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SATIRE IN THE DRAMA OF SEAN O'CASEY

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SATIRE IN THE DRAMA OF SEAN O'CASEY

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SATIRE IN THE DRAMA OF SEAN O'CASEY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For your race, in its poverty, has unquestionably one really effective weapon -- laughter. Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution -- these can lift at a colossal humbug -- push it a little -- weaken it a little, century by century; but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand. Mark Twain¹

Sean O'Casey, like Mark Twain, recognized laughter as the only effective weapon against sham, hypocrisy, and totalitarian regimentation. Through laughter, he attempts to restore some semblance of order to the sick society, the "chassis,"² created and nourished by the stand-patters, the profiteers, and the "Down-and-Outs". He is disliked and attacked by the stand-patters who see nothing wrong with the way the world is now and by the profiteers whose inordinate profits depend on maintaining the status quo. Typically, the "Down-and-Outs" ignore O'Casey as they ignore every other challenge. But like their fellow targets, the "Down-and-Outs" have an aversion to change. O'Casey, on the other hand, equates change with progress and sees both as inevitable in a social order that is alive

¹Mark Twain, "The Mysterious Stranger," The Family Mark Twain (New York: Harper & Bros., 1935), p. 1245.

²Sean O'Casey, Collected Plays, 4 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), I, pp. 20, 42, 88-89.

just as he sees both as impossible in a social disorder that is dead.

O'Casey, as satirist, offers something vital to replace that which he seeks to destroy. He is neither a universal cynic nor a "demolition expert", as Kenneth Tynan labels Shaw.³ He is sensitive, perhaps "abnormally sensitive to the gap between what might be and what is."⁴ What he offers in lieu of the mental rigidity, moral apathy, and automaton living which he seeks to destroy is life itself -- life as it can be when no longer controlled by a dead past, by "business as usual" stand-patters, or by those who consider mortification of the flesh a pre-requisite to joy. O'Casey's concern is not with the past nor the future, but with the here and now. This is the world he seeks to correct, to save from its own foolishness. "After all," as Shaw notes in his Quintessence of Ibsenism, "the salvation of the world depends on the men who will not take evil good-humoredly, and whose laughter destroys the fool instead of encouraging him."⁵ O'Casey's writing identifies him as a man much concerned with what Shaw calls "the salvation of the world."

Few things are consistent in the canon of Sean O'Casey, who shares Whitman's nonchalant attitude toward consistency as well as Emerson's distrust of it. But among those few things that are consistent are his penchant for laughing at the ridiculous wherever he finds it and his insistence upon revealing the distorted ugliness of any system that dehumanizes or destroys

³As quoted by James Sutherland, English Satire (Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 1.

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁵George Bernard Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism (New York: Brentano's, 1929), p. 186.

the people involved in it --whether the people are involved by choice or otherwise. He directs his satire at such systems whether they are innately evil or simply seem so due to the manipulations of the inelastic manikins who control them and their victims. O'Casey's people, from those in his earliest to those in his latest plays, are involved in desperate sometimes fatalistic struggles against tradition, materialism, religion, nationalism: against forces which, in their uses of human beings, would lessen or obliterate the joys of life. O'Casey's rebels declare their independence with Avril, who says, "I'm fed up carrying things about to get this foolish old house in order."⁶ They recognize with the workman that "there is sweet music in the land, but not for the deaf; there is wisdom too, but it is not in a desk it is; but out in the hills and in the life of all things rovin' round, undher the blue sky."⁷

In his own terms, O'Casey held that man is responsible for the "chassis" of the universe and he attempted from 1924 to 1964 to answer Juno's question, "Oh, What can God do agen the stupidity of men?"⁸ The answers vary from the drunkenness and joy of Joxer Daly and Jack Boyle to the political involvements of Ayamonn and Red Jim Larkin to the dancing and cavorting of the Cock and Main Marion. Partial answers are gained by all who try to see into Heaven through the wrong windows of drink and abandon; a prophecy of order restored is implicit in the actions of the young people in The Drums of Father Ned who would replace the hate and

⁶ Collected Plays, III, p. 92.

⁷ Ibid., p. 100.

⁸ Collected Plays, I, p. 86.

hypocrisy-laden government of their fathers; momentary victories are won by Nannie and the young whore who, in affirming their joy of life, dance to their deaths. Nothing but distress and continued anguish are gained by O'Casey's cowards who are content to thump their craws and say, either in a whine or a self assured bellow, "I am what I am." O'Casey's villains are generalized rather than specific. They are business men, quarrelsome Irishmen, newly powerful politicians, officers of the church, army personnel, and domineering parents. They are, in short, those who would (by choice or through ignorance) halt change or deny the joys of life to the living. In his drama, O'Casey attacks stupidity as readily as he attacks any organized clerical or secular power that represses what was for him the essence of human existence.

As satirist, he uses virtually every device ever used in satire to attack the repressive ideas and institutional pride of Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, politics in general, and the basic economic structure of the world. The world in his drama is rarely restricted to the three walls on the picture-box-stage but extends to include the audience in a specific theatre and to include the world outside the theatre. This is true in his first and his last plays and in most of those in between. The wars he uses, while specifically and historically accurate, are artistic microcosms of the chaos that most modern men inhabit. The device of the microcosm when not implicit in the action on stage is made explicit in the title or in the language of his drama. For example, Oak Leaves and Lavender is subtitled A World on Wallpaper and The Drums of Father Ned is subtitled A Mikrocasm of Ireland. His tenement dwellers in The Shadow of a Gunman and Juno and the Paycock are human beings, first of all. Their involvements and their obviously human desperations are not restricted to tenement

dwellers in Dublin any more than the pretensions and fears evidenced in The Plough and the Stars are restricted to those on stage who did and did not participate in the Easter uprising of 1916.

Just as O'Casey uses the same stock characters (parasite, strong women, out' butties, drunkard) over and over, so does he use the same themes in successive plays. The themes, like the characters who work them out, are extended, clarified, and examined from several different viewpoints. So it is that Bessie Burgess and Fluther Good in The Plough and the Stars are richer, more fully developed artistic creations than their prototypes, Nannie in Nannie's Night Out and Joxer Daly in Juno and the Paycock. O'Casey uses the war metaphor in all of his first six plays except Kathleen Listens In. The war that begins pretty much as setting in The Shadow of a Gunman becomes an active destructive agent in The Plough and the Stars and a malignant ritual in The Silver Tassie. Also, the themes of the earlier plays are more fully developed in the succeeding ones. For example, in The Plough and the Stars, the viewer is bludgeoned with the idea that the vanity and immediate excitement of untempered patriotism and senseless war destroy the most basic and most meaningful human relationships -- those between friends, those between husband and wife, those between mother and child. In The Silver Tassie, the impersonal chaos of war destroys these same human relationships and reduces human beings to less than living things. The same human relationships are disrupted and destroyed as in The Plough and the Stars; in addition, the golden boy of Act I becomes the half-life who suffers "the horrible sickness of life only from the waist up" with his "body dead from the belly down."⁹ This is what is left of Harry Heegan,

⁹Collected Plays, II, pp. 64-65.

the golden boy of Act I who could break a chain by flexing his biceps. Harry's war has destroyed beauty, joy, and human potential. Harry's comment as he leaves the dance, "The Lord hath given and man hath taken away,"¹⁰ echoes Juno's "Oh, what can God do agen the stupidity of men?". Furthermore, it restates O'Casey's contention that man himself is responsible for the chaos of his society and that man himself must restore sanity and order, if they are to be restored.

O'Casey's target in his earliest and latest satire is mankind: more specifically, the stupidity and the passivity of mankind that destroy individuals or prevent them from living life as it should be lived. In O'Casey's vision, organized religion, nationalistic organizations, and politics are all mad games played by mad men. In any conflict of these forces, civil or universal, it is individual human life that is destroyed or impaired; it is individuals who make up mobs, even when the mobs are called armies; ultimately, there is no panacea and individuals must shoulder the responsibility for their own well being. As he phrases it in "Come to the Fair,"

It isn't the politician who makes the community, but
the community that makes the politician. The politicians
are but the looking-glass in which the citizen sees
himself.¹¹

Man's search for an all inclusive answer, for an outside miracle to solve his everpresent problems in the world that is very much with us, might lead him into an organized, long established religion. Such religions, as O'Casey confided to Rod Nordell, frequently "lead people into

¹⁰Ibid., p. 102.

¹¹Sean O'Casey, "Come to the Fair," The Green Crow (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1956), p. 238.

metaphysical puzzles that delude them from the sordidness of the world that needs to be dealt with."¹² O'Casey's objections to organized religion are well known, but the fact that he was opposed to them as repressive and restrictive forces, not as faiths, is too little known. In his drama as in his essays, O'Casey's satire is consistently directed against repressive forces, however impressive their names may be. His own devotion to Russian Communism and its promises did not protect its inelastic advocates who, according to O'Casey, "drive me mad. They know nothing but what they read in their little pamphlets."¹³ O'Casey was, of course, a communist "long before Russia came out with it,"¹⁴ but his much repeated theme that man must make his own miracles and must right his own world is proof enough, as many American critics need to know, that he did not find communism per se the answer to all of man's ills.

Basically, O'Casey's comic world is a wasteland world created and maintained by man for man. O'Casey emphasizes the deformity and sickness of the world itself and its lack of vitality in his parade of blind, deaf, mutilated, stupid, vain human monsters who occupy and control the world. His greatest monsters remain those who have eyes, yet see **not**, those who have ears, yet hear not. Theirs is a world in which man continually wars with machines and never wins, a world in which the telephone rings constantly and the "fella" at the other end can make no sense, a world in which people seek meaning in rituals, processions, gaudy costumes, plaster saints, new pianos, and social decorum -- none of which succeed in really concealing

¹²Rod Nordell, "Cock-A-Doodle Casey," New Leader, XLI (November 3, 1958), p. 21.

¹³Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 20.

the flawed human element, all of which succeed in portraying that human element imprisoned behind bars of its own construction and helpless in the vigor of its own rapacity.

An escape from and an antidote to the social poisons of the world are discovered by limited numbers of O'Casey's people -- by the Cock, Marion, Lorna, and Loreleen who are driven out of the society they have sought to help. They leave singing. Their folly-ridden society triumphs, but the outcasts are triumphant in the sense that they, like Synge's tramp and Nora Burke, are free. Again, in The Bishop's Bonfire, Father Boheroe, who preaches that merriment is a kind of worship, and the Old Codger, who has a "vilely venomous tongue," are ostracized while the Prodigal continues to drink and vow temperance as did Fluther Good in The Plough and the Stars. Foorawn dies for love. All escape, at a price, and a sick society remains victorious and unchanged.

In "The Power of Laughter: Weapon Against Evil" O'Casey states specifically what he has so long preached in his plays and essays -- that those who deny or condemn laughter as evil are themselves to be feared, that laughter reveals the greatest dangers in those areas where it is forbidden.

Laughter tends to mock the pompous and the pretentious; all man's boastful gadding about, all his pretty pomps, his hoary customs, his wornout creeds, changing the glitter of them into the dullest hue of lead. The bigger the subject, the sharper the laugh. No one can escape it; not the grave judge in his robe and threatening wig; the parson and his saw; the general full of his sword and his medals; the polled prelate, tripping about, a blessing in one hand, a curse in the other; the politician carrying his magic wand of Wendy windy words; they all fear laughter, for the quiet laugh or the loud one offends them, strips them of pretense, and leaves them naked to enemy and friend.¹⁵

¹⁵Sean O'Casey, "The Power of Laughter: Weapon Against Evil," The Green Crow, p. 227.

In O'Casey's world, heroism and effective action are not dead. They are possible, as they frequently are not in the wasteland worlds of much modern literature. As O'Casey notes in "The Lark in the Clear Air Still Sings," "Life will never wait for heroes, mostly unhonored and unsung, but always there and ready to act."¹⁶ O'Casey's love for mankind and his enthusiastic optimism are in conflict with and lend depth to the confused state of "chassis" and anarchy that continue to exist at the final curtain of most of his drama. O'Casey as a dramatist and as a satirist loves the world he reveals in his own version of the Steel Glass and he preaches to the pessimists that, "We have no reason whatever to be ashamed of our humanity; we have many good reasons to be proud of it."¹⁷ He mocks mental apathy, complacent acceptance of the status quo, and moral cowardice. He insists that those who have eyes to see and ears to hear must find both sorrow and joy in life. O'Casey uses virtually every satiric means observable in literature from the fable and the epigram through the allegory and rhetorical compendium, the burlesque and the parody, to the inverted or upside down world, which he uses most effectively. Every play is not satire, of course, but every play includes satire and the sharp edge of that satire is intended to destroy something ugly in the world or at least to reveal its ugliness to ridicule and healing laughter.

The purpose of this study is to examine the satiric elements in O'Casey's drama and to trace what I conceive to be a constantly developing satiric attitude in the plays of Sean O'Casey. The bitter, rage-filled

¹⁶Sean O'Casey, "The Lark in the Clear Air Still Sings," Under a Colored Cap (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1963), p. 141.

¹⁷Sean O'Casey: "The Green Crow Caws," Under a Colored Cap, p. 76.

artist who emerged from Dublin's slums presents only incidental satire in his Irish plays (Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, The Plough and the Stars), but as he branches out into experimental drama and begins to recognize the potential of expressionism, phantasy, and allegory, he brings full grown and continuous satiric illumination to bear on the problems of the world. Coincidental and complementary developments are the development of his optimism, his militaristic pacifism, and his own concept of drama as a fine art.

It isn't the question of goodness or badness of a play that is the more important thing; it is the going back on the idea that the drama must change and develop a new outlook, a broader scope, and a fresh style, if it is to live as an art alongside the art of architecture, of painting, and of music. In my opinion, the time has passed for a drama to devote its expression to one aspect of life alone, and to consider that aspect of life as dominant for the time the play takes to unfold itself; that in one play one aspect of life must be the beginning, the middle, and the end of it. Consistency of mood and of manner isn't always, indeed, not even often, found in life, and why should it then be demanded in a play?¹⁸

His manifesto is neither new nor original, but is sincere and serves a worthy purpose -- that of allying Sean O'Casey with the serious creative artists rather than with the users of art. This alliance poses a hurdle to those who view O'Casey as only a propagandist or a writer of thesis plays. He co-mingles tragic and comic elements in every single play because every single play is about human life and the foibles and tragedies that are necessarily a part of that life.

O'Casey, as satirist, uses laughter as a weapon against all who destroy social order and all who would perpetuate the chaos of social disorder. O'Casey, as a man, views laughter as a weapon against evil,

¹⁸Sean O'Casey, "Tender Tears for Poor O'Casey," The Green Crow, p. 181.

surely, but also as "wine for the soul -- . . . a great natural stimulator, a pushful entry into life"; he recognizes in laughter the power of healing and the means to what Shaw calls "the salvation of the world." Laughter, like dance, is one of the joys of life and is more indicative of real life than breathing is, "and once we can laugh, we can live. It is the hilarious declaration made by man that life is worth living."¹⁹ The aims of his satire are to strip away the fearful facade of regimented powers of repression, to reveal and destroy the ugliness concealed by those facades, and to establish a meaningful social order in lieu of the "chassis" perpetrated by the stupidity of man. These aims he would further and ultimately realize through the power of laughter.

The focus of this study is the developing satiric attitude of O'Casey as that development is revealed in his drama. The development follows an essentially chronological pattern as the dramatist moves from the frustrations of his personal involvement to the clarity afforded by artistic distance. Chapter II is concerned with O'Casey's Irish Period and consists of explication of the satire implicit and explicit in The Shadow of a Gunman, Kathleen Listens In, Juno and the Paycock, Nannie's Night Out, and The Plough and the Stars. The Irish Period concludes with O'Casey's exile from Dublin, a self-exile brought about directly by the riots in the Abbey Theater during the fourth performance of The Plough and the Stars.

Chapter III deals with O'Casey's experiments in expressionism, beginning with the much maligned The Silver Tassie and ending with his

¹⁹Sean O'Casey, "The Power of Laughter: Weapon Against Evil," The Green Crow, p. 226.

much discussed but little read Red Roses For Me. This period is best described as transitional since O'Casey combines the techniques of realism and expressionism in The Silver Tassie and Red Roses For Me, uses his own version of unsubtle allegory in conjunction with the expressionistic technique in Within the Gates, adapts a folk tale in The End of the Beginning, and writes a fairly clear if a rather biased account of the 1913 lockout in The Star Turns Red.

Chapter IV consists of examinations of the satire in three full length phantasy plays (Purple Dust, Oak Leaves and Lavender, and Cock-A-Doodle Dandy), in four one act plays (A Pound on Demand, Hall of Healing, Bedtime Story, and Time to Go), and in The Bishop's Bonfire, and The Drums of Father Ned. The section labeled "Encore" examines the last three plays written by O'Casey, written by a grief stricken, virtually blind, but still perceptive eighty year old exile from Dublin, Ireland. The plays offer, for the most part, recapitulations of themes and characters already familiar to O'Casey's readers.

From Shadow of a Gunman through The Drums of Father Ned, the vision of this Irish satirist expands from the limited scope of Ireland's troubles to the universal scope of human society. His continuing experimentation in technique and his ability to use what he learned from those experiments led ultimately to the satiric vision of such later plays as Cock - A - Doodle Dandy and The Drums of Father Ned. These plays, like those which preceded and followed them, present Ireland as the microcosm of the world. Sean O'Casey's satire is alternately destructive and curative, his aims being to destroy the source of infection and to replace "chassis" with some semblance of social order.

CHAPTER II

THE IRISH PLAYS OF SEAN O'CASEY

The Shadow of a Gunman: A Tragedy in Two Acts

I wish to God it was all over. The country is gone mad. Instead of counting their beads now they're countin' bullets; their Hail Marys and paternosters are burstin' bombs -- burstin' bombs, an' the rattle of machine-guns; petrol is their holy water; their Mass is a burnin' buildin'; their De Profundis is "The Soldiers' Song", an' their creed is, I believe in the gun almighty, maker of heaven an' earth -- an' it's all for "the glory o' God an' the honour o' Ireland".¹

When The Shadow of a Gunman was first produced at the Abbey Theatre in April, 1923, the spectators were reminded by a program note that any gunshots heard were a part of the script and that members of the audience were to remain seated. The setting has frequently been described as realistic and William A. Armstrong has meticulously equated the play's events with history and with passages from Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, the fourth part of O'Casey's autobiography.² The fact that the curfew, the raids, the Black and Tans, and the ambushes of the play are based on historical fact is ample proof of Seumas's comments, "Oh

¹Collected Plays, I, p. 131.

²William A. Armstrong, "History, Autobiography, and The Shadow of a Gunman," Modern Drama, Vol. IV, No. 4 (February, 1960), pp. 417-424.

Kathleen ni Houlihan, your way's a thorny way,"³ and ". . . Kathleen ni Houlihan is very different now to the woman who used to play the harp an' sing. . . for she's a ragin' divil now. . . ." ⁴ The world in which O'Casey's characters strut and cower is a mad world, a world of very real and immediate death, a world ruled by ruthless uniformed men whose raids are inevitable; it is, as O'Casey notes, a world where "the angel of death is a biting bitch."⁵

It is not O'Casey's intent to glorify the revolution nor to romanticize those who die bravely for creed or nation. Rather, the madness generated by the chaos of war acts as backdrop for and catalyst in the action onstage. The dramatist's chief concern is with the people in the tenement, especially those who are unwillingly invaded by the madness that reigns outside their tenement walls. The tenement is an isolated world set in a chaotic and mad universe. The madness is, throughout the action of The Shadow of a Gunman, a kind of touchstone which reveals to viewers and readers the relative values and the deep flaws in the human character.

Man's penchant for hypocrisy, for seeming to be what he is not, is satirized -- sometimes bitterly, sometimes lovingly. Adolphus Grigson with his refrain of "Here's the fust today" becomes the first of a long and continuing parade of O'Casey's delightful drunks who find courage, self respect, and independence in their cups. Grigson proves his manhood

³Collected Plays, I, p. 96.

⁴Ibid., p. 132.

⁵Sean O'Casey, Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1960), p. 65.

by reading the scripture to his wife and thereby putting her in her place. In what is perhaps the funniest scene of the play, Grigson brags that he was not "born in a bottle," that he's "afraid av nothin', creepin' or walkin', . . . that Grigson's no soft thing."⁶ Mrs. Grigson speaks of her ineffectual husband in a series of Freudian puns which characterize him before he enters the action. She answers Seumas's suggestion that her husband may turn over a new leaf with, "Sorra leaf Adolphus'll ever turn over, he's too far gone in the horns for that now."⁷ When she enters inquiring of him, her first line is, "He hasn't turned up yet, an' I'm stiff with the cold waitin' for him."⁸ As Dolphie Dear enters the tenement she knows: "it's him, I know be the way he's fumblin'."⁹ Her chief concern about her ineffectual husband, despite her protestations, is the lateness of his arrival, for it's after one, after the curfew, and the raids of either the Black and Tans of the British Army are ever present dangers. She asks, "Do the insurance companies pay if a man is shot after curfew?"¹⁰

The boisterous drunken Grigson, as the madness tears its way into the tenement in the persons of the dreaded Black and Tans, becomes a snivelling coward, seeking refuge in his Bible, which is his sole authority, except for his bottle. The Black and Tans throw his Bible to the floor, confiscate his bottle, force him to offer up a prayer for the Irish Republic, and to sing "We Shall Meet in the Sweet Bye an' Bye." Upstairs, after the

⁶Collected Plays, I, pp. 138-139.

⁷Ibid., p. 136.

⁸Ibid., p. 135.

⁹Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 137.

danger has passed, Grigson tells the story quite differently, mentioning his own nonchalant courage and the manner in which he backed the soldiers down -- all these possible, he notes, "If a man keeps a stiff upper front."¹¹

The cowardice of Seumas parallels that of Grigson as does his ability to retell his adventure in such a way that he emerges heroic. Seumas too uses the Bible as talisman; he also uses a few plaster saints, a true poetic gift, and his congenital slovenliness to maintain some semblance of security. He blames others with his own most blatant faults and clings to superstition (the tappin' in the wall), pat answers, and the time of day for his perspective.

The true nature of Seumas's courage is the same as that of Grigson's. Both are basically creatures of instinct who cling to whatever is at a given moment and adapt readily whenever circumstances change. Grigson and Davoren are foils who reveal various aspects of Seumas's character. Seumas, the poet, the braggart, the philosopher, the devoted Christian, is revealed in terms of his relationships to Grigson and Davoren. One of O'Casey's sharpest satiric jabs is revealed in the conversation between Seumas and Davoren. The satire is levied against cowardice, hypocrisy, and religion whenever that religion is false or offers false hope or becomes a talisman only:

¹¹Ibid., p. 155. Grigson's comic role is, without explication, exceedingly funny. When he is recognized as a burlesque of the stage Irishman, when he is seen as a cornucopia of the many fears that control Ireland, when it is recognized that his quicksilver changes from braggart to coward and from He-man to fumbling husband are not out of character, he is recognized as one of O'Casey's many satiric triumphs. Grigson and Seumas, despite the relative youth of the latter, become "the oul' butties" of O'Casey's later drama.

Seumas: You're one of the brave fellows that doesn't fear death.

Davoren: Why should I be afraid of it? It's all the same to me how it comes, where it comes, or when it comes. I leave fear of death to the people that are always praying for eternal life: "Death is here and death is there, death is busy everywhere."

Seumas: Ay, in Ireland. Thanks be to God I'm a daily communicant. There's a great comfort in religion; it makes a man strong in time of trouble an' brave in time of danger. No man need be afraid with a crowd of angels round him; thanks to God for His Holy religion!

Davoren: You're welcome to your angels; philosophy is mine; philosophy that makes the coward brave; the sufferer defiant; the weak strong; the¹²

The discourse is interrupted by a volley of shots and both men reveal their very real fear of death. O'Casey states quite specifically here what is to become the major theme of The Plough and the Stars. It is as it should be that the spokesman is Seumas who becomes, after several years of aging in the slums of Dublin, the Fluther Good of The Plough and the Stars. His lines here anticipate the major theme of that later play:

. . . You're not goin' -- you're not goin' to beat the British Empire -- the British Empire, by shootin' an occasional Tommy at the corner of an occasional street. Besides, when the Tommies have the wind up -- when the Tommies have the wind up they let bang at everything they see -- they don't give a God's curse who they plug.

...

It's the civilians that suffer; when there's an ambush they don't know where to run. Shot in the back to save the British Empire, an' shot in the breast to save the soul of Ireland. I'm a Nationalist meself, right enough -- a Nationalist right enough, but all the same -- I'm a Nationalist right enough; I believe in the freedom of Ireland, an' that England has no right to be here, but

¹²Ibid., pp. 132-133.

I draw the line when I hear gunmen blowin' about dyin'
for the people, when it's the people that are dyin' for
the gunmen!¹³

In addition to setting up the theme for The Plough and the Stars, this passage adequately answers Davoren's question that ends Act I: ". . . And what danger can there be in being the shadow of a gunman?" It also anticipates the death of Minnie and goes far to destroy whatever semblance of heroism there is attached to the actions and the death of Maguire. O'Casey's true heroes go not on maneuvers with the I.R.A. nor on practice marches with the Irish Citizen Army. They stay at home and combat the real fears and problems of existence that are ever present in the Dublin slums.

O'Casey satirizes the fear of gossip, a fear that is apparently universal; here the fear is ironic and especially ludicrous as Davoren, the presumed gunman, warns Minnie of it, and as Seumas, who shares his apartment with Davoren, warns his young tenant, "The oul' ones'll be talkin', an' once they start you don't know how it'll end."¹⁴ The fear is ludicrous and ironic because of the much greater danger outside the tenement walls -- the immediate danger of raids and death. The fear itself has some basis as we hear the malignant words of Mrs. Grigson directed against Minnie who is, for her mind, a deceitful little hussy who deserves whatever happens to her.

It is Minnie who fears neither gossip nor death, just as it is she who has the least to say of both. Minnie is the only near-heroic person of the play, and she dies for a false idea, a shadow that disappears

¹³Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 129.

in the bright light of truth. Her talisman, the shadow of a gunman, is as false and as unreal as the religious totems and talismans of Seumas and Grigson, as ineffectual as the Philosophy of Davoren, but for her it is real. In his presentation of Minnie, O'Casey damns the hypocrisy of the other characters whose talismans are discarded, ignored, or blasphemed in time of danger. Minnie, despite or perhaps because of her youth and her innocence, is true to her ideal, and her ideal remains false.

O'Casey satirizes the poetic temperament of Shelley's disciple who desires and expresses desire for great heroic and creative activity at the same time he relishes his own inactivity, gives way to his own lethargy, and is revealed as an insincere coward -- a charge, by the way, that cannot be levied against either Seumas or Grigson. They are never out of character, whatever they say or do. Despite Davoren's poetic exile and his protestations, it is Seumas who is the poet. It is he who readily quotes Shakespeare, cites play, act, and scene; it is he who warns Davoren against the dangers of poetry for the working man, and then defines the limits of a poet's greatness:

If I was you I'd give that game up; it doesn't pay
a working-man to write poetry - I don't profess to know
much about poetry -- I don't profess to know much about
poetry -- about poetry -- I don't know much about the
pearly glint of the morning dew, or the damask sweetness
of the rare wild rose, or the subtle greenness of the
serpent's eye -- but I think a poet's claim to greatness
depends upon his power to put passion in the common
people.¹⁵

Davoren replies:

Ay, passion to howl for his destruction. The
People! Damn the people! They live in the abyss, the
poet lives on the mountain-top; to the people there

¹⁵Ibid., p. 127.

is no mystery of color: it is simply the scarlet coat of a soldier; the purple vestments of a priest; the green banner of a party; the brown or blue overalls of industry. To them the might of design is a three-roomed house or a capacious bed. To them beauty is for sale in a butcher's shop. To the people the end of life is the life created for them; to the poet the end of life is the life that he creates for himself; life has a stifling grip upon the people's throat -- it is the poet's musician. The poet ever strives to save the people; the people ever strive to destroy the poet. The people view life through creeds, through customs, and through necessities; the poet views creeds, customs, and necessities through life.¹⁶

These two speeches combined with Davoren's frequent quotations from Prometheus Unbound mark Davoren as a stage-poet, almost the opposite from O'Casey's concept of what a true poet should be. Seumas's definition of a poet's greatness as "the power to put passion into the common people" is much closer to O'Casey's vision. For O'Casey as for his American idol, Walt Whitman, the poet's place is with the people, and he is of the people. The mystery of color, the might of design, and beauty -- however rhapsodic Davoren is -- are dead whenever they are isolated from the lives of people. O'Casey's poet figures mature in succeeding plays until ultimately they become satirists rather than objects of satire, leaders of action rather than recipients of action, people rather than stock-characters.

As O'Casey notes in "Always the Plough and the Stars," the artist who is nothing but an artist "occupies a perilous place in life, for he is the most expendable of men." He is beset with the ever present danger of not getting "enough dough to live;" he must struggle against the notion that an artist is not a human being, and he must somehow escape, if he is

¹⁶Ibid., p. 127.

to be an artist, both "self glorification and the glorification of the crowd." In Sean O'Casey's opinion, "The artist's place is to be where life is, active life, found in neither ivory tower nor concrete shelter; he must be out listening to everything, looking at everything, and thinking it all out afterward."¹⁷ Davoren, despite his clarity of vision and his ability to recognize his own cowardice, the courage of Minnie, and the madness of the world they occupy, is -- as he notes -- a poltroon. He is, because of his self-imposed ~~separation~~ from life, a ridiculous figure, a burlesque of a true poet.

In the later plays, O'Casey's poets are men of the people, very much involved in battling for the ideas they espouse, perhaps dying in the process as does Ayamonn in Red Roses for Me. The laborers in Purple Dust, The Bishop's Bonfire, and The Drums of Father Ned are true poets, for they combine Davoren's clarity of vision and his intellectual awareness of what art is with a very real involvement in life, an involvement denied to Davoren by his self-imposed isolation in what must be the Dublin slum version of the ivory tower. The visions and the involvements of O'Casey's later poet figures are not purely intellectual ones, anymore than they are purely emotional ones, as has been charged. They do not retreat to isolation for their sustenance. They are not separate from, but are a part of, life; they are endowed with eyes to see, ears to hear, and a particular joy in life.

Davoren in The Shadow of a Gunman is an embryonic poet gifted with clarity of vision, but little else. He lacks the essential ingredient

¹⁷Sean O'Casey, "Always the Plough and the Stars," The Green Crow, pp. 170-173.

of the artist, experience in real life. He can learn much from Seumas, as noted earlier, though he surpasses Seumas in perception. He recognizes both the courage and the innocence of Minnie, but does not recognize in her the ingredient absent in himself, the independence and the knowledge of life that permit her to dance the Hooley, to dismiss Donal's wild flowers as weeds, and to say as he warns her of gossip, "An' do you think Minnie Powell cares whether they'll talk or no? She's had to push her way through life up to this without help from anyone, an' she's not goin' to ask their leave, now, to do what she wants to do." Minnie sees life in terms of her own experience. Donal Davoren cannot because he isolates himself from human experience, seeks solitude, and believes the poet to be a savior of the people who saves them by being scorned or destroyed by them.

Seumas has the poetic gift of expression but Davoren praises the beauty, the innocence, and the bravery of Minnie. Seumas dismisses her sarcastically as "A Helen of Troy come to live in a tenement!"¹⁸ He urges Davoren to stop seeing Minnie Powell, using what for him is infallible logic, "Surely a man that has read Shelley couldn't be interested in an ignorant little bitch that thinks of nothin' but jazz dances, fox-trots, picture theatres an' dress."¹⁹ Davoren defends her bravery and is mocked by Seumas who has no real trust in anything:

. . . An' as for bein' brave, it's easy to be that when you've no cause for cowardice; I wouldn't care to have me life dependin' on brave little Minnie Powell -- she wouldn't sacrifice a jazz dance to save it.²⁰

¹⁸Collected Plays, I, p. 130.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 129.

²⁰Ibid., p. 130.

The death of Minnie has a real artistic value in that it affords the viewer with yet another touchstone by which to test the professed values of those in the tenement -- especially the values of Mrs. Grigson, Seumas, and Davoren. For Mrs. Grigson, the dead Minnie ceases to be the deceitful little hussy who needs a coolin' an' deserves whatever happens to her and becomes "Poor little Minnie." Seumas proclaims his own innocence, "Is it my fault; am I to blame . . . She did it off her own bat -- We didn't ask her to do it."²¹ Davoren insists that he and Seumas are "a pair of dastardly cowards" and that shame is his portion now as he recognizes himself as "poet and poltroon."²² All of these observations occur after the danger is past and tend, in part, to re-emphasize one basic theme of this play as stated earlier by Seumas -- "An' as for bein' brave, it's easy to be that when you've no cause for cowardice. . . ."²³

Neither the raids, nor the quotations from Prometheus Unbound, nor the various talismans, nor Minnie's death effect any real change within the walls of the tenement. There may be hope for Davoren, who accepts the fact of his cowardice, but his is not the final line in the play. This play is essentially a bitter comment on the human condition, on man's selfishness and his refusal to help either himself or his fellow man. The hypocrisy, fears, and quest for identity are not restricted to the characters on stage but are native to man, whether he be on stage, in the audience, or elsewhere.

²¹Ibid., p. 156.

²²Ibid., pp. 156-57.

²³Ibid., p. 130.

The basic methods of satire include the verbal irony implicit in all the dialogue between Seumas and Davoren, the irony of character of those who loudest proclaim their courage and soonest seek refuge in time of danger, and of course the dramatic irony which reveals courage in the romantic girl who goes to her death for a shadow that has no substance. O'Casey's juxtaposition of stock characters permits a clearer view of both Seumas and Davoren, and his burlesque of the I.R.A.'s true relationship to those in the tenements clearly establishes the people's separation from the political conflict. The Auxiliary soldier's rapid departure from Seumas's room when he hears that whiskey has been confiscated in another room underlines Davoren's earlier comment that "A man should always be drunk . . . when he talks politics -- it's the only way in which to make them important."²⁴ It also indicates something terrifying about the bully's dedication to duty, to cause, and to country.

The plot line of The Shadow of a Gunman is so carefully contrived that O'Casey's debt to Boucicault and the well-made play tradition is patent. The letter, for example, is not lost sight of, though its function in the play is at best a mechanical one. The letter, as Mrs. Henderson states, "is as good a letter as was decomposed by a scholar."²⁵ Its jargon and meaningless circumlocution, plus the fact that its author and Mrs. Henderson are greatly impressed by it, add comedy as well as perspective to the play.

²⁴Ibid., p. 106.

²⁵Ibid., p. 116.

The bit of paper on which Davoren typed his and Minnie's names is confiscated by the Black and Tans, and is of course smeared with her heart's blood, blood which obliterates Davoren's name and thereby protests him from the Black and Tans just as Minnie, by taking the bombs, has protected him. Whether he knows it or not, he has nothing to fear, though he will probably continue to be afraid. Seumas's insistence on knowing the time of day and his concentration on the tapping on the wall lend thematic as well as mechanical structure. O'Casey, as his guides direct, leaves no loose ends as he puts his characters through their paces.

The play's three nights on the Abbey Stage, performed before ever larger audiences,²⁶ anticipated the future success of O'Casey's drama on that stage and a kind of rebirth for the Abbey Theatre itself which was rapidly falling into economic despair. O'Casey's share of the 93 £ total receipts was less than 4 £, hardly enough to pay his bills.²⁷ These facts have their place in literary history; the important thing to this paper is that O'Casey had for the first time adorned a public stage with his combination of riotous laughter and grim tragedy; that he had insisted for the first time that man look within himself for courage, faith, reason for being; that he had used his satiric scalpel to strip naked the follies, fears, and vices of man.

Kathleen Listens In: A Political Phantasy in One Act

Following O'Casey's disappointment in his share of the ticket sales for The Shadow of A Gunman (4£ of 93£), he vowed to

²⁶The receipts were 13 £ for the first night, 30 £ for the second, and 50 £ for the third.

²⁷Inishfallen Fare Thee Well, p. 229.

go forward. He had put his hand to the plough, and he wasn't the one to look back. He would start a new play that very night.

So he had, and he called it Cathleen Listens In, a jovial sardonic sketch on the various parties in conflict over Irish politics -- Sinn Fein, Free State, and Labour. It was a short one-act work, and was performed after a major play had ended [in the Abbey Theatre on October 1, 1923]. Another experience for Sean! The audience received the little play in dead silence, in a silence that seemed to have a point of shock in its centre. Not even a cold clap of a hand anywhere. They all got up from their seats, and silently filed out of the theatre.²⁸

Thirty-eight years after the writing of Kathleen Listens In,

O'Casey noted that

it was written specifically to show what fools these mortals were in the quarreling factions soaking Ireland in anxiety and irritation after the Civil War. I imagined that satire might bring some sense to the divided groups so busy practicing envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness: it didn't do it.²⁹

The phantasy itself has certainly more historical than literary value showing as it does O'Casey's early interest in the phantasy and the satiric value of the phantastic on the Irish stage. As O'Casey says of this play,

. . . it is a "phantasy," done after my first play at the Abbey [Shadow of a Gunman], showing this form was active in my mind before the "major" realistic plays were written, tho' most critics maintain that phantasy began after I left Dublin. This, of course, is what they want to believe, and so, God be with them.³⁰

²⁸Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, p. 230.

²⁹Sean O'Casey, "Kathleen Listens In," Tulane Drama Review, V, 4 (Summer, 1961), 36. This is a part of O'Casey's prefatory comment to the play which is reprinted in this issue, the only publication of this play, to my knowledge, except in Robert Hogan's Feathers From A Green Crow.

³⁰Ibid., p. 36.

Kathleen Listens In: A Political Phantasy In One Act uses several devices of the morality play as Jimmy the Workman, the Man in Kilts, the Free Stater, the Republican, the Business Man, and the Farmer all vie for the young Kathleen's hand. Kathleen is weak, sick, and ultimately on her death bed as the doctor tries to save her from the devastating noise made by her suitors. "She's very weak," he says, "but she'll pull round after a bit, if she gets perfect quietness. A whisper may prove fatal -- she'll need perfect peace and quietness for the rest of her National life."³¹

The satire is not subtle, and virtually all the spokesmen and demanders in the new Free State are represented, from the Orange Man who beats the big drum over the boundary question to Jimmy the neophyte Socialist who threatens strikes and walkouts and promises houses for all workers. O'Casey satirizes the Free Staters' Oath so violently opposed by Republicans, Labor, and others in one delightful scene.

