental — Excuse me, there's something wrong here. We have the wrong placard I think. (*He takes down the notice about Lafayette and hunts for one about Duval.*) Thief, thief, leg of lamb. (*To MAGISTRATE:*) I hope the walk hasn't tired you, sir. Slight problem, nothing to worry about, I'm afraid the minister has been detained. It's not quite time, I think. I wonder if you could just go round again. You could wait here, sir, if you'd rather and the rest of the procession could just go round the square. No need to go back up the hill. That's right, people will move aside, music again too, it's very moving, well done, music, music.

The procession slowly circles. PIERRE puts up the correct notice.

HEADMASTER. That gentleman is the magistrate. See his wise face, kind and stern. Here comes the cart, see the villain. You can see the weakness and evil. His right hand which did the evil deed is clad in red. One of these men is the executioner — ah, that one in red. He carries an instrument of justice. What does red symbolise?

CHILD. Blood, sir.

HEADMASTER. And?

CHILD. Passion, sir.

PIERRE. Get that ribbon off, off.

PIERRE realises the WORKMEN have gone and gets the ribbon off himself.

HEADMASTER. What will he do with the wicked man?

CHILD. Hang him, sir.

HEADMASTER. Wrong.

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CHILD. Hurt him, sir.

HEADMASTER. Hurt him, yes, can somebody be more precise?

CHILD. Cut his hand off, sir.

HEADMASTER. Yes, you can see it written on the notice. He will cut off the hand that stole the leg of lamb.

CHILD. Please, sir, shouldn't they cut his leg off, sir?

Meanwhile the MINISTER has arrived and is greeted by
PIERRE.

PIERRE. They came down the hill, a moment of great solemnity, the power of the law struck home to the heart and mind, the pigeons flew up. You see the notices, sir, explaining, so everyone understands what is happening and isn't carried away by emotion.

MINISTER. They can't read.

PIERRE. The magistrate also makes a speech, sir. And each condemned man makes a speech. Some of them can read, sir. A few of them. Maybe not.

HEADMASTER. Your country loves its children like a father. And when the children are bad the country grieves like a father. And punishes like a father.

The procession stops by the scaffold.

MAGISTRATE. There's a word here not very clearly written.

PIERRE. I can't read my own writing. Whatever you think.

MAGISTRATE. Execution?

PIERRE. Very likely. (*To MINISTER:*) A headmaster has brought his pupils. The use of punishment as education —

MAGISTRATE. 'This is a day of mourning.'

PIERRE. Ah, ah, excuse me, execration.

MAGISTRATE. 'Day of mourning.'

PIERRE. No, the word, here, execration.

MAGISTRATE. Very good, I would never have thought of that. Execration. Let me make a note. 'This is a day of mourning.'

We are, you see, in black. We mourn that one of our citizens has broken the law. We mourn that we must separate ourselves from this citizen and inflict this penalty upon him. Black symbolises our grief and our — ha — execration of his crime. This man has with his right hand —'

PIERRE. Hold it up, hold it up.

MAGISTRATE. — 'committed an act against his fellow men. And it is with grief that his right hand will be taken from him. We do not rejoice in vengeance. There will be no singing and dancing, no cursing and fighting. It is a sad necessity for him and for us. Our social order —'

Meanwhile one of the CHILDREN fidgets, is taken out of line by the HEADMASTER, caned on the hand and returned to his place. The rest of the CHILDREN stand motionless.

MINISTER. Can't we get on with the punishment?

PIERRE. This is the general introduction to the whole —

MINISTER. Never bore a mob.

PIERRE. We're about half-way.

MINISTER. Where's the executioner?

PIERRE (to MAGISTRATE). Thank you, we'll stop there, thank you.

PIERRE claps; HEADMASTER joins in; CHILDREN join in. By then PIERRE has stopped.

Now the condemned man will speak. Listen and learn. Music.

Music. The prisoner, DUVAL, climbs on to the scaffold. Cheers and jeers from the CROWD.

Wait till the music stops. Now.

DUVAL. I, Jacques Duval.

PIERRE. Go on.

