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"Vulgarized" : victorian women's fiction in minor theatres

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“VULGARIZED”: VICTORIAN WOMEN’S FICTION IN MINOR THEATRES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

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by

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ABSTRACT

The theatre of the Victorian era is often ignored in literary studies or denigrated when it is discussed. This project, however, seeks to provide a framework within which we can explore the power of Victorian theatre as it responded to and shaped ideas in London between 1848 and 1882. Looking specifically at how these theatres adapted material already situated within the ideological context of the period, I argue that the adaptations of three major Victorian novels highlight the ways in which minor theatres engaged with the genres often considered high art and used that material to create new meanings for an often ignored sub group--the working class. In particular, I investigate multiple adaptations of Charlote Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, and M.E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* for what the adaptation can reveal about how these playwrights conceptualized class relations.

These adaptations exist within a series of relations--to the original novel, to the history of the theatre, to the audience, and to the conversations occurring when they were performed. Some of the theatres were popular houses like the Old Victoria or the St. James, while others were relatively small and obscure like The Globe in Newcastle Street and the Queen's, and each had a distinct relation to the larger society and social discourse of the era. I contend that these plays reveal the ways in which seemingly disparate conceptions of class in the Victorian era in fact interacted in these theatres as the playwrights appropriated the conversations concerning paternalism in the 1840s and 50s, the push for social reforms in the 1860s, and the ways in which society defined a "gentleman" in the latter part of the century in order to create new versions of class relations for the working classes. This project seeks to examine the voices speaking for and to the working classes in the theatrical conversations of the mid to late Victorian years and how these theatrical adaptations crafted narratives of the Victorians that worked in relation to but

simultaneously against much of the public discourse concerning class and specifically the working class.

INTRODUCTION
THE “DISFIGURED” “SCRUFFY ORPHAN”: VICTORIAN THEATRE
AND ADAPTATION

On January 31st of 1848, the first adaptation of *Jane Eyre* on a London stage opened at the Old Victoria theatre. Shortly thereafter, Charlotte Brontë wrote to her publisher William Smith Williams concerning this new version in a minor theatre, remarking that she felt any adaptation of *Jane Eyre* for this arena would be “woefully exaggerated and painfully vulgarized” (Smith 25). Brontë’s concern that the adaptation would “vulgariz[e]” her novel, reflects a tendency we see more broadly in modern scholarship concerning adaptation and Victorian theatre. Often simply ignored by literary scholars, when Victorian theatre does become the focal point of critical attention, critics often denigrate the form, seeing its popularity as a reflection of its low place on the culture spectrum. To return to Brontë, her terminology, “vulgarized,” can be connected to not only our modern desire to create hierarchies of art, but also marks a specific concern for the Victorians, the appropriation of material for or by the masses.¹

This tension runs throughout the Victorian era and has much to do with the transition into a stratified class society rife with antagonism between the various social levels. An 1863 article, for example, satirically bemoans the ways in which the term “genteel” was losing its value because “it has...been vulgarized” or rather “passed on from Nob to Snob...until it is dragged in the kennels of the great unwashed” (Bede 138). Though the article certainly mocks what it calls “the genteel succles,” it nonetheless reflects the anxiety in the upper ranks of society regarding the ways in which the poor, the working class, the “great unwashed” were appropriating the ideas and modes of the “genteel” (138). What is at play here is the ways in which both the Victorians and modern scholars seek to classify various types of entertainment based on the social groups who are mostly likely to attend these amusements. At the apex, we find what

many refer to as “high culture,” the opera or literature for instance, and at the bottom rests those entertainments popular with the masses; today, this spot could arguably be assigned to reality television.

In our consideration of the nineteenth century, however, this results in the dismissal of theatre as simply popular entertainment. When we dismiss this genre, though, we do more than suggest that material is less than literary. Pierre Bourdieu argues that within “the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools, periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of consumers” and further asserts, “this predisposes tastes to function as markers of ‘class’” (1-2). In this way, when the theatre is ignored the theatre, large sections of society that attended the theatre, for whom much of the theatrical material was crafted, especially in minor theatres, are also overlooked. To return to Brontë’s comments, her assessment of the minor theatres embodied a view of the theatrical world as some how inferior not simply for the sake of quality but inferior for its association with the “masses.” The distinction Brontë, and many others, make concerning what she views as the superiority of the novel and inferiority of the theatre obscures the ways in which “in nineteenth-century England, literature and the theatre were collaborative storytellers; they were the dominant media through which audiences understood the world” (Auerbach 4). By looking at the overlap of these two forms in the guise of theatrical adaptations of Victorian novels, I contend that we unveil a more complex and complete view of the ways in which the Victorians crafted images of themselves.

This dissertation investigates the adaptations of three Victorian novels, *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Mary Barton* (1848), and *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) for the London minor theatre stages from 1849-1882. While literary scholars today and members of Victorian society alike belittle the theatre, the plays produced for these minor theatre stages offer significant insight into the ways

in which an often neglected sub-set of Victorian society framed ideas concerning class and were simultaneously framed by the depictions of class on these stages that sought their patronage.

E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, first published in 1963, sought to identify and explore the proliferation of working-class voices in political discourse during the early Victorian era, voices critics often either felt did not exist or neglected as uneducated.

Similarly, this project seeks to examine the voices speaking for and to the working class in the theatrical conversations of the mid to late Victorian years, crafting narratives of the Victorians that worked in relation to but simultaneously against much of the public discourse concerning class and specifically the working class. These adaptations developed out of the already existing discussions concerning labor, status, and hierarchy and manipulated the various ideologies and ideas circulating in Victorian England. The plays discussed here certainly do not advocate for outright class revolution nor do they entirely disrupt the established social structure. Instead, they create new models of class relations that reconfigure existing ideas and theories in ways that affirm the rights and place of the working class as part of the public.

Further, I read these new adaptations as part of a larger propensity for radicalism within the Victorian theatre. In the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, playhouses were often sites where the public protested what they saw as the abuse of the poor, including "The Old Price Wars" of 1809 and reactions against the New Poor Law of 1834.² The adaptations discussed here represent new iterations of the power of the theatre to react to public issues and create a space wherein the working-class could articulate their dissent and disapprobation. Those in authority certainly feared the power of the theatre, and this concern resulted in considerable censorship including the banning of all productions of William Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* for fear that the audience would idolize and imitate the hero.³

Even though they were censored, these adaptations provided the disempowered working class with a voice (and body), a way to see issues concerning them portrayed for them, crafted with them in mind. While I employ the term radical here, I do not mean to suggest that these plays resulted in any revolution (either literal or metaphorical) but rather that they articulated for the working class various ways of seeing and being seen. Further, I would argue that it is, in part, this voice, that helps to dissipate some of the outright class hostility. Unlike France or any number of other countries during the nineteenth century, England never faced a violent revolution. Tom Nairn argues this is because “classes embrace political revolution only when they see no other route forward” (20). The theatre offered one of many ways that those without power could feel that their concerns were receiving public attention. Thus, we can find value in these neglected theatrical adaptations for what they uncover concerning how playwrights shaped and reacted to ideas concerning class for working-class audiences. Further, I contend that the ways in which these playwrights frame class in their adaptations responds to the tenor of periodical and governmental approaches to the working class that viewed this group as inferior and unworthy of a participation in government and policy discussions.⁴In her seminal book, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon argues, “to deal with adaptations *as adaptations* is to think of them as...inherently ‘palimpsestuous’ works, haunted at all times by their adapted texts” (6). It is in this way that I consider the adaptations during the nineteenth century of Victorian novels. Numerous playwrights co-opted Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*. However, these adaptations are “haunted” not only by their source texts but also by each other, by the historical context, and the physical constraints of the theatre.

The chapters of this dissertation are divided into three periods, the late 1840s and early 1850s, the mid-1860s, and finally the late 1870s to the early 1880s, which I see as representative of three stages of development of class tensions. The earliest period, the 1840s and early 1850s, as represented in these plays emphasizes nostalgia for an older form of class dynamics. Leading up to the late eighteenth-century, England's class structure relied on the paternal system wherein the members of society associated with each other vertically rather than horizontally; that is, they saw themselves as part of a sort of social ladder, connected above and below rather than as part of homogenous sub-group (field workers, servants, aristocrats, etc). Within this system, those in power owed those under their control certain protections while those who served owed their masters devotion and recognition of their duty to serve. However, the industrial revolution altered these relationships, resulting in an alienation of worker from employer as the owner abandoned his role as father to his people, what Harold Perkin terms "the abdication of paternal responsibility" (*The Origins* 150). However, by the 1840s, growing dissatisfaction with industrialization produced a resurgence of this dying social organization: "What had happened was a concentration of abuses in towns, a new standard of expectations on the part of workers, and on the part of the governing classes a growing awareness of social problems and a belief that they could be remedied" (Roberts 58). Responding the needs of workers and employers, this return to the paternal ideal was echoed in the theatrical productions of the era.

Nevertheless, industrialization created new modes of identification, triggering in the birth of class-consciousness, according to E.P. Thompson. In this new model, individuals "feel and articulate the identity of their interests between themselves and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs" and as such begin to organize (Thompson *Making* 9). One of the key movements seeking to increase the role of the worker in

public and governmental conversations was Chartism, a movement that began in 1838 and died off in 1848. The Chartists, called such for their attempts to present “The People’s Charter” to Parliament, aimed at achieving reform in a variety of ways, including appealing to the government as well as protests that at time became violent. However, this group failed to gain entry into parliament to deliver their charter both in 1838 and 1848. With the dissolution of the Chartist movement, many working-class radicals began to maneuver within the existing frameworks in order to achieve working-class rights. It is this failure and consequent alteration in methodology along with the resurgence of paternalism that the first adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton* respond to when they arrived on the stage in 1849 and 1851.

Moving away from the period of nostalgia nostalgia, I argue that conflict between classes took on a new direction in the 1860s; this conflict played out in political and social modes rather than through violence. During the 1860s, the desire for parliamentary reform grew, leading up to the debate concerning the expansion of the vote in 1865-66. While parliament agreed that reform was necessary, there was considerable disagreement on the extent and method of reform. The result--the failure of the bill, the dissolution of the liberal government, and the establishment of the conservative one--created considerable unrest and protest in the public, including gatherings in Hyde Park. This is but one example of many ways that the public conversation concerning rights and the working class produced agitation and increased class antagonism. As the era progressed, the Victorians began to associate with members of their own class and vilify those whose interests did not align with their own. In the adaptations this transition is embodied in the ways in which the playwrights alternately sought to place blame on the working or aristocratic classes for the moral decay in society.

The final progression in the transition from a vertical association towards a classed organization signified the easing of outright tensions. In this final iteration, while tensions still existed, there was a movement away from aggression and towards cooperation via a intermingling of identity markers. According to Jose Harris, “The chartist epoch of the 1840s, had experienced acute class segregation and tension. But many historians of differing ideological persuasions have identified the last quarter of the nineteenth century as the period in which the tentacles of class became all-embracing, in which all other social and cultural attributes became reducible to class categories” (Harris 6-7), and this can certainly be seen in the late 70s and early 80s. Class may have been the identifying indicator by which each group judged another, but the government and periodical publications seemed to become more receptive to the rights of the working classes. Considerable reforms were passed in parliament during this time, including more expansion of voting rights and protections for workers. Simultaneously, the working class man became more and more associated with a term normally applied to those in the aristocracy, the gentleman. It is this broadening and redefinition of the term gentleman to incorporate labor that is emblemized in the theatrical adaptation of *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley’s Secret* in the late 70s and early 80s.

While this dissertation is primarily concerned with the ways in which these adaptations approached issues of class, gender is intricately tied to the subject matter. In the nineteenth-century, conceptions of gender roles for men and women related directly to the individual’s place on social scale. As Anna Clark notes, the difficult conditions faced by the working-class, especially textile workers, necessitated the inclusion of women in the working world. In order to support their families, women took on jobs outside the home, including working in factories. However, they also brought the public home to the private by working in homes and taking on

lodgers to pay rent. Indeed, weavers “relied on their wives’ and daughters’ labor” in order to complete their own work (13). In this way, for the working classes, the struggle for the rights of laborers often connected to the struggle for women’s rights, and even the legislation of the era mirrored this relation. For example, during the debates in 1865-1866 concerning the Reform Bill, John Stuart Mill attempted to include women in the expansion of the right to vote, though he ultimately failed. Because the novels (and consequently the adaptations) feature female protagonists limited by both class and gender, much of the plays’ commentaries revolves around this relationship between gender and class. Thus, later in the century, as parliamentary reform not only aids the worker but also women, these events are reflected back in the theatrical materials. This is especially the case in terms of the role of women in domestic service, as governesses, and as wives. While parliament may not have written many laws specifically aimed at either domestic service or governesses, the periodicals of the late 70s and 80s often made connections between the two, especially in terms of the evolution of education in England. Further, in parliament, several bills concerning women’s rights passed, including property acts in 1870 and 1882 as well as the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1878. In effect, I argue that these reforms based on women’s rights become inextricably tied with class reforms of the era, at least in the popular imagination.

These minor theatres appropriated the public discourse concerning class issues and manipulated the conversation in such a way that they gave birth to new renderings of class that worked against the dominant anti-worker tone and towards defining a new mode of interaction that considered the rights of and restrictions on the working class. Although playwrights throughout the century appropriated many Victorian novels, I have chosen to focus on *Jane Eyre*, *Mary Barton*, and *Lady Audley’s Secret*. Each of these novels received considerable theatrical

attention throughout the nineteenth century, with multiple productions in London, England at large, and around the world. The profusion of adaptations allows for a close examination of *how* they and the theatres engaged with public discussions of social and political issues in the nineteenth century, creating new modes of meaning and new expressions of those ideas. Secondly, the contrasting audiences for the novels and the theatrical adaptations opens space to examine how an oft neglected segment of Victorian society, the working class and poor, engaged with many of the pressing concerns of the era.

In this instance, the change of venue--private reading space to public viewing space--alters the composition of the audience, which inevitably affects the content. For, as George Bluestone notes, "Each medium presupposes a special, though often heterogeneous and overlapping, audience whose demands condition and shape artistic content (31). While many who sat in the theatres watching these plays may have read the sources, not all would have. Even those who had read the original came to the theatre with different expectations. Moreover, the authors of the novels and the playwrights of their adaptations necessarily targeted unique audiences, and such division, along with the overlap in reader/spectator, leaves the adaptations open to dynamic examination based on novelist/reader and playwright/spectator relations that inflect the material. Significantly, while these novels generally sought to engage middle and upper-class audiences, many of the theatrical productions were crafted for specifically working-class spectators. This alteration in audience combined with a variety of other factors created new iterations of class relations within the performed stories, ones specifically crafted for laboring audiences.

Finally, these three novels were chosen as emblematic of another shift; not only do they show the movement from novel to stage and from upper-middle class to working-class

theatre-goers, but they also demonstrate the ways in which male playwrights appropriated the works of female novelists. While acknowledging that the adaptations of women's novels to the stage are often neglected, Kerry Powell still feels that when "refitted for a masculinist theatre" they are "inevitably disfigured" (101). Though changes are certainly made, suggesting that the main effect "disfigure[s]" the material is to fall back on issues of fidelity rather than seeing the value of the adaptation. As Julie Sanders notes, "adaptation can also be oppositional, even subversive. There are as many opportunities for divergence as adherence, for assault as well as homage" (9). While the playwrights chose to appropriate the author's material and in so doing changed many of the meanings conveyed in that original, doing so did not mean an erasure of the subversive content but rather a "divergence" from one mode of critique to another. In taking these female writers' works and restaging their material for different audience, the male playwrights created new systems of content that wove together pieces of the original novels' subtexts with new ways of viewing and interpreting Victorian class ideology.

However, I do not wish to imply an easy division between the groups that consumed the novels/plays but rather to suggest that the composition of the adaptations' audiences, though likely to include some of the readers, incorporated new viewers who would not have been previously exposed to the works or the target audience for the novel. It is the relationships between old and new, spectator and reader, novel and script, female novelist and male playwright that create the "hybrid form" of adaptation (Stam 3). As a type of theatrical Frankenstein's monster, stitched together from the novels, the socio-cultural issues of the time, and the needs of the audience, these nineteenth-century theatrical adaptations embody the fragmented qualities of Victorian life. For, like these plays, the ways in which the Victorians' constructed images of themselves represent amalgamations of various ideologies, experiences,

and cultural artifacts. Looking at these supposedly inferior theatrical productions can uncover subversive constructions of the self.

The neglect of theatrical adaptations of major Victorian novels within literary scholarship has often stemmed from the belief that “performance is characterized as illusory, deceptive, exaggerated, artificial or affected,” while “the theatre, often associated with the acts and practices of role-playing, illusion, false appearances, masquerade, façade, and impersonation, has been condemned” as well (Postlewait & Davis 4). Nina Auerbach similarly notes that the Victorian theatre tends to be seen as inferior to “high culture” though it is “somewhat redeemed by the cultivation of its Edwardian successors” (3). However, such outright rejection of the theatre limits the ways in which we can understand how the Victorians saw themselves, both literally as they saw themselves on the stage (and mirrored back by curtains)⁵ and metaphorically in the ways the playwrights crafted their characters and plots.

Within the context of these critical studies of Victorian theatre, this dissertation investigates the ways in which theatrical entertainment fashioned for working-class audiences participated in creating, remodeling, and spreading specific conceptions of class relations. In exploring these adaptations, I uncover how various authors, writing mostly for working-class audiences, used the theater as a place not simply for entertainment but also where the social hierarchy could be examined, dissected, and reformatted. By employing material already enmeshed in cultural and social issues, these playwrights created works that had to take into consideration the original novel as well as the changes occurring at the time of the adaptation, including political maneuvers that affected the populace, social movements that galvanized segments of the population (such as Chartism), as well as current events that would have been linked to the material. Furthermore, these playwrights would need to respond to the perspectives

of the theatres' working-class audiences, a group that the original novels would not have been considering. Finally, the power of the Lord Chamberlain's office to censor the material would have also been a major concern for the writers. These adaptations, like the novels they were based on, are cultural artifacts that demonstrate how the Victorians understood the world around them and how these playwrights simultaneously dissected that world in order to create new versions of themselves and their audiences.

Exceptionally popular in their own rights, *Jane Eyre*, *Mary Barton* and *Lady Audley's Secret* illustrate many of the socio-cultural conflicts occurring during the decades in which they were written, but the plays discussed here resituate the content to offer new and less canonical views of the era. During the nineteenth century, the theatres drew audiences from across the social spectrum, with some catering to a specific sub-set of the population while others vied for more diverse spectators. In their original format, *Lady Audley's Secret*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Mary Barton* seem to attract middle or upper-class audiences.⁶ While *Mary Barton* may concentrate on the plight of the working class, the narrator's voice clearly shows the intent of championing the working class to those in the middle and upper ranks, and Elizabeth Gaskell, in a letter written in 1848 prior to the publication of the novel, explained that she hoped her work would "excite attention at the present time of struggle on the part of the work people to obtain what they esteem their rights" ("The Letters" 54). Both *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley's Secret* feature characters living among the gentry and middle to upper class, and the mass of the readership would be within this group. However, I do not mean that members of the working classes did not read these novels and respond to them. Rather, I contend that the novels were not crafted with that particular audience in mind. The adaptations, on the other hand, produced in minor theaters that mostly catered to a working-class audience (and even those that attract a more diverse

audience that I discuss here would have necessarily had to take in to consideration the interests of this subset), unveil ways in which populations excluded from scholarly and political discourse could manipulate and reimagine the ideologies that circumscribed their lives.

Many of these plays receive minimal critical attention, in part due to the difficulty of accessing the materials. All of the adaptations of *Jane Eyre*, including John Courtney's, W.G. Wills's, James Willing's, and T.H. Paul's, discussed here are now readily available thanks to Patsy Stoneman's groundbreaking book *Jane Eyre on the Stage: 1848-1898* (2007). Stoneman provides not only the full text of the plays but also contextual notes concerning the playwright, theatres, and reception as well descriptions of the manuscripts themselves. The adaptations of *Mary Barton* (including John Courtney's 1850 production), however, exist only in manuscript form in the Lord Chamberlain's Plays⁷ in the British Library and a few locations that carry microform copies of the manuscripts in the United States.⁸ In the case of the *Lady Audley's Secret* plays discussed here, some have been published in acting editions (William Suter's and C.H. Hazlewood's versions), some were privately printed during the nineteenth century (George Roberts's 1863 version), while others remain only in manuscript in the British Library (Roberts 1877 revision). Scholarly editions like Stoneman's, though, are few and far between.

Consequently, this dissertation seeks to expand the critical work done on theatrical adaptations in the nineteenth century. I argue that these underappreciated texts can reveal much concerning the ways in which the theatre participated in the public dialogues on social, cultural, and political issues by adapting texts already engaged with those issues.⁹ The adaptations discussed here maintain the general plot structures of the original novels, but many expand the roles of working class or laboring characters and often turn dramatic scenes to comic effect.¹⁰ At times, I discuss concurrent adaptations at theatres that attracted disparate audiences (the

working-class audience of Suter's and Hazlewood's adaptations in contrast to Roberts's aristocratic and middle-class audience in chapter two) in order to underscore the power of the audience to shape and respond to the theatrical productions before them. The theatre, by nature, actively engages the audience, with members responding to what they see on stage and the stage responding to those who filled the theatre. However, these plays do not portray a simple subversion of the dominant class structures of the time; they instead represent the ways in which the theatre could mediate class tensions, engage in public conversations, and even imagine new modes of class relations.

The first chapter, titled "'A Patchy Affair': Paternalism in the Old Vic Adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton*," considers the first theatrical productions of *Jane Eyre* in 1848 and *Mary Barton* in 1851, both of which were written by John Courtney for the Old Vic Theatre. By examining the particular composition of the Old Vic Theatre as well as the social and cultural events surrounding the production, I argue that Courtney's adaptations revive and manipulate the class structure of paternalism that had begun to fade in the face of industrialization. These plays look nostalgically back at a period of what appeared to be simpler class relations while also incorporating new ways of seeing the working class. Thus, I argue, they reject not only the revolutionary tactics of groups such as the Chartists but also the industrialized system that alienated worker from employer. When considered within the context of both the industrial changes of the late 40s and early 50s and the decline of Chartism, the adaptations transform an old form of class relations and remake it in such a way that it empowers the laborers while still working within a historical class structure (though one in decline). In effect, I assert that Courtney negotiates between various ideologies, merging pieces of middle-class domesticity with paternalism. But, he does so in such a way that valorizes the working class.

While chapter one investigates two productions at one theatre written by a singular author, chapter two, “A Multiplicity of Audleys: Framing the Lady in 1863” examines three adaptations of Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* all of which occurred in 1863 shortly after the novel appeared in print: William Suter’s at The Queen’s Theatre, George Robert’s at the St. James, and Colin Henry Hazlewood’s at The Old Victoria Theatre. These adaptations offer a unique chance to explore the ways in which novels on the stage manipulated social discourse based on audience. Comparing Suter’s and Hazlewood’s adaptations (crafted for largely working class audiences) with Robert’s (produced at a theatre seeking aristocratic spectators), I argue that these plays produce two conflicting responses to the same movement. Situated against scholarship that views the 1860s as an “age of equipoise” and in dialogue with critics and historians such as Roland Quinalt, Martin Hewitt, and Sheila Sullivan who view the decade instead as one of tension and class anxiety that has simply diverted from one mode of expression to another, this chapter argues that rather than present outright class hostility, the articulations of class antagonism instead turn towards a battle concerning the pollution of one group by the ideology of the other. Thus, Hazlewood and Suter frame Lady Audley and her narrative as a treatise against the aristocracy and the corrupting influence of ideology from above; In contrast, Roberts frames Lady Audley as the criminal laborer while Robert Audley, the professional man, works to protect the aristocracy from her. The clear distinction seen between the adaptations fashioned for laborers versus the one professional and landed elite underscores changing dynamics of social tensions, which though not as consistently violent as the 1840s simmered in public discourse.

Chapter three, “A ‘Gentleman of the Right Sort’: Unstable Hierarchies and the Minor Theatres of the 1870s & 1880s” addresses productions of *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *Jane Eyre* in

the late 70s and early 80s within the context of political reform. Juxtaposing the expanded four act version of George Roberts's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1877), James Willing's *Jane Eyre* (1879), and W.G. Wills's *Jane Eyre* (1882) with Dion Boucicault's 1866 *The Long Strike*, an adaptation of *Mary Barton*, I argue that the former three productions indict the landed elite for corrupting society and portray laborers as the bulwark against such immorality. The shift seen between the aggressively anti-working class *The Long Strike* and the relatively sedate view of laborers in the other three reflects an alteration in the discussion concerning class relations. Because Boucicault's adaptation comes directly after the failure of the Reform Act in 1865 and the vocal backlash from laborers, this play deals harshly with its manual laborers, indicting the class and its anti-owner sentiments. Contrasting this content with that seen in Willing's, Roberts's and Wills's adaptations, reveals a shift in the very ways in which some Victorians identified class markers. These adaptations all imply the removal of the term "gentleman" from the aristocracy and its application instead to the hardworking laborer. Although these productions do not entirely deconstruct the social hierarchy, they nonetheless undermine the structure that would place the noble and wealthy "gentleman" at the apex and the low and poor worker at the nadir.

In looking at these three periods, the 1840s to 1850s, the mid-1860s, and finally the late 1870s and early 1880s, this dissertation traces modulations in discussions concerning class from the perspective of the laboring classes. The adaptations discussed here were written by men coming from a variety of backgrounds, some laborers others middle class, but in writing for the minor theatres, they engaged *with* the working class even if they originally came from without. In adapting novels already part of the public consciousness and already enmeshed in the socio-cultural discourses of their era, these playwrights acted as critics of those novels and the ideas espoused in them. The minor theatres, thus, participate in framing the social conversations

concerning a variety of issues facing the Victorian. I argue that these plays rather than representing secondary and inferior versions of the novels of Brontë, Braddon, and Gaskell instead proffer new ways of examining how the Victorians saw themselves, their social structure, and their world.

Notes

¹ See Elsie Michie's *The Vulgar Question of Money* for more on vulgarity in the Victorian era.

² See Elaine Hadley's *Melodramatic Tactics* for more on the radical potential of Victorian Theatre

³ Many scientific studies have disproven the relationship between mass shootings and video games, but what I focus on here is not the accuracy of the arguments but on their existence in the socio-cultural conversation.

⁴ Throughout the nineteenth century, when political reform, especially the expansion of enfranchisement of the working class, became the subject of discussion, the fitness of the worker to engage in political discourse took center stage. Robert Lowe, a member of Parliament who held many positions throughout his career including Chancellor of the Exchequer, was particularly vocal on the moral inferiority of the working class. See Janice Carlisle's chapter, "Mr. J. Stuart Mill, M.P., and the Character of the Working Classes," in *Mill and Moral Character* for more on the issue of working-class integrity and disposition as it relates to their role in public discourse.

⁵ The Old Vic Theatre used a glass curtain at various times during the nineteenth-century, a prop that will be discussed later in this dissertation.

⁶ See Lynn Mae Alexander's *Women, Work, and Representation: Needlewoman in Victorian Art and Literature* for discussions of audience in *Mary Barton*,

⁷ During the nineteenth-century, all plays went before an agent of the Lord Chamberlain's office for approval prior to being produced. The office would vet the material for any unacceptable material, at times requesting alterations before approving the plays.

⁸ In the United States, Old Dominion University and the Cleveland Public Library both hold extensive collections of nineteenth-century plays. Soon, they may be made available through Gale Cengage's digitization project in collaboration with the British Library.

⁹ While I concern myself mostly with presentations of class in this study, the interaction between these ranks necessarily requires consideration of other social factors that are inextricably tied to them, especially gender.

¹⁰ See Appendix for brief summaries of the novels.

CHAPTER ONE
“A PATCHY AFFAIR”¹ : PATERNALISM IN THE OLD VIC ADAPTATIONS OF *JANE EYRE* AND *MARY BARTON*

On Boxing Night of 1821 the Old Victoria Theatre (known then as the Coburg), a popular minor theater on the southside of the Thames River, debuted its looking-glass curtain.² The principal owner, Francis Gloper “counted on pleasing the smart section of the audience with a reflection of themselves” with this new addition to his theatre (Rowell *Old Vic* 13). This enormous mirrored curtain projected back on the audience images of themselves, though in a distorted fashion. *The New Monthly Mirror*, in its review of the much-anticipated addition to the theater, found the effect wanting, terming it “one of the most absurd exhibitions we have ever seen” and noting, “it is not used as a curtain, but is itself part of the performances” (“Coburg” 61). Just as the mirror at the Old Vic became a part of the performance, reflecting the audience back to themselves, the productions at the theatre similarly mirror the spectators.

However, I do not suggest a simple one to one relationship between the performance on the stage and the audience viewing it. Like the Old Vic’s mirror, where “the objects which are reflected are distorted and disjointed frightfully--one sees one’s head cut off or arm severed,” the adaptations discussed here dissect and manipulate pieces of the audience and the society within which they lived, crafting new versions (61). The Old Vic, with its looking-glass curtain, epitomizes the relationship between theater, performer, audience, and culture that this dissertation explores, and so I begin here, with the Old Vic. I turn to the Old Vic for yet another reason; the first adaptations in London of both *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton* found their home here, with the same author penning the scripts, John Courtney. His versions of these two novels for working-class audiences carved up the socio-cultural productions of class relations by paring off pieces of the paternal system and stitching it back together with new ideas concerning

domesticity and the working classes. Playwrights like Courtney acted as interpreters and critics, not only of the literary works that they adapted for the stage, but also of the demanding constraints placed on women in the working class by both the standards set by the middle-class and the limitations that members of their own class invoked in their attempts at gaining power and equality.

In the late 1840s and early 1850s, the Old Victoria Theatre produced a variety of shows, focusing on dramas that appealed to local life. Productions based on popular novels were common at the theatre throughout the nineteenth century, including adaptations of *Frankenstein* (1818)³ *Susan Hopley* (1841), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), and *East Lynne* (1861) to name a few. Courtney's adaptation of *Jane Eyre* in 1848 appeared at the Old Vic shortly after its original publication. His version of *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life!* took longer to reach the Old Vic stage. Though he wrote the play in 1850, the first staging did not occur until 1851. Nevertheless, both productions evince the writer's desire to reformulate these novels written by women for a theatrical audience who would not have been part of the original novels' target audiences. As George Rowell notes, the audience of the Victoria theatre, for the most part, was "illiterate...simple and indiscriminating" (39), so these adaptations would likely be the audience's first exposure to the material.

Patsy Stoneman explains that little is known about John Courtney; still, she suggests that he may have been John Fuller, an actor and playwright who worked "at various London theatres between 1829 and 1852" ("Editor's Notes to John" 20). Although his origins in terms of class are unknown, Courtney's connection with acting and playwriting does link him with that element of the working class. John Russell Stephens, in *The Profession of the Playwright*, explains, "most East End dramatists came from lower down the social scale," noting, "between roughly the early

1840s and the late 1850s almost no dramatist made any money out of the plays as the long process of economic decline in the theatre reached its nadir” (3 & 48). In any case, Courtney, in adapting both of these novels was certainly writing for the working class and, in part, about the working class. However, the audience would have been from an entirely different segment of laborers than the majority of the characters in *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton*.

The struggle for working-class rights, a problem that unified many disparate groups in the labor market, was in flux at the time of the adaptations. The methods employed by workers shifted from away “the overtly revolutionary working-class institutions,” and “the conversion of all the covertly revolutionary ones into pillars of existing society” (Perkin *Origins* 323). According to Harold Perkin, this “left only the trade unions as residuary legatees of the working-class ideal” (323). Courtney’s adaptations invoke this changing climate as he dismisses new conceptions of class relations and instead links the world of his plays to an older system. While his depiction of class relations seemingly rejects “revolutionary” methods of improving the lives of laborers, he nonetheless seeks a solution to the difficulties facing the working class and does so in a manner that acknowledges the realities of the laboring world while also leaning towards rigid view of class relations. Ultimately, these productions denounce the changes in the labor market that disconnected worker and employer, choosing to sculpt a new version of class relations in terms of an old system that was gaining traction at the time: Paternalism.

The Theatre

Throughout the nineteenth century popular novels quickly found their way to various stages in London and cities around Britain; these productions ranged from faithful adaptations that changed little to works that simply took the basic plot structure and went their own direction. Similarly, the theatres that took on these works of literature represented a broad range of

theatrical houses: from the patent theatres in the West End to small transpontine⁴ or East End theatres. Often, theatres would produce competing versions of the same plays (a topic I will discuss later). Of the many theatres that wove the contemporary literature of the Victorian era into their repertoires, The Old Victoria theatre stands out not only for the volume it produced but also for its place as the theatre that often created the first adaptation of several novels. It's history and consequently its status in 40s and 50s certainly influenced what shows the management chose to put on while also affecting just who attended the theatre.

The Old Victoria Theatre, originally called The Coburg, opened its doors in 1817 intending to attract “royal and courtly” audience members (Rowell 8). According to Rowell, “in its early years these hopes were regularly fulfilled” in no small part due to the management of Joseph Glossop (8). Glossop, the man behind the looking-glass curtain, “was no mere theatrical dilettante but closely involved in the running of his theatres” (12). Such was the case with the Old Vic, which he ran until 1822. In 1820, Glossop as manager of the Old Vic faced charges for infringing on the rights of the patent theaters⁵, specifically Drury Lane. In response, he wrote letter to the *Theatrical Inquisitor* defending himself, “Minor Drama,” and his theatre. In his letter, he directly addressed Mr. Elliston, the manager of Drury Lane who he claimed initiated the proceedings and reflects on the damage that the limiting of legitimate drama and such litigation had:

Of all the monopolies of mankind, that of the mind is the most injurious,--of all the specifics of slavery, that of intellect and talent is the most hateful. Let us carry on fair traffic in all we can render disposable; but in the name of humanity, let us not create a contraband commerce in the exertions of genius,--let us not depress and debase, by depreciation, the noble faculties of the mind. (201)

Though Glossop denied breaking the laws concerning legitimate theatre, insisting he did only what Elliston himself had done when running a minor theatre, his sentiments concerning the

regulation and limitations placed on those engaged in theatrical entertainment at minor theatres demonstrated his interest in defending the free trade of ideas within the theatrical world as well as his dedication to the Old Vic. When he left, the theatre became chaotic, with “a succession of acting managers” taking control and “responsibility being assumed by several members of the company” (Rowell *Old Vic* 15). From its earliest period, the Old Vic theatre emblemized the ways in which British society melded ideas and forms, and Glossop’s interest in securing legitimate plays for his theatre marked the ways in which minor, and supposedly inferior, theatres engaged with the larger culture of the times.

With the loss of Glossop and a procession of managers, The Old Vic did not maintain its aristocratic audience for long, quickly becoming a theatre for a “largely local and working-class” audience (Davis & Emeljanow 14). In 1826, George Boswell Davidge took control of the theatre and maintained his appointment for six years, “a period of steady decline not wholly attributable to his management” (Rowell *Old Vic* 15). In 1829, for instance, he attempted to revitalize the theatre, having it “newly decorated, painted, and embellished, in a manner that reflects equal credit to the taste of the artist, as well as to the liberality of the manager” (“Coburg” 81). Such efforts, however, had little effect on the composition of the audience, which had a “limited mentality” (Rowell 15). After Davidge ceded his place at the helm of the Coburg, Daniel Egerton and William Abbott took control in 1833 and officially changed its name to the Royal Victoria Theatre. Egerton and Abbot’s management sought “to restore the artistic standards and recalling the discriminating audience” proposed by Glossop (26). The July 6th 1833 edition of *The Athenaeum* praised the men for their “activity and industry in putting the theatre in order” (“Victoria Theatre” 444). The promise of their opening could not be sustained; Egerton was imprisoned for debt in 1834 and Abbott abandoned the theatre shortly thereafter. When they left,

Joseph Glossop once again took control of the Old Vic theatre, reinstating the looking-class curtain from early decades, though he too eventually failed when he ran out of money (Rowell *Old Vic* 31). When Glossop left in 1835, the Old Vic “drifted downwards” with a succession of managers who all struggled to keep the theatre open (33). The struggle to attract a wealthier clientele and ultimately the failure to do so inevitably altered the materials seen on its stage.

In 1841, David Osbaldiston and Eliza Vincent (whose history will be discussed later) acquired the management of the Old Vic and retained their posts until 1856 (35). While modern critics tend to view their tenure with “particular scorn” (35), contemporary reviews from the early years of their management praised their leadership. The *Theatrical Journal*, for instance, commended Osbaldiston for his “superior merit,” as well as “the efficiency with which the principal characters have been played and the uniform success attending the whole representation” of *Macbeth* (“Victoria” 228). Like much of the history of the Old Vic, the success seen by Osbaldiston and Vincent could not be maintained once they left the theatre. When Osbaldiston died in December of 1850, Vincent continued to run the Old Vic but was rarely seen on the stage and died in 1856 (Rowell *Old Vic* 43). With both gone, the theatre returned to fitful managements, with no one staying for long through the 1880s, leaving the theater struggling to attract an audience.

