

methuen | drama

COMPLICITE

PLAYS: 1

THE STREET OF CROCODILES

THE THREE LIVES OF LUCIE CABROL • MNEMONIC



Introduced by Simon McBurney

B L O O M S B U R Y

Complicite

Plays: 1

The Street of Crocodiles, The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol, Mnemonic

The Street of Crocodiles: '... has a lightness of texture that perfectly counterpoints the underlying gravity of the Bruno Schulz stories on which it is based ...' Michael Billington, *Guardian*

The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol: 'You follow this Complicite version [of John Berger's story] as intensely as you would read a Grimms' fairytale.' Alastair Macaulay, *Financial Times*

Mnemonic 'connects the seemingly unconnected: past with present, you and me, the songs we share, the stories we once told and the stories we tell now.' Lyn Gardner, *Guardian*

Founded in 1983, Complicite is a constantly evolving ensemble of performers and collaborators, now led by Artistic Director Simon McBurney. Complicite's work has ranged from entirely devised work to theatrical adaptations and revivals of classic texts. The Company has also worked in other media; a radio production of *Mnemonic* for BBC Radio 3, collaborations with John Berger on a radio adaptation of his novel *To The Wedding* for BBC Radio and *The Vertical Line*, a multi-disciplinary installation performed in a disused tube station, commissioned by Artangel. Always changing and moving forward to incorporate new stimuli, the principles of the work have remained close to the original impulses: seeking what is most alive, integrating text, music, image and action to create surprising, disruptive theatre.

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The Street of Crocodiles

The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol

Mnemonic

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B L O O M S B U R Y
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Contents

<i>Chronology</i>	vii
<i>Prologue</i>	ix
The Street of Crocodiles	1
The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol	73
Mnemonic	127

A Chronology

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1983 | <i>Put It On Your Head</i> |
| 1984–5 | <i>A Minute Too Late</i> |
| 1985 | <i>More Bigger Snacks Now</i> |
| 1986 | <i>Please, Please, Please</i> |
| 1986 | <i>Foodstuff</i> |
| 1987 | <i>Burning Ambition</i> |
| 1987 | <i>Anything for a Quiet Life</i> |
| 1988 | <i>Ave Maria</i> |
| 1988 | <i>The Phantom Violin</i> |
| 1989 | <i>The Lamentations of Thel</i> |
| 1989 | <i>Anything for a Quiet Life</i> (revival) |
| 1989 | <i>The Visit</i> |
| 1989–91 | <i>My Army Parts I and II</i> |
| 1990 | <i>Help! I'm Alive</i> |
| 1991 | <i>The Visit</i> (revival) |
| 1992–4 | <i>The Street of Crocodiles</i> |
| 1992 | <i>The Winter's Tale</i> |
| 1994–6 | <i>The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol</i> |
| 1994–5 | <i>Out of a house walked a man . . .</i> |
| 1996 | <i>Foe</i> |
| 1997 | <i>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</i> |
| 1997 | <i>To the Wedding</i> (BBC Radio 3) |

1997–8	<i>The Chairs</i>
1998–9	<i>The Street of Crocodiles</i> (revival)
1999	<i>The Vertical Line</i>
1999–2001	<i>Mnemonic</i>
2000	<i>Light</i>
2000–2	<i>The Noise of Time</i>
2002	<i>Mnemonic</i> (BBC Radio 3)
2002–3	<i>Mnemonic</i> (revival)
2003–4	<i>The Elephant Vanishes</i>

Prologue

Three plays are gathered in this book – *The Street of Crocodiles*, *The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol* and *Mnemonic*. They are in many ways quite separate in time, space, meaning and style. The world of *The Street of Crocodiles* is that of the unconscious and the imagination. The short stories by Polish Jewish writer, Bruno Schulz, which form the inspiration for the piece, describe small town life in Galicia at the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire seen through the eyes of a child. The play is constructed of fragments from these stories. Fleeting, apparently random images and fragmentary scenes evoke pungent feelings and imply a story; but it is one that is never made explicit. People drift across the lost world of a small town in turn-of-the-century Poland, turning the stage into a dreamscape. By contrast, in *The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol*, John Berger confronts us with unflinching reality. It is the story of a peasant woman born in the Haut Savoie in 1900 and describes a pitiless life of bone-breaking physical labour in the French Alps. The narrative is direct, explicit and moves relentlessly towards its tragic conclusion. In *Mnemonic*, there are multiple stories. Five contemporary stories set in different countries and spanning thousands of years are interwoven, unfolding at the same time in the same space.

