

Disciplinary Power and the Role of the Gaze in Caryl Churchill's *Softcops* (1978)

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Abstract:

Caryl Churchill's *Softcops* premiered in 1984 at the Barbican Theatre by the Royal Shakespeare Company. The play is set in the 19th-century France. This study investigates subtle methods of surveillance adopted by disciplinary institutions to control individuals' bodies and minds. It seeks to examine the play in the light of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1978), which scrutinizes punitive practices in the modern Western penal system, and the evolution of punishment from public executions in the 18th century to the covert surveillance methods employed in 19th century disciplinary institutions such as prisons, schools, and hospitals. The study offers an analysis of the play, focusing on power dynamics within the prison setting and their implications for broader societal contexts. Furthermore, it explores the use of subtle contemporary practices that go unnoticed, thereby reducing resistance and perpetuating authoritarian norms in modern society. The play examines themes of domination, methods of surveillance through the portrayal of a dystopian society, where state authorities maintain order through aggressive punitive measures. *Softcops* begins by the imposition of harsh regulations targeting the bodies of prisoners, culminating in their adoption of self-discipline, and emphasizing the impact of constant surveillance. The study reveals the impact of punitive measures and constant surveillance on the characters' behaviors, bodies, and minds, implying that authoritarian regimes operate by normalizing self-policing to avoid public punishment.

Keywords: *Softcops*, Caryl Churchill, disciplinary practices, domination, panopticon, oppression.

السلطة التأديبية ودور المراقبة

في مسرحية كاريل تشرشل "رجال شرطة لطفاء" (١٩٧٨)

الملخص:

عرضت شركة شكسبير الملكية مسرحية الكاتبة البريطانية كاريل تشرشل "رجال شرطة لطفاء" على مسرح باربيكان عام ١٩٨٤. تدور أحداث المسرحية في فرنسا في القرن التاسع عشر. تبحث الدراسة نظام المراقبة التي تتبناها المؤسسات الاجتماعية للسيطرة على سلوكيات الأشخاص وذلك في ضوء أفكار ميشيل فوكو التي طرحها في كتابه "الجريمة والعقاب" (١٩٧٨) الذي يدرس الممارسات العقابية في المجتمع الغربي الحديث وتطور أساليب العقاب من الإعدام العلني في القرن الثامن عشر إلى نظام مراقبة سلوكيات الأشخاص التي تتبناها المؤسسات التأديبية مثل السجون والمدارس والمستشفيات في القرن التاسع عشر. تقدم الدراسة تحليلاً للمسرحية مع التركيز على ديناميكيات السلطة داخل السجن وآثارها على السياقات المجتمعية واستخدام الممارسات العقابية الخفية التي تضعف المقاومة وتديم المعايير الاستبدادية في العصر الحديث. تدرس المسرحية موضوعات الهيمنة والمراقبة واستخدام سلطات الدولة إجراءات عقابية عنيفة للحفاظ على النظام. تبدأ المسرحية بفرض السلطات لإجراءات قاسية تستهدف أجساد السجناء و تنتهي بالتزامهم بأساليب الانضباط الذاتي والممارسات التنظيمية لتجنب العقاب. تكشف الدراسة طبيعة ديناميكيات القوة وتوضح آثار الإجراءات العقابية والمراقبة المستمرة على سلوكيات الشخصيات وأجسادهم وعقولهم.

كلمات مفتاحية: رجال شرطة لطفاء، كاريل تشرشل، ممارسات تنظيمية، السيطرة، السجن،

الاضطهاد

Disciplinary Power and the Role of the Gaze in Caryl Churchill's *Softcops* (1978)

Introduction

Churchill wrote an initial draft of *Softcops* in 1978, which premiered in 1984 at the Barbican Theatre by the Royal Shakespeare Company. She draws influence from the memoirs of Vidocq, a former robber turned chief of police known for his use of disguises, and Lancenaire, a notorious criminal who achieved a glamorous reputation. The play is set in the 19th-century France. It investigates subtle methods of surveillance adopted by disciplinary institutions to control individuals' bodies, minds, and behaviors. This study seeks to examine the play in the light of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1978), which scrutinizes punitive practices and societal control in the modern Western penal system, and the evolution of punishment from public executions in the 18th century to the covert surveillance methods employed in 19th century disciplinary institutions such as prisons, schools, and hospitals.

