Sorting Out the Differences between Multiple Versions of Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables*—Films and Books

A Partial Syllabus for the Graduate Course, *The Literature of Oppression and Deliverance*, at Ibaraki Christian University

Harris G. Ives

**THESIS:** There are many people who have an almost "racial memory" of the story of *Les Miserables*. This is caused by the highly popular musical which dominated stages all over the world in the last decade. Further, many busy readers have come to know the work through the proliferation of abridged editions. In past times of higher standards of high school curricula, the book was required reading. There are those who have confessed to only perusing "Cliff Notes" of the work. No matter the extent of one’s contact with the novel, there is great confusion as to the true story line. This paper compares many of the versions with the uncut English translation.

**INTRODUCTION**

As a professor of modern American literature, I am eager to share with students the foundation upon which currently popular writers such as Wally Lamb and Jane Hamilton have built their complex stories. Lamb’s *I Know This Much Is True* is a phenomenal work which tells of a dysfunctional family. Similarly, Hamilton’s *The Book of Ruth* relates a tale of a woman haunted by the persistent psychological

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1. Of course I use the term *racial memory* here as synonymous with collective memory. *Les Miserables* has been a work of art which has permeated many cultures; particularly it has had a profound effect upon the culture of the American student as it was once required reading in high schools. Although it does not occupy the place it once did on high school curricula, many "Baby Boomers" share common "remembrance" of the work, especially since the current, long-running Broadway musical has popularized it again.
2. Cliff Notes are familiar to many American students. This series of booklets, famous for their yellow and black striped jacket design, encapsulates entire classics within a few pages.
4. Harris G. Ives, "Recurring Motifs in Wally Lamb’s Expansive Novel, *I Know This Much Is True*," Omika Studies in Language and Literature, Volume 6, October 2002. The paper discusses the numerous instances of repeated motifs in this bestseller. As Jean Valjean is stalked by injustices of his time (in the person of the legalistic inspector Javert), modern American characters are stalked by recurring cases of psychoses and neuroses in family lines. In this story, a schizophrenic man, cuts off his hand in a bizarre interpretation of the dictates of Jesus. His healthy twin brother is haunted by the guilt caused by his lapses of sympathy. But the convoluted plot reveals a series of haunting nemesis. It is very much a product of its age, just as *Les Miserables* is a product of the 19th century.
demons which have disturbed generations in her family. The obsession in America these days seems to concern the oppression of individuals by their parents and forebears. Earlier literature was wider in scope, seeing systems and governments as oppressors of the downtrodden. If the recent bestsellers seem more personal and specific, they are probably logical, modern, progressions of the earlier plots of evil systems. What we are experiencing is a shift from the great social themes of the 19th century to the theme of personal psychology and familial trauma in this beginning of the new millennium. Instead of the stalking self-righteous Javert, stalking guilt and repeated patterns of familial psychoses and neuroses haunt modern characters.

THE FOUR GREAT NOVELS OF OPPRESSION

In devising a syllabus for the graduate program at Ibaraki Christian University, it occurred to me that I might develop a course in which four classic novels were taught as background material for subsequent, modern American literature. Four great novels of systemic oppression came to mind: Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1852;6 A Tale of Two Cities, Charles Dickens, 1859;7 Crime and Punishment, Fyodor Dostoevski, 1866;8 and Les Miserables, Victor Hugo, 1862.9 All of these works of the 1800s depict the exploitation of the poor and the ignorant by the rich and by the social systems of their day.

A YEARLY SERIES

Beginning with this paper, I introduce a series in which I discuss techniques for teaching the four great novels. If I cannot commit us to a study of the whole text, at least I can teach abridgements which do not actually reverse or re-write actual events in the story.

A Story of Great Familiarity and Confusion

We will begin with an analysis of the various versions of Les Miserables. While traveling across America this last summer I took a poll of people who claimed to have read the novel; at one time, it was a staple of required high school assignments. Many Americans confessed to never having read the work; others acknowledged reading any one of several abbreviated versions. Of course, with the popularity of the Broadway show, (affectionately referred to as Les Miz), many people know much about the story

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7. Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities.
9. Les Miserables; the class at ICC uses the Paul Benichou edition of 1964.
line. There were a few people who have insisted that they actually read the unabridged version at some point during their lives. A second query in my poll was, "Even if you have not read the work, or have not seen the movie, or watched the new musical, can you tell me anything about the work?" The answer was astounding; almost everyone cited the scene of Jean Valjean traveling through the sewers of Paris as he attempted escape from the unrelenting police inspector. That scene is embedded in the cultural memory of many Westerners.

It also became evident that many Americans were confused about the sequence of events of the story. Many cited scenes which are not actually in the unabridged edition. The film versions include characters which are not part of the original text (see appended charts). And of course there is an endless list of scenes and details actually in the work but not in the memory of those who profess some familiarity with the work. There are several reasons for the confusion regarding the story line of Les Misérables:

1. The existence of a published, though incomplete, prototype novel
2. The multiplicity of film and abridged versions
3. The use of nicknames and aliases in the uncut novel
4. The use of feminized forms of last names (Thenardier-Thenardiess)
5. The extensive use of flashbacks
6. The extensive use of the encyclopedic passages on Catholic Orders, Revolutionary History, and moral asides (all typical Victorian conventions)

The Prototype Novel

Additionally, confusion regarding story line, sequence, character names, etc. is exacerbated by Hugo's prototype book, Les Misérables (eventually published in 1927). This long, incomplete work basically tells the same story as Les Misérables; there are differences in character names and sequencing. Hugo abandoned this work in 1848, and took up the "new" novel in 1860, finishing the work we now know as Les Misérables in 1862.10

Storytelling is an ancient art, of course. Its primitive forms are often delightful because they change and "grow" with each oral interpretation. However, the study of important novels in graduate schools depends upon a mastery of the immutable details of finely written works. Because of the multiple versions of Les Misérables, and because of the publication of the prototype novel, modern students can be excused for their confusion. It remains a fascinating task to find the actual story line.

