Mr Jones' defence: a re-appraisal of the works of Henry Arthur Jones

MR JONES' DEFENCE:
A RE-APPRAISAL OF THE WORKS OF HENRY ARTHUR JONES

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Declaration

I, Jeremy Nigel Newton, declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own, and that the thesis is the one upon which I expect to be examined.

Signed …… Date ……..

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Introduction

Henry Arthur Jones and the renaissance of English drama

Henry Arthur Jones (1851-1929) was a prolific English dramatist of the late-Victorian and Edwardian period. He was a contemporary of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, and in his day won greater commercial success and critical acclaim than either of them. However, his reputation diminished in the years after the Great War, and the last major study of Jones was published in 1932, just three years after his death.[1] Later full-length works yoked Jones together with his contemporary Arthur Wing Pinero, rather than treating him as worthy of attention in his own right, and their considerations of Jones' *oeuvre* are superficial.[2] Critical movements in the second half of the twentieth century responded to Jones' work with some hostility: his plays about the Woman Question, for example, were received particularly badly by second-wave feminist commentators. However, signs have emerged of a revival of academic interest in this key figure in English theatre. A number of Jones' individual plays have received attention in the context of recent works about the theatrical representation of illicit female sexuality, Victorian perceptions of marriage, the influence of John Ruskin, theatre and evolution, and Victorian literary subversion.[3] In this thesis, I undertake a broader reappraisal of Jones, whose work bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and responded to the cultural convulsions of the *fin de siècle*.

[1] Richard A. Cordell, *Henry Arthur Jones and the Modern Drama* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1932).
[2] Penny Griffin, *Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1991); and George E. Wellwarth, *The Maypole in the Strand: Sir Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones, a Study* (New York: Vantage Press, 2001).
[3] See Sos Eltis, *Acts of Desire: Women and Sex on Stage, 1800-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Peter Yeandle, 'Christian Socialism on the Stage: Henry Arthur Jones's *Wealth* (1889) and the Dramatisation of Ruskinian Political Economy', in *Persistent Ruskin: Studies in Influence, Assimilation and Effect*, ed. by Keith Hanley and Brian Maidment (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), pp. 93-104; Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr, *Theatre and Evolution from Ibsen to Brecht* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Jeanette Shumaker, '"Fallen" Clergymen: The Wages of Sin in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth*, and Henry Arthur Jones's *Michael and his Lost Angel*', in *Victorian Literary Cultures: Studies in Textual Subversion*, ed. by Kenneth Womack and James M. Decker (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017), pp. 165-85; and Mary Christian, *Marriage and Late-Victorian Dramatists* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) particularly Chapter 5, 'Henry Arthur Jones and the Business of Morality', pp. 103-130.

My title, *Mr. Jones' Defence,* is an allusion to one of his most successful plays, *Mrs. Dane's Defence* (1900), the story of which revolves around an inquiry about the title character and the eventual revelation of her true identity. In my research, I have sought to understand the truth about Henry Arthur Jones himself, and whether he was indeed the misogynistic late-Victorian reactionary described in many accounts of his work. My exploration of the cultural context in which his plays were written, the conditions under which they were first produced, and the reception of their first performances, disclose a more nuanced character. The 'defence' of Jones is not unconditional or uncritical: there are clearly aspects of his work that are both problematic and unpalatable, particularly in his later plays of war and empire. Nevertheless, I argue in this thesis that critics have erred in dismissing Jones altogether, and I make the case for appreciating him as a significant figure in the development of the English stage, whose plays both reflect and critique the changing cultural landscape and social *mores* of *fin de siècle* Britain, whose non-dramatic writings altered audience expectations and influenced theatre practice, and whose contribution to the discourse of drama and theatre paved the way for English drama in the twentieth century.

In this Introduction, I provide a brief survey of Jones' early life and career up to the point of his first major success, the 1882 melodrama *The Silver King*. I discuss the cultural figures whom Jones cited as his principal intellectual influences, outline the state of the English stage at the moment that Jones first emerged as a playwright, and show how Jones engaged with those influences and conditions in his early non-dramatic writings. It is through these critical interventions that I examine Jones' contribution to the discourse of theatre at the *fin de siècle*, and in particular his exhortations for the elevation of audience taste, his critique of the actor-manager system and the capitalist structures of theatre production, his calls for the abolition of stage censorship, his advocacy for the recognition of playwriting as a true art form, and his pursuit of publication as a means of providing the dramatist with a measure of artistic independence comparable to that of the novelist or painter. I argue that these interventions, which have received little critical attention in recent years, contributed to a transformation of both English production practices and English playwriting around the turn of the century.

The five chapters that follow are organised thematically. They examine Jones' engagement with a range of *fin de siècle* cultural concerns, through a reading of a selection of plays in juxtaposition with the writings of key commentators like Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin and Herbert Spenser. In Chapter One, I analyse Jones' characterisation of male figures in *The*

Silver King (1882), *The Dancing Girl* (1891), *The Masqueraders* (1894) and *The Liars* (1897), and contextualise these characterisations by reference to contemporaneous critical currents and tropes: I argue that Jones contributed to the late-Victorian discourse of masculinity – an aspect of his work that commentators have generally overlooked – through plays that enabled the theatrical performance of a changing and increasingly unconventional set of masculine paradigms. Chapter Two deals with Jones' dramaturgical strategy and how he used it to deliver critique of late-Victorian religion and religious hypocrisy: by reference to *Saints and Sinners* (1884), *Judah* (1890), *The Tempter* (1893) and *Michael and his Lost Angel* (1896), I argue that in the face of constraints imposed by official censorship and audience sensitivities, Jones adopted a strategy of intentional textual subversion – that is to say, the communication of radical ideas by concealment 'in plain sight' – and I identify in these plays an intense critique of Victorian religious ideology that twentieth-century commentators have also tended to overlook. In Chapter Three, I address Jones' treatment of economic concerns as key dramatic themes, and in particular his engagement with socialism in the year of the London dock strike, his dramatization of Ruskinian political economy and his Morrisian idealisation of the craftsman: I focus on *Wealth* and *The Middleman* (both produced in 1889) and argue that, although Jones may have become deeply conservative in his later years, at the *fin de siècle* he was amongst the earliest playwrights to articulate progressive socialist ideas in plays that were intended for the West End stage and its privileged audiences; I also discuss *The Crusaders* (1891), the production of which was Jones' own direct, personal challenge to the power structures of the West End theatre. Chapter Four looks at Jones' critical address to illicit female sexuality in his society comedies – perhaps the theme for which Jones is both best-known and most widely-reviled today – and discusses *The Case of Rebellious Susan* (1894), *Mrs. Dane's Defence* (1900) and *The Princess's Nose* (1902): I demonstrate how Jones utilises the *raisonneur* device to critique the discrepancies in power between men and women, between social classes, and between generations, that underpin the prevailing moral codes, and I argue that far from being the conventional Victorian patriarch described in many accounts of his work, Jones actively and repeatedly challenges society's treatment of the sexually transgressive woman. Finally, in Chapter Five, I discuss Jones' engagement of multiple theatrical domains in the service of the imperial project, in his late plays of war and empire: *Carnac Sahib* (1899), *Fall in, Rookies!* (1910) and *The Pacifists* (1917) are problematic for the modern reader in many ways, not least because Jones took full part in official wartime propaganda and appears to celebrate violence – often described in extremely graphic language – against the Empire's enemies. I

argue that these plays overshadow Jones' vigorous earlier critiques of England and the English, and that they raise questions about British attitudes to race and nation that are still pressing more than a century later. How Jones' entire body of work responds to the changing social and cultural preoccupations of late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain – the industrial unrest of the 1880s and the emergence of socialism as a political force, the changing gender roles and sexual codes of the *fin de siècle*, the implications of scientific developments for religion and its institutions, and Britain's changing relationship with the Empire and with Europe – thus forms the core of this thesis. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I consider the trajectory of Jones' critical reception and reputation since the mid-twentieth century.

My methodology entails examination of the broad cultural and theatrical context in which the plays I consider were written and produced for the first time; close reading of the individual plays and detailed analysis of their themes; and consideration of their early reception history by reference to contemporaneous reviews and criticism. Taken together, these approaches allow me to recover how these works were understood by Jones' original audiences, and to restore to them aspects of meaning that are lost when – as has generally been the case with Jones' plays over the last century – the plays are considered solely as texts. Within each individual chapter, the plays that I discuss are dealt with in chronological order, which enables me to trace both the evolution of Jones' own thinking and the impact of cultural developments and changes in theatre production and audience composition over the course of his writing career.

Early life and career

Jones was born on 20 September 1851, in the Buckinghamshire village of Granborough. His early life was described by his daughter Doris in *The Life and Letters of Henry Arthur Jones* (1930), and most of what we know about this period comes from her account.[4] Jones was the first child of Silvanus Jones and Elizabeth Stevens, who had married at the Independent Chapel in nearby Winslow in November 1850. There would be four further children, all sons. Silvanus was a farmer who, Jones wrote later, worked on average fifteen hours a day and was

[4] Doris Arthur Jones, *The Life and Letters of Henry Arthur Jones* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1930). There is little about Jones' early life in the archives that I have been able to access at Senate House Library and at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection.

a ‘hard, unsympathetic man’ who was ‘not kind to his wife’.[5] Elizabeth lacked her husband’s capacity for physical exertion and suffered from ill-health throughout her life: she would die young, in 1887, at the age of sixty-one, ‘worn out’, as Jones said.[6] It was Elizabeth who set the spiritual tone of family life: she had an unusually deep religious belief and, as Jones told his daughter, ‘She couldn’t get it out of her head that anything could be right except that particular brand of Baptist religion she’d been brought up in.’[7] Notwithstanding his love for his mother, however, Jones’ disdain for religion, and particularly the narrow-minded Puritanical religion of the provincial chapel, pervades his dramatic output.

According to his daughter’s biography, Jones began school at the age of five, and from eight years he attended Mr. John Grace’s Commercial Academy. In the summer months, school began at six in the morning, with an hour of lessons. Jones would then go home for breakfast; undertake a milk round for his father; return to school at quarter to nine; go home again for lunch at midday; return to school between quarter to two and four o’clock; and after tea, continue with his milk round, before being back in place for evening school until seven o’clock. Jones remained at Grace’s until the age of twelve, at which point:

> “[my father] packed me off to his brother, the deacon of a Baptist chapel, who kept a shop at Ramsgate. I never had a day’s schooling afterwards, and I consider this to have been a great advantage. I was able to educate myself in my own way and at my own expense, by keeping up a constant and loving acquaintance with the English classics, and with some of the French and German masterpieces; by a close study of social and political economy; and by extensive foragings among the sciences.” [8]

This autodidactic eclecticism, unconstrained by the formal boundaries of academic disciplines, would serve Jones well: as I will show in later chapters, Jones’ plays often discuss matters of political economy and social conduct in terms that echo the scientific thinking of the day.

Doris also recounts that her father hated working in his uncle’s drapery business, and he left after less than four years.[9] The experience fixed in his mind an enduring loathing for the

[5] D.A. Jones, p. 25.
[6] D.A. Jones, p. 26.
[7] D.A. Jones, p. 27.
[8] Quoted in D.A. Jones, p. 31.
[9] D.A. Jones, p. 31.

commercialism of the provincial middle class, its philistine indifference to the arts, the life of the dissenting chapel and its preoccupation with social propriety, and the hypocrisy that ran beneath its professions of puritan devotion: these early-set emotional currents would manifest themselves in 1884 in one of Jones' first successes, *Saints and Sinners*, and in many later plays. Jones turned his back on religion when he left his uncle: growing up in Granborough, under the influence of his mother, Jones had 'attended chapel regularly – a small Baptist Chapel dating from 1625, tucked away at the end of a cobble lane; but once he left Ramsgate he did not go to church very often'.[10] He could not entirely escape commercialism, however: the options were limited for a fifteen-year old of his background and education, and his new position was in another draper's shop, run by a man named Bryant in Gravesend.[11]

Jones moved again when he was eighteen, to London, where he worked for some time in a warehouse in Friday Street in the City. His love for the theatre started at this point: Jones' strict Puritan upbringing meant that he had never been to a theatre in his youth and, although he claimed to have written a play (now lost) when he was just sixteen, his first visit to the theatre came at the age of eighteen, when he saw Kate Bateman in the title role of Augustin Daly's *Leah, the Forsaken* (1863) at the old Haymarket Theatre. It was a formative experience: 'I left off writing a novel I was engaged upon, and gave most of my leisure to seeing plays and reading Herbert Spencer. I used to hurry from the City almost every evening at six to see the same successful play for perhaps a dozen times, till I could take its mechanism to pieces.'[12] The reference to the 'mechanism' of the play suggests that Jones paid particular attention to its dramatic construction. This period is the zenith of the 'well-made play', the form derived from the French *pièce bien faite* associated with writers like Victorien Sardou, characterised by clever but contrived plotting, often designed to lead up to a single situation – perhaps a scandalous revelation, an emotionally-charged confrontation or a suicide attempt – and which presented to the audience an illusion of reality that 'assumed the smooth progression of events [with] scene and act building to a series of climaxes in a succession of curtain lines', with stage-time passing and scenes changing in the intervals.[13]

[10] D.A. Jones, p. 47.
[11] D.A. Jones, p. 32.
[12] D.A. Jones, p. 34.
[13] Jean Chothia, *English Drama of the Early Modern Period* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 228. Victorien Sardou (1831-1908) was just one of the progenitors of the *pièce bien faite*. Other leading exponents of the form included Eugène Scribe (1791-1861), Émile Augier (1820-1889), and Alexandra Dumas *fils* (1824-1895). Their works are often characterised by sexual intrigue, and their characters include some of the stage's most famous fallen women. Scribe's works include *Adrienne*

Shaw and other critics would take issue with well-made plays as a form: Shaw dismissed them as 'mechanical rabbits', 'clockwork mice' and 'Sardoodledum' for the manner in which a host of conventions like lost telegrams or late trains were pressed into service in order to engineer an implausible situation.[14] However, effective dramatic construction is something for which Jones was applauded throughout his career. Years later, when Jones was a respected and commercially-successful playwright, Shaw would begin his review of *Michael and his Lost Angel* (1896) with the words, 'One of the greatest comforts of criticising the work of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones is that the critic can go straight to the subject-matter without troubling about the dramatic construction […] Mr. Jones's technical skill is taken as a matter of course.'[15] Jones learned his dramatic construction from the perspective of an audience member.

In his first year in London, Jones wrote several one-act plays that he sent to managers, all of which were returned.[16] His first year in London was formative in other ways, however. Another young man named Emery Walker (later Sir Emery) (1851-1933) was working in the same Friday Street warehouse, and they began a lifelong friendship. Walker, who like Jones was an autodidact whose modest family background meant that he had been sent out to work at an early age, would go on to a career as a leading engraver, printer and photographer, and become a major figure in the Arts and Crafts movement. It was Walker who introduced Jones to William Morris, whose aesthetic theories and political writings would appeal to Jones in many ways, and whose influence is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. It was also during this period that Jones met Jane Seely, the daughter of the owner of another warehouse: they married in September 1875 at St. Andrew's Church in Holborn (Emery Walker was Jones' best man) and they remained together until Jane's death in 1924.[17]

While he and Jane were engaged, Jones moved from London to another warehouse job, this time in Bradford; and then to a position as a commercial traveller with a textile firm in the

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Lecouvreur (1849) and the libretto for *Manon Lescaut* (1856). Sardou's works include *Divorçons* (1880) and *La Tosca* (1887), on which Puccini's opera was based. Dumas wrote *Le Demi-Monde* (1855); and his novel *La Dame aux Camélias* (1848), which he adapted for the stage, inspired Verdi's *La Traviata.*

[14] Meisel, pp. 78-80.

[15] George Bernard Shaw, 'Michael and his Lost Angel', in *Dramatic Opinions and Essays* (New York: Brentano's, 1906), Volume 1, pp. 308-17.

[16] D.A. Jones, p. 35.

[17] D.A. Jones, p. 36-7.

West Country called Rennie Tetley. After the wedding, the couple took a house in Exeter, and although Jones continued to work in commerce, he persisted with his playwriting ambitions. The first of his plays to receive a production was the one-act work *It's Only Round the Corner*, which received a single performance at the Theatre Royal in Exeter in December 1878.[18] The story concerns an old and blind church organist, Michael Kinsman, who has lost his position because of his drinking. The new organist, a younger man named Frank Seaton, is also the lover of Michael's daughter, Jenny. Frank wins Michael's approval to marry Jenny after persuading the parson to reinstate Michael; Frank will become assistant organist, and benefit from Michael's guidance and experience. The play ends happily with the characters grouped around the piano while Jenny sings 'The First Violet' and Michael plays the flute.

It's Only Round the Corner is inconsequential and characterised by the same staginess as much mid-Victorian drama, with frequent asides and soliloquies. However, Jones confidently wrote to Wilson Barrett, one of the leading actor-managers of the day, offering him the play, and Barrett decided that he could use it.[19] The play opened at the Grand Theatre in Leeds in August 1879 under a new title, *Harmony Restored*, as an afterpiece to W.S. Gilbert's *Charity.* Barrett wrote to Jones afterwards that the production 'went fairly well, it was very well played all round' but that the play itself was nevertheless 'a little amateurish, wanting in finish and strength of dialogue'.[20] He continued to encourage Jones, however, and their correspondence of this period shows the experienced actor-manager mentoring and providing dramaturgical advice to the new author. Referring to a draft of another of Jones' works, Barrett observed:

> All oaths should be expunged; 'this is your darnation old mother again' would probably provoke and certainly deserve a hiss, all the expletives do not strengthen

[18] The publicity stated that *It's Only Round the Corner* was 'a new domestic drama in one Act, written expressly for Mr. Wybert Rousby,' whose company was then appearing in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Jones' play was an afterpiece to the main production on 11 December. *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser,* 11 December 1878, p. 4.

[19] Marjorie Thompson, 'Henry Arthur Jones and Wilson Barrett: Some Correspondence, 1879-1904', *Theatre Notebook*, 11 (1957), pp. 42-50 (p. 42). Thompson describes the correspondence between Jones and Barrett that is held in the Brotherton Library at Leeds. (Sadly, the Brotherton collection lacks the correspondence leading up to production of *The Silver King*.) Thompson makes a number of mistakes in her article, such as incorrectly ascribing certain specific lines and cuts mentioned by Barrett to the wrong Jones play, which have then been perpetuated by later commentators like Russell Jackson and James Thomas.

[20] Thompson, p. 43.

> but disfigure a charming piece. I do not think Barry's conversion and singing the Moody and Sankey hymns advisable – I abhor cant as much as any man living.[21]

Barrett's comment about expletives is an early instance of the tension that would emerge in Jones' later dealings with other actor-managers. Jones had written dialogue in terms that he felt were natural for the characters. Barrett, whose success as a theatre practitioner depended on being attuned to audience sensitivities, advised Jones to moderate the language in order to avoid audience disapproval. (Hissing was a common expression of such disapproval: the hissing that greeted certain lines in *Saints and Sinners* will be discussed in Chapter Two.) In later years, actorial rewriting would bring Jones into frequent and sometimes bitter conflict with other actor-managers – it was one of his principal objections to the actor-manager system – but at this early point in his career, Jones was content to benefit from Barrett's judgement.

Apart from dramaturgical guidance, however, Barrett also set the direction of Jones' aesthetic and moral thinking in a Ruskinian mode. Barrett was not only an admirer of Ruskin, but the two men were personal friends and collaborators with a shared set of aesthetic values: Barrett helped Ruskin with visual illustrations and effects for a lecture at the Royal Institution in 1884, and Ruskin encouraged Barrett to stage a series of classical dramas.[22] Ruskin's aesthetic and moral influence is clearly discernible in the tone of Barrett's writings about theatre:

> The influence of the drama may and ought to be a *moral* influence […] A people's character depends upon their amusements as well as upon their more serious employments […] The stage ought to promote all that is healthiest in morality, as well as that which is inspiriting to the intellect and pleasurable to the imagination […] The business of the dramatist, and of the actor […] should be to interest, to uplift, to refine, to touch the heart and open the eyes, to recall, to suggest, to reveal true and lofty ideals […] He will tell us of the evil, the sordid, the terrible […] but he will never put evil for good, or mislead our judgement, or confuse our moral sense, pervert our sympathies, make vice attractive. All this is false to what is truly natural, false to truth and beauty.[23]

[21] Thompson, p. 42. The play referred to must be *Hearts of Oak*, produced at the Theatre Royal, Exeter, in May 1879 under the management of F. Neebe, the published version of which includes the line 'This is your old mother again!' See *Hearts of Oak* (London: Samuel French, 1887), p. 9.
[22] The relationship between Barrett and Ruskin is discussed in detail by Katherine Newey and Jeffrey Richards, *John Ruskin and the Victorian Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[23] Lecture at St. Paul's Cathedral, Dunedin, on 12 January 1902. Quoted in Newey and Richards, p. 36.

For Barrett, as for Ruskin, art had to have a moral purpose: actors and playwrights must show the truth, but also convey a healthy and uplifting moral message. This is not just an aesthetic statement: it is a social duty. 'A people's character' depends on it. Barrett instilled in the novice playwright a belief in the importance of the stage as a means of forging character and influencing an entire nation.

Barrett's commitment to Jones was justified by the success of his next one-act play *A Clerical Error* (1879), a trivial piece but one that reflected those Ruskinian values. The *Theatre* commented that it was 'the style of play that ought to win the gratitude of amateur actors, country houses, and middle-class life generally – people in fact who demand something wholesome, interesting, dramatic and pure'.[24] This light romantic comedy concerns a pastor who mistakenly believes that his young female ward is in love with him and who, when he realises his error, pretends that his offer to marry her was simply made in jest and stands aside in favour of the man whom she really loves. Despite its inconsequentiality, however, the play is important as the first of Jones' works to centre on a flawed clerical character. This is a type that would re-emerge in increasingly challenging ways in the plays of religious life that I discuss in Chapter Two. It is also important as the play that convinced Jones that he could finally turn his back on trade, to make his living as a playwright.

A Clerical Error was produced on 13 October 1879, an accompaniment to Sardou's *Fernande,* on the opening bill for Barrett's tenure at the Court Theatre in London.[25] *Fernande* itself lasted only two weeks, but *A Clerical Error* was retained on the next bill, and was still running over twelve months later, now as a curtain-raiser to Schiller's *Mary Stuart*. The play proved to Barrett that Jones' work had commercial potential and, although Jones did not write anything specifically for Barrett over the next three years, Barrett made a point of keeping in touch. His investment of time and energy in the young playwright would repay enormous financial dividends with *The Silver King* in 1882, his first substantial success, which will be discussed in Chapter One.

[24] Quoted by Russell Jackson in his introduction to *Plays by Henry Arthur Jones* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 2.
[25] James Thomas, *The Art of the Actor-Manager: Wilson Barrett and the Victorian Theatre* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), p. 35.

The Silver King freed Jones from the constraints of a life in trade. He appears to have been successful as a commercial traveller, but he worked on commission and his basic salary was just £150 per year.[26] By contrast, in 1883 – the year that included the first year's fees from *The Silver King* – Jones earned well over £3,000, and the play continued to be performed professionally, somewhere in the world, for the rest of Jones' life; it was also filmed twice.[27] Its opening night marks the beginning of Jones' ascendancy as the most successful English playwright of the *fin de siècle*, and his work would dominate the West End stage for the next twenty years.

Early intellectual influences: Spencer, Arnold and Ruskin

Jones had continued to read widely throughout his years in trade, and the writers who influenced him in those early days remained with him for the rest of his life. Chief among them were Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), John Ruskin (1819-1900) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). At first sight, these seem strange bedfellows: on one side, the conservatives Arnold and Ruskin, anxious about the degradations imposed on the mass of the population by industrial capitalism, whose aesthetic criticism was inextricably linked to social commentary, who believed in the social utility of art (including drama), and who advocated public funding of schools, galleries and other institutions – including a national theatre; on the other, Spencer, a radical liberal, proponent of laissez-faireism, and champion of individual liberties against state intervention. Jones refers frequently to all three authors in his own critical writings, and their aesthetic, social and scientific thinking pervades his plays.

Jones wrote in 1920, 'After the Bible and Shakespeare Arnold perhaps influenced me more than any other writer in my early days.'[28] As early as 1879, before he had made his name with *The Silver King*, Jones sent Arnold copies of two plays, *The Garden Party* (1879, not produced) and *A Clerical Error* (which was about to open at the Court), and Arnold replied

[26] D.A. Jones, p. 38.
[27] D.A. Jones, p. 58. According to The National Archives' 'currency converter', which enables users to compare the purchasing power of money in different decades, the sum of £3,000 in 1880 would equate to about £198,000 today. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/> [accessed 19th August 2020].
[28] Letter dated 27 April 1920 to Aubrey Ward Goodenough. Quoted in Aubrey Ward Goodenough, *Henry Arthur Jones; a study in dramatic compromise*, PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) thesis, State University of Iowa, 1920, p. 94.

appreciatively, stating that he hoped to see the latter.[29] Arnold also attended the first night of *The Silver King* at Jones' invitation, following which he approached the *Pall Mall Gazette* and provided a very positive review, praising both the production and the literary quality of the writing. It must have been gratifying for Jones to receive such public approbation from one of his idols. Arnold's influence upon Jones was both thematic and critical. Thematically, Jones' plays often echo Arnold's scorn for the commercially-minded dissenting middle class – the class in which Jones had grown up – and he satirised its philistinism, puritanism and hypocrisy in *Saints and Sinners* and several other plays. (The very title of Jones' later work, *The Triumph of the Philistines* (1895) recalls Arnold's use of the term 'Philistine' throughout *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-9)).[30] Critically, Jones shares with Arnold a concern at the lack of a great national drama, his diagnosis of its causes in the degraded social conditions of the majority of the population of England's industrial cities, and his views about what might be done to remedy it. Jones' non-dramatic works are full of allusions to Arnold's thinking. Among Jones' earliest critical interventions, for example, 'The Theatre and the Mob' (1883) and 'The Dramatic Outlook' (1884) both refer to Arnold's 1879 essay 'The French Play in London' (discussed in more detail in the next section) as evidence of the impoverished condition of English drama in the early years of the *fin de siècle* and as a call to arms to improve and organise the theatre of the future.[31] Jones takes from Arnold a belief that the theatre is capable of having a profound impact on national life, offering a means of expression for national identity and taste. Arnold argued for central organisation in theatre as he had done – in his professional capacity as an inspector of schools – in relation to education, with state support linked to the achievement of clear and measurable standards,

[29] Goodenough, p. 95.

[30] Arnold's definition of 'Philistine' can be found in the following passage: 'The people who believe most that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being very rich, and who most give their lives and thoughts to becoming rich, are just the people whom we call the Philistines. Culture says: "Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voices; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it?"' Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-9) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 39.

[31] Jones, 'The Theatre and the Mob', reprinted from the *Nineteenth Century Review* for September 1883, in *The Renascence of the English Drama: Essays, Lectures, and Fragments Relating to the Modern English Stage, Written and Delivered in the Years 1883-94*, pp. 1-25 (p. 14). 'The Dramatic Outlook', an address to the Playgoers' Club on 7 October 1884, reprinted from the *English Illustrated Magazine* for January and February 1885, in *Renascence*, pp. 153-91 (p. 155).

and Jones in turn would urge the foundation of a national repertory theatre in his own critical writings.

Ruskin was another advocate of state intervention in the arts, and exerted a great influence on Jones' aesthetic thinking. Jones freely acknowledged his debt to Ruskin's art theories and their application to the work of the stage, writing for example in 'The Dramatic Outlook' (1884) that 'if you will but study him [Ruskin], you will find that much of what he has said there [in *Modern Painters*] may be as usefully applied to the criticism of the drama as to the criticism of pictures'.[32] Jones took from Ruskin three important and related convictions. The first was that art (including drama) should be both beautiful and morally uplifting. The second was that the stage was a valuable means of education, if it were only used for the right ends: Ruskin wrote in 1888 that he had 'always held the stage quite among the best and most necessary means of education – moral and intellectual'.[33] The third was that the tone of many popular plays of the mid- to late-Victorian period was not only tasteless but morally harmful: Ruskin perceived a 'direct and constant' connection between the sensational reporting of crimes in the newspapers and what he described as 'the modern love of excitement in the sensational novel and drama […] all furious pursuit of pleasure ending in actual desire of horror and delight in death'.[34] These are precepts to which Jones repeatedly returned in his own writings. Of sensationalism in popular drama, clear echoes of Ruskin can be heard in Jones' contention in 'The Theatre and the Mob' that a successful melodrama tended to succeed 'much in proportion as the general impression left by it is the same as the general impression left by the front page of the *Illustrated Police News*; and our most popular melodramas have borne about the same relation to dramatic art as an engraving in the *Police News* bears to an etching by Rembrandt'.[35] Of education, Jones observed in 'The Relations of the Drama to Education' (1893) that 'there are lasting relations between the drama and the wider education of men; that it is and should be a guide and teacher; and that it is not a matter of indifference or unconcern to our land whether the art that portrays and interprets its national life is palsied, supine, effete, diseased, and imbecile, or whether it is living, active,

[32] Jones, 'The Dramatic Outlook', p. 184.
[33] Ruskin, *Arrows of the Chace*, in *The Library Edition of the Works of John Ruskin*, ed by E.T. Cook & A. Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903-12) (hereafter referred to as *Complete Works*), Vol. XXXIV, p. 549.
[34] Ruskin, *Time and Tide*, in *Complete Works*, Vol. XVII, p. 468.
[35] Jones, 'The Theatre and the Mob', p. 9.

healthy, clear-eyed, clear-brained, clear-souled, and clear-tongued'.[36] Ruskin's concerns about the elevation of public taste, the importance of 'healthy' and improving forms of art, and the value of art in educating the mass of people – concerns that were shared with Arnold – are ones to which Jones returned throughout his career.

As with Arnold, too, Ruskin's influence is thematic as well as aesthetic and moral. Jones shared Ruskin's horror at the impact of Victorian industrialism on the lives of workers and on the natural environment, and Jones' plays *Wealth* (1889) and *The Middleman* (1889), discussed in Chapter Three, clearly show the influence of Ruskinian political economy as expressed in *Unto this Last* (1862).[37] In other plays, such as *The Silver King* (1882) and *The Case of Rebellious Susan* (1894), Jones' characters articulate Ruskin's thinking on gender, including the influential notion of the 'separate spheres' of male and female activity that Ruskin had described in his 1864 lecture 'Of Queens' Gardens' (published the following year as part of *Sesame and Lilies*). Ruskin's gender binary casts man as 'the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender', who 'in his rough work in open world, must encounter all peril and trial', whereas the domain of the woman is the home itself: her power is 'for rule, not for battle – and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision'.[38] Jones' supposed endorsement of these conventional roles may be one of the reasons why the critical tide turned so strongly against him in the mid-twentieth century, given the reaction against Ruskin by second-wave feminist critics like Kate Millett.[39] I argue in Chapter Four, however, that Jones' treatment of Ruskinian gender politics is subtler than many recent commentators have realised, and that the characters who most forcefully articulate Ruskinian roles were themselves intended by Jones, and understood by audiences, to be ambiguous and morally questionable.

Herbert Spencer exerted a different kind of influence on Jones. Spencer, like Jones, has been a somewhat neglected figure since the mid-twentieth century: his work is ambiguous and problematic, and has been appropriated in equal measure by politicians and commentators of

[36] Jones, 'The Relations of the Drama to Education', an inaugural address at the reopening of the City of London College on 12 October 1893, reprinted in *Renascence*, pp. 287-308 (p. 306).
[37] Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Complete Works*, Vol. XVII, pp. 5-114.
[38] Ruskin, 'Of Queens' Gardens', in *Complete Works*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 109-44, (pp. 121-2).
[39] Millett memorably described 'Of Queen's Gardens' in 1970 as 'a concoction of nostalgic mirage, regressive, infantile, or narcissistic sexuality, religious ambition, and simplistic social panacea'. Quoted in Francis O'Gorman, *Late Ruskin: New Contexts* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), p. 119.

the left and the right. As a philosopher of science associated with evolution, Spencer was overshadowed by Darwin, and later discredited academically for his selective approach to evidence and for his association with what has become known as 'social Darwinism' (although in recent years a number of major studies have re-evaluated his position in intellectual and cultural history).[40] In many areas, Spencer is diametrically opposed to the social commentary of Arnold and Ruskin: he advocated laissez-faire economic and social theories and argued (for example in *The Man versus the State* (1884)) against what he saw as the unjustified extension of government into the lives of private individuals and institutions. This anti-statism was satirised by Arnold, who alluded to it in his essay 'The French Play in London' (1879), a discussion of the visit of the (state-funded) Comédie-Française which had performed to great critical acclaim at the Gaiety Theatre in June and July 1879, as 'our favourite doctrines of the mischief of State interference, of the blessedness of leaving every man free to do as he likes, of the impertinence of presuming to check any man's natural taste for the bathos and pressing him to relish the sublime'.[41]

What Jones takes from Spencer is not his economic and social thinking but his scientific framework for understanding the world. Jones began reading Spencer in the 1870s, when Spencer was at the height of his fame, and wrote to Emery Walker in February 1878 that:

> I am now approaching the end of Herbert Spencer's system of philosophy. It has been a hard nut to crack, but I wanted first of all to get a good groundwork of the latest science to build upon. And Herbert Spencer must not merely be read; he must be learned.[42]

Spencer was at this point right in the middle of the vast project that came to be known as his system of 'Synthetic Philosophy': an attempt to unify and systematize a number of branches of philosophy, psychology and biology, which consisted of ten volumes published over thirty

[40] For a discussion of how Spencer's ideas have been diffused and (mis)appropriated, see 'The Diffusion of Spencerism and its Political Interpretations in France and Italy' by Naomi Beck, in *Herbert Spencer: The Intellectual Legacy* ed. by Greta Jones and Robert A. Peel (London: The Galton Institute, 2004), pp. 37-60. For other recent studies of Spencer's position in intellectual and cultural history, see Mark Francis, *Herbert Spencer and the Invention of Modern Life* (Durham: Acumen, 2007); Michael W. Taylor, *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer* (London: Continuum, 2007); and Mark Francis and Michael Taylor (eds.), *Herbert Spencer: Legacies*, (London: Routledge, 2015).
[41] Matthew Arnold, 'The French Play in London' (1879), reprinted in *Irish Essays and Others* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1882), pp. 208-43 (p. 240).
[42] D.A. Jones, p. 39.

years.[43] It is presumably this system that Jones was finding such 'a hard nut to crack', and it is primarily to Spencer's scientific writings that Jones is indebted. That Spencer was a significant influence on Jones is known – for example, Kirsten Shepherd-Barr noted in 2015 Jones' use of a brief allusion to Spencer in *The Dancing Girl* (1891) – but the exact nature and extent of that influence have not previously been considered in detail.[44] I argue in this thesis that Spencerian thinking is also apparent in *The Silver King* (1882), *The Masqueraders* (1894) and other plays: it pervades Jones' dramatic treatment of a considerably wider range of issues than just evolution, including gender roles and biological determinism, altruism and morality. It is impossible to overstate the importance of Spencer, along with Arnold and Ruskin, in Jones' dramatic output. The plays return repeatedly to the scientific and philosophical thinking of Spencer, to Arnoldian themes of philistinism and hypocrisy, and to Ruskinian political economy and gender politics. How Jones engages with these writers (and others), and translates their writings for the stage, will be addressed in later chapters in the context of the specific plays that I discuss.

The condition of English drama circa 1880

English theatre had flourished throughout the Victorian era; though perhaps it is more appropriate to talk of English theatres in the plural. By 1879, when Barrett staged *It's Only Round the Corner* in Leeds, a multiplicity of theatrical domains co-existed in London and beyond. Michael Booth, in *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (1991), describes a varied ecosystem that encompassed the old Patent Theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden; numerous other West End houses, which were continually being refurbished or augmented by new establishments; a still wider range of venues in the East End and to the south, across the Thames; grand Theatres Royal in major cities outside London, and lesser theatres in smaller towns, served by their own stock companies or by touring companies sent out from London; not to mention innumerable music halls, taverns and other places of amusement.[45] Within this

[43] The constituent parts of the Synthetic Philosophy, once it was finally published as a whole, consisted of *First Principles* (first published in 1862) (Volume 1); *The Principles of Biology* (1864 and 1867) (Volumes 2 and 3); *The Principles of Psychology* (1855) (Volumes 4 and 5); *The Principles of Sociology* (1882 to 1898) (Volumes 6, 7 and 8); and *The Principles of Ethics* (1892) (Volumes 9 and 10).

[44] Shepherd-Barr, pp. 42-6. Eltis, in *Acts of Desire* (2013), in turn references Shepherd-Barr in her discussion of *The Dancing Girl* and Jones' treatment of gender roles.

[45] Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), particularly Chapter One, 'Theatre and Society', (pp. 1-26).

vast range of performance spaces, audiences of all classes could access entertainments of all kinds. Dramas, melodramas, pantomimes, farces, Shakespeare and opera were widely performed; but Booth also notes that such text-based dramatic output had to contend with 'lectures, panoramas and dioramas, magicians, minstrel shows, mesmerists, magic lantern presentations, circuses, menageries, and a whole host of specialist showmen and entertainers who lived by pleasing the public'.[46] At the point Jones emerged as a playwright, the English entertainment business was in vigorous economic health.

As far as dramatic writing was concerned, though, the same period was also considered a moment of crisis. In 'The London Theatres' (1879), Henry James complained that 'the English stage has probably never been so bad as it is at present' and considered 'why it is that in the English language of our day there is not so much even as an unsuccessful attempt at a dramatic literature – such as is so largely visible in Germany and Italy, where "original" plays, even though they be bad ones, are produced by the hundred'.[47] The progressive critic William Archer expressed similar concerns at the start of *English Dramatists of Today* (1882): 'A very short glance at any of the following essays will show that I take a somewhat gloomy view of the present state of the drama. In this I am not singular.'[48] There was a general sense of pessimism about the state of English drama among the leading critical minds of the day.

Why such pessimism? The failings that these commentators perceived – and that Jones would also write about extensively, once his first major success as a playwright had given him a platform for critical interventions of his own – were numerous. They included over-reliance on adaptations and translations of French plays; the economics of playwriting as a profession; the constraints imposed by the censorship, both official and unofficial; the lack of copyright protection for English drama, and the related absence of any tradition of play-publishing and play-reading; the want of discernment among theatre audiences, and of informed and impartial criticism to guide them; the insufficiency of formal drama training for English

[46] Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, p. 26.
[47] Henry James, 'The London Theatres', originally published anonymously in the *Nation*, 12 June 1879, reprinted in *The Scenic Art: Notes on Acting and the Drama, 1872-1901* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949), pp. 119-24 (pp. 119, 123).
[48] William Archer, *English Dramatists of Today* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882), p. 1.

actors; and the actor-manager system as a means of organisation for theatrical production generally.

These matters were interconnected in complicated ways. For example, the dependence on adaptations of French plays came about partly because of the economics of playwriting and the commercial nature of the actor-manager system. Given that a translation or adaptation of a pre-existing comedy by a French author might cost £50, whereas an original dramatic work written in English might cost £200 or more, there was a strong economic incentive for the actor-manager to prefer the former.[49] As a result, English audiences were as likely to be offered an adaptation of a play by Sardou as a new play by an English author; and such adaptations might themselves be distorted and debased in the process of modifying them for the tastes and expectations of an English audience. For Henry James, the shortage of new plays in English was 'the essential weakness of the whole institution [i.e. the English theatre] – the absolute poverty of its repertory'.[50] Archer echoed that view: 'Our weakness does not lie in the fact that we borrow from France; it lies in the fact that we have no contemporary drama of our own such as almost all our neighbours possess and appreciate along with the French masterpieces.'[51] The basis of remuneration for English dramatists was thus both a consequence of the system of theatrical production, and a cause of the shortage of original English plays.

That is not to say that new English drama was non-existent. Archer described the state of English drama in 1882 as flourishing, but only as what he called a 'non-literary product' suitable solely for performance and without aspirations to literary merit.[52] The future of English drama, for Archer, depended on the recovery of its status as literature, and the detrimental effect of treating drama entirely as a non-literary product was reflected in both the substance and the quality of such new plays as were written:

> The public has entirely lost the habit of reading fiction in dramatic form. The loss to itself, to the authors, and to art in the abstract is enormous. Until it regains the habit which exists throughout Europe and once existed in England, our drama will remain unliterary, frivolous, non-moral, unworthy of its past and of our present stage of advancement in other branches of literature and art.[53]

[49] James Woodfield, *English Theatre in Transition, 1881-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 9.
[50] James, p. 123.
[51] Archer (1882), p. 3.
[52] Archer (1882), pp. 3-4.
[53] Archer (1882), p. 7.

The term ‘non-moral’ needs explanation. Archer glossed this expression as meaning ‘hav[ing] no relevance to the moral facts and problems of English life, as the dramas of Augier, Dumas, Feuillet, and Sardou have to those of French life’.[54] For Archer, the lack of a play-reading habit among the English public was a key obstacle to the development of serious, literary drama that could examine and challenge social conventions as European writers were able to do. Until that habit was recovered, Archer argued, English drama could not rise above the frivolous.

One major structural impediment to the development of play-reading was the lack of effective copyright protection for English plays, with its adverse implications for play-publishing. Until 1891, and the coming into force of the US International Copyright Act, the publication of a script in England meant, in effect, that the playwright forfeited his American rights. Under English law, too, a stage performance in America was deemed to be a ‘publication’, so if even a pirated version of a play were produced in – say – New York before its first performance in Britain, the playwright again lost his copyright protection under English law.[55] The practical consequence was that new English plays were simply not published: notwithstanding occasional instances of private printing on the part of individual playwrights such as Tom Taylor and W.S. Gilbert, there was no general custom of publishing plays at the start of the *fin* ‘except in the quite unreadable form in which Mr. [Samuel] French presents them to the “profession” and to amateurs’.[56] To earn money from their works, dramatists were entirely dependent on the play being produced, and therefore on being acceptable to an actor-manager, to the censor, and to the audiences who went to see it. The lack of a tradition of publishing and reading plays was thus a contributory cause to the paucity of new and challenging dramatic literature. Archer wrote in 1882 that he ‘should like to see in England a body of playwrights, however small, whose works are not only acted, but printed and *read*’, but he was not optimistic about the achievement of this vision: ‘I do not, in my most sanguine moments, venture to hope that this nineteenth century will witness its

[54] Archer (1882), p. 8.
[55] For a discussion of the legal background to the 1891 International Copyright Act, see Katherine E. Kelly, ‘Imprinting the stage: Shaw and the publishing trade, 1883-1903’, in Christopher Innes (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 25-54.
[56] Archer (1882), p. 6.

attainment.'[57] In the event, the change of copyright law in 1891 which conferred proper protection on dramatic works led to an immediate flourishing in the publication of plays, of which Jones was in the forefront.

A further obstacle to the emergence of new drama was audience tastes and expectations. This was inextricably linked to matters of class, and more precisely – as Archer and others suggested – the failure of both the middle class and the upper class to provide leadership in matters of judgement:

> The theatre is supported by the most Philistine section of the middle class, and by the worse than Philistine, the utterly frivolous section of the upper class. People of intellect and culture go at long intervals to one or two theatres, and are perfectly in the dark as to what is really good and bad. A theatre supported mainly by people who have no taste or thought whatever, and partly by people who have taste and thought for everything except the drama, cannot be expected to take a serious hold of life.[58]

It is notable that Archer uses the Arnoldian term 'Philistine' to refer to the middle-class members of the theatre audience. Arnold himself had previously remarked on the 'complete estrangement' of the Puritan middle class from the theatre in the mid-Victorian period, and in 'The French Play in London' – although he appears to celebrate the fact that the middle class was making a return – Arnold voices a similar frustration with their critical abilities: 'I see the middle class beginning to arrive at the theatre again after an abstention of two centuries and more; arriving eager and curious, but a little bewildered.'[59] The impoverished state of English drama was attributed in large part to the perceived inability of audiences – and specifically those audiences with the capital to influence cultural direction and thus the tastes of the broader population – to appreciate and demand serious plays.

For Arnold and Archer, this lack of appreciation had to be addressed primarily through criticism. In his 1865 essay 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', Arnold had defined criticism as 'a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world', with the aim of 'creating a current of true and fresh ideas'.[60] The

[57] Archer (1882), p. 4. The italics are Archer's.
[58] Archer (1882), pp. 8-9.
[59] Arnold (1879), p. 236.
[60] Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' (1865), in *Essays in Criticism* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1911), pp. 1-41 (pp, 38 and 22).

focus of this essay was literary rather than dramatic criticism, but its essential message – that informed criticism, which both explains and communicates new work to audiences, is a necessary precursor to the emergence of fresh creative writing – applies equally to the theatre. For Archer too, the appreciation of new dramatic writing and the elevation of audience tastes could not proceed without the development of a new approach to dramatic criticism in English newspapers and magazines. Critics were needed who would guide the public in the appreciation of new drama, rather than merely reflecting popular opinion; who would speak out honestly notwithstanding their personal friendships with the actors and authors whose work they were seeing; and who 'can *criticize the critics*, or at any rate can comment upon the attitude of the public mind towards a play or actor as affected by the professed organs of criticism'.[61] For Archer, new dramatic writing had to go hand-in-hand with sound dramatic criticism that could both identify new writers and works of merit, and act as a channel for introducing them to the public. Jones was a beneficiary of the emergence of that critical expertise, being singled out early in his career as a promising new English playwright and a hope for the future.[62]

Changes in taste were also impeded by the essentially conservative nature of theatre censorship. Until the Theatres Act 1968 abolished its role as censor, every play had to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain's Office for licensing before it could be publicly performed, and the censor could prohibit plays or demand textual changes. Those measures were blunt instruments, however, and – then as now – the censorship operated in subtler ways too: 'Anticipating what would and would not be acceptable to the Lord Chamberlain, writers restricted their imaginations – consciously and unconsciously – by tailoring their ideas accordingly.'[63] Besides accommodating the commercial judgement of actor-managers about the suitability of the material for an audience, authors also had to navigate the formal machinery of official censorship, and in anticipating those constraints they would inevitably censor themselves.

Although censorship had its historical roots in controlling political references in the theatre, by the *fin de siècle* its main focus was individual morality, and particularly sexual morality:

[61] Archer (1882), p. 16. The italics are Archer's.
[62] Archer (1882), p. 220.
[63] Dominic Shellard and Steve Nicholson, with Miriam Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets...: A History of British Theatre Censorship* (London: The British Library, 2004), p. 77.

Edward F. Smyth Piggott, the Examiner of Plays between 1874 and 1895, saw his role as defending drama from playwrights who would otherwise enjoy 'an unrestricted licence in their importations of obscenity'.[64] Critics and authors alike might argue against it, but for the working playwright censorship was a fact of life, and those who aimed to deal seriously with sexual matters in particular – as Jones sought to do in many of his plays of the 1890s – had to tread carefully if they wished to see their work performed.[65] As Sos Eltis has observed, 'to challenge society's sexual mores openly on the Victorian public stage was impossible... [Licences for performance] were only grudgingly conferred on even the most orthodox and sentimental presentation of the fallen woman.'[66] As late as 1899, Shaw could write that

> the normal assumption in England is that without a Censor the stage would instantly plunge to the lowest practicable extreme of degradation […] If you introduce a male libertine in a serious play, you had better 'redeem' him in the end by marrying him to an innocent young lady. If a female libertine, it will not matter if she dies at the end, and takes some opportunity to burst into tears on touching the hand of a respectable girl.[67]

The playwright accordingly had to exercise caution: too radical a challenge to conventional sexual *mores* might render a play unacceptable to the censor, and therefore unperformable on the commercial stage even if an actor-manager were daring enough to support it. Shaw waited over thirty years before the first public production of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* because he refused to compromise with the censor's demands: the play was completed in 1894, but public performances remained banned in Britain until 1925.[68] Jones was readier to compromise, and the final versions of many of the plays that I discuss in this thesis represent an accommodation between Jones and the actor-managers who produced his work, and whose sensitivity to the judgements of censors and audiences necessitated concessions on the playwright's part.

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[64] Quoted in Shellard et al, p. 5.
[65] See for example William Archer, 'The Censorship of the Stage', in *About the Theatre: Essays and Studies* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1886), pp. 101-71; and George Bernard Shaw, the 'Author's Apology', in *Mrs. Warren's Profession.*
[66] Sos Eltis, *Revising Wilde: Society and Subversion in the Plays of Oscar Wilde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 60.
[67] Quoted in Shellard et al, 25.
[68] Frederick J. Marker, 'Shaw's Early Plays', in Innes (1998), pp. 103-23 (p. 116). Marker notes that the Stage Society put on two private performances in 1902. There was also a short-lived New York run in 1905, consisting of one night at the Garrick Theatre: the manager and the cast were subsequently arrested by the vice squad for appearing in an immoral work.

Other institutions associated with the theatre also needed reform. The visit of the Comédie-Française initiated, or perhaps accelerated, a general re-evaluation of the English theatre and of how it might be improved by reform of its institutions. One aspect was training. Both James and Arnold commented on the poor quality of English actors compared to their French counterparts, and James opined further, 'There can be no serious school of acting unless there is a dramatic literature to feed it; the two things act and react upon each other – they are a reciprocal inspiration and encouragement.'[69] Poor acting was connected both to the lack of good dramatic writing and to the lack of formal training for actors: it had long been customary for actor-managers to take apprentices, but the country's first drama school – Sarah Thorne's School of Acting at Margate – opened only in 1885.[70]

Arnold argued for more radical changes to the organisation of the theatre. Towards the end of his essay, Arnold imagines the French company turning to its English audience and setting out its recommendations for the improvement of the English stage:

> 'Forget,' – can we not hear these fine artists saying in an undertone to us, amidst their graceful compliments of adieu? – 'forget your clap-trap, and believe that the State, the nation in its collective and corporate character, does well to concern itself about an influence so important to national life and manners as the theatre […]'[71]

For Arnold, the cultural potential of the English theatre was profound and untapped: theatre was an influence on national life and manners, and an important element in forming the collective identity of the nation. Arnold's prescription for the English stage involved State support for the theatre with the formation of a company with a permanent base in the West End; a repertory combining Shakespeare and new works; the establishment of an associated

[69] James, p. 123.
[70] Thorne advertised for students wishing to enter the theatrical profession and charged £20 for three months' training, or £30 for six months' training. The syllabus included classes in voice production, gesture and mime, dialects and accents, make-up, the portrayal of characters, the value of pace and the value of pauses. <http://trm-archive.blogspot.com/2007/09/> [accessed 19 August 2020]. Although LAMDA, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, is widely thought of as the first British drama school, when it opened in 1861 it was known only as the London Academy of Music. Instruction in spoken English began later, and speech examinations were first instituted in the 1880s. Baz Kershaw, 'London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art', in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Theatre and Performance* <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.lib.bbk.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780198601746.001.0001/acref-9780198601746-e-2349> [accessed 1 April 2022].
[71] Arnold (1879), p. 241.

drama school; and the gradual rolling out of similar publicly-subsidised schemes across the country.[72]

By 1880, then, it was widely acknowledged that English theatre was at a turning point: 'we are at the end of a period,' wrote Arnold, 'and have to deal with the facts and symptoms of a new period on which we are entering; and prominent among these fresh facts and symptoms is the irresistibility of the theatre.'[73] Archer condemned the vicious circle created by a commercial theatre operating only according to the laws of supply and demand – 'A frivolous public calls for frivolous plays, and frivolous plays breed a frivolous public. The public degrades the managers, the managers the authors, the authors the actors, the actors the critics, and the critics the public again' – but even he looked forward to 'the day of regeneration' when 'the coming critic' would usher in the age of 'the coming dramatist.'[74] Henry Arthur Jones, whose career to that point had been, in Archer's words, 'neither long nor eventful', was nevertheless named in *English Dramatists of Today* as one such coming dramatist (others included Arthur Wing Pinero and W.S. Gilbert): this was on the strength of just three works, in which even Archer found much to criticise, commenting on *A Clerical Error* (1879), for example, that it contained 'a good many elements of the commonplace'.[75] For all that, Archer concluded that Jones had done 'enough to establish for his future efforts a fair claim to respectful attention'.[76] That assertion was justified after the first night of *The Silver King* in November 1882, shortly after Archer's book was published. In Jones' first significant critical intervention the following year, 'The Theatre and the Mob' (1883), the newly-successful playwright added his voice to those of Archer, Arnold and James, and expressed a similar view about having reached a turning-point: 'one might in a sanguine moment be inclined to say that we have ready to our hands in abundance every element of a great dramatic renascence – except good plays.'[77] It was clear to a wide range of commentators around 1880 that English drama was ripe for improvement, and it would become Jones' mission to help bring that renaissance about, through both his plays and his critical writings.

[72] Arnold (1879), pp. 241-2. It would take another twenty-five years until Harley Granville Barker and George Bernard Shaw published the first concrete proposals for a national theatre in England. See *A National Theatre, Scheme & Estimates* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1907).
[73] Arnold (1879), p. 232.
[74] Archer (1882), p. 16.
[75] Archer (1882), p. 220.
[76] Archer (1882), p. 226.
[77] Jones, 'The Theatre and the Mob', p. 40.

Jones' early critical writings

Alongside his career as a practicing playwright, Jones wrote and lectured extensively on matters related to drama, and his major non-dramatic writings were published during his lifetime in two collections, *The Renascence of the English Drama* (1895) and *The Foundations of a National Drama* (1913).[78] For the critic Richard Cordell, writing in 1932 – from a transatlantic perspective and across a period of thirty-five years that included the cultural upheavals of the *fin de siècle*, the Great War and its aftermath – *Renascence* was 'the most important volume of dramatic criticism since the studies of the older English drama by Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt. Until Shaw began publishing his plays with their critical prefaces and his collected play reviews, Jones was the only important spokesman of his profession for the new drama.'[79]

Some of Jones's principal themes in the earlier volume are the improvement of audience tastes to appreciate serious drama; the faults and inequities of the institutions of theatre production, and particularly the actor-manager system; the desirability of recognising the drama as literature, including the reform of copyright law in order to provide greater protection for the intellectual property of dramatists and enable the publication of printed plays; and more generally, calls for greater freedom for dramatists to portray all aspects of human life and experience, unimpeded by the official censorship or the disapproval of the censorious 'Mrs. Grundys' who sought to police the boundaries of public decency. Jones' essays and articles in *Renascence* address all the constraints within which Jones' plays of the *fin de siècle* were written and produced: understanding these constraints, and Jones' attitude to them as manifested in these interventions, is essential to understanding the plays themselves.

The opening essay in *Renascence*, 'The Theatre and the Mob', had originally appeared in the *Nineteenth Century Review* in 1883, the year following the success of *The Silver King*. The essay was Jones' first major critical intervention and the very title hints at a preoccupation that would dominate his critical writings: the power of the 'mob', and specifically the judgement of the mob in the theatre. This is an anxiety that goes back to the earliest days of

[78] For brevity, I refer to these collections as *Renascence* and *Foundations* respectively.
[79] Cordell, p. 142-3.

European drama. The third book of Plato's *Laws* includes a discourse over the regulation of music in the Athenian *polis*, in which Plato criticises the relaxation of the laws governing the classification and performance of music. In former days, writes Plato, these laws were determined and enforced by those with the education and authority to interpret them correctly; but latterly the uneducated and ill-informed in the audience had taken the liberty of forming their own judgement, expressed by hissing or clapping according to whether they approved or disapproved. The consequence is disorder in the theatre itself, and in the world beyond:

> Whence the theatric audiences, that once were voiceless, became clamorous, as having professed knowledge, in the things belonging to the Muses, of what was beautiful and not; and instead of aristocracy in that knowledge, rose up a certain polluted theatrocracy. For if indeed the democracy had been itself composed of more or less well-educated persons, there would not have been so much harm; but from this beginning in music, sprang up general disloyalty, and pronouncing of their own opinion by everybody about everything; and on this followed mere licentiousness, for, having no fear of speaking, supposing themselves to know, fearlessness begot shamelessness.[80]

The above translation is by Ruskin. It was published in Letter 73 (January 1877) of *Fors Clavigera* under the heading 'The Laws of Plato on Music', and Jones was almost certainly familiar with it.[81] For Plato and for Ruskin, this 'theatrocracy' represents mob rule: catering to the lowest common denominator of popular taste in music and drama, rather than aspiring to loftier standards, is a step towards the breakdown of social order more generally.[82] The elevation of popular taste in the theatre is therefore not merely a theatrical preference: it is an important social duty. This unapologetically elitist thinking is common to both Ruskin and Arnold. Jones shares with them the belief that those with refined critical faculties should act as guides, and show the way to those whose circumstances had provided less opportunity to learn to appreciate what Arnold termed 'the *best* knowledge and thought of the time'.[83]

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[80] Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain*, Vol. VII, Letter 73 (January 1877), in *Complete Works*, Vol. XXIX, pp. 13-29 (p. 26).
[81] We can be confident that Jones knew this passage because he alluded to the preceding heading of the same letter ('The need of education. The art of being rightly amused') in the title of a lecture, 'On Being Rightly Amused at the Theatre', originally delivered at Bradford on 13 November 1887, and reprinted in *Renascence*, pp. 192-225.
[82] For a more extensive discussion of the notion of 'theatrocracy', see Tony Fisher, *Theatre and Governance in Britain, 1500-1900: Democracy, Disorder and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[83] Arnold (1867-9), p. 52.

Central to the project of improving popular judgement was redressing the imbalance in popularity between dramatic art and 'mere' entertainment:

> [The] drama is not merely an art, but it is also a competitor of music-halls, circuses, Madame Tussaud's, the Westminster Aquarium, and the Argyll Rooms. It is a hybrid, an unwieldy Siamese Twin, with two bodies, two heads, two minds, two dispositions, all of them, for the present, vitally connected. And one of these bodies, dramatic art, is lean and pinched and starving, and has to drag about with it, wherever it goes, its fat, puffy, unwholesome, dropsical brother, popular amusement.[84]

The dual nature of late Victorian theatrical entertainment is here expressed in the most vivid terms: the imagery of the 'fat, puffy, unwholesome, dropsical brother' contrasts directly with the 'healthy' tone to which Ruskin, Arnold and Jones all believed art should aspire. In 'Our Modern Drama: Is it an Art or an Amusement?' (1892), Jones returns to the same theme, arguing for the need to raise standards of taste and judgement, and quoting from Ruskin's *The Cestus of Aglaia* (1865): 'The end of art is not to amuse. All art which proposes amusement as its end, or which is sought for that end, must be of an inferior, and is probably of a harmful, class.'[85] For Jones, drama had to be something more than a mere source of amusement, with greater artistic merit and moral purpose, the popular acceptance of which would be led by the middle and upper classes who should be the most readily capable of appreciating the merits of new dramatic writing.

That elevation of taste depended, however, on changes in other theatre institutions and practices and, in 'The First-Night Judgment of Plays' (1889), Jones turned his attention to the impact of rash critical judgement. He contrasts the play, the success and fame of which is entirely dependent on the judgement of its first-night audience, with the novel and other art-forms. A painting that fails to sell immediately may find another buyer, and a book that fails to achieve immediate popularity nevertheless remains available for enjoyment by other audiences or later generations; but the economics of theatrical production – including the fact

[84] Jones, 'The Theatre and the Mob,' p. 11. The racialised term used to describe conjoined twins is a creature of its time, but it also emphasises precisely the sensational aspect of theatrical spectacle to which Jones objects. The term 'Siamese twins' originally referred to the conjoined twins Chang and Eng Bunker (1881-74), who were born in Thailand (formerly known as Siam). They appeared in numerous shows in countries in the West and became well-known to English and American audiences. See <https://www.britannica.com/science/conjoined-twin> [accessed 16 September 2020].
[85] 'Our Modern Drama: Is it an Art or an Amusement?', an address delivered to the Playgoers' Club on 5 November 1892, reprinted in *Renascence*, pp. 256-287 (p. 263).

that, as already noted, 'legitimate' drama is in competition with music-halls and circuses – mean that a play may be forgotten forever following a hostile reception on its first performance, even though there are many elements that might affect both the quality of that performance and the audience response and which are beyond the control of the dramatist himself. This fact is another impediment to dramatic freedom: 'while very gratefully acknowledging the great generosity of first-night audiences […] the fact that their verdict is supposed to be final, conclusive, and exhaustive, sometimes acts as a drag and a bar to the development of our drama.'[86] The requirement for instant acceptance necessitates caution on the part of both writers and actor-managers, and a tendency to stick with conventional formulae. The solution, Jones suggests, is to seek 'the greatest forbearance for all work that, however faulty in points of technique, does yet aim at painting a phase of life, or at tackling some vital type of character, or at illustrating some great passion, in a serious and straightforward way'.[87] The English drama will not be successfully elevated unless those critics who lead public opinion have educated audiences about what serious drama can be, and to do so those critics must themselves alter their way of thinking. The essay is an appeal for the elevation of public taste, and for dramaturgical freedom, but also a demand for more measured responses in the evaluation of new or challenging work that requires time and consideration to appreciate fully.

For Jones, responsibility for the debasement of public taste lay in the economics of theatre production – more specifically, the actor-manager system – and this is a second major theme in Jones' non-dramatic writings. The actor-manager system, which was the prevailing system of production for legitimate drama over the last quarter of the nineteenth century, arose out of the collapse of the old stock company repertory system under which a theatre would engage a company for a season, and the company would perform a repertory of plays that changed on a nightly basis. However, changes in demographics and audience tastes in the second half of the century – including an expectation that a major production of, say, a melodrama or a Shakespeare play would have a large cast, an elaborate set, and spectacular stage effects – altered the economics of theatre production so that managerial effort came to be focussed primarily at establishing a single long run, over the course of which there might be a realistic chance of recouping production costs and making a profit.[88] (The West End continues to

[86] Jones, 'The First-Night Judgment of Plays', p. 81.
[87] Jones, 'The First-Night Judgment of Plays', p. 82.
[88] Woodfield, p. 5.

operate under these conditions, as do many other venues and forms of theatre production.) William Archer, in his entry on 'Drama' in the 1911 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, wrote that by 1875, 'There was not a single theatre in London at which plays, old and new, were not selected and mounted solely with a view to their continuous performance for as many nights as possible, anything short of fifty nights constituting an ignominious and probably ruinous failure.'[89] The actor-manager system, under which entire productions revolved around the star quality of a single performer and the long run, provided the economic and organisational structure within which new plays were commissioned and staged. However, from the perspective of the working playwright, it had two major drawbacks.

