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### The Stage Adaptation of *That Lass o' Lowries* and Mid-Victorian Plays of Factory and Mine

Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel *That Lass O' Lowries*<sup>1</sup> of 1877, which is set in the English Midlands, reveals the influence of the years she spent in Manchester.<sup>2</sup> In the novel, Mrs. Burnett manages to encompass many themes: the poverty and afflictions of a Midlands mining town, the struggles to achieve safety and labour reforms in the mine, the differing outlooks within the Established Church towards poverty and the labouring classes, the barriers set in the path of true love by caste, renunciation in love and the plight of the fallen woman.

It is not surprising that the novel immediately attracted two playwright-adapters, Arthur Matthison and Joseph Hatton, since some of its themes were popular in plays of the time, and the industrial setting, although not new in the theatre, had certainly not been fully exploited. It is interesting to note that the year before he turned to Mrs. Burnett's novel, Matthison had adapted *Enoch Arden* with its sentimental narrative for the stage; Hatton's preceding effort was an adaptation of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

Matthison and Hatton titled their adaption *That Lass O' Lowries, Liz*, and described it on the title page of the Samuel French edition<sup>3</sup> as "founded on the novel . . . by permission of the author." The following notice, accompanied by typographical emphasis appeared above the title: "This play is the only version of Mrs. Burnett's Novel authorized by the author . . ." <sup>4</sup> The play was first produced in London at the Opera Comique on September 1, 1877.

When one compares the novel and this adaptation, one not only learns a great deal about the theatre of the time, but one also realizes some of the strengths, subtleties, and weaknesses of Mrs. Burnett's book. As we shall note, the playwrights with their theatrical concerns, tended to choose what would appeal to the theatre audiences. In doing this they sometimes ignored a significant part of Mrs. Burnett's work and lost some of her concerns. Of course, one also becomes aware of

the opportunities that a novelist has with his or her form which are denied to the playwrights.

Almost all the themes in *That Lass O' Lowries* appeared in other fiction of the century. Mrs. Burnett knew, for example, that Mrs. Gaskell had depicted the industrial Midlands in her novels *Mary Barton* in 1848, and *North and South* in 1855. Love and caste were often coupled as themes in the novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Clergymen of various stripes appeared as well. And, of course, the fallen woman (often coupled with the theme of virtue-threatened-but-triumphant) was a familiar figure in fiction from *Pamela* onwards.

The woman who fell or who was saved from this fate-worse-than-death was certainly a recurrent figure in Victorian domestic melodrama; plays rooted in this theme were legion. The theme of caste also was explored close to Mrs. Burnett's time in Tom Robertson's play *Caste* of 1867. But it is a theme that has always been in the theatre, although it was exploited on a domestic level in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in such important plays as George Lillo's *The London Merchant* (1731), Douglas Jerrold's *Black Ey'd Susan* (1829) and Westland Marston's *The Patrician's Daughter* (1842). In the eighteen-seventies we find the popular comedy *Our Boys*<sup>5</sup> by H. J. Byron with its pleasant egalitarian spirit. Gilbert, of course, treats the theme and exposes its stereotypes in both *H. M. S. Pinafore* (1878) and *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879). Just as ubiquitous a theme is that of renunciation in love, which is as old as the theme of love itself. Rooted in the early theatre and romance, it naturally found its way into eighteenth and nineteenth-century popular theatre and fiction where it easily gratified an insatiable appetite for sentiment.

The role of the church in social reform which Mrs. Burnett explores in her book was not a common topic in the theatre of the period. Censorship from the Examiner of Plays and, indeed, from the audience, would prevent such a theme from depiction on stage. Novelists were not under such constraints. Nevertheless, in both forms, the figure of the clergyman often became a stereotype. One memorable exception in the theatre appears in Wilkie Collins's play *The New Magdalen*<sup>6</sup> (1873) in which a clergyman is a political activist and organizes the downtrodden farm labourers. The plight of the agricultural worker in the strictest sense of the term is briefly depicted in C. H. Hazlewood's melodrama, *Waiting For the Verdict; or, Falsely Accused* in 1859<sup>7</sup>; the sufferings of the poor millers at the hands of the large monopolies are revealed in Edward Fitzball's *The Miller of Derwent Water* in 1853<sup>8</sup>; and, in 1886, Clement Scott's and Wilson Barrett's

play *Sister Mary*<sup>9</sup> looks briefly at the arrogant treatment of the agricultural labourer.

If one thinks in broader terms, there are many domestic melodramas which make the tenant farmers and cottagers the victims of the landlords, or more frequently their agents. In other respects, the countryside was frequently depicted as a place of quaint thatched cottages where, beside simple but clean hearths, people lived virtuous lives. The messages ultimately were: be content with your lot and honest poverty is better than a fate worse than death.

In the endless search for more novel backgrounds for melodrama, playwrights sometimes seized upon urban, factory, and mine settings. Usually the only difference caused by the change in milieu was that the villain now became a factory owner, or a mineowner instead of a landowner. An example of a factory setting used for novelty is D. J. Stanley's play *The Life of a Mill Girl*<sup>10</sup> (1884); against the mill background setting a sentimental and romantic tale is acted out. However, landowners, factory owners and mine owners were privileged persons. Because of this, the Examiner of Plays at the office of the Lord Chamberlain frequently forbade unfavourable references to these groups.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Sally Vernon in her article, "Trouble Up At T' Mill: The Rise and Decline of the Factory Play in the 1830s and 1840s,"<sup>12</sup> discusses the reasons why this decline occurred and lists the many pressures which inhibited factory drama. As Professor Vernon suggests, there are indeed few significant plays which deal, even in part, with industrial themes and settings after the 1840s. One notable exception is Boucicault's adaptation of Mrs. Gaskell's novel *Mary Barton* entitled *The Long Strike* (1886).<sup>13</sup> It is a lively piece of theatre with one of his most successful "sensation" scenes which invokes the use of the telegraph to summon a vital witness to a trial. Boucicault obviously felt little concern for the social issues raised by Mrs. Gaskell but he saw the dramatic possibilities in the tale.<sup>14</sup> Dickens, who read the play before it was performed, said of it:

[It] is done with a master's hand. Its closeness and movement are quite surprising. Its construction is admirable. I have the strongest belief in its making a success.<sup>15</sup>

In his detailed study of the adaptation, Richard Altick not only demonstrates that Boucicault failed to achieve Mrs. Gaskell's social purpose but he also points out that, in her novel, Mrs. Gaskell failed to see the potential for dramatic effect in the murder scene and the courtroom scene.<sup>16</sup>

As well as Boucicault's play, there are several more which in whole or in part deal with related themes. In 1851, for example, Thomas and J. M. Morton's play *All That Glitters Is Not Gold*<sup>17</sup> combines the theme of caste and a factory setting as it portrays a new-rich factory owner. The social-climbing industrialist is contrasted to his son, who remains a humble and honest cotton spinner. Unfortunately, as the play's romantic hero, the son becomes a stereotype. To stand beside him, the authors introduce a factory girl whom he wishes to marry in spite of his father's objections. This heroine is proud of her background and when she praises education we are reminded of the curate's night school in *That Lass O' Lowries*; the Morton heroine says:

Oh blessings on every school in every village of the land, and blessings on the simple words over the door, "Reading and Writing taught here"!!<sup>18</sup>

*The Tide of Time*<sup>19</sup> written by Bayle Bernard in 1858, centers around the caste theme as it presents the conflict between landowners and new railway interests in the 1840s. In spite of the frequent snubs, the railway man becomes the hero and without rancour praises the wealthy "old" classes and their love of England with what Henry Morley calls: "English earnestness of feeling."<sup>20</sup> A sentimental love story follows and it overwhelms the play. A similar situation is presented in *New Men and Old Acres* by Tom Taylor and Augustus Dubourg in 1869.<sup>21</sup> In this work the social-climbing manufacturer, though exposed in all his crassness, extols the combination of education and energy which allowed him to carry out his labours effectively and to leap the barriers of class. The authors, like Mrs. Burnett, believe in opportunity and self-help.

In 1867, just ten years before *That Lass O' Lowries*, a play by Watts Phillips, *Lost in London*<sup>22</sup> has a crucial scene about the misuse of a safety lamp in a mine which foreshadows Mrs. Burnett's use of the lamp. Phillips, in his text, insists also upon realistic detail for the interior of the miner's cottage. In a manner reminiscent of Tom Robertson at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in the same decade, the playwright asks that the things in the cottage should be "homely and rough" and that even the table cloth should look "coarse".<sup>23</sup> In the play's third scene, we are taken down into the mine itself:

Interior of Bleakmoor Mine. Various perspective of galleries and workings, in which the miners are seen passing to and fro with safety lamps. Baskets seen ascending and descending shaft.<sup>24</sup>

A machine which is to displace many workers is the centre of the action in Tom Taylor's *Arkwright's Wife*<sup>25</sup> which appeared in 1873.

Although he went back a century for this particular incident, Taylor realized that the threat of the machine was part of the industrial picture of his own time and he captured the mob's fear of the machine and its impulse to act when roused. In *That Lass O' Lowries* and the adaptation *Liz* the miners of the pit are rather indifferent to the safety lamps but they are more interested in the new furnaces recommended by the crusading engineer perhaps because the owners are so hostile to the innovation.

In speaking about his play *The Middleman*<sup>26</sup> of 1889, Henry Arthur Jones acknowledges that Taylor's play impressed him.<sup>27</sup> Jones took the idea that Arkwright had stolen his invention from an artisan and had married the artisan's daughter. Jones's villain is the owner of a pottery works who steals the formula for a new glaze from one of his artisans. In revenge the artisan invents an even better glaze and ruins his manager. All is resolved when the artisan's daughter marries the owner's son. Although Jones writes a better play, he allows the sentimental love plot to overshadow what he felt was the main theme: "the fight between grasping commercialism and inventive genius."<sup>28</sup>

In 1886, an interesting factory play, *The Foreman of the Works*<sup>29</sup> was presented at the Standard Theatre. The setting is a north-country foundry town and there are some inconsistent efforts to capture a regional dialect. The curtain opens on a meeting to plan a strike but the leader is soon revealed as a demagogue with domestic motives for his actions. The factory manager is presented unsympathetically and a vicar of the church sides with the workers. The possibility of any significant confrontation is soon destroyed when things are overwhelmed by a love plot which involves the foreman's daughter and the foundry owner's son. So it is sentiment and romance which ultimately save the day as is the case in Jones's *Middleman* three years later. One might also ask if the playwright had read Mrs. Burnett's novel or seen the adaptation for the stage since the dialect is used and a clergyman is involved.

In *Work and Wages*<sup>30</sup>, which played in 1890, a similar pattern is followed: the strike here is soon eclipsed by the love theme. But this latter part of the plot is handled awkwardly, even though the author had so many models. In the part of the play involving labour, the audience receives a series of lectures and their tone and content are demonstrated in the following speech:

What I was, so let me remain—plain Thomas Wentworth, one of the great army of British Workmen who have made our country the foremost nation on earth. And now that the storms of life are for the moment swept aside and the breeze of prosperity bids fair to waft us safely into the Haven of Happiness—let us not forget the compact we

have made to offer our example to the World of a True Union of Capital and Labour, the one working for the other each to his own and until the day shall [come] when He to whom we look for all our mercies in this world shall according to our work so mete out our Wages.<sup>31</sup>

In the preceding few examples the tendency to allow the love theme to dominate and conclude the play indicates a catering to popular taste. Moreover, one feels that the social issues do not really interest the playwrights. In Mrs. Burnett's play and in the Hatton and Matthison adaptation, the love interest dominates from the first and the social issues are blended in; there is, then, a reversal of the process we have seen in the plays just discussed.