I must confess to having read the work only a few years ago. Somehow, the importance of the work on high school syllabi diminished from the time of my brother's study to my own, four years later (1960–1963). I do recall my mother and brother taking turns reading the sewer section aloud while I slept. Subliminally I absorbed the details of sewer escape and of the great love of Jean Valjean who assumed the burden of carrying the body of young Marius to safety. So I, too, had the sewer scene, embedded in my brain even before I actually read the work.

**Gender Changes, Name Changes, Deleted Scenes, Revised Chronology**

No one can be blamed for having confusing memory of the story. In the proliferation of versions, such amazing switches as gender and name changes occur. The very recent Fox Studios presentation starring John Malkovich changes the gender of the faithful servant of Jean Valjean. In the book and elsewhere, Toussaint is a lovable old woman who stutters. In the Fox version, Toussaint is an old man.\(^\text{11}\) In the 1998 Liam Neeson film,\(^\text{12}\) the man rescued from under the carriage is named Lafitte, but in the book his name is Monsieur Fauchelevent—an important element to the story because later in the narrative, Jean Valjean poses as Fauchelevent's brother and therefore assumes another alias. In the 1935 Frederich March film, the man in the accident is unnamed.

And perhaps most disturbing of all is the great license the good 1935 film took with the scene of Fantine's death. That rendition has Jean Valjean successfully placing the sweet Cosette in bed with her living mother. The grand tragedy of the original book is that the mother died without having her petition to God and Monsieur Le Mayor granted—to see her child before she dies.

**Les Miserables -- Relevant for Scholars Today**

It is a marvel of a work, and it needs to be taught to students of the vast body of the literature of oppression and deliverance. As a Christian, I am naturally disposed towards tales of enslavement, rebellion, and deliverance. Those three words are basically the outline of the Bible—whether one is talking about the racial or the individual experience. On the grand, national level, the Biblical story is of the bondage

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\(^{12}\) Mandalay Entertainment, Columbia Pictures, *Les Miserables*; Liam Neeson as Jean Valjean, Geoffrey Rush as Javert; 1998. This production stops the story at the death of Javert and omits the marriage scene of Cosette and Marius. Additionally, it omits the highly melodramatic scene of the death of Jean Valjean.
of the Israelites in Egypt, their dramatic flight under the generalship of Moses, and
their eventual deliverance to "the Land of Milk and Honey." On the more personal
level, the Biblical story concerns each man's enslavement to sin, his rebellion towards
God, his forgiveness, and his exoneration through the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the
Cross. This type of language may be foreign to increasing numbers of modern people
and scholars, yet it is precisely the language that inspired Victor Hugo to write his 19th
century novel. It is the inspiration for the on-going body of modern American novels
today.

THE UNCUT VERSION OF THE SCENE AT THE BISHOP'S HOUSE

Deviations from the original, full French text begin with the very opening scene.
Newly released from prison, Jean Valjean knocks upon the door of local bishop.
Unfamiliar with ecclesiastical practices and hierarchy, Jean Valjean does not fully
realize that he is the guest of none other than His Exalted Eminence, the Bishop. The
cleric resides with his sister and his housekeeper. Both women have heard that a
convict is loose in their community, and they are worried about his appearance at their
doors, knowing that the kindly cleric is altruistic to a fault.

"No Room in the Inn"¹³

The scene is fraught with Christian allusions. Like the Holy Family at the time of
Jesus' birth, there was no room in the inn for Jean Valjean. He is despised because
of his criminal past. He carries a yellow passport which marks him. Like Jesus, He
knocks upon a certain door, awaiting hospitality. The Bishop, as uncorrupted and as
innocent a man as walks among afflicted mankind, salutes Jean Valjean as "Brother."
Jean Valjean asks if there might be a "stable" for him to lodge rather than interrupting
the polite occupants of the vicarage. The Bishop announces himself as a "priest"
(humbly avoiding the more accurate and more lofty title -- "Bishop") and will not will
consign Jean Valjean to a stable (as the Holy Family were consigned in the Bible).

¹³. For the Bible reader, *Les Misérables* is so completely recognizable for its allusions to
Scripture. As Jean Valjean is rejected from the shelter of many places, he is suggestive of the
rejected Christ. The kindly bishop of the novel informs Jean Valjean that he would never
relegate him to a stable (which quickly calls to mind the improvised nursery for the Lord). See
Luke 2:1-12
"Going the Extra Mile"\textsuperscript{14}

"Going the extra mile," the good bishop does not content himself with merely serving Jean Valjean at the same table where he and his sister eat, but he orders more stately tableware to be placed in front of the ex-convict. Jean Valjean takes note of the silver, incredulous at the numerous kind overtures. At bedtime, the cleric escorts Jean Valjean to a room adjoining his own.

**The Beatific Face**

The Bishop's holiness is no more in evidence than it is when Jean Valjean awakens in the night to steal the silverware. The guest pauses to look upon the sleeping visage of the holy man and marvels at such contentment in sleep. His own nights were filled with spectres of harsh, cruel prison treatment. He could not fathom a sleep in which a man's face betrayed only perfect trust in his Lord.

Shortly after the bishop has breakfast and is apprised of the theft by the outraged housekeeper, the police escort Jean Valjean into the residence. There, the ex-convict stands with his accusers—the evidence is now in their hands. But the Bishop lies in order to save the criminal. He declares that all of the loot was a gift—further insisting that the man had neglected to carry away other treasures awarded him, particularly two silver candlesticks. The police are satisfied that Jean Valjean was indeed the recipient of this generosity and take their leave. Alone with the ex-convict, the Bishop uses highly charged Christian terminology to convey to Jean Valjean that his lie on his behalf was meant as a catalyst for his change of character. The Bishop's carefully chosen words are reflective of the Christian Doctrine of Redemption:

Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil, but to good. It is your soul I am buying for you. I withdraw it from dark thoughts and from the spirit of perdition and I give it to God.\textsuperscript{15}

This language of buying another's soul, and wresting it from the hands of evil enslavers is the great vocabulary of Redemption. Those who have been even minimally catechized recognize the association with the Doctrine in which Jesus' death on the

\textsuperscript{14} "Going the extra mile," is a Christian concept in which someone does much more than is expected or require. It comes from the famous *Sermon on the Mount* in which Jesus exhorts His followers to become paragons of generosity and peacemaking. Matthew 5:38–41. The good bishop of *Les Misérables* goes the extra mile when he awards the silver candlesticks to the houseguest turned thief.

cross purchased humanity away from the control of Satan. Hugo, for all of the references to his libertine ways, knew Christian teaching.