Free Stater: Now let us all thake a solemn an' sacred oath.

Republican: I won't, I won't, I won't; I'll not take no oath for nobody, so help me God.³²

He parodies the old Irish line of status quo, traditionbound, solid citizens as two men urge or rather command the newly powerful Miceaw O'Houlihan, who sold his cow to buy a house, to throw out his poppies and his English flag and to grow shamrocks, to sing "The Soldiers' Song" before and after meals, and to read a chapter of Mitchell's Jail Journal nightly. The door is slammed in the faces of the two men as they chant in responsive reading fashion:

³¹Sean O'Casey, "Kathleen Listens In," Feathers From A Green Crow, ed. by Robert Hogan (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1962), p. 295.

³²Ibid., p. 296.

1st - We think what we thought, we say what we said,
 we stand where we stood seven hundred years ago;
 the world may change but Ireland'll never alther.

2nd - As it was in th' beginnin', is now an' ever will
 be, world without end, amen.³³

Miceaw is a rather fearful spokesman for progress, does not want to be called Mick anymore, and is confused by all who want to educate Kathleen. He finds his "house is hardly worth livin' in. . . the inside's in a shockin' state!" primarily because every group in Ireland insists on aiding in furnishing and redecorating it. One group, "That rowdy Dawn o'Liberty Fife an' Drum Band is afther puttin' the finishin' touch on it." It is a band which Tomaus says "has too many bandmasters in it! Playin' an' playin' the one tune, till everybody was fed up with it."³⁴ Miceaw has formed his own brass band and his "heart's bruk tryin' to keep them together. . . every member. . . wants to play a defferen' tune, an' the big drummer only wants to hear himself."³⁵

In this seven-veiled allegory, Ireland is represented by the cow which has been sold too cheaply, by the house which is a shambles, and by the sickly Kathleen. The young Kathleen has all of the pretensions long associated with new bourgeosie, pretensions parodied by O'Casey in Juno and the Paycock and in virtually all of the plays written since 1950. She says to the first two who come to court her,

Oh, for God's sake go away, an' done be annoyin' me.
 I have to practice me Fox Trots and Jazzin' so as to
 be lady-like when I make me deboos into the League o'
 Nations.³⁶

³³Ibid., p. 279.

³⁴Ibid., p. 284.

³⁵Ibid., p. 284.

³⁶Ibid., p. 282.

Jimmy threatens to go on strike, to go to Russia, because as he asks,

What's the good o'lovin' Kathleen, when she won't take any notice o' you? Others can hold her hand for hours, an' bring her for walks, but whenever she sees me, she passes me by with her nose in the air -- just because I can't play the bloody piano!³⁷

The various forces, all as embryonic in Ireland as the Free State herself, in their striving to possess or to give advice concerning the cow, the house, and Kathleen, are responsible for the chaos and, in O'Casey's view, the ultimate destruction of all three.

The various groups are parodied by the gifts they offer the young girl and by the endearing names they call her. The Republican offers to his "sweet little, red little rose" "a picture painted o' herself in 1916 in everlastin' oils"; the Free Stater offers to "his little brown cow" a Manual in Government of a House according to the Constitution; the Farmer offers to his "cluster of little brown nuts" a bag of self rising flour; the Business Man offers to his "sweet little beautiful pulse of my heart" a little clockwork motor car that will run around the room; Jimmy, the worker, threatens either to strike or to leave if he isn't given due consideration.³⁸

The satire, neither subtle nor kindly, finds further utterance in most of O'Casey's plays that follow. As O'Casey noted, the satire had little effect on Ireland. It did, however, serve to illuminate the chaos that was the Irish political system. The response of that Abbey audience

³⁷Ibid., p. 290.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 291-292.

who "Like the Arabs. . . folded their tents (minds). . . and silently stole away"³⁹ suggests that the play was neither too subtle nor too pleasing for their Irish sensibilities. Gabriel Fallan, the man who played the role of the Man in Kilts, recalls the audience response to this bitter little satire:

. . . as soon as the curtain rose. . . the laughing began, but before long it was obvious that it was sectional laughter. I laughed when your party got a rap; you laughed when it was the turn of mine. Towards the middle of the piece the laughter began to lose something of its earlier substance; then it started to fall off, flicker, and finally to die out completely. The curtain came down in what was worse than silence -- a few thin apologetic hand-claps obviously intended for the players. There were no calls for author. We knew that the author had been in front. When the theatre emptied we couldn't find him. He told me afterwards that he had run out of the place mortified at the play's reception. After walking the streets for a few hours . . . he returned to his tenement room and. . . sitting down at his typewriter he. . . set down the opening lines of Juno and the Paycock.⁴⁰

Kathleen Listens In is a topical satire that cannot be ignored in any serious study of Sean O'Casey's development as a satiric artist. Here, the foolishness, destructive follies, and insolence of Everyman intent on having his own way are presented in the restricted scope of a national teacup, and the chaos continues within that teacup as the curtain concludes the action of the play.⁴¹

³⁹Tulane Drama Review, V, 4 (Summer, 1961), 36.

⁴⁰Robert Hethmon, "Great Hatred, Little Room," Tulane Drama Review, V, 4 (Summer, 1961), 51-52.

⁴¹O'Casey satirizes the same factions in his short story, "The Seamless Coat of Kathleen." The seamless coat represents the unity of Ireland. In the story, as in "Kathleen Listens In", the satire is not subtle, as is suggested by a thematic statement from the story: "the poor little coat is beginning to show unmistakable signs of many and many a struggle, torn by those trying to keep it on and rent by those trying to take it off." The story is reprinted in Robert Hogan's Feathers From a Green Crow, pp. 244-247.

Juno and the Paycock: A Tragedy in Three Acts

The third work, a full length play, was, from the Abbey Theatre point of view, an emphatic success, and Yeats halted in his meditations to tell Sean that he had given new hope and new life to the theatre. The house had been booked out for the first week, and the run of the play was extended for a week longer.⁴²

Juno and the Paycock was the first play in the history of the Abbey Theatre ever to run for two weeks and was the second play in that theatre's history ever to permit the House Full sign to be displayed; the first was Sean O'Casey's The Shadow of a Gunman despite the curfew, the Civil War, and the armed guards present in the theatre. Juno and the Paycock netted for O'Casey 25% and won the Hawthornden Prize as the best work of the year by a new writer. In addition to the honor, the Hawthornden Prize carried a stipend of 100%. Lady Gregory, one of the founders of the Abbey Theatre, a versatile playmaster herself and long since O'Casey's champion, recorded in her Journal that Juno and the Paycock was ". . . a wonderful and terrible play of futility, of irony, humour, tragedy." After the performance she told W. B. Yeats, "This is one of the evenings at the Abbey which makes me glad to have been born."⁴³

The action of this play takes place during a two month period in 1922, during the bitter and deadly Irish Civil War that erupted almost immediately following the creation of the Irish Free State, O'Casey's terrible beauty. The war and its madness here as in The Shadow of a Gunman are outside the tenement and outside the lives of the characters,

⁴²Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, pp. 231-232.

⁴³As quoted by Elizabeth Coxhead, Lady Gregory (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 198.

except as they are represented in the mutilated person of Johnny, who lights candles, hides, and makes selfish demands throughout the play. The backdrop of the play begins with the announced death of young Tancred and ends with the execution of Johnny, the traitor. Though the madness of the Irish Civil War reigned in Ireland in 1922, it is essentially meaningless, except for the threat that it poses to life and limb, to O'Casey's characters who live their lives much as they would without the disturbance.

The satire of the play hinges on the painful reduction of the central figures to a ridiculous level as they assume they have been freed from poverty by the legacy and try to conceal the rags of poverty behind the artificial noise of the gramophone. Their attempt to attain decency is as ridiculous as is their ostentatious new furniture. O'Casey knew from long and painful experience that poverty itself is not ridiculous and does not render its victims ridiculous. As these victims mimic the taste and the ways of life of those more economically solvent, as they flaunt their new-found good fortune by acquiring gaudy and ostentatious and unnecessary material possessions, and as they strut proudly and take pride in the new which but emphasizes the old, they do become ridiculous. As Meredith, Shaw, O'Casey, et al have noted, poverty has a bareness that can not be concealed behind a facade. When a man surrenders himself to appearance, "begins to neglect himself and treat his shadow on the wall with marks of infinite respect," he becomes absurd. This is especially true when he is revealed in the Steel Glass, not as he appears but as he is.⁴⁴ And this is precisely what happens in Juno and the Paycock.

⁴⁴DIAL, IV (October, 1843), 254, as quoted in Notes and Queries, II, 6 (June, 1964), 228.

The rivalry of Joxer Daly and Juno Boyle for the attention and time of the superficial and infinitely selfish Captain Boyle is made more painful by Juno's role as supporter and rock, rather than shrew. She is the mother for the entire household, a kind of universal mother, as her name implies. As she says to Johnny and Mary directly and as she demonstrates throughout the play, "I don't know what any o' yours ud do without your ma."⁴⁵ Her infinite common sense and goodness lend tragic as well as comic depth to the microcosm of the play. Joxer is the traditional parasite, fully equipped with an endless parade of maxims and platitudes. He is always in perfect agreement with whatever is said by whomever he is with and his replies are usually just off center and make the conversation, in some cases, oddly tangential, rather than direct. His loyalty to his role is paralleled by Juno's loyalty to hers and, by contrast, lends grandeur to Juno's common sense and goodness. Just as Juno hides in her own home in order to confront the parasite, Joxer hides later to avoid Juno. Then, like the hiding ~~bugger~~ ^{MAPER} in The Alchemist, he is forgotten. Unlike the ~~bugger~~ ^{CLERK}, he is neither stifled nor unconscious when his claim on Captain Boyle is threatened by news of the legacy.

Captain Boyle is also a parasite and is described as such very early in the play by Juno, who says of her husband, "He wore out the Health Insurance long age, he's afther wearin' out the unemployment dole, an', now, he's thryin' to wear out me!"⁴⁶ The Paycock's refrains concerning the pains in his legs whenever a job threatens his leisure and his "I've some spirit left still" when Juno offers to feed him despite his laziness

⁴⁵Collected Plays, I, p. 8.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 6.

identify him in the same way that Joxer's platitudes identify him. Captain Boyle "can skip like a goat" in the pubs if no work threatens and he is quite willing to steal the food offered and to share it with Joxer, so long as he can cling to his pride and announce to Juno, "I've a little spirit left in me still."

Captain Boyle throws a large shadow in Act II, a shadow which he accepts as reality and treats with the greatest respect. He undergoes no real change, as his "relapse" in Act III shows quite clearly. The satiric value of his manifesto in Act I is not lost on an audience so recently shaken by Great Britain's demands that officers of the Irish Free State must take oaths of allegiance to the crown. Coming as it does before any mention of the legacy, Captain Boyle's comment is part of the false front he builds to satisfy his own ego: "Today, Joxer, there's goin' to be issued a proclamation be me, establishin' an independent Republic, an' Juno'll have to take an oath of allegiance."⁴⁷

With the promise of money and therewith the necessities of life, Juno, like Ma Joad, her archetypal sister in Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath, can relax and relinquish at least nominal control of the family. Boyle senses this and proclaims himself "a new man from this out."⁴⁸ In his new role, Captain Boyle becomes ludicrously pompous concerning the responsibilities of money, man's true relationship to the church, and his newly acquired, money-inspired authority on any given subject.

From this new role of authority, Boyle reverses his earlier comments on the church and its officers, and, like Seumas in The Shadow of a Gunman, attributes his earlier heresy to an absent acquaintance:

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 35.

Comin' up the stairs who did I meet but that bummer Nugent. "I seen you talkin' to Father Farrell," says he, with a grin on him. "He'll be folleyin' you," says he, "like a Guardian Angel from this out" -- all the time the oul' grin on him, Joxer.

. . .

"Mr. Nugent," says I, "Father Farrell is a man o' the people, an', as far as I know the History o' me country, the priests was always in the van of the fight for Ireland's freedom."

. . .

"Who are you tellin'?" says he. "Didn't they let down the Fenians, an' didn't they do in Parnell? An now. . . ." "You ought to be ashamed o' yourself," says I, interruptin' him, "not to know the History o' your country." An' I left him gawkin' where he was.⁴⁹

The Paycock, with promise of money, decked out in new clothes, living in the same bare tenement overloaded now with gaudy furniture and decorated with crepe paper, realigns himself with the church and evidences a new found pride in the history of his country. No longer content with the joyful noises people make when they are happy, he insists on the artificial music of the gramophone. At the end of Act I when the Paycock discovers that Mr. Ellison of Santry has bequeathed him money, Ellison ceases to be "that prognosticator an' procrastinator" and becomes "Poor Bill;" the Captain says, "I'll never doubt the goodness o' God agen'," and announces to his family, "we'll have to go into mournin' at wanst." O'Casey's satiric comments on the changing relationships of the moneyed Paycock are indicative of his dislike for sham wherever he sees it. He has not begun by the time of Juno and the Paycock his unceasing battle against the sham of organized religion, so here the mirror reveals the hypocrisy of Captain Boyle, a new-

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 38.

bourgeoisie Boyle who must establish respectability and maintain a respectable aura.

His newly respectable status demands of him that he eliminate any fear of gossip, so he will beat and ostracize the sinful Mary who, in addition to her other encumbrances, doesn't show her father the proper respect. He rejects her and her plight, in spite of the fact that he already knows his prosperity is all facade and that "The boyo that's afther doin' it to Mary done it to me as well." Even in the face of this fact, the Paycock continues to strut, to demand his rights, to order new clothes from Needle Nugent, and to demand honor for the shadow he casts on the wall rather than draw attention to that which he really is or is not.

O'Casey directs bitter satire at his versions of Ben Jonson's Corbaccio, Corvino and Voltore, those willing to sacrifice current possessions in hope of future gain from one who appears to be magnanimously wealthy. So it is that Needle Nugent makes clothes for the Paycock, Mrs. Madigan hocks her blankets and table to patronize Mr. Boyle, and he is enabled to get virtually anything on promise from furniture stores, grocery stores, and friends. Joxer reaffirms his and Boyle's identity as "the two musketeers," and the painful irony of appearance versus reality unfolds.

The time worn plot device of daughter wronged by someone who was just passing through re-emphasizes the piognancy of Mary's desire to escape the tentacles of poverty, an attempt she makes early in the play through reading what her father calls "nothin' but thrash. . . The Doll's House, Ghosts, an' The Wild Duck - buks only fit for chiselurs!" Her participation in the labor strike, her concern with the proper clothes to wear, and her immature repetition of "a principle's a principle" reveal the caustic and slyly irreverent O'Casey's attitudes toward her youthful

adherence to her values. The fact that Johnny also utters "A principle's a principle" and dies a traitor, and the fact that Mary is more concerned with which ribbon to wear than with the strike itself underline O'Casey's contention that neither Ibsen nor Labor Movements are "for chiselers."⁵⁰

O'Casey shares Juno's common sense approach, her essential adherence to reality rather than appearance. It is Juno who tells her husband, "I'm afraid we're runnin' into too much debt."⁵¹ It is she who remains loyal to Mary, and makes the decision to leave Boyle and Joxer in the barren tenement; it is she who affirms during the funeral procession for Mrs. Tancred's son that "it's nearly time we had a little less respect for the dead, an' a little more regard for the livin'."⁵² It is she who brings whatever order there is into the "chassis" of the Boyle home. The chaos of that family -- Johnny's execution as traitor, Mary's pregnancy, and the Paycock's continued sense of self importance -- reflect in little, the chaos of Ireland in 1922, a chaos which could give way to order only under the guidance of a firm hand. In O'Casey's opinion, there was no strong hand and the people's choice, Eamon de Valera, was far from the answer.⁵³

Juno and the Paycock includes several processional, all leading up to the final procession, that of the resposessors who strip the barren

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 23, 6, 31. This is a rather important point in any serious study of O'Casey. In all the plays of the Irish period, his socialists, communists, laborers, and poets are very young, not mature enough to be effectual, and young enough to be gulled by any show of force.

⁵¹Collected Plays, I, p. 40.

⁵²Ibid., p. 58.

⁵³This is discussed at length by O'Casey in both Drums Under the Windows and Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well.

tenement of its gaudy display and leave its nakedness adorned with crepe. On the occasion of the first processional, that for Robbie Tancred, Juno states that life is for the living as Tancred's funeral processional interrupts the false gaiety of the party in the Boyle rooms. The next processional which includes the stripping of the Boyle's apartment and the arrest of young Johnny culminates in the arrival of the police who want Juno to identify her son's body. Juno then reveals her essential kinship to Mrs. Tancred as she repeats the same phrases and suffers the same pain that Robbie Tancred's mother had already endured:

Maybe I didn't feel sorry enough for Mrs. Tancred when her poor son was found as Johnny's been found now -- because he was a Die-hard! Ah, why didn't I remember that he wasn't a Diehard or a Stater, but only a poor dead son! It's well I remember all that she said -- an' it's my turn to say it now: What was the pain I suffered, Johnny, bringin' you into the world to carry you to your cradle, to the pains I'll suffer carryin' you out o' the world to bring you to your grave! Mother o' God, Mother o' God, have pity on us all! Blessed Virgin, where were you when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets, when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets? Sacred Heart o' Jesus, take away our hearts o' stone, and give us hearts o' flesh! Take away this murdherin' hate, an' give us Thine own eternal love!⁵⁴

This kinship with Mrs. Tancred, the inefficacy of Johnny's constant candle burning before his saint, and the fact that a dead son is dead whether the Republic is up or down,⁵⁵ lend greater depth to Juno's outcry, "These things have nothin' to do with the Will o' God. Ah, what can God do agen the stupidity o' men!"⁵⁶ The stupidity and short-sightedness of men, their

⁵⁴Collected Plays, I, p. 87.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 54.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 86.

penchant for looking backward toward church, history, and tradition, and their insistence upon looking at the shadow they cast rather than at what casts the shadow are the targets of O'Casey's satire here and elsewhere. He contends that the madness and chaos that reign outside the tenement are not separate from the chaos within, that it will continue until that within gives way to some kind of order. The poignant ending of Juno and the Paycock reveals Boyle reaffirming that "th' whole worl's. . . in a terr...ible state o'. . . . chassis" as he has chosen an alliance with Joxer to the disrepute of sheltering his daughter in his respectable house. The hollow revelry of his uncomprehending conversation with Joxer in the crepe-paper-adorned and barren room is suitable medium for his pronouncement as he discards the last of his borrowed money,

The blinds is down, Joxer, the blinds is down!
 The counthry'll have to steady itself...it's goin' ...
 To hell... .. No matther...what any one may ... say ...
 Ireelan' sober ... is Ireelan' ... free."⁵⁷

Here, as elsewhere, the turmoil continues behind the final curtain. O'Casey had fulfilled his vow to "write a play that would bring all Ireland to the theatre."⁵⁸ Too many of those who entered the theatre, through no fault of O'Casey's, left believing that Johnny's heroism, the Paycock's devotion to escape, and the way of a lawyer with a maid are the prime concerns of this drama. Juno is certainly the most difficult and challenging role of the play. Her essential goodness, her devotion to Johnny, who is her dead son whether the Republic is up or down, her assumed responsibility to Mary, her concluding prayer, "take away our hearts o' stone, and give us

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 88.

⁵⁸Robert Hethmon, op cit, 52.

hearts o'flesh! take away the murdherin' hate, an' give us thine own eternal love!" -- these are the values espoused by this play. The Paycock's role, his active participation in the ritual of being what he is not, Mary's and Johnny's immature espousal of "A Principle's a principle," Bentham's lack of knowledge and his pretense to all knowledge -- these are among the objects of satire, satire intended to reveal truth and to reduce shadow to substance.⁵⁹

Nannie's Night Out

It is difficult not to share O'Casey's opinion of Nannie's Night Out, an opinion that kept him from including it in his collected works. As recorded in Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, Nannie's Night Out is "a play no-one liked, except A.E., otherwise known as George Russell, who thought it O'Casey's best work; an opinion that didn't bother Sean, for he knew A.E. knew nothing about the drama and felt it a little less"60

⁵⁹O'Casey's rejection of a lucrative offer from Hollywood for the film rights to Juno and the Paycock is indicative of his own opinions concerning his play:

My works wait there for any film company that may desire them -- for an arranged price, of course; and I'm not concerned overmuch with what they may do with them. But when it was said that the figure of "Captain Boyle" was to be all important (probably to the great joy of Barry Fitzgerald), relegating the other characters to insignificance, it was high time for O'Casey to say ah, no, be God!

In spite of powers thrusting big money before an author for work he doesn't want to do, and little or nothing for what his own will wishes to create, it is better for him to go his own way, even if it be with a limp. It is not a happy way, but it is his only way if he wishes to remain true to himself and right with God. "No Flowers for Films," The Green Crow, p. 196.

⁶⁰Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, p. 234.

Nannie's Night Out was first performed on September 29, 1924, as a short play following Shaw's Arms and the Man. Though perhaps better off dead, the play was revived, produced, and printed by Robert Hogan.⁶¹ O'Casey has not revised his opinion of this early play.

Nannie's Night Out makes much use of the cacophony of disjointed conversation experimented with in both Shadow of a Gunman and Juno and the Paycock. There is no real plot as such and the comic situation is hackneyed. Polly Pender, widow, keeper of the dairy store, and sought after in marriage by three out' men, must choose one for her husband. Their physical incapacities contrast violently with Nannie's frenzied song of life. The three old men brag of their physical stamina and great good health, of the agonies they've endured without complaint, and gossip about each other in their mutual pursuits of Polly's hand. All are old, nearer death than life, and all are cowards who urge Polly to give her money to the gunman who comes to rob her.

The atmosphere of boredom and petty incident is created by Polly's repetition of the egg story, by the lack of imagination as the blind, the halt, and the lame make love to Polly, and by the ballad singer who alternately sings, begs, cajoles, and threatens. The atmosphere belies the true situation, for, in reality, in the period of one day, Polly was hit in the eye by a rotten egg thrown by an outraged customer, courted by three men, approached by a begging ballad singer, duped by a child, visited by her bookie, was the victim of an attempted robbery, and watched Nannie, the only vital person in the play, die in her shop.

⁶¹It was produced March 13, 1961, by the Lafayette Little Theatre at Lafayette, Indiana; it was published in Feathers From a Green Crow, ed. by Robert Hogan, in 1962.

O'Casey's satire here is bitter as he reveals an admirable little con artist duping the store keeper, a hunch-backed boy, son of Nannie, as a tipster and a bookie, an Irish gunman overcome and expelled by a drunken woman, and the ballad singer begging to support his wife and eleven children. The satire is most obvious and most bitter in the exchange between Polly Pender and Oul' Joe concerning Johnny's crooked spine:

Joe: He's a crabby lookin' little youngster.

Mrs. Pender: He couldn't be anything else; he lives on th' streets. When he was three or four he fell down a stairs an' hurted his back. . . It's a wondher they wouldn't do something for poor little kiddies like him, instead o' thryin' to teach them Irish.

Joe: Oh, we've bigger things than that to settle first; we have to put th' Army on a solid basis, an' then, th' Boundhery Question has to be settled too -- in comparisement with things like them, a few cripples o' chiselurs is neither here nor there.⁶²

O'Casey's satire of the state of Ireland continues as Nannie narrates her accounts of her arrests by Irish Bobbies. In one alternate ending she is hauled back into jail by them as she identifies them as a "gang o' silver button'd bouseys," far inferior to the British soldiers for, "The poor Tommies was men, th' poor Tommies was men!"⁶³ The lack of vitality of the three oul' men of Ireland is well summed up in Polly's analogy as she berates the three for aiding the gunman who came to rob her: "Comparin' Nannie with some o' yous is like comparin' a flywheel to a trouser's button--." In the alternate ending of the play, Nannie takes oul' Jimmy's cane after she expels the gunman and dances off with it down the street, breaking windows as she goes.

⁶²Ibid., p. 321.

⁶³Ibid., p. 332.

Her vitality is the most striking and obvious force in the play. Nannie's refrain and resolution to die game, "to tear and kick and bite," and her wish that the ballad singer have "a short life and a merry wan," help to emphasize the death and the deadliness of the world she dances through. Her song and dance are uninterrupted except for drink and death. There is a wide separation between this Irish Nannie and the oul' men whose songs are interrupted by coughing fits, whose lovemaking is trite and according to custom, whose conversation sparkles most when it is concerned with personal bodily ailments.

Nannie's Night Out has some historical significance in that it satirizes the social conditions of Ireland, the ineptness of the Irish to meet responsibility, and the awe with which they view anything that's really alive as Nannie is. O'Casey tells a tale of the same woman on a drunken spree in Drums Under the Windows, wherein she is called Mild Millie.⁶⁴ He laments that her vigor and life and infinite potential cannot be salvaged, cannot find expression in any other way. The play also includes, as do virtually all of O'Casey's plays, a mouthpiece for his social gospel.⁶⁵ The speaker is the virile but careless ballad singer who must beg to support his eleven children. He preaches to the crowd gathered to watch Nannie die:

Yous gang o' hypocrites! What was it made Nannie
what she was? Was it havin' too much money? Who
gave a damn about her? It was only when she was
dhrunk an' mad that anywan took any notice of her!
What can th' like o' them do, only live any way
they can? Th' Poorhouse, th' Prison, an' the morgue --
them is our palaces! I suppose yous want us to
sing "Home Sweet Home," about our tenements? D'ye
think th' blasted Kips o' tenement houses we live

⁶⁴Sean O'Casey, Drums Under the Windows (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1960), pp. 96-113.

⁶⁵This is also noted by Ronald Ayling, "Nannie's Night Out," Modern Drama, V (September, 1962), 154-155.

in'll breed Saints an' Scholars? . . . It's a long time,
but th' day's comin'. . . th' day's comin'. . . Oh, it's
cruel, it's cruel!⁶⁶

The Plough and the Stars: A Tragedy in Four Acts

In The Plough and the Stars, a bitter artist portrays the wide variance between the pomp, parade, and spendor that men take war to be and the deprivation, gore, and death that war is. Here as in his earlier plays, the madness of war affects the fate of O'Casey's people; here it controls that fate whereas in the earlier plays it afforded the setting and the circumstances for the human involvements of the characters. Sean O'Casey in this play presents the attitudes of his dreaming, arrogant, vain, Irishmen as they prepare for war against Great Britain with much the same attitude and many of the same activities that a home team uses in preparing for the big game against a traditional rival. His people remain, as O'Casey does not, unaware that war itself is neither festival, game, nor passing activity.

The first two acts of The Plough and the Stars present the Home Team preparing for battle, wearing colorful uniforms, marching off under beautiful flags, and being inflamed and mesmerized by powerful rhetoric. The first uniform seen is that of the Foresters proudly worn by Uncle Peter: "green coat, gold braided; white breeches, top boots, frilled shirt. He carries the slouch hat, with the white ostrich plume, and the sword in his hands."⁶⁷ As is usually the case in this play, the Covey's response to the cowering Peter's regalia is the most revealing one: "Isn't that th' malignant oul' varmint! Lookin' like th' illegitimate son of an illegitimate

⁶⁶Feathers From a Green Crow, pp. 329-330.

⁶⁷Collected Plays, I, p. 180.

child of a corporal in the Mexican army!"⁶⁸ Later Covey says to Bessie Burgess of the same uniforms and the continuing preparations for war:

When I think of all th' problems in front o' th'
workers, it makes me sick to be lookin' at oul'
codgers goin' about dhressed up like green-accountred
figures gone astray out of a toyshop!⁶⁹

The next uniform that the audience sees is that of the Irish Citizen Army, worn by Captain Brennan -- "green suit; slouch green hat caught up at one side by a small Red Hand badge; Same Browne belt, with a revolver in the holster."⁷⁰ Brennan has gone to Jack Clitheroe's apartment with others concerning a reconnaissance attack on Dublin castle. Prominently displayed in Clitheroe's apartment is a portrait of Robert Emmet, the Irish martyr who was executed by the British for leading an ill-planned, ill-executed attack on Dublin Castle in 1803. Emmet's forces consisted of 150 undisciplined, untrained men, many of whom deserted before the march on the castle, many of whom deserted enroute. Emmet was caught up in the same kind of nationalistic zeal that nurtured the Easter Uprising of 1916. He himself was further sustained by great faith in Irish manhood and by the impotent promises of Napoleon to lend aid to the Irish if they wished to escape British bondage. His portrait in this initial scene helps to develop the locker-room atmosphere of Acts One and Two of The Plough and the Stars.

Jack Clitheroe, standing in the room with Robert Emmet's picture, accepts his orders and -- as heroes in story books do -- rushes away from

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 182.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 202.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 187-188.

wife and hearth in his uniform and with his newly discovered promotion to the rank of commandant. The uniforms reveal at the same time the vanity of the peacocks who wear them, the envy of those who don't, and O'Casey's own bitterness which is discussed at length in Drums Under the Windows, bitterness that his good sense was overruled by Captain White, the Countess Markievicz, and even Jim Larkin in their move to uniform the members of the Irish Citizen Army. Further, O'Casey, as secretary, was expected to get the money to pay for the uniforms. O'Casey argued, and rightly so, that the kind of fighting that such soldiers might have to do could best be accomplished by trained guerilla fighters cloaked in the anonymity of civilian dress.⁷¹

In Act II⁷² the soldiers, citizens, and laborers are spellbound by the rhetoric of a shadowy figure who inflames their nationalistic fervor. The orator is the historical Patrick Pearse, one of the principal

⁷¹Drums Under the Windows, pp. 334-345.

We will be rebels; worse -- we will be traitors, even terrorists to England, and she will strike without stop or mercy. It is for us, as far as we can, to force her by dodgery to strike oftenest at the air. If we flaunt signs about of what we are, and what we do, we'll get it on the head and round the neck. As for a uniform -- that would be worst of all. We couldn't hope to hide ourselves anywhere clad in green and gold, or even green without the gold. Caught in a dangerous corner, there would be a chance in your workaday clothes. You could slip among the throng, carelessly, with few the wiser. In uniform, the crowd would shrink aside to show you, and the enemy will pounce. In your everyday rags you could, if the worst came, hang your rifle on a lamp-post and go your way. But you couldn't take your uniform off, for, even if you did, a man walking about in his shirt would look as suspicious as one going about in a uniform -- that is, if any of you has a shirt. (p. 339).

⁷²Act II of The Plough and the Stars is O'Casey's earlier one act "The Cooing of Doves" which was rejected by the Abbey Theatre at the same time Kathleen Listens In was accepted. See Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, p. 164.

planners of the Easter Week uprising, signer of the Proclamation of the Republic, and Commander in Chief of the Republican forces during Easter Week. His extended call to arms in this play is taken directly from his address in which he proclaimed the Irish Republic.⁷³ The overheard comments, as used by O'Casey, contribute ^{to} the Big Game atmosphere and lead ultimately to one of the basic thematic truths of this play, that "the vanity and excitements created by patriotism and war disrupt fundamental human relationships. . ."⁷⁴ This is especially true if the patriotism is a shallow one begotten on Vanity by Oratory. The tension that precipitates the violence of the last two acts builds throughout Act II.

The tension is motivated of course by the words of Pearse:

It is a glorious thing to see arms in the hands of Irishmen. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the sight of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the use of arms. . . Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. . . There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them!⁷⁵

⁷³Stephen Gwynn, Irish Literature and Drama In the English Language: A Short History (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1936), p. 21.

⁷⁴W. A. Armstrong, "The Sources and the Themes of The Plough and the Stars," Modern Drama, IV (December, 1961), 240.

Armstrong has meticulously worked out the specific sources for the unseen orator's words. The first speech (pp. 193-194) except for the first sentence -- "It is a glorious thing to see arms in the hands of Irishmen" -- comes from Pearse's "The Coming Revolution," delivered in 1914. The second (pp. 195-196) comes in part from Pearse's "Peace and the Gael" delivered in 1915. The third (pp. 202-203) is composed of selected sentences from "Peace and the Gael." The fourth and final speech is O'Casey's adaptation of Pearse's graveside oration for the Irish patriot, J. O'Donovan Rossa in July of 1915. Armstrong contends that O'Casey by his artistic selection makes his speaker "even more dogmatic in tone and oracular in attitude than Pearse;" and O'Casey's orator's final speech is infinitely more "confident about the outcome of the insurrection that he is advocating." pp. 234-236.

⁷⁵Collected Plays, I, pp. 193-194.

Rosie, the prostitute, calls this "the sacred thruth," and the usually sensible, settled Barman responds, "If I was only a little younger, I'd be plungin' mad into the middle of it!" These and the rhapsodic eloquence of Peter and Fluther indicate the effect of the speech. The cowardly Peter in full-dress Forester costume states in his much interrupted soliloquy:

A meetin' like this always makes me feel as if I could dhrink Lock Erinn dry! ... I felt a burnin' lump in me throat when I heard th' band playin' "The Soldiers' Song," rememberin' last hearin' it marchin' in military formation, with the people starin' on both sides at us, carryin' with us th' pride an' resolution o' Dublin to th' grave of Wolfe Tone.

...

... Th' memory of all th' things that was done, an' all th' things that was suffered be th' people, was boomin' in me brain . . . Every nerve in me body was quiverin' to do somethin' desperate!

...

I was burnin' to dhrav me sword, an' wave an' wave it over me --⁷⁶

And Fluther, not to be outdone, also becomes eloquent as the voice of the speaker moves him to thirst and rhetorical splendor:

You couldn't feel any way else [but thirsty] at a time like this when th' spirit of a man is pulsin' to be out fightin' for th' thruth with his feet thremblin' on' th' way, maybe to th' gallows, an' his ears tinglin' with th' faint, far-away sound of burstin' rifle-shots that'll maybe whip th' last LITTLE shock o' life out of him that's left lingerin' in his body!

...

Get th' Dublin men goin' an' they'll go on full force for anything that's thryin' to bar them away from what they're wantin', where th' slim thinkin' counthry boyo ud limp away from th' first faintest touch of compromization.

...

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 194-195.

Jammed as I was in th' crowd, I listened to th' speeches pattherin' on th' people's head, like rain fallin' on th' corn; every derogatory thought went out o' me mind, an' I said to meself, "You can die now, Fluther, for you've seen th' shadow-dhreams of th' past leppin' to life in th' bodies of livin' men that show, if we were without a titther o' courage for centuries, we're vice versa now! Looka here. The blood was BOILIN' in me veins!"⁷⁷

This scene anticipates in small what is happening to the mob outside as they yield up their senses to the flaming rhetoric of Pearse. The uniformed members of the mob are of the army led by and represented by Jack Clitheroe, Lieutenant Langen, and Captain Brennan. When these three enter the pub preceding the conclusion of the speech,

They are in a state of emotional excitement. Their faces are flushed and their eyes sparkle; they speak rapidly, as if unaware of the meaning of what they said. They have been mesmerized by the fervency of the speeches.⁷⁸

They, too, speak in the slogans of shallow patriotism as they describe Ireland as greater than a wife or a mother and repeat that "Th' time is rotten ripe for revolution. . . Th' time for Ireland's battle is now -- th' place for Ireland's battle is here."

The speaker though has not finished. His conclusion is calculated to make Fluther's blood boil even hotter, and to make the cheering sections cheer even louder:

Our foes are strong, but strong as they are; they cannot undo the miracles of God, who ripens in the heart of young men the seeds sown by the young men of a former generation. They think they have pacified Ireland; think they have foreseen everything; think they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! -- they have left us our Fenian dead, and, while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland, unfree, shall never be at peace!⁷⁹

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 194-195.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 213.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 213.

The result of this final speech is a team emotionally ready for the Big Game. Brennan hoists the Plough and the Stars, vows "Imprisonment for th' Independence of Ireland!" Langon hoists the tricolor and vows, "Wounds for th' Independence of Ireland!" Clitheroe vows, "Death for th' Independence of Ireland!" The three together chant, "So help us God."

As Act II ends, the team is ready and Commandant Clitheroe, having sealed his vow with a glass of port wine, clad in the full military regalia of the Irish Citizen Army, gives his troops their command to march in the practice raid on Dublin castle.

The last two acts unveil the reality and the ugly truth of war. The proud flags fall, uniforms are discarded, civilians loot, die, and quibble. Both teams are sure that their opponent is not playing the game. Fluther, as he hears the first artillery barrages, says, "Surely to God they're not going to use artillery on us? . . . Aw, holy Christ, that's not playin' the game!"⁸⁰ Captain Brennan doesn't play the game as he leaves Clitheroe to die, dons his civvies, and joins the non-combatants in the relative safety of Bessie's rooms. The British Sergeant Tinley complains of Irish ambushes and snipers, " . . . Dum-dum bullets they're using. Gang of Hass-assins potting at us from behind roofs. That's not playing the game: why down't they come into the owpen and fight fair!"⁸¹ The eerie repetitive chant, "Red Cr..oss, Red Cr...oss! Ambu...lance, Ambu...lance!" is part of the game and becomes more frequent and more thematic as the game nears the end.

O'Casey reveals in The Plough and the Stars more directly than in either of his earlier plays, his antipathy toward war and its senseless

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 223.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 255.

shattering of human life. Here for the first time, war itself becomes an active agent in the drama. Its madness permeates the action of the play and no one is safe from its destructive forces. His invective and his outraged satire are directed not at the war itself, not at the British soldiers on sacred Irish soil, not even at the patriots at the barricades, but at the vanity and folly which lead men into uniforms, into parades, into demonstrations, and ultimately into disaster.