First, the financial risks of production almost *necessitated* sticking with proven and popular dramatic formulae, because a play that was not immediately successful simply would not survive: 'Under this hard condition […] of immediate recognition, immediate approval by the multitude – that multitude, as Ruskin says, "always awake to the lowest pleasures art can bestow and blunt to the highest," – under this hard condition every play is produced.'[90] As a result, the English theatre had adopted the 'hateful doctrine of managerial shopkeeping, so full of hideous, ruinous degradation to dramatic art', by which 'managers are encouraged to consider themselves as cheesemongers, bound, it appears, by every established maxim of British commerce, to corrode the palates and poison the stomachs of their customers – if it pays'.[91] The Arnoldian tone of Jones' criticism is clear: if the greatest aspiration of actor-managers was to make the most profit by selling audiences what they wanted and not trying to improve the dramatic fare that was available, then they were no better than the provincial, philistine shopkeepers whom Jones and Arnold despised.

Second, the actor-manager system skewed the public perception of the relative importance of the writer and the manager, to the detriment of the former. Jones described this as a 'radical defect' because:

> it fixes the responsibility for the play upon the person who is not really responsible for it. In truth, a manager is never responsible for any play that is performed at his theatre. He may be responsible for the exclusion of

[89] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th Edition, Volume 8, Slice 7, "Drama" to "Dublin". Ebook published by Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32783/32783-h/32783-h.htm> [accessed 10 March 2017.]
[90] Jones, 'The Theatre and the Mob', p. 10.
[91] Jones, 'The Theatre and the Mob,' p. 12.

> certain work, but there is only one person who is responsible for its production, and that is the author of it. So far as a play has in it any literature, any character painting, any creative or imaginative force, any observation of human life, it belongs to the man who wrote it.[92]

In Jones' view, then, the contribution of the author was undervalued; and it is certainly true that in posters and playbills of the 1890s, the name of the actor-manager tends to feature far more prominently than that of the playwright (if the latter appears at all). The effect was to create an imbalance in power that undermined the ability of the playwright to ensure the integrity of his text.

The actor-manager system accordingly gave rise to a real tension between the practical, commercial demands of the theatre on the one hand, and the artistic vision and standing of the playwright on the other; and it is unsurprising that Jones often came into conflict with the actor-managers with whom he collaborated – even those whose productions earned Jones fame, wealth and artistic credibility. Sir Charles Wyndham produced five of Jones' plays, and Wyndham's biographer characterised Jones as 'a difficult man'.[93] The biographer of Sir George Alexander records that Jones was 'not a restful element in the theatre' and that 'stories were rife of the times when he leaped across the orchestra and stumped out of a theatre, and when he was barred out of the rehearsals of his plays'.[94] Jones also quarreled very publicly with E.S. Willard over the relative importance of their respective contributions to the success of *The Middleman* (1889) – a huge hit – and the intensity of their disagreement prompted the *Nineteenth Century* to publish a symposium in which Wyndham, Henry Irving and Bram Stoker (better known as the author of *Dracula*, but also Irving's business manager) put up a spirited defence of the actor-manager system: Stoker's opening essay began by commending its 'good effect […] not only to those immediately concerned, and to dramatic artists in general, but even, in greater or less degree, to literature and the arts, and so to the great public'.[95] For Jones, however, responsibility for debased audience tastes and the associated disregard for the profession of playwright lay with the actor-manager system; and

[92] Quoted in 'Stage and Song' *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 July 1890, p. 1.
[93] Wendy Trewin, *All on Stage: Charles Wyndham and the Alberys* (London: George Harrap & Co., 1980), p. 130.
[94] A.E.W. Mason, *Sir George Alexander and the St. James' Theatre* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1935), p. 94.
[95] Bram Stoker, Henry Irving and Charles Wyndham, 'Actor-Managers', *The Nineteenth Century: a monthly review*, 27 (June 1890), 1040-58 (p. 1040).

when Jones announced that he would produce *The Crusaders* for himself in 1891, it was an assertion of the priority of the dramatist, the creator of intellectual property, over the actor-manager who in his capacity as capitalist businessman was primarily concerned with its financial exploitation rather than its artistic integrity, and who in his capacity as star performer would manipulate the author's literary work to suit his own ends.

Jones also attributed to the demands of the actor-manager system, and the compromises that it necessitated on the part of the playwright, the lack of credence given to drama as a serious literary form. In his Preface to the first published edition of *Saints and Sinners* in 1891, Jones commented, 'The present system in England of manufacturing plays to order and to exploit some leading performer is quite sufficient to account for the literary degradation of the modern drama and for the just contempt with which it has been viewed by the intellect of the nation during the last twenty-five years.'[96] The extent of that contempt, which came to be known as 'the divorce of literature from the stage', can be understood from a series of articles entitled 'Why I Don't Write Plays' that ran in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the summer of 1892, and in which novelists including Thomas Hardy, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, George Moore and George Gissing (and many others whose names are less recognisable today) were asked to give their views about the relationship between literature and drama, and the reasons why dramatic writing was held in such low esteem by the literary establishment of the day. For Hardy, the issue was the constraints that theatrical production placed on the artistic freedom of the writer: he writes of 'the play as nowadays conditioned, when parts have to be moulded to actors, not actors to parts; when managers will not risk a truly original play; when scenes have to be arranged in a constrained and arbitrary fashion to suit the exigencies of scene-building'.[97] For George Moore, the problem was public taste:

> As the taste of the public lies wholly with the bad play […] the crude, shapeless, brainless composition, written with deliberation and strict knowledge of "the kind of thing the public wants" – it would, I think, prove inimical to the stage and to literature that English men of letters should turn their serious attention to dramatic writing.[98]

[96] Jones, *Saints and Sinners* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1891), p. xii.
[97] 'Why I Don't Write Plays: I – Mr. Thomas Hardy', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 August 1892, p. 1.
[98] 'Why I Don't Write Plays: XII – Mr. George Moore', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 September 1892, p. 3.

Moore cites the hostility of the reception of *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler* as instances of the lack of judgement of London audiences. He concluded his response, however, by undertaking to write a play for performance at the Independent Theatre.

For Jones, the 'divorce' of drama and literature was also a consequence of the different ways in which audiences experienced the novel and the play: the performance of a play was an ephemeral experience whereas the written word existed in a permanent and material form. In arguing in 'The Literary Drama' (1892) that the new drama ought to be regarded and judged as literature, Jones made a compelling case for the revival of the practice of printing plays:

> Surely the best, perhaps the only, safeguard against the success of all kinds of bunkum and clap-trap on the English stage is the custom of publishing our plays. We may not as yet have written plays with a distinct literary "note," but the knowledge that we shall be "read" as well as "seen" must tend towards the cultivation of a literary form.[99]

For Jones, the standard of playwriting would be raised if dramatists knew that their words would persist in permanent form, to be evaluated at leisure on the page as well as enjoyed in the immediacy of the theatrical experience. When the International Copyright Act came into force on 1 July 1891, Jones put this belief into practice: he immediately had his publishers, Macmillan, apply to register his American rights in *Saints and Sinners* at the US Copyright Office, the first foreign copyright to be registered under the new law.[100] Jones had been arguing for years for the recognition of drama as a literary art form; now, for the first time, a reading audience would have the opportunity to judge the literary merit of Jones' works on the basis of the author's own words.

In choosing *Saints and Sinners* as the first of his works to be published – although many of his other plays had been produced very successfully in the intervening seven years since *Saints and Sinners* was first produced – Jones was also making a point about how publication freed the playwright from the commercial and artistic constraints associated with production. Jones' original manuscript had the heroine (the seduced maiden Letty Fletcher) dying in the closing moments of the play, but in the theatre the ending was changed for commercial

[99] Jones, 'The Literary Drama: a Reply to Mr. H. D. Traill', published in the *New Review*, January 1892. Reprinted in *Renascence*, pp. 102-18 (p. 110).
[100] Wendi A. Maloney, 'First Foreign Copyright Registered 125 Years Ago', *Copyright Notices* (2016), p. 10. <https://www.copyright.gov/history/lore/pdfs/201602%20CLore_February2016.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2020].

reasons to one in which a loyal admirer returns from Australia and offers to marry her, because it was thought that this would be more pleasing to audiences. That commercial decision was vindicated by the play's success: in its revised form, the play ran for six months at the Vaudeville in 1884-5 and was subsequently produced at the Madison Square Theatre in New York. Jones later wrote: '*Saints and Sinners* played over two hundred nights at the Vaudeville with a happy ending. If my heroine had continued to die, *Saints and Sinners* would have been out of the bills in a fortnight, and with what I believe was better workmanship and a more logical and artistic dénouement would have counted against me as a failure.'[101] However, Jones reinstated the original, tragic ending for the published version, which he felt was more aesthetically satisfactory and reflected more closely his original intention.

The 1884 production of *Saints and Sinners* had also been the subject of criticism because of Jones' use of scriptural quotations – for which it was hissed on its opening night – and for the unfavourable portrayal of clerical characters, which many considered unacceptable in the unhallowed setting of a theatre.[102] The printed text, however, was not subject either to the official censorship of the Lord Chamberlain's Office or to the unofficial censoriousness of hostile playgoers. The publication of *Saints and Sinners* thus marks the liberation of playwrights from the compromises that had to be made on the stage: compromises with actor-managers who insisted on sticking to 'safe' subjects because of the amount of money that was at stake in staging a play; compromises with those who would challenge the author's freedom to choose his subject-matter and the words he put into his characters' mouths; compromises with star performers, who might insist on cutting or reshaping speeches or entire scenes to show themselves in the best light; and compromises with what he felt were the too-easily offended sensibilities of some playgoers.

Publication also freed the playwright from the ephemerality and subjectivity of the experience of performance: the work could now be fixed in a form that was material and permanent, and that reflected the author's own original vision, unmediated by actors and staging. The play was no longer just a script: it was a text that could take its place alongside other books in the library and in time acquire (or lose) a canonical status that would preserve

[101] Quoted in Cordell, p. 68.
[102] D.A. Jones, p. 93.

the author's words intact. Jones' friend George Bernard Shaw would fully exploit these new freedoms when he started writing plays, which only came after 1891. Shaw always envisaged that his plays would be read as much as acted, and this is clear from Shaw's stage directions, which often run on for pages and read like a novel. The opening stage direction of *Saints and Sinners* runs to six lines and describes the scene that the audience in the theatre will see. By contrast, Shaw's 1897 play *The Devil's Disciple* opens with a stage direction that is two pages long and explains not only the stage-scene but the character and background of the woman who is onstage when the curtain goes up, and the historical context of the setting. This is drama designed to be read as literature. Although play-reading, as opposed to play-going, would remain a novelty for some years – a 1907 article about Jones' plays in the *North American Review* discusses how the experience of reading a play differs from that of reading a novel – Jones' leadership in publishing *Saints and Sinners* and in securing copyright protection for it represents a major step towards the general acceptance of drama as a literary form.[103]

I will argue in subsequent chapters of this thesis that Jones' plays are not the reactionary diatribes described in many recent accounts of his work; rather, that Jones often used the stage as a platform for the communication of progressive and even radical ideas. Jones' non-dramatic writings and interventions likewise show determined resistance to the West End theatrical institutions and production practices of the day, and the commercial and aesthetic limitations they placed on dramatists. Along with the other leading drama critics of his age – Clement Scott, William Archer, George Bernard Shaw and A.B. Walkley – he influenced theatre practice and helped shape the direction of English drama in the twentieth century. If the arguments that Jones was making have become commonplace, it needs to be remembered that they were not always so: in Cordell's words, Jones was 'roughly taken to task for his daring […] He was assaulted for advocating the printing of plays, for asserting that drama is an art, for pleading for a distinction between drama and mere amusement, for asking for support for the better drama which offers a criticism, a taste of life'.[104] It may be difficult to appreciate now how audacious some of Jones' writings appeared at the time, but Jones' significance was clearly recognised by contemporaries in the American academy.[105] When

[103] W. D. Howells, 'On Reading the Plays of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones', *North American Review*, Vol. 186, No. 623 (October 1907), pp. 205-212.
[104] Cordell, p. 152.
[105] Jones came to feel more appreciated in America, where the academic study of modern English-language drama began in the early years of the twentieth century, than in England where universities

Harvard conferred an Honorary Master of Arts on Jones in 1907, it was the first time that such an honour has been given to a playwright; and William Lyon Phelps, the influential Professor of English at Yale from 1901 to 1933, wrote an appreciative obituary of Jones in the *Yale University Library Gazette* for October 1929, ascribing to him 'more than to any other man, that English plays became available in printed form, claimed a place in literature, and challenged the verdict of literary critics'.[106] Jones' critical writings were recognised by the time of his death as marking a significant contribution towards the acceptance of drama as an artistic endeavour that goes beyond ephemeral entertainment, and towards the recognition of plays as works of literature as well as theatre.

In his plays, too, Jones was in the vanguard of re-establishing the English drama as a form that could have both popular appeal and literary merit. This is evident from the critical response to *The Silver King* (1882), in respect of which commentators warmly approved the authors' aspirations, none more enthusiastically than Matthew Arnold:

> [*The Silver King* is] something new and entirely praiseworthy […] a sensational drama in which the diction and sentiments do not overstep the modesty of nature. In general, in drama of this kind, the diction and sentiments, like the incidents, are extravagant, impossible, transpontine; here they are not. This is a very great merit, a very great advantage. The imagination can lend itself to almost any incidents, however violent; but good taste will always revolt against transpontine diction and sentiments. Instead of giving their audience transpontine diction and sentiments, Messrs. Jones and Herman give them literature. Faults there are in *The Silver King* […] But in general throughout the piece the diction and sentiments are natural, they have sobriety and propriety, they are literature. It is an excellent and hopeful sign to find playwrights capable of writing in this style, actors capable of rendering it, a public capable of enjoying it.[107]

These three pillars – playwrights, actors and public – are important. For English drama to elevate itself, authors, actors and audiences would all have to set themselves higher

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remained, at the time of Jones' death in 1929, largely unconcerned with the modern drama. See Cordell (p. 206), who also notes the work of Allardyce Nicoll, in the promotion of the study of Victorian dramatists at the University of London, as an exception to the general indifference to modern drama of the academic establishment in Britain in the 1930s.

[106] William Lyon Phelps, 'Henry Arthur Jones', *Yale University Library Gazette*, October 1929, pp. 21-8 (pp. 21-2). Phelps records that Jones made many visits to Yale, giving public lectures and attending Phelps' own classes in Contemporary Drama where he answered questions from undergraduates.

[107] Matthew Arnold, 'At the Princess's', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6 December 1882, p. 4. The term 'transpontine' described a style of heightened diction and dialogue that was common in popular melodramas staged in the minor theatres outside central London, typically in the East End or on the other side of the Thames – hence 'across the bridge' or 'transpontine'.

expectations; a new school of theatre criticism would also have to emerge, in which commentators like Archer could bring to public attention the work of new playwrights. Jones' great achievement with *The Silver King* was to show that the theatregoing public might be willing to embrace new plays that aspired to literary merit, and thus to start to put in place one of the three pillars of the English dramatic renaissance. In the following chapters of this thesis, I shall examine how Jones applied his critical principles over the course of his long career as a practicing playwright, as well as discussing the thematic substance of his plays about gender, religion, politics and nationality, and challenging the prevailing critical impression of this important dramatist.

Chapter One

'He'll make a man yet':
Jones' male heroes and the late Victorian crisis of masculinity

The career of Henry Arthur Jones spans the *fin de siècle*, a period widely regarded as a time of 'masculinity in crisis': that is to say, a period 'in which the traditionally dominant forms of masculinity have become so blurred that men no longer know what is required to be a "real man" – either because of structural changes or because of challenging critique, or both'.[1] Victorian art and the Victorian novel have long been recognised as playing a key role in the construction and communication of male identities, but the stage was another medium through which masculinities, both dominant and subordinate, could be communicated.[2] For example, the emergence of the 'gent' or 'swell' as a model of working-class masculinity was encouraged by comic music hall acts of the 1870s and 1880s.[3]

Jones' plays are full of troubled male protagonists struggling to live up to traditional paradigms of proper masculine conduct and, in this chapter, I examine Jones' dramatic shaping of the leading male characters in four such works: *The Silver King* (1882), *The Dancing Girl* (1891), *The Masqueraders* (1894) and *The Liars* (1897). Recent critical attention to these plays has tended to focus on (and rightly take issue with) Jones' treatment of their sexually transgressive female characters: Drusilla Ives in *The Dancing Girl*, Dulcie Larondie in *The Masqueraders* and Lady Jessica Nepean in *The Liars.* However, if the focus is shifted to masculinity, it becomes clear that the plays are more concerned with the moral

[1] John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (London: Pearson Educational, 2005), pp. 45-6. The idea of the *fin de siècle* as a period of masculinity in crisis gained widespread currency with the publication of Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991).
[2] See for example Joseph A. Kestner, *Masculinities in Victorian Painting* (Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1995), and Philip Mallett (ed.), *The Victorian Novel and Masculinity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). In terms of drama specifically, Michael Mangan's *Staging Masculinities: History, Gender, Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), includes a chapter dealing with the treatment of masculinities in *A Doll's House*, *Breaking a Butterfly*, *Candida* and *Peter Pan.* David Haldane Lawrence's *Diverse Performances: Masculinities and the Victorian Stage* (London: Paradise Press, 2014), focusses on the roles of men in the Victorian theatre as an organisation (as actors, managers, stagehands, audiences and playwrights), but it also touches on the communication of masculinities through the drama being performed on the stage itself.
[3] Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago Press, 1992), pp. 43-4.

education of their male heroes than the sexual conduct of their heroines. I argue that Jones contributed to the late Victorian discourse of masculinity by presenting in these plays a range of male exemplars that not only respond to the changing and emerging masculinities of the period, but also dramatise important aspects of the contemporaneous scientific discourse of gender.

The protagonists in all four works were played by leading actor-managers – Wilson Barrett, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, George Alexander and Charles Wyndham respectively – all of whom had a reputation for 'manliness' in both their onstage personas and their personal characters.[4] The distinction between 'manliness' and 'masculinity' is an important one. For John Tosh, the term 'manliness' implies the existence of a single, monolithic standard of manhood, with 'manly' status being conferred or withheld by one's peers according to their perception of one's attributes and achievements; whereas 'masculinity' is an expression of personal authenticity that 'should not be subject to prescription, and […] should ideally express individual choice'.[5] Commentators such as Joseph A. Kestner have mapped some key representations of masculinity in Victorian art: in *Masculinities in Victorian Painting* (1995), Kestner described four main 'ideographs' that he termed the mythical hero, the gallant knight, the challenged paterfamilias and the valiant soldier.[6] The protagonists of the plays I discuss brought these ideographs to life on the West End stage.

Dominant forms of masculinity were subject to cultural challenge during the *fin de siècle* on several fronts. They included the reform of marriage laws since the mid-century, which had altered the balance of domestic power by making divorce easier; the related improvements in the legal rights of women with regard to property and the custody of children; the emergence of the New Woman, who represented a challenge to men in the workplace and elsewhere; the emergence, too, of the decadent or aesthete (described by Elaine Showalter as 'the masculine counterpart to the New Woman and, to some Victorian observers, "an invention as terrible as, and in some ways, more shocking" than she'); and the developing scientific study of human

[4] For example, Barrett was described as having a 'manly, frank and winning personality' in Arthur Goddard's *Players of the Period: a Series of Anecdotal, Biographical, and Critical Monographs of the Leading English Actors of the Day* (London: Dean & Son, 1891), p. 179. Tree, Alexander and Wyndham are also frequently praised in reviews for their 'manly' voice and appearance.
[5] Tosh, p.2.
[6] Kestner, p.235.

sexuality, which challenged conventional thinking about sexual conduct and began the process of legitimising desires that had previously been designated 'unnatural'.[7]
Taken together, these changes threatened the dominant notion of the 'separate spheres' of male and female influence that John Ruskin had articulated in 'Of Queens' Gardens' a generation earlier, and to which I referred in the Introduction. Ruskin's gender thinking is characterised by this binary and expressed in moral terms, and even decades after 'Of Queens' Gardens', Ruskin remained concerned with the proper duties of men. For example, in *A Knight's Faith* (1884), Ruskin holds up Sir Herbert Edwardes, who led a campaign in the Punjab in 1848-9, as a model of male conduct: an idealised Christian hero who could inspire his non-Christian army through virtue, self-sacrifice, kindness and fidelity. As Francis O'Gorman puts it, *A Knight's Faith* was just one of several 'textual commendations of manliness which ran together different forms of strenuous labour with Christian virtue and which examined men, like Edwardes, situated in a desexualized zone of homosociality, freed from the potentially distracting presence of female sexuality'.[8] This 'desexualized zone of homosociality' figures in all the plays I consider in this chapter.

As noted in the Introduction, Jones was heavily influenced by Ruskin, and it is unsurprising that his plays also show a preoccupation with proper male conduct. However, Jones was also interested in scientific developments. The contemporaneous writings of evolutionary theorists described – without the specifically moral dimension found in Ruskin – gender stereotypes that reflected the dominant and essentialist assumptions of the age. In *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), Darwin commented (in a section headed 'Difference in the Mental Power of the Two Sexes') that 'Woman seems to differ from man in mental disposition, chiefly in her greater tenderness and less selfishness […] Woman, owing to her maternal instincts, displays these qualities towards her infants in an eminent degree; therefore it is likely that she would often extend them towards her fellow-creatures. Man is the rival of other men; he delights in competition, and this leads to ambition which passes too easily into selfishness.'[9] Spencer likewise asserted, in *The Study of Sociology* (1873), that the supposed earlier cessation of individual development in women resulted in 'the mental manifestations [having] somewhat less of general power or massiveness' and 'a perceptible falling-short in

[7] Showalter, p. 169. The causes of the late Victorian crisis in masculinity are discussed in more detail in Tosh, particularly Chapter 1, 'The Making of Manhood and the Uses of History', pp. 13-28.
[8] O'Gorman, p. 122.
[9] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1871), II. pp. 326-30 (p. 326).

those two faculties, intellectual and emotional, which are the latest products of human evolution – the power of abstract reasoning and that most abstract of the emotions, the sentiment of justice – the sentiment which regulates conduct irrespective of personal attachments and the likes or dislikes felt for individuals'.[10] For both Darwin and Spencer, then, gender roles were biologically determined rather than socially constructed.[11]

This biological aspect of gender discourse was important to Jones. Evolutionary thinking had inspired novelists since *The Origin of Species* appeared in 1859, from George Eliot in the mid-Victorian period through to Thomas Hardy at the end of the century.[12] Drama was decades behind the novel in this respect: in her discussion of theatre's engagement with evolution, the earliest instance that Kirsten Shepherd-Barr cites as a serious attempt to incorporate evolution thematically into English-language drama is Jones' *The Dancing Girl* (1891). However, Jones had touched on evolution and social Darwinism years earlier, in *The Silver King* (1882), and he engaged with scientific thinking more than any of his contemporary fellow-playwrights.[13] Jones' examinations of masculinity are positioned within the discourse of evolution: the action of the plays I consider takes place against a background of natural forces, geological timescales and cosmic distances, and the writing reflects some key aspects of *fin de siècle* responses to and refinements of Darwin and Spencer.

One such refinement was the application of evolutionary thinking to social ills like extreme poverty: Spencer had argued in *The Study of Sociology* that state intervention would hasten social decline, and the term 'social Darwinism' has since become a by-word for a laissez-faire political ideology that invokes evolutionary theory in the service of non-intervention in poverty and other social problems. This is not to say that Spencer's world is entirely pitiless. Both Darwin and Spencer recognised the evolutionary value of altruism and co-operation:

[10] Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, 3rd edn (London: Henry S. King, 1874), p. 374.
[11] It should be noted that this kind of biological essentialism was contested from the moment it emerged in evolutionary discourse. For an account of the response of contemporaneous feminists to the essentialism of Darwin and Spencer, see S. Pearl Brilmyer, "Darwinian Feminisms", in *Gender: Matter*, ed. by Stacy Alaimo (Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks, Macmillan Reference USA, 2017), pp. 19-34.
[12] For a general discussion of evolution in the Victorian novel, including the works of Eliot and Hardy, see John Kucich, 'Intellectual debate in the Victorian novel: religion and science', in Deirdre David (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 107-28.
[13] Shepherd-Barr, pp. 42-6. More generally, see Chapter 2, 'Confronting the Serious Side', pp. 38-62.

Darwin described the importance of what he termed the 'social instinct' of humans and certain other animals in *The Descent of Man*, and Spencer argued in *The Data of Ethics* (1879) that, just as evolution had involved an advance by degrees from the unconscious parental altruism of animals to conscious parental altruism of the highest kind, so had there been a natural advance by degrees from 'the altruism of the family' to 'social altruism'.[14] The tension between the amoral universe and the altruistic conduct expected of men in late-Victorian society is thematically central to many of Jones' plays.

A related refinement is degeneration theory, as described by Edwin Lankester in *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1880), which became increasingly influential towards the end of the century. Lankester demonstrated how some simple species (like the barnacle and a kind of marine filter-feeder known as the ascidian) were degenerate versions of more complex forms that had ceased to have to hunt or compete for food, and warned of the implications of this for human society: 'Possibly we are all drifting, tending to the condition of intellectual Barnacles or Ascidians.'[15] In Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (written in 1892, and translated into English in 1895), this scientific insight was endowed with specifically moral overtones. Nordau condemned Ibsen, Wilde and many other leading writers and artists of the day for the supposed corrupting influence of their 'degenerate' works, and described the very term '*fin de siècle*' as representing 'a practical emancipation from traditional discipline' which manifested itself in numerous ways:

> To the voluptuary this means unbridled lewdness, the unchaining of the beast in man; to the withered heart of the egoist, disdain of all consideration for his fellow-men, the trampling under foot of all barriers which enclose brutal greed of lucre and lust of pleasure; […] to the sensitive nature yearning for aesthetic thrills, it means the vanishing of ideals in art, and no more power in its accepted forms to arouse emotion. And to all, it means the end of an established order, which for thousands of years has satisfied logic, fettered depravity, and in every art matured something of beauty.[16]

As the reference to 'unbridled lewdness' suggests, sexuality was an important part of the discourse of degeneration (or 'devolution', a term that emerged in this period), and this is vividly reflected in the fantastic fiction of the *fin de siècle* such as Stevenson's *The Strange*

[14] Herbert Spencer, *The Data of Ethics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), p. 204.
[15] E. Ray Lankester, *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (London: Macmillan, 1880), pp. 59-61.
[16] Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), p. 5.

Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde (1886) and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Along with Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), these novels trace the progressive degradation of either the individual or the human species.[17] The narrative of degeneration lends itself less readily to the stage than to the novel, but I will show that in their examination of masculinities, Jones' works also address aspects of degeneration and decline in individual families and in society as a whole.

A third refinement of Darwin is the further development of evolutionary ethics in the writings of Thomas Huxley and others: Huxley argued in his 1893 lecture 'Evolution and Ethics' that social progress required 'a checking of the cosmic process [of Darwinian competition for mating rights and food] at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best.'[18] For Huxley, the attributes that typically favour male animals in a state of nature – such as size, physical strength and aggression – have to be controlled in human society by appropriate moral codes and law:

> The practice of that which is ethically best – what we call goodness or virtue – involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows.[19]

Huxley's case is that ethics have to be created by society *despite* nature, thus 'checking the cosmic process', and contrasts with Spencer's argument that altruism is itself a natural facet *of* the cosmic process. Many of Jones' male characters animate precisely these conflicting positions, and self-restraint and altruism are pitched against self-assertion and pitiless competition in each of the plays that I discuss. The notion of masculine self-discipline, which

[17] The first use cited by the Oxford English Dictionary for the term 'devolution' in its biological sense is 1882, by H. S. Carpenter: 'If there be e-volution, there surely is de-volution, a degradation of the species.' <https://www.oed.com> [Accessed 24 April 2020].
[18] Thomas H. Huxley, 'Evolution and Ethics', published in *Evolution & Ethics and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1895), pp. 46-116 (pp. 81-2).
[19] Huxley, pp. 81-2.

has been glossed by a recent commentator as 'the learned ability to control potentially disruptive male energies', is a particularly important value for Jones.[20]

That Jones was actively engaged with these strands of scientific thinking is clear. His daughter Doris relates that he read Darwin and Huxley, that he often said 'Any clear thinking I've done I owe to Herbert Spencer', and that he once told Spencer personally how, 'as a boy not out of his teens, he had commenced reading all his works, and how deeply and lastingly he was indebted to their teaching for his intellectual development'.[21] Doris also recounts that Jones 'saw a great deal of Sir Edwin (Lankester)' and that he delighted in reading and re-reading Lankester's books.[22] Jones was not the only dramatist with an interest in these matters: Wilde too read Darwin and Spencer, and was introduced to Huxley by Huxley's daughter Henrietta, a young illustrator and singer who moved in the same circles.[23] However, where Wilde's engagement with evolution is manifested mainly in his prose, Jones' engagement pervades his plays. By considering these works through the lens of scientific thinking – and specifically the strands of Darwinism, social Darwinism, degeneration and evolutionary ethics – I will show how the masculinities that Jones articulated both address evolutionary discourse and respond to the changing cultural milieu of *fin de siècle* London.

The Silver King **(1882)**[24]

Jones' concern with masculinity goes back to the earliest days of his playwriting career. In *The Silver King*, written in collaboration with Henry Herman and produced by Wilson Barrett at the Princess's Theatre in November 1882, Jones dramatises precisely the Ruskinian gender roles articulated in 'Of Queens' Gardens'. The hero, Wilfred Denver, begins the play as a drunken, dissolute gambler and neglectful husband and father. Having been framed for a murder committed by the villain, Skinner, he flees London, hoping to stow away on a ship

[20] Mallett, p. vii.
[21] D.A. Jones, pp. 34, 40, 114.
[22] D.A. Jones, p. 40.
[23] David Clifford, 'Wilde and evolution', in Kerry Powell and Peter Raby (eds). *Oscar Wilde in Context* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 211-9 (p. 211). Clifford says that Huxley did not take to Wilde: "'That man", he commanded Nettie after her guest had left, "never enters my house again."' Sadly, there is no other account of the meeting, so the reasons for Huxley's animosity must remain unknown.
[24] Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman, *The Silver King* in *Plays by Henry Arthur Jones* ed. Russell Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Silver King* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.

from Liverpool. A catastrophic fire, following a train crash, means that Denver is believed dead, enabling him to get away and adopt a new identity. Denver changes his name to John Franklin, a name that for the late-Victorian audience would have been synonymous with the 'manly' qualities of courage, endurance and self-sacrifice. Sir John Franklin (1786-1847) was a Royal Navy officer and Arctic explorer, who led an expedition to find the Northwest Passage in which he and his entire crew died: a statue of him was erected at Waterloo Place in London in 1866.

Under this assumed and significant name, Denver labours in the homosocial zone of the Nevada silver mines and makes an enormous fortune, earning the soubriquet 'the Silver King'. He returns to England incognito, having demonstrated his masculine stature through courage, hard work and good deeds: we learn that he has built a city in Nevada 'where every man would shed his blood for me, and every child is taught to reverence the name of John Franklin' (85). He finds his wife Nelly and their young family on the edge of starvation, about to be turned out into the snow by their landlord – the same villain who had framed Denver for the murder in Act I. He challenges and overcomes Skinner, and is finally reunited with Nelly and reinstated as the head of the family. The role of paterfamilias has been described as 'One of the most powerful constructions of masculinity in nineteenth-century Britain […] the man in the family unit required to be provider, lover, husband, supporter, moral guide, infallible authoritarian and unquestioned arbiter'.[25] This is the position from which Denver has fallen off at the start of the play, and to which he is restored at the end.

The playwrights announced their intentions in the programme, with a verse from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*:

> I held it truth, with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things.

In *The Silver King,* Denver rises on his 'dead self' – the dissolute young man thought to have died in the train crash – to 'higher things' as the Silver King. The theme of Denver's masculine progression is introduced at the very start when the old servant, Jaikes, tells another character, 'Well, he's a bit wild, but there ain't no harm in him […] He'll make a

[25] Kestner, p. 141.

man yet' (41). Indeed, the entire narrative arc of the play can be viewed as Denver's passage towards 'making a man'. Masculinity is a quality that has to be fashioned, and Denver constructs himself according to a Ruskinian paradigm of Christian masculinity, engaging in 'rough work in open world' and so performing his part of Ruskin's gender binary, while Nelly performs hers by remaining at home as guardian of the family. It is only once he has overcome adversity and undertaken charitable works that Denver can triumph over Skinner and regain his lost masculine status as head of the family.

This is not achieved without struggle: the effects of Denver's journey are physically inscribed on his body. Three and a half years pass between Act II (the aftermath of the train crash) and Act III (Denver's return as the Silver King), but Denver ages significantly in that period. The physical toll is described in a sentimental exchange between Nelly and their young daughter, Cissy. Nelly is wondering about the mysterious benefactor who has saved her from eviction. Cissy has met him, briefly, but has not recognised him as her father:

> NELLY Who can it be, this unknown friend, this silent unseen protector, this guardian who is ever watching over my path? Cissy, what was the gentleman like?
> CISSY Oh, he was a very nice old gentleman!
> NELLY Old?
> CISSY Oh, yes, his hair was nearly white and he was crying so much.
> NELLY Crying? Why should he cry? *(With sudden joy, aside)* Can it be? Oh, if it were he, if it could be, if it might be, if it were possible! *(Eagerly snatches locket from her neck, opens it, shows it to CISSY very eagerly.)* Cissy, was he like this?
> CISSY Why, that's my father's likeness, mamma!
> NELLY Yes, was he like that?
> CISSY *(after looking at it for a moment or two)* Oh, no, mamma! The Silver King's hair is nearly white.
> NELLY But the face, Cissy, the face?
> CISSY *(looking again)* No, my father's face is quite young and happy, and the Silver King's face is so sad and old. No, the Silver King isn't a bit like that. (86)

Denver's redemption comes at a cost: he literally loses his youth. This is a recurring trope in Jones' works: the flawed heroes of *The Dancing Girl* (1893) and *Michael and his Lost Angel* (1896) undergo similar physical transformations. Whether it is the sexual transgression of those later plays or the neglect of family duties in *The Silver King*, the fallen man cannot, in the moral world of Jones, recover his masculine stature without sacrifice. There is always a

price to pay – though it must be acknowledged that the cost to the fallen man is less than the cost to the fallen woman, who often pays with her life.

Wilfred Denver thus performs the version of masculinity articulated by Ruskin: he masters his propensity for gambling and drinking, encounters danger and adversity in the open world, and secures the defence of his home and family. Along with Ruskin, though, the influence of Herbert Spencer is also discernible: indeed, the play can be read as a dramatisation of the tension between a moral (Christian) view of the universe, and an amoral (social Darwinist) one. These contrasting philosophies are embodied in Denver and Skinner respectively. Where Denver is motivated by remorse about his supposed crime and his abandonment of his family, invoking God's intervention to resolve his torment – the play's most famous line is his cry, 'Oh God! put back thy Universe and give me yesterday!' (61) – Skinner's universe is godless, and his actions are motivated entirely by self-interest. His antagonism to Denver is not the result of personal animosity: Skinner commits a murder when a robbery goes wrong, and sees an opportunity to avoid responsibility by blaming it on Denver who happens to be lying in a drunken stupor at the scene of the crime. Skinner's decision to frame the hero is made on the spur of the moment.

Likewise, Skinner's eviction of Nelly is not motivated (as is often the case with melodramatic villains) by any sexual intention towards the heroine, nor by malice towards the Denver family. Indeed, at this point in the play, Skinner is not even aware that Nelly is Denver's wife: it is simply a coincidence that he now happens to be her landlord. Skinner views the world in starkly Darwinian terms. The opening stage direction of Act III describes the interior of Skinner's villa at Bromley, with '*Window at back showing a snowy landscape outside*' contrasting with the '*very luxuriously furnished apartment […] Fireplace right, with large comfortable fire burning*'. The dialogue opens with the following exchange between Skinner and his wife, Olive:

> OLIVE *(by window)* More snow! *(coming down to SKINNER)* Herbert, you don't really mean to turn that poor woman and her children out of that wretched cottage?
> SKINNER Yes, I do!
> OLIVE Why?
> SKINNER They are starving, one of the children is dying. I object to people starving and dying on my property.
> OLIVE But what will they do? Where will they go?

SKINNER There's a nice comfortable workhouse about two miles off.
OLIVE *(Puts her arm on the back of his chair.)* But surely, Herbert –
SKINNER Now don't argue, Olive, the woman can't pay her rent – she must go!
OLIVE But it isn't her fault she is poor. *(pause)*
SKINNER Fault! It's no fault in England to be poor. It's a crime. That's the reason I'm rich.
OLIVE Rich? When I think how our money is got, I grudge the poorest labourer's wife her crust of bread and drink of water. *(pause)*
SKINNER Ah, that's foolish. My dear Olive, all living creatures prey upon one another. The duck gobbles up the worm, the man gobbles up the duck and then the worm gobbles up the man again. It's the great law of nature. My profession is just as good as any other, till I'm found out.
OLIVE *(Rises, goes to him)* When you talk like that I hate you. Your profession indeed! Burglary – burglary and – *(in a whisper)* – murder! (63)

Here, at the opening of Act III – a pivotal moment between the chase action of Act II and Denver's return in the next scene – is a statement of the application to human affairs of the principle of survival of the fittest. The world outside the window is harsh, and Skinner has made himself comfortable at the expense of others. Skinner's surname suggests both financial rapacity and a lack of squeamishness, and it may be no coincidence that Skinner's first name, like Spencer's, is Herbert. He is the incarnation of Darwin's description of man as 'the rival of other men', whose innate disposition tends towards competition, ambition and selfishnesss.

Denver and Skinner thus represent the two sides of the ethical binary described by Huxley: where Skinner thrusts aside and treads down all competitors, Denver respects and helps his fellows; where Skinner demonstrates ruthless self-assertion, Denver exercises self-restraint. Indeed, in the final scene, where Jones might have given the hero a physical confrontation with the villain (the crowd-pleasing dénouement of many melodramas), he instead has Denver coolly hand Skinner to the police with the words 'Mr Baxter, do your duty and arrest the murderer of Geoffrey Ware!' (101).[26] Denver's masculinity is reclaimed not through the exercise of physical force over Skinner, but through moral strength and the rule of law. He undergoes a transformative journey in which he symbolically dies (in the train crash) and is reborn as a new man, re-fashioning himself in the idealised masculine image of Sir John Franklin. His journey involves hardship and moral education, which qualifies him to prevail over the representative of an amoral world. Jones follows Huxley in advocating the necessity of restraint and altruism in the Darwinian universe, and he dramatises in Wilfred Denver the

[26] Russell Jackson has noted that Jones 'drafted but rejected a number of more picturesque and violent dénouements, including one in which Skinner went after Denver with an air-pistol and fought hand-to-hand with him.' Jackson, p. 6.

Ruskinian paradigm that defines proper masculine conduct not only in terms of struggle, but also in terms of charity and self-sacrifice.

The Dancing Girl (1891)[27]

Similar values are communicated in *The Dancing Girl*, which Herbert Beerbohm Tree produced at the Haymarket Theatre in January 1891. In the years since *The Silver King*, male conduct – and particularly transgressive male sexual behaviour, which was not even touched upon in the earlier play – had come under intense public scrutiny following a series of high-profile sexual scandals in the mid- to late-1880s: these included the trial of the brothel-keeper Jefferies in 1884, the publication in 1885 of W.T. Stead's series of articles on child prostitution and trafficking 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon', and the exposé in 1889 of the Cleveland Street male brothel in which telegraph boys were employed for the gratification of middle- and upper-class patrons. These scandals, Showalter asserts, 'changed the level of public awareness about sexuality and engendered a fierce response in social purity campaigns, a renewed sense of public moral concern, and demands, often successful, for restrictive legislation and censorship'.[28]

This growing public recognition of the fact that outwardly respectable men might lead depraved hidden lives, along with notions of degeneration and of the divided self, had found vivid artistic expression in fiction. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the brutish and morally insensible subconscious of the respectable Dr. Jekyll is unleashed by the transforming draught that changes him into the 'ape-like' Mr. Hyde: 'My devil had been long caged,' Jekyll writes in his final statement, 'he came out roaring'.[29] On the stage, Pinero's *The Profligate* (1889) had also addressed the distance between outward respectability and inward corruption. *The Dancing Girl* was another dramatic engagement with the subject of

[27] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Dancing Girl* (London: Samuel French, 1907). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Dancing Girl* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.
[28] Showalter, p. 3.
[29] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde', in Jenni Calder (ed.), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and other stories* (London: Penguin Classics, 1979), pp. 27-98 (p. 90). The term 'ape-like' is used several times to refer to Hyde (e.g. pp. 47, 96, 97). Stevenson's image of a 'devil' being uncaged anticipates Nordau's 'the unchaining of the beast in man' in the extract quoted earlier in this chapter.

male sexual misconduct in this febrile cultural and moral climate, and it is informative to compare it with Pinero's earlier play.

The Profligate was produced by John Hare at the Garrick Theatre in April 1889. The title refers to the principal male character, Dunstan Renshaw, described as 'a town gentleman who does ill in the country', whose youthful career of seducing naïve provincial girls under an assumed name comes back to haunt him.[30] The play concerns the moral education of a man through experience, and his ultimate rejection of one model of masculine behaviour (the profligate seducer) in favour of another (the faithful husband). As the curtain rises, Renshaw is about to marry Leslie Brudenell, an innocent young woman barely out of school. Knowing what Renshaw's past has been, his friend Hugh Murray admonishes him:

> Renshaw, do you imagine there is no Autumn in the life of a profligate? Do you think there is no moment when the accursed crop begins to rear its millions of heads above ground; when the rich man would give his wealth to be able to tread them back into the earth which rejects the foul load?[31]

Pinero's imagery of wild oats continuing to grow uncontrollably, in darkness and secrecy, echoes the tone and language of social purity campaigners like Josephine Butler. Renshaw's past comes to light when he is recognised by a woman he had seduced and abandoned years before. Filled with remorse, Renshaw resolves to poison himself, but changes his mind at the last moment as his young wife enters and takes him in her arms.[32] As the critic for the *Times* observed, the novelty and the impact of the play lay in its reversal of conventional gender roles, replacing the suicidal fallen woman of traditional melodrama with a suicidal fallen man.[33]

In *The Dancing Girl,* another wealthy profligate plans like Renshaw to take his own life by means of poison, but is prevented at the last moment by the intervention of the heroine. Recent commentators judge that the play has not aged well. Wellwarth, writing in 2001,

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[30] Arthur Wing Pinero, *The Profligate* (London: William Heineman, 1898), p. 29.
[31] Pinero, *The Profligate*, pp. 38-9.
[32] This was the ending that was performed, but Pinero's original ending had Renshaw taking the poison and dying on the stage. Hare persuaded Pinero to change the ending, arguing that the play would reach a wider public if the leading man were not killed off in front of the audience. See John Dawick, *Pinero: A Theatrical Life* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1993), p. 159.
[33] 'Opening of the Garrick Theatre', *Times,* 25 April 1889, p. 9.

describes it as ‘almost embarrassing to read, impressing the modern reader as consisting of a seemingly endless farrago of clichés’.[34] When it was first produced, though, critics praised its audacity, describing it as ‘a work of singular power and originality’ and applauding it as ‘a daring stage experiment’.[35] Audiences approved too: the play ran for 310 nights in London and opened in New York later the same year.

The protagonist is Valentine Danecourt, Duke of Guisebury. Guisebury is a good-natured but reckless man, morally and financially incontinent and neglectful of his estate, which includes the remote Cornish island of Endellion. Drusilla Ives, the eponymous ‘dancing girl’, is the daughter of one of Guisebury’s tenants, the devout Quaker David Ives. Having escaped the stultifying tedium of her Quaker life, Drusilla now lives in London as the Duke’s mistress under the assumed name of Diana Valrose. Recent comment on this play has tended to focus on Drusilla and disregard Guisebury. Eltis, for example, cites *The Dancing Girl* with its ‘Quaker turned seductress’ merely as an instance of the ‘fallen woman’ play that dominated the London stage of the 1890s, and Griffin describes Drusilla as ‘heartless and flippant’ and even ‘evil – a moral emblem shown to the audience,’ but neither of them makes any mention of Guisebury at all.[36] I argue, though, that the narrative arc of the play focuses not on the dancing girl of the title, but on Guisebury’s psychological journey and moral redemption.[37]

The story moves between Endellion and London, and the island setting is significant in both narrative and thematic terms. As the play opens, we learn that the encroachment of the sea has damaged the island’s economy: there is no work for the sailors and fishermen who live there, and they are forced to leave their families and to take the only employment available, as crew on a dangerous Arctic voyage. The Duke’s decadent lifestyle in London is thus contrasted with that of the Arctic explorer, which is again held up – as in *The Silver King* – as one of the paradigmatic masculinities of the day. We are constantly reminded of the presence of a dangerous natural world in the background: the villager John Christison lies awake tormented by the lack of progress on a ruined breakwater and by his failure to keep a promise

[34] Wellwarth, p. 44.
[35] *Pall Mall Gazette,* 16 January 1891, p. 2. *Morning Post*, 16 January 1891, p. 3.
[36] Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, p. 114; Griffin, p. 32.
[37] In an interview in the *Idler* in November 1893, Jones mentioned that he had suggested two titles to Tree: *The Dancing Girl* and *The Absentee.* Tree chose the former. The critical reception might have been different if he had chosen the latter – a reference to Guisebury, the neglectful absentee landlord – and thereby directed critical attention more towards the male protagonist than the female one.

to maintain it in good repair (52); the ship carrying the Arctic expedition is reported to have been lost, like that of Sir John Franklin, and Guisebury dreams of the dead men, 'their limbs dropping off with grangrene *(sic)* and frostbite, hanging over me in my sleep' (59). The natural world is unforgiving, and the island is being swept away by the sea, just as the Duke's name and line are, it is implied, being swept away by his degeneracy: 'Did you see that article in yesterday's Trafalgar Square Gazette on "The decline of our aristocracy?"' asks his friend Slingsby, 'They did give it to you hot' (55). Guisebury is the last of the Danecourt line, envying the happiness of 'some little cad and his wife buying their Sunday's dinner with four squalling, snub-nosed brats hanging around them' (58). The world of the play is the world of Darwinian natural forces, evolution, degeneration and extinction. The erosion of the island is a metaphor for the decline of the Danecourt family: both things can be arrested, but only by hard work and sacrifice on the Duke's part.

This engagement with evolutionary discourse is spelled out explicitly at several points. Although the lines were subsequently cut, the text submitted to the Lord Chamberlain's Office contained several references to Herbert Spencer and to aspects of evolutionary theory. Most remarkably, Sybil sums up Spencer's teaching in a few lines in Act IV:

> SYBIL You know they teased me about reading Herbert Spencer the other day – *(Guise nods)* I've found out something.
> GUISEBURY What?
> SYBIL That he teaches exactly the same thing as Dante. Dante says "in His will is our peace." Herbert Spencer says "You must bring yourself into perfect agreement with all these great laws around you. You must, or you'll get crushed." And that's what you've had to do. You have obeyed.[38]

This is the distillation of Jones' reading of Spencer. The words are given to the character who guides the Duke's moral journey, and Spencer himself approved of it: according to Jones' daughter Doris, 'Herbert Spencer was very pleased at this quotation from his teaching, and

[38] This dialogue appears in the licensing copy of *The Dancing Girl* which is held in the Lord Chamberlain's Plays at the British Library. LCP 53466 G. Act IV, p. 4. The production papers for *The Dancing Girl* in the Herbert Beerbohm Tree Archive at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection (HBT/3) include prompt books with slightly different versions of the same dialogue. It was not reproduced in the published text, and it seems likely that it was cut after the first night, when the curtain came down after midnight: the running-time was reduced by forty-five minutes within days. It is clear, however, that the dialogue was heard by the first night audience, because several reviews mention these allusions to Spencer. See L.F. Austin, 'The Playhouses', *Illustrated London News*, 24 January 1891, p. 114; and [Anon.], 'Haymarket Theatre', *Times*, 16 January 1891, p. 3.

H.A.J. derived great pleasure from the talk he had with the great man.'[39] Sybil's words contain the authorial voice of Jones, describing in evolutionary and social Darwinist terms how the world is. Individuals must adapt to their circumstances or die. In the case of Guisebury, his adaptation consists of stepping up to his socially-prescribed role of paternalistic landowner.

The action of *The Dancing Girl* takes place over four years and, for most of the play, Guisebury is on a self-destructive course as he bankrupts his estate over Drusilla and castigates himself over his own falling-off. He is aware of his moral failing, increasingly conscious of the neglect of his duty and his failure to keep his own promise to Christison to restore the breakwater: 'I want to keep my word, Regy. It would make a new man of me!' (60). Just as *The Silver King* concerned 'making a man' of Wilfred Denver, so *The Dancing Girl* involves 'making a new man' of Guisebury. Central to both plays is the recovery of masculine status through the exercise of self-restraint and the taming of uncontrolled male impulses. The two heroes follow similar trajectories of a moral decline, followed by a journey – a psychological one, in Guisebury's case, rather than a physical one – in which they acquire self-knowledge and moral awareness, before restoration to their destined masculine position.

That the Duke is morally culpable for leading Drusilla astray is made clear in some expository dialogue early in the play. When Slingsby asks how he met 'Diana Valrose', Guisebury replies:

> Her father sent her up to a situation in London, and five years ago she called on me as her father's landlord for a subscription to some charity affair – I saw she was two-thirds delightful Quaker innocence, and one-third the devil's own wit and mischief, so I gave her the subscription! […] She astonished me with the amount of things she learnt, and the way she dropped the Quaker, and became – well, she's a Pagan! Three years ago she took a fancy to dancing. Last season she began dancing for some charities, and her long skirts took the town by storm. She got asked to lots of places, and – that's the whole history of it, Regy. (21-22)

Jones' Duke is cast from the same mould as Alec d'Urberville in Hardy's novel of the same year: the wealthy, titled seducer attracted to the sexual innocence of a younger woman. Under his influence, Diana Valrose has 'dropped the Quaker' and become a 'Pagan': that is to say, she has turned her back on her strict religious upbringing to follow instead a creed that rejects

[39] D.A. Jones, p. 114.

conventionality and embraces sexual equality and a freer life.[40] She does not start out as a temptress, although that is how she ends up. Guisebury's account of her seduction is a version of the predatory male conduct described in 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon', bowdlerised for the West End stage.

Guisebury's financial recklessness mirrors his moral dissolution. At the outset of the play, he is 'a spendthrift, a libertine, a gambler with cards and horses' (27), who has lavished on Drusilla a 'house in Mayfair, race-horses, carriages, diamonds' worth a hundred thousand pounds (22). He has mortgaged his land and neglected the maintenance of the island's breakwater with disastrous consequences: 'Two years ago, my friend Mark Christison was struck in the high tide, as he was trying to save his home from destruction. He died and his wife went out of her mind. What Valentine Danecourt wastes on his dancing creatures would have built a breakwater, and saved Mark Christison's life' (27). A clear causal link is drawn between the Duke's moral decline and the neglect of his paternalistic duties as a landowner.

Nevertheless, the Duke has the capacity for virtue. The point is made repeatedly throughout the play by another young woman, Sybil Crake. Sybil is the daughter of the Duke's land agent, and the very antithesis of Drusilla. The contrast between them is emphasised in a highly visual fashion: where Drusilla is famed for her dancing, Sybil is lame. She is described as '*an odd elfin girl, about 20, lame with crutches, very bright, sprightly, alert, she hops on […] GUISE's manner towards her is protecting, something like a master to a favourite dog'* (30). Sybil's physical appearance is a constant visual reminder to the Duke of his own potential for self-sacrifice: we learn that the injury was incurred years before, when she was trampled by a runaway horse but rescued by Guisebury himself (41). The Duke thus has the makings of another of the classic Victorian masculinities described by Kestner: a gallant knight, who risks his life to save a child in danger, rather than a seducer of innocent Quaker girls. He refers to Sybil affectionately as Midge, and despite their difference in station she is allowed to criticise him and to act as his conscience. Like Lear's Fool, she has liberty to speak truth to her social superior in riddling terms:

[40] The foreword to the short-lived *Pagan Review* (which had only one issue, in August 1892) encouraged the 'new inwardness to withdraw from life the approved veils of convention' and a commitment 'to end gender discrimination and live a freer life'. See Bénédicte Coste, 'Late-Victorian Paganism: the case of the *Pagan Review*', *Cahiers Victoriens and Édouardiens* [Online], 80 (Autumn 2014). <http://journals.openedition.org.cve/1533> [Accessed 12 April 2020].

GUISEBURY Well, Midge, what have you been doing?
SYBIL Wishing I was a millionaire, a bricklayer or a horsewhip.
GUISEBURY Why?
SYBIL If I were a millionaire, I could build that breakwater; if I were a bricklayer, I could help poor young Christison build it; if I were a horsewhip, I might whip all the people who brought you up, and between them spoiled a good man in the making. (31)

The Duke then is a 'good man' who has been 'spoiled' by the influence of others, but Sybil also sees in him the possibility of reform and makes a promise to him: 'perhaps some day I shall pull *you* out from under the horses' feet' (41).

This promise is fulfilled at the climax of the play, which comes at the end of Act III and is set at the Duke's London mansion. Having sold off his properties and settled his debts, Guisebury resolves to take his own life; but as he lifts the poison to his lips, Sybil appears at the last moment and stays his hand. The audience's approbation of this moment was recorded by the *Illustrated London News*: 'When Miss Rose Norreys, the guardian angel, crept down the stairs just in time to arrest the suicide's hand, the theatre burst into one great shout, which must have stirred the pulse of the most cynical critic.'[41] She has saved him as she promised, at the moment he was under the horse's feet. As in *The Profligate*, the fallen man is rescued by the devotion of the good woman. Jones allows him the chance of redemption, and the recovery of his masculine status: an outcome that would not have been permissible had the gender roles been reversed.

The final act takes place two years later, back at Endellion. The opening stage direction simply reads: '*GUISE discovered, changed, aged*' (104). Like Denver in *The Silver King*, the process of recovering lost masculine status is inscribed on Guisebury's face and body: the price that he has to pay is the physical and mental toll of his efforts. He is contemplating the imminent completion of the breakwater, the work that he had neglected in his profligate days. We hear how he inspired his men to continue working on it through the storms of the previous November, and how his exertions have made him ill. Having wasted the first thirty-five years of his life, he has now, under Sybil's influence, regained his masculine stature as the gallant knight and the caring paterfamilias of his community. 'You believe in work, and you believe in all the great things that people call by different names,' she tells him (106).

[41] L.F. Austin, 'The Playhouses', *Illustrated London News,* 24 January 1891, p. 114.

Behind every code of beliefs is a common set of values comprised of 'all the watchwords and passwords – Faith, Duty, Love, Conscience, God. Nobody can help believing them' (106). The message is that there is just one permanent and enduring set of moral truths: although they are known by different names, Spencer's truth is the same as Dante's, and Ruskin's the same as Spencer's. It is notable, however, that Jones does not specifically endorse a Christian world view: eight years after the explicitly Christian morality of *The Silver King*, in *The Dancing Girl* 'Faith' and 'God' are just two out of many 'passwords' that people may use to describe their values. *The Silver King* had been written under the influence of the devout Wilson Barrett, whereas *The Dancing Girl* reflects the new evolutionary ethics taught by Huxley; but the two plays represent the same moral values and masculine paradigms.

The masculinity that Guisebury recovers is a qualified one. Like Denver, Guisebury has been on a journey involving a symbolic death (his attempted suicide and his subsequent illness), and the recovery of his lost moral standing involves a level of self-sacrifice that leaves both mental and physical scars: 'I shall never be the same man that I was before my illness. That dreadful two months. You pulled me through, Midge, but – I'm maimed for life' (105). Guisebury, like Denver, is both aged and chastened by experience.

As for Drusilla, like the fallen woman in so many plays, her story ends in exile and death. We learn in Act IV that she had died in New Orleans eight months earlier, but she is dismissed quite abruptly: another reason, perhaps, why the play is so problematic for a modern reader. Eltis concisely sums up Drusilla's demise as 'eschewing repentance, and subsequently dying of no diagnosable cause other than dancing on a Sunday'.[42] Other loose ends are tied up in a similar way: it turns out that the land agent, Crake – Sybil's father – had saved up a considerable sum during his time working for the Duke, and it is this money that has now been used to complete the harbour; the economy of the island is improving because of trade; Drusilla's father forgives the Duke when he finds a letter that shows that the Duke had offered to marry her; and on the very day that the last stone is put into the breakwater, a ship unexpectedly enters the harbour, with all the sailors returned safely from the Arctic. The play ends on a note of redemption, both physical and spiritual: bells are ringing offstage in the village of Endellion when Sybil comes to the Duke and tells him that the Endellion men are home. Guisebury '*Bursts into tears*', and as he does so '*She touches him; he turns*' (117). 'So

[42] Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, p. 114.

he bringeth them to their desired haven,' she says. He replies, 'And me – to my desired haven'. 'Listen', says Sybil. There are '*faint cheers*' offstage, as '*Music swells*' and the curtain falls. With the reinstatement of the Duke's masculine status, he is able to move on from the sterility of his relationship with Drusilla, and the ending raises the possibility of marriage with Sybil and thus continuation of the Danecourt line.

As in *The Silver King,* Guisebury's fall represents the abandonment of a conventional masculine role as gallant knight and protector of the poor; his recovery is motivated by remorse and acknowledgement of that failure; and it is achieved through the Ruskinian moral virtues of courage, leadership, self-sacrifice and physical effort, augmented and encouraged by the devotion of a good woman. In evolutionary terms, too, Guisebury's story teaches that degeneration – the decline of the Guisebury family – can be arrested and reversed through the Huxleyan values of self-restraint, just as the coastal erosion of Endellion can be stopped by hard work. Guisebury's near-suicide allows him to become a new person – a new man – and his new-found virtue is held up to the audience as a model to be emulated. However, it comes at the cost of his vigour and his health: the moral lesson is that masculine status, once lost, can only be recovered at a price.

The Masqueraders **(1894)**[43]

The three years between *The Dancing Girl* (1891) and *The Masqueraders* (1894), which was produced by George Alexander, brought immense changes in the presentation of non-normative masculinities on the West End stage. In Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance,* which he produced at the Haymarket Theatre in April 1893, Tree took the leading role of Lord Illingworth, whose interest in Gerald Arbuthnot has been described as 'perhaps the most blatant expression of homosexuality in Wilde's plays'.[44] Alexander would later produce *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the St. James's Theatre in 1895, which echoes *The Profligate* in the use of false names and identities by town gentlemen who court girls in the country; and although Wilde's comedy ends with the prospect of double weddings, many commentators have noted the play's undercurrent of homosexual deception, allusions and in-jokes:

[43] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Masqueraders* (London: Macmillan, 1899). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Masqueraders* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.
[44] Lawrence, p. 288.

> Algy's 'Bunburying' and Jack's 'Earnest' constitute an escape into a secluded sphere where the hidden self may be revealed. It provides an outlet from a rigid society, hostile to those who transgress its values. Algy and Jack seek contrasting loopholes for their proclivities. When Algy speaks of 'Bunburying' all over Shropshire, he could be cruising the countryside for rustic trade – not unlike Pinero's profligate.[45]

The invented personae of the two male characters, and their ostensibly happy marriages at the end, are cover for sexual preferences that could not be openly expressed on the West End stage.

The revolution on the stage reflected social changes in the theatre audience. Lawrence notes that although dandies and bohemian aesthetes were not unusual figures in fashionable West End audiences, '[by] the early 1890s a previously sublimated queer coterie was making itself visible […] of which Oscar Wilde was the undisputed leader' with the bar of the St. James's Theatre one of its main focal points.[46] At the opening night of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Wilde 'teasingly suggested a covert gay presence in the audience and on the stage', persuading members of his circle – and one member of the cast – to wear green carnations in their buttonholes.[47] Beyond the theatre too, concealed male identities, whether the hidden homosexual preferences of married men and bachelors or the penchant for vice behind the respectable public faces of professional men and aristocrats, were a matter of public comment. The door was open for dramatists to portray a broader range of masculinities on the London stage, and this is what Jones does in *The Masqueraders* and *The Liars.*

The Masqueraders, which opened at the St. James's in April 1894, concerns the love triangle between Dulcie Larondie, a woman of gentle birth but reduced circumstances, who at the opening of the play is working as a barmaid at a Hunt Ball in a provincial town; and her two male admirers, Sir Brice Skene and David Remon. The moral trajectory of Remon, the hero

[45] Lawrence, p. 293.
[46] Lawrence, pp. 43-4. See also Matt Cook, 'Wilde's London', in Powell and Raby, pp. 49-59: Cook writes 'the Criterion Bar on Piccadilly Circus became a "great centre for inverts" as (apparently) more respectable customers left. Other places in the West End had a similar queer reputation – most famously, the bar at the St. James's Theatre' (p. 55).
[47] Lawrence, p.45. Lawrence explains in a footnote that 'Traditionally, the shape of the carnation symbolised the anus, while the colour green was thought to be favoured by homosexuals.'

of *The Masqueraders*, differs markedly from those of Denver and Guisebury. Where the earlier protagonists have already, as the play opens, fallen off in some way (drunkenness and neglect of family in the former, sexual profligacy and neglect of social responsibilities in the latter) so that they have to learn restraint as part of their moral journey towards a newly-defined masculine identity, Remon is a model of attentiveness and altruism for almost the entire play: he is a devoted admirer, who continues to love Dulcie even after she marries another man, selflessly supports the family when her dissolute husband squanders his fortune and, at the end of the play – having been given the chance to start a new life with her – walks away in order to preserve her reputation. The moral journeys of Denver and Guisebury take place within the timeframe of the play's narrative, as they progress from their fallen condition to redemption. Remon's journey comes at the end of the play, when he departs for Africa and for almost certain death, in a conscious and performative act of self-sacrifice for the sake of the woman he loves.