**Sources for this Study**

The versions of *Les Miserables* which were studied for this research include three films and three books. The following is a list with abbreviations used to identify sources in the comparative charts:

**Books:**


**Films:**

1. *Les Miserables: The Musical That Swept the World;* 10th Anniversary Performance, libretto by Alain Boubil and Claude Michel Schonberg; lyrics by Herbert Kretzmer; the Cameron Mackintosh Production, performed at the Royal Albert Hall; the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, 1995. *(ABMS)*

2. *Les Miserables:* Joseph Schenck and Darryl Zanuck production starring Frederick March and Charles Laughton, Twentieth Century Pictures, 1935; black and white. *(SZ)*


**VARIATIONS IN THE SCRIPTS**

Detailing the numerous deviations from the original script requires a much larger page allotment than I have been granted in this journal. What we can do is focus on some significant scenes and discuss the variations among them. I have selected the following scenes for analysis:
1. The Night Spent at the Bishop’s House
2. The “Theft” of Petit Gervais’ Coin
3. The Rescue of the Orphaned Cosette
4. Jean Valjean’s Entry Into the Convent
5. Gavroche and His “Brats”
6. The Marriage of Cosette; the Death of Jean Valjean

THE 1935 TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX INTERPRETATION

The highly acclaimed 1935, black and white film, is most notable for its exclusion of the Petit Gervais passage. In the book, the scene immediately follows the blessing of Bishop Myriel. When the police return Jean Valjean to the house with the silver he has stolen from the bishop, the cleric lies and says that the items were gifts. He gives the thief silver candlesticks and commends him to God’s care.

Petit Gervais Episode Omitted

The film does show the ex-convict’s deep contrition. But the book moves quickly to the scene of Valjean stepping on a chimney sweep’s coin. When the innocent child pleads for a return of his money, Valjean shouts at the boy to get out of his way. The scene is important in showing how quickly human beings can forget their resolves to be better. The Bishop’s largesse was provided with the stipulation that the thief would practice kindness and generosity toward others. Yet Valjean fails in this first opportunity to live righteously. Almost immediately, he is penitent, but it is too late. The child has disappeared. The film moves from the Bishop’s house to a scene of Valjean in a pasture, kneeling before a shrine of the Virgin. The film’s melodrama is heightened by a choral and orchestral arrangement of the Ave Maria reaching a crescendo as Valjean presses forward to do good.

Cosette Placed in Bed with Her Living Mother

The most surprising re-arrangement of the script is the Jean Valjean’s rescue and return of Cosette to her mother before Fantine dies. In the uncut English version and all other treatments of this passage, Fantine dies before her daughter is rescued from the evil Thenardiers. The book achieves considerable pathos as it shows inspector Javert arresting Jean Valjean whom the dying woman believes to be her gallant protector, the one who will return Cosette to her. In the 1935 film, Jean Valjean is successful in getting Cosette to Fantine on time. He places the child in bed with the living mother.
Sequencing of the 1935 Twentieth Century Fox Interpretation

This film begins with the original Hugo Preface flashed on the screen, "So long as there exist, by reason of law...a social civilization (which) creates hells on earth..."

1. It opens with the sentencing of Jean Valjean in court for stealing bread to feed his sister’s children.
2. Jean Valjean is more articulate and less brutal in this early screening.
4. The following scene is the commissioning of Javert as Inspector.
5. Javert confesses to his superiors that he was (A) born in jail, (B) son of a prostitute mother, (C) son of a thief-father.
6. Normally such a person would be disqualified for the job in law enforcement at that time, but Javert insists that he is all the more suitable for the job because he was determined to live a life far different from his bad parents.
7. We see Jean Valjean rescuing a prisoner who is injured from a falling plank in the galleys.
8. Jean Valjean is enragd because while he was rescuing the fellow prisoner, he missed his mealtime.
9. He is severely beaten for causing a disturbance.
10. The following scene shows his release from prison.
11. He is outraged that his "muster" is a mere 109 francs, when he should have received 171 francs.
12. He is given a yellow passport to present to officials of all towns that he passes through - indication of his ex-convict status.
13. He comes to the village where he is refused food and shelter.
14. A Gothic rain storm is added to the scene of his sleeping outside.
15. An old crone advises him to "knock on that door."

Note 1.: There is no mention of the money which she gave him – that element of the uncut book version has not been encountered in any film version thus far.

16. The maid and the sister of the Bishop rehearse what they have heard during the day: an ex-convict is in the neighborhood.
17. They worry that the Bishop’s generosity will cause him to invite the wretch inside.
18. The sister in this version seems more kindly disposed to Jean Valjean.
19. The Bishop orders better tableware for the houseguest.
20. Jean Valjean mentions that he would be satisfied with accommodations in the stable.

Note 2.: This reference to "a stable" and "no room in the inn" is a definite allusion to the birth of Christ.

21. Jean Valjean does not recognize that he is in a vicarage in the presence of a Bishop.
22. The Bishop announces himself only as a priest.
23. He calls Jean Valjean "Sir."

Note 3.: The address used in the uncut book and in other films is "Brother."

24. The Bishop calls for better tableware to be placed before the guest.
25. The Bishop escorts Jean Valjean to a bedroom adjoining his own.
26. In the passageway, Jean Valjean asks, "How do you know I won’t murder you?"

Note 4.: In the Liam Neeson portrayal of 1998, this question was asked at the table.
27. The stormy night is much in evidence as Jean Valjean sleeps.
28. He has a nightmare of his prison life.
29. He gets a rod and goes to the Bishop’s room; presumably he intends to rob and hurt the Bishop.
30. The silver is in the Bishop’s own room.