Notably, *Softcops* features an all-male cast. Justin Hayford argues, "Lacking the political sophistication and theatrical flair of her best work, Churchill's play glosses Foucault's monumental work in Cliffs Notes fashion." Throughout the play, Churchill explores themes of domination and surveillance within a dystopian society where state authorities uphold order through violent punitive measures. The play critiques a reality where individuals are constantly monitored and manipulated by suppressive regimes. Reflecting on Foucault's concepts of the panopticon and the role of the gaze, it deals with the mechanisms that lead to self-discipline and the internalization of regulatory measures. *Softcops* raises questions about the nature of power and the impact of surveillance on individual behaviors and social dynamics.

Churchill, a British playwright, was born in 1938 and graduated from Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University in 1960.

She was a resident dramatist at Joint Stock Theater Company. Throughout her plays, she advocates for the liberation of individuals, regardless of gender, from the oppressive constraints of historical norms and current social pressures (Mambrol). Oliver Ainley states that critics depict Churchill's work as less appealing, because it tends to be unconventional. Churchill raises issues of power dynamics, and resistance in social relationships as represented across her plays, including *Owners* (1973), *Top Girls* (1982), *Cloud Nine* (1979), and *Fen* (1982). Her works shed light on social norms and regulatory measures imposed on individuals' bodies. Churchill received Obie Awards For Playwriting for her plays *Cloud 9* (1979), a farce exploring sexual politics, *Top Girls* (1982), addressing women's pursuit of power, and *Serious Money*, a satirical take on the British stock market (1987). She was also honored with the Obie Sustained Achievement Award in 2001. In 1988, she won the Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Play for *Serious Money*. In recognition of her contributions, Churchill was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame in 2010.

Softcops sheds light on the development of modern Punitive methods, which is used to classify individuals into categories such as the impoverished, the delinquent, and the insane, effectively segregating them from the affluent, the law-abiding, and the sane. The play highlights the use of physical coercion as a means to assert authoritarian control over the public. In her author's note, Churchill affirms that the play is about governments' efforts to "depoliticize illegal acts," creating a distinct class of criminals to prevent widespread subversion. This process involves the introduction of figures such as detectives and criminals, further perpetuating societal divisions and power differential (13).

Softcops begins by the imposition of harsh regulations targeting the bodies of prisoners, culminating in their adoption of self-discipline. This softer method of punishment involves the prisoners monitoring their own behaviors, emphasizing the power dynamics associated with surveillance. The play underscores the transition in punitive methods from the 18th century to 19th century, highlighting the use of disciplinary norms to circumvent public

punishment, which often incites resistance. The cops serve as representatives of the state, who are responsible for ensuring compliance with and adherence to the laws. They epitomize the Foucauldian notion of disciplinary power, employing subtle tactics such as constant surveillance, establishing accepted behaviors, and shaping societal norms and expectations. Hence, the title *Softcops* encapsulates the nuanced methods utilized by authorities to exert control.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of regulatory measures and the function of surveillance in controlling behaviors, bodies and minds of individuals in society. Utilizing a theoretical framework informed by Foucault's concepts of modern institutional disciplinary practices, particular attention is given to the dynamics of power, the significance of surveillance, and forms of resistance in authoritarian regimes. The study contends that Churchill's work in *Softcops* reflects the influence of Foucault's concepts, as she portrays the effects of punitive measures and constant surveillance on the characters' behaviors and bodies. The study offers an analysis of the play, putting into focus power dynamics within the prison setting and their implications for broader societal contexts. Additionally, the study explores the use of subtle contemporary practices that go unnoticed, thus reducing resistance and perpetuating authoritarian norms in modern society.

Theoretical background:

Throughout *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault investigates the impact of oppressive power dynamics on society, suggesting that socially constructed norms are used to subject individuals to constant surveillance by the state. According to Foucault, social relations are structured by systems of domination, the nature of which varies depending on societal conditions. Foucault reveals how social institutions shape penal practices that provoke social resistance, tracing individuals' evolution from positions of submissions to forms of resistance.