DUVAL. I, Jacques Duval.

PIERRE. Don't cry, speak up. (To the MINISTER:) Tears of repentance.

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DUVAL. I, Jacques Duval. Under sentence of having my right hand cut off —

PIERRE. Hold it up. Good.

DUVAL. Call out. Call out . . .

PIERRE. Theft, crime of theft, cut off for the crime —

DUVAL. Theft, crime of theft, cut off. Fellow citizens. Call out to my fellow citizens.

PIERRE. Learn —

DUVAL. Learn by my terrible example. Never steal even if you're hungry because . . .

PIERRE. Because it is against the laws —

DUVAL. Laws of our beloved country. And your hand will be cut off.

PIERRE. Up, up, that's right.

DUVAL. I'm very sorry what I done.

PIERRE. Good.

DUVAL. And submit, is it? Submit the punishment the judge give me. Gladly. Gladly submit. Judge give me. And . . .

PIERRE. I am happy —

DUVAL. — I am happy —

PIERRE. — to be an example —

DUVAL. — example

PIERRE. — to you all.

DUVAL. — all.

PIERRE. Watch —

DUVAL. Watch what is done to me today and remember it tomorrow.

PIERRE. If you are sorry for me —

DUVAL. Yes, that's it.

PIERRE. Keep the law. Go on.

DUVAL. Go on.

PIERRE. No, keep the law.

DUVAL. Yes.

PIERRE. And then I'll know my pain did some good.

DUVAL. I don't know what comes after.

PIERRE. That's all.

MINISTER. Where's the executioner?

HEADMASTER. Are all your eyes open?

MAN IN CROWD. Jacques! I'm here. Jacques!

DUVAL. Don't look!

DUVAL's hand is cut off and displayed to the CROWD by the EXECUTIONER. He faints and is put in the cart. PIERRE indicates to the MUSICIANS that they should play. The GUARDS take the cart out, DUVAL's FRIEND running after. The MUSICIANS play. One of the children, LUC, turns aside to be sick. The others stand motionless.

MINISTER. It's over very quickly. I don't count the talking.

When I was a boy one punishment would last from noon till sunset. You could buy food and drink. I remember one time they lit a fire to throw the corpse on in the late afternoon and he held on and held on and they had to build the fire up again in the evening. It was still glowing at midnight, and people still standing. That was the wheel, of course, you don't see it now. People don't want to read, they don't want speeches. You'll drive them away, and what's the use of a punishment if nobody sees it? What brings a crowd, it's very simple, is agony, I'm not saying they don't appreciate something fine. They like an executioner who's good at his job. They like fine instruments. Nothing upsets a crowd more than hacking. But they like something unusual and they like a man to stay conscious so he doesn't miss it.

PIERRE. There's a good crowd here today.

MINISTER. That's the novelty. They don't want a school, they want a festival.

PIERRE. A festival means riots. People attack the executioner.

MINISTER. And the soldiers shoot them down.

The HEADMASTER has got the sick child, LUC, and made him stand with his arms over his head.

HEADMASTER. Now control yourself. Stand with your arms up till I tell you.

MINISTER. Listen, my boy. People have vile dreams. The man who dares cut a throat while he's awake is their hero. But then justice dares cut and burn and tear that man's body, far beyond what he did and beyond their dreams. So they worship us. That's why it's a festival.

PIERRE. But I don't want them to be caught up. Their hearts may beat a little faster but all the time they must be thinking.

The music starts again for the approach of the procession — the return of the GUARDS and the cart.

MINISTER. While the fire burned and long after it died down there was considerable fornication. Not only among the poor.

PIERRE. Ah look, sir, excuse me, down the hill.

MINISTER. I found my way to a lady who had never been more than civil to me and my hand under her skirt found her ready for hours of ingenuity beyond my dreams. Next day she received me for tea as usual. The people went about their work quite silently.

PIERRE. I want them to look at the illegal act in the perspective of the operation of society and the light of Reason.

The cart comes in with LAFAYETTE, a murderer. He is already speaking in the cart and continues when he is transferred to the scaffold. PIERRE suddenly remembers that the placard must be changed and hurries to do it.