The action of the play, like that of *The Dancing Girl*, is set against a background of natural forces and phenomena. The characters are aware of the wider and more dangerous world beyond Europe: a friend of Remon departs in Act I for what will prove to be a fatal journey to Alaska, and Remon himself leaves for Africa at the final curtain on what is likely to be another doomed expedition (there is 'a jolly lot of fever there' (78)). The vast distances and timescales of the cosmos are also a presence, because of Remon's profession: he is an astronomer, preoccupied with the study of planets and sunspots. *The Masqueraders* resembles Hardy's *Two on a Tower* (1882) in this respect, another work with an astronomer as protagonist and male love-interest, in showing human affairs as infinitesimal on the universal scale.

The point is reinforced by the recurring motif of an imagined planet in Andromeda in which everything is perfectly ordered, by contrast with our own world. The motif is introduced in Act I, shortly after Dulcie has agreed to marry Skene. Remon's brother Eddie tells him: 'This is the very worst world that ever spun round, for a man who has a heart. Look at all the heartless and stupid people; what a paradise this is for them! […] Let's pretend there's just one perfect star somewhere, shall we?'. Remon replies, 'Oh, very well; let's pretend there's one in the nebula of Andromeda. It's a long way off, and it does no harm to pretend. Besides, it makes the imbroglio of the universe complete if there is one perfect world somewhere in it' (36-7). Dulcie and Remon return to the comforting notion of a better and kinder world in

Andromeda throughout the play, and Remon's final words to Dulcie are a promise to meet her again 'In that little star in Andromeda. All's real there' (113). The closing line allows for the possibility that such an ideal world might exist, but that – if it does – it is so impossibly remote as to be forever unattainable in any material, physical sense.

In adopting this whimsical image, Jones is echoing a near-contemporaneous work, Olive Schreiner's short story 'In a Far-Off World' (1890), which begins as follows:

> There is a world in one of the far-off stars, and things do not happen here as they happen there.
>
> In that world were a man and woman; they had one work, and they walked together side by side on many days, and were friends – and that is a thing that happens now and then in this world also.[48]

Schreiner imagines an ideal world in which men and women can be equal, but it is remote from here; and her fable concludes – as does *The Masqueraders* – with the man leaving the woman, and the woman willingly relinquishing him. The story was published in a widely-read collection, *Dreams*, and the image would presumably have been recognisable to at least some of the audience.[49] Jones' choice of Andromeda for his version of this borrowed image is also loaded with meanings: ones that are less readily accessible to a modern reader than to a *fin de siècle* society audience, whose education (at least for the men in that audience) would have included classics and astronomy. The galaxy at the centre of the Andromeda constellation is the most distant object visible to the naked human eye, which underlines the unattainability of that perfect world. The constellation is named after a character in Greek mythology who was chained to a rock to be devoured by a sea-monster, as an act of appeasement to Poseidon; she was rescued by Perseus, who slew the monster after her father agreed to give him Andromeda's hand in marriage. Like Andromeda, Dulcie is metaphorically chained up and offered to a monster in her marriage to Skene; and she is saved by Remon, who thus fulfils the role of a classical hero: another of the dominant

[48] Olive Schreiner, 'In a Far-Off World', in *Dreams* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1891), pp. 57-64 (p. 59).
[49] *Dreams* went through 25 editions in 40 years, according to the editors of the recent (2020) Broadview Press edition. See Justin Thompson, '*Dreams* by Olive Schreiner', *Women's Writing* <DOI:10.1080/09699082.2021.1893505> [accessed 26 January 2022].

masculinities described by Kestner. The very name Andromeda means 'ruler of men', which emphasises the play's theme of proper male conduct.

In the central conflict between Skene and Remon, Jones contrasts two strong male types, and the key moments in the play dramatise a Darwinian competition for the woman. Both men have a hidden side. Skene is a dissolute baronet with a weakness for drink and gambling, and a bullying and possibly violent attitude towards women. This inner nature is concealed, however, by his outward appearance: the *Standard* described the character as 'a selfish, reckless, unscrupulous man of the world, veneered with attributes of good breeding till the brutality of his nature breaks through'.[50] Remon is the opposite, and the contrast with Skene could hardly be more explicit: where Skene is a man of the world, Remon's fascination with the stars marks him as *other* worldly. Remon is not, however, *un*worldly: he is also an adventurer, whose pursuit of scientific truth involves hardship and self-sacrifice. His friend and colleague Copeland announces near the start that he plans to leave England, declaring 'I'm sick of this nineteenth-century civilisation' (7), and urges Remon to forget about Dulcie and join him on a dangerous expedition to the homosocial space of Alaska (11). Remon demurs at this point; but the ending of the play sees him setting out on another potentially fatal voyage, to Africa to observe a transit of Venus. We also learn early on that Remon has a capacity for violence, notwithstanding his bookish demeanour: he tells Copeland 'He [Skene] shook hands with her [Dulcie] last night. When his finger-tips touched hers, I felt I could kill him' (11).

This hidden nature is revealed, though not fully unleashed, early in Act I, when Remon confronts Skene directly:

> (*SIR BRICE and DAVID have been sitting at table, looking at each other.*)
>
> SIR BRICE You spoke?
> DAVID No. (*The look is continued for some moments.*)
> SIR BRICE (*folds his arms over the table, leans over them to DAVID*). What the devil do you mean?
> DAVID (*folds his arms over the table so that they meet SIR BRICE'S, leans over them so that the two men's faces almost touch*), I mean to kill you if you dishonour her.
> SIR BRICE You'll kill me?
> DAVID I'll kill you.
> SIR BRICE I'll have her one way or the other.

[50] [Anon.], 'St. James's Theatre', *Standard,* 30 April 1894, p. 2.

DAVID You're warned. (15-16)

The display of aggressive male body-language and threatening speech is thoroughly Darwinian. It is reminiscent of the displays described by Darwin in the context of sexual rivalry in the animal kingdom, and although it is dressed up in the language of social and moral codes of honour ('I'll kill you if you dishonour her') it seems clear that what is at stake here is possession of the woman ('I'll have her one way or the other').[51] Despite his '*pale, studious, philosophic-looking*' appearance (6), Remon has a capacity for action that is comparable to the hero of any adventure novel, and a primitive and animalistic instinct for violence towards his rival. Like Dr. Jekyll's 'devil' that had been 'long caged', there is a constrained force within Remon, which is briefly released in the final confrontation with Skene in Act III.

Around the leading male roles of Remon and Skene are ranged a number of other masculine types. They include Montagu Lushington, described in the stage directions as '*a modern young man*' (2), who appoints himself as a master of ceremonies at the Hunt Ball. He is a scandalmonger who spreads sexual and financial gossip, and professes a decadent philosophy of world-weary amorality:

> I always do exactly as I like. If I want anything I buy it, whether I pay for it or no. If I see a woman I admire I make love to her, whether she belongs to another man or no. If a lie will answer my purpose, I tell it. I can't remember I ever denied myself one single pleasure in life; nor have I ever put myself out to oblige a fellow-creature […] These are my principles, and I always act up to them. (60-1)

This louche decadence is reminiscent of Wilde's epigrammatic quips and posturing, and the type would have been well-known to the St. James's audience. Lushington was described by critics as 'a modern man of the world', 'a cynical, graceless, selfish pleasure-lover' and 'an easy-going voluptuary quite untroubled by anything so inconvenient as a conscience,' and the *Standard* noted specifically the Wildean quality of the dialogue between Lushington and the other Society characters: there is 'much cynical and satirical dialogue, of a style which has come prominently into vogue since Mr. Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*'.[52] Jones is

[51] See for example Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872).
[52] [Anon.], 'The Theatre: "The Masqueraders" at the St. James's Theatre', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 April 1894, p. 11; [Anon.], 'Mr. H.A. Jones's New Play: "The Masqueraders" at the St. James's',

holding up the Wildean decadent for comparison with both the robust aggression of Skene and the quiet intensity of Remon.

Another male type is represented by a crowd of unruly young men at the Act I ball, some of whom force themselves behind the bar and manhandle Dulcie as she works, uninvitedly putting their arms around her waist (18). 'One has to put up with a good deal here,' Dulcie tells her sister Helen. 'Men aren't nice creatures' (22). Men are not good either: when Helen warns Dulcie a few moments later that Skene is 'not a good man', Dulcie's response is that 'there aren't any good men left in the world. The race is extinct' (22). Indeed, Jones seems to be at pains to show how many types of men are anything but 'nice' or 'good'. The amoral masculinity that Lushington and these others represent is criticised by Jones in explicitly Darwinian terms, in a drunken speech by Eddie on the eve of the departure for Africa: 'You can't think how jolly it is to have no duty and no conscience and no faith and no future, no anything but pleasure and life! […] Let's all be fools for once in our lives! Let's be monkeys again!' (90). Jones invokes the discourse of degeneration (in the form of evolutionary regression) to criticise the immoral and thoughtless conduct of the majority of men in the play, and by implication in the theatre audience.

The conflict between Remon and Skene is played out in two big set-pieces, in which they compete for love (and, the text clearly suggests, possession) of Dulcie. These confrontations – the auction of a kiss from Dulcie, and later the cutting of cards for her – were well-received by audiences, but even in 1894 the *Times* noted that the card-cutting scene was 'one from which all but the boldest of dramatists would shrink'; though it reminded its readers that 'men once sold their wives at Smithfield, and that even now one reads of the occasional sale of a wife among the lower orders for a pot of beer or a shilling'.[53] Both scenes make uncomfortable reading today.

Birmingham Daily Post, 30 April 1894, p. 4; [Anon.], 'St. James's Theatre', *Standard*, 30 April 1894, p. 2.

[53] [Anon.], 'St. James's Theatre', *Times*, 30 April 1894, p. 12. The auction and card-cutting episodes are also reminiscent of the opening chapter of Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), in which the drunken Michael Henchard sells his wife Susan. That the outcome of the characters' lives should depend on a game of chance is yet another Hardyesque feature of the story: the action of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* for example, turns largely on random events. See Kucich, p. 124.

In Act I, in order to raise money for the widow of a huntsman, it is suggested that Dulcie sell a kiss to the highest bidder. Dulcie indignantly resists the idea, and some older guests are outraged at its indecency, but Dulcie is steamrollered into taking part. Lushington sets himself up as auctioneer and describes Dulcie as if he were selling a racehorse or an artwork: 'Gentlemen, only ten guineas – only ten guineas for this rare and genuine, this highly desirable –' (31). The bidding is taken up by Skene and then by Remon, and they lock horns over the 'lot', outbidding each other in ever-increasing increments until the price reaches three thousand guineas: an amount that we know is more than Remon possesses. The scene is an open display of masculine competition, aggression and nerve on both sides. The potential for a Darwinian fight to the death between males competing for the attention of a female is sublimated into the (just barely) socially-acceptable medium of a charity auction, in which the prize is a female body. In this first confrontation, Skene's greater wealth allows him to carry the trophy away: once the cheque is made out, Skene further asserts his masculine dominance over Remon by taking legal possession of Dulcie. He tells the company that he had previously offered to marry her – an offer that she now accepts, despite her misgivings about Skene's nature, because it carries with it the prospect of escape from her dull provincial life. It is clear to the other guests, however, that Dulcie has made an unfortunate choice. 'I pity the girl,' says one. 'Bricey will make a sweet husband' (36).

Bricey does not make a sweet husband, of course, and his mistreatment of Dulcie gives rise to the second and climactic confrontation with Remon, at the end of Act III. Four years have passed. Remon has inherited a fortune, and is building his own observatory on Mount Garidelli, near Nice. Dulcie, now Lady Skene, has had a child but she is miserable in her marriage. She and Skene are also in Nice, living at a hotel but running out of money because of Skene's gambling. Remon, who has supported them out of love for Dulcie, comes to her on the eve of his departure for Africa, and Jones gives the audience another brief tableau:

> *(Exit [Eddie]. As soon as he has gone, DAVID and DULCIE, who have been standing on opposite sides of the room, go to each other very calmly. They meet in the middle of the room, take each other's hands. He raises hers to his lips. DAVID's appearance has changed since the last Act; he is more worn and spiritual, a little greyer, very calm at first, an unearthly look in his face. They stand looking at each other for some moments.)* (90-1).

Like Denver and Guisebury, Remon has endured hardship and care in the intervening years, which shows in his features. Skene enters, and mistakenly supposes that Remon has come to

claim repayment of his money. He challenges Remon to cut cards for it, 'double or quits' (95). Remon initially refuses, but in a sudden moment of resolution, issues a counter-challenge:

> SIR BRICE Once for all, will you give me a chance of paying back the six thousand pounds that Lady Skene has borrowed from you? Yes or no?
> DAVID No.
> SIR BRICE No?
> DAVID (*very emphatically*). No. (*Goes to door, suddenly turns round, comes up to him.*) Yes. (*Comes to the table.*) I *do* play cards with you. You want my money. Very well. I'll give you a chance of winning all I have in the world.
> SIR BRICE (*after a look of astonishment*). Good. I'm your man. Any game you like, and any stakes.
> DAVID (*very calm, cold, intense tone all through*). The stakes on my side are some two hundred thousand pounds. The stakes on your side are – your wife and child.
> SIR BRICE (*taken aback*). My wife and child!
> DAVID Your wife and child. Come – begin! (96)

Remon's '*calm, cold*' manner epitomises the self-restraint that was such an important feature of late-Victorian manliness, and the denouement that follows is another competition over female flesh: this time, a high-stakes gamble in which the participants cut cards to decide who will have Dulcie. When at the third and deciding cut the prize goes to Remon, his long-suppressed aggression bursts out as physical violence:

> SIR BRICE (*to DULCIE*). You're anxious, are you? I'm going to win! I mean it! I'm going to win! (*To DAVID.*) Now! (*DAVID holds cards; SIR BRICE cuts*) My God! I've lost!
> DAVID (*throws down the card-table; leaps at him; catches hold of him by the throat*). Yes, you've lost! She's mine! (*Gets him down on his knees.*) You've cheated me of her all these years! You've cheated me of her love, cheated me of the fatherhood of her child, you've dragged her down, you've dishonoured her! She's my wife now — my wife and child! Take your oath you'll never lay claim to them again! Swear it! (*Shaking him.*)
> SIR BRICE She's yours! Take her! I'll never see her or her child again! I swear it! Take them! (100-1)

Again, this is the language of ownership and possession, which is reinforced a few moments later in the closing lines of the Act: 'She's mine! She's mine! She's mine! (*Throws SIR BRICE back on the floor. To DULCIE.*) My wife! My child! Come! You're mine!' (101). The scene has moved from a superficial civility between the two men at the outset, to the ritualised competition of the gamble, to an outright exhibition of physical domination, and it concludes with Remon taking possession of the woman and child as the prize for his

uninhibited display of assertiveness. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* commented, 'The whole play is a duel between a dreamer and a blackguard for the body of a barmaid […] the old heady barbarian strife of savage against savage for the desired, the desirable.'[54] It is Darwinian rivalry played out within the confines of a fashionable hotel on the French riviera.

In the end, however, Remon's aggressive male desire to defeat and to possess gives way to more altruistic impulses. Huxley wrote of the evolutionary and moral imperative to exercise self-restraint in place of ruthless self-assertion; and in the final Act, having removed Dulcie and the child to safety, Remon's disruptive male energies – his wish to possess Dulcie sexually – are brought under control by Dulcie's saintly sister Helen, who persuades him to relinquish his claim to her on two grounds. When Remon says that he has decided to stay with Dulcie rather than leave for Africa, Helen appeals to his sense of honour and duty:

> DAVID I've changed my mind.
> HELEN (*with quiet sarcasm*). Is that a good excuse for a soldier to make just as he's ordered into battle?
> DAVID I'm not a soldier.
> HELEN Yes, you are. We are all soldiers on this earth, bound to be loyal to every one of our comrades, bound to obey the great rules of life, whether they are easy or hard. Yes, and all the more bound when they are hard, when they may cost us our very life. (110)

The notion of duty, and particularly the notion of soldierly duty, was a potent one. But Helen also appeals to social purity. She reminds Remon that Dulcie will never be free to marry him legally unless her husband divorces her (in which case Skene will also take the child), and she urges him to leave Dulcie for the child's sake: 'Save her [Dulcie] to be a good mother to that little helpless creature she has brought into the world, so that when her girl grows up and she has to guide her, she'll not have to say to her child, "You can give yourself to this man, and if you don't like him you can give yourself to another, and to another, and so on. It doesn't matter. It was what I did!"' (110). Having rescued her from a loveless marriage, Remon must exercise heroic self-restraint and altruism and leave Dulcie in the charge of her sister, to preserve her reputation. Despite the purity of Remon's own intentions – he addresses Dulcie as his wife, although not legally married – the play closes with a tableau showing Remon and Eddie leaving for Africa, and an uncertain fate:

[54] [Anon.], 'The Theatre: "The Masqueraders" at the St. James's Theatre', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 April 1894, p. 11.

DAVID (*to* DULCIE). In six months from now, come to meet me, my wife, and bring our child. Or, it may be a little later – but come and meet me – my wife – a little later.

DULCIE Where?

DAVID In that little star in Andromeda. All's real there. *(Exeunt* EDDIE *and* DAVID.*)*

CURTAIN.

If curtain is called up, show a picture of DAVID *outside the window, in the full morning sunlight, the mountains covered with snow behind him;* EDDIE *is beside him drawing him away,* HELEN *has brought* ROSY *to* DULCIE, *who has the child in her arms, clasping her, her face hidden.* (113)

The journey motif that was present in *The Silver King* and *The Dancing Girl* thus re-emerges in *The Masqueraders,* though in this case it is moved to the end of the play. Where the journeys undertaken by Denver and Guisebury occur during the action, and mark the characters' recovery of lost masculine status, in the case of Remon – who has retained his moral stature throughout, with the exception of his lapse into violence in Act III – the journey that will define him only begins at the final curtain.

The ambiguity of this ending was commented upon by critics. The *Standard* commented, 'If the defeated and disgraced Skene blew out his worthless brains, the obstacle to happiness would be removed; but the dramatist doubtless passes this by as conventional.'[55] Jones could easily have tied up all the loose ends and plotted a happy future for Remon and Dulcie, either by having Skene commit suicide or by having Remon kill him in self-defence, but – as in *The Silver King* – Jones eschews the obvious, violent ending in favour of a more muted one. Remon removes himself, leaving open the possibility that Skene will reappear in Dulcie's life. Pursuing the role of adventurer, he heads off to the homosocial world of Africa where he will fulfil his destiny, either to come back as a scientific hero or to die in the attempt – though the closing line, with its reference to the impossibly-distant perfect world in Andromeda, and the Romantically tragic image of the final tableau, all signal that he is fated not to return.

[55] [Anon.], 'St. James's Theatre', *Standard,* 30 April 1894, p. 2. A similar observation appears in 'Pierrot's' review 'At the Play', *Hearth and Home,* 3 May 1894, p. 858.

The Masqueraders suggests that the best male role models – the best *men* – are too big for English society, and perhaps even for this world: their destiny lies in encountering adventure, danger and perhaps death elsewhere. England is left to the brutish Skene and the decadent Lushington. The play is Jones' warning of the impact of degeneration and its implications for Britain. The *Pall Mall Gazette* described the moral of the play, with the high-minded and decent man exiling himself from the masquerade of cynics and cads who make up English Society, as '[a] lesson of struggle and of despair', and the *Times* referred to the play's 'chilling pessimism'.[56] It is a pessimism that Jones would revisit in *The Liars,* which similarly concludes with the play's only admirable characters embarking on a fatal voyage at the end.

The Liars (1897)[57]

The theatre's tolerance of subordinated masculinities, which had emerged in the years immediately preceding *The Masqueraders*, was quickly reversed in the wake of the Wilde trials in 1895: Wilde's libel action against the Marquess of Queensbury collapsed after three days in April 1895, and Wilde was put on trial on twenty-five counts of gross indecency later the same month. Alexander notoriously removed Wilde's name from the playbills and programmes for *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which had then been running for three months. After Wilde was sentenced to two years' hard labour, his fall was followed by a conservative backlash that jeopardised even the homosocial world of the respectable West End club; and the enforcement of state-controlled restraints on homosexuality, introduced by the Labouchere Amendment in 1885, became increasingly severe in the trial's aftermath. Effeminacy, aestheticism and decadence were overtly condemned because of their perceived associations with homosexuality (Symons even changed the title of his 1893 essay 'The Decadent Movement in Literature' to 'The Symbolist Movement in Literature' because of the association of decadence with homosexuality and vice); and the 'manly' man – the soldier or adventurer – was elevated.[58] Tosh observes that in this climate, 'Any hint of erotic charge of

[56] [Anon.], 'The Theatre: "The Masqueraders" at the St. James's Theatre', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 April 1894, p. 11; [Anon.], 'St. James's Theatre', *Times*, 30 April 1894, p. 12.
[57] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Liars* (London: Macmillan, 1901). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Liars* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.
[58] Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (eds.), *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c. 1880-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 131.

emotional excess between men, such as had been commonplace in polite society a generation earlier, now aroused suspicion.'[59]

The Liars, which Charles Wyndham produced at the Criterion in October 1897, is Jones' most Wildean play: a satirical portrait of upper-class society, peppered with epigrammatic dialogue, and having – as the title suggests – a plot that centres around deception. It has some striking dramaturgical similarities with *The Importance of Being Earnest*, some of which may be coded references to homosexuality: at the very least, there are ambiguous lines and stage moments that might be interpreted in that way by audience members in the know. The focus of recent critical attention to *The Liars* has been the (potentially) transgressive woman, Lady Jessica Nepean, and the way in which an adulterous affair is forestalled and the conventional social order re-imposed: Wellwarth, for example, suggests that the play demonstrates 'an almost religious belief in the infallibility of a social order that was the result of centuries of pragmatic wisdom'.[60] However, I suggest that closer consideration of the relationship between the main male characters opens up other and more interesting interpretative possibilities.

The main plot concerns the flirtation between Lady Jessica and Edward Falkner. Jessica is '*a very bright, pretty woman about twenty-seven, very dainty and charming*' (13), and is married to a faithful but dull husband, Gilbert. Falkner is '*About forty, strong, fine, clearly-cut features, earnest expression, hair turning gray, complexion pale and almost gray with continued work, anxiety, and abstinence*' (23): he is a bachelor and a career soldier, lionised by the British public for action against African slave traders. He represents a certain kind of late Victorian masculinity characterised by military prowess and courage, and his life of self-sacrifice is again etched on his features. Like the challenged paterfamilias Denver, the gallant knight Guisebury and the classical hero Remon, Falkner reflects one of the dominant Victorian masculinities in Kestner's taxonomy: in this case, the valiant soldier.

At the start of the play, though, Falkner has become infatuated with Jessica to the extent that he is prepared to abandon his duty and his reputation in order to take her away from her husband. When she flirtatiously arranges to meet Falkner for a private lunch at a riverside

[59] Tosh, pp. 38-9.
[60] Wellwarth, p. 85.

hotel, they are discovered by Gilbert's brother. To protect her reputation, Jessica persuades a female friend to provide an innocent-sounding explanation for her presence at the hotel, but complications arise as the falsehood is uncovered, and more lies have to be told to justify the ones that came before. Against the advice of an old family friend, Falkner's comrade-in-arms and fellow-bachelor Sir Christopher Deering (another valiant soldier), Jessica persists with the deceit. Over the course of the next two acts, the cover story becomes increasingly convoluted, drawing in more and more of Jessica's circle of family and friends until, finally, it collapses, and Jessica tells Falkner to admit the truth to Gilbert. In the fourth and last act, Falkner bids goodbye to Jessica, who returns to her husband; and Falkner returns to Africa in the company of Deering and Deering's new fiancée, the widow Beatrice Ebernoe. *The Liars* thus ends in a similar way to *The Masqueraders*, with the departure of the male protagonists, to fulfil their duty and face death in a distant land.

On the face of it, this is an entirely conventional plot curve, with marital harmony restored at the end. However, there are moments that suggest that the relationship between Falkner and Deering is something more than just a homosocial bond between army comrades. In particular, there is a striking amount of physical contact between the men in the play. In the opening scene, a stage direction has Deering *'Trying to link his arm in GEORGE'S'* in response to which George *'stands off'* (4). He later links arms with another man, Coke, not once but twice (10, 88). For a male character to link arms so insistently and repeatedly with other men might not in itself imply anything more than easy homosocial familiarity but, coming so soon in the wake of Wilde's plays of hidden identities, theatre audiences might well infer a deeper meaning. There are also numerous instances of handshakes, some of which likewise appeared to be endowed with an emotional significance that goes beyond mere greetings or congratulations: for a Victorian audience the hands were a sexually-significant part of the anatomy, and would have been understood 'both as a site of sexual signification and a dangerous sexual implement'.[61] In *The Liars*, one particular handshake seems loaded with meaning. It occurs when Deering, having admonished Falkner for his flirtation with Jessica and his abandonment of military duty, bids him farewell:

> SIR C. Very well. You'll understand some day, Ned, that I couldn't see an old comrade, a man who stood shoulder to shoulder with me all these years – you'll understand I

[61] William A. Cohen, *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction* (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 33-4.

couldn't see him fling away honour, happiness, reputation, future, everything, without saying one word and trying to pull him up. Good-bye, old chap. [*Going off.*

[Falkner springs up generously, goes to him warmly, holding out both hands.

FALKNER [*Cries out.*] Kit!

SIR C. Ned!

[*The two men stand with hands clasped for some time, then Falkner speaks in a soft, low, broken voice.*]

FALKNER I love her, Kit – you don't know how much.

(33)

The generosity and warmth of the handshake, the urgency of Falkner's call to his friend, the familiar shortening of his Christian name (used only by Falkner and by Deering's future wife, Beatrice), are followed by a silence, during which the stage is static. There is presumably a long moment of eye contact between the two men whose hands are clasped. The audience has the opportunity to absorb and evaluate this tableau, before Falkner proceeds in a '*soft, low, broken voice*.' Falkner's next words might be understood several ways. Ostensibly, he is explaining to Deering why he chooses love over duty; but he is also explaining why he chooses to pursue the prospect of a life of domesticity with Jessica in preference to a life of adventure with Deering. It is almost as if Falkner were breaking up with a lover. Two years after the Wilde trial, it seems unlikely that the subtext of this moment would have been lost on the audience.

Beatrice Ebernoe is as sexually ambiguous a character as Deering. She comes onstage only at the end of Act I (34-7) and again for two brief exchanges in Act IV (99-103 and 119-120). She plays almost no part in the main story, she is the one named character who is not in some way involved in the web of lies, and her sole function in the play is as the love interest for Deering. All we know about her past is that she is the widow of another army officer, that she had been taken hostage by slavers in Africa, and that Falkner had been responsible for her rescue (6). However, despite her former marriage to Colonel Ebernoe and her prospective marriage to Deering at the end of the play, there are coded suggestions in the play that Beatrice's sexuality is not what it seems on the surface.

For example, Beatrice is first heard offstage some time before her first entrance (in the printed text, this occurs twenty-seven pages before she is seen onstage, so perhaps thirty minutes' playing time). She is not speaking but playing the piano, '*very softly and beautifully at a distance of some twenty yards*', and the stage direction says that the onstage characters '*all listen*' (7). This is in effect another tableau, during which the audience can contemplate

the implications of the onstage moment. After a moment, a minor character, Mrs. Crespin, asks, 'Is that Mrs. Ebernoe?', and when this is confirmed by Deering, continues: 'What a beautiful touch she has.' Mrs. Ebernoe is thus established early in the play as being 'musical' which, as Lawrence explains, is 'one of a number of code words or euphemisms for being homosexual', and someone whose 'beautiful touch' is appreciated by other women.[62] (Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest* is also first heard offstage, playing the piano.) We later hear that, rather than remarry after the death of her husband, she has 'some thoughts of entering a sisterhood' (36). This is not a woman who feels a great need for male companionship.

In depicting (or at least implying) these subordinate sexualities, Jones was continuing to engage with the latest developments in evolutionary theory. The discourse around homosexuality did not suddenly cease with the Wilde trial: if the trial marked a low point in tolerance and understanding, it also marked a turning-point because (in the words of Sander L. Gilman) it 'crystallised the homosexual emancipation movement'.[63] Showalter describes two conflicting models of homosexual identity that emerged in the mid-1890s. One was 'the paradigmatic fin-de-siècle model of sexual inversion' according to which homosexual men were an '"intermediate sex" […] born with a high percentage of essential femininity', whereas the other saw homosexuality as the ultimate evolutionary stage of gender differentiation.[64] According to this second model:

> Gay men and lesbians occupied the opposite poles rather than the center or threshold of sexual difference. Male homosexuals would have most in common with heterosexual men who shared their delight in male companionship and, to some degree, their disdain for women.[65]

Deering repeatedly expresses just this kind of disdain throughout *The Liars*, and it is partly this sentiment that accounts for the disdain in which Jones himself is held today. Consider the following speeches about women from Acts II and IV, when Deering is urging Falkner to abandon his infatuation with Jessica and return to military service:

[62] Lawrence p. 292.
[63] Quoted in Showalter, p. 172.
[64] Showalter, p. 172-3.
[65] Showalter, p. 173.

> Love ’em, worship ’em, make the most of ’em! Go down on your knees every day and thank God for having sent them into this dreary world for our good and comfort. But, don’t break your heart over ’em. Don’t ruin your career for ’em! Don’t lose a night’s rest for ’em! They aren’t worth it. (192)
>
> Come! Come! My dear old Ned! This will never do! And all for a woman! They aren’t worth it. (218)

These speeches, with their repeated conclusion that women ‘aren’t worth it’, have been treated by recent generations of critics merely as expressions of casual misogyny. However, I suggest that what is being articulated here is rather the second model of homosexuality: one in which the exclusion of women was regarded as healthy and virilising. Jones is portraying in Deering a deeply homosocial man; but one whose manliness, as an army officer and imperial hero, is completely unimpeachable.

Why might Jones have decided to create such a character at this specific moment? The answer may lie in the treatment of Wilde after his trial, abandoned by Alexander and others in the theatrical establishment, his work denigrated and left unperformed. As I explained in the Introduction, Jones had campaigned against censorship for years, and argued vigorously that no subject should be off-limits for the dramatist. In *The Liars*, Jones wrote a play which, like *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is entirely structured around deceptions, and in which there appear to be numerous coded references to homosexuality. Jones suggests the possibility of a homosexual relationship between men of impeccable military and imperial credentials, at a moment when any explicit theatrical depiction or expression of homosexual desire would have been impossible. The reader is left wondering just who the ‘liars’ of the title are: does this refer to Jessica and her co-conspirators, or to the trio who leave for Africa and who have steadfastly resisted being drawn into Jessica’s lies, but may be living a lie of their own?

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that there is a demonstrable progression in Jones’ treatment of masculinities in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Besides reflecting the period’s rapidly changing social conditions, these works form part of a wider literary, artistic and theatrical discourse, engaging with and responding to the work of other playwrights, adopting many of the same tropes and dramaturgical strategies, and communicating the dominant

masculinities that Kestner would categorise a century later. But they also dramatise the period's shifting intellectual currents, in their treatment of morality, altruism and evolution. Writing *The Silver King* under the tutelage of Wilson Barrett, Jones presented in Wilfred Denver a masculine paradigm of the middle-class paterfamilias, characterised by the Ruskinian virtues of devotion to his family, hard work, tenacity and Christian faith. In the middle years, the protagonists of *The Dancing Girl* and *The Masqueraders* come to exhibit similar masculine qualities of self-sacrifice and self-restraint, although the Christian dimension is removed and replaced with an evolutionary imperative to altruism such as Darwin, Spenser and Huxley had all in their different ways described. Finally, in *The Liars*, with the coded homosociality/homosexuality of Deering and Falkner, Jones presents his audience with the possibility of a subordinate and non-heteronormative masculinity, embodied in the powerful and idealized form of the late-Victorian soldier-hero, as a paradigm and role-model that might also be worthily emulated.

Chapter Two

‘Oh you Christians, will you never learn to forgive?’: faith and hypocrisy in Jones’ plays of religious life

In her 1930 biography of her father, Jones’ daughter Doris recalled an incident at the first night of Somerset Maugham’s *The Unknown* (1920):

> At the end of the second act, after Miss Haidée Wright’s magnificent outburst, “Who will forgive God,” H.A.J. and Dame Madge Kendal, who was near us, were in tears, and as he turned to me, whilst applauding heartily, he said, “And I was hissed on the first night of *Saints and Sinners* for a few scripture quotations.”[1]

By contrast with Somerset Maugham’s work, the critique of religion in *Saints and Sinners* is mild, but Jones’ play proved controversial when it opened at the Vaudeville Theatre in September 1884. The principal cause of the controversy was Jones’ use of biblical quotations, many of which he put into the mouths of two villainous and hypocritical deacons. The first night audience expressed its disapproval by hissing at certain points, and reviewers reported that it was the texts from the Bible that provoked the strongest disapproval.[2] The London audience of the mid-1880s was clearly unsettled by the use of biblical language in a theatrical context, and this unease was part of a more general anxiety about the juxtaposition of religion and theatre. Many clergymen were opposed to the theatre on moral grounds, and the Lord Chamberlain’s Office exercised its censorship powers to prevent the theatrical presentation of biblical stories, Church interiors, religious ceremonies and clerical characters.[3]

It is remarkable, then, that in three plays of the late Victorian period, Jones’ leading characters were clergymen placed in progressively more scandalous situations: in *Saints and Sinners*, a non-conformist minister conceals his daughter’s seduction, and is blackmailed by

[1] D.A. Jones, p. 93.
[2] [Anon.], ‘Public Amusements: Vaudeville Theatre’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 28 September 1884, p. 5.
[3] A detailed discussion of stage censorship is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see for example Shellard et al; John Russell Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama, 1824-1901* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Richard Foulkes, *Church and Stage in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Helen Freshwater, *Theatre Censorship in Britain: Silencing, Censure and Suppression* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

his deacons when they learn the family's secret; in *Judah* (1890), another non-conformist minister lies on oath to protect a false mystic with whom he is in love; and in *Michael and his Lost Angel* (1896), a Church of England vicar commits adultery with a woman whom he wrongly believes to be a widow. In another play, *The Tempter* (1893), the Devil himself leads a group of pilgrims in a drunken carouse, encourages other characters into the cardinal sins of lust and envy, and brings about the death of a Christian prince and his lover.

The challenge that these plays represented to late-Victorian restrictions about the theatrical presentation of religious subject-matter was recognised during Jones' lifetime: in *The English Stage* (1897), the French critic Augustin Filon described the first performance of *Saints and Sinners* as an important date in the history of English drama, because it marked 'the revival of active hostility, in that ancient conflict between the Puritans and the stage, which began in 1580'.[4] More recent commentators often dismiss these plays merely as instances of genres that have ceased to be worthy of serious critical attention – the seduction melodrama, the well-made play, the mock-medieval verse romance – but such reductive treatment is unjustified. *Saints and Sinners* and *Michael and his Lost Angel* are vigorous critiques of the religious hypocrisy of clergymen and other churchgoers. *Judah* and *The Tempter* venture into doctrinal territory as well, addressing the tension between faith and reason and touching on atheism.

In this chapter, I examine the social and theatrical context in which these plays were written, and the oppositional views that Jones voiced. I argue that, in the face of the constraints of censorship and audience sensitivity, Jones adopted a subversive dramaturgical strategy in which strongly critical statements are juxtaposed with more conventional ones or wrapped up within familiar genres and plot-lines, in such a way as to render them performable. Like many of the other plays discussed in this thesis, Jones' plays of religious life have been neglected because of the critical preoccupations and preconceptions prevailing since the mid-twentieth century. However, they dramatised important aspects of the religious discourse of the *fin de siècle*, and paved the way for the stronger critiques of later English playwrights: they represent an important moment in the history of English theatre censorship, and a major step towards the open discussion of religious matters on the English stage.

[4] Augustin Filon, *The English Stage, being an Account of the Victorian Drama*, translated by Frederic Whyte (London: John Milne, 1897), pp. 235-6.

The social and theatrical context

Three aspects of the late Victorian social context are particularly relevant to the consideration of Jones' plays of religion. The first is the religious climate of the age. Victorian Britain has been described as 'a society remarkable for the extent and intensity of its religious life', and Christianity was a powerful cultural influence.[5] The Church of England built over 5,500 new churches between the mid-1830s and 1901, while Protestant Nonconformity was also prominent in national life. Mid-Victorian Nonconformity, dominated by middle-class leaders with a strong commitment to individualism, free trade and hard work, and a professed abhorrence of matters such as atheism and sexual impropriety, was the milieu in which Jones himself grew up. Matthew Arnold had both defined and attacked this kind of narrow-minded Victorian Nonconformity in *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-9): 'Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the *Nonconformist*: -- a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons; and then think of it as an ideal of a human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light, and perfection!'[6] Jones would critique precisely the same narrow-mindedness and bigotry of the Nonconformist middle-class in *Saints and Sinners.*

At the same time, for all the vigour of its religious life, the Victorian period was one of religious crisis, and this is the second key aspect of the social context. The retreat from Christian orthodoxy that had its roots in the Enlightenment accelerated in the mid-nineteenth century as the result of several inter-related scientific and philosophical advances.[7] Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-3) had explained the development of the earth as the result of slow processes taking place over vast periods of time, rejecting the notion that Noah's flood (or any similar catastrophe) could account for the geology of the earth's crust.[8]

[5] Gerald Parsons, 'Introduction: Victorian Religion, Paradox and Variety', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, 4 vols (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), I, 1-13 (p. 5).
[6] Arnold (1867-9), p. 44.
[7] For the impact of scientific developments on Victorian literature and thought, see J.A.V. Chapple, *Science and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1986); John Glendening, *The Evolutionary Imagination in Late-Victorian Novels: An Entangled Bank* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007); Allen MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy and the Ecological Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Richard G. Olson, *Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008). The very brief summary of intellectual developments that follows is based mainly on these works.
[8] Chapple, p.68.

Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (published in Germany in 1841, and translated into English by George Eliot in 1854) had argued that God is merely a representation of the attributes and aspirations of humanity itself, and accordingly that 'theology is anthropology'.[9] Kelvin's Second Law of Thermodynamics, first described in 1852, had led to the recognition that the universe will ultimately approach a state in which it ceases to function because its heat energy has been dissipated (the so-called 'heat death of the universe'). Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) had described how species evolved over thousands of generations by random variation rather than according to any divine or teleological plan. Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* (1863) had built on the thinking of both Kelvin and Darwin, and its final chapter again addresses whether the universe is going to die. Such works, and their implications, were widely aired in periodicals like the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Westminster Review*. They were also reflected in the art and literature of the time: Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) has been described as representing 'the random, contingent character of the post-Darwinian world' in which Hardy brings to bear on the heroine 'a concatenation of Darwinian factors'; and H.G. Wells' Time Traveller witnesses the heat death of the sun in *The Time Machine* (1895).[10] These intellectual developments are at the heart of late-Victorian anxieties about the nature of the universe, its future, and the place in that universe of humanity and of God: all themes that Jones would address in *Judah* and *The Tempter*.[11]

The third key aspect is Victorian awareness of the hypocrisy of their own age. In *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (1957), the broad term 'Victorian hypocrisy' was considered by Walter Houghton, who distinguished three discrete but related behaviours, which he called 'conformity', 'moral pretension' and 'evasion'.[12] 'Conformity' means the sacrifice of sincerity to propriety, necessitating the suppression of personal convictions and tastes in the

[9] Olson, p.131.
[10] Glendening discusses the Darwinian elements of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in Chapter 3, 'The Entangled Heroine of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*', pp. 69-106. MacDuffie discusses *The Time Machine* and its representations of the heat death of the sun in Chapter 8, 'Evolutionary energy and the future: Henry Maudsley and H.G. Wells', pp. 223-51.
[11] Chapple, p.8.
[12] Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 394-5. Although Houghton focussed on the mid-Victorian period, and some of his readings have since been challenged (second-wave feminists would find particular issues with the chapter on love and marriage, for example) the book remains influential as one of texts that helped to establish an interdisciplinary approach to Victorian scholarship. For the purposes of this chapter, the taxonomy of Victorian hypocrisies is still serviceable.

interests of doing or saying the 'right' thing. 'Moral pretension' involves the public profession of pious and moral sentiments that are not reflected in personal conduct. 'Evasion' involves the refusal to look at life candidly, and the wilful disregard of unpleasant facts or circumstances. All three types of hypocrisy are represented in the plays that I discuss: clergymen conceal their own sins and those of others, deacons act in ways that are uncharitable and unethical, and Christians generally profess a piety that they lack or refuse to forgive the sinners in their midst.

Criticism of religious hypocrisy was nothing new in the literature of the period. Dickens had created characters like Pecksmith and Chadband – in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4) and *Bleak House* (1852-3) respectively – and used them to expose religious humbug and cant. However, drama lagged behind the novel and the essay in dealing critically with religious hypocrisy and other matters of religion, partly because of the long-entrenched history of anti-theatricality amongst clerics and churchgoers: what Jonas Barish, in his extensive 1981 survey of the phenomenon, called 'the anti-theatrical prejudice'.[13] Moral objections to the theatre fell into two broad categories. First, there were objections to the process of imitation that dramatic performance involves, in the Platonic tradition that regarded mimesis as not only intrinsically wrong but corrupting: Plato wrote in Book III of *The Republic* that 'if [our guardians] imitate at all, they should imitate from youth upward only those characters which are suitable to their profession -- the courageous, temperate, holy, free, and the like; but they should not depict or be skilful at imitating any kind of illiberality or baseness, lest from imitation they should come to be what they imitate'.[14] Second, there were objections to the indulgence of pleasure, which were also partly to do with imitation. In this case, the issue was the moral effect that performance might have on the spectator, and how the spectator might be inflamed to imitate in real life the acts that he sees in the theatre: St. Augustine recorded in his *Confessions* how 'I rejoiced with lovers wickedly enjoying each other, imaginary though the situation was on stage'.[15] St. Augustine's observation perhaps explains why the stage, with the immediacy and emotion of performance, was felt to be a more potent medium than the page for influencing behaviours or attitudes, and hence why religious criticism in the novel became acceptable so long before such criticism was permitted in the theatre.

[13] Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
[14] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 80.
[15] Quoted in Foulkes, p. 20.

Clergymen were also concerned about the social effects of exposure to places of entertainment: in the debate on the Dramatic Performances Bill in 1833, the Bishop of London had objected to the anticipated expansion of London theatres, and illustrated its adverse consequences anecdotally: at the Garrick Theatre, a 'young woman being enabled to obtain admission… for 6d, contracted an invincible taste for theatrical amusements and the dissipations connected with them. She remained out late at night, and at last all night, and the result was that the poor woman [the girl's mother] lost her daughter, and the daughter lost her character.' Although the mid- to late Victorian period witnessed a growing accommodation between the Church and the stage – the Revd. Stewart Headlam founded the Church and Stage Guild in May 1879 with the aim of getting the Church to recognise the 'enormous educational power of the Drama' and the value of 'genuine amusement and bright spectacle' to the London populace as two of its principal goals – for many religious people, the anti-theatrical prejudice remained, with the middle classes in particular avoiding the theatre until the final years of the century.[16]

The fact that theatres were seen as – and frequently were – places of licentious behaviour meant that, by association, it became unacceptable to portray religious life or subject-matter in that context. John Russell Stephens, in *The Censorship of English Drama, 1824-1901* (1980), observes that by contrast with political, moral and other forms of censorship, religious censorship became increasingly inflexible as the nineteenth century progressed, and cites several striking instances. The use of scriptural references and allusions was completely proscribed, and the religious censorship exercised by the Lord Chamberlain's Office extended to 'the deletion of all passages and phrases quoted directly from the Scriptures or even implying any such association… from the comic or irreverent biblical tag to the most serious and devout references'. In the Strand Theatre's 1854 version of *Bleak House*, the censor even prevented Jo the crossing-sweeper from being taught The Lord's Prayer on his death-bed. It was unusual for church interiors, and particularly for church services, to be presented onstage. The Bible could not be used as a stage property, and 'as late as 1870 a crucifix was forbidden in the theatre, though an unadorned cross was usually permitted'.[17]

[16] Foulkes, pp. 112-5.
[17] Stephens, p. 100.

The representation of clerics on the stage was also frowned upon throughout the early- and mid-Victorian periods. It was only with Wilkie Collins' stage adaptation of his novel *The New Magdalen* (1873) that 'a clergyman [was] introduced into a play in anything other than a peripheral role', and even then the furthest most playwrights were prepared to go in portraying the clergy was the kind of gentle caricature that Wilde drew in Canon Dr Chasuble in *The Important of Being Earnest* (1895).[18] The representation of clerics engaged in any form of unseemly or scandalous situation was doubly unpalatable: the Bishop of London himself led a protest against the portrayal of priests 'singing comic songs & the like' in Sydney Grundy's *The Vicar of Bray* (1882).[19] The Register of Lord Chamberlain's Plays, which includes a column headed 'Words and Passages to be Omitted in Representation' in which are recorded restrictions or cuts that were a condition of the grant of a licence for performance, shows that official censorship continued to prevent unfavourable portrayals of the clergy until the very end of the century. For example, *A Society Scandal* (1896) by G. Logan was granted a licence with the condition that 'there is to be no attempt to place a clergyman on the stage in an absurd or derogatory position. Omit in representation'.[20] These are ideological sensitivities that Jones would confront in his plays of the 1880s and 1890s, in which clergymen are placed in situations far worse than merely 'absurd': in *Saints and Sinners*, *Judah* and *Michael and his Lost Angel* respectively, one minister lies to his congregation, another perjures himself, and a third commits adultery.

How did Jones get away with it? The Register of Lord Chamberlain's Plays does not indicate that any of these plays by Jones was granted a licence only on condition of cuts or changes. The 'Words and Passages to be Omitted in Representation' column is blank in the register entry for each play. Given Stephens' assertion that 'the course of religious censorship from 1824 to 1901 was determined […] by reference to public opinion (which generally meant no more than the opinions expressed by the press)', it seems strange that the Examiner should have failed to anticipate the hostility of the audience response to *Saints and Sinners* and *Michael and his Lost Angel* in particular.[21] (*Judah* and *The Tempter* had a more favourable reception.) It may simply be that the Examiners lacked consistency: in the words of Helen

[18] Stephens, p. 109
[19] Stephens, p. 108-9.
[20] Lord Chamberlain's Office Day Books 1887-1897. Located in the British Library with catalogue number Add MS 53707: 1887-1897.
[21] Stephens, p. 93.

Freshwater, 'although the Lord Chamberlain's decisions were final, they were also highly unpredictable and likely to be generated by any number of different considerations.'[22]

Another possibility, however, is that Jones evaded the censor by adopting a deliberate dramaturgical strategy with these works, concealing their critique of Victorian religion within genres and narrative frameworks that ostensibly favour the prevailing Christian ideology. The critics Kenneth Womack and James M. Decker have recently described the practice of intentional textual subversion, meaning the communication by a writer of potentially radical ideas by concealment 'in plain sight', and I propose that Jones' plays of religion are subversive in this sense: challenging ideas are communicated through stories that are on the surface entirely conventional.[23] Oppositional statements are juxtaposed with (weaker) espousals of conventional Christian values, thus maintaining an appearance of ideological correctness even as that ideology is challenged. Conventional thinking is forcefully questioned at key moments in the story, and major characters articulate aspects of science's challenge to traditional beliefs, but each play ends with the apparent restoration of 'proper' order, in which sins are brought to light and confessed, and penance is promised and done. These morally-orthodox endings thus mask highly critical appraisals of late Victorian religious attitudes, and of attitudes to faith more generally. In this way, Jones was able to avoid the censor and ensure that his plays were capable of being staged, whilst still conveying unconventional or challenging messages about the hypocrisy of religious personages and the vanity of religious belief.

Saints and Sinners (1884)[24]

As noted in the Introduction, Jones grew up in a devout Dissenting family that shunned the theatre, and the uncle to whom Jones was apprenticed was also the deacon of a Baptist chapel.[25] It is this world of provincial Dissenting congregations, with businessmen for deacons and a rigidly Puritanical outlook, that Jones confronts in *Saints and Sinners*, which

[22] Freshwater, p.12.
[23] Kenneth Womack and James M. Decker (eds.), *Victorian Literary Cultures: Studies in Textual Subversion* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017), p. xi.
[24] Henry Arthur Jones, *Saints and Sinners* (London: Macmillan & Company, 1891). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *Saints and Sinners* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.
[25] D.A. Jones, p. 31.

was presented by Thomas Thorne at the Vaudeville Theatre on 25 September 1884 after a formal copyright performance at Greenwich and a try-out at the Theatre Royal, Margate on 22 September.

Saints and Sinners tells the story of Jacob Fletcher, the minister of Bethel Chapel in the village of Steepleford, and his daughter Letty. Letty has two admirers: George Kingsmill, an honest young farmer; and Captain Eustace Fanshawe, a wicked philanderer, who lures Letty away with false promises of marriage and installs her as his mistress at a villa in Torquay. With Kingsmill's assistance, Jacob traces his fallen daughter, confronts the villain, and persuades Letty to return home. The family conceal Letty's affair in order that she should not be ostracised. Fanshawe is posted to India, where he dies in battle; Kingsmill emigrates to Australia to seek his fortune. Back at Steepleford, Samuel Hoggard, the corrupt senior deacon of the same chapel, has hired a private detective to investigate Letty's absence, and tries to blackmail her father in order to get him to acquiesce in a fraudulent financial arrangement involving a will of which Jacob is a trustee. Hoggard's junior deacon, Prabble, a less villainous but equally self-interested tradesman, is complicit in the blackmail plot because of Jacob's refusal to speak out against the new co-operative stores that are damaging his grocery business. Jacob chooses to resign instead, after publicly confessing his family's secret before the congregation. The family fall into poverty, which lasts for four years. During that time, Letty redeems her reputation through charity and tending to the sick, until the loyal Kingsmill returns from the colonies, now a wealthy man, and offers to marry her.

The happy ending was a compromise. *Saints and Sinners* originally ended in Letty's death: the conventional fate of the fallen woman on the Victorian stage. This tragic version was seen during its trial run by the critic Clement Scott, who advised Jones to alter the ending to the one in which Letty is married. Jones later wrote: '*Saints and Sinners* played over two hundred nights at the Vaudeville with a happy ending. If my heroine had continued to die, *Saints and Sinners* would have been out of the bills in a fortnight, and with what I believe was better workmanship and a more logical and artistic dénouement would have counted against me as a failure.'[26] In its revised form, the play was a success, running for six months at the Vaudeville in 1884-5 and subsequently being produced in New York. The original ending

[26] Quoted in Cordell, p. 68.

was restored by Jones when he published the play in 1891, and it is this version, with Jones' original, tragic ending, that I discuss here.

At one level, *Saints and Sinners* is a seduction play with an ending that many in the audience would have found to be morally sound: an innocent country girl is led astray by a wealthy, cigar-smoking army officer, redeemed through her own good deeds and the devotion of her aged father and her former admirer, and then either dies (as in the published version) or is married to the faithful George Kingsmill and hence made a respectable woman again (in the version performed at the Vaudeville). From this perspective, the play is entirely conventional. However, this framework conceals a vigorous critique of a certain kind of religious hypocrisy, manifested most clearly in the scenes involving the two deacons but also present as a general undercurrent through the whole play. It is this that distinguishes the play, inscribing a type of cultural critique upon the well-worn plot. How this critique operates will be demonstrated by a discussion of the characters of Jacob, Hoggard and Prabble, and by consideration of the play's broader themes of charity and forgiveness.

Thomas Thorne, who played the role of Jacob, had previously staged Jones' one-act comedy, *An Old Master* (1880), in which 'as a fond and foolish father, [he] found an opportunity for the display of some gentle and pleasant pathos', and the same qualities must have served him well as the devoted father of Letty.[27] Jacob is described on his first entrance as '*a country dissenting minister, about fifty, very gentle and kindly, shabbily dressed*' (4). He is portrayed at the outset as unworldly, a man of God who is 'just like a baby with his money' and 'lets everybody impose on him' (1-2). However, he embodies a sincere and practical form of Christian virtue, as a short exchange with the collector of pew-rents, Lot, makes clear:

> LOT Why, all the poor folks of the town come to Bethel; all the scum, all the riff-raff, all the publicans and sinners, as you may say.
> JACOB Well, yes; they're the very people that I want to come.
> LOT But they've got the best seats in the Chapel, and they don't pay pew-rents.
> JACOB They can't afford to buy their religion.
> LOT Then they ought to take it in the gallery, and be thankful. If we were to put them in the back seats, we should get some fashionable folk in the front pews.
> JACOB *(rises).* No, Lot, we'll let it stay as it is. There are plenty of places where the poor have to take back seats; we'll keep one place where the rich and the poor shall meet together and be equal. (6-7)

[27] [Anon.], 'At the Play', *Observer,* 15 July 1883, p. 3.

In these few lines, Jacob articulates the Christian values of charity, forgiveness and love for the poor. There is an egalitarian message that must have played well to the gallery at the Vaudeville: the theatre is another place where the 'fashionable folk' get the good seats and the poor go to the back. When this paradigm of virtue is constrained by paternal devotion to conceal his daughter's fall, the audience is not invited to condemn it, because his reasons are just: Letty is an innocent girl, tricked into running away with Fanshawe, who then persuades her that her family and community would never take her back.

It is only when Hoggard and Prabble threaten to reveal Letty's past to the congregation that Jacob is forced to confess the truth publicly. The two deacons are the antithesis of Jacob. Hoggard is a tanner, described as '*a blustering well-to-do middle-aged man of business*' (8). Prabble is '*a little provincial grocer, very small, but very self-important*' (51). These characters bring to life the middle-class Nonconformist tradesmen amongst whom Jones grew up, and exemplify the hypocrisies that Houghton described as moral pretension and conformity. Hoggard is completely corrupt, with an equally complete disregard for the Christian values he purports to hold: his small-scale efforts in Act I to swindle the widow Mrs. Bristow out of the full value of her husband's estate have enlarged, by the end of Act V, to the theft of the townspeople's savings from the Penny Bank. Prabble's hypocrisy is of a lesser kind: not outright criminality, but the simple, narrow self-interestedness of the provincial shopkeeper, who complains because Jacob refuses to use his pulpit to encourage the chapel congregation to shop at his grocery business rather than the co-operative stores.

The hypocrisy of the two deacons is manifested in their language as much as their conduct, as they twist scripture for their own self-serving ends. Hoggard particularly seems to delight in quoting the Bible, and Jones always places these extracts in an ironic context. Thus, Hoggard quotes Proverbs 22:9 ('Seest thou a man diligent in business? He shall stand before kings') immediately after telling his employee to submit a fraudulent claim for damage to the railway company and urging him 'We must be sharp in business nowadays. Business is business' (34). After Hoggard and Prabble reach an understanding to drive Jacob out of his post, Hoggard tells Prabble 'How sweet it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' echoing

Psalm 133 (77).[28] Shortly afterwards, holding the chapel door open for his junior deacon, Hoggard reflects '"He that abaseth himself shall be exalted"', from Luke 14:11. The irony of this false humility is underlined by its juxtaposition with Hoggard's abuse, moments later, of a mendicant who is begging at the chapel: 'Get out, get out, you old vagabond; really it's abominable that such persons should be allowed in a Christian place of worship! What is religion coming to?' (78). Where Jacob welcomes in the publicans and sinners of the town and gives them seats at the front, Hoggard drives the poor away. Where Jacob serves the poor and defends the widow, Hoggard steals and cheats, sanctimoniously quoting scripture all the while.

The lack of probity amongst the Dissenting middle class is plainly a major target in *Saints and Sinners,* and it is one that Jones shared with Matthew Arnold, who had expressed similar concerns in *Culture and Anarchy*:

> [W]hen we hear so much said of the growth of commercial immorality in our serious middle class, of the melting away of habits of strict probity before the temptation to get quickly rich and to cut a figure in the world; when we see, at any rate, so much confusion of thought and of practice in this great representative class of our nation [i.e. the middle class], may we not be disposed to say, that this confusion shows that his new motive-power of grace and imputed righteousness has become to the Puritan as mechanical, and with as ineffective a hold upon his practice, as the old motive-power of the law was to the Jew? [29]

This quotation is interesting because, having laid the charge of lack of probity against the middle class, Arnold appears to check himself and soften the accusation to 'at any rate […] confusion of thought and of practice'. Jones does not pull his punches like that. Hoggard and Prabble practice outright fraud and theft, veneered with mechanical observance of the external trappings of religion and empty utterance of scripture: there is no 'confusion' about it. They are the dramatic embodiment of precisely the anxieties that Arnold had expressed

[28] This line from Psalm 133 appears to have been popular with Victorian hypocrites. The cruel, self-serving humbug Bonaparte Blenkins uses exactly the same quotation in Olive Schreiner's 1883 novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 85.
[29] Arnold (1867-9), pp. 56, 117. The statement in the final line about the mechanical and ineffective observance of Biblical law by 'the Jew' is unsettling to a modern reader but is not necessarily to be regarded as antisemitic or pejorative. Arnold's attitude to the Jews has been discussed by Lionel Gossman in 'Philhellenism and Antisemitism: Matthew Arnold and his German models', *Comparative Literature*, 46 (1994), 1-39.

about the relationship between middle-class Dissent, the outward observances of Puritanism and the dishonesty of much commercial conduct.

However, Hoggard and Prabble are just the most extreme instances of religious hypocrisy in the play: the wider congregation also shows a general disposition towards it. In Act I, Jacob's housekeeper Lydia rebukes Jacob for continuing to offer charity to Peter Greenacre, '*a disreputable old man with evidence of drinking*', and is gently corrected by Jacob with the words 'Well, you see, Lydia, he's spent all his parish pay, and he's had nothing to eat for two days, and we can't let him starve, can we?' (4). In Act IV, when Letty has left Fanshawe and returned home with her father, a country-woman on her way into the chapel observes 'What a blessing it is to have good children like ours, Mr Fletcher. My Fanny is a good girl; she isn't like that Lucy Gatehouse,' to which Jacob replies 'It isn't for us to judge, Mrs. Parridge. Who made us to differ? […] Let Him judge who knows all hearts and let us be dumb' (85). The play is pervaded by a sense of the petty, Puritanical judgmentalism of the chapel community – the wilful disregard of Christ's injunction to the scribes and Pharisees about Mary Magdalene, that 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her' (John 8:7).

This critique of Christian hypocrisy has its most forceful articulation in the final scene, at least in the version that Jones chose to publish. The dialogue at this point merits special attention. After four years of repentance and good deeds, Letty has recovered the respect of the townspeople, and has been invited back to the Chapel 'to take her place as a good woman amongst good women' (111). It is too late for her, however. Exhausted by the family's impoverished conditions, and by her work nursing the poor, Letty is close to death and delirious:

> JACOB Letty, stay with me – stay with me just a little while, till I can come this journey with you. It's only for a little while – it isn't worth saying "good-bye."
> LETTY Good-bye for a little while, then. How dark it's getting! Father – he'll [George] take my place when I'm gone – (*Breaks off suddenly, looks round wildly, jumps up violently with a shriek.*) -- Yes! I have sinned, but can you never forgive me? I have tried so hard to live it down – Oh you Christians, will you never learn to forgive? *(Wildly staring.)*
> JACOB Letty, Letty – my dear, you have lived it down – no soul dare speak a word against you.
> LETTY (*quieting, stares round for some seconds, smiles).* Eh? What is it? Is that you, father? Yes, I have lived it down, haven't I? They forgive me! (*Drops back, looks up smiling.*) I'm so tired, daddy – so tired –

(*Dies.*)

CURTAIN. (115)[30]

Jones thus poses a subversive question to the audience moments before the final curtain. The quiet reassurance of Letty's final speech, 'They forgive me', is juxtaposed with the urgent intensity of the preceding one, 'Oh you Christians, will you never learn to forgive?' Letty's words are a challenge to all Christians, of whatever denomination, to observe the principles of forgiveness that they profess. The positioning of this line at the climax of the play, and the sudden contrast that the violence of its delivery makes with the subdued action of the rest of the death scene up to this moment, have the effect of sending the audience out into the night with a rhetorical question to wrestle with, rather than with the comforting sentiment of the play's tranquil close. The outwardly conventional ending – the death of the fallen woman – is thus juxtaposed with the strong critique of religious hypocrisy that immediately precedes it.

The initial reception of *Saints and Sinners* was characterised by a degree of hostility. The *Era* reported that 'the occasional outbreaks of dissent' when scriptural phrases were used in the dialogue 'proved most emphatically that the strong dislike of the playgoer to blending the religious element with the dramatic scenes has by no means faded away'.[31] The *Morning Post* cautioned:

> It is skating on very thin ice to put scriptural quotations into the mouths of comic personages. Than false sanctity there can be no more legitimate object of stage satire, but it is possible to hold up to righteous indignation the Chadbands and Pecksniffs of society without attributing to them Biblical utterances which, falling from such lips, savour of irreverence, and are apt to shock what should always be held in respect – the religious sentiment of the audience.[32]

[30] The licensing copy of *Saints and Sinners* in the Lord Chamberlain's Plays at the British Library shows a slightly more protracted ending, in which Letty's death is followed by a short exchange between Jacob and George, and the curtain falls on '*the two men standing with hands clasped'*: LCP 53323 I, Act V, p. 142. It is not clear which version was played at Margate, but there is little difference in either tone or effect between the licensing copy and the published version (though the former would draw the audience's focus back to the male characters rather than the dead heroine). I have not been able to locate a copy of the play with the revised 'happy' ending that was subsequently performed at the Vaudeville.