Note 5. : In the Liam Neeson portrayal of 1998, the silver is in another room.

31. He observes the peaceful repose of the Bishop

Note 6. : The observation of the sleeping Bishop is important in the uncut book; it is not included in the 1998 Liam Neeson film.

32. The Bishop is at breakfast and learns of the theft.
33. The police return the culprit to the Bishop’s residence.
34. The Bishop insists the silver was a gift. He upbraids his guest for not taking the silver candlesticks which were also given him.

Note 7. : In this 1935 production, the candlesticks are almost other characters in the story. They are frequently featured in close ups during poignant moments in the story.

35. The Bishop does not deliver the famous lines regarding, “I have bought your soul.”
36. But the Bishop does repeat other famous lines from the text – “Next time enter by the door.”
   These words are also highly suggestive to Bible students.
37. Jean Valjean takes his leave. On his way, he kneels at a shrine of the Virgin.
38. Here is one of several orchestral crescendos of the Ave Maria in the film.
39. There is no Petit Gervais scene.

Note 8. : The book emphasizes that Jean Valjean stole money from a helpless child almost immediately after being graciously dismissed by the Bishop. There is some argument if the theft were intentional or a matter of Jean Valjean’s distraction.

40. The story shifts to the successful factory of Jean Valjean, now known as the kindly Monsieur Madeleine.
41. The woman foreman confronts Fantine, a worker who has been discovered for having an illegitimate child in another village.
42. The town fathers offer Jean Valjean the post of Mayor.
43. There is the mayoral parade.
44. Jean Valjean makes a dramatic apostrophe to the silver candlesticks– “We’ve come a long way.”

45. Javert reports directly to the mayoral mansion.
46. Fantine is dismissed by Javert – she begs to be taken to the mayor to be granted mercy.
47. Jean Valjean sends donations to the convent in Paris.
48. Fantine enters Jean Valjean’s house and threatens to kill him.
49. She spits in his face.
50. The scene shifts – Fantine is sick in bed in the care of the Mayor.
51. She apologizes – he comforts her.
52. She tells him her daughter is with the innkeepers of the Brave Sergeant

Note 9. : In the uncut version, the title of the inn is THE SERGEANT OF WATERLOO.

53. Jean Valjean goes to the inn to rescue Cosette at night.
54. True to the uncut version, Jean Valjean meets Cosette outside of the tavern as she fetches water in a bucket.
55. The entire inside scene of the tavern is omitted.
56. The film quickly moves to the accident of the worker under the horse cart.
57. No name is given for the worker.

Note 10.: In the 1998 Liam Neeson portrayal he is named Lafitte; in the uncut book version he is named Fauchelvent.

58. Javert begins to suspect Jean Valjean because of the great physical strength.
59. Javert demands the resume of the mayor.
60. There is a carnival in front of the Brave Sergeant.
61. Cosette washes dishes.
62. He helps her carry the bucket of water.
63. Next scene: Jean Valjean and Cosette are in the carriage; they are on their way to meet Fantine.
64. Cosette gets in bed with the living Fantine.

Note 11.: This is one of the biggest breaches in the script - all other versions show Fantine’s death and then the rescue of Cosette.

65. Javert comes to the house while Cosette and Valjean play checkers.
66. Javert demands his own punishment for suspecting the good mayor is an ex-convict.
67. Javert reveals that another man is being tried in court as the real Valjean.
68. Valjean summons his servant Toussaint to order him a carriage for the city.

Note 12.: In this version, Toussaint is a woman servant (as in the book) but she does not stutter.

69. Valjean appears in the court to exonerate the dim-witted criminal.
70. He returns to the house; he tells Cosette that he is going away.
71. Fantine awakens as Valjean escapes.
72. Javert arrests Valjean at Fantine’s bedside.
73. Fantine dies.
74. Valjean attacks Javert and escapes to Paris with Cosette.
75. In a lodging house with Cosette, Valjean hears church bells.
76. He writes the letter to the convent under the guise of the Mayor.
77. He recommends himself for the gardening job.
78. The next scene is a confirmation scene – girls in procession.
79. After five years, Cosette and Valjean leave the convent.
80. From their carriage, they see Marius addressing revolutionary students.
81. Jean Valjean gives money to Cosette to contribute to Marius’ cause.
82. Cosette goes to the meeting.
83. Javert follows Cosette home.
84. Valjean sees Javert outside of his house.
85. Marius comes to the house to see Cosette.
86. The next scene is the Cafe Musain – revolutionary headquarters.
87. Cosette sends a letter to Marius saying she is going away.
88. The letter is not delivered.
89. Eponine rushes to the house to deliver a message from Marius.
90. Eponine escorts Valjean to the barricades to meet Marius.
91. Valjean rescues the stricken Marius.
92. Eponine is stricken at the barricades – dies.
93. Valjean enters the sewers with Marius.
94. Javert follows Valjean home.
95. Javert drowns himself in the Seine.

THE 1996 TENTH ANNIVERSARY PRODUCTION, LIVE, ROYAL ALBERT HALL

This musical production is a hugely expensively mounted production with a company of 250 performers. It is done as sort of a musical "reader’s theatre" style, with characters performing in front of microphones in the middle of the stage. It is entirely sung – there is a little scenery and staging. It takes considerable liberty with the script of the original uncut version.

No Convent Scene

One of the remarkable changes in the script is the omission of the convent scene. In the original, Jean Valjean and little Cosette scale a wall putting them in a cloistered convent. Valjean finds a gardener who owes him a great debt (as Monsieur Madeleine, Valjean once rescued Fauchelevent from beneath a carriage). The gardener and Valjean inform the mother superior that the ex-convict is his brother. Valjean is hired as a second gardener, and Cosette attends the convent school. They remain in the convent for many years until Cosette, in fear of being turned into a nun, asks her "father" to move to Paris. In this version, that entire section of the book is removed.