His vision of vain men in colorful uniforms is essentially the same as that expressed by Mrs. Gogan:

The Forestherd is a gorgeous dhress! I don't think I've seen nicer, mind you, in a pantomime. . . . Th' loveliest part of th' dhress, I think, is th' ostrichness plume. . . . When yous are goin' along, an' I see them wavin' an' noddin' an' waggin', I seem to be lookin' at each of yous hangin' at th' end of a rope, your eyes bulgin' an' your legs twistin' an' jerkin', gaspin' an' gaspin' for breath while yous are thryin' to die for Ireland.⁸²

He is not, as her name suggests she is, a portender of doom who gets his kicks by relishing the disaster of others, prophesying death for all, and getting "a kind of threspasing joy to feel meself movin' along in a mourning coach" at somebody else's funeral. He satirizes in Mrs. Gogan the respectable woman who giggles at naked pictures, gossips, swears that "any kid, living or dead, that Jinnie Gogan's had since [marriage], was got between the bordhers of th' ten commandments," and abandons her children for a row or a profit. Mrs. Gogan is his creature of the Dublin slums who knows and is fascinated by Death. Her sensual pleasure as she describes its horrors, her response to the death of her child who was "never any other way but faintin'" her expressed gratitude to both Bessie and Fluther, and

⁸²Ibid., p. 199.

her obvious delight with the lovely shoes "with th' pointed toes an' th' cuban heels" are all facets of her personality. Her devotion to the church and the rituals of the church and her preoccupation with the beauty and the gore of the deaths of other people are the opposite poles of her personality that O'Casey combines in his own irreverent way as he portrays the plight of slum dwellers and their talismans of respectability and redemption.

O'Casey's main satiric point which is developed throughout the action of this play is that those who suffer most during any war are the women and the children. More specifically, in the Easter Uprising, those who suffered most were the slum dwellers, the noncombatants, the wives and mothers. This point is emphasized, in part, by the fashionably dressed, middle-aged, stout woman who is almost fainting with fear, who pleads with the Covey and Fluther for direction. She "was foolish enough to visit a friend, thinking the howl thing was a joke, and now I cann't get a car or a tram to take me home -- isn't it awful?" She testifies, "I'm so different from the others. . .;" she is afraid and says so, "I know I'll fall down in a dead faint if I hear another shot go off anyway near me -- isn't it awful!"⁸³ She and her class are inconvenienced, can't find transportation, and are afraid of a war they took to be a joke. In the meantime, Nora Clitheroe loses her baby, her husband, and her mind; Bessie Burgess is slain in the most unheroic unromantic way possible; Mollser dies of consumption; the slum dwellers, especially the women and children, suffer the real agonies of war, whether the war be an Irish revolution, an Irish civil war, or a world war.

The war itself, despite the inspired rhetoric, is not a holy war; the soldiers are not dedicated to any real cause, but continue to fight

⁸³Ibid., pp. 225-227.

because, as Nora says, "they're afraid to say they're afraid." The moral inadequacy of the combatants is testified to by the numerous incidents of betrayal that follow the emotionalism unfettered by Pearse's rhetoric: Clitheroe sings "The Soldiers' Song" and abandons Nora to join the troops after he knows of his promotion; later, he thrusts his pregnant wife away from him and leaves with Brennan and the wounded Lieutenant. He dies for the same reason for which he participates -- "he is afraid to say that he is afraid," just one more indication of the vanity evidenced in his earlier separation from the I.C.A. when he thought he didn't get a promotion, the vanity that led him to buy, polish, and adore the Sam Browne belt, a belt that Mrs. Gogan says he slept with. He ought, as Fluther notes, "to have a baby's rattle."⁸⁴

Giving way to the same kind of intoxicated emotionalism, Mrs. Gogan abandons her consumptive daughter to attend the rally, baby in her arms; then she abandons the baby in the pub and later she abandons both Mollser and the baby as she participates in the ritual-looting of the shops and brings home her new belongings in the pram. But, in reality, the war itself is neither a Big Game, nor a joke, nor a bargain basement as O'Casey depicts the destruction of basic human relationships, death itself, and the madness of war as reflected in the madness of Nora Clitheroe -- wife, mother, non-combatant, slum dweller.

The only truly heroic actions are among those most affected by the war: Nora combats public opinion, the intoxication of patriotism, and the vanity of her husband as she attempts to search him out and take him home with her. Fluther Good, the man who operates according to instinct,

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 167.

flys into rage at Covey's calculated insults, laughs at Peter Flynn's regalia, and -- as demonstrated earlier -- is momentarily sucked up in the vacuum of patriotism during the rally, before he goes home with Rosie. Nonetheless, it is he who dares to search for and bring back Nora Clitheroe from the madness of the barricades, and it is he who dares death again to arrange for the burials of Nora's still-born child and Mollser. In his own participation in the looting, he is still the creature of instinct and the war itself changes him no more than the imagined new wealth of Captain Boyle changes Joxer Daly.

Bessie Burgess, who is contemptuous of Nora, who insults her neighbors but putting a new lock on her door, who will "sing whenever she damn well pleases," is the "oul' orange bitch" who sings "Rule Britannia" as the madness of armed revolt reigns outside her doors. She participates in the looting and threatens physical violence to Mrs. Gogan, but it is Bessie Burgess who picks up the rejected Nora, goes for the doctor to care for Nora, sits up with Nora for three nights running, and ultimately dies trying to move Nora from in front of the window. In these non-combatants is seen what David Krause calls the only untainted heroism in The Plough and the Stars -- endurance.⁸⁵ Nora Clitheroe, Fluther Good, and Bessie Burgess have greater courage, greater charity, and greater human capacities than any uniformed patriot in the play. They, as O'Casey depicts, are morally superior.

The Covey specifically identifies himself with socialism and with the Labor Movement, questions the validity of Fluther's war wounds -- as

⁸⁵David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 104.

well he should -- and offers his own platitudinous panaceas for the social, political, and economic ills of Ireland. These immature understandings and his ready reference book, Jenersky's Thesis on the Origin, Development and Consolidation of the Evolutionary Idea of the Proletariat, are treated with equally scathing satire. His answers to all problems are pat and emerge as ill-formed, adolescent enthusiasms without real understanding or meaning. He fulfills the role in this play played by the Ballad Singer and Mary Boyle in the preceding plays. He is O'Casey's suggestion that the social problems and revolutions are not games for "chiselers" any more than Ibsen is for "chiselers." The Covey, in his relative inexperience, is not as lacking in perception as some of his pat answers indicate. He notes early in the play amid the furor of preparation for the great demonstration that nationalism "is an accidental gatherin' together of mollycewels an' atoms." Following Mollser's death, he parrots another imperfectly understood truth, that "it's all because of th' system we're livin' undher."⁸⁶ O'Casey could well have had the Covey in mind in 1958 when he said of the Communists, "They drive me mad. They know nothing but what they read in their little pamphlets."⁸⁷ In any case, the Covey is irascible and is the focus of the bickering within the pub during Act II. He bickers with Fluther Good, Rosie, and Peter, and is something less than an innocent bystander as the row erupts between Bessie and Mrs. Gogan. The bickering, in addition to its comic value, reflects the discordant factions in Ireland, and the Covey represents in his caustic animosity and in his cynical denunciation of all this Nationalistic "dope,"

⁸⁶Collected Plays, I, pp. 170, 249.

⁸⁷Rod Nordell, "Cock-a-Doodle Casey," 20.

something of the immature demands, frustrated aims, and disillusionment of the Labor forces in Ireland following the fiasco of the 1913 lockout.

Nora Clitheroe is rather obviously an Irish version of Nora Helmer in Ibsen's A Doll's House; she too is called by pet names. She is Jack's "little red-lipped Nora"; she tries heroically to save her husband, who is an insensitive and as vain as Torvald, and is blamed by him for her deception; she tries to improve the world around her and early in the play, as quoted by Mrs. Gogan, describes the tenements as "Vaults.... that are hidin' th' dead, instead of homes that are sheltherin' th' livin'."⁸⁸ O'Casey's Nora, unlike Ibsen's, is ineffectual and is destroyed by that which she combats. It is she rather than the door that is slammed; it is she rather than her husband's hollow pride that is destroyed. As the play ends she has gone with Mrs. Gogan to sleep in the dead Mollser's bed.

The card game played by Covey and Fluther in the room with the coffin symbolizes for O'Casey the methods which shape the destinies of human beings; the players continue to shuffle, wager, and argue until they abandon their cards to participate in the more lucrative pastime of looting. This, like the looting scenes themselves, reflects the total lack of order, the madness in society at war. It is a chaos to which Fluther Good is particularly suited as is revealed by his many vows of temperance and by his answer to the Covey's urging that he "thry to keep a sup for tomorrow." Fluther responds,

Spread it out? Keep a sup for to-morrow? How th'
hell does a fella know there'll be any tomorrow?
If I'm going to be whipped away, let me be whipped
away when it's empty, an' not when it's half full!⁸⁹

⁸⁸Collected Plays, I, p. 165.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 242.

The card game, the drinking, and the making of tea are rituals which give the only semblance of order to the chaotic world at war. This fact emphasizes the terror and the irony of the situation when the two British soldiers, both routinely performing their tasks, invade the apartment of the slain Bessie and drink the tea she so recently prepared. Their professional and impersonal attitude is revealed in their matter of fact comments, "Oh Gawd, we've plugged one of the women of the 'ouse," and "Whoy the 'ell did she gow to the window?" Then, they drink the tea and join their comrades in song as the play ends. Perhaps O'Casey's most bitter comment on the way of the world which he well knew is his dedication of this play "TO THE GAY LAUGH OF MY MOTHER AT THE GATE OF THE GRAVE."

Though The Plough and the Stars was ill-received by those about whom and for whom it was written, Lady Gregory discovered it to be

A wonderful play...[about] the forgiveness of sins, as real literature is supposed to be. These quarreling, drinking women have tenderness and courage showing all through, as have the men... and then comes what all nations have seen, the suffering that falls through war, and especially Civil War, on the women, the poor, the wretched homes and families of the slums. An overpowering play. I felt at the end of it as if I should never care to look at another; all others would seem so shadowy to the mind after this.⁹⁰

This is the last of O'Casey's Irish plays, and it serves as a fitting finale as O'Casey includes the rawness of the slums, the reality of war, and the true tragedy in lives which are discarded even as Fluther and Covey threw down their cards. The Plough and the Stars, it seems to me, is the best of the Irish plays, combining the humor, pathos, and tragedy of the other four. The satire is further reaching and more bitter as O'Casey

⁹⁰Coxhead, Lady Gregory, pp. 203-204.

seeks to identify to the world's eye the factionalism and the adolescent grandeur that caused and co-existed with the bloodshed and madness of Easter Week were no more heroic than those who participated in the "murdering hate" of the Irish Civil War six years later.

The riots that erupted in the Abbey theatre during the fourth performance of The Plough and the Stars had been anticipated by jeering, shouting, and booing during earlier performances. The history of incidents leading up to the riot, O'Casey's battle with his critics, Yeats' heroism during the riot, and the Abbey's government subsidy are adequately dealt with in other studies. For O'Casey, the riots and his own disillusionment marked the end of a period, and he, like Paul Morel, turned to the quick of the town:

It was bitterly cold, with a fierce, keen wind blowing, and soon it was sending sharp sleety hail and salty spray into his face, stinging it deeply -- Ireland, spitting a last, venomous, contemptuous farewell to him.... He faced resolutely towards where the ship was going. Sweet Inishfallen, fare thee well! Forever!⁹¹

⁹¹Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, pp. 395-396.

CHAPTER III

TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

O'Casey's official separation from the Abbey Theatre and from Dublin did not go unheralded. The stormy riots during the performances of The Plough and the Stars together with their aftermath anticipate what is unfortunately the chief point of critical concentration in the life and works of Sean O'Casey, the Abbey's rejection of O'Casey's The Silver Tassie.¹ Critics of many colors have feasted on the battle between Yeats and O'Casey. O'Casey himself, never one to duck a battle, furnished the total correspondence concerning The Silver Tassie to St. John Ervine for publication in The Observer and to A.E. for publication in The Irish Statesman. A.E. did not publish the correspondence but warned O'Casey that Yeats might take legal action for the serious breach of copyright. O'Casey wrote "to the press to say that he was indifferent to the threat, even if Dr. Yeats decided to lay the dispute before the League of Nations."²

¹Critics for the most part have concentrated on the correspondence between O'Casey and Yeats, Shaw's involvement in the incident, and the fact that the Abbey Theatre never regained the stature after O'Casey left it that he brought to it with his five Irish plays. Among the more lucid treatments of the incident are:

David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work;
Robert Hogan, The Experiments of Sean O'Casey; and
Mary C. Bromage, "The Yeats - O'Casey Quarrel," Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review, LXIV, 14 (March 1, 1958), 135-144.

²Sean O'Casey, Rose and Crown (New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 42-43.

The reading public -- Irish, English, and American -- was delighted with the battle, and it is unfortunate that O'Casey violated his own rules concerning artistic temperament and engaged in the hassle which severed his relationships with Lady Gregory and reduced his relationship with Yeats to a cool, respectful, business arrangement. It is also unfortunate that Yeats, the Nobel Prize winner and virtual God of Irish Letters, should have assumed his pedantic and pompous role in the exchange with O'Casey.³

The whole affair has been too much dealt with and has for too many years given critics something to write about besides the play itself. The overabundance of critical concentration on this episode and the mass of pages written during and about it do a very real disservice to the play which presumably caused it and to those sixteen plays which follow it.

In The Silver Tassie, as in all those which follow it, O'Casey combines various techniques and types of drama to attain his artistic goal: to show individual man's involvement in various rituals of mankind, many of the rituals at best meaningless and at worst totally destructive. The techniques utilized in The Silver Tassie are no more daring than those of his later plays, and are in several instances less effective than in those later plays. During this period from 1928 to 1942, which I choose to call his transitional period, O'Casey moves from the essential realism

³The role is quite obvious in Yeats's letter dated April 20, 1928, and addressed to "My dear Casey." Yeats informs O'Casey, "...you are not interested in the great war;...the mere greatness of the world war has thwarted you;...the whole history of the world must be reduced to wallpaper in front of which the characters must pose and speak... [As for the play]...it is all too abstract, after the first act; the second act is an interesting technical experiment, but it is too long for the material; and after that, there is nothing." Allan Wade, The Letters of W. P. Yeats (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 740-743.

and naturalism of his Irish period into expressionism, symbolism, and the frankly fantastic which became the established and effective techniques of his latest plays, 1955 to 1961.

In almost every instance, the kinship of O'Casey's drama to Old Comedy is obvious. His satiric attacks on church, crown, individual and public follies are not obscured by subtlety; the worlds of his drama become ever more fantastic until they are ultimately -- except for costume -- virtually indistinguishable from the Cloud-Cuckoo-Land of Aristophanes. His characters continue to be representative rather than individual personalities; and the prescribed solution to the plagues of man's stupidity always rests ultimately on individual human beings who are capable of joining together into constructive units dedicated to the creation of a better social situation, one in which the citizens recognize and seek to correct their society's ailments. When they can not function in a sick society, O'Casey's poets and workers and lusty wenches leave it and go forth, much as Synge's tramps and tinkers do, into the world. They will not be denied the pleasure of song, dance, love, and life itself.

His satiric laughter continues to strip away the pretentious well-fed demeanor of those in power and to reveal the sickness hidden by their facades of well being. The discovered sickness, like Mollser's, symbolizes a farther reaching and more deadly social ailment which can best be treated and cured by healing laughter.

The Silver Tassie: A Tragi-Comedy in Four Acts

Because of the Abbey's rejection, The Silver Tassie was first produced in London's Appollo Theatre on November 11, 1929. The violent world of O'Casey's earlier plays has been enlarged to include mankind literally

rather than symbolically in the action of the great world war. It is a destructive world which maims and kills, and its victims are no less dead than those of the Easter uprising, the armed revolt against the British Empire, or the Irish Civil War.

The world and its war are responsible for the transformations, the deaths, and the mutilations that render the major characters of Act I virtually unrecognizable in the similar setting of Act IV. Act I portrays the central characters in the aftermath of a football victory, a victory toasted in long draughts from the silver tassie and by the hot young bodies of the victors and their followers. Harry Heegan is the golden boy, the athlete who has led his team to victory and has won for them permanent possession of the tassie. Due to the efforts of Sylvester Heegan, Simon Norton, and other admirers, the invincible Harry is becoming a myth during his own youth. They recall and embroider his athletic feats as they await his arrival. The emphasis on time, its inevitable passing, and man's obligations to it become thematic and of increasing importance as the play progresses. When Harry does arrive, he insists on replaying the football game with Barney, reliving the excitement of his victory, and basking in the enthusiasm of his followers. This intensity of the moment, this rage to live the moment for its own sake, makes it possible for Harry to suggest to his friend Barney that they "go to the spread and hang the latch for another night."⁴

Barney refuses this invitation to desert, partly because he could lose his pay and partly because he fears that the military powers would

⁴Collected Plays, II, p. 31.

sentence him to permanent duty in the trenches. His is not an undivided devotion to duty; he frankly fears reprisals. He and Harry Heegan have already overstayed their leave; Mrs. Heegan, one of O'Casey's realistic Irish mothers, knows that her son can be shot at dawn for desertion, and she also knows that her own government allotment would then cease. She urges Harry to return to duty, for "You've got only a few bare minutes to spare," and he in his exuberance vows to "make the most of them, then,"⁵

Mrs. Heegan believes with Susie Monican that "the men that go with the guns are going with God,"⁶ and she doesn't understand why his experiences in the trenches haven't given Teddy Foran "some idea of the sacredness of life!"⁷ When her son and his cronies actually board ship, Mrs. Heegan voices her ironic thanksgiving, "Thanks be to Christ that we're after managin' to get the three of them away safely."⁸ Act I ends with the football victory, the silver tassie, the allotment checks, and the bodies of all the young men intact. The victory wine has been consumed and the tassie placed on the altar beneath Harry's picture and his other athletic trophies. The madness and sickness suggested by Teddy Foran's drunken rage and the broken clutter he leaves "in a mad an' muddled heap like the flotsam an' jetsam of the seashore"⁹ anticipate and set the stage for the futility and the desperation of the succeeding acts. The flotsam

⁵Ibid., p. 28.

⁶Ibid., p. 29.

⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁸Ibid., p. 34.

⁹Ibid., p. 34.

and jetsam of the broken dishes anticipates that of the battlefield in Act II, that of the hospital ward in Act III, and that of another victory celebration in Act IV.

Neither the language nor the action of this act can truthfully be described as realistic. The act itself is a victory hymn or a victory chant complete with altar and promise of sacrifice. The ritual itself is completed in the ensuing acts as the human sacrifice is completed. The Silver Tassie is "literally a hell of a play" and, as Shaw contends, Yeats is extraordinarily wrong in calling Act I realistic.

The first act is not a bit realistic; it is deliberately fantastic ~~chanted~~ poetry. This is intensified to a climax in the second act. Then comes a ruthless return for the last two acts to the fiercest ironic realism.¹⁰

Act I is part of an encompassing ritual, the ritual of human sacrifice.¹¹ The football victory, the victor's permanent possession of the tassie, the wine and the toasts, Harry Heegan's trophy display, and the altar which is to hold the tassie afford the setting as well as the action of this unit of the play. This segment of the play is complete in itself in that the football celebration is concluded and one phase of life is finished. The characters who reappear in later acts are totally changed by the incidents and the experiences of war.

The surrealistic setting of Act II mirrors the distortions and the horrors of war: the jagged lacerated ruin of a monastery, the rubbish heaps that were once homes, the spiky stumps of trees that were once a small wood,

¹⁰Lady Gregory's Journal, pp. 110-111. The passage from Shaw's letter is entered under the date of June 28, 1928.

¹¹Ronald G. Rollins, "O'Casey's The Silver Tassie," The Explicator, XX, 8 (April, 1962), item 62.

the shattered shellpocked earth, and the barbed wire fretwork that protects the men in the trenches. Above all this is a stained glass image of the Virgin and a life-size crucifix with an arm partially blown off by shell fire. The grotesque distortions of war are emphasized by various ironic notations: for example, the pedestal of the crucifix contains the words PRINCEPS PACIS; the howitzer, which becomes the God and the altar of the scene is marked HYDE PARK CORNER. Near the entrance to the Red Cross Station is chalked the notation: NO HAWKERS OR STREET CRIERS PERMITTED HERE. Barney is tied to the howitzer, and a cold rain is falling. The scene recalls Susie Monican's notion that "the men who go with the guns are going with God" and Mrs. Heegan's twin heresy that one can learn about the sacredness of life in front line trenches. The whole scene is permeated by the terrifying silence of the battlefield; the silence is emphasized by the memory of the gaiety and noise of the celebration in the preceding scene.

The war is a highly stylized ritual involving the prophet of doom, ironic obeisance to the howitzer as God of War, ritualistic bitching, disappointing mail call, idiotic superiors, and -- of course -- the pomposity and arrogant cowardice of civilian visitors and the Staff Walla. The Croucher in his death mask is the prophet of doom, O'Casey's inversion of the biblical Ezekiel who prophesied the granting of sinews, flesh, skin, and breath by God and who witnessed the transformation of the dry bones into a living and exceeding great army into whom the wind breathed the breath of life. The Croucher, on the other hand,

...prophesied and the breath came out of them, and the sinews came away from them, and behold a shaking, and their bones

fell asunder, bone from his bone, and they died, and
the exceeding great army became a valley of dry bones.¹²

The God who will bring Croucher's prophecy to pass is the howitzer
before which the soldiers kneel in obeisance as battle begins. Led by the
corporal, the soldiers chant their litany of thanksgiving and adoration:

Corporal: Let us honour that in which we do put our trust.

Soldiers: That it may not fail us in our time of need.

Corporal: Hail, cool-hardened tower of steel emboss'd
With the fever'd, figment thoughts of man;
Guardian of our love and hate and fear,
Speak for us to the inner ear of God!

Soldiers: We believe in God and we believe in thee.

Corporal: Dreams of line, of colour, and of form;
Dreams of music dead for ever now;
Dreams in bronze and dreams in stone have gone
To make thee delicate and strong to kill.

Soldiers: We believe in God and we believe in thee.

Corporal: Jail'd in thy steel are hours of merriment
Cadg'd from the pageant-dream of children's play;
Too soon of the motley stripp'd that they may sweat
With them that toil for the glory of thy kingdom.

Soldiers: We believe in God and we believe in thee.

Corporal: Remember our women, sad-hearted, proud-fac'd,
Who've given the substance of their womb for shadows;
Their shrivel'd, empty breasts war tinselled
For patient gifts of graves to thee.

Soldiers: We believe in God and we believe in thee.

Corporal: Dapple those who are shelter'd with disease,
And women labouring with child,
And children that play about the streets,
With blood of youth expiring in its prime.

Soldiers: We believe in God and we believe in thee.

Corporal: Tear a gap through the soul of our mass'd enemies;
Grant them all the peace of death;

¹² Collected Plays, II, pp. 36-37.

Blow them swiftly into Abram's bosom,
And mingle them with the joys of paradise!

Soldiers: For we believe in God and we believe in thee.¹³

The ritual of war includes, in addition to the prophet and his god, the ritualized bitching of the men who do the fighting as they curse the "god-dam rain and blasted whistling wind"; as they envy the shirkers safe at home curled up at ease warm and dry, happy and safe at home; as they chant "But wy'r we 'ere, wy're we 'ere -- that's wot we wants to know;" and as they hearken to mail call where one soldier receives a prayer book with a green plush cover with a golden cross, and another receives a "red and yellow coloured rubber ball" and a note from his Mollie, "To play your way to the enemies' trenches when you all go over the top."¹⁴

The surrealism of the setting and the fantastic chanted poetry of Act II provide an adequate vehicle for O'Casey's rage against the destructive stupidity of war and for his own belief that the young and essentially innocent are the ultimate victims. The meaningless patter of command and the painful idiocy of those in command are parodied in the Visitor and the Staff Walla, both of whom learned about the heroics of war from the silver screen, from pulp magazines, and from academic pep talks. The Visitor complains that the military authorities "won't let a man plunge," but require him to wear a helmet and to seek only the safest route to his destination. He lectures Barney, whose crime was stealing food to eat, concerning the sacred trust of private property; he urges the Corporal to keep his exhausted men moving as much as possible; he praises the worship service,

¹³Ibid., pp. 54-55.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 51.

"Splendid. Bucks 'em up. Gives 'em peace." After a two minute visit to the field hospital that is overfull of wounded and dying, he notes his findings: "Nurses too gloomy. Surgeons too serious. Doesn't do." Then he urges the men to attend his lecture the following day. In short, the Visitor is a compendium of hypocrisies detested by O'Casey and is a character type immediately recognizable to most veterans of front line and field hospital service. O'Casey's bitterness is not obscured by the ridiculous antics of the cowardly Visitor, nor do the soldiers in any way conceal their bitter contempt for him.¹⁵ O'Casey's contempt and that of the battle-weary soldiers who have been resting on the besieged battlefield for "twenty-nine days, twenty-three hours and twenty-three minutes" is summed up rather effectively in the first soldier's chant as the Visitor disappears into the field hospital:

The perky bastard's cautious nibbling
 In a safe, safe shelter at danger queers me.
 Furiously feeling he's up to the neck in
 The whirl and the sweep of the front-line fighting.¹⁶

Just as the Visitor mirrors the cowardice and the security of the civilian political powers behind the scene, the orders read by the prancing Staff Walla reflect the idiocy and the chaotic minds in control of military maneuvers:

BATTLE BRIGADE ORDERS, F.A., 31 D2

Units presently recuperating, parade eight o'clock P.M.
 Attend Lecture organized by Society for amusement and
 mental development, soldiers at front.
 Subject: Habits of those living between Frigid Zone and
 Arctic Circle.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 40-48.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 43.

Lecturer: Mr. Melville Sprucer.
 Supplementary Order: Units to wear gas-masks.
 As you were.¹⁷

The over complexity and ludicrous inanity of the military jargon summoning the troops to a meaningless lecture are further parodied in another set of orders:

BRIGADE ORDERS, C/X 143. B/Y 341.

Regarding gas-masks, Gas-masks to be worn round neck so as to lie in front $2\frac{1}{2}$ degrees from socket of left shoulder-blade, and $2\frac{3}{4}$ degrees from socket of right shoulder-blade, leaving bottom margin to reach $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch from second button of lower end of tunic. Order to take effect from 6 A.M. following morning of date received. Dismiss!¹⁸

The pervading distortion and the unreal qualities of men and language depict the destructive and omnipresent force of the silent war which functions as the only recognizable individual identity -- except for the death mask of Croucher and Barney, who is being punished because:

A brass-hatt pullin' the bedroom curtains
 Between himself, the world an' the Estaminay's daughter,
 In a pyjama'd hurry ran down and phon'd
 A Tommy was chokin' an Estaminay cock;
 An' I was pinch'd as I was puttin' the bird
 Into a pot with a pint of peas.¹⁹

The senseless chaos of war is not made up entirely of battles, gunfire, victory, and defeat. At the same time, it consists of and contributes to the increasing madness of individuals separated from familiar surroundings, the gradual decay of men forcibly kept away from beauty and forcibly imprisoned in a world of increasing ugliness. The end results of this madness,

¹⁷Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 51-52.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 49.

decay, and separation from beauty are the flotsam and jetsam of the battle field. O'Casey wrote of his attempt to portray war and of one of this play's basic themes:

I wished to show the face and unveil the soul of war.
I wanted a war play without noise, without the interruptions of gunfire, content to show its results, as in the chant of the wounded and in the maiming of Harry; to show it in its main spiritual phases, its inner impulses and its actual horror of destroying the golden bodies of the young, and of the Church's damned approval in the sardonic hymn to the gun in Act II. Yes, the play symbolically treats with the theme of human sacrifice.²⁰

The nightmare world of Act II with its surrealistic setting and its chanted responses does much to capture the essence of the silent destroyer begat by the stupidity of men. The characters are all shades, grotesque moving figures devoid of individual identities. They represent mankind -- mankind victimized by the inhumanity and the stupidity of individual human beings who happen to be in positions of power. O'Casey's scream of protest against war actually begins in Act II with the backdrop of the preceding act to afford contrast and perspective. The scream increases in volume and intensity from the beginning of this battleground scene through the sterile life of the hospital wards to the final ironic episode of another football victory celebration.

The fiercest kind of ironic realism, as Shaw noted, permeates the action of the last two acts. The fantastic chanted poetry, dream-like movements, and surrealistic setting of Act II are at the same time replaced by and intensified by the sterility, efficiency, and order of the antiseptic hospital ward. The howitzer, the crucifix, and the picture of Mary are

²⁰The letter quoted is included in Rollin's Explicator essay, noted above.

present in the wooden crosspieces which enable the wounded and the sick to pull themselves into sitting position, in the statue of the Blessed Virgin which sits inertly on its pedestal, and in the sister who carries her rosary and her brass crucifix from bed to bed. The Visitor of Act II has his ideal realized in this hospital ward as Surgeon Maxwell bounces about cheerfully doling out life and death, interrupting his songs and bawdy stories frequently to flirt with Nurse Susie Monican. The cheerful facade of Surgeon Maxwell, who is a close kinsman of Act II's Staff Walla, combines with the antiseptic atmosphere and the morphia to further distort the haunting results of the war.

In addition to the maimed and dying soldiers, the hospital ward houses other casualties of war, among them Sylvester and Simon, who continue to function as chorus and to represent the society within which football victories are won, the same society for which the young athletes go off to war. The sickness of war is the sickness of that society, as reflected in Sylvester's and Simon's presence in the hospital. On a literal level, they are obviously not war casualties, but on another, perhaps more meaningful, level, they and that which they represent are.

Another battle casualty is Susie Monican. The rifle polisher who concealed her beauty and her beautiful body behind sombre ill-fitting dress, persecuted Sylvester and Simon with her tambourine theology, and maintained that Harry was different from those who would manhandle lassies, has become a very attractive girl dressed to show her charms most effectively, a professional nurse who teases Surgeon Maxwell with her kisses, does her job efficiently, and considers Harry as Number Twenty-Eight, no different from any other patient in her ward. As she notes, "If you'd passed as many

through your hands as I, you'd hardly notice one."²¹ The tambourine theologian of the first act, who functioned with her Old Testament rhetoric as a prophet priestess foretelling the doom of the hot young men of Act I, has become the Queen of Sheba, as Sylvester notes, and tends the ailing as she displays her charms. She is the priestess of a different temple, but is a no less effective one. She is the priestess of life rather than death, and life goes on -- infinitely poorer, perhaps, for the carnage and the desolation of battle -- but it is life, and it is for the living -- not for the half alive and not for the dead. In this play, life is for Jessie, Barney, Susie, and the insensitive, cliché-spouting Surgeon Maxwell -- not for blind Teddy, half-paralyzed Harry Heegan, nor for Number Twenty-Three who will be kept alive by morphia for a few days more.

The increasing deterioration of Harry Heegan's body is accompanied by his own increasing bitterness as he loses hope. He shouts to Simon that he needs a miracle, not an operation.

The last operation was to give life to my limbs, but no life came, and again I felt the horrible sickness of life only from the waist up. Don't stand there gaping at me, man. Did you never clap your eyes on a body dead from the belly down?²²

Later he says to Nurse Monican,

In a net I'll catch butterflies in bunches; twist and mangle them between my fingers and fix them wriggling on to mercy's banner. I'll make my chair a Juggernaut, and wheel it over the neck and spine of every daffodil that looks at me, and strew them dead to manifest the mercy of God and the justice of man!

...

To hell with you, your country, trees, and things, you jibbering jay!²³

²¹Collected Plays, II, p. 103.

²²Ibid., pp. 64-65.

²³Ibid., p. 77.

Harry would become war itself and render unto the butterflies and daffodils the same mercy and justice shown to him by senseless war. O'Casey's own bitterness toward the church's sanction of and active involvement in the war ends Act IV. A Sister of Mercy enters, paraphrases scripture, urges Harry to pray, and exits. And Harry does pray, accompanied by the choral response of the sisters' "Salve Regina,"

God of the miracles, give a poor devil a chance,
give a poor devil a chance!²⁴

The answer to Harry's prayer is implicit in the carnival world of the last act, a carnival world complete with fantastically shaped paper hats, music for dancing, and a football victory to celebrate. The hollow gaiety of this frantic tinkle-tinkle world of paper hats is emphasized by the ever present reminders from the hospital ward (the blinded Teddy and the wounded Harry) and by the list of honored dead. Barney's frantic clutching for the available charms of Jessie is thwarted by Harry Heegan, the wraith or spectre of the lusty football hero of the preceding year. The music is a foxtrot, but the real dance that everyone is involved in is the dance of death, the dance-macabre. It is the post-war, cardboard, "let's-be-happy" world, the tinkle-tinkle world of artificial and frenetic gaiety depicted by Lawrence in St. Mawr, by Ford in Parade's End, by Hemingway in The Sun also Rises, and by scores of other modern artists.

In O'Casey's wasteland, as in the others, there is neither direction nor communication. The effective and hilarious telephone incident helps to make this point. When the phone rings, Simon wants to "manipulate the thing in tranquillity;" he first hears "a kind of buzzing and roaring

²⁴Ibid., p. 79.

noise" and then doesn't "seem to be able to hear a damned thing." Sylvester correctly observes that "the stupidity of some persons is . . . terrifyin!" He can't operate the phone either. Mrs. Foran, as usual, has the last and most perceptive word on the incident and on the world that it is a part of: "Curious those at the other end of the telephone couldn't make themselves understood."²⁵

Harry's answer is that a poor devil does not have a chance. His bitterness becomes tinged with self pity as he notes with Coleridge's Ancient Mariner that "even creeping things can praise the Lord"; however, the Lords toasted by Heegan "are men puffed up with the pride of strength," and he, unlike the mariner, has gained neither new vision nor new understanding. His song of life and joy in Act I has become:

To the dancing, for the day cometh when no man
can play. And legs were made to dance, to run, to
jump, to carry you from one place to another; but
mine can neither walk, nor run, nor jump, nor feel
the merry motion of a dance. But stretch me on
the floor fair on my belly, and I will turn over
on my back, then wriggle back again on to my belly;
and that's more than a dead, dead man can do!²⁶

He is more, though little more, than a dead man. When the silver tassie is brought to him, he toasts only himself, "for the shell that hit me bursts for ever between Jessie and me." His bitterness is shared by the blinded Teddy who says,

What seest thou, Teddy? Thou seest not as man
seeth. In the garden the trees stand up; the green
things showeth themselves and fling out flowers of
divers hues. In the sky the sun by day and the
moon and the stars by night -- nothing. In the hall

²⁵Ibid., pp. 83-88.

²⁶Ibid., p. 82.

the sound of dancing, the eyes of women, grey and blue and brown and black, do sparkle and dim and sparkle again. Their white breasts rise and fall, and rise again. Slender legs, from red and black, and white and green, come out, go in again -- nothing. Strain as you may, it stretches from the throne of God to the end of the hearth of hell.²⁷

Harry's increasing kinship with Teddy is further clarified in the litany between them as the mad party, the danse macabre, goes on about them.

Harry: I can see, but I cannot dance.

Teddy: I can dance, but I cannot see.

Harry: Would that I had the strength to do the things I see.

Teddy: Would that I could see the things I've strength to do.

Harry: The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away.

...

Harry: The rising sap in trees I'll never feel.

Teddy: The hues of branch or leaf I'll never see.

Harry: There's something wrong with life when men can walk.

Teddy: There's something wrong with life when men can see.

Harry: I never felt the hand that made me helpless.

Teddy: I never saw the hand that made me blind.

Harry: Life came and took away the half of life.

Teddy: Life took from me the half he left with you.

Harry: The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away.

Teddy: Blessed be the name of the Lord.²⁸

The litany itself is concluded after Harry observes Barney and Jessie seeking the comforts of the couch, and after he mangles and bruises the silver tassie he had won the year before.

²⁷Ibid., p. 89.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 94-95.

Teddy: Come, Harry, home to where the air is soft. No longer can you stand upon a hill-top; these empty eyes of mine can never see from one. Our best is all behind us -- what's in front we'll face like men, dear comrade of the blood-fight and the battlefield!

Harry: What's in front we'll face like men! The Lord hath given and man hath taken away!

Teddy: Blessed be the name of the Lord!²⁹

Mrs. Foran is spokesman for the dancers as she urges Harry to play, "for there's nothing I love more than the ukelele's tinkle, tinkle in the night time."³⁰ The real and symbolic presence of Teddy and Harry are constant reminders of the destructive madness of war and of society's continuing responsibility to its heroes. The relatively brief time between Act I and Act IV emphasizes the uncertainty and the lack of stability within any established society, just as it points up the short-lived memories of hero worshippers. The victory spectacle reaches a premature climax as the colored balloons are released; nostalgia and the bitterness implicit in the ubi sunt comments of Mrs. Foran and the other guests bring the cycle of the play and of the ritual full circle. O'Casey's optimism is present despite the mangling and the destruction of the war. As he and his characters testify, life does survive "in the race after the destruction of its finest youth, but it survives in more vulgar, cruel, debased forms than before."³¹

The Silver Tassie is a pacifistic drama in which Sean O'Casey declares war on war. The play "assailed the spectator with a long, silent

²⁹Ibid., p. 102.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 94, 102.

³¹Winifred Smith, "The Dying God in the Modern Theatre," Review of Religion, V, 3 (March, 1941), 275.

scream of protest;... it protested against man's inhumanity to man;... it protested against the remediable idiocy of war."³² This same scream against exactly the same kind of destruction exists in O'Casey's earlier plays, and the expressionistic techniques are neither earth shaking nor entirely without precedent. Kathleen Listens In, for example, makes effective artistic use of the litany, the echo, and the disjointed conversation. Setting is also important to the mood of the action and helps to define character in the preceding plays. O'Casey's intent in making use of his surrealistic setting in Act II and the artificial gaiety of Act IV was to reveal what he conceived to be truth. He accomplishes this by distorting what others conceive to be reality. The distortion functions, not to obscure or to make ridiculous, but to reveal what exists behind the facade. It is this distorting process, this bending and examination of old materials under a new light, that many critics hail as expressionism. For the Sean O'Casey of 1928, a facsimile of life was no longer sufficient. He, like O'Neill, desired to bring "the inward outward through symbolic distortion."³³

O'Casey's satiric mirror reflects the false values and false security and false religion in Act I that beget the black grotesque horrors

³²G. W. Brandt, "Realism and Parables: From Brecht to Arden," Stratford Upon Avon Studies 4, Contemporary Theatre, ed. by John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, (London: Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1962), p. 37.