[31] [Anon.], 'Saints and Sinners', *Era*, 27 September 1884, p. 8.

[32] [Anon.], 'Vaudeville Theatre', *Morning Post*, 27 September 1884, p. 5.

These first-night reviews show that many in the audience were deeply uncomfortable with Jones' use of scriptural language, and with the play's religious subject-matter more generally. It is striking that the *Morning Post* specifically mentions Chadband and Pecksniff: the names would have been recognisable to readers as bywords for a certain kind of hypocritical character; but their use also suggests that by the time of *Saints and Sinners*, a generation after the publication of Dicken's novels, there was still no readily-identifiable stage character to whom Hoggard and Prabble could be compared. It was only with *Saints and Sinners* that criticism of Victorian religious hypocrisy crossed over from the novel to the stage.

It was apparent to many of Jones' contemporaries that *Saints and Sinners* marked a turning point in the dramatic treatment of religion. Progressively-minded critics were able to see beyond the controversy over scriptural quotations, and recognise the play as a landmark: 'one of the most remarkable pieces of recent times… if only for the boldness with which [Jones] has attacked the weaknesses of a particular class of religionist.'[33] Matthew Arnold, who saw the play in London in December 1884, congratulated Jones in a letter: 'The piece is full of good and telling things, and one cannot watch the audience without seeing that it is by strokes of this kind faith in the middle-class fetish is weakening, however slowly, as it could be in no other way.'[34] *Saints and Sinners* was a direct challenge to the convention that religious matters should not be discussed on the stage, a theatrical counterpart to Arnold's writings on the hypocrisy of the Dissenting middle class: Jones rendered religious criticism performable on the stage by positioning its oppositional statements at key moments in the play, and all within the framework of a conventional and ideologically-sound plot. This is a dramaturgical strategy that Jones would take further six years later in *Judah*, in which he explored the still more sensitive territory of Christian doctrine.

***Judah* (1890)**[35]

Whilst *Saints and Sinners* dealt critically with religious hypocrisy, it did not touch upon doctrinal matters: Christianity itself was not in issue. In two later plays, though, Christian doctrine itself was a central theme, and for that reason the subject-matter was potentially even

[33] [Anon.], 'Saints and Sinners', *Derby Mercury*, 15 October 1884, p. 7.
[34] Quoted in D.A. Jones, pp. 93-4.
[35] Henry Arthur Jones, *Judah* (London: Macmillan & Company, 1894). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *Judah* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.

more contentious. *Judah* (1890) examines faith from the standpoint of a sceptical scientist, and *The Tempter* (1893) is an outright attack on the very notion of an ordered universe governed by a supernatural and benign creator.

Judah was produced in May 1890 at the Shaftesbury Theatre, with E.S. Willard in the title role. It is set in Asgarby Castle, near the provincial town of Beachampton, where the aging Lord Asgarby engages a faith-healer by the name of Vashti Dethic in a desperate attempt to save the life of his terminally-ill daughter Lady Eve. Vashti is a 'fasting girl', credited with miraculous powers of curing the sick after prolonged fasting and praying. Judah Llewellyn is a young Welsh Presbyterian minister who has fallen passionately in love with her, partly in the belief that her powers are genuine and God-given. In reality, Vashti is merely the instrument of her father, a confidence trickster who promotes her supposed powers for financial gain. Vashti's abilities are put to the test by Professor Jopp, a scientist and professional sceptic, who insists on her being locked in a tower while she fasts, in order to ensure that nobody is helping her. Judah observes the experiment and realises that Vashti's father is secretly supplying her with food; yet at the point that Jopp is about to reveal her as a fraud, Judah steps in and swears that she had had no assistance, perjuring himself to save her reputation. Lady Eve recovers. A year later, celebrated by the village in which they live but tormented by the lies that they have told, Judah and Vashti confess everything and embark on a new life, cleansed by the disclosure of the truth.

Fasting girls were a source of fascination in the late Victorian era.[36] A Welsh girl named Sarah Jacob, who was claimed to have taken no food or drink for two years in the 1860s, became the subject of intense speculation as to whether her abstinence was the result of miraculous, divine attributes or simply a fraud. The fasting girl's body thus became the focal point for competing medical, religious and spiritual attentions: 'the controversy over fasting girls exacerbated a set of pre-existing ideological tensions about the relationship between mind and body that were central to the Victorian debate between religion and science.'[37] Through the story of Vashti, Jones anatomises late-Victorian attitudes to religion and to faith more generally: attitudes are examined in a succession of duologues involving Professor

[36] See Stephen Wade, *The Girl who Lived on Air: the Mystery of Sarah Jacob, the Welsh Fasting Girl* (Bridgend: Seren, 2014); and Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: the Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
[37] Brumberg, p. 63.

Jopp, which permits Jones to comment on a range of views from a sceptical, rationalist perspective.

Jopp himself stands aloof from any religious profession. He represents a form of undogmatic scepticism, informed by scientific knowledge, that is as characteristic of the late Victorian period as the provincial, middle-class Puritanism of *Saints and Sinners.* The Society for Psychical Research, which had been established in 1882, counted amongst its aims and objectives the scientific investigation of 'remarkable phenomena, which are prima facie inexplicable on any generally recognised hypothesis, and which, if incontestably established, would be of the highest possible value', and its principal areas of enquiry included 'the nature and extent of any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, apart from any generally recognised mode of perception'.[38] The Society's supporters included Ruskin, Freud, Gladstone and other major figures in the artistic, scientific and political establishment; and although the Society is not specifically mentioned in *Judah*, Jopp embodies its open-minded approach to unexplained phenomena. When asked whether he 'denies' that Vashti has supernatural powers to cure the sick, he responds 'We don't deny miracles nowadays, Mr. Prall – we explain them […] The perfectly natural means by which miracles are always accomplished' (15). Jopp is, however, prepared to admit the value of faith to those who believe in it, as he observes in a short soliloquy towards the end of the play:

> After all, why not believe the fairy tales? Why not pretend there is a dryad in every tree, and a nymph in every brook? Nymphs and dryads may be as good names for the great secret as germ-plasms and protoplasms. Perhaps there is no great secret after all. (96)

There is more to this speech than just an acknowledgement that people should be free to believe in the supernatural if it pleases them. Jopp, the principal voice of reason in the religiously-charged atmosphere of the play's setting, invites the audience to consider the inevitable outcome of the pursuit of scientific truth. If everything that happens can ultimately be explained in the rational terms that science offers, then 'there is no great secret after all': that is to say, there is no divine or supernatural creative force that is beyond human comprehension. As with the ending of *Saints and Sinners*, an important question is raised by

[38] Society for Psychical Research, 'Statement of Aims and Objectives (1883)', <https://www.spr.ac.uk/statement-aims-and-objectives-1883> [accessed 11 November 2018.]

a major character at a key moment in the action, and remains unanswered on the stage: the audience is left to decide for itself.

It is primarily through the rationalist viewpoint of Jopp that Jones examines Victorian religious attitudes. Jopp is juxtaposed at various points in the play with Papworthy, Judah, Vashti and Dethic, and their contrasting views on faith are critiqued mainly through the dialogue at these points. The minor character Papworthy, a middle-class local dignitary and businessman, is a representative of the same kind of provincial Dissent as Hoggard and Prabble in *Saints and Sinners*. While there is no suggestion that Papworthy is in any way corrupt, he embodies an unspiritual form of religious participation that is more concerned with status and propriety than with any deeply-held faith: the hypocrisy of conformity, in Houghton's terminology. Jopp meets Papworthy at the start of the play, and their expository opening scene establishes the play's thematic framework of the tension between science and faith:

> PAP. I have been connected with the Durfield Road Chapel since I was a boy, and it seems to me that our young minister, Mr. Llewellyn, is going too far when he declares in public his belief in the miracles that this Miss Dethic is said to work.
> JOPP You don't believe in miracles, Mr. Papworthy?
> PAP. Not in England in the nineteenth century. Do you, sir?
> JOPP No. I never believe in miracles that do not happen either in a remote century or a remote country.
> PAP. Quite so, sir; and though of course I don't say they are impossible in Beachampton to-day, yet I think as mayor, and as head of one of the oldest establishments in the city, it is my duty to – to – ah – to –
> JOPP To discourage them as much as possible, eh? (2)

Jopp's gentle mockery shows up the paradox that followers of conventional Christianity should believe in the miracles reported in the Bible but find it impossible to believe in the miracles that are reported in their own place and time. The exchange also raises the issue of the sincerity of Christian profession, and its relationship with social propriety. Papworthy's concern is not that Judah is insincere in professing belief in Vashti's supposedly supernatural powers, but rather that for Judah to declare it publicly is somehow improper. It is 'as mayor' and 'as head of one of the oldest establishments in the city' that Papworthy has come to discuss the matter with Lord Asgarby, one of the chapel's major supporters, and to discuss whether Judah should be removed from his post.

Judah represents a sincere but unconventional form of Christianity. He is passionate in his convictions, with an inclination towards mysticism and a readiness to believe in miracles. He is half-Jewish, half-Welsh, and Jopp speaks approvingly of this mixed background early in the play: 'Celt and Jew! Two good races! Just the man to give England a new religion, or make her believe in her old one' (3): the clear implication is that religion has lost its way in England, and that someone like Judah might invigorate it. The first exchange between Judah and Jopp highlights the philosophical differences between them. Judah has described hearing 'mysterious voices' since he was a child:

> JUDAH I hear them almost every day. I have heard them ever since I was a child and kept my father's sheep on the hills in Wales. You know I lived almost alone until I was nearly twenty. I saw no human being, sometimes spoke to no one, from one week to another.
> JOPP And you fancy that you hear a real voice at these times?
> JUDAH It is not fancy – I hear it as plainly as I hear yours. [JOPP *smiles.*] Why do you doubt me? Is the spirit-world so far from you that you don't believe in it? It's nearer to me than this earth I walk upon. (13)

Judah believes in the voices that he hears and the reality and proximity of the spirit-world. Jopp does not, ascribing the voices to the realm of psychology ('fancy') rather than the supernatural. However, as I have already noted, it is clear from other dialogue that Jones respects the sincerity of the belief.

It is the presentation of Judah as a man of sincere and passionate Christian faith that makes his perjury potentially problematic for the audience. Jones makes allowance for this in the same way as he does with Jacob's deception in *Saints and Sinners.* The lie is told for the best of reasons: not only is Judah in love with Vashti, but he has witnessed the benign effects of her supposedly miraculous fasting and does not wish to break the spell that it holds over her followers. Furthermore, the lie is only extracted under pressure, when Jopp – correctly suspecting that Dethic has practiced some form of subterfuge in order to smuggle sustenance to Vashti in the tower – forces Judah into a corner:

> JOPP But I heard voices, I'm sure. Who was it? Who was speaking here a few moments ago? Mr. Llewellyn! [*Challenges JUDAH.*] You know something of this, sir.
> JUDAH I know nothing. [*Pause. JOPP looks at him.*] Don't you believe me?
> JOPP [*Looking at him.*] I don't know. Give me your oath — you have not brought Miss Dethic any food. [*VASHTI looks at JUDAH.*
> JUDAH My oath — I have not brought Miss Dethic any food.

JOPP Your oath — you have not seen her take any. [*VASHTI looks at him.*
JUDAH [*After a pause.*] My oath — I have not seen her take any. [*VASHTI shows relief.*
JOPP Your oath — she has not been outside that door, to your knowledge. [*Longer pause.*
JUDAH My oath — she has not been outside that door to my knowledge.
JOPP [*Looks at him.*] Enough! I take your word. I was mistaken.

CURTAIN (71)

Jones builds up to the *dénouement* by having Judah swear three times, with first a *pause*, then a *Longer pause*, as he compounds his lies and weighs up their implications. Strictly speaking, what he swears to in the first two oaths is true: Judah himself has *not* brought Vashti any food, and he has *not* seen her take any. Only the third oath is an actual falsehood: having done his best to equivocate, Judah is finally left with no option but perjury. The effect is to allow the audience to regard the perjury as a forgivable lapse: as with Jacob's concealment of Letty's past, Judah's lie does not lead us to question his faith or virtue, and it is ultimately redeemed by his confession and his re-dedication to a virtuous life at the close of the play. Maintaining Judah's religious integrity means that Jones can end the story on a morally sound note, with the repentant hero and heroine going out into the world to start a new life. The direct criticism of religion is again wrapped up in a conventional narrative structure, applying the same dramaturgical strategy as Jones had used in *Saints and Sinners.*

Vashti is likewise sincere in spirit, but she is ambivalent about the mysticism that Judah perceives in the universe. She does not dismiss it entirely though, having been taken in – at least partly – by her father and made to believe that she may indeed have mysterious powers. Jopp adopts a sympathetic approach in his Act II duologue with her. At this point in the play, Vashti has been fasting for eighteen days and is on the point of collapse. Jopp urges her to give up the pretence, explaining the psychology of faith healing:

JOPP If you don't know the secret of this mysterious power of yours, I'll explain it to you. These good folks whom you cure are all suffering from different kinds of nervous diseases, where only volition is required to make them better. Their faith in you gives the necessary shock to their volition, and brings its powers into exercise. But in all cases of organic disease I assure you you are as helpless as – as any regular practitioner; and that's saying a good deal.
VASHTI But there is no proof that I have not cured them.
JOPP Certainly there is no proof. And that is why I think you are behaving very foolishly.
VASHTI What do you mean?

> JOPP If your patients insist on getting well, neither I nor any one else can possibly prove you have not cured them. But – I can and will prove that you can't live without eating. (59)

Jopp recognises that Vashti is trapped in upholding her own pretence and gently offers her a way out, urging her '*Quietly, earnestly, rather tenderly*' to give up: 'I want no victory, Miss Dethic. Come, let's both give up. What do you say?' When she refuses, he rebukes her with the words 'you're trifling with the truth; you're playing upon *sacred feelings*; and I warn you I shall be *merciless* to you' (emphasis in original) (60). Jopp does not deny that faith-healing can be beneficial, but he ascribes its effects to psychology rather than the supernatural or the divine; and he takes issue with the false mysticism of Vashti's act, and particularly the pretence that she can survive without food for three weeks because of supernatural intervention. He does not criticise her devotees for their credulity, but he despises those who would exploit it. Jopp's encounter with Vashti thus allows Jones both to explain faith-healing as a phenomenon, and to criticise those who pretend to be healers for their own personal gain.

Dethic is located at the other end of the spectrum of religious sincerity from Judah. He is described on his first appearance as '*a suave, furtive, sallow, oily man of about fifty with a touch of the manner of a second-rate platform orator*' (14). He is an outright charlatan who had once practiced as a conjuror under the stage name Professor Janus, and later adopted the name Dethic because 'Well, I had to take some name, and I – I thought Dethic was a very good one' (98). We never learn his true name, but this two-named and two-faced character preys on the religious hopes of the credulous and the desperate.

The two sides of his character are manifested by differences in his diction: in public, he speaks in a manner that Jones describes as '*oily, balmy*' (24), expressing himself in unctuous and obsequious terms; but in private, he switches into a more vernacular mode that shows him up for the cheap trickster that he is: 'By Jove, we're in clover at last! […] play your cards well, and our fortunes are made for life' (18). He treats the people who believe in Vashti as dupes who are there to be exploited: 'It's ungrateful to repine at Providence for having made the world so full of fools, when it's quite clear they are put here for our especial benefit' (20). Jopp neatly categorises Dethic in scientific terms: 'genus, cheat; species, religious; variety, bogus-miracle business' (17). His is the most reprehensible form of religious pretence, the very embodiment of the hypocrisy of moral pretension. Jopp sees through Dethic from the outset, and undermines and challenges him throughout the play. In the last Act, having

discovered the subterfuge that allowed Dethic to smuggle food to Vashti during the experiment – a duplicate key to the tower in which Vashti is locked – Jopp speaks privately to Dethic and forces him to agree to leave the country; but he does not unmask him publicly as a fraud for fear of damaging Lady Eve's recovery (99). Jopp manages his excoriation of the confidence trickster in such a way as to preserve the psychological benefits of Vashti's act.

There are some very clear messages from these duologues: religious convictions, including faith in mystics, can be beneficial to the true believer, even if their effects owe more to human psychology than to divine intervention; faith should be qualified by scepticism and a willingness to accept scientific facts, but sincerely-held beliefs should nevertheless be respected; and those who unscrupulously exploit the faithful or naïve should be exposed and pursued. Jopp expresses a rationalist, humanist view of the universe, tempered by a compassionate understanding of the spiritual needs of others, and this stance is articulated and reiterated throughout the play.

Despite the manifestly religious nature of *Judah's* subject-matter – with its themes of faith, hypocrisy, scepticism, perjury and confession – few of the early reviews indicate any discomfort on the part of the audience. By contrast with the outcry over *Saints and Sinners*, at the first night of *Judah* 'there was not a dissentient voice to be heard, while the heartiness of the applause at the finish left no possible doubt as to the fate of the play… Rumours had gone about that the play would deal with religious controversy, and that therefore, its chances of success would be minimised; but these rumours have certainly not been borne out'.[39] The play's critical reception is characterised more by a focus on the perceived novelty of its plot and the modernity of its characters, than by any objections to its religious themes and characters. The *Morning Post*, for example, described the characters of Judah and Vashti as 'novel figures on the stage', Jopp as 'a sceptical scientific man quite of the modern type', and the other intellectuals, Juxon Prall and Sophie Jopp, as 'a go-ahead young Oxford man […] and an "advanced" young damsel'.[40] That is not to say that reviewers were indifferent to the religious dimension of the play, and indeed the commentator for the *Observer* linked the religious dimension of the play directly with its modernity:

[39] [Anon.], 'London Correspondence', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 May 1890, p. 5.
[40] [Anon.], 'Shaftesbury Theatre', *Morning Post*, 23 May 1890, p. 3.

> With its sympathetic appeal on behalf of a fraudulent "fasting-girl", with its selection of a Welsh Presbyterian minister of Jewish descent for its hero, and with its constant references direct and indirect to the conflict between religious superstition and scientific unbelief, *Judah* is unquestionably original and undeniably up to the date known in Paris as the *fin du siècle.*[41]

However, it was the act of contrition in the final scene that rendered the outcome fitting, and it is striking that critical approval of this moment was itself couched in religious terms. The *Pall Mall Gazette* observed that 'Just at the moment when wealth and position are offered them, [Judah and Vashti] confess everything to those whom their words and deeds have deceived. Then hand in hand they go out into the busy world once more to become man and wife, and to help each other expiate the evil that has fallen across their lives'.[42] The language is reminiscent of the elegiac closing lines of *Paradise Lost*, in which the fallen Adam and Eve 'hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow, / Through Eden took their solitary way.' In a similar vein, the *Graphic* noted approvingly that the play ended with 'Full and complete confession, sincere repentance, resolute determination to repudiate worldly advantages, and live a life that should testify to the inward purification'.[43] What made *Judah* acceptable, then, was the ending. The play ran at the Shaftesbury until 26 September 1890, at which point Willard's company left London for a brief provincial tour, which was followed by an American tour that included performances in New York of *Judah* along with Jones' other plays *The Middleman*, *The Deacon* and *Wealth*.

The success of *Judah* was partly attributable to Jones' decision to round off the play, as he had done in *Saints and Sinners*, in an ideologically-satisfactory way: in this case, with a confession of sin and a promise to make reparations for it by hard work and good deeds. The romantic and conventional curve of this plot allowed Jones to dramatize and explore the tension between faith and science, and provided a framework for critiquing the conventional religion of Papworthy, the mystical faith of Judah, and the cant and hypocrisy of Dethic, just as he had previously criticised religious hypocrisy in *Saints and Sinners* within the framework of a conventional seduction drama. *Judah* shows again how Jones used his dramaturgical skill to enable the theatrical staging of a challenging critique by embedding it

[41] [Anon.], 'At the Play', *Observer*, 25 May 1890, p. 7.
[42] [Anon.], 'Music and the Theatres', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 May 1890, p. 2.
[43] [Anon.], 'Theatres', *Graphic*, 31 May 1890, p. 607.

within an acceptable narrative arc, and so advance the boundaries of what could permissibly be said about religion on the West End stage.

The Tempter (1893)[44]

Jones' most direct attack on religion came in *The Tempter*, which Tree produced at the Haymarket on 20 September 1893 and which ran until 1 December. The play differs from Jones' other plays of religion in three important ways: it is the only play that features a supernatural character, namely the Devil; it takes the form of a blank verse drama; and it is set in the fourteenth century. Setting a literary work in another time or country was a common strategy among writers who wished to challenge convention or authority without falling foul of the censorship. *The Tempter*'s combination of fantasy, poetic diction and historical distance allowed Jones to criticise religious attitudes of the 1890s under the guise of commenting on the pre-Reformation church, and to do so in terms that are remarkably strong.

The play begins with a 28-line Prologue in two stanzas, each of which is in sonnet form. The first encourages the audience to 'Leave for awhile the fret of modern life' and the second to 'Waken in Chaucer's England.' The language echoes Jones' great influences, Ruskin and Arnold, in its medievalism and its critique of the Victorian age, with its description of 'the reek of this stockjobbing age, / Its wan-faced railway herds, its wealth, its illth, / The muddy ferment of its greed, and rage / Of blind, deaf, mad, industrial war'. The word 'illth' is a Ruskin coinage, first used in 1860 as a correspondent to 'wealth' and meaning that which causes devastation and trouble. The play thus opens with a short blast of criticism of the modern day, before taking us back theatrically into an idealised past with the words 'Raise curtain.'

The story proper concerns the virtuous Christian Prince Leon of Auvergne. As the play begins, Leon is betrothed to an English noblewoman, Lady Avis of Rougemont, whom he has not met since childhood; but he has previously been in love with Avis' cousin, Lady Isobel, who is now destined to become a nun. The play opens on board the ship that is bringing Leon to England for the wedding, in the middle of a storm that the Devil has called up. The ship

[44] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Tempter* (London: Macmillan & Company, 1905). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Tempter* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.

sinks, the crew drown, but the Devil preserves Leon in order to use him to wreck the peace between England and France that this dynastic marriage is intended to bring about. By disguises, lies and specious arguments, the Devil first persuades Leon and Isobel to consummate their love, then turns them against each other. Encouraged by the Devil, Isobel stabs Leon. The dying Prince is carried to the door of Canterbury cathedral, where Isobel takes her own life after the Devil reveals his true identity and the machinations that he has worked upon her, and the two lovers are reunited in death.

Tree himself played the Devil, in what appears to have been a pyrotechnic display of acting virtuosity and stage artifice. One review reported that with a pointed beard, reddish ringlets and ' a curious cloak, eminently suggestive of a tail', Tree 'does not disdain the limelight man's aid to produce vivid effects'.[45] At various points in the play, the Devil appears as a soldier, a scholar and a friar, and it is in these medieval guises that he deceives and cajoles his victims into their mortal sin of lust. In outlook, however, Jones' Devil is entirely modern. One commentator described him as 'an unconventional type of devil […] the cool, polished man of the world, at times strongly cynical, but always ingratiating himself into the favour of everyone he meets'.[46] Throughout the play he comments, from a very modern perspective, on the hypocrisy of Christians in general and the English in particular, the indifference of God and the meaninglessness of creation. *The Tempter* shows just how directly Jones was prepared to attack religion once he had found a dramaturgical framework that permitted him to do so.

The theme of hypocrisy is first raised in the second scene, when Drogo Pound, the steward to Avis' father, the Earl of Rougemont, appears at an inn on the Canterbury road. He tells the innkeeper that the Earl and his entourage require lodging, and that Drogo and the Earl are living on bread and water, walking barefoot and being scourged every night as penance 'till we purge ourselves clean of all sin at the tomb of the holy martyr' (10). We also learn that the Earl has seized certain lands in France that rightfully belonged to his niece Isobel, this being the reason for the penance, and wishes to abase himself before the beggars of the town. The Devil, watching in the disguise of a gentleman, comments on the scene:

[45] [Anon.], 'A Column for Ladies', *Weekly Standard and Express*, 14 October 1893, p. 3.
[46] [Anon.], 'London Correspondence', *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 23 September 1893, p. 5.

[The Earl of Rougemont comes forward with a very meek and sanctified expression, kneels to the Beggars, praying at the same time, lifting his eyes to Heaven.

DEVIL [*Observing him.*] Oh, how I love a hypocrite! [There's reason
And salary for other sins. For lies,
Lust, murder, robbery, I pay good wage,
But all my darling hypocrites sin gratis,
Do penance, mortify themselves, mouth, fast,
Obey a thousand senseless, joyless rites.
For what? That Heaven and I may both look on,
Equally uncozened, equally amused:
Go on, poor hypocrites, and cheat yourselves.] (18-19)[47]

The Earl's theatrical acting-out of contrition is at odds with what the audience knows of his character. From a theological point of view, the Devil is of course right: insincere repentance cannot lead to forgiveness because Heaven is not misled, so it can only operate to deceive other men. This is the hypocrisy of moral pretension, and the Earl's conduct is mirrored in the hypocrisy of Drogo, whose wife hides plums and meat for him, in breach of his professed fasting. The Devil comments:

> That rogue has caught hypocrisy from his master. It's very catching here in England! There must be something in the climate of this favoured isle that suits with it! When I have time I'll look me out a pair of very choice hypocrites, and plant them here in England; they'll breed, they'll breed, and in a few hundred years the country will swarm with them! (28)

Just as the Prologue takes us back in time to the fourteenth century, so the Devil casts forward to a Victorian England that 'swarms' with hypocrites. The audience would have recognised this as a frank comment on their own age and country: as Houghton observed, the hostile criticism of Victorian writers like Carlyle and Mill forms a large part of the evidence for calling the Victorian age as a whole hypocritical.[48] The Devil is likewise criticising, in an ironic and humorous way, the hypocrisy that lay beneath the professed attitudes and behaviours of many of Jones' contemporaries.

[47] The Macmillan text does not explain why square brackets appear at certain points in the published version, such as in this extract. However, the play was reduced in length by some 45 minutes following its opening night, as the *Morning Post* reported on 20 October 1893 (p. 5), and I believe that the square-bracketed lines are text that was cut as part of this exercise.
[48] Houghton, p. 424.

The theme of divine indifference to human suffering is articulated by the Devil throughout the play. In the opening scene, when a sailor in fear of drowning prays 'God have mercy! Christ have mercy! God hear me!', the Devil replies 'He's deaf! He's not at home! He's gone upon a journey' (7). Towards the end of the play, as Isobel is praying for Leon's life to be saved at the cathedral gates, he tells her 'There is none hears thee. / None has regard to thee! Thy God is dead!' (98). At yet another point, the Devil observes that man 'bribes his fellow-apes to flatter him' and describes man as setting up 'an image / Of his lank, pitiable, monkey self' which he then calls God (24). (Darwin's influence on the Devil is clear – the reference to apes and monkeys suggests that the medieval Devil is quite aware of *The Descent of Man* – but the idea that God is humanity's own invention also suggests Feuerbach's conception of God as a projection of human ideals.)

It should be noted that the Devil does not deny the existence of God outright: it would be illogical, even in the fantasy-world of this play, for one supernatural being to deny completely the existence of another, as well as perhaps going too far to get past the censor. Rather, the Devil suggests that God has either ceased to take an interest in human affairs ('He's not at home!'), or is dead, or is just an invention of man. Jones thus avoids the risk that the play might be banned for promoting atheism, and further distances the dramatist from the play's anti-religious sentiments by having these voiced by the Devil in the course of tempting or tormenting mortals. *Of course* the Devil repeatedly denies God's interest in human affairs and the idea that the universe has any divine plan or meaning: he *would* say that, wouldn't he?

This unorthodox theological position has its fullest articulation in the Devil's long, final speech, which demands close consideration. The dying lovers, Leon and Isobel, have just been taken into the cathedral by the priest, Father Urban, and the Devil mockingly calls out to him to 'Physic them up for Heaven! / Mumble and drone them into paradise' (104). Left alone onstage, the Devil now addresses God directly. The opening lines describe the purposelessness of creation:

> And Thou! Work out Thy cunning, aimless scheme;
> Spin round Thy maddening maze of foolish worlds
> Eternally, like drunken dervishes,
> All to no end, save that it is Thy whim.
> Let restless matter dance round restless matter,

> Till long-eked impotent space and time rebel
> And sicken at their own sterility. (105)

This passage is Jones' most explicit dramatic challenge to religion, articulating some key anxieties about the place of faith in a universe whose workings had been increasingly laid bare by science. As noted earlier in this chapter, Lyell had explained the development of the earth in terms of slow processes taking place over the course of eons: 'long-eked' time as the Devil says. Kelvin's insight into the heat-death of the universe is present in the prediction of 'impotent space and time' ending in 'sterility'. Darwin's account of evolution through random variation explains the development of organisms that are 'cunning' (in the sense of clever or intricate) but only as part of an 'aimless scheme'.[49] The Devil's words reflect not the theology of the superstitious and religious Middle Ages, but the latest Victorian thinking about science, the impersonal nature of creation, and the future of the universe: all concepts that had been widely disseminated through the medium of periodicals during the Victorian era, and audience familiarity with which Jones takes as read.

As I have already observed, Jones stops short of an outright declaration of atheism. Now addressing himself to God, the Devil says that his creation is meaningless and ultimately sterile, and charges God with hiding himself from the creatures that he has made:

> Hide Thou Thy childish secret! Make no sign!
> Give Thou no hint wherefore Thou hast designed
> This deftly dovetailed chaos of creation
> To issues of stupendous nothingness!
> Let darkened mankind grope in misery,
> And Thou be silent! Keep them blind! (105)

God's 'childish secret' – which from the next two lines we understand to mean the purpose of creation – is hidden from mortals. God remains silent, leaving 'darkened mankind' to

[49] It should be noted that the term 'cunning' was an important one in the evolutionary discourse of the *fin de siècle.* Samuel Butler's book *Luck, or Cunning, as the Main Means of Organic Modification?* (1887) (2nd edn, London: A.C. Fifield, 1920) takes issue with the notion of natural selection ('luck') which it contrasts with organic development driven ultimately by divine intelligence and design ('cunning'). Butler concludes: 'The theory that luck is the main means of organic modification is the most absolute denial of God which it is possible for the human mind to conceive – while the view that God is in all His creatures, He in them and they in Him, is only expressed in other words by declaring that the main means of organic modification is, not luck, but cunning' (pp. 266-7). However, in the context of the Devil's speech that I have quoted above, it makes no sense to interpret 'cunning' in this way. Indeed, Jones' use of the term may have been an intentional dig at Butler.

speculate as to his intentions. This is the most that religion can do, to 'grope' as to what God's purpose might have been, but mankind remains 'blind' and religion itself is thus pointless.

The speech then concludes in prophetic mode:

> Now set ye kings to work and ply red war!
> Famine and hunger inappeasable
> March over these fair lands and gnaw them bare
> Till frenzied mothers kill and eat their babes!
> Breathe thick on every wind black pestilence,
> And taint the universal earth! I see
> A merry, busy harvest time, a crop
> Of death and ruin waving ruddy ripe
> For me to put my sickle in and garner! [*Vanishes*
>
> (105)

This valedictory curse brings us back to the world of 1893 that was described in the Prologue, and 'its greed, and rage / Of blind, deaf, mad, industrial war'. The devil is anticipating the ills – the *illth* – of the late nineteenth century, with its wars, famines and pollution, ascribing them to the meaninglessness of God's universe, and God's own withdrawal from it. While the onstage cosmos of *The Tempter* has a place for both God and the Devil, it is hard to imagine a more explicit anti-religious sentiment, short of an outright declaration of atheism.

In placing this remarkable speech close to the end of the play, Jones uses the same strategy as he adopted in *Saints and Sinners* and juxtaposes a strong oppositional statement with a weaker conventional ending. After the Devil vanishes, there is a pause; then music is heard, and '*the first streaks of dawn appear in the sky […] at length the full spring dawn spreads over the scene, and shows all the trees of the cloister garden in full bloom*' (106). Lady Avis enters from one side, and Father Urban from the Cathedral. A short exchange follows, just twelve lines of blank verse, less than half the length of the Devil's tirade. Father Urban assures Avis that the Prince and Isobel are now at peace, and the play ends with a bland assurance that their sins have been forgiven: 'And the smooth water doth not sooner close / Over a pebble with its returning calm / Than Heaven's forgiveness drowns and hides man's sin' (106). The play thus closes on an ostensibly optimistic note: a fine spring day, and an ideologically-acceptable reassertion of Christian values and divine mercy. However, this is tame stuff compared with the vigour of the Devil's speech: as with Letty's dying outburst in

Saints and Sinners, and Jopp's speculation about the 'great secret' near the end of *Judah*, the Devil's rhetorically-powerful refutation of religion is surely what the audience will take home with them, rather than the bland consolation offered by Father Urban.

The Tempter was an extravagant production. It followed Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance* at the Haymarket (another play about late Victorian hypocrisy), and Tree announced that the new production would be 'somewhat elaborate' and that the theatre would be closed for several months to allow for the necessary alterations to the stage.[50] The first night was ill-starred, however, because 'the shipwreck scene was a fiasco, as the gauzes caught fire and the ship refused to sink'.[51] The ambitious scenery and mechanical effects meant that the first night audience had to sit through long scene-changes that 'made the occupants of the gallery impatiently whistle between the acts "We won't go home till morning" and "Home, sweet home."'[52] Despite those mishaps, the play ran for 76 nights and was still playing to £200-a-night houses when it ended. Commercially, *The Tempter* was not wholly unsuccessful, but it was expensive to run and Tree replaced it with a revival of a well-known and 'bankable' comedy, *Captain Swift* by C. Haddon Chambers, which Tree had first produced at the Haymarket in June 1888.[53]

Contemporaneous reviewers found several aspects to criticise. A letter to the *Era* suggested that the Examiner of Plays had been remiss in granting the play a licence on the grounds of taste and decency: 'Mr. Jones permits his Tempter to sail very close to the wind when he tempts the Lady Isobel and her lover to taste the sweets of forbidden fruit, and talk about it in a matter-of-fact fashion which is not calculated to improve the morals of Beauty's adorers and love-sick ladies of high and low degree.'[54] There were concerns on religious grounds as well. One reviewer described the play as 'a work calculated to shock the delicate susceptibilities, and possibly also to offend the feelings of the religious'.[55] When it closed, another commentator suggested that 'probably Mr. Jones will be warned to abjure the diabolical and supernatural, and confine his more or less "poetical" abilities to subjects

[50] [Anon.], 'The Haymarket Theatre', *Standard,* 17 August 1893, p. 3.
[51] D.A. Jones, p. 93.
[52] [Anon.], 'Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's New Play: "The Tempter" at the Haymarket', *Birmingham Daily Post,* 21 September 1893, p. 8.
[53] [Anon.], 'Haymarket Theatre', *Morning Post,* 4 December 1893, p. 3.
[54] Charles Richard Harrington, 'The Devil up to Date', *Era,* 14 October 1893, p. 11.
[55] [Anon.], 'London and Other Notes', *Derby Mercury,* 27 September 1893, p. 8.

concerning and interesting to poor humanity'.[56] Jones must have known that the play's religious aspect would arouse objections, and adopted a strategy of subversion in order to propagate his anti-religious sentiments: it is hard to believe that the Devil could have evaded the censor had the play not ended with a conventional affirmation of the forgiveness of sin, and been distanced from the reality of 1890s England by its historical setting, verse form and fantastical leading character.

Michael and his Lost Angel (1896)[57]

Religious hypocrisy received another strong treatment in *Michael and his Lost Angel*, which opened at the Lyceum Theatre in January 1896. In this play, the Reverend Michael Feversham, an Anglican clergyman, has an adulterous relationship with Audrie Lesden, a wealthy society woman who gives herself out to be a widow, but whose husband – as we learn late in the play – is in fact still alive. Audrie wishes to repent for the frivolity of her past life, inspired by Michael's devotional tract *The Hidden Life*, and she contributes generously towards the rebuilding of his church. Their brief affair occurs as the result of a mishap: Michael goes on retreat to a remote island in order to wrestle with the feelings that Audrie has aroused in him; she follows him there, and finds herself stranded with him when she misses the boat that she had planned to take back to the mainland. Michael initially tries to conceal the affair, but eventually – like Jacob Fletcher and Judah Llewellyn – confesses everything to his congregation at the consecration of the rebuilt church, before abandoning his parish and England. In the fifth and final Act, a kind of coda to the main action in Acts I to IV, he has retreated to an Italian monastery, where he is contemplating conversion to Roman Catholicism. Audrie appears, having followed him unbidden to Italy, where – suffering the conventional fate of the fallen woman – she dies in his arms of 'a kind of malarial fever' (96), exacerbated by Michael's rejection of her.

The title of Michael's book, *The Hidden Life*, could be a subtitle for the play itself. Michael's friend and fellow-clergyman, Reverend Mark Docwray, tells us in Act I that the book is having an enormous influence on the public: 'Nothing else is talked about' (11). In Act II,

[56] [Anon.], 'Our London Letter: "The Tempter" at the Haymarket', *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 27 November 1893, p. 4.
[57] Henry Arthur Jones, *Michael and his Lost Angel* (London: Macmillan & Company, 1896). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *Michael and his Lost Angel* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.

Audrie tells Michael what his book meant to her: ‘Six months ago I was tired, gnawn to the very heart with ennui, and one hot restless night I happened to take up your book, “The Hidden Life.” It came to me – oh, like a breath of the purest, freshest air in a fevered room’ (47). We never learn what *The Hidden Life* actually says, though, in terms of its teachings. Its very title is a kind of puzzle, as suggestive of hypocrisy as it is of inner spirituality: the audience is invited to speculate what it might contain, and the play is full of ‘hidden lives’ both spiritual and temporal. Audrie has a ‘hidden life’ in the inner spirituality that Michael’s book awakens in her, but she also has a ‘hidden life’ in the sense that she conceals her marriage. Michael has a ‘hidden life’ in his repressed sexuality and in the guilt and shame that he suffers after their affair, but he also has a ‘hidden life’ in the sense that he conceals the affair from his congregation. The adulterous clergyman, who repeatedly advocates honesty and transparency in others and insists on ‘the necessity of a life of perfect openness before God and man’ (94), hypocritically tries to hide his own sin: his conduct is the very antithesis of the ‘transparent life, a life without secrecy and without guile’ that he soliloquises about in Act I (17), and he eventually has to bring the secret adultery into the light.

These hidden lives are partly exposed during the long scene between Michael and Audrie, when they are alone on St. Decuman’s island. She asks him about his past and he tells her of a youthful lover, whom he describes in surprisingly sexualised terms: ‘Fair, with changing grey eyes that could be serious or merry as she pleased, and fine clear features, and the sweetest provoking mouth –’ (44). When she presses him to tell her if he ever had ‘other romances, darker, deeper ones’, he avoids the question: ‘Nothing that I dare show’ (95). ‘What a world there is within oneself that one never dares speak of!’ comments Audrie, and the action of the play can be understood in terms of Michael coming to terms with his own hidden life, the inner world that he dare not speak of: his susceptibility to sexual temptation, his reluctance to admit it to himself or the people around him, and his ultimate acceptance of it in the act of public confession and repentance.

This pattern of sin, concealment, revelation and penitence provides the narrative structure for the main action of the play, which is framed by acts of confession. As the play opens, Michael is about to return from church where, at his insistence, a young woman called Rose Gibbard, who has had a child out of wedlock, has made a public confession of her sin. Rose is the daughter of Michael’s fellow-scholar and aide, Andrew, and her confession, which takes place offstage just before the action of the play begins, foreshadows Michael’s

confession at the end of Act IV. There are suggestions in the expository opening dialogue and throughout the play that Michael's insistence on the girl's public act of repentance was unduly harsh; and furthermore Michael himself acknowledges that his puritanical zeal in dealing the matter was partly motivated by self-interest because – unaware of her pregnancy – he had provided Rose with a place to stay: 'The whole village was talking of it. I believed in her innocence and defended her to the last. So when the truth came out I daren't hush it up. I should have been accused of hiding sin in my own household' (10). Michael's reason for forcing Rose into a public act of confession is concern for his own reputation as much as concern for Rose's soul.

That the story of *Michael and his Lost Angel* is a thoroughly conventional tragic love story was recognised by the original audience: William Archer likened Michael and Audrie to Romeo and Juliet, and to Hero and Leander.[58] Thematically, however, Jones has two targets. One is the adverse effects of too strict an adherence to Pharisaical codes of observance, including those that are self-imposed: Michael breaks under the strain of trying and failing to live up to the high standards of conduct to which he aspires. In the year that passes between Act III and Act IV, Michael practices suppressing his true feelings about Audrie, becoming cold and distant. Commenting on one of the statues of the rebuilt church, but referring ironically to Michael who she knows is listening in the shadows, she describes it as a stone saint with a stone heart: 'Look how hard and lifeless he is. In a well-regulated world there would be no room for angels or devils, or stone saints, or any such griffins' (86). Michael's character trajectory takes him from the Pharisee in Act I, to the adulterous lover of Act II, to the broken hypocrite and coward of Act III, to the penitent of Act IV, and finally away from the Church of England and into the arms of Roman Catholicism in Act V in the hope of being reunited with Audrie in an afterlife. The play encourages the audience to reject Puritanism and to accept the importance of recognising and accommodating human frailty in others and in ourselves.

Jones' other target is the related matter of religious hypocrisy, in which external shows of piety and self-discipline are used as a veneer to cover sin. This is something that Michael recognises in himself after he has returned from St. Decuman's to Cleveheddon and is discussing with Audrie how to conceal their affair:

[58] William Archer, *The Theatrical 'World' for 1896* (London, Walter Scott: 1897), pp. 16-17.

> How men try to make their religion square with their practice! I was hard, cruelly hard, on that poor little girl of Andrew's. I was sure it was for the good of her soul that she should stand up and confess in public. But now it comes to my own self, I make excuses; I hide, and cloak, and equivocate, and lie – what a hypocrite I am! (58)

Jones foregrounds Michael's hypocrisy and moral pretension, but he also prefaces Michael's admission with a more generalised observation: 'How men try to make their religion square with their practice!' Michael's hypocrisy is an individual instance of a more general fault among professors of faith who adapt their religion to suit their conduct, rather than changing their conduct to reflect the moral principles that their religion teaches.

Although *Michael and his Lost Angel* is less strident than *The Tempter* in its anti-religious sentiments, it shows Jones continuing to push the boundaries of what could permissibly be said about clerics in serious drama. The production was beset by problems, at least some of which arose from the close association of religion and sex. The actor-manager Johnston Forbes-Robertson, who produced the play and took the role of Michael, objected to the title: he explained to Jones that 'lost angel' had been 'a term for a lady of pleasure for many years', and proposed calling it *Michael and Audrie* instead.[59] Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who was originally cast as Audrie, objected to certain lines, complaining 'It's *profane*, Mr Jo-o-ones,' and demanded cuts and changes.[60] Jones wrote to Forbes-Robertson about the 'constant scenes' with the leading lady at rehearsals, and suggested that perhaps it would be better to engage another actor, Marion Terry, in her place. In the event, Mrs. Pat resigned of her own accord two weeks before the opening night, and Marion Terry stepped into the role.

Predictably, the combination of sex scandal and religion also proved problematic for audiences. The production lasted only ten days in London (and only eleven in New York where it had opened the same day), and after it came off the reviewer for the *Era* commented:

> It is impossible to say how much of the failure of Mr. Jones's piece is to be attributed to the spectacle of a clergyman "going wrong" in a very objectionable and inexcusable way, and how much to the pervading gloom of the whole piece. It is pretty certain, however, that the erotic and

[59] D.A. Jones, pp. 172-80.
[60] Margot Peters, *Mrs. Pat: The Life of Mrs Patrick Campbell* (London, Hamish Hamilton: 1985), p. 122.

> adulterous priest will never become an accepted type of the modern British drama.[61]

This suggests that it was specifically the *dramatic* representation of the adulterous priest that was the cause for concern. By the time of *Michael and his Lost Angel*, there had been numerous adulterous clergymen in the novel, including for example Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861). It was the theatrical aspect, and the fear that religion could somehow be contaminated by association with the stage, that made it difficult for some members of the audience to take. The representation, in Act IV, of the interior of Michael's church and the procession that precedes his public act of confession, was also widely criticised. The *Era* considered that the play was 'certain to cause pain and annoyance to the great majority of conventionally religious people, to which the reproduction on the stage of a church and congregation in the full swing of a service must be an abomination and an offence'.[62] More than a decade after *Saints and Sinners*, then, the combination of religion and the stage – and even more so, the combination of religion, *sex* and the stage – still made audiences uncomfortable.

Jones was not consulted about the decision to close *Michael and his Lost Angel*, and wrote angrily to Forbes-Robertson after it happened.[63] Forbes-Robertson replied that the box office receipts had been 'exceedingly bad': a justification with which Jones took issue, publishing the recorded takings in an Author's Note to the MacMillan edition of the play, and pointing out that the receipts were higher than for the first 10 nights of *The Middleman,* which had been a great financial success. Forbes-Robertson responded in turn that the figures for *Michael* had been artificially boosted by the announcement of the play's imminent withdrawal. However, given the criticism of its subject-matter and setting, there must be some doubt as to whether the withdrawal of the play was entirely a business decision. Joseph Knight, in his Preface to the published edition, suggested that 'Such rebuff as the play encountered was, I fear, due to the preconceived attitude of some representatives of public opinion' (xxii). George Bernard Shaw, writing in the *Saturday Review* the month after the play closed but before Jones had published the box office figures, hinted at a conspiracy:

[61] [Anon.], 'Michael and his Lost Public', *Era,* 1 February 1896, p. 17.
[62] [Anon.], 'The London Theatres: The Lyceum', *Era,* 18 January 1896, p. 9.
[63] D.A. Jones, pp. 177-8.

> I find it extremely difficult to believe and experts in theatrical business will share my difficulty that *Michael and his Lost Angel* was withdrawn for purely business reasons. As to the real reason, I do not know it; and I am so afraid that, with my romantic imagination, I shall begin guessing at it in spite of myself if I do not immediately break off, that --[64]

It is unlikely that there will ever be a definitive explanation for the play's failure. Financial considerations may well have been a factor, and several reviewers had certainly reported that they found the play dull. Another factor may have been tensions in the company, and particularly the atmosphere created between Jones and Forbes-Robertson about the production process, which led to subsequent public recriminations.[65] It also seems likely, though, that even though his critique of religious hypocrisy was wrapped up in a tragic but conventional love story, by adding the extra ingredient of illicit sexuality Jones had this time sailed too close to the wind.

Conclusion

Jones' plays of religion dramatise *fin de siècle* anxieties about the relationship between faith and religion, and provide an insight into late-Victorian religious hypocrisy. However, their greatest historical significance lies in the fact that they were written and produced at all. Martin Meisel, describing in his book on Shaw the growing *rapprochement* between the Church and the stage in the late nineteenth century, states that by the 1890s, 'clergymen were now portrayed on the stage with relative frequency'.[66] That this was so is largely attributable to Jones' efforts. As instances of the stage portrayal of clergymen, Meisel cites just five plays, of which three were by Jones: *Saints and Sinners*, *Judah*, and *The Tempter* (the other two were Wilkie Collins' *The New Magdalen* (1873) and W.G. Wills' *Olivia* (1878)). Jones' subversive dramaturgical strategy enabled him to comment on religious matters without falling foul of the censor or alienating too many members of the audience; and this conditioning of audiences for the portrayal of clerics and religious settings and themes established the platform on which Shaw, Somerset Maugham and later dramatists were able

[64] Review of *The Fool of the Family*, in the *Saturday Review*, 8 February 1896. Reprinted in George Bernard Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties*. 3 vols (London: Constable and Company, 1948), II, 34-41.
[65] See the report of Forbes-Robertson's speech to the Playgoers' Club dinner shortly after the play closed: *Era*, 1 February 1896, p. 17.
[66] Martin Meisel, *Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theater* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1984), pp. 335-6.

to build their less conventional and more damning critiques of religion. Jones' plays of religious life are key landmarks in the history of the dramatic representation of religion on the English stage, paving the way for subsequent, more widely recognised developments.

Chapter Three

‘It’s not right – it’s not right! It’s not right!’: Jones’ plays of labour and capital, and the changing economy of the West End theatre

I showed in the last chapter how Jones adopted a subversive dramaturgical strategy in order to circumvent religious censorship, framing his anti-clerical articulations within conventional narratives. Jones took a more direct stance in confronting another of the conservative forces in the theatrical ecosystem, namely the actor-managers who were gatekeepers for the production of new plays. Jones’ issues with the actor-manager system, and his assertions of the primacy of the playwright as a contributor to the success of any production, were outlined in the Introduction. In this chapter, I address Jones’ advocacy of the rights of creators of intellectual property against those who would take unfair advantage of their inventiveness, his engagement with the tension between labour and capital more generally, and his efforts to change the production practices of the West End stage. Although Jones is not generally thought of today as a political playwright – as an early commentator noted in 1920, ‘for the most part Jones [gave] the labor movement and the problems associated with poverty and economic readjustment a wide berth’ – the plays that I look at in this chapter address some of the most pressing political matters of his day.[1]

I deal first with *Wealth*, in which Jones dramatizes aspects of Ruskinian political economy and also touches on the desirability of shared ownership of the means of production. I then consider *The Middleman,* the story of which revolves around control of intellectual property and the exploitation of an invention by unscrupulous capitalists, and which may accordingly be regarded as an analogy for Jones’ often difficult relationship with the actor-managers who produced his work. Finally, I discuss *The Crusaders*, which Jones produced for himself in his own (unsuccessful) challenge to the economic practices and power structures of the West End theatre, and in which he satirises William Morris’ Utopian vision of a perfectible society. I argue that, although in later life he became reactionary in his outlook – his daughter described him as becoming after the Great War ‘an uncompromising Die-Hard’ with ‘a hatred of the lower classes [which] was strengthened by his depressed mental outlook’ – his political works of 1889 to 1891 show him engaging positively with a range of socialist and

[1] Goodenough, p. 130.

progressive thinking.[2] Jones was an enthusiastic participant in the capitalist undertaking of the Victorian stage, but he was also in the forefront of giving a theatrical platform to socialist ideas at a moment of economic and political turbulence, communicating but also critiquing Ruskinian and Morrisian thinking about industrial capitalism, and helping to break the grip that a small coterie of actor-managers exercised over the West End stage and the emergence of new dramatic writing.

These three plays were produced during a time of intense industrial unrest in London. The strike by the match girls at the Bryant and May factory in Bow, which began in July 1888, was a response to excessive working hours and poor pay; it would also bring to public attention the horrifying health consequences of their working conditions. The National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers was formed in April 1889, in response to poor working conditions and layoffs at the Beckton gasworks, where industrial action led to a reduction in the working day from twelve hours to eight. The strike by the London dockers, known as the Great Dock Strike, began on 12 August 1889 and lasted for five weeks. The extent of the unrest in the summer of that year was summed up by the *East London News*: 'coal men; match girls; parcels postmen; car men […] employees in jam, biscuit, rope, iron, screw, clothing and railway works' had all found occasion to down tools over pay and conditions.[3] The 'New Unionism' that emerged to protect the economic interests and welfare of unskilled casual workers was mirrored in the establishment of socialist groups in which several of Jones' circle were active – most notably, George Bernard Shaw and William Morris – and that had social and political change as their principal aim: they included the Social Democratic Federation (originally founded in 1881 as the Democratic Federation), the Fellowship of the New Life (1883), the Fabian Society (1884), the Socialist League (1885), the Hammersmith Socialist Society (1890) and the Independent Labour Party (1893). The very proliferation of such organisations, and the convoluted history of their development during the *fin de siècle*, shows something of the fragmented nature of progressive political movements in late Victorian Britain.[4] Anarchists, individualists, trade union collectivists, communitarianists and parliamentary gradualists might all be regarded as 'socialists', and

[2] D.A. Jones, pp. 128-9.
[3] Quoted by David Rosenberg in 'The Rebels who brought London to a standstill', *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 March 2015 <https://www.thejc.com/culture/books/the-rebels-who-brought-london-to-a-standstill-1.65742 [accessed 10 May 2018].
[4] For an account of the principal movements in British socialism at the *fin de siècle*, see Chapter 7, 'Socialism', in Ledger and Luckhurst, pp. 173-5.

although we know from Jones' daughter that 'As a young man, under the influence of Emery Walker and William Morris, my father flirted with Socialism', exactly what variety of socialism this was is unclear.[5]

In any event, in October 1888, Jones invited Shaw and William and May Morris to his house, to hear the reading of a work that was then entitled *A Socialist Play.*[6] It is impossible to be sure today which of Jones' plays this eventually became. Morris wrote about it afterwards to his other daughter, Jennie, but did not name the play: 'I suppose May told you how we went to hear Mr. H. A. Jones read his play? I really got rather interested in it before it was over.'[7] Norman Kelvin, the editor of Morris' collected letters, suggested in 1987 that this work became *The Middleman*, which was produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre in August 1889, but Nicholas Salmon has more recently claimed that it was produced as *Wealth*, at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, in April of the same year. [8] I favour Kelvin's opinion, as the exploitation of labour by capital is the thematic heart of *The Middleman*, whereas the treatment of unskilled labour and the unionisation of workers in *Wealth* is peripheral to the main plot. Whichever is the case, however, over the spring and summer of 1889, at the peak of the industrial unrest in the East End of London, two major West End theatres produced plays by Jones that addressed questions of capital and labour. The West End audience was not insulated from the unrest on the other side of the capital.

The capitalist production practices of the West End theatre were not insulated either. The actor-manager system, which had been the predominant means of organising theatre production for legitimate drama throughout the Victorian era, was under attack from performers, critics and playwrights alike. Younger or less established actors increasingly objected to the hegemony of a small number of established stars, and the Actors' Association (a forerunner of Equity) was established in 1891 in response to poor working conditions in

[5] D.A. Jones, p. 128.
[6] Jones may have been inspired to write this play by an earlier effort on Shaw's part. Michael Holroyd relates that Shaw had been working on a 'socialist play' during 1887. When William Archer commented unfavourably on it, Shaw suggested giving the play to Jones, whose dramatic construction he admired and 'who might borrow a notion from it for a drama touching socialism'. Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 277.
[7] William Morris, letter to Jennie Morris, 17 October 1888, in Norman Kelvin (ed.), *The Collected Letters of William Morris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), Vol. II, pp. 829-30.
[8] Norman Kelvin (ed.), *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, Vol. II, p. 830 n; Nicholas Salmon, 'The Unmanageable Playgoer: Morris and the Victorian Theatre', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, 12.4, Spring 1998, 29-35, 33.

theatres and the abusive financial practices of certain actor-managers. Critics as diverse as Clement Scott and William Archer – the leading advocates of the old drama and the new respectively – challenged the actor-manager system on aesthetic grounds: Archer's 'Plea for an Endowed Theatre' was published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1889 and advocated the establishment of a subsidised theatre to liberate English drama from the financial strictures of commercial supply-and-demand, whilst Scott wrote in 1900 that the actor-manager was 'adept at looking after number one; and number one is the first consideration,' and argued that the actor-manager's greed and vanity led to the production of inferior works.[9] Jones, Shaw and other dramatists resented the control that the leading actor-managers exercised over choice of repertoire as a whole and over the integrity of the dramatist's text for individual plays and, as I noted in the Introduction, Jones made several public interventions as to the relative importance of the playwright and the actor-manager to the success of any new drama. Jones' decision to produce *The Crusaders* for himself was both an experiment and a challenge to the theatrical status quo, and the play is accordingly of interest as much for the circumstances of its production as for its text.

***Wealth* (1889)**[10]

Wealth concerns a rich industrialist, Matthew Ruddock (played by Tree), who rejects his daughter Edith because of her refusal to marry his greedy capitalist protégé rather than the socialist admirer whom she loves. The adoption of the title *Wealth* is itself noteworthy. It is understandable that an actor-manager might have reservations about the audience appeal of a work with such a sententious name as *A Socialist Play* – if that was indeed how *Wealth* started life – but the single-word title also signalled Jones' seriousness of purpose, reminiscent as it is of the titles of the mid-century 'problem plays' of T. W. Robertson like *Society* (1865) and *Caste* (1867). Furthermore, the term 'wealth' was a contested one for much of the Victorian period. John Ruskin stated that the 'first object' of his 'Four essays on the first principles of Political Economy,' published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860 and subsequently reprinted in the single volume *Unto This Last* in 1862, was 'to give an accurate and stable definition of wealth'.[11] *Unto This Last* as a whole is a sustained attack on the

[9] Lawrence, p. 96.
[10] Henry Arthur Jones, *Wealth* (British Library, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Collection: 1189/6 Add. Mss. 5342H). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *Wealth* are taken from this version, and page references are given in the body of the text.
[11] Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, p. 19.

classical economics of Mill and Ricardo, and their underlying assumptions about human behaviour, rationality and the pursuit of financial gain, and the final essay contains Ruskin's ringing proclamation as to the true nature of wealth:

> I desire, in closing the series of introductory papers, to leave this one great fact clearly stated. THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.[12]

For Ruskin, then, 'wealth' is defined in moral terms: it is the exercise of 'helpful influence' over the lives of others, achieved in part by means of 'possessions'. The mere accumulation of those possessions, which by themselves are nothing more than riches or exchange value, is not wealth.

However, for many socialist thinkers of the generation that followed Ruskin, the Ruskinian definition of wealth as a matter of moral virtue had come to appear too rarefied, and failed to take account of the impact that the acquisition of possessions – Ruskin's precondition for the ability to exercise 'helpful influence […] over the lives of others' – had on those by whose labour the possessions were produced. In 'The Economic Basis of Socialism' (1889), Shaw described how the exploitation of labourers under the capitalist system resulted in the accumulation of money in the hands of a single class, and observed: 'It is sometimes said that during this grotesquely hideous march of civilisation from bad to worse, wealth is increasing side by side with misery. Such a thing is eternally impossible: wealth is steadily decreasing with the spread of poverty. But riches are increasing, which is quite another thing.'[13] For the audience of 1889, then, the term 'wealth' was part of the contemporaneous discourse of economic relations: its adoption as the title of the play challenges the audience, even before they enter the theatre, to consider both the nature of wealth itself and the conditions of those who produce the goods that the rich consume.

[12] Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, p. 105.
[13] George Bernard Shaw, 'The Economic Basis of Socialism' (1889), reprinted in Ledger and Luckhurst, pp. 180-5 (p. 181).

The distance between mere riches and true wealth is precisely the lesson that Ruddock learns over the course of the play. Thinking himself impoverished, he wishes that he could have his money again in order to shower his millions upon his more needy fellow men. At the end of the play, in his dying words, he sums up what he has learned:

> We brought nothing into this world! And we can take nothing out – all my affairs are in order; the ledger is made up! [EDITH CRIES]. What makes you cry? You cry because I am rich? I had millions but I was poor! I had nothing and I was rich! Rich! Rich! Rich! Not money – not that sort of riches – heavenly riches – Love, love, love. (82)

Ruddock's final words are a declaration of the truth he has discovered through the course of his psychological journey, and echo Ruskin's definition of wealth as 'Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration'. However, the play also raises the issue of material conditions of working people, particularly through certain of Edith's speeches which I will consider shortly.

Although Matthew Ruddock is the central character of the piece, thematically the play is arranged around Edith's two suitors: one is Ruddock's grasping nephew (and adopted son) John, to whom Edith is engaged when the play opens; the other is a virtuous young socialist named Paul Davoren. John works in Ruddock's business, and stands to inherit his wealth; he manipulates markets for profit and encourages Ruddock to sack striking ironworkers in a foundry that the company owns. Paul owns an ironworks himself, but we learn at the outset of the play that his socialist convictions have led him to reorganise his business along co-operative lines. Both John and Paul want Edith's hand in marriage; both separately appeal to Ruddock on issues of 'right' business practice. The dichotomy could hardly be made more explicit. The characters are set in opposition to each other with the starkness of a melodrama, or even (as is often the case with the heroes and villains of melodrama) a morality play.

Adjudicating between the two of them is Ruddock. Ruddock begins the play as a successful capitalist, the owner of immense riches. Act I opens with Ruddock giving Edith a luxurious London mansion in anticipation of her marriage to John. Over the course of the play, however, he disinherits her because of her love for Paul and what, as a socialist, he represents. Ruddock loses his fortune – or so he believes, although as it turns out John has taken steps to protect his assets – when his investments go bad: consequently, he loses his

reputation in the City; his friends and relatives desert him; and he suffers both mental and physical breakdown as the result of overwork and personal remorse. The love of his daughter, who has become engaged to Paul and embarked on a simpler, pastoral life in a cottage away from London, temporarily restores his physical health but not his earlier, driven personality. In a state of childlike innocence, he recognises how foolish he has been and the emptiness of his pursuit of money. In the end, stirred up by the unreformed John to the belief that he can recover his standing, he collapses and dies; but not before he has blessed Edith and Paul, and bequeathed to them all his property.