The Laughable Thenardiers

The Petit Gervais episode is also omitted; however, the musical does include some of the episode concerning another poor orphan boy character — Gavroche. As in the book, the little boy joins the student revolutionary movement and is killed. The musical omits the fascinating section of Gavroche, himself a mere child, assuming adoptive fatherhood of two younger urchins. Additionally, it is not indicated in the musical that Gavroche is actually the neglected child of the evil Thenardiers.

The musical achieves a great moment in making the Thenardiers comic characters. Although they are mercenary and unkind to Cosette, the couple are depicted as bungling and laughable. This representation is unique to the musical production.

Sequencing of the Musical Version (10th Anniversary Production, London)

1. It opens in the Toulon prison.
2. Jean Valjean’s number is 24601.
3. Jean Valjean is paroled.
4. The bishop accommodates the ex-convict in the residence.

Note 1.: The characters of the housekeeper and the sister are not included.

5. Jean Valjean steals the silver.
6. He is returned to the bishop.
7. The bishop lies to protect him; he gives the ex-convict the candlesticks.
8. The bishop makes the "Bought your soul" speech.

Note 2.: In this production, Fantine gets in a fight with another factory worker. It is revealed that she has an illegitimate child.

9. Jean Valjean breaks up the fight between Fantine and the other woman.
10. Fantine is dismissed.
11. She sings the song of her romance of her unnamed lover.
12. She sells her hair.
13. She becomes a prostitute.
14. The part of Bamatabois is implied--we see the man insult the prostitute.
15. Javert arrests Fantine for prostitution.
16. Valjean intercedes, frees Fantine and takes her to the hospital.
17. Valjean rescues the unnamed man from underneath the cart.
18. Javert suspects the mayor of being Jean Valjean.
19. Valjean reveals his true name in court.
20. But he escapes from Javert.
21. The dying Fantine dreams of Cosette.

Note 3.: The important book scene of Sister Simplice telling a lie – that she has not seen the mayor – is omitted.

22. Later Javert walks in on Jean Valjean attending Fantine.
23. Javert’s abrupt arrest of the mayor is cause for Fantine’s death.
24. Jean Valjean escapes Javert again—he is next seen at the Thenardier’s inn.
25. Cosette fetches water on command of the Thenardiess.
26. Jean Valjean buys Cosette’s freedom for the 1500 francs.
27. They leave for Paris.
28. The next scene is 10 years later.
29. Gavroche appears in the slums.
30. Marius and Enjolras are dismayed by the plight of the poor.
31. Next, there is the scene of the Café Musain where the students plan their uprising.
32. Gavroche announces the death of Lemarque.
33. Eponine shows Marius the house where Cosette lives.
34. It is very quickly mentioned that Eponine is the daughter of the Thenardiers

Note 4.: There is no mention of the other Thenardier children, especially of Azelma.

35. Eponine foils the attempt of the Thenardier gang to rob the house of Valjean.
36. Valjean plans to run away with Cosette to Calais and England.
37. The next scene is of the student barricades.
38. Marius sends Eponine to deliver a farewell letter to Cosette.
39. Eponine joins Marius at the barricades and dies.
40. Javert enters the barricades.
41. Jean Valjean enters the barricades and spares the life of his nemesis.
42. Gavroche is seen among the dead—there is no accounting of his attempt at getting ammunition from dead soldiers as in the book.
43. Jean Valjean carries the stricken Marius through the sewers of Paris.
44. J.V. meets Javert outside the sewers.
45. Javert agrees to let Valjean deliver Marius to his house, and then to be arrested.
46. Javert drowns himself.
47. Jean Valjean decides to disappear from Cosette's life rather than cause her embarrassment.
48. Thenardier secures a high government appointment.
49. The marriage of Cosette and Marius is implied.
50. Marius begs forgiveness for not properly thanking Valjean for his rescue.
51. Fantine appears as a phantom in the dying scene of Valjean.

The Gerard Depardieu Version, 2001

Gerard Depardieu's portrayal gives an extended treatment of the story of Jean Valjean in prison. Here, he rescues another inmate from a burning building. Javert informs him that he is granted a two-month decrease in his sentence. This minimal reward infuriates Valjean. The inspector is forced to reinstate the full sentence.

The scene of the Bishop's house is also altered. The Bishop asks the convict his name (which is not part of the actual work), and the Bishop announces his own full title which alters from the original—the uncut version emphasizes the humility of Bishop in his declaration of being a mere “priest.” This film omits the beautiful scene of the cleric escorting Jean Valjean to his room. As in the Liam Neeson production, the Bishop awakens during theft.

To its credit, this film includes a faithful rendering of the Petit Gervais episode in which a poor child drops his coin. The ex-convict, fresh from the merciful experience of the Bishop's house, fails to emulate the kindness of the Bishop and their mutual Savior. It is a sobering moment in the actual book which alerts Valjean to the ease with which one can lapse into inhumanity.

SEQUENCING OF THE FOX CHANNEL 2001 VERSION

1. This version opens with a fire in the Toulon prison.
2. A burning beam falls on one of the prisoners.
3. Jean Valjean rescues a fellow inmate from the accident.
4. Javert announces two months will be erased from Valjean’s sentence for the good deed.
5. Valjean is enraged for the small amount of early release; Javert re-instates the full time for the insubordination.
6. Javert himself finally announces the parole
7. Valjean is issued a yellow passport which brands him as an ex-convict.
8. The next scene is of the Bishop using the cathedral as a social service rescue mission.
9. Mademoiselle Baptistine, the Bishop's sister, writes a letter in which she complains of her brother's extreme generosity to the indigent.
10. Madame Magloire screams at the sight of Valjean at the rectory door.

Note 1.: There is no old crone who advises him to "knock at that door.”
11. The Bishop calls for candlelight.
12. The Bishop requires good silver setting to be placed before his dinner guest.
13. The Bishop announces his full title

Note 2.: In other versions, the Bishop only announces himself as a simple priest.

14. The Bishop asks Valjean his name.

Note 3.: In other versions, the Bishop purposely does not ask the ex-convict's name, using the address "brother" for him.

Note 4.: The Bishop does not escort Jean Valjean to his room as in other versions.