In all of the pieces, we are far from a reality that we might think of as ‘ours’. The subject matter, a pre-war Polish-Jewish upbringing, the life of poor mountain peasants and an archaeological discovery dating back 33,000 years does not strike us now as personal and intimate. Yet, for me, somehow that is what they are – both intimate and personal. Perhaps it is that they are all to do with memory, people remembering things. In *The Street of Crocodiles* Joseph remembers when he smells the book he is reading. For Jean in *Lucie Cabrol*, it is the heat of the fire which brings back the dead and in *Mnemonic* the physical sensation of being alone in your room in the middle of the night unable to sleep, produces the cascade of memories and associations about love and loss. The physical stimulation of memory is a general human experience, common to us all, but it evokes

something that is unique to each of us. It defines who we are in life and is also our point of contact with the dead. My mother was a birdwatcher. Months after she died, my arm would move involuntarily to the telephone when I saw a heron fly over my house.

There is another reason why they belong together; why they are side by side in this book. It is because of the way they were made. They are all compositional pieces that came about through a process of collaboration. The work of Bruno Schulz, John Berger and the story of the Iceman, as recounted by Konrad Spindler, were the starting points in each case. From there they were developed through chaotic and continually evolving rehearsals that involved improvisation, argument, writing, rewriting, despair and hope. They represent the work of more than fifty people, coming together over a period of seven years. They were developed as they were performed. And they have been performed in countries all over the world to audiences who then influence the way we remake the shows the next time we play. With each change, be they new actors, new technicians, new producers or new audiences, fresh insights emerge, new directions are discovered and pointed out. In this way, the pieces have become meeting points, destinations, points de départs, we could even say they have become places in themselves.

All the pieces are about a common sense of displacement. An experience of loss, of a kind of banishment specific to our time. *Lucie Cabrol* charts not only her exile from the village, but her adaptation to being banished from a way of life that has been in place almost unchanged since the Neolithic age. For Bruno Schulz, the vanished world of his childhood stands as a metaphor for all that was disappearing in that part of the world, the end of empire and the shock of twentieth century commercialisation. The gathering darkness in the stories also prophesies all that was to be obliterated after his death. And in *Mnemonic*, the parallel stories of searching for a father and searching to uncover a more distant death, that of the Iceman, serve to focus a common desire to know 'Where do I come from?'

In the past a sense of belonging was obtained through a continuity of history and the unchanging nature of place. Those who were stationary tended to think of the experience of displacement belonging to the emigrant. But as I have travelled and performed it seems to me that this sensation of 'homelessness' – of a rupture with the past, a kind of dismantling of history and experience – is not only that of the emigrant, forced through economic, social and political violence to tear up all that is known and move to start a new life elsewhere. It seems, now, to be a common experience, a product of our time. Perhaps it is best described as a loss of continuity between the past and the future; a loss of connection between our dead and those yet to be born. And, perhaps, this sensation of loss is what brought the people who made these pieces to the same space, the site of these plays. It is one of the things that has joined us with audiences everywhere.

'Why do you need to know about your father?' Virgil asks Alice in the final scene of *Mnemonic*.

'Because if I don't know who he is, I feel I can't come home,' she replies.

'Then imagine,' says Virgil.

Perhaps in some small way this is an answer. That is to say the act of collective imagination itself creates a site.

What can grow on this site of loss? It is strange to suggest that these pieces are something as static as a 'site', since they are constantly shifting and moving. As are the people involved in their creation. So if they are 'sites' or places in themselves then they are places of passage. Passing places. Such as you find on single track roads in the mountains. When a driver travelling in the opposite direction is forced to give way to allow both to continue their journeys, there is a curiously intimate moment of contact as one waits and the other passes. What is marvellous is not the passing but what passes between; passed through the look, the acknowledgement, the gesture. And travelling with these pieces to many places in the world it is this which creates a sense of belonging. What passes between. The pieces become part of a kind of nomad hospitality. As a collaborator I have

constantly received this hospitality from my fellow makers, and as a performer it is something I have received from audiences everywhere. This is why I can feel at home almost anywhere. It is also why I feel I can go on.