Wealth opened in April 1889 at the Haymarket, a prestigious theatre that Tree had taken over eighteen months earlier. It attracted a fashionable and wealthy audience: when the previous managers, Squire and Marie Bancroft, had taken the lease of the theatre in 1879, one of the alterations they made to the auditorium was to replace all the 2s. "pit" seats in front of the stage with fewer 10s. stalls seats, the pit patrons being banished to the upper circle.[14] Tree was not afraid of taking commercial risks with new drama that was potentially controversial (he would stage the first London production of *An Enemy of the People* in 1893), and it seems likely that both Tree and Jones anticipated that the affluent Haymarket audience would find the subject-matter of *Wealth* challenging. In an interview in the *Pall Mall Gazette* shortly before the first night, Jones described *Wealth* as 'a play with a strong purpose' but went on to say that it was more concerned with the psychology of the millionaire than with the conflict between economic systems: 'It is not true, however, that I have given prominence to the subject of Socialism. The allusions to it are merely incidental. It may be said, however, that I have treated of the current craze for speculation on the Stock Exchange.'[15] The assertion that the allusions to socialism are incidental seems somewhat disingenuous – Paul's profit-sharing plan is thematically important, and Jones must also have been concerned about what his friends in the Fabian Society and the Socialist League would think of the character – but it is fair to say that socialism is not at the centre of the play. Other advance publicity also emphasised the priority of the psychological dimension over the political one: one newspaper anticipated 'a piece said to be of very curious structure, and uniting dramatic with psychological interest in remarkable combination'.[16] Jones thus positioned the play primarily

[14] Russell Jackson (ed.), *Victorian Theatre: The Theatre in Its Time* (Whitstable: New Amsterdam Books, 1989), p. 13 and pp. 61-3.
[15] [Anon.], 'A Few Words about "Wealth"', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 April 1889, p. 7.
[16] [Anon.], 'Theatrical and Musical Intelligence', *Morning Post*, 22 April 1889, p. 6.

as the story of one individual's psychological development rather than as a broader attack on capitalism or a defence of socialism. As with Jones' plays of religion, in which criticism of institutions is partly concealed (but thus facilitated) by framing it in terms of the conduct of individuals, so in Jones' plays of industrial relations the structural critique is expressed through the psychological focus on one representative individual.

Nevertheless, the play clearly does respond to issues of capital and labour, confronting the audience with a systemic and structural question from the start. This part of *Wealth*, which occupies three pages of the typewritten play-text at the British Library and would have had a playing time of perhaps ten or twelve minutes, is worth examining in some detail because it illustrates how Jones raised the contentious issue of industrial relations in front of his West End audience. The sequence falls into three main sections, beginning with the arrival of a telegram from which Ruddock learns of Paul's decision to offer shares in his Sheffield foundry to the workers:

> MATT I have just received a telegram from Boothroyd, my Sheffield manager, that you are making arrangements to hand over your works at Sheffield to your workmen.
> PAUL *(Cross down R.)* Quite true, Mr. Ruddock! I am advancing them money in proportion to the time they have worked for us, and as they prove themselves capable, they will be admitted to a share in the concern.
> MATT But you're making them the masters – you're demoralising the whole trade – My workmen have given notice to strike – the fools – but they'll suffer for it!
> PAUL *(Having read telegram, returns it to JOHN) (Crosses L in front of MATT:)* I'm sorry for them!
> JOHN *(Taking telegram)* We shall fight it out, Davoren – you know the state of trade – we shall beat them – and you'll stand a good chance of losing your money.
> PAUL It was my money then?
> JOHN Of course it was!
> PAUL Then I have done as I thought best with it!
> MATT *(Rise)* Ah, you don't know the value of money. You didn't earn it.
> PAUL Then I have no right to it – and I'm returning it to those who have.
> JOHN It's rather lucky the men are going to strike now – trade's bad – it will pay you to close the works for six months, sir.
>
> (10-11)

This exchange concisely articulates the differing attitudes to money of the main protagonists. Paul's money appears to have been inherited ('You didn't earn it'), and he feels on principle that his fortune should be shared with those whose labour created it. John, who stands to become very rich when he marries Matthew's daughter, is a calculating man of business: he thinks of Paul's loan to the workers solely in monetary terms, chides him for taking an

unnecessary financial risk, views industrial relation in terms of conflict ('We shall fight them […] we shall beat them'), and even sees a way to turn the planned strike to economic advantage ('It's rather lucky the men are going to strike now'). The self-made millionaire Matthew shows disdain for his workforce, regarding them as 'fools' for coming out on strike and promising that they will suffer for it. The three men represent a range of uses and abuses of economic power, and their differences of outlook drive the action of the play.

The dialogue then takes a new direction. Although we hear little more about the strike in *Wealth*, the allusion to a strike is of course highly topical in the London of 1889, and Jones now raises the human cost. Edith pleads with her father to consider the effect of the planned lockout on the families of the strikers, after he determines to close the works the following day:

> EDITH What are you going to do, father?
> MATT *(Cross L.)* Close my works tomorrow, till my work-people learn wisdom. The winter's coming! The winter's coming! *(To SERV:, who enters)* Telegram form!
> *(Exit SERV:)*
> EDITH Father, not to-morrow, – you will spare them!
> MATT No, my dear – I'm keeping my works open now for their profit not for mine – it will teach them a wholesome lesson. *(takes form, crosses R.)*
> *(SERV: enters with telegram form – gives it to MATT:, who takes it, sits down to table and writes)*
> JOHN Yes. When they're starving, they'll know better than to quarrel with their bread and butter.
> EDITH *(Throws a reproachful look at JOHN)* Father, remember the last strike – the suffering –
> MATT *(Seated R.C. writing)* Their own fault – their own folly and ignorance!
> EDITH *(L. of him)* Yes, but because they are foolish and ignorant, pity them! The women and children! Think if it were your own child!
> MATT *(Touched, looks up at her)* That's impossible! Thank God, poverty and want can never come near you, my dear – *(very tenderly)* I'll take care of that! I'll take care of that!
> EDITH Who can tell? I often ask myself how it is that I am so rich – while –
> MATT Go on, my dear – go on – while –
> EDITH While countless thousands are so wretched and poor. I have all – they have nothing. They work that I may play, they sorrow that I may laugh, they hunger that I may be sated with every luxury, they are frozen that I may be wrapped from every wind. They die that I may live! It's not right – it's not right! It's not right!
> (11-12)

Jones thus moves the dialogue on to direct the thoughts of the audience first to the suffering that the lockout will cause, and from there to the nature of capitalism itself. Edith's

impassioned speech at the end of this passage articulates in dramatic form a central argument of socialism: that the comfort of the rich should not be built on the misery of the poor. Shaw expressed the same point in 'The Economic Basis of Socialism': 'In the midst of the riches which their labour piles up around you, their misery rises up and stifles you.'[17] Morris would put a similar sentiment into the mouth of Ellen, his idealised citizen of the future in *News from Nowhere*, when she comments on Victorian novels and the romantic entanglements of their characters:

> [T]here is something loathesome about them. Some of them, indeed, do here and there show some feeling for those whom the history-books call "poor," and of the misery of whose lives we have some inkling; but presently they give it up, and towards the end of the story we must be contented to see the hero and heroine living happily in an island of bliss on other people's troubles […] while the world must even then have gone on its way, and dug and sewed and baked and built and carpentered round about these useless – animals.[18]

Both in fiction and in fact, the comfortable lives of the rich are built on the hard work and degradation of the poor, in a way that is ultimately unsustainable. Edith's short speech about the 'countless thousands', with its thrice-repeated declaration of the immorality of the entire system, is an early dramatic expression of this key socialist argument.

The final part of this sequence is Matthew's response to his daughter:

> *(Very quietly)* Have you finished, lass? You want to know why you are rich, and happy to-day? I'll tell you! *(Rise, leaves telegram on table, goes to side-board, takes up a small model of an invention under glass, cross L.)* You see this little model – my father made it! He was an inventor, a dreamer, full of plans for benefitting humanity – while his wife and children wanted bread. He spent his life to bring this little toy to perfection; just before it was finished, he was forced to sell it for next to nowt – *(EDITH crosses R.)* to a manufacturer in our town. That manufacturer made a fortune out of it! My mother pined away for want of food – my father died in the workhouse. I held his hand at the last. "Don't be a fool, Matt., as I've been," he whispered. "By God, Father, I won't!" I said. Well, I began from that time, and I worked and saved, worked and saved, worked and saved – (12)

Matthew himself, then, is a product of the capitalist system, and his drive to accumulate riches is the result of seeing his own father exploited and impoverished. His success, as he

[17] Shaw, 'The Economic Basis of Socialism', p. 181.
[18] William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 130.

subsequently explains to Edith, is the result of hard work, thrift and self-sacrifice – coupled as we have seen with a readiness to exploit others economically – but it is the fear of poverty that underlies it, and he has recurring nightmares about ending his life in the workhouse. Jones gives Matthew a backstory that confers on him a degree of dignity and virtue that is lacking in the other rich characters – John and the circle of grasping relatives and friends who are on the periphery of this entire scene. It serves to pull the broad, systemic analysis that Edith has just articulated back into the individualised and psychologised framework of the play. It also paves the way for his ultimate moral redemption, by contrast with the irredeemable John.

In the space of a few minutes, Jones has thus introduced the thematic significance of the main characters of the play; reminded the audience of the topicality of industrial relations and the tension between capital and labour; drawn attention to the suffering of the strikers, both in the play and by association in the real world outside the theatre; and articulated an important aspect of contemporaneous socialist thinking. The scene may be short, the discussion of the issues may be brief, and the specific strain of socialism being advocated may be a moderate one: Harley Granville-Barker would later describe Paul's form of socialism as 'a little mild advocacy of profit-sharing'.[19] However, it is perhaps the earliest dramatic articulation of socialist thinking, by a leading English playwright, on a West End stage.[20]

Matthew's long speech about his father is significant for another reason as well. It anticipates the more forceful attack, in *The Middleman*, on the unfair appropriation of intellectual property by businessmen. The experience described by Matthew, of seeing the financial rewards of inventiveness going to the capitalist rather than to the inventor himself, drives the entire action of the later play, and it is clearly a matter about which Jones felt strongly: the little toy that Matthew's father invents, and the glazing process that Cyrus Blenkarn discovers in *The Middleman*, can both be regarded as analogies for Jones' own plays. They are all works created by the intellectual endeavours of a lone individual, whose efforts are not fully

[19] Harley Granville-Barker, 'The Coming of Ibsen', in *The Eighteen Eighties: Essays by Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature*, ed. by Walter de la Mare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), pp. 159-96 (p. 171).
[20] Raphael Samuel cites, as instances of early plays that reflected and dramatised the socialist and trade-union agitations of the period, Edith Lyttleton's *Warp and Woof* (1904) and Cicely Hamilton's *Diana of Dobson's* (1908). *Wealth* pre-dates them by more than a decade. See Raphael Samuel, Ewan MacColl and Stuart Cosgrove (eds.), *Theatres of the Left, 1880-1935: Workers' Theatre Movements in Britain and America* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 10.

recognised or remunerated when the work is exploited commercially. Grievances about the loss of control over the text when it passed into the hands of the actor-manager, and about the proportions in which the playwright and the actor-manager benefitted financially from the success of a production, would lead Jones and other playwrights of his day to challenge the primacy of the organisational structures of the West End stage on which their works were performed.

The first night of *Wealth* was attended by 'a most brilliant audience', including Sir Arthur Sullivan, Oscar Wilde, and William and May Morris: the *Athenaeum* noted that Morris was 'an unusual guest on such occasions' and speculated that he had been 'lured, possibly, by the knowledge that one of the characters was a representative of a mild form of Socialism'.[21] Despite the obvious anticipation, however, the play was received harshly: according to one critic, 'When the curtain fell for the last time, there was no enthusiasm, and Mr. Jones prudently declined his call. Mr. Tree thanked the audience for their friendly reception of the play, but the tone of his voice in speaking the word friendly betrayed intense disappointment.'[22] Another reviewer noted that 'the audience grew weary long before the drama ended, and when the curtain fell, expressed dissent with vigour'.[23]

Those present attributed the hostile reception to several factors. The principal objection was the prominence of the character of Ruddock. The part was specially written for Tree, and Jones acknowledged that in writing the play he had 'purposely simplified the plot in order to give the character the greatest possible scope'.[24] Tree would go on to become a leading tragedian during his tenure of Her Majesty's Theatre in the 1890s, and Jones gave Tree a character with the potential for a histrionic display of Shakespearean proportions, with a scene of distraction, madness or pathos at the climax of each of the four Acts. However, the actor-manager indulged himself too much for the *Graphic*, whose reviewer observed that 'his strange paroxysms and outbursts of maniacal violence are almost the only features in the play which stand forth in any prominence' and that the audience 'found the actor's elaborate method and oft-repeated explosions somewhat tedious'.[25] The *Era* described 'Mr Tree

[21] [Anon.], 'London Correspondence', *Birmingham Daily Post,* 29 April 1889, p. 4; [Anon.], 'Dramatic Gossip', *Athenaeum*, 4 May 1889, p. 577.
[22] [Anon.], 'London Correspondence', *Birmingham Daily Post,* 29 April 1889, p. 4.
[23] [Anon.], 'Haymarket Theatre', *Morning Post,* 29 April 1889, p. 2.
[24] [Anon.], 'A Few Words about "Wealth"', *Pall Mall Gazette,* 27 April 1889, p. 7.
[25] [Anon.], 'Theatres', *Graphic*, 4 May 1889, p. 462.

tantalising his relations by dangling small fortunes before their noses, Mr Tree showing signs of incipient insanity, […] Mr Tree decidedly wrong in the head, and Mr Tree taking an unconscionable time a-dying and deliberately scattering flowers,' concluding that 'Mr Tree's impersonation of Matthew Ruddock is undoubtedly clever; but we expect something more than a one-part piece at the Haymarket'.[26] There were many similar objections to the perceived self-indulgence of Tree's performance, and the degree of prominence accorded to his role: the criticisms expressed here reflect the turning of the critical tide against the figure of the star actor-manager who advanced himself at the expense of the overall stage picture.

Another objection was the subject matter of the play itself: 'It is impossible to make the sordid scheme of any man who has devoted himself body and soul to the accumulation of millions dramatically interesting or attractive' wrote one reviewer, while another suggested that 'it may be doubted whether such studies [of mental disturbance] come within the due range of dramatic action,' and a third criticised the lack of any 'love interest' and associated 'sparkling dialogue'.[27] The Haymarket audience may simply not have been ready for what was considered, in its day, a challenging psychological study. Another factor that generated hostility was the sense that the audience was being preached to rather than entertained. The *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* noted 'a general concensus *[sic]* of opinion that the piece is too didactic to be considered an entertainment. […] Stage sermons, prolonged through several acts, are difficult things to manage successfully'.[28] The object of the sermon also seems to have been unclear to some in the audience, the *Graphic* commenting that any didactic purpose was 'not so much to be found in the action of the play as to be gathered from semi-official hints in other quarters, strengthened by the suggestions of a quotation from Dekker's beautiful lyric which figures in the playbill'.[29] Not only was Jones' stage sermon thought to be dull; its meaning was lost on the audience.

It is striking, however, that few critics remarked on the play's social content. Although the play confronts directly, if briefly, the kind of industrial unrest that was sweeping the East End

[26] [Anon.], 'The London Theatres', *Era*, 4 May 1889, p. 14.
[27] [Anon.], 'Haymarket Theatre', *Morning Post*, 29 April 1889, p. 2; [Anon.], 'Haymarket Theatre', *Standard*, 29 April 1889, p. 3; [Anon.], 'London Letter', *York Herald*, 30 April 1889, p. 4.
[28] [Anon.], 'Our London Letter', *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 29 April 1889, p. 4.
[29] [Anon.]. 'Theatres', *Graphic*, 4 May 1889, p. 462. The Dekker lyric in the playbill was: 'Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers? / Oh, sweet content! / Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed? Oh, punishment!'

of London at the time of its production, this was not what the audience took away from the theatre: Paul's mild advocacy of profit-sharing and even Edith's impassioned acknowledgement that the luxury of the rich depends on the misery of the poor – 'It's not right – it's not right! It's not right!' – appear to have left audiences unmoved. Perhaps the piece was too dominated by Tree. Perhaps the egalitarian and socialist messages were too diluted by Jones in the interests of commercial palatability. Whatever the reason, none of the criticism I have read appears to have considered the play to be socialist propaganda. Nevertheless, it clearly represents a contribution to the late-Victorian discourse of political economy and the pursuit of individual wealth, and the dramatic expression of Ruskin's prose writings on the subject.

Wealth managed to last the season, eventually running at the Haymarket for seventy nights: a respectable run, but not an outstanding one. (William Archer wrote a few years later that 'To rank as a success at all, a play must run, to good houses, at least 100 nights'.[30]) When Tree gave a speech to his public, on the last night of the Haymarket season in July, he said that 'the success of "Wealth", despite the disfavour shown it by the first-night public, was a source of peculiar gratification to him'.[31] It is difficult not to feel that there is a note of vanity and face-saving in this remark though, because, by the standards of Jones' earlier successes like *The Silver King* and *Saints and Sinners, Wealth* had not done well at all. However, Tree also announced that he had already commissioned another play from Jones: this would be *The Dancing Girl,* which was produced at the Haymarket in 1891, and gave Jones and Tree a considerable hit.

The Middleman **(1889)**[32]

Wealth had a moderately successful after-life. The play went on to be produced in New York in 1891, and was translated and produced in Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Austria and Germany too. *Wealth* also paved the way for another serious play that dealt with capital and labour: the same columns that reported Tree's end-of-season speech at the Haymarket on 20

[30] William Archer, Introduction to *The Theatrical 'World' of 1896* (London: Walter Scott, 1879), p. xxvi.
[31] [Anon.], 'Dramatic Gossip', *York Herald,* 27 July 1889, p. 5.
[32] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Middleman* (London: Samuel French, 1907). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Middleman* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.

July also recorded that the Shaftesbury was due to re-open in August with E. S. Willard's production of *The Middleman*.[33]

The term 'middleman', like 'wealth' and 'socialist', attracted a range of meanings in the mid- to late Victorian period. Ruskin had defined 'middlemen' in *Unto This Last* as including 'overseers (or authoritative workmen), conveyancers (merchants, sailors, retail dealers, etc.), and order-takers (persons employed to receive directions from the consumer)'.[34] A middleman was, for Ruskin, a legitimate participant in the network of commercial relationships that were necessary for the work of the producer to reach the consumer. Within a generation, however, the word had acquired the pejorative connotations that it retains today, as the title of an 1893 article by Jones, 'Middlemen and Parasites', makes clear. Jones laments what he describes as the deterioration of 'the quality of our manual labour', which he attributes to 'the notion that there is some way of everybody's living on the nation without working for it'. The willingness to live off the labour of others is described in primarily moral terms, as a sickness affecting the wellbeing of the entire country, for which the only cures are honesty and hard work. Jones concludes:

> [T]his law by which a nation is socially healthy according as it frees itself from middlemen and parasites, and is socially diseased and disorganised to the extent it feasts them – this law will continue to operate, spite of all tinkering with tariffs and all Eight-hour Bills. [35]

For Jones, then, the term 'middleman' connotes economic activity of a parasitic nature, and this is exactly what he attacks in this play. As with *Wealth,* the title operates as a challenge to the audience – in this case, to consider exactly what a middleman is and does – and the corrupt capitalists of Jones' play are a quite different kind of middleman from the necessary intermediaries described by Ruskin.

In *The Middleman,* Cyrus Blenkarn is a skilled inventor in the employ of the rich Joseph Chandler, proprietor of the Tatlow Porcelain Works and master of Tatlow Hall. Chandler is every bit the stage capitalist, described on his first entrance as '*a smug, fat, prosperous-*

[33] [Anon.], 'Music and the Drama', *Glasgow Herald,* 22 July 1889, p. 4.
[34] Ruskin, *Unto This Last,* p. 113.
[35] Henry Arthur Jones, 'Middlemen and Parasites', *New Review,* 8 (June 1893), 645-54. Reproduced in the *Brisbane Courier,* 25 July 1893, p. 7 <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3563431> [accessed 12 January 2022].

looking man of fifty, with the manners of an upper-class commercial man' (11). He has a talent for business but none of Blenkarn's inventiveness. We learn early in the play that Chandler's porcelain works had been saved from closure, and Chandler's fortune made, off the back of a patent that Blenkarn had sold cheaply to Chandler many years before. Blenkarn has since become obsessed with discovering a lost process of pottery glazing and, in the pursuit of this goal, he is reduced to utter poverty. The capitalist Chandler, and his manager and intermediary Batty Todd – both 'middlemen' in the sense of profiting from the labour of others by standing between the craftsman and the customer – circle Blenkarn with offers of financial support, hoping to secure another patent for a cheap price, and double-crossing each other in the process. Blenkarn resists them but becomes increasingly desperate, eventually burning all his furniture in order to keep his kilns alight, in his last-throw-of-the-dice experiment to make the process work. In the event, his dedication is rewarded: towards the end of Act III, Blenkarn takes from his kiln a perfect specimen of the new glaze. Act IV opens with Blenkarn moving into Tatlow Hall as its new owner, replacing Chandler whose factory has gone out of business, unable to compete with Blenkarn's process.

In a subplot, Mary, one of Blenkarn's two daughters, has an illegitimate child with Chandler's son, Julian, a spendthrift Army officer. Although he wishes to marry Mary, he leaves for Africa, ordered there by his father in order not to embarrass the family. Mary follows him, leaving Blenkarn distraught, and we hear that she has died onboard ship. It is the belief that she has died, and the cause of her death, that motivate Blenkarn to hold out against Chandler's financial enticements. In the closing moments of the play, on the very day that Blenkarn moves in to Tatlow Hall, Julian Chandler returns from Africa with his new wife – who turns out to be none other than Mary, the news of whose death had been faked to save the name of her family, but whom Julian had married overseas as he always intended. Their marriage represents an allegorically-perfect union of the son of Capital and the daughter of Labour.

The plots of *The Middleman* and *Wealth* begin from the same starting point. As noted above, Matthew Ruddock's character is formed by the experience of seeing his father dying in a workhouse, having sold his invention cheaply to a manufacturer who went on to make a fortune out of it. *The Middleman* starts in a similar way, Cyrus Blenkarn having sold his patent for next to nothing to Chandler before the action of the play begins. In Cyrus' case, however, his dedication enables him to persist with his pursuit of the new process, and in the

end to become a rich man in his own right – although the process by which Cyrus becomes economically ascendant is not addressed in detail, and this change takes place in the two and a half years that pass between the action of Acts III and IV. Thematically, both plays deal with matters of capital and labour, with the principal characters representing the conflicting forces in action; but in the case of *Wealth* the focus is on the psychology of the individual capitalist, whereas in *The Middleman*, the control of intellectual property is at the very centre of the story and the play forcefully criticises aspects of the capitalist system itself.

It is unsurprising that the issue of due recognition for the creators of intellectual property should be a matter of concern to the practicing dramatist of the *fin de siècle*. In the early and mid-Victorian period, playwrights could expect to receive a flat payment of just £50 or £100 per act, with no royalties on ticket sales or compensation for later revivals: an example of the economic imbalance that this caused is Tom Taylor's comedy *Our American Cousin* (1858), for which Taylor was paid £150, but which earned £20,000 for John Buckstone, the actor-manager who produced it at the Haymarket.[36] In the 1860s, dramatists had started to demand sharing arrangements instead, which initially took the form of a set payment per performance, but gradually became the kind of royalty system that remains today. Jones himself took an active hand in the commercial negotiations for productions of his work: for example, in a letter of 19 November 1889 to the American impresario Herbert Marshman Palmer, Jones set out his demands for performances of *Wealth,* which ranged from '5% of all sums up to $3000 weekly' to '10% of all surplus beyond $4000 weekly.'[37] Unlike Matthew Ruddock's father and the young Cyrus Blenkarn, it is clear that Jones was fully alert to the potential commercial value of his work, and cautious about letting others take unfair advantage of him just because they provided the capital to stage a production.

This tension underpins the central conflict of *The Middleman,* between Chandler and Cyrus. Chandler is an unimaginative capitalist whose principal contribution to any business is puffery and what he calls 'business energy'. Cyrus, by contrast, is a Promethean figure of creativity and innovation, experimenting incessantly in his flame-lit workshop in order to perfect the special glazing process. The function of capital is contrasted unfavourably with the value of the intellectual work of the inventor throughout the play: 'Where would his

[36] Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, pp. 142-5.
[37] Extracts from Jones' correspondence with Palmer over the American rights for *Wealth* and *The Middleman* can be found in Jackson, *Victorian Theatre*, pp. 333-6.

invention have been if it hadn't been for my capital and business energy in working it?' asks Chandler in Act I (21), but Julian knows that 'it was his [Cyrus'] invention that made your fortune' (17); and at the climax of the piece, towards the end of Act III, Jones gives Cyrus an extraordinary speech. At this point in the story, Cyrus has driven himself to poverty, and to physical and mental exhaustion, in his pursuit of the process. He is forced to plead for money in order to keep his kilns alight, but the townspeople all turn him away. Returning to his workshop he complains bitterly to his younger daughter, Nancy:

> When I came to Tatlow, it was bankrupt, its trade was in ruin, its people starving. My invention, the fruit of my brain, fed it, and clothed it and brought it to prosperity! And now it laughs at me and tells me I'm mad! I suppose I am mad! I haven't fattened myself on another man's labour and tears! I must be mad! God made this world for parasites! I must be mad! A leech's mouth to fasten on your neighbour and suck all his blood from his heart! That's sanity, and I'm mad, my girl, for I haven't done it! (99)

Jones apotheosizes the intellectual effort of the inventor, and makes it clear that any profit is ultimately attributable to that rather than to the 'capital and business energy' of which Chandler is so proud. Those who take unfair financial advantage of others are 'parasites' and 'leeches.' For its place and time – on the West End stage of 1889, before Ibsen had become widely appreciated and three years before the production of *Widowers' Houses*, the first of Shaw's more overtly political *Plays Unpleasant* – this is a remarkable speech.

Apart from that generalised attack on the behaviour of capitalists, the play also addresses a number of the specific social and economic concerns that Ruskin had expressed in *Unto This Last.* In the fourth essay in the collection, entitled 'Ad Valorem', Ruskin urged his readers to consider how the price that they pay for their goods affects the workers who ultimately manufacture them:

> In all buying, consider, first, what condition of existence you cause in the producers of what you buy; secondly, whether the sum you have paid is just to the producer, and in due proportion, lodged in his hands; thirdly, to how much clear use, for food, knowledge, or joy, this that you have bought can be put; and fourthly, to whom and in what way it can be most speedily and serviceably distributed: in all dealings whatsoever insisting on entire openness and stern fulfilment.[38]

[38] Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, p. 113.

Ruskin's first concern, the 'condition of existence' of those who make the produce, is at the heart of *The Middleman*. Where the action of *Wealth* takes place mainly in the drawing rooms and offices of the rich Matthew Ruddock, *The Middleman* takes the audience into the factory and the workshop – the *Pall Mall Gazette* applauded the 'effective stage picture' of the firing-house, with 'its kilns of red brick and the gaping, glowing mouths of its white-hot furnaces'.[39] The near-destitution into which Cyrus and his family sink are placed before the audience. Factory conditions are also touched upon: when Chandler's family visit the factory, Chandler's daughter Maude complains 'We've been nearly choked in that horrid tile-room! Oh, Papa! Is it necessary for the women and girls to do that terrible work?' When Chandler tells her that their work is necessary for England's commercial prosperity, Maude replies 'I shall never go there again. Oh, papa, I wish for those poor girls' sakes that England could do with a little less commercial prosperity' (55-7). Although I have found no published review that refers explicitly to this exchange, it is hard to believe that, barely a year after the Bryant and May match-girls' strike, the topicality of the reference to working conditions for girls would have been lost on the audience. The point is dealt with lightly, but nevertheless it is there in the play, and Jones would have been conscious that a more directly polemical attack – such as Shaw would make on factory conditions for women in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893) – might not have got past the censor or indeed Willard.

Ruskin's second concern is how much the producer sees of the price paid by the consumer. As I have already noted, in Ruskin's view the position of middleman or intermediary is not necessarily a dishonest one: rather, Ruskin's point is that the worker should be entitled to receive a just fee for his labour, once all the people in the web of relations between worker and consumer have taken their share of the price that the customer pays. Blenkarn, however, never receives fair payment for the work he performs for Chandler. At the end of Act III, when Blenkarn knows that his experiment has succeeded, and Chandler – unaware – again offers to buy the patent for the new process, Blenkarn's passionate curtain speech attacks Chandler for undervaluing his work over the years:

> CHAN. I'll buy – What is it, Blenkarn?
> CYRUS Go on – You'll buy –
> CHAN. *(looking at him)* I'll buy —

[39] [Anon.], 'To-day's Tittle Tattle', *Pall Mall Gazette,* 29 August 1889, p. 6.

CYRUS What? My body and soul? Buy back the past thirty years! Buy back my girl from her grave in the sea! Buy back the sweat of my brow and the strength of my hands that I've wasted for you? *You'll* buy? No, *I* buy now! I buy *you!* Do you know the price I've paid for you? I've given the toil of my life! I've given hunger and tears and despair and agony! I've given my child to be your son's mistress! That's the price I've paid for you, but I've got you! I've bought you! You're mine! You're mine! You're mine!

(CYRUS, laughing hysterically, staggers to bedside as CURTAIN falls.)

(101)

By focussing at this climactic moment on the economic abuse of labour by capital, and the cost to the worker of his condition of existence – hunger, tears, despair, agony, and even in this case his first-born child – Jones places the notion of fair payment at the very centre of the play. There is also a strong invocation of a discourse of slavery: Chandler has tried to 'buy' Cyrus; but with the words 'You're mine! You're mine! You're mine!' Cyrus inverts that power relationship.

Ruskin's third and fourth points deal with the use that the consumer makes of the product, and need not be addressed here. The final point, however – the insistence on openness in all dealing – is also dramatized by Jones. Chandler and Todd conspire to cheat not only Blenkarn but possibly their other investors too; and they even scheme individually, in their 'asides' to the audience, to cheat each other:

CHAN. But suppose this old fool *(indicating Blenkarn's room)* was to find out the secret of the old Tatlow –
TODD Well?
CHAN. It would knock all our present ware out of the market.
TODD He'll never find it out.
CHAN. No, and if he does, I could buy his patent of him for a five pound note.
TODD Yes, to be sure. *(Aside.)* Unless I bought it for ten.
CHAN. Very well, Todd. Then we'll sign the contract and start the works at once.
TODD *(going to Chan R.C.)* Right. And if business gets a little shaky, you can turn the whole concern into a limited liability company, and clear out.
CHAN. Oh, quite so, quite so.

(53)

Throughout *The Middleman,* then, we can see Jones dramatizing Ruskinian themes, including what has been described as 'the very Ruskinian idea of the superiority of skilled craftsmanship to money-making,' and using the emblematic characterisation and other

theatrical conventions of melodrama to bring them to life on the stage.[40] The lack of openness in business dealings is also illustrated and criticised, along with the moral dubiety of unscrupulous capitalists being permitted to avoid personal responsibility for losses by hiding behind the corporate veil of the limited liability company. This was a relatively recent invention, first introduced in England by the Limited Liability Act of 1855, and it was contentious because of the perception that it decoupled business conduct from moral responsibility: as S.F. Van Oss observed in 1898, in an article for the *Nineteenth Century* entitled 'The Limited Company Craze', 'personal ownership has ceased to be the controlling power in trade; and when it left it took along with it that personal care, personal supervision, and personal responsibility which made our business great.'[41] By dramatizing the abuse of economic power, in a play produced at the moment of social and industrial crisis that the Great Dock Strike represented, Jones was able to create a drama that was both topical and powerful.

The Middleman opened at the Shaftesbury Theatre on 27 August 1889, with Willard in the leading role. Willard had been known to Jones for years, having played the role of the villainous 'Spider' in Barrett's original production of *The Silver King*. The Shaftesbury had acquired a reputation for being an unfavourable venue because of the failure of the production with which it had opened the preceding year, but the universal approval that greeted *The Middleman* broke the spell: *Reynold's Newspaper* reported that 'this hitherto ill-starred house reopened with a new drama by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones of such excellence, and so exceedingly well acted, that a change of fortune may be predicted for the present managers'.[42] For *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* the play was an 'unequivocal' success; the *Pall Mall Gazette* reported 'such a storm of applause as is rarely heard even within the walls of a theatre'; for the *Era*, the production 'looks like a big financial as well as artistic success, and the management as well as the author are entitled to general and hearty congratulations.'[43]

[40] Newey and Richards, p. 26.
[41] S.F. Van Oss, 'The Limited Company Craze', *Nineteenth Century*, 43 (1898), 731-44. Quoted in Kristen Guest, 'Jekyll and Hyde, Inc: Limited Liability, Companification and Gothic Subjectivity', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 44 (2016), 315-29, 315.
[42] [Anon.], 'Public Amusements', *Reynold's Newspaper,* 1 September 1889, p. 6.
[43] [Anon.], 'Public Amusements', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper,* 1 September 1889, p. 5; [Anon.], 'The Middleman', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 August 1889, p. 2; [Anon.], 'E.S. Willard in "The Middleman"', *Era*, 21 September 1889, p. 8.

Where Jones had resisted taking a bow on the first night of *Wealth,* he received 'the special honour of a double call' at the end of *The Middleman.*[44]

Audiences were conscious of the play's topicality. The *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* noted that the play 'so grapples with the abiding problem of Capital v. Labour as to be peculiarly apropos at a period when the great Dockers' strike has, unhappily, shaken the social system of the East-End of London to its foundation'.[45] The *Pall Mall Gazette* suggested, 'would it not be an excellent idea for Messrs. Willard and Lart [Willard's business partner at the Shaftesbury] to give a matinée to some of the "dockers"? It would at any rate show those struggling workers that West-end playgoers have plenty of sympathy with the interests of labour as against capital.'[46] The *Daily Telegraph* linked the play with earlier literary interventions:

> The Radicalism of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones is the healthy Radicalism of 'Felix Holt,' and in these days of strikes and social disturbances the moral of "The Middleman" will be as acceptable to the honest master as to the sensible man.[47]

The reference back to Eliot's 1866 novel contrasts her 'healthy Radicalism' with the different (presumably 'unhealthy') form of radicalism that was manifest in 1889 and 'these days of strikes and social disturbances'. *Felix Holt: the Radical* represents a moderate form of progressive-conservative politics that accepted the permanence of class divisions and recognised the importance of the political independence of the working class in a way that earlier industrial novels (Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), for example) had not.[48] When Eliot, writing in the persona of her title character, published her 'Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt' in *Blackwood's* magazine in 1868, it was a call for understanding and co-operation between the working classes and 'the richer, softer-handed classes' whose knowledge and education could nevertheless help to improve the lives of everyone. Jones' radicalism is of the same kind: he does not seek to eliminate class divisions, but calls for collaboration and a more honest and understanding form of capitalism. At the

[44] [Anon.], 'Dramatic Gossip', *York Herald,* 31 August 1889, p. 13.
[45] [Anon.], 'Music and the Drama', *Penny Illustrated Paper,* 31 August 1889, p. 215.
[46] [Anon.], 'To-day's Tittle Tattle', *Pall Mall Gazette,* 29 August 1889, p. 6.
[47] [Anon.], 'Shaftesbury Theatre, *Daily Telegraph,* 28 August 1889, p. 3.
[48] For an overview of the treatment of social class in the Victorian novel generally, including the industrial novel, see Joseph W. Childers, 'Social Class and the Victorian novel', in David (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, pp. 148-69.

end of the play, the audience is left with no doubt that the newly-wealthy Cyrus, now the owner of both Tatlow Hall and the porcelain works, will prove to be a more enlightened employer than either Chandler or Todd – but he will still be an employer. It is interesting to note, too, that the *Telegraph*'s critic cited a novel rather than another drama for the comparison – another sign of the relative novelty of this kind of theatrical intervention.

The Middleman was a great success in London, running at the Shaftesbury for 182 nights, and receiving another successful production in New York; it was also the first of Jones' plays to be produced in continental Europe.[49] The thematic connection with *Wealth* was not lost on critics, and commentators noted approvingly what an improvement *The Middleman* represented over the earlier work: one critic considered that *The Middleman* was 'worth a dozen such pieces as "Wealth"'.[50] One important factor distinguishing the two plays was that *The Middleman* was recognised to have a stronger overall structure:

> It is of course a piece of the same *genré [sic]* as "Wealth;" the central character is here in all its complex psychological detail; but, in addition to this, we have something more than the poor apology for a plot which served as a background to the rugged figure of "Mat Ruddock." The men and women who move in Cyrus Blenkarn's world are not mere wooden puppets; they interest us from their closely-woven connection with the main personage of the drama, just as much as the subsidiary nonentities in "Wealth" annoyed one by their very presence. At the Haymarket the author [treated] us to a surfeit of dismal and distracting diffuseness; at the Shaftesbury he gives us unity of structure and completeness of design.[51]

Jones had plainly taken on board the criticism that *Wealth* was a one-part play dominated by Ruddock. *The Middleman* is an ensemble piece, with stronger roles for the minor characters, including not one but two romantic sub-plots (the marriage of Mary and Julian, and a separate story concerning Cyrus' younger daughter Nancy and her admirer Jesse Pegg), one of which provides an undercurrent of comedy that was lacking in *Wealth* and that was noted by critics as providing a satisfying contrast to the intensity of the main action.[52]

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[49] D.A. Jones, p. 108.
[50] [Anon.], 'London Letter', *Newcastle Weekly Courant,* 7 September 1889, p. 3.
[51] [Anon.], 'The Middleman', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 August 1889, p. 2.
[52] [Anon.], 'London Letter', *Newcastle Weekly Courant,* 7 September 1889, p. 3; [Anon.], 'Public Amusements', *Reynold's Newspaper,* 1 September 1889, p. 6.

As much as the structure, critics applauded the balanced tone of the play. Clement Scott commented in the *Illustrated London News* that if Jones wished to understand why audiences had disliked *Wealth* but warmed to *The Middleman*, it was because in the later play 'his [Jones'] story, sad as it must be, cynical as it often is, downright determined and uncomplimentary as it will be found by some, has still, as it should have, the bright colour of sympathy and the lustrous gilding of pity'. Chandler and his friends are not humiliated at the end of the play: 'Cyrus can forgive them and so can we. We are all happier to have done so.'[53] The reversal in Cyrus' fortunes, the *deus ex machina* news of the survival of Mary and her marriage to Julian, and the forgiveness of Chandler, all combine to leave the audience uplifted rather than dejected: having absorbed the play's harsh criticisms of capitalists and parasites, the audience can enjoy the happy ending to the melodramatic plot and the conventional tying-up of loose ends. *The Middleman* is popular drama with a meliorist message in the George Eliot vein, that society might be improved, and suffering alleviated, through human endeavour and mutual understanding. By evoking the meliorism of the mid-century, Jones avoids the kind of bleakness that audiences might experience – and often found objectionable – in other plays of this more volatile and politically radical era, notably the works of Ibsen and Shaw's *Plays Unpleasant.*

The quality of the performances contributed to the success of the play, and Willard's acting appears – though no reviewer stated it explicitly – to have contrasted favourably with Tree's. As noted above, Willard had previously played the Spider in *The Silver King* and had a reputation for stage villains, and in particular 'the polished rogue and scoundrel so much in vogue with the dramatists of the day,' and his role in *The Middleman* came as a revelation to audiences.[54] The *Illustrated London News* praised the understated nature of Willard's performance:

> The awakened man in Mr. Willard, when he learns that his beloved child is ruined, and that the men in whom he had blind faith have wrought this ruin, is superb. […] No ranting, no froth, no empty frenzy mar the effect of the terrific indictment. The curse of the heart-broken man is effective in its superb dignity of utterance.[55]

[53] 'C.S.' [Clement Scott], 'The Playhouses', *Illustrated London News*, 7 September 1889, p. 303.
[54] [Anon.], 'Shaftesbury Theatre', *Morning Post*, 28 August 1889, p. 5.
[55] 'C.S.' [Clement Scott], 'The Playhouses', *Illustrated London News*, 7 September 1889, p. 303.

This was clearly a more nuanced performance than the histrionics of Tree's Matthew Ruddock, despite the extremities of emotion that Cyrus goes through. Jones had found in Willard an actor-manager who could bring his tormented heroes to life with both subtlety and psychological veracity. (Willard would go on to play the title role in *Judah* the following year.)

When Jones published *The Middleman* in 1907, eighteen years after its first production, it was still being regularly performed across the English-speaking world. Dedicating the published edition to Willard, who had continued to play the role of Cyrus Blenkarn in various productions throughout that period, Jones admitted that he was 'sadly conscious that much of it [the play] is old-fashioned in manner and form' (9). The fact that *The Middleman* was still interesting to playgoers was, Jones suggests, 'because the story repeats some rude enforcement of that old perennial message to the oppressor, "Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth"'(9). The Biblical text comes from the Gospel according to James (5:4) and is part of an admonishment to the rich about the vanity of luxurious wealth, and the financial abuse of their labourers. It is a powerful and timeless injunction, and one that Jones clearly felt had been forgotten in the world of late-Victorian industrial capitalism. The radicalism of *The Middleman* is certainly of the moderate kind, but the play appealed to audiences in a way that the colder 'psychological study' of *Wealth* had failed, using the form and conventions of melodrama to convey this message to a wide audience that was not yet ready for the more explicitly challenging political drama of Shaw.

The Crusaders **(1891)**[56]

The righteous anger that Jones had expressed in *The Middleman*, against those who took unfair economic advantage of the intellectual efforts of others, abated somewhat after 1890. Changes in copyright law, and in particular the passing in 1891 of the new American copyright legislation that I discussed in the Introduction, changed the balance of economic power between playwrights and actor-managers in a very material way. However, there

[56] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Crusaders* (London: Macmillan, 1905). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Crusaders* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.

remained other tensions of a more artistic nature. A small group of powerful actor-managers dominated the West End stage of the 1890s, including many of Jones' collaborators: Tree at the Haymarket and Her Majesty's, Willard at the Shaftesbury, Alexander at the St James's, and Wyndham at the Criterion and Wyndham's. They selected plays for production, controlled all aspects of the production process, and felt at liberty to alter the text of plays to suit themselves, excising passages, changing endings and restructuring scenes to give themselves a suitably striking speech, moment of action or exit line before the curtain came down at the end of an act. However, as the stature of the dramatist increased, so did the confidence with which playwrights asserted the priority of the author and challenged actorial tampering with their words. Jones' conflict with Wyndham over the text of *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, to be discussed in Chapter Four, is an instance of this kind of tension. Jones also expressed his anger at Willard, who played the role of Matthew Ruddock in the American production of *Wealth*, for changing the final act by replacing the death scene with a conventional happy ending. The disagreement between the two men was conducted in a very public fashion, through letters to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in August 1891, in which each also questioned the true value of the other's contribution to the success of *The Middleman* and *Judah*.[57] Jones was not alone in challenging the influence of the leading actor-managers. Pinero refused to work with Alexander for six years, despite their very successful collaboration on *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893) and other works, writing to him in 1899 that 'there is not room for two autocrats in one small kingdom.'[58] Shaw would likewise object when Tree changed the ending of *Pygmalion* (1914) to a romantic one that anticipates the marriage of Professor Higgins and Eliza Doolittle: when Tree wrote to him in reply 'My ending makes money; you ought to be grateful,' Shaw responded, 'Your ending is damnable; you ought to be shot.'[59]

These disagreements were part of a broader set of challenges to the commercial economy of the West End theatre generally, and the actor-manager system specifically, that came to a head during the *fin de siècle*. The influence of new models of theatre organisation from

[57] E.S. Willard, 'In Defence of the Actor-Manager', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 August 1891, pp. 1-2; 'An Attack on the Actor-Manager: a Reply to Mr. Willard, by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 August 1891, p. 3; E.S. Willard, 'The Actor-Manager Controversy: a Rejoinder to Mr. Jones, by Mr Willard', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 August 1891, p. 3.
[58] John Dawick, *Pinero: A Theatrical Life* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1993), p. 250.
[59] Samantha Ellis, '*Pygmalion's* opening night in London, 11 April 1914', *Guardian*, 11 February 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2004/feb/11/theatre> [accessed 24 June 2019].

mainland Europe started to be strongly felt in the early 1880s, following tours undertaken by 'official' state- or court-sponsored companies like the Comédie-Française and the Meiningen Company (supported and directed by George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen). As noted in the Introduction, the visit to London of the Comédie-Française in 1879 had led Matthew Arnold to argue the case for a state-supported national theatre for England, that could set its sights beyond mere commercial success, in his essay 'The French Play in London'; the first concrete proposals for such a theatre were made in 1885; and Archer published his 'Plea for an Endowed Theatre' in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1889.

In parallel with these calls for a publicly-funded theatre, new avant-garde stages on the continent, notably André Antoine's Théâtre Libre (founded in Paris in 1887) which was dedicated to creating a naturalist theatre, inspired private initiatives that offered a platform for new English dramatic writing that might be too challenging to get past the censors or to risk producing on the main West End stages: these included the Independent Theatre Society, which was launched in March 1891 under the leadership of the Dutch critic J.T. Grein (1862-1935), with a closed house performance of *Ghosts* as its opening production; and the Stage Society, founded in 1889, which would give private performances of unlicensed plays such as Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.[60] The nascent figure of the director – which many theatre historians trace to Antoine and the establishment of the Théâtre Libre – would displace the actor-manager in the early twentieth century as the individual with overall aesthetic responsibility for a production and its stage picture; and the preoccupation with naturalism would operate to moderate the pursuit of histrionic excess that a star performer like Tree had previously been able to enjoy.[61] When Sir Henry Irving signed the Lyceum into the hands of a syndicate in 1899, it was an indication that the dominance of the actor-manager was coming to an end: the financing of productions, the aesthetic control of the *mise-en-scène* and the interpretation of the text, and the work of the individual performers, would become increasingly separate functions.[62] Jones supported both the Independent Theatre and the Stage

[60] Tracy C. Davis, 'The show business economy, and its discontents', in Kerry Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 36-51.
[61] For an account of the rise of 'directors' theatre' see Peter M. Boenisch, *Directing Scenes and Senses: the Thinking of Regie* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 15-32. Boenisch argues that the role of *Regisseur*, in the sense of the person who gives direction to the interpretation of character and the actors' stage performance, predates Antoine by a century or more, but nevertheless still regards 1887 as a pivotal date.
[62] Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, p. 57.

Society, but in 1891 he also undertook his own personal challenge to the actor-manager system with the production of *The Crusaders*.

The Crusaders, billed as 'A New Comedy of Modern Life', concerns the philanthropic efforts of the London Reformation League, a fictional group of privileged social reformers whose ostensible aim of improving the condition of the London poor is belied by the baser motivations of its members. Lord Burnham, the Foreign Secretary, is a genial, cynical politician who is persuaded by his son to lend his name to the cause and become President of the committee, but who is more concerned about horse-racing and fine wines. The son, Dick Rusper, is involved with the committee primarily because of his romantic interest in Cynthia Greenslade, the attractive young widow whose husband's bequest finances the League's activities. The Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Campion-Blake, is a social climber for whom the committee is a means of gaining access to the aristocracy. The Vice-President, Mr. Palsam, is another of Jones' dissenting Puritans, obsessed with vice and eager to find evidence of sexual misdemeanour even where none exists. Mr. Jawle, described as 'the Great Pessimist Philosopher', is introduced to lend intellectual weight to the undertaking but condemns 'the absolute folly and depravity of the human herd' (95), 'the vast spectacle of human imbecility, selfishness, and emptiness' (96), and the 'pernicious folly' of the League's scheme (97). The tone of the play is primarily satirical, and it contains some good comic lines, but it also includes more serious observations about late Victorian London and the challenges of improving it.

The League's main project is described by Cynthia in Act I: 'We have taken five hundred poor seamstresses out of the worst sweating shops in the East End, and set them to grow roses on a rose-farm near Wimbledon Common' (13). It is a self-indulgent fantasy, in which each of the 'rescued' girls is given the name of a species of rose (the two such characters we meet in Act II have been re-christened 'the Queen of the Marshal Niels' and 'the Lady Gloire de Dijon'), dressed up in pretty clothes, and expected to sing as they go about their work (14-15). The futility and unsustainability of the scheme are made clear to the audience from the outset: asked by the practical Burnham whether the rose-farm pays for itself, Cynthia replies 'Not at present. But it doesn't matter, because we've so much money coming in we don't know what to do with it' (13). Act II is entitled 'Utopia arises within an easy drive from Hyde Park Corner' (xv): the whole idea of the rose-farm satirises contemporaneous organisations like the Fellowship of the New Life, which advocated communal living – the Fellowship

itself had set up an experimental commune at Doughty Street in Bloomsbury in 1890 – and which Jones' great friend Shaw had dismissed as 'sit[ting] among the dandelions' while the Fabians wanted to 'organise the docks'.[63] In the ultimate impracticability of the scheme, Jones is also critiquing the kind of vision described by Morris in his Utopian work of the same year, *News from Nowhere*, in which elegantly-dressed and high-minded labourers work contentedly, and of their own volition, mending roads or making hay in the fields that border the upper Thames.

Notwithstanding its mockery of drawing-room philanthropists and utopic communes, *The Crusaders* delivers some pointed social comment. The League also includes two earnest young activists, Philos Ingarfield and Una Dell, into whose mouths Jones puts the most important speeches. Philos is described on his entrance as '*about thirty, long light curly hair parted in the middle, worn eager face, high narrow forehead; lean, nervous, dreamy, absorbed*' (19). Mrs. Campion-Blake refers to him as 'a kind of inspired idiot. Something between an angel, a fool and a poet. And atrociously in earnest! A sort of Shelley from Peckham Rye' (18). Una is '*a sensitive, shy, enthusiastic girl, about twenty*' (19), whom Cynthia introduces to Lord Burnham with the words, 'On a platform she can talk to three thousand miners. In a drawing room she hasn't a word to say' (20). The tension between the idealism of the activists and the Wildean cynicism of the rest is evident from the start, when Burnham asks Philos how he proposes to start reforming London:

> PHILOS I start with the condition of London at the present moment. What have we made of our city? What are we going to make of it? Put up twenty-story flats all over the West End as far as Richmond, build Clapham Junctions all over the suburbs, and let the East End sprawl in its misery till it covers Essex. That's London's present ideal. Is it yours?
> LORD BURNHAM I regret to say I have no ideals.
> UNA No ideals?
> LORD BURNHAM No; you see I've been in Parliament since I was twenty- two.
> PHILOS I want to put an ideal London before every Londoner. I want all good citizens to stand in line and say to London filth, to London ugliness, to food adulteration, to slums, to bad drains, to legal chicanery, to horse-racing, to the Stock Exchange, and to all other ways of living upon your neighbour without working for him, to the

[63] Quoted in Kevin Manton, 'The Fellowship of the New Life: English Ethical Socialism Reconsidered', *History of Political Thought*, 24 (2003), 282-304, 282. Manton challenges the historical narrative that Shaw and others propagated, that the Fabians were motivated primarily by the desire for practical action whilst the Fellowship was populated by unworldly dreamers. However, this was a perception that clearly existed at the time of *The Crusaders.*

thief, to the idle, to the drunkard, to the jerry house-builder, — I want Londoners to say to all of them, — "We'll abolish you!"

LORD BURNHAM And what do you suppose all these good folks will say in reply?

DICK *(in a low aside).* "We'll see you damned first!" (22-3)

Philos' speech is an indictment of the squalid conditions in which the majority of working-class Londoners lived, of the ways that they could be exploited financially by greedy landlords and builders, and more generally of the rapid and uncontrolled development of London's sprawling suburbs. These are concerns that Jones shared with Morris and Shaw, and it is notable that Jones does not question the desirability of seeking change: what he satirises in *The Crusaders* is the sincerity and capability of the aristocratic do-gooders who involve themselves in reform without any practical plans for bringing it about.

The two young activists seem for much of the play to be equally incapable of devising a workable strategy for change. Early in the action, when Burnham asks Philos to explain the method for achieving the universal brotherhood of man that he envisages, Una interjects:

> It's so easy! By persuasion! There's no other way of making people better. Men don't keep on being foolish for ever. They used to cut one another's throats. They're beginning to see that's absurd. By-and-bye they'll see it's just as absurd to cheat and lie to one another! (23-4).

This echoes the very Morrisian idea, in *News from Nowhere*, that human society might somehow reorganise itself spontaneously and without coercion into a model in which each person cares for their neighbour, and in which all people live fulfilling lives and contribute equally and willingly to the necessary work of the community. Una's assertion is again undercut by Burnham, who declares in another Wildean echo that 'lying is far too venerable and *useful* an accomplishment for humanity to see its absurd aspect – in our day at least' (24). The sceptic has the last word in this particular exchange, and the conversation is interrupted by the entrance of the butler. However, towards the very end of the play, Una is given a long and powerful speech in which the audience – both those onstage and those in the auditorium – are urged to keep striving for a better world. With the failure of the rose-farm, and the wreckage of his other social and romantic aspirations, Philos is on the point of abandoning his work, which Burnham now dismisses outright as 'madness'. Una responds to Burnham, but the substance of her speech is meant for Philos and for us:

> Oh, yes; it's madness! Century after century, the same mad chase, the same mad dream! We hunt for what we shall never find, we dream what will never come true. We know it; but still we pursue, and still we dream! Our Dulcinea is always false, but we always think her true; we give our strength for a parsley garland; we drain Europe of its flower of manhood to buy a little sacred spot in Jerusalem; we ride shameless through Coventry; we spill our blood like water for the Stuarts; we send Paris, red with butchery, dancing after liberty, equality, fraternity; we tilt at every windmill, we dash ourselves on every pike! Oh, you are right! We are mad enough! But our madness keeps the world alive! Your sanity stagnates! Our madness breeds your ideals; and you're dead, you're dead, you're dead without ideals! (114-5).

This seems to me the principal message of the play. Humanity must keep on aspiring to a better world, even if it is unclear how such aspirations should be put into practice. At the same time, the world is not going to be repaired by interventions from governments or wealthy philanthropists: humankind has to fix itself. When Burnham sums up the demise of the rose-farm experiment with the words 'there is no way of mending society', Una responds that 'If everybody mended himself, Lord Burnham, society wouldn't need any mending' (113). This is an anti-statist message that Morris and his circle would surely have endorsed. Although many socialist groups would have contested this position, arguing that the state is essential to counter laissez-faireism, the philosophy propounded in *The Crusaders* is that personal responsibility is the key to changing the world.

The Crusaders opened at the Avenue Theatre (now known as the Playhouse) on 2 November 1891, and was hotly anticipated, not least because of the angry exchanges between Jones and Willard that had appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* a few months earlier. *The Crusaders* had taken Jones over a year to write, and he spared no expense on the production, hiring well-known actors even for lesser roles, and giving William Morris *carte blanche* to design and make the furniture.[64] However, although reviewers praised the scenery, the acting and the staging, the initial audience response to the play itself was hostile – so much so that on the second night, Jones went in front of the curtain and addressed the audience in person:

> Ladies and Gentlemen, -- Last night I stood on this spot and received a most cordial hissing and hooting for work that had cost me twelve months' labour. I only asked for a fair hearing, which the second and third acts did not receive on the first night. No one knows how much actors and actresses depend on the

[64] D.A. Jones, pp. 119-23.

> sympathy of the audience, and how they are baffled and disorganised if this is denied them. I only ask for fair play and a fair hearing.[65]

There were several reasons for the hostility. There are obvious problems with the play's structure, which includes a romantic sub-plot in which Dick vies with Philos for Cynthia's affection; another sub-plot in which a scheme to transport a ship full of 'ne'er-do-wells' to start a new life in South America goes awry, resulting in a revolution for which the British government has to compensate the republic of Costa Rica; a contrived melodramatic episode in Act II in which Dick climbs into Cynthia's bedroom window uninvited; and an awkward resolution to the case of mistaken identity that results. For some reviewers, the play suffered from over-complication: *Reynolds's Newspaper* criticised its surfeit of unnecessary characters and incidents – 'The mistake Mr. Jones made was that he did not omit more' – with the result that the audience became restless in the second and third acts.[66] Others complained about precisely the opposite, asserting that it was the *lack* of incident that had caused the discontent: 'The play lacks finish, and is very disjointed, and the really clever character painting does not retrieve the lack of plot which the modern playgoer requires in such heavy work to keep him amused – in some cases, perhaps, awake.'[67] For others still, the problem was one of tone: the *Daily News* commented that 'Social satire and romantic sentiment are elements which on the stage do not as a rule go well together'.[68] Commentators were almost unanimous, however, in assigning responsibility for the deficiencies in construction and tone to the absence of an experienced manager. For one critic, the play 'wanted cutting and pruning and changing after the first night far more than any of Mr. Jones's plays that have gone before. The moral is that the actor-manager knew more about an audience than the author-manager'.[69] For another, 'there is so much good matter in it that with the assistance, say, of a practised player or an experienced manager it might have been hammered into shape and made acceptable, but as it stands it is a jumble and a mixture, aggravating, irritating, and, we fear, altogether hopeless.'[70] The prevailing opinion seems to have been that there were many positive aspects to the play and to its presentation, but that taken as a whole the production lacked the cohesiveness of vision that an experienced actor-manager might have imposed upon it.

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[65] Quoted in [Anon.], 'Avenue Theatre', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper,* 8 November 1891, p. 16.
[66] [Anon.], 'Avenue Theatre', *Reynolds's Newspaper,* 8 November 1891, p. 5.
[67] [Anon.], 'London Correspondence', *Aberdeen Weekly Journal,* 5 November 1891, p. 5.
[68] [Anon.], 'The Drama', *Daily News,* 3 November 1891, p. 5.
[69] [Anon.], 'Our London Letter', *Ipswich Journal,* 7 November 1891, p. 5.
[70] [Anon.], 'The Crusaders', *Era,* 7 November 1891, p. 11.

Conclusion

It is difficult to read some of the press comment about *The Crusaders* without getting a sense of the theatre world's *schadenfreude* at the failure of Jones' experiment. Most critical of all was the *Era*, the theatrical trade paper, which complemented its review of *The Crusaders* on 7 November with an editorial entitled 'Author-Manager' in the same edition. The comment began with the words 'It would be simply brutal to exult at the first-night failure, at the Avenue Theatre, of Mr H.A. JONES'S first attempt as an author-manager' but then went on to do exactly that:

> What comment is to be made is to be invited not by Mr H.A. JONES, the author, but by Mr JONES, the essayist, lecturer, and interviewee. It has been his grievance, expressed in these capacities, that he has always been kept down by a "bogey man" in the shape of an actor-manager. If there were any defects in Mr. JONES'S work, if his muse did not soar into the purest part of the empyrean, it was the actor-manager who was the ballast. The wretch would insist on casting himself for a leading part when he would have often been better suited with a subordinate one. He had his role altered to suit his capabilities, and, finally – unkindest cut of all – walked away with £10,000, leaving the poor author only a paltry £3,000 for his pains. Outside his work, we really do not see that Mr JONES deserves any mercy.[71]

The sarcastic language suggests that the writer of this critique was settling a score. Jones' outspoken views on the power structures of British theatre production had alienated many in the theatre establishment. Jones held out for a while, buoyed up by the royalties from *The Dancing Girl* which received its two hundred and fiftieth performance at the Haymarket on 13 November. Two weeks after *The Crusaders* opened, and after some changes to the text, the Avenue Theatre was 'very well filled every night, and a brainless play is proved to be no longer a necessity, even for the manager who makes profit his only guide'.[72] In the end, however, the experiment failed. The play closed on 29 January 1892 after a run of less than three months, having cost Jones £4,000. Jones had challenged London's theatrical status quo and lost. Within twelve months of the closure of *The Crusaders*, Charles Wyndham would produce *The Bauble Shop* at the Criterion, initiating the long, if at times fractious, collaboration that would generate Jones' successful run of society comedies of the mid-

[71] [Anon.], 'Author-Manager', *Era*, 7 November 1891, p. 15.
[72] [Anon.], 'Our London Letter', *Liverpool Mercury*, 18 November 1891, p. 4.

1890s. It is for these plays rather than his more overtly political works that Jones is best-remembered today, but *Wealth*, *The Middleman* and *The Crusaders* show Jones not only using drama as a medium to communicate a moderate version of the socialist ideals of his circle, but also engaging in his own political struggle for the ascendancy of the playwright and freedom from an oligarchy of actor-managers.

Chapter Four

‘A hateful world for women’:
female sexuality and sexual transgression in Jones’ society comedies

This chapter discusses the treatment of female sexuality in three plays by Jones: *The Case of Rebellious Susan* (1894), *Mrs. Dane’s Defence* (1900) and *The Princess’s Nose* (1902). The prevailing assessment of these works, which goes back to the generation of second-wave feminist criticism in the mid- to late twentieth century, casts these dramas as socially conservative and Jones himself as a reactionary apologist for late-Victorian views of women and marriage that have long ceased to be palatable. A characteristic example comes from Griffin’s 1991 book about Jones and Pinero: ‘Jones’s attitude to women, though typical of a certain type of Victorianism, is, a century later, largely unacceptable.’[1] However, Jones had a more nuanced and even progressive agenda than recent commentators recognise. I discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis Jones’ strategy of intentional textual subversion, and I propose that Jones’ plays of female sexuality are as subversive as his plays of religion. While the overt narrative arc of each play does indeed see social norms restored, with adulterous husbands returned to their wives, errant wives returned to their husbands, male admirers sent off to the colonies and fallen women banished from polite society, these endings are ambiguous in mood and tone, and the audience is left questioning the social order itself. Furthermore, a close reading of these plays reveals that Jones repeatedly and systematically undercuts the authority of the *raisonneur* characters, whose received dramaturgical role is to articulate and enforce the conventional sexual and social *mores* of London society within the drama of the time. He critiques the discrepancies in power – between men and women, between social classes and between generations – that underpin the dominant ideology, and invites audiences to question society’s treatment of the sexually transgressive woman.

As I argued in Chapter Two in relation to Jones’ plays of religion, the strategy of subversion was the result of the conditions – social and commercial – under which Jones was writing and preparing plays for performance. The impact of the censorship, and its preoccupation with sexual matters, was discussed in the Introduction. Commercial pragmatism was another factor: playwrights had to compromise with the actor-managers who took charge of

[1] Griffin, p. 31.

producing their plays, and whose own commercial judgement and sense of propriety might lead them to demand changes in a text. For the playwright seeking to stage a challenge to received wisdoms about sexuality, the obstructions presented by Lord Chamberlain's Office and the theatrical establishment necessitated the concealment of meaning within conventional narratives that were ideologically sound on the surface, and that typically involved a moral lesson that saw virtue rewarded and transgression punished.