15. Valjean steals silver spoons.

Note 5.: In this translation, the Bishop awakens during the theft—this is not the case in the book.

Note 6.: There is no indication of Valjean observing the beatific face of the sleeping Bishop.

16. The police return Valjean to the Bishop with the spoons.
17. The Bishop lies and says that the silver was a gift.
18. The Bishop informs Valjean that the candlesticks were also a gift.
19. The Bishop makes the famous speech, "I bought your soul."
20. The Petit Gervais scene is included faithfully.
21. The next scene is a faithful rendering of the scene of Fantine leaving Cosette in the care of the Thenardiers.
22. The next scene is of Javert reporting for duty in the village of Montfermeil.

Note 7.: This version makes the successful Valjean mayor and owner of business converting nettles into fabric. The original version makes him the owner of a factory processing jet stone. There is mention of Valjean's interest in converting nettles in the book.

Note 8.: Curiously in this version, when Valjean and Javert meet, there seems to be no recognition of Javert by the ex-convict. All other versions have Valjean become very uncomfortable in the presence of his recognized nemesis.

23. Fantine receives another letter requesting money from the extorting Thenardiers.
24. Fantine requests an early leave from work this day to post a letter.
25. Madame Vinturnien reads the letter and discovers that Fantine has an illegitimate child.
26. Madame Vinturnien lies and says that the mayor requires Fantine's instant dismissal.
27. Fantine, now a prostitute, propositions Javert.

Note 9.: This is different from all other versions in which Javert observes Fantine soliciting.

28. Fantine attempts to sell her teeth, but the "dentist" is afraid she will bleed to death.

Note 10.: In the uncut version, she does sell her teeth and her hair.

29. Valjean rescues Fauchelevent from beneath the horse cart.
30. Fantine attacked by the cruel dandy (in the book he is named Bamatabois).
31. The scene of Javert booking Fantine in the precinct follows.
32. Valjean interrupts the process; he demands the release of Fantine.
33. Fantine spits into Valjean’s face.
34. Fantine collapses and Valjean carries her to the infirmary.
35. A nun feels sorry for Fantine (in the book, she is named Sister Simplice).
36. Valjean upbraids Madame Vinturnien for dismissing Fantine.
37. Javert overhears that conversation.
38. Valjean soliloquizes about the candlesticks.
39. The nun speaks to Valjean; she comments on Jesus’ Lost Sheep parable.
40. Valjean goes to Aras to declare his identity and to exonerate the falsely accused man.

Note 11.: In all other versions, the defendant is dim-witted, much to the amusement of the onlookers at court.

41. Valjean walks out of the court after having declared himself the ex-convict. He simply says, “You know where I live.”
42. The nun lies to Fantine, saying Valjean has already gone to rescue Cosette.
43. Valjean appears at the bedside again.
44. Javert enters to arrest Valjean.
45. Fantine dies from the abrupt manner and shocking announcement of Javert. She knows her daughter is not in the house after all.
46. Valjean escapes the room.
47. Valjean creates a fire in the field as a distraction for his hunters.
48. Cosette appears alone in the forest, fetching the bucket of water.
49. Valjean meets Cosette outside as is described in the book.
50. Valjean bargains with the Thenardiers to release Cosette.
51. Javert arrives at the end in chase of Valjean.
52. Cosette carries a doll during the escape.

Note 12.: In the uncut book, there is an extended passage in which Valjean buys the doll for Cosette.

53. Javert arrests Thenardier for admittedly selling a little girl to a transient.
54. An unnamed boy shows shelter to Valjean and Cosette
55. They live in the Gorbeau boarding house.
56. Javert hires an informant to track down Valjean.
57. Valjean and Cosette scale the convent walls.
58. Fauchelevent recognizes Valjean in the garden.
59. Fauchelevent, the man who owes a favor to Valjean, explains the convent rules.
60. The next scene is the introduction of Valjean and Cosette to Mother Superior.
61. She makes the famous remark regarding Cosette’s homeliness, rendering a suitable candidate for the convent.
62. Javert reports to the police headquarters.
63. The next scene shows the convent girls at play.
64. Cosette signals her father that she will meet him tonight.
65. Valjean excitedly readsies the gardeners house for his “daughter’s” visit.
66. Curiously, the next scene shows Valjean in bed with his teenage “daughter.”
67. Mother Superior is summoned to police headquarters. She lies, “the new gardener does not have a girl with him.”
68. Cosette begs to leave the convent.
69. Marius observes Cosette and her father in the park.
70. He speaks to them, hoping to become acquainted with the beautiful Cosette.
71. Valjean, jealous of any man who might impress Cosette, quickly takes her away.
72. Cosette drops her handkerchief to encourage Marius to find her.
73. They do charity work in the poor areas.
74. Marius befriends Gavroche—speaks of his great love for the newly discovered Cosette.
75. Marius asks Gavroche to help him locate Cosette (whom he knows as Ursula).
76. The impoverished Thenardiers move to the slums.
77. Gavroche introduces Thenardiers to Marius

Note 13: There is no mention that Gavroche is actually the mistreated and abandoned child of the Thenardiers.

78. Eponine, the daughter of the Thenardiers now disguised as the Jondrettes, falls into unrequited love with Marius.
79. Jondrette boasts that he was a fighter in one of the French revolutions.
80. Marius acknowledges that his father, Pontmercy, also fought in that war.
81. Marius is now attracted to the lying Jondrette-Thenardier.
82. The Thenardiers disguise their second daughter, Azelma, as a dying child.
83. They extort money from Marius and Valjean in their demand for pity.
84. Jean Valjean and Cosette enter the house to minister to the poor.
85. Jondrette-Thenardier recognizes the pair.
86. Gavroche shows a hole in the apartment whereby he may peep into the Jondrette apartment (to get a look at the ministering Cosette).
87. Marius notes that the scheme of the Thenardiers to harm Jean Valjean.
88. Marius reports the crimes of the Thenardiers to Javert.
89. Javert gets Marius to participate in a "sting" operation to capture the Thenardiers.
90. As Monsieur Favre, Valjean enters the Thenardier apartment alone.
91. Thenardier and his gang attack Valjean.
92. Marius is reminded that Thenardier claims to rescued his father in war—a lie.
93. But Marius alerts Javert of the crime in the apartment.
94. Javert arrives and sees Jean Valjean—but the latter escapes.
95. Toussaint attends Jean Valjean.