³³O'Casey does in The Silver Tassie what he recognizes as O'Neill's accomplishment in The Hairy Ape, a play recommended to O'Casey by Jim Larkin: "....This was a play that gave more than a facsimile of life; it brought the inward outward through symbolic distortion...." Personal letter quoted by Ronald G. Rollins, "O'Casey, O'Neill and Expressionism," Bucknell Review, X, 4 (May, 1962), 365.

of the battlefield in Act II. Just as the athletes and their trophies are displayed for pleasure and aggrandizement of those present in Act I, so are the wounded and dying displayed for the pleasure and aggrandizement of the Staff Walla and the Visitor in Act II. O'Casey's satiric bitterness reaches greater intensity in the panorama of the antiseptic "while there's life, there's hope"³⁴ hospital ward, and ultimately reaches its peak in the final act wherein the mutilated and the dead must cede their world to the whole and the living. As the metamorphosed Susie notes,

No longer can they do the things we do. We can't
give sight to the blind or make the lame walk. We
would if we could. It is the misfortune of war.
As long as wars are waged, we shall be vexed by woe;
strong legs shall be made useless and bright eyes
made dark. But we, who have come through the fire
unharmd, must go on living.³⁵

Within the Gates

Within the Gates was published in 1933, four years following the production of its predecessor, The Silver Tassie. Both plays underwent some box-office difficulties when they were produced and both were published prior to their trials on stage. O'Casey's declaration of independence, his official ultimatum to the powers that be in the theatre and his denunciation of the picture-box stage was not published until 1937. Its title, "The Green Goddess of Realism," is not subtle in its suggestion that O'Casey was on the rampage again. The essay, as fine and as definite as it is, was anticipated by the techniques and the intents of both The Silver Tassie and Within the Gates, both of which can be defined as expressionistic rather

³⁴Collected Plays, II, p. 65, p. 68.

³⁵Ibid., p. 103.

than realistic, both of which are illuminated distortions of life rather than calculated slices of life, and both of which present allegorical rather than concrete pictures of that which is.

O'Casey, by 1928 and certainly by 1933, had become more concerned with the eternal significance than with the momentary effect of a situation, more involved in creating the essence of experience than in portraying a reproduced description of experience. He, like his expressionistic forebears in Germany and France and the United States, was searching for the inner meanings of a given experience for humanity as a whole. He believed, as they did, that

Everything else is facade, showing a bourgeoisie attitude that is to be destroyed with its superficial judgements of right or wrong. Once the bourgeoisie mask is torn away the link with eternity given to every human being will be revealed.³⁶

O'Casey, the rebel, is foremost even within his new medium; he did not appreciate those who allied him too closely with the Expressionistic movement any more than Shaw appreciated those who compared him (usually unfavorably) to Shakespeare. O'Casey protested as late as 1959 in an interview with Rod Nordell that he did not know the difference between impressionism and expressionism and that when he wrote The Silver Tassie, he thought he was writing some kind of ritual.³⁷ Again, on March 24, 1960, in a letter to Ronald G. Rollins, he denied that he "consciously adopted expressionism,

³⁶As quoted by Robert Hogan, Experiments of Sean O'Casey (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), pp. 56-57.

³⁷Rod Nordell, "Cock-a-Doodle-Casey," 20-21.

which I don't understand and never did."³⁸ Whether O'Casey adopted the techniques consciously or unconsciously, they do exist in his plays and he does acknowledge his debt to O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra in his prefatory comment to Within the Gates.

Furthermore, the devices and techniques of both expressionism and stream of consciousness are effectively used by O'Casey in "I Wanna Woman," "The Star Jazzer," and "The Job," three of the four short stories appearing in Windfalls, 1934.³⁹ The first of these treats precisely the same feelings of fear and guilt that torture the Young Woman in Within the Gates. These fears and guilts are stirred periodically by Jack Avreen's remembering Lochner's painting of the crucifixion which he has removed from above his couch so that the painting will not interfere with his methodical seduction of an Irish Catholic girl who is supposed to visit him; they are further amplified by sign-carrying evangelists and by hymn singers in Picadilly circus where he goes to work off his frustration on a high class whore. Though the point of view in this story is essentially omniscient, the imagery and sound patterns are stream of consciousness. The figures are not individuals but type characters, for the most part nameless, and they function as morality figures in the mob scene at Picadilly Circus much as the morality figures in Within the Gates work their respective ways through the microcosm of Hyde Park.

O'Casey's irony and satiric bent are also operative in "The Star Jazzer," which utilizes essentially the same techniques to portray the

³⁸Ronald G. Rollins, "O'Casey, O'Neill and Expressionism in Within the Gates," West Virginia University Philological Papers, XIII, 77.

³⁹Sean O'Casey, The Green Crow, pp. 253-303.

mechanical nightmare world of the Dublin slums. The journey is not through the circus nor through Hyde Park, but is up and down, up and down ten flights of stairs in the rhythmic ritual of washdays. The woman's temporary escape from her slum world into song and dance is, so far as she is concerned, temporary madness, and she is frightened by it. Except for the temporary respite afforded by her midnight madness of song and dance, she is one of the Down-and-Outs and will never again escape from the prison of her bed and her wash-tub. These stories demonstrate O'Casey's facility with the new techniques as well as his ability to write effective short stories.

Utilizing the expressionistic techniques along with those of the morality play, O'Casey's Within the Gates is set in Hyde Park, through whose gates pass the whole procession of human life. The play itself, just as does Everyman, presents man's symbolic quest from birth to death or from spring to winter. Most of the characters evidence a continuing decay and are crippled in one way or another; both they and the setting itself reveal the inevitable toll of time. One who reads the Down-and-Outs, the Attendants, the Evangelists, and the Arguers as the sole representatives of mankind must misread the play as O'Casey's call for submission to inevitable and restful death. Such a reading does not account for the Bishop, the Dreamer, and the Young Whore, whose combined experience and growth reveal the basic theme of Within the Gates to be a "cry for a vigorous and effective live,"⁴⁰ the same theme so basic to virtually all of O'Casey's plays written after 1938, from Purple Dust, through Cock-a-Doodle-Andy, through The Moon Shines on Kilenamoe.

⁴⁰Sean O'Casey, "The Cutting of an Agate," The Flying Wasp, (London: Macmillan, 1937), p. 48.

The characters in Within the Gates are not individuals, but morality play figures as their names and their actions indicate. Each is a symbolic representation or a symbolic distortion; for example, the Bishop is

good-natured, well-intentioned, religious, and sincere; but he is timid, mistaking good-nature for the fire of the Holy Ghost, and life has passed him by. And he is not a character, but simply a symbol.⁴¹

O'Casey uses him as a symbol of a man who has not a false but a partial view of life. As he expands that partial view to become a whole view, distorting it as he does so with his own hypocrisy, guilt, and fear of public opinion, he reveals himself to be an unfit guide for human beings whose destiny it should be to sing and laugh and dance. He and all of the other characters, including the Dreamer, have partial views. Their answers and their dogmas are incomplete. Jannice has no answer, but as a seeker she is less fragmentary than those who refuse either to think or to relate their philosophies to their immediate lives.

The Evangelists enter, as the stage direction tells us, prowling forward "looking left and right for sinners." One carries a banner with the red letters ONCE TO DIE, the other a banner with black letters THEN THE JUDGEMENT. One

has a lemon-shaped head, staring, stupid-looking eyes, shrunken cheeks, surly lines round a wide mouth, and ears that stick out from the sides of his head.

The other

has a big head, coarse face, heavy, hanging lips, and a small snubby nose. As he chants, he continually blinks his eyes. Both are shabbily dressed,

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 48-49.

and look, for all the world, like sullen, long-forgotten clowns.⁴²

These descriptions, even without the warning litany of the two, make their spiritual value to O'Casey's people quite obvious. They, like the other spiritual advisors and like their closest kinsmen, the two attendants, are among the Down-and-Outs. They are fragmented personalities who lack a total view of life and have a tremendously restricted view of man's role and his destiny. Their placards and their movements symbolize their crippled condition just as the exaggerated limps of the attendants symbolize theirs.

The Atheist who becomes the stepfather of Jannice, the Young Woman, attempts to teach her his own fragmented view of life which leaves neither time nor room for song. The Dreamer informs him that he has led his daughter "from one darkness into another. . . . man can study or worship God in dance and song and story."⁴³ The loyal follower of the Atheist, the Man with the Stick, parrots his master and both are engaged in a continuing stalemated argument with god-fearing public opinion as it is represented by the man wearing a Bowler Hat, the man wearing a Trilby Hat, the man wearing a Straw Hat, and -- to be sure -- such public officials as the Policewoman, the Nursemaids, the Guardsmen, and the Gardener. The continuing argument is static and much of the humor of Within the Gates results from its misunderstandings, its misquotations, malapropisms, and its just off-center focus. The arguers are not involved in any action; they just talk. The protagonist, the Everywoman of this play, moves around and through the foggy haze of their rhetoric in her active quest for a meaningful life.

⁴²Collected Plays, II, p. 129.

⁴³Ibid., p. 124.

The play begins on a note of joy and quickness quite similar to that in Chaucer's Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. It is spring time, the birds sing, the Earth is a maiden again, and the warming sun is her quickening groom. The song "Our Mother the Earth is a Maiden Again" is a song of joy and its theme is basic to all of the play that follows. The young boys and girls who sing the song represent trees and flowers and are, as their later frolic around the May-Pole suggests, allied with the life force so foreign to the Down-and-Outs.

The second scene opens with a call to the money makers, the businessmen, the politicians, and the churchgoers who are "haggard and giddy with care, busy counting your profit and losses," to bellow their goodbyes to "the buggerin' lot n' come out to bow down the head 'n bend down the knee to the bee, the bird, 'n the blossom. . . ."⁴⁴ The call, of course, is unheeded by the hat-wearing, newspaper-reading representatives of public opinion. The scene, set during Summer Noon, presents a jaded rather than an appreciative interest in life and in the life force of Nature herself. This jaded and somehow nastily lascivious interest is always seen in relation to the Young Woman. Her religious instructors can't keep eyes or hands off her knees. The Park Attendants in their bitterness drool at the prospect of having such a woman. Jannice seeks peace everlasting with the fragmented, knee-patting Salvation Army Officer, who tells her to beware of the Bishop and his kind of help: "Never heed him, Sister. He would hide God's countenance with a cloud of ritual. Come with me: the yoke is easy; the burden light."⁴⁵ The Bishop, despite the guilt and shame of it all, looks

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 149.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 174.

consciously and appreciatively at Jannice's legs. When she approaches him for help, he gives her only cliches about motherhood, work, and thrift. When he pats her knee and has his hand forcibly removed, he takes refuge in his book, and refuses to aid her because, as he announced initially, "Oh, my child, I'm afraid I can help only those whom I know."⁴⁶

Jannice, whose growing theology is more fitted to the immediate needs and experiences of life, and whose expanding view is more complete than the Bishop's, tells him that a priest of the most high God is neither a man nor a stranger, that she's heard the same old rot about mother, work, and thrift a thousand times before, that he hides behind his book when facts frighten him, that he's afraid to find a lie in what he thinks to be true or a truth in what he thinks to be a lie. She says to him of his disassociation from life, his sheltered condition, and his facade of Christianity:

You and your goodness are of no use to God! If Christ came again, He'd have to call, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance.

...

A tired Christ would be afraid to lean on your arm. Your Christ wears a bowler hat, carries a cane, twiddles his lavender gloves, an' sends out gilt-edged cards of thanks to callers. Out with you, you old shivering sham, . . .⁴⁷

The Dreamer offers the Young Woman a song for her pleasures.

". . . Come, sweet lass, and let's transmute vague years of life into a glowing hour of love."⁴⁸ As Jannice exits with the Salvation Army Officer

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 159.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 160-164.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 170.

"to hear more of the peace that seems far away," she says to the Bishop, "Good-bye, old man, who, saving yourself, had no time to save others," and tells the Dreamer, "I have not quite forgotten your sweet song, young singer!" The Dreamer offers Jannice his song for her merry kindness and tells her, "I am thinking, not of your needs, but of my own," promising nothing but transient pleasure, whereas the Salvation Army Officer is "a real friend who offers peace as a child might offer a friend a new-blown daisy."⁴⁹

O'Casey's satiric jabs at the limited views of those who talk most is effective here. Neither the Bishop nor the Salvation Army Officer nor the Dreamer has the answer for Jannice. She learns from each. Unlike the Bishop, she must be involved in life; unlike the Salvation Army man, she must question and earn the peace she seeks rather than accepting it at face value as a gift. Unlike the Dreamer, she must find a purpose other than song and dance. These must be integral to but not the total essence of her life. Her continuing quest has as its background the continuing stalemate between public opinion's representatives and the atheistic spokesmen. The increasing fervor of the Old Woman's attacks, the conflict between any two theologies represented, and the perpetual suffering and bitching of the Down-and-Outs complete the background of the world which this play's Everywoman must make her way through.

The muffled drum, with its superstitious associations with England in danger, and the song of the Down-and-Outs have become thematic by Scene II. The danger to England is obvious within Hyde Park in the depression

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 173-175.

and in the hopeless attitudes of the Down-and-Outs, in the dogmatism of the Atheist, in the equally dogmatic views of public opinion, and in the continuing fruitless quest for answers among those divergent groups who have all the answers. Historically, the time of the play corresponds with the time of the Great Depression, but O'Casey's theme deals with a different and perhaps a more serious depression, that of the human spirit. The Dreamer is quite specific in stating that the song of the Down-and-Outs is not for

. . . the unemployed. They remain men in their misfortune. I keep those who whine through to-day and dread to-morrow; who would for ever furl the flag of life; who fear any idea common thought hasn't had time to bless; those who have a sigh for a song and a sad sigh for a drumbeat.⁵⁰

He prays: "Kill off the withered mind, the violently stupid, O Lord, who having nothing to give, have nothing to get!" He answers the old attendant who tells him that "death's only the gyte to a fuller en' a nobler life" by a direct order: "Take that dead hand off me! ... Be off, and die, and keep a holy distance from the quick and the lively."⁵¹

His definition of the Down-and-Outs and his prayer function as continuing calls for a more meaningful life. The Dreamer is a more mature version of O'Casey's poet figure who first appears as the adolescent Donal Davoren in The Shadow of a Gunman. The Dreamer's vision of life is less ethereal and less removed from life itself than Davoren's, but is not yet whole. He serves as a kind of touchstone for the Young Woman who, through continuing and varied experiences of life, recognizes the limitations of even the Dreamer's vision. Her rebel spirit, central to any hero created

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 133-134.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 130-131.

by Sean O'Casey, erupts in her refrain, "If I go, I'll go game, and die dancing!" As the play progresses, Jannice becomes more and more aware of the many facets of life and less and less convinced that any single creed or spokesman has all the answers. The process of becoming aware is, in a sense, the process of becoming alive.

Scene III is set on an autumn evening and Jannice methodically rejects one pressure group after another. In one of O'Casey's more decisive episodes, Jannice tells the debaters, representatives of public opinion, who argue about evolution versus Genesis, still without any real communication, "Why, the wisdom each of you has, taken together, would fit on a spoon."⁵² The four hat-wearing men, immaculate in their dress, retreat into their newspapers just as the Bishop earlier had retreated into his book. They are the God which he serves, as described by Jannice in that earlier scene, and the newspapers, with their banners of Murder, Rape, Suicide, Divorce, are the totems of this God. The offstage band accompanies them as they sing "London Bridge is Falling Down," a rather unsubtle statement of a basic theme of the play. Jannice scornfully and mockingly delivers her prayer to Lucifer, "who has caused all newspapers to be written for our learning," as she watches the spouters of public opinion pore over their daily gospel, and concludes her prayer, "Why the hell don't you all say Amen!"

After telling the Bishop, God's grenadier, to go away, Jannice returns her attention to the newspaper readers who "look like a silent gang of monkeys searching for fleas,"⁵³ identifies them as "deaf and dumb perishers"

⁵²Ibid., p. 181.

⁵³Ibid., p. 185.

and tempts them as she dances in and out among them. She identifies them as a "bunch of high-minded toads" who turn the "dear joy of a sin . . . to a sting and bruising."⁵⁴ As she collapses, they return to reading the gospel of the day. Jannice tells the Bishop that both he and the Salvation Army Officer have the "same gloomy glimpse of life. Miserere, miserere, all the way to heaven!" She sings her carpe diem song to the tune of "Little Brown Jug" in her continuing frenetic quest for an answer. The Salvation Army Officer, O'Casey's device to emphasize the wide divergence within the Christian religion, offers her help when the rejected Bishop leaves. "The ritualist has left you in your need, but the evangelist is here to comfort and help you -- if you will." His plea is followed by the hymn sung by his followers and the emotional appeal of the moment sways Jannice until the Dreamer calls her "to the deep kiss and clutch of love; to sing our song with the song that is sung by a thousand stars of the evening!"⁵⁵ The Salvation Army men continue to sing about the sad "fate of the lamb who strays" as the curtain falls.

O'Casey's parody of the evangelical altar call is a biting one, but despite its invective spirit, the Salvation Army representative is no more a villain than is the Bishop. O'Casey's target is organized religion, not the Christian faith; his specific targets are those within various sects who pretend to be able guides for humanity. The Bishop learns, as this morality play progresses, that his sister is wrong when she tells him, "A bishop should be in the midst of the incense, in the sanctuary, away from the sour

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 186.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 189-202.

touch of common humanity."⁵⁶ He learns from Jannice that a priest of God must be neither a man nor a stranger and that he must be involved in life itself rather than separated and merely pretending to be involved. The Bishop, like Jannice, is in the process of beginning life; he is not, like the Down-and-Outs, in a static cocoon awaiting his inevitable demise.

Scene I ends with Jannice in the arms of the law, arrested for prostitution when she asked the gardener to marry her; Scene II ends with her going forth with the Salvation Army Officer "to hear more of the peace that seems so far away," after having her plea for help rejected by the Bishop; Scene III ends with her in the embrace of the Dreamer after having rejected public opinion, the Bishop, and the Salvation Army. At the end of Scene IV, Jannice fulfills her vow to die dancing and dies as her hand is guided by the Bishop in making the sign of the cross. The sequence is not happenstance, but indicates the Young Woman's frustrated progress in her pursuit of a vigorous and meaningful life.

The continuing frustrations of her quest in the wasteland world of no communication, of newspaper gospel, and of apathetic acceptance of inevitable and somehow rewarding death, lend credibility to her choice of the Dreamer's offer of immediate pleasure, song, and dance. The fact that she hesitates when the evangelical call is re-issued indicates that she is aware that even this is not the final and complete answer, that no single pat answer can be wholly right. Up to this point in the play, however, the Dreamer's creed is more nearly correct and is less limited than the other creeds.

By Scene IV, the cycle of seasons and of Everywoman's life has progressed to the fourth stage, Winter, a time of cold and blackness. Just as

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 133.

the singing of "London Bridge is Falling Down" functioned symbolically in the third scene and the various responses identified the speakers with their views of life, so do the mournful sound of "The Last Post" and the comments of the spokesmen for public opinion identify their continuing roles in this final scene. The satiric conflicts up to this point have pitted Atheism against Christianity, evangelism against ritualism, legal dictates against instinct and passion, and the Dreamer's carpe diem philosophy against all organized and dictated ones. In this final scene, a new conflict, one very much alive as are the others, pits the militant Guardsman against civilians in the continuing argument of "styted hypotheruse," ridiculous analogy, confusing the issues, and pat answers. O'Casey's satire of these is superficial, to be sure, but the fact that they are represented in the cross section assembled in Hyde Park is indicative of their roles in the life of men represented in that microcosm.

Jannice continues her quest and ultimately fulfills her vow to die dancing. It is difficult to say how much of this final scene is dictated by O'Casey's sardonic humor, but his presentation of the Bishop as a growing, searching man who is in the process of learning about life suggests that Jannice's marriage of religion and dreams does not represent a defeat for her. Rather, it is a victory. The Down-and-Outs recognize their condition as their song indicates but do nothing about it: "We challenge life no more, no more, with our dead faith and our dead hope."⁵⁷ The Dreamer continues to hurl his challenge and his prayer,

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 230.

Way for the strong and the swift and the fearless:
 Life that is stirr'd with the fear of its life, let it die;
 Let it sink down, let it die, and pass from our vision forever.⁵⁸

The Bishop tells his archetypal sister, "Go home, go home, for Christ's sake, woman, and ask God's mercy on us all!" He is moved by Jannice's death and somewhat awed that she died making the sign of the cross. The play ends, not with engulfing blackness, but with the sky changing "to a bright gray, pierced with golden segments, as if the sun was rising, and a new day about to begin."⁵⁹

This morality play does not offer a pessimistic picture of man engulfed in and destroyed by the poverty of a great economic depression. This is background, part of the scenery, but the real struggle is Everyman's struggle against despair, haplessness, and apathy, against the kind of incurable decay portrayed so vividly in the Down-and-Outs. This morality play, like most others, involves no great intricacies of plot. The action is not cloaked in any air of mystery; there is no suspense, and about the third time Jannice voices her defiance and her vow to die dancing, no one should be in doubt as to the eventual outcome. The plot itself is a mechanical one, one that is not foreign to any viewer of melodrama. If the plot per se concerns only the unravelling of the not too deep mystery of Jannice's father, it is, as Robert Hogan suggests, too predictable. Viewed, however, as a morality play, which it is, Within the Gates can hardly be condemned for having too few human beings, too little character development, or too little mystery, any more than Everyman or Mankind can be condemned for the same reason.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 230.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 231.

⁶⁰Robert Hogan, The Experiments of Sean O'Casey, pp. 71-76.

The basic action is the search of Everywoman for salvation; the oft-repeated theme is her continuing "cry for a vigorous and effective life." Her continuing frustrations, as already noted, reflect the virtual impossibility of a contrived answer, whatever authority the answerer claims to have. O'Casey calls not for an escape from life, but for an involvement in life. The answers, whether they come from self-ordained philosophers or from organized religion, should not "lead people into metaphysical puzzles that delude them from the sordidness of the world which needs to be dealt with."⁶¹ Jannice's symbolic and satiric struggle is for meaningful existence in a sordid world, on other than that world's terms, on other than a single mechanized catch-all answer.

O'Casey's obvious sympathies lie with the Dreamer, his poet figure, but it is patently obvious that even the Dreamer does not really come to grips with the problems of life; he evades or ignores them. He recognizes the need in every life for song and dance and rightfully hurls his imprecations at the Down-and-Outs, the Bishop, and the Arguers. His view is less limited than the Atheist's or the Bishop's Sister's, but the Young Woman sees its inadequacy along with its spontaneous and immediate beauties. The Dreamer is, as O'Casey says, the

symbol of noble restlessness and discontent; of the stir in life that brings to birth new things and greater things than those that were before; of the power realizing that the urge of life is above the level of conventional morality; of ruthlessness to get near to the things that matter, and sanctify them with intelligence, energy, gracefulness and song; of rebellion against stupidity; and of the rising intelligence of man that will no longer stand, nor venerate, nor shelter those whom poverty of spirit has emptied of all that is worthwhile in life.⁶²

⁶¹Rod Nordell, "Cock-A-Doodle-Casey," 21.

⁶²Sean O'Casey, as quoted by Hogan, p. 73.

He, like the other characters, is a morality play figure. His vision, while inspired, is incomplete. Were his view not a partial one, Jannice would have completed her quest at the end of Act III when she answered his honest proposal "to transmute vague years of life into a glowing hour of love." The play does not end there, for the quest is not complete there. The Dreamer, like the law and organized religions, offers only a partial answer.

Within the Gates presents an optimistic view of life during the depression of the 1930's, a view not in sympathy with the various contemporary messages of misery, hopelessness, and futility, sombre messages "hailed as profound meditations, incontrovertible, showing life buttoned up into everlasting woe."⁶³ The play, whatever its intent, was banned in Boston by the Wesleyans and the Jesuits for its "sympathetic portrayal of immorality" and its portrayal "of the utter futility of religion as an effective force in meeting the problems of the world."⁶⁴ O'Casey describes the play as "a cry for courage, decency, and vitality in life," and attacks the outrageous weaknesses and misconceptions of the Catholic and Wesleyan churches, essentially the same weaknesses and misconceptions already satirized in Within the Gates.⁶⁵ This satiric morality play, with its sustained use of the expressionistic

⁶³Sean O'Casey, "Out Damned Spot," Under a Colored Cap, p. 260.

⁶⁴Rose and Crown, pp. 270-271.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 269-277. The whole incident from the play's opening in London to O'Casey's specific denunciations of his critics is included here. He reduces the objections to absurdity, understands why Shaw has "never yet met an intelligent Jesuit," praises the Harvard, Radcliffe, Wellesley, and Tufts students who protested the banning, and is more convinced than ever that Within the Gates is effective satire, that "what splashed from the play over the Jesuits wasn't filth in any form, but hyssop, purifying hyssop, though the clerics didn't like the sting of its cleansing criticism."

techniques and its attempt to return song and dance to the stage, is an important document in the history of the modern theatre. With its attack on mechanized, ready-made creeds and its insistence upon active participation in life, it is, likewise, an indispensable touchstone in any serious study of the attempts and attainments of Sean O'Casey.

As satirist, O'Casey has a specific goal in mind. The goal in this play is to rip away the ostentatious facade, however impressive it may be, and to reveal the concealed truth. He reveals the truth about a Bishop who hides from life, the truth about soothsayers who do nothing but prattle, the truth about the public whose opinion is God and whose totem is the newspaper. He also reveals the truth about evangelical religion the very existence of which is predicated on the inadequacy of the Bishop's faith. Each of these believes his partial view to be whole and correct; all talk at cross purposes; not one has the total answer, as the Down-and-Outs exemplify. Their very condition of being Down-and-Outs is due to their own dependence on hand-me-down answers. The babbling world of Hyde Park is a world of much noise, but little sense. No one is interested in any except his own version of truth.

The solution which Jannice seeks must somehow combine the few elements of sense that she learns from various groups. She is teacher as well as student. She recognizes that the Dreamer's withdrawal from life detracts from the truth and beauty of his way of life. In O'Casey's world view, he is little better than Davoren, for a true poet does not separate himself from life. Through the continuing efforts of Jannice, the Bishop ventures out of his cloister, actively pursues and ultimately lends symbolic aid to Jannice as she combines her Dreamer's and her Father's modes of being. O'Casey's meaning is hardly obscure here: he says with the old poet quoted by Yeats, "In dreams

begin man's responsibility." Life itself must be an active quest and an active involvement. Where it is less, man is less than whole.

The End of the Beginning

This delightfully funny farce is O'Casey's version of an old folk tale claimed by virtually every European nation. O'Casey's additions and alterations are indicative of his wit and his ability to distort even a folk tale about a fool to reveal new and perhaps more meaningful patterns of behavior.

The folk tale, as recorded by George Webbe Dasent,⁶⁶ involves one surly petulant husband and his sweet affectionate wife who offers to harvest the hay, so that her husband can keep the house to suit himself. The husband's only chores are to churn butter, to feed and milk the cow, and to cook dinner. He manages during the complexities of house-keeping to let a pig turn the churn over, to kill the pig accidentally, and to run a keg of ale onto the floor, neither to feed nor milk the cow nor to prepare dinner, to leave the baby unattended, and to be stuck in the chimney while the cow on the other end of the rope is suspended midway between roof and ground. His hungry wife returns from the field, cuts the rope with her scythe to release the cow, and discovers her husband head down in a porridge pot.

O'Casey's fool, Darry Berrill, is obese, obstinate, bald, and totally inept at any physical task. Any one of these traits would render him a stage fool; taken all together, they render him a laughing stock from the moment the curtain rises until the play is over. His buddy, Barry

⁶⁶George Webbe Dasent, "The Husband Who Was to Mind the House," Folk Tales and Fables, I, selected and arranged by Eva March Tappan (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), pp. 280-282. This tale, usually Dasent's version, is included in dozens of anthologies.

Derrill, is his **exact** opposite: slender, easy-going, heavily mustached, and quite well-coordinated. His near blindness and his relationship with Darry identify him as the other half of the inseparable comic-duo.

Lizzie, Barry's wife, is as efficient as, but less devoted to her husband than her folk-tale equivalent. She is jealous of **and** likes to gossip about Alice Lanigan

that's on the margin of fifty, n' assembles herself together as if she was a girl in her teens, jutting out her bust when she's coming in, 'n jutting out her behind when she's going out, like the Lady of Shalott, to catch the men.

...

...she has a kid who has never had a pat on the head from a father.⁶⁷

These additions, plus the various machines and paraphernalia of modern living (mower, town hall clock, alarm clock, razor blades, and the mysteries of electricity), render the folk tale virtually unrecognizable and leave in its stead a moral-making farce.

Barry is a comic Cassandra who persistently warns of impending doom, is ignored, and then is instrumental in, if not directly responsible for, each succeeding disaster. His recurrent warnings and his refrain, "You're not going to expedite matters by rushing around in a hurry," the efficient whirring of the mowing machine in the background, and the methodical tolling of the town hall clock impose a kind of order on the several incidents that occur. Other well-made-play devices used by O'Casey include the frame afforded by Lizzie's prayer, "God grant that it won't be the end, an' that when I come back, I'll at least find the four walls standing,"⁶⁸

⁶⁷Collected Plays, I, p. 268.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 269.

and her return to the chaos within the four standing walls. Further, Darry remains obstinate and inept and refuses to accept responsibility for his own failings -- whether he does not mow the hay, does not keep time to the music, does break the clock, or does effectively demolish everything within the four walls of the house. He greets his wife, who has mowed the hay and freed the dangling heifer, with the final ironic lines of the play,

Now you see the result of havin' your own way! Why the hell didn't you hold on to the rope when you took it off the heifer, so that I wouldn't come down with a bump?

...

- my God, woman, can you do nothin' right!⁶⁹

The satire in The End of the Beginning is superficial and only incidental to the slapstick humor as the two buddies merge their talents and methodically wreck the house. O'Casey's attitude toward the reducing fad and the misuse of the gramophone are secondary to the spectacle of the huffing Darry doing his physical jerks and to the memory of his wife's viewing his naked body practicing the physical jerks before the mirror. That both men suffer wounds and are reduced to total helplessness by routine housekeeping tasks re-affirms O'Casey's admiration for efficient Irish women and his contempt for those inept individuals who insist on giving advice to others.

This play and A Pound on Demand were written just prior to their publication in Windfalls, 1934. The End of the Beginning was produced in the Abbey Theatre in February, 1937, but A Pound on Demand was not produced until January, 1947, in the American Repertory Theatre. Despite the dates

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 291.

of composition and production, however, both legitimately belong to O'Casey's Irish Period rather than to his Transitional period; an opinion based on the dramatic techniques and the satiric intent of the two short plays.

A Pound on Demand

A Pound on Demand is a sketch involving the maudlin drunkenness of Sammy Adams who has money on deposit through the Government Post Office and the parasitic Jerry who wants desperately for Sammy to withdraw a pound. The sketch is crammed with incident, and the juxtaposition of drunkenness and civil authority constitutes the central conflict of the sketch. For O'Casey, the treatments of the efficient postmistress and her policeman beau are remarkably kind. The postmistress quite correctly refuses to honor the request for a pound on demand and the policeman officiously but understandingly sends the two drunks toward home despite Sammuel's early proclamation,

... Poleeish to the right of me, 'n to the left of me,
'n nothing left of them in the end but silver buttons
for souvenirs! ... We often plastered the roads with
policemen, 'n left them thryin' out how they were
going to get themselves together again!⁷⁰

The stoutish woman represents outraged public opinion, and like her counterparts in The Plough and the Stars and The Silver Tassie, is as much the target of O'Casey's satiric jabs as the two buddies are. She and they make ridiculous demands on the postmistress, are offended, and make hollow threats. Civil authority, despite the threats, presents a united front in the persons of the postmistress and the policeman. The demands are not honored, the incident concludes, and presumably the policeman and his girl

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 308.

resume their flirtation as the curtain concludes the sketch. The realistic technique, as used in this drunk scene, is similar to that used by O'Casey during his earliest years of writing. The devices of farce and the well-made-play once again testify to O'Casey's debt to Boucicault and his apprenticeship in the Old Merchants' Theatre. While Guy Boas describes these two plays, along with Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars, as a complete self-contained unit of O'Casey's work, a literature of their own which presents "an urban and more robust version of the peasant world of Synge,"⁷¹ they bear essentially the same relationship to the Irish period, actually, that Kathleen Listens In and Nannie's Night Out bear to the expressionistic or the transitional period. A Pound on Demand and The End of the Beginning recall the essentially realistic techniques, the stage Irishman, and the isolated incidental humor of the Irish period in much the same way that Kathleen Listens In and Nannie's Night Out anticipate the expressionistic technique, thematic use of music, and distortion for the sake of clarity to be found in the major plays written after The Silver Tassie.

Purple Dust

Written by his own account in 1937-38,⁷² O'Casey's Purple Dust displays the same artistic combination of expressionism and realism, the same blending of morality play and farce so evident in other plays of the transitional period. Purple Dust has been damned by two decades of critical

⁷¹Guy Boas, "The Drama of Sean O'Casey," College English, X, 2 (November, 1948), 80.

⁷²"Purple Dust in Their Eyes," Under a Colored Cap, p. 261.

theatrical opinion uttered in Ireland and England, but praised over the same period by O'Casey's enthusiastic American readers and viewers.

These extremes of critical opinion were somewhat anticipated by the "pre-rumble" of circumstances surrounding the play's initial production.⁷³ After O'Casey had already commissioned George Jean Nathan to bring about production of Purple Dust in New York, he received an unsigned letter from a London Theatre Club requesting an option on the play. O'Casey, of course, refused. A second signed letter "came along to say that the play had been in rehearsal for some time, and would O'Casey kindly give formal permission to the production by the Theatre." Following his second negative response, a third letter informed O'Casey that "James Agate had been invited to see the play and give his views on it in the coming issue of the Sunday Times." Agate, of course, "denounced the play as a worthless one; more, that it was an attack on England when England was helpless and unable to reply!"⁷³ O'Casey's consequent rage did have some justification, and this justification was compounded considerably by his earlier much publicized feud with Agate over the merits of Within the Gates and the demerits of a critic who found Within the Gates beyond his understanding. O'Casey's "The Cutting of an Agate" concludes characteristically, "The truth is that ... the play Within the Gates is beyond him, and -- to whisper the fact to the world rather than confine it between four walls -- I am not a damn bit surprised."⁷⁴ One interesting result of O'Casey's exchange with James Agate was that critic's unqualified praise of a very bad play, The Star Turns Red, a play

⁷³Sean O'Casey, Sunset and Evening Star, (New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 161-162. This whole incident is described in some detail in this final volume of O'Casey's autobiography.

⁷⁴"The Cutting of An Agate," The Flying Wasp, p. 49.

which Agate termed "A Masterpiece," "a magnum opus of compassion."⁷⁵ Agate apparently discovered the wasp's sting to be painful and offered this review in exchange for peace and as a presumed retraction of his earlier statements concerning the "pretentious rubbish" written by Sean O'Casey. Ironically, it is the rationalistic English mind such as Mr. Agate's that is the basic target of O'Casey's satire in both Within the Gates and Purple Dust.

Purple Dust depicts Great Britain as a crumbling old Tudor mansion ill-prepared to withstand the natural elements and doomed to fall before the force of wind and rain despite the efforts of Cyril Poges and Basil Stoke to hold it together with paint and gaudy furniture. These two inept and impotent stage Englishmen owe at least their germination to Shaw's comments in his "Preface for Politicians" and much of their development to Broadbent and Doyle in Shaw's John Bull's Other Island. Among Shaw's other memorable and pertinent phrases in the preface is his confession that "it takes an Irishman years of residence in England to learn to respect and like a block-head. An Englishman will not respect nor like anyone else."⁷⁶

One basic theme of John Bull's Other Island is that Englishmen, like their country, will muddle through somehow and that their most stirring accomplishments are somehow muddled successes. Tom Broadbent is the stage Englishman ancestor of O'Casey's two blockheads -- Stokes and Poges; he, like they, spouts all the traditional cliches concerning Empire and Ireland's

⁷⁵David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work, p. 208. Krause includes a long selection from Agate's enthusiastic review of The Star Turns Red, a review printed in Sunday Times, 17 March, 1940. The passages appear on pages 389-390 of Krause's excellent study of O'Casey and his art.

⁷⁶George Bernard Shaw, "Preface for Politicians," John Bull's Other Island (New York: Brentands, 1907), p. XV.

role therein, utters profundities concerning efficiency and modernism, and possesses the lethargic sense of humor associated with the stage Englishman since Shaw. To complete his play, Shaw leaves the impression that Broadbent will inevitably represent the Irish in Parliament. While not at home among his constituents, he will be very much at home in Parliament. Broadbent, unlike these O'Casey inspired descendents, does maintain, despite his gullibility and foolishness, a kind of dignity. O'Casey's Englishmen, however, are gulls and fools from the moment they enter the stage until the prophetic flood symbolically removes them from the stage.⁷⁷

The decaying mansion in Purple Dust, despite the Oxford background and the financial wizardry of its owners, will crumble and fall into a heap of purple dust. O'Casey views the remnants of England's glory -- "the Yeomen of the Guard and the cuirassed horsemen standing under the archway of the Horse Guards centre, and the bearskin of the Household Regiments" -- as quaint album mementoes, as "part of an open-air museum."⁷⁸ All these will pass despite the efforts of Stoke and Poges to hold them and to glue them back together as they break apart. In O'Casey's unsubtle morality play, he portrays the Old House as the inevitable victim of the ravages of time and change; the disintegration of the manor is only superficially contributed to by the two Englishmen who try to put it back together as it was in the good old days so that they might enjoy it and bask in its reflected glory.

⁷⁷Robert Hogan, The Experiments of Sean O'Casey, pp. 101-102. Hogan notes this as a distinction between Shaw's refusal to set up straw-men and O'Casey's willingness to use a stacked deck. He continues the metaphor of the card game by noting that O'Casey sometimes refuses to let the opposition take even a single trick, as in The Star Turns Red and Red Roses for Me.

⁷⁸"Purple Dust in Their Eyes," Under a Colored Cap, p. 262.

Inevitable change, here as elsewhere in O'Casey's canon, brings with it inevitable progress as life triumphs over death.