This is not simply a personal phenomenon but also reflects and expresses the time we are living in. The feeling of rupture is being modified, maybe transcended by a new sense of intimacy across great distances. To simply call it communication is to underestimate it. It is a passing of secrets. In the same way our forebears attended to the essential needs that gave meaning to their lives, perhaps we need to give this passing communication the same quality of attention – the attention that was once given to the eternal.

I am writing this sitting in the window on the first floor, looking down at a path of boulders set in a garden of gravel. The path leads to a teahouse that has been constructed on the trunk of a tree. I am in Japan. Kyoto. I recognise none of the plants. I do not know the metaphoric significance of the arch of grass or the stone carvings; nothing I can see is familiar to me. Yet curiously, although I am here in passing, I feel completely at home. And when I see something that looks like a heron, I still reach for the phone . . .

Here in Japan, in what are surroundings that could not be further from my own life, staying with people who speak as little English as I do Japanese, I have a sense of belonging. I am here because when my hosts saw *The Street of Crocodiles* some years ago their response was to invite us to their house, which is a temple in Kyoto. Messages from everywhere come here.

Which is why this book is dedicated to all those who have in any way participated in the creation of these pieces – those passing, and those who have become eternal.

Simon McBurney
May 2003

The Street of Crocodiles

Dedicated to Jacob Schulz who died in 1997.

Bruno Schulz: a chronology

- 1892** 12 July: Bruno Schulz born in Drohobycz, East Galicia, a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father was a Jewish shopkeeper.
- 1902–10** Bruno attends a school named after Emperor Francis Joseph. But he does not grow up in the dominant traditions of German-speaking Austria. Nor does he remain in the sphere of traditional Jewish culture, his parents being assimilated Jews. He never learned Yiddish; he knew German but he spoke and wrote in Polish.
- 1905–15** With his father an invalid, Bruno spends all his free time at his father's bedside.
- 1911–13** Bruno studies at the Academy of Art in Vienna then goes on to the University of Lvov to study Architecture. After the First World War, Poland is created a republic. Galicia is annexed by the republic in 1921.
- 1915–24** Years Bruno describes as his 'lost, stupid and idle youth'. He spends most of his time reading and drawing.
- 1924** Bruno begins teaching at a local high school, his earnings supporting his mother, his sister and her son. His classes are, for Bruno, an unwelcome distraction from the main business of his life – his writings and drawings. His pupils later recall the fabulous stories he told and illustrated with a few swift lines on the board or on pieces of paper.
- 1930** Bruno publishes a book of drawings, *The Book of Idolatry*.
- 1932** Bruno has a one-man show of drawings and paintings in Lvov. It is a qualified success.
- 1934** *Cinnamon Shops*, Bruno's first book of stories, is published to wide acclaim. It is very successful and gains him the recognition and friendships he has long desired. It also

brings controversy. The headmaster of the high school forbids his pupils to read it and declares it an 'abomination, a scandal that profanes the Polish language'.

- 1937** Bruno's book, *Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass*, is published with illustrations by the author. He also translates *The Trial* by Kafka.
- 1938** Bruno works on his masterpiece, *The Messiah*. Though various sections of it were entrusted to the safekeeping of friends, none of it, to our knowledge, has survived.
- 17 September 1940: The German army enters Drohobycz.
Winter 1940: The Soviet army enters Drohobycz.
1941 onwards: Drohobycz under German occupation.
- 1941** Bruno is forced to leave his job at the high school. He offers his services as a draughtsman to the Third Reich and is refused. He is protected by a Nazi officer, Felix Landau, as a 'useful Jew'. He paints Landau's portrait.
- 1942: Ghetto confinement is enforced.
- 1942** Bruno and a fellow Jew, a solicitor, Izydor Freidmen, are employed to catalogue books for the Nazis in order that those the Nazis consider worthwhile may be exported to Germany. Bruno's friends draw up an elaborate plan of escape.
- 19 November 1942: The Nazis kill 150 Jews in retaliation for the shooting of a Nazi officer.
- A few days earlier, Landau had shot a Jew under the protection of a rival officer. This officer takes advantage of what later becomes known as 'Black Thursday' to search Bruno out and shoot him twice in the head. 'You shot my Jew, so I shot yours.'
- 1957** Bruno's stories are reissued in Polish and translated into German and French and begin to find an international readership.