Although located near the Waterloo Bridge and thus close to easy transportation across the Thames, The Old Vic nevertheless failed to draw audiences from farther away throughout the nineteenth century. Ultimately, the increase in “local” audiences as the century progressed “may in turn have militated against the theatre’s attractions for a middle-class audience” (Davis and Emeljanow 12). However, The description of the audience as simply “working class” may be too vague a term, considering the wide scope that such a designation could imply. More

specifically, the Old Vic audience consisted of costermongers, mechanics, pickpockets, local vendors, and a variety of other workers found in the Lambeth marshes, including “bakers, blacksmiths, bootmakers, bricklayers, carpenters, joiners and coach makers” (Davis & Emeljanow 20). Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, the Lambeth district “retained its identification as a region of wharves, timber yards, and heavy machinery,” and while the number of servants in the region would grow by the 1860s to 42.2% of the population, this was not the case in the decades during which the plays discussed in this chapter were produced (20). Although the theatre flirted throughout the nineteenth century with attracting a more genteel audience, most attempts failed and the theatre consistently fell back on the local laborers for spectators.

Contemporary critics of the Old Vic were quick to cast aspersions on the theatre, its audience, and the type of performances it offered. An 1848 article, “Present State of Art, The Drama, Music, and Dramatic Literature” published in *Hood’s Magazine* bemoaned the conditions at minor theatres:

It is to the absence of a refined and educated audience with wealth in their hands, that the growth of immorality and the debasing of dramas at some of our minor theatres are to be mainly attributed:--robbery and murder, coarse language, vulgarity of style, and clap-traps are resorted to, in order to enable the managers to keep their doors open by pandering to the coarse tastes of a low audience. (44-45)

Hood’s Magazine first published in 1843 was the pet project of Thomas Hood, who began his life as an engraver and worked at a variety of magazines. According to Hood, the magazine aimed to supply “‘Mirth for the Million’ and light thoughts, to a Public sorely oppressed--if its word be worth a rush, or its complaints of an ounce of weight--by hard times, heavy taxes and those ‘eating cares’ which attend on the securing of food for the day” (Hood qtd in Jerrold 372). Hood himself certainly supported the working class and his publication seems to have, at least

during his lifetime, appealed to the laboring segment of society. However, Hood died in 1845, and it appears that F.O. Ward, who acted as “sub-editor” during Hood’s illness, took control of the periodical. Although the original audience for the magazine seems to have been workers, the tone of this article suggests a vitriolic analysis of that group, making it all the more complicated. It is unclear who the editor of the periodical was at this point in time as the materials written by the editor for this edition are just signed “Editor,” though it could be F.O. Ward who had taken control in 1845. Did the author intend this content as a rebuke of the traditional readership of the magazine or a call to arms for those in charge of theatres? In the conclusion to the article, both possibilities seem to be addressed as he notes that many periodicals have discussed the issue, addressing “a very large portion of the public” which he follows with an exhortation to the “members of the profession,” asking them to draft a “petition to be presented to Her Majesty” (45). In either case, this article demonstrates a shift in the publication’s perception of the working class, a transition that could mean the periodical wished to disengage from that group.

In contrast, Dickens published in the March 30th 1850 edition of *Household Words* a defense of the working-class theaters and their patrons, detailing a trip to the Old Victoria Theatre. Dickens, who had been a regular contributor to *Hood’s Magazine*, notes in “The Amusements of the People,” that the audience was held in rapt attention by the show before them and though the patrons held among their number pickpockets, he was “little disturbed by their presence” since “they were evidently there as private individuals and not in their public capacity” (14). Where the audience for the article that appeared in *Hood’s Magazine* remains ambiguous, *Household Words* “attempted to address a new sort of middle-class audience” and remained under the management of Charles Dickens until 1859 (Waters 42 &1). Dickens, well known for

his novels that depicted the hardships of the working classes, clearly takes a more charitable view of the spectators at the Old Vic than the writer for *Hood's* did.

These seemingly incompatible descriptions of minor theatres in general and the Old Vic in particular demonstrate the conflicted place of working-class theatre in Victorian society. While many, like Dickens, saw the best in these theatres, they did so by ignoring some of the issues that resulted from the character of working-class life and entertainment. Rather than approaching the minor theatres in their own right, as a manifestation of working-class identity, interests, and performance, critics often attempted to impose from above a set of standards foreign to the world of the working class. In both cases, the writers overlay the realities of the theater with their preconceptions of the minor theatres and the audiences expected to attend them. For the anonymous editor of *Hood's*, this means applying the oft-repeated view that minor theatres “debase” the material in order to slake the “coarse” desires of an uneducated audience bent on debauchery and vice, while, for Dickens, the minor theatre and its audience instead seek entertainment just like those in higher ranks.

Dickens himself acknowledged the dearth of knowledge concerning the working class, opening his article by saying, “As one half of the world is said not to know how the other half lives, so it may be affirmed that the upper half of the world neither knows nor greatly cares how the lower half amuses itself” and he intends to rectify the fault (12). While Dickens’s comments here imply that he has a better understanding of the “lower half,” his immediate reaction to the audience at the Victoria is the desire to alter them: “It required no close observation of the attentive faces, rising one above another, to the very door in the roof, and squeezed and jammed in, regardless of all discomforts, even there, to impress a stranger with a sense of its being highly desirable to lose no possible chance of effecting any mental improvement in that great audience”

(14). Dickens's tone in this passage retains the note of admiration ("great audience"), but he nonetheless sees the need to impose upon this group his own standards and beliefs. As much as he argues that he wishes to explain these people to his readership, he in fact seems to be contemplating how he and any other "stranger" to the world might impose new ideas on them. Taken together, these articles represent the ways in which the outside world sought to impose stereotyped visions of what it meant to be "working class" or in a minor theater, and I argue that the plays attempt to do just the same but in reverse: to perform for their audiences new ways of envisioning themselves outside of the confines of imposed ideals.

Though Dickens suggests that even those who engaged in illicit trade behaved themselves in the Old Vic, some of the negative press that the Victoria received during the nineteenth century was justified. A few instances during the management of David Osbaldiston and Eliza Vincent corroborate some of the public's concerns with immorality in the theatre. Osbaldiston arrived at the Old Vic in 1834 as an actor and outcast: he left the Surrey Theatre and his pregnant wife for Vincent. Many viewed his first performance at the Old Vic (then the Coburg), where he took on the role of Rolla in *Pizzaro*, as "a challenge to the moral standards" and "the audience responded howling him off the stage" (Rowell 32). This account of Osbaldiston's reception, although undergirding the popular belief that the Old Vic theatre was somehow immoral, simultaneously demonstrates the morality and social conservatism of many of the audience members who refused to accept Osbaldiston's performance of the play's hero because of his misdeeds. Furthermore, this incident also emphasizes the power of the Victorian theater as stage and audience were interconnected, responding to each other and adapting to the moment in which the adaptations were created.

Although this event occurred early in Osbaldiston's control of the Old Vic, stories of his dubious character followed his career there. Peter Roberts narrates an incident involving Osbaldiston in 1847. He was

convicted and charged twenty shillings for selling spirits without a license. The real reason for the fine, however, was more complicated. In February 1847, the Lord Chamberlain circularised London managers concerning the fact that theatre saloons were admitting prostitutes free to round up their clients. Osbaldiston's fine was in fact a warning for promoting, on his premises, the oldest profession in the world. (27)

In essence, the character of the Old Vic and similar working-class theatres were complex.

Although the audiences were often on the lower end of the working class, this did not necessarily result in a violent immoral audience ready to perform the misdeeds they saw on the stage in their everyday lives as many Victorians feared. In part, the mixture of misbehavior and rejection of hypocrisy on the stage stemmed from their indoctrination in middle-class morality.⁶ However, it is also important to remember that the audience and managers were not perfect and lived with hardships often obscured in much of the fiction of the time that concentrated heavily on the lives of middle and aristocratic classes.

Revising Paternalism

John Courtney's *Jane Eyre* arrived on the Old Vic stage only a year after the initial release of Brontë's novel. Although it appears that Brontë never saw a production, she did respond to the adaptation in a letter to her publisher William Smith Williams:

A Representation of 'Jane Eyre' at a Minor Theatre would no doubt be a rather afflicting spectacle to the author of the work: I suppose all would be woefully exaggerated and painfully vulgarized by the actors and actresses on such a stage. What—I cannot help myself asking—would they make of Mr. Rochester? And the picture my fancy conjures up by way of reply is a somewhat humiliating one. What would they make of Jane Eyre? I see something very pert and very affected as an answer to that query. (Smith 25)

Brontë's response was not without merit as many of the changes made when the play hit the stage in 1848 were more than a little exaggerated and focused on spectacle. Nevertheless, Courtney's and later adaptations provide a critical insight into the ways in which playwrights using material already situated in cultural and social issues could reinvent the work for a new audience with a new purpose and consequently provide a new way of reading how the working class perceived and projected images of themselves. With almost half of the population of the area surrounding the Old Vic employed in either industrial or commercial labor, the adaptation idealizes the life of the rural domestic servant in contrast to those who had to fend for themselves in more public venues like schools and public businesses. Although some of the audience would have worked in the domestic realm, the numbers of those actually engaged as servants in the area was relatively low when the Old Vic put on Courtney's *Jane Eyre*, and they would have worked in the city rather than the country, leaving them with few ties to the world in the novel and thus the chance to romanticize the safety of rural domestic employment. Ultimately, Courtney demonizes the work done for a public institution, suggesting that it is not the work but the system within which it is performed that is at fault.

Maintaining the basic structure of Brontë's novel, Courtney's play does cut the scenes of Jane's childhood at Gateshead with the Reed family, opening instead with Jane already installed as a teacher at Lowood. Before Jane enters, however, Courtney introduces the character of Betty Bunce, a servant girl at Lowood who is frustrated by the ill treatment both the servants and the students receive. She commiserates with yet another added character, Joe Joker who serves as her love interest in the play. After they bemoan the hardships of their lives, deciding they must leave to survive, Jane finally arrives on stage, engaged in a conflict with Mr. Brocklehurst that ends with her departing Lowood for Thornfield. Joe defends Jane to Mr. Brocklehurst,

eventually throwing him out a window into a pail of water in a comic relief scene. The third scene opens at Thornfield where much of the plot from the novel is repeated, though the aristocrats never actually appear on stage. Here too, Betty and Joe have an added comic scene: Betty has taken work at a grocer's and the owner, Jeddediah Piper, seems to have designs on his servant. However, Joe steps in again, this time attacking Jeddediah with flour when he attempts to kiss Betty.

Back at Thornfield, Mason has arrived and Bertha assaults him as in the novel, followed by Jane providing aid and shortly thereafter becoming engaged to Rochester. The rest of the play continues with Brontë's plot, including Jane's visit to the Rivers home and the revelation of Jane's inheritance with slight additions concerning the relationship between Joe and Betty. The fire occurs at Thornfield as in the novel, but here, Joe runs in to save Rochester from the flames. After the fire, Betty and Joe search out Jane and tell her about Thornfield. Jane returns to Rochester, again with scenes similar to the novel, except that Mason arrives, attacks Rochester for hiding Bertha, and Joe again protects Rochester. The play ends with Jane promising to care for Joe as he is the "preserver of my husband," which results in exclamations of joy from all on the stage (Courtney *Jane Eyre* 63).

Courtney's adaptation gives the very first lines of the play to Betty Bunce, highlighting her significance⁷. Betty is "discovered" in the schoolroom, reflecting on both her place and the place of the children at the school. Bemoaning her plight, she cries, "Dear me, what a life is mine--a servant of all work to a charity school" and follows through by similarly commenting on the perilous position of the "scholars" at Lowood whose relatives have "sen[t] them out of the way to be thumped, bumped and consumptionized" (32). Betsy's remarks reflect a general contrast in the production between labor performed for an individual family rather than for a

business or public establishment. Betty's role as a "servant of all work," in a public institution, a place with much discipline and little comfort, meant her duties would be "extremely burdensome" as she most likely "did virtually all of the housework and child care, was on duty 17 or 18 hours a day and slept on a pallet on the kitchen floor" (Mitchell 50). Although similar work would have been performed in poorer houses that employed only one servant, Courtney amplifies the horrors of service at the school rather than at a home. E.P. Thompson notes, "Relations between employer and labourer were becoming both harsher and less personal; and while it is true that this increased the potential freedom of the worker, since the hired farm servant or the journeyman in domestic industry was... 'halted half-way between the position of the serf and the position of the citizen', this 'freedom mean that he felt his *unfreedom* more" (199). Betsy's engagement with an institution that dehumanizes and neglects rather than acknowledging the humanity of laborers initiates the tone for the entire play, one where the move to industrialization and impersonal work creates a chasm between employer and employee that degrades those involved in the process.

As a servant who must perform all functions, Betty's position along with her place in an institution that had little care for the welfare of either employees or students, reinforces the adaptation's connections between poor working conditions and unfeeling owners. Immediately following Betty's opening monologue another character molded for the play appears on stage, the servant Joe Joker, who joins in Betty's reflections on the difficulties of their roles. He remarks that working at Lowood is "Domestic Transportation" and firmly asserting that he will "make a rush and get out before I go out like a rush light" due to starvation (Courtney *Jane Eyre* 32). The reference to transportation here directly reflects the public discourse concerning crime at the time of the production. Early in the decade, parliament passed penal law reforms that made

regulations concerning transportation much stricter. According to an article published in 1848, before being sent to one of the colonies, “each convict should be subject to a ‘secluded’ course of ‘preliminary penal discipline, in some instances in *England*, before transportation” (“The Old” 277). While the law itself was passed originally in 1842, the issue itself continued to take center stage in the periodicals throughout the decade, with many, like the author of the article just mentioned, condemning the new practice as just as useless as the old.

In 1849, a year after Courtney’s adaptation, the issue continued to fill periodical pages, with a twenty page article on “The Transportation Question” appearing in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. Interestingly, the author here again finds the system of punishment ineffective, but blames the increase of crime on “an *imperfect* education” (520). The depiction of such harsh conditions specifically related to working at the charity school, at the “Lowood Institution” as Joe names the place, where servants are left to die of “domestic starvation” indicts the system under which they labor, linking the new harsher system of relations to a slave-like servitude that used apparent liberty (the ability to leave) to justify lower standards and disinterest from those above. Moreover, the relation made here between poor education and “transportation” represents a direct assault on the system of governance that punished criminals with harsh treatment at home prior to forcefully removing them from their country without making real efforts to alleviate the causes of criminal activity. Thus, the play indicts Lowood as a public institution for mimicking the uncaring and disinterested system of law and justice.

Jane’s rebuke of Brocklehurst in the following scene, where, in a change from the original, she refuses to stand on a stool and be degraded (though she is a teacher in this version and not a young student), further emphasizes that the failures at Lowood stem from the lack of empathy and understanding:

Jane: I will be heard, for my pent-up feelings must have vent. For eight years I have endured all that falls to the lot of the poor orphan girl, discarded by those that should protect her and cast upon the cold care of an unfeeling world--all that I could do in patience, suffering, industry, and obedience to those above I have done. You sir, by the munificence of others, are placed here as our protector. Instead of kindness from you, I and those around me meet but scorn. In place of the bland smile and mild reproof of errors we meet your continuous frown, your determined opposition. Charity! Oh, 'tis a monstrous mockery of it, 'tis persecution upon the helpless and unprotected--and I tell you, sir, that you should blush to own such feelings inhabit your cold and uncharitable heart.

Brock: And dare you talk thus to your kind protector?

Jane: I do, and tell you too that the time will come when those who dispense their wealth for the instruction of their poorer fellow beings will see more closely into the conduct of those into whose hands they place their trust. (Courtney *Jane Eyre* 35).

Jane's long and detailed censure of Brocklehurst and his failures as a "protector," especially in contrast to what she describes as her dedication to "obedience to those above" mirrors the changing conditions between laborers and owners, working-class and middle-class. While there was no doubt a shift in the ways in which employers and employees related to one another, as Thompson notes, there is also a simultaneous backlash against this new construction, a move to reformulate the old system in a way that benefited owners and workers alike. Thomas Carlyle's 1843 *Past and Present* laments the shift towards what he terms the "Cash Gospel" (183), what he views as the reduction of relations between laborers and owners to simple exchanges of funds. He contended that "A Man has other obligations laid on him, in God's Universe, than the payment of cash" (188), and further reminded his readership that "Cash-payment never was, or could be except for a few years be, the union-bond of man to man. Cash never yet paid one man fully his deserts to another; nor could it, nor can it, now or henceforth to the end of the world" (182). Carlyle intended his commentary as a warning to those in power, a reminder that the system they had chosen for class relations cannot succeed, and this adaptation plays out the

dangers of class relations reduced to numbers and the benefits of human connections between masters and servants in its depiction of life at Lowood.

With such a morose and dark opening scene--one clearly linked with the dark imagery of the novel's opening where Jane is locked in the Red Room, terrified, alone, and cut off from aid--the remainder of Betty's performance stands in stark contrast as she lightly banters with those around her and often finds herself in the center of comic relief scenes. While the somber tone of the opening conveys the plight of the working-class servant and underscores the failure of the capitalist system that rejects paternalistic focus on human connections, the switch to the comic tone maneuvers the issue of class relations into a more palatable form for a working-class audience who as come to the theatre to escape from a "monotonous, drab, and squalid" life in search of "excitement, forgetfulness, and a better world in their entertainment" (Booth 60). The comic nature of these characters, so unlike anything seen in the novel, functions as an escape into a world that was simultaneously familiar and dreamlike, a world where audience members saw themselves reflected, in similar circumstances but with more success and freedom than they currently experienced but also saw the dangers of stepping out of their assigned roles. In part, this pull between freedom and class boundaries replicates what the audience would have seen in the looking-glass mirror at the Old Vic that descended between scenes (though it was gone by the time of this production): The mirror clearly showed the levels in the audience, the tiers that separated the poorest patrons cramped together in the pit from those who could afford a box. The play acknowledges the horror of the pit--the stench, the constraints, the limits, but also reminds the audience that clear lines must separate those stuck in the mire from those who had escaped it.

These play-made characters further underscore the growing conflict between duty to an employer and class loyalty as class relations altered with the burgeoning of industrialization. Because the masters felt less beholden to their employees and worried more about “cash,” the resulting breakdown of the paternal structure creates an uprising of sorts from workers. In particular, Joe refuses to bow before a master who does not acknowledge his rights. In a scene where Brocklehurst belittles and dismisses Jane, Joe clearly stands on the side of a fellow servant, defending Jane:

Brock: Dare you interfere with my authority?

Joe: Yours or anybody else's if he don't know how to use it. (Courtney *Jane Eyre* 36)

Joe's willingness to rebuke Brocklehurst becomes all the more significant since “the plight of large groups of workers remain[ed] desperate” in the late 1840s, with many “at the point of subsistence” (Thompson *Making* 209). Though his remarks would mean the loss of his place and undoubtedly the loss of any hope of a letter of character, Joe speaks, reminding the audience that though their plight may be harsh, they too must remember “how to use” their voices and limited power.

In the 1840s, England faced an uncertain economic outlook. *The Rambler* in April of 1848, notes that in fact the difference between wealth and poverty must be at the center of public discourse:

The great problem of the statesmen of this day is the reconciliation of rich and poor, or rather, of riches and poverty. For several hundred years the whole course of society has tended to separate the two by a frightful chasm, which now threatens to widen so violently, as by an earthquake, as to shatter the social fabric, and overwhelm all classes in one indiscriminate destruction. (“Rich” 345)

Within the context of the violent and destructive class struggles that were rending British society, Brocklehurst's outright hostility and Joe's refusal to bend mark the “chasm” between the classes.

This scene represents the dangers for those in the owning and governing classes when they abandon the responsibilities laid upon them by their positions of power while simultaneously mirroring for the audience the ways in which they could stand against “indiscriminate destruction.”

Throughout the adaptation, Joe continues to defy the authority of those he feels abuse their stations. In their attempt to escape, after Joe has “scuffle[d]” with Brocklehurst, Joe and Betty proceed to douse the Beadle and Brocklehurst:

Betty: Be quiet--here, this cupboard--no--the window--the cistern is beneath!

Joe: Throw it up, Betty--they shall have a bath--now--out with you!

Brock: Mercy--murder!

Betty: Silence! (*business*)

Both Outside: Help, murder, robbery, drowning!

Joe: Ha, ha--now, Betty, lets seek our fortunes together. (*Courtney Jane Eyre 38*)

Joe and Betty’s reliance on one another for protection reflects a particular change in the nature of class relations in the nineteenth century. During the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, class relations remained hierarchical, with those below attached to those above through paternalism. E.P Thompson argues that moving into the 1830s and beyond this system was overturned and replaced by a sense of “class consciousness...in which working people were aware of continuing both old and new battles on their own” (712). Courtney’s adaptation simultaneously harkens back to the old system of paternalism while also affirming the realities of the changed relationship between worker and employer. However, the necessity of interdependence between members of the same class, in this instance, servants at a charity school, stems from a failure in the institutional structure to provide for the laborers. The

characters who stand in as representations of industrial disinterestedness find themselves repeatedly rebuked and mocked, figures unworthy of any authority or deference from their social inferiors.

Lowood, offering little protection and near starvation subsistence, stands in as a representative of the New Poor Law of 1834 and similar instances where the poor were left unaided, leaving them to their own defenses. The issues with the Poor Law came to a head between 1845-1847 with a scandal occurring at the Andover Workhouse that resulted in parliamentary changes to the law due to public outcry at the treatment of the poor. According to Lynn Hollen Lees, “Tales of the Andover workhouse inmates eating the bones they were ordered to crush took their place in a long saga of starvations, floggings, and mindless cruelties,” which resulted in “people fantasiz[ing] about confinement within the workhouse, endowing it with superhuman power of a repression” (151). Courtney chooses not the somber and foreboding world of Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* to highlight these vast alterations in class dynamics but rather the lighthearted world of the invented servants, transplanting Brontë’s social discourse into a new form for a new audience, an audience directly confronted with the difficulties of the changing England who have sought the theatre not to be reminded of the difficulties of their lives but to imagine a world where they could overcome these problems. That the adaptation points to their fellow workers as a source of aid while also reinforcing many of the tenets of paternalism is not unusual. David Roberts contends that the widespread popularity of paternalism among a variety of populations (from landholders, to Whigs, to Tories and beyond) “was bound to produce different varieties among its supporters” (211). That this adaptation merges a concern for members of one’s own social class with a critique of a failed paternalist and a figure often associated with the new (failed) reforms, the beadle, emblemizes the ways in which the paternal outlook could be altered to fit the working class. Courtney’s adaptation, aimed at the

urban poor and not at a Brocklehurst or beadle, offers the best of both worlds: an increased sense of the bond between laborers and the safety net that paternalism could provide.

While Courtney is quick to empower the working class when faced with the harshness of Brocklehurst's notions of charity and duty, he just as quickly derides those in the lower ranks who fail to remain within the boundaries of their assigned roles. Betty, having left Lowood, finds a place as a servant to Jeddediah Piper, a "Groce[r], Mealm[a]n, and Corn Chandle[r]." While neither belongs to the landed elite (Betty as working-class servant and Jeddediah lower middle-class), they nevertheless mimic the boundaries seen in the gentry between masters and servants (a dynamic emblemized by Jane and Rochester). Betty, here, is the servant to Piper's master, and when Piper oversteps his role, much as Rochester does with Jane, asking for a bit of romance, there is an immediate backlash from other working-class characters:

Piper: Go to that cupboard, you'll find a bottle of brandy--give me a glass--another, thank you, come here, my dear.

Betty: His dear...

Piper: Come and sit by me, Betty--you are sure you have no followers?...That's dear Betty--ah, you don't know what I felt when I first saw you--Oh, Betty, take pity on your wretched master, let me have one faithful heart to repose upon--smile upon him--oh Betty, suffer him to take (*about to kiss her*)

Betty: That (*a slap*)

Piper: Oh!

Joe (*from a cupboard*): And that as a plaister, Daddy Piper (*throws flour*).
(Courtney *Jane Eyre* 48-49)

Courtney presents a serious predicament in lighthearted fashion, defusing tension through comedy. This scene occurs after Rochester vaguely informs Jane of his past "error" which he is quick to remark is not a "crime" and immediately before his proposal and Jane's acceptance of marriage (45). Bookended by the two scenes that represent Rochester's break from social

hierarchies and his crime of bigamy, the comic scene where flour flies acts as a break in tension while serving a further thematic purpose as it juxtaposes Rochester's social crime with Piper's similar social misstep. Both act outside the bounds of the rigid hierarchical distinctions of early Victorian England. Patsy Stoneman notes that the audience at the Old Vic comprised a "prevalence of costermongers," a group closely related to Piper's profession (21). Rochester's willingness to break the social barriers between master and servant may be excused in the play, but the same is not so for Piper who becomes a figure of derision when he mirrors Rochester's actions. In effect, this subplot further underscores the rigid class distinctions that are a necessity of the paternalistic structure while simultaneously furthering a distinction between laboring for a private family home and working in a public venue, like Lowood or the grocer's. Though Lowood and Piper's businesses are by no means interchangeable, the repetition of "bad paternalists" (Brocklehurst and then Piper) emphasizes the contrast the play will then create between these men and the successful paternalist, Rochester.

Jane, however, becomes emblematic of proper subservience. Though she still makes claims to equality with Rochester, she does so only after she situated herself as Rochester's social inferior. Their equality can only arise after Jane has let Rochester (and the audience) know that she recognizes her inferior place on the social scale as well as her duty to her master: "Oh Sir, this pains me--I would not be inquisitive, and should not seek to learn the secrets of my master--still the confidence you have placed in me this night emboldens me to ask--can I by any means, consistent with my sex, my station, or my means relieve your griefs?" (Courtney *Jane Eyre* 45). Jane's language here, her obsequious tone as she begs Rochester not to think she would dare to "seek to learn the secrets of my master" as well as her emphasis on acting according to the designations that the Victorians placed on her--her gender, her work, and her class--all

undermine the more subversive elements of the original novel in favor of affirming normative conceptions of interpersonal relationships. Esther Godfrey argues that the Jane of Brontë's novel "appears fully aware of the radical potentiality and instability of her new position as she moves from a working class world [at Lowood] into the middle class" at Thornfield (858). Courtney's Jane seems even more cognizant of her "radical potentiality" but diffuses that power through moments where she makes statements such as the one quoted above. Rather than using Jane to undermine the constructed social hierarchy, this adaptation invokes Jane's voice to reaffirm those systems and remind the audience of the dangers of their disintegration.

In her new position at Thornfield, Jane not only bends to the paternal structure but also takes her own change in social position seriously, treating those beneath *her* in the same manner, demonstrating the ways in which paternalism could be adapted to changing social structures. David Roberts suggests, "The growth of paternalism was, however, more than a revival. It took on a life of its own, creating new forms of old elements" (99), and Jane's actions in this adaptation demonstrate one way in which "old elements" could be appropriated to favor the working class. When Joe arrives at Thornfield, she welcomes him and congratulates him on his escape from Lowood:

Jane: We both need to thank the chance that sent us from such a home--come, you will breakfast with me--Mrs. Fairfax will be glad to entertain one who, like you, has befriended me.

Joe: Do you mean, Miss, to introduce me as an acquaintance with such clothes as these--look at my jacket!

Jane: I introduce you, not your attire--'tis your heart I estimate, your clothes I heed not--come.

Joe: Well I never!

Jane: How happy it has made me to be enabled to serve my good old Joe.
(Courtney *Jane Eyre* 49)

Although Jane remains just a governess, her response to someone beneath her on the social scale resembles the “Lady Bountiful” archetype, a figure whose “expenditure of time, money, gifts, and advice had been crucial in sustaining the bonds of deference that tied laborers to the land and its owners” (Elliot 57). Jane’s care for those below her on the social scale reinforces her connection to a historical class structure that succeeded based on the ability of those in positions of power to relate to and inspire deference from those below. Further, Jane’s reference to Lowood as a “home” reinforces the link between paternalism, and its failure in the public sphere. Lowood, though an institution, is, for Jane, a “home,” one where Brocklehurst should have acted as “protector” but failed in doing so. At Thornfield, Jane (and Rochester) act to maintain the reciprocal duties between ruling and working classes.

While the first portion of the adaptation emblemizes what is wrong with the current system of relations between workers and employers, the second stresses the superiority of laboring in a rural family home controlled by a benevolent landlord. The play again relies on Jane’s language to ameliorate the more dangerous ideas from the novel, where, as Chris Vanden Bossche remarks, she “rebels against social exclusion” (46). This Jane instead embodies almost exclusively the second version of Brontë’s Jane, the one who “ultimately does not seek to overturn the existing social order” (47). Not only does she consistently remind the audience of her care for her “station,” she further highlights Rochester’s own superiority in several instances. At one point, she muses to herself, “Strange the kind interest my master takes in me...How is it that I, a poor girl, a creature of his bounty, should feel his equal--I do so spite of myself--it is the confidence his kindness gives to me” (Courtney *Jane Eyre* 49). The connections to the paternalist tradition are most blatant at moments such as these, where the characters reflect on or specifically respond to their “master” and his “bounty,” viewing themselves as protected due to

the care they are given and simultaneously bound to care for their maser in return. Jane's insistence that her safety and happiness stem not from any alteration in herself but rather from Rochester's successful enactment of paternal duty.

Moreover, Rochester's own repetition of his connection to the land further emphasizes his role as the "kind" paternal landlord. Upon his return to Thornfield he vehemently attests his devotion to his home:

The night is rough and the wind shakes the gables of these old towers I love. Thornfield [is] still my boyhood's home--and yet staying by the old beech trunk, a hag stood by me and with a loud laugh, exclaimed--'Like it if you can, like it if you dare!'--[Perhaps] 'twas my bewildered brain that pictured the wild form--no-I will like, I dare like it! (38).

While the Rochester of the novel can barely stand his home and has no desire to even visit, let alone "like it," until he cements his romantic connection to Jane, Courtney's Rochester uses his first scene in the play to reiterate his connection to his "boyhood's home." Although he feels tested in his affection by an "old hag" he refuses to bend to the prodding of this phantom and instead reasserts his devotion to home. The image of the old hag here, much like Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and even Brontë's misshapen Bertha Mason, stands in as the disruptive feminine element that seeks to unhinge structured society.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their groundbreaking book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, argue for a relationship between nineteenth century hags and Chaucer protagonist in "The Wife of Bath:"

He portrayed [the wife] projecting her subversive vision of patriarchal institutions into the story of a furious hag who demands supreme power over her own life and that of her husband: only when she gains his complete acceptance of her authority does this witch transform herself into a modest and docile beauty. Five centuries later, the threat of the hag, the monster, the witch, the madwoman, still lurks behind the compliant paragon of women's stories. (79)

Rochester's imagined conversation with a hag on the grounds of Thornfield can thus be linked directly to his struggle with Bertha, the hag hidden in his attic. Rochester ignores this illusory hag as he does Bertha. Both Bertha and this imaginary woman mark the "wild" "subversive" women that disrupt the ordered paternal world. We feel no pity for this hag who threatens the rightful owner, and in this way the adaptation again seeks to reaffirm normative gender and class boundaries. Just like the heroes of Shakespeare and Dickens, Rochester must overcome this figure in order to maintain the ordered world of Thornfield, something he achieves much more easily in the adaptation than in the novel as all of his workers seem utterly devoted to his protection, a unique trait among the men in power in Courtney's adaptation.

Rochester's role as paternalist in this adaptation works to further reinforce the duty not only of the landowner but also the devotion owed to the employer by a laborer. In so doing, the play seeks to subvert the growing antagonism and aggression arising in the laboring classes due to harsh conditions and poverty. Courtney's version of *Jane Eyre* implies that while bad paternalists in the public meant harsh conditions and a need for class solidarity, private labor under a good paternalist meant stability, suggesting that the worker should seek rural private employment, a state much idealized in this adaptation. Just as Rochester's good paternalist was more fantasy than reality in England at this time, the production similarly crafts workers who, in responding to his generosity, exceed the reasonable bounds of duty. During the scene when Thornfield burns, Joe the Joker, who at every other turn has laughed at authority and physically assaulted those in positions of power, now leaps to protect Rochester:

Roch: Ha! the hall on fire--where is Jane--Jane Eyre! (*rushes up*)

Joe: Stay, sir, for heaven's sake!

Roch: Stand off--Jane, I come to rescue you! (*rushes in*)

Betty: Oh, do not follow him!

Joe: He is our master and must not perish thus! (*Follows*)....*Joe is seen bearing him off as the flames burst forth and part of Hall falls in--the female still laughing as she falls among the ruins[.]* (59)

Joe's plea to Rochester and subsequent vehement assertion that Rochester "is our master and must not perish thus!" allows Joe to reposition himself within the paternalistic relationship between master and servant, something he earlier derided with Brocklehurst, a man Joe felt did not deserve his fealty. Joe becomes the idealized laborer to Rochester's idealized landlord. While the audience suffered in urban London, Joe and Rochester exist in a dream-like world, one that for the viewers had been replaced by the harsh realities of urban industrialization, one that they could view as a possible form of escape from their own hardships and the neglect they received from politicians and others in positions of power. Kristen Leaver contends that melodramas became a tool to "voice the plight of their politically disempowered audiences by dramatizing the contradictions implicit in middle-class attempts to define and manage the ideological problem posed by the lower class" (444). Leaver uses this argument to reject the notion that the theatre acted as the mouth-piece for middle-class norms. While I agree that melodramatic productions can be subversive, in the case of Courtney's adaptation, the laissez-faire disconnection between classes, which became emblematic of much of the class antagonism, bears the brunt of the assault. Rather than working towards an empowered working class, this adaptation relies on nostalgia for the paternal system that was slowly fading away.

This adaptation, much like Courtney's of *Mary Barton* in 1851, manipulates normative class relations, simultaneously reinforcing strict boundaries between workers and employers while appropriating the language of paternalism to serve the working class. While Courtney's adaptation, like Brontë's original, does not overturn the reigning social structure, it does

undermine the middle-class ideal of individuality and the changes that arose in class relations with the rise of industrialization in favor of more nostalgic paternal relations, though it idealizes this system as much as it derides the new structure. This play represents an appropriation of the contemporary dialogue surrounding class relations, assessing the failures of the vast alterations in Victorian society while proffering to the audience a safe and sentimental performance of paternalism that guarantees the continuance of a rigid class hierarchy while refocusing on the strong role the workers can play.

Just a few years after this reimagining of class relations graced the stage at the Old Vic, Courtney followed up with yet another revision of popular conceptions of class with his 1851 *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life!* In his essay, “Encountering Melodrama” David Mayer describes the theatrical genre as a “deformed hybrid” (145). The manuscript⁸ for *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life!* epitomizes the reasons for this oft bequeathed description, both metaphorically and literally. The physical manuscript is scribbled in a handwriting that at times becomes almost entirely unreadable, Ds, As and the symbol for “and” all look the same, and there are pages hastily added to the end after the censor rejected the original version.⁹ More broadly, as an adaptation, Courtney’s play reflects the essentially “hybrid” state of many theatrical works at this time as well as the hybridity of adaptation itself. However, Mayer in no way means his remarks as a criticism of the form, arguing instead that the theatre in general and melodrama in particular are part of “an essential social process” (146), and this adaptation engages not only with its audience but also the larger cultural exchanges occurring at this time. The hybridity of the text stems from several sources: its relationship to theatrical production and the novel, to the dynamic influence of the Lord Chamberlain’s office, the audience in the theatre, contemporary cultural pressures and the economic constraints. While Gaskell’s novel targeted

middle-and upper-class readers, attempting to attract attention to the plight of industrial workers, this adaptation engaged a specifically working-class audience, an audience that would have experienced firsthand some of the hardships depicted in the novel, though this does not mean that the middle class could not (or would not) see performances of the play. Written in 1850 and performed in 1851 at the Old Victoria Theater, Courtney's production of Elizabeth Gaskell's 1848 *Mary Barton* was "written expressly for this Theatre" according to the playbill (Bolton 209), and in the 1850s, this would mean writing to the limited audience in the area of the Old Vic.

Where the readers of Gaskell's novel could separate themselves for the horrors of working-class life, the audience in the Victoria theatre had a visceral connection to the tenuous position of laborers, could themselves easily end up starving or undefended, and the playwright necessarily takes into account this relation in adapting the novel. When viewed as an interpretation, a response to Gaskell's work in light of various social and cultural events, this adaptation becomes significant for its transformation in perspective. Anna Clark contends, "The 'working class' should not be seen as an ideal theoretical construct, but as an ever changing creation of radicals choosing from different strategies in their attempts to unite working people" (177). And, we can similarly view this adaptation in terms of "strategy," as the writer works to influence and respond to the needs of working rather than middle-class spectators while simultaneously contending with the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain's office. In reaction to these constraints, this adaptation manipulates the stereotypes surrounding female labor and domesticity, reconfiguring the middle-class domestic ideal to better suit the realities of laboring life, but it does so by invoking a historical and outmoded conception of class relations.