The central conflict in this play is between the half-remembered tradition and unknown history of a dead past and the demands for life in the present. For O'Casey, the battle is between death and life, and death is overmatched from the outset, for Death's spokesmen are fools who combine the follies of the antiquarian, the bad taste of the nouveau riche, and the ridiculous posture of those whose total worth is measured in money. The Englishmen's opponents are the realistic Irish workmen led by O'Killigain, and the impotent Englishmen lose their women, their investment, and -- unless they are more fortunate than fleetfooted -- their lives. They are not fit to survive in the better world that's coming, and they, like the other relics of England's open air museum, must make way for progress, and for those who are fitted to live. Those who do live must have eyes to see and ears to hear; they must have voices to sing and feet to dance; further, they must desire to live in a vigorous and meaningful way. They must not lapse into the drowsy shadowland between life and death as did the Irish at Liffey Bridge following the second miracle in Red Roses For Me. By inclination and by definition they are opposed to revering tradition, to "Thricking th' rotten beams into a look o' sturdiness with a coat o' white and black paint, an' they for long a dismal dwellin' even for the ghawin' beetle an' th' borin' worm."⁷⁹ They are opposed to the clergy's trying "to keep a sensible check on the lower inclinations of the people," especially when those lower inclinations are the natural desires to sing, dance, and live. In this play they

⁷⁹Collected Plays, III, p. 4.

are dramatically opposed to Stoke ~~and~~ Poges and the hypocritical reverence for a dead past and repressive religion that these two represent.⁸⁰

Purple Dust exemplifies the inevitable defeat of Poges and Stoke in a series of ludicrous incidents; the end result of each incident is further destruction of the mansion and further illumination of the follies and false pride of the proprietors. Within O'Casey's canon, the nearest parallel to the destruction per se is in The End of the Beginning. There, too, total destruction results from the frenetic activities of the fault-finding fools -- Darry Berrill and Barry Derrill. Their frenzied efforts, like those of Stoke and Poges, are to set a house in order. Neither pair knows what order is, and neither will accept guidance or responsibility. Darry's pride, like that of Poges, anticipates the painfully funny demise of his great plan. Order in the comic world can be established only when the Stokes, the Poges, and their antiquarian dreams cease to exist.

As noted earlier, the Tudor mansion in Purple Dust is a microcosm of the British Empire on the verge of collapse. Though a one-to-one relationship is improbable, Poges bears a striking resemblance to O'Casey's version of Neville Chamberlain, a hopelessly naive, ineffectual, old man who accepted Hitler's word and returned to England singing songs of peace:

Mr. Chamberlain came home waving the talismanic
umbrella. Is it peace, Jehu? It is peace! Herr
Hitler has met an old man in the half-way house, and

⁸⁰ From this play until his last, O'Casey's attack on organized religion becomes increasingly more specific, more outrageous, and perhaps less effective than his earlier subtler attacks. Due to these attacks on Catholicism and errant Protestantism, too many critics have erroneously dismissed O'Casey as atheistic -- an interesting and ironic, but obviously unsubstantiated charge.

has promised to be good; has promised to go over the hills only.... We need have no fear. He will level Moscow. He won't harm us. He as much as told Mr. Chamberlain so.⁸¹

The trusting old man with his faith in reputation and his devotion to Empire is remarkably similar to the essence of Poges as his motives and methods are dissected on stage. The specific incidents in the dissection are those of farce comedy: a huge grass roller gets out of control as the ineffectual Poges attempts to maneuver it as the salesman from simple Ireland told him he could; the roller crashes through a wall; a cow, brought by another Irish salesman, sends the heroes scurrying for protection when they mistake it for a bull; the cow is later shot dead; the workmen methodically destroy the mansion's ceiling, walls, door frames, and the heirlooms of the house; Stoke falls from a spirited horse and his "lassie o' th' house went off with O'Killigain riding naked through the locality!"⁸²

The Irishmen are capable of direct action; they combine the marvelous romanticism and the effective realism of O'Dempsey and O'Killigain with the sardonic humor and irreverent attitude toward modernism of the yellow bearded electrician and the postmaster. O'Casey's Irishmen here are not of the Dublin slums, but of a rural world far removed from suffering and privation. They are close kinsmen of Synge's tramps and tinkers. Existence and the necessities of life are not their prime concerns, nor are they conspicuously nationalistic. They revel in freedom and joy and life. Their pride is natural and they relinquish neither freedom nor identity as they work for their English employers. It is not they who are out of their element.

⁸¹Sunset and Evening Star, pp. 162-163.

⁸²Collected Plays, III, p. 44.

Just as the majority of the Irish laborers are expert salesmen, the Irish girls are also superb con-artists who combine their particular talents with the foolish desires of old and virtually impotent men to amass tidy personal incomes and valuable collections of trinkets. The Irish laborers condemn the pretensions of the girls who claim descent from the Duke of Ormand and try "to be something else beside themselves."⁸³ The same Irishmen are quite pleased with the artistry of the girls, each of whom has a cash settlement of £ 500 per year from her Englishman. It is important to the comic world of this satire that the Irishmen do not make moral judgments nor damn the girls for their whoredom, but that Poges and Stoke do condemn the girls as sluts and harlots. The condemnations are as ludicrous as the presumed matches between the lusty vital wenches and the cold hapless Englishmen, as ludicrous as January-May marriages always are in the comic world.

Poges and Stoke do not see clearly nor hear well. They are lost in the magic of their own sounds and seek to create their own Eden. Their Eden will consist of the world of the refurbished Tudor mansion in the simple rustic setting of old Ireland, a pastoral world therein they can enjoy peace and dignity, wherein they can "forget the vile world and all its ways."⁸⁴ Poges see rustic Ireland as the land where peace was born, a land of simple ignorant Irishmen who will respect his native superiority and stand in awe of his glory as reflected by the Tudor mansion and its wonderful past. The pastoral never-never land is to be an Eden without a serpent to mar or jeopardize its perfection and everlasting peace. Unknowingly, they have

⁸³Ibid., p. 9.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 31.

the serpent on their payroll in the person of O'Killigain whose very name, however Irish it be, suggests his true relationship to the sadly materialistic Stoke and Poges. To further damn their pastoral project, O'Casey endows the businessmen with the friendship of Reverend George Canon Chreehewel who encourages Poges:

You have a very beautiful house here. An old house, but a fine one. It is almost a sacred thing to keep an old thing from dying, sir; ...

...

With all its frills, its frivolities, its studied ceremonial, however gaily-colored its leisure may have been, the past had in it the core of virtue; while the present swirl of young life, I'm saying, with its feverish sthрут of pretended bravery, its tawdry carelessness about the relation and rule of religion to man, with all its frantic sthretching of pleasure into every second of life, contains within it a tawny core of fear that is turning darker with every chime of the passing hours!⁸⁵

Canon Chreehewel urges his moneyed friends to "assist the clergy to keep a sensible check on the lower inclinations of the people,"⁸⁶ to recapture the discipline and virtue of the past, and -- "Help us to curtail th' damned activity of the devilish dance halls!"⁸⁷

The battle lines are clearly drawn: Poges, Stoke, and Canon Chreehewel are the defenders of tradition, history, a dead past, just as they are the perpetrators of sterility. The workmen and the girls, aided considerably by wind, flood, and Sean O'Casey, represent life, enthusiasm, joy, freedom, and virility. The gouty, doughty Stoke, the leader of the opposition, as known by Avril, is:

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 86.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 86.

A toddler thriking with a woman's legs; a thief without the power to thieve the things he covets; a louse burrowing in a young lioness's belly; a perjurer in passion; a gutted soldier bee whose job is done, and still hangs on to life!⁸⁸

The young lioness, by mutual agreement, prefers O'Killigain who is neither toddler nor thief without power; nor is he a perjurer in passion. The continued association of Stoke and Poges with sterility and impotence is not subtly portrayed by O'Casey. Against the virulent dreams of the Englishmen, the Irish worker promises fruitful love; O'Dempsey will show Souhaun "wondhers of a manly manner" and assures her that: "With firm-fed men an' comely, cordial women there'll be laughter round a red fire when the mists are risin', when the roads an' fields are frosty, and when the nights is still."⁸⁹ In the Tudor manor, there is no fire until an Irishman builds it, nor is there fuel, or axe. There is telephone and desk and one electric light, and there will be a bathroom, "if we can fit one in without injuring the harmony of the old house."⁹⁰ The choice for the girls is clearly between death and decay on the one hand and life and joy on the other, as the laborers urge the girls to leave the mansion of "creakin' grandeur an' poor witherin' talk; salt food without a dhrink to go with it; an' a purple dhryness turnin' timidly to dust!"⁹¹ In short, the invitation is to leave the world of the dead and half-dead and go forth into the land of the living.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 93, p. 105.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 89.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 106.

The Englishmen are complacent and secure enough in their solvency that they make fun of the poetic pleas of O'Killigain and O'Dempsey: "Spit out what's here, an' come where love is fierce an' fond an' fruitful. Come, lass, where there's things to say an' things to do an' love at the endings!"⁹² They attribute the amusing madness of the workmen to the demented state of all Ireland which must be due to the climate. It is, "amusing up to a point, but hardly reassuring," as Stoke notes, and "it isn't exactly comfortable to be living in a community of crazy people. . . . It may even become dangerous."⁹³ Poges complacently continues to write his business letter and to be certain of his holding power for the amours of Souhaun. When the girls do leave the palace of money with their nest eggs and promissory notes in hand, they are accused of taking money under false pretences; Avril speaks for both concerning the accusation, and in doing so repeats the essential character of the mock-Eden created by the Englishmen:

I gave more than I got, you gilded monkey. It's
winnowed of every touch of life I'd be if I stayed
with th' waste of your mind much longer. Th' thrinkets
I wormed out of you are all here, an' here they stay,
for the wages were low for what was done for you.⁹⁴

Poges and Stoke see their escapist's world as one which will "make us young again. We'll be as lively as goats in no time."⁹⁵ It is, as the play demonstrates, a world without communication, without hope for the future, and without joy in the present. It is a ludicrous make-believe world where the inhabitants wear gaudy costumes, mimic country dance styles, and adore real and imagined relics of bygone days. O'Killigain sees their mansion as a morgue and chooses to "let the dead bury their dead";⁹⁶ he notes

⁹²Ibid., p. 106.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁹³Ibid., pp. 109-110.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 21.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 118.

that "old things are perishing" and encourages the workers to cease working, "for it is waste of time to try to buttress up a tumbling house."⁹⁷ The alternative is the real world to be found

With the bitterness an' joy blendin' in a pretty
woman's hand; with the pity in her breast; in th'
battlin' beauty of her claspin' arms; an' rest be-
side her when the heart is tired.⁹⁸

His gospel is that "there never can be evil things where love is living,"⁹⁹ that life should be lived as it is rather than adored as it was, and that a pretty girl is evidence that God is smiling.¹⁰⁰ He agrees with O'Dempsey that

there is sweet music in the land, but not for th'
deaf; there is wisdom too, but it is not in a desk
it is, but out in th' hills, an' in the life of all
things rovin' round, undher th' blue sky.¹⁰¹

The chief targets of O'Casey's satire in this play are ignorance, confusion, and pomposity as personified in the figures of Stoke and Poges. He also attacks the hypocrisy of Poges the businessman, and the gullibility of the little man who wishes to cast a large shadow. The pastoral tradition is parodied in the impotent quest of the Englishmen and in the complete victory won by O'Killigain and his laborers. They will go to the hills and live life, tacitly escaping from the same vile world that Stoke and Poges sought to escape. O'Casey's techniques remain those of the anatomy and the burlesque. The satiric wit is no more controlled here than the action itself. The wayward comedy is basically a farce but, due to the language and O'Casey's sheer exhuberance, it carries the satire effectively.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 74.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 100.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 16.

I cannot agree with Gellbert that "the humor is puerile" nor that the "romanticism is ... enshrined in long, wallowing passages of purple sub-Synge song."¹⁰² Nor is Barzun accurate in assessing Purple Dust as "a sadistic persecution of bungling Philistinism."¹⁰³ It is a wayward comedy with heavy satire a major ingredient. Youth and life win out, as they must, over old age and death. O'Casey utilizes setting, sound, and the threat of rain and inevitable flood to establish the atmosphere and mood of the play. When the rain comes, it does not dampen the spirits of O'Killigain and Avril nor of O'Dempsey and Souhaun. It is a healing and life giving rain which will wash away the purple dust of a dead past and send the dabblers in antiquity out of a land to which they do not belong. Just as Purple Dust "hits, of course, at the adoration of the old, outworn things, and leans towards new thought and young ideas,"¹⁰⁴ it is also a part of O'Casey's continuing attempt to eliminate the blind followers and adherents to old forms of the so-called drama of realism and to create new forms of drama that

will take qualities found in the classical, romantic, and expressionistic; ... blend those qualities together; breathe the breath of life into the new forms and create new dramas.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²Roger Gellbert, "Dumb Show," New Statesman, LXIV, 1641 (Friday, 24 August, 1962). 237.

¹⁰³Jacques Barzun, "O'Casey at Your Bedside," Tulane Drama Review II, 2 (February, 1958), 59.

¹⁰⁴Letter from Sean O'Casey to Walter C. Daniel dated 16 March, 1961, as quoted in "Patterns of Greek Comedy in O'Casey's Purple Dust," Bulletin of New York Public Library, LXVI, 612.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 603. Daniels quotes O'Casey's New York Times article of Oct. 21, 1934, p. 22.

The Star Turns Red

The Star Turns Red is an oddity, even in the canon of the versatile Sean O'Casey. On one level, like Oak Leaves and Lavender, it is a bitter attack on the dehumanization wrought by Fascism. The attack takes the form of a no-holds-barred propaganda piece presenting on the one hand the White Good Communist and on the other the Black Bad Fascist. For the receptive reader, there is no real choice between the two; from the outset, it is obvious that the clenched fist of communism must smite the evil out of existence at the earliest opportunity. On this level, the play is akin to Within the Gates in that it is a morality play demonstrating the optimistic gains of Good against entrenched Evil. Like Within the Gates, this play is also expressionistic rather than realistic in its presentation of materials.

The Star Turns Red makes use of the Great Lockout of 1913 and presents in unmistakable clarity the great leader of that Lockout, Red Jim Larkin. On this level, the play should continue O'Casey's war against the miseries and the evils of poverty by pitting the forces of labor against those of capitalism. The association of communism and labor is not a difficult one to make, and O'Casey -- like Shaw -- viewed poverty as the gigantic foe, the Black Apollyon, the demon that must be killed. Shaw is quoted as saying,

In the guise of plays, I contended that poverty should be neither pitied as an inevitable misfortune, nor tolerated as a just retribution for misconduct; but resolutely stamped out and prevented from recurring as a disease fatal to human society.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶"A Whisper About Bernard Shaw," Green Crow, p. 198.

That O'Casey viewed communism as the ultimate weapon against the gigantic foe, poverty, and as the true religion, is made abundantly clear in his "Hymn to the Red Star."

Morning star, hope of the people, shine on us!
 Star of power, may thy rays soon destroy the things that
 err, things that are foolish, and the power of man to
 use his brother for profit so as to lay up treasure for
 himself where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where
 thieves break through and steal.
 Red Mirror of Wisdom turning the labour in factory,
 field and workshop into the dignity of a fine song;
 Red Health of the sick, Red Refuge of the afflicted,
 shine on us all.
 Red Cause of our joy, Red Star extending till thy five
 rays, covering the world, give a great light to those
 who still sit in the darkness of poverty's persecution.
 Herald of a new life, of true endeavour, of common-sense,
 of a world's peace, of man's ascent, of things to do
 bettering all things done;
 The sign of Labour's shield, the symbol on the people's
 banner;
 Red Star, shine on us all!¹⁰⁷

The Star Turns Red, however, does not examine the capitalism versus labor conflict, nor go very deeply into any examination of communism. O'Casey seems content to attack, and to reveal the horrors of fascism. While the drama is touted to be social protest drama, proletarian literature, and a historical examination of the forces at work in the 1913 fiasco, it is none of these. While satire is clearly the most effective weapon for social reform, there is virtually no satiric examination of motives or powers in this play. O'Casey does pay lip service to his muse in his parody of bourgeois tastes and standards and in his treatment of the traitors to labor's cause, but the effective weapon of laughter is not directed at either poverty or

¹⁰⁷Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, p. 222.

fascism nor at their causes, despite the fact that these should be his chief targets if the play is what he says it is.

Language, gesture, and movement are as highly stylized as the settings for the various acts. They do help to establish mood and to reveal character. The action, like the rhetoric, is frequently strained and artificial enough to seem a parody, but the parody never quite comes off. The labor movement, envisioned by O'Casey as Whitman's En Masse, led by Jim Larkin, who sought shorter working hours and "the right of men to live and die like men," is not portrayed effectively. O'Casey's bitterness at the defeat in March of 1914 is clearly evident in the play written a quarter of a century after the fact. Larkin assumes heroic proportions, but his loyal followers include only the idealistic Jack, the mature Michael, the one-man-gang Brannigan, and the ineffectual Brown Priest. He is overmatched in his battle against the combined uniformed forces of the church, fascism, capitalism, and the traitors within the labor movement.

Despite these overwhelming odds and the methodical murdering of both Michael and Jack, the setting and the singing of the "Internationale" cause the drama to end on an optimistic note. In the final scene, which presumably establishes this air of optimism, even the most devoted reader's credulity is impossibly strained by the awkward verse dialogue, by the mass conversion of Kain and the soldiers to his dead brother's ideology, and by the clenched fist of the weeping Julia.

As bad as it is, this play includes redeeming graces which keep it from being altogether trite. Joybell, the self-centered, uniformed Catholic flag-waver, speaks a kind of Orwellian parody of the English language, and, despite his monk's habit, is forced by the teasing of Julia toward some rather

decisive action. The calculated teasing action backfires on the sadistic trio of Julia and the old couple as they ridicule Joybell's celibacy. Julia's repeated enticing, "How would you like to cuddle me in a lonely wood with the darkness falling? ... Go on - hug me! Give me a kiss hot enough to melt the bones in a girlie's body!"¹⁰⁸ and the taunting of the old people ultimately make Joybell so mad with passion that he seizes and kisses Julia "madly till she is breathless and frightened." The harmless joke has turned him into an animal, so far as Julia is concerned. His reply to the taunting is couched to answer any questions yet remaining in the minds of the laity: "I'll make you giddy, you pretty little bitch! I'll press you till you break in two! I'll tear off every stitch you ever had on, so I will!"¹⁰⁹

This episode, I presume, is responsible for Boas's description of Joybell as half-priest, half-imbecile,¹¹⁰ a true but perhaps misleading label. For a brief moment, the comic and the pathetic elements are in suspension, but when Joybell punches the old man in the eye and leaves, the social comedy resumes as the trio bickers, blames each other for what has happened, and the old woman, who begins by defending Julia as "a fully respectable girl, without a glimmer of guile in her" joins her husband two minutes later and orders Julia out of her home: "Go home quietly to your own place, with your dressed-up indecency. If you don't I'll leave the mark of my fingers on your paint-patterned face!"¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸Collected Plays, II, 261.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 261.

¹¹⁰Guy Boas, "The Drama of Sean O'Casey," College English, X, 2 (November, 1948), 84.

¹¹¹Collected Plays, II, p. 265.

O'Casey's usually direct attack on the church is here an attack by suggestion and innuendo. Both the Purple Priest and Joybell have affectations of speech: Joybell utters meaningless syllables and needless repetitions, and he frequently stammers and stutters; his superior, the Purple Priest, uses an inordinate number of syllibants and occasionally lisps.¹¹² Julia, who will not forego her party for her father, for Jack, nor for the Red Cause, enters in her party dress and is greeted by the Purple Priest with what is potentially the most obscene line in O'Casey's canon--"I see before me a poor daughter of Eve dressed for a folly that will fondle sin with a busy finger;...."¹¹³ As the Priest of catholicism, capitalism, and fascism, he conceals motives as well as deeds behind his platitude, "To a priest, the first step to heaven is obedience, the second step is obedience, and the third step is obedience. Let what is to do be done!"¹¹⁴ The Lord Mayor, ally of the Purple Priest, affects the lisp of his canonical counterpart, but his lisp is lost entirely in a moment of real emergency. Unlike the Purple Priest, he is not as evil as he is ineffectual. His good deeds are calculated political investments. The tea provided for the poor does more to feed the pomp and vanity of the Lord Mayor himself than it does to eliminate the hunger of those who accept his gift.

Public opinion is here as elsewhere in O'Casey's drama a fearful and fluctuating barometer, ever seeking for stability and self-aggrandizement.

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O'Casey's association of the color purple with death and decay is a consistent one, most obvious perhaps in this play, in Purple Dust, and in Oak Leaves and Lavender.

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Collected Plays, II, p. 271.

114

Ibid., p. 274.

The bickering old man has been decorated by industry, wants to maintain the status quo, to depend on the church and the police for protection, and to dress up like Father Christmas and dispense charity to the poor. The Lord Mayor, official representative of the people, revels in the comforts of his luxurious home, affects a more pronounced lisp when things are going his way, and has a devoted wife who can say, on the eve of pitched battle:

Oh, we don't mind the workers organizing; we like them to organize; we encourage them to organize.... But only in safe and sensible and secure and Christian and Catholic Unions.¹¹⁵

The members of the public, excepting only Red Jim and his faithful few, recognize the church and the police as ultimate authorities and would suffer any punishment to maintain the status quo. Julia, accused of immodest dress and of being a "sex-hilarious lassie eager to pillage him (any sensible man) bare of all his holy hesitation,"¹¹⁶ moves the Most Respectable Man to say, for instance, "If the way of a maid with a man can't be controlled, it'll have to be stopped altogether."¹¹⁷ Public opinion reflects the complacency and the fear, the pomposity and the emptiness of its worshippers. It and its adherents are subject to the same quicksilver realignments, the tongue clucking, and the inactivity of their fellow worshippers in Within the Gates.

These same attitudes are also apparent in those laborers who wander in and out of the opulence of the Lord Mayor's house, doing nothing but waiting for a miracle to occur; they also are viewed in those who stand meekly aside from their revolutionary tasks when confronted by a priest, and in all who see change as a necessary evil. These readily observable traits

¹¹⁵

Ibid., p. 339.

¹¹⁶

Ibid., p. 319.

led O'Casey to remark in 1919, "Trade Unionism may give the worker a larger dinner plate--which, heaven knows, he badly needs--but it will never give him a broader mind, which he needs more badly still."¹¹⁸

The Star Turns Red is not good drama, a fact recognized by O'Casey who barely mentions it in his many pages of rapture concerning the hope and salvation of man through the auspices of International Communism and who does not include it in his Selected Plays. As suggested earlier, its main flaw as either morality play or social protest drama is its unequivocal concentration on the evils of fascism, evils readily admitted by virtually all English and Russian readers and play-goers in 1940. The juxtaposition of Lenin's portrait and a bishop's portrait establishes the lines of battle as does the juxtaposition of the factory smokestacks and the church's cross. O'Casey manipulates these same themes much more effectively in earlier and later drama. The death of the idealist in this play and the use of his corpse as a rallying point for the labor forces emphasizes the necessity of his choosing loyalty to his brotherhood over personal safety, but the use of his body also emphasizes the less palatable doctrine that the end justifies the means. O'Casey's humanistic creed, his demand for life, and his opposition to regimentation in any form are as hollow in this drama as the optimistic note on which the play ends.

The same materials used for this play, the 1913 Lockout and the immediate consequences up to the Easter Uprising of 1916, are used in O'Casey's next and far better play, Red Roses for Me. As Esslinger has ably pointed out, the two plays have much in common.¹¹⁹ The idealism of Jack, his

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Herbert Coston, "Sean O'Casey: Prelude to Playwriting," Tulane Drama Review, V, 1 (September, 1960), 105.

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Pat M. Esslinger, "Sean O'Casey and the Lockout of 1913: Materia Poetica of the two Red Plays," Modern Drama, VI, I (May, 1963), 53-63.

choice, and his ultimate destruction parallel the more effective course followed by Ayamonn, the combination poet-idealist-worker. Both plays end on notes of hope for mankind. The Star Turns Red fails while Red Roses for Me does not, because the hatreds in the earlier play of brother for brother and of countryman for countryman are irrational as are the conversion of Keim and his soldiers to communism. It fails because O'Casey's contending forces are white and black with no shadings of grey; it fails

because O'Casey ignores what W. H. Auden presents in "Musee des Beaux Arts," and what O'Casey himself knows so well, the fact that at every nativity at least one camel would be scratching its backside against a tree.¹²⁰

Red Roses For Me

The transitional period (1928-1942) concludes with Red Roses For Me, a play utilizing the same combination of expressionism and realism evident in The Silver Tassie, the play which marked the beginning of a new era for Sean O'Casey. The numerous similarities in technique and theme make these plays more than arbitrary mechanical markers for this period in the development of O'Casey's satiric arsenal.

The earlier play pits individual man against the impersonal destructive machine that is war and records the destruction of life, limb, personality, and identity by that machine. O'Casey's WAR functions as protagonist in at least one act and is omnipresent in the tone of the action; it, like Steinback's BANK, is a monster created by but not controlled by men. Whatever its aims, be they materialistic or idealistic, WAR ultimately is a destroyer of life, of individuality, and of hope. New lives must be built in its aftermath,

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Ibid., 61.

preferably on new foundations, but sometimes on the shaky foundations left partially intact by the destruction of war.

In Red Roses For Me, man is pitted against another destructive monster, created but not controlled by him. He can be an unknown victim of the combined forces of capital, church, public opinion, and civil authority--all being components in the system--or he can gain identity and perhaps gain life itself by creating a new force, in this instance, labor. The goals of labor, if they become unclear or distorted, result in a broadening and weakening union with nationalism, religion, and personal aims. The result is a new monster and the ultimate effect can be defeat, such as that portrayed on the battlefield in Act II of The Silver Tassie.

In The Silver Tassie exchange, Yeats charged O'Casey with not being really "interested in the Great War," with no real involvement in it, and with being thwarted by its "mere greatness." Such a hollow charge could not be levied against Red Roses For Me, for Sean O'Casey was very much involved in Larkin's Labor Movement, both before and during the impotent strike of 1913. He also knew the Dublin slum conditions, the appalling wage scales, and a representative few of the 28,000 people who lived in dwellings condemned as unfit for human habitation by the Commission of Inquiry. O'Casey shared the British opinion stated in the recruiting slogan for World War I -- "The trenches are safer than the Dublin slums."¹²¹

The immediate aims of the 1913 strike, the dream of Jim Larkin, were thwarted when such Irish leaders as Arthur Griffith, Padreac Pearse, and Tom Clark saw the strike as a vehicle for nationalism, for glory rather than for improved living conditions, for a holy end rather than a material beginning.

This, plus the powerful combine of William Martin Murphy's forces, the existing government, and the Irish Catholic Church, defeated the strike; the laborers themselves, after six months of deprivation, raced back to work -- actually grateful to have jobs under any conditions.

O'Casey nursed this bitter defeat for a quarter of a century before reducing it somehow to a splenetic attack on fascism in The Star Turns Red. This bitterness is more effectively masked and refined in Red Roses For Me, which even Hogan admits "is about thirty-seven times better drama than" the earlier Red play.¹²² The red star is more clearly presented here -- as it is in Rose and Crown -- as an ethical rather than a political commitment. It is the red star of ethical humanism, the sword of light which would raise man to the human level. In Red Roses For Me, as elsewhere in O'Casey's plays, mankind is continually frustrated and prevented from achieving his goals, from satisfying his desires, and from realizing his just deserts by various organized and, therefore, impersonal forces. Man responds to this continued denial and to the demand for total obedience either by becoming a "Down-and-Out" as in Within the Gates and Red Roses For Me, by adopting the attitudes of the workers in The Star Turns Red and waiting for a miracle to transform them from have-nots to haves, or by making a concerted effort to overcome tradition and entrenched power and to improve his lot. In O'Casey's canon, the last choice and a joyful response to man's natural inclination to sing and dance make man a devotee of the Red Star.

Ayamonn Breydon emerges as a proletarian hero incorporating "the sum total of the virtues of the working class."¹²³ Ayamonn is O'Casey's first

¹²²

Experiments of Sean O'Casey, p. 88

¹²³Vivian Mercier, "Decline of a Playwright: the Riddle of Sean O'Casey," The Commonweal, LXIV, 15 (July 13, 1956), 367.

mature poet: like Whitman's ideal poet, his is a quicker and a deeper perception than that of ordinary men, and his is a more vital and more meaningful involvement in life's demands than that of ordinary men. Due to these superior developments and gifts, he is a leader of men. Ayamonn is not the stage poet of Shadow of a Gunman who sought refuge and separation from the responsibilities of life; neither is he content to marvel at the mystery of color, the might of design, and the aesthetic beauty in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, as Davoren is. Ayamonn demonstrates the essential truth of Seumas's contention that a poet's greatness resides in his "power to put passion into the common people." His vision and commitment are greater than the Dreamer's, for he must act and lead others to act. Whereas Davoren is O'Casey's embryonic poet who ultimately recognizes his own cowardice and ineffectual action, Ayamonn is his mature poet who dons Shakespearean costume over his working clothes, knows the power as well as the beauty of the word, and makes his poetic powers an integral part of his answer to the demands of life.

This union of art and life, this mutual acceptance of the ideal and the real, this immediate recognition of the beautiful and the ugly make him the mature poet who is at the same time able to love and to hate Kathleen ni Houlihan, to revel in the glories of Shakespeare and to move the "Down-and-Outs" to sing and dance, to confront the mob which attacks Mullcanny, and to lead the strikers against the armed civil authorities. He is, as was Whitman's ideal poet, a whole man and, as such, he is a messiah of O'Casey's red star of ethical humanism. His mission is to transform the world.

O'Casey's satiric answers to the miracles of Lourdes and the weeping plaster saints, as well as his satiric command to those who sit

around, bewail their plight, and wait for miracles to happen, are reduced to their essence in Red Roses For Me, a play containing two true miracles -- both of which answer prayers of the faithful. The first miracle is the transformation of the drab, faded, and yellowed Virgin, who reflects the wear and tear of slum living, into a vision "Fair as th' first grand tinge of th' dawn, ...an' bright as th' star of the evenin'." ¹²⁴ The Virgin's return is complete with mystical visions by two eye witnesses, by Ursula -- the ill child whose sickness cannot be removed by a new coat of paint -- and by a gentleman citizen. Ursula

looked, and saw Her come in; in th' moonlight, along the street
She came, stately. Blinded be the coloured light that shone
around about Her, the child fell back, in a swoon she fell
full on the floor beneath her. ¹²⁵

This vision is verified by a citizen whose

eyes caught a glimpse of Her too, glidin' back to where She
came from. Regal an' proud She was, an' wondrous, so that
me eyes failed; me knees thrembled an' bent low, an' me heart
whispered a silent prayer to itself as th' vision passed me
by, an' I fancied I saw a smile on Her holy face. ¹²⁶

Ursula is happy, and the adoring crowd is amazed and momentarily transported. Their sincerity and joyful hymn of prayer is directed to the Virgin, resplendent in her new clothes:

Oh, Queen of Eblana's poor children,
Bear swiftly our woe away,
An' give us a chance to live lightly
An hour of our life's dark day! ¹²⁷

This prayer is rather directly answered by the second miracle, which transforms the gloomy scene, the expressionless faces of the forgotten men

¹²⁴ Collected Plays, III, p. 162

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 177

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 177

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 184

who are the "Down-and-Outs", and the "bleak, black, an' bitther city... Like a batthered, tatthered whore, bullied by too long a life,"¹²⁸ into a vibrant and joyful exemplum of song and dance and hope. Those who inhabit the "graveyard where th' dead are all above th' ground"¹²⁹ are contemptuous of Brennan O' Th' Moor's lusty, lively song as they continue to dream of the good old days gone by, to prophesy the winning horses in the next race, and to bewail his wasting their "precious time." The chorus describes the three gates of the bleak city as "castles of poverty, penance, an' pain."¹³⁰

Ayamonn does not deny the truth of the lamentations, but does advise the "Down-and-Outs" assembled at Liffey Bridge that Dublin is:

what our hands have made her. We pray too much and work too little. Meanness, spite, and common patterns are woven thick through all her glory; but her glory's there for open eyes to see.¹³¹

As O'Casey's spokesman, he masks his bitterness and his contempt for those who wait for something to happen to them and urges them to do something besides complain about their lot in life. "It was dark," he says, "when th' spirit of God first moved on th' face of th' waters. ...No-one knows what a word may bring forth. Th' leaves an' blossoms have fallen, but th' three isn't dead."¹³² The Ireland recognized by the "Down-and-Outs" wears the sober black shawl of the title song, but they are unaware of the beautiful hand and the bunch of red roses in the black folds of the shawl, as they

¹²⁸

Ibid., p. 196

¹²⁹

Ibid., p. 186

¹³⁰

Ibid., p. 196

¹³¹

Ibid., p. 196

¹³²

Ibid., p. 197

are unaware that Kathleen ni Houlihan "has th' bent back of an oul' woman as well as th' walk of a queen."¹³³

Ayamonn, as miracle worker, as poet, as transformer, urges the people "to pull down th' banner from dusty bygones, an' fix it up in th' needs an' desires of today."¹³⁴ He promises a new world in return for their recognition that the Ideal is beautiful and Reality is ugly, if that recognition leads to constructive action: a world wherein Eeada will eat the apples she now sells and Dympna will wear the violets she now sells, a new world which exists symbolically in the womb of the young maiden, Finnoola.

The power of the poet's word -- "No one knows what a word may bring forth" -- and the light of the sun transform the scene into one encompassing the beauty of colors and the glories of the past, beauties and glories symbolic of the world that can be if the "Down-and-Outs" will take meaningful action. Those present are radiant and are moved to praise their city of splendor in song.

Ayamonn joins Finnoola in a symbolic dance of life, joy, and fulfillment. The people are moved to oaths of allegiance, oaths to take action to remove the bonds of poverty and to rebuild a perfect city. When Ayamonn departs to lead the strikers, his word and its power also depart: the colors and lights fade; the fading of the miracle is as gradual and as dramatic as its beginning as the songs cease and the singers resume their roles as dark figures in a dark city. In the background, the words of their song are repeated as the curtain falls:

¹³³

Ibid., p. 197

¹³⁴

Ibid., p. 198

We swear to release thee from hunger and hardship,
 From things that are ugly and common and mean;
 Thy people together shall build a great city,
 The finest and fairest that ever was seen.¹³⁵

In both of these miracles, O'Casey is quite explicit in his contention that man's plight can be improved by man himself, that direct involvement and direct action are necessary to life in the here and now, that miracles -- when they occur -- are the results of man's efforts and not of his complacent acceptance. Whatever the Virgin meant to the poor and whatever visions accompanied her kidnapping and her miraculous return, her new splendor was calculated, planned, and paid for by Brennan o' th' Moor, a man. The miracle at the bridge on the river Liffey resulted directly from the efforts of men: the lusty song of Brennan o' th' Moor and the practical artistry of Ayamonn were directly responsible for the transformation of the "Down-and-Outs" into singing, dancing humans vowing immediate and positive action. The third miracle, that of transforming the vision into reality, does not come to pass because the citizens of Dublin awake from their dream instead of awaking to their dream. They see the sable shawl but only half remember the red roses. They resume complacent waiting rather than using Ayamonn's Sword of Light. The new world in the womb of Finnoola is stillborn as the miracle becomes a strange curiosity rather than a sought after reality. The "Down-and-Outs" fail to see as the Rector does in the final act that "From the clash of life new life is born."¹³⁶

O'Casey's satiric view of complacency and cowardice continues in his portraits of Samuel, Dowzard, and Foster: they are cowards who seek

¹³⁵

Ibid., p. 204.

¹³⁶

Ibid., p. 209.

the sanctuary of the church yet object to its symbols and rituals as popery; they seek to destroy the strike and Ayamonn, would refuse Ayamonn and then his corpse admission to the church; they attempt in their shadowy ignorance to destroy his cross. They emerge in their ignorance and in their roles as scabs as unsympathetic characters. Nonetheless, their roles are essentially comic roles and their distorted selfishness mirrors one reason for the strike's failure. In them and in the "Down-and-Outs," who resume their dying after the miracle, are epitomized the greed, complacency, and irresponsibility which prevent any idea from becoming reality. One of O'Casey's basic themes, here as elsewhere, is that man must act; he must be content neither to shun nor to wallow in his destructive element, but must involve himself in life if a better world is to be born alive.

The single shilling demanded by the strikers is, for the ironic Brennan, "the root of all evil"; for Ayamonn and ultimately for Mrs. Breydon and Sheila, it is an avenue to God's light, a sun-ray, "the first step taken in the march of a thousand miles,"¹³⁷ and it is not just a shilling but "th' shape of a new world."¹³⁸ Neither the songs, the miracle, nor the incidental good deeds of Brennan o' th' Moor can effect the transformation that was to be the third miracle, though all are necessary and real steps toward it. The shilling itself, had it been gained, would have been but a step. No single simple answer exists, as O'Casey reveals in his portrait of Mullcanny, whose much talk and no action are as impotent as the talk without the action seen in the philosophy of the Atheist in Within the Gates. Equally impotent is outraged public opinion when that

¹³⁷

Ibid., p. 211.

¹³⁸

Ibid., p. 225.

rage is not vented in some positive action. Neither free thought, nor argument, nor volume of argument is effectual in and of itself. O'Casey's view of these limited views of life has not altered since his satiric examination of them in Within the Gates.

As symbolically portrayed in Inspector Finglas, civil authority enforces existing laws and does nothing to encourage or raise the expectations of the people. His is a destructive force under the command of the Triumvirate: Nationalism, Industry, and the Roman Church. The Inspector, a protestant church warden, pompously misquotes scripture to justify the ways of man with man and to demonstrate that God is on his team. A comic figure in his various distortions, Finglas is ultimately recognized by Sheila as a "dusky-minded killer of more worthy men";¹³⁹ his "dusky" mind is blood brother to the "smoky ignorance" of Dowzard and Foster.¹⁴⁰ He, like they, destroys the possibility of the shilling's becoming either a reality or a meaningful symbol of a new world waiting to be born.