Note on the script

The present version of this script has been developed steadily since the project of *The Street of Crocodiles* began at the Royal National Theatre Studio in 1991. Eight years after the journey began, it is still migrating, developing and changing. Along with the original cast, we have included in this volume a list of people who have been part of that journey, most especially Jacob Schulz, Bruno's nephew, who died in 1997 and to whom this text is dedicated. For us Jacob formed the link between the present and the living past.

The script originated with the short stories of Bruno Schulz, collected in two volumes entitled *Cinnamon Shops* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*. Because they deviate from the normal rules of narrative and eschew superficial drama, our process was as much one of invention as adaptation (to this end, we have included quotations which will point the reader to the textual inspiration at the origin of each scene). Our process involved not only the writing of original dialogue (as with any play) but also the lifting of text direct from the stories (and from Schulz's letters and essays). We used descriptions of him given to us by Jacob. We worked on improvisations in which the actors played out the process of memory which lies at the heart of all his stories. We recreated the atmosphere of his times and the mechanism of his dreams. We investigated the rhythm of his nightmares and his intense engagement with his beloved and despised solitude.

If you had opened the door of the rehearsal room when we first began you might have thought you were in a prop maker's workshop, a second-hand clothes store, or even a hallucinatory jam session, with the participants playing desks instead of drums and dancing with coats instead of partners. We used anything which came to hand to find a landmark and open up directions in which to travel. We read the stories over and over, improvised and argued. We went up blind alleys, losing ourselves in Schulz's vast imaginative landscapes and the mazes of his fantasy. For to

spend time in his company turns your head (*'Dizzy with light, we dip into the enormous book of holidays, its pages scented with the sweet melting pulp of golden pears'*). The sensuality of his writing captures those long forgotten smells from the past, with an imagination that can transform gazing at a stamp album into a religious trauma (*'Canada, Honduras, Nicaragua, Abracadabra, Hipporabundia . . . I at last understood you, oh God!'*).

So, this book is more the record of a process than a text for performance; a map rather than a play. A play is a place which demands to be inhabited; both origin and destination, linked by a clearly determined path. A map indicates the landscape, suggests a multitude of directions, but does not dictate which one you should take. A map, however beautiful, is a guide not a site. If you wish to visit the site yourself, pick up Schulz's books. And travel.

Simon McBurney and Mark Wheatley,
January 1999

The Street of Crocodiles, originally a co-production with the Royal National Theatre, was first performed at the Cottesloe Theatre, London on 6 August 1992. In 1992 and 1993 it toured to: the Sydney Festival; Gracie Fields Theatre, Rochdale; Tramway, Glasgow; Oxford Playhouse; Theatre Royal, Winchester; Cambridge Arts Theatre; Dundee Repertory Theatre; Traverse Edinburgh; Theater Gessner Allee, Zurich; LIFE Festival, Vilnius; Tagenka Theatre, Moscow; Theatr Polski, Wroclaw; Israel Festival, Jerusalem; Theater der Welt, Munich; and Grec Festival, Barcelona.

A 1994 revival toured to: National Theatre, Bucharest; Muvesz Színház, Budapest; Festival Theatre en Mai, Dijon; Carrefour International, Quebec; Bonner Biennale, Cologne; Reykjavik Arts Festival; Theatre du Merlan, Marseille; the Dublin Theatre Festival; Festival de Otono, Madrid; Gardner Arts Centre, Brighton; Young Vic, London; and Whitehall Theatre, London.

A revival in 1998 toured with a new cast to: Lincoln Center Festival, New York; Toronto Harbourfront Centre; Minneapolis Theatre de la Jeune Lune; and Setagaya Public Theatre, Tokyo. 1999 West End season at the Queens Theatre, London and Stockholm, Stadsteater.

Based on the stories of Bruno Schulz
Adapted by Simon McBurney & Mark Wheatley
Devised by The Company

Director Simon McBurney
Design Rae Smith
Lighting Paule Constable
Sound Christopher Shutt

The original cast was as follows:

Joseph
Father (Jacob)
Mother (Henrietta)
The Family:

Cesar Sarachu
Matthew Scurfield
Annabel Arden

Uncle Charles
Agatha
Cousin Emil

Clive Mendus
Joyce Henderson
Antonio Gil Martinez

The Maids:
Adela
Maria

Lilo Baur
Hayley Carmichael

The Shop Assistants:
Theodore
Leon

Eric Mallett
Stefan Metz

1994 Revival

Cast Annabel Arden, Lilo Baur, Hayley Carmichael, Antonio Gil Martinez, Joyce Henderson, Eric Mallett, Clive Mendus, Stefan Metz, Cesar Sarachu, Matthew Scurfield