LAFAYETTE. Lafayette. Look at me. Remember the name.

Lafayette. Murderer. Murderer. Want to know what I did?

Killed my boss. Killed old daddy Anatole right in his office.

He was shouting like he does, know how he shouts. And I was on him, hands round his neck, would he stop shouting, would he hell. So I kept hanging on, didn't I. I'm meant to say sorry

for that. Sorry sorry sorry sorry sorry. Do you think I am? I shit on the judges. I shit on my boss. I shit on you. I really did shit on my boss. Do you shit on your boss? You didn't kill him though, did you, I'm the killer. And I'm the one going to die. Want to die instead? You can if you like. I don't want to. You do it. You kill him instead, all right? He goes a horrible colour, wait and see. I'm not sorry, I'm glad. It wasn't easy but I did it. Lafayette did it.

Meanwhile:

PIERRE. This isn't what we arranged he would say.

MINISTER. Just hang him.

PIERRE. I wrote a speech.

MINISTER. Where's the executioner?

PIERRE (*to LAFAYETTE*). Look, you agreed what you were going to say.

LAFAYETTE strikes him. Instant brawl. LAFAYETTE is seized by the EXECUTIONER and GUARDS, a hood put over his head and a noose round his neck. The CROWD throws stones, shouts, climbs on to the scaffold. The CHILDREN scatter. LAFAYETTE is hoisted up. The EXECUTIONER is hit by a stone. The MINISTER and MAGISTRATE escape from the scaffold. PIERRE tries to defend the scaffold and is knocked down, pulling the black cloth with him. The rope hanging LAFAYETTE is cut by one of the CROWD. He gets down and tries to run but is pulled down by someone else. The scaffold is broken. The CROWD has formed into two groups, one beats up LAFAYETTE and one beats up the EXECUTIONER. The DIGNITARIES and MUSICIANS are standing aside in a huddle. The CHILDREN are watching what is done to LAFAYETTE and the EXECUTIONER. A line of SOLDIERS comes on with fixed bayonets and advances. The CROWD scatters and disappears. LAFAYETTE and the EXECUTIONER are lying on the ground. LAFAYETTE sits up, still with the hood and noose on, and collapses again. One of the MUSICIANS blows a few wild notes, a DRUMMER joins in. One of the SOLDIERS turns towards them. Silence.

The SOLDIERS go. The MAGISTRATE and MINISTER go. The CHILDREN get back into a crocodile and LUC lifts his arms again. PIERRE gets out from under the black cloth, blood on his face. The GUARDS and MUSICIANS put the pieces of broken scaffold in the cart, put LAFAYETTE and the EXECUTIONER on top, and go out. Just PIERRE and the HEADMASTER and the CHILDREN are left.

What I visualise you see. Is a Garden of Laws. Where, over several acres, with flowering bushes, families would stroll on a Sunday. And there would be displayed every kind of crime and punishment. Different coloured hats. Different coloured posters. Guides to give lectures on civic duty and moral feeling. And people would walk gravely and soberly and reflect. And for the worst crime. Parricide. An iron cage hanging high up in the sky. Symbolic of the rejection by heaven and earth. From anywhere in the city you could look up. And see him hanging there, in the sun, in the snow. Year after year. Quietly take it to heart. A daily lesson.

The HEADMASTER wipes blood off PIERRE's face.

HEADMASTER (to LUC). You may put your arms down now.

The HEADMASTER and CHILDREN go out. PIERRE is left alone. The MINISTER and VIDOCQ approach from opposite sides.

MINISTER. The best informer we have is Vidocq. He's a villain but he catches villains. I've a good mind to persuade him to change his way of life and make him Chief of Police.

VIDOCQ. Here comes the minister. He can't do without me. But everyone treats informers like dirt. I've a good mind to persuade him to trust me and make me Chief of Police.

MINISTER. Is that you, Vidocq?