In order to discuss possibilities of resistance in relations of domination, it is crucial to examine Foucault's concepts regarding the nature of power in society. Foucault conceives domination as an ever-changing relation, in which actions are used to defer other actions. He defines power relations as a "multiple and mobile field of force relations, wherein far-reaching, but never completely stable effects of domination are produced" (Vol.1, 102). Consequently, it is difficult to define the boundaries of domination relations in real social situations due to its unstable nature, which guarantees equal distribution and circulation of power in the social body. According to Foucault's theory, "power constructs social organization and hierarchy by producing discourses and truths, by imposing discipline and order, and by shaping human desires and subjectivities" (Karlberg 4). Foucault reveals alternative forms of power, such as disciplinary power, the power of knowledge and the power of discourse. Nevertheless, these relations of domination inevitably provoke resistance among social subjects.

In the 18th century, the king wielded absolute power, determining both rewards, and punishments for his subjects. However, a shift has occurred from sovereign power, characterized by violent public punishment, to contemporary punitive measures that regulate bodies through surveillance techniques. Today, social institutions employ regulating measures, treating the body as a machine (Vol. 1, 139) and controlling individuals' movements, actions, and behaviors through constant supervision. Individuals internalize these disciplinary measures until they reach a state of total subjection. According to Foucault, disciplinary power emerges from epistemological power or the power of knowledge that appeared in the 19th century. Sawicki asserts that "ways of knowing are equated with ways of exercising power over individuals" ("Foucault and Feminism", 221). Disciplinary power is aimed at individual's body, behavior, and mind. Prisons, hospitals, and schools employ various regulations to supervise social subjects. For example, prisons utilize punitive measures to regulate prisoners' behaviors, while hospitals use medical

regulations, leveraging their authority to categorize the society into legal/criminal and sane/insane, thereby normalizing social control.

The power of knowledge emerges as a new form of power that controls people's lives. Recently, the more you know the more you can control. Social institutions categorize individuals according to specific social and cultural criteria, imposing oppressive measures that subjugate them, and taking advantage of their weaknesses for the benefit of authoritarian entities. Disciplinary measures entail putting social subjects under constant surveillance, compelling them to adhere to social authority.

Foucault studies the mechanisms of power within the society to uncover potential avenues of resistance accessible to social subjects, who are by-products of power dynamics. He argues that his investigation of the concept of power leans more towards an analysis of power rather than a comprehensive theory, focusing on defining the distinct realm shaped by power relations and identifying the tools necessary for its examination (Vol.1, 82). In his analysis of social relations, he underlines the intricate nature of domination relations that lead to resistance.

According to Foucault, possibilities of resistance are related to the positive, unstable nature of power relations, which are affirmed by their inherent inequality (Vol. 1, 193). In such unstable domination relationships, social subjects may find avenues for empowerment. Al Amoudi believes that Foucault studies the aforementioned institutions "because of his assumption that modern legal power may be best studied where it generates the more resistance" (19). This implies an interactive relationship between domination and resistance, as the presence of one phenomenon asserts the existence of the other. Thus, domination is not exercised freely within society, because unrestrained authority often leads to servitude.

Social subjects typically find themselves with limited options, as they are both products and instruments of power (Vol.1, 94). The aim of exerting power is not to control bodies, but rather

to regulate actions. However, regulating actions is not the sole purpose of power. Foucault contends, "There is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives" (Vol.1, 95). This implies that social dynamics are not arbitrary, as every exercise of power primarily serves the interests of authoritarian regimes.

Foucault believes that social subjects have the chance to dominate, since they are free to act and make choices. However, this does not imply that domination arises from the conscious choice or decision of the individual subject (Vol.1, 95). Rather, power is wielded and recognized by the domineering structures. Consequently, disciplinary practices are employed to regulate social subjects until they internalize imposed rules. Misbah suggests that individuals' behaviors are evaluated according to social and scientific knowledge, which establishes norms and standards governing such behaviors in fields like medicine, psychology and criminology (25). Consequently, "modern individuals", as described by Aurelia Armstrong, actively participate in their own "normalization" by adhering to social norms.

Although social subjects have the potential to challenge dominant authorities, they can remain indefinitely in a state of subjection. Foucault suggests that social subjects may acquiesce to power if they perceive it as merely restricting their desires, thereby "leaving a measure of freedom—however slight—intact. Power as a pure limit set on freedom is, at least in our society, the general form of its acceptability" (Vol. 1, 86). This notion underscores the role of individual acceptance or rejection of societal measures in shaping disciplinary power. Consequently, individuals' resistance poses a threat to the continued dominance of hegemonic entities. According to Foucault, resistance is an ongoing process for subjects due to the fluid nature of domination relations. This implies that social subjects have the capacity to alter their positions within domination relations through acts of resistance.