It is surprising just how much of *That Lass O' Lowries* is carried over into the play *Liz*. In certain parts, the playwrights adopt while in others they adapt. A comparison between novel and play reveals the spatial quality of a novel and the power of an omniscient narrator. There is a more obvious control operating in the novel and Mrs. Burnett's purposes are clear although she is not as intense as is Mrs. Gaskell in *Mary Barton*. Unfortunately, Hatton and Matthison are not such skillful theatrical practitioners as Boucicault and their adaptation is not as powerful as *The Long Strike*. On the other hand, their approach to their source results in almost all the issues raised by Mrs. Burnett getting a hearing. But in doing this they lose some of the coherence of the novel.

Ann Thwaite in her study of Mrs. Burnett, entitled *Waiting for the Party*, relates<sup>32</sup> how the author based her novel on an incident that occurred when she was living in Manchester, fifteen years before. In a square, she saw a pit girl knitting while being bullied and threatened by her abusive father. Mrs. Burnett was impressed by the manner in which the girl maintained her dignity. She named her heroine "Joan" and took her title from the phrase people used for her because of the cruel father: "that lass o' Lowries." The adapters chose to rename Joan "Liz" and to give the play that simple title.<sup>33</sup> This choice of name creates a difficulty because in the novel Lizzie is the name of the "fallen" girl whom Joan befriends. In the play this weak creature is called "Nan."

In her novel, Mrs. Burnett takes pains to describe the dress of Joan and the other pit girls and women. The adapters include suggestions for stage costumes:

Modern. Women, short dresses, shawls and handkerchiefs over heads. Some to wear clogs, as worn in Lancashire. Liz Lowrie. A rough serge, or woolen kind of blouse or jacket, tied round waist, with belt of same material. Short woolen frock or petticoat, blue worsted stockings, and



heavy-looking boots, laced like a man's. Loose handkerchief round neck and arms bare.

The above is not of course as effective on the page as Mrs. Burnett's description which opens Chapter One:

They did not look like women, or at least a stranger new to the district might easily have been misled by their appearance . . . There were about a dozen of them there — all "pit girls," . . . women who wore a dress more than half masculine, and who talked loudly and laughed discordantly, and some of whom, God knows, had faces as hard and brutal as the hardest of their collier brothers and husbands and sweethearts. They had lived among the coal pits, and had worked early and late at the "mouth," ever since they had been old enough to take part in heavy labor. It is not to be wondered that they had lost all bloom of womanly modesty and gentleness . . . they had breathed in the dust and grime of coal, and, somehow or other, it seemed to stick to them and reveal itself in their natures as it did in their bold unwashed faces. (1)

Mrs. Burnett must set Joan apart from these women, and she does so with these words:

But she differed from the rest in two or three respects. The others seemed somewhat stunted in growth; she was tall enough to be imposing. She was as roughly clad as the poorest of them, but she wore her uncouth garb differently. The man's jacket of fustian, open at the neck, bared a handsome sunbrowned throat. The man's hat shaded a face with dark eyes that had a sort of animal beauty, and a well-molded chin. (2)

What seems to attract Mrs. Burnett to her heroine is the girl's almost fierce independence; this trait governs most of Joan's actions and her relationships with the other characters. She suggests that this spirit is something innate and that it cannot be crushed by circumstances. Occasionally Joan's reticence could be mistaken for pride but Mrs. Burnett is careful to balance the portrait with a rather appealing shyness in Joan. Hatton and Matthison have attempted to capture these strengths of the heroine found in the novel. However, they do so only in a superficial way because they are denied the kind of descriptive and interpretative passages of the novelist. Thus, in a general way, Joan is more fully developed than Liz and there are more subtle motives provided for her actions. The play, while maintaining some of Joan's fire, loses most of her warmth.

In the novel, Joan's vitality is captured effectively in the scene in which she defends the fallen Lizzie before the hostile pit girls and women. The playwrights carry over the speech almost word for word for their Liz:

"Lasses," she cried, her voice fairly ringing, "do yo' see this? A bit o' a helpless thing as canna answer back yo're jeers! Aye! look at it well, aw on yo'. Some on yo's gotten th' loike at whoam. An' when yo've looked at th' choild, look at th' mother! Seventeen year owd, Liz is, an' th' world's gone wrong wi' her. I wunnot say as th' world gone ower rest wi' ony on us; but them on us as has had th' strength to howd up agen it, need na set our foot on them as has gone down. Happen theer's na so much to choose atwixt us after aw. But I've gotten this to tell yo' — them as has owt to say o' Liz, mun say it to Joan Lowrie!" (24)

But what the adapters miss is the intense maternalism which Mrs. Burnett captures in the novel when Joan is with the illegitimate infant. These feelings which Joan displays balance and complement her independent, and at times aggressive, spirit. Although the adapters do not ignore these maternal feelings, they do not attempt to make them a strong characteristic in their heroine Liz. To a certain extent this is due to the economy in adaptation which they must practise.

For similar reasons, other subtle aspects of the novel are lost or weakened in the play. The tentative friendship which springs up between the pit-girl heroine and the well-meaning vicar's daughter in the novel becomes too obvious and overly sentimental in the play. In the same fashion, Joan's strong feelings of filial duty and loyalty become quixotic in the portrait of Liz in the play. As a novelist, Mrs. Burnett discusses more than Joan's actions to convey the subtleties of her character.

In both the novel and the play, the heroine is given feelings of unworthiness which mitigate what might be thought of as unbecomingly presumptuous behaviour for one of her class. Mrs. Burnett also makes much of Joan's desire to improve herself through education and religion combined with a generous portion of self-help. In the novel, the curate establishes a night school for the pit lads and lasses and Joan receives some education there. Anice aids her in a religious awakening which is heavy with sentiment and centered on a picture of "Christ in Agony" which Joan sees at the rectory. Through it all, Joan feels beneath the attention of the reforming curate and she feels inadequate beside the privileged Anice. In both novel and play the two girls meet over a hedge between the highroad and a garden and the author and the playwrights use the hedge as a symbol of the barrier between classes. Later in the novel, when she knows Anice better, the following exchange takes place:

"Is na theer a woman's pace fur me i' th' world? Is it allus to be this way wi' me? Con I niver reach no higher, strive as I will, pray as I will — fur I *have* prayed? Is na theer a woman's place fur me i' th' world?"