Subtler meanings could of course be conveyed in performance, through the use of gesture, tone of voice and common stage techniques – a tableau, for example, could provide a pause for thought, 'a moment to apprehend not the simple truths but the complex contradictions and possibilities of the drama's multiple implications' – and a clever playwright could work multiple meanings into the written text itself, using ambiguity and irony to undermine the ostensible lesson of the story.[2] Dramatists could also give the actor stage directions to clarify exactly how a line should be spoken or a scene played, and so convey tone and hence meaning through more than just the printed dialogue. I will argue that this is how Jones introduces a progressive agenda into the three plays that are the subject of this chapter. By examining the context in which the plays were written and produced, it is possible to understand what compromises had to be made by the author. Close reading reveals the hidden subversive positions in Jones' depiction of the network of sexual, social and power relationships in the elite society in which these plays are set. Analysis of the original reception of each play, in the form of contemporaneous theatre reviews, suggests how those positions were understood by the original audience.

The dramatic treatment of themes of gender and sexuality was not new in itself, of course – consider the roles of Viola in *Twelfth Night* or Rosalind in *As You Like It* – and the sexually transgressive woman was likewise nothing new on the London stage of the late Victorian period. She had been a stock character in melodrama for decades, and the frequent translations and adaptations of French plays that dominated the legitimate stage in the mid-century had also set before the English playgoing public 'fallen women' like Dumas' Margaret Gautier in *La Dame aux Camélias* (1852), who would become known to later audiences as Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*. These fallen women take many forms, and for most of the century their stage incarnations were entirely conventional in nature, conforming

[2] Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, p. 46.

to pre-ordained dramatic types – seduced virgins, unmarried mothers, adulterous or bigamous wives, professional courtesans, scheming temptresses, along with repentant versions of all of these – with little regard to psychological truth. As Eltis has observed, 'Whereas novelists like Gaskell, Braddon, and Hardy were concerned with the psychology of the sexually delinquent woman, melodrama's forte was exterior action not internal motivation, so the fallen woman on stage was predominantly a convenient plot-mechanism rather than the focus of systematic analysis.'[3] Many of the plays discussed in previous chapters include just this kind of conventional type: Letty Fletcher in *Saints and Sinners*, Drusilla Ives in *The Dancing Girl* and Audrie Lesden in *Michael and his Lost Angel* are respectively, a seduced maiden, another seduced maiden turned adventuress, and an adulterous but repentant woman with a past. Although the narrative trajectory of the stage type paralleled that of her sisters in contemporaneous novels – generally ending in death as the result of suicide, murder, capital punishment or natural causes – drama had tended to lag behind the novel in attempting to address her psychology.

However, just as the 1890s witnessed the production of several important plays by English playwrights dealing with masculinities and male sexuality, so the same period saw numerous new and original plays, by largely the same group of authors, that sought to deal in a more serious way with the inter-related themes of female sexuality, marriage, adultery and the sexual double standard. The increasingly frank examinations of these issues may have been partly enabled by developments in European drama, and in particular the first English productions of Ibsen over the preceding decade. As Sally Ledger observed, 'Ibsen's dramatic expression of female sexuality goes far beyond what most writers of the period would have dared to represent.'[4] Ibsen had first started to attract attention in England with the publication of articles by Edmund Gosse and William Archer in the 1870s, followed by the first translations of *Nora* (*A Doll's House*) and *Ghosts*, by H.F. Lord, in 1882 and 1884 respectively. The first tentative theatrical productions on the English stage were a single performance of *Quicksands* (Archer's adaptation of *The Pillars of Society*) at the Gaiety Theatre,in December 1880; *Breaking a Butterfly* (an adaptation of *A Doll's House* by Jones and Herman, his collaborator on *The Silver King*) which ran at the Prince's Theatre for

[3] Sos Eltis, 'The fallen woman on stage: maidens, magdalens, and the emancipated female', in Powell (ed)., *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, pp. 222-36 (p. 223).
[4] Sally Ledger, *Henrik Ibsen* (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 1999) (second edition 2004), p.37-8.

twenty-three performances in March 1884, and which I discuss later in this thesis; and a single amateur performance of *Nora* in 1885. By 1891, though, productions of Ibsen had become common, even if they often had to take the form of private performances for theatre societies in order to avoid the censorship laws: *A Doll's House* was staged at Terry's Theatre in January 1891, *Rosmersholm* at the Vaudeville in February, *Ghosts* at the Royalty in March, and so it continued.[5] The flood of English 'problem plays' that followed included Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) and *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893) and *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* (1895), and Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893) and *Candida* (1895). In 1895, the actress Kate Terry Gielgud observed, 'The public has been satiated with social and physiological problem-plays; it begins to tire of the eternal sex question.'[6] By 1900, the London correspondent for the *Birmingham Daily Post* declared of the problem play that 'we have by this time seen surely enough'.[7]

These works are all part of the wide Victorian discourse about women's rights – legal, political, sexual, educational, professional and otherwise – that is for convenience summed up in the phrase 'the woman question'. Legal issues including marriage, adultery, illegitimacy, divorce and separation were among the principal battlegrounds of the movement for women's rights, and remained at the forefront of public discourse throughout the *fin de siècle*. This was a debate in which Jones took an active part. His dramatic output in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth included a series of plays that anatomised marriage and its imperfections. The topicality of this issue cannot be overstated: marriage as an institution was a matter of intense public debate throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and there was a considerable volume of legislation passed in order to address its inequalities and other deficiencies. The 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act established the civil divorce court: before that, divorces could only be obtained by means of a private Act of Parliament, the effect of which was to make it impossible for any but the wealthiest families. The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 gave married women the right to control their own money and property, addressing the injustice that a woman's property had previously vested in her husband upon marriage. The 1884

[5] Tracy C. Davis, *Critical and Popular Reaction to Ibsen in England, 1872-1906* (PhD dissertation, University of Warwick, 1984). Davis includes, in Appendix A, a useful chronology of 'Ibsen-related events' (not just productions, but also the appearance of essays and lectures about Ibsen, and translations of his work) in the period covered.
[6] Quoted in Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, p. 114.
[7] [Anon.], 'London Correspondence', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 September 1900, p. 4.

Matrimonial Causes Act conferred a measure of protection on wives against physical or sexual abuse by their husbands. The 1886 Guardianship of Infants Act established the principle that a mother should have custody of her children following separation or divorce.

These measures, clearly progressive in terms of the rights of women, also illustrate the persistent lack of confidence in marriage as an institution: indeed, when Mona Caird, in an 1888 essay for the *Westminster Review*, described the state of marriage in late Victorian England as 'a vexatious failure', it prompted the *Daily Telegraph* to ask its own readers whether this was indeed the case, and the response was remarkable. Over 27,000 letters were received, many of which were published in the newspaper over subsequent weeks, and a selection of which was later compiled into a single volume entitled *Is Marriage a Failure?*.[8] These letters, sometimes signed by name, but more often submitted under a signature such as 'A Widow', 'A Matrimonial Failure' or 'A Lover of Justice', show the wide variety of attitudes to marriage prevailing at that moment: they come from men and women; from correspondents who are married, unmarried, widowed or divorced; from every occupation from lawyer to cleric to office clerk to housewife; and from all parts of the United Kingdom (and beyond). Jones would place on the stage many of the situations that these correspondents had experienced, and the views and anxieties that they expressed. *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, with its four contrasting couples, was described by one critic of the time as 'a dramatic study of infidelities'.[9] *Mrs. Dane's Defence* deals with the exclusion of a young woman who is discovered, on the verge of marrying into the upper echelons of society, to have 'a past'. *The Princess's Nose* exposes in the harshest terms the limited choices available both to a married woman with an adulterous husband, and to that husband's mistress. Jones uses these plays to dramatise important aspects of the late nineteenth-century woman question, including the inter-related matters of gender roles, marriage and female 'purity', and to criticise the status quo.

Twentieth-century criticism of Jones' sexual politics often focussed on the *raisonneur* characters in these works. The *raisonneur* as a dramatic type derives from the French 'well-made play' of the mid-century, and these characters – including a QC, a colonel, a judge and an aristocrat – represent the political and social establishment of late-Victorian England.

[8] Harry Quilter (ed.), *Is Marriage a Failure?* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1888).
[9] [Anon.], 'Criterion Theatre', *Standard*, 4 October 1894, p. 3.

They intervene in the romantic affairs of erring wives, wayward husbands and misguided lovers; and they persuade them to change their ways, and so restore the conventional order of the privileged society in which they live. To the modern reader or audience, much of what these *raisonneurs* have to say – about sex, marriage, divorce and the position of women in society – is problematic. The patriarchal and conservative attitudes that they articulate are unpalatable from the perspective of modern gender politics, and the expression of them has contributed to the critical disdain for Jones' work that has prevailed since the mid-twentieth century, because the *raisonneur* has generally been interpreted as expressing the views of the playwright himself. Ada Mei Fan, for example, writing in 1988, repeatedly refers to the *raisonneur* as an act of 'ventriloquism' on Jones' part, and observes: 'Ever conscious of his role as a moralist, the *raisonneur* Jones preaches, with every play a pulpit, that Nature has ordained a certain order: woman is man's helpmeet; man is woman's master; and the relationship is indissoluble.'[10] For Griffin, writing in 1991, the Jones *raisonneur* is 'the author's mouthpiece'.[11] For Wellwarth, in 2001, the *raisonneur* 'unquestionably espouses Jones's own viewpoint with his condescending preaching and frequently catfish sedulousness at emotional stage managing'.[12] Eltis, who discusses at length all three of the plays that I will consider, provided a more nuanced reading in 2013, acknowledging that whilst the theatrical charisma and authority of Charles Wyndham (who played several of these characters during his very successful period of collaboration with Jones in the 1890s) 'implicitly claimed the status of authorial mouthpieces' for his *raisonneurs*, the question whether their words should be taken as authorially-validated lessons is complicated by the fact that many of Jones' plays set out directly to satirize the moral hypocrisy of those in positions of power.[13]

Nevertheless, even Eltis stops short of recognising – as I shall argue – that Jones deliberately undermines the authority of his *raisonneurs*, and the reductiveness of most modern readings of these characters has clouded the critical interpretation of the plays more generally. It is an over-simplification to treat the *authoritative* voice of the *raisonneur* and the *authorial* voice of the playwright as one and the same thing. A closer reading shows that Jones' *raisonneurs* are ambiguous figures, whose moral authority is doubtful: analysis of the early reception

[10] Ada Mei Fan, '*In and Out of Bounds: Marriage, Adultery, and Women in the Plays of Henry Arthur Jones, Arthur Wing Pinero, Harley Granville-Barker, John Galsworthy, and W. Somerset Maugham*' (PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, New York, 1988), p. 21.
[11] Griffin, pp. 36-7.
[12] Wellwarth, p. 63.
[13] Eltis *Acts of Desire*, pp. 148-9.

history shows that they were recognised as such by the original audiences, and the plays contain numerous other instances of ambiguity and irony that have largely been overlooked by recent generations of critics. Once these are recovered, it becomes clear that the dismissal of these plays as reactionary Victorian misogyny is unmerited. In their different ways, all three plays are, in fact, subversive.

The Case of Rebellious Susan (1894)[14]

The rebellious Susan of the title is Lady Susan Harabin who, having discovered that her husband James has been having an affair, sets her mind on having an affair herself in order to pay him back. (Several contemporaneous critics noted similarities between *Rebellious Susan* and *Françillon* by Alexandre Dumas *fils* (1887), in which another young wife declares that she has repaid her unfaithful husband in the same way: the scenario would have been recognisable to the original audience as one of a set of tropes in the dramatic representation of the woman question.[15]) Susan leaves home and takes a trip to Cairo, where she forms a friendship – the exact nature of which is never explicitly stated in the play – with Lucien Edensor, a young man whom she meets there. On returning to England, she is pressured by her husband, her family and her female friends to accept male infidelity as a fact of life, forgive her husband and return home – a pressure that she vigorously resists until she learns that Edensor has not only accepted a government appointment in New Zealand but also married another woman whom he met on the voyage to take up his post. At that point, she reluctantly capitulates, and is welcomed back by James with promises of a shopping trip to Bond Street and material compensation for his past infidelities in the form of a diamond ring and bracelet.

The play was produced by Charles Wyndham at the Criterion Theatre in Piccadilly Circus. The Criterion had opened in 1874, and had become the home for the Charles Wyndham Company the following year. It was a small theatre, built entirely underground – one modern

[14] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, in *Plays by Henry Arthur Jones*, ed. by Russell Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 105-61. All quotations from *The Case of Rebellious Susan* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.
[15] See for example the unsigned review of *The Case of Rebellious Susan* in the *Morning Post*, 4 October 1894, p. 3.

critic describes it as a 'bandbox' – and it seated approximately 600.[16] It was comfortable, incorporating a restaurant and heralding 'a new era of pomp and good living', and it attracted an affluent audience.[17] The intimate auditorium suited the kind of subtle presentation for which Wyndham would become well-known, and was a natural home for the Society drama that emerged in the 1890s. According to the theatre historian George Rowell, 'By reproducing the accents and habits of the fashionable London set, Jones allowed Wyndham, by now a frequent guest of the Prince of Wales at Marlborough House, to mirror on the Criterion's stage the elegant company who assembled in the stalls, and hold up the likeness for the admiration of the bourgeoisie in the dress circle.'[18] The social elite that made up Wyndham's audience were the very same people whose values Jones was criticising in his writing.

The circumstances in which the play was written show the pressure on Jones to conform to a certain type of late Victorian morality. In his early years at the Criterion, Wyndham had specialised in risqué farces like James Albery's *The Pink Dominos* (1877), an adaptation of the French comedy *Les Dominos roses* by Alfred Hennequin and Alfred Delacour; but by the 1890s – perhaps as a result of his ascent to the highest levels of society – Wyndham was deeply concerned about propriety, and *The Case of Rebellious Susan* gave rise to tensions on this front. Wyndham was squeamish about the direct confrontation of female infidelity: he wanted Susan to be unequivocally cleared of the charge of adultery, but – as Jones would not agree to that – he urged Jones to make certain cuts in order, as he put it, 'to leave an opportunity to the audience of guessing what conclusions they most affected as to Sue's guilt or innocence'. These included expunging her line to Edensor 'I should kill myself if anyone knew' (suicide being one of the conventional endings of the fallen woman story). Wyndham wrote to Jones:

> I stand as bewildered today as ever at finding an author, a clean-living, clear-minded man, hoping to extract laughter from an audience on the score of a woman's impurity […] I am equally astounded at a long-experienced dramatic author believing that he will induce married men to bring their wives to the theatre to learn the lesson that their wives can descend to such nastiness, as giving themselves up for one evening of adulterous pleasure

[16] George Rowell, 'Wyndham of Wyndham's', in *The Theatrical Manager in England and America: Players of a Perilous Game*, ed. by Joseph W. Donohue, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 189-213 (p. 200).
[17] Victor Glasstone, *Victorian and Edwardian Theatres: an Architectural and Social Survey* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 66.
[18] Rowell, pp. 203-4.

> and then return safely to their husband's arms, provided they are clever enough, low enough, and dishonest enough to avoid being found out.[19]

This extract illustrates several things. First, it shows how an actor-manager of the mid-1890s could expect to influence a playwright, even when the playwright was as established and successful as Jones was by this point. Second, it shows the actor-manager's sensitivity to commercial pressures: Wyndham's main concern is that, if it is clearly indicated that Susan's relationship with Edensor is of a sexual nature, the play will cease to be funny, and therefore – it is implied – will not succeed. Third, it shows how that commercial sensitivity operated to suppress new or challenging drama: Wyndham's other concern is that husbands will not bring their wives to see a play with such a subversive message, for which reason Wyndham felt the story should be altered. It is worth noting Wyndham's moralising language of 'impurity', 'nastiness', 'adulterous pleasure', 'lowness' and 'dishonesty': the tone of the letter is surprising because it seems to represent the most severe kind of Victorian prudery, rather than the more liberal views that one might have expected of a successful man of the theatre who had made his name in adaptations of French sex comedies. In the event, Jones refused to alter the play in any material way. The question of Susan's guilt or innocence was left open, and Jones later made it very clear that his own intention was that Susan *should* be understood to have had a sexual relationship with Edensor. In fact, the uncertainty over Susan's conduct is just one of several creative ambiguities in the play: the moral standing of the *raisonneur* is also ambiguous, as is its ostensibly happy ending of the reconciliation between Susan and her husband, and therefore the overall message of the play as a whole. The original critical reception of the play, discussed later in this chapter, shows how these ambiguities operated on the original audience.

The play itself is structured around four contrasting couples: Lady Susan and James Harabin, Elaine Shrimpton and Fergusson Pybus, Admiral Sir Joseph and Lady Darby, Sir Richard Kato Q.C. and Mrs. Quesnel (or Inez). Their different experiences of marriage provide the thematic framework for the piece: having four couples allows Jones to examine a range of situations, attitudes and strategies – a small cross-section of the lives described in *Is Marriage a Failure?* – and these are all mapped out within the first Act.

[19] Quoted in D.A. Jones, pp. 164-5.

Susan and James are the couple around whom the action revolves. The stage directions describe her as being '*about twenty-seven*', while he is '*an average English gentleman about forty, a little inclined to stoutness*' (109, 115). They have been married for six years when the play opens, and the action begins in the aftermath of her discovery of his adultery, with her declaring to Lady Darby (her aunt) and Inez (her oldest friend) that she has decided to 'pay him back in his own coin' (109). Susan is quick-witted and spirited, and we are inclined to sympathise with her from the outset. When Lady Darby advises her simply to accept her husband's adultery on the grounds that 'Some cases are worse than others; and when you come to my age you'll be thankful that yours is no worse than a respectable average case,' Susan responds: 'Respectable average case! No! that's just what my case shall not be. It shan't be average, and perhaps it won't be respectable' (110). (It is interesting to note that Jones uses the same word, 'average', to describe both her husband and her difficult marital situation.) Over the course of the play, Susan's rebelliousness is suppressed by the forces of law, family and convention; the play concludes with Susan agreeing to return to her dislikeable husband with a defeated acceptance of the proposition that hers is nothing more than a 'respectable average case' after all (161). As I will show, it seems clear that Jones intends the audience to understand that Susan's case *is* a respectable average one – in the sense of being commonplace among a particular section of society – but asks the audience to consider whether this *should* be so.

Elaine and Pybus are an 'advanced' couple, providing a comic counterpoint to the main plot. Elaine is twenty years old at the start of the play, and is a satirical depiction of the New Woman: described as '*a raw, self-assertive modern young lady, with brusque and decided manner'* (120), she establishes the Clapham Boadicean Society for the Inculcation of the New Morality among the Women of Clapham, and her mode of speech is that of the radical political meeting: 'We have duties and responsibilities that we shall allow no worm-eaten conventionalities of society to interfere with'; 'Why should we dwarf and stunt ourselves physically, morally, intellectually, for the sake of propping up a society that is decrepit and moribund to its core?' (120-1). Pybus is a feminised aesthete, described as '*a lank, dreamy young man of twenty-five, with longish light hair, with precise, nervous, and rather affected manner',* who describes his upset at the Harabins' marital problems in affectedly aesthetic terms: 'It affects me like a wrong note in music, like a – *(descriptive gesture)* like a faulty dash of colour in a picture – it distresses me' (118). His long hair and effete tone suggest that Pybus is a traitor to normative late Victorian paradigms of masculinity, much as Elaine is to

contemporaneous models of traditional femininity. The trivial domestic discord that later arises between Elaine and Pybus is set up as a contrast to the seriousness of the Harabins' situation, and is easily resolved by some practical suggestions from Elaine's guardian, Kato.

Sir Joseph Darby, *'a jovial English gentleman of about sixty',* is an Admiral who has spent much of his life at sea. Despite frequent sexual misdemeanours, he loves Lady Darby, and indeed becomes quite sentimental at her indulgence of him. Having advised James to 'own up like a man' to his adultery, he continues in a maudlin vein about his own marriage:

> My wife, now – I've been a sad rascal, Jim – I won't mince matters – I've been a thorough out and out rascal. *(much affected)* I can't forgive myself. But she's forgiven me. Ah! what angels women are! Yes, she's forgiven me freely! *(slight pause)* I haven't told her all. But she's forgiven freely what I have told her. So I thought I wouldn't grieve her by telling her anymore. *(Sits in his chair and ponders his past transgressions, much affected.)* (117-8)

Sir Joseph's strategy for marital harmony is to keep quiet about infidelities, or at least not to disclose all of them. Lady Darby, who does not hear this speech, has a correspondingly pragmatic approach, which she expresses when she advises Susan on how to respond to James' adultery: 'I should give him [James] a sound talking to. I should make his life a misery for a fortnight; then – I should never mention the matter again.' (111). Sir Joseph and Lady Darby represent one model for a successful marriage, expressed in a comedic way and based on wilful disregard by one partner of the moral failings of the other; but this is not a model that Susan is willing to accept. Nor is it one of which normative, bourgeois middle-class morality would approve, even though it is plainly held up in this play as a commonplace and hypocritical practice of the Mayfair set.

The final pair consists of Kato and Inez. Kato is '*a bright, shrewd man of the world, about fifty-five*' (111). He is an eminent divorce lawyer who acts as the play's *raisonneur,* comments on the action, counsels the estranged couples, and ultimately persuades Susan to return to her family. His practice in the Divorce Court is repeatedly mentioned as conferring upon him authority to comment on the romantic lives of those around him: he is the living embodiment of the law of marriage. Although only Susan and Edensor know for certain what took place in Cairo, Kato suspects that the story that accounts for their absence from dinner at their hotel on a certain Sunday evening – that they were attending a church service where

there was a particularly long sermon – is a fabrication. The Act II scene in which Kato interrogates Susan, and encourages (or coerces) her to return to her husband, is the thematic core of the play. As Susan's uncle and Elaine's guardian, he also represents two other sources of power, namely family authority and financial control. Kato's philosophy of marriage is summed up in an early exchange with Susan, after she complains that 'marriage is a hateful, wretched institution':

> SIR RICHARD Marriage is not a hateful, wretched institution. On the contrary, after twenty-five years' constant practice in the Divorce Court, I am prepared to affirm that marriage is a perfect institution –
> LADY SUSAN *(aghast)* What?
> SIR RICHARD -- worked by imperfect creatures. So it's like a good ship manned by a mutinous crew.
> LADY SUSAN It's men that make it what it is.
> SIR RICHARD Yes -- and women. And the result is a condition that varies in each case with all the varying tastes, tempers, dispositions, infirmities, prejudices, habits, etc., etc., etc., of the contracting parties. (113)

It is striking how closely Kato's remarks echo one of the letters in *Is Marriage a Failure?* in which a correspondent named only as 'Common Sense' wrote:

> To say that marriage, as an institution, is not free from faults and blemishes is simply to say that it is human. Which of our institutions, I would ask, is faultless or spotless? Are our laws, our Parliament, our administration, our commercial morality, models of perfection? I trow not; they are as good as we deserve they should be, and no better. So is marriage— the best contrivance we have hitherto hit upon for at once facilitating and dignifying the natural relations between the opposite sexes, for guaranteeing the proprieties of family life, and for averting many serious evils from society at large.[20]

Kato's uncritical description of marriage is the conventional, late Victorian endorsement of it as the best form of institution that humankind can devise.

Inez is '*a widow of about thirty, fascinating, inscrutable*' (109). Inez represents yet another source of influence on Susan: the authority conferred by friendship in the social circle in which Susan lives. Inez's status as a widow means that she can be regarded as a woman of the

[20] Quilter, p.62.

world – the counterpart to Kato – and her own advice to Susan in Act I is much the same as Lady Darby's:

> Well – I shouldn't nag him [James]. I should be utterly broken-hearted and mutely reproachful. I should look more intensely interesting, and a little paler, and wear prettier frocks, and give him a better dinner each evening, and when he has begged forgiveness for a long while I should find it in my heart to – to forgive him. (111)

The reactionary forces in the play are not exclusively male: there is a considerable amount of female complicity in the double standard. Inez, along with Lady Darby, repeatedly advises Susan to accept her husband's adultery. These are the female voices of society, reinforcing the double standard by their acquiescence in it, and only rebellious Susan herself comments on the lack of female solidarity in the face of male sexual transgression: 'We are such traitors to ourselves. If we could only bind ourselves together... It's our cowardice and weakness and falsehood that make them such brutes' (111). Together, Inez and Kato represent every kind of conventional authority that can be exercised over Susan: law, family, money, friendship, class. It is hardly surprising that Susan eventually submits to them. By upholding the sexual double standard, emphasising the importance of reputation, and repeating the simple moral certainties about 'good' women and 'bad', the society depicted on the London stage of the 1890s closes ranks against outsiders, the fallen women or New Women who might disrupt the established order.

The play opened on 3 October 1894, and was a considerable success: a parallel production opened in New York in December, the original Criterion production ran for 164 nights and was followed by a national tour, and the play was revived at Wyndham's Theatre in 1901, and again at the Criterion in 1910.[21] It is clear from the first-night reviews that audiences were fully alert to the ambiguity about Susan's conduct in Cairo. Clement Scott complained that Jones 'has not made it quite clear to the audience to what extent she [Susan] has been indiscreet when temporarily separated from her husband'.[22] William Archer's original review in the *World* summarised the plot as 'A jealous wife rides the high horse for a certain time, threatens, and even attempts, vengeance in kind, and then climbs down more or less ingloriously'; but when his reviews were collected in *The Theatrical 'World' of 1894*, he

[21] D.A. Jones, pp. 167, 417.
[22] Clement Scott, 'The Playhouses', *Illustrated London News,* 13 October 1894, p. 463.

added a footnote that said: 'How I came to say "attempts," I do not know. In the theatre, I fully understood the author to imply that she not only attempted but accomplished the retaliation she threatened.'[23] Whether or not Susan actually 'fell' became a matter of public discussion – so much so that when Mary Moore (who played Susan) was interviewed by the *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* a few days after the opening, one of the questions was 'But is Lady Susan so Very Naughty?'. Her response was fittingly equivocal: 'So you, like most men, are of the opinion that that remark [a particular line of Edensor] whitewashes Lady Susan's reputation. We women, and I suspect the author too, read a subtler meaning in that phrase. However, it's a debatable point.'[24] It is striking that Moore perceived that the two sides of the debate over Susan's guilt or innocence had formed along gender lines. Clearly, whilst the extent of Susan's infidelity could not be stated outright on the stage, it was something that both sexes could happily discuss once the play was over.

Jones himself ended the speculation in December 1894, according to a newspaper column entitled 'Theatrical Gossip' which reported: 'Mr Henry Arthur Jones, at a recent dinner party, informed those present that Lady Harabin *did* commit a breach of the seventh commandment.'[25] That clarification immediately led to a reappraisal of the play itself, and one commentator noted just how bold Jones has been:

> We now know that Lady Susan did transgress the moral law at Cairo. That sheds a flood of light upon the piece, which must be studied and judged accordingly. Lady Susan now acquires an artistic interest which at first she did not appear to possess. We now know that, unlike M. Dumas's Françillon, Lady Susan did retaliate upon her husband in kind, and that explains her readiness to return to Mr. Harraben *[sic]* after she was satisfied of the faithlessness of her lover […].[26]

The reference to *Françillon* is important. In *Françillon*, the husband is guilty of adultery, while the wife remains innocent. In *Rebellious Susan,* both parties are guilty, but for Jones to have declared this unequivocally in the text would have rendered the play unperformable. If

[23] William Archer, *The Theatrical 'World' of 1894* (London: W. Scott, 1895), p. 269.
[24] T.H.L., '"Rebellious Susan" at Home': Miss Mary Moore interviewed by a P.I.P. artist', *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times,* 13 October 1894, p. 226.
[25] [Anon.], 'Theatrical Gossip', *Era,* 15 December 1894, p.10.
[26] [Anon.], 'Criterion', *Morning Post,* 27 December 1894, p. 2.

the censor had not rejected it, Wyndham plainly would have done. Maintaining the ambiguity about Susan's guilt or innocence enabled Jones to write a play that would at once be acceptable to the actor-manager, satisfy the censor, and provoke discussion amongst the audience. Once the play had been produced and had proved a commercial success, Jones was able to intervene in the critical debate and to resolve the ambiguity definitively, and so allow audiences to evaluate or re-evaluate the play in exactly the terms that he had originally intended. More than this, *Rebellious Susan* moved forward the conventional plot-curve of the 'fallen woman' play, so that the protagonist no longer had to turn out to be innocent (as in *Françillon*), accept banishment (like Mrs. Erlynne in *Lady Windermere's Fan* in 1892) or die (like Paula Tanqueray in *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* in 1893, and so many other fallen women of the Victorian drama). Instead, she could – if the circumstances were right – resume a respectable married life.

Just as there is ambiguity about the events in Cairo, so there is ambiguity about the moral standing of Kato, the *raisonneur* of the piece who expresses most of its conservative and anti-feminist sentiments. On the matter of the sexual double standard, Kato tells his niece, 'My dear Sue, believe me, what is sauce for the goose will never be sauce for the gander. In fact, there is no gander sauce' (112). He brushes off female emancipation with the assertion that 'There is an immense future for women as wives and mothers, and a very limited future for them in any other capacity' (153). It is Kato who asks, 'How is it that women never will understand the Woman question?' (155). Kato represents a particularly self-assured and complacent kind of Victorian patriarchy, which treats the sexual double standard as an acceptable norm and the emancipation of women as a folly. It is Kato, too, who arranges for Edensor to be offered the government post in New Zealand and who persuades him to go, so removing the disruptive effect that his presence has on Susan: when the younger man objects and tells Kato that he loves Susan, Kato replies 'Very well then, keep on loving her. But pack off to New Zealand next Thursday. Now let's drop her' (128), briskly dismissing Susan (and implicitly women in general) as a problem that can simply be abandoned when it is convenient for Edensor (and men) to do so.

Notwithstanding the prominence given to these sentiments, however, it is clear from the dialogue, and the audience reception, that Jones wanted the audience to be sympathetic to Susan. In the scene in which Kato persuades her to return to London rather than elope to the

continent with Edensor, the dialogue and stage directions convey at once her frustration, her determination, and the strength of the social forces that are ranged against her:

> SIR RICHARD Now you know what is in store for you, so behave like a good girl and give me a hearty welcome.
> LADY SUSAN Indeed I won't! I'll run away from you. *(getting into a temper, walking up and down with great indignation uttering little cries)* Really! Of all the absurd. – Well! – What next! I never – Oh! *(Turns round and faces him, very resolutely.)* Now, Uncle Dick, I love you very much, but don't drive me to kick over the traces.
> SIR RICHARD My dear Sue, I'm going to take very good care that you don't.
> LADY SUSAN Really, of all the unwarrantable – *(Bursts into a fit of angry laughter.)* Once for all understand me, Uncle Dick, I'm my own mistress, and I'm going to do just as I please.
> SIR RICHARD No, my dear Sue, you are going to do just what is suitable for my niece, and for an English lady with her own reputation and the reputation of her family to consider. (143-4)

This short exchange encapsulates all the conservative values against which Susan is rebelling: duty to family, reputation, law (embodied by the lawyer Kato himself), and the patronising voice of patriarchal authority.

But Kato himself is morally ambiguous. He warns Susan that she risks becoming *déclassé* if she persists with her plan to elope and, when she replies that there are plenty of women who are not good and who are not *déclassé*, Kato tells her that women are divided into two classes: not good and bad, but 'those who have lost their reputation, and those who have kept it' (142-3). His code is based on expediency rather than any deeply-held religious or moral conviction. Kato, we learn towards the end of the play, has had lovers of his own; and Inez points out the irony that Kato himself is a beneficiary of the double standard and of the unconstrained female sexuality that he is working to repress in Susan:

> You have loved once, and yet with her consecrated image in your heart's holy of holies, you have opened its outer courts to a rabble of petticoats, drunk the wine and broken the bread with sluts, tossed off life's sacrament with any strange priestess that offered it – look at the remains of the feast! (150)

In the world of Kato and his circle, reputation takes precedence over conduct. Jones' true target is not the sexually-daring and independent-minded woman, but the hypocrisy of the rigid social code that would subdue her. Kato's moral authority is further undermined by the manner in which he badgers Susan and – towards the end of their long duologue in Act II –

even uses his physical strength to restrain her, the exercise of precisely that 'brute force' on the part of men of which the New Woman Elaine repeatedly complains: the stage direction has Kato catching Susan's hand when she makes to snap her fingers at him, leaving her '*struggling to get hold of her hand*' and resorting to '*stamping her foot at him*' while he instructs her '*complacently*' about the courses of action open to her (144). Jones' stage directions for the closing lines of the scene have Susan replying to her uncle in a way that is *'frightened', 'very frightened', 'in an agony of fright'* before agreeing *'in a very humble voice'* to do as he asks and return to London with him (144). Whatever sentiments the *raisonneur* may express about codes of behaviour, the effect is that the audience is invited to sympathise with Susan and the predicament that she faces. Her rebellion is closed off by an overbearing male authority that uses physical strength as one of its tools, and by all the other conservative forces (both male and female) that are ranged against it. Jones is not asking the audience to endorse the codes of behaviour articulated by the *raisonneur*: he is criticising them. Kato's views may represent the conventional moral view espoused by the patriarchal authority of the day, but it is hard to believe that they are really the views of the playwright, or the message of the play. As the *Observer* noted, 'Everybody in the play is insincere, from the lackadaisical enthusiast [Pybus] who wants to "stamp himself upon the age" by the help of a well-dowered bride, to the shrewd sensible man of the world [Kato] who philosophises cynically even over his own proposal of marriage; and the playwright is, it seems to me, the most insincere of all.'[27]

Indeed, the message of the play as a whole is ambiguous. Some of the critics who attended the first night saw the play as nothing more than an insubstantial comedy, but others were more troubled by it, and noted that the play ended on a note of tension and uncertainty. The *Standard* observed that the marital rift is patched up for reasons of convenience rather than because Susan and James love each other and concluded, 'A comedy more devoid of romance cannot well be conceived.'[28] The *Birmingham Daily Post* commented: 'It is not pleasant to speculate, as the curtain falls, upon the chances of happiness in store for a wife who has promised to fly, and a husband who had passed his years in unfaithfulness.'[29] Augustin Filon, writing four years after the original production, echoed that impression of the play's ending and of what it augured for the future happiness of Susan and James: 'to judge

[27] [Anon.], 'At the Play', *Observer*, 7 October 1894, p. 6
[28] [Anon.], 'Criterion Theatre', *Standard*, 4 October 1894, p. 3.
[29] [Anon.], 'London Correspondence', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 4 October 1894, p. 5.

by his hungry glances at her whilst he helps her off with her opera cloak, I am afraid we are witnesses of a fresh misunderstanding. The love that she is offered and the love she wants are not the same love.'[30] The audience response demonstrates the unsettling effect of the play's ambiguous ending. It may close with the wife's return to her husband, but it is hardly a happy reconciliation. Like many of the marriages described in *Is Marriage a Failure?*, the parties remain together primarily for reasons of convenience, appearance and economic necessity.

In the publicity that preceded its opening, the play was described as a 'New and Original Comedy'. [31] However, it was plainly not a 'comedy' in the generic sense of the word, that is to say, 'a drama written in a light, amusing or satirical style, and with a happy or conciliatory ending'.[32] If it wasn't a comedy, then, what was it? A detailed discussion of dramatic genres, and in particular the heavily-contested concept of tragedy, is beyond the scope of this thesis, but what is clear is that Jones had meant the play to be both ambiguous and serious in purpose.[33] Jones declared the seriousness of his intentions in the preface to the published text, which took the form of a dedicatory letter addressed to 'Mrs. Grundy', the personification of Victorian prudery. Heavy with irony, the letter expresses concern that people might be in doubt as to the exact moral of the story, which he summarises as follows: 'that as women cannot retaliate openly, they may retaliate secretly — and *lie*! And a thoroughly shocking moral it is, now we have got it.' Jones concludes the letter with the words 'P.S. My comedy isn't a comedy at all. It's a tragedy dressed up as a comedy' (107). Jones is using the term 'tragedy' here not to describe a dramatic genre, but in its more colloquial sense of 'a shocking or lamentable event or situation'.[34] *The Case of Rebellious Susan* has the narrative arc of a comedy, but the ostensibly comedic ending cannot

[30] Filon, p. 250.
[31] See for example the advertisement in the *Morning Post*, 3 October 1894, p.4.
[32] Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'Comedy', meaning 2b <www.OED.com> [accessed 22 December 2018].
[33] For the history and contested meanings of the term 'tragedy', see George Steiner's 1961 book, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber Library edition, 1995). Steiner describes how the notion of tragedy as it originated in ancient Greece implies the action of divine, cosmic or supernatural forces 'which can neither be fully understood nor overcome by rational prudence,' and that the term therefore cannot be properly applied to the tracts of nineteenth-century playwrights like Ibsen and Shaw, where the problems that the playwrights dramatise could be resolved through technical and social means. In Steiner's memorable phrase, 'More pliant divorce laws could not alter the fate of Agamemnon; social psychiatry is no answer to *Oedipus.* But saner economic relations or better plumbing *can* resolve some of the grave crises in the drama of Ibsen.' (p. 8).
[34] Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'Tragedy', meaning 4a <www.OED.com> [accessed 22 December 2018].

hide the lamentable situation of Susan's continuing unhappiness, her miserable marriage and the sexual politics that give rise to it.

When considered in these terms, the ending of the play does indeed seem tragic. Just as Susan is intimidated by Kato, so she submits at the end to the platitudes of her female friends. Once Susan has been persuaded to return to her husband, Inez and Lady Darby endorse her acceptance of her position and her recognition of the futility of further resistance:

> LADY DARBY Why didn't you forgive him at first, Susan, and save us all this trouble?
> LADY SUSAN *(Sighs)* I wonder why I didn't.
> LADY DARBY You see, dear, we poor women cannot retaliate.
> LADY SUSAN I see.
> LADY DARBY We must be patient.
> INEZ And forgive the wretches till they learn constancy.
> LADY SUSAN I see.
> LADY DARBY And, dear, yours is a respectable average case after all.
> LADY SUSAN Yes, a respectable average case after all. (160-1)

It is difficult to tell exactly how these lines were delivered in performance, but the stage direction *'Sighs'* suggests a tone of resignation and defeat, which is reflected in Susan's monosyllabic responses and repetitions, and in her automaton-like acquiescence and echoing of the other characters' words. The final line of this exchange immediately precedes a change in mood – the butler enters to announce dinner – and the idea of the 'respectable average case' is left hanging in the air for the audience to contemplate as the characters exit and the curtain falls. Last off the stage are Inez and Kato, and their closing dialogue further invites the audience to reflect on the ambiguities and uncertainties of the play:

> SIR RICHARD What *was* there between Lucien and Sue at Cairo?
> INEZ *Honi soit qui mal y pense.*
> SIR RICHARD Yes, but that sermon was a very long one! Do women ever tell the truth about their little love affairs?
> INEZ Do men?
> SIR RICHARD No wise man ever tells.
> INEZ No wise woman ever tells. (161)

Jones leaves the audience with a series of open-ended questions, just as he had done in *Saints and Sinners* and *Judah*. The Anglo-Norman chivalric motto '*Honi soit qui mal y pense*' (meaning 'shame on him that thinks evil of it') emphasises the ambiguity: the significance of the situation depends on how the audience choose to regard it. Far from enforcing the

prevailing sexual *mores*, Jones is inviting the audience to carry the discussion on after the play, and to consider whether change is desirable in the real world.

In *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, Jones used ambiguity in a truly subversive way, to negotiate a course between what he wanted to write, what Wyndham and the Lord Chamberlain's Office would accept, and what would be understood by his West End audience. There is ambiguity about whether Susan's rebellion takes the form of a sexual affair; ambiguity about the moral standing of the *raisonneur* and thus the validity of his moral pronouncements upon Susan's behaviour; ambiguity about whether the play is intended to be viewed as a comedy or a tragedy; and ambiguity as to whether the ending represents a willing acceptance of society's imperfect values, or the pitiable capitulation of an independent female spirit.

The dimension of deliberate ambiguity seems to have been lost on more recent generations of commentators. Fan cited Kato's admonishment to Elaine to 'Go home, and don't worry the world any more about this tiresome sexual business' as 'the distillation of Sir Richard's – and Jones's – wisdom'.[35] More recently, Eltis has criticised *The Case of Rebellious Susan* for its 'stubbornly anti-feminist message'.[36] However, when one considers the constraints to which the playwright was subject, and the ambiguities and ironies that he wrote into the play, the characterisation of the play as *anti*-feminist seems too harsh. Although the ending of *Rebellious Susan* ostensibly reinforces the conventional *mores* of the day – the errant wife returns to her husband, her reputation intact –there is a tension between this outwardly comedic conclusion and the play's sympathetic treatment of Susan (and indeed the playwright's own later description of the play as a tragedy). Her final words, as she exits with James, are an appeal: 'Love me, Jim! I want to be loved!' (161). Her submission to convention is the result of coercion by the *raisonneur* and others, and the audience is invited to pity rather than condemn. The reviewer for the progressive *Reynolds's Newspaper* summarised the target of the play most clearly: 'In "The Case of Rebellious Susan", the mask of innocence which is supposed to adorn Society is ruthlessly torn away, exposing the petty weaknesses of our blue-blooded brethren.'[37] The London correspondent for the *Glasgow Herald* observed that Jones had used comedy to address a serious subject that might not otherwise be discussed: 'There are many bright,

[35] Fan, p. 36.
[36] Eltis, *Acts of Desire*, p. 147.
[37] [Anon.], 'Drama, Music, and Art', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 7 October 1894, p. 5.

brilliant lines in the play, but the subject itself is very daring and hardly agreeable.'[38] The play is a criticism of the sexual double standards and hypocrisy of the elite society that was watching itself represented on the Criterion's stage, wrapped up in humour and given a conventional story arc because of the constraints under which the playwright had to work.

Mrs. Dane's Defence[39]

Jones and Wyndham revisited questions of marriage and sexual conduct in two later works, *The Liars* (1897), which was discussed in Chapter One, and *Mrs. Dane's Defence* (1900). The writing of these plays appears to have caused less friction than the earlier work: according to one commentator, 'After *Rebellious Susan* Wyndham's battle was won, and Jones embraced Victorian convention with the fervor of a convert […] By 1900, the date of *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, Jones had become a stalwart of the establishment.'[40] However, this is too superficial an assessment of the later play, in which Jones uses the same techniques of ambiguity and irony to undercut the conventional arc of the story and so to cause the audience to question the morality of the ending and the acceptability of the social conventions that it reflects.

The action of the play takes place in Sunningwater, an affluent town in the Home Counties, where a young man, Lionel Carteret, has become engaged to a young woman who goes by the name of Lucy Dane. A local busybody, Mrs. Bulsome-Porter, learns that Mrs. Dane bears a strong resemblance to one Felicia Hindemarsh, who five years before had been involved in a sex scandal in Vienna: an innocent young governess who was seduced by her married employer and had a child. Over the course of the play, the truth comes to light. Felicia Hindemarsh had taken a new name in order to start a new life, and – as Lucy Dane – achieved a measure of social respectability. The story concerns her gradual unmasking, her increasingly desperate attempts to protect herself, and her final expulsion from Sunningwater society.

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[38] [Anon.], 'Our London Correspondence', *Glasgow Herald*, 4 October 1894, p. 5.
[39] Henry Arthur Jones, *Mrs. Dane's Defence* (London: Macmillan & Company, 1905). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *Mrs. Dane's Defence* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.
[40] Rowell, pp. 206-7.

The play was produced at the luxurious new Wyndham's Theatre in October 1900. When the theatre opened in November 1899, it held about 1,200 people, '540 on satin-upholstered tip-up chairs, the rest on undivided pit and gallery benches.'[41] For the opening production (a revival of *David Garrick* by T.W. Robertson) seats ranged from 1s. in the gallery, to 10s. 6d for stalls seats, and on up to £6 6s. for the most expensive private boxes. In *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, as in *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, the smart society audience in the boxes and the stalls would see its conduct reflected back in ways that were not always flattering; and the two plays are similar in a number of other ways. Structurally, the heart of each play involves a cross-examination to get to the truth about the sexual past of the eponymous woman. In each play, there is a young male lover who is the protégé of the *raisonneur.* In each play, the *raisonneur* himself is an eminent lawyer, played by Wyndham: in *Mrs. Dane,* his name is Sir Daniel (Mr. Justice) Carteret, who is a judge and Lionel's adoptive father. In each play, too, the *raisonneur* is complemented by an attractive and intelligent younger widow, to whom the *raisonneur* has a romantic attachment: in this case Lady Eastney, described as '*about thirty, bright, fashionable, handsomely dressed*' (19), and played by Mary Moore. During the course of the play, Carteret intervenes to scotch Mrs. Bulsome-Porter's gossip and allegations by proving forensically that 'Mrs. Dane' is indeed who she claims to be; and when – at the end of a long two-hander in Act III – the truth is finally revealed, it is Sir Daniel who persuades Mrs. Dane to abandon any claim on Lionel and to return to her child. Like *Rebellious Susan*, *Mrs. Dane's Defence* ends with the restoration of polite society's outward norms, but not necessarily happily: Susan goes back to her loathsome husband, and Felicia is banished.

The *raisonneur*'s main justification for insisting on this course of action is truly extraordinary to the modern reader. It comes in a duologue with Lady Eastney, and it is worth quoting at length:

> SIR DANIEL If he were your son would you wish him to marry her? Would you wish all his after-life to be poisoned by the thought that she had deceived him, that she had belonged to another man, and that man and his child still living? Wouldn't you wish your boy to have the love of a girl who could give him all herself? Do, for heaven's sake, let us get rid of all this sentimental cant and sophistry about this woman-business *(unconsciously getting very heated)*. A man demands the treasure of a woman's purest love. It's what he buys and pays for with the strength of his arm and the sweat of his brow. It's the condition on which he makes her his wife and fights the world for her and his children. It's his fiercest instinct, and he does well to guard

[41] Glasstone, p. 104.

it; for it's the very mainspring of a nation's health and soundness. And whatever I've done, whatever I've been myself, I'm quite resolved my son sha'n't marry another man's mistress. There's the plain sense of the whole matter, so let us have no more talk about patching up things that ought not to be patched up, that can't be patched up, and that sha'n't be patched up if I can stop them from being patched up!

LADY EASTNEY *(Looks at him very much amused.)* I wouldn't get into a temper about it if I were you. (109)

Carteret focusses on the notion of female 'purity', and his tirade combines a number of justifications for the exclusion of Mrs. Dane. There is simple sexual jealousy (Lionel would eventually be 'poisoned by the thought […] that she had belonged to another man'). There is financial power and the legal ownership of women ('the treasure of a woman's purest love' is what the man 'buys and pays for'). There is chivalry ('he fights the world for her'). There are notions of eugenics and national identity (female purity is 'the very mainspring of a nation's health and soundness'). However, Carteret's verbose self-assurance is punctured immediately by a single line from Lady Eastney, the tone of which is indicated by Jones in the stage direction, and which undermines the import of his words.

Furthermore, as in *Rebellious Susan*, the *raisonneur*'s own moral authority in the matter is ambiguous. The words 'whatever I've done' in the above extract allude to Carteret's own youthful affair with a married woman, the late mother of Lionel. Carteret has a long speech in Act I in which he describes this affair, which was with the wife of one his clients (surely a breach of professional codes of conduct as well as moral ones), and which culminated in a planned elopement that was only prevented by the woman's illness and death. After that, Carteret says, 'I became successful, and met other women; had my affairs with them – I won't call them love-affairs – some of them graceful, some of them romantic, none of them quite degrading, but all of them empty and heartless' (25): his hypocrisy in dictating Lionel's romantic life is clear.

As in *Rebellious Susan*, too, Carteret uses physical force against the young woman at the critical point in his cross-examination of her. This is not immediately plain on the face of the Macmillan edition, but the Samuel French edition – the acting edition that records in the form of marginal notes the prompt's description of how the actors moved around the stage – includes the following additional stage directions against the dialogue (111-2):

SIR DANIEL I'm going to prove that you are Lucy Dane[2] – *if you are Lucy Dane. [She looks at him.]*

[2] *Taking a step towards her*

SIR DANIEL Does Risby know who you are?

MRS. DANE What do you mean?

SIR DANIEL Does Risby know who you are?

MRS. DANE Yes – he knows that I am Mrs. Dane.

SIR DANIEL The cousin of Felicia Hindemarsh.

MRS. DANE *[After a pause.]* Yes.

SIR DANIEL You told Risby, a mere acquaintance, that Felicia Hindemarsh was your cousin and you didn't tell Lionel, you didn't tell me?

MRS. DANE I – I *[She looks at him]* I – oh – I'll answer you no more. Believe what you please of me! I want no more of your help! Let me go![1]

[1] *Sir Daniel holds her.*

SIR DANIEL *[Stopping her]* How much does Risby know?

MRS. DANE Don't I tell you he knows I am Mrs. Dane?

SIR DANIEL Woman, you're lying! You are Felicia Hindemarsh!

This use of force by the *raisonneur*, his own morally equivocal sexual past, and the casual puncturing of his pomposity and self-assurance by Lady Eastney, all suggest that as an arbiter of moral values, Carteret is compromised. His moral authority is further reduced by a fourth act sub-plot to get Mrs. Bulsome-Porter to retract her remarks about Mrs. Dane, by threatening her with an action for slander which is known to be unjustifiable.

As noted earlier, the possibility of such moral ambiguity has been considered by Eltis, but Eltis stopped short of recognising that it might be intentional. However, given the number of factors operating to subvert Carteret's authority, it is hard to believe that this is anything other than a deliberate strategy on Jones' part. John Russell Taylor observed that the final act of the play is 'full or ironies and ambiguities which can hardly be anything but intentional,' and the same applies to the character of Carteret specifically.[42] The original audience clearly felt

[42] John Russell Taylor, *The Rise and Fall of the Well-Made Play* (London: Methuen & Co., 1967), p. 48.

ambivalent about him, as the first night notices show, and his equivocal status undermined the views that he articulates. The *Daily Telegraph* described Carteret as 'a more or less oleaginous impostor' and noted 'the hypocritical bias of his airy philosophisings' before concluding: 'The moral of Mr. Jones's play is that the law is harder for a woman than for a man; but it is nevertheless a trifle hard to have this enforced from the lips of such a plausible fraud as Mr. Justice Carteret.'[43] The *Morning Post* disliked 'the cynical extortion from the meddling Mrs. Bulsome-Porter of a written apology to Mrs. Dane for the attacks on her character,' as did the *Graphic*.[44] The writer of the 'World of Women' column in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* recognised that discrediting the *raisonneur* was a deliberate dramaturgical strategy on Jones' part:

> I think it must have been the intention of the author, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, to evoke the sympathy of the audience for the unhappy woman, and he certainly has done so with complete success, more especially as the man who condemns her does not take up his odious office of judge with clean hands.[45]

To the original audience, then, the authority of the *raisonneur* was understood to be at best questionable. One must therefore also question whether these views are indeed those of the author, and whether the *raisonneur* is indeed the author's 'mouthpiece'. If so, Jones put his views into the mouth of a character who was clearly understood by the audience to be both deceitful and hypocritical: an authority figure with a questionable sexual history of his own, and a readiness to connive in the unjust extraction of Mrs. Bulsome-Porter's apology.

One effect of Carteret's relentlessness was to move the audience to pity the heroine. Once Carteret has forced Felicia to admit her true identity, she tells her real story, which begins the same way as those of Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Ruth Hilton: an innocent village girl, flattered by the attentions of a rich, older man. In this case, the man was married, and when the affair came to light, the wife killed herself and the man went out of his mind. The girl, now pregnant with the illegitimate child, was taken in by a cousin in Canada, who gave out that she was a widow. This is Mrs. Dane's real defence: it is her account of how she came to be an outcast, and the moral justification of her efforts to conceal her history behind a new

[43] [Anon.], 'Wyndham's Theatre', *Daily Telegraph,* 10 October 1900.
[44] [Anon.], 'Wyndham's Theatre', *Morning Post,* 10 October 1900, p. 6; W. Moy Thomas, 'Two New Plays', *Graphic*, 13 October 1900, p. 543.
[45] [Anon.], 'The World of Women', *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 27 October 1900, p. 263.

name. Carteret may have spoken for society, but the audience overwhelmingly took the side of the fallen girl. The correspondent for the *Leeds Mercury* reported that Lena Ashwell presented 'a most sympathetic picture' as 'a woman who went wrong when hardly more than a child'.[46] The *Graphic* described how 'the poor, hunted creature' dropped to the ground 'overwhelmed with grief and shame' at the end of her cross-examination by the 'pitiless' Carteret.[47] The *Pall Mall Gazette* noted Lena Ashwell's 'power to express poignant agony', and expressly linked the character of Mrs. Dane to Hardy's tragic heroines: 'What a Tess Mr. Hardy has missed in her!'[48] The audience would have recognised that the story of Mrs. Dane followed a similar trajectory to that of Tess, the 'pure woman' of Hardy's novel – from seduced maiden, to mistress, to outcast – and responded accordingly.[49]

Critics also noted the extent of female antagonism to Mrs. Dane. Just as several female characters in *Rebellious Susan* are complicit in the sexual double standard, in *Mrs. Dane* the exclusion of the fallen woman is primarily the result of female antipathy, coupled with male inertia. The *Daily News* noted that whilst the men in the play are 'enraptured' with her, 'The ladies, on the other hand, and particularly the censorious and shrewishly jealous wife of Mr. Bulsom-Porter, and leader of the scandal mongers, are cold and distant.'[50] The *Graphic* likewise observed that it was 'mainly from the malignity of women that Mrs. Dane suffers, though the offensive investigations into her private life and character are carried on with the connivance, or, at least, with the acquiescence of the male members of the little community, even in the lady's presence'.[51] The persecution of Mrs. Dane, then, was recognised by the audience to be the consequence of a combination of female censoriousness and male complacency. Carteret, who towards the end of the play says that Mrs. Dane 'shall find me the truest and best of friends to her and her child' (122), nevertheless refuses to allow her to put her past behind her: she is not good enough to marry his adopted son. Lionel, too, could save her by marrying her, and indeed threatens to do so regardless of what society thinks, but

[46] [Anon.], 'From Our London Correspondent', *Leeds Mercury*, Wednesday, 10 October 1900, p. 4.
[47] W. Moy Thomas, p. 543. (Spelling corrected.)
[48] 'Theatrical Notes', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 October 1900, issue 11089, p. 1.
[49] An exception to the prevailing tone of sympathy for Mrs. Dane was the review in the *Manchester Guardian*, which dismissed her as an 'erring and mendacious woman': [Anon.], 'New Play at Wyndham's Theatre', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 October 1900, p. 10. Such opinions were, however, in the minority.
[50] [Anon.], 'Mrs. Dane's Defence', *Daily News*, 10 October 1900, p. 4.
[51] W. Moy Thomas, p. 543.

in the end he also acquiesces in the breaking of the engagement. All the power relationships in the play – gender, class, money, seniority – operate to exclude her.

As in *Rebellious Susan*, Jones again invites the audience to consider whether this state of affairs is as it should be. In a short passage in Act IV, Lady Eastney bombards Carteret with a series of questions that challenge the hypocrisy of their social circle:

> Aren't we all humbugs? Isn't it all a sham? Don't we all have one code on our lips and another in our hearts, one set of rules to admonish our neighbours, and another to guide our own conduct? Why should I lecture that poor woman on her duty to Society? Why should I take her name off my visiting list, and pretend that I can't know her? (107)

When Carteret responds that women are free to conceal their pasts, just like men, but 'at any rate the outside of the platter must be clean' – another questionable moral pronouncement – Lady Eastney moves on to attack him directly, and in particular the sexual double standard that he articulates:

> Oh, aren't you [men] Pharisees and tyrants, all of you? And don't you make cowards and hypocrites of all of us? Don't you lead us into sin, and then condemn us for it? Aren't you first our partners, and then our judges? (108)

This short outburst conceals a complex set of power relationships. A young woman is 'led into sin' by an older and more worldly man; other men then condemn her for it, but the worst censoriousness is shown by the women who turn their backs on their fallen sister and would seek to exclude her from their company. Both sexes are hypocritical in their treatment of Lucy Dane, and it is Lady Eastney, not Sir Daniel Carteret, who expresses the real message of the play when she turns Carteret's severe and hypocritical moralising back on himself, and the rest of Sunningwater society along with him: the true *raisonneur* of this play – the mouthpiece of the author, if there is one at all – is actually a *raisonneuse.*

Mrs. Dane's Defence is part of a pattern of social criticism that runs through Jones' dramatic output, asking the audience to consider their own views of the social *mores* being played out on the stage in front of them. In this way, Jones conveys his progressive message – that the sexual conduct of men and women should be judged by the same standards, and that women should not be excluded from society because of youthful sexual conduct in which they were

blameless – through a subversive text, the message of which is in tension with the ideologically-sound arc that the story describes.

The Princess's Nose (1902)[52]

Audiences found *The Princess's Nose* a more problematic play than either *The Case of Rebellious Susan* or *Mrs. Dane's Defence*. The plot concerns the marriage of the Prince and Princesse de Chalençon, and social class is a particularly important aspect of the power relationships in the play. The Prince is a French aristocrat living in England; the Princess, *née* Norah Langrish, is a daughter of minor English gentry who has married into the French aristocracy. Into this marriage comes Mrs. Malpas, a childhood friend of Norah who had used to make fun of her for having a red nose. She had also been, in those younger days, Norah's social equal; but Norah has married 'up' into French aristocracy, whilst Mrs. Malpas has married 'down' into trade and is now the wife of a dull but respectable brewer. Over the course of the play, the Prince determines to abandon the Princess and their son, and elope with Mrs. Malpas to Paris: an ending that is prevented only by a carriage accident in which Mrs. Malpas is involved, and which results in her own nose being severely disfigured. The action of the play takes place over the course of three days, during a hunting party at the Prince's house in the West Country. The theme of illicit sexual conduct is raised in an expository opening dialogue between two elderly scandalmongers, one of whom declares: 'You know I can be trusted in these matters. I never said a word about Miss Mompesson's – misfortune, till the nurse was actually in the house' (3). This is remarkably explicit, when one considers that Jones' earlier one-act play *Welcome Little Stranger* (1885) had been refused a licence because of its mere allusion to childbirth, which the Examiner of Plays had found 'suggestive and coarse'.[53]

The title of the play is intended to arouse curiosity. The critic for the *Sunday Times* noted at the time that the play was 'strangely-named', and the American critic Richard Cordell, writing in 1932, found it 'unaccountable' that a dramatist who could invent titles like *Saints and Sinners* and *The Liars* should attach 'such a clumsy title' to his play.[54] However, the nose

[52] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Princess's Nose* (London: Chiswick Press, 1902). All quotations from *The Princess's Nose* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.
[53] Stephens, p. 140.
[54] H.A.K., 'Plays and Players: the Past Theatrical Season', *Sunday Times*, 13 July 1902, p. 2; Cordell, p. 167.

is loaded with sexual significance – something that critics have generally overlooked – and I propose that Jones was doing something very specific and deliberate in choosing this title, by challenging the audience to consider what the nose stands for. There is a long-established association (in psychology, literature, art and other fields) between the nose and the genitals, both male and female. In a 2006 article on bodily mutilation, the anthropologist Jurgen Wasim Frembgen began with a brief survey of the sexual symbolism of the nose around the world: citing Freud, Bakhtin and others, Frembgen observed that: 'In addition to the fact that both the nose and the private parts have orifices, the peak of the nose is said to correspond to the clitoris and the nostrils are said to remind us of the vulva' and also notes other aspects of the close relationship between the olfactory organ and eroticism/sexuality, including the importance of smell in sexual activity and the fact that when a person is sexually aroused, 'both the nose and the genitals are filled with blood, get hot, and begin to swell'.[55] Bearing this in mind, and given the sexual subject-matter of the play, the disfigurement of Mrs. Malpas' nose has to be read on two levels. At the superficial level, it provides a *deus ex machina* ending that results in the errant Prince returning to his wife and retribution for Mrs. Malpas' youthful mockery of Norah's appearance. At a deeper level, however, it can be read as genital disfigurement as well: the Prince can have no possible use for Mrs. Malpas if her nose (genitals) no longer functions, and she no longer has the capacity for sexual pleasure. The Princess's 'nose', which Mrs. Malpas had once made fun of, becomes of greater interest to the Prince once Mrs. Malpas had been disfigured.

That the audience is intended to look for this deeper meaning is suggested by the fact that, although Mrs. Malpas herself does not appear on the stage after the accident, the condition of her nose is dwelt upon in excessive detail in which the Princess seems to delight: there is 'bruising and tumefaction', a 'mulberry appearance', 'displacement of the cartilage of the alae nasi', making her 'liable to a running cold in the nose' with 'possibly considerable whistling, heavy breathing and some snoring', and 'the nose may be flattened on the face' (81-2). The emphasis on anatomical detail suggests that there is more going on than just simple poetic justice: Jones seems to be inviting the audience to consider what else is being suggested in terms of Mrs. Malpas' physiology. There is also a social significance to the injury. In many cultures, and across many periods of history, mutilation of the nose and other

[55] Jurgen Wasim Frembgen, 'Honour, Shame, and Bodily Mutilation. Cutting off the Nose among Tribal Societies in Pakistan', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, third series, 16 (2006), 243-60 (p. 244).

extreme forms of facial mutilation have been performed as a severe form of punishment, which in the case of women is particularly associated with sexual transgression. Frembgen gives instances from across the world, including the suggestion by a Swiss doctor in 1938 that 'all Jewish women, younger than 40, who had sexual relations with non-Jews, should have their noses cut off "because nothing is more ugly than the removal of the nose"'.[56] The disfigurement that Mrs. Malpas suffers can thus be regarded as implicitly a moral punishment for her planned adultery.[57]

The play opened at the Duke of York's Theatre on 11 March 1902, with Irene Vanbrugh in the role of the Princess, Gertrude Kingston as Mrs. Malpas, and H. B. Irving as the Prince.[58] The Duke of York's was another of the fashionable new West End venues, opened in 1892 and originally named the Trafalgar Square Theatre.[59] It had been leased to an American producer, Charles Frohman, in 1897: an early sign that the actor-manager system was coming to an end, as a new breed of dedicated, professional producers moved into theatre management and the staging of plays.[60] This perhaps accounts for the deeply dislikeable nature of most of the leading characters in the play: without an actor-manager dictating every aspect of the production, and demanding a role that would show him in a favourable light, Jones could depict a version of high society that is morally bankrupt in every respect.