Sheila Moorneen refuses to recognize Ayamonn's fidelity to his role as poet and the importance of his prophetic vision of a better world. His efforts to paint, his devotion to Shakespeare, and his consorting with potentially dangerous people are "foolish things" to Sheila, who tries to bribe and to blackmail him into renouncing his role as leader of the strike. The religious differences of the Catholic Sheila and the Protestant Ayamonn are unimportant per se. They, like the bickering within the Protestant congregation and the Protestant Inspector's following the dictates of the Catholic Church, reflect the inadequacy of any organized religion to solve the problems of life in the world as it is. The inadequacy stems in part from the bickering for its own sake and in part from the efforts of one

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 223.

group to impose its beliefs, its patterns of behavior, and its prejudices on all. Sheila would have Ayamonn forsake his vision for immediate acceptance by those in power.

Sheila, like Julia in The Star Turns Red, refuses to accept responsibility and is necessarily forsaken by her idealist who must act. Ayamonn, like Michael in Yeats's Kathleen ni Houlihan, must reject the immediate pleasures and the promise and the dowry of his prospective bride for the greater promise and the more immediate necessities of Kathleen herself. Though Sheila would look beautiful with red roses in her hand, she has nothing else in common with Kathleen ni Houlihan, the sober-clad Ireland of the title song. Sheila's joking retort to Ayamonn's mock prayer is laden with truth, for she would look comical if she "were to go about in a scanty petticoat, covered in a sober black shawl."¹⁴¹ Sheila would be ridiculous in the black shawl, and the new Ireland, if it is to be born, must be born from the womb of Finnoola, who is more accustomed to the truth, the ugliness, and the necessities of reality. As Ayamonn tells Sheila and as she ultimately understands, the red roses of Ireland were never meant for her.¹⁴²

Each of the four acts in Red Roses For Me ends in a kind of epiphany resulting directly from the poet's attempts to bring perception to the people and to move them to action. Roory O'Balacaun is a zealous Irish nationalist, an Irish Catholic who sees the Sword o'Light in Republican banners and the Catholic faith. His dark view is limited, but his words and his song have deeper meaning for Ayamonn, who clasps his hand and joins him in singing:

¹⁴¹

Ibid., p. 171.

¹⁴²

Ibid., p. 226.

Then out to th' place where th' battle is bravest,
 Where th' noblest an' meanest fight fierce in th' fray,
 Republican banners shall mock at th' foemen,
 An' Fenians shall turn a dark night into day!¹⁴³

The softly singing men and women, still awed by the miraculous transformation of their Virgin, offer religious faith as a pat answer, while Sheila, rebuffed by Ayamonn, weeps in the background. The faith and the tears, moving as they are, remain as inadequate as Fenianism alone to build a new Ireland. The song of promise echoed in the concluding lines of Act III recalls the intensity of the miracle at the bridge and holds some promise for Ireland, but the promise, like the new world in Finnoola's womb, is stillborn because the people do not act.

The final scene keeps the play from being a tragedy. The dead Ayamonn lies on his cross of daffodils and Brennan sings the prophetic "Red Roses For Me," indicating that though Ireland still wears the black shawl, she also continues to hold the red roses in her slim hand. Ayamonn's action, though ineffective, has affected the thinking of both Mrs. Breydon and Sheila, and they share his vision. Brennan o' th' Moor still sings and Kathleen, bleak as she is, is not without hope.

These four significant scenes offer in turn nationalism, religious faith, vows and enthusiasm, and dedication to an ideal. Each is insufficient in itself, and no combination, without action, can be effective.

O'Casey's sardonic sense of humor, which he describes as the only thing "we Irish have in full measure,"¹⁴⁴ underlies every phrase of Red Roses For Me. The play is an album of satiric portraits. Sheila denies responsibility for immediate pleasures but ultimately shares Ayamonn's vision; the

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁴⁴"St. Pathrick's Day in the Morning," The Green Crow, p. 219.

"Down-and-Outs" can be manipulated but return to slothful lethargy when the strong poet leaves; the one-answer hawkers, such as the Irish Roory O'Balacaun and Free-thinker Mullcanny, despite the inadequacy of their answers, are sympathetically portrayed. Dowzard and Foster are prejudiced fools whose cowardice and audacity render them humorous rather than terrifying. The uniform-conscious, ritual-conscious Samuel is close kinsman to the prancing, brightly uniformed braggart soldiers of The Plough and the Stars. The pomposity of Inspector Finglas, together with his essential innocence, prevent his being an essentially evil man, but, like the Bishop in Within the Gates, he is an instrument of evil. O'Casey's sardonic humor extends to the action itself which presents Ayamonn's aim to be far more than the finite goal of Jim Larkin. The forces which helped to destroy the historic strike become, in this play, an integral part of Ayamonn's vision of a transformed Ireland. Nationalism per se is satirized only in Roory's limited view of it and in his baseless certainty of its efficacy.

This sardonic sense of humor, the gallery of satiric portraits, and O'Casey's artistic control of the action make this an effective drama. It consists of a series of tableaux, each designed to lend particular emphasis to the basic theme. Here the artist effectively combines the techniques of realism and expressionism, and he utilizes elements of the miracle and the morality play traditions; these same combinations are used in all the major plays of the transitional period. At the same time that Red Roses For Me effectively concludes this period, the mystical fantasy of Act III anticipates the last plays, which, as a group, recognize no barriers of technique or tradition and are essentially fantastic in concept. Here as there, the world is turned upside down, transformed into a vision of what might be. The basic themes and the basic targets of Sean O'Casey's

volatile satire in the plays of his last period remain essentially the same as in these plays of the transitional period.

CHAPTER IV

THE FINAL PERIOD

The Final Period lasts from the publication of Oak Leaves and Lavender in 1946 until the publication of Behind the Green Curtains in 1961. During this decade and a half, O'Casey's chief concern is Ireland and her priest-ridden plight. Again and again, he presents his tongue in cheek "mikrocism," and his nostalgia and personal bitterness are often so interfused that individual plays are rendered ineffective. During this period, he continues to experiment with expressionism and fantasy, only occasionally returning to realism as a primary dramatic method. His bitterness at remembered wrongs is perhaps most evident in Hall of Healing and, of course, in The Drums of Father Ned. His experimentation with technique remains a constant factor here as during the transitional period.

The charge that O'Casey in this last period sacrificed character to theme could be easily validated. However, O'Casey would not admit the sacrifice as a weakness: for him, every play must somehow be a religious experience; for him, repetition of a legitimate theme is but a way of instruction; for him, as his prefaces and his essays clearly show, the plays themselves are best viewed as moralities and their worlds as microcosms. Specific attacks on specific individuals and situations in Ireland are at the

same time topical and universal, for his individual targets are portrayed as types rather than as isolated phenomena.

Here, as earlier, the plays are dealt with chronologically rather than in some other arbitrary manner. A legitimate argument might be made for discussing Oak Leaves and Lavender in conjunction with The Star Turns Red, since both are hate-filled and splenetic attacks; another, perhaps more impressive, argument might justify treating Hall of Healing, Bedtime Story, Time to Go, and The Moon Shines on Kyleneamoe, in a separate section dealing only with one act plays. Thematically and developmentally, however, they are more appropriate to the Final Period than to either the Transitional or the Irish Periods. This period includes three first-rate plays in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, The Bishop's Bonfire, and The Drums of Father Ned, all of which include elements of the marvelous, all of which attack censorship and complacency as ways of death, all of which suggest an honestly pagan rebirth as an antidote to the destructive poisons fostered by the un-blessed union of wealth and church as that union exists in Ireland.

Oak Leaves and Lavender, or A World on Wallpaper

This is perhaps the "most bloodthirsty play ever written by a congenital pacifist."¹ Set during the Battle of Britain, it recalls O'Casey's

¹ Vivian Mercier, "Decline of a Playwright -- the Riddle of Sean O'Casey," The Commonweal, LXIV, 15 (July 13, 1956), 367-368. Mercier's thesis, with which I disagree, is that O'Casey was on the "wrong track" from 1928 on, and that the decline was due to the Abbey's rejection of The Silver Tassie. Mercier dismisses other suggested reasons for O'Casey's decline: that Lady Gregory wrote his earlier plays, that an unidentified school teacher helped O'Casey in the writing of his Irish plays, and that living in England destroyed his art. To substantiate his thesis, Mercier describes Purple Dust as "embarrassingly bad, class-conscious," dismisses Cock-A-Doodle Dandy as "having an absence of genuine conflict" and a "lack of logical development."

own terrifying experiences as he and his family sought refuge from the shrapnel and the German bombs. The play functions as a call to arms and attempts to justify the combined efforts of the Soviets and the British as a holy war against the evil Fascists. War remains the same impersonal destructive machine here that it is in The Silver Tassie, but here it is a war that must be won to preserve mankind and to preserve any hope of progress in the right direction. The violence of war is but the violence of life; as phrased by one of O'Casey's spokesmen, "life is full of violence, and we're in the middle of life. Birth is noisy, and death isn't quite a quiet thing."² War is a madness and in its world "fair is foul and foul is fair,"³ death is inevitable, and those who die should "die for a fair cause."⁴ It is a holy war against Fascism, a fight in which "righteousness and war have kissed each other: Christ, Mohamet, and Buddha are one."⁵

In this propaganda tract, O'Casey again sets up straw men to be the victims of his winning rhetoric. The conscientious objector, despite O'Casey's own strongly pacifistic feelings, is portrayed as a fool whose half-baked ideas are neither convincing nor acceptable. The fascist spokesman is Mrs. Deeda Tutting, obviously the fictive descendent of Mrs. Creda Stern.⁶ Like her improbably named prototype, Deeda Tutting "has something important, very important, to say," has lost one husband to the Russian OGPU, and insults her listeners with her loudly inarticulate prose. Further, Deeda

²
Collected Plays, IV, p. 94.

³
Ibid., p. 27.

⁴
Ibid., p. 28.

⁵
Ibid., p. 29.

⁶
Sunset and Evening Star, pp. 126-131.

is O'Casey's satiric view of the tourist who knows all there is to know about Russia because she's been there. In her eye-witness account, she describes a "chaos of incompetence, a mass of sullen terror, a swamp of ignorance" behind the "boasting facade of Soviet achievement."⁷ She, like the conscientious objector, is a fool, despite her educational tour, her personal loss, and her "Em Ay." Deeda is a fool because she, like Creda, knows "Only what I say, only in what I believe, is the truth."⁸

Oak Leaves and Lavender, like Purple Dust, presents the old ghost-inhabited mansion as a microcosm of England. England, during the emergency of war, however, is able to change as she must in order to survive. The old house in its process of physical change from a mansion to a rest home to a military headquarters to an industrial site creating tanks and munitions, reflects the changes necessarily undergone by England. Here, as in Purple Dust, the characters have the task of getting the old house in order; despite the immediate emergency and the high patriotic feelings, O'Casey presents the bungling inefficiency of the bourgeoisie at war just as he had earlier presented the bungling inefficiency of the bourgeoisie at peace, at play, and at work. Mary, we are told, while "putting a blackout up in th' dark" stepped "from th' window-sill on to a chair that wasn't there," and Tom is "Another fool! Not able to drive a nail into wood without shoving his hand through a window and cutting a vein open!" Another fool, while "cloakin' a window, top of chair, top of another, top of a table; as pitched down, lookin' like 'ee's broken back, or somethin'!" All of these, and other casualties, create chaos instead of order as they turn the house into

⁷ Collected Plays, IV, p. 51.

⁸ Sunset and Evening Star, p. 131.

a hospital for bungling incompetents. Feelim correctly observes, "The foe'll do less injury to us than we're doin' to ourselves!"⁹ O'Casey demonstrates herein that fools at war remain fools, for war itself performs no miracles in the character of men.

Yeats wrote to O'Casey during The Silver Tassie affair: "...the whole history of the world must be reduced to wallpaper in front of which the characters must pose and speak."¹⁰ Yeats was wrong in his condemnation of The Silver Tassie; however, the same charges could be legitimately levied against this later play which is ironically subtitled A World on Wallpaper, O'Casey does treat a war that he is very much involved in, one that threatens to snuff out his life on any given day, and he is unable to gain the necessary artistic distance. Without that distance, artistic control is impossible, as this play amply demonstrates. The play fails because O'Casey was too much involved, had too much first-hand and incidental information, and he -- like his Home Guardsmen -- is unable to choose a target. Since he cannot gain aesthetic distance from the microcosmic society of the play, he is unable to perform as critic and satirist, as he did so well in Purple Dust.

He does set up the now familiar straw men as spokesmen for pacifism and fascism, as perpetuators of the Ireland versus England feud, as parrots for the Protestant versus Catholic arguments, and as performing clowns in the town versus farm fuss. As easily as the straw men are set up, they are destroyed by O'Casey's rhetoric; the incessant governmental forms and reports,

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Collected Plays, IV, pp. 13-14.

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W. B. Yeats, Letter to O'Casey dated April 20, 1928, Allan Wade, The Letters of W. B. Yeats (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 740-743.

together with the destructive incompetents in their besieged world, emphasize the meaninglessness of old customs and hallowed traditions in the face of new and immediate dangers. They, like the ghosts of the past, are impotent in the presence of the new dangers wrought by modern technology.

Death is portrayed as inevitable, but somehow beautiful and meaningful when young people give their lives for a cause or for love. O'Casey's two spokesmen are Feelim, a fellow Irishman in self exile, and Drishogue, a fellow communist dedicated to living for the moment and to dying for the brotherhood of man. This tract against fascism only incidentally sings the praises of humanity and communism; the true focus is on the war effort itself, and O'Casey's redundant praise of that effort moved Robert Hogan to read the play as "almost an ethical tract on why one should fight."¹¹

O'Casey's expressionistic techniques are mechanically implemented in this play and are never as dramatically effective as they are in The Silver Tassie. The devices of expressionism are used early to create a mood of impending disaster. The wraithlike dancers of the minuet, the lavender seller's song, and the odor of lavender are associated with death and with a dead past. They are made integral to the play by the frequent and fearful references to the legends and superstitions associated with them. The repeated image of the swastika, the wireless, the trumpeting of "Deutschland Uber Alles," and the haunting call-sign of "Germany calling, Germany calling" further develop the mood of impending doom and the awareness of ever present death. So also do the clock with its purple dial, the pervading odor of lavender, and the purple light on the wireless. The mood change from one of despair to one of hope is not subtle. Abruptly

¹¹

Robert Hogan, The Experiments of Sean O'Casey, p. 109.

in Act III, the V sign, the encouraging words from the wireless, and the image of the Union Jack and the Soviet flag crossed, announce hope and prophesy ultimate victory. The impotent ghosts of the past prepare to leave the efficient industry of the newly revitalized house. The workers have become efficient and the war effort will be a success due largely to the adaptability of the old house as it is transformed from a museum for dead things to an industrial showplace. The symbolic change is gradual and, for the most part, the changes wrought by the bourgeois workers are superficial.

War actively invades the premises when Abraham Penrhyn carries an unexploded bomb in, when Dame Hatherleigh receives the telegram announcing her husband's death, and when the call for arms is answered by the image of the tank. The old must make way for the new, and the dead must make way for the living. Dame Hatherleigh symbolically joins the earlier occupants in her quest to find her dead husband. In the epilogue, she replaces the young Son of Time; his knowledge of vitality and death and memory of things past establish the proper perspective for the new tenants of the old house. Dame Hatherleigh has not the earnest and warm vigour of youth, but she has accepted the necessity for change, for adaptation, and she does recognize the only alternative as total destruction. The epilogue, with Dame Hatherleigh as spokesman, answers Feelim's final exclamation: "Which is worse -- th' burden of th' dead who are with us now; or that of the living still to come!"¹² She knows that "our end makes but a beginning for others," that "only the rottenness and ruin must die." She notes, as the insistent young lovers have testified earlier, that, despite war, death, and destruction,

¹²Collected Plays, IV, p. 108.

life goes on and will continue to go on:

The cherry is as red as ever; the apple blossom rosy;
and the sky is often blue; sweet lavender rears tops
of gentle purple; many a sturdy oak shall strut from a
dying acorn; and a maiden's lips still quiver for a kiss.¹³

While Oak Leaves and Lavender fails as satiric comedy, elements of satire are implicit and explicit in the characters, the situations, and the action it depicts. It does utilize the expressionistic techniques and approaches the fantasy integral to O'Casey's later and far better plays. Further, it affords an interesting example of an artist too close to his materials, too enraged to have effective control. Sean O'Casey, the artist who loves humanity and peace and progress, does not go gently nor gracefully into the dark night of war. As this play amply demonstrates, he goes screaming, even when he views the war as a holy one.

Cock-A-Doodle Dandy

Cock-A-Doodle Dandy is a symbolic satire intended to reveal the ever present knavish hypocrisy and malignant sickness that lie at the heart of modern society. Modern society suffers from the hypocrisy and the ironic anti-materialism of Marthraun, from the puritanical puddling and destruction of Shanaar and Father Domineer, and from the apathy of the "Down-and-Outs" who wait for a miracle to be delivered unto them.

The villains, here as in O'Casey's earlier morality plays, are stock villains labelled with name, uniform, and action. Shanaar is a religious quack. His name "means Old Man in Gaelic (Shan Ahr): but there is a biblical reference to Shinar, the land of confused languages where the Tower of Babel was built (Gen. 11:2,9), which is a particularly appropriate

¹³Ibid., p. 111.

allusion for Shanaar's confusion of superstitious nostrums, medieval exempla, and bog-Latin."¹⁴ His pretentious language is approached by Michael Marthraun who is concerned with Mahan's not being "versed in th' endurin' promulgacity of th' gospels,"¹⁵ as well as by the pomposity of Father Domineer's commands. Domineer, as his name clearly shows, must be the dominating force, and when his authority is defied, his rage and his violence destroy human life as he demonstrates when Mahan's lorry driver refuses to leave his lover. One-Eyed Larry, in addition to being half-blinded, is virtually a half-wit. He courts approval by lying and protects himself by cowering behind Domineer. Domineer's parish, Nyadnanave, is truly a Nest of Knaves, however saintly they profess themselves to be.¹⁶

Sailor Mahan, despite his alliance with the forces of evil, those forces intent on the destruction of joy and life, has some vestiges of goodness. He sings of a "Long time ago when men was men/ An' ships not ships that sailed just to an' fro-o-o," notes that "there's nothin' evil in a pretty face, or in a pair of lurin' legs,"¹⁷ perceives that Domineer and his militant corps of destroyers are fools, and recognizes the bearded Shanaar as a dangerous owl' cod. It is Mahan who rescues Loreleen from the vigilantes, who attempts to protect his lorry driver from Father Domineer, and who will not be bullied by either Michael or Domineer. Due to old

¹⁴ David Krause, Sean O'Casey, pp. 242-243.

¹⁵ Collected Plays, IV, p. 157.

¹⁶ Krause notes that Nyadnanave is Gaelic for "Nest of Saints; and the name also contains the ironic pun, Nest of Knaves. The Cock is the satiric mocker of Nyadnanavery." pp. 241-242.

¹⁷ Collected Plays, IV, p. 176, p. 125.

alliances and the prospects of continued financial gain, he is unable to leave Nyadnanave and follow the Cock, so he remains with those whose mission it is to destroy life and song and dance in the present and sings his memories of a long time ago.

The forces for good, for the preservation of life as it ought to be lived now, are led by the spectacular Cock -- a poet transformed and retaining the power of the word. Though a mathematical equation would be ridiculous, there are clearly discernible elements of O'Casey himself in the sardonic Cock, and, to complete the identification of the Cock and O'Casey's poet figure, this play is dedicated to "James Stephens: the Jestin' Poet With a Radiant Star in's Coxcomb."¹⁸ The Cock uses essentially the same kind of magic as that employed by Ayamonn in Red Roses for Me. The Cock's followers include Maid Marion, named for the lovely lady of Robin Hood's greenwood, a name evocative of a legendary era of hearty merriment and honest rebellious disregard for oppression and corrupt authority; and Robin Adair, the minstrel, whose name announces his eventual abandonment of Nyadnanave as it recalls its namesake, the old traditional ballad, "Robin Adair:"

What's this dull town to me, Robin Adair?
 What was't I wished to see, what wished to hear?
 Where all the joy and mirth
 Made this town a heaven on earth?
 O, they're all fled with thee, Robin Adair.

Another follower, Loreleen, is reminiscent of Die Lorelei, the siren of power and beauty whose beautiful songs lured sailors to destruction. In an O'Caseyan reversal, Loreleen is saved from destruction by a sailor who adores and would possess her charms. Loreleen's step-mother, Lorna, completes the list of those who follow the Cock and understand the power of his word and agrees

¹⁸

Ibid., p. 118.

with Marion that "th' place'll lose its brightness if th' Cock's killed."¹⁹

Utilizing his magic powers and those of his gifted followers, the Cock turns the materialistic Nyadnanave upside down and reveals, in the new view, the grotesque essence of the regimented inelasticity of Nyadnanave. The distorting process is used here to reveal and to emphasize truth, one such truth being that dance, though forbidden by the church in Domineer's parish, has been throughout history and will continue to be "a sacrament of rest and joy;"²⁰ a second truth is that, even in Domineer's parish, song is a spray of light in a dark place.²¹ Dance and song are presented as positive forces associated with the positive powers of Nature which the Cock somehow controls.

The efficacy of dance and song as healing and transforming rituals are demonstrated and proclaimed by O'Casey in various plays and essays. The triumphant dance in Red Roses for Me eliminates the poverty and misery on the banks of Liffey; Jannice makes song and dance integral to her quest for meaning in Within the Gates; the healing and sacramental powers of dance and song are even more fully discussed in The Drums of Father Ned. In all these incidents, Father Domineer's church, which O'Casey attacks, views song and dance as institutions of the devil. Domineer, with his scowl and his limp and his demands for obedience, is representative rather than individual. For O'Casey, he symbolizes a historical procession of Procrustean Priests whose chief concern was the size and shape of an inelastic regimented creed rather than the spirit and the capacities of man. Historically, O'Casey sees that creed as a compost of Thou Shalt Nots:

¹⁹

Ibid., p. 190.

²⁰

Sean O'Casey, "Merrical of Miracles," Under a Colored Cap, p. 208.

²¹

Collected Plays, IV, p. 177.

All those old boyos dreaded the dance -- St. Augustine, Salimbene, Aquinas, even Abelard, ... Even Petrarch, even he, immersed in the puritanism of the medieval church, denounced dancing too. Even he, a poet! Says he, "From dancing we get nothing but a libidinous and empty spectacle, hateful to honest eyes and unworthy of a man; take lust away, and you will have removed the dance also."²²

Like "all those old boyos," Father Domineer equates joy and sin, laughter and sin, song and sin, dance and sin. When the magic dance in the garden moves Mahan, Marthraun, and the Sergeant ever nearer to the ardour and abandon of Loreleen, Lorna, and Marion, Father Domineer enters from the midst of a loud, long peal of threatening thunder and "glares down at the swinging dancers" as he shouts with vicious intensity:

Stop that devil's dance! How often have yous been warned that th' avowed enemies of Christianity are on th' march everywhere! An' I find yous dancin'. How often have yous been told that pagan poison is floodin' th' world, an' that Ireland is dhrinkin' in generous doses through films, plays, and books! An' yet I come here to find yous dancin'! ...Th' empire of Satan's pushin' out its foundations everywhere, an' I find yous dancin', ubique ululanti cockalorum ochone, ululo!²³

As Robin Adair, the messenger who provides music for the dance, tells Michael Marthraun of his religion, "Faith, your fathers' faith is fear, an' now fear is your only fun."²⁴ Utilizing logic and the fact that Father Domineer's inelasticity will not permit him to understand, Robin Adair discovers to him that "th' devil was as often in th' street, an' as intimate in th' home when there was nor film nor play nor book."²⁵ Since the rigid spokesmen of the church see black as black, white as white, and joy as evil, O'Casey ironically grants their premise that song and dance are devil inspired,

²² Rose and Crown, p. 258.

²³ Collected Plays, IV, p. 185.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 161.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 184.

has Loreleen sprout horns, saint's pictures turn to the wall, and permits the Cock's followers to testify: Lorna says that "th' devil's not a bad fella either,"²⁶ and Maid Marion warns Robin Adair, "I've some of th' devil in me."²⁷ And the Devilareans, with their pagan gospel of song and dance, are united in their onslaught against the entrenched powers of conformity and codified religion. Their spiritual leader, O'Casey's devil who inspires joy and laughter, is close kinsman to Joyce's God who is a shout in the street, and he ultimately becomes Father Ned in O'Casey's later play, The Drums of Father Ned.

The natural rhythm of Father Ned's drums controls the action and the tempo of that play just as the Cock, in a more whimsical way, controls the action of Cock-A-Doodle Dandy. In both plays, the enemy is the entrenched power of the newly rich politician and codified religion -- the awesome power of state and church united against change of any kind and therefore against life itself. When such a union prevails, the dispensation of "Honour be th' clergy's regulated by how much a man can give,"²⁸ and the priests (like Domineer) can not smile; hypocrisy and complacency and shirking of social responsibility become modes of being dictated by the prevailing fear of change.

The devotees of this codified religion see good and evil in terms of financial profit and loss; Michael and Mahan, for example, condemn the unchristian ethics of the workers who demand a living wage when they should be thankful to be employed at all. Michael's wealth is ill-gotten and he

²⁶
Ibid., p. 156.

²⁷
Ibid., p. 161.

²⁸
Ibid., p. 159.

manages to twist that into a Christian virtue since it is his money that sends Julia to Lourdes. While congratulating himself on good business sense and trying to outfox Mahan, he spouts platitudes against materialism and tallies his own increasing wealth. O'Casey's attack on Christian Materialism is extended on the level of pun and parody to include the politicians of Ireland, the newly powerful members of the bourgeoisie aristocracy who are further damned by "the terrible beauty of the tall hat."

Michael Marthraun, with his new top hat, his impressive public office, and his eager anticipation of a papal visitor is De Valera reduced to absurdity. Michael, like De Valera, belongs to the right organizations, prays to the right God, and does business with the right people. O'Casey's bitterness here is but a brief glimpse of that displayed in "A Terrible Beauty is Borneo,"²⁹ which is an extended examination of the fearful new nation under the fearful new leadership of an Easter Monday veteran:

Devotion to the church's curriculum kept De Valera on the steady path, avoiding hell, and reaching heaven, and all that. His kneeling on a stage, in front of a crowded house... to receive the blessing of a visiting cardinal, was, to Sean, a humiliating thing for the head of a Republican State to do.³⁰

Marthraun, the DeValerian, is in league with Father Domineer, and they are at opposite poles from O'Casey's Devilarians, the followers of the Cock. The first is the way of death, the way of further increasing the compost of generations of Procrustean denials; the second is the way of life, the way of joy and laughter here and now. The conflict between O'Casey's DeValereans and his Devilarians provides the central action of

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Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, pp. 200-222.

³⁰

Ibid., p. 216.

this drama and of every play written after 1950 by Sean O'Casey.³¹

Cock-A-Doodle Dandy combines the universal application of the morality play with the specialized illumination of the expressionistic technique; further, it demonstrates in all three scenes O'Casey's contention that life has a lot of time for dance, laughter, and song, for each is a part of life itself. He says, "It is my favorite play; I think it is my best play -- a personal opinion,"³² and says of its possible interpretation:

Broadly it stands against everything interfering with, or hindering, the natural joys of life, applicable to all men, but cast in a gay Irish mold. It shows, or tries to show -- regarded in this way -- that Ireland is the world; just as Ibsen made Norway a world, and Strindberg made a world of Sweden.³³

In this play, O'Casey goes beyond the surrealism and the posed distortions of The Silver Tassie and Within the Gates to use a new technique anticipated by the Liffey scene in Red Roses For Me. He utilizes magic and supernatural weapons to combat the lethargy, complacency, and evil fostered by Domineer and Domineer's religion. In Cock-A-Doodle-Dandy the magic is farcical and its immediate effects successfully reduce the materialists to ridiculous levels as they worry about religious pictures turning to the wall, devilish horns sprouting from the foreheads of the beautiful girls, the demonized liquor bottle, the collapsing chairs, and the hat-cock confusion. The individual episodes repeat the same theme over and over again, showing

³¹

Krause calls the Nyadnanavians "'devalerian' puritans under strict orders from their politicians and priests to beware of the joyous temptations of the 'devilarian' Cock." p. 251.

³²

Sean O'Casey, Letter to the New York Times in November of 1958 as quoted by Robert Hogan, The Experiments of Sean O'Casey, p. 122.

³³

Hogan, p. 125.

graphically that the true members of Domineer's church are fearful of and are incapable of change. Their answer to anything out of the ordinary is that it is evil and that it must be destroyed.

The mock-heroic battle between Domineer's forces and the Cock's magic permits the satirist to dissect his enemy at leisure and to reduce his enemy's mode of being to absurdity. Shanaar advises that all things unnatural and unseemly must be ignored; that evil demons -- in this case the followers of the Cock -- have no behinds (an interesting absurdity in view of the charges against Loreleen, Lorna, and Maid Marion); and that no demons caught out in the open air can withstand the force of Latin phrases. The stage for the mock-heroic battle is set as the Cock's miracles unfold before the awed eyes of those who try to ignore them and shout Latin incantations toward them at the same time. One-Eyed Larry, half blind coward and obvious liar, carries bell, book, and candle for Father Domineer who will attempt to cleanse the house of evil spirits. The superstitions of the devoted followers of Shanaar and Domineer are as ridiculous as their attempts to hold up their trousers against the fearsome wind.

Their authority and the symbols of their power reside entirely in the grim visage of Father Domineer and in the impotent guns of Michael and the comic Sergeant. The Sergeant fires his guns at the top hat and fears the hat's "unholy novelty" of either changing into the Cock or disappearing whenever the gun is fired. Michael, despite his magic charms and his false knowledge of the ~~existence~~ of evil, screams at Lorna,

...Through our bulgin' eyes, didn't we see th' horri-
fication of me tall-hat turnin' into th' demonized
cock? Me tall-hat, you bitch, me own tall-hat is
roamin' round th' counthry, temptin' souls to destroy them-
selves with dancin' an' desultory pleasures!³⁴

³⁴Collected Plays, IV, p. 180.

Both of these authorities, the grim visages of the priest and the guns, are less than effective against the evil of joyous life fostered by the miraculous Cock. Domineer is magically whisked away and returned in disarray on the back of a wild duck, either a white one or a speckled one, or perhaps on the back of a barnacle goose, depending on which of Father Domineer's followers has the clearest vision. All are eye witnesses and all provide different accounts of the miracle which restored their priest to them. All the eyewitnesses are members of Father Domineer's church and their conflicting accounts provide, in context, yet another satiric view of the religious miracles extolled by eye witnesses and clung to as positive proof of the power of the church. A point obscured by the bickering of the miracle proclaimers is that Domineer's return is hardly a stately one and his steed, such as it was, was not commanded by his authority.

The stern visage of Father Domineer's authority is clearly evident in the actions of his vigilantes who throw stones at Loreleen and are praised for their noble work of beating, mauling, and robbing her; his authority is further evident as he addresses Loreleen as sinful slut, honied harlot, painted paramour, and shuttle-cock of sin. The vigilantes are women far less attractive than their victim and lustful louts whose "whole nature's a tuft of villainies!" Lorna addresses one of the lustful toughs who would condemn Loreleen, "If God had given you a tusk, you'd rend asundher every woman of th' disthricht!"³⁵ Robin Adair addresses Domineer as "Father, so full of pity and loving-kindness," an ironic greeting designed to bring the melee into focus. The entire episode

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Ibid., p. 214.

juxtaposes, in satiric fashion, Christ's treatment of the guilty adulteress and Father Domineer's treatment of the innocent Loreleen.

Domineer, rather than forgiving and aiding, condemns her, condones the robbery and mauling, and threatens her with death if she doesn't get over the "virtuous bordhers" of Nyadnanave. He is frankly fascinated by the "rosy rottenness" of her sin, and is a lecherous old man stuffing the minds of his followers with meanness and fear. Agreeing with the fanatic Shanaar, he teaches them the catechism that "a woman's always a menace to a man's soul. Woman is th' passionate way to hell!"³⁶ Loreleen tells Domineer, "When you condemn a fair face, you sneer at God's good handiwork. You are layin' your curse, sir, not upon a sin, but on a joy."³⁷ The way of Father Domineer with his flock is a thinly veiled satiric allegory of the church's way with mankind, as O'Casey sees it, a way he sees as consistently opposed to any social change.

Father Domineer and his followers resist all change and all competition as necessarily evil. Women who contradict their husbands, wear bright colors, and consider themselves as independent human beings violate what Michael Marthraun knows to be "a basic law of nature and a law of God." Lorna, his "costumed slut," breaks this law and further jeopardizes her soul by seeing avarice as evil and materialism as a way of death. The basic law of nature and of God is reaffirmed by the Sergeant who says of women, "Th' house is their province, as th' clergy's tired tellin' them. They'll have to realize that th' home's their only proper place";³⁸ and by Father

³⁶

Ibid., p. 218.

³⁷

Ibid., p. 216.

³⁸

Ibid., p. 173.

Domineer, who orders the women into the house, "th' place, th' proper place, th' only place for th' woman."³⁹ This consistent attitude is further mocked by O'Casey who portrays all the followers of the magic Cock, except Robin Adair, as women.

Those who follow the authority of Domineer, O'Casey's villains, blame books for "th' woeful way we are,"⁴⁰ and they describe "minds that babble about books...[as] th' biggest curse of all."⁴¹ Loreleen's sinful mind, according to Michael Marthraun, "is always mustherin' dangerous thoughtsplundered outa evil books!"⁴² Father Domineer knows books to be "Hell's bells tolling people away from th' thruth,"⁴³ and presumably away from the basic laws of nature and of God, as he interprets them. Such being the case, the vigilantes follow their leader and confiscate two banned books after the evil spirits have been exorcised from Marthraun's house: one by Voltaire and Ullissississies which is "Worse than th' other one."⁴⁴ For life to continue as it is and for them to remain what they are, Domineer's followers must oppose any stimulus to change just as they must repress any evidence of life and must maintain their power at any cost.

Actually, the way of Nyadnanave is, as Lorna observes, the way of materialism and the way of death. Recognizing the social evils perpetrated by Michael's avarice, she warns, "If you want to embalm yourself in money, you won't get me to do it."⁴⁵ The hypocrisy of the materialistic

³⁹ Ibid., p. 199.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 160.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 173.

⁴² Ibid., p. 200.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 200-201.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 201. The confiscation and burning of books that is sponsored by Father Domineer's religion is further developed in The Bishop's Bonfire and in The Drums of Father Ned.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 205.

religion of the Nyadnanavians is perpetuated in their adoration and blind faith in such miracles as those viewed by eye-witnesses in the "money making madness" at Lourdes. O'Casey is especially splenetic in his comments on the miracle cures and on those who sit back and wait for such miracles to change the way of the world. Father Domineer sends Julia there to "fetch home a miracle," to join the crowds of all colors

that race, tirra lirra, along to Lourdes! Racing along, carrying their rotting crops of humanity, to where a hymn and a prayer are to prosper them back to health. The woe and the waste of it all! Lourdes, where hope is swallowed down by misery to be vomited up again, more miserable, and lost. Where Lazarus is offered a crumb, but can never crawl near enough to get it. ...Where belief plays her last joke on the dying. The church's great sweep of misery and woe. ...The Coney Island of misery, agony, and woe.⁴⁶

O'Casey continues his harangue against the blindness of regimented faith and faith-healing by noting that Lourdes, a religious shrine, takes in more money than any bank can hold. Such wealth and such energies could be more profitably invested in a cure for killing diseases and

the direr ills of man, sending more young to the grave than Lourdes can cure in an eternity of time. Disease can never be conquered, can never be quelled by emotion's wailful screaming or faith's cymballic prayer. It can only be conquered by the energy of humanity and the cunning in the mind of man. In the patience of a Curie, in the enlightenment of a Faraday, a Rutherford, a Pasteur, a Nightingale, and all other apostles of light and cleanliness, rather than of a woebegone godliness, we shall find final deliverance from plague, pestilence, and famine.⁴⁷

In Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, Julia returns uncured, destined to an early death. Her sickness, like that of Mollser in an earlier play, reflects the diseased condition of society itself, which will not be cured by a miracle.

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Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, pp. 382-383.

⁴⁷

Ibid., pp. 383-384.

For Julia, as for other victims fated to remain in Nyadnanave or its counterpart, the only cure is death.

Each of the scenes in this satiric play ends on a chilling note, indication enough that the main point of O'Casey's satire is more than laughter at man's folly. The villains are vicious and dangerous to life itself. Scene I ends in a mock ritual as Julia is ushered off to Lourdes by a parish priest who cannot smile, on a journey whose consequences testify to the inadequacy of faith without action. Scene II ends with the priest's symbolic murder of the lorry driver who will not conform and will not renounce his lover. The death is presented in a hackneyed and unconvincing way, but its thematic importance is obvious on a symbolic level. Father Domineer condemns to death those who are finally disobedient, and he continues to wage active and deadly war against life, joy, song, and dance in any combination. Scene III ends with the revelers being expelled from Nyadnanave and taking with them all the song and dance, all the life, that was there. Robin Adair follows them, playing his accordian and singing; Michael Marthraun is left behind clutching his rosary, and Julia remains on her stretcher awaiting death which is simultaneously the way of life and the only escape from Nyadnanave after the Cock is expelled.