Courtney's *Mary Barton* cuts much of the beginning of Gaskell's novel, opening with Harry Carson and Sally Leadbetter discussing Mary and her response to his letter. When Harry leaves, Sally gives her first monologue, explaining why she acts so poorly and her jealousy of Mary's beauty. This is followed by the entrance of a character crafted for the play, Badger, who is one of Sally's love interests and a scam artist of a sort. The play shifts from Sally and Badger to Mary contemplating her life and its hardships, followed by the entrance first of Sally and then of John Barton. Here, some of the general content from the novel remains--Barton has been to London, seen his charter rejected, and is bitter. Mary tries ineffectively to calm him. Many of the side characters and their corresponding plots have been cut, including Alice Wilson, though Job Leigh still plays a small role in the play as he is a member of the union with John and Margaret has a small role as Will Wilson's love interest (with no mention of her singing). Again, the main plot concerning Jem, Mary, and Harry plays out as it does in the novel, with Mary initially rejecting Jem (though after she had also already ceased relations with Harry), regretting doing so, blaming herself when Jem is put on trial for Harry's murder, and working to free him. Likewise, Mary's aunt Esther does return to warn first Jem and then later Mary, and the play ends with the revelation of Barton's guilt and Mr. Carson forgiving him when he dies. Aside from these changes, the main alterations made relate to the addition of a sub-plot concerning Sally, Badger, and Tom Shuttle (another added character who vies for Sally's attention). The scenes with Sally and Badger alternate with the main narrative, as they seek their fortune as performers (singers to be specific though they do not work or practice at it). Sally and Badger's dreams are quickly dashed when they are laughed off the stage with patrons asking for their money back, and they find themselves in Liverpool, where Badger is called to testify

against Jem, though he refuses to do so. Sally and Badger separate, each feeling that the other has ruined their life.

Written two years after Courtney's version of *Jane Eyre* and performed three years later, *Mary Barton* underscores an evolution in perspective on paternalism and class relations. While this adaptation similarly relies on nostalgia and rigid social hierarchies, its criticism of the importation of ideals from above onto the working class is more pronounced, though it similarly finds fault with aggressive working-class tactics. According to Harold Perkin, the nineteenth-century saw a struggle between various ideals, each supported by a different class, with the middle-class ideology ultimately winning out (*Origins* 224). For the middle class, the entrepreneurial man and the woman as the Angel in the Household along with a severe set of moral regulations (at least in public) denoted success.¹⁰ Where Courtney's *Jane Eyre* seems to reject middle-class ideology outright, focusing instead on simply returning to paternalism, *Mary Barton* reconsiders middle-class values, especially in terms of domesticity, and manipulates them along with the paternal ideal in a manner that undergirds the superiority of the working class while questioning any outright imposition of middle-class norms on laborers' lives.

Perhaps one of the starkest examples of the collision between middle-class ideal and working-class reality is the depiction of Mary Barton herself: unlike the novel, the play secures Mary in the home. Though she still works for the seamstress Miss Simmonds, Mary never actually goes to work. In fact, Mary remains almost entirely in her home until called to go to Liverpool to save Jem in Act 3. The play obscures Mary's labor, instead leaving her to tend to the hearth in accordance with the domestic ideal that left women as the holder of the household keys, a silent protected member of the family who did not stray into the public sphere. In the 1830s through the late 1840s, the Chartist movement fought for working-class rights, beginning

with local groups of workers and burgeoning into a national movement calling for reform. In 1838, they published the People's Charter, outlining their goals, and later submitted it to Parliament in 1842 and again in 1848 though Parliament refused to see them. Clark asserts that Chartists "tried to create a positive class identity for working people uniting diverse elements into an 'imagined community' through political organization and rhetoric" but also notes that they often deployed "domesticity to wrest concessions from the state," though, "working people had to negotiate ways to put the principles of domesticity into practice" as the lifestyle of laborers could not easily accommodate separate spheres (220 & 248-249). Within the context of the "working-class culture of the Midlands and the north which nurtured physical-force Chartism," Mary's appropriation of domesticity along with a rejection of violence emphasizes the ways in which this text reappropriates ideology of both Chartism and the middle class to new purpose (495).

Essentially, Mary's character manipulates domesticity, enacting a working-class version that acknowledges the necessity of some movement between spheres while primarily focusing on remaining in the home. Mary's first remarks in the play remind the audience of the harsh conditions her family struggles under as she informs them that "times have been very hard with us of late," but she also quickly changes her position (Courtney *Mary* 477). In a scene added after the Lord Chamberlain rejected the original version, Mary tells her father, "we have suffered and may suffer more, but let us bow to the burden. The storm passes and the sun bursts forth again to health and vigour" (510). Mary's consistent placement in the home along with her efforts to assure her father and the audience that "the storm passes" suggests that the aggression of Chartism is no longer necessary. Perkin notes that "physical force Chartism," which was associated with the northern portions of the country had nearly ceased to exist by 1850, arguing,

“physical force...was mere bluff, and when their bluff was called they could only retreat” (*Origins* 322). Courtney uses Mary’s place in the home, her ability to mimic middle-class domesticity along with her belief in renewed “health and vigour” for the working class to reinforce the death of Chartism; he follows through by offering a new method by which the working class could unite. Courtney further emphasizes the lack of urgency for Mary’s labor when Sally comes to entice her to meet with Harry Carson. Mary not only refuses to have further involvement with him but also dismisses Sally, declaring, “I shall not return to work today,” a comment that provokes no response from Sally (*Courtney Mary* 477). While Mary’s first speech implies desperate conditions for herself and her father, her lines in the rest of the play dismiss that danger of poverty as something of the past and in so doing also discards the methods by which the working class organized themselves to counteract these hardships.

Instead of promoting the Chartist aims of her father, Mary invokes a more normative mode of class relations, one which leads more towards cooperation. Andrew Maunder, in his article, “Mary Barton Goes to London: Elizabeth Gaskell, Stage Adaptation and Working Class Audiences,” argues that in Courtney’s adaptation, “Mary...becomes much more than she does in the novel, a forthright articulator of family values, community and domesticity” (15). However, Mary exceeds these boundaries as she acts not only as an idealized working-class woman--balancing the restrictions placed on her gender from both her own class and those in higher classes-- but also serves to underscore the failures of the actions of the factory-owning middle class. In the novel, when Harry’s intentions are revealed, she simply proclaims, “I now scorn you, sir, for plotting to ruin a poor girl!” and leaves (Gaskell 158). Courtney, however, chooses to expand this speech, indicting Harry more specifically for his misdeeds against the working class:

Sir, I could not love you before, but now I totally despise you owning as you do you mean to not honor till your disappointed vanity and person forced you to this offer. I despise you for your attempt against one whose poverty should have made you her protector. (Courtney *Mary Barton* 481)

Throughout the play, Mary acts as the mouthpiece of working-class concerns and does so more effectively than the aggressive John Barton. When Mary castigates Harry for failing to act as her “protector,” she connects herself to the paternal class system, a set of relations between the laboring and owning classes that echoes back to the landed agricultural system of England’s past. This speech mirrors Jane Eyre’s response to Mr. Brocklehurst in Courtney’s previous adaptation. Mary’s use of this terminology reflects a reformation of labor relations occurring during the 1850s as factory owners, like Titus Salt who built a town for his workers and tried to ameliorate their conditions while still rejecting large scale reform and unionism,¹¹ attempted to mimic the landed elite’s paternalism in their relations with those who worked for them.

Mary further attempts to disarm her father’s angry comments concerning the disparity between “the owner of the lordly mansion and the trial oppressed dweller of the humble cot,” reminding him that “we should not murmur” and then calling on religion to reinforce her speech as God “cares for all is with both and watches the deeds of all” (509). While Barton consistently underscores the differences between classes, Mary works to make connections between them and to counteract her father’s harsher sentiments. Consequently, Mary acts not only as the ideal female worker but also as the representative for the return to an older formation of class relations in urban environments that asks the audience to reject Chartist violence and instead look backwards to a family-like style of cooperation between workers and employers that would allow the woman to stay in the home but would not necessarily disengage her from the labor market. In essence, Courtney’s Mary adapts the Chartist call for domesticity, used by them to

legitimize their claims to space in public discourse with the middle class and aristocracy, for a more peaceful return to a revised paternalism.

While Mary melds middle-class domesticity with a call for a paternal system, Sally Ledbetter embodies the failures of middle-class ideology when applied to working-class women. Mary is the exception to the rule for working-class women and domesticity and Sally the model for the negative consequences of simply taking it in its entirety. Judy Lown notes, “Domestic ideology made far fewer inroads into working-class women’s consciousness at this time than into that of working-class men. In terms of the distinctive conditions of working-class women’s lives the ‘domestic ideal’ was neither realistic nor desirable” (186). Given a larger and more multifaceted role in the play than in the novel, Sally emblemizes the dangers and disruptions that the introduction of ideals from above could have. Importation of domesticity can succeed but the assumption that middle-class ideology could be imported wholesale into the lives of working class women was nothing but destructive.

At one point, Sally compares her situation to Mary’s and notes that she must “make a fool” of Harry because of her precarious monetary situation (one payment from Harry is more than she “gets in a week’s wages”); For Sally, her success rests on her ability to “make up in dress” “what she lack[s] in beauty,” something Mary need not worry about according to Sally as she is “so pretty” (*Courtney Mary Barton* 475). Maunder suggests that the play reforms Sally’s character, arguing that “Sally still takes bribes from Harry Carson but feeds him misinformation; she is no longer characterized by her grasping self-interest but feels a strong sense of sisterhood with her neighbour and is outspoken about Carson’s motives” (9). This, however, seems to be an exaggeration of Sally’s good intentions. Though the play does make her more pitiable, she tells the audience that a large part of her manipulation of Harry Carson is because she has “a poor old

mother to keep” (Courtney *Mary Barton* 475), Courtney undermines Sally’s claims of altruism when she follows this line by noting that she also has “appearances to keep up” (475). Both reasons in the text seem to be given equal weight in Sally’s mind, and her need for what she deems appropriate dress is referenced multiple times while her mother is never again mentioned.

Like Lady Audley in Mary Braddon’s novel *Lady Audley’s Secret*, Sally wishes to escape the hardship and trappings of a working-class life in favor of what she perceives as the beauty and ease of wealth and position. However, as Martha Vicinus notes, the “Victorian middle class regarded such mobility as undesirable,” and the play similarly criticizes Sally’s actions, though for different ends (7). Sally represents a significant deviation from Mary’s embodiment of middle-class domesticity as she seeks not simply to incorporate domesticity into her life but rather desires to achieve the leisure and the accoutrements that go along with being a member of the middle class. This juxtaposition reminds the audience that while the working class can claim domesticity, they cannot escape the boundaries of their class, a sentiment also espoused in Courtney’s 1848 *Jane Eyre*. That Sally finds no support, even from members of her own class, reinforces the class loyalty as depicted in Mary who consistently remarks on her desire to “dwell with the friends that have grown with me” (Courtney *Mary Barton* 510). Mary employs a version of middle-class domesticity that does not conflict with a return to a version of paternalism where masters care for employers and those employers in turn do not seek to exceed their bounds since this social hierarchy demands clear stratification. Sally, then, reminds the audience that the imposition of standards from another class cannot be entirely successful due to the real conditions of working class society; instead, her experiences combined with Mary’s support a selective approach.

Further, Sally's character disrupts the depiction of any simplified conception of middle-class ideology as applied to laborers. In her attempt to escape her place in the working class, Sally allies herself with a performer who gives "benefit concerts"--that is concerts to benefit himself where neither he nor Sally attempt to actually prepare. In this instance, neither Sally nor Badger has any interest in actually working, instead simply expecting money and success to be given to them. Sally's pseudo-work with Badger ultimately disqualifies her from legitimate labor with Mrs. Simmonds, who kicks her out for consorting with him:

Sally: Great powers, its Badger--the wretch--oh you monster

Badger: Oh--I wont stand it Sally

Sally: Oh you brute, look here at the broken-hearted girl who has got herself discharged for you...misses heard of my singing for your benefit concert...and she told me next day if I made such acquaintances as you, that you must provide for me. Oh Badger wont you share your fortune with me? (496)

Sally's apparent misdeeds are only such when viewed through the lens of middle-class norms as the working class has a more fluid and less restricted view of gender relations and sexuality. As Clark notes, "Even if laboring women did not accept middle-class definitions of sexual morality, they lived in a society [that]...could punish them for deviating from bourgeois values" (51). Sally's persecution by her employer for "mak[ing] such acquaintances" connects the value system used by Courtney to the middle class rather than the working one. In so doing, the adaptation simultaneously critiques the system itself for failing to recognize the working-class dynamics of gender and imposing inappropriate notions of fallenness crafted by the middle class while also reinforcing the dangers facing those in the working class as they can and will be judged by standards that neither fit their mode of life nor reflect the real relations between laborers.

Courtney's adaptation, responding to the changing dynamics in the factory and labor markets as well as the tone of the political movements engaged in fighting for workers' rights, reframes Gaskell's novel. The consistent repetition of scenes featuring Mary followed by scenes featuring Sally offers the audience conflicting conceptions of the effect of the middle-class ideal of domesticity and idleness on working class women. However, these seemingly disparate depictions--Mary as the ideal homemaker and Sally as the fallen woman corrupted by a desire to escape the working class for the stability of the middle--signal the need for a modification in the already existent discourse concerning class relations. Maunder contends that the play "leaves the Victoria audience with an idea of the necessity and the possibility of an alternative employer-employee relation, one that does not accept capitalism without humanitarianism" but more specifically, the adaptation invokes a new "old" system for its audience, calling on them to adopt the return to the paternalistic style of class relations that factory owners like Titus Salt¹² were attempting to reanimate (16). This system would allow the working class to claim domesticity as the Chartists desired but also reaffirmed clear class boundaries, rejecting any possibility of upward mobility. This adaptation, though by no means aggressively subversive, does disrupt the simplified stereotypes of female labor that women encountered across class boundaries, effectively proffering to its audience a new vision of femininity and labor that stitched together pieces of the contemporary dialogue surrounding domesticity, work, and class relations.

Together, Courtney's adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton* suggest an evolution in the discourse surrounding class relations. For both adaptations, the vast changes that arose due to industrialization and the rise of a middle-class ideal, which eroded the relations between laborers and employers that existed in decades and centuries past with the paternal system, become the focal point. *Jane Eyre*, in part due to its rural setting and focus on domestic labor,

envisions the paternal system as safe retreat for those who have ventured into the public arena (in this case, Lowood as emblematic of institutional labor). Although this adaptation provides a critique of class relations as developed from the changes in the labor market, it does so as a subtext, simply focusing on the positive elements to be found in the country under an idealized version of paternalism. *Mary Barton*, however, takes a more critical look at the imposition of middle-class ideology as applied to the working class and suggests instead a melding of middle-class domesticity with the old paternalism as an ideal method for fashioning a method of class interaction that considers the realities and harshness of working-class life. However, as it is conceptualized here, it idealizes the relationship between the wealthy/well-off and the poor. Courtney emphasizes the failures of the dominant social structure and simply leaves Mary to remind the audience of how things should be in an ideal paternal world. Ultimately, these adaptations act as a microcosm of the larger discourse of class relations that occurred throughout the nineteenth century. While, as Perkin notes, we can identify various “ideals” for each class, these systems are in no way stable but are rather pliant and interconnected with pieces from various systems blended together at different moments.

Notes

¹ FML Thompson in *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* refers to the paternal structure in Britain as such.

² To see an image of the mirrored curtain, visit the Library of Congress website at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005676992/>

³ The dates listed are those of the original publications of the novels. The adaptations occurred throughout the nineteenth century, often repeating as the repertoire required.

⁴ A term used to describe the theatres located on the south side of the Thames River--namely, the Surrey Theatre and the Old Vic Theatre. See Davis and Emeljanow “The Surrey and Victoria Theatres” in *Reflecting the Audience*, 2001

⁵ Until the passage of the Theatre Regulation Act in 1843, only the two patent theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, could produce what was deemed legitimate drama, though minor theatres would often simply alter “legitimate” drama by adding music in order to show it without the threat of prosecution. The minor theatres would also stage melodrama, pantomime, and a variety of other “illegitimate” forms of entertainment.

⁶ Anna Clark, in her book *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (1995) notes that although the working class in general held very different values in terms of wives and gender roles, they also felt the pressure to meet the requirements imposed by the middle class in order to be taken seriously. Consequently, although women were expected to work, and indeed hard working women were valued, they also had to abide by the patriarchal control of and recognize their inferiority to their husbands (64-66). See also Harold Perkin’s *The Origins of Modern English Society* for more on the differing values of classes.

⁷ According to Patsy Stoneman, “*Susan Hopely* (1841), by G. Dibdin Pitt, was the play which established a reputation for Obsaldiston and Vincent, and its success explains the prominence of the servant characters in Courtney’s *Jane Eyre* (“Editor’s Notes to John” 29).

⁸ As noted in the introduction, many of the plays here exist solely in the British library. The only copy of this adaptation is in the guise of the manuscript that was submitted to the Lord Chamberlain’s Office for licensing. All plays produced in London during this time frame had to be examined by a member of this office, often resulting in changes if the Lord Chamberlain felt the material inappropriate. These copies are often hastily written, with sections crossed out, notes in the margins, and tacked on additions.

⁹ Although the correspondence of the Lord Chamberlain’s office is available in the British National Archives, the indexes for 1850-1851 did not survive, making it difficult to find the letter outlining the problems. Thus, I am currently unable to provide any specifics concerning this data.

¹⁰ See Martha Vicinus’s *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* (1973) and Joan Perkin’s *Victorian Women* (1995) for more on the silent and idle role of middle-class “Angels,” See Alex J. Tuss’s article “Divergent and Conflicting Voices: Victorian Image of the Male” in *Journal of Men’s Studies* Volume 4 (1995) or John Tosh’s *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (2007) for more discussion of the various roles of men in Victorian society.

¹¹ See David Roberts’s *Paternalism in Early Victorian England* (1979) and *Social Conscience of The Early Victorians* (2002) for a more detailed critique of paternalism in factories.

¹² Titus Salt, a philanthropist from Yorkshire, is most well known for establishing Saltaire, a factory town not far from his hometown of Bradford where the factory workers lived and worked under his care. The factory and town were both well equipped, including “a recreation-ground for the workpeople,” a Sunday School, and well-maintained homes (Balgarnie 254). For more on Titus Salt, See Robert Balgarnie’s *Sir Titus Salt, Baronet: His Life and Its Lessons*.

CHAPTER TWO A MULTIPLICITY OF AUDLEY'S: FRAMING THE LADY IN 1863

All of the adaptations discussed in this dissertation represent the appropriation of a female author's material by male playwrights who not surprisingly alter much of the material surrounding gender performance. The few critics who study these adaptations focus heavily on the tendency to omit gender concerns from the theatrical productions. Kerry Powell suggests that these performances "inevitably disfigured" the original work and in so doing drained the new version of the "subversive content" (111). Similarly, Lynn Voskuil, in her discussion of sensation drama, acknowledges that adaptations "often thematized contemporary social issues" but then shortly thereafter remarks that Dion Boucicault, a popular and prolific playwright in the nineteenth century (who will be discussed in a later chapter for his adaptation of *Mary Barton*), "retreats from an insurrectionary or subversive position" and follows through by asserting that "potentially explosive subject matter was...soft-pedaled for London audiences" (253-254). For Voskuil and Powell,¹ adaptations of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* exemplify the failures of the male-dominated theatrical world to adequately transform women's writings for the stage.

Though the theatrical productions of *Lady Audley's Secret* certainly make drastic (and sometimes cringe-worthy) changes to the novel, the contention that the material was simply watered down for the masses devalues the power of these plays. Although the plays often alter the controversial depictions of gender relations, they do not simply purge themselves of social critique, but instead shift the critical emphasis to depictions of laborers and work. In 1863, three very different London theatres, each catering to different audiences, simultaneously mounted productions of Braddon's controversial *Lady Audley's Secret*. The overlap of these theatrical iterations all occurring in London acts as a microcosm of the larger cultural work being done by

Victorian theatre in its adaptations of major novels of the era. Produced so closely together but resulting in extremely different plays, the three adaptations discussed in this chapter reveal the ways in which theatre engaged with and then created new social commentary for underrepresented voices in political discourse. The theatres, with patrons ranging from wealthy Dukes and Duchesses to paupers and prostitutes, developed content that reacted to these audiences and their worlds. William E. Suter's *Lady Audley's Secret*, performed at the Queen's Theatre, began on February 21st 1863 while George Roberts' production at the St. James Theatre opened on February 28th and ran well into May of 1863. Colin Henry Hazlewood's version of *Lady Audley's Secret* was mounted at The Old Victoria Theatre on May 25th 1863 started its run just as Roberts's was ending.²

While adaptations were certainly not the only fare offered at these three theaters, neither were their adaptations of *Lady Audley's Secret* the only such productions staged. The Queen's for instance, featured adaptations of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dredd* (1857, penned by Suter) and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853, penned by Edward Fitzball) as well as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1839) and Braddon's *Aurora Floyd*, which was performed just two months after *Lady Audley's Secret*. The Old Vic, as noted in the previous chapter, had the first adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton*, but also offered adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853), *Dredd* (1856) and *Frankenstein* (1840) like the Queen's. Meanwhile, The St. James was also consistently showcasing adaptations: in March of 1863 *The Merry Widow*, which was "founded on a very successful French piece," an adaptation of Sir Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*, retitled *Circumstantial Effie Deans* was presented in May of the same year, and yet another adaptation of a Braddon novel in 1865, *Eleanor's Victory* ("The St. James" 473). The repetition of the same play at several theatres in the same time frame, thus, was not uncommon. In fact, the

adaptations of *Lady Audley's Secret* fit within a general pattern of adaptation that all three theatres engaged in throughout the nineteenth century.

These productions emblemize not only the extent to which theatre acted as a mediator of literary works for audiences, both those who had read and those who had not read the original works, but also mark the power of the theatre to create cultural discourse of its own. The playwrights, actors, and managers did not simply translate the material from novel form to script but instead used that material to develop and portray their own responses to socio-cultural issues. In looking at how these theatres, situated in very different areas of Victorian London, appropriated Braddon's novel at the exact time but managed to produce vastly different products, we exhume non-traditional views on social issues. In their chapter discussing the variety of audiences that frequented Victorian theatres, Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow note,

The moral implications of Lady Audley's bigamy in the many adaptations of Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* may have been taken seriously at the St. James Theatre in London's West End, but at the Britannia or Victoria theatres popular audiences may well have justified the choices made by Lady Audley on economic grounds even if they condemned her morally. (94)

These adaptations demonstrate the ways in which literature was reformatted to not only appeal to a variety of types of audiences excluded from positions of power but also to become new renderings of social and political discourse, in this case specifically those concerning class distinctions, labor, and hierarchy. The three versions of *Lady Audley's Secret* discussed here, which attracted audiences ranging from the working class (The Old Vic and Queen's) to the middle class and wealthy (The St. James) interrogate popular conceptions of class distinctions between the three main social groups, the working, the middle, and the aristocratic classes, during what many oversimplify as an age of equipoise.

Many modern scholars contend that William Laurence Burns's 1964 classic book *The Age of Equipoise* outlined a foundation for the widely held view that the mid-Victorian years were ones of balance, compromise, and stability. While Burns does refer to this period as one of "equipoise," he refers not to stability but instead to the precarious balancing act necessary at the time, the ways in which any slight change could unsettle society. Other scholars have more recently explored the unease of the Age of Equipoise. Roland Quinault, for instance, asserts, "there was a surprising amount of popular protest in mid-Victorian Britain, by comparison not only with the subsequent period, but also with the preceding period" and further contends, "The years between 1852 and 1867 were surprisingly disturbed. The period witnessed the last classic food riots outside wartime, although they were generally confined to the more remote rural areas" (111-112). Although the Chartist movement saw much of its public façade fade away after its failures in the late 40s, this did not ultimately result in an immediate transition to stability and harmony between classes. While many suggest that this era saw an easing of class tensions and the rise of if not outright stability than at least the appearance of compromise, in the early 1860s the various social struggles, especially where class and gender intersected, simply mutated into new forms.

When we move from looking at the early 1860s in general to the year surrounding these productions (1862-1863), political disruption appears to be minimal but there are nonetheless disputes concerning labor. *The Saturday Review of Politics* in its article concerning the year in review, suggests that 1862 was relatively subdued due to Queen Victoria's mourning for Prince Albert, referring to the year as one of "political suspense" where "finance has been stationary, legislation has been scanty, the debates on foreign politics have been without result" ("The Year" 761-762). Nevertheless, the article does identify one "national calamity," the Lancashire Cotton

Famine, caused in part by the American Civil War (761). A decrease in trade due to a lack of cotton supply coming from the American South “threaten[ed] hundreds of thousands with starvation” though according to this author it did not result in “agitation” or “political discontent” (761). Although this writer asserted that the bereft workers meekly and with reserve bore their hardships, there were rallies and calls for change. Hugh Mason, a mill-owner, “castigated the local millowners [in Manchester] for their miserly attitudes,” and laborers wrote to newspapers decrying their treatment (Kirk 295). While certainly not an example of physical force Chartism, the situation in the north of England did breed class tensions.

While factory workers do not appear in *Lady Audley's Secret*, the tension evinced by this event--difficulties of the laborer versus the “miserly” reaction of those with wealth--represents a larger split that affected workers across fields. The 1862 guide, *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen*, for instance, stresses that a lady must “never stoop to the degradation of making companions and confidants of...servants” and must “never on any account treat them as equals” as doing so would “spoil them, and at the same time debase” the lady (90). Another complaint voiced by many women who employed female servants related to their deportment, or rather lack thereof. “A Chapter on Servants” published in September of 1863 blames education for the bad habits of servants. The writer, a woman who employed female servants, opined, “I imagine the end of education in her station was meant to give her the opportunity of learning her duty to heaven and man from One Book” but she instead sees the servant “bringing her boasted learning only to the hindrance of her duties” (154). Such reactions against the education of the poor can be tied to increased calls for reform in education. One such reform, the Revised Code of Education enacted in 1862, tied funding to the abilities of students and was followed by the Education Act of 1870, which expanded schools and created local school boards to govern their

management.³ Much of what is at issue here is the place of the servant in the social hierarchy, whether the servant should have either equal rights and equal education or even be supported in hardship, and it is these tensions that play out in the adaptations discussed in this chapter.

The 1860s marked a transitional period during which the British nation strove towards “equipoise” as the various ideals constructed by the working, middle, and upper classes struggled for supremacy. Perkin in *The Origins of Modern English Society* argues that it is during this period that the middle-class ideal achieves its dominance, and while much of the public discourse was saturated by this view, they were still nonetheless confronted by various threats. Sheila Sullivan, in “Spectacular Failures,” argues that the supposed age of “equipoise” was fraught with tension, in part due to what many saw as the failures of women: “By the end of the 1850s, they were awash in evidence, gleaned from divorce courts, popular novels, and criminal trials, that women’s transgressions were threatening both the ideal and the reality of domesticity” (87). Sullivan’s discussion of “women’s transgressions,” especially as seen through sensationalism, marks a clear concern found in Braddon’s novel, and one that does not disappear when brought onto the Victorian stage. Hutcheon contends, “The move to a performance or interactive mode entails a shift from a solo model of creation to a collaborative one” (80). Although *Lady Audley’s Secret* certainly explores a variety of issues concerning Victorian society, the crux of the issue remains Lady Audley’s manipulation of gender and domesticity. However, when Lady Audley’s “transgressions” move from a “solo” mode to one that creates a “direct” assault on the viewer (13), her subversive actions rather than evincing the anxiety surrounding domesticity, as they do in the novel, become a symptom of larger class tensions associated with the audiences.

The Theatres

In the previous chapter, I outlined the Old Vic's place in the theatre hierarchy as well as the type of patrons likely to be attracted to it in the 1850s as such history inflects the performances at the theatre. In the 1860s, the Old Vic was still in an era of decline, trying to survive after having lost the management of David Odsbaldiston, who died in January of 1851, followed by manager Eliza Vincent's⁴ death in November of 1856. According to Rowell, "for the next twenty-five years managements would come and go, few lasting more than two or three years, none making the Theatre pay" (*The Old Vic* 43). When *Lady Audley* reached the Old Vic in 1863, the theatre was once again in a transition between managers: John James Towers who had been running the theatre for several years, gave control over to Frederick Fenton, an artist. Towers's reign at the Victoria, "began a line of managers apparently more concerned to exploit the money-making resources of its bars. The quality and character of the entertainment offered deteriorated in consequence" (43-44). According to Ian Bradley, "By the middle of the nineteenth century the Old Vic...had become a notorious haunt of prostitutes and was little more than a drinking den. The occupants of seats in the gallery nightly tied their handkerchiefs together to make a rope with which to haul up large stone bottles of beer from the stalls" (666). While there is some argument concerning the character of the audience and their actions while in the theatre, there is at least a general consensus that the Old Vic appealed to a local and working-class audience, and in this period in particular its state of decline meant that a wider clientele would be less likely to attend.

However, the composition of that working-class audience changed during the nineteenth century. While the early decades of the Old Vic's history show a market-driven working class

(those who worked in markets or small businesses), this changed according the 1861 census.

Davis and Emanijelow note that by this time of the Lambeth workers

42.2 percent or 38,813 (including housewives) were involved in domestic duties, 32,326 (35.1%) in industrial trades, while an additional 7.8 percent, including dealers of all kinds of porters, engaged in commercial trades. Though engine and machine makers remained an important element, shoemakers, brass foundry workers, and boilermakers were fewer in number. (20-21)

Earlier in the century, the workers were employed primarily in relation to the region's "wharves" and "timber" as well as other mostly masculine employments (bricklayers, carpenters, and coach makers), but by the 1860s there has been a vast increase in those employed in "domestic duties" associated with women. Although the Old Vic tended to attract mostly a local and poor audience, in part due to "the general squalor of its immediate environment" (39), it nevertheless made attempts to broaden its audience. Davis and Emanijelow explain that "in 1859 the introduction of pit stalls at 1s 6d indicate an attempt at gentrification. In March of 1863 in an effort to retain their audiences, the management of Frampton and Fenton announced that refreshments in the theatre's saloons...were no more expensive than at the public houses outside" (38). The Old Vic, like many minor theatres, wished to bring audiences from across London, but it ultimately failed, in part due to the location and often the squalor found in the working-class neighborhoods that housed playhouses like the Old Vic. Such was the state of affairs when Hazlewood's version of *Lady Audley's Secret* arrived at the theatre.

Similarly, the Queen's Theatre in Tottenham Court Road, also known as the Prince of Wales Theatre, boasted a less than reputable standing. According to Davis and Emeljanow, the audience "was arguably local, drawn in part from the tradesmen, shopkeepers, and workers who lived in the vicinity (148). They further note that the men were mostly employed as "shoemakers, carpenters, tailors, bricklayers, painters, plumbers...and laborers," while "the few

women in employment...worked as domestic servants, cooks, charwomen, milliners, seamstresses, washerwomen, manglers, and laundry keepers. In 1861 the majority of inhabitants...continued to be employed in industrial and domestic trades” (148-149). Although much of this would change once Marie Wilton (eventually Bancroft) took over in 1865 and attempted to revitalize the theatre, even she was daunted by the audience upon visiting theatre shortly before her tenure as manager began in 1865:

It was a well-conducted, clean little house, but oh, the audience! My heart sank! Some of the occupants of the stalls...were engaged between the acts in devouring oranges...and drinking ginger-beer. Babies were being rocked to sleep, or smacked to be quiet, which proceeding, in many cases, had an opposite effect! A woman looked up to our box, and seeing us staring aghast, with, I suppose, an expression of horror on upon my face, first of all ‘took a sight’ at us, and then shouted, ‘Now, hen, you three stuck-up ones, come out o’ that, or I’ll send this ‘ere orange at your ‘eds.... ‘Oh Byron!’ I exclaimed, ‘do you think that people from the West End will ever come into those seats?’ (Bancroft 178-79)

The audience, prior to the Bancrofts arrival in 1865, was certainly a local, very much labor-oriented group, and while Marie Wilton’s description of her experience suggests that the group tended towards coarse demeanor, this does not necessarily correlate to an inattentive or unengaged spectator. Because the Queen’s Theatre existed on the fringe of high society, in a neighborhood not very far from the Westminster area, various managers hoped to attract the patronage of high society; nevertheless, the derelict nature of Tottenham Court drove away rather than attracted such audiences until the Bancrofts transformed the theatre.

George Rowell reminds us that while the Queen’s Theatre eventually gained respectability in the later 1860s due to the management of Bancrofts, even then its standing came more from the contrast with its surroundings: “No doubt the elegance of its fittings...w[ere] enhanced by the squalor of the surroundings. What seemed so daring at the former ‘Dusthole’ off the Tottenham Court Road might not have startled the patrons of the Haymarket or the St.

James's" (83). However, this attempt to revitalize the Queen's Theatre, turning it into the Prince of Wales, did not strike from the populace's memory the origins of the Tottenham Court playhouse. When in 1897 Augustin Filon described the lasting impression that this theatre made during the nineteenth century, it is not the revitalized Bancroft version that he recalls:

Near Tottenham Court Road, one of the noisiest and commonest quarters of the town, there was a squalid, miserable-looking street where ill-fed and ill-famed Frenchmen were at this time beginning to congregate; and in it there was a place of entertainment where all sorts of things had been achieved, but bankruptcy oftenest of all...The house bore the high sounding name of the "Queen's Theatre," but the people of the neighborhood called it the 'Dust-Hole,' and in so doing proved their acquaintance with it. (103-104)

Similarly, Michael Booth refers to The Queen's theatre in less than glowing terms, calling it a "run down low class" theatre and referring to the area as "insalubrious" according to the "middle-class point of view" (*Theatre in* 52). The Queen's Theatre, when *Lady Audley's Secret* first appeared on its stage, had yet to see the transformative influence of the Bancrofts, was still considered by many a "Dust-hole" that "knew little else than evil days, and for many years had become again quite a minor theatre" (Bancroft 176). In general, the Queen's and the Old Vic had much in common and generally drew similar audiences, although the Queen's theatre had aspirations of gaining a wealthier clientele, which ultimately influenced its production of *Lady Audley*.

The St. James Theatre, however, from the time it opened in December of 1835, catered to a wealthier clientele. While this dissertation primarily examines working-class theatres, the inclusion of the St. James in this study serves to underscore the differences seen in minor theatres during the Victorian era. Although the St. James and The Queen's were technically both classified as "minor" (i.e. not one of the two patent house) theatres, they served vastly different audiences. The St. James did attempt at one time to attract a working-class audience in the West End, only to fail entirely. It is this very failure that makes the adaptations of *Lady Audley* ideal

for examining the effect of theatre audiences on the content of plays: what played at the St. James could not appeal to the laboring audiences any more than what played at the Old Vic could appeal to an upper-middle-class audience.

When it opened under the management of John Braham, the St. James Theatre rivaled its West End compatriots in its opulence. According to an article published in *The Mirror* in 1836, The St. James's claim that it was "'the most splendid theatre in Europe'" was "no idle boast or vain glory" ("The St. James" 274). Similarly, *The Theatrical Journal* refers to the St. James theatre as "one of the most modern and one of the handsomest in London" and also notes that during its early years "the house was possibly more frequented by the aristocracy than any other in London" ("London Theatres" 99-100). Barry Duncan describes in great detail the quality of the audience seen at the opening of this theatre:

The London Crowd gathered early outside on that chilly December evening. Four-wheelers lined the pavements of King Street, so that champing of horses and jingling of harness mingled with the din of the assembling throng against the faint background of accompaniment of last minute hammering...Grooms and footmen slapped hands under oxters whilst ladies and their escorts gossiped amidst warm fur wraps and rugs. (16)

The contrast between the audiences at the St. James and the two working-class theatres where *Lady Audley's Secret* was performed in 1863 could not have been starker. After opening night, however, The St. James Theatre and Braham struggled: the theatre did not fill, and Braham was forced to close several times (MacQueen-Pope 30-32). Although the description above comes from much earlier in the St. James's history, the theatre still attracted a more respectable audience than the Queen's or Victoria in the 1860s. Situated "in the very heart of the West End of London, close neighbour to Royal palaces and to what were once the homes of great nobles, statesmen, the gentry, and the most exclusive and oldest established clubs in the world," the working class would be little drawn to it (19). Throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, The St.

James had several managers who made various attempts at drawing crowds, all with little success. The importation of French dramas and operas under the management of Mr. Mitchell who reigned from 1840 to 1852 “appear to have pleased the ordinary playgoers...[but] aroused the ire of the theatrical profession who regarded these cross-Channel folk as poachers” (41). From there, the theatre went through various theatrical content, though it remained closely connected to French drama and opera for some time in an attempt to attract a wealthy clientele.