"Yes," said Anice, "I am sure there is."

"I've thowt as theer mun be somewheer. Sometimes I've felt sure as



their mun be, an' then again I've been beset so sore that I ha almost gi'en it up. If there is such a place fur me I mun find it — I mun!"  
 "You will find it," said Anice. "Some day, surely." (213)

In the play, this loses its intensity as it is adapted in the following words:

LIZ: ... Is there not a woman's place in the world for me?

ANICE: ... Yes, Yes; I am sure there is.

LIZ: Ah, I'm glad you've heard that cry of a poor half-broken heart. I will not hide the pain of it from you, Miss Anice. I want to be a woman—I want to be a woman. If there's a woman's place for me I must find it. I've often thowt there must be.

ANICE: There is and you will find it. (30)

The heroine's anxiety is caused by her strong attraction to the mining engineer Fergus Derrick. If she feels inferior to the curate and Anice, she feels almost worthless before this paragon of masculinity.

Such an abject attitude might be expected to lessen the reader's sympathy for Derrick. However, in the world which Mrs. Burnett creates, he emerges as a sympathetic character. As a mining engineer, he represents a new group in society. As a gentlemen as well as a professional man, he should be a member of the establishment — in this case the mine owners. Essentially he is his own man. His profession comes before all else and when he thinks of the welfare of the miners, he sees himself as a bridge between the miners and the owners. Because of his feelings concerning the mine and the miners, it is not surprising that he is susceptible to the pit girl who stands so apart from her own kind. But he is not completely his own man for he is torn apart by the forces of society and caste on one side and the forces of humanity and compassion on the other. This conflict becomes so intense that only some kind of crisis will resolve it. So Mrs. Burnett uses Derrick's period of recuperation after the explosion to motivate his change in character. He is nursed by Joan as he suffers from fever and delirium and in this way, from his rambling talk, she learns of his true feelings.

The adapters attempt to transfer all this to their play, but they are not completely successful and the result is that before the crisis Derrick is often an insufferable stuffed shirt and his rebirth after his illness is too fortuitous. If one turns back to the novel, one is perhaps too inclined to credit Mrs. Burnett with more subtle techniques than are really there.

In *That Lass O' Lowries*, the author with her four young people, the curate, Anice, Joan, and Derrick creates a tale of renunciation. Her ethereal and crusading young curate adores Anice, the vicar's daughter, from afar. Not only does he feel unworthy before such a model of

virtue but he also assumes that she must be attracted by the dynamic Derrick. He also concludes from Derrick's disjointed talk of the difficult paths of love that Derrick loves the beautiful Anice. Thus the author is able to allow the young curate to bathe in the glow of renunciation. Mrs. Burnett is also able to demonstrate how the lack of communication between people can cause suffering.

It is not surprising that Hatton and Matthison reduced all the complications of plot needed to create the misunderstandings and renunciations. However, their simplification focussed squarely on Derrick and the heroine, Liz. Anice and the clergyman provide a kind of bonus at the end of the play by joining hands and hearts. Another strength is created in the play by the adapters' handling of this theme and their insistence that the path of true love cannot run smoothly given the barriers created by caste. In the play the barriers fall resoundingly:

DERRICK: ... Liz Lowrie, I ask you in my right mind ... in my clear senses ... I ask you, with all the deep sincerity of a man who loves for the first time, and that with all his heart, to become my wife . . .

LIZ: ... Fergus Derrick, you are asking me to be your wife! Me!

DERRICK: I love you! — you, and no other woman!

LIZ: I canna turn you from me! Oh, I canna!

DERRICK: My wife!

*Picture — curtain (39-40)*

Mrs. Burnett, having created more complex and subtle characters must have a more tentative ending and in terms of her novel a more realistic one. She calls for a period of adjustment:

"Yo' are askin' me to be yore wife!" she said. "Me!"

"I love you," he answered. "*You*, and no other woman!"

She waited a moment and then turned suddenly away from him, and leaned against the tree under which they were standing, resting her face upon her arm. Her hand clung among the ivy leaves and crushed them. Her old speech came back in the quick hushed cry she uttered.

"I conna turn yo' for' me," she said. "Oh! I conna!"

"Thank God! Thank God!" he cried.

He would have caught her to his breast, but she held up her hand to restrain him.

"Not yet," she said, "not yet. I conna turn you fro' me, but theer's summat I must ask. Give me th' time to make myself worthy — give me th' time to work an' strive; be patient with me until th' day comes when I can come to you' an' know I need not shame yo'. They say I am na slow at learnin' — wait and see how I can work for th' mon — for th' mon I love." (268-269)

Earlier in the novel, the devoted Joan "shadows" Derrick as he walks the highroad, in order to protect him from her father's schemes for vengeance and possible attack. Mrs. Burnett makes a great deal of this

demonstration and devotion. The playwrights use the idea but condense it considerably. They also accelerate the love between Derrick and Liz at the end of the first act in a tender scene which is accompanied by music. After Derrick has thwarted Lowrie's attack which Liz has tried to prevent, this exchange takes place:

LIZ: ... I must warn you that you are in more danger now than iver.

DERRICK: The old danger.

LIZ: The old danger, as is more to be fear'd now.

DERRICK: And *you*; you stand between me and that danger.

LIZ: Did n'a you . . . stand betwixt danger and me? But harm shanna' be done you, if I dee for it! It shanna', if I dee for it! (*tenderly and sadly*) It is na' wi' me as it is wi' other women. Yo' cannot judge o' me as yo' judge o' other lasses. It has na' been left for me to be lass-like, an' fear't — an' —modest — an' —

DERRICK: It has been left to you to stand as high in my esteem as any woman on earth.