1998-9 Revival

Cast Annabel Arden, Bronagh Gallagher, Eric Mallett, Antonio Gil Martinez, Gregory Gudgeon, Marcello Magni, Charlotte Medcalf, Clive Mendus, Stefan Metz, Cesar Sarachu, Matthew Scurfield, Ásta Sighvats

Awards

1993 Four Olivier Award nominations for: BBC Award for Best Play, Best Director, Best Lighting, Best Choreography (Marcello Magni)

1993 Barcelona Critics Award for Best Foreign Production

1993 Manchester *Evening Standard* Award for Best Visiting Production

1994 L'Academie Quebecoise du Théâtre Award for Best Foreign Production

1994 Dublin Theatre Festival Award for Best Visiting Production

Thanks to all those who have contributed to the production over the years: Paul Anderson, Anita Ashwick, Simon Auton, Dave Ball, Jason Barnes, Sophie Brech, Chris Chibnall, Nobby Clark, Johanna Coe, Claudia Courtis, Susan Croft,

Christina Cunningham, Henrietta Duckworth, Judith Edgely, Sandra Formica, Gareth Fry, Sue Gibbs, Paddy Hamilton, Sue Higginson & the NT Studio, Sarah-Jane Hughes, Johnny Hutch, Helena Kaut-Howson, Irene Kozica, Jacek Laskowski, Helen Lewis, Peter Lewis, John Mackinnon, Gerard McBurney, Richard McDougall, Pete McPhail, Rosa Maggiora, Marcello Magni, Jane Martin, Nadia Morgan, Oxford Museum of Modern Art, Naomi Parker, Picador Books, Marek Podostolski, The Polish Cultural Institute, Quay Brothers, Catherine Reiser, Ian Richards, Lorraine Richards, Martin Riley, Doug Rintoul, Richard Rudznicki, Red Saunders, Jacob Schulz, Danusia Stok, Gemma Swallow, Judith Thorpe, Steve Wald, Russell Warren-Fisher, Ed Wilson, Octavia Wiseman, Ray Wolf.

Note

As many of the actors were from different countries, you will find in the script that they speak in their own languages.

The quotations from Bruno Schulz's work come from *The Collected Works of Bruno Schulz*, published by Picador.

Prologue

The sorting of books

As a Jew, I was assigned by the Drohobycz Judenrat to work in a library under Gestapo authority, and so was Schulz. This was a depository made up of all public and the major private libraries . . . the books were to be catalogued or committed to destruction by Schulz and myself. *Letter to Jerzy Ficowski from Tadeusz Lubowiecki, Gilwice, 1949.*

A warehouse on the outskirts of Drohobycz in Poland. 19 November 1942. Through the half dark, piles of discarded books are highlighted by spotlights.

The sound of dripping water as the audience enter the mist-filled auditorium.

Joseph enters *USL* double doors. He takes off his coat and hangs it on the back wall. As he crosses *DSR* he looks at the bucket to see where the dripping is coming from. Exits *DSR* double doors.

Voice (*off*) He du, komm her! Sortier die neue Ladung Bücher und schmeiss den Schund weg!

Joseph (*off*) Ja, ja . . .

Voice (*off*) Los, los, bewege dich!

Joseph returns with books pushed in a packing case with wheels. He is sorting and cataloguing books. He has a pen and a sheaf of bookmarks. He writes on them and puts them in the books that are to be kept. These he takes up the ladder left and places in a row. The others he drops on the floor. One book he holds longer than others as if reluctant to commit it to destruction.

Voice (*off*) Ja, das ist die letzte Ladung . . . die letzte, hab' ich gesagt!

Joseph drops the book in his fright and then carries on the sorting. He finds another book particularly appealing. He is unable to throw it away. He stops, and looks at it. Out of it falls a feather. He takes a chair *DSC* and begins to read.

The sound of marching feet.

Joseph stands and watches them pass. He sits on his chair again, opens the book again. He smells its pages.

Music.