Always reaching for an aristocratic audience, but rarely attracting them in large numbers, The St. James Theatre situated itself as a theatre for the refined but found that such an audience had little interest in the theatre as compared to opera. According to *The Saturday Review*, the St. James Theatre flirted with the idea of attracting a different audience in the late 50s and early 60s under the management of F.B. Chatterton. However, “the theory of mainly appealing to patrons of a lower class is abandoned [in 1861], and the performances on the stage as well as the accommodations in the front of the house, at once indicate respect for the more fashionable section of playgoers” (“Mr. Alfred” 194). The St. James, although located in a very fashionable section of London, struggled throughout its life to draw large audiences, in part because, as “The Select Committee on Theatrical Licenses and Regulations” noted in 1866, “In the first place, no ‘first-class theatre has ever been known to pay; but the St. James Theatre has attempted to give itself a character for elegant performances, and such a theatre does not pay because the class that it appeals to does not support in sufficient number” (Great Britain 157). Although the theatre had difficulty consistently filling its seats, the reviews of shows found in the various London periodicals from its birth in 1835 through the 1860s describe its audience as always “fashionable” or “elegant” and, so far as I have found, there seems little evidence that the theatre sustained any large working-class audience.⁵ It is this history, its interest in and dedication to

attracting the middle and upper ranks of society, that created the setting within which Roberts penned his adaptation of *Lady Audley*.

Who Corrupts Whom: Policing Class Borders

On February 21st 1863 William Suter's adaptation of *Lady Audley's Secret* opened at the Queen's Theatre in Tottenham Court Road to less critical acclaim than the production that would soon follow it at The St. James Theatre. One of the only reviews I have been able to locate of Suter's version has little to say of the show other than that it opened and that "the construction [was] very similar to the version brought out, *with the sanction* of the authoress, at the St. James theatre" ("Our Orchestra" 568). Although this review suggests that Suter's adaptation follows the same general plot structure as George Roberts's adaptation at The St. James, it in fact deviates significantly both from that production and from Braddon's original novel. Suter's *Lady Audley* opens with an extended comic scene between two domestic servants, Bibbles (the butler) and Bubbles (the footman), whom we see throughout the play in scenes that highlight their obsession with money and station, as both are set on marrying Phoebe because of her connection to Lady Audley. We discover that George Talboys has gone to India where he has a relative who is a rich merchant rather than to Australia, and when he "abandoned" his wife he left her with "jewels and trinkets" to help her. The adaptation does include the general framework from Braddon's novel--the arrival of Talboys and Robert Audley, followed by Talboys's disappearance and Robert's search for him. However, the play ends quite differently from the novel: Lady Audley chooses to commit suicide rather than go to a madhouse and the play closes with her death while Sir Michael, Robert Audley, and George Talboys look on in horror.

Although The Queen's Theatre and the Old Vic both claimed members of the working classes as the staple of their audiences, these theatres were far enough apart to cater to entirely different audiences--The Queen's Theatre in the northwest section of London and the Old Vic on the south side of the Thames. Further, Davis and Emanijelow explain in *Reflecting the Audience*, "The Queen's Theatre was the only neighborhood theatre within the borough of St. Pancras, which stretched from Hampstead to Camden and Regent's Park into the vicinity of Tottenham Court Road and areas north of Oxford Street" (137). The larger area from which the Queen's could draw an audience, suggests that in theory both aristocratic and working-class citizens of London could easily reach this theatre. However, the specific sector of St. Pancras where the Queen's Theatre was located meant that many of the wealthier members would not venture into its environs. Although the theater managers attempted at various times to garner a more respectable audience, it generally relied on the local working class with the men drawn mostly from "industrial" or shop-oriented trades and the women mostly from "domestic" labor. Suter's production reveals the opposing strains placed on the management: they had to please the working-class audience that they were bound to attract but did not wish to alienate the wealthier classes that they wanted to draw. Consequently, this production simultaneously mocks the working class as obsessed with money and social climbing (legitimizing the stereotypical negative view of the working class propounded by those in power) while framing this narrative in such a way that it ultimately critiques the individuals rather than the class. Consequently, the adaptation implies that the dangers facing the working class come not from within their own ranks but from self-imposed appropriation of middle-class and aristocratic ideology, ideology that purposefully devalues the very group seeking to imitate it.

The first scene to grace the Queen's stage for *Lady Audley's Secret* depicts Bibbles (the Butler) and Bubbles (the footman) arguing about rank and money. This comic scene turns these rural domestic servants into figures of mockery whose fascination with social hierarchy within the working class combined with excessive greed reflect their inculcation into the rigid social hierarchy that emphasized clear class delineations and the importance of wealth/station. In the Victorian novel, "What...matter[s] is how far [a] person associates himself, in terms of status, values and attitudes, with his working-class environment. Thus, depending upon their psychological or social presentation, a publican or a domestic servant may or may not be regarded as working class" (Keating 29). Similarly, Suter's depiction of Bibbles emphasizes his refusal to associate himself with his own class. Throughout the opening scene, Bibbles attempts to separate himself from his fellow servants, especially Bubbles, whom he views as inferior and rejects as a compatriot. He vehemently rebukes Bubbles: "You a butler! Never hope to arrive at that dignified station; a butler is expected to be a man of noble bearing and commanding figure--a butler is expected to be a man--that is in short, such a man as I am!" (Suter 1). The terms that Bibbles uses to describe the character of a butler--"commanding," "dignified" and "noble" mirror those normally seen in conjunction with men of status and wealth. Nevertheless, Bibbles's perception of his position is portrayed as inaccurate. However he may view himself, his actions only serve to degrade his position rather than elevate it. It is the imposition of the characteristics that are associated with the wealthy and especially with the aristocracy ("noble"), that turns the "butler" into a working-class character worthy of derision not from above but from his own class.

Later, Bibbles castigates Bubbles for making him appear lower than he is after Luke Marks confronts them, attempting to forcefully distinguish himself from the stereotypical working-class male whom the middle-class viewed as “shameless and crude” (Hedgecock 24):

LUKE. (R, *seeing them*) Oh! One of these men will tell me [looking for Phoebe]-- I say, you fellows--

BIBBLES. Fellows! (*aside*) Never met with such indignity since I have been a butler I. (*to BUBBLES*) ‘Tis all through you I am so insulted, he judges me by the company I keep. (Suter 7)

The scene continues with Luke’s attitude affronting Bibbles and finally culminates with him insisting Bubbles throw Luke out, which Bubbles refuses to do:

BUBBLES. You-- (*crosses C*) lets have a good look at you. (*looking him over*) Um! Mr. Bibbles, I beg most respectfully to decline, (*crosses to L*)

Luke. If all servants are such animals as these, I shall never get out of the place.
Exit R.

BIBBLES. (*Shouting after Luke*) I’m not a servant, and I’m not an animal--I’m a butler; villain! (7)

As noted previously, the Queen’s Theatre drew at least a small portion of its audience from female domestic servants, though the men tended to work in other fields. Why, then, make the domestic servants in this production the butt of all of the adaptation’s jokes? These two characters, especially Bibbles, seek to set themselves apart from the larger laboring class, viewing themselves as superior to their comrades. In particular, Bibbles description of himself as “noble” and further his obsession with distinguishing himself from other domestic servants-- “I’m not a servant...I’m a butler”--indicates that he refuses the new social structure that banded groups together based on their role in the labor market rather than on their position in the vertical social hierarchy⁶. Bibbles embodies much of what was loathed about the stereotypical butler: he perceives himself as “an awesome figure” and exudes “excessive pride” (May 15). However,

Bibbles's notions of hierarchy within domestic servitude were not unusual; those at the top of the domestic service hierarchy would have seen themselves as socially superior to those at the bottom, and this applied especially to butlers, who unlike the other male servants "did not wear livery" and instead wore "the clothing of a gentleman" (Mitchell 53). While Bibbles's attitudes are in line with nineteenth-century conceptions of the butler, the comic way in which Suter represents Bibbles's pretensions turns the butler into a method of critiquing such snobbery. Though the earlier decades of the Victorian era saw more outright unified working-class reactions against the system that disempowered them, there were still many movements during the 60s that similarly worked to unify the working class in order to effect change. Quinault notes that in fact, "some mid-Victorian riots impinged directly on the consciousness of the London establishment. The tranquility of Hyde Park...was disturbed by Sunday trading riots in 1855, The Garibaldi riots in 1862 and the reform riots in 1866" (112). Within this climate, Bibbles's attempt to associate himself with his masters rather than recognize the necessary bonds between members of the working class marks him as a failure within his own ranks.

Bubbles, who like Bibbles seeks to disassociate himself from labor, similarly functions to disrupt many of the negative stereotypes of working-class men as the adaptation insinuates that these stereotypes actually arise from the injection of aristocratic pretensions in domestic laborers. After being dismissed by Bibbles for refusing to acknowledge the butler's superiority and for daring to desire Phoebe, he takes a new job where he must go to debtors and take "possession" until payment is given: "I'm the man in possession; a most degrading occupation for a sober and industrious young man" (Suter 24). Bubbles's role as the "man in possession"--a person employed to occupy the business or residency of a debtor who refuses to or is unable to pay in order to take "possession" of any goods or materials that could pay for the debt--turns him

into a general member of the working class. FML Thompson argues of domestic servants, “at any one moment the great majority regarded themselves as transients, looking forward to the time when they could cease to be domestic servants, so that the chances of forming a corporate identity were minimal (248). Herein lies Suter’s pointed critique of domestic servants. While urban working and industrial laborers struggled, many domestic servants who worked for the wealthiest masters viewed themselves as somehow superior, capable of reaching above their current status, in part no doubt because “servants in the grand establishments had a certain amount of leisure and a distinctive culture. They had nothing in common with the vast majority of servants” (249). Bubbles’s view of his own self-worth as a servant at the grand Audley Court as well as his constant search for wealth, marks him and those of his ilk as a diseased portion of the laborer classes as they worked against rather than with the larger group.

While a footman at Audley Court, Bubbles had not only his pay but also housing and clothing that marked him as physically different from his working-class compatriots. Here, Bubbles laments his fall and sees it as “degrading” to his character, which he defines as “industrious” and “sober,” though all of his actions prior to this moment are in fact in the opposite vein. As a “man in possession” Bubbles again takes on a career where he can manipulate his job in order to perform the minimum work necessary, though the outward manifestations of his change are enough to make him miserable. Bubbles “*maudlin[ly]*” bemoans the alterations in his life to Luke, asking that he “look at me! Are these clothes anything like the handsome livery I used to wear?” (Suter 24). For Bubbles, this shift in his role from a lazy and drunk but well attired footman to a lazy, drunk, and poorly attired “man in possession” has larger significance. Although his actual labor changes little at all--in both positions he looks after others possessions but manages to do little actual work--for him the degradation stems from

the associations he now must make and from the loss of the appearance of status. At Audley Court, Bubbles could preen and separate himself from his fellow laborers, viewing himself as somehow superior to men like Luke, though he has many of the same habits as him. Suter imposes all of the negative stereotypes of the working class onto Bibbles and Bubbles who, as domestic servants to a wealthy aristocrat, attempt to mimic that group rather than identifying with other laborers.

Like the adaptation of *Jane Eyre* at the Old Vic in 1849, the added cast of comic working-class characters parallel the storyline of the protagonist: Just as Lady Audley seeks wealth and position by marrying above her station so too do these servants. For Bibbles, and for Bubbles as well, marriage is a mercenary endeavor. Throughout the production, they fawn over Phoebe, not for her person, but for what she can give them. In the same scene where Bibbles repetitively asserts his superiority as a butler and fires Bubbles for what he perceives as assaults on his position as butler, the two discuss the benefits of marrying a well-off woman:

BIBBLES. Hitherto unheard of ruffian, you are discharged!

BUBBLES. What does that matter to such a smart young man as I am! I shall make it my business to obtain a situation with a lovely young lady with large property, and she'll fall in love with me and marry me!

BIBBLES. If she did, she'd be sent to pass the honeymoon in a lunatic asylum! Bubbles, you are discharged--I give you warning.

BUBBLES. You are jealous of me with Phoebe Marks.

BIBBLES: Jealous of *you*! Do you imagine Phoebe would cast a look on an undersized footman when there is a full grown butler in the way....Phoebe Marks is Lady Audley's own maid, and great favorite with her mistress, receiving besides her liberal salary, handsome presents from her ladyship; in short, Phoebe is a charming creature! (Suter 5)

This conversation epitomizes this production's view of Lady Audley's social climbing:

Bubbles's belief that he can mirror Lady Audley's entrance into the aristocracy, finding a "lovely

young lady with large property” of his own, turns the original novel’s commentary on “the strict ordering of society” and “the normative concept of what a woman should be” according the Victorian culture into something that should be laughed at rather than taken seriously (Hedgecock 124). The inversion of the gender paradigm in the attempt to climb the social ladder serves to mock not only those who seek to make gains in their social status but also the system itself.

According to Helena Michie, “The ideal Victorian marriage...served as one of the few appropriate vehicles for female class mobility” (though limitedly as she was not meant to reach to high) since “a woman inevitability took on the class status of her husband” (62). Because these characters are distanced from the types of labor performed by the working-class men in the theatre, they can stand as markers of what not to be and warnings for the female domestic servants who may view themselves as superior to the masses filling the theatre. These characters never unify against outside incursions and instead remain simple comedic stereotypes of domestic servants. However, it is the very comic tone of the scenes in which they stride the stage that works to mobilize the audience. The working-class theatergoers entered the theatre not to be castigated for their short fallings but to escape from the drudgery of their everyday lives. By turning Bibbles and Bubbles into not only untrustworthy but also useless members of the working class who help no one and only serve to hurt themselves because of their self-professed superiority, the characters can stand as a warning against the effects of abandoning the class within which you were born or as models to which the audience could feel superior.

Although such a sentiment certainly serves the purposes of the aristocracy and middle class who wished to keep the social hierarchy stable, in this adaptation, the audience for which it was produced shifts the meaning. Rather than simply catering to the status quo desired by those

in power, the adaptation goes further to comment on the realities of the working class life. Suter's adaptation examines how male laborers who absorb the same ideology as their female compatriots distort working-class society by mimicking the middle and aristocratic classes' preoccupation with hierarchy and wealth. It is the aping of these attitudes that destabilizes the working class rather than an inborn fault of the poor. Throughout the play, Bibbles's speech concerning Phoebe's attributes breaks down, with the line at one point coming out as "a charming creature, receiving besides her liberal mistress, salary presents" (Suter 30) and finally becoming "a charming creature! Her lady is a great favourite receiving, besides her present mistress, a handsome--" (Suter 34). While marriage in the working class "was often a business partnership, for both spouses had to contribute to the family's maintenance," this did not ultimately mean that all such marriages must be mercenary and in fact, "many plebeian partnerships were happy and harmonious" (Clark 64). Rather than concern himself with building a "partnership" for his marriage, Bibbles worries only about the financial gain that would come with wedding Phoebe. Like Luke Marks, Bibbles emphasizes the "perquisites" that the working class desired from their aristocratic masters. Phoebe's value and "charm" stem not from her abilities but rather from the wealth and position she offers to Bibbles as "Lady Audley's own maid." Consequently, the view of working-class marriage as a partnership, requiring both to work--though still leaving the woman inferior---disappears when working-class men begin to view women as commodities--much in the same manner as Braddon's novel suggests middle-class and aristocratic women are viewed. In Suter's *Lady Audley* "plebeian partnerships" become warped by concerns for money and status.

While many critical studies of Braddon's novel examine Lady Audley as a invader of the aristocracy, a manipulator/imitator of the ideal woman, as well as a figure that critiques the

Victorian view of women as commodities,⁷ Suter's revision of her character offers a unique insight of Lady Audley's character from a working-class perspective that depicts her actions as a reflection on both the failures of laborers as well as her own decision to abandon the world into which she was born. Jennifer Hedgecock argues that those in superior social positions, "patronized the laboring poor, generalizing them as shameless and crude, unable to assimilate to middle-class moral values" even as they feared lower-class women's ability to pass as aristocratic (24). Braddon's depiction of Lady Audley as a manipulator of social cues and styles--her ability to put in on the appropriate façade for the class she mimes--underscores the tensions felt by those in positions of power. Suter instead focuses on the damage that such façades do to the woman who comes from the lower ranks of society. After burning down Luke's inn, Suter's Lady Audley questions her place in the world:

LADY A: It is more than I can bear--suspected--hunted--forced before the world to wreath my face with smiles, and chatter idle gossip, while my heart is torn with torture--is rent with agony! (*producing a phial*) Oh that I had courage to swallow but a few drops of this, and so end all for ever! (*reflecting*) yet, no--why should I, now? (Suter 34)

Though Lady Audley is certainly depicted as the guilty party, she is more to be pitied in this adaptation than in either Robert's or Hazlewood's later productions, not because she is mad (as this production rejects that defense) but because she was "forced" to play a part she was not fit to enact in order to escape destitution. In the original novel, Lady Audley's actions serve to disrupt and undermine the aristocratic estate at Audley Court, but in this drama, her actions reflect back on her own class. Earlier in the play, when Lady Audley attempts to justify her actions to Talboys she speaks of the decision she was forced to make when he abandoned her, vehemently asserting that "a wife when her husband deserted her could not be innocent of all fault...I was penniless--helpless--hopeless; before me was starvation or a repulsive life of infamy! I shrunk

from both” (16). While scholars often view Lady Audley as a “fallen woman” in accordance with the dominant Victorian trope of womanhood,⁸ this version of Lady Audley emphasizes her refusal to enter a “repulsive life of infamy” as a prostitute--though she does still enter a bigamous relationship. According to Lady Audley, her actions originate from both George’s abandonment but also from derision she earned from those around her.

Because the options offered to her as a “destitute” and “abandoned” wife were limited by her poverty and lack of social standing, Lady Audley must don a mask--both in the original and in Suter’s adaptation. The difference, however, is one of choice versus obligation. Lady Audley believes she must act as a wealthy lady in order to survive without her husband. By focusing on Lady Audley’s view that she rejected “infamy” in behaving as she does and then contrasting this view with her actions at the end, the production invokes the dangers of accepting the ideals imposed from above, of seeking to quit the class into which the character is born. However, Lady Audley proceeds as she does in this production because members of her own class judged her based on her husband’s choices, leaving her to believe that her only escape lay with upward mobility. Suter’s adaptation reveals that what appears to be salvation is actually destructive, forcing Lady Audley to commit suicide in order to escape her new role:

LADY A. Talk not to me thus; it is to mock my agony for I am dying....Your threat (*to ROBERT*)--the madhouse! I have taken poison--death is on me even now! (*sinking to the ground*) If I had but delayed a few minutes only!--but this torture heaven had reserved for the supreme moment! Oh agony more terrible than those with which the poison racks my frame! but ‘tis almost over. You will not give my memory to infamy? No, you will not dare!--for your own sakes you will not dare! And buried in the grave will be “Lady Audley’s Secret-ah!” (Suter 38).

According to Suter’s Lady Audley, her initial abandonment of the class into which she was born stemmed from the accusations she faced, and she finds herself similarly dispossessed of her place in the aristocracy once her crimes have been unveiled.

This version of *Lady Audley's Secret* ends in a way that none of the others do. Lady Audley chooses her own end: where she felt “forced” into leaving the working class, she now reclaims her own power in death. Hedgecock contends, “popular literature warns readers of the consequences suffered by exiled fallen women forced into alienation, poverty, slum dwelling, and suicide” (49). But, this adaptation presents Lady Audley’s suicide as a choice rather than something she is “forced” into. In fact, she enacts her suicide in order to escape from the “consequences” that Robert Audley wishes to inflict upon her. There are several instances in the production where Lady Audley considers suicide, but she rejects this option, believing in her own power, until the very end when she finds herself at the mercy of the figure-head of the aristocracy who has already asserted his desire to “see her stand upon the scaffold” (Suter 23). Helen Talboys/Lady Audley ultimately has no place in either the working class or the aristocracy, and her exile arises out of her abandonment of the working class, excluding her from society as a whole with only suicide as an escape. Although Lady Audley’s suicide does afford her at least minimal control over her body and destiny, it also effectively censures the circumstances that force her to this end: the working class excluded her just as she later finds herself rejected by the aristocracy and that exclusion stems from the appropriation of an ideology (the fallen woman/Angel dichotomy) that had no place in the laboring world.

Suter turns his production of *Lady Audley's Secret* into an invective against the defection of working-class men and women while also censuring the working class in general for accepting the guidelines enforced from above. Bibbles, Bubbles, and Lady Audley herself come to represent the dangers of idealizing a system outside of the normative working-class life. Because the audience at the Queen’s Theatre would have certainly been almost entirely working class themselves, the production functions on two levels: to warn them against attempting to imitate

the modes of the aristocracy as they ultimately pervert working class ideals and, to some extent, to indict the members of the working class who judge their compatriots by the very standards that seek to exclude and denigrate them.

Rather than proceed chronologically, I now address C.H. Hazlewood's production at the Old Victoria Theatre in May of 1863. This theatre, like the Queen's, drew a working-class audience whereas the St. James attracted a wealthier clientele. If Suter's adaptation at the Queen's subtly critiques Lady Audley for betraying the class to which she belonged and judges the working class harshly for their treatment of her, Hazlewood's *Lady Audley* vehemently condemns her as a "traitress" (10), while simultaneously emphasizing the just nature of other working-class members of the dramatic personae compared to the corruption seen in the middle class.

Hazlewood's adaptation, like almost all of the theatrical productions of *Lady Audley's Secret*, follows the same general plot as the novel. However, there are major changes: the play opens with Luke and Phoebe discussing the work ethic; there is an emphasis on Lady Audley's misdeeds and Sir Michael's blindness to her actions; and George Talboys becomes an entirely innocent man. We discover that he has, in fact, written to his wife several times and did not abandon her. Hazlewood also drastically changes the ending of *Lady Audley's Secret*, though the actual events remain much the same. Lady Audley sets the inn on fire, and both Robert and Luke survive, but Phoebe denounces her loudly, after which Robert and Luke arrive. Luke wishes to tell his narrative but Robert silences him because he doesn't want to damage his family name. However, Alice (Alicia in the novel) arrives to inform them that Sir Michael has died, so all is revealed, including Lady Audley's madness. The play ends with her death and the group standing around looking at her sympathetically.

C.H. Hazlewood, a prolific playwright, joined the London theatre scene in 1850. Although he wrote for several theatres during his career, he is most well known for his ten years at the City of London Theatre early in his career and his work at the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton where he was house dramatist in the 1860s and 70s. *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre* describes the young C.H. Hazlewood as a “low comedian in circuit theatres and a scribbler for cheap publications” but follows up by noting that he later “became one of the most prolific and successful” playwrights in the Victorian era (Banham 478). Aside from his adaptation of *Lady Audley’s Secret*, Hazlewood also adapted Braddon’s *Aurora Floyd* and produced in excess of 120 plays during his lifetime. A fixture at minor theaters, Hazlewood was a master at reframing popular narratives for working-class audiences.

Where Suter’s production accentuates the faults of the working class, especially when they seek to emulate the aristocracy, Hazlewood’s *Lady Audley* instead employs Phoebe as an idealized vision of the female worker. The opening scene, where Luke acts in this same manner as his character always does, depicts Phoebe’s efforts to underscore the necessity of labor and of maintaining respectability, even when poor:

Phoebe. I wish you’d work, Luke, instead of skulking about from one public house to another all day long; I’m ashamed of you.

Luke. Well, I know I’m not over steady; but it riles me, Phoebe, to see the luck o’ some folks... Well, well I know I have been goin’ the racket; but I’ll reform, I’ll leave this place and all my evil ways and companions. I should like to go to some o’ those places abroad, Phoebe, where they say land can be got for the mere asking; it be expensive to reach there, that’s the worst on’t. But I say, Phoebe, (*going up to her*) one o’ them diamond earrings o’ my lady’s, or one of Sir Michael’s rings as he wears would fetch a little fortune if turned into money. Couldn’t you mangle to lay hold o’ one, give it to me, and---

Phoebe. For shame Luke!...if you dare tempt me again with such wicked words, I’ll treat you as the greatest stranger in the world” (Hazlewood 4-5).

During the 1860s, there was broad concern about the “Domestic Service Question” with numerous articles regarding the issue published in a variety of periodicals. “A Chapter on Servants,” in *Sharpe’s Magazine* in September of 1863, notes, “Servants remain more than ever the ‘greatest plague of life.’ Every view of the question has been taken, from the philanthropist who insists that the employers are more to blame than the domestics who worry them, to the experienced matron who details her own knowledge of the shortcomings and vicious propensities of servant-girls” (153). Similarly an article published in *The Saturday Review* in 1860 asserts, “Every one is agreed that at this particular time we are especially badly off. Servants are hard to find, and bad when found,” (“Servants” 205) and *The Leader and Saturday Analyst* refers to the servant problem in 1860 as “the gigantic domestic misery of the present day” (“The Great” 251). These are but a sampling of the many commentaries being written on servants during the early 1860s, and while there are some who defended domestic servants, the vast majority find domestic servants severely wanting. Hazlewood, however, portrays Phoebe as dedicated to work and incorruptible when faced with Luke’s temptations. The contrast between Luke’s laziness and propensity to steal and Phoebe’s stalwart dedication to duty converts Phoebe into the idealized image of domestic servitude. In this production, Phoebe has no desire for upward mobility, something many of the articles concerning domestic servants were concerned with⁹ and a common quality found in Phoebe in other adaptations. Instead, she embodies the working-class ideal of femininity, a woman who is “content, efficient, and industrious” (Kortsch 41) rather than grasping and “vicious.”

Hazlewood not only turns Phoebe into an ideal for the working class but also goes further, making her and, strangely Luke, the voices of justice in contrast with the moral ambiguity of the aristocracy. After Lady Audley has set fire to the inn at Mt. Stanning, Phoebe

stands against Lady Audley, refusing, as she did with Luke, to ignore her duty, specifically her duty in the home:

Phoebe. But I have a husband also, madam; and, bad as he is, it is my duty to see to his safety.

Lady A. Let the drunken sot perish if he will. He is a curse, a disgrace to you and-
-...

Phoebe. I see it all now. Luke was the possessor of some terrible secret; you wished him out of the way, and Mr. Robert too. That was your motive for wishing me to leave you alone at the inn. Oh! cruel, wicked woman! what did my husband know of you that you should wish him dead?

Lady A. He knew too much, but now he is silenced

Phoebe. But I am not! I will denounce you to justice--I will proclaim you as a murderess! Help! Help! Murder! Help! help! (Hazlewood 28)

Some scholars view Phoebe as Lady Audley's doppelganger; she "imitates social codes performed by her mistress and is often mistaken for her lady" (Hedgecock 123). But Hazlewood reimagines Phoebe as the antithesis of Lady Audley. Where Helen Talboys willingly abandons her husband in search of wealth and power, Phoebe devotes herself to hers, even though he is violent and a "disgrace." Moreover, Phoebe also acts as the inversion of Lady Audley in ethical terms. The desire for social mobility corrupted Lady Audley, who upon being "deserted" chose to "make reprisals on" George Talboys (Hazlewood 12). Significantly, this George does not actually abandon his wife; he writes to her regularly from India where he had gone to better his situation, making Lady Audley's actions all the more treacherous and underscoring the morality of Phoebe who insists that she will "denounce you to justice" when Lady Audley tries to bring her back to Audley Court. The contrast between Lady Audley and Phoebe interrogates the idea that the female domestic servant is in fact the harbinger of "misery" and "viciousness." Hazlewood's adaptation suggests that the negative view held by the "experienced matron" stems

less from faults in the female servant than from the fear that she will reveal the corruption found in wealthy homes as she refuses to bend to bribery and the lure of wealth and status, unveiling the faults of her lady when they break beyond minor annoyances and become instead matters of “justice.”

Hazlewood’s depiction of the devotion of the working class to truth and “justice” even extends to his portrayal of Luke, whom he redeems at the last moment. While in the novel Luke does unveil Lady Audley’s crimes, his actions are a result of his scheming nature. Here, however, he cries, “I, thank heaven! I am spared to do an act of justice before I end my guilty life. I accuse that woman of----“ (Hazlewood 29). Before he can reveal Lady Audley’s crimes, Robert silences him, telling him to “hold, hold. It will be better not to cast a stain upon my uncle’s name. Say nothing I beg, I entreat of you” (29). Just as Phoebe acts as foil to Lady Audley in the previous scene, so Luke foils Robert here. Although Luke has spent the entire play as the epitome of the abusive and corrupt working-class male, his last gesture in the play redeems him in order to underscore the unethical character of those associated with the aristocracy. Robert, unwilling to see his uncle’s name “stain[ed],” silences “justice” and consequently becomes complicit in Lady Audley’s crimes. Jan Schipper contends that in Braddon’s novel, “Robert’s social duty demands that he expose and contain Lady Audley” (51). Hazlewood’s Robert ignores “social duty,” buttressing the aristocratic family by shielding the Audley name. Justice becomes secondary to reputation. In crafting the end in this manner, Hazlewood manages to idealize the working class for their devotion to truth and justice while indicting the aristocracy as corrupted due to their devotion to social appearances.

Because Hazlewood’s adaptation of *Lady Audley’s Secret* relies so heavily on establishing clear lines between the honor of the working class and the corruption of the

aristocracy, Lady Audley's character becomes entirely unsympathetic. She is grasping, scheming, and it is her desire and ultimately her success in reaching above her station that have made her so. In her speech to George Talboys, Lady Audley makes a clear distinction in terms of how she views her own character now versus her opinion of the young Helen Talboys: "I am no longer the weak confiding girl you first knew me--no I am a resolute woman" (Hazlewood 12-13). Hazlewood's diction labels the poor Helen Talboys as "confiding" while the Lady Audley depicted in the production is instead not only "resolute" but also "systematically blackened" according to Ian Henderson (5). While this is certainly a simplification of Braddon's character and also serves to eliminate some of the subversive commentary on gender, the result is not a removal of all subversive content but rather a shift of that subversion to the depiction of an ethical working class corrupted by the aristocracy. This inverts the common fear that working-class debauchery and deviousness would contaminate the wealthy upper-middle class and aristocracy, especially by means of overreaching women.¹⁰

The differences here between the working-class adaptations put on at the Queen's and the Old Vic demonstrate the power of location. The Queen's theatre, existing as it does on the periphery of the respectable section of London--though firmly in an unrespectable section of town--attracted a working-class audience though managers often desired to appeal to a wealthier clientele, a goal it would achieve in just a few years when the Bancrofts took over. The Old Vic, though nearer to railways and bridges, was located in a densely populated working-class transpentine section of town that relied heavily on its laboring audience and thus framed its narratives explicitly for the working class (as seen in the previous chapter with *Mary Barton* written "expressly" for its audience). Because the Queen's has these conflicting desires, its production mocks the working class and legitimizes stereotypes of this group but does so in a

way that pacifies its working class audience by suggesting that the domestic servants in the production are worthy of mockery for their emulation of the aristocracy and abandonment of their fellow workers. Thus it indirectly indicts the aristocracy themselves for imposing their will on those below them. The writers for this theatre walked a delicate line, due to both audience and censorship, which resulted in this dual and complex intent. Although writers for the Old Vic would have also faced the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain's Office, its reliably working-class audience results in an adaptation that also notes the dangers of the aristocracy but emphasizes the working class as the champions of justice in the face of a corrupt aristocracy.

While Suter's and Hazlewood's adaptations were enjoying successful runs on the peripheries of London with working-class audiences, George Roberts' *Lady Audley's Secret* at the St. James Theatre maneuvered Braddon's novel to new purpose. Roberts's adaptation focuses on the corruption in the character of laborers and attempts to ameliorate the antagonism between the professional middle class, represented by Robert Audley, and the aristocracy--a reversal of what we see in Hazlewood's production. The *Era Almanack* for 1869 provides some insight into the changes made by Roberts in this production as it gives a short biography of the playwright. *The Era Almanack* explains that George Roberts is actually a pseudonym for George Walters who was "educated at Eton and Oxford, where he graduated B.A. in 1855, and M.A. in the following year" ("Biographical" 20). The biography further reveals that Roberts/Walters worked for a time as a lawyer (explaining many of the legal allusions provided in the adaptation), spent some time in the United States prior to the Civil War, "and on his return proclaimed his sympathies with the Confederate cause in a pamphlet" (20). Roberts's education and position in the professional middle class inflects his adaptation of *Lady Audley*, which at the St. James drew an aristocratic audience rather than a working-class one. This version of *Lady*

Audley's Secret, obviously crafted to suit a more educated audience with its many classical allusions and mocking depiction of the working-class characters, underscores the continued tensions surrounding class mobility during an era of industrialization and global upheaval.

Like Braddon's novel, the play splits among three main arcs: Lady Audley's attempt to keep her secret; Robert Audley's attempt to discover what happened to his friend; and Luke and Phoebe, the two working class characters, the former who blackmails Lady Audley and the latter who serves her. However, the adaptation changes several factors. First, the play focuses more heavily on Robert Audley and presents him in a much more positive light than the novel and adds historical literary allusions as well as references to the language of the bar. In fact, the play opens with Robert and a servant in London rather than at Audley Court. Further, additions are made to Phoebe's and Luke's roles: Phoebe desires, like Lady Audley, to mimic the wealthy upper class and is more manipulative, while Luke's character becomes even more base and takes advantage of what he feels are his rights as a worker. One of the most significant changes comes at the end of the play. Where Braddon's novel concludes with Lady Audley's perfidy revealed to her husband Sir Michael and with her subsequent removal to a madhouse, where she dies, the play instead ends with the majority of the cast in the lime tree walk where Lady Audley finally admits her misdeeds. Sir Michael, however, is not there; Alice (Alicia in the novel) arrives and informs everyone that Sir Michael has died, (as she does in Hazlewood's version) and Lady Audley collapses into a partial death--she cannot be revived but "her soul still lingers."

Suter opens his adaptation with a scene featuring bumbling but amusing domestic servants, but Roberts instead begins his production with Robert Audley and the professional man's home. Aeron Haynie, in a discussion of Braddon's original, comments that, "the book begins and ends with descriptions of Audley Court, the contested site of power in the novel and

the symbol of the health and integrity of the Audley family” and thus “illustrates mid-Victorian concerns over the sanctity of the aristocratic country estate, the fear that it could be metaphorically invaded and contaminated by the middle class” (64). Roberts’s adaptation, however, seeks to legitimize the professional home and further cements the “power” associated with the rising professional middle class.

Consequently, this adaptation makes delineations between types of labor, classifying what Robert Audley does as distinct from the labor done by the poor in factories and domestic service, though he himself still derides his profession. In the opening scene, Robert sits in his home, preparing for his morning while his servant Slip sees to his needs. The scene is comic, with Robert and Slip arguing about a missing newspaper, but quickly moves into a consideration of Robert’s position in the social hierarchy when he reads a letter from Alice. Although the speech is long, it is worth including the majority here:

Audley. (*looking at address and reading it*). ‘Robert Audley, Esq., Barrister at-Law.’ This is my pretty cousin’s handiwork. ‘Barrister at-Law,’ with a note of admiration at one end and a note of interrogation at the other. That’s Alice’s idea of a joke. She’s never happy unless she’s pitching my profession into my teeth. It’s too bad--too bad! If I cannot command, at least I deserve success. For five years I have listened to the advice of friends and foes. ‘Go to Westminster,’ says A, ‘and ventilate yourself,’ so I would if they’d ventilate the Courts. ‘Dine in hall’ cries B; so I did at five: five o’clock for a whole term, till I got dyspeptic. ‘Stick to chambers, whispers a third, ‘and wait for clients.’ Wait! Haven’t I waited like patience on a hard cane chair, smiling at imaginary briefs? ‘Go to ‘circuit’ bellows a fourth. Circuit! pshaw! haven’t I been round and round and round again like a squirrel in a cage ‘till I’ve lapsed into a state of chronic vertigo? No if I’d been a pauper like Plodder, or had married an attorney’s only daughter like Badger, or was a bum-bailiff’s brother, like Bouncer, perhaps I might, by this time have got one foot on the woolsack. But as it is, Blackstone has paled before Balzac; and after all, I’m not much to be pitied. What with a trip up the Rhine, or a peep at the Pyrenees, a day’s cover-shooting, or a scour across country to shake up the lives, to say nothing of a stall at the Opera, and a cosy club, I manage to scratch through the year somehow. Then there’s my uncle’s honest face and cheery welcome at Audley Court. (4)

Robert Audley straddles classes; he works at a profession, but his relationship to Audley Court elevates his social position. This passage illustrates George Roberts's attempt to bind his aristocratic audience with the professional Robert Audley. While he bemoans his inability to get "one foot on the woolsack," he simultaneously reflects on his own aristocratic lifestyle.

Although he may be a barrister, something that Alice is always "pitching...into [his] teeth," he also has ties to nobility, which is emphasized in his description of his leisure activities. The "cosy club" he attends as well as his "stall at the opera" situate him within the context of the leisured or at least monied class, a group that the St. James Theatre wished to attract, though it struggled to do so in large numbers. According to W. MacQueen-Pope, "the grand people who lived in and around King Street were not essentially theatre-goers. They patronized the opera chiefly because it was a society function, and in doing so they went to an opera-house, not to a theatre" (26). The emphasis on the melding of professional with aristocrat in the character of Robert Audley seeks to assuage the concerns of the aristocratic audience who preferred a stable class hierarchy, even though wealthy middle-class professionals were already penetrating their ranks. To be more specific, Robert Audley clearly belongs to the upper middle class, a group according to Julia Schubert, who "led a splendid life and often had contact with the aristocracy, even mixed with it" (6). While productions at the minor theatres that attracted members of the laboring working class reinvent Braddon's novel in ways that cement working class ideology, this adaptation instead seeks to connect the professional laboring class more closely to the aristocracy and consequently legitimize their place in high society, certainly something that the St. James Theatre itself struggled to do throughout its lifetime.