VIDOCQ. What is the real colour of Vidocq's hair? I don't know myself. Grey by now. Do I really wear spectacles? Is this moustache real or stuck on? If it's real, did I grow it as a disguise? Or will it be a disguise when I shave it off? Who have you come to see, sir? And do you see him?

MINISTER. I see someone useful.

VIDOCQ. Always that, sir. I'm twenty men and all of them at your service.

MINISTER. I have a special job for you, Vidocq.

VIDOCQ. I'll be glad to do it, sir, whatever it is.

MINISTER (*aside*). This is going too fast. He'll never accept if I ask him point blank.

VIDOCQ (*aside*). I'm being too eager. He won't believe I'm not tricking him.

MINISTER. We'll talk about it later. You may not be the right person for this particular enterprise.

VIDOCQ. Yes, I'm not that interested in sneaking.

MINISTER. I can manage without your services.

VIDOCQ. I can do without you an all.

MINISTER (*aside*). This is terrible.

VIDOCQ (*aside*). This is terrible. Sir, I hear you've had a great success in arresting the notorious regicide, Fieschi.

MINISTER. It's not generally known but I don't mind telling you. He was discovered yesterday drunk in an attic.

VIDOCQ. The police don't often have such luck.

MINISTER. It takes skill to catch a man like that.

VIDOCQ. Yes, I'm quite surprised they managed it.

MINISTER. The police force is a force to be reckoned with.

VIDOCQ. I've nothing against the police force as such.

MINISTER. It's not as efficient as it might be.

VIDOCQ. That's exactly what I think myself.

MINISTER. Ah.

PIERRE *approaches*.

PIERRE. Excuse me, sir, did you say Fieschi? Fieschi who tried to murder the king with an infernal machine? That will count as regicide, sir, parricide, even though the king wasn't hurt. Might it not be the occasion, sir, for the use of the iron cage I

mentioned to you which would hang above the Garden of
Laws and —

MINISTER. Aren't you ashamed?

PIERRE. It didn't go quite according to plan, sir.

MINISTER. I should have told the soldiers to shoot.

PIERRE. Next time —

MINISTER. Next time I will have the prisoners flogged. And ten
men taken from the crowd.

PIERRE. If the prepared speeches —

MINISTER. They will all be gagged.

PIERRE. My idea, sir, is that in the park —

MINISTER. Never. Tell him, Vidocq. You were a boy when pain
was seen to be necessary. We are dealing with a wild animal
and we keep it off us with raw meat and whips. We don't teach
it to sit up and beg and feed it sugar lumps. It bit you this
morning and I'm glad.

PIERRE. Reason is my goddess.

MINISTER. Reason uses whips. The minister has no further use
for your services.

PIERRE. Thank you, sir.

PIERRE starts to leave.

MINISTER. I'd have Fieschi ten days dying but that has all been
abolished. But you and I, Vidocq, know what it is to live in
fear.

VIDOCQ. Come back here. Not a rich man?

PIERRE. No.

VIDOCQ. Poor but honest?

PIERRE. And not stupid.

VIDOCQ. Idealist? Visionary? Reformer?

PIERRE. It will happen. If not me, someone else.

VIDOCQ. No, never someone else. Me. Me. If you think of a good

idea get the credit. My slightest whim I go for like a life's ambition. Here's some money for you.

VIDOCQ *throws a gold coin on the ground.*

All you've got to do is pick it up. But if you don't do it before I count a hundred, I'll shoot you in the leg. I count in ones. The gun is loaded. The coin is real gold. It's not tied to a string. Well?

PIERRE *looks from one to the other and laughs nervously.*

Neither of us will touch you. You have a hundred seconds to pick up the coin. But of course you might get cramp and fall down. There might be an earthquake. Someone else might run up and get the coin first. And then I will shoot you in the leg. Never mind what I'm after.

PIERRE. All right.

VIDOCQ *starts to count. PIERRE stands still till ten then walks very slowly and picks up the coin.*

VIDOCQ. Again?

PIERRE. Wouldn't mind.

VIDOCQ. No, this time we're going to do it different. Come here. Hands behind your back. You can have another coin just for asking. But if you do I'll hit you in the face.

PIERRE. No you won't.