The tone of the play is set early on, in the descriptions of the tableaux that are to be presented as an evening entertainment for the guests. The tableaux are being organised by Mr. Eglinton-Pyne: he is described as '*a poseur of thirty-five; tall and rather handsome, with a touch of the stage Italian or Spaniard; soft, plausible, insinuating, deferential manners to women*' (7),

[56] Frembgen, 245. See also Patricia Skinner, 'Defacing Women: The Gendering of Disfigurement' in P. Skinner, *Living with Disfigurement in Early Medieval Europe* (2017), pp. 133-58. <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/43264> [accessed 15 January2022].
[57] Another literary instance of female facial disfigurement as punishment for sexual misconduct, roughly contemporaneous with the plays discussed in this chapter, can be found in 'The Case of Lady Sannox' by Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle, published in the *Idler* in November 1893. The mutilation in this case involves not the nose, but the mouth and lips: another instance of organs associated with sexual pleasure.
[58] Not to be confused with Sir Henry Irving. H.B Irving (Harry Brodribb Irving) (1870-1919) was Sir Henry Irving's eldest son.
[59] John Earl and Michael Sell (eds.), *The Theatres Trust Guide to British Theatres, 1750-1950* (London: A&C Black, 2000), pp. 108-9.
[60] Charles Frohman (1856-1915) was a successful theatrical producer on both sides of the Atlantic. Apart from Jones, the playwrights whose work he produced included J.M Barrie: *Peter Pan* was first produced at the Duke of York's in 1904. Frohman died on the *Lusitania* and his body was washed up on the coast of County Cork. Henry Arthur Jones was one of the pall-bearers at the funeral.

and is referred to by one character as looking like 'a damaged Don Juan fished out of Madame Tussaud's' (7). It is clear that the tableaux are all principally concerned with the display of female bodies. The Princess is to pose as the Countess of Salisbury, the fourteenth-century noblewoman remembered for her affair with Edward III, who is said to have lost her garter whilst dancing at court. (When the other courtiers laughed at her, the king returned the garter with the words '*Honi soit qui mal y pense*', the same phrase that Jones also used towards the end of *The Case of Rebellious Susan* when Kato and Inez are speculating about Susan's sexual conduct.) The Princess's sixteen-year old niece, Daphne, is to pose as a dryad, dressed in 'Something soft and floating – a kind of green vapour' (9). One of the scandalmongers observes that 'The tableau man was flirting with the Princess all the morning, and [Daphne] has been flirting with the tableau man all the afternoon' (6). The atmosphere in the country house is sexually-charged, and the theme of illicit sexuality pervades the action of the play. Sexual affairs are discussed with striking directness, as will be illustrated by an examination of three separate exchanges: the scene in Act I between the Prince and Mrs. Malpas; the later Act I scene between the Princess and her uncle, Sir John Langrish, who is the play's *raisonneur*; and the long two-hander in Act III between the Princess and the Prince.

The first scene in which the Prince and Mrs. Malpas are alone together shows the negotiation of the terms of their future affair. The Prince has been attracted to Mrs. Malpas since their first meeting, the preceding year: they have flirted openly, but he complains that after many months 'I am still out of doors in the cold' (14). It is Mrs. Malpas who takes the initiative and proposes to the Prince that he should meet her in Paris whilst her husband is on business in Brussels – but not until she has certain guarantees. She declares that she will be 'appallingly frank' and demands to know from the Prince whether he would stand by her in the event of a scandal: 'My present position [i.e. as the wife of Malpas] is a very small, unenviable one. But it's quite secure and respectable. If I lose it, I have nothing; no money; no friends; no influence; I simply go under. I don't want to go under' (14). It is partly the middle-class pre-occupation with respectability that necessitates the discussion. Aristocratic men can flout the moral law with impunity; middle-class women cannot. Mrs. Malpas needs protection because her husband would disown her if he learned of the affair:

> MRS. MALPAS He wouldn't hush it up. Even if he wished his people wouldn't let him. They're all high-and-dry-British-Church-cum-British-beer-cum-British-stupidity-

cum-British-county-fogeyism. Suppose there's a scandal? Suppose I have to burn my boats?

PRINCE Your boats? That is Mr. Malpas?

MRS. MALPAS Mr. Malpas, mild and pale ales, double stout, respectability, everything – what will my future position be?

PRINCE That will be in my hands.

MRS. MALPAS Yes, I know. Would you continue to recognize me –

PRINCE To recognize you?

MRS. MALPAS Before the world; before my world. People won't dare to cut me while you hold on to me, but they'll drop me the moment you drop me. Suppose there's a scandal, and you have to choose between me and her? Which will it be? Me or the Princess? *[He doesn't answer. She waits a little and then laughs a little satiric laugh.]* (15)

The exchange shows the dilemma of the unhappily married middle-class woman of the *fin de siècle.* She cannot jeopardise the financial and social standing conferred by her married status unless and until she has some tangible assurance that she will not in turn be abandoned by her lover. Mrs. Malpas shows agency, initiative and intelligence, but the scene also makes clear just how dependent she is on the protection of a man. Jones places on the stage the financial and social considerations that need to be taken into account by the middle-class woman who would leave her husband, and hence the necessity for the kept woman or courtesan to negotiate the terms of the arrangement as a commercial transaction. Jones does not criticize Mrs. Malpas for this: on the contrary, the intensity of the speech that he gives her about British stupidity and fogeyism suggests that he shares her anger and frustration. She is not a scheming temptress, but a woman trapped in an intolerable situation, and the '*little satiric laugh*' underlines that this is the case: another instance of Jones conveying meaning through the stage directions rather than the lines.

In the Act I duologue between the Princess and her uncle (24-9), Sir John advises the Princess how to retain her husband. When the furious Princess tells him that she intends to cause a scandal, his response is to warn her against it:

SIR JOHN [*Quietly.*] What good will that do? What will it lead to? First of all, you'll throw your husband into this woman's arms; force him to protect her openly – perhaps for life. Is that what you want? Meantime what will become of you? Either you'll have to come round and forgive him – or – you can get a separation and an allowance; take away your boy; bring him up without a father; lead a deadly dull, unnatural life all by yourself; or perhaps form some other attachment, become *déclassé* –

PRINCESS I couldn't do that! You know I couldn't! Oh, it's a hateful world for women! Hateful! Hateful! Isn't it a hateful world for women?

SIR JOHN Well, if I had made it – I don't wish to say anything disrespectful of Providence, but I should certainly have been more gallant to you ladies. However, as it is, I don't see the least hope for any considerable adjustment of the seventh commandment.

PRINCESS Ah, it's all very well for you to jest, Uncle Jack, but I can't see it as a jest at all. (26-7)

The *raisonneur's* advice to the Princess is no different from that of Inez and Lady Darby at the end of *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, that the wronged wife should acquiesce and disregard her husband's adultery. The Princess's outburst, with its impassioned repetition of 'hateful', expresses her feelings unequivocally, and the final line of this exchange is reminiscent of Jones' description of the earlier play as 'tragedy dressed as comedy'. Like Mrs. Malpas – and indeed like Susan Harabin and Lucy Dane – the Princess is trapped by social convention. The words that Jones gives his *raisonneur* may be sound advice about how to survive in the society that his characters occupy, but it seems unlikely that Jones endorses the *status quo* that both Mrs. Malpas and the Princess criticise in such a vigorous and unambiguous way. It is indeed a hateful world, for both women.

The core of Langrish's advice to the Princess is stated in the starkest terms:

> If you've lost his heart, you must set to work and win it back. I'm afraid there's only one way to win a man's heart, and that is to make yourself the most attractive woman in his vicinity. Win him! Win him! Never let him see you for a moment in a dress, or a mood, or an attitude that isn't becoming to you. (27)

This Act I speech is echoed by Sir John near the start of Act III, after Mrs. Malpas has left for Paris, but before the Prince has departed: 'Don't throw up the sponge when you need all your strength and courage […] Now's your chance. Win him! Win him! Win him!' (55). The *raisonneur's* advice reflects the amoral world of Darwinian competition: if the women in this social world are to survive, they have to compete to attract and then retain the protection of a man.

This exhortation to 'win him' immediately precedes the scene between the Prince and the Princess, in which she endeavours to entice him to remain with her. The dialogue is couched in coolly formal terms, both of them recognising that the Prince is about to leave her but neither of them explicitly acknowledging it. The night is cold outside, and the Princess

suggests that the Prince send his carriage driver to the kitchen to get something warm to eat before they leave. She tries a range of strategies at different points in the scene: she is coquettish ('Everyone has been paying me compliments tonight. Haven't you a little one to spare?' (56)); she reminds him of his son (You'll come and see Victor […] You needn't disturb him. He's sure to be fast asleep. Won't you come and look at him?' (57)); she flirts ('I've ordered the loveliest little cosy fire in my boudoir – and my new negligée has come from Paris – "instead of which" you go careering over bleak commons at midnight' (61)); she teases, '*edging herself affectionately against him*' ('"Will you walk into my parlour?" said the poor little fly to the stupid old spider. What does the stupid old spider say?' (62)); she sends for drinks and cigars to make her husband comfortable and encourage him to remain (64); she puts on a kind of private fashion show, changing into her new negligée and showing it off for him (66-8).[61] When even this is unsuccessful to keep him there, she ends up pleading in the most direct and abject way:

> Henri, don't go! Don't go! I can't bear you should leave me! Don't go! My heart will break if you do! You shan't go. *[Sobbing.]* I won't let you. I love you! I love you! Don't go! I want you to stay! I must have you stay with me! Please! Please! Please! Say yes! No, don't speak! You will stay! You will? (68)

The short sentences and urgent repetitions convey her utter desperation: she has tried everything she can, and there is nothing left but to beg. For modern readers, as for the original audience, this is a troubling scene. Jones had established the theme of the sexualised display of partially undressed female bodies with his description of the tableaux earlier in the play. The tableaux themselves are performed offstage, during the action of Act II, but Act III culminates in the Princess reducing herself to posing in her negligée in order to entice her vile husband to remain, and finally delivering this speech. The scene dramatizes the complete humiliation of a woman. Although it is impossible to discount the idea that some members of the audience would have taken pleasure in this spectacle, one imagines that many would have found it uncomfortable to watch.

[61] At the time of *The Princess's Nose,* the term 'negligée' simply denoted an item of loose, informal clothing. The *OED* definition includes 'A woman's light dressing gown, *esp.* one made of flimsy, semi-transparent fabric trimmed with ruffles, lace, etc.; (also) a nightgown'. As an instance of usage, *OED* cites J.M. Barrie's *Peter & Wendy* (1911): 'Tink,… if you don't get up and dress at once, I will open the curtains, and then we shall all see you in your *négligée*.' <www.OED.com> [accessed 16 September 2018].

The sexually-charged atmosphere of the first three Acts is superseded in the fourth and final Act by a prevailing mood of violence. The elopement between Mrs. Malpas and the Prince is prevented when the carriage in which she is travelling collides with a motor car, which results in Mrs. Malpas being disfigured. The Prince abandons Mrs. Malpas without a qualm, leaving her to return to her dull but dependable husband, and returns to the Princess. He also horsewhips Pyne for suggesting to other house guests that he, Pyne, has had a sexual relationship with the Princess, thus restoring the family honour – and perhaps, subtextually, transmuting into physical violence the sexual frustration of the Prince's own failed affair with Mrs. Malpas.

The ending of the play is also troubling. The Princess's apparent satisfaction at her rival's injury diminishes the sympathy that the audience may have felt for the Princess at the moment of her humiliation in the négligée scene, and the closing lines of the play are highly ambiguous. The Princess has been watching, through the parlour window, as the Prince whips Pyne in the stable yard outside, and she calls to him:

> PRINCESS Henri! Henri! That's enough! Henri, please, no more! Henri, please spare him! Please, for my sake!
>
> *[She stops, turns away. After a moment or two, the PRINCE enters, flushed, a horsewhip in his hand, which he throws down.]*
>
> PRINCE That is done! And now – tell me, I am forgiven?
>
> PRINCESS Yes, quite. But you will never, never do it again? *[Suddenly clasps him with a cry of --]* Ah, how long shall I keep you?!
>
> PRINCE For always – while you hold me as close as you do now.
>
> PRINCESS Are you sure? Are you sure? These hearts of ours are such vagabonds, such wanderers – Nothing binds them except love! *[He kisses her.*
>
> CURTAIN (91)

The Prince's answer to the question of how long the Princess will keep him is equivocal: his loyalty is conditional. Her final speech, apart from the trite sentiment of the curtain line, consists of two unanswered questions. The Princess thus has her husband restored to her, but only as a result of Mrs. Malpas' disfigurement, and not one of the major characters comes out of the situation in a good moral light. Pyne is revealed as a cheap and ungallant Lothario. Mrs. Malpas returns to her innocent, ignorant husband. The Princess, seen looking 'very radiant' as she prepares a poultice for Mrs. Malpas, is clearly taking pleasure in the mutilation of her rival. The Prince shows a capacity for cruel indifference to women, and for physical violence to other men. When J. M. Barrie wrote to congratulate Irene Vanbrugh after

the opening night, he questioned why the Princess would ever have wanted such a husband.[62] The ending is far from conventionally comedic, and its moral is ambiguous and open to discussion.

The discomfort that audiences felt is evident from the first-night notices. Critics reported that the public 'resented the vulgarity of feeling underlying the play' and received the play 'coldly'.[63] The *Sunday Times* observed that the ending of the play was 'highly problematical' because – as in *The Case of Rebellious Susan* – it was clear that in returning to the Princess in the final Act, the Prince was not doing anything more than 'take her on as a stop-gap until further conquests come his way'.[64] As with *Rebellious Susan,* audiences were unclear about Jones' intentions because the ambiguities made it impossible to extract a moral message that was consistent with the dominant ideology.

A different critique came from George Bernard Shaw, who wrote to Jones to say that he was 'profoundly shocked'.[65] Yet in describing what he referred to as 'the black spot in this most turpitudinous play,' namely the negligée scene, Shaw also acknowledged the truth of the situation that Jones was depicting: 'I quite admit that the proposition of your infamous old *raisonneur*, that a man's wife is simply his whore, and must compete with all the other whores if she is to retain her hold of him, is as a matter of fact true of a considerable number of marriages.' Shaw objected, however, 'that you of all men should embrace this position and make comedy capital out of it, as if it were an entirely satisfactory and sensible one': this, said Shaw, was 'completely unendurable'. Shaw's complaint is strikingly similar to the objection that Wyndham had expressed to Jones during the writing of *Rebellious Susan*: not that the situation shown in the play was untrue – one married woman is bullied into retaining her social position by lying about her adultery, another has to behave like a prostitute in order to compete with her sexual rival – but rather that this was not a subject for a comic treatment. This concern at the tone, rather than the truthfulness of the message, was echoed by Max Beerbohm in the *Saturday Review.* Beerbohm saw quite clearly that the *raisonneur* is not expressing Jones' own views – there was 'no reason for confusing Mr. Jones with the Princess's somewhat tedious uncle' – and that Jones himself 'does not subscribe, or wish to

[62] Irene Vanbrugh, *To Tell My Story* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1948), pp. 190-1.
[63] [Anon.], 'Duke of York's Theatre', *Times,* 12 March 1902, p. 10. [Anon.], '"P.I.P" Playgoer"', *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times,* 22 March 1902, p. 182.
[64] H.A.K., 'Plays and Players: "The Princess's Nose"', *Sunday Times,* 16 March 1902, p. 6.
[65] G.B. Shaw, letter to Jones dated 22 March 1902. Quoted in D.A. Jones, pp. 211-3.

convert us, to the doctrine that a young wife, neglected by her husband, should bar no means of attracting his attention'.[66] Beerbohm's concern, like Shaw's, was more that the play was artistically unbalanced, creating uncomfortable entertainment out of troubling situations.

Conclusion

In this respect, *The Princess's Nose* is consistent with both *Mrs. Dane's Defence* and *The Case of Rebellious Susan.* These plays about the containment of female sexuality share a common feature in unsettling their audiences and eschewing easy moral lessons. Their subversive pattern appears to have been a deliberate strategy on Jones' part: to write serious dramas that reflected the sexual *mores* of the smart society that patronised the Criterion, Wyndham's, and the Duke of York's; to critique the hypocrisy and moral emptiness of their social and sexual codes of conduct; to circumvent the constraints of censorship and commercial sensitivity by means of ambiguity and irony; and so to wrap up tragic stories and social criticism in the frameworks and conventions of the society comedy. Jones' dramatic attacks on *fin de siècle* sexual codes may lack the intensity and anger of Ibsen or Shaw, but I have shown in this chapter that, if we consider these texts in the context of their performance and audience reception, they are more forceful works than recent generations of critics have thought.

[66] Max Beerbohm, 'An Indiscreet Play', reproduced in Max Beerbohm, *More Theatres: 1893-1903* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969), 448-52, p. 450.

Chapter Five

‘There’s a great world-tussle coming’: race, empire and war in Jones’ late works

The year 1900 – the year of *Mrs. Dane’s Defence* – is widely regarded as the high-water mark of Jones’ popularity as a dramatist. Thomas Postlewait, for example, commented in his 2004 survey of the London stage from 1895 to 1918, that although ‘Jones continued to write social dramas throughout the Edwardian era, […] he never matched the popular success of *Mrs. Dane’s Defence*’.[1] Jones’ later successes included *Dolly Reforming Herself* (1908), *Mary Goes First* (1913) and *The Lie* (1914), the last of which was a major hit when it was first produced in New York, and again on its London production nine years later when Jones was seventy-two. However, Jones’ time after 1900 was taken up increasingly with writing and lecturing about the state of English drama, censorship and the foundation of a national theatre; and particularly, during the First World War and its aftermath, with generating nationalistic propaganda in the form of both plays and pamphlets. His propaganda plays include *Fall In, Rookies!* (1910) and *The Pacifists* (1917), the former a recruitment play, the latter a satire in which Jones ridiculed those who advocated the resolution of international disputes by means other than force. These plays show the persistence of Jones’ preoccupation with many of the matters that had concerned him in earlier years: the formation of masculine identity, sexual transgression, the hypocrisy of the English and their anxiety about social status. However, they also demonstrate some striking discontinuities: they were written for different audiences and different venues, for the music hall or palace of varieties rather than the West End stage or the provincial Theatre Royal; the social conscience evident in *Wealth* and *The Middleman* is superseded by impatience with, even contempt for, the working man; above all, Jones’ dramatic writing, which had previously been concerned primarily with matters of private morality, was now pressed into the service of the wartime state.

In this chapter, I consider Jones’ late plays of empire and war, together with certain of Jones’ non-dramatic interventions of the war period. These works respond to Britain’s changing imperial and military fortunes over the course of time: the more Jones felt England and the

[1] Thomas Postlewait, ‘The London stage, 1895-1918’ in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, ed. by Baz Kershaw, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, III (2004), pp. 34-59 (p. 44).

Empire to be in danger (from both external and internal forces), the more nationalistic and reactionary his writing became. The violence and racism of British army officers towards their Indian enemies and allies alike, in Jones' final play of the nineteenth century, *Carnac Sahib* (1899), develops into still more violent anti-German sentiments articulated in shockingly graphic terms in the unproduced *Finding Themselves* (1917). The imperialist and nationalist attitudes in these late works are a theatrical expression of the shifting imperial anxieties of the *fin-de-siècle*, the widespread xenophobia and fear of invasion that prevailed as the new century dawned, and the anti-German propaganda of the First World War. I argue in this chapter that Jones' theatrical critique of England and the English that I discussed in earlier chapters – the subversive attacks on hypocrisy, religiosity, Philistinism and the social and sexual *mores* of the elite – are abandoned in the War years and replaced by dramas that are intended to encourage national unity and service in the face of a potentially existential threat to the Empire and the homeland; that these wartime plays were specifically written for different venues in order to engage different audiences from those that frequented the expensive West End theatres; and that Jones' change of thematic direction is part of a wider trend, in which leading writers and actors willingly complied in the co-option of the London stage by the government of the day.

The drama of the First World War is a comparatively unexplored field of study. As L. J. Collins observed in the Introduction to *Theatre at War, 1914-18* (1998), 'To judge by the paucity of writing about the stage for the period 1914-18 it seems that theatre historians regard the war years as of little consequence.'[2] This sentiment was echoed more than a decade later by Mary Luckhurst who noted, in 'A Wounded Stage: Drama and World War I' (2010), that 'the critical neglect of plays about the Great War is perplexing'.[3] This is changing, and many wartime plays have been unearthed and studied in detail over the last quarter-century.[4] However, the works that we now think of as the most significant plays

[2] L. J. Collins, *Theatre at War, 1914-1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), p. 2.
[3] Mary Luckhurst, 'Drama and World War I', in *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880-2005*, ed. by Mary Luckhurst (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 301-15 (p. 301).
[4] There are now several important works that deal with the English theatre of the First World War (by which I mean both plays written during the period 1914-18 and plays written about the conflict in later years). Apart from Collins and Luckhurst, see Heinz Kosok, *The Theatre of War: The First World War in British and Irish Drama* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), and *British Theatre and the Great War, 1914–1919: New Perspectives*, ed. by Andrew Maunder (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). A. D. Harvey's *A Muse of Fire: Literature, Art and War* (London and Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon Press, 1998) also touches on First World War theatre, although it is broader in both its historical and cultural scope.

about the war were only written after the events they describe – in some cases, decades after. Well-known instances include R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End* (first produced in 1928, and still revived with some regularity) and Sean O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie* of the same year; Joan Littlewood and Theatre Workshop's *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1963); and Peter Whelan's *Accrington Pals* (1981). These plays all present resistance and critique: they address both the enormous national trauma that the war inflicted, and its human cost for individuals and families. From today's perspective, it is strange to think that the theatre ever seriously engaged with the First World War from anything other than an anti-war stance: given that *The Trojan Women* and *Lysistrata* were first performed in Athens in the fifth century BC, the anti-war play is as ancient as European theatre itself.

Historically, however, nationalist and patriotic dramas abounded on the wartime London stage. That this should be so is unsurprising. Political and military leaders recognised the potential of the theatre to stir up strong emotions in an audience – one of the principal reasons for the persistence of the anti-theatrical prejudice in England from the Puritan era to the late-nineteenth century, as I discussed in Chapter Two – and saw that it could be harnessed to arouse patriotic sentiment in the service of recruitment and morale, while censorship could be used to suppress dissenting voices. Even Wilfred Owen, whose personal testimonies of the horrors of trench warfare are among the most vivid and enduring artistic responses to the war, exercised caution in choosing what to publish at the time: as editor of *The Hydra*, the magazine set up at the Craiglockhart War Hospital for Neurasthenic Officers, Owen published works by himself and Sassoon, amongst others, but 'was careful not to print anything too critical of the war'.[5] If a poet like Owen censored himself in that way, in a publication intended for his own shell-shocked comrades, what prospect could there be of putting a truly critical response to the war on the stage?

That is not to say that there were absolutely no dissenting dramatic voices at the time. Vernon Lee (Violet Paget) read her anti-war allegory *The Ballet of the Nations* (1915) – a prose text mainly written in the form of dialogue – in a small theatre in Chelsea at a meeting of the Union of Democratic Control, the body founded by a group of Liberal and Labour dissidents in September 1914 to oppose the war that had just been declared by Asquith's Liberal

[5] Dominic Hibberd, *Wilfred Owen* (London: Phoenix, 2002), pp. 344-5.

government.[6] However, such works were scarce, and most of them suffered one of two fates: they were either suppressed or lost. Works that were suppressed include Shaw's *O'Flaherty V.C.* (1915), in which a decorated soldier gives an account of the effect of the war on his life: 'Don't talk to me or to any soldier of the war being right. No war is right; and all the holy water that Father Quinlan ever blessed couldnt *[sic]* make it right.'[7] The play attacks both the war and the consideration by the British government of conscription in Ireland. On this basis, it was never likely to get permission to be performed, and it was rejected by the Abbey Theatre (for whom Shaw had written it). Indeed, there is evidence that while the war went on, most playwrights refrained from even bothering to submit plays with a pacifist message to the Lord Chamberlain: the majority of such plays date from the 1930s.[8] Works that have been lost include the skits and sketches (possibly thousands of them) produced in smaller venues in Britain, or behind the lines in war zones. As Luckhurst observes, 'A great many revue scripts and music-hall sketches have been lost either because they could not easily be transcribed or because they were not valued as "literature",' but such performances could readily avoid censorship by including material (verbal or physical) that had not been submitted for official licensing.[9]

In the mainstream theatre, however, two broad trends emerged. One was an increasing preference among audiences, as the war continued, for escapist material over realist or experimental dramas: the most successful production of the period was Oscar Asche's *Chu Chin Chow* (1916), a musical version of *Ali Baba* that opened at His Majesty's Theatre in 1916 and ran for 2,235 performances before closing in 1921.[10] The other was the emergence of patriotic drama in support of the war effort. The critic A. B. Walkley, looking back in 1919 on the theatre's response to the war, described how the Ministry of Propaganda invited playwrights like Jones to produce work that encouraged patriotic sentiment, and continued:

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[6] Sally Blackburn-Daniels, 'A Theatrical Performance of Vernon Lee's *The Ballet of the Nations*', SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies 6:2 (2020), 225-233, 226-7 <https://skenejournal.skeneproject.it/index.php/JTDS/issue/view/25> [accessed 26 October 2010]. *The Ballet of the Nations* would become (after extensive reworking) an ambitious stage allegory entitled *Satan the Waster* (1920). Kosok includes a summary of the action of *Satan the Waster* (pp. 93-4).

[7] George Bernard Shaw, *O'Flaherty V.C.: A Recruiting Pamphlet*, in *The Complete Plays of George Bernard Shaw* (London: Odhams Press, 1934), pp. 819-828 (p. 822).

[8] Kosok, p. 174.

[9] Luckhurst, p. 303.

[10] Luckhurst, p. 303.

> These gentlemen, heroically sinking the artist in the patriot, wrote their little one-act pieces, exhorting us to do war-work, to eat less meat and so forth, and the result, so far as the art of drama was concerned, was the abomination of desolation.[11]

As Walkley suggests, many patriotic plays of the period were at best crude and serviceable propaganda. Another theatre critic, W. A. Darlington, writing for the *Daily Telegraph* in 1919, considered that 'the art of theatre dropped dead when war was declared' and that '[s]erious theatre found itself with nothing to say and […] nobody was in the mood to listen to it'.[12] Meanwhile, Jones' own imperialist politics are expressed in a range of domains, encompassing the West End theatre, the music hall, the public lecture and the private study. By considering Jones' works about Empire and war, the circumstances in which they were written and produced, and their reception by the public, I show how Jones – and the London theatre more generally – worked to communicate ideologically-acceptable justifications of British imperial rule and the war with Germany, and reinforced the racist stereotypes and assumptions on which such justifications were founded. The same playwright whose subversive theatrical interventions had contributed to the discourse of gender, religious hypocrisy and social justice throughout the 1890s became, in wartime, an unequivocal apologist for the status quo.

Hearts of Oak (1879) and *Carnac Sahib* (1899)[13]

The patriotism and nationalism that characterise much English drama of the war years, including Jones' plays of this period, did not emerge fully-formed in 1914. Imperial and military melodrama as a genre had been popular since at least the days of Nelson and Wellington. Michael Booth has vividly explained how patriotic feelings were stirred up through spectacular battle scenes in which, by convention, British soldiers fought heroically with treacherous and vicious enemies, to emerge triumphant against impossible odds:

[11] A. B. Walkley, 'The Theatre and the War', *Cornhill Magazine*, series 3: 47 (1919), pp 425-34 (p. 428). Quoted in Kosok, at p. 161. Kosok observes: 'Most of the patriotic plays that have survived from the period of the War deserve such a harsh judgement.'
[12] Quoted in Luckhurst, p. 302.
[13] Henry Arthur Jones, *Hearts of Oak* (London: French's Acting Editions, n.d.) and *Carnac Sahib* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1899). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from these plays are taken from these editions, and page references are given in the body of the text.

> Hatred and contempt for the enemy and glorification of the British soldier and sailor fell easily into the conventional [melodramatic] division of villain and hero, evil and good. Cannon roared and smoke rolled; flames swept the stage; ships sank and forts blew up; the Union Jack waved exaltedly over all, and the Great Commander and the Great Common Man alike declaimed patriotically, fought heroically, behaved magnanimously to the vanquished foe, treated their womenfolk tenderly, and to the rest of the world displayed the finest sentiment and the noblest conduct.[14]

As Booth suggests, such melodramas were based on a nationalist ideology and invariably had a propagandist element to them, and they persisted from Napoleonic times right through the *fin de siècle*. In the legitimate theatre, the trend culminated in a series of productions by Augustus Harris at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane that have come to be known as 'Drury Lane imperialism'.[15] These plays included *A Life of Pleasure* (1893), which was set against the background of the Third Burmese War of 1885, and *Cheer, Boys, Cheer* (1895), the action of which was based on an episode in South Africa in 1893. Both plays ran for more than 150 performances at Drury Lane, before transferring to other theatres.[16] Lesser theatres too staged excessively patriotic and militaristic dramas: *The Absent-Minded Beggar or For Queen and Country*, written by Arthur Shirley and produced at the Princess's in 1899, was described by in the *Times* as

> really a Maxim gun's play. In the last two acts the din of firing is incessant, and all shortcomings are forgotten when a Boer position is taken at the bayonet's point, in spite of treacherous flags of truce, and the curtain falls on a great victory, leaving the house filled with gunpowder fumes and the audience with frenzied feelings of patriotism and joy.[17]

The *Guardian* likewise reported that the Maxim gun was still firing away as the curtain fell on a stage '"filled with the figures of the slain"', and that the episode '"roused the more

[14] Michael R. Booth, *English Melodrama* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965), p. 93. Chapter 4 (pp. 93-117) is an extensive survey of military and nautical melodrama on the English stage from 1789 onwards.
[15] See Michael R. Booth, 'Soldiers of the Queen: Drury Lane Imperialism' in Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopolou (eds.), *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), pp. 3-20; and Jeffrey Richards, 'Drury Lane imperialism' in Peter Yeandle, Katherine Newey and Jeffrey Richards (eds.), *Politics, Performance and Popular Culture: Theatre and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 174-94.
[16] Richards, pp. 179-81.
[17] Quoted in Richards, p. 184.

excitable members of the audience to a remarkable pitch of enthusiasm"'.[18] The play fetishizes the new technology of warfare and of imperial domination: the rapid-fire Maxim gun, invented in 1884, has been described as 'the weapon most associated with imperial conquest' and it conferred a huge advantage on industrialised European powers in their colonial conflicts in Africa and the Far East.[19] These accounts suggest that popular jingoistic plays of the 1890s occupied the simplistic moral universe of sensational melodrama in which good (us/British) is in conflict with bad (them/Boer): a binary that lends itself easily to a patriotic and nationalistic message. There is no consideration of the political or moral significance of the victories acted out on the stage, or of the ethical implications of the mass slaughter that these plays celebrate.

The melodramatic fervour roused by these plays was not without criticism. In the same year as *The Absent-Minded Beggar*, 1899, the *Stage* ran a series of letters and editorials about the role of patriotism in the theatre, prompted by a letter to the editor about the over-playing of *Rule Britannia.* In one such letter, headed 'The Stage and the War', a correspondent named Whitmore Ledger wrote that he had recently visited many theatres in and around London, where he found that the plays were good and the acting of a high standard; but, he continued:

> why, oh, why, are we regaled with 'Rule Britannia'? The best music will pall, and however patriotic one may be (and I trust I am not lacking in that quality), it becomes difficult, to put it mildly, to wax enthusiastic over the same tune nine times in one week. Then, too, the management should bear in mind that there is a large section of the audience who do not agree with the action of the Government in the Transvaal.[20]

Ledger recognises that dissenting voices and different viewpoints are being drowned out by a vocal and noisy form of patriotism. Another correspondent, Thea Lesbrook, commented: 'We hear a great deal of the "mission of the stage" – of its influence for good etc. But I contend that in this matter the theatre is by no means attempting to "elevate the masses", as it so often professes to do, but is instead playing down to the mob and helping to foster every injurious

[18] Quoted in Simon Popple, '"Fresh from the Front" Performance, war news and popular culture during the Boer war', *Early Popular Visual Culture* (2010), 8: 4, pp. 401-18 (p. 407).
[19] Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century, Volume One: 1900-1933* (New York: Avon Books, 1998), p. 11.
[20] Quoted in Popple, pp. 407 and 415, n.13.

feeling of hatred and uncharitableness.' The *Stage* itself was equally critical of the jingoism, dismissing it as 'bellicose rubbish' and 'unworthy of a sane and strong people'.[21]

We cannot be sure what Jones, the devoted follower of Ruskin and Arnold who had campaigned tirelessly for the elevation of popular taste, thought of these plays. The evidence from Jones' own work is that he approved of their underlying militaristic and patriotic sentiments, however crudely those sentiments might have been expressed; and I argue later in this chapter that Jones effectively suspended his commitment to theatrical 'taste' in the interests of producing nationalistic propaganda plays in the service of the war effort. Jones' militarist inclinations are manifest in some of his earliest work. The short two-act comedic play *Hearts of Oak*, that was originally produced at the Theatre Royal in Exeter in May 1879 and subsequently taken up by Wilson Barrett for production in Leeds and London, concerns a self-confessed 'good-for-nothing rascal' named Ned Devenish, who joins the army after his fiancée Kitty's parents insist on her breaking off their engagement. He announces his enlistment towards the end of Act I with a jaunty jingoism:

> I've come to say good-bye to you all. I've taken the Queen's shilling, and I'm going to fight for old England, I'm going to show her enemies across the seas what stuff English lads are made of. (17)

Urging Kitty not to break her heart over him, Ned explains how worthless his own life is, and why he is prepared to sacrifice it in battle:

> I'm only good to go and stand up in a line and get shot – such chaps as I – why we make the best soldiers in the world, don't you see? We're no good to ourselves, or to anybody else, and if we get a bullet through us, it don't matter a tinker's curse to anybody, and society gets rid of a blackguard, don't you see, so wipe your eyes you little fool. (18)

Ned thus articulates a critique of social value that Jones associates with both masculinity and class. The idea that unemployed young men from the working class are only good to get shot is one that Jones would return to more forcefully in his later recruitment plays.

Act II opens four years later, on Christmas Eve. Ned has been fighting on the Gold Coast, but no letters have been received from him and Kitty does not know whether he is alive or dead.

[21] Quoted in Popple, p. 407.

As carol singers gather outside her family's door, Ned takes off a disguise and enters the house, declaring 'Yes, Kit, it's your own Ned back safe and sound – no, not safe and sound – I've had a nasty bullet through my shoulder, Kit, so they invalided me, and sent me back to England' (26). He has lost none of his jauntiness, though: 'Why, I killed score and scores of 'em […] And once I nearly got killed myself. They'd given me up, and got my coffin ready to pop me into' (29). His return is just in time to prevent Kitty's engagement to a wealthy, older man; and to recover a missing inheritance of £4,000. The curtain comes down as the family take their seats for dinner, and Christmas carols are sung offstage.

The dialogue of *Hearts of Oak* anticipates two strands of thinking that would re-emerge in other, more troubling ways in *Carnac Sahib* and the wartime plays. One of these is the casual attitude to the violent deaths of 'scores and scores' of an unnamed and othered 'them', which subsequently manifests in the outright racism that can be seen in Jones' later works. The other is the belief in the virtues of military service as a means of turning supposedly worthless 'blackguards' and 'rascals', predominantly from the working class, into worthy young men. As I discussed in Chapter One, Jones' plays present hardship and self-sacrifice as the key to acquiring true masculine stature. The dangers and deprivations of military life provided ample opportunities for demonstrating 'manly' qualities, and Jones would invoke this trope repeatedly in the service of the pre-war recruitment drive.

In this respect, Jones' later works of war and empire mirror theatrically contemporaneous developments in the novel and in English culture more generally from the 1880s onwards: John Tosh, in *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (2005), described a 'rejection of domesticity' or 'flight from domesticity' taking hold as the decade progressed, with social and cultural changes calling into question the benefits of marriage, particularly at the upper end of the social scale.[22] This flight from domesticity was reflected in the increasing popularity of adventure fiction and the appearance from the mid-1880s of the immensely popular works of Robert Louis Stevenson, H. Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling. Conan Doyle referred to this genre as 'the modern masculine novel', and in an 1890 article for the *National Review* he ascribed its popularity to boredom

[22] Tosh, p.111.

with the conventions of the marriage plot, arguing that marriage represents only a small part of 'the affairs of men'.[23]

In the same period, however, the Empire was under threat from both indigenous populations and competing European powers: a series of colonial defeats in Africa and Afghanistan culminated in the death of Gordon at Khartoum in 1885; within a few years, British interests in South Africa were being challenged by the possibility of an alliance between the Transvaal Boers and Germany. Imperial reverses of this kind were, Tosh suggests, 'a reflection on the virility of the British people' and the language of degeneration was invoked to warn of the implications for the Empire of failure to inculcate an appropriately healthy masculinity at home.[24] Alongside the flight from domesticity and anxieties about the future of the Empire, then, were concerns about the mental and moral health of the nation, and particularly of the men who formed the backbone of its military and administrative machinery. Ross G. Forman has described a 'double helix' of *fin de siècle* representations of Empire:

> on the one hand, the promise of continued expansion, new 'spheres of influence', and the success of the 'civilising mission' and, on the other, the fear of collapse, degeneration and reverse colonisation […] Put historically, the glorification of Empire during Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 at one extreme vied with the millenarian prediction of *fin de siècle, fin du monde* at the opposite end of the spectrum.[25]

All these tensions are evident in Jones' play *Carnac Sahib*, which was produced by Herbert Beerbohm Tree at Her Majesty's on 12 April 1899. The action concerns the rivalry between two army officers, the Kiplingesque hero Colonel Carnac (played by Tree) and the ignoble Colonel Syrett, for the affections of Olive Arnison, a (fallen) married woman, played out against the backdrop of a local uprising in India. The play reuses some familiar tropes from Jones' earlier work: like Falkner in *The Liars*, Carnac is diverted from his duty by his attachment to Mrs. Arnison, and has to recover his masculine status through heroic deeds of military valour. However, the setting is far removed from the English country houses and Mayfair drawing-rooms in which Jones' most successful plays were set.[26] Jones and Tree

[23] Quoted in Kestner, p.24.
[24] Tosh, pp. 194-5.
[25] Ross G. Forman, 'Empire', in Gail Marshall (ed)., *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siecle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 91-112 (p. 91).
[26] I am aware of only one other Jones play whose entire action takes place overseas, namely *Chance, the Idol* (1902) which is set in Monte Carlo.

must have hoped that the combination of the tried-and-trusted narrative arc, the sumptuous orientalist sets – including 'Ruined Hindu Temple near Fyzapore', 'Bazaar and Exterior of the Ghur-i-Noor, Dilghaut' and 'The Jewelled Palace at Fyzapore' – and the promise of military spectacle along Drury Lane lines, would score a hit with the public. It did not: the play closed after just one month, on 12 May.

Although the action of *Carnac Sahib* is stated to take place 'At the present time' (vii), the setting called to mind not the then-current South African conflict, but rather the Indian Rebellion of 1857-8 (also known as the 'Indian Mutiny' because it began with an uprising of Indian soldiers against their English commanders). The reviewer for the *Times* recognised this explicitly: 'The date [of the action] is supposed to be the present day, but the period is that of the Mutiny.'[27] The Indian Rebellion had provided the background for numerous plays at the time – most notably, Boucicault's *Jessie Brown, or the Relief of Lucknow* (1858), with which *Carnac Sahib* has much in common: a villainous Rajah, a local uprising, a British stronghold besieged by overwhelming enemy forces, the prospect of terrible atrocities being perpetrated against the British defenders when the inevitable final attack comes, and the last-minute relief by friendly troops.[28] This harking back to an earlier period served a kind of propagandist imperial purpose. 1899 was a critical year for the British Empire. It was the year in which the Second Boer War began, which crystallised many of the pre-existing anxieties that I have already mentioned about colonial self-assertion, competition with other European powers and the decline of British influence, and which in turn provoked an imperialist reaction as Ledger and Luckhurst have described:

> [T]he death of Gordon, or defeat at the hands of disciplined Zulus or handfuls of Boers, almost propelled the hardening ideology of Empire. Newly 'jingoistic' defences of empire were also responding to the loosening of the consensus over the validity of imperialism, whether from socialist or anarchist voices, or within the ranks of the liberal intelligentsia, which fractured over the prosecution of the Boer War.[29]

The statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, torn down in 2020, had been erected in 1895 – so around the same time as *Carnac Sahib* – and could be regarded as analogous in terms of a late-Victorian glorification of an earlier imperial moment and a figure of colonial and

[27] [Anon.], 'Her Majesty's Theatre', *Times*, 13 April 1899, p. 6.
[28] See Booth, *English Melodrama*, p. 97, for a brief description of *Jessie Brown*.
[29] Ledger and Luckhurst, p. xvi.

imperial action.[30] The world of *Carnac Sahib* recalled what was, for those who supported the Empire, a safer place and time: the Indian Rebellion had been successfully suppressed, and British colonial superiority had seemed assured. [31]

As in other imperial melodramas, the enemy in *Carnac Sahib* is dehumanised: 'By Jove, I long to get at the devils' (6) declares one young officer, while another man reports 'we are at the Guard-room doing our best to keep the devils down' (115). The Indian rebels are quite literally demonised. They are also portrayed as treacherous and cruel: 'The Nawab has surrounded Fyzapore, sir, and has taken several of our native soldiers and put their eyes out' (106). Carnac laments during the last night of the siege, when defeat seems certain, 'If it weren't for the women, Billy, if it weren't for the women!' (117): the implication is that if the rebels cannot be held off, the British women within the besieged fortress will be raped or enslaved. This kind of vilification of the enemy is commonplace in plays of this genre and in much other media representation of the time: during the Boer War, there were extensive media reports of alleged atrocities by the Boers, including poisoning of water sources, the distribution of poisoned cigarettes to injured British soldiers, and above all 'white flag' treachery where surrendering Boers turned and fired upon their opponents.[32] Such vilification appears designed to legitimise acts of violence against the enemy, and in *Carnac Sahib* the British officers positively relish such acts. When asked by Mrs. Arnison whether there is likely to be fighting, Syrett replies 'Yes. A good sharp tussle. It's only a matter of smashing

[30] Dan Hicks, 'Why Colston had to Fall', *ArtReview*, 9 June 2020 <https://artreview.com/why-colston-had-to-fall/> [accessed 19 January 2022]. Hicks notes that the Colston statue was erected 'in November 1895, just a few months after the coalition Unionist government came to power. This was a government that oversaw a virulent intensification of British military violence in Africa, including the Ashanti War of 1896, the Benin punitive expedition of 1897 and the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan in 1898. At a time in which Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company and George Goldie's Royal Niger Company were leading this new ultraviolent form of corporate colonialism, building a monument to a leading figure from an earlier phase of chartered companies, the slave-trading Royal Africa Company, was a powerful piece of propaganda.'

[31] It should be added that the British conducted brutal reprisals against those who took part in the uprising, with sepoys being bayonneted or fired from cannons in revenge for the murders of British women and children: this is an aspect of British rule that Drury Lane imperialism chose to overlook. Away from the legitimate stage, however, such atrocities appear to have grotesquely celebrated. A contemporaneous harlequinade staged at the Surrey Theatre as part of the pantomime *Queen Mab* (1857-8) concludes with 'a gruesome scene in which a sepoy was killed by Clown, dressed in antique Grenadier's costume, stuffed into a mortar and fired at [a] butcher's shop, where his disjointed body replaced the mutton and beef on the hooks. This reproduced in comic form the actual punishment being inflicted on captured mutineers.' Richards, p.191.

[32] Popple, p. 408. Popple goes on to note, 'Reports of "white flag" incidents […] reached a crescendo in the early months of 1900, and the myriad press reports were soon augmented by literary, dramatic and visual representations.'

the Rajah and hanging a few hundred natives' (8); 'Go and kill a few dozen natives, and let that satisfy you' (9) she says, a few moments later. A junior officer reports to her after one engagement that 'Syrett rallied us and drove them into the river. We drowned a few hundred and bayonneted the rest' (39). Even Carnac, who is held up to the audience as a paradigm of decency for much of the play, indulges in this violent colonial mindset: in his very first exchange of the play, he takes Syrett's Muslim servant by the throat with the words, 'Listen! This is the second time you've dared to insult my servant. The next time a good stout English rope will go – queek – round this Oriental neck of yours. *(Shaking him by the throat.)* Queek! *(Kicks him)*' (11-12). *Carnac Sahib* represents the countless slaughtered rebels as de-individualised and nameless, the named Indian characters as either obsequious or treacherous, and describes actual or threatened violence against them in an uninhibited way. On the surface, the play allows the audience to indulge in violent militaristic fantasies against a nameless and othered enemy; subtler perhaps than the noisy battle spectacles at the Princess's, because the main battles in *Carnac Sahib* take place offstage, but not fundamentally different.

However, there is a tension at the heart of the piece. Whilst there is no discussion as to whether the British had any place in India to start with – it is simply taken for granted that the British are there – the British officers who are charged with maintaining the Empire are portrayed as morally bankrupt. Syrett is a liar, Radnage is a drunkard, and even Carnac allows his personal life and his adulterous attraction to Mrs. Arnison to interfere with his duty in a 'senseless and cowardly' way (16). The moral ambiguity of the leading characters recalls the subversive dramaturgy that I discussed in earlier chapters. It suggests that while Jones endorsed the imperial project, he felt that Britain's empire-builders fell short in their moral leadership.

This tension may partly account for the play's lack of success. It was not an evening of out-and-out jingoism and visual spectacle of the kind that was pleasing large audiences at Drury Lane, but neither was it an entertaining examination of social *mores* among the ruling classes like, say, *The Liars*. Its absurdities – the extravagant sets, the military heroics, the love triangle – were lampooned in *Punch* which, alluding to both *Carnac Sahib* and another play of the same year, *Carlyon Sahib* by Gilbert Murray, described a formula for an all-purpose 'Anglo-Indian' play:

> You can have your hero besieged in a gorgeous temple, and let him quell a mutiny with a glance of his eye and a single revolver cartridge. He can carry on his flirtation with somebody else's wife in the intervals of the fray.[33]

The *Era* reported that the play had been booed at the end, and speculated that Jones 'must have begun *Carnac Sahib* on contract, at short notice, and "knocked it off quickly". The play begins well, but gradually degenerates, and the last act is remarkably weak.'[34] For the *Era,* then, the issue was a perceived laziness in the writing that fell short of Jones' usual standards. For the *Leeds Mercury,* the problem with the play was its lack of substance, and the fact that – unusually for Jones – the dialogue and the story had become subservient to the spectacle: 'from the spectacular point of view, [the play] left nothing to be desired. It is one long series of glowing tableaux illustrative of military life in India, but as a play it will do nothing to enhance Mr. Jones' reputation as a dramatist.'[35] The reference to 'tableaux' specifically suggests how static *Carnac Sahib* must have seemed to audiences accustomed to the noise and tumult of the Drury Lane melodramas, but the point of the critic's comment remains that Jones had not provided a play that contained any dramatic interest. Even the conservative *Morning Post* expressed disappointment that Jones had neglected his own precepts from *The Renascence of the English Drama*, lamenting with obvious irony that '[Jones'] ideals of a literary drama and of a national drama appear to have been abandoned, unless indeed the appeal to national prejudice, to what a few years ago was called jingoism, is what the author meant by a national drama.'[36] It is notable, however, that among all these criticisms there is little written about the play's imperialist and racist language, which suggests that the ideological assumptions underlying *Carnac Sahib* were widely shared by its audience. Those assumptions persist into Jones' plays of the war years.

[33] [Anon.], 'Mr. Punch's Dramatic Recipes: No. III – How to Write an Anglo-Indian Drama', in *Punch, or the London Charivari*, Vol. CXVII, 12 July 1899, p. 16.
[34] [Anon.], '*Carnac Sahib', Era,* 15 April 1899, p. 13. The assertion that the play was written in a rush is incorrect, however. Doris reports that Jones had spent more than two years reading books about India before writing the play.
[35] [Anon.], '*Carnac Sahib* at Her Majesty's Theatre', *Leeds Mercury,* 13 April 1899, p. 4.
[36] [Anon.], 'Her Majesty's Theatre', *Morning Post,* 13 April 1899, p. 5.

***Fall In, Rookies!* (1910)**[37]

Although the imperial melodrama of the 1890s appealed to and reinforced its audience's presumption of a right and natural British rule over faraway dominions, the literature of the *fin de siècle* also evidences a countervailing anxiety about threats to the homeland itself. Numerous works of this period deal with imagined invasions of different kinds, the most famous of which are two fantastical works of 1897. H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* begins in Woking in Surrey, and describes the effect of an extra-terrestrial invasion on London and the Home Counties. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the threat is not an armed one, but it is easy to read in terms of a more generalised fear of immigrant 'invasion': Lyn Pykett, for example, describes the character of Dracula as 'the foreign, Eastern "other" which threatens to invade the West (specifically) in a form of reverse colonization'.[38] Closer to reality (albeit a counterfactual reality) is George Chesney's novella *The Battle of Dorking* (1871), which describes the invasion and conquest of Britain by a foreign power that is not specifically named but is German-speaking.[39] In the new century, novels like Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) and William Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910* (1906) also anticipated an imminent threat from Germany. Popular fiction of this kind not only raised public awareness and anxiety about the possibility of a European war; critics such as Cecil D. Eby have argued that it actually helped to bring about the war of which it warned, by fostering xenophobia and creating a climate in which patriotism and militarism could flourish.[40]

Jones too had expressed early intimations of a European war. In his one-act play *The Goal* (1897), the dying engineer Sir Stephen Famariss warns his son, 'There's a great world-tussle

[37] Henry Arthur Jones, *Fall In, Rookies!* (London: Chiswick Press, 1910). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *Fall In, Rookies!* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text.
[38] Lyn Pykett, 'Sensation and the fantastic in the Victorian novel', in David, pp. 211-30 (p. 227). At one point in the novel, Jonathan Harker finds a map in Dracula's library, on which are marked the locations of Dracula's new estate at Carfax, along with other sites where he has arranged to have placed boxes of Transylvanian earth. The image is suggestive of a general planning an invasion and identifying strategic points for attack and retreat.
[39] Karl Beckson, in *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (New York and London: Norton, 1992), identifies *The Battle of Dorking* as the origin of the 'invasion fiction' genre (p. 363).
[40] Cecil D. Eby, *The Road to Armageddon: the Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature, 1870-1914* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987). Eby asserts that in the years leading up to 1914, popular literature was 'so steeped in militant nationalism that the Great War, when it finally arrived, came like an ancient prophecy at last fulfilled' (p. 9).

coming, Dan – I shan't live to see it – but it's coming, and the engineer that ties England and America together will do a good turn to both countries.'[41] Likewise, the action of Jones' one-act *The Knife* (1909) takes place against the background of a war in France, and the leading character – a doctor – declares, 'I don't want to leave my practice, and my wife; but now the old country's in such a terrible hole, if I can be of use to our poor chaps out there I've simply got to go.'[42] The exact nature of the 'world-tussle' and the continental war, and the parties to these conflicts, are not discussed in any more detail – the dialogue is tangential to the main action of both plays – but the idea that a major war was imminent was plainly gaining currency many years before the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in June 1914.

Several other playwrights wrote dramas in the same pre-war period that could be regarded as 'invasion-scare' plays, intended to alert their audiences to the need to prepare for a war with Germany: examples include Guy du Maurier's *An Englishman's Home* and B.S. Townroe's *A Nation in Arms,* both of which were produced in 1909.[43] *An Englishman's Home* ran for 163 performances at Wyndham's Theatre and was revived in 1911-12. It concerns a middle-class English home which is invaded by foreign troops, who overrun the volunteers seeking to defend it; and it has been suggested that the play 'must have significantly increased the recruiting for the newly-established Territorial Army'.[44] Another play that contributed to the recruiting effort was *England Expects* (1914) by Seymour Hicks and Edward Knoblauch (or Knoblock – he later changed his name, presumably to one less German-sounding), which was produced at the London Opera House.[45] Recruiting officers attended the building during the

[41] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Goal, A Dramatic Fragment*, in Henry Arthur Jones, *The Theatre of Ideas: A Burlesque Allegory* (George H. Doran Company, New York, 1915), pp. 101-26 (p.124).
[42] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Knife*, in Walter Prichard Eaton (ed.), *One-Act Plays for Stage and Study: Second series* (New York and London: Samuel French, 1925), pp. 327-46 (p. 331). Kosok suggests that these references to the war were later additions to the 1909 text, 'introduced to give the play an added topicality' when it was published sixteen years later, because 'apart from them it is a conventional problem play about a doctor who is about to operate on his wife's lover and is torn between his desire for revenge and his professional integrity' (p. 15).
[43] For a discussion of these plays and their impact, see Harry Joseph Wood, 'External Threats Mask Internal Fears: Edwardian Invasion Literature 1899-1914', PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 2014, pp. 184-6 <https://livrepository.liverpool.ac.uk/2003341> [accessed 13 January 2021]. Wood mentions Jones' *Fall In, Rookies!* as a third instance of the 'invasion-scare' play, but says nothing more about it.
[44] Kosok, p. 13. Kosok does not, however, give any statistics to support this suggestion.
[45] The London Opera House should not be confused with the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden. The London Opera House was built in Kingsway by the American impresario Oscar Hammerstein, and opened in November 1911. Hammerstein made an enormous loss on the project, which was

performances, the central scene of which involved an appeal to the audience by an onstage recruiting officer, to which a number of actors planted in the stalls responded by rushing onto the stage and signing up. According to Samuel Hynes, in *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (1992), 'The scene was so persuasive, at one performance at least, that a member of the audience clambered up after the four actor-recruits, and had to be sternly sent back to his seat by the sergeant.'[46] Although the effectiveness of the theatre as a means of recruitment is impossible to judge, what is clear is that the government recognised that the stage could itself be recruited for this purpose. Collins suggests that there were 'at least twenty-five new plays written for the direct purpose of recruitment, although the Lord Chamberlain's collection contains many more in which the aim of recruitment was part of the sub-text'.[47] The theatre and its associated professions lent themselves willingly to the patriotic cause.

With his play *Fall In, Rookies!*, which had a short run in London in the autumn of 1910, Jones committed himself to the cause of recruitment in readiness for the coming conflict. Jones had read the play earlier to Lord Roberts, a former Commander-in-Chief of the British army who spent the decade before 1914 campaigning for conscription in anticipation of a war with Germany, and with whose work Jones, according to his daughter, was 'always in complete sympathy and agreement'.[48] Roberts was reportedly so pleased with the play that he immediately insisted on taking Jones over to his club to introduce him to Kitchener. Roberts took exception, however, to Jones' proposed title, *Drill the Rascals*: '"It may be meant as a term of endearment, but the public will not take it as such, and I believe such a title will prejudice the reception of the play"'.[49] It therefore appears to have been at least partly at Roberts' suggestion that *Drill the Rascals* became *Fall In, Rookies!* and his sensitivity to the implications of the title is noteworthy (as is Jones' insensitivity or plain indifference). The term 'rascal', generally used today in an affectionate sense, had more pejorative connotations in the late nineteenth century: it could also be used to describe 'a dishonest person' and 'a

intended to rival Covent Garden but which was quickly turned over to variety and revue, before becoming a cinema in 1916. See Glasstone, p. 128.

[46] Quoted by Kosok, p. 162.

[47] Collins, p. 183.

[48] D. A. Jones, pp. 259-60. For a brief account of the life and career of Frederick Sleigh Roberts, first Earl Roberts (1832-1914), see the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography entry at <https://doi-org.ezproxy2.londonlibrary.co.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/35768> [accessed 10 January 2021].

[49] Letter from Roberts to Jones. Quoted in D. A. Jones, p. 260.

member of the rabble'.[50] A play intended to recruit young men into military service could hardly be expected to appeal to them if its very title suggested that they were worthless. Jones' stage directions in the published text also refer to the local populace as '*morsels of human scum, undersized, half starved, badly clothed […] most obviously unfit for the army or work of any kind'* (3). A handful of lines are even assigned to characters named as '1st Scum' and '2nd Scum' (3). Jones' choice of language shows the disdain that he had come to feel towards the working class who would make up the ranks of the army: while there was an element of this in *Hearts of Oak*, by the time of *Fall In, Rookies!* it has become outright contempt, stripped of the sentiment and poignancy that was evident in Ned's goodbye to Kitty. Twenty years after his appeals for a measure of social and distributive justice in *Wealth* and *The Middleman* (1889), Jones' recruiting play shows no interest in the causes of poverty, nor any concern for the conditions of the poor.

How exactly did Jones come to present such contempt for the working man? I have already noted the prevalence of anxieties about national degeneration and the future of the Empire, and this is reflected in growing public concern about the large population of the poor at the turn of the century, and changing attitudes towards those who had nothing: Ledger and Luckhurst have described 'a discourse of degenerative urban blight and a set of representations of the poor, in which the "residuum" are more feared than pitied'.[51] However, Jones' own personal background is as relevant to this change in his outlook as the shifting cultural picture. Jones' daughter Doris ascribes his 'great dislike for the lower middle-classes, from whom he sprang' to 'the many examples of prejudice and narrow-mindedness from which he suffered as a lad and during his early manhood'.[52] In later life, it appears to have been exacerbated by fear of losing the wealth that he had accumulated:

> Whenever he had a nervous breakdown, one of the most prominent symptoms was a dread of losing what money he had saved. Democratic legislation increased this dread. He saw the mob laying greedy hands on his possessions. I shall never

[50] The Oxford English Dictionary gives several definitions for 'rascal', including 'A mischievous or cheeky person, esp. a man or child. Frequently as a playful or affectionate term of reproof': this is the sense in which the term is most commonly used today. Other uses include 'An unprincipled or dishonest person; a rogue, a scoundrel' and the obsolete sense of 'A person of the lowest social class; a member of the rabble' <www.OED.com> [accessed 24 September 2021].
[51] Ledger and Luckhurst, p. xv.
[52] D.A. Jones, p. 128.

> forget the concentrated vehemence with which he said to me a year or two before his death, 'I *hate* the name of Labour – I *hate* the name of Labour.'[53]

What is also clear is that by this point in his life, Jones was moving in the circles of the elite: leaving aside the military peers I have mentioned, and the numerous theatrical acquaintances who were now firmly accepted as part of the establishment (Wyndham was knighted in 1902, W.S. Gilbert in 1907, Tree in 1909, Alexander in 1911; and J. M. Barrie was made a baronet in 1913), the Jones family was mingling with both aristocrats and politicians. The second husband of Jones' daughter Ethelwyn Sylvia, whom she married in 1913, was Angus McDonnell, the second son of the Earl of Antrim and a future Conservative MP for Dartford.[54] Another daughter, Gertrude Mary, married Irving Albery, a stockbroker and the future Conservative MP for Gravesend.[55] Henry Arthur Jones himself, the son of the Buckinghamshire farmer, the autodidact draper's boy who had pursued self-actualisation and amassed wealth through his writing, the successful playwright who still 'dropped his aitches very occasionally' despite his cultivation and social standing, now identified himself unconditionally with the ruling class.[56] He had become part of an establishment that was moving to a war footing, preparing to send thousands of working-class recruits to their deaths for the sake of an idealised British nation and empire.

The action of *Fall In, Rookies!* takes place outside the Duke of Wellington, a roadside inn near a provincial town, at the time of the Boer War. Structurally, the play is similar to Jones' *Hearts of Oak* from thirty years before: there are two scenes whose action is separated by several years, during which time the leading character leaves his home, experiences military service overseas, and returns a better man. The same trope had been employed by Jones in *The Silver King* (1882) and *The Dancing Girl* (1891), which I discussed in Chapter One, and in which the male protagonists grow into their full masculine selves during the years of hardship that pass between one act and another. In *Fall In, Rookies!* the first, much longer scene, introduces the tearaway Nat Drake, a drunk, unemployed wastrel, described on his entrance as '*a well-built, very handsome, strong young fellow about twenty-five, rather*

[53] D.A. Jones, p. 129.
[54] [Anon.], 'Col. The Hon. Angus McDonnell' (obituary), *Times,* 26 April 1966, p. 14.
[55] [Anon.], 'Sir Irving Albery' (obituary), *Times,* 17 November 1967, p. 10. Irving Albery was the son of the playwright James Albery (the author of *The Pink Dominos,* the piece in which Wyndham had first made a name for himself) and the actress Mary Moore (the original Rebellious Susan, and subsequently Lady Wyndham).
[56] D.A. Jones, p. 129.

slouching and lounging in his gait – his dress is untidy, worn and a little ragged; his hair thick and unkempt' (6). Nat is not an appealing character: during Scene I he scraps with other local youths, gives a beating to one particularly feeble young man named Alfy, and forces himself on the barmaid Cherry and kisses her against her will. Higlett, a recruiting sergeant who happens to have stopped at the inn, nevertheless singles Nat out from the other drinkers as a potential recruit. Mrs. Drake, Nat's mother, turns up to tell Nat that the family has been evicted and to admonish him for his drunkenness and idleness. The scene ends with Nat leaving with Higlett to join the army, partly because he has nowhere else to go. Scene II is set three years later, following a short blackout during which there is a '*quick change for Nat from rough make-up to very smart soldier with corporal's stripes, cane, etc.*' (23) and the orchestra is directed to play '*good stirring military marches until ready to ring up*' (24). The brief second scene shows us the transformed Nat Drake, who has come back from South Africa a hero, carried off several prizes at a local sports day, and won back the respect of both his mother and Cherry. The play ends with a long speech in which Nat extols the benefits of army life:

> Three years ago I was a lazy, loafing, drunken good-for-nothing, and I should have ended up in the workus or in a ditch, or God knows where! But I took to soldiering and there's this about soldiering, it either makes a man, or it breaks him! And them as it breaks, they was good for nothing but to be broke! And them as it makes, it makes men of them for all their life! (28)

The idea of 'making a man', which is such an important trope in Jones' major works like *The Silver King*, thus re-emerges in this short, late play. However, while there is continuity in both the narrative arc and the 'before and after' structural device that Jones uses, the later play has a different purpose. *The Silver King* and *The Dancing Girl* treat masculinity as a private and moral issue: the individual man has to acquire or re-acquire masculine stature by virtuous conduct. In *Fall In, Rookies!* by contrast, the promise of becoming 'a real man' is made with a very practical aim: to recruit young men into the army. The arc of the drama thus moves from an individual key to a national one. The idea that military service can 'make' a man remains potent and is still used in military recruitment today.[57]

[57] A 2015 television advertisement for Royal Navy recruitment shows in montage the life journey of a young man from boyhood, through adolescence and into manhood, and ends with the words 'Sure, I was born in Carlisle – but I was made in the Royal Navy.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAMFQwebh6Q> [accessed 1 July 2021]. A slightly later campaign (2018) featuring a female recruit concludes with the similar caption 'BORN IN ST.