Robert Audley's comic tone as he describes his lack of success as a lawyer and his specific reminders to the audience that he was not "a pauper like Plodder," nor had he "married

an attorney's only daughter," and was not "a bum-bailiff's brother" distinguished him from the self-made men who were invading the aristocracy and upending the land-based mechanism for achieving power and station. In fact, Robert's reference to "Audley Court" along with his pastimes distance him from others who engage in professional labor whom he obviously abhors, based on his caricatures of the lawyers as Plodder, Badger, and Bouncer. According to the *OED*, "plodder" refers to either a "ruffian" or a "drudge," both definitions dating back to the 1500s while "badger" in noun form (1500s and on), refers to a "trader...a hawker, a huckster" and in verb form (1700s) means to "bait, hound, to subject to persistent harassment," though this definition seems to have seen less use than the noun. Similarly degrading, "bouncer" refers to a "boaster, bully, swaggering liar," according to the *OED*. While lawyers certainly find themselves much maligned here, Robert does not. Instead, he separates himself from other members of his profession and blames his lack of success in the field of law on his refusal to stoop to the level of the Bouncers, Badgers, and Plodders. Moreover, Robert's place in the professional middle class is complicated by his role as heir to the Audley title and lands. Although not the offspring of Michael Audley, Robert will inherit his lands, as there is no male heir born to Sir Michael. Robert, thus, exists neither entirely in the aristocracy nor entirely in the professional world. His apathy towards his work signifies his dilettante status: because he expects to one day inherit Audley Court, there is no need for him to succeed as a lawyer.

Further, Robert Audley's references to classical literature throughout the adaptation link him to not only an educated upbringing but also associate him more closely to the bar. While the aristocracy traditionally educated their male children first at home with tutors and then later perhaps with enrollment at Eaton or Harrow and then Oxford or Cambridge, the upper middle class, who sought entrée into the ranks of the aristocracy similarly sent their male children to

these schools. Robert's language situates him within this well-educated group. At the end of his very long monologue at the opening of play, Robert makes an analogy to "Themis" when referencing his lack of success as a barrister (7), talks of "Jupiter" to Talboys when he first discovers his wife's death in the newspaper, and compares himself to "Ixion" (22). Pamela K. Gilbert notes that Braddon's original similarly contains references to classical literature, arguing, "*Lady Audley's Secret* contrasts the theme of Ulysses with frequent references to Jason and Medea to highlight the male selfishness and betrayal that incites female murderousness" (185). While this adaptation similarly makes reference to Ulysses, the addition of these specific allusions serve to not only tie Robert more closely to an educated upbringing but also to link him with his profession.

Themis reigns over law while Jupiter, as the king of the Roman gods, passes judgment and oversee oaths. Similarly, Robert's contention that he fulfills Ixion's role signifies his conflicted double burden to see out what he feels is justice, though he acknowledges that in so doing he may damn himself by hurting his father-figure, Sir Michael. Roberts chooses to emphasize Robert Audley's education in both the traditional training that the aristocracy or wealthy upper middle class would receive as well as the profession specific language of the bar. When George Talboys finally arrives at Audley Court, having previously stayed at the inn (called "The Chequers" in this production) in Mt. Stanning, Robert Audley remarks, "Why if it isn't George *in propria persona*" (Roberts 18) and later when first confronting Lady Audley he asks, "Have you ever studied any work on evidence, Lady Audley? Best or Starkie, or Taylor, for instance--I suppose not. *I have*" (24). With these combined references to classical education and to Robert Audley's obviously strong education in law, Roberts links the professional middle-class to the wealthy leisure class. Robert Audley's ability to easily employ the language of the

bar, *propia persona* for instance, in his everyday conversations suggests that although he looks down at his fellow lawyers who he feels are of a lower class, he does not situate the profession itself as such. His easy use of legal language as well as references to well-known lawyers of his day, like Thomas Starkie who worked specifically on criminal law,¹¹ evinces his emersion in his field. Although there are certainly “bounders” and “badgers” to be found at bar, Roberts never chooses to actually include any such characters. Instead, he uses Robert Audley as the ideal professional: a man with clear ties to the aristocracy, one who empathizes with that class and who abhors the baser men of his profession.

In crafting Robert Audley thus, Roberts detaches the profession itself from the scorn that Robert shows to a specific segment of its adherents. Davis and Emeljanow view the West End as perhaps “unique” in its audience as it was not “a neighborhood seeking a theatrical expression of its values, but rather a theme park constructed in order to promulgate values which would attract audiences from elsewhere” (173). While this applied generally to the West End, the St. James, throughout its history consistently attempted to attract an aristocratic audience, though there were certainly cheaper seats available. Consequently, while the theatre may have attracted a broader audience, it ultimately sought to please the wealthy upper classes of society. Robert’s language throughout the play demonstrates Roberts appeal to just such a subset of playgoers. Towards the end of the production, Robert Audley maintains that his interest in law had been more scholarly than labor oriented, but his encounters with Lady Audley force him to change his path:

Sir Michael may have told you I have never practiced as a barrister, that I have shrunk, not through fear of incapacity, but from sheer inactivity from the responsibilities of my profession--that is not far from the truth; but we are sometimes FORCED into the position we have most avoided, and I have of late found myself compelled to turn my attention to the study of CRIMINAL law (Roberts 24).

Though technically employed as a barrister, Robert Audley prides himself on his lack of work, his ability to remain apart from the rest of the upper-middle-class who work as lawyers out of necessity. Robert only applies himself to his labor when “forced into the position” by Lady Audley’s invasion of the aristocracy. It is her attempt as one who had previously engaged in labor to invade the upper echelons that results in the change in Robert Audley. While Robert’s transition to an actual working professional rather than a relative of an aristocrat playing at being a barrister might initially seem to be devolution according to Robert’s own original position on “Plodders,” “Badgers,” and “Bouncers,” his labor as a lawyer instead serves to legitimize the professional class for the aristocratic audience, though within limits.

According to Perkin, “what characterized the emancipated professional men as a class was their comparative aloofness from the struggle for income,” a concern that the aristocracy also ignored, or at least pretended to (*Origins* 256). Therefore, instead of lowering Robert, a respectable relation to an aristocratic family, his labors actually serve to protect the aristocracy from the true danger, Lady Audley and her ability to pass in the aristocracy even though she comes from poverty. Lady Audley, or Helen Talboys, was raised by her father “a broken-down half-pay lieutenant, a drunken hypocrite,” (Roberts 4), and Robert Audley accuses her of “tak[ing] advantage of poor George’s absence to win another and a richer husband; a heartless, shameless woman who speculated on the chances of his death, and seized wealth and station at the risk of a base and hideous crime” (37). Although Lady Audley/ Helen Talboys would not be considered a member of the working class, her low position within society, her poverty and her lack of social status all set her apart from the leisured segment of society. Class distinction, thus, becomes about more than just labor, resulting also from character and a freedom from concerns of money.

Where the novel leaves Lady Audley to explain away her actions, during which she does admit that she would not “abandon the wealth and position” she had gained (Braddon 392), George Roberts instead allows Robert Audley, barrister, to narrate her crimes. He emphasizes the treachery of seeking not only a husband but specifically “a richer” one as she “speculated” (which seems to emphasize a debase interest in money) in order to achieve “wealth and a station” (Roberts 37). Though he does not willingly engage in his career, the attempts of Lady Audley to gain a higher “station” impels him to act to preserve the distinctions between those he sees as from a degraded station and those who belong in the highest. This adaptation distances the professional worker from the general labor force, allowing Roberts, a man trained in law himself, to attach the upper-middle class more closely to the wealthy aristocrats rather than the demeaning stereotypes of lawyers Robert Audley himself offers early in the production.

While Robert Audley’s character functions to ameliorate the tensions that arise in this era due to the intermingling of members of the professional middle class and the aristocracy, the addition of extended scenes between Phoebe and Luke Marks, during one of which she is chastised for her desire to appear other than she is, underscores the distinction that must be made between laboring at a respectable profession and employment as a member of the working class whether as a domestic servant or in other hard-labor employment. During the first scene where Phoebe comes on stage, her desire to mimic her social betters elicits harsh criticism from her working-class beau, Luke Marks, and is worth citing at length:

Phoebe: [Y]ou might look at me, and tell me if you think the journey has improved me.

Marks: It ain’t put any fresh colour in your cheeks, Phoebe. You used to be as plump as a pippin, and as brown as a russet, and now you’re as white as if you really were a ghost.

Phoebe. But it’s not genteel to have a colour, so my lady says.

Marks. Genteel! Who wants you to be genteel? Not I for one; don't think it.
Phoebe: But all the world isn't of your opinion, Luke. I'd lots o' pleasant things said to me when we were travelling; the couriers and the valets paid me such compliments.

Marks That's like their sauce. *Curriers* indeed! I'd *curry* 'em and no mistake.

Phoebe: Why, you ought to be proud of people noticing me. Do you know Luke, I learned more in the last three months abroad, than I did in a year's schooling. And what do you think, Luke? I can speak a little French, and I've got as far as the irregular verbs.

Marks: French! A deal o' use that'll be to you when you're Mrs. Marks; you won't have much time for any verbs young woman *reglar* or not. French indeed! what next? Why I suppose instead of your milk-pail, you'll go out with your grammar and begin *parley-voing* to the cows. (Roberts 10)

Although Luke Marks represents much of what many of the aristocracy and middle class found repulsive in the working class, his staunch rejection of Phoebe's desire to be "genteel" relates directly to the distinctions the audience would desire to see evinced. Phoebe's aspiration to pass as "genteel" and avoid returning to her "brown as a russet" complexion starkly embodies the middle-class and aristocratic fear of the incursion of members of the lower ranks into their limited society.

According to Shelia Sullivan, "The problem for individual subjects in the late 1850s and 1860s was a problem of managing a set of relations--between deviance and normality, authenticity and fiction, classed masculinity and femininity--at a moment when those relations were constructed by the nation as both deeply troubled and the only legitimate ground of authority" (86-87). Produced for a non-laboring audience, one situated in the middle and upper classes, Roberts's production demonstrates the weakening of concrete boundaries between classes, of the ability to identify who embodies the "classed masculinity and femininity" while also assuring the audience that, just as they balked at incursions from below, so too did those below balk at the imposition of middle-class and aristocratic styles on their lives. The docile,

pale, and inactive woman who fit the aristocracy and upper-middle class had no place in the laboring sector of society. Clark contends that while “popular [working class] culture had represented the wife either as an industrious partner or as a powerful virago, the new notion of separate spheres” meant “she was expected to be passive, protected by her husband and sheltering in the home” (248). Phoebe’s attempts to impersonate the manners and appearances of her social superiors meet only with derision from her social equals, as this version of femininity cannot match the culture of the working class. Specifically, Luke reminds Phoebe, and the audience, that such airs are not appropriate for the life of the female laborer, in fact, making her desire to act as Lady Audley does a joke--not only something that would be undesirable for the wealthy wanting to maintain class distinctions but also undesirable for the working class as it would make her unfit to fulfill her role in society.

The play further mocks the greedy nature of the laboring poor by expanding Luke’s role. Where the plays discussed in the previous chapter seem to look nostalgically at the paternal system of class relations, Luke’s obvious manipulation of what he views as the aristocracy’s dues to him serve to underscore the distinctions between classes and further to exonerate the aristocracy who have already abandoned their duty to care for those under their protection. Much as Phoebe’s first words in the play remark on her desire for upward mobility, Luke’s first speech reveals his twisted view of paternalism:

Marks. Under-keeper at Audley Court! You aint got much of a life I’m thinking, Luke Marks. Under-keeper! I hate being *under* anybody...If it warn’t for the pickins to be got out of the old squire’s preserves, I’d a’ been off long ago. Ha! ha! A net in the meadow and a wire in the wood, a springe in the spinney, and a night line in the pond;--that’s what I call bein; your own preserver. (Roberts 9)

Luke goes on later in the play to defend his beliefs when Phoebe begs him to “work hard” (11):

Marks. Work hard! Well, so I do. What do you think o’ that (*pulling gin from pocket*) as a specimen of hard work? Short and sweet for the rabbits in the warren.

Phoebe. Poaching, Luke, still?

Marks. Pooh! Poaching! No, I'm only looking after my perquisites. (11-12)

Although Luke's character in the novel is also portrayed negatively, the focus in Braddon's work remains on his violence and his manipulation of Lady Audley. Here, Roberts demonizes him for his abuse of the paternal system of class relations that requires the aristocracy to care for their dependents and the dependents to be respectful and dutiful towards their masters. Perkin argues, "The birth of class... was from the point of view of the old society a process of alienation: alienation, that is, of the middle and lower ranks or orders from each other and from the higher" and further contends that the aristocracy "insisted on paternal discipline and filial obedience long after they were willing to pay the price for them" (*Origins* 182). With the fading of the paternal system and the rise of class-consciousness, each segment of the population sought to further their own position on the rights and duties of their given class. In this adaptation, Luke's manipulation of the idea of "perquisites"--that which the aristocracy owed the working class--in order to defend his thieving supports the apathy of the aristocracy towards their dependents. Luke clearly cares only for "bein your own preserver," underscoring the stereotype often held by those in positions of power in the nineteenth century that the working man was "in general, dishonest and likely to steal when given the chance" (Swafford 55).

Roberts' portrayal of the working class male falls in line with the general transition from the paternal system to the idea that each man should work for himself (self-made man). An article that reviewed a new tract written by a clergyman for the benefit of the working class, published in October of 1863, similarly places the blame for the difficulties of working-class life on the faults of working-class men and asserts that "we believe that after all that may be done for them by their superiors in social rank, the real work in this direction must be done by the people

themselves. And...they can do much more with their present means than they have yet attempted” (“Better Days” 448). While published after Roberts’s production went on the stage at the St. James Theatre, the sentiment espoused in the article helps to situate the adaptation within the context of the public discourse on the duties and disposition of the working class. Both Roberts and this text suggest that the “superiors in social rank” are released from the obligation to help the poor because, in fact, the poor could “do much more” on their own if they would only rise above their debased state. Although Phoebe seems to have a stronger sense of the “real work” needed by laborers, even she views her position as somehow beneath her, desiring to mimic the aristocracy. Combined, the changes to the characters of Phoebe and Luke Marks buttress both the fear of the aristocracy that their world could be invaded by the manipulative working class and the justification they felt of their abandonment of the roles of the wealthy.

While much of Lady Audley’s narrative remains the same as in the novel, including large passages that are word-for-word, the switch from her passive recitation of her crimes in her description of the encounter with Talboys to the physical staging that allows Talboys to speak for himself emphasizes the nobility of those who come from wealthy backgrounds in contrast to the deceptiveness of the poor. Because this scene is only told second hand in the novel, it is worth including the majority of the stage version here:

Talboys. What! you justify yourself, you glory in your shame?

Lady A. Shame! Who cast the shame, the bitter reproach of want and poverty upon me? Who left me with no better protector than a drunken father and the burden of a helpless child, who, lying in his cradle, seemed, with his baby smile, to mock his father’s memory? Thank heaven he was spared his mother’s sufferings?

Talboys. (*in agony*) Dead! my son dead? And I have toiled and suffered for---for this. Woman, what have I done that my reward should be this grievous wrong?

Lady A. Wrong! Have not *you* wronged *me*? You prate to me of toil and suffering. You do not know the labour that has been my lot for many a weary day. What was my life when you were gone? No helping hand held out to me by your proud family; I, your wife, left to choose 'twixt death and drudgery. I chose the latter, bitter though that choice was. Three years had passed...I argued, I reasoned, and last I *justified* myself. I have a right to think that he is no more to me, nor I to him, and why should I let his shadow stand between me and prosperity?...One word more, and I have done. When I became your wife George Talboys, I gave myself to you. The temptations that wreck some had no terrors for me; nay more, though a legion of tempters were around me I remained true to you.

Talboys. You may deceive yourself, you cannot deceive me. I left you true, I return to find you false.

Lady A. You left me a helpless girl; you see me now a woman, prepared to render you your due, no more.

Talboys. Poor child!

Lady A. Don't bring me your compassion. I've fed and batted upon pity long enough to know the bitterness of such a meal. 'Tis now my turn to tender that poor dole to others. I seek neither your aid nor sympathy. Go, forget me.

Talboys. And leave you to your shameless triumph....

Lady Audley. What would you have---

Talboys. Justice, no more! (Roberts 20-21)

Throughout the scene, Roberts contrasts Lady Audley's severe version of events with Talboys's care and "compassion." The only stage direction for the entire scene goes to Talboys, who, upon finding out his son is dead is "in agony." Lady Audley, however, lacks emotion, bitinglly rejecting Talboys's "pity" and "sympathy" for her suffering, which only serves to weaken her position that she was in fact the injured party. Her cool demeanor as she logically explains how her actions were necessary marks her as not only unfeeling but as calculating as she seeks to evade Talboys's judgment of her.

In his analysis of the presentation of Lady Audley's madness in this production, Ian Henderson contends, "Lady Audley articulates with greater and greater persuasiveness the external causes of her apparent crimes - presenting, then, the case for her sanity in the same terms taken up by twentieth-century critics - but I believe Herbert's performance simultaneously communicated the madness within her subject" (14). Lady Audley certainly ends the play mad, but this scene, as written by Roberts, accentuates not her madness but rather the ways in which those from outside the world of wealth and privilege differ from those who come from refined society. Specifically, Lady Audley's "persuasiveness" in and of itself is cause for concern. She spends most of the play (and novel) convincing members of the landed elite that she is in fact one of their number. In so doing, she disrupts the clear social divisions that the aristocracy held so dear. This scene is a continuation of her attempts to persuade her social superiors that she belongs. Just as the depiction of Robert Audley's relation to the professional class serves only to legitimize at least part of that group's place in the upper-echelons of society (the segment that already had connections upward not downward), Lady Audley similarly seeks to stress that she only turns to "drudgery" when turned away by his "proud family," implying that she, like Robert Audley, only worked when circumstances forced her rather than because of her social situation. However, her icy reserve and her willingness to act badly when contrasted with George Talboys's perseverance when faced with his own "suffering" mark her actions as another screen behind which she hides her origins. For the wealthy audience, Lady Audley's true crime stems from her invasion into their world, her attempt to disrupt the clear lines they have constructed between leisure and labor and in so doing she has perverted the doll-like innocent version of womanhood due to her lack of social standing.

By contrasting Helen Talboys/Lady Audley's version of her abandonment with George Talboys's narrative of the night he leaves his wife, which occurs in the first act of the adaptation, the production further distinguishes between coming from the corrupt and poverty stricken segment of society as embodied by Lady Audley (as well as Luke and Phoebe) as compared to the wealthy middle class. In this scene, the audience learns that George Talboys "swore" that he would leave "for ever" but repented in order to ease her suffering, returning to "put a few pounds, the half of our small stock on the table by the bed" and before leaving "kissed the pale baby-face" (Roberts 5-6). His description of his time working similarly emphasizes his compassion as he credits "the memory of my darling, the trust I had in her love and truth" for his successes (6). Lady Audley's character in this adaptation consistently attempts to "*justify*" her actions, but in so doing only succeeds in justifying the stereotypes of the working class as corrupt and angling for social status.

The difference here between Lady Audley's scathing criticism of Talboys and George's displays of tenderness and devotion accentuate the ways in which this adaptation discriminates between the devious character of those who engage in labor and the gallantry of those who come from wealth. Both George and Robert take on labor only to serve others, recognizing it as their duty, though for George it is a duty to his wife rather than to preserving the aristocracy. While the novel clearly identifies George Talboys as the son of a wealthy squire, his heritage is more obscure in this production. The audience only knows that he comes from money as his father bought him a position in the cavalry, which would be particularly expensive due to the cost of buying and maintaining a horse (Roberts 5). Norman McCord and Bill Purdue note that many of the higher-ranking members of the military "were closely linked to the dominant groups in society," and further explain,

Officers' salaries were so low that it was difficult...to live comfortably on...army pay, especially in fashionable units...Entry into the commissioned ranks in cavalry and infantry regiments was normally a matter of patronage combined with purchase of a commission. A high proportion of these officers was drawn from the aristocracy and gentry, and the great majority of them came from social groups with some supplementary private income. (61-62)

The lack of detail concerning George's social rank further blurs the lines between the aristocracy and the upper-middle class, much as the depiction of Robert Audley's profession does, further cementing the links between the wealthy upper-middle class and the aristocracy. Talboys could effectively have come from either group due to his commission in the cavalry, and this production suggests that Talboys, like Robert, is not to be reviled for his lack of clear social standing, but instead viewed as a stalwart protector of the aristocracy.

While Braddon's novel is often seen as embodying the aristocratic fear of the invasion of the middle class into the upper echelons, this production depicts them not as invaded by the middle class but instead saved by them in the guise of Robert Audley as a professional. Roberts's adaptation emphasizes the dangers facing the very wealthy from the very poor as they become more and more capable of mimicking their social superiors. The performance of *Lady Audley's Secret* at the St. James supports the aristocratic audience's belief that the working class and poor were indeed corrupt, but also points out that their presuppositions concerning the upper middle class were in fact baseless as this group rather than contaminating their world purges it of the working class infections.

When viewed together, these three productions provide a snapshot of the social discourse concerning class in 1863. Though Suter and Hazlewood both address working class audiences, their angle of vision differs drastically and ultimately results in productions that mirror each other in their presentation of the working class, though both ultimately come to similar conclusions: the aristocracy and its ideology can only pollute the working class. Roberts's

version comes to the opposing conclusion, laborers and those outside of the leisured segment of society will only contaminate the aristocracy, and the middle-class professional man serves as a stabilizing buffer between the two. The men of this production police the boundaries into the aristocracy, ensuring that only those with the proper qualifications (wealth or blood ties) gain access. Because the 1860s is often viewed as an “age of equipoise,” the social tensions, especially surrounding the place of liminal figures--the domestic servant or the professional man--are often undervalued. However, these adaptations illustrate the complexity of the relationship between these three groups during this time period and consequently represent unique interpretations on the extant governmental and journalistic discourse concerning social hierarchy and class distinction. Hazlewood, Roberts, and Suter each invoke Lady Audley in order to interrogate the competing views of class relations and thus integrate a socially diverse audience into a dialogue that often excluded many of the average theatergoers.

Notes

¹ See also Kate Mattacks’s “Regulatory Bodies: Dramatic Creativity, Control and the Commodity of *Lady Audley’s Secre* and Ian Henderson’s “Looking at Lady Audley: Symbolism, the Stage, and the Antipodes” for more criticism on the failures of the adaptations.

² These three plays were all available as published versions during the nineteenth century. Thomas Hailes Lacy, a well-known publisher of acting editions, printed Suter’s, and Hazlewood’s was similarly published by a well-known printer--Samuel French--while Roberts’s adaptation was privately printed by T. Scott.

³ In the early part of the nineteenth century, a much smaller proportion of the working class was educated, though there were Sunday schools where they could attend. According to Eric Hopkins, in 1818 “only about 7 percent of the total population of England and Wales was attending day schools” (135).

⁴ Vincent and Obsbalidston had been fixtures at the Old Vic since their move there in the 1830s when Osbaldiston left his pregnant wife behind at the Surrey to further his romantic relationship with Vincent.

⁵ See *The Musical World* for June 5, 1858 pg 359 and *The Theatrical Observer* for September 30th 1837, pg 1 for examples.

⁶ See E.P Thompson *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Random House, 1963.

⁷ See Elizabeth Langland's, Katherine Montwieler's, and Aerone Haynie's chapters in *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context* as well as Jan Schipper's *Becoming Frauds: Unconventional Heroines in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Sensation Fiction*.

⁸ See Jennifer Hedgecock's *The Femme Fatale in Victorian Literature: The Danger and the Sexual Threat* and Nina Auerbach's *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* for more on the fallen woman.

⁹ See "The Great Domestic Misery."

¹⁰ This is especially seen in commentaries concerning the governess as well as domestic servants. See Mary Poovey's "The Anathamized Race."

¹¹ Thomas Starkie wrote several texts concerning law and criminal courts both before and after this production was staged, including *A Practical Treatise of the Law of Evidence, and Digest of Proofs, in Civil and Criminal Proceedings* (3rd edition 1842), *A Treatise on the Law of Slander and Libel and Incidentally of Malicious Prosecutions* (1858), *A Treatise on Criminal Pleading: With Precedents of Indictments, Special Pleas & C* (1814), and *On the Trial by Jury* (1880) just to name a few. Because of the generic nature of the other two names provided, it is difficult to discern who George Roberts was referencing.

CHAPTER THREE
**A “GENTLEMAN OF THE RIGHT SORT”: UNSTABLE HIERARCHIES AND THE
MINOR THEATRES OF THE 1870S AND 1880S**

Between the performances of *Lady Audley's Secret* in 1863 and the productions of *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley's Secret* in the late 1870s and early 80s, there were several intervening adaptations of both of these novels as well as of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Mary Barton*. I have chosen not to designate an entire chapter to these adaptations and to instead fast forward to the closing productions in the nineteenth century as these last performances mostly clearly mark the ways in which the vast changes in Victorian society and culture effected the content of productions, especially in reference to class relations.¹ The adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley's Secret* staged in the late 1870s and early 1880s approach the working class with less antagonism and utilize the terminology of the middle and aristocratic classes in order to legitimize the place of those Victorians who labored either to survive or to gain disposable income.

Though I exclude many of the adaptations from the latter part of the 1860s, *The Long Strike*, Dion Boucicault's 1866 revision of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* bears some investigation. This adaptation veers extensively from Braddon's novel, only representing the novel through the use of its key plot lines and characters, who are renamed and nodding to his debt to the original, *The Examiner*, in an article published on October 6 1866, "suggested that the play was his own" ("Theatrical" 632). Boucicault's attempt to disassociate his play from its source differentiates it from the majority of the plays discussed in this dissertation, many of which rely on the popularity of the source to garner attention. Nevertheless, the tone and content of Boucicault's *Long Strike* mark it as a transitional piece and necessitate its inclusion in this dissertation. In particular, Boucicault's adaptation, occurring immediately following the failure

of a reform act in parliament in 1865 and the subsequent demonstrations for workers rights, serves as a intermediary production between the 1863 *Audleys* discussed in the previous chapter and the adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley* in the 70s and 80s. The contrast between Boucicault's production and those that follow it underscores the vast changes in the delineation between the classes during the latter part of the Victorian era. In particular, the later productions attack the upper classes for their corruption, extricating the term "gentleman" from its association with this group and situating it more closely with morality, a morality these adaptations find not in the upper ranks but instead in the hands of those who labor. It is unclear how long Boucicault may have been working on *The Long Strike*². However, Joe Kember notes that the play went through several versions before being finalized into the production seen at the Lyceum. According to Kember, "Boucicault's own promptbook for the play indicates that he was obliged to make many alterations in the course of rehearsals, before he was satisfied with his adaptation" (52). The evidence in the promptbook suggests that Boucicault's revision of *Mary Barton* was not written quickly, though just how long he considered writing the adaptation, we cannot know.

In the two years leading up to the performance of Boucicault's *Long Strike*, tensions between classes once again took prominence in Victorian politics. I have already noted that the 1860s rather than simply being a time of "equipoise" was in fact much more complex. This two-year period in particular saw an outburst of class antagonism, especially after the defeat of the liberal parliamentary electoral reform bill, first brought before Parliament on March 12, 1866. Although militant working-class reformism slowly died off in the second half of the nineteenth century, calls for reform itself did not. Some working-class groups continued to speak up for the rights of laborers and "by 1859, all parties in the state were committed to reform, disagreeing

rather on points of detail than on the principle of change” (Saunders 7). Sponsored by William Gladstone and Lord Russell (Prime Minister), this reform bill was comparatively conservative, only extending voting rights to a portion of the working class, with “relatively high rental qualification of £14 in the counties and £7 in the boroughs” (Hall, McClelland, & Rendall 3). Nevertheless, the Reform Bill of 1866 failed to pass the House, in part due to the machinations of members of Russell’s and Gladstone’s own Liberal party with the cooperation of Disraeli’s Conservative party (St. John 76-77). Even leading up to the presentation of the bill, much tension and discontent existed within the liberal party.

Russell’s cabinet created versions of the bill with varying requirements, from rate-paying to rental rates with numbers as high as £12 and as low as £6. Nonetheless, the bill struggled to make it to the floor in Parliament, and when it did reach there, it faced opposition from staunch liberals as well as conservatives. A group of liberals calling themselves the Adullamites stood with the conservative party, attempting to frame their abandonment of their party as “an act of loyalty, placing the principles of the Liberal party above the men who currently led it” (Saunders 201). One large concern for both groups of dissidents remained the percentage change in the electorate that would be caused by a lowering of the rate requirement. Many feared that such a move would not provide equal representation but instead result in an unequal representation that would disenfranchise the wealthy and aristocratic members of society. Robert Saunders argues that the key difference between the Adullamites and Gladstone’s/Russell’s vision of reform stemmed from their differing views of government. For the Adullamites, represented by Robert Lowe, the liberals needed to “defen[d] the legislative machine,” while Gladstone instead viewed reform as an issue concerning “the relationship between government and governed” (208). When the bill finally faced debate, Gladstone conceded to an amendment that would alter the

distribution of seats in addition to enfranchisement, but several more calls for changes occurred that ultimately resulted in the bill's failure and the dissolution of the government.

Public groups who supported the reform bill (and working-class rights in general) were outraged by the failure. The Hyde Park riots were in response to Parliament's failure to enact reform. This conflict although "not as violent as many electoral conflicts in Britain...came to symbolize the threatening power of the working men's movement to Liberal and Conservative politicians alike" and further necessitated a response by parliament as the "demonstrations created a public nuisance that ministers would be expected to resolve, since even peaceful protests caused disruptions to traders and businessmen" (Hall, McClelland, & Rendall 4 & Sanders 15). The upheaval following the failure of the 1866 reform act may not have caused a rebellion or revolution but it did aid in the downfall of Russell's liberal government and the installment of Disraeli's conservative one. And, when Disraeli took control of parliament, he and his party quickly moved to pass a new version of the reform act, which succeeded in 1867. It was within the context of this battle for reform and for the place of the working class in the public sphere that Boucicault penned his adaptation of *Mary Barton*.

Performed at the Lyceum Theatre in September of 1866, Boucicault's adaptation of Gaskell's novel shifted the content significantly from both the novel and previous adaptations. The Lyceum was not known as a working-class theatre but rather tended to attract the aristocracy. According to "Garrick Funnybone" in "Comparing Audiences at Some London Theatres, 1850," "the Lyceum boxes are much patronized by the nobility; the pit is in every respect highly respectable; the gallery extremely quiet" (158). Though this report comes some fifteen years prior to Boucicault's adaptation, the same audience was found there in the years leading up to his production. According to a November 7, 1863 article, this theatre drew "a

numerous audience among whom were remarked most of the notabilities now in London” (“Lyceum” 615). Though not the only reason Boucicault may have made his alterations to the novel, the composition of this audience would have influenced the changes to the tone and content of Braddon’s novel that would not have been necessary (or appropriate) at working-class theaters. Rather than presenting a complex picture of the troubles faced by the working class and the argument for the necessity for cross-class cooperation, Boucicault’s adaptation indicts the working class while disempowering Mary Barton, a move that effectively renounces demands for parliamentary reform that were destabilizing the political system.

Boucicault’s adaptation opens with the mill managers (including Readley who seems to be an amalgamation of both Carsons from the novel) contemplating how to deal with the “longest strike on record” while masses of working men mingle outside (4). This scene, which leads to the meeting between managers and workers, is similar to the novel, with no agreement reached. After this, however, the play takes a more violent turn than in the novel. The workers riot, damaging one of the manufacturers’ buildings (Readley’s). A “mob” again builds and chases Readley whom Jane Learoyd (Mary Barton) saves. As in the novel, Jane/Mary seems to be in love with him for the first part of the play. This violence continues as a London laborer who has come to Manchester enflames the mill workers, and they plan to burn down various factories, though the destruction never occurs. Readley overhears the plot, and it fails. He is then shot by Barton who kills Readley because he wishes to stop the manufacturer from testifying against his compatriots, all of whom have been imprisoned for the plan to burn down the factories. Act Two Scene One ends with Noah (John Barton) vehemently affirming, “Their fate hangs on Readley’s breath. No breath of his shall ever testify against them” (17). Further changes to the plot include the addition of a telegraph machine to contact Will Wilson (here

known as Johnny Reilley), which results in the elision of Mary Barton/Jane's fervent attempt to bring Will/Johnny back to save Jem (though Jane does eventually realize it is Jem she loves). The play ends with Will/Johnny arriving just as the jury is about to announce a verdict. Once his evidence is heard, Jem is found not guilty. The adaptation concludes with everyone excited and in an uproar but with no reconciliation between masters and workers, no revelation of Barton's guilt, and no more content concerning Jane/Mary.

These revisions suggest that because Boucicault was writing for a wealthy audience and because of the very public demonstrations by workers, he reformulated the text of Gaskell's novel into an indictment of working class unionism and "mob" rule. The adaptation effectually depicts this group and its actions as destabilizing to both the working class as well as those members of the owning classes. Furthermore, Boucicault elides Gaskell's subversive depiction of female agency and power by excising the moments where Gaskell empowers Mary Barton.

According to Kerry Powell,

The heroic efforts of Mary Barton--called Jane Learoyd in this play--are skipped over in Boucicault's dramatization. The heroine, played by Boucicault's wife, stands passively while two men, a lawyer and telegrapher, work out the return of the missing witness to testify in Jem Wilson's trial for murder...Absent in the Lyceum Theatre version is any hint of the last hundred or so pages of the book in which the sympathy and forgiveness, realized throughout the novel by women in general and Mary Barton in particular, begin to influence men as well. (107)

Boucicault's revisions, then, in the light of the Hyde Park riots and the working class clamoring for political rights, disempower the working class and thus justify the actions of those in power (those most likely to be in his audience). Mary Barton becomes a giggling working-class woman who first fawns over Readley then suddenly realizes she loves Jem. While working-class men are depicted as being incapable of controlling their violent urges and consequently unfit for inclusion in public discourse, the working-class Jane becomes like the stereotypical middle-class Angel,

incapable of acting on her own, dependent on men of high social standing (such as the lawyer) to aid her when her laboring protectors fail her (in Jane's case, her father).

By vilifying working-class organizations, turning their actions into organized crime rather than organized protest, Boucicault's adaptation takes the relatively peaceful demonstrations that occurred in Hyde Park and creates its own version that buttresses support for anti-reform movements.³ Matthew Arnold viewed the Hyde Park Riots as symptomatic of a change in the way the working class engaged with society as they began to join the middle and aristocratic classes in "doing as they like with great vigor" (51). For Arnold, these riots seemed just the beginning of the laborer trying to achieve "his way," but in so doing

he falls into the habit of taking it oftener and oftener, and at last begins to create by his operations a confusion of which mischievous people can take advantage, and which at any rate by troubling the common course of business throughout the country, tends to cause distress, and so to increase the sort of anarchy and social disintegration which had previously commenced. (52)

In Boucicault's adaptation we see a similar idea play out as the riots devolve into more and more disruptive acts. It is only when the laborers see their rebellion end with Noah's murder of Readley that they withdraw from their actions. However, they do not simply cease their violence but also end the strike, as if realizing that in fighting the factory owners they brought on this chaos. This adaptation, more so than any of the previous productions discussed here, works to incriminate laborers rather than to alleviate class tensions. Such a direct assault on the character of the working class can certainly be linked to the upheaval occurring in public discourse in 1865-1866. The adaptations that follow Boucicault's in the 70s and 80s also take on a new tone, but none take the aggressive anti-working class stance seen here.

Between the Texts: What Changed after the Reform Act of 1867

While the time between the initial failure of the Reform Bill in 1865 and the passage of a new version in 1867 saw considerable class tension and anti-worker sentiment, the decades following marked a new way of envisioning class for many. For instance, Alfred Marshall, a neoclassical economist, felt that “hope for the future of the working class was in effect to professionalize them, to make their work consistent with being an industrious ‘gentleman’” (Perkin *Rise* 129). This sentiment acknowledges the worker’s place in public conversations and society but does so with the caveat that the labor must meld himself to an ideal imposed from outside. Marshall’s sentiment finds repetition in many publications in the 1870s and 1880s, including theatrical productions. However, rather than simply importing an ideal that originated in the aristocracy, the idea of the gentleman is reformulated to suggest that it is not that the workers need to be “professionalize[d]” but rather than they already bore the qualities of a gentleman in a way that many in the aristocratic classes no longer did.