Father Domineer is successful in driving life and joy from his parish. His influence and power, ridiculous as they are, are too strong for the natural inclinations. Lorna, Loreleen, Maid Marion, and Robin Adair are free from the destructive materialism of the community and leave it to its own end. They, like Synge's tramps and tinkers, will not be denied the joys of song and dance; like their counterparts in Synge and in O'Casey's earlier plays, they know the power of the word. They cannot transform an unwilling society but they can and do leave the place "where

a whisper of love...bites away some of th' soul," the place whose priest cannot smile and whose cowardly citizens cannot face their own failures. Unable to transform Nyadnanave, the followers of the Cock go "To a place where life resembles life more than it does here." Marthraun, who is "very lonely now," having "no one left...but th' Son o' God," asks, "What, Messenger, would you have me do?" The messenger replies characteristically and truthfully, "Die. There is little else left useful for the likes of you to do."⁴⁸

O'Casey's bitterness is more apparent in this than in any preceding play. The optimism that marks most of his other works is absent here. It is driven out with Loreleen, Lorna, Maid Marion, and Robin Adair. Nyadnanave is a monument to death, to complacency, lethargy, and blind faith. The artist's satiric advantage is marked as he combines elements from virtually every genre in this kaleidoscopic expose of society's ills. For the first time, the opposition wins a decisive victory, but their victory is a hollow one. Even in victory, they remain fools, fools who fear truth, ignore truth, spout incantations against truth, and try always to protect their positions of relative power against change of any kind. So it is that the women of Nyadnanave must stay in their appointed temples and obey their husbands, books which arouse questions or even puzzled thought must be destroyed, and evil spirits which would bring about social change must be hunted down and either destroyed or driven out. This is necessary for the continuance of life in Nyadnanave, whether the evil spirits be called Jim Larkin, Ayamonn Breydon, or Cock-A-Doodle Dandy.

This, like O'Casey's other plays, offers far more than instant entertainment. Its scope is universal and the villains are not restricted to the theatre stage; they are all those who would

⁴⁸ Collected Plays, IV, p. 221.

drive the joy of life from the hearts of men; ...It isn't the clergy alone who boo and bluster against this joy of life in living, in dance, song, and story...and who interfere in the free flow of thought from man to man...They are fools, but they are menacing fools, and should be fought anywhere they shake a fist, be they priest, peasant, prime minister or proletarian.⁴⁹

Hall of Healing

O'Casey's own experiences in the Parish Dispensaries of Dublin and his memories of them form the basis for this "sincere farce," a play as censorious as it is sincere in damning inadequate and inhumane medical care available to the poor in Dublin. This is perhaps the only play in O'Casey's canon that was more effective and more censorious than he intended, for he was unaware when he recalled the incidents of his childhood and early manhood and wrote them into this play, that the same conditions and the same rickety dispensing shacks still existed and were still operative in the Dublin of 1951. "The notorious Red Ticket that exacerbated some of O'Casey's days, was still the method of communication between patient and doctor, and, for all he knows, flourishes still."⁵⁰ One severe young critic of Hall of Healing so hopelessly misread O'Casey, the play, and Dublin itself that he was able to condemn O'Casey's "attitude of profound contempt for the poor," to read the characters and the style as fraudulent new Stage-Irishmen and Irishism, and to conclude: "The hopelessness you portray in Hall of Healing is out of date."⁵¹ Whether Patrick Galvin really believed that O'Casey contemptuously exploited the suffering of the poor is immaterial;

⁴⁹ Sean O'Casey, comments in New York Times (November 9, 1958) as quoted by Krause, p. 258.

⁵⁰ Sunset and Evening Star, pp. 316-317.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 318-320.

it is important to note that O'Casey's "Down-and-Outs" are not necessarily from the lower echelon of the economic scale, any more than all members of the proletariat are necessarily "Down-and-Outs."

Hall of Healing does not pretend to be great drama, nor does its author call it a favorite play, a label reserved for Juno, Plough and the Stars, The Silver Tassie, Cock-A-Doodle Dandy and perhaps two or three others. Hall of Healing does use the device of the morality play in an ironically realistic way. The characters have no individuality, are called simply the Doctor, Black Muffler, Red Muffler, Lad, Young Woman, etc. The waiting action they are involved in emphasizes the uncertainty, need, resignation, and frustration that comprise their lot in life. The drabness of their existence is effectively symbolized by the drab, patched, threadbare clothes that cover their pain-wracked undernourished bodies. Their flesh tones are described in various shades of yellow, pale gray, and white, and the only color in their lives exists in the warning signs posted about the dispensary in bright reds and greens and blacks -- TUBERCULOSIS: BEWARE, CANCER: BEWARE, DIPHTHERIA: BEWARE. These and the colored medicines in the colored and clear bottles provide all the visual diversion from the colors and the constant awareness of death.

These morality figures suffer from rheumatism, delerium tremens, diptheria, and consumption; the old Doctor, a human being who was their friend, died of cancer, and the new one is as helpless against their poverty as he is against his own addiction to the "dhrop." The misery of these poor is emphasized by the farcical antics of Alleluia as he dances, in their presence, to the organ music heard from the church next door, sings "The Rose of Tralee," enforces orders and rules, and fears the Doctor. The Doctor's Monday hang-over and his inordinate concern for his fountain pen and his rules evoke

laughter and horror, the first because he is a fool, the second because the sick and the dying are dependent upon him. To magnify the wide separation between his lot and that of his patients, the Doctor's rich warm clothing and that of his Apothecary contrast sharply with the threadbare wraps worn by the patients. The separation becomes even more obvious as the drunken doctor refuses to see the nine year old child of Red Muffler because he is too busy, he is hungover, and "there are thousands of kids like yours gasping for life in the city today."⁵² As the Young Woman who is dying of consumption takes her prescription of liniment and her "note to the consumption dispensary o' Charles Street," she recognizes the note as her death warrant, as did Mollser in both The Plough and the Stars and "A Fall in a Gentle Wind." For these services, the Doctor and the Apothecary expect gratitude, devotion, and humility from the patient poor. O'Casey's rage against the conditions permitting such poverty and such suffering is as much in evidence as ever. The play is set in winter and the cold, falling snow is the same snow that covers Dublin in Joyce's The Dubliners, the snow of death. The essential difference is that O'Casey's snow is wet and cold; his characters are miserable in their sickness and poverty, and he offers no romantic illusions concerning the relationships of the present and the past. The time is now and "Death has sometimes a kindlier touch than many a human hand,"⁵³ in that it removes the sufferer from the maladies of life.

The bitter irony of the play's title, Hall of Healing, becomes more and more apparent as death's inevitability and death's presence are made manifest in the lives of the poverty stricken patients. The irony is

⁵²
Collected Plays, III, p. 270.

⁵³
Ibid., p. 272.

further dramatized as the Apothecary refers to Red Muffler, the outraged father of the dead child, as a "cheeky boyo" and continues, "Not a grain of gratitude in one of them for all we thry to do for them. ...It would almost make a man despair of humanity."⁵⁴ Alleluia's dance to the organ music and the patient waiting of the poor for medical aid are identified as a dance of death by Red Muffler, who also recognizes that "Patience is only th' holy name for suicide."⁵⁵ Red Muffler, O'Casey's socialist spokesman, despite his rage and his suffering, is impotent against the system which condemned his child and the Young Woman to death. The Doctor and the Apothecary go home on schedule, leaving Alleluia to dance his dance and sing his song in his "fussy, fiddlin'" way. Equally impotent is the rage of Green Muffler who spent his last penny on empty bottles as directed by the officious Alleluia, empty bottles not used for his prescription. His threats and outrage gain neither aid nor special attention from the patient poor who wait for their fair share of the liniments and mixtures. Except for Red Muffler and Green Muffler, the Doctor's patients are the "Down-and-Outs" waiting numbly for death.

The satire and the comedy in this "sincerious farce" sharply attack the "blasted fomenter of medicine" who permits his patients to die as he maintains his schedule and enforces his rules, as he stacks the red tickets on his desk to worry about tomorrow. Those who die become "something silently seen no more," and "it's curious how th' old is left to wither on, while th' young often go before they've time to bloom. It doesn't seem right to me."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 272.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 264.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 271-272.

Hall of Healing, Bedtime Story, and Time to Go share a peculiarly and bitterly blended optimism and resignation. All three were performed for the first time on May 7, 1952, in New York, the year after they were published. They provide an interesting mixture of O'Casey's experimental techniques and the realism of his earlier period. His chosen kinship to Shaw in his continuing war against poverty, in his presentation of truth as it is rather than as we would have it be, and in his extensive stage directions are as apparent in Hall of Healing as in any of his longer plays. The stage directions themselves serve both literary and dramatic purpose and keep this play from being only a loud scream of protest. The bitterness of the satire is akin to that in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, but here there is neither song, nor dance, nor a magic messiah. The only hope is in the continued existence of such complainers as Red Muffler and Green Muffler, complainers who refuse to accept death as a blessing or as the wish of God, complainers who recognize injustice and social sickness in the Doctor's manner of allocating life and death as he enforces his rules and permits Alleluia to reign supreme in the waiting room.

Bedtime Story

O'Casey draws freely from the farce, melodrama, and situation-comedy traditions for this episodic expose of the "decline and fall into the drab and malicious menace of puritanism."⁵⁷ Angela Nightingale is the only vital person on stage: she combines vitality, paganism, and sense of humor in her lucrative professions of con-artist and whore. Angela likes to dance and sing, ignores public opinion, and recognizes that

⁵⁷

Under a Colored Cap, p. 54.

Sometime or other, we have to face out of all we get into:
face out of getting into bed with a woman no less than face
out into silence from the glamour of prayer; face out of
summer into winter; face out of life into death!⁵⁸

Her gull, John Jo Mulligan, is a "constitutionally frightened chap" who will never recover from a "futile sense of sin," from an overwhelming fear of public opinion, and from his sincere conviction that Angela "should be ashamed and sorry ... instead of feeling sinfully gay about it. It's necessary to feel sorry for a sin of this kind."⁵⁹ Mulligan wears a Trilby hat and is proud that "the head of my department's a grand Knight of Columbanus, an uncomprising Catholic,..."⁶⁰ The Trilby hat, here as in Within the Gates, identifies the wearer with the makers and the fearers of public opinion and with the worshippers at the shrine of the daily newspaper; just as surely, his actions in the presence of Angela Nightingale identify him as a fool who is "all for go-ahead godliness"⁶¹ as soon as he has completed his carnal sin on a cold January morning "the very next day after me Novena." He prays to Saint Panteemalaria, adores the Knights of Columbanus, and promises only a quiet hour of poetry to Angela, a quiet hour of Yeats. Apparently the only line he read was "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree" before he was overcome by Angela's "dance that uplifted ... [her] skirt out of the way of ... [her] movements and juggled a vision of spiritual desolation into a mirage of palpitating enjoyments."⁶²

He, like all of O'Casey's respectability-enslaved puritans, is ultimately reduced to total absurdity by the vigor of Angela Nightingale.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 231.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 234.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 234

⁶² Ibid., p. 237

Using blackmail like the veteran she is, Miss Nightingale ultimately departs with Mulligan's ring, his best overcoat, his umbrella, his new wallet, £ 18 in cash, and a check for £ 10. Having stripped him of these symbols of masculinity, respectability, and sanity, Angela leaves him with his Trilby hat and his second best overcoat to "face out" the winter that always follows summer.⁶³ The world he must face is his own element, the world of puritanical hypocrisy, ridiculous poses, and public opinion. Ironically, his landlady, Miss Massie, and his friend, Daniel Halibut, accurately diagnose Mulligan's madness and have him hauled away by a policeman, a doctor, and a nurse, while he babbles incoherently about his wallet, his money, and Angela's lost handbag.

The world attacked by O'Casey is the one in which Miss Massie "sleepwalks" to her gentleman boarders "at the dead of night, with a loving look on her face,"⁶⁴ the one in which anything out of the ordinary is presumed mad. The Holmberg-wearing Halibut is not as severely ridiculed in this Anatole burlesque as is his celibate friend, for Halibut loves to dance and sing and try his way with the girls. He does not attempt to hide his appetites behind a religious facade nor to blame them on sleepwalking. Furthermore, he chooses life itself to the canned questions of Yeats, who will "drive you nuts." Neither does he use Yeats to lure girls into his

⁶³ Angela Nightingale offers John Jo Mulligan the same chance for life that pretty Alice, in her more jaded way, offered Jack Avreen in "I Wanna Woman." In both of these and in The Drums of Father Ned, when Bernadette Shillayley profits exorbitantly from the lust of Alec Skerighan, the Ulsterman, O'Casey contrasts the essential freedom that honesty provides with the ever present fear that accompanies hypocrisy; in all cases the hypocrites are greatly concerned for their reputations. In all cases, the concern reduces them to absurdity and deprives them of material wealth. They, in turn, gain nothing for their efforts except shame and fear.

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Collected Plays, IV, p. 252.

rooms, to make him drowsy, nor to explain his late hours. In the mad world inhabited by John Jo, Halibut, and Miss Massie, the only recourse when patterns are broken is to assume the violator insane; hence, Massie and Halibut have Mulligan committed while he assumes both of them to be mad. All are essentially correct, but for the wrong reasons. This superficial satire of the mores and customs of respectability is funny, does burlesque the manners of a whole segment of society, and did manage to get itself banned by the Education Council -- the latter to the great delight of O'Casey.

...it was decided by this Council that this play was too saucy to be shown to the elderly audiences which might come to witness the performances during the drama trials of the Festival. So this little play has never been performed in England, as far as I know, except by the students for the students of the R.A.D.A., for fear it might weaken the moral fibres of the elderly, bringing the land to a decline and fall into the depravity of whoredom; though this, at least, would be better and brighter than to decline and fall into the drab and malicious menace of puritanism.⁶⁵

Angela Nightingale's song, her can-can, her escape from the permeating madness of John Jo's world, and her victory over hypocrisy are thematic and provide both structure and continuity for the play. Angela Nightingale, as her name testifies, is much too good and much too alive for the hypocrisy and the inelasticity of John Jo's respectable world of saints and Trilby hats. She passes through his life singing her song and dancing her dance, and he remains unchanged. A devotee of novenas, materialism, and respectability, Mulligan is momentarily stripped of all his grandeur by Angela Nightingale and left with only hollow pretense and his hollow zeal for "go ahead godliness." Constantly seeking for a divine world and

furtively concealing his human qualities, Mulligan, like Marthraun clutching his rosary, makes his way a way of death. Angela, like the Cock and his revelers, has moved through Nyadnanave and moves on in her quest for the quick of life.

Time to Go: A Morality Comedy in One Act

There is nothing new or original in this morality play which uses the microcosm of Ireland to represent the world. O'Casey reveals the vices and follies of the alliance between business and Canon Bullero, an alliance which permits the clergyman to obtain large donations in return for his priestly silence concerning the exorbitant prices charged by Michael Flagonson and Bull Farrell; once again, the artist points up the reasons for the mass emigration of Ireland's young and warns those materialists whose only joy is in the jingling of coins against the death they court.

Kelly from the Isle of Mananaun and Widda Machree are blessed with honesty and the desire to conduct business honestly. Such intentions can only destroy the lucrative jingle-jingle of business in the Irish country town, whose citizens demand conformity to the local mores. When the kilt-wearing Kelly and his sister-soul, Widda Machree, do not conform, they are adjudged insane, public menaces, and real threats to the status quo. This is precisely the value of the marvelous pair: they do threaten the status quo as they dance, sing, and wish to promote honesty among the daylight robbers, the rogues, and the gulls of the country town.

The town itself is just recuperating from the heavy and the lucrative business of a fair which provided both the clergy and the businessmen with inordinate profits. Flagonson is surprised at "How lonesome an' woebegone the decorations look now the crowd's gone."⁶⁶ The blasted trees

⁶⁶Collected Plays, IV, p. 262.

with their withered limbs symbolize the way of death taken by the town. The magical powers of the marvelous Kelly are similar to those of the Cock in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy; the blasted trees and the authorities of the town are momentarily transformed: the archetypal argument concerning the fair price of cattle ceases, the trees flower and bloom, and the townspeople recognize a miracle in what they experience.⁶⁷ The miracle is short-lived, however, and is soon discounted as a hallucination as the scramble for profit and credit resume.

The town drives away the young people who pause for nourishment; its own "young are goin' who aren't already gone. ...there's ne'er a one, lad or lass, in th' disthricht between seventeen and thirty."⁶⁸ It remains in the grip of the triumvirate of Business, Clergy, and "Polis" -- the last because the Polis are "th' only ones to put th' fear o' God in"⁶⁹ the children. This triumvirate is supreme and its powers remain unquestioned except by the young couple and by Kelly and the Widda. The triumvirate's power, as presented by O'Casey, resides in the shaky and shameful practice of furtive protection money paid by Flagonson and Farrell to Canon Bullero, and in the clergy's willingness to have the "Polis" enforce church dictates. Business and Church and "Polis" demand that such flagrant violators as the Widda and Kelly be cured of their madness.

When Kelly proclaims that the harp of Tara now sounds like jingling coins, he is arrested by the sergeant who will take him "Where you'll be cured into seein' things as we all see them," and the Widda is escorted by the civic guard "along to where your poor mind'll be mended."⁷⁰ Kelly warns

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 291.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 263.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 264-265.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 289.

the materialistic vigilantes by way of prophecy:

Soon yous'll all be no more than these two barren, deadened trees. Then when yous are silent stiff, others will count your coins.⁷¹

His prophecy comes to pass, even after the transformation and after the townspeople have recognized him and his Widda as saints.

The transformation was a fleeting one because no real change is possible without effort by the communicants, whether the miracle is on the River Liffey or in a country town. The madness of society which sees all change as dangerous and all who initiate change as mad is emphasized here by distorted and incoherent language, by the public's insistence that the miracle workers have a warrant for their actions, and by the foolish consistency of their little minds. This village, like Nyadnanave is condemned to death when its potential saviors decide that "it's time to go." Life and hope for life depart with the magic of honesty and song and dance; in the village, after the hallucination, it's business as usual.

The Bishop's Bonfire: A Sad Play Within the Tune of a Polka

The Bishop's Bonfire once again presents a microcosmic Irish village as the site for the continuing battle between life and death, the battle between youth and age, between construction and destruction. The action in Ballyoonagh is, as Father Boheroe discovers, a "punch and judy show", laughed at by God as the church officials pull the strings of the hapless players. Father Boheroe's name is at the same time an anagramatic Boyo-Hero and is Gaelic for Red Road;⁷² this priest who is considered heretical by both the

⁷¹Ibid., p. 289.

⁷²Robert Hogan, Experiments of Sean O'Casey, p. 124. Hogan translates Boheroe's name and identifies him as "the *raisonneur* left over from the well-made play."

faithful and the mercenary is the closest O'Casey ever comes to a truly human Roman priest. Boheroe does not condemn drinking, dancing, singing, dreaming, nor making love: the first is but an attempt "to glimpse heaven through the wrong window";⁷³ concerning song and dance, he believes that "merriment may be a way of worship" while "Too much formal prayer...sometimes ~~makes~~ a soul conceited";⁷⁴ of making love, he assures cowardly Catholic Daniel that "a man in a woman's arms may indeed be close to God."⁷⁵ His heresy further testifies that

All places are sacred, ... the church we pray in, the homes sheltering us, the shops where we get the things we need to go on living, the halls we dance in; yea, the very place we walk on is holy ground. Work, too, is holy, but only when it's reasonable....⁷⁶

This ideal priest, like O'Casey's ideal poet, relates his artistry to the nature and the needs of life. Religion must be more than a showpiece, must do more than consume time and make money, must accept and extoll beauty; further, despite the church's pietistic reverence for work, Boheroe states, "Too much work misfits a soul for heaven and for here."⁷⁷ Of the problems besetting men, he believes that "when we have problems, ... ourselves are the saints to solve them."⁷⁸ Boheroe contends that man doesn't do his part when he waits for God to perform miracles and that "God is unhappy when we don't do what we can with what He gives us."⁷⁹

⁷³ Sean O'Casey, The Bishop's Bonfire (London: Macmillan and Company, 1961), p. 24.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 114.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 27.

Boheroe is O'Casey's version of what a priest ought to be: aware of and involved in life, a human being dedicated to the understanding and aid of other human beings. His role in this play is not a comic one; the ironic humor of his utterances depends entirely on one's perception of the wide divergence between what ought to be and what is. The priest ought to be a man devoted to improving the living conditions of his people. By the end of the play, it is obvious that such a priest as Boheroe can no more survive in the church of Ballyoonagh than the Cock's spirit can survive in Nyadnanave, for Boheroe is opposed to the money-church power-combine which rules and will continue to rule the microcosmic village.

Codger Sleenhaun, an eighty-four year old man devoted to joy and song and production in life, is a thinly disguised O'Casey in a vicarious return from exile. He is at the same time wise and foolishly proud, aged and delightfully young at heart, respected for his abilities and expelled for his attitudes. The relationship between the young Father Boheroe, the old Codger Sleenhaun, and the defrocked priest, Manus Moanroe, is a close and important one. All are alive and all recognize life as it is to be a monstrous joke, a punch and judy show, an affliction to be cured rather than endured. When Codger is discharged and ordered out of the village, Manus decides to leave also; Boheroe, though not a "dead priest" as Manus is, notes of professional church people, especially the nuns and priests, "We are dead people, and must learn to lie circumspectly in our shrouds."⁸⁰ For his heresy and his affiliation with life among the living, Father Boheroe is summarily threatened by the same Monsignor who dismissed the Codger as a "vicious void in God's Kingdom,"⁸¹ and said, of the departure

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 113.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 101.

of Manus, "A very good riddance!"⁸²

Manus Moanroe's growing disgust with "god-frighted people" and his cynical attitude toward the construction of temples which must be ever "higher and higher till the shouting of heavenly pride encases and hides the growling-grumble of men"⁸³ mark him as opponent of the Reiligan-Rankin-Roman combine, whose pietistic materialism seeks effectively to destroy life itself. Manus's frustrated love for Foorawn, who has vowed eternal chastity, his devotion to Codger, who is expelled from Reiligan's garden after long and devoted service, and his bitterness at being alive after his suicidal heroism in the British Air Force are all involved ultimately in his decision to right some wrongs by "stealing a little from a lot stolen from many."⁸⁴

Manus's rage at the chastity-bound Foorawn as a "mournful, empty shell of womanhood," and a "sounding cymbal...of tinkling brass" is responsible for Foorawn's death, which on a symbolic level is her total commitment to the church. Her death is as dramatically ineffective as the drawn out scene involving Lt. Reiligan's jeep-plan for the defense of England. In O'Casey's view, Ireland was and is a priest-ridden island, and Foorawn's death is somehow the responsibility of the church which denied her life, pronounced Manus a dead priest, devoted itself to the collection of large sums of money, and ignored the humanity of its victims.

Reiligan's name, while a legitimate name, is also an anagrammatic Religion; he, in his pomp and glory, with his riches and his top hat, serves

⁸² Ibid., p. 109.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 11.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

many satiric functions for O'Casey. His attitude toward profit is implicit in his dismissal of Codger, "I'm sorry at losin' the Codger, but he must be nearin' his end anyhow,"⁸⁵ and in his desire to keep Manus Moanroe, "his right hand man," on his payroll. His appointment as Papal Count, his financing of the elaborate preparations for Bishop Mullarkey's visit, and his desire to match his daughter in marriage with the Bishop's brother further indicate his relationship to the established church.

Reiligan is perhaps the most representative figure in this play, for, with his great wealth, his gauche tastes, and his black hat, he is also the bourgeois Irish politician of DeValera ilk. His class is brutally satirized in his selection of and great concern for rugs, tapestries, tables, piano, prayer stools, and ducks. Reiligan, with his papal association, his political and economic power, is the religion of Ireland, as viewed by Sean O'Casey. Keelin is a virtual slave in her father's house, and the Monsignor -- adept manipulator that he is -- takes care not to offend Reiligan, who has the power to buy, sell, hire, and banish men.

So it is that O'Casey's names consistently identify his characters, their true natures, and occasionally their thematic functions in his plays. Canon Burren will burn books and pictures to welcome Bishop Mullarkey to his old home town. Bishop Mullarkey's bonfire, which casts eerie shadows during the concluding action of this "sad play within the tune of a polka," means different things to different characters. It will light a welcome for the Bishop; it will destroy evil books whose words are like the words of Manus Moanroe;⁸⁶ Rankin prays that "it may light such a blaze in all the

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Ibid., p. 106.

⁸⁶

Ibid., p. 43.

hearts in Ballyoonagh that men may no longer think of women, or women think of men...."⁸⁷ The Prodical notes with more perception and more censure than he knows, "We're all part of the Bishop's Bonfire, flaming up with feelin's of welcomin' good-will."⁸⁸ Father Boheroe angrily rejects an invitation to witness the burning, "Oh, to hell with the Bishop's Bonfire."⁸⁹ Each of the characters is identified in terms of his relationship to and his attitude toward the welcoming bonfire. The bonfire is the church's way with dissenters and several earlier plays anticipated this thematic and titular use of it. The church's saints remain Columbanus, Panteemalaria, and Casabianca. The evil spirits remain those banished in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy: "Kissalass, Velvet t nighs, Reedabuck, Dancesolong, an' Sameagain."⁹⁰ The church officers, Reiligan, Burren, and Mullarkey, are -- like One-Eyed Larry -- half blind cowards who destroy what they cannot grasp.

Religion's victims include not only Keelin, Foorawn, Moanroe, and Codger, but also Prodical and Rankin, both of whom wear O'Casey's characteristic bowler hats. Rankin is obsessed with a sense of ever present sin; his skull is a death's skull; his voice is "the high falsetto voice of a man unmade."⁹¹ Constantly at prayer and confession, he smugly announces, "I am what I am" and he has a genuine Puritanical hate for "the evil Eves who send men sidling into sin."⁹² His prayers, whining, and smugness are comic devices, but he, like Shanaar, is a dangerous force. He literally spits in the face of life and on the proffered love of Keelin, but he readily

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 48-49

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

⁹⁰ Collected Plays, IV, p. 198.

⁹¹ The Bishop's Bonfire, p. 2.

⁹² Ibid., p. 26.

succumbs to the manipulative artistry of Monsignor Burren. The Prodical is a vacillating drunkard, alternately drinking and vowing never to drink again. He is the closest thing to a median that exists in this play as he listens first to the songs and invitations of the Codger, then to the threats and insinuations of Rankin and Reiligan and the Roman Monsignor.

O'Casey uses various devices and techniques to render his targets absurd: the workmen argue that bricklayers don't carry bricks, don't pluck ducks, and they do very little work. Reiligan blusters, when he discovers so little work done,

From this out, there's to be no talkin'; and if anyone does talk, everybody is to listen to nobody. Anyone -- no one -- mind you! Damn it, are you listenin' to me?⁹³

This ridiculous command, his great concern for the new carpet and for his Catholic piano, together with his consternation at the unplucked ducks reveal him to be as absurd as any of his workmen, the essential difference being that he is more ostentatious about his own absurdities than the workmen are. Reiligan's desire for Keelin to marry the fifty-six year old farmer brother of Bishop Mullarkey, who prefers his pipe to the company of any woman, renders Reiligan a mad fool. This series of absurdities in the burlesque picture of the newly-rich, hat-wearing politician Reiligan proves once again that "O'Casey will commit any outrage on a character short of giving him dull lines."⁹⁴

In the burlesque sequence involving St. Tremolo, the Bookineeno, that hollow plaster saint is given the power to utter piercing noises heard only by a sinner in his presence. This variation of "The Emperor's New

⁹³ Ibid., p. 59.

⁹⁴ Adams, Phoebe Lou, "The Play's the Thing," Atlantic Monthly, 196 (October, 1955), 96.

Clothes," when combined with the basic honesty and guilt feelings of the laborers, provides some slapstick comedy and a rather cynical view of the adoration of plaster saints. The prayer cushion and the brandy are also reserved for the eminent Bishop, as is the music of the piano, and the caustic O'Casey reveals the great void behind the facades of Reiligan's pretense and his religion. He, the elaborate preparations, and the hierarchy of the church are all reduced ultimately to the absurd level of the unplucked ducks and St. Tremolo's fearful shrieks.

The Bishop's Bonfire does not end well for anyone: Foorawn is dead, killed by Manus who leaves; Codger is out of work; Keelin will probably marry Farmer Mullarkey; the peasants cower; the bonfire rages. The episodic action of the play is incidental and is not substantial. O'Casey was "by no means satisfied" with the play, but thought it was good.⁹⁵ His scathing attack on his critics in "Bonfire Under a Black Sun"⁹⁶ does little to illuminate his intent in the play, but Codger Sleenhaun, with his lantern and his keg and his concern for the meadows and the geranium, is certainly the most positive voice in The Bishop's Bonfire. He, as O'Casey's vicarious spokesman, and Father Boheroe as O'Casey's perfect priest, attempt to show the way to regeneration and life, but Reiligan's followers defeat them, and the Bishop's bonfire is destructive rather than life giving. The satire is scathing as the village forces of Church and State drive out or destroy any threat of life. Even the Codger's dance is a goose-step, and the ash tree -- like its counterparts in "Time to Go" -- is not a tree of life.

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Hogan, p. 129.

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The Green Crow, pp. 130-159.

The Drums of Father Ned

O'Casey's topical play, The Drums of Father Ned, was written especially for the Dublin International Theatre Festival of 1958. His preceding play, The Bishop's Bonfire, had premiered in Dublin's Gaiety Theatre and had run for five weeks to packed houses. Its combined bitterness and caustic superiority kept the vigilantes of the Irish press occupied for several weeks and perhaps set the scene for the debacle of 1958, when the Festival was ultimately cancelled due to the efforts of the Archbishop of ~~DUBLIN~~ ^{DUBLIN}.⁹⁷ In his usual uncanny way, O'Casey had anticipated in The Bishop's Bonfire the fate of his later play, whose repetitive theme and comic characters are much less scathing, whose religious leaders are more foolish than vicious, and whose ironic fate was a more telling blow against the regimentation of Irish Catholicism than its performance could ever have been.

In The Drums of Father Ned, O'Casey anticipates and accepts his Irish countrymen's charges against the high priest of life and joy. So doing, he makes Father Ned the namesake of Old Ned, and his symbolic drums throb as the human heart does, in exact tempo to the pulse of life. Father Ned is Father Boheroe three years later, an ideal priest who "says that through music, good books, an' good pictures, we may get to know more about th' mysthery of life."⁹⁸ Father Ned never appears on stage but is

⁹⁷ Krause relates the history of incidents leading up to O'Casey's own ban of all his plays from Ireland on the stage and on Radio Eireann. Samuel Beckett placed a similar ban on all his plays, and five years earlier, Sean O'Faolain had responded to the banning of some of his works by the Censorship Board: "I think my reader will have begun to understand the difficulties of writing in a country where the policeman and the priest are in a perpetual glow of satisfaction." David Krause, Sean O'Casey, pp. 270-282, pp. 396-397.

⁹⁸ Sean O'Casey, The Drums of Father Ned (London: Macmillan, 1960), p. 19.

omnipresent:

...he might be anywhere, though some may think he's nowhere;
again he may be everywhere; but he's always with th' dhrooms.⁹⁹

...
Father Ned'll be where he's wanted; ...he may be anywhere;
he may be nowhere to a seeker who gets in his way.¹⁰⁰

In this play, as elsewhere, O'Casey's satiric deck is stacked; the regimented church is represented by the Reverend Doctor Fillifogue, a blustering fool, and by a collection of pious materialists who really rule the church as they conduct business as usual, "only pure business... uncontaminated with any smidereen of friendliness."¹⁰¹ Binnington and McGilligan are outraged at the hypocrisy of the common people who refuse "to realize that when they work for us they're workin' for God."¹⁰² Business is business and must realize a profit; these two and Father Fillifogue are against the Tostal Festival because it does not make money and because it saps the energies of the workers who could be more gainfully employed.

The play begins with a PRERUMBLE set during the troubles of 1920-1922. The brief scene sets the mood for the ensuing play and isolates the pettiness and the personal hatreds that become the chief targets of the artist's invective. The play itself is "A Mickrocasm of Ireland" and the costume-wearing businessmen, the new de Valerian politicians of the later acts, are anticipated by the hate filled captives of the Black and Tans in the PRERUMBLE. Ireland is burning and the Irishmen are divided by personal hatreds. These two Irishmen were born the same year in the same town, live on the same street, court and eventually marry sisters, attend the same

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 67-68.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 28.

parochial school and the same church, and conduct profitable business with each other. Their "perfect hate casts out fear" and the Black and Tans spare their lives, for "these two rats will do more harm to Ireland living than they'll ever do to Ireland dead."¹⁰³

The PRERUMBLE device was used earlier and less effectively in Oak Leaves and Lavender, again as a kind of flashback -- the essential difference being that in the earlier play the flashback was from a time of war to a time of distantly remembered peace. The pretensions of the two haters who crawl off in opposite directions gain fuller development in the more opulent surroundings of their later riches.

O'Casey tells us that "This comedy's but an idle, laughing play/ About the things encumbering Ireland's way,"¹⁰⁴ the things being Church, State, Materialism, Fear, Hatred, and Public Apathy. These follies and those who enforce them are revealed in this play which suggests an immediate antidote to these combined poisons, the antidote of love, music, song, dance, and merry hearts.

The pompous grandeur of Alderman Aloysius Binnington and Councillor McGilligan is rendered comic by their elaborate costumes, the elaborate furnishings of their elaborate homes, the etiquette lessons afforded their wives, and their attitudes toward business. Each strives to have the biggest palm trees, the largest piano, the most elegant wife, and the largest bank account. "Businessman, patriot, and pietist," Binnington "loves himself more than anything else living or dead." So far as he's concerned, "...it is

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 8, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., P. x . The play is dedicated to the memories of Dr. Walter McDonald, Dr. Morgan Sneed, Father Yorke, Canon Hayes, and Father O'Flanagan: "Each in his time was a Drummer for Father Ned, and the echoes of their drumming sound in Ireland still." p. v.

a dereliction of good taste for a Deputy Mayor to wear a more gorgeous gown than the Mayor."¹⁰⁵ The business ethics of these two Irishmen who hate each other are based invariably on expedience and profit as were those of Poges, Reiligan, and O'Casey's other successful businessmen. They, too, figure prices, scold the young, and complain that "This appalling materialism's spreadin' everywhere."¹⁰⁶

The play within a play sequence testifies to O'Casey's dramatic dexterity as it restates the basic themes of the outer play: that it is time for a change, that those who demand change are guilty of "hightreason against this realm and the realm's law," and that "our chapel's on fire," set ablaze by the yeomanry. Here, as in the PRERUMBLE, and as in Ireland, the Irishmen do mechanical and wary battle with each other while the chapel burns. Fittingly, the play rehearsal is interrupted by the Reverend Fillifogue who also interrupts and interferes with all of the other preparations for the Tostal. Fillifogue's comments on the play within a play and on the chorus rehearsal are thematic and anticipate his ultimate paralysis and that of his followers. At the same time, his comments reveal his stand against change, against what O'Casey calls life:

So your play babbles about the rights of man. What with your rights of women, rights of children, rights of trades unions, rights of th' laity, an' civil rights -- youse are paralyisin' life!¹⁰⁷

The Drums of Father Ned, while satirizing the personal battles and personal hatreds of individual Irishmen, wages a pitched battle for change and action against the complacent lethargy and the entrenched power

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 34-40.

of Fillifogue, Binnington, and McGilligan. The terms of the battle are clearly stated by Nora, who runs for public office against Binnington:

[We are not fighting] against our fathers! We're fighting what is old and stale and vicious: the hate, the meanness their policies preach; and to make a way for th' young and thrusting.¹⁰⁸

When informed that it's easier said than done, Nora retorts, "Everything said, Michael, is easier than anything done. It is a fine fancy to say brave things; better to do them." Like her namesake in Ibsen's Doll's House, Nora sets out to do brave things,

To snatch from Erin's back the sable shawl,
And clothe her as she was ~~before~~ her fall;
In cloak of green as bright as spring's young call;....¹⁰⁹

Doonavale is the Nyadnanave of this play and on the battlefield of Doonavale, as background for the Life versus Death conflict, the Orangeman from Ulster argues politics and religion with his Catholic counterparts, while the pietistic vigilantes are commanded by Father Fillifogue, who tells them:

I'll do th' thinking for youse; I'll say th' things that should be said; an' youse'll do th' things I'll tell youse to do. Now go ahead, an' burn th' atheistical timber, or something may happen to our town....Burn it as a reparation to God for landing atheistical timber on th' holy wharf of Doonavale.¹¹⁰

Father Fillifogue attempts to use the old hatred for the north to manipulate his followers to do his will; he threatens and dismisses his adversaries from appointive posts. He wields his obviously symbolic umbrella as a threatening weapon until his organist, Mr. Murray, sends him away after a

¹⁰⁸

Ibid., pp. 81-82

¹⁰⁹

Ibid., p. x.

¹¹⁰

Ibid., p. 96.

ludicrous wrestling match, and as the play ends, the Ulsterman and Mr. Murray take the umbrella away for good. Fillifogue, without the support of capital and without the blind following he's accustomed to, becomes ridiculous and impotent and paralyzed.

The main action of the play is much embellished by occasional and continuing slapstick comedy as pretense is reduced to absurdity: McGilligan warns Skerighan that "a Protestant tune's no fit thing to be played on a Catholic piano";¹¹¹ every workman and visitor who enters Binnington's house drinks freely of his liquor. Mrs. Binnington, never successful in her attempted pirouettes, which are so necessary for the wife of the ostentatious mayor, sums up her confusion and her frustration in her much repeated, "God damn it!"¹¹² Father Fillifogue's brilliant capacity for reducing everything to a capsule cause and effect relationship interprets the reading of banned books, the importing of Red lumber, the confusion of Doonavale, the communist tendencies of the workers, and the love affair between Nora and Michael as direct results of "th' College lettin' th' students wear jeans."¹¹³

Bernadette notes early in the play that "in Doonavale, near everything said or done is dangerous. We're tired out at feelin' afraid of a word or a look bringin' courage or affection into our lonely souls!"¹¹⁴ However, the reversal of fortune and the salvation of Doonavale is possible only after Nora tells the Reverend D. Fillifogue,

You see, Father, we're fed up bein' afraid our shaddas'll
tell what we're thinkin'. One fool, or a few, rules th'

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 69.

¹¹²Ibid., pp. 16-17.