LIZ: (*very softly*) Thank yo'! (*He takes her hand gently*) Na, na, you mustna'.

(*She withdraws her hand; buries her head in her hands; exits slowly; he sinking down on edge of pit, and looking after her. Slow curtain as Liz turns away from Derrick. Music to bring down curtain.*) (11)

Contrary to what Ann Thwaite suggests in her study of Mrs. Burnett, these playwrights do not ignore the strand of plot which tells the story of the fallen young Lizzie.<sup>34</sup> It is difficult to imagine playwrights of their time denying the audience yet another sentimental look at the "frail sisterhood." Lizzie is just a young, weak and frivolous girl upon whom the label of "fallen woman" rests rather heavily. What is really surprising is that the two adapters did not exploit and expand the part of the plot surrounding her. As we have seen Liz eloquently defends the wretched Nan from the taunts of the other women. She also gives the girl and her infant a home, admonishes her gently but firmly and prevents her from seeing her seducer. Although Liz tends the infant we do not see, as noted earlier, the strong portrayal of maternal feeling in the heroine which Mrs. Burnett stresses so much in order to add dimension to the heroine's character. The truth is, that, here again the adapters had to condense the material. When they chose to adapt the novel, they were faced with an *embarras de richesses*.

In *Liz* the adapters do make a significant change when they choose to turn Johnston Barholm, the vicar, into the mine owner and "late M.P." The play loses much through this change and gains little. For in her novel, Mrs. Burnett uses the vicar and his curate to demonstrate some tensions existing within the church at that time. This contrast between the two clergymen is one of the most interesting aspects of the novel. They have conflicting attitudes concerning Joan, the fallen

Lizzie, the miners and the mine itself. The curate, Paul Grace is a moral foil for Vicar Barholm and a physical contrast to the manly Derrick. As noted already he almost cherishes renunciation and he also endures the patronizing attitude of his superior.

In the novel, Mrs. Burnett devotes an early chapter to Barholm in order to create a picture of the man and all his prejudices. Moreover, she is interested not only in what he is but also why he is that way and she strips away the layers of the man. She soon establishes his smugness and his oversimplified views about social problems. The phrase she uses to encapsulate him is: "he was contented with himself." (27) He also underestimates his curate and his daughter Anice and treats them both like children. The author makes a slight attempt to excuse him by stressing his privileged background but in the play, where he is the mine owner, this is held against him. The attitude of Mrs. Burnett is summed up in this passage:

But a man who, having mistaken the field of his endeavour, yet remains amiably self-satisfied, and unconscious of his unfitness, may do more harm in his serene ignorance than he might have done good if he had chosen his proper sphere. Such a man as the last was the Reverend Harold. A good-natured, broad-shouldered, tactless, self-sufficient person. (18)

Such a man, she claims, has a "comfortable confidence in ecclesiastical power," and when it came to the people of Riggan, "he intended to do them good, and improve them, in spite of themselves." (18)

It is on such a foundation, then, that Hatton and Matthison build the character of the mine owner Barholm. In their hands the figure becomes stereotyped, and is merely choleric and ranting when not being smug. He slides into a role that could easily be played by the resident "male heavy" of a theatre company. His character has been oversimplified and there is no subtlety in his portrayal. He is the villain to be hissed at. The following passage from the play reveals this lack of dimension and the asides of the sympathetic characters, Anice and the clergyman establish a black and white contrast. They are speaking of the villainous Lowrie:

BARHOLM: A most discontented man. Many of his class *are* discontented. People ought to accommodate themselves to their station of life. Look at me! I do. Consider my cares, my trials, my responsibilities, and yet nobody ever hears me complain. *I* don't fret and fume like they do. Why cannot they be satisfied? *I* am.

LONSDALE: (*aside*) Self-satisfied.

ANICE: Oh, papa, you have many, many reasons to be satisfied. I haven't much of a head, perhaps, but even I can see that it is far better to be paid for the coal than live down that dreadful mine to dig for it.

LONSDALE: (*aside*) I should like him to change places with a pitman for a week.

BARHOLM: Ah, my dear, your small female mind cannot grasp these matters. You must not come to consider these people of the same sort of material as ourselves. We are the superstructure —

ANICE: And they are the props.

LONSDALE: Well said, Miss Barholm, very well said.

BARHOLM: Very ill said, sir. Do you and Miss Barholm wish to pull down the whole social fabric? Would you, sir, like to be hewing in a coal mine, and you, miss, be gathering coal at the pit's mouth? I've no patience with such revolutionary talk.

ANICE: Well, then, papa, let us finish the argument. I really do feel myself nearer to these poor people than you are.

LONSDALE: (*aside*) Nearer their hearts, I'm sure." (13)

It is not surprising that Barholm is unsympathetic about improvements in the mine. As the engineer, however, Derrick sees an urgent need for improvements and he has specific suggestions:

BARHOLM: ... You are for nothing but spending money.

DERRICK: Better spend money than human life.

BARHOLM: It's easy to set up for a philanthropist with other people's money, Mr. Derrick. Myself and the other owners of this Colliery don't keep the works going for amusement.

DERRICK: I don't set up for a philanthropist, but I do set up for an engineer, and you will find even on the score of money that my plans are cheap. Put in the fans and abolish the furnaces, and we'll say no more about the other changes.

BARHOLM: No, it's all nonsense. Furnaces have been used ever since the mines were open. As for the rest, I suppose the men have complained. They always did. They always will, whatever's done for 'em.

DERRICK: Only the sober, honest men with wives and families have complained, and with reason. As you say, there have been furnaces ever since there have been mines, and there have also been explosions which may, in many cases, be attributed to them. There was an explosion at Browton last week. It was considered a mystery by the Government. Old miners understood it well enough. The return air, loaded with gas, had ignited at the furnace, and the result was that forty dead and wounded men were carried up the shaft to be recognized by wives and children dependent on them for daily bread. . . .