The late 1870s and earlier 1880s saw a plethora of productions of both *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley’s Secret* in London, across the country, and in foreign countries. Because of the vast number of plays produced during these decades, this chapter will focus on the three most illuminating: two of *Jane Eyre* and one of *Lady Audley’s Secret*. The first, an expansion of George Robert’s earlier *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1877), now in four acts, appeared on the Olympic’s stage, a theatre house located next to Drury Lane. The second, James Willing’s *Jane Eyre* in 1879 saw more success than most, with productions in London first at the Park Theatre (1879), followed by the National Standard, Shoreditch (1881), and the Surrey (1882), as well as touring productions throughout England. Patsy Stoneman notes that although the play was attributed to Willing, John T. Douglass was the actual playwright, a significant revelation as he

managed both the Park and the National Standard (“Editors Notes to James” 271). These three theatres--one in the northwest, in the east, and one across the Thames--underscore the changing composition of theatre audiences in the 1870s and on, as more playhouses had to cater to a broader audience rather than relying on local attendees. The third production, W.G. Wills’s 1882 *Jane Eyre*, was staged at the Globe Theatre, Newcastle Street. This theatre although close to the Olympic (which attracted a diverse audience) did not manage to curry the favor of a similarly eclectic group of spectators. All of these adaptations engage in the contemporary conversation concerning the value of a working-class voice in public discussions, devaluing the hierarchy by suggesting that it is the landed elite (non-workers) that corrupt society and that the working classes themselves gained the right to the appellation of “gentleman” where the original bearers of that title lost it.

In contrast to Boucicault’s adaptation, the productions of Willing, Roberts, and Wills appeared during a period when the question of parliamentary reform had been resolved, at least to some extent. However, the passage of the Reform Act in 1867 did not mean a cessation of conflict between classes. This act expanded the vote by lowering the requirements, including “ratepaying adult male occupiers and lodgers in lodgings worth £10 a year, and a resident for at least twelve months,” but there were still abiding tensions concerning this enfranchisement which only “won a victory of 310 votes to 289” (Hall, McClelland & Rendall 5). Although extending the vote to a portion of the “respectable working class” (7), the Reform Act did not by any means grant universal male suffrage nor did it include provisions for female suffrage, despite attempts by John Stuart Mill to have such an amendment added to the bill. This period, with some reform but with continued tensions, represents another iteration of class relations wherein the hierarchy, to some extent, blurs and the laborers gain social recognition. According to Jose

Harris, the class system in England becomes simplified in the latter portion of the nineteenth century “into two major and mutually exclusive class-formations: a property-owning ‘ruling class’ that embraced aristocrats, capitalists, and professionals, and a largely property-less ‘working class’, whose culture and institutions gradually subsumed all other subordinate groups” (7). Although the division of society into this binary certainly represents an oversimplification of life in the late Victorian era, it nonetheless articulates one of the many ways the Victorians categorized members of its society. L.C.B. Seaman identifies yet another way in which the Victorians classified themselves, noting that “what the late-Victorian period perpetuated in English life was a different division altogether: one between those of all ‘classes’ who assented to the existing social, economic and political order and those also of all ‘classes,’ who dissented from it” (319).

While these two views seem contradictory, they promote the same idea concerning one of the central conflicts of the late-Victorian era: the animosity and struggle for power between members who supported the old regime and those who sought change. While Harris limits his terms to workers and non-workers and Seaman takes a broader stroke looking at dissenters and supporters, both arguments reflect the alterations to rigid class structures and responses to the ways in which one could identify a social peer. In effect, this period begins the formation of what Thomas Heyeck terms the “plutocracy,” the control of power by the wealthy which thus still excluded most of the laboring section of society (12). According to Heyeck, beginning in the 1870s, the “economic troubles among the aristocracy and gentry” meant “they blurred the line that had long divided the landed class from the middle class” through marriage and investment (12). Perkin similarly contends that in the late-Victorian era,

The rich, the most variegated class in terms of differential wealth, power, and status, were, paradoxically, becoming more unified...The rich and powerful

amongst both the landowners and business men--together with a few exceptionally successful lawyers, engineers, architects, authors, journalists, artists and other professional men--raised themselves above the common herds of their kind and drew together

and suggests that this period also saw “the remaking of the working class” (*Rise* 62-63 & 101).

When these struggles to define the boundaries of class arrived in the theatres, the resulting productions often presented a dynamic view of class relations, with the majority of the plays deemphasizing aristocratic supremacy while still employing tenets of that sector’s ideology in order to appease that portion of the audience.

While John Courtney’s, and many other early Victorian adaptations, relied on the addition of working class characters and a focus on their roles, the adaptations discussed in this chapter instead concentrate on the aristocracy. In part, this can be linked to the state of class relations during the closing decades of the Victorian era. Beginning in the 1870s and leading into the 1880s, workers gained some rights. Unions were made legal again in 1871 with the Trade Union Act. Workers were given the right to peacefully strike in 1875 with the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, and the Reform Act of 1884 expanded the right to vote even further. Before the passage of many of these laws, those who worked, especially as servants, had few rights compared to their employers. Various Master and Servant Laws that were not repealed until 1875 “were characterized by a double standard of penalties, which treated breach of contract by workers as criminal offense, but offered only civil remedies when employers violated agreements,” and thus it is only with the acts passed in the later decades of the nineteenth century that workers gain support from the government when contracting for work (Frank 2). These expansions, though, do not signify an entire shift in the view of the laboring sector of Victorian society. In the 70s and 80s a diverse view of labor existed in England, some proud of working while others maintained a “snobbish disdain for work...even among the very poor” (Harris 125).

Moreover, the adaptations that occurred during this time period also offered subversive views of one particular title, the “gentleman”, whose meaning became more and more complex as the century progressed and the relationship between the classes altered. The term traditionally referred to a member of the landed elite, normally a younger son of an aristocrat who could not claim his father’s title but nonetheless led a genteel life or another similarly wealthy man free from the burden of labor, such as a land-owner with sufficient rents. This definition, however, is incomplete and barely scratches at the many ways the British deployed the term. Mark King similarly argues for a more nuanced consideration of the term as “from its very beginnings, the concept of the “gentleman” has been bound up with flexibility, indeterminacy, and uncertainty” (13). And, in fact, most of the writing concerning the term itself during the nineteenth century reiterates this sentiment. In 1826, William Hazlitt, for instance, publishes an entire article “On the Look of a Gentleman” where he acknowledges that “what it is that constitutes the look of a gentleman is more easily felt than described. We all know it when we see it” though he does concede that to some extent that which makes a gentleman stems from “his air and manner” as well as a “voluntary power over his whole body” (183). Though this definition of the gentleman relies less on bloodlines and more on the attitude and bearing of the man, Hazlitt nonetheless sees the term as limited to the wealthy and aristocratic segments of society. In his essay, he describes the growing tendency of those in the laboring segment of society to mimic this model and derides such actions:

We also sometimes meet with straggling personation of this character, got up in common life from pure romantic enthusiasm...I recollect a well-grown comely haberdasher, who made a practice of walking every day from Bishopgate Street to Pall Mall and Bond Street with the undaunted air and strut of a general-office; and also a prim undertaker, who regularly tendered his person, whenever the weather would permit, from the neighborhood of Camberwell into the favourite promenades of the City with a mincing gait that would have become a gentleman-usher of the black-rod. What a strange infatuation to live in a dream of being

taken for what one is not--in deceiving others, and at the same time ourselves; for no doubt these persons believed that they thus appeared to the world in their true characters, and that their assumed pretensions did no more than justice to their real merits. (185-186)

Hazlitt's tone here seems patronizing at the best and outrightly dismissive of the tradesmen at the worst. For Hazlitt, the worker in "common life" cannot hope to embody the essence of the gentleman, only managing to "deceive" themselves that the world takes them for what they are not. The sentiment espoused here is certainly not an uncommon one, especially for the time at which he writes, but as the nineteenth century progressed so too did the conversation concerning the gentleman.

While the term retained its association with physical bearing and morality (and to some extent social status), it was more and more broadly adapted. In "The Grand Old Name of Gentleman," an article published in October of 1868, the author simultaneously bemoans the dearth of true gentlemen, fearing that many "form a low estimate of the order when [they] admit the qualifications so lightly" and asserts that a gentleman's "merits overleap the limits of his birth and connection, making themselves known in spite of himself" (147). The sentiment espoused here sees repetition in other periodicals of the time. *The Saturday Review* in 1877 concedes that while "one is most likely to find a gentleman... in 'people of hereditary wealth and inherited culture'" the qualities of this type of man "have become general enough where pedigree is deficient" ("Quite A" 739). Both authors are willing to admit that men not born with the right sort of "pedigree" may attain the qualities of the gentleman, though the worker does so not naturally but "in spite of himself." In looking for the gentleman outside of the ranks of nobles, the traditional abode of that creature, the Victorians of the latter part of the nineteenth century add yet one more wrinkle to the title. Martin Weiner similarly argues for a shift in the location of the term "gentleman" to the middle class. According to Weiner,

The adoption of the culture of enjoyment by new landowners and aspiring landowners meant the dissipation of a set of values that had projected their fathers as a class to the economic heights and the nation to world predominance. In its place, they took up a new ideal--that of the gentleman. This new ideal was in its essentials the older aristocratic ideal purged of its grosser elements. (13)

While this title had long been both marked by blood and bearing, the separation of one from the other was a slow process, one which had much to do with the rise of middle-class men to positions of power. The working-class male still remained on the fringes; however, by the 60s and 70s, many writers added the caveat that they *might* attain gentlemanhood but the trait was not natural. In contrast, middle-class men who could engage in the “culture of enjoyment” easily adopted the title to fit within their ideology.

By 1880, though, some had discarded the notion that a gentleman must have the appropriate lineage in order to be entitled to the name. An article in *The London Reader* in January of 1880 firmly asserted, “In this country every boy may grow up to be a gentleman if he will. It is not necessary that he should become rich--most boys think it is--nor is it necessary that he should be a great scholar, nor that he should become a distinguished man” (“How to” 244). Although this author rejects the importance of wealth or position, he still maintains that there are few gentlemen actually to be found in England. For this writer, the boy wishing to be a gentleman will succeed because of “the harder he works in the right way,” though he “must study with his eyes and ears” as well and “feel, as well as speak and act” (244). Again, the emphasis remains on actions, some way of being that will set the gentleman apart from the mass of other men; however, this writer, like the author of the 1868 article, believes that few actually manage to become gentlemen. Interestingly, this author also makes a clear delineation between an emphasis on appearances and the character of a true gentleman, writing that a man who cares too much for “hat, cut, trousers and boots” cannot be a gentleman and is instead “a fop, and

sometimes come[s] near to making a fool” (244). The writer reiterates this sentiment several times in the brief essay, ending with an exhortation:

Let no boy therefore think he is to be made a gentleman by the clothes he wears, the horse he rides, the stick he carries, the dog that trots after him, the house he lives in, or the money he spends. Not one of these do it--and yet every boy may be a gentleman. He may wear an old hat, cheap clothes, have no horses, live in a poor house and spend but little money, and still be a gentleman...by being true, manly and honorable (244).

This article represents a rather large shift in the way the Victorian imagined the origins of the gentleman. Here, it seems, wealth and noble lineage offer less chance of achieving gentlemanliness than those in professions where men “work in the right way.” The transition seen in these texts from considering the gentleman innately tied to the nobility to imagining that connection as dangerous and more likely to eliminate gentlemanliness echoes in the plays produced in working class theaters during this period, theatres that take this dialogue concerning gentlemanliness and class and reimagine it for those in the lower ranks of society, those who, for the most part, could not afford the horse, the dog, or the clothes.

The Theatres

As I have noted previously, the history and audience composition at Victorian theatres had considerable effects on the content produced at these theatres. Where the adaptations discussed in previous chapters tended to appear at neighborhood theatres that attracted local audiences, the plays discussed here appeared at theatres during a period when theatre audiences became less bound by location. While many of the working-class theatres, like the Queen’s and Old Vic, often struggled to diversify their audiences, Michael Booth notes that beginning in the mid-1840s, many West End theatres attempted to “attract new [audiences] at a lower level of class and income” and further argues that this tendency continued throughout the rest of the nineteenth century: “As late as the 1880s and 1890s, nevertheless, certain West End

theatres...had a strong element of lower-middle-class and working-class patronage, confined to the pit and gallery perhaps but still an influence on the choice of repertory” (7). Because both East and West End theatres had faced the slumping economy of the mid 40s to 60s, the struggle to stay afloat meant the West End altered productions not only to suit the wealthy clientele that they were used to attracting but also to broaden their appeal to potential working-class audiences, and East End as well as Transpontine theatres had to work to make their productions attractive to more than just those living in the vicinity. While this certainly meant a diversification of the type of shows seen at these West End minor (and major) theatres as well as those in the east and across the river, it also meant a revision of the material presented in the plays.⁴ The combination of changing audiences, alterations in the depiction of working-class engagement in the public sphere, and calls for greater reforms meant that the plays offered a complex revision of class politics.

The Olympic Theatre in Newcastle Street, often referred to as “little Drury Lane,” due to its location adjacent to that patent house, opened in 1813 as a “Saloon for horsemanship and kindred shows,” and from the beginning attracted laborers though it was technically in the West End (Sherson 78). The theatre was located at the intersection of Drury Lane, Newcastle Street, and Wych Street, and though close to the respectable Drury Lane patent house, the neighborhood was not entirely respectable. Erroll Sherson describes Wych Street as “one of the narrowest dirtiest and most disreputable thoroughfares in the West” and refers to the entire neighborhood as a “slum,” “a vile neighborhood with the vilest associations,” and notes that even Drury Lane struggled to attract audiences in part due to this location (77). Much like the ramshackle nature of the neighborhood, the Olympic Theatre was “a structure quickly improvised from the remains of a French Warship, with a tin roof to keep out the rain” (Moody 31). While there is general

agreement about the quality of the neighborhood, the Olympic received more diverse reviews. According to Sherson, it was a “very oasis in a desert of foulness” (77); this perception of the Olympic may stem from the alterations made to the playhouse by Robert Elliston when he took control (Banham 819).

First run by Phillip Astley, the “Saloon” was not particularly successful and this failure continued until 1830 when Madame Vestris, a popular actress and manager, took control of the Olympic and “inaugurated the first successful season it had ever had” (Sherson 80-84). Vestris made further improvements to the house and managed the Olympic theatre until 1839 when she and her husband Charles Mathews, who had joined her in the management of the theatre after their marriage, were succeeded first by Samuel Butler, then George Wild (1841-44), followed by Kate Howard in 1846--all of whom failed to achieve the success seen by Vestris (Sherson 85-88). Like many Victorian playhouses, The Olympic “was destroyed by fire in 1849” but rebuilt and later regained success under the guidance of Alfred Wigan in 1853-1857 (Banham 819). A variety of managers followed with varying degrees of success, and in 1873, Henry Neville, an actor who had long performed at the Olympic, took over the management and attempted to produce Shakespeare plays. However, according to Sherson, “Drama, sensational or domestic, was the proper fare at the Olympic. When the management aspired to give Shakespeare, it was generally a failure” (106). It was during this regime that George Roberts’s extended version of his adaptation of *Lady Audley’s Secret* appeared, but the productions at the Olympic at this time did not “achiev[e] any great success” (107).

Although on the fringe of the respectable section of the West End, the Olympic nonetheless managed to attract a diverse audience, for as Booth explains, “Minor theatres in the West End drew more miscellaneous audiences, or even a fashionable one, as in the case of

Madame Vestris's up-market Olympic Theatre" (*Theatre* 6). Consequently, while many of the minor theatres that were further afield from the thriving theatre district in the West End struggled to appeal to a "fashionable" audience--one that according to many preferred the opera to the Theatre.⁵ The Olympic, even with its "vile" location, managed to draw this subset of the Victorian theatergoer throughout its history. Nevertheless, the theatre could not simply produce material suited only for this small subset of the theatrical audience and necessarily crafted material meant to draw audiences from a broad swath of the nineteenth-century public. In fact, the Olympic fared better than Drury Lane during the mid-century recession that hit the theatres hard.

Even though Drury Lane was technically one of the respectable legitimate theatres, it too had difficulty in the mid- and late-nineteenth century attracting audiences due to "Mismanagement...location, a failure to establish its repertoire...and changing audience taste," which all left it struggling to succeed (Davis and Emeljanow 202). Thus, while its neighbor Drury Lane fought to recreate its identity after the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 ended the patent theatres' control of legitimate theatre, the Olympic managed to diversify. Davis and Emeljanow note that in the West End, unlike the East End and Transpontine locations, the audience was not necessarily local but comprised a large "travelling population" (213). Davis and Emeljanow further explain that after the 1843 act, there was a "shift from popular theatregoing to theatregoing as a middle-class and fashion conscious leisure activity," especially in the West End (225). The Olympic Theatre's audience, thus, spanned the spectrum from wealthy "fashionable" members of high society to the working and middle classes and consequently, it needed to adapt its works to suit the diverse population that attended theatres in the West End. The Olympic's history of limited successes and relatively consistent failures as

well as its placement on the fringe of high society in the West End helped to shape the content that its managers chose to stage. Though it had made many advances from its early days as a horse saloon, its origins remained a part of the public consciousness and a part of the way its writers shaped material for it.

While all three of the theatres that housed James Willing's production of *Jane Eyre* were minor houses that mostly appealed to the working classes, the Park Theatre is most relevant to this study, as it was the theatre for which the production was created. Opened in 1874 as the Alexandra Theatre with Thorpe Pede as manager (Sherson 291), this Camden Town theatre was part of the building boom that began in the mid 1860s (Davis and Emeljanow 185). Sherson notes that the repertoire of the Alexandra "did not vary much...As might be expected from the character of the neighborhood, it was principally strong meat that was set out for local consumptions. Melodramas or plays with strong sentimental interest paid best" (292). The Alexandra, according to Sherson, "must be considered as one of the least notable of all London Theatres" (294). Nonetheless, an article published in *The Musical World* on October 11th 1873 considers the Alexandra "one of the prettiest theatres in the metropolis" ("Royal" 681), and the same periodical refers to it as an "elegant theatre," with "entertainment of the highest class, and worthy of the most liberal patronage" on April 11th 1874 ("Royal" 228). Raised in what Porter calls a "lower-middle-class development" (123), the Alexandra/Park Theatre was nevertheless "well placed to attract both high class audiences from the Regent's Park area, and a lower-class audience from Tottenham Court Road" (Stoneman "Editor's Notes to James" 273).

In 1877, Madame St. Claire took control of the Alexandra theatre and staged a production of *Romeo and Juliette* with little success, a common problem faced when managers attempted to import highbrow entertainment to the theatre. Two years later, in 1879, the Alexandra became

the Park Theatre (Hartnoll 12). At the same time, Thomas Douglass took over the management of the theatre and produced his version of *Jane Eyre*. Although short-lived, the Park was nevertheless popular and well attended. Accounts of the composition of its audience may vary, but its general location on the fringe of the higher class neighborhoods would suggest that Willing's *Jane Eyre* initiated its London run at a house that did not rely on a single segment of society for patronage.

The National Standard Theatre in Shoreditch, where Willing's (Douglass's) *Jane Eyre* was next staged in 1881, was one of the first theatres in the East End that "attracted stars from the West" (Stoneman 278). While the Park Theatre came from the theatrical revival of the 1860s, the National Standard opened in 1837, and John Douglass took over management in 1849 (Hartnoll 520). Though Douglass managed several houses throughout his lifetime, taking over the Park for instance, he still maintained control of this theatre until his death (520). The Standard, like the Park attracted a varied audience: Davis and Emeljanow note that it "drew tradesmen, mechanics, their children, and silk weavers from Spitalfields" while also attracting "the residents of Hackney and Kingsland--very opulent districts then" (47 & 52-53).

Similarly, the Surrey theatre in Southwark, Willing's adaptation's next stop in 1882, managed to attract a broad audience. Opened in 1782 as the Royal Circus, the theatre was originally associated with horse shows and later became closely linked with nautical melodrama. Like most theatres in the Victorian era, the Surrey burnt down several times, including once in 1803 and again in 1865 ("Description" 109-110). After it was transformed from the Royal Circus into the Surrey theatre, the productions varied in content. Although most well known in the present day for its nautical melodramas, the Surrey often produced opera as well Shakespeare in addition its melodramatic material.

Frequently considered a neighborhood theatre during its early life, in the late 20s and early 30s, “the theatre attempted to broaden the range of its audience beyond the immediate neighborhood” (Davis & Emeljanow 4). During the latter half of this period (in the 30s) Robert William Elliston, an actor and manager, took control of the theatre. He “was always classical,” preferring Shakespeare, and the Surrey thrived under his management, but “after the death of Elliston, the lesseeship was held in succession by Davidge, Osbaldiston, Crestwick, and other individuals of dramatic note; but it never rose far above mediocrity” (Thornbury 370-371). While Elliston catered to the “classical” during his tenure, other managers attempted a more varied body of work: “‘From December 1873-1881 William Holland, the self-styled ‘People’s Caterer,’ took over the management of the theatre” (Davis & Emeljanow 31-32). During his management as well as for some time following, the Surrey altered the content of the productions, relying more heavily on low-brow forms such as melodrama. Even though the alteration in content from the “classical” to the “people’s,” might suggest that the management sought to draw a specific subset of the theatergoing population, Davis and Emeljanow remind us,

The varied nature of the Surrey’s repertoire, which could attract audiences for opera, Shakespeare, and the legitimate drama, not to mention melodramas and farces on a variety of non-nautical topics, militates against the assumption of specifically nautical and working-class audiences. The audience was not only local but also from further afield. (27)

The Surrey cannot be easily categorized as simply a “working-class” or “neighborhood” theatre. Although located near the Old Vic, and often lumped together with it, the Surrey managed to attract both the local audience who “tended be tradesmen, shopkeepers, skilled artisans, merchants, clerks, and laborers” as well as theatergoers from the West End, no doubt in part due to its “more salubrious and accessible location” (18 & 39). This theatre managed, like the Park and the National Standard before it, to induce a broad swath of the public to attend productions

like Willing's *Jane Eyre*. These three theatres that housed Willing's version of *Jane Eyre* all reflect the ways in which his adaptation could and did appeal to a varied audience. The histories of these theatres, especially the Park where it originated, mark Willing's adaptation as one that mediated Brontë's novel for audiences who would have had different views of the world around them. In effect, he crafted a version of *Jane Eyre* that utilized the ideology of the aristocracy to bolster the legitimacy of labor, which affectively catered to the dynamic audiences at all the theatres it would later become associated with.

As Willing's production ran at the Surrey theatre from December 4-15 1882 (Stoneman "Editor's Notes to James" 281), W.G. Wills's adaptation, the last new version of *Jane Eyre* to be produced in London in the nineteenth century, began at the Globe Theatre in Newcastle Street.⁶ This theatre should not be confused with Shakespeare's Globe in Southwark. Like the Park, The Globe was built during the latter half of the century, specifically in 1868 and was "the second speculation in theatrebuilding of Sefton Parry" (Sherson 237). Sherson suggests that while the first plays staged at the Globe garnered much attention, it was unable to sustain this success and quickly faltered, in part due to "an epidemic of opera bouffee" and French material along with French actresses (238). Nevertheless, this theatre "was a good deal concerned with the romantic drama," aside from this digression into foreign material and foreign actresses (Sharp 247). Unlike the Surrey, which was viewed as a respectable establishment attracting a varied audience, the Globe had been "for many years previous to its demolition...the resort of shady characters" (Baker *History* 330). In fact, Phyllis Hartnoll notes that the Globe "was not a success and constantly changed hands" and refers to the construction as "jerry-built" (211). The Globe is mostly remembered due to the tenure of one of the leading actresses of the day, Mrs. Bernard

Beere, who played Jane in Wills's adaptation (with "astounding force") and ran the Globe herself in the 1880s (Sherson 247).

Jane Eyre was just one instance of a Victorian novel arriving on the stage of the Globe Theatre. *Armadale* by Wilkie Collins appearing in 1876 and a version of Dickens's *Bleak House* in 1877, though Sherson notes this particular production, "like most plays founded on the novels of Dickens...was hardly a success" (241). While play versions of these novels graced the boards of the Globe, the theatre was by no means singularly attached to the novel. Instead, it produced a variety of content in the late 70s and early 80s, including more opera bouffee and a resurgence of "melodrama of the most lurid description" in 1882 (242). The Globe lasted for the remainder of the nineteenth century, with few successes and many failures, especially when introducing novels on the stage, and finally closed in 1902. Unlike the Park and Olympic theatres, The Globe rarely managed to attract wealthy spectators, relying heavily on the lower ranks to fill its seats, at least one reason why Wills's adaptation more clearly indicts the aristocracy while associating Jane with labor.

The theatres where these three adaptations played represent a wide range of playhouses that all attracted stage productions of popular novels. Moreover, the majority of these theatres also underscore one of the many changes in theatergoing that occurred during the late nineteenth century: as transportation improved and more theatres arose that catered to specific theatrical tastes, audiences intermingled more and more as they moved throughout the city to attend the type of entertainment that pleased them. While there was always some cross-over between working, middle, and aristocratic classes at the theatres, the earlier decades did see more delineation in theatergoing, in part due to the neighborhood theatre phenomenon. By the late 70s and early 80s, however, members of all classes mingled across theatres. In part, this melding

echoes the cultural changes occurring during the period, as terms, like the gentleman, became less attached to a specific class and more malleable. These theatres, broadening their base audience to include the working class and wealthy, had to find a way to bridge the gap between these groups. One way the writers at these theatres managed to do so was by joining the conversation on class, gentlemanliness and corruption.

Inverting Class and Gender Markers: Gentlemanly Workers, Corrupt Aristocrats, and Empowered Women

Unlike the other adaptations discussed in this dissertation, George Roberts' 1877 four-act version of *Lady Audley's Secret*⁷ at the Olympic theatre, staged in June and July, is a revision of his previous 1863 two-act play. In general, the later play mimics the original, with large sections of the licensing manuscript actually containing pasted on cut outs from the printed copy of the 1863 version. Nonetheless, Roberts removed some material, added new, and rearranged some scenes.

The opening remains in Robert Audley's rooms in London but his servant is no longer the male Slip but instead the female Mrs. Pitcher on whom Robert relies. Much of the dialogue that follows remains the same, but Roberts adds lines to various speeches by each character. Mrs. Pitcher's presence results in some of the most drastic changes in the opening as Talboys and Robert Audley discuss his "establishment" (Roberts *New Version* 15). Much comedy ensues as they talk about the articles in the newspaper, and the act ends with the revelation of Helen Talboys's death. Act Two opens at Audley Court where Sir Michael and Alice are arguing about Lady Audley, whom Alice cannot stand. The emphasis here, however, remains on class and Alice's exasperation at Lady Audley's rise in position. Again, Roberts returns to his earlier version, cutting in large chunks where the Audleys discuss Robert followed by the scene where Phoebe and Luke Marks argue about class and Lady Audley. The play then returns to Robert,

Talboys, and Alice, who examine Lady Audley's portrait, which causes Talboys to exclaim, "let me alone" and run off. The act then concludes with the confrontation between Lady Audley and Talboys, overseen by Luke.

Act three opens in the same way as Act Two did in Robert's earlier version: Robert looking over a notice concerning Talboys that he placed in the newspaper. Here, Roberts adds a scene where Robert attempts to discuss Lady Audley and her history with Doctor Dawson (his uncle's physician), the previous employer of Lady Audley. Dawson, however, finds Robert's insinuations about Lady Audley horrifying and inappropriate. The following scenes are jumbled pieces from the original that include the argument between Alice and Robert, Lady Audley and Robert's first confrontation (with an extended aside given to Robert where he wonders if he must rip the "mask" from Lady Audley), and finally the scene where Lady Audley convinces her husband to send Robert away. The final act opens at the "Chequers Inn" where Robert, as in all versions of Braddon's novel, attempts to make Luke divulge what he knows. Again, Lady Audley appears, sets fire to the house (though here she emphasizes that she is prodded on by "some devil"), and takes Phoebe away. The general plot of the conclusion remains the same: the revelation of Lady Audley's crimes, Alice arrives to inform them of Sir Michael's death, Luke's confesses, Talboys reappears, and lady Audley suffers a "half death." However, these final scenes emphasize Lady Audley's madness as she hears a church bell and imagines that it will wake her child.

The modifications made for Roberts's Olympic Theatre production emphasize the change in the audience composition and reflect the alterations in class dynamics during this period. While the play maintains its emphasis on the reliability of the middle class and aristocracy (thus appealing to that segment of spectators), the alterations made depict the value of the laborer, in

part by disassociating the term “gentleman” from the aristocracy and reassociating it with men who engage in work. The mutations in this adaptation present a complex depiction of class relations. It maintains its positive portrayal of the relationship between the middle and aristocratic classes and yet also alleviates some of the antagonism towards those in the laboring classes. It achieved the latter aim by providing a voice to working-class labor and upsetting normative conceptions of both the gentleman and female work. These changes echo many of the contemporary discussions concerning the role of labor in the life of the gentleman. Samuel Smiles, for instance, argued as early as 1859 that “even the humblest person, who sets before his fellows an example of industry, sobriety, and upright honesty of purpose in life, has a present as well as a future influence upon the well-being of his country” and follows through with a description of men who changed the world who came from “the common class of day laborers” (11 & 14), while he later derides the aristocrat who lives an “indolent” lifestyle (162).

One of the largest additions to Roberts’s 1877 version of *Lady Audley’s Secret* comes at the very beginning of play where Roberts introduces Mrs. Pitcher whose first lines in the play offer a working-class perspective on Robert Audley. In choosing to begin the play in this manner, Roberts alters the focus of the opening and addresses a segment of the audience that could have been put off by other elements in the production. Bruce Robbins argues that when novels allow working-class characters to narrate, “thanks to the insidious immediacy of the narrator’s hold over the reader, the same ‘low-life’ figure whom the play condemns as a ‘scoundrel’ can disarm criticism and establish a subversive right to fellowship” (93). While Mrs. Pitcher clearly outlines her own faults during the speech, she nonetheless uses her power as the first to engage the audience to establish not only her own right but also to disrupt dominant

models of class structure. Mrs. Pitcher opening speech is split between reflection of her position and the character of Robert Audley (all misspellings are from the manuscript):

Mrs. P (dusting out tea cup with a dirty apron) We wants a new service badly for the grit crusts in the crackers so there's no getting at it with one's thumb nail (blowing in cup and looking at it) There now, we're as bright as a new farthing! (Setting down up) It's a real pleasure and no mistake, to do for Mr. Audley; he's the most affablest gentleman as I ever had under my charge and I've looked after all sorts and sizes in offices and chambers in my time. Somehow, for all he's so pleasant spoken the attornies don't seem to fancy him well, he's all the more time to attend to himself at home. He dusts his own books and fiddles over his chany and gimcracks. What's more, he sticks to the ground floor and that saves me trapesing (sic) up and down stairs and cases my bones. Then he's as punctual as the post, pays regular and has no petty ways and cooperative dodges about him. Yes, Mr. Audley, he's a fine open-handed and open hearted gentleman of the right sort, he is, as don't lock up his tea and sugar or go off in a fit when the sherry bottle is a bit low, or the sperrits (sic) run out...he's a party as would do credit to any young lady and I suppose he'll be for leaving chambers soon and settin' up with that pretty little cousin of his in the country, down Essex way. (looking at sketch) There you are, my pretty, in your gold frame, as natural as life. When I look at your smiling face, It minds me of my young days when Pitcher, rest his soul, had the cutout in black, with a pair of scissors for twopence at greenwick fair, the time when I was general servant at the pork butchers in Highbury. Now, are we all straight? No there's a the letters in the box! (Roberts *New Version* 5)

This is one of the rare instances where one of the plays presents a positive view of Robert from a third person. Almost all of the other characters in Roberts's (and other) adaptations view Robert Audley as "lazy"--Sir Michael and Alicia--(24) or "a poor hand at his trade"--Luke Marks-- (29). Similarly, in the novel, there is nothing in the first half to suggest that Robert is other than what those at Audley Court think he is. He appears "stridently negligent" of his duties (Haynie 71), and many argue that it is Talboys's death that transforms him into a "fully 'masculinised' role as head of the bourgeois family" (Pykett 103). This is not the case in Roberts's production as he contrasts the view of Audley Court with that of a domestic servant. Mrs. Pitcher, instead of viewing Robert as useless, portrays him as an ideal master and 'gentleman,' though no doubt due in part due to his apathy concerning her minor thefts. His worth for Mrs. Pitcher stems neither

from his social connections to the aristocracy nor from his situation within the law but instead from the manner in which he manages his home, a task normally associated with women.

Mrs. Pitcher's view of Robert Audley paints domestic labor engaged in by men as a signifier of gentility, and thus manliness, while such labor would traditionally be seen as womanly. In considering the conversations concerning Victorian gender norms, "a good deal of criticism has been aimed at Victorian feminists...for accepting the sexual division of labor in the household" (Shanley 66). Though much of the feminist writing during the Victorian era maintained the "division of labor," this adaptation instead blurs the lines between masculine and feminine work. While I do not mean to suggest that Roberts was a feminist himself, this play does reject simple constructions of labor in ways that would have been outside of the norm. Roberts defuses anxiety about this disruption by presenting it humorously, as something that the audience could laugh about but not as something that was degrading. In effect, Mrs. Pitcher's character and her view of Robert both work to undermine Victorian gender structures.

Having examined men of "all sorts and sizes" in her career, Mrs. Pitcher judges Robert as superior for his ability to be "a fine open handed and open hearted gentleman of the right sort," though this comes with mixed meanings--as she appreciates not only his ability to pay her in a timely manner but also his willingness to ignore her faults, including pilfering "sperrits." Nevertheless, her contention that he is not only a "gentleman" but also a "real pleasure" to serve contradicts the view of Robert Audley as indolent that we see in Braddon's original, especially as we learn here that Robert willingly works in his own home, dusting his books, china, and "gimcracks"--a term that refers to "a useless ornament, a trumpery article, a knick-knack" ("Gimcrack"). These actions would not normally be associated with gentlemanliness--the male head of house in either a middle or upper-class home was not "expected...to do much except

issue orders to servants"--but for Mrs. Pitcher, a servant, they reveal Robert Audley's willingness to engage in labor of his own (Roebuck 23). They do, however, reflect his general poor management of his home and his willingness to bend to a servant who has no qualms in taking advantage of him. Weiner argues that late-Victorian England saw the "consolidation of a national elite" that merged the professional and industrial middle-class with the landed gentry (158). What we see here instead is a merging of the middle-class professional male with the laboring segment of society, a move that can be seen as a backlash against the merging of the non-workers in opposition to labor.

Although his position itself may not reflect well on him in the eyes of the middle and upper classes, Mrs. Pitcher's reaction offers a working-class perspective (though one certainly skewed by self interest). In this instance, labor becomes itself a marker of masculinity and appropriate behavior, which is in complete contrast to the aristocratic distaste for labor but much in line with the conversations occurring in the periodicals of the time where aristocratic manners and dress no longer clearly marked a man as a gentleman while engaging in the "right sort" of labor would according to many periodical articles, including those seen in *The London Reader* and *The Saturday Review*. In broadening the type of man who could be labeled as gentleman this production works against what we see in Braddon's novel. According to Jonathan Loesberg, the sensational fiction published in the 1850s and 1860s (including *Lady Audley's Secret*) depicted "not fear of violence from the lower classes precisely but of a world made chaotic and at least partially indecipherable by the loss of class identity" (121). Such fear of loss fades in Roberts's new adaptation, which seeks to subdue fears concerning the disruption of class lines through its application of the term "gentleman" to a new set of standards outside of its historical space. In so doing, the adaptation works against the violent anti-worker sentiments seen in earlier adaptations

like Boucicault's and instead suggests that the erosion of class hierarchy would not disrupt the social fabric in the ways that many had feared in previous decades.

Where the original 1863 version provided a rather straightforward portrayal of Robert as an ideal male bridging the gap between aristocrat and the middle classes, this version also employs Robert to address the working-class view of what it means to be "gentlemanly," which in this case, does not depend on lack of labor but instead an understanding of it. Because this is the decade during which the working class began to achieve a role in the public sphere, gaining the right to vote, Robert Audley's connection to labor places value on that act rather than on leisure. His actions in the play support the law and aid in the discovery of a criminal, and the play thus connects the relationship here between work and the right to engage in public discussions on political and social issues. Labor justifies his status, which in turn justifies his right to speak. Moreover, the version of masculinity presented here suggests an emphasis on the "gospel of work" espoused by Thomas Carlyle and Samuel Smiles who supported a version of gentlemanliness that emphasized self-help. This version of masculinity relies on labor as the defining feature of masculinity and was often associated with the middle-class ideal of the self-made man while it also "implied that the upper classes were indolent" though it simultaneously "assimilated much of the ethos of the [aristocratic] class" (Danahay 23). This revision of the term "gentleman" works to transform gender structures in its subversive depiction of Robert. The play dismantles the binary between the gendered domestic and public spheres by associating Robert, and by extension the gentleman, with female labor and then situating Robert as the heroic figure.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Pitcher also reaffirms what the rest of the play (and Roberts' 1863 version as well) does, that Robert does not belong among the other "attornies" like the

“Plodder,” “Bouncer,” and “Badger” discussed in the previous chapter (Roberts *New Version* 7). Robert clearly feels that many in his profession fail to meet the requirements of gentlemanliness and thus disassociates himself from such groups. Robert’s rejection of the corrupt and ungentlemanly qualities associated with his profession is further affirmed by the addition of another letter that Robert reads in the opening scene: “Confidential. Dear Sir, I can undertake to offer cash advances on simple note of hand; strictest secrecy guaranteed” to which Robert responds, “really, one hardly knows which to admire more;--the ingenuousness or the ingenuity” and then tears the letter up (7). Technically a member of the profession, Robert nonetheless distances himself from what he sees as the corruptions of that field, maintaining his own moral code, which he further upholds when given the “confidential” letter. That he refers to the sender as being both ingenuous as well as having “ingenuity,” technically contradictory terms, marks his ability to understand the subtle manipulations of the type of money lender who would send such a note--willing to loan with little security and high risk while providing “secrecy” which would imply underhanded dealings. While the “Plodder” speech defames the character of the professional “attorney”, this moment in contrast emphasizes Robert Audley’s morality and his unwillingness to break from “gentlemanliness” as an ethical code dictating appropriate behavior, a tenet generally associated with the aristocratic definition of the term (Perkin *The Origins* 273). Perkin further notes that during the later nineteenth century, professional men worked to legitimize their place in the hierarchy by “start[ing] from the existing ideals” and altering them to suit their own place in Victorian society, which resulted in a disassociation of the title of “gentleman” from the “aristocrat touchy about his honour” and association with a man who would be “honest” (*Rise* 121). In this way, Robert Audley mimics the social movements

occurring in Victorian society as his gentlemanliness evolves from the 1863 version of the play to this new adaptation that emphasizes even less his association with the aristocracy.