In *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality*, Foucault elaborates his concept about the impact of constant surveillance

over prisoners within the modern penal system, as established by Jeremy Bentham's design of the panopticon. Bentham envisioned a circular prison layout with a central tower enabling a single guard to observe all the prisoners without their knowledge, thereby fostering a pervasive sense of surveillance. Foucault contends, "The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly" (*Discipline and Punish*, 189). Foucault further elucidates that in such a model, "power would be exercised solely through exact observation; each gaze would form a part of the overall functioning of power" (*Discipline and Punish*, 187). In the "panopticon," prisoners are subjected to constant observation by guards, leading them to internalize corrective measures and adopt self-discipline. Modern disciplinary institutions impose regulations and rules to control individuals' bodies, thereby transforming the human body into a site of power.

Softcops explores the authoritarian control of state authorities, drawing upon Foucault's insights into modern punitive measures. This exploration extends beyond just prisoners to encompass other members of society. Foucault's examination of the body as a locus of power provides a framework for discussing the social construction of docile subjects, which in turn perpetuates unequal distributions of power within society, reinforcing privileges for corrupt individuals in totalitarian regimes. As state representatives encounter public unrest and riots during the scenes of public punishment, they begin to seek more subtle methods of control. At this point, Bentham's penal system emerges as an attractive option.

State authorities are represented by Minister, Pierre, and Headmaster, who devise new methods of punishment and seek to educate the public about the dire consequences of violating laws. Pierre is interested in employing public punishment as a didactic tool to instill obedience in children (6). Later, he proposes the idea of relocating public punishment to a park, where perpetrators of heinous crimes, such as parricide, would be displayed in hanging cages as a deterrent for others. However, the children do not react

actively as expected, which renders Pierre's didactic approach ineffective and potentially dangerous for neglecting possible public riots. He argues, "I dream of something covering several acres and completely transforming-as you know.... But if the minister is impressed today I hope for a park" (6). The Headmaster supports this notion, asserting that it would intimidate criminals and force them to comply with societal rules.

It seems abnormal for impoverished people to resist, particularly since much of the audience is depicted as ignorant or illiterate, unaware of the extent of state control. In this context, knowledge becomes a tool for domination, and the lack thereof could lead to subjugation. The play reveals the paradoxical societal response to crime, where individuals like Vidocq, a thief, are rewarded for their aggressive traits, while individuals like Duval, who steals out of necessity, are subjected to severe punishment such as the amputation of their hands. This underscores the culpability of the very society that enforces corrective measures in order to perpetuate social injustices. It is the same society which appoints Vidocq, a thief, as a chief of police. Vidocq's success as a police chief depends on his ability to put on disguises akin to those as a thief. At the end of the play, the punitive system appears as a culprit, employing state-loyal criminals to enforce its corrective measures on the citizens, thereby antagonizing and excluding those who resist it. This authoritarian system rewards adherence to the restrictive rules, even when applied by criminals. Foucault's analysis of domineering social systems brings into focus its oppressive disciplinary practices that are meant to maintain order and discipline, while it is used to control social subjects for the benefit of their oppressors.

According to Pierre, information holds significant importance in this system. His insistence on composing speeches for both the magistrate and the prisoners, Duval and Lafayette, asserts the interplay between power, knowledge and discourse (Kermayn 154). Despite Duval's emotional distress, he obediently adheres to the scripted speech. Despite his tears, he is compelled to

recite Pierre's words, explaining to the public that he is happy to get his hand amputated. He says:

DUVAL. I, Jacques Duval.

PIERRE. Go on.

DUVAL. I, Jacques Duval.

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

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.

.....

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

PIERRE. I am happy –

DUVAL. – I am happy –

PIERRE. – to be an example –

DUVAL. – example (19)

Duval is the perfect example of a docile subject, molded by the dictates of an authoritarian system. He is even unable to feel sorry for himself in this difficult situation. Duval's assertion that hunger is not a valid excuse for theft underscores his internalization of societal norms and values, because admitting to theft out of hunger

would implicate the state rather than himself, revealing his acceptance of the state's authority.