BARHOLM: That's the sensational view, Derrick. And we are talking of these mines, not the pits at Browton.

DERRICK: A fiery pit represents the same danger wherever it is. I hold the lives of these men in my hands.

BARHOLM: It is very good of you to think so. I hope they appreciate it. They have never thanked me for keeping them alive for a score of years. And yet myself and partners have not lost half-a-dozen of them all that time. . . . Mr. Derrick, your absurd ideas are spreading. . . . I shall have a strike on my hands as well as a new-fangled engineer.

DERRICK: I will relieve you, sir, of the latter difficulty. I will hold no human life lightly in my hands. I tender you my resignation. (27-28)

The above passage follows Mrs. Burnett's treatment of the scene very closely, although as narrator she describes Derrick's feelings and creates some measure of intensity. She can also provide us with some industrial background which the adapters cannot fit into their text without resorting to excessively long speeches. The following passage reveals Mrs. Burnett's knowledge of technical details of her research into the problem in general:

The substitution of the mechanical fan for the old furnace at the base of the shaft, was one of the projects to which Derrick clung most tenaciously. During a two years' sojourn among the Belgian mines, he had studied the system earnestly. He had worked hard to introduce it into Riggan. . . . But the miners were bitterly opposed to anything "new-fangled" and the owners were careless. So that the mines were worked, and their profits made, it did not matter for the rest. They were used to casualties, so well used to them in fact, that unless a fearful loss of life occurred, they were not alarmed or even roused. . . . Opposition was bad enough, but indifference was far more baffling. The colliers opposed Derrick to the utmost, the company was rather inclined to ignore him. . . . The colliers talked with rough ill-nature; the company did not want to talk at all. (53-54)

Derrick's point of view is tragically justified when an explosion occurs in the mine. We assume that it has been caused by careless use of the Davy lamp (Lowrie was dismissed for such carelessness earlier), and a faulty furnace and inadequate ventilation. In the novel, Mrs. Burnett moves the action after the explosion down into the mine itself. The play, for technical reasons, remains on the surface (although Watts Phillips in *Lost in London*, mentioned above, has a scene in a mine interior). Yet the playwrights do achieve some tension as the vicar Lonsdale and Liz descend to rescue the miners and, of course, Derrick. However, the threatening danger is more effectively described in the following passage from the novel:

It was a hazardous task they had before them. Death would stare them in the face all through its performance. There was a choking after—damp below, noxious vapors, to breathe which was to die; there was the chance of crushing masses falling from shaken galleries. (229)

The novel form permits such evocative descriptive passages. There is no part of the play, moreover, which captures the bleakness and poverty of Riggan, the colliery town, as do the following brief lines which describe the parish the curate must serve:

His district lay in the lower end of the town among ugly black streets, and alleys; among dirt and ignorance and obstinacy. (96)



The fatalistic acceptance of their lives by the men working under Derrick is captured in these words by the novelist.

The men under him worked with a dull, heavy daring, born of long use and a knowledge of their own helplessness against their fate. There was not one among them who did not know that in going down the shaft to his labor, he might be leaving the light of day behind him forever. But seeing the blue sky vanish from sight thus during six days of fifty-two weeks in the year, engendered a kind of hard indifference. (214)

A secondary yet vital character in *That Lass O' Lowries* is "Owd Sammy Craddock." It is easy perhaps to exaggerate his contribution to the novel because of the much-needed humour that he provides. Moreover, when one compares him to the stereotyped figure of the stage adaptation, one begins to realize the strength of Mrs. Burnett's creation.

In the novel, Sammy is a colourful creature both in his speech and his attitudes. He is the village iconoclast and an outspoken observer of village life. And as the curate Paul Grace realizes, Sammy has influence; he says:

"Among the men who were once his fellow-workers, Craddock is an oracle ... His sharp sarcastic speeches are proverbs among the Rigganites; he amuses them and can make them listen to him." (16-17)

But what most concerns Grace, although it pleases the reader, is that Sammy is most eloquent when his target is Reverend Barholm:

"Barholm is his strong card ... He scans Barholm with the eye of an eagle. He does not spare a single weakness. He studies him — he knows his favourite phrases and gestures by heart, and has used them until there is not a Riggan collier who does not recognize them when they are presented to him, and applaud them as an audience might applaud the staple jokes of a popular actor." (17)

Sammy's independence carries him into political realms as the following passage reveals:

Owd Sammy sat near the chimney-corner smoking his pipe, and making severe mental comments upon the conduct of Parliament, then in session, of whose erratic proceedings he was reading an account in a small but highly seasoned newspaper. Sammy shook his head ominously over the peppery reports, but feeling it as well to reserve his opinions for a select audience at The Crown, allowed Mrs. Craddock to perform her household tasks unmolested. (159)

In Mrs. Burnett's hands he has considerable zest and ginger in his speech and actions.

Some interesting situations are created by Mrs. Burnett through interactions among the characters of Jud, Craddock and Anice. Because Jud is a protégé of Anice and is being educated at the curate's night school, she gives him a copy of *Robinson Crusoe* which he shares with Craddock. Sammy's lively mind is most receptive to the adventures, and, with Jud, he marvels over the "Cannybles." Later, when Sammy's small but independent income stops as a result of a bank failure and he suffers a blow to his pride, it is Anice, the perennial "do-gooder" who finds him a suitable job as a lodge keeper.

Unfortunately, Sammy has a small part in the play. He becomes a stereotyped character who provides comic relief. He is still somewhat independent but in the playwrights' hands he loses much of his feistiness. Without Reverend Barholm to criticize, Sammy is given the rôle of speaker of mildly cynical asides about mineowners. When he experiences financial disaster, he returns to work at the mines and is merely disgruntled. At the end of the play, he loses some dignity since he is used as a cupid figure to help unite the reluctant lovers.