While the play opens with Mrs. Pitcher providing the audience with insight into the character of Robert Audley, shortly thereafter Robert performs the same function for Mrs. Pitcher. Initially, he refers to her as “my major domo” and then “my female factorum” but then belittles her by calling her “my laundress--laundress as the definition has it, on the lucus non lucendo principle, that they were never known to wash anything--not even themselves” (Roberts *New Version* 9-10). Later, he again offers a complex view of Mrs. Pitcher:

Rob What do you think of my establishment? Multum in parvo! Butler and cook and groom of the chambers, rolled into one...Pitcher is invaluable. To be sure she has her little failings, apt to be a trifle frolicsome with the bottle occasionally. But to do her justice, she's a woman of discrimination and knows the difference between old Hennesy and British. (15)

Rather than an idealized version of the perfect domestic servant, Mrs. Pitcher represents some of the realities of domestic servitude. She has “little failings,” but these minor issues, which he ironically calls “frolicsome” rather than problematic, seem to be outweighed by her utility. In a December 1877 article entitled “Female Household Servants”, published in *The Leisure Hour*, the author discusses the troubles facing employers of female servants, not the least of which remains “the difficulty of obtaining good servants,” which the writer feels “is increasing and will continue to increase” (765). This sentiment is oft repeated, with *The British Architect* describing “the difficulty of obtaining servants” as “almost insurmountable” in its May 26th 1876 edition (“A Domestic” vii) and *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* arguing the same in its March 18th 1876 issue (“Servants” 362). In part then, Robert’s acceptance of the foibles of his servant who fills all necessary positions in the house (thus saving him from hiring more servants) can be connected to the shortage of domestic help. Mrs. Pitcher’s shortcomings

are insignificant considering her usefulness in the home and the problems Robert would face replacing her during a period of economic uncertainty. Moreover, the Latin he employs when explaining her role “Multum in Parvo” translates as “much in little,” emphasizes the benefit of appreciating what is available, no matter how “little,” rather than berating and bemoaning the problems of shortages while also no doubt suggesting how much labor she performs for relatively low pay.

Aside from issues of utility, the ways in which Robert Audley names Mrs. Pitcher, not as a “maid of all work⁸” or “general servant” but with a variety of titles, effectively empower the female worker by undermining normative gender divisions. While “Major Domo” could apply to both women and men, the term more often referred to male “head servant,” normally “the butler” or “house steward” and all of the references until the 20th century refer to men (“major”). While Major Domo could theoretically apply to either gender, both “butler” and “groom of the chambers” are clearly masculine roles. By providing Mrs. Pitcher all of these titles rather than simply calling her a servant, Roberts undermines these gender constructions, at least within his working-class characters. Purposefully ironic, Roberts’s inversion of masculine and feminine with Mrs. Pitcher and Robert Audley mocks the binaries structuring gender for both men and women. Roberts empowers Mrs. Pitcher, giving her control and domain over Robert Audley’s domestic space not as the housekeeper, a label he leaves out, but as the butler. Trevor May argues that this title transformed the bearer into an “awesome figure...even to the mistress and sometimes...to the master” and that “insobriety” tended to be seen as one of the “failing[s] seen in those who served as butler (15). Consequently, Mrs. Pitcher, though a female servant, is styled as a masculine one. She is not looked down upon for her ability to perform these roles and is instead seen as more valuable for it in the same way that she views Robert more highly for his

ability to be both the gentleman and still acknowledge labor. Jennifer Hedgecock argues that “both Alicia and Robert Audley demonize and dehumanize the working class” in Braddon’s novel (127), but in Roberts’ version, Robert Audley values labor, recognizing that, although not without fault, Mrs. Pitcher has worth and abilities beyond the limits of her gender and class.

Alice, on the other hand, continues to “demonize” those who come from labor, but rather than supporting this view, Roberts’ adaptation uses her prejudice to critique the aristocracy, which works in direct contrast to the aim of the earlier version. Roberts’ original version clearly appeals to a wealthy landed audience, and the additions we see here subtly alter the content in order to entertain the diverse audience at the Olympic while also demonstrating alterations in the public discourse concerning class relations. Specifically, Alice (a simplified version of Braddon’s Alicia) appears to be a spoiled petulant aristocrat, whose mistreatment of Lady Audley stems from her own personality deficits and warped view of class distinctions. Even though Lady Audley is in fact duplicitous and murderous, Alice’s reactions to Lady Audley, in this version, reflect badly on her rather than suggesting her ability to discern Lady Audley’s true character. Alice’s first complaint to her father (almost her first words in the play at all) reveal her exasperation at her father’s marriage as she whines that “to be under the thumb of a nursery governess, just out of a Doctor’s shop--really papa, it’s--it’s--well, it’s awful!”

(Roberts *New Version* 23). Shortly after voicing this complaint, Alice throws a tantrum:

Alice (throwing down basket in a pet) Lucy! Even the very flowers are to bow down and worship her! It--it--It’s disgusting! Lucy this,--Lucy that,--Lucy all day long! I’m sick of it and her! (takes up basket) what all the world can find to rave about in her I can’t for the life of me understand. But so it is!” (26)

In adding these lines that paint Alice Audley as the irritable child who dislikes the encroachment of a new woman into her home, Roberts lessens the power of Alice’s insights into Lady Audley’s character. Her obvious class antagonism effectively weakens her arguments against Lady

Audley, especially when seen in conjunction with the additions made to Robert Audley's character as well as the inclusion of Mrs. Pitcher. Katherine Montweiler notes, "Braddon does not treat Alicia very kindly" either (n. 60), and indeed the novel suggests that Alicia finds Lady Audley's childish pretense frustrating as it allows her to act as an "imposter" in the aristocracy (49).

In this version, Roberts exacerbates the negative depiction of Alice, making *her* seem childish in her reaction to Lady Audley. Furthermore, her contention that her inferior position to Lady Audley is "awful" and her opinion that the aristocratic male attention Lady Audley receives is "disgusting" reflect her view of a limited aristocracy. According to David Cannadine, "from the 1870s onward peerages were given out in greater numbers, and to people of more humble background," resulting in a more diverse population in that group (126). Alicia's reaction against Lady Audley, then, reflects an outmoded view of the aristocracy as purely based on heritage, while this group was in fact altering not only due to the increase in peerages granted but also due to marriages between members of the middle and aristocratic classes, much in the way that the term "gentleman" expanded to include men outside of the nobility and even those who labored. By rendering Alice's remarks impotent, this adaptation disorders the orderly ranks of society. Her comments appear no more than the ranting of a child, which further supports the dissemination of the term "gentleman" outward from the aristocracy to include a broader swath of society as members of the aristocracy fail to meet the standards by which members of society who claim "gentle" appellations should live.

Roberts further dilutes the anti-laborer sentiments in his 1877 adaptation as Lady Audley's position in the play is altered in order to minimize the negative tone associated with those engaged in labor. Ann Cvetkovich argues that in Braddon's novel "desire threatens social

divisions when it leads men to choose women...who are outside their class” and Robert must be “mobilize[d]” to “contro[l] the intrusions of” Lady Audley” (52). Though Robert still acts to remove Lady Audley from Audley Court, he responds not to her “intrusions” into a class she has no place in as a laborer but rather to her madness. Lady Audley may not be a part of the working class itself, but she nonetheless engages in *work*, and, as noted earlier, there is a clear divide in the way that the aristocracy begins to think about those who control labor and those who perform it. In my previous chapter, I argued that in Roberts’s earlier version he accentuated not Lady Audley’s madness but instead her corruption as a member of the laboring classes, but the anti-worker sentiment of that production dissipates to some extent in this version. Lady Audley still does not belong in the aristocracy, but rather than underscore her villainy, Roberts chooses to diminish Lady Audley’s culpability by refocusing on her madness. Kerry Powell argues that Roberts’s 1863 adaptation paints Lady Audley as “a more genteel Lady Audley, continually tottering, swooning, and clinging to sturdy objects for support” and believes that it is Colin Henry Hazlewood who emphasizes her madness in his 1863 version (112-113). However, here the adaptation underscores not her gentility but rather her mental instability.

When she contemplates burning down The Chequers Inn, she begins with a speech from the 1863 version claiming that “I was not wicked when I was young--my crime but the impulse of the hour,” but Roberts then adds to this version, “Yet, there’s some devil here that goads me on and will not let me rest” (Roberts *New Version* 73). And this scene is followed by another addition while Lady Audley and Phoebe walk back to Audley Court. As they walk, Lady Audley hears a church bell tolling in the distance, which unsettles her: “Yes, the bell that bids us pray for the soul that is passing away (in a strange manner) It is for my child! (bell again) How loud it pierces the night air. What if it should wake my child from his long sleep!” (76). While the first

addition implies that Lady Audley has no control over herself and her actions could be read as an attempt to excuse her misdeeds, the second addition shows the cracks in her sanity more clearly by providing a manifestation of that insanity. Combined with Roberts's original ending where Lady Audley faints away and is "not yet;--not yet" dead because "the soul may linger, but the mind--the mind is gone!" (85), these two scenes suggest that Lady Audley has been mad for the entirety of the play. When she responds, "I cannot! I cannot!" to Talboys's injunction to repent just before the end of the play, she articulates the extent to which she has lost control of her body (84). Certainly such scenes are sensational and would appeal to the working-class desire for melodrama, but more than this, these moments remove the focus from her class background and place it on her madness. The intentional shift away from her origins and towards her insanity distances the production from the anti-labor sentiments espoused in the 1863 version. More specifically, as this version blurs the lines between classes through its manipulation of gender (and especially the gentleman) this shift serves to dismiss the negative assessment seen by Alice Audley concerning the infiltration of members of the laboring classes into the upper class by suggesting that Lady Audley should be excluded not because of her origins but because of her mental infirmities.

Just as the alterations to Robert and Alice Audley serve to attract the working-class audience, so too does this addition. While the play employs ideology that stems from the aristocracy ('gentleman'), it also undermines the claim that the upper classes alone have sole right to the term or to a place in public discourse. These changes broaden the scope of the play while also reflecting the slowly changing dynamics of class relations in the late 1870s. While the aristocracy and upper-middle class united as non-workers in contrast to the workers, the working classes still fought for their right to speak against the regulations that held them back, and the

play offers evidence that laborers had equal claim. Roberts's decision to shift the focus away from villainy of Lady Audley's invasion of the aristocracy to her mental state connects to the other alterations made within the adaptation that deemphasize the corruption of the working class. George Roberts manipulates Lady Audley in his first adaptation to justify the wealthy elite's negative view of the laboring masses but here he complicates her role. Her infiltration into Audley Court becomes dangerous not because she comes from a position of labor but because of her mental instability--an instability whose origins receive little attention in the first adaptation, with only a single phrase to suggest that she has inherited the trait from her mother. Roberts's 1877 version of *Lady Audley's Secret* challenges the simplified view of the ideal upper and perverse lower ranks of society. The 1870s marked a period during which the working class gained a voice in political discourse while they, along with women, sought even greater representation as well as time when the label "gentleman" became dissociated with the nobility and found new meaning in labor. By simultaneously employing pieces of the aristocratic ideal male via the label of "gentleman" while also providing a more dynamic view of the working class via Mrs. Pitcher, this adaptation reveals the ways in which theatrical adaptations engaged with contemporary discussions in a way that reimagined the ideas and events of the era, producing new versions of competing ideologies.

Produced only two years after Roberts' four-act *Lady Audley's Secret*, James Willing's *Jane Eyre*,⁹ which was spectacularly popular—staged first at the Park Theatre on August 27th 1879 (running through October) and later at various locations from 1879-1882—follows Brontë's original narrative but with quite a few drastic alterations. The play opens at Gateshead where Jane and Mrs. Reed have the same arguments as in the novel. Jane is told she is bad, is to be sent off to a school, she responds that she is not bad, and is not a liar since she will not say she

loves her aunt. However, at the end of the scene, Jane recants in a way that she does not in the novel, telling Mrs. Reed that she will pray that “Heaven bless Aunt Reed” (Willing 293). From here, the play moves straight to Thornfield several months after Jane has arrived, just before the arrival of Mr. Rochester’s guests, who include the Ingrams as well as John Reed (who is also interested in Blanche Ingram) and Mr. Brocklehurst. During the guests’ visit, Mr. Brocklehurst stands as a comic example of the hypocrisy of those who run charities, constantly remarking on the necessity for “charity” while being obsessed with his own funds. Following this, the play follows the same lines as the novel: Rochester tricks Blanche into thinking he wants to marry her, abandons her, and asks Jane to marry him. She agrees (with no “equal as we are” speech), Bertha’s existence is revealed, and Jane flees at the end of Act Two.

When act three begins, Rochester and Mason talk about Bertha, after which Rochester decides he must follow Jane. The scene then switches to Jane, who is helped in her hardship by Mr. Brocklehurst who also seems to want to marry her (for monetary reasons). In the meantime, John Reed has run off with Blanche Ingram, ruining her. He comes to Brocklehurst in hopes of getting his aid in swindling Jane Eyre out of her inheritance from his uncle, but Brocklehurst refuses to help him. Jane arrives and argues with John about her money. He attacks her and suddenly Rochester appears to help her. Following this, Rochester explains how he ended up married to Bertha and asks Jane to forgive him, but she sends him away. Jane then becomes a teacher at the local school, and while at her home Blanche appears, explaining that she ran off with John Reed. She blames Jane for her problems initially, but Jane then offers to give her part of her inheritance. Because of this generosity, Blanche tells Jane about Thornfield burning down, and they leave to find Rochester. Perhaps one of the strangest alterations then occurs: Jane arrives, but Rochester is in fact not blinded, just pretending to be so in order to test Jane. They

reconcile, and Blanche is invited to live with them. The play ends with Jane and Rochester agreeing to be married on the next day. Generally, the alterations made within this production depict the aristocratic conception of their class's superiority as outmoded, while redeploing some of the ideology of that class in order to idealize the laboring segment of society. Although such alterations would appear to antagonize an aristocratic audience, it avoids such outright animosity by transforming the conclusion in a way that upholds normative gender dynamics and by suggesting that segments of the ideology of the aristocracy remain the standard by which men (and women) should be judged.

In particular, Jane stands in as a marker of the idealized laboring woman who recognizes the necessity of class boundaries, though she also indicts those in higher ranks who fail to act in accordance with social regulation. Like Lady Audley, Jane does not come from the working class itself but is nonetheless associated with labor, first as a governess and later in her willingness to take employment that would be designated as working-class, such as dressmaking. Jane, early on in her stay at Thornfield, rebukes herself for her attraction to Rochester. When she reflects on the possibility of his marriage, she chides herself:

It's true then—what is it to me? If true or false, what interest to me? Jane Eyre, fool—to think you are gifted with the power of pleasing him—a gentleman of family—a man of the world—and I a dependent, despised by my rich relations—a novice—I must not forget it—it does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her, and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them which if unreturned and unknown must devour the life that feeds it. (Willing 299)

Where Boucicault's production of *Mary Barton* underscores the innate antagonism felt by those from the working class towards those in power, Willing invests Jane with opposing sentiments. She informs her audience that what she contemplates, what she desires, "does good to no woman." She directly relates the ill effects of love beyond station; she, "a dependent" would be

“devour[ed]” by the desire to move beyond her sanctioned realm. Kevin Swafford contends that the end of the Victorian era saw a simultaneous emphasis on a “stable, static, and naturalized social hierarchy” that was more wishful dreaming than reality and a consistent “increasing [of] social anxieties and conflicts, not the least of which are rooted in the struggles and determinations of class” in the “closing years of the Victorian era (roughly from the early 1870s” through the end of Queen Victoria’s reign (xi). In this adaptation, Willing takes these tensions and instead of indicting the laboring classes as violent insurrectionists, depicts them as cognizant of the perils that accompanied the vast changes in class relations, of the “madness” of seeking upward social movement.

Although such a sentiment supports the status quo, Jane is not just a simpering female who meekly abides by the presiding regulations for female deportment. Later in the production, she in fact indicts Rochester himself for his mistreatment of Miss Ingram. She asks if he “think[s] nothing of Miss Ingram’s feelings” and then insists he consider whether “Miss Ingram will not suffer from your dishonest coquetry? Wont she feel forsaken and deserted?” (Willing 314). Jane must act as the voice of justice and ensure that the empowered male recognizes the ways in which he breaks the standards set forth by society for men in positions of power. Indeed, Jane uses language that suggests that Rochester’s actions have in fact removed him from his proper station. He has been acting the coquette, a term generally applied to women, rather than a rake. Thus, while Jane’s initial speech concerning her sentiments in relation to Rochester reinforces the “stable” class hierarchy, her later conduct calls for those who are in power similarly to maintain the tenets of their station, implying that failure to do so is emasculating. This chastisement fits within a larger dialogue concerning the sexual misdeeds of the wealthy

and upper classes of society whom many saw as “the cause of a range of social problems,”¹⁰ while further emphasizing the detachment of gentlemanliness from that group (Griffin 100).

Rochester and later John Reed act much like Alec D’Urbervilles in Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891), which was also adapted for the stage¹¹, manipulating women without considering the consequences of actions. Hardy’s novel may have been published approximately twelve years after Willing’s production, but both works underscore a shift in the public consciousness which had once viewed the working class as unfit to participate in government. There was a general fear that “‘mob rule’ would threaten the order and tranquility of the nation,” but the passing of the Reform Act of 1867 “legitim[ized] the working class citizen in new ways” (McClelland 73 &71). Not all members of the working class received the right to vote, only the “respectable and sober” (77). Such classifications of the working class are suspect as they suggest that the working class had previously lacked respectability and other qualifications for engaging in public dialogue (and that segments remained so). McClelland argues that those lobbying for working class rights were quick to self-identify as such, with “the kind of masculinity on show” acting as a central tenet of conversations concerning those arguing for the right to vote (77). Just as the version of masculinity performed by working-class activists in their efforts to gain political power marked them as either “respectable” or part of the virulent “mob,” the actions of the men in Willing’s adaptation mark them as unfit to inhabit their positions of power. While Rochester never overtly acts to defile Blanche, his manipulations do in fact lead her to run away with John Reed. As not only the leading male but also the figure representing the empowered section of society (the non-workers), Rochester is castigated for his failure to adhere to the system that so many in his position required the poor to adhere to. This further marks the upper-class male as the site from which moral decay emanates.

While Rochester is acquitted of his misdeeds in the adaptation, John Reed epitomizes the unrepentant corruption of the upper classes. Reed's character, who even in the novel refuses to act according to his station, links the creation of fallen women to wealthy men. Hedgecock argues, "the fallen woman trope is really meant to keep women subordinated to patriarchal power, and at the same time to provide a convenient scapegoat for the existing moral turpitude in Victorian society" (49). However, in this adaptation, although Blanche still loses her place in society, she is not the "scapegoat," for immorality, and it is instead Reed who takes on this role. Though such a transfer still maintains "patriarchal power"--she has no individual control--it does nevertheless shift the focus away from female debauchery and onto the male who created it. Once Reed has ruined himself and Lady Blanche, he seeks Jane's destruction by taking her inheritance, but strangely, Mr. Brocklehurst, a member of the professional class, indicts John Reed for his actions as a landed gentleman:

John Reed: Blanche Ingram is not my wife--why the village idiots didn't imagine I'd marry the spoony girl?

Mr. Brock: Well, I believed you had--don't call the village idiots because they in their ignorance perhaps, expected Mr. John Reed to act as a gentleman--(*rises*).

John: What does it matter to me, what they think—we'll change the subject—I have not seen Blanche Ingram (*rises*) for more than a month—I left her in London—she begins to have conscientious scruples about her conduct and because I remonstrate—she asked me to marry her—of course I couldn't do that. (Willing 321)

Mr. Brocklehurst, a comic character, further places blame onto the elite male. His assessment of John's actions represents Willing's direct critique of failed representatives of the upper class. Moreover, the contrast that Brocklehurst sets up between John Reed and the "village idiots" who believe in following the dictates of social hierarchy, performing the role of "gentleman,"

suggests that John Reed's most heinous crimes stems from his failure to meet the guidelines of that role.

Perkin contends that the term "gentleman" shifted depending on class to which the individual belonged and notes that for the landed elite, the term "was a moral ideal" and "an aggressive code which demanded that a gentleman should indeed be honest and keep his word...be courteous and honourable towards ladies--though not necessarily to mere women and servant girls" and further meant that "his typical vices...were private and confined chiefly to his own class, whereas his influence for good was public, and spread to all his neighbours" (*Origins* 273-275). However, the term at this point in the nineteenth century had become not only more malleable, applying less to class and more to actions, but also separated from its origins in the nobility.

As several periodicals of the 70s and 80s noted, any man could be a gentleman, but in fact those with wealth and station were more likely to turn into a "fop," when deploying their wealth as a marker of gentlemanliness ("How to" 244). Thus, it is the "village idiot" who becomes the true gentleman while the man of wealth instead degrades the term. Where John Reed and Brocklehurst function as similar types in the novel—both manifest the vices to be found in the wealthy landed elite—the play overtly contrasts the two in this scene. Brocklehurst begins the play in much the same manner as the novel, but is converted to the appropriate role, remonstrating with John on how he must "act as a gentleman." Brocklehurst binds morality and gendered actions in his dialogue with John, reminding him of the necessity of performing his masculine duty, marriage—the appropriate action for the gentleman. While this adaptation continues to uphold rigid class structures to some extent, it nonetheless deploys the characters to reimagine what it actually means to be a "gentleman," a term that in previous decades

necessarily required a certain social status. In this instance, “gentleman” is disassociated with class and reassociated with conduct, in effect, suggesting that even the working-class male could be a gentleman while the wealthy male with social standing had lost his right to the title.

In the same sense, Blanche ignores her duty to both her class and her gender—stepping beyond her allowed sphere, which in effect cuts her off from all sections of society. She functions as Jane’s parallel, seduced by John Reed as Jane is by Rochester. While Blanche does not escape the play unaffected by her actions, she does appear less culpable than Reed who manipulated her. Nevertheless, where Jane resists the advances of Rochester once she realizes he is married, Blanche willingly departs with John, depicting the consequences should Jane have acquiesced to Rochester’s demands. Blanche eventually regrets her decision, her “conscientious scruples” rising once she realizes the implications of her misdeeds, the necessary removal from society (Willing 321). After being abandoned and recognizing her exiled state, she wanders much in the way that Jane wanders in the novel, unable to regain her previous station. Interestingly, Blanche loves Rochester in this version and is driven to her misdeeds by that love. Here, then, we get the example of what Jane warns the audience against in her speech concerning loving Rochester. Blanche has acted in “madness” since she “let a secret love kindle within” and the result as Jane cautions, “if unreturned and unknown must devour the life that feeds it.” Blanche seduced and, unsure “why [she] struggle[s] to live” since her “life is valueless,” indicates a contrast in the ways in which Jane and Blanche view the “value” of life (328).

Because Blanche, a member of the aristocracy, sees her only value in her purity, her place in the world of the play becomes untenable. Jane, however, refuses to live by the dictates of Victorian gender norms that insist on the ostracization of fallen women, valuing Blanche for herself. Yet again Willing’s adaptation manages to subtly indicate that old version of aristocratic

values need to be appropriated to new use. Blanche has been exiled, but the audience never sees her rejected by society on the stage. In fact, all scenes post-fall for Blanche instead underscore the care she is given, not by members of her own class, but by those beneath her--Brocklehurst who defends her in conversation with Reed and Jane who seeks to aid her. Blanche may feel that her life is "valueless" outside of the wealthy aristocratic lifestyle that she was accustomed to, but the adaptation rejects this view, suggesting that Blanche deserves care and compassion while it is John Reed who should be ostracized. The interplay here between class and gender norms upsets the power of the reigning social regulations--those imposed by the wealthy--and instead shifts power to the workers and poor who provide compassion in contrast to the harsh stipulations dictated by the social code.

In spite of this compassion, Blanche still insists that her place has been lost, but this contention is met with further suggestions that her view is simply outmoded. She implores Jane, "What am I now? How can I seek again my happy home...the family I have disgraced—how ask forgiveness of that mother's heart, whose precepts I have set at naught...how can I mingle with my friends of old—a cast of mistress—a woman of the streets" (Willing 329). Jane, however, mitigates Blanche's immorality, offering her salvation, so long as she approaches the future with "sincere repentance" (329). Jane, ever pure, has gained her inheritance and offers to share it with Blanche, who will live with Jane as her "sister," in what Blanche refers to as "the companionship of all that is good and virtuous" (330). Willing's polarization of his version of Brontë's characters—Brocklehurst as a sort of savior, Blanche as fallen woman, and Jane as ideal laboring woman--responds to the crises presented in the original text, in part performing a restitching of the social fabric that Brontë picks apart.

Although the Reform Act of 1867 “inspir[ed] the first organized petition to Parliament for the enfranchisement of women” ten years prior to the production of Willing’s *Jane Eyre* (Rendall 119), the decade between saw further agitation for women’s rights, including the passage of the Married Woman’s Property Act in 1870 which gave women control of the money and lands granted them by their marriage agreements and was amended in 1874. Mary Lyndon Shanley argues that the women fighting for property rights in 1870 “relied extensively on...the equal right of men and women to control their own property regardless of marital status” while they also “invoked the practical plight of working-class wives as well as theoretical considerations of justice” (57 &60). In this way, the fight for women’s rights marks the interrelation between gender and class much as we see in the plays discussed here where gender norms become tools for representing exclusion and inclusion across classes.

Property law reform, however, was only one way among many that women sought political rights. In 1872, an amendment was passed by parliament making the father equally responsible for illegitimate children, and in 1878 the Matrimonial Causes Act allowed abused wives to officially separate from their husbands. This progression in women’s rights in the 1870s links with the shift in perspective seen in Willing’s adaptation. Jane’s willingness to treat the “fallen” Blanche as a “sister,” relates to the changing place and value women achieved in the 1870s as they gained a voice in politics, which moved the value away from the body. Like the workers fighting for their place in the public conversation, women fought for public rights throughout the nineteenth century, but it was during these concluding decades that parliamentary progress began to be accomplished for both. In this adaptation, Willing’s alterations to Brontë’s novel link gender and class relations, suggesting that the narrow view of middle-class women

and working people of both sexes held by those in power was in fact just a way to project onto these disempowered people the faults of empowered men who disrupted to social fabric.

While Blanche becomes the image of the fallen woman, Jane represents the idealized version of a female laborer's stoicism in the face of constant mistreatment by those in higher social classes. Once she has escaped from Rochester, having discovered his marriage, she wanders, starving. However, in this version, Jane is found not by St. John but by Mr. Brocklehurst who agrees to help her. When he asks what she could possibly do, she responds, "I will be a dressmaker. I will be a plain work-woman; I will be a servant, a nurse girl, if I can be no better" (Willing 320). Patsy Stoneman argues that "melodrama depended on conventional gender relations to stabilize its alternative bourgeois 'truth and ethics,'" and consequently the stage adaptations of *Jane Eyre* necessarily "altered the emphasis of the novel in two, almost opposite ways. On the one hand, they gave exaggerated vocal expression to Jane's sense of class oppression and victimization; on the other, they recuperated the radical implications of her relationship with Rochester in conventional comic nuptials" (*Brontë Transformations* 8-9). While to some extent these adaptations "gave exaggerated vocal representation" to class struggle, they also seek to minimize this discourse in a variety of ways. Rather than focus heavily on the "oppression and victimization" Jane endures from the upper class, the play instead sets out to idealize Jane as a laborer willing to engage in any respectable work no matter how low rather than succumb to the fate awaiting Blanche Ingram. Stoneman implies that the adaptation offers less commentary on "bourgeois" ideology in their attempts to shore up the holes Brontë made in the social structure, but even though the play emphasizes a "conventional" marriage, it nonetheless works against many of the dominant principles of the era in its depiction of class relations and power dynamics.

Esther Godfrey argues that in Brontë's novel "Masculine and feminine constructions...ultimately cannot be separated from the larger gender anxieties raised by Jane's class position" (853), and similarly Willing's production unites gender and class in its reformation of social values. Members of the rising middle class and the wealthy aristocracy feared corruption from working women because of "mixed-gender and bleak work environments" though they nonetheless "exploited working women both sexually and economically" (Fuchs 65). Working-class women's labor, however, was not only essential for the poorest families, but her work at "shopkeeping or needlework contributed to his [her husband's] respectable lifestyle" for those who inhabited the higher ranks of the working class, at least in the earlier part of century (Clark 121). Some of this acceptance of female labor fades as working-class men attempt to achieve a place in public dialogues by mimicking the middle-class view of women in the workplace and using domestic ideology to bolster their efforts. Nonetheless, women continued to work and gain protections for that work (237). By presenting Jane's desire to work as "a plain work-woman" or "dressmaker," the adaptation contrasts the real immorality found in John Reed's misdeeds with the honest and respectable labor done by working-class women.

While such labor would have appeared demeaning to women of high rank, for Jane it is a mark of her respectability, her refusal to allow the limits placed on women to guide her own conception of her place in society. Ultimately, then, Jane's purity and her association with labor disrupt the idea that female labor defiled and contaminated the domestic sphere. This view of labor is seen earlier in the play as well when Jane discusses her work at Thornfield, describing it as liberating:

This is certainly an agreeable change from Lowood School--those eight years of servitude--an age seems to have elapsed since the day which brought me first to

Lowood. I have never quitted it until now. All my vacations have been spent at School. I have had no communication by letter or message with the outer world, School Rules, School duties, School habits, notions and voices, and places and costumes--This is all I know of existence for seven years of routine--*I am now free--Mr. Brocklehurst-that petty tyrant--*.(Willing 295, emphasis mine)

Here, as in many of the adaptations, Lowood resembles a prison that binds Jane, in effect making her a slave of the “petty tyrant.” John Brougham’s 1849 adaptation makes similar claims for Lowood, but does not see working at Thornfield as an escape. Jane instead believes that upon leaving Lowood she would simply be performing “an exchange of prisons” (77). In this earlier adaptation, Jane is disassociated from labor as she simply does not belong to the working class and thus labor becomes degrading. The shift in Jane’s view of labor from “prison” to “free” signifies a alteration in the view of labor itself, in part due to the ways in which the working class gained a place in public conversations concerning both political and social issues in the 1870s.

While the adaptation disrupts the negative views of working-class women and labor, it does not go so far as to disregard the reigning social structure entirely, and thus Willing refuses to subordinate Rochester to Jane’s care. At the end of the production, Rochester’s blindness becomes a ruse meant to test Jane’s devotion, though he still has a crippled hand. When confronted by John Reed who is still attempting to steal Jane’s inheritance, Rochester quickly unmasks himself:

Yes—he can *see*—I was blind even to the one I loved—blind to learn if her love was deep enough to fly to my side as a cripple—but blind no longer to see my darling’s heritage stolen by a robber and a scoundrel...Pardon the deception Jane--my sight is slightly injured but it was given out I was stone blind. And anxious to test the sincerity of your love--I feigned blindness. (Willing 335)

Rochester’s last act towards Jane illustrates both the extent of her devotion to him as well as his superiority. He controls Jane, and she doesn’t react negatively to the revelation of the trick, responding to the exposure by exclaiming “Edward--Oh joy--“(336). Rochester has acted badly

in previous sections of the play, perhaps even in such a way that would label him as a scoundrel, and here it is suggested that he still desires to maintain his power over Jane. His manipulation, however sinister to a modern reader, goes unchastised in the production, standing as a way for him to test Jane's devotion. Jane's exclamation suggests that not only does she see nothing wrong with this ruse but also takes "joy" in his revealed health and desire to protect her.

Kerry Powell argues of Willing's adaptation, "Instead of the rehabilitation of a brutalized male, this drama concerns itself with testing the worth of a well-intentioned but inexperienced young woman whose survival at every turn is the result of some man's largesse" (106). Yet, the conclusion also provides Jane with some power to help other women as she insists that Blanche live with her and Rochester as her "dear sister" (Willing 336). The power dynamics in Willing's production subtly manipulate the social structure that not only subordinated women but also disempowered the working class. Rochester's control and position as a gentleman remain untested, but John Reed loses all due to his depravity and the fallen Blanche finds salvation with the Rochesters. While the conclusion suggests a return to normative Victorian gender and class dynamics, the play also undermines the negative view of female labor while directing blame at failed male aristocrats whose refusal to adhere to the tenets of their own regulations disrupted Victorian society. Such changes reflect the alterations occurring in the 1870s and 1880s in terms of class boundaries; the term "gentleman" no longer necessarily only referred to those born into the nobility; in fact, it seems to become disassociated with that class--at least in this play--though it retains its moral requirements. The 1870s marked a period of vast political changes for both the working class and women, and this adaptation engages with these alterations by simultaneously depicting the value of some of the ideals associated with the aristocracy (gentleman) while also

undermining the idea that birth into the aristocracy resulted in superiority and birth into the laboring sectors resulted in inferiority.

Willing's revision of John Reed's character is imitated in another adaptation in England in the nineteenth century, which is worthy of note for its construction of Reed. This play opened in Oldham while Willing's adaptation was still running in London, though there is much confusion about the Oldham production due to irregularities between the play submitted to the Lord Chamberlain (Paul's) and the one identified in the periodicals (Wills's at the Globe). According to Patsy Stoneman, while the *Oldham Evening Express* suggests that W.G. Wills's adaptation is the one being produced, this is simply impossible as he did not write this adaptation until 1882 ("Editor's Notes to T.H." 340). Stoneman believes, "It almost seems certain, therefore, that the play performed in Oldham was Willing's rather than Paul's play," and the advertisement simply "named the wrong London theatre" (341). Essentially, it is unclear if or when Paul's adaptation was produced, which complicates its place within this dissertation. Nevertheless, T.H. Paul's *Jane Eyre's* depiction of the relationship between the upper classes, lower classes, and corruption mimics much of what we see in Willing's adaptation and is thus useful in establishing the ways in which many plays during the same period manipulated and responded to contemporary social issues.

Just as Willing contrasts idealized and corrupt versions of the aristocratic ideal in Rochester and John Reed, so too does Paul, focusing on the dissolute John Reed and replacing the Ingrams with the Reeds as the guests at Thornfield Hall. In an era rife with class anxiety, John stands as the emblematic of the upper class man intent on keeping his position in the social hierarchy at all costs. Mrs. Reed learns early on of Jane's inheritance, intending to destroy the document, but John intervenes:

Mrs. Reed: She is the same as ever, seems to se[e] my thoughts--but she shall not fri[ghten] me into weakness--this letter which [should] give her happiness she shall never [see] (*tears letter*). Now, Jane Eyre, you little know what[t] your defiance has cost you--

John enters suddenly L

John (*takes pieces of letter from her hand*: Don't destroy it altogether, it may be useful yet--...don't be afraid, I'm not going to tell her though, until she is willing to come to our way of thinking--there, leave it to me, Mother, we must crush her still more, get her turned out from here if necessary. (Paul 351)

Paul specifically places John and Mrs. Reed at the center of the narrative, leaving it to these characters to create the situations that will lead to Jane's removal from Lowood and placement in Rochester's home. Where the novel uses this moment to empower Jane, depicting her resolve, Paul's adaptation uses it to revile the machinations of the upper classes. Though untitled but possessing land, the Reeds, like Rochester, live in the world of affluence and ease, and their desire to "crush" Jane "still more" places them within the realm of those who sought to disempower the laboring classes. The later decades of the nineteenth century did see some improvements for the working classes, as laws were passed improving work hours and conditions; however, such alterations did not alleviate class antagonism, resulting in what Gertrude Himmelfarb calls "a time less of social malaise than of social ferment" (75). John, then, represents the worst indulgences and follies of those who would assume roles of superiority without the attendant duties and further marks the ways in which it is the historical version of the landed elite, with its emphasis on exclusion, that disrupts the social fabric.