Lafayette deviates from the scripted speech. His rebellious speech incites public riot. The impassioned speech prompts the crowd to dismantle the scaffold and assail the executioner, which leads to chaos. The scaffold serves as a symbol of both defiance and adherence to state authority, propagating for conformity and rebellion at the same time. Consequently, spectators are divided into two groups; with one faction supporting the state and assaulting Lafayette, while the other rebels against authority and beats up the executioner. This affirms the inherent correlation between oppression and resistance, as the existence of domination provokes opposition. Subsequently, Pierre proposes the establishment of a "garden of laws" as a means to educate the public about legal compliance. He states:

And people would walk gravely and soberly and reflect.
And for the worst crime. Patricide. 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. (14)

In Pierre's garden, crimes like patricide and insulting the king receive swift and effective punishment, and prisoners are used as cautionary examples to dissuade others from committing such crimes. However, the minister dismisses Pierre's proposal, asserting that "Reason uses whips" (16). He offers Vidocq, a notorious robber, a position as police chief. The minister claims that Vidocq is an indispensable asset, because of his invaluable knowledge of the criminal underworld. Later, he reveals that he needs him to stand against poor neighbors who trespass the boundaries of his land and chop the trees for firewood (25). Pierre puts faith in Vidocq, believing that he will restore order. He acknowledges Vidocq's ability to identify criminals and bring them to justice, but he questions what should be done with them thereafter, emphasizing the importance of using their bodies to

demonstrate the power of law. He states, "Vidocq is bringing some order into crime. He knows who the criminal are and he will catch them. But then what? What do you do with them? If you don't use their bodies to demonstrate the power of law" (33). Pierre believes that public punishment should be used to affirm the authority of the system and to maintain social order.

When faced with resistance, state authorities resort to employing criminals and spies to enforce the law. Pierre approves of Bentham's alternative solution, which builds upon Pierre's original plan. Bentham proposes a reversal of Pierre's concept. He argues, "Imagine for one moment that you're the prisoner. This is your cell, you can't leave it. This is the central tower and I'm the guard. I'll watch you day and night" (39). Instead of relying solely on public punishment that is aimed at the bodies of the prisoners, the authorities opt for subtler but equally effective strategy such as constant surveillance. By manipulating knowledge, they wield power over the dwellers of social/disciplinary institutions, seeking to enforce control through softer measures.

Bentham's soft control system operates through the normalization of self-policing and adherence to societal norms to avoid punishment. The constant feeling of being under surveillance discourages prisoners from communicating with each other, thereby maximizing the effectiveness of penal practices. Pierre maintains that prisoners cannot communicate by tapping on the walls, because the guards are watching them (39). Bentham's system extends beyond prisoners to include patients and ordinary individuals, as illustrated by the Pierre's discussion with Holidaymaker. Pierre asserts that the state employs new categorization methods based on physical features, suggesting that attributes such as a "long nose and close-set eyes" (45) could signify deviation. Now, Pierre's vision of the garden of laws includes the entire city, exploiting education, supervision, punishment, and medication to normalize state control (49). The final product of this system is exemplified by Holidaymaker, an ordinary citizen who adopts the new method and judges others

based on their appearances. Ironically, Pierre is oblivious to the fact that he could be subjected to judgment according to these new fluid boundaries of categorization. Churchill's criticism incites the audience to reconsider their role within this oppressive system-- whether they are the oppressed or the oppressors.

The play offers limited insights into the characters, portraying them as tools through which the system operates. They are depicted as either the oppressed or the oppressors. However, Churchill introduces Bentham, the creator of the panoptic system, to underscore the evolution and widespread impact of "master narratives" (Kermany 158). Bentham's presence highlights the interconnectedness of knowledge and dominant structures, particularly in the context of the totalitarian system that imposes constant surveillance to regulate individuals' bodies and actions. His presence serves to emphasize the pervasive nature of these systems and their global impact.

Pierre's failure in his endeavors both as a stage manager and an educator is emphasized through his portrayal as a subservient dog for Vidocq. He obediently retrieves the coins tossed by Vidocq, highlighting his ambivalent nature as both a master and slave in the current power context. He is a subject of power and knowledge, succumbing to Bentham's panoptic system, which illustrates the intricacies of subjugation and control.