The play preserves the relationship between Jud and Sammy and uses the humour of *Robinson Crusoe* and the "Cannybles". Hatton and Matthison have Sammy speak of the desert island as the "dissolute" island and since he is a stereotype, he repeats the malapropism several times. Doubtless the role of Sammy would fall to the actor who was in every company to play rustic clown figures.

It is not surprising that the closest parallel between the novel and the play involves the villain. In fact, one might wonder if Mrs. Burnett received her inspiration from stage melodrama. Joan's father is a collier and a notorious malcontent; Dan Lowrie (in the play "Phil") has had a run in with Derrick because he lit his pipe in the mine using the flame from his safety helmet. Dismissed from his job, he turns his energy towards a scheme to destroy Derrick. Joan, even though the object of her confused affections is the target of her father's villainy, remains a model of filial loyalty.

The scheme which Lowrie and his two cohorts settle upon is horrifying; they plan to ambush Derrick and throw acid in his face. Due to confusion at the scene of the ambush, it is Lowrie who receives the acid. He does not die immediately but suffers and repents. This allows Joan to soar to unbelievable heights of forgiveness. The play spares, or deprives, the audience by having Lowrie expire immediately.

A second frightening aspect of the conspiracy of the villains involves Jud and his dog. The young boy, with his dog, overhears the villains as they plan their deed. When he is discovered, in order to make him swear a vow of silence, the villains hold the dog "Nib" over the "black

abyss" of an abandoned mine shaft. In the play, with no abyss at hand, the villains hold a knife at the dog's throat.

Joan and her background certainly attracted Mrs. Burnett but the Midlands speech fascinated her. Ann Thwaite tells us that Frances and some of her young friends learned to speak the dialect which she used in the novel. Also, one lad, a caretaker's son, was coaxed by Frances to talk about the speech of his "grandfeyther."<sup>35</sup> It is suggested as well that Frances had read Reverend Gaskell's "Lectures on the Lancashire Dialect" which was appended to the later editions of *Mary Barton*.<sup>36</sup>

The first edition of *That Lass O' Lowries* must have been a challenge for the printers at Scribners, John F. Trow and son. One can sense the great care behind her consistent efforts to transfer the dialect to the reader's ear. In the Samuel French edition of the Hatton and Matthison adaptation one also senses that some care is being taken.

Although there are similarities between the dialects of *Liz* and *That Lass O' Lowries*, there are some interesting differences. When comparing specific speeches, one feels there is at times a lesser degree of authenticity in the play. In the following examples, the heroine asks Anice to visit her cottage to see the unfortunate young girl and her baby:

"Then come if yo' loike — an if they'll let yo', some ud think there wur harm i' the choild's touch. I'm glad yo' dunna.

(*That Lass O' Lowries*, 51)

"Then come — come if yo will come, an' if they'd let yo', for some 'ud think there were harm for the likes o' yo' i' the choild's touch. I'm glad you donnot think so.'

(*Liz*, 15)

It is difficult to determine if the adapters are trying to approximate Mrs. Burnett's attempts or if they are making certain words and phrases accessible to the actors and actresses who would use the acting editions.

As noted earlier, Joan's impassioned speech which defends Lizzie from the taunts of the pit women is taken over almost verbatim by the adapters. The exchange between Anice and Joan concerning Joan's role as a woman, which is also quoted earlier, offers a good example for comparison as do the endings for the novel and the play which are also reproduced earlier. When there are changes in these longer passages, the result is that some colour and intensity is lost in the play. But, on the whole, one receives the impression that Hatton and Matthison realized that the dialect was an integral part of the tale and in spite

of some modifications, the play's text stands above other play texts of the time which attempt to create regional dialects.

It is perhaps disappointing that Mrs. Burnett, in her novel, did not deal even more incisively with reactionary mine owners, the conservative clergy and all the other forces in society which stood in the way of the individual. One reason for this is suggested by Ann Thwaite when she says that Mrs. Burnett "believed in charity and opportunity rather than revolutionary change."<sup>37</sup> Certainly the theme of opportunity and the place of self-help are stressed in the novel and Joan, Anice and the curate are all used to portray charity. The play loses some of this thrust when it oversimplifies the role of the church. Certainly what we do find in both the novel and the play about caste is more forceful than the embarrassing compromise which ends Robertson's play *Caste*:

Oh Caste's all right. Caste is a good thing if it's not carried too far. It shuts the door on the pretentious and the vulgar; but it should open the door very wide for exceptional merit. Let brains break through its barriers, and what brains can break through love can leap over.<sup>38</sup>

Two things that capture the modern reader's attention in both the play and the novel are the role of caste in society and the role of women. One feels strongly an absence of an egalitarian spirit in both themes in both the novel and the play. It is difficult to accept the way the heroine must defer to those above her in society, such as Anice, and those above her in society *and* masculine, such as Derrick. To expose the male chauvinism and the double standard in the novel and the play is relatively easy to do. However, such an exercise fails to see the novel and the play in the light of their own time. Mrs. Burnett wants us to see that the barriers between the classes were high in a strongly stratified society. Moreover, the very fact that we react this way suggests that Mrs. Burnett indeed wished to expose the stereotyped rôle given to women in her time. The extent to which she was a feminist and in a sense ahead of her time is revealed in Ann Thwaite's biography.

The greatest weakness in the novel is the characterization of Anice and the play perpetuates the weakness. An early reviewer of the novel drew attention to the manner in which Anice could flaw the novel and we are told that in a letter Mrs. Burnett said: "Sometimes I hate the girl ... She seems too Sunday Schooly."<sup>39</sup> She is too cloying and tiresomely interfering. When she enters the play and the nineteenth-century theatre, she becomes a female version of the *raisonneur*, that pompous and smug Dutch uncle of the well-made play formula. On the whole, she is easier to endure in the novel because there is more space devoted to establishing her motivations.