VIDOCQ. It's not so bad as being shot in the leg. Want a coin?

PIERRE. No.

VIDOCQ. Real gold.

PIERRE. No.

VIDOCQ. Off you go then. There you are. It's not what the punishment is, sir, it's knowing you're going to get it. You could take a whole year to kill a man and nobody cares because nobody expects to get caught. You can cover the whole town with posters and nobody reads them because nobody expects to get caught. I've never been caught.

PIERRE. I never thought of that.

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MINISTER. It's not true. Vidocq has convictions for theft, blackmail —

VIDOCQ. But I never did any of that. It was always a mistake. I happened to look like the man that done it. I was walking past at the time. Somebody had it in for me. I have done some jobs, I will admit, but you couldn't tell me one of them.

MINISTER. You're saying the police make mistakes?

VIDOCQ. Say you divided the country into ten areas, then into ten divisions, ten subdivisions, ten branches, ten sections, where are we getting, ten policemen in each section.

MINISTER. A million policemen?

VIDOCQ. It's not the number so much as the shape. And at the top a strong man.

MINISTER. A strong man at the top.

VIDOCQ. Do you know what a card index is, sir?

MINISTER. Little boxes.

VIDOCQ. With cards in them, with names on, in the order of the alphabet.

MINISTER. A friend of mine is a naturalist and I believe he —

VIDOCQ. You want a box with all the criminals. And another box with all the kinds of crime. You get a blackmail, b, look it up, who's done blackmail before, Vidocq, V, look him up, how he operates, where you find him, you've got me.

MINISTER. You don't want me to get you.

VIDOCQ. No, sir, if you took my advice I'd have to change my way of life.

MINISTER (*aside*). He said he'd have to change his way of life.

VIDOCQ (*aside*). Dare I suggest it now?

MINISTER (*aside*). Is this the moment to make the offer?

VIDOCQ. Of course I am a professional where crime is concerned. I couldn't lead a life completely cut off from it.

MINISTER (*aside*). Is he saying he won't go straight?

I have known you a long time and I know what you are.

VIDOCQ (*aside*). Is he saying he can't ever trust me?

PIERRE. I've had an idea. I think Monsieur Vidocq would make an excellent Chief of Police. I know you both think my ideas never work out.

MINISTER. But you know Monsieur Vidocq would never want to be a policeman.

VIDOCQ. You know the minister would never trust me.

PIERRE. The card index box appeals to Reason.

VIDOCQ. The boy's not stupid, you know.

MINISTER. Not at all. He's one of the brightest in my department.

VIDOCQ. You should listen to what he says.

MINISTER. I value his opinion very highly. I didn't really dismiss him just now.

VIDOCQ *gives* PIERRE *a gold coin*.

VIDOCQ. You can think of this coin as the perfect crime, no trouble, from the days before Vidocq was Chief of Police.

PIERRE (*to the MINISTER*). Sir, about the park —

MINISTER. Chief of Police.

The MINISTER and VIDOCQ embrace.

Crimes against property is an area of concern. I have land. I have warehouses. In the bad old days the peasants used to take liberties, chop down trees for firewood, that sort of thing, perfectly understandable, the old feudal landlords were monsters. But you can't have that now the land's owned by respectable citizens. You can't have that in warehouses. I lose thousands.

VIDOCQ. Wherever you get a lot of workers, sir, you'll get a lot of bad characters.

MINISTER. I sometimes think you see that if I took one of them as an example and set up a wheel by the factory gate —

VIDOCQ. Not a wheel, sir, a card index box. We'll have the bad characters in a box. You'll see. You can trust the rest. And the police will live so close to that criminal class, take informers from it, know it like itself, so every time someone reaches for a gold coin, wham, he's hit in the face.

MINISTER. I regret the disappearance of the thumbscrew. But that's the nostalgia of an old man.

PIERRE. A golden age. Crime will be eliminated.

VIDOCQ. Not entirely eliminated, no. It is my profession.

MINISTER. Vidocq, can I trust you?

VIDOCQ. I'm going to be famous.