Part One: Act of Remembrance

1 The summoning of the past

Somewhere in the dawn of childhood was The Book; the wind would rustle through its pages and the pictures would rise. Page after page floated in the air and gently saturated the landscape with brightness. *The Book*

The cast gradually appear on stage as if called up by Joseph's imagination. One of Father's assistants, Theodore, walks down the wall perpendicular to the audience, pauses to take his hat and looks up as, out of the bucket, his twin assistant, Leon, appears – wet and dripping. Having struggled out of the small bucket, he picks it up. There is no trace of where he has come from. Maria emerges from the packing case of books. Charles, Emil and Agatha emerge from behind bookcases. Mother, swathed in cloth, shuffles forward on her knees with a book covered in a shawl. At a signal, they all produce books in their hands and look at Joseph.

Joseph And there are rooms which are sometimes forgotten . . .

Father (*appears*) And there are rooms which are sometimes forgotten. Unvisited for months on end, they wilt, become overgrown with bricks and lost once and for all to our memory, forfeit their only claim to existence. Once, early in the morning towards the end of winter, I visited such a forgotten chamber. From all the crevices in the floor, from all the mouldings, from every recess there grew slim shoots filling the grey air with a scintillating filigree lace of leaves. Around the bed, under the lamp, along the wardrobes clumps of delicate trees, which high above spread their luminous crowns, enormous white and pink flowers blossomed among the leaves, bursting with bud before your very eyes, and then falling apart in quick decay. And before nightfall there is no trace left of that splendid flowering. The whole elusive sight was a *fata morgana*, an example of the

strange make-believe of matter which had created a semblance of life.

They all proceed and sit on chairs.

Adela **Father** **Leon** **Theodore** **Charles**

Mother

Maria

Emil

Agatha

2 The awakening of memory

Who can understand the great and sad machinery of spring? Tree roots want to speak, freshly starched underskirts rustle on park benches, and stories are rejuvenated and start their plots again.

Spring

At the age of eight, Bruno's mother read to him Goethe's 'Erlkönig', of which he said later: 'Through half-understood German, I felt its sense and was shattered and wept deeply.' *Notes to the company from Jacob Schulz, Bruno's nephew, June 1992*

Joseph turns and sees them. He seems to remember these people. *They are relics of his memory, a little broken down and faded. He turns back front and they rise one by one as if attached to him. They form the shape of a class behind him with chairs only and sit as he sits. They begin reciting the first lines of 'Der Erlkönig'.*

Mother

'Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?'

All

'Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind.'

Agatha

'Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm.'

Maria

'Er fasst ihn sicher' . . .

Adela

. . . 'er halt ihn warm.'

Joseph looks behind him. He is surprised to see these people. He looks away. They laugh and form themselves into little groups, as if at tables in an open-air café courtyard. He looks back. These are the groups behind him: **Agatha**, **Charles** and **Emil** left. **Leon**, **Theodore** and **Adela** right. **Mother** and **Father** **USR**. **Maria** centre.

Joseph (begins walking round them) Theodore? (Goes to **Theodore** and takes his coat.)

Theodore Leon! Psst! (Gets up. **Leon** follows him.)

Joseph Leon?

They cross to **Emil** and take his coat. **Joseph** watches them.

Adela (calls from behind **Joseph**'s back) Joseph!

Joseph Adela?

Adela My God, Joseph, you're as thin as a rake.

Joseph turns back to **Leon** and **Theodore** as he hears them laugh and sees . . .

Joseph Emil?

Emil Hombre Joseph! Pero que alegria, chico! How wonderful to see you . . . (He takes **Joseph** centre stage, behind his chair.) You've changed, you're a man now! Un hombre! Joseph did I ever tell you what I saw in Madagascar? (Takes him behind the chairs of **Charles** and **Agatha**.) In Madagascar I found these photos; fotografias de chicas desnuditas.

Agatha tries to look. **Emil** points to distract her attention.

Mira qué tetitas. Son las chicas de Madagas-car. (His voice cracks on the last syllable. He tries again.) Madagas-car. (Same result.)

Charles tries to help by tuning the syllable to the highest note of the banjo.

Pages have been omitted from this book preview.



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'The Street of Crocodiles is inspired by the life and stories of Polish writer Bruno Schulz (1892-1942). It captures the vast landscapes of Schulz's extraordinary imagination and the startling absurdity and sensuality of his work' *Independent on Sunday*

The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol: 'An unsentimental evocation of peasant life, a hymn to the tenacity of love and a Brechtian fable about the world's unfairness' *Guardian*

Mnemonic: 'Dwelling on memory and origins, it manages to be brilliantly original and unforgettable' *Independent*

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