In the history of the Victorian novel, Joan is not unique as a different and a complex heroine. However, in the play, Liz stands out as a significant heroine in later Victorian theatre. Not only is she a pit girl who must overcome adversities, but she is also an individual who wants a significant place in society. Three important playwrights of the latter half of the century, Robertson, Pinero and Jones did not create more interesting females. Kate Verity, the heroine of Pinero's *The Squire* (1881) and Letty in Jones's *Saints and Sinners* (1884), for example, are memorable partly because their creators are skilful in portraying them. Hatton and Matthison do not have the same skill, but they have a strong heroine in their source and enough of this strength comes through in their adaptation. Also, a middle-class heroine, such as those of Robertson, Pinero and Jones, who was treated in a believable fashion was long in arriving on the scene, and a lower-class heroine was even longer in coming. Hatton and Matthison, with Mrs. Burnett's aid, present a heroine from the working class who is caught in a society by its stratification and prejudices. This is why *Liz* has a more significant place in the history of the drama of the period than *That Lass O' Lowries* has in the history of the novel.

Both the above works are ancestors of the play *Hindle Wakes* of 1912 with its memorable heroine Fanny Hawthorn. This play by Stanley Houghton was produced by Lewis Casson for Miss Horniman's Repertory Company at the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester. It is interesting to note that in the first edition of the play's text, a "note on the Lancashire dialect" was deemed necessary and included. As for the Midlands setting, it was not fully exploited in fiction or on stage (or film) until after World War II.

#### NOTES

1. New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Company, 1877. All references are to this first edition.
2. Ann Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party*. In this biography, the author deals with Mrs. Burnett's early years in Manchester.
3. French's Acting Edition of Plays, vol. 114 (Hereafter this collection will be referred to as "French" with the volume number appearing after in Arabic numerals.)
4. Charles Reade's adaptation of the novel appeared in the Amphitheatre in Liverpool, on September 31, 1878. A copy is in the Lord Chamberlain's Collection of Plays. Ann Thwaite discusses this adaptation and the controversy surrounding it (page 62). She also discusses Mrs. Burnett's own adaptation in the United States (page 63.) A burlesque adaptation for *Punch* is also referred to (page 61).
5. French, 116.
6. London: Published by the author, 90 Gloucester Place, Portnam Square, 1873. The clergyman is also given another untypical role when he not only raises the fallen woman from her shame but he also marries her.

7. Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays, vol. 99 (Hereinafter this collection will be referred to as "Lacy" with the volume number appearing after in Arabic numerals.) City of London Theatre, January 29.
8. Lacy, 12.
9. Lord Chamberlain's Collection of Plays, September, 1886, (Hereinafter referred to as "L.C." followed by month and year.)
10. L.C., February, 1884. Performed in Warrington, Lancashire; no reference to a London performance.
11. In the Lord Chamberlain's "Register of Plays: 1877-1886" the following phrases are deleted from a play entitled, *The Landlord*: "the wicked landlord system," and "bloated toad of a landlord in parliament."
12. *Victorian Studies* XX, 2, Winter 1977, pages 117-139.
13. French's Standard Drama (no. 360).
14. A detailed comparison is found in Richard Altick's article "Dion Boucicault Stages *Mary Barton*", *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, XIV, Spring, 1959, 129.
15. *Ibid.* p. 130.
16. *Ibid.* p. 137.
17. Lacy, 3. Olympic Theatre, January 13, 1851.
18. *Ibid.* p. 17.
19. Lacy, 38. Haymarket Theatre, October 25. There are some similarities between this play and Tom Robertson's two plays, *Progress* (1869) and *Birth* (1870).
20. Henry Morley. *Journal of a London Playgoer*, p. 230.
21. Lacy, 90. Haymarket Theatre, October 25.
22. Lacy, 80. Adelphi Theatre, March.
23. *Ibid.* p. 2.
24. *Ibid.* p. 13.
25. London: Chatto and Windus, 1877. Globe Theatre, October 6.
26. *Representative Plays of Henry Arthur Jones* vol. 1. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1925.
27. Winton Tolles. *Tom Taylor and the Victorian Drama*, 248.
28. Richard Cordell. *Henry Arthur Jones and the Modern Drama*, 50.
29. By G. M. Fenn. L.C., March, 1886.
30. By William Bourne. L.C., June, 1890.
31. *Ibid.* (no page numbers). Other plays examined (a) Harvey, *The Workman*, L.C., May, 1879. A play about a fallen woman. (b) Anon. *Lords and Labourers*. This title appears in the Lord Chamberlain's list for 1874. The word "refused" appears after the title and there is no manuscript. (c) Bellingham. *A Socialist*. L.C., April, 1887. This is a one-act farce in which a would-be socialist is cured by a friend who moves in with him and insists upon sharing his goods. (d) Charles Reade's novel *Put Yourself in His Place; or, Free Labour* appeared as a play at the Adelphi Theatre in May, 1870. The manuscript does not exist in the Lord Chamberlain's collection, although the title is listed in the table of contents for the month of May.
32. p. 15.
33. The Samuel French edition uses the title *Liz* only. Allardyce Nicoll in his *Hand List of Plays* adds: "That Lass O' Lowries."
34. "Adapters could and did do the most extraordinary things with the books they adapted. A review of *Liz or That Lass O' Lowries* at the Royal Amphitheatre, Liverpool, in the *Era* of 15th July 1877 points instantly to one of them. The character Liz in the book — the poor wronged girl with the bastard child — was obviously considered too strong meat for the stage, but Joan in the book is now called Liz." (61) Certainly the printed version of the Hatton and Matthison treats this strand of the plot, although they rename the girl Nan just as they renamed Joan, Liz. This latter change of name may have caused some confusion concerning the *Era* review.
35. Thwaite, p. 15.
36. *Ibid.* p. 46.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *The Principal Dramatic Works of Thomas William Robertson* Vol. 1.
39. Thwaite, p. 53.