The chain gang serves as catalysts for change in the play, challenging the existing status quo and inspiring others to resist oppressive structures. They symbolize freedom and defiance against state authorities, asserting their liberation even while wearing the chain, which is a symbol of the ultimate disgrace for a criminal. Therefore, the boys feel liberated while wearing the chain, as it frees them from the constraints of societal norms and regulations. They reach a point where conformity is deemed as shameful as punishment itself. The warder states:

WARDER. Not what I'd call an education, sir. I should stand further over here if I was you. No, it teaches bad men how to be worse and it teaches them pride in it.

مجلة وادي النيل للدراسات والبحوث الإنسانية والاجتماعية والتربوية (مجلة علمية محكمة)

PIERRE. But what does it teach the crowd who sees them?

WARDER. Teaches the crowd to riot.

PIERRE. Oh dear.

WARDER. Teaches hate of the rich. Scorn of the obedient.
Defiance of fate.

PIERRE. Oh but surely –

WARDER. Whole country's in an uproar, sir, when the
chain gang's gone through. (35)

The chain gang becomes a sign of rebellion, igniting resistance among the crowd. This underscores the notion that excessive oppression stimulates strong resistance. Foucault's concept of the penal system highlights the impact of surveillance and coercive disciplinary measures on the emergence of resistance and riots. Institutional regulations, rooted in panopticism, subjugate individuals' minds, bodies, and actions. Although Foucault asserts that resistance inevitably arises where power exists, he does not clarify the mechanisms behind its manifestation. However, Churchill's play portrays how domination and resistance coexist within social dynamics, illustrating how oppressive practices provoke riots and violence in defiance of authoritarian rule. By acknowledging the influence of constant surveillance on social subjects, the play highlights the effect of observation on social hierarchies, and underscores the socially constructed nature of the world.

The utilization of spies against resistance movements is depicted as a demeaning betrayal of public trust, as the spy willingly accepts degradation and oppression. By rejecting resistance as a means to achieve freedom, the spy turns into a docile subject who internalizes self-discipline. Thus, he loses his subjectivity. However, his action also underscores the cowardice of the oppressing authorities in confronting public unrest.

The play reveals that social subjects are marginalized, because they are denied their right to resist state authorities. This affirms the oppressive nature of institutional disciplinary practices, which contradicts Foucault's notion of the positive nature of power.

When resistance is controlled by the domineering entities, social subjects are deprived of any opportunities to resist, as oppressive regulatory measures diminish the possibilities of resistance available to them.

Disciplinary power does not only regulate behaviors, but it is also used to manipulate and control minds. As a result, individuals outside the prison become prisoners themselves, internalizing panoptic practices, and adhering to state laws and regulations. Finally, social institutions succeed in transforming social subjects into docile entities, incapable of resistance or attaining freedom.

The play includes dedicated agents and hypocritical spies who lack the courage to reveal their true affiliations. For example, Vidocq occupies two conflicting roles; he is a cop and a robber at the same time. Kritzer argues, "Churchill does maintain a given player/role combination as a stable dyad throughout the play, such as...Pierre in *Softcops*, the rigidity of this relationship emphasizes the extent to which the character functions as part of the oppressive status quo" (129). While Foucault focuses on studying the analytics of power, Churchill's play reveals the effect of social control on the prisoners as representatives of human beings in general. Foucault's concentration on disciplinary practices and their societal role overlooks their oppressive and restrictive effects, leading to an endless state of subordination. Rejecting the role of social subordination could be a mechanism to revolt against institutional oppression.

The relentless pursuit of oppressive corrective measures without sufficient attention to their context perpetuates the position of current social subjects. This does not advocate for the complete rejection of disciplinary measures but rather emphasizes that they should not impede social subjects' rights to assume other roles in society. According to Foucault's concepts on subjection, the presence of domination is closely tied to the existence of resistance. However, the constitution of subjects by power can limit their freedom.

Pierre, the Minister, and Vidocq do not acknowledge their enforcement of oppressive practices. Instead, they claim that they educate the public about discipline and punishment to prevent resistance. They operate covertly to perpetuate their hold on public opinion. The prisoners are not only faced with unequal distribution of power but also confront social constructs based on divisions such as low-abiding/delinquent and the sane/insane and fair judgment/bias. This bias deprives the prisoners of their right to spend some time on the beach, reflecting the society as a large panopticon that applies regulatory measures to control individuals' behaviors and minds. According to this system, prisoners do not belong to society unless they conform to its rules. *Softcops* demonstrates how the power that is inflicted upon guards is based on a social construction of police responsibility toward the society. However, they misuse it to enhance their status.