Note 14: Interestingly, in all other versions, Toussaint is woman. In the book and some film versions, she stutters. In this version, Toussaint is a mute man.

96. Valjean informs Cosette that they will move to England.
97. Eponine goes to Cosette’s house to beg for food.
98. Marius goes to the prison to speak with Thenardier and pledge allegiance for the former’s alleged rescue of Pontmercy.
99. But Marius cannot get into the cell; he meets Eponine and gives her a letter to present to her father.
100. Eponine tells Marius where Cosette lives.
101. He visits Cosette in the garden
102. They profess love.
103. The landlord informs Valjean that Javert will inspect the house.
104. Valjean plans immediate move.
105. The student uprising finally ensues.
106. Eponine informs Marius that Cosette and her father have left the country.
107. Marius, greatly grieved, goes to the barricades not caring if he should die.
108. Valjean discovers Cosette’s farewell letter to Marius.

Note 15: In the musical, Marius writes the farewell letter to Cosette

109. Cosette explains her love of Marius to Valjean.
110. Gavroche reports to the barricades; he wants to fight with a gun.
111. Jean Valjean goes to Enjolras apartment looking for Marius.
112. The housekeeper reveals that Marius is greatly in love and that he is not at home. She says the young men meet at the Café Musain.
113. Javert is in the barricades, captured by the students.
114. Gavroche is killed as he attempts to steal weapons from dead soldiers.
115. Jean Valjean spares Javert’s life in the barricades.
116. Marius is injured in the fray.
117. Valjean carries Marius through the sewers of Paris in the escape.
118. Thenardier occupies the sewers, extorts money from Valjean (Thenardier holds the key to the exit gate).
119. Javert is awaiting Jean Valjean’s exit from the sewers.
120. Valjean begs one hour freedom to deliver Marius home.
121. Javert grants the wish—he escorts the pair to the home of Monsieur Guillenormand, the grandfather of Marius.
122. Jean Valjean begs to say goodbye to Cosette.
123. Javert grants this wish as well.
124. But while Valjean says goodbye, Javert drowns himself in the river.
125. Cosette and Marius get married.
126. Thenardier’s, impoverished are in the outside crowd.
127. Azelma follows the wedding coach home to spy for her father, Thenardier.
128. At the reception, Cosette searches for her alienated father.
129. Later, Valjean reveals his full story to Marius.
130. Valjean does not to be a blight in the life of the happy Cosette.
131. Valjean swears Marius to the secret and forces Marius to ban him from the house.
132. Cosette, in bed, cries because her father has disappeared.
133. Thenardier appears as an ambassador in the house of Marius.
134. Thenardier unwittingly reveals that he is a scoundrel and that Valjean was the man who rescued Marius from the barricades.
135. Cosette and Marius rush to Valjean’s house.
136. Valjean is dying, but Marius and Cosette bring him great delight.
137. Marius apologizes for not showing proper gratitude to his savior.
138. Cosette makes her father happy by professing undying love for him.
139. Valjean dies.
140. Cosette lights the candles in the famous candlelabra.

The Liam Neeson Portrayal of Jean Valjean—Mandalay
Entertainment; Columbia Pictures, 1998

The Liam Neeson portrayal of Jean Valjean is a wonderful piece of art, meticulous in many ways yet it alters the script importantly when it has the bishop awakening during Valjean’s theft of the silver. Face to face with such unfathomable goodness, the brutish ex-convict reacts with the only emotion he has—anger that erupts into physical violence. He simply smashes the bishop’s face and runs away. It is a scene carried out with its own power, but it is not part of the original.

The Neeson production does not have the Petit Gervais section. As is the case with all other film and musical versions of the book, the Mother Crucifixion scene is
excluded. In that wonderful passage, an old nun dies leaving instructions to be buried in the vault under the altar, a forbidden procedure. The Mother Superior decides to grant the wishes of the deceased. She engages the gardener in assisting with the plot. Because she is now obligated to him, the way is paved for her to grant the favor the gardener needs: hire the ex-convict Jean Valjean as a second gardener. This scene in the novel is highly complex, but it shows the intricate network of what Japanese call *giri* : the gardener owes a favor to Jean Valjean; the Mother Superior owes a favor to the gardener.

The Neeson portrayal ends with the suicide of Javert. It deletes the marriage scene of Cosette and Marius; it deletes the death scene of Valjean.

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**Sequence of the Liam Neeson Portrayal**

1. The film opens with a flashback—the hands of Jean Valjean fondle the necklace of the dead Fantine.
2. There is a panorama scene of Jean Valjean, newly released from prison, walking in the snow.
3. An old woman approaches him and says, "knock at that door."
4. Jean Valjean knocks at the bishop’s door and shows his ex-convict’s passport.
5. At the table, Jean Valjean asks the trusting bishop, how do you know I won’t kill you . . . ."

Note 1. : There is only one woman inhabitant of the house; apparently the woman is the Bishop’s sister—there is no housekeeper as in the original.

Note 2. : The bishop does call for finer plates to set before his "brother and guest" as is done in the uncut version.

6. We see Jean Valjean in disturbed sleep; he dreams of the cruelty he experienced in the prison rock quarry (as opposed to prison galley of the original work).
7. Jean Valjean awakens in the night; he goes to the outer room to steal silver spoons.
8. The Bishop awakens and comes face-to-face with the thief.
9. Jean Valjean punches the bishop in the face.

Note 3. : The strike is not part of the original script.

Note 4. : Jean Valjean does not study the peaceful repose of the Bishop as in the original.