Nat's final speech is far from being the only reference to masculinity in this short play. In fact, the dialogue returns insistently to what 'being a man' involves. 'Well, you're just the sort we want. We could soon make a man of you', says Higlett to Nat (8), and later, 'Now are you coming along o' me to serve your country as every man as is a man ought to do [?]' (12). Cherry tells Nat to take 'The first job that turns up! And do it like a man!' (13). To Higlett she says: 'If you were a man, you'd give that brute there [*pointing to Nat in the bar*] the thrashing he deserves!' (20). There are several other instances, and these articulations of masculinity are mainly placed in the mouths of two characters. One is the recruiting sergeant who provides the opportunity for Nat to establish his masculine status through military service; the other is the young woman for whose sexual attentions the young men are in competition. Although Higlett lists out the official benefits of army life – 'Reg'lar *work*, reg'lar *hours*, reg'lar *pay*, good grub, and above all "You've got to do what you're told!"'(11) – the idea that enlisting for military service will make a young man sexually attractive is also stated quite explicitly:

> HIGLETT *[To Nat.]* You come along o' me mate, and never mind the gals. *[Good-humoured and persuasively.*
> NAT Never mind the gals? What's the use o' my being a soldier if I ain't to mind the gals?
> HIGLETT Oh, the gals come into it *[laughs]* at times – in their proper places – but take 'em as perquisites.
> NAT I don't mind how I take 'em! *[Crosses to right of arm-chair.]* What perquisites should I get?
> HIGLETT You're a well set-up chap *[with distinct admiration]* you might have any amount of perquisites. (8)

'Gals' are reduced to 'perquisites', valued only because they function as sexual fodder for men, and the first scene of the play holds out to the young men in the audience a clear promise that women will be more sexually attracted to soldiers than to men in other walks of life. This is reinforced towards the end of the play when, before Nat has returned from his sports day, Higlett tells Cherry, 'You should have seen the gals on the Sports ground […] just hanging around his neck, as gals will! Half a dozen of 'em!'(25). The ending is troubling, as Cherry now accedes to Nat's previously unwanted advances, apparently for no other reason

ANDREWS / MADE IN THE ROYAL NAVY'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0gMo-sHz1Y> [accessed 25 September 2021].

than that he has won some sports trophies, made her jealous of the other 'gals', and given her a ribbon. The propaganda assures the prospective recruit that he will acquire not only physical prowess, self-respect and the respect of others, but also sexual success. There is little mention of the discomforts and dangers of soldiering, and almost no mention of war.

The venue for the production of *Fall In, Rookies!* was the Alhambra, which stood on Leicester Square in London: a music hall rather than a theatre. Although the intimate music halls of the mid-Victorian period (often owned and run by pub landlords) had gradually been superseded by grander venues backed by big businesses, music hall audiences – and audience behaviour – remained markedly different from those in the legitimate West End theatres.[58] Even at the Alhambra, which was one of the most sumptuous music halls (ornately decorated in a style described as 'Saracenic', the physical embodiment of late-Victorian imperial and orientalist fantasy in architectural form), there existed an informality and intimacy that was absent from the more rarefied atmosphere of, say, Her Majesty's. This intimacy existed both within the audience and between the audience and the performers, with audience members responding enthusiastically to catch-phrases and call-and-response cues from the chairman and the artists.[59] The ready availability of alcohol in the auditorium must also have contributed to the uninhibited atmosphere. Doris Jones recounts that when Lady Roberts attended *Fall In, Rookies!* with her husband, she had never been to a music hall before and 'she was so nervous at the thought that the performance might shock her that she kept her car waiting the whole time in case she wished to leave at any moment'.[60]

As Jacky Bratton has observed, 'Drama was accorded no special treatment in the halls; its narrative excitement and perhaps its realism could be relished, but audiences did not expect carefully preserved illusion, especially at the expense of other pleasures.'[61] So why would a playwright like Jones, who had repeatedly expressed in his critical writings utter disdain for the 'mere' entertainment that the music halls offered, and who still had serious dramas running in major theatres in London and throughout the country, choose to have this

[58] Jacky Bratton, 'The music hall', in Powell, pp. 164-82 (p. 164).
[59] For a description of the Alhambra, see Glasstone, pp. 50-1. The Alhambra first opened as the 'Panopticon' in 1850 and went through several reconstructions (the latest being 1907 and 1912) before it was finally demolished in 1936 to make way for the Odeon Cinema. Bratton (p.171) comments on the 'participatory rituals' of the music hall, which were 'an exercise of power relations across the footlights'.
[60] D. A. Jones, p. 260.
[61] Bratton, p. 172.

particular work performed in such a setting? I propose that Jones took his play to the Alhambra for two interconnected reasons. The first is demographic. The music halls attracted audiences from a wider social spectrum than the West End theatres, and if the purpose of *Fall In, Rookies!* was to encourage enlistment, it was best performed in a venue patronised by large numbers of young men from the social stratum that had always provided the majority of the armed forces, namely the working class; and where a combination of alcohol, bravado and peer pressure might combine to inspire prospective recruits to take the Queen's shilling. The second is aesthetic. Whereas for most of the *fin de siècle* the West End theatres focussed on endeavouring to present an illusion of reality using the conventions of the well-made play, involving for example the separation of actors from audience by the notional 'fourth wall' and the actual proscenium arch, the conventions of the music hall reduced the aesthetic distance substantially. The impact of *England Expects* at the London Opera House has already been mentioned. In another play performed at a different music hall, Bertrand Davis' *A Call to Arms* (1914) at the Golders Green Hippodrome, the onstage recruiting sergeant addressed the audience directly with the words 'Gentlemen, I am asked by the Authorities to state that a Recruitment Officer is in attendance in the vestibule of the building. Is there any man here tonight who can and will help his country in her hour of need?'.[62] The intimacy of the music hall stage, with its permeable fourth wall, must have given the patriotic appeal an immediacy and directness that could not readily be achieved in the legitimate theatre.

Fall In, Rookies! is not a subtle play. The *Penny Illustrated Paper* took angry exception to the piece, which it summed up as 'melodramatic sermonising that the only manly fellow in the typical English village is a drunken sot, and that he goes off to the army and leaves the country to be run by others'.[63] The *Times* commented that 'considering that it is written by so accomplished a dramatist as Mr. H. A. Jones, [*Fall In, Rookies!*] is not so much a play as a piece of rather crude scene-painting', and continued:

> Splashes of red for the British Army and patriotism and the happy, jolly, useful clean life of the soldier. Drab shadows for the undersized, undisciplined, weak, selfish, useless loafers that will not fall in and become 'rookies.' Black for the silly victim of drink, the hopeless rotten fool of a man who degrades his manhood and ruins his hard-working mother by his idleness, instead of putting on a red coat and serving his country, his King and his God. And black, too, for the whining, canting, methodistical old women in male attire (though it seems rather

[62] Collins, pp. 183-4. Glasstone (p. 131) classifies the Golders Green Hippodrome as a music hall.
[63] 'Gog', 'Between the Turns', *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 12 November 1910, p. 629.

> unnecessary and untrue to drag in the Church) who deplore and petition against the growing spirit of militarism.[64]

The lack of subtlety is unsurprising, however. A short recruiting play ('*Time of Representation, 28 minutes*' (1)), sharing the bill at a noisy music hall with 'The Grand Ballet' and several other acts, has little room for intellectual nuance or psychological refinement. Richard Cordell, whose study of Jones was published after the First World War but before the Second, notes of the play that 'It is a childish tract, and in the disillusionment of the aftermath of the Great War seems puerile. […] However justifiable *Fall In, Rookies!* might have been as propaganda, it is as theatrically artificial as it is psychologically spurious'.[65] The audience nevertheless 'cheered all the points that make for universal service with a will'.[66] Spurious as it may be, the play seems to have captured the mood of the time, and to have served its function of appealing to and reinforcing the patriotic sentiments of the particular audience that Jones intended to target.

Interlude: non-dramatic writings

With the outbreak of war, Jones' energies were for several years diverted from playwriting into patriotic articles, lectures and letters to the newspapers, the tone of which became more nationalistic and more wildly rhetorical as the war went on. In a letter that appeared in the *Times* in August 1914 under the heading 'To English Girls', Jones called for the 'shaming' of 'laggard' young men who had not yet signed up for military service: 'The English girl who will not know the man – lover, brother, friend – that cannot show an overwhelming reason for not taking up arms – that girl will do her duty and will give good help to her country.'[67] In a reversal of *Lysistrata,* in which the withholding of sex is the means by which women seek to end a war, Jones suggests that women should use sex as one of the means (along with friendship and family pride) to encourage their menfolk into fighting. If *Fall In, Rookies!* suggested that the man who does his patriotic military duty is more likely to be sexually

[64] [Anon], 'Alhambra Theatre', *Times,* 25 October 1910, p. 10.
[65] Cordell, pp. 190-1.
[66] [Anon.], 'Alhambra Theatre', *Times,* 25 October 1910, p. 10. The reviewer went on to conclude drily, however: 'We may, we unsophisticated gents, gird up our loins, and quit us like men, and determine that without counting the cost we will give up some of our personal inclinations and individual liberty for the sake of our country. Or, we may not.' Patriotic cheering in a music hall does not necessarily convert itself into positive action in the form of enlistment.
[67] Henry Arthur Jones, 'To English Girls', *Times,* 29 August 1914, p. 9.

attractive to women, 'To English Girls' instructs young women that it is their duty to persuade young men to join up, and to withhold sexual favours from those who refuse to do so. In a distortion of the Ruskinian gender binary that I discussed in Chapter One, Jones turns female influence upon men from a matter of private morality into a matter of public and patriotic duty. Ruskin's articulation of masculine character, which makes it the responsibility of men to pursue war and conquest 'wherever war is just', and to secure the 'maintenance, progress, and defence' of his own home, is unchanged; but 'To English Girls' tells women, the source of moral influence on men in Ruskin's analysis, to direct that influence towards encouraging military service.

Predictably, Jones also took issue with pacifism. He supported a proposal in October 1915 that had the effect of forcing Shaw to resign from the Dramatists' Club because of his pacifist views, and told Shaw in a letter the following month that

> Your writings on the War have done great harm […] Germany is everywhere making use of your utterances to justify her own actions and slander England. Whether you know it or not, and whether you care or not, you are one of our country's worst enemies. And you are an enemy within our walls.[68]

This intervention represents another break with Jones' attitudes of the *fin de siècle.* The same playwright who had campaigned against censorship for thirty years now sought to silence the voice of another writer. Shaw sent a long reply the day after receiving Jones' letter, beginning 'If you think you are going to put ME off with a sheet of notepaper containing extracts from the *Daily Express* copied with your own fair hand, you have mistaken your man'.[69] Shaw was not to be silenced, and went on to write the satirical one-act play *Augustus Does His Bit*, which was produced by the Stage Society in 1916.

While Jones' opposition to pacifism took humorous dramatic form in his 1917 satire *The Pacifists*, which I turn to shortly, a different and less temperate kind of nationalist rhetoric characterised his non-dramatic writings of this period. The pamphlet *Shakespeare and Germany* (1916) is a response to a suggestion in the *Cologne Gazette*, à propos the Shakespeare tercentenary that year, that Shakespeare would, were he still alive, regard

[68] Quoted in D. A. Jones, p. 312-3 (p. 312).
[69] Quoted in D. A. Jones, pp. 313-6 (p. 313).

modern England with scorn.[70] The elevation of Shakespeare to the status of literary icon had been largely a Victorian project, important landmarks in which included the establishment of the Shakespeare Society in 1840, and the opening of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre (the precursor to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company) in Stratford in 1879. As Mark G. Hollingsworth observed in *Nineteenth-Century Shakespeares: Nationalism and Moralism* (2007), by the mid-Victorian period Shakespeare had 'taken a role at the very centre of intellectual and cultural life in Britain'.[71] Jones was roused to heavy-handed rhetoric by the perceived appropriation of England's national poet:

> [I]t will be well for England to be prepared for the characteristic official announcement which will doubtless be made in Berlin on 23rd April of the final and complete annexation by Germany of William Shakespeare, with all his literary, poetical, philosophical, and stage appurtenances, effects, traditions, and associations, and all the demesnes that there adjacent lie. Meantime we may ask by what insolence of egotism, what lust of plunder, or what madness of pride Germany dares add to the hideous roll of her thieveries and rapes this topping impudence and crime of vaunting to herself the allegiance of Shakespeare?[72]

The reference to the 'annexation' of Shakespeare and his 'demesnes' positions the German statement precisely as an act of territorial as much as cultural appropriation. Jones associates this cultural appropriation with other (unspecified) 'thieveries and rapes' committed by Germany. The language is strong, reflecting the demonisation of Germany that had intensified as the war continued, particularly after the sinking of the English liner *Lusitania* in May 1915, in which 1,198 passengers and crew died (they included Charles Frohman, an American producer who was a personal friend of Jones).[73] English newspapers now carried reports of German atrocities, often unsubstantiated and often since admitted or demonstrated to have been false: James Bryce, the propagandist behind the Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages of 1915, later defined the term 'propaganda' as 'that dissemination by the printed word of untruths and fallacies and incitements to violence'.[74] The fashioning of

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[70] Henry Arthur Jones, *Shakespeare and Germany* (London: Charles Whittingham & Co., 1916).
[71] Mark G. Hollingsworth, *Nineteenth-Century Shakespeares: Nationalism and Moralism*, PhD thesis, University of Nottingham (2007), p. 2 <http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/10551/1/M_Hollingsworth_Thesis.pdf> [accessed 25 September 2021]
[72] Jones, *Shakespeare and Germany*, pp. 3-4.
[73] D.A. Jones, p. 294.
[74] Quoted in Hugo Garcia, 'Reluctant liars? Public debates on propaganda and democracy in twentieth-century Britain (ca. 1914–1950)', *Contemporary British History*, 33:3 (2019), 383-404 <DOI:10.1080/13619462.2019.1571920> [accessed 26 October 2021]. Garcia notes that Vera Brittain had summed up Bryce's report with the phrase 'I don't know how any man can read it and not enlist'.

Germany as monstrous, and of Germans as brutal, devious and treacherous, was all part of the work of the wartime propaganda machine.

The title page of *Shakespeare and Germany* states that it was 'written during the Battle of Verdun': this was the longest battle of the war, in which the opposing armies of France and Germany fought for almost a whole year at the cost of around 300,000 lives. Jones imagines, in Shakespearean phrases and diction, how Shakespeare would have praised France for her brave resistance to the common enemy:

> How would Shakespeare swell his proudest notes to praise thee, and yet not praise thee enough! And turning from this havoc and ruin, how would he send his prophetic soul to dream of things to come; of the days when these bloodstains shall be washed from the face of Europe, and the earth shall be green again; when thy land shall be cleansed from abominable hoofs, and thy cities shall be redeemed and redressed in new arising loveliness […] O France, endure! England shall not fail thee![75]

Where France had often been characterised by English commentators of the *fin de siècle* as decadent, it is now positioned as heroic; whilst the Germans are demonised, just as the Indian rebels of *Carnac Sahib* were, in the image of 'abominable hoofs'. Noting that *Macbeth* had been chosen as the play for the official German celebration of the tercentenary, to be staged at Weimar, Jones goes on to draw parallels between the murderous reign of Macbeth and the actions of the modern Germany, before predicting the ultimate overthrow of that tyranny 'now that at last the slow, immitigable might of England has begun to encompass you'.[76] The exaggerated rhetoric of the whole would be intensified in the virulent anti-German sentiments of his last wartime drama, *Finding Themselves* (1917).

[75] Jones, *Shakespeare and Germany*, pp. 19-20.
[76] Jones, *Shakespeare and Germany*, p. 25.

The Pacificists (1917) and *Finding Themselves* (1917)[77]

The critic Heinz Kosok, in *The Theatre of War: The First World War in British and Irish Drama* (2007), asserts, 'Two issues surface repeatedly in patriotic war plays: the controversial question of recruiting and the equally important rejection of pacifist tendencies.'[78] However, recruiting plays like *Fall In, Rookies!* became redundant once conscription was introduced in 1916. Jones' other main dramatic work of the war period is a satire, set in the fictitious English town of Market Pewbury – the same setting as one of Jones' earlier satires, *The Triumph of the Philistines* (1895).[79] The story concerns the tensions that arise between the townspeople after one particularly aggressive individual, a butcher named Fergusson, fences off parts of the common, blocks rights of way, makes unwanted advances towards the wife of another citizen named Peebody and demands she accompany him to the seaside, and locks up the same man's grandmother in a cellar. Peebody and the town's mayor, Weech, repeatedly fail to confront Fergusson directly, and the Market Pewbury constabulary – consisting of a single *'very large, badly-made policeman, doubled up with lumbago*' (65) – is incapable of doing so when called upon. Instead, Peebody and Weech try to exert moral, psychological and civic influence over Fergusson: they threaten him 'with the loss of esteem of all his fellow townsmen, and the condemnation of posterity' and tell him that he is no gentleman (37); they seek to explain away his antisocial behaviour on the basis that 'being a butcher, he eats too much meat […] which flies about all over his system, and gingers up his propensities to that degree, that he isn't accountable for his actions, and so he rampages about all over the place' (37); they establish a 'Peebody League' (which, like the London Reformation League in *The Crusaders* (1891), satirises the many 'leagues' set up by socialists and others, and often associated with pacifism) with a comically verbose and meaningless charter that does not commit them to any specific course of action

[77] Henry Arthur Jones, *The Pacifists: A Parable in a Farce* (London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1917). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Pacifists* are taken from this edition, and page references are given in the body of the text. Sadly, it has not been possible to access *Finding Themselves* during the course of writing this thesis: the original, unpublished manuscript is held at the V&A Theatre and Performance Collections (GB 71 THM/154/2/12), but the archive has been closed to researchers since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 and will not reopen until 2023.

[78] Kosok, p. 162.

[79] *The Triumph of the Philistines, and how Mr. Jorgan preserved the Morals of Market Pewbury under Very Trying Circumstances* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1899) was produced by George Alexander at the St. James's Theatre in May 1895. Although its initial run was short (just forty-four nights), Alexander toured the play with greater success later the same year: see D.A. Jones, p. 169.

at all (38-9). It is left to another resident of the town to engage a professional pugilist, Tom Bluke, to tackle Fergusson and throw him into the canal. Another townsperson, unnamed and described only as a 'red-haired shopman', helps Bluke to deal with Fergusson. The play ends with the news that Mrs. Peebody is going off to the seaside with Bluke, telling her husband that she had enjoyed Bluke's display of force against Fergusson – 'Not morally, of course. But physically, it was quite educational' (91) – and that Bluke had won her over with his subsequent politeness and attentiveness.

Jones subtitled the play 'A Parable in a Farce', so the audience is invited to look for meanings and moral lessons. As if that were not clear enough, the newspaper listings for the play also stated that:

The Play is

DEDICATED to

> The tribe of Wordsters, Pedants, Fanatics, and Impossiblists who so rabidly pursued an ignoble peace that they helped to provoke a disastrous war; who, having provoked a disastrous war, have unceasingly clamoured against its effectual prosecution; who throw dust in their own eyes, lest they should perceive the noon-day truth; whom neither history nor reason nor thundering facts can teach; whom to convict of having been wofully *[sic]* and blindly wrong in the past, does but drive to be wilfully and madly wrong in the future; who might justly be regarded as pitiable figments of farce, if their busy mischief were not still seeking to bring about the tragedy of a delusive and abortive peace.[80]

Audiences could accordingly have been under no illusion about the allegorical and didactic nature of the play, and the angry rhetoric of this dedication is typical of Jones' patriotic propaganda of the later war period.

The Pacifists was produced at the St. James's Theatre on 3 September 1917, after a preliminary week at Southport, but it closed just ten days later.[81] The critic for the *Times* reported that the first night audience had found much in it to enjoy and had 'burst into frequent laughter', but that he himself had been 'miserably, tragically, conscious' of failing to find any good in it (though he did not explain why this was so).[82] Jones was deeply

[80] See for example, the theatre listings in the *Times*, 3 September 1917, p. 6.
[81] [Anon.], 'The Theatres', *Times*, 17 September 1917, p. 11.
[82] [Anon.], '*The Pacifists:* Mr. Henry Arthur Jones's New Play', *Times*, 5 September 1917, p. 9.

disappointed by the play's failure, and wrote a few months later to the American critic Clayton Hamilton that the work had 'delighted a lot of cultivated men – such as Edmund Gosse and Henry Newbolt and Sidney Lee and a score of others on that level'.[83] He ascribed the play's failure to an error of construction, speculating that it might have succeeded if he had 'thrown the action into a more fantastic setting, where I could have dispensed with narrative and shown the events taking place' – the 'events' meaning, presumably, Fergusson's antisocial actions and his ultimate downfall, which all happen offstage and are reported by characters coming in and out of Peebody's parlour.[84] Cordell had the opposite impression of the play: 'Some of the most sparkling dialogue [Jones] ever wrote is wasted in this rather disingenuous defence of the militarists' postulate that if one is to keep the peace he must go armed.'[85] Disingenuous it may be, but this play was written in wartime and in the service of patriotic propaganda, when subtlety of moral and philosophical argument was not necessarily the dramatist's main priority.

As a parable, the characters and the main incidents of the play are straightforward to read in allegorical terms. Fergusson's bullying conduct corresponds to German activity in the years leading up to the war: annexation of overseas territories (feminised as Mrs. Peebody and her mother), naval blockades, and intervention in Britain's diplomatic and trading relationships with its colonies. Peebody and Weech, whose flowery language of moral influence and non-violence cloaks a simple reluctance to engage in direct conflict for fear of the consequences, represent Jones' view of the peace movement (and more generally of liberal utilitarian ethics, where moral behaviour is 'enforced' by esteem and reputation). Kosok has suggested that the fiery red-haired shopman represents Ireland, eager to fight on England's side; though surprisingly, Kosok then goes on to ask whether, if the red-haired shopman reminds the audience member of Irish support for England, 'where would such an identification leave the far more dangerous Bluke?' and suggests that Jones has purposely left Bluke ambiguous in order 'to allow the audience some leeway to conduct the debate which is the subtext of the

[83] Quoted in D.A. Jones, p. 297. Jones' comment gives some idea of the establishment figures who made up his circle of acquaintances and who appreciated his work at this point. Sir Edmund Gosse (1849-1928) was a writer, critic and literary biographer whose works included *Father and Son* (1907). Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938) was another poet, whose best-remembered work today is the patriotic lyric 'Drake's Drum'. Sir Sidney Lee (1859-1926) was a literary scholar, and editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography.*
[84] D.A. Jones, p. 297.
[85] Cordell, p. 241.

farcical plot'.[86] In my view, however, there is no such ambiguity at all, and Jones' intentions are clear. Bluke represents the United States, which had entered the war in April 1917, just a few months before *The Pacifists* was produced. Bluke's conduct towards Mrs. Peebody is a warning: if England shows that it lacks the will to defend itself against Germany, its new and powerful wartime ally might in turn make advances towards England's colonies when the opportunity arises.

One further work of the war years shows how completely Jones had abandoned Ruskinian aspirations of beauty in his ideological support for the war. This is the unproduced and unpublished four-act piece *Finding Themselves.* The reason it remains unproduced does not appear to have been the play itself, but rather the availability of the people and resources required to stage it in 1917. Doris Jones quotes a note from her father explaining that

> I had arranged with a leading London actor to play the chief part and we were looking for a manager and a theatre, when he was taken by the War Office for more important work. There being no other actor available, the play was necessarily set put aside. The end of the War came, and England, theatre folk included, made haste to forget all about it and its lessons.[87]

Jones expressed a hope that the play might nevertheless, at some point in the future, hold 'some interest for playgoers as giving a picture of London in those dark hours' but the judgement of posterity has been considerably less kind. Richard Cordell, writing between the First and Second World Wars, found the play 'unpalatable in its hyperbolical jingoism'.[88] Marjorie Northend, early in the Second World War, found it 'a repulsive exhibition of blind, poisonous nationalism, the nationalism which looked upon all Germans as monsters and vermin to be exterminated'.[89] The play concerns the effect of war on a family, and how it teaches them economy, courage and self-sacrifice: by supporting the war effort they 'find themselves'.

It has not been possible to access the text of *Finding Themselves* during the course of writing this thesis. The original document is held at the V&A Theatre and Performance Collections,

[86] Kosok, p. 92.
[87] D. A. Jones, p. 299.
[88] Cordell, p. 242.
[89] F. Marjorie Northend, 'Henry Arthur Jones and the Dramatic Renaissance in England', University of London, Bedford College, MA thesis (May 1940), pp. 126-6.

but the archive has been closed to researchers since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. On top of this, the collection is now being moved to new premises, and will not reopen until 2023. I have therefore had to rely on limited extracts gleaned from secondary sources, including Richard Cordell's 1932 book and Marjorie Northend's 1940 thesis (Northend was given access to the typescript by Doris Jones). What these limited extracts reveal, however, is a piece that is remarkable for the excessive violence of its imagery, as when an invalided English soldier describes killing a German in battle:

> There was this one fat Boche – he was down on his knees with his goggly eyes staring out of his head, squeaking for mercy. I gave him mercy – German mercy, I did. I spilt him about all over the trench.[90]

The heroine also exclaims how she intends to work 'to make shells to blow their filthy carcases into clots, and make them stink over the face of the Earth'.[91] The hostility towards a generalised enemy is reminiscent of the casual slaughters described in *Carnac Sahib*, but here it is worked up to a shocking pitch of explicit violence.

Expressions of fear and hatred of Germany were not unusual in 'hun-bashing' dramas (the term used by the German critic Kosok).[92] Collins' survey of wartime playscripts submitted to the Lord Chamberlain's office found numerous instances of scenes in which outrages were perpetrated by Germans against innocent victims: 'The greatest atrocities were attributed to the depraved antics of the German soldiery [including] the killing of mothers, beating of children and rape of young girls, the latter being the most common.'[93] Another instance of the hun-bashing drama is J. Hartley Manner's short play *God of My Faith* (1917), set in London as the news of the *Lusitania* arrives, in which one character implores God to curse the Germans: 'May their hopes wither. May everything they set their hearts on rot. Send them pestilence, disease and every foul torture they have visited on Your people. Send the Angel of Death to rid the earth of them and their spawn.'[94] The hatred that Jones' characters express for Germany in *Finding Themselves* is not fundamentally inconsistent with the xenophobic and nationalistic voices that were being heard in other plays. However, the troubling imagery takes the sentiment to a rhetorically violent extreme that verges on the pornographic (in the

[90] Quoted in Cordell, p. 242-3.
[91] Cordell, p. 243.
[92] Kosok, pp. 165-173.
[93] Collins, p.217.
[94] Quoted in Kosok, p. 34.

non-sexual sense of being designed to stimulate or excite a visceral response). In his final drama of the war years, Jones appears to have abandoned his Ruskinian and Arnoldian commitment to the pursuit of culture and beauty, and resorted to the coarsest kind of writing in his support for the war.

Conclusion

The British Empire is present in the background of many of Jones' major dramas. It forms an essential part of the desexualised zone of homosociality that I described in my discussion of masculinities in Chapter One: the male protagonists of *The Masqueraders* (1894) and *The Liars* (1897) depart for Africa at the end of each play, and to almost certain death in the pursuit of their masculine destiny. The young hero of *Saints and Sinners* (1884) makes his fortune in Australia, while the villainous seducer in the same play is reported to have died in battle in India. The married heroine's lover in *The Case of Rebellious Susan* (1894) is conveniently removed from London when he is despatched to a civil service job in New Zealand. However, from the turn of the century onwards, questions of empire, race and war come to the fore and feature ever more strongly, and the works that I have discussed in this chapter engage with questions of war and empire on multiple fronts. These plays re-use narrative tropes that are familiar from Jones' earlier work, like the fallen woman in *Carnac Sahib* and the notion of young men being 'made' (and older men redeemed) by military service; but in his patriotic dedication to the war, Jones appears to have abandoned many of the convictions that he had previously held dear. *Fall In, Rookies!* shows a dislikeable contempt for the common man. Ruskinian reverence for women is jettisoned in *Fall In, Rookies!* and 'To English Girls', in both of which female sexuality becomes a commodity to be used for the purposes of military recruitment. Jones' disagreement with Shaw calls into question his commitment to freedom of expression. The excessively violent language of *Finding Themselves* betrays Jones' longstanding Arnoldian commitment to the notion that drama should be both beautiful and uplifting. But what is most striking about these late plays of war and empire is that, for all his earlier critique of England and the English – the commercial middle-classes, the hypocrisy, the effects of industrialisation on the country's citizens and environment – Jones appears to have aligned himself completely with the status quo of Edwardian England, articulating on behalf of the ruling elite a fanatical conviction in the moral superiority of the English over their wartime enemies, and in the project of empire, and prioritising this conviction over almost everything that he had previously believed.

Conclusion

'I am conscious that I have largely failed': the afterlife and changing critical reception of Henry Arthur Jones

There have been only occasional revivals of Jones' work in recent years. *The Silver King* was staged at the Chichester Festival Theatre in 1990, and the Orange Tree Theatre in Richmond revived *The Case of Rebellious Susan* in 1994 and *Mary Goes First* in 2009. Benedict Nightingale, reviewing the last of these for the *Times*, described the play as having been 'retrieved from the theatrical oubliette'.[1] How did such a major dramatist disappear so completely from the public consciousness? Jones' plays continued to be performed and celebrated throughout his later years, and there can be no doubt as to the esteem that he still commanded at the time of his death in 1929. A four-volume selection consisting of seventeen plays, entitled *Representative Plays* and edited by the American theatre critic and academic Clayton Hamilton (1881-1946), was published in 1925.[2] A handful of PhD theses and Masters' dissertations were written while Jones was still alive, mainly in American universities (which had been quicker than English ones to appreciate the importance of drama and performance as a field of study), by researchers some of whom had the benefit of personal correspondence with Jones about his influences, dramaturgy and the reception of his plays.[3] In the days following Jones' death, on 7 January 1929, obituaries and personal reminiscences appeared in the *Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Observer* and many other newspapers, and theatre critics wrote appreciative testimonials.[4] The biography by his

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[1] Benedict Nightingale, 'Cash for honours amid the northern snobbery of 1913', *Times*, 6 January 2009, p. 28.

[2] Henry Arthur Jones, *Representative Plays: edited, with historical, biographical, and critical introductions, by Clayton Hamilton* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1925).

[3] Academic studies undertaken during Jones' lifetime include Karl Gustave Hans Teichmann, *Henry Arthur Jones Dramen*, PhD thesis, University of Giessen, 1913; Hazel Mildred Chadderdon, 'The Influence of the Melodrama on the Works of Henry Arthur Jones', MA thesis, University of Illinois, 1917; Olga Vera Hofacker, 'The Influence of Ibsen on Henry Arthur Jones', MA thesis, University of Illinois, 1920; and Aubrey Ward Goodenough, *Henry Arthur Jones; a study in dramatic compromise*, PhD thesis, State University of Iowa, 1920. The first theatre studies degree programme in the USA was established in 1914 at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, but it took until 1947 before the first UK department was established (this was at the University of Bristol), which may partly account for the comparative neglect of Jones by the British Academy: see Christopher B. Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.11.

[4] [Anon], 'Obituary: Mr. Henry Arthur Jones. A Famous English Dramatist', *Times*, 8 January 1929, p. 17; [Anon.], 'Famous Dramatist Dead: Henry Arthur Jones. *The Silver King* Memories. Association with Wilson Barrett', *Daily Telegraph*, 8 January 1929, p. 15; [Anon.], 'Henry Arthur Jones: Veteran Dramatist's Death. From *The Silver King* to *The Lie', Observer,* 8 January 1929, p. 14.

daughter Doris, *The Life and Letters of Henry Arthur Jones*, which has been referred to throughout this thesis, was widely reviewed following its publication in 1930. The study of Jones' work by Richard Cordell of Purdue University in Indiana, *Henry Arthur Jones and the Modern Drama* – to date, the only critical book that has concentrated solely on Jones – was published in 1932. This level of academic and cultural attention makes the subsequent, sharp decline in Jones' reputation particularly remarkable. Within a decade or so, even his most successful and enduring plays had largely vanished from the professional theatre repertoire: by 1942, Marjorie Northend could write in the *Review of English Studies*, 'None of these plays was great, nobody remembers them now'; although she would go on to commend the contribution that Jones' pamphleteering had made to English drama, and the significance of his plays as 'the honest attempt to introduce new thought and new life into the theatre in a form acceptable to the people'.[5] The academy also ceased to show much interest in his work, except by way of comparison (invariably unfavourable) with Ibsen, Wilde and Shaw.

One factor in the evaporation of Jones' popularity as a dramatist must be the decline of melodrama as a stage genre. There is a strong strain of melodrama running through Jones' entire body of work – consider for example the emotionally-charged climaxes of *The Dancing Girl* or *The Middleman* – but melodrama was going out of fashion even as Jones was first embarking on his playwriting career. As Dutton Cook wrote in 1883, the year after Jones scored his first big success with the melodrama *The Silver King*:

> There is something possibly in the nature of melodramas that compels them to grow old with greater rapidity than plays of a more sober character; the time arrives when situations cease to thrill and effects no longer startle as once they did, and over the whole work there descends like a pall or wet blanket a sense of its infirmity or decay.[6]

The best-known melodramas were regularly burlesqued, and their stage performances were increasingly attended by sophisticated audiences who came to mock rather than to sympathise with the predicaments of the heroine or the tribulations of the hero. In 1896, Shaw described how an impassioned speech by the villainess of *True Blue* was greeted by 'a house half-white with its purgation by pity and terror, and half red with a voiceless, apoplectic laughter'.[7] The

[5] Marjorie Northend, 'Henry Arthur Jones and the Development of the Modern English Drama', *Review of English Studies,* Vol. 18, No. 72 (October 1942), pp. 448-63 (pp. 451, 463).
[6] Quoted in Booth, *English Melodrama*, p. 178.
[7] Quoted in Booth, *English Melodrama*, p. 179.

decline of melodrama would be further hastened by the 1914-18 war, with its shattering of the moral certainty that melodrama demands. 'The twentieth century is simply not favourably disposed towards melodrama,' wrote Michael Booth in *English Melodrama* (1965): 'Ideal worlds, absolutes, moral and social certainties, simplicity, sureness and confidence, are all out of intellectual fashion.'[8] Theatre audiences came to demand greater subtlety and ambiguity in serious plays. When the actor Alan Howard died in 2015, the *Guardian*'s theatre critic Michael Coveney opened his obituary with a reference to Howard's 1990 appearance in Chichester's *The Silver King*, 'a piece of Victorian hokum by Henry Arthur Jones', and 'hokum' is typical of how stage melodrama is viewed today; although melodramatic plot devices and mechanics persist and thrive in screen dramas, particularly the television soap opera.[9]

The 'well-made play' – the kind of play that Jones had been so adept at constructing – also became the subject of increasing scorn. Indeed, the term 'well-made', which was plainly intended as a compliment in the nineteenth century, had come by the mid-twentieth century to be 'almost invariably used in criticism as an insult'.[10] There is of course nothing wrong with any work of art being well-made, in the sense of well-constructed: many contemporary plays are constructed very well indeed. However, by the middle of the twentieth century, the British 'well-made play' had also come to be associated with a whole set of formal social conventions that were by then dated and irrelevant. As John Russell Taylor asked in his 1967 book *The Rise and Fall of the Well-Made Play*:

> what would become of well-made social drama in a world where right and wrong were not as distinct as black and white, and where the only criterion was what you could get away with – especially as the margin of what you could get away with grew yearly wider?[11]

Jones was to become associated with just such 'black and white' morality: unfairly perhaps, since, as I have shown in earlier chapters in this thesis, moral ambiguity is woven into many of Jones' plays, particularly the society comedies and 'problem plays' of the 1890s. Nevertheless, the preoccupation with social propriety, scandal and divorce that characterised

[8] Booth, *English Melodrama*, p. 184.
[9] Michael Coveney, 'Obituary: Alan Howard: One of the leading heroic actors of his generation, whose clarion voice would reverberate to the RSC's rafters', *Guardian*, 20 February 2015, p. 37.
[10] John Russell Taylor, *The Rise and Fall of the Well-Made Play* (1967), p. 9.
[11] Taylor, p. 49.

many of Jones' most enduring successes, was itself out of date by the time of Jones' death, as the drama critic of *Country Life* noted at the time. An actor friend, he reported, had recently read *The Liars* to a group of 'intelligent young people' who had 'found the trimmings to the comedy in every way admirable but the main dish was no longer to their taste', the main objection being that 'nowadays going through the Divorce Court doesn't mean anything to anybody'.[12] Discussions of marriage and moral codes in Mayfair drawing-rooms, typified by Jones' successful line of society comedies of the 1890s, had become dated and even laughable. Jones would be eclipsed by more brilliant writers with more overtly political and social intentions, or just more entertaining dialogue: Ibsen, Wilde and Shaw in his own day; Harley Granville Barker, Elizabeth Robins and the suffrage dramatists in the Edwardian period; Noel Coward and Somerset Maugham with their more explicitly *risqué* works; and in time by the emergence in the 1950s of writers like John Osborne, Harold Pinter and Arnold Wesker, whose moral preoccupations are separated from the drawing-room dramas of the *fin de siècle* by two World Wars.

The disappearance of Jones' plays from the stage does not, however, account for their equally swift disappearance from the canon of English dramatic literature and from academic study. On the whole Jones' play-texts have received a publication about as frequently as the plays themselves have received a professional production.[13] Serious academic attention to the Jones' *oeuvre* has been just as scarce: few theses or dissertations since 1929, the year of Jones' death, mention Henry Arthur Jones in their title, and even fewer have him as their main topic.[14] Victorian drama generally remained a neglected field of study until late in the

[12] George Warrington, 'At the Theatre: Henry Arthur Jones', *Country Life*, January 26, 1929, p. 125.
[13] Some of the plays that I have discussed in my thesis make an occasional appearance in anthologies. *The Liars* was included in *Late Victorian Plays, 1890-1914*, ed. by George Rowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). *The Middleman* appeared in *The Lights o' London and Other Victorian Plays*, ed. by Michael R. Booth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). A selection entitled *Plays by Henry Arthur Jones*, edited by Russell Jackson and consisting of *The Silver King, The Case of Rebellious Susan* and *The Liars* was published as part of the series *British and American Playwrights, 1750-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
[14] A search of major academic databases, including ProQuest and British Library EThOS, discloses few Masters and PhD theses since 1929 that name 'Henry Arthur Jones' specifically in their title. (I recognise that he is named with greater frequency in the titles of articles and chapters, including the recent publications that are referenced in the Introduction to this thesis.) The theses of which I am aware are Quincy Farr Wham, 'Social Satire in Henry Arthur Jones', MA thesis, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1939; Marjorie F. Northend, 'Henry Arthur Jones and the Dramatic Renascence in England', MA thesis, University of London, Bedford College, 1940; Regina Domeraski, *A World Divided: The Plays of Henry Arthur Jones*, PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 1980; Ada Mei Fan, *In and Out of Bounds: Marriage, Adultery, and Women in the Plays of Henry Arthur Jones, Arthur Wing Pinero, Harley Granville-Barker, John Galsworthy, and W.*

twentieth century, as Regina Domeraski observed in the Introduction to her 1980 PhD dissertation *A World Divided: the Plays of Henry Arthur Jones* (the most recent PhD of which I am aware that is devoted entirely to Jones): there was a 'modern prejudice against the Victorian theater' which had until recently been dismissed 'in the same way as most serious critics dismiss television sit-coms'.[15] The melodramatic nature of Jones' writing may further account for this academic indifference, as much as it explains the paucity of recent performances. Although the sensational, sentimental and emotional melodrama of the nineteenth century has been the subject of considerable academic interest for several years now, it was a neglected field for most of the twentieth century, for reasons that Juliet John explained in 2009: not only did the academy lack the vocabulary to deal with the primarily emotional appeal and impact of the melodrama as a genre, but 'the aesthetic simplicity of melodrama, its "non-elite" audiences, its demonstrative rather than analytical mode, and its devaluation of both spoken and written language meant that it was fundamentally threatening to Victorian and early twentieth-century notions of Literature and Culture, on which academic study of the Arts was based'.[16] If melodrama were not a fitting object for study, nor was a playwright such as Jones, through whose works run such a strong melodramatic and emotional vein. Today, however, television sit-coms and Victorian melodramas alike are considered eminently suitable subjects for academic attention, not least for the insight they provide into changing cultural preoccupations and popular attitudes. A reconsideration of the value of Jones' work is accordingly long overdue.

Jones' late writings must have further alienated the mid-century academy. In his collection of essays *Patriotism and Popular Education* (1920), Jones took issue with the 1918 Education Act, which had raised the school leaving age from 12 to 14, abolished all fees in state elementary schools, and prescribed a curriculum that included sciences and classics. Among the many – not always mutually consistent – interventions that Jones makes in the debate over state-funded education is the argument that since an estimated 85 per cent of children belong to the class of manual workers, they should 'be allowed and encouraged to learn those

Somerset Maugham, PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, New York, 1988; and Jay Tyler Sharma, 'Who is Paying for God: A thematic analysis of Henry Arthur Jones's religious plays in relation to the modernist trend', MA thesis, Central Washington University, 2019.

[15] Domeraski, pp. xi-xii. Domeraski's thesis consists of a strictly chronological survey of Jones' works, with no detailed attention to any individual play or theme.

[16] John, J., (2008) "Melodrama and its Criticism: An Essay in Memory of Sally Ledger", 19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century 8, p. 4 <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.496> [accessed 1 December 2021].

things that they will be mainly concerned to *do*, and shall not be forced to learn those things that they will be only remotely concerned to *know*'.[17] Rather than being required to learn about Cicero, Jones suggests, the fourteen-year old daughter of a domestic help would be better equipped for life if she is taught how to cook a good omelette: 'If a knowledge of Cicero's life and writings will, in some occult way, help our domestic servants and our carpenters to save the State, I am enthusiastically in favour of letting them know all about him as quickly as possible. But I have my doubts.'[18] It is a strange attitude to find in the son of a Buckinghamshire farmer, whose background and early life marked him out for a provincial shopkeeper rather than a man of letters, and it is symptomatic of the hardening conservatism that I described in the previous chapter. Other essays in the same collection deal with social cohesion in the wake of the War, Irish nationalism, the increasing electoral success of the Labour Party, and the rise of Bolshevism. Taking these things together – particularly the aversion to socialism and the disdain for publicly-funded education – it is hardly surprising that Jones fell out of favour with the academy after 1945. The pronouncements of certain of Jones' *raisonneurs* about the Woman Question were also unlikely to endear his work to the second-generation feminist literary criticism that began to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s.

One Jones play has come in for particular opprobrium over many years. This is *Breaking a Butterfly* (1884), the adaptation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* that Jones wrote with Henry Herman, in which Ibsen's famous ending (among other things) is revised. In Ibsen, Nora asserts a new-found agency and independence when she walks out on her husband and children, slamming the door behind her – a slam that Shaw described as 'more momentous than the cannon of Waterloo or Sedan' and which testifies to 'the importance of the play – and the sound-effect—as a defining moment in the gender debates of nineteenth-century middle-class culture'.[19] In *Breaking a Butterfly*, rather than walking out, the Nora character remains with her husband, who promises to protect her against the consequences of the forgery that she had committed. It is largely because of Jones' revision of this ending, and the implications of the new 'happy' ending in terms of its reassertion of conventional middle-class gender roles, that the Jones adaptation is so reviled. I have purposely refrained from a

[17] Henry Arthur Jones, *Patriotism and Popular Education* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1920), pp. 260-1.
[18] Henry Arthur Jones, *Patriotism and Popular Education*, p. 11.
[19] Mangan, p. 177.

detailed examination of *Breaking a Butterfly* in this thesis, as it has already received extensive critical attention, but I mention it here because the tone of much of the criticism tells us something about how Jones' reputation has been communicated within the academy since the mid-twentieth century.

The deficiencies in *Breaking a Butterfly* were noted by numerous commentators, including William Archer, Harley Granville-Barker and George Bernard Shaw, at the time of its original production at the Prince's Theatre in March 1884: the more recent criticisms that I quote below are nothing new. Archer, a translator of Ibsen and one of his main champions in England, wrote in the *Theatre* that Jones and Herman had 'felt it needful to eliminate all that was satirical or unpleasant, and in making their work sympathetic, they at once made it trivial', although he went on to observe that he did not blame them for doing so, since 'Ibsen on the English stage is impossible'.[20] However, the enormous cultural status of Ibsen and the attendant academic interest in the performance history of his works have resulted in *Breaking a Butterfly* receiving a degree of critical attention that is out of proportion to its significance in the Jones *oeuvre.* To generations of Ibsen scholars, Jones is mainly known for having produced a travesty. For Christopher Innes, writing in 1992, this 'notorious adaptation' amounted to 'a trivialization that has come to symbolize the artistic bankruptcy of moral conformism'.[21] For Sally Ledger, in 1999, the 'rather coyly entitled' adaptation 'transposed Ibsen's radically subversive play into a banal exposition of moral trivia', ending with 'a predictably saccharine reconciliation between husband and wife'.[22] George E. Wellwarth, in 2001, referred to the play as 'a piece of literary vandalism'.[23] Sos Eltis dismissed the ending in 2013 with heavy irony: 'Herbert [*sic – should be 'Humphrey'*] nobly takes responsibility for his wife's crime and, once disaster has been averted, his wife shelters herself lovingly from the dangers of the world against his manly chest.'[24] All these critics are entirely correct in recognising the counter-subversive effect of Jones' reworking of Ibsen's subversive

[20] Ledger, *Henrik Ibsen,* p. 5
[21] Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama, 1890-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 11.
[22] Ledger, *Henrik Ibsen,* p. 4.
[23] Wellwarth, p. 138. Wellwarth's credibility on the interrelationship between *A Doll's House* and *Breaking a Butterfly* is somewhat undermined by the fact that, in a single paragraph, he misnames no fewer than three of the characters in Ibsen's original play, referring to Dr. Rank as 'Dr. Frank', Mrs. Linde as 'Mrs. Lindex', and Krogstad as 'Erogstad'. His proof-readers may be at fault, but it suggests a lack of attention to detail on the part of the writer as well.
[24] Eltis, *Acts of Desire,* p. 134.

original, but there is another dimension to the play that they have overlooked. It has taken recent work studying masculinities to offer a (partially) corrective view, and a more nuanced response can be found in the analysis of the play by Michael Mangan, who concentrates on the character of Humphrey as much as Flora:

> When Humphrey Goddard [the Torvald Helmer character] performs the very miracle which Nora Helmer had hoped for from Torvald, he lives up to and affirms the chivalrous ideal, as Torvald did not. Torvald's failure had opened up the gap between masculine self-image and the actuality of bourgeois gender relationships, and had thrown into question bourgeois paternalism itself. Humphrey's noble act of self-sacrifice, on the contrary, stands as Jones' and Herman's ringing affirmation of the existing gender order.[25]

In defending his wife and squaring up to the villain – even at the expense of compromising his own cherished integrity with an outright lie – Humphrey performs precisely the gender role prescribed for him by Ruskin in *Sesame and Lilies*. This is an aspect of *Breaking a Butterfly* that most commentators, focussing mainly on the violence done by Jones to Ibsen's iconic Nora and often avoiding any critical analysis of Humphrey at all, have failed to recognise. I have shown in this thesis that Jones is at least as concerned with the conduct and moral obligations of men as he is with female self-assertion and sexuality, but critical attention to Jones has generally concentrated on the latter. The former are equally important; and even if we (quite rightly) no longer subscribe to the Ruskinian gender binary, we have to read Jones' work in a different way when we turn our critical focus on their male characters.

The prominence given in studies of *fin de siècle* drama to Ibsen and the discourse of the fallen women has, I suggest, dominated criticism of Jones' work to the extent that it has obscured his contribution to other cultural discourses and to the development of English drama as practice and industry. Recent work in other aspects of Victorian culture has opened up Jones' plays to new interpretative possibilities, and it is these possibilities that I have explored in this thesis. Even the latest doctoral dissertations on Jones, by Domeraski and Fan in 1980 and 1988 respectively, pre-date the emergence in the 1990s of attention to masculinity, and masculinities, as 'a central problematic of cultural formation and change'.[26] Such recent criticism as there has been of *The Dancing Girl, The Masqueraders* and *The*

[25] Mangan, p. 183.
[26] James Eli Adams, quoted in Kestner, p. 2. For a very brief account of the growth of critical theory generally, and the emergence of new approaches since the mid-twentieth century, see *Beginning Theory* by Peter Barry, 3rd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p.194.

Liars has tended to concentrate on their principal female characters, Drusilla Ives, Dulcie Larondie and Jessica Nepean, and as Domeraski observed in 1980, the presence in Jones' plays of such 'unreal and distasteful women […] above all else is probably responsible for the fact that Jones's plays are today considered little more than historical curiosities'.[27] However, as I showed in Chapter One, if we consider these works through the lens of masculinities, and in their proper historical and cultural context of the moral panic prompted by the sex scandals of the late 1880s, it becomes clear that their principal purpose is not to proscribe female conduct but rather to provide moral instruction to men. Where Ruskin made women the bearers of moral values, as guardians of the hearth and the source of moral influence on men, Jones demands that men bear more of this responsibility. Jones' plays of masculinity are in dialogue with the work of other playwrights of his day, reflecting the changing masculinities of the *fin de siècle* and engaging with the latest thinking about morality, altruism and evolution.

The critical focus on Jones' treatment of the fallen women in *Saints and Sinners* and *Michael and his Lost Angel*, Letty Fletcher and Audrie Lesden, has likewise eclipsed the importance of these works as challenges to the censorship. Along with *Judah* and *The Tempter*, these plays confront the religious hypocrisy of the late-Victorian age, and articulate anti-religious sentiments and even atheistic views. I demonstrated in Chapter Two how the subversive dramaturgical technique that Jones adopted allowed him to circumvent the strictures of religious censorship, and helped to open up the English stage to the more explicit critiques of religion that would follow in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, author of *Behzti (Dishonour)* observed in 2014, a decade after the controversy that attended the presentation and subsequent cancellation of her play at Birmingham Rep, 'My experience showed me that freedom of expression is precious, both as a gift and a right. When it is taken away, there is nothing left but abject, depressing silence.'[28] Jones' contribution to the free articulation of religious or anti-religious views, and the open criticism of religious institutions, is an aspect of his life and career that has been neglected and should be at least noted and even celebrated.

[27] Domeraski, p. 63.
[28] Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, 'Ten years after my play Behzti sparked Sikh riots, I'm back', *Guardian*, 24 May 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/24/10-years-behzti-gurpreet-bhatti-birmingham-sikh-protest> [accessed 23 November 2021].

In Chapter Three, I argued that Jones was not only the first major playwright to vocalise a socialist message on the West End stage, in *Wealth* and *The Middleman,* but that these plays themselves form part of a broad and ultimately effective campaign by Jones to elevate the status of the author and to establish the playwright's claim to artistic primacy over the actor-manager. When he decided to produce *The Crusaders* for himself, he was challenging the production practices of the West End, asserting the right of the dramatist to control the intellectual property that he had created, and helping to break the grip that a narrow group of capitalist actor-managers exercised over the West End stage and the selection of plays for production.

Perhaps most significantly, I addressed in Chapter Four the charge of misogyny that has so frequently been levelled against Jones in recent critiques of *The Case of Rebellious Susan, Mrs. Dane's Defence* and *The Princess's Nose*. I demonstrated that much of the criticism of these plays has been based on an incorrect assumption that the dogmatic, ideological, gender pronouncements of their *raisonneurs* represent the author's own views, and I provided a corrective by identifying the numerous ambiguities and subversive elements that are woven into these works: examination of their early reception history shows that audiences clearly understood those *raisonneurs* to be morally compromised and the plays to carry a more subversive and progressive meaning. Although all three plays deal with the containment of female sexuality, I have shown that they unsettled their audiences and eschewed the easy moral lessons that most twentieth century commentators have ascribed to them.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I addressed Jones' plays of empire and war, with an analysis that was partially informed by a post-colonial perspective: another critical approach that has only really emerged since the 1990s. It is striking, for example, that Domeraski brushed over *Carnac Sahib* in 1980 as having 'little else to interest the reader or viewer than details of English life in India'.[29] The post-colonial critical approach helps to highlight how Jones represented non-English peoples, how 'othering' – initially of the non-European populations of Africa and India, but subsequently of the Germans as well – takes place in texts; and how the treatment of such 'others' as nameless, indistinguishable and often treacherous is part of a wider strain of racism and imperialism in English culture. I have also shown how Jones responded to the patriotic appeals of the First World War, abandoning his own strongly-held

[29] Domeraski, p. 116.

aesthetic convictions in the interests of serving his country and its ruling elite, the class to which Jones had been so keen to gain admission. These are aspects of Jones' work that have received almost no critical attention to date, and the discussion of these plays contributes to a growing body of research into the drama of the First World War and the complicated interplay of issues of imperialism, race and class.

What is Jones' real significance, then, if his plays so quickly ceased to be performed and the academy ceased to take him seriously as a writer worthy of study in his own right? Jones himself, mindful of his legacy and perhaps conscious of the rapid marginalisation of his dramatic work after the First World War, included in his will a message to the public about the future of the English theatre. Jones acknowledged with gratitude the success that he had attained on the English stage, and the rewards that his efforts had brought him, but the main import of the piece concerned his aspirations for English drama:

> I am convinced that England cannot have a modern drama worthy of her place among the nations, a modern drama in which she can take a just and lasting pride, and for which she can claim the esteem of other nations until our theatre is brought into relation with our literature, and until the great body of English men of letters takes a diligent and understanding interest in the theatre.
>
> In this conviction I have endeavoured through the greater part of my life to draw English men of letters to the theatre. I have also tried to persuade English playgoers to read and study modern plays that they may take a more intelligent interest in what is set before them in the theatre and may get a more refined and enduring pleasure from plays when they see them acted.
>
> I am conscious that I have largely failed in both these aims. It is with some hope that the causes I have advocated may yet succeed that I ask English men of letters and English playgoers to accept from me in a spirit of forbearance and friendliness this legacy of a last few words.[30]

The tone is one of disappointment; but it is fair to ask, nearly a century later, whether Jones' failure was as complete as he evidently felt it to be. It is hard to imagine any writer who would today shun the theatre on the basis that modern drama cannot be literature: the 'divorce of literature from the stage' had been consigned to history well before Jones died.

[30] Quoted in 'Literature and Drama', Times, 11 January 1929, p. 10. Extracts from the will also appeared in the *Daily Mail* under the headline 'Mr. H. A. Jones' Failure' (*Daily Mail*, 11 January 1929, p. 6), and in other newspapers.

Thomas Hardy, who in 1892 had contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s series 'Why I Don't Write Plays' that I discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, was asking Jones' advice in 1897 about a possible stage version of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and the royalty terms that he should seek. Another novelist who had contributed to the series, George Moore, wrote *The Strike at Arlingford* which was produced at the Independent Theatre in 1893. By the early years of the new century, American universities were teaching modern English drama in their English departments, and Jones received several invitations to speak on the subject.[31] The practice of play-publishing and the habit of play-reading, both of which Jones helped to revive in England, were also gaining momentum before his death and remain vigorous today. Modern English drama would go on to flourish as a writer's theatre in the twentieth century: indeed, the growth of theatre and performance studies over the last few decades is partly a reaction against the attention to the dramatic text that gained such critical ascendancy in the twentieth century, as more recent scholars have sought – as I have done in this thesis – to analyse and understand the event of performance. Jones must be given credit for his contribution in laying the groundwork for the achievements of subsequent generations of playwrights, both through his extensive critical interventions and through his practical example in asserting the primacy of authors against the demands of actor-managers and censors.

In my discussion of all these works, I have recovered a sense of the importance of Jones' contribution to the English theatre, based on a record that consists not only of his own published texts and unpublished manuscripts, but also of numerous documentary sources of production, performance and reception history. Jones is revealed as a formidable figure of the *fin de siècle* theatre, communicating through the stage the thinking of Ruskin, Arnold and Spencer; extending the boundaries of what could permissibly be presented in an era of official censors and self-appointed Mrs. Grundys; challenging the institutions of theatre production and in particular the powerful actor-managers who decided which works reached the public and in what form; demanding proper intellectual property protection for playwrights; and campaigning tirelessly for the recognition of modern English drama as a serious literary form. If he was a less brilliant playwright than Ibsen, Wilde or Shaw, it is

[31] The text of three of these lectures is reproduced in *Foundations.* 'The Corner Stones of Modern Drama' was delivered at Harvard University in October 1906 (pp. 20-43). 'Literature and the Modern Drama' was delivered at Yale University in November 1906 (pp. 44-68). 'The Aims and Duties of a National Theatre' was delivered at Columbia University in January 1911 (pp. 69-87).

nevertheless hard to imagine how they might have come to such prominence in England had Jones not paved the way: as I noted earlier, even William Archer deemed Ibsen ‘impossible’ in 1884. Jones is a key writer whose works were judged by many of the leading critics of his own day to have literary status on a par with any other English playwright; and whose writings and personal campaigns about the organisation of the theatre, copyright law, censorship and the literary nature of the dramatic work profoundly affected subsequent theatre practice and appreciation of the dramatist’s craft.

Bibliography

Introductory note

This bibliography is arranged in four parts.

Part A lists the plays by Henry Arthur Jones that I have cited in this thesis, arranged alphabetically by title. A full list of all Jones' plays (including works that were unperformed and/or unpublished) can be found in Appendix A to Doris Arthur Jones' *Life and Letters* (1930).

Part B lists the essays and other non-dramatic writings by Jones that I have cited. Again, these are arranged alphabetically.

Part C lists contemporaneous criticism of the plays by Jones that I discuss. These are organised chronologically by play, according to date of first production. J.P. Wearing's annotated bibliography of writings about Jones (1979) is very comprehensive, but the decision to arrange its entries alphabetically by title – when the titles of newspaper reviews in particular are often uninformative as to subject-matter (for example, 'At the Play' or 'The Theatres') – makes it a less readily useful resource than it might otherwise have been.

Part D lists all other works cited, and is arranged alphabetically by title.

Part A – Plays by Henry Arthur Jones

There are two collections of plays by Henry Arthur Jones, namely *Representative Plays*, ed. by Clayton Hamilton, 4 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1925), and *Plays by Henry Arthur Jones*, ed. by Russell Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). The former consists of seventeen plays and spans Jones' entire career. The latter was published as part of the Cambridge University Press series *British and American Playwrights, 1750-1920* and includes only three works from his peak, namely *The Silver King*, *The Case of Rebellious Susan* and *The Liars*. However, I have generally referred to Macmillan and Chiswick Press

editions that were published during Jones' lifetime, and whose texts Jones would have approved. The specific works cited in this thesis are as follows.

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– *The Tempter* (London: Macmillan, 1905)

– *The Triumph of the Philistines, and how Mr. Jorgan preserved the Morals of Market Pewbury under Very Trying Circumstances* (London: Macmillan, 1899)

– *Wealth* (British Library, Lord Chamberlain's Plays Collection: 1189/6 Add. Mss. 5342H)

Part B – Essay, lectures, articles and other non-dramatic works by Henry Arthur Jones

Two collections of Jones' non-dramatic writings were published during his lifetime. These are *The Renascence of the English Drama: Essays, Lectures, and Fragments Relating to the Modern English Stage, Written and Delivered in the Years 1883-94* (London: Macmillan, 1895) and *The Foundations of a National Drama: a Collection of Lectures, Essays and Speeches, delivered in the years 1896-1912* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1913). For brevity, I refer to these collections as *Renascence* and *Foundations* respectively. The specific works cited in this thesis are as follows.

Henry Arthur Jones, 'The Aims and Duties of a National Theatre', lecture originally delivered to Columbia University, New York, on 26 January 1911, reprinted in *Foundations*, pp. 69-87)

– 'An Attack on the Actor-Manager: a Reply to Mr. Willard, by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 August 1891, p. 3

– 'The Corner Stones of Modern Drama', lecture originally delivered to Harvard University on 31 October 1906, reprinted in *Foundations*, pp. 20-43

– 'The Dramatic Outlook', address originally delivered at the opening of the Playgoers' Club on 7 October 1884, reprinted in *Renascence*, pp. 153-91

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