Softcops suggests that everyone is compelled to conform to social norms, which are similar to the laws imposed on prison inmates. Punitive measures are used to maintain public silence and powerlessness, forcing social subjects to internalize self-discipline. At the end of the play, public awareness of the oppressive authoritarian regime prompts resistance against institutional subjugation. However, the play reveals that authoritarian entities will always intimidate/ taunt the weak and employ spies to safeguard themselves. There will be casualties on both sides; for example, the prisoner who attempts to kill Pierre is killed by a guard, while the spy is slain by resistance.

The prisoners' bodies become symbols of subjection, as they are exploited later by Vidocq to illustrate the dire consequences of challenging the state's penal system. For example, Vidocq uses the hand of the dead body of Lancenaire to underscore the perils of revolution against deep-rooted disciplines. Previously, Pierre holds the amputated hand of Duval, a poor man who steals food, which serves as an indictment rather than evidence of social control over the public.

At the end of the play, Pierre's declaration that the society has become the garden he dreamed of is contradicted by the prisoner's trial to kill him in front of Holidaymaker. This event underscores the impossibility of total control; it is merely an illusion. Resistance will always exist. This scene exposes the oppression inherent in the panoptic institution. Meanwhile, it puts into focus the indifferent reaction of the compliant prisoners who continue their picnic without showing any sign of remorse for their deceased colleague.

In *Softcops*, punitive measures have a detrimental impact on the prisoners, constraining their choices and affecting their bodies, minds, and behaviors. As Foucault observes, "it is a power that only has the force of the negative on its side....it is incapable of doing anything, except to render what it dominates incapable of doing anything either, except for what this power allows it to do" (Vol.1, 85). Since state authorities limit the avenues for resistance, the prisoners find themselves with few options. Despite the restrictive disciplinary measures regulating resistance mechanisms, Foucault believes that social subjects still have the chance to achieve freedom due to the unstable nature of domination relations. However, Foucault's model is fragile, as it fails to provide definite mechanisms for resistance against authoritarian entities.

Foucault presents general ideas about freedom, suggesting that resistance comes from inside. He asserts that it "is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Should it be said that one is always 'inside' power, there is no 'escaping' it" (Vol.1, 95). However, emphasizing internal positions of resistance may jeopardize its ability to challenge authoritarian entities successfully, because effective opposition should not be controlled by domineering structures. Therefore, Sawicki claims that "his assertions that resistance to power is everywhere appear at best gratuitous, and at worst incoherent" ("Feminism, Foucault", 162). By restricting prisoners' behaviors and controlling their opportunities for resistance, they are kept in a constant state of subjection. Allowing social institutions to manage their resistance undermines their efforts to achieve freedom. Foucault's model on

dominance lacks effective mechanisms for resistance beyond relying on the instability of domination relations. This could be rendered to his belief that social subjects are free to engage in or abstain from domination relations. Therefore, he overlooks resistance mechanisms.

Conclusion:

Throughout the play, public executions of the prisoners serve as a deterrent against potential public resistance, a tactic aimed at blurring resistance as discussed by Foucault. In fact, Foucault fails to provide clear guidelines on the mechanisms of resistance, apart from his notion about unequal distribution of power in the society that may help subjects in their quest for freedom. However, Churchill's play suggests that solidarity could be an effective means of resisting authoritarianism. This is illustrated by the crowd's ability to prevent the execution of Lafayette by dismantling the scaffold. Similarly, the chain gang manages to transform the oppressive symbolism of the chain into a symbol of freedom and resistance. Thus, the play presents different types of subjects: the docile subject like Duval, who adheres to the rules till the end; the social subject like Lafayette, who succeeds to initiate riots rather than conformity; and the empowered subject like Vidocq, whose collaboration with state authorities proves beneficial to him. Despite being a tool of power, Pierre does not have the same kind of empowerment from the minister, as his garden project is never approved.

In the end, institutional disciplinary power employs oppressive penal measures that are imposed on the bodies and minds of the prisoners to regulate their behaviors. Some prisoners internalize state disciplinary practices and exhibit self-discipline. Thus, they endure ever-lasting subjugation. Others resist state oppressive measures and manage to turn the chains into symbols of defiance. Churchill's *Softcops* does not present solutions, but it prompts the audience to search for them. She encourages the audience to reflect on the intricacies of power dynamics and the potential for collective action and social change.

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