PIERRE *takes out a book and reads.*

PIERRE. The memoirs of Vidocq.

VIDOCQ. Every night a new crime against property. I want to catch the gang redhanded. I get drinking with their leader. I seem to be from the provinces. I seem not to want him to guess I've escaped from prison. I seem to let him get me drunk.

ANTIN *and VIDOCQ 2, who looks nothing like VIDOCQ.*

ANTIN. Stick with me and you'll be all right. I'll settle Vidocq one of these days.

VIDOCQ 2. Everyone says that.

ANTIN. Right then, we'll settle him tonight.

VIDOCQ 2. You know where he lives?

ANTIN. Coming?

VIDOCQ. So we wait for me outside my door. But I don't show up all night.

ANTIN. I'll get him tomorrow. Now then, you interested in a job?

VIDOCQ. So we plan a robbery for the next night. And to his surprise the police turn up.

ANTIN. Here, what's this?

VIDOCQ 2. I'm Vidocq.

Tableau of VIDOCQ 2 arresting ANTIN.

PIERRE (*reads*). A butcher was robbed and murdered on the road.

VIDOCQ. I get two of them, Court and Raoul. The third's a retired customs officer. I go to his village. He's mending a road with thirty other men. If I try to arrest him, they'll kill me.

VIDOCQ 3, *quite different again*, and PONS GERARD, VIDOCQ *embraces* PONS.

VIDOCQ 3. How's the family?

PONS. What? what?

VIDOCQ 3. Have I changed so much?

PONS. I can't quite —

VIDOCQ 3 (*whispers*). Friend of Court and Raoul.

PONS (*for the benefit of the other men*). Ah ah, my dear old friend.

VIDOCQ. So I get him alone.

PONS. Who was it got them?

VIDOCQ 3. Who do you think?

PONS. I'd like to see that Vidocq. What I'd do to him.

PONS *gives* VIDOCQ *a drink*.

VIDOCQ 3. What you'd do to Vidocq is give him a drink.

PONS. Don't make me laugh.

VIDOCQ 3. I'm Vidocq.

Tableau — VIDOCQ 3 arrests PONS GERARD.

PIERRE (*reads*). There was cholera in Paris. Three hundred people died every day. Riots broke out. The army was having trouble. It was thought Louis-Philippe might lose his throne.

VIDOCQ. There's a group building a barricade so I go up behind them with a few men in plain clothes. I'm carrying a red flag, which makes it easier to get about. They're looking in front where the soldiers are coming. I take hold of their leader, Colombat. I say, Come along now, I'm Vidocq.

What VIDOCQ describes is happening. VIDOCQ 4 with a red flag arrests COLOMBAT.

VIDOCQ 4. Come along now, I'm Vidocq.

Tableau — VIDOCQ 4 arrests COLOMBAT.

VIDOCQ. We cleared five barricades so the army had freedom of movement. The revolt was suppressed. It was a matter of public order. More than half the people on the street were villains. I've welcomed every kind of government, always hoping for order. Better my way than the army shooting. Which they still did of course. One young man couldn't get the bloodshed out of his mind and subsequently tried to kill the king. I disguised myself as a duchess one day and shook the king's hand.

PIERRE. Speaking of killing the king, sir, the regicide, the one with the infernal machine, sir, I was wondering if we could make a display —

VIDOCQ. Make a display? of a regicide?

MINISTER. The rack? — no.

PIERRE. The iron cage — everyone stares up — amazing spectacle —

VIDOCQ. A regicide? You want to take people's attention off. You don't want to make an example of a regicide, people follow an example. What you want for a spectacle is someone good-looking and a bit out of the ordinary. Lacenaire.

MINISTER. Who's Lacenaire?

VIDOCQ. Second-rate little villain. Bungles half his jobs.

MINISTER. Then what's the point?

PIERRE. I've heard of Lacenaire.

VIDOCQ. He's writing his memoirs. People pass them round on little bits of paper.

PIERRE. That could be a wonderful means of education if he was warning young people against — is he? I suppose not.

VIDOCQ. He's pretty. He writes verses. He'll do.