10. The sister reports the theft of the silver.
11. The police deliver the culprit with the evidence.
12. The Bishop lies; he insist that the silver was a gift and, in fact, the houseguest neglected to take the silver candlesticks which were also gifts to him. He puts the candlesticks in the bag.
13. The Bishop delivers the famous speech, "I have bought your soul . . . ."
14. The time shifts to nine years later; Javert arrives by coach to assume post in the village of Vigot.
15. Jean Valjean is now a successful mayor and owner of a tile and brick factory.

Note 5. : In the uncut version, he is the owner of a "jet" firm.

16. The production emphasizes the austerity of the mayor—he is shabbily dressed and he lives in an unimpressive house.
17. The men and women workers are in separate areas of the factory.
18. Fantine, an unwed mother is discovered as a "dishonest woman," -- she drops the letter which tells her of her daughter's welfare.
19. We learn that Fantine has a daughter, Cosette, who lives with the evil Thenardiers.
20. Jean Valjean withdraws all of his funds from the bank in order to take flight.
21. Fantine sells her hair to earn money to send to her daughter

Note 6. : She does not sell her teeth as in the uncut version.

22. There is the famous accident in which a worker is trapped beneath a horse carriage.
23. Jean Valjean rescues the worker.
24. The phenomenal feat of strength causes Inspector Javert to recall the physical feats of Jean Valjean in prison.
25. Javert now suspects that the mayor is Jean Valjean in disguise.
27. In jail, Fantine pleads to Javert for mercy.
28. Jean Valjean walks in on the scene, Fantine spits in the mayor's face, believing him to be the cause of her firing from the factory.
29. Jean Valjean dismisses Javert; takes the fainting Fantine to his quarters to be cared for by nun-nurses.
30. Javert apologizes—he has become convinced that the mayor is not really the ex-convict.
31. Javert reports to Jean Valjean that the real Jean Valjean has been arrested and is at trial in Paris.
32. The conscience-stricken Jean Valjean cannot let an innocent man suffer in his stead.
33. Jean Valjean goes to Paris and shocks the court by insisting that he is the ex-convict.
34. Jean Valjean immediately goes to the Thenardiers to rescue Cosette (Fantine's daughter) from the cruel family.
35. Jean Valjean walks in on the scene of Mrs. Thenardier mistreating Cosette.

Note 7. : In the uncut book version, he meets Cosette outside of the inn and helps her carry the water bucket inside.

36. The Thenardiers' two girls play while Cosette darns socks.
37. Jean Valjean pays for to have free time.

Note 8. : In the uncut book version, he buys a glorious doll and gives it to her—Fantine is incredulous of such kindness and generosity.

38. Thenardier makes the lewd offer: Jean Valjean may, for a price, have Cosette to "play with."
39. Eventually, Jean Valjean produces the letter authorizing him to remove Cosette from the premises.
40. They escape to Paris, and scale the wall.
41. By chance, they scale the wall of the very convent where Jean Valjean has a friend.
42. The worker, identified in this production as Lafitte, is sleeping in his room.
43. When Jean Valjean enters the room, he recognizes the man who owes him a favor.

Note 9. : In the uncut book version, Fauchelevent is outside in the garden when Jean Valjean enters.

Note 10. : In the book version, the moonlight falls clearly upon Jean Valjean's face, and the gardener instantly recognizes him, believing that his great benefactor has fallen from heaven into his midst.
Note 11. In the book, Fauchelevent invents the scheme for Jean Valjean to pose as his brother and to seek employment as a gardener at the convent.

Note 12. In the book, The Mother Superior engages the gardener in an illegal plan to bury a dead nun inside the chapel (they were required to be buried outside).

Note 13. In the book there is network of obligation: the gardener is obliged to do a favor for his benefactor; the Mother Superior is obliged to do a favor for the gardener.

44. Cosette, a teenager, convinces her father it is time for them to leave the confines of the convent.
45. In the city, Cosette sees the handsome Marius giving a revolutionary speech; they are instantly smitten with each other.
46. Cosette arranges a series of romantic meetings with Marius.
47. The orphan Gavroche, apparently less than 12 years old, attaches himself to Marius and the revolutionary students.
48. The orphan Gavroche adopts two smaller children—he pretends to be their father.

Note 14. This is an extended part of the novel. Gavroche is actually a discarded son of the Thenardiers. He lives on the streets.

Note 15. In the book, Gavroche lives inside of monument of an elephant. He has shows a great tenderness to the two little boy orphans who refer to him as ‘monsieur.’

49. The woman servant, Toussaint, is devoted to Jean Valjean. She stutters.
50. The revolution takes place in the streets.
51. Gavroche is killed while checking the bodies of fallen government men for ammunition.
52. Javert penetrates the barricades of the revolutionaries. He hopes to find Jean Valjean in the midst of them.
53. Cosette is distraught about her lover, Marius. Jean Valjean goes to the barricades to rescue him from danger.
54. Javert is captured by the rebels. They attempt to execute him.
55. Jean Valjean insists that he has a deep grievance against the government man, and that he deserves to execute him privately.
56. In the alley, Jean Valjean allows Javert to escape; he shoots the gun in the air, causing the rebels to believe that the infiltrator was executed.
57. Jean Valjean notices that Marius is injured.
58. Jean Valjean throws Marius over his shoulders and escapes with him through the sewers of Paris.
59. Javert is waiting for Jean Valjean as he exits the sewers.
60. He arrest Jean Valjean.
61. Jean Valjean begs mercy to be allowed to deliver Marius to his daughter.
62. Javert allows the breach of law.
63. While Jean Valjean delivers Marius and bids Cosette farewell, Javert drowns himself in the Seine.
64. Jean Valjean returns to the scene of his arrest, sees that Javert has killed himself.
65. Jean Valjean realizes that he is finally free; he walks happily away, presumably to the house where Marius and Cosette are.
A Chart Comparing the List of Characters in the Uncut Version with their Representation in the Various Films and Book Editions

**LEGEND:** 1. ...★...means the character is included in version. 2. ...■...means the character is included but the name is changed. 3. ...⊙...means the character is not at all included. 4. ...●...means the character is implied, but not specifically named.

(see page 23 for full titles)

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