Paul situates John as the central antagonist of the play, placing him in St. John's role, offering Jane marriage, though for less honorable reasons. Attempting to trick Jane into marriage to gain control of her uncle's fortune, John begins one of many schemes to regain his lost funds, later attempting to blackmail Rochester once he discovers Rochester's marriage to Bertha, but all

his attempts fail. When he realizes Rochester will not pay for his silence and Jane will not marry him, he seeks his revenge, exclaiming that he “shall thwart [Rochester’s] intention and mar his happiness--to say nothing of the revenge I shall have on my cousin Jane Eyre” (Paul 366). He exposes Rochester’s bigamy just as Bertha comes on stage, setting the house on fire and leaving Rochester free to marry. From a member of the landed elite, John’s actions suggest his own failures within the mold of the gentleman. Mitchell contends that the ideal gentleman “should care about something other than money. He would do the right thing without thinking about what it might cost him financially” (271). The wealthy middle class and aristocracy feared that the working class would in some way defile their world if allowed in, and the governess was meant to act as arbiter for the house she served, protecting the children from infection by the low traits of the laborers, though as the century progressed many began to fear the governess would pollute the home rather than protect it.¹²

Paul’s placement of John as the failed gentleman who enters Thornfield and attempts to corrupt all those within, demonstrates a larger shift in the adaptation: concern that the working class carried with it low morals is replaced with a concern that the upper classes are at fault, mimicking Willing’s adaptation. John Reed remains emblematic of the corrupted nature of the upper classes, seeking salvation for himself alone and willingly blighting the futures of those around him so long as it serves his ends. However, Jane forgives John in the last moments of the play, offering to “save” him from himself. Reed agrees, though his actions throughout the play suggest that perhaps this concession has more to do with his desire to shore up his own respectability than to mend his relationship with Jane. In both of these adaptations, John Reed demonstrates that decay of British morality stems not from a corruption seeping upwards from

the debauched working class but instead stems from the lechery and avarice of the wealthy landed elite.

Written a few years later than Paul's *Jane Eyre*, W.G. Wills's adaptation, which opened on December 23rd 1882 at the Globe Theater in Newcastle Street, continues to underscore the immorality of the wealthy upper classes. Although born in 1828 to a prosperous family in Ireland that allowed him to live "as idle as well-to-do young men in those early times usually were" (Wills "W.G." 4), Wills spent his life in London "always poor, and sometimes penniless" and "live[d] in almost squalid surroundings" (2-3). The contrast between his two lifestyles, the wealthy gentleman from Ireland and the poor artist in London, may have made him capable of "acquiring among all classes a widespread popularity" (Wills "W.G" 1). Wills, a prolific dramatist, "was perhaps the leading purveyor of the romantic, poetic, historical drama to the British theatergoer in the 1870s and 1880s," though "he had no practical knowledge of the stage, put in few stage directions and was mainly concerned with a poetic vision" (Richards 173 &176). He had mixed successes in the theater but dedicated himself to both writing and painting. According to his brother and biographer Freeman Wills, "one of Willie Wills's great fortes was adaptation. He could rapidly extract the pith from a novel, grasping the main facts and all that was essential, arranging the perspective and preserving the characteristics" (152).

Freeman Wills's description of his brother's abilities and sentiments seem a bit biased. He willingly admits that his brother's "play strikes--necessarily, perhaps--a very different keynote from the novel" but argues, "it is the sentiment of the story that is woven into the play, and this is done with success and good taste" (186). Public reception remained mixed. In an article published in February of 1883 in *Theatre* the writer contends that the play "leaves the spectator dissatisfied" ("*Jane Eyre*" 112), and *Dramatic Notes* in January of 1882 argued that his

adaptation “did not prove sufficiently powerful” (“XII” 76). In contrast, *The Athenaeum*, in its December 1882 article, asserted that “while departing from the story to the extent of introducing situations and even characters which do not appear in it, Mr. Wills has supplied little or nothing for which in the narrative a species of justification is not supplied” (“Drama” 907). Wills continued to produce adaptations of novels with varying success. His writing petered off after 1887 after “the death of his beloved mother,” which “broke Wills’s heart”; Wills died a few years later in 1891, “virtually penniless” (Richards 178).

As the reviews suggest, Wills changed much of the material from Brontë’s novel, though he kept the broad plot. As in the novel, Jane, a poor governess living at Thornfield, falls in love with Rochester, gets engaged to him, discovers Bertha, leaves, and returns to marry Rochester after Bertha has died. Unlike in the novel, Wills added several characters including Mr. Prior and his mother, with whom Jane had stayed prior to living at Thornfield. Mr. Prior wished to marry Jane, the reason she left her post teaching in his village. He comes to Thornfield to beg Jane to return, remarking on how poorly her “social superiors” treated her at Thornfield (397). Much as in Brougham’s early adaptation, Wills’s version adds a scene where the Ingrams mock Jane, though with the intent of depicting her failures and their own superior knowledge rather than simply “cowing” her. Where Brougham’s Ingrams enter and exit the play relatively swiftly, Wills focuses on their presence much as Paul does with the Reeds. This is one of the few adaptations to include the gypsy scene from Brontë’s novel, which ends with Rochester and Jane engaged and is followed by warnings from several people, including Mrs. Fairfax, Grace Poole, Lady Ingram, and Mr. Prior that Jane should abandon Thornfield. Jane refuses until Mr. Prior reveals that Rochester is already married, and she leaves at the end of Act three. Act four opens

with Rochester at a “lodge” after Bertha has set fire to Thornfield (422). He has been injured in the fire and abandoned by society. Jane arrives, they talk, agree to marry, and the play ends.

The place of the governess in British society became even more tenuous as the century progressed. According to the article “How Girls are Taught” published in the *Examiner* on April 17th 1880, the role of governess, as a mode of employment, was fading, “never likely to rise from her ashes” due to the creation of high schools (495). Moreover, the glut of governesses searching for jobs, in part due to the creation of these schools, resulted in many “gentlewomen” becoming impoverished while those in a position to hire such women were more often than not willing to exploit this situation (Crump 492). The periodical *Judy: or The London Serio-Comic Journal* published a short reproof of such actions in the October 26th 1881 edition. Here, they describe an advertisement published in another periodical that sought to hire “any elderly Governess” to care for children “in exchange for her board and lodging and laundress bill” (“A Generous” 190). The writer chastises the advertiser for “the incredible cruelty” of the ad, referring to the request for a governess without pay as “impertinence,” and “meanness,” and says that no one would dare post such an ad for any other household position (190). This situation along with the many parliamentary acts that expanded the rights of workers in the 1870s and 1880s are reflected in the way in which Wills modifies Jane’s role in his play.

The rise in class tensions combined with the faltering of the governess position makes Jane’s willingness to stand up to the Ingrams all the more powerful as her situation, if she were to lose her position, would indeed be dire. Simultaneously, the Ingrams’s treatment of Jane in this adaptation underscores the fear felt by those in positions of wealth that clearly defined class lines could no longer be depended up on to distinguish between who belonged and who did not. The Ingrams seek not only to demean Jane (as they do in the novel) but further to mark her as

inferior and incapable of meeting the standards of her position. In a scene towards the beginning of act two, Blanche calls for Jane, intending to show her unsuitability as a governess:

Blanche: The Governess. Let us get her down, and draw her out--let us bait her. I'm sure we shall have some fun... We'll all be so condescending, and charming. We'll pretend we've had an argument and make her the arbiter, don't you see? I'm quite sure she knows--nothing of history.

Lady Ingram: And I don't think she knows French--a most incompetent person--but my sweet love, I cannot approve. [Jane enters and they quiz her on a variety of subjects including geography and French]....

Blanche: Donner un plat de *sa* métier! What's that, Miss Eyre?
Jane (*promptly*): Bad French-- '*son métier*'....

Lady Ingram: How can you be so presumptuous? My daughter has had the most expensive masters--impossible! (Wills 401- 402)

In a scene where the aristocrats intend to use their place in the social hierarchy to demonstrate their own natural superiority and the natural inferiority of a servant, the Ingrams only serve to further underscore their own faults and Jane's forbearance. Blanche seeks to use Jane as a reminder of her own superiority and the innate inferiority of any below her, and Lady Ingram's contention that her daughter could not possibly be incorrect as she has employed the "most expensive masters" marks the Lady's preoccupation with money and status while also noting the shift in the way the wealthy educated their children. For her, money is inextricably linked to quality, thus meaning that without fail they must be superior to Jane.

However, Wills upsets such views in this and the following exchange between Blanche and her sister. Blanche's inhumanity towards Jane is emphasized when Blanche's sister warns that Rochester would interrupt her interrogation if he returns, and Blanche simply scoffs, stating, "On what plea? Cruelty to animals?" (402). While the Ingrams act similarly in Brontë's novel, deriding Jane and governesses in general, Wills makes these characters a focal point in the production to heighten the contrast between Jane's social position and their own, ultimately

noting the demeaned and ignorant state of the aristocrats in contrast to Jane's controlled and intelligent responses. Blanche's refusal to acknowledge Jane's humanity demonstrates a common opinion held in the later Victorian era. According to F.M.L. Thompson, "Some contemporary opinion indeed held that domestic servants were not part of the working class at all, but were servile and degraded appendages of the class of the householder for whom they worked" (239). Wills's depiction of the interplay between Jane and Blanche presents for his audiences an instance of the superiority of a person who labored in the face of contemporary views that sought to displace them from larger conversations occurring in parliament and periodicals. Working against negative perspectives of those who engaged in labor, Wills uses the Ingrams as a model of the failure of the aristocracy while Jane stands as the idealized worker.

Wills further expands his discourse on the faulty nature of the upper classes through his portrayal of Adèle. Depicted as vacuous and obsessed with trivialities in the novel, the Adèle of Wills's production seems more like a miniature Blanche in training, constantly belittling the servants around her. The opening scene of Wills's *Jane Eyre* is devoted to the interplay between Jane, Adèle, and Mrs. Fairfax and throughout Adèle asserts her power over Mrs. Fairfax. Discussing how Jane and Adèle will pass their time, Jane suggests they might play hide and seek but Adèle balks at this, arguing that there are ghosts and that they must lock their doors against them. Mrs. Fairfax interrupts, explaining that they lock the doors for fear of robbery not for fear of ghosts and Adèle quickly reprimands the housekeeper:

Adèle: We are talking, Madame, Miss Eyre and I, pray do not interrupt.

Jane: Oh, fie, you musn't talk in that way.

Adèle Can you tell stories?

Jane: Oh, yes.

Mrs. Fairfax: Don't tease Miss Eyre. She's tired.

Adèle: Hush--hush--hush. (Wills 389).

Viewed as either the “bulwark against immorality and class erosion,” or as noted earlier, as the point at which working class ideals could infiltrate the homes of the wealthy, the governess serves an inverted role here (Poovey 171). Rather than protect Adèle from exposure to working-class elements, Jane must inoculate Adèle against the influence of the upper classes. Jane exists in a liminal space; the governess, due to her labor, “was associated with the working-class woman” who should, due to her class, have “remained outside the front door of the wealthy Victorian home” but because of her specific labor, she invades it instead (Hughes 119). In choosing to open the play with a scene that showcases Adele’s already nascent class antagonism and Jane’s quick attempt to undermine what she views as a breach in decorum, the scene underscores Wills’s inversion of the historically rigid class hierarchies by demonstrating the superiority of both Jane and Mrs. Fairfax.

The only other scene given to Adèle occurs about halfway through act two, where Adèle rejects Blanche, and the aristocracy she represents in favor of Jane, calling Blanche “*mechant*” (sic) (French for wicked) because she told her that she “did not belong to Monsieur Rochester or anyone” (Wills 407). Jane quickly defends Adèle, telling her “I love you all the better for that. As a child I was just like you--we love one another all the better” (407). Here, Wills transplants some of the dialogue that occurs in the novel between Rochester and Jane, choosing instead to have Adèle directly confront the antagonism of a lady of the aristocracy with Jane again acting as buffer between Adèle and that segment of society. Throughout the adaptation, Jane continues much in the same manner. When Rochester implies that he is poor and needs to sell much of his property and possessions, Jane responds that he “may be happier so” and reflects on “how sweet”

a quiet and reclusive life “would be” (405). While most narratives of class movement in the Victorian era focus on a desired move upward, Wills instead emphasizes the desirability of a movement if not exactly downward then at least away from the corrupting influences of the upper classes. Wills’s adaptation, arriving near the end of the century, dramatizes the increased tensions between the working and non-working segments of Victorian society as the tensions between the middle and upper ebbed while the call for reform from the lower ranks increased, culminating in the Reform Act of 1884. This adaptation, like Paul’s, emphasizes the inferiority of the upper classes and the need to protect the young from the depravity that flowed from it while demonstrating the ways in which those who engaged in labor could and should be included in public and political dialogues.

While Wills’s adaptation decries the corrupt and uncaring qualities of the aristocracy, it also emphasizes the salvation that poverty, or at least the loss of position, could provide. Rochester, when he still has his place in society, is referred to as “a dishonorable despicable, unprincipled man...he is no gentleman--a hypocrite--almost a felon” by Blanche when she comes to warn Jane to leave (Wills 417) and Mr. Prior implies that he is “false--without truth--and without honor” (416). Although he can claim the name of “gentleman” due to his social status, he by no means meets the larger requirements outlined by the title. In fact, his money and status have protected him in his “dishonorable” and “false” actions, allowing him to move freely so long as he could maintain the appropriate lifestyle. In this way, Wills’s Rochester mimics the conversations occurring in the periodicals of the period where some argued that wealth could remove gentlemanliness (*The London Reader*), while others note that a true gentleman evinced a “forbearing use of power” (“A Gentleman” 443). The author of the latter article, however, defines power loosely, suggesting that it is not simply political or social power that a gentleman

must properly employ but any sort of power, including that which he wields over “wife”, “children,” “the weak,” “the employed,” “the poor,” “the confiding,” and so on (443). In his wealth and safety, Rochester fails to use his power or gentlemanly title appropriately and thus finds himself split from that role. After the loss of Thornfield and the exposure of Bertha, however, he falls into poverty, living in a secluded “lodge” (Wills 422). It is not until this point, when he escapes the world of the Ingrams, that Rochester can achieve peace and happiness, though he “is ruined” monetarily (424). In his crippled and impoverished state though, he reclaims his place as a “gentleman” and is referred to as such by Mrs. Fairfax (424). However, “gentleman,” as an appellation for Rochester, no longer refers simply to his social rank but rather to his demeanor. Rochester acknowledges that he has lost his place, remarking that he has committed “two high crimes against society...poverty and scandal” (425). He recognizes that his fault and his exclusion from society stems not from any moral failure (though he did commit crimes that would label him as such) on his part but rather from his loss of wealth and the creation of a scandal. Claudia Nelson suggests, “Among the upper classes... ‘gentlemanliness’ referred to not only an internalized code of conduct ...but also to a way of life” (28), but this play attempts to detach the “moral code” from the “way of life” as the latter often resulted in disregarding the former. In Wills’s play, “society” and its obsession with being a gentleman is revealed as a hoax, a meaningless term used to justify perceived superiority that simply did not exist.

The term “gentleman,” in this play, becomes disassociated with the wealthy elite as Rochester only regains the appellation when he manages to extricate himself from the “unprincipled” sector of society that justifies the mistreatment of the laboring classes by marking them as corrupt. Moreover, there is no chance for Jane and Rochester to regain social position

via renewed funds. The subplot concerning Jane's inheritance has been entirely excluded. Earlier in the play Rochester fantasizes about what it would be like to leave his place in society while he manipulates Blanche: "I have often pictured myself, if I became a poor man, what a peaceful happy home I might create around me. No stately dinners--no chattering parties--but a ministering wife, such as you Blanche, in your quiet alpaca gown, sharing with me my privations and turning by her sympathy--our common cares into joy" (405). While this is certainly an idealization of the lives of the poor, refusing to admit to the hardships and want that would necessarily attend living in poverty, it also suggests that the way that the poor live, without "stately dinners" but with "peaceful" homes with a "ministering wife," would be infinitely superior to the luxury of the aristocracy. Of course, this vision of "peace" in a poor home relies on maintaining gender boundaries. Nonetheless, this juxtaposition of the corruption of the landed elite with the idealization of the poor family dismantles the negative perception of the laboring poor. While many feared the growing outcry for reform, for the inclusion of working class men in public discourse, Wills instead sees laboring as purifying force, a lifestyle that removes corruption and restores character.

The changes seen in Roberts's, Willing's, and Wills's adaptations of Victorian novels for the British stage during these decades demonstrate the extent to which the labels and lines demarcating class fluctuated. The 1870s and 1880s was a period of instability, with vast changes in the political, social, and economic facets of Victorian society, all of which worked to blur the lines between the wealthy landed elite and the laborers. Increased agitation for rights for both middle-class women and for working class men upset many of the boundaries that had been structured by first the aristocracy and later the middle class. In part, these plays employ a title historically tied to the landed elite, gentleman, in order to subvert normative class structures.

Engaging with the discussion of what exactly made a gentleman seen in many of the periodicals of the period, these plays import that conversation and deploy it as a method of legitimizing the laboring sector, and thus themselves as large sections of the audience and workers would have come from that portion of society. These theatrical adaptations did not attempt to mimic the style or tone of scholarly conversations as their aim was first to entertain, but this goal does not lessen the extent to which these productions still engaged with the issues of the era, performing new versions of social hierarchy that often subtly upset the normative constructions of class and gender while still appealing to a broad audience, in part due to the necessity of attracting audience from across the social spectrum.

Notes

¹ I exclude these adaptations for several reasons. First, their relationship to the London stage is dubious. John Brougham's *Lady Audley's Secret*, which opened in London in 1866, actually first appeared at the Winter Garden Theatre in New York in 1863. Similarly, the anonymous 1867 version of *Jane Eyre*, produced at the Surrey theatre, was a much abbreviated version of Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer's German adaptation, *Jane Eyre or The Orphan of Lowood (Die Wais Von Lowood)*, which opened in Vienna in 1853. These two productions' connection to foreign audiences and foreign politics makes their place in this study ambiguous at best considering the weight given to both criteria in considering the significance of the alterations made to the text.

² *The Long Strike* was published during the nineteenth century in acting editions by Samuel French, making this edition readily available both online and via microform copies of the publication.

³ According to Deirdre McFeely, "Dion Boucicault successfully linked history and melodrama" throughout his career "in *The Colleen Bawn*, *Arrah-na-Pogue* and *The Shaughraun*," all of which take Irish historical events as their focus (139). The violence seen in *The Long Strike* also echoes the tone seen in other plays, such as his 1880 *The O'Dowd* and 1870 *Rapparee*.

⁴ West End theatres, in order to appeal to the laboring classes, expanded their performances of melodramas, farces, and spectacles in addition to continuing to stage legitimate dramas (Booth 7).

⁵ See the *Report from the Select Committee on Theatrical Licenses and Regulations; Together with the Proceedings of the Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix*

⁶ There were other productions of *Jane Eyre* in nineteenth-century England, but they were simply new performances of old adaptations, including revivals of W.G. Wills's version.

⁷ Unlike Roberts' 1863 version of *Lady Audley's Secret* which has printed copies of the text still available, the only copy I have been able to find of this version exists in the Lord Chamberlain's Plays archive in the British Library as a manuscript copy.

⁸ The maid of all work, as the title implies, fulfilled all duties in the house and was generally the only servant on hand. See Flanders, Judith. *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England* for more on the maid of all work.

⁹ James Willing's, T.H. Paul's, and W.G. Wills's adaptations of *Jane Eyre* have all been compiled into critical editions in Patsy Stoneman's *Jane Eyre on Stage: 1848-1898*. Aside from this book, the only other copies seem to be in the Lord Chamberlain's Plays archive at the British Library in manuscript form, which is where Stoneman conducted her research for her book.

¹⁰ Specifically, in the 1870s, the Social Purity Movement called into question the upper-class male's actions and indicted the sexual promiscuity of the group, seeing in their actions the cause for much of the corruption in Victorian Society. See Ben Griffin's *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture, and the Struggle for Women's Rights* for more.

¹¹ The first stage adaptations of *Tess*, written by Lorimer Stoddard, opened in New York in 1897.

¹² In Mary Poovey's "The Anathematized Race," she argues that the governess position in the upper and middle class home became increasingly more complex as the wealthy and landed elite often feared she would act as an agent corrupting the children with working-class morality and ethics.

CONCLUSION REASSESSING THE VALUE OF VICTORIAN THEATRE

When taken together, the progression of theatrical adaptations from the late 1840s and early 1850s, to the early 1860s, and finally into the late 1870s and early 1880s embody the power of the theater in Victorian society to engage with contemporary issues for an underrepresented portion of society (the laborer) and then to mold that revision in such a way that it creates new versions of the Victorians. Rather than see theatrical adaptations as “vulgar,” as Charlotte Brontë feared any adaptation of *Jane Eyre* would be or as a “scruffy orphan” to the novel and poetry of the era, this dissertation argues that the theatre in fact worked alongside these forms and in dialogue with the issues being discussed in parliament and the periodicals.

In recent years, scholars have become increasingly interested in the literature of the working class. Florence Boos published her collection, *Working-Class Women Poets in Victorian Britain: An Anthology*, in 2008, offering one of the first compilations of poetry written by female laborers. In 1994, Paul Thomas Murphy published *Toward a Working Class Canon: Literary Criticism in British Working Class Periodicals, 1816-1858*, where he examines “the explicitly stated literary values found in the hundred of periodicals written by and for the working class” and how those values demonstrate “the several ways in which the working class created its own literary aesthetic” (2). Similarly, research into theatrical adaptation in the nineteenth century has grown. Patsy Stoneman’s *Jane Eyre on Stage* published in 2007, without which this project would have been impossible, demonstrates the power of the adaptations in the nineteenth century with her thorough research on the plays, the theatres, the playwrights, and the reception. It is within the context of these growing fields that this dissertation situates itself. In examining two neglected areas, Victorian working-class literature and Victorian theatrical adaptations, I argue that we uncover new versions of the Victorians, ones they crafted in response to not only the

cultural and social pressures of the time but also in tandem with the needs of a sub-group of Victorian society that is often marginalized in the consideration of Victorian literature and culture.

Together, these plays reveal that the boundaries between classes and their ideologies in the Victorian era were extremely malleable. Laborers and those writing and producing plays for them used a variety of methods to engage with and subvert the public conversations concerning class. In taking bits and pieces of various expressions of class relations and reformulating them to work for rather than against working-class goals, these adaptations offer laborers a voice that represents them to a broader public. In the earliest versions of *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton*, this means employing nostalgia and paternalism in order to empower laborers who were alienated from their work and their employers under industrialization. Later, in the 1860s, the plays similarly redeployed contemporary discussions of the role of the domestic servant and middle-class domesticity as a reaction against the encroachment of middle-class and aristocratic lifestyles in the working-class home, an importation that effectively deformed and disrupted the laborer's home. Finally, in the late 1870s and early 1880s, the playwrights usurp the upper-class term of "gentleman," responding to contemporary discussions in periodicals concerning the character of a gentleman by extracting the label from the aristocracy and implanting it in the working class. In effect, these plays follow the development of class relations in the Victorian era, picking up the conversations that occur in parliament and journalism and using that along with the novels that had already been situated within the context of Victorian cultural and society to give voice to the laborer, to recreate class structures in new ways, and to manipulate the conversations concerning these issues in ways that the literature aimed at the middle and aristocratic classes did not.

E.P. Thompson argues that “class is a relationship not a thing,” a pattern that we can identify when we look at individual members of society over a long period of time (11). This dissertation argues that Victorian minor theatres engaged with the larger cultural and social conversations concerning class, but unlike the scholarly or governmental discussions, the minor theatres responded to the needs and lives of the working class, though not exclusively. Henry Mayhew in particular felt that the ways in which the Victorians sought to reach the laborers were ineffective:

My own experience with this neglected class goes to prove, that if we would really lift them out of the moral mire in which they are wallowing, the first step must be to provide them with *wholesome* amusements. The misfortune, however, is that when we seek to elevate the character of the people, we give them such mere dry abstract truths and dogmas to digest that the uneducated mind turns with abhorrence from them. We forget how we ourselves were originally won by our *emotions* to the consideration of such subjects. (41)

While I do not wish to contend that the adaptations discussed here were particularly “*wholesome*,” they do effectively engage their audiences via their emotions, through connections to their worlds and ideals. Consequently, in looking at how these minor theatres in London between 1848 and 1882 appropriated novels already engaged with the social and cultural issues of the era, I wish to demonstrate the value of engaging in critical examinations of theatrical adaptations as a part of the *pattern* of ways that the Victorians created images of themselves.

This dissertation examines just a few of the many stage adaptations of Victorian novels that occurred in London and limits its investigation to the portrayal of class and to a lesser extent gender. There are a plethora of other adaptations of not only these three novels but of other prominent pieces written during the nineteenth century, including works by Dickens, Tennyson, and the authors discussed here. Further research concerning how these plays interacted with and responded to the adaptations discussed here is necessary, especially concerning how the

playwrights approached the writings of male and female novelists. The differences found, for example, between adaptations of Tennyson's *The Princess* and the novels of female authors would be particularly revealing in terms of the ways in which the theatrical world responded to a male author's work on gender differently from a female author's.

Although I excluded the international adaptations of the three novels discussed here, these versions, too, deserve critical attention for what they can reveal about how playwrights adopted quintessentially British material for entirely new audiences. An earlier version of this dissertation, in fact, included an examination of John Brougham's 1849 *Jane Eyre* in chapter one. For, like the British versions of the late 1840s and early 1850s, Brougham too seems to be responding to a nostalgia for older constructions of class relations, though in reaction to American issues. This adaptation along with others staged in America and across Europe have not received significant critical attention, though they could offer unique insights in transatlantic studies. Further investigations of the adaptations discussed in this dissertation as well as these international versions would necessarily consider issues of globalization and post-colonialism, topics that I felt did not fit in this particular project.

Adaptations of major Victorian novels comprised a large portion of the materials written for theatres in Victorian England and abroad. While often ignored as secondary to their sources, these plays have significant insights to offer in literary studies because the theatre played a central role for the Victorians as not only a form of entertainment but as a mode of articulating and manipulating socio-cultural issues as part of the larger literary landscape. The adaptations of the three novels develop and respond to ideologies of class, and the investigation of these adaptations here offers a place to begin thinking about the roles of theatrical adaptation in Victorian England.

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APPENDIX SUMMARIES

Jane Eyre (1847)

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* published in October of 1847, under the pseudonym Currer Bell, narrates the experience of the eponymous character. Opening at Gateshead, a young Jane lives with her abusive Aunt Reed and her three cousins, John, Georgiana, and Eliza. She is an outcast within her family, only allowed to live there because Mrs. Reed swore on her husband's deathbed to care for Jane who had been orphaned when very young. After Jane has an altercation with her cousin John Reed and a hysterical fit caused by her incarceration in the Red Room (where her uncle died), Mrs. Reed can no longer stand Jane's presence and sends her to Lowood School, a charity institution run by the hypocritical Mr. Brocklehurst who lives a lavish life himself but forces the children at the school to survive at a subsistence level. Mrs. Reed warned Mr. Brocklehurst that Jane was a vindictive and false child, and shortly after her arrival at Lowood, he makes her stand before the class while her errors are outlined and the other students warned to avoid her. The fellow students, however, do not hold Mr. Brocklehurst in high regard, and his threats do not ruin Jane's chances. She quickly becomes friends with Helen Burns, a fellow student, and Mrs. Temple, a kind teacher. However, Helen and many other children die in an epidemic of consumption. Jane stays at Lowood into her early adulthood, moving from pupil to teacher but longs to do more.

She advertises for a position as governess and leaves shortly thereafter for Thornfield Hall where she has been hired by Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper. At Thornfield, Jane tutors a single student, Adèle, a young girl who is the ward of Mr. Rochester. Rochester, the owner of Thornfield Hall, spends little time at home, but this changes when he meets Jane Eyre. At Thornfield, strange occurrences happen sporadically, including unidentified laughter as well as a

fire set in Mr. Rochester's room, from which Jane saves him. These strange occurrences are attributed to Mrs. Poole, a servant in the house. Jane and Rochester have an uneasy awkward friendship throughout her time at Thornfield, though it is clear that Jane cares for Rochester. Rochester invites local gentry to stay at his home, including the Ingram family. During this party an incident occurs where a Mr. Mason of Jamaica arrives and ends up injured. Jane helps Rochester tend to Mr. Mason who leaves early in the morning. Blanche Ingram, the daughter of Lady and Lord Ingram, is a great beauty and much is made of her relationship with Rochester. In fact, Rochester leads Blanche on, going so far as to suggest they may marry, to make Jane jealous. After Rochester pretends to lose his fortune, the Ingram family breaks of its connection to Rochester.

Jane leaves Thornfield for a short time after learning that Mrs. Reed is dying. When she reaches Gateshead, Mrs. Reed reveals that Jane has an uncle alive who wanted her to be with him, though she told him Jane was dead out of bitterness. Mrs. Reed dies and Jane returns to Thornfield where after a confrontation with Rochester about finding new employment due to his imminent marriage and her belief that they are "equal as we are," Rochester proposes, and they become engaged. However, just as the wedding is about to happen, a lawyer and Mr. Mason arrive to reveal that Mr. Rochester is already married to Bertha Mason Rochester, a mad woman whom he keeps locked in the attic, the source of all the mysterious noises and occurrences in the house. Jane is heartbroken and flees in order to maintain her honor. After wandering for a considerable time, Jane stumbles upon the home of St. John Rivers, a minister, and his family. They save Jane, who is gravely ill from starvation and exposure. Jane stays with the Riverses, learning from them and then becoming a teacher at their local school. During her stay with this family, St. John reveals that they are all cousins and that their uncle left his entire fortune to

Jane. Jane refuses to accept it in its entirety, instead splitting the inheritance equally between herself, St. John, and his two sisters, Diane and Mary. St. John dreams of going to India as a missionary and wishes to take Jane with him as his wife. Jane is willing to go as his sister but refuses to marry him, as there is no love between them. After Jane refuses to go with St. John, she hears a voice cry out for her in the night and believes it is Rochester. She immediately sets off to find him. When she reaches Thornfield, it has been burned down and she learns that Bertha, who started the blaze, died in the fire. Rochester was injured, losing his hand and his sight, and retired to his hunting lodge Ferndean Manor. Jane travels there. After a bit of verbal parrying, they agree to marry and be happy. The epilogue shows them together with their son, and Rochester has regained some of his sight.

Mary Barton (1848)

Elizabeth Gaskell's 1848 *Mary Barton*, describes the hardships faced by factory workers in Manchester. The main plot revolves around the Barton family, consisting of Mary and her father John. Mary's mother dies early in the novel after her sister Esther disappears, and Mary and John are left to fend for themselves. Mary is extremely pretty and wishes to move above her station, while John Barton is proud of his labor and wishes to keep Mary away from the influence of wealth. Left with just herself and her father, Mary goes to work as a seamstress. It is during this time that she becomes acquainted with Harry Carson, the son of the local mill owner who begins to court her. However, Jem Wilson, a laborer and family friend, also wishes to court Mary. When he proposes marriage to her, she refuses him, still thinking to marry Carson. Shortly thereafter, though, she realizes she has made a mistake and decides to break off her relations with Carson. Carson, unwilling to concede, continues to follow Mary, eventually admitting that he had no intention of marrying her. In the mean time, Mary's aunt Esther has

returned as a prostitute and seeks to warn Jem Wilson that Mary's connection to Henry Carson is dangerous. Jem confronts Henry, asking after his intentions and a small fight ensues where Jem strikes Henry.

At the same time, John Barton has joined the Chartist movement. Many have lost their jobs at the factory (owned by Mr. Carson) and those who do work feel they are paid too little. They attend a meeting with Mr. Carson, his son, and various other factory owners, attempting to improve the workers' conditions, but instead John Barton discovers that Harry Carson has drawn a picture mocking the poor men. This incites the group to action, and they draw straws to see who will act to take revenge on the factory owners. Shortly thereafter, Henry Carson is shot in the street, and Jem Wilson is blamed.

Mary is distraught, torn between believing that Jem has killed Henry over her and refusing to believe he could do such a thing, but evidence piles up against him. He has an uncertain alibi, claiming to have walked with his cousin Will part of the way on the road to Liverpool, and his gun was used in the shooting. Esther arrives at Mary's home, carrying yet more evidence, the wadding from the gun found near the site of the murder that has Mary's name in Jem's handwriting. Mary realizes that this was from a paper given to her by Jem and begins to suspect that her father may have killed Harry. She sets out to clear Jem by travelling to Liverpool to retrieve Will. The trial continues with no sign of Will, but he arrives at the last moment, resulting in an acquittal. John Barton calls for Mary, Jem, and Mr. Carson, revealing that he murdered Henry and asking forgiveness. Mr. Carson refuses to forgive him and leaves but soon returns having changed his mind. John Barton dies in his arms. Jem and Mary, along with his mother, travel to Canada because his name has been tainted by the trial and he will be unable to find work. The novel concludes with them living happily together in Canada.

Lady Audley's Secret (1862)

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) follows the eponymous heroine. Opening at Audley Court where the attractive Lucy Graham, previously a governess for the local doctor, married the elderly Sir Michael Audley. At the same time, Robert Audley, Sir Michael's heir, though not his son, lives in London, working as a lawyer. While at his apartment, his old friend George Talboys, who he has not seen in many years, appears. George relates his history to Robert, telling him that he married the daughter of a dissolute officer, lost favor with his father for doing so, and soon became impoverished. Although the couple was initially happy, their poverty made life difficult and after a fight, he decides to leave his wife to go abroad to make his fortune. Having achieved this, he came home to find his wife. However, as they talk, he sees a notice in the paper that reports the death of Helen Talboys, his wife. The news breaks George, and Robert tries to coax him out of his melancholy state, insisting he accompany him to Audley Court where he will go to meet the new Lady Audley.

When they arrive at Audley Court, the relationship between Lady Audley and Alicia, Sir Michael's daughter from his previous marriage, is strained. Alicia clearly dislikes Lady Audley and sees Robert's interest in Lady Audley as a threat to her own desire to marry him. Lady Audley, a doll-like woman smiles and attempts to befriend Robert while avoiding meeting George. However, when George sees a painting of Lady Audley, he becomes distraught. He acts strangely thereafter and abandons Robert while fishing on Audley Court to go speak with Lady Audley, who a servant informs him is walking in the lime-tree walk. After this, George disappears and Robert Audley begins his search for him, vowing to discover what happened to his friend.

Throughout the investigation, Clara Talboys, George's sister, spurs him on, and he eventually uncovers evidence that seems to implicate Lady Audley in Talboys's disappearance, including letters and a label on luggage that proves she is in fact Talboys's wife. Robert warns Lady Audley that it would be in her best interest to leave before all is revealed. She, however, refuses to cave, laughing away his concerns. However, Luke Marks, the husband of Lady Audley's servant Phoebe, saw what occurred between Lady Audley and Talboys and blackmails her. With these two threats looming over her, Lady Audley continues to endeavor to protect herself, paying Luke's debts after having purchased an inn for him and Phoebe. In order to remove Robert from Audley Court, she insinuates to Sir Michael that he has been paying too much attention to her, and Robert is asked to leave, though he only goes to Luke's inn in nearby Mt. Stanning.

Called to the inn to pay yet another of Luke's debts, Lady Audley sees a chance to free herself of the two men who threaten her life, and she sets fire to the inn, taking her servant Phoebe away with her. Robert survives and pulls Luke, who has been badly injured, from the flames. He confronts Lady Audley concerning her misdeeds including murdering George Talboys by knocking him down a well, and she confesses to Sir Michael, claiming inherited madness. A doctor is brought in to consider her mental state and concludes that she suffers from latent insanity. Robert sends Lady Audley to a foreign insane asylum under an assumed name. After the confrontation with Lady Audley, Robert visits Luke Marks, who has asked to speak with him as he nears death. Luke reveals that George survived Lady Audley's attack but that he left for Australia. George informs Clara and spends much time with her on her father's lands, eventually falling in love with her. They agree to marry and plan to go to Australia to search for George. However, when Robert returns to London, he finds George waiting for him in his

apartments where he once again recounts the events of his life for Robert. The novel closes with a description of Robert Audley's life two years later, including his success as a lawyer and his life with his family, and finally a short aside that reveals Lady Audley's death in the asylum.

VITA

Doris Frye grew up in Bradenton, Florida, a small town on the west coast of the state. Always interested in literature and reading, she pursued a bachelor's of arts in literary studies at Saint Leo University and graduated in 2007. Degree in hand, she moved on to graduate school in the Department of English at Louisiana State University in 2007, studying Victorian Literature and theater.

She earned her masters degree in 2009 and chose to continue her academic pursuits at LSU. During this time, she co-published an annotated bibliography of 150 sources for Oxford Bibliographies Online with Sharon Weltman and later provided a programme article for the Baton Rouge Little Theatre's production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Along the way, she became intrigued by adaptation and joined this new interest with her abiding love of the Broadway musical, culminating in article concerning gender in the musical adaptation of Gregory Maguire's novel *Wicked*, which was published in *Studies in Musical Theatre*.

Doris currently lives in Mobile, Alabama with her husband Mitch Frye, Chihuahua Oscar, and Siamese cat Simone.