¹¹³Ibid., pp. 98-99.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 49.

family life; rules th' school, rules th' dance hall, rules th' library, rules the ways of a man with a maid, rules th' mode of a girl's dhress, rules th' worker in fields and factory, rules th' choice of our politicians, rules th' very words we try to speak, so that everything said cheats th' thruth; an' Doonavale has become th' town of th' shut mouth.¹¹⁵

Bernadette Shillayley is a saucy vital wench, twin sister to the whore in Bedtime Story, whose antics and success she duplicates. Her victim is just as fearful but more alive than John Jo Mulligan; the Orangeman from Ulster, far from promising to read Yeats for a quiet hour, wants a kiss, "just as a fine beginnin'." Bernadette, who "can guess only dimly at its meanin'" when Skerighan accuses her of "Twutterin' your luddle bum," succeeds in frightening him into paying a few pounds blackmail, forgives the "poor sinful man" for "th' dhreadful harm you have done to a poor innocent counthry girrl," promises to pray for him, and leaves him half terrified and fully stunned by her duplicity. Father Fillifogue further confuses the victimized Orangeman when he says of Bernadette, "That sly little vixen schatters occasions of sin everywhere she goes."¹¹⁶

Bernadette Shillayley, as her name suggests, is as bold as a bear and as subtle as a cudgel in her attempts to live naturally, to dance, to sing, and to enjoy the results. Her indecorous way of life is an exemplary foil for the respectability and the decorum proffered by Fillifogue and Fellows. She combines realism and romanticism as she assures Tom that she and he must fade and fall

when all that could be done is done; not be a wild grab at life, but a sturdy, steady livin' of it; when all our deeds and joys'll be as many as the leaves on an ash or

¹¹⁵

Ibid., p. 98.

¹¹⁶

Ibid., pp. 58-62.

th' blossoms on a three of hawthorn. Then we can fade in quietness, and fall with the carelessness of satisfaction.¹¹⁷

The mood of the whole play is permeated by the frenzied activities of those involved in the Tostal. The drums, periodically sounding in the background, the rough renditions of Adeste Fidelis, the play rehearsal, and the choir rehearsal all look forward to and anticipate the Tostal celebration. All the people are actively involved and, as a result, Doonavale is transformed into a living town, a transformation possible for Ireland when the Irish people follow the lead of Nora, Michael, and Bernadette. As the tempo of the action increases and more and more of the trappings are removed from the ostentatious homes of the Binningtons and the McGilligans, the old changes into the new. O'Casey's forces win a resounding victory as the decorations are distributed to conceal the drabness of Doonavale behind splashes of color, as the door of Fillifogue's house is painted "a flamin' red; redder than th' reddest sun a frosty sunset ever seen,"¹¹⁸ as Fillifogue's clerk and macebearer drop dead, "plonk plonk -- just like that!"¹¹⁹ and as the forces of life assemble on the Hill of Three Shouts to determine the election of new officers.¹²⁰ As life's victory becomes more evident, Father Ned's drums increase in tempo, playing the Death March for the symbolic

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

¹²⁰ "Folly th' crowd, an' youse won't lose your way, for people are on their way from th' Glen of th' Light, from th' Meadow of Knowledge, an' from th' Gap of Courage...to th' Hill of th' Three Shouts." p. 101. Three Shouts on a Hill was "a wild thing" which included "a shout at the Gaelic League, a shout at Sinn Fein, and a shout at Labour." O'Casey asked Shaw to write a preface for it, but Shaw refused because, as he noted, O'Casey ought "to go through the mill like the rest of us." Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, p. 31; Green Crow, p. 171. To the best of my knowledge, this reference is the closest that Three Shouts on a Hill, which O'Casey wanted 25 £ for, ever came to publication.

death of Fillifogue's power, for it -- like his clerk and his macebearer -- is dead.

Father Ned, like Joyce's God, is a shout in the street:

It might be a shout for freedom, like the shout of men on Bunker Hill; shout of th' people for bread in th' streets, as in th' French Revolution; or for th' world's ownership by th' people, as in th' Soviet Revolution; or it might just be a drunken man, unsteadily meandering his way home, shouting out Verdi's "Oh, Le-on-or-a."¹²¹

In any case, the music of Father Ned's drums is the music of life, and "Dee moosic of life is scarin'" Fillifogue, Binnington, and McGilligan, the apostles of discord and fear and materialism. They are paralyzed and are unable to move out of their chairs, however violently they try. They are symbolically dead and O'Casey's dead cannot rise and walk. The steadily increasing tempo of Father Ned's drums is matched by the new and abounding life in Doonavale. Even McGunty contributes to the new confusion by playing his trumpet version of "Boots and Saddles," fitting funeral music for the paralysis and death of Fillifogue and his flock.

The satiric burlesques and invective of The Drums of Father Ned reduce the social and religious hierarchy of Ireland to ashes, even as their spokesmen are symbolically dead. Ironically, "The Dead March" and

¹²¹ The Drums of Father Ned, p. 92. Murray informs Fillifogue earlier (pp. 42-44) that "When we worship Mozart, we worship God; ...Mozart's moosic can be as dee murmur of a river's first flow among dee forget-me-nots an' dee meadow -- sweet; as gay as a dance of boys an' girls at a fair, an' no priest present!" Murray is an interesting exception to O'Casey's usual pattern of using speech defects to symbolize moral or spiritual decadence. In this play, Murray is obviously a follower of life and a devotee of Father Ned, while Fillifogue's villainy is amplified in his mockery of Murray's lisp. Murray's lisp may be modelled on Lady Gregory's, one that always fascinated O'Casey and one which he attempts to imitate in Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, pp. 176-199. O'Casey's imitation, in both cases, while intended to capture the charm of personality, is ineffective and does render a strong character somewhat absurd.

"Boots and Saddles" become the rally music for a united Ireland: Orange does join Green; youth will win the election; inevitable change will be neither feared nor avoided; song and dance will become as natural and as healthy as a shout in the street,

That nobled minds may all new courage grow,
And miser'd hearts be merry.¹²²

Encore

Behind the Green Curtains begins where The Drums of Father Ned leaves off: the "Dead March" continues to play, and it could be the death knell for the rigid controls of the church, except for public cowardice. The public funeral of a Protestant benefactor is overlooked by a portrait of Parnell and virtuously ignored by a couple of worn-out hawkers who wonder which saint the portrait honors. The intellectual leaders of Ireland -- the journalist, poet, actor, and senator -- are "jittering at the gate" but do not attend the memorial service because they fear clerical reprisals if they commit the grave sin of attending a Protestant funeral.

The first scene establishes the mood of the play and identifies the cowardly leaders of Ireland, who cower, in the second scene, behind the pulled drapes, the green curtains, to think their brave thoughts. The masked vigilantes whom they fear are also cowards, as their masks and actions prove. The battle between life and death continues, but in this play Nyadnanave is called Ballybeedhust, and it is fairly obvious that O'Casey's accent is on the last syllable, "dhust." He sings of the death of Ireland.

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The Drums of Father Ned, p. x. The Ulsterman episode, complete with theological arguments and the various shouts in the street that are God, exists in a slightly different form in Rose and Crown, pp. 290-297.

This play is a bitter song sung by a poet in exile as he laments both his own loneliness and the literary void of Erin, as Erin consistently drives away talent and crowns mediocrity. In his prefacing comments, O'Casey identifies journalists as writers who are dangerous, more dangerous than other writers, if they do not walk "within the shadow of truth, courage, and sincerity."¹²³ The literary cult in this play represents the Yeatsian hangers-on, those without talent or means who derive glory and income from their associations with each other and with the Irish Academy. Their names and their actions clearly identify them: Wycherley McGeera, the dramatist, debunks Yeats on general principles, and has one volume of plays published at Chatastray's expense; McGeelish, the gossip columnist, complains of his hard life, cowers, and has spent the money given him by Chatastray to finance his novel -- a novel he has never written and will never write; Bunny Conneen, the actor, is a bunny-rabbit who reads his press clippings and believes himself to be "an artist of a wide fame"; Leslie Horawn, the poet, lives by the creed that

Th' writer's place is th' cool contentment of quiet,
in a corner where no voice comes; no car drives by;
no child's laugh disturbs; no touch from a woman to
ruffle th' stillness of thought; only birdsong and th'
gentle ripple of a rose on its own bush.¹²⁴

These are the great minds of Ireland; all are Catholic and all refuse to attend the funeral of a Protestant patron for fear of gossip and retaliatory action. Their living patron is Senator Chatastray, who is equally cowardly. His plush library is fully stocked with Gaelic books, but he can't

¹²³ Sean O'Casey, Behind the Green Curtains, Figure In the Night, The Moon Shines on Kilenamoe: Three Plays by Sean O'Casey, (London: Macmillan (1961) p. 1.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 28, p. 42.

read Gaelic. Hidden away in a lower drawer of a sideboard, he keeps Renan's Life of Jesus and a photo of a nude, much to the delight and the horror of his sycophants, who alternately envy him and condemn the "leader of piety and upright conduct."¹²⁵

Christy Kornavaun is a "squinting prober" for The Catholic Buzzer and is a combination Judas goat and jackal, as he snoops, leads the vigilantes, and writes for The Buzzer. He, as representative of his church's power, is the real villain, the hypocrite, the lecher, the suspicious paranoic whose fruitful imagination fills in the details of Noneen's sex life "when darkness hides things, an' th' flimsy frills of night are worn, [and] behind green curtains th' handling sport begins."¹²⁶ When his direct advances are thwarted by Noneen, she ceases to be "damned pretty before, behind, an' below," and becomes a "painted doll," a "festhered lily," an "ignorant, impudent little arcadian tart,"¹²⁷ and ultimately is physically punished by Kornavaun's vigilantes. Nominally, Noneen's punishment is for consorting with an unmarried man; ironically, it is for rejecting Kornavaun, the black-mailer and the lecher, and for throwing a drink in his face.

Kornavaun is much feared by the respectable and cowardly artists who all submit to his threats; he is suitably treated and identified only by Beoman as "this viper-fool" and by Reena, who addresses him as, "you bordher-line lunatic, you full-feathered hypocrite, you mouldy crumb of life,"¹²⁸ Kornavaun and his church gain their power from the fear that

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

overwhelms Ireland, and they are powerless against those who do not fear. Reena describes Ireland as "a huddled nation frightened undher th' hood of fear,"¹²⁹ and therein states the basic thesis of Behind the Green Curtains. Reena also informs Senator Chatastray, the poet patron, that fear and seclusions are not legitimate answers to the problems of life, but that one must be involved in life in order to live: "No one and nothing can be left alone in this world. As long as you're alive, you'll have to bear being touched by th' world you live in."¹³⁰ Chatastray himself, in a brief moment of lucidity, which results from his conversation with Reena, identifies the marchers as

Th' groggy gang of hypocrites! Cowardly minds
an' spent-out lives trudge along on unsteady feet
to th' rhythm of th' Marseillaise, without any
idea of the singing revolt in its melody.¹³¹

Momentarily there is hope for Chatastray as he defies his sycophants and Kornavaun, but he is overcome by his fears and his hypocrisy and joins the marchers, choosing death rather than life as he chooses conformity and the status quo.

Basically, the play is a study in the progressive deterioration of those afflicted by cowardice. After a given point, a moment of decision, all is lost. All the writers and actors except Chatastray are lost when the play begins. Though no flowers fill his vases and his green drapes are drawn, he is still potentially a living man, not so much as Sailor Mahan is in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, but more than Keelin's young man in The Bishop's

¹²⁹

Ibid., p. 59.

¹³⁰

Ibid., p. 60.

¹³¹

Ibid., p. 61.

Bonfire. His copy of Renan's Life of Jesus and the photo of the nude identify him as a hypocrite, but as one with more capacity than his friends have. When he dons the symbolic uniform and joins the processional, he is lost in "an army with banners marching in th' wrong direction";¹³² he will continue to live behind curtains and to "move be candle-light when the sun is out,"¹³³ for he lacks, as Reena tells him, "Guts," and, thereby, he lacks life. Such being the case, he joins "th' third Ordher of th' Brothers Repentant" and marches under the banner ironically proclaiming "Free Thought in a Free World." After a brief flurry of life, he succumbs and rejoins the regimented followers of the Bishop, a Bishop who "said that no writer can become great unless he always does it prostrate on his belly before God."¹³⁴

The aptly named saints honored by the Bishop's religion are St. Sinfoilio, St. Ishkabaheen, St. Stepsaside, St. Touchnrun, St. Dubudont, and St. Goslow. True followers are impressed by miracles and have no difficulty understanding what the plaster Virgin of Syracuse is weeping about: she obviously weeps because a suppliant "woman was weepin', an' she was weepin' because her husband was a Communist"; this greatly amuses O'Casey's spokesman, Beoman, who suggests that the saint may weep because the woman is not a communist.¹³⁵ The Bishop's religion keeps the true followers fearful and at the same time ashamed of their fear. Fear is the way of life for the artists who do not attend Lionel Robartes' funeral because "o' th' risk:

¹³² Ibid., p. 63.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 62.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 71.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

Catholics at a non-Catholic religious service may incur excommunication."

The fear is compounded as Bunny corrects this interpretation by noting that such Catholics "incur it automatically."¹³⁶

The bickering continues as the age old Catholic versus Protestant question dominates the conversation of the devoted Catholic friends of a dead Protestant benefactor. The bickerers and their comments are reduced to the proper perspective by O'Casey's sardonic Beoman who sings:

So th' old flute was doomed, and its fate was pathetic.
'Twas fasten'd an' burn'd at the stake as heretic.
While th' flames roar'd round it, they heard a strange noise;
'Twas the old flute still whistlin' "Th' Protestant Boys!"¹³⁷

Beoman is O'Casey's confident workman blessed with ability and common sense; he sees through sham, frightens the vigilantes, proclaims Parnell a better man than either St. Joseph or St. Peter, and snorts "at a faith that has th' Christian world sizzlin' with miracles!"¹³⁸ Beoman leaves Ireland with Reena and Noneen to get away "from this dead place,"¹³⁹ the dead place which reflects its character by banning and burning "filthy literature that corrupts Irishmen and makes them ripe for Communism."¹⁴⁰

The death of Ballybeedhust is also reflected in the Catholics who fear to attend a Protestant benefactor's funeral, in the punishments adminis-

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

Beoman is a hero of far greater potential than Beowulf, so far as the humanistic O'Casey is concerned, because a man has mind, purpose, courage, and strength. Beoman is, like his Anglo-Saxon near-namesake, a folk hero; unlike Beowulf, he emigrates when disaster is imminent in the hopeless fear that dominates the actions of the citizens of Ballybeedhust.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 46.

tered by the vigilantes, and in the closing of the factories to protest a marriage between a Catholic girl and a Protestant man. All of these, together with solemn processions protesting against communism by marching under banners proclaiming "Free Thought in a Free World," are emblematic proofs that Ballybeedhust is a dead place.

The bitterness of O'Casey's satire is due in large part to his own personal experiences. He was invited to join the Irish Academy of Letters when it was created by Yeats; his invitation was personally signed by George Bernard Shaw. "Shaw was asking a favour from Sean; the first favour ever asked," and O'Casey had to refuse because he

didn't like institutions powered to decide what was good literature and what was not good: they had made too many mistakes before. They were inclined to look kindly on those who flattered their own work.¹⁴¹

Pictured in the inept poet of this drama is O'Casey's view of the ultimate evil of the Academy, that members of such an Academy might become an exclusive mutual admiration society and thereby stifle, rather than encourage, creative writing. O'Casey also believed that Yeats led a protected and essentially unseeing life "behind velvet curtains." O'Casey's marriage to a Catholic girl, the resulting protests, and his series of clashes with the Catholic hierarchy contribute some bitterness to his portrayal of the continuous conflict between Protestants and Catholics and to his view of the inelasticity of the religion which demands total conformity. Concerning the marriage which closes the shop in this play, O'Casey's own oft-expressed view was that all marriages should be mixed: each should consist of one man and one woman.

¹⁴¹

Sunset and Evening Star, pp. 254-255.

There is no real movement and no real change for the citizens of Ballybeedhust, though the scene of action moves from a public park fronting on a burial ground to the confines of Senator Chatastray's home to the processional protesting against communism. As the scene-title indicates, the great minds of Ireland are "jitterin' at th' gateway" in Scene I just before they succumb to the threats of Kornavaun; they are protected from light and life by the thick green curtains shrouding Chatastray's home in Scene II; in Scene III, "The Day of the Marching Souls," they move from one darkness into another as they fall into line amidst the regimental hierarchies of the honored groups:

All Ireland'll be there; first th' Bishops an' clergy,
secular an' ordhers, then the Ministhers of th' State,
then the Law....[th' third Ordher of th' Brothers Repentant]
will folley th' Legion of Mary...headed be the band of th'
Boys Brigade....¹⁴²

The demonstration shuts off light and enforces the separation of the marchers from involvement in life just as effectively as Chatastray's green curtains do. The Brothers Repentant take great pride in their unfurled banner and recognize no irony in its proclamation, FREE THOUGHT IN A FREE WORLD.

"The green curtains of the title...symbolize the obscurantism and humbug of Irish Catholicism...."¹⁴³ More than that, they symbolize the artificial blinders worn by the Irish who prefer not to question and not to jeopardize either their immediate or their eternal security. They also symbolize the constitutional blindness of O'Casey's ostrich-like Irishmen who continue to assert that one can unthink anything simply by ignoring it,

¹⁴²

Behind the Green Curtains, p. 46.

¹⁴³

Ibid., p. i.

that one can eliminate a church-proclaimed evil by chanting Latin phrases at it, and that one can shut out fear and life by drawing one's own blinds.

The satiric bitterness of this play cannot be discarded as the result of splenetic old age. O'Casey's main theme for three decades was that Ireland's way is a way of death. The alternatives in this play are not essentially different than those offered in the preceding plays: the young and those who wish to live out of the shadow of fear can follow O'Casey, Beoman, Noneen, and Reena into exile and thereby save themselves and perpetuate Ireland's mediocrity and accelerate the march toward death. The other alternative is an Ayamonn-miracle which would involve a cessation of internal bickering, thought and action independent of the Procrustean mould, and a sustained faith in the magic and the power of the word and the action of vital people.

Figuro In the Night is a morality play satirically "dedicated" to

The Ferocious Chastity of Ireland...in the abiding hope that all, North and South, will combine against, fight, and destroy this communist and insidious effort to overthrow the age-long virtue of the Irish People; to prevent this rock-built chastity from corrosion, so that it may outlive all red-like attempts to frighten or weaken its determination by a godless and ruthless ridicule. Amen.¹⁴⁴

The setting is Dublin and the morality figures of the first scene maintain their rock-built chastity, do not tarry nor marry, and piously praise themselves for their good sense. They are the walking dead and their world is a darkly silent one of gloom and desolation.

The young girl sings a song of love, "O Dear, What Can the Matter Be?", the improvised lyrics being O'Casey's own answer to the sterile plight

¹⁴⁴

Ibid., p. 87.

of Ireland and the song itself becoming thematic as the play progresses. The old woman's antiphonal answers to the young girl's love song are based on memory -- a barren memory, for she "never heard a birdsong to distract me from me higher thinking."¹⁴⁵ The mother and the father that she and the old man listened to in their youth "are but cracked china figaries on the mantelshelf of memory."¹⁴⁶ The blue ribbons given her by the old man in his youth are yellow with age and have not been worn. The old couple meet, stir up half-forgotten memories, and depart in opposite directions, both decrepit and leaning on their canes, both much concerned with public opinion and reputation. Blue ribbons and birdsongs and unbridled youth are recognized and feared by both as occasions for sin. She remembers and embroiders the memory of her youthful beauty and the blue ribbons offered by one young man, "gay ribbons fit only for a girl's ringlets, or for decorating dainty pieces shelthering the pleasant and secret parts of a lassie's virgin form,...."¹⁴⁷

The old woman, in a brief moment of envy and lucidity, defends Adam's tying a "blue ribbon on the bonnie brown hair of his Eve," for "The poor man got tired looking at her dressed only in her innocence; he needed her to look gayer to him and feel gayer herself, for the heady juice of the apple they'd eaten jollied them into a jostle together."¹⁴⁸ The high thoughts, the obeyed parental commands, and the resulting barrenness of her youth are in violent conflict with the thoughts, the disobedience, and the essential fecundity of Adam and Eve. The old woman's ambivalent responses to life are too late. She

¹⁴⁵

Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁴⁶

Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁴⁷

Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁴⁸

Ibid., p. 99.

is no longer a young girl, and, for the pagan purposes of this play, she is no longer alive.

The birdsong, the crow's caw, the Adam and Eve tale, and the continuing search of the young girl during the initial scene anticipate the transformation and the avid enthusiasm of the second scene, which is a pagan hymn to pagan joys. The old people remain old and impotent, but are secretly lecherous and envious. Their puritanical comments are suggestive and impotently obscene, while the natural antics of the young are essentially innocent and potent. The impotence of the old is emphasized as one has a bandaged head, one wears his arm in a sling, one is deaf, one is blind; all are out of place in a world where "Everything seems wonderful to eyes that see and ears that hear."¹⁴⁹

O'Casey briefly revives what Krause has called his Cock ex Machina with its spirit of youth and joy; it is present in both the Figuro and the Birdlike Lad and soon becomes the dominating spirit of the play. The transformed world is one of bright color, light, flowers, and song. The old symbolize public opinion (bowler hat), deValerian politicians (top hat and tails), hypocrisy (envy of those they condemn), and death (imposed self-denial and reverence for the status quo). The young in their pagan song and dance represent thrusting life and promise for a future as they ignore and symbolically tear to tatters the prevailing public opinion and fear of change.

The morality play context remains intact as the fearful young man, who is praised by the old man for protecting his "decent dangling accessory" from "them bitches of girls,"¹⁵⁰ moves from fear through questioning toward

¹⁴⁹

Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁵⁰

Ibid., p. 107.

understanding of the mysterious mood of the transformed Dublin. He asks of the old men, "Every living thing goes in couples, so why shouldn't lads and lassies do the same?" He identifies the old men who fear the evil import of "silk-sinisthered legs" as "holy buckoes, groping and rowdying about in the spare parts of the crowd, looking for what you couldn't get even if you got it!"¹⁵¹ Inspired by the Birdlike Lad, who testifies that the same transformation has occurred all over Ireland and that "the Bishops are seated at a Round Table in the Senate Room" singing love songs, the young man tells the old, "To hell with the lot o' yous -- I'm for the thrust and throe of Figuro!"¹⁵² He takes bonny blue ribbons to his Alice and, like Adam, emerges with the golden apples of the sun. Unlike the old people in the first scene, the young man has learned about life before it is too late.

O'Casey tells his reader that the two scenes of Figuro in the Night are "eloquently and humorously related," and they are, as the first presents the aridity of negation and the second presents the joys of involvement. The Figuro, with his "Peek-a-boo," his "Sight Enthrancing," is the venerable poet's answer to the screams of St. Tremolo in The Bishop's Bonfire, and the raucous dance of youth is O'Casey's answer to the plight of Ireland, whose decreasing population is due to the emigration of the young, the increasingly late age of marriage, and the Puritanical yokes of conservative Catholicism and conservative Protestantism.

The satire is not masked as O'Casey dissects his homeland and ridicules the hypocritical piety that he reveals there. Much of the humor of this poetic morality play is due to the ~~salacious~~ use of language by the old and the

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 119.

inverted situation of the young wenches dragging down any male in sight. The element of fear continues, however, as the Catholic journalists, one deaf and one blind, are ordered back to their "airless little office, to write your scraps of gossip, and try to tell your shrinking little world that the world outside is changing."¹⁵³ All the while, the dance of life continues in the streets of Dublin, and, according to the Birdlike Youth, throughout Ireland.

Obviously, this unperformed play is not one of O'Casey's better efforts, but the aged satirist did enjoy flailing his old enemies and his Young Man does come to grips with the joy of life, thereby affording at the same time a victory and a prophecy. O'Casey's people must leave the everlasting lullaby of Eden, and in order to do so they must be "too human to be unafraid, but too human to let fear put an end to us!"¹⁵⁴ If the result of leaving Eden is death, then it is "Death for this man, death for that woman, but greater life for all."¹⁵⁵ Eden, whether it be called Dublin, Nyadnanave, or Ballybeedhust, is a way of death if it does not admit change.

The fair mentioned in the thematic song, "Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be?", is used in essentially the same way that the fair is used in Time to Go: it is a joyous time of gaiety and frivolity but leaves in its wake desolation and unfulfilled dreams. To go to the fair is to escape from reality; O'Casey's answer is to make life itself a perpetual fair so that the young may never experience the desolation and drab loneliness endured by the old people in Scene I, so that blue ribbons can be worn and enjoyed while

¹⁵³

Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁵⁴

Drums Under the Windows, p. 274.

¹⁵⁵

Behind the Green Curtains, p. 101.

they are bright and new, so that the young -- once they become old -- will have something other than fear and chastity to remember.

The setting of The Moon Shines on Kyleneamoe is also a dead town inhabited by the very old, "th' lot o' them, man an' woman, if not there already, is on th' tip o' 70."¹⁵⁶ It is "a dark and lonesome land" whose somber midnight mood is emphasized by Sean Tomasheen's singing a song of death, "I Dreant That I Dwelt in Marble Halls." Kyleneamoe is a town unaccustomed to having the train stop. The symbolic red light surprises Andy O'Hurrie and utter confusion reigns so long as the train is stopped.

O'Casey's chief targets in this farcical episode are the pretensions of little men who have some authority and the ludicrous over-specialization which makes a change of hats and badges necessary before Tomasheen can perform his various chores. The inefficiency recalls the incident when O'Casey first journeyed to Coole, as Lady Gregory's guest, carrying the first suitcase he'd ever owned. The Galway Express was to leave Dublin at 8:00 A.M. and no one could board without a ticket, as an efficient guard informed O'Casey. The ticket office did not open until 8:00 A.M. and the sleeping ticket salesman refused to heed the demands of the crowd before that magic hour. In the confusion enforced by the sarcastic guard and compounded by shrill blasts from the engine, O'Casey defied the uniformed authorities and boarded the train sans ticket. The crowd followed, and all reached their destinations in spite of the rigidly enforced rules.¹⁵⁷

The Irishmen of the play are the stage Irishmen of John Bull's Other Island who kibitz and call names and hurl insults at each other, but unite

¹⁵⁶

Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁵⁷

Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, pp. 172-175.

against the ludicrous English intruder who is clad in a burlesque of the official parliamentarian's uniform, is impeded by an attache' case and an umbrella, and is named Lord Leslieson of Otterry St. Oswald. He is a parody of the stage Englishman and it is delightful to contemplate his arrival at his destination in a donkey-drawn creel cart.

The moon does shine on Kylenamoe, as is evidenced by the presence of the young lovers and the essential kindness of the Conroys. The silver apples of the moon sought and found by Eve in Eden and by Alice in Figuro in the Night are suggested by the transient presence of Mave Linanawn and her lover, who would rather own her "than own all of Ireland, without division."¹⁵⁸ It is a wise choice for him to make, so far as O'Casey is concerned, and the lovers are threatened and ordered off the railroad's property for violating the rules.

Behind the Green Curtains, Figuro In the Night, and The Moon Shines on Kylenamoe were written following the death of Niall, a loss which sent O'Casey hurtling into prodigious writing activity. They restate his basic themes and include the same devices of fantasy and expressionism used in the other plays of his final period. While not as effective as either Cock-A-Doodle Dandy or The Drums of Father Ned, these plays argue rather forcefully that Sean O'Casey did not lose his touch, did resent the stranglehold that was stifling Ireland, and did envision a better life which could come to pass whenever his countrymen were willing to make a conscious choice, to demand change, and to take off the symbolic straitjackets worn as badges of tradition and complacency and fear.

¹⁵⁸

Ibid., p. 135.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Sean O'Casey's drama is satiric, becoming increasingly so from the incidental satire in the tragi-comic plays of his Irish period to the universal implications of the satiric fantasies of his last period. In Shadow of a Gunman and Juno and the Paycock, Dublin's playgoers were made aware of the madness that methodically infringed upon and destroyed the lives of the characters on stage, for it was the same madness that still raged outside the theatre itself. Just as they were aware of the human strengths and capacities of Juno Boyle and Minnie Powell, so also were they aware of the strong, ironic bite of O'Casey's topical satire directed at the Auxiliaries, the Black and Tans, and the argumentative civilian populace. O'Casey's own recognition of the overwhelming public response to his topical and incidental satire in these early "tragedies" must have been at least instrumental in his choosing to write a satiric fantasy, written especially for the Abbey audience, an audience, incidentally, that did not respond favorably to Kathleen Listens In, the thinly disguised allegory of Ireland's internal weakness.¹

The satire in The Plough and the Stars is more incisive than that in the earlier plays, and O'Casey's juxtaposition of scenes and his cacaphonic sound patterns anticipate his later use of visual and aural distortion to

¹ Kathleen Listens In was first performed October 1, 1923, and was rewritten before its six later performances beginning March 3, 1925. The play failed and its reasons for failure are suggested earlier in this paper. The primary importance of the play is that it anticipates O'Casey's later experiments and his ultimate dedication to fantasy as a satiric art form.

emphasize the true nature of his tragi-comic world. His cowards dress in colorful costumes and make brave sounds to hide their fear. Their world collapses as it must, for their dedications and proclamations are false. The rioting and the pilfering portrayed in the looting scenes reveal the true nature of their world, and the true nature of those equipped to survive in it. The riots in the Abbey Theatre reflected essentially the same insecurity and quasi-madness in Dublin that are integral to the drinking and looting scenes in the play.²

O'Casey's experiments in expressionism in both The Silver Tassie and Within the Gates increase the scope of his satire toward universal proportions. In the latter play, his morality-play figures epitomize the follies, the stupidities, and the fears that man must confront if he is to live. The hopes for joy that make the confrontation possible are examined in the variously fragmented characters and become the basic theme of virtually every play that follows. Too much has already been made of the fact that these and all his future plays were written by a self-exiled O'Casey -- too much because the usual aim of such criticism is to demonstrate O'Casey's decline as a playwright, a decline that is not observable in his dramas, his essays, or his autobiography.

These intermediate experiments in expressionism and fantasy are but steps toward a more effective satiric vehicle. The existence of expressionism, fantasy, and morality play features in the earlier plays ably refutes

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It is more ironic and more fitting still that "at 10:15 on the evening of 17th July, 1951, the curtain fell at the conclusion of a brilliant performance of The Plough and the Stars," the last play to be performed in the Abbey Theatre, for the theatre was destroyed by fire that night. Lennox Robinson, Ireland's Abbey Theatre, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1951), p. 183.

the customary and arbitrary cataloguing of O'Casey's plays as realistic, expressionistic, and fantastic in any neatly chronological sequence. Such labels tend to obscure rather than to illuminate the plays of either period. At the same time ~~that~~ the surrealistic, biblical, and cacaphonic experiments establish the unreal qualities of the madness of war and the sterility of Surgeon Maxwell's hospital in The Silver Tassie, they point toward the fantasy and the magic that transform the world in Red Roses For Me, Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, and The Drums of Father Ned.

As the plays become progressively more satiric, the settings become progressively more universal. By the last period, each setting (however specific) is microcosmic, each character type (however Irish) is representative of some aspect of mankind, and the poet's satiric weapons (however destructive) are directed at the improvement of the comic world he portrays. O'Casey's penchant for burlesques and his willingness to reduce his villainous ~~stan~~ men to absurdity, to depict them not as individuals but as type characters, to endow them not with dialogue but with poisonous platitudes are offset by his equal willingness to reduce his heroes to absurdity by utilizing essentially the same techniques. The result is that in many of his satiric portraits of society, the viewer sees the two opposite extremes, if not the two lunatic fringes.

It is not necessary to be a clever whore to be a vital personality, but Angela Nightingale is the only vital personality in Bedtime Story and Jannice is the only vital personality in Within the Gates; it is not necessary to wear a uniform to be a villain, but virtually all of O'Casey's evil men do wear either clerical, political, or military uniforms. O'Casey's satire juxtaposes the good and the evil components of his comic world and in the

juxtaposition illuminates, by distortion and by example, the problems that confront mankind. He does not solve the problems, but does suggest an active approach toward their solution. In O'Casey's comic world, man must solve his own problems, create his own miracles, and correct his own follies. In short, he must do something to restore the dying world that he lives in. The plays rarely, if ever, offer escapism as man's answer to his problems; rather, they insist on involvement and calculated action. Occasionally such a character as Ayamonn Breydon or Father Ned³ states or exemplifies the theme so clearly and makes the association between the box stage and the world outside so obvious that none can miss the author's intent: man must act, must correct his own follies and those of his world, must forge his own miracles, and, if he does not, he must accept death as the consequence of his inactivity and his refusal to join the living.

The multitude of striking paradoxes and seeming inconsistencies that occur in the plays of Sean O'Casey are in themselves ample fields of study. He shares with Whitman pleasure in his own barbaric yawp and with both Whitman and Emerson a contemptuous attitude toward conformity, consistency, and contradiction. While O'Casey sneers and condemns those who wear the formal dress and the top hat of the De Valerian politician and those who hide their fears behind the gaudy costumes of the Foresters and the Citizens army, the

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Though Father Ned does not appear on stage, he is the spirit which moves others toward involvement in life, and it is his thematic gospel that ultimately isolates the complacently powerful in their lethargy and leaves them and their miasmatic doctrines symbolically dead, as the young and vital prepare for the future.

Nyadnanave is deserted by the Cock and his Followers, in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, for the miracle of life is impossible there. The desertion is itself a quest for life in much the same way that Joyce's exile and O'Casey's exile were quests for ways of life impossible in Ireland.

transformers of his comic world, especially in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy and The Drums of Father Ned, are also elaborately dressed in brilliantly colored costumes, as they make free use of paint, flowers, and song to dress up a drab world. His laborers don Shakesperean garb over their work clothes and are themselves transformed by the magic of the word. O'Casey's contempt for the drab dress of the Catholic clergy offers an interesting contrast to his own preference for the drabest kind of work clothes, a preference reinforced by his presentation of such figures as Red Jim Larkin, Ayamonn Breydon, and the Old Codger. Further, the essential goodness of the Brown Priest is at least partially symbolized by the color of his habit and its contrast to the habit of the materialistic and greatly powerful Purple Priest. Nonetheless, in other plays, purple and brown and black are the colors of death and hopelessness.

The same O'Casey who refused to dress for receptions or first night performances and condemned the soldiers of the Irish Citizen Army for adorning themselves in expensive, colorful, easy-to-see uniforms loved the pomp and splendor of parades and processions. Holloway records that O'Casey wore the green sack of the Foresters on one occasion and participated, during a thirsty friend's absence, in the annual Parnell procession, a participation that ultimately resulted in his joining the Gaelic League.⁴ This same O'Casey consistently uses the pomp and the splendor of parades in both The Plough and the Stars and Behind the Green Curtains as facades for cowardice, the participants themselves being constitutionally blind cowards who march and act for fear their fears will be discovered. O'Casey's own choice of the laborer's clothes earned him much criticism from other members of the Gaelic League, for he

⁴ Saros Cowasjee, Sean O'Casey: The Man Behind the Plays (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), pp. 9-11. Further, it is on record that "O'Casey himself supported the motion that uniforms should be distributed to the I.C.A., though from The Story of the Irish Citizen Army, it would appear that O'Casey was against the distribution of uniforms." p. 21.

attended meetings "untidily dressed, and was once asked to wait outside as he was not suitable clad to appear before the Dean of St. Patrick's."⁵

O'Casey bitterly satirizes the wearers of Trilby hats, of bowler hats, and the worshippers of newspaper headlines as a sick society's leaders and its touchstones of success. At the same time, he is sorely distressed by those who are unaware of what is going on in the world and by those who openly accept the eye witness accounts of "typical tourists" as bona fide fact. He demands here, as elsewhere, informed and critical study rather than blind acceptance. Hollow poses and empty facades are to be laughed at rather than adored.

His Catholic dignitaries are unrelenting, inflexible, and unbearable, as their names and actions indicate. Reverend George Canon Chreehewel, Father Domineer, Bishop Mullarkey, and their like demand blind obeisance, total submission, and unrelenting devotion to their dogma and their creed. Their devoted followers are epitomized at one extreme by One-Eyed Larry, the half-blind coward in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, and at the other extreme by the spiritually blind materialist who controls the town and pays the church for protection. Nonetheless, O'Casey dedicated The Drums of Father Ned to various Catholic clergymen who had concerned themselves with feeding the hungry, warming the cold, and living life as it perhaps should be lived. Such humanitarian priests are models for Father Boheroe (The Bishop's Bonfire), Father Ned (The Drums of Father Ned), and the Protestant Reverend E. Clinton (Red Roses for Me), all of whom are outside the dogmatic conformity demanded by Father Domineer and his ilk.

The same O'Casey who exiled himself from Ireland, who had the Cock and Maid Marion lead the procession of living people out of Nyadnanave and

leave that hamlet to Death (Cock-A-Doodle Dandy), who had Kelly and the Widda Machree demonstrate the efficacy of truth and honesty and then abandon an Irish town to continue its vicious practices (Time to Go), argues consistently that man and nation must be adaptable and flexible enough to continue life in any situation. The microcosmic mansion in Purple Dust is destroyed because it can not adapt, but the mansion in Oak Leaves and Lavender thrives and becomes a center of life because it can adapt to momentary emergencies; Ayamonn and Father Ned insist that people must forge their own miracles and right their own worlds. Those who wait for miracles live sterile and disappointed lives, their ultimate identity being with the "Down-and-Outs." Man and nation must be adaptable, for change is inevitable. O'Casey, perhaps to as great a degree as Macaulay, sees progress as inevitable, all change as good, and maintenance of the status quo as a way toward death. Industrialization, invention, and medical research, fully utilizing all existing machinery, are the ways of life offered by this paradoxical writer who, on the other hand, portrays the modern wasteland-world as a direct result of mechanization. In the wasteland-world, O'Casey's fools are constantly confronted and defeated by machines ranging from alarm clocks, telephones, and radios, to the larger machines of war and industry. When the machine becomes God, as the howitzer does in The Silver Tassie, man's dance is a dance of death.

O'Casey's adoration of Walt Whitman, "another emotional fool,"⁶ is also apparent in his thesis that the basic evils of society are man-made and will be corrected when the common man attains the position that he is entitled to within that society. Like Whitman, he is dismayed when his common men

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"The Green Crow Caws," Under a Colored Cap, p. 78.

attain wealth and cease to be common men. In O'Casey's plays, such men don rich clothes, buy big houses, own pianos, and become pompously complacent. His offered solution is the destruction of their miasmic affectation and the revelation of their basic follies. O'Casey's attacks on regimentation, materialism, and anything else whose inelasticity would deny individual man's identity and would prevent him from ennobling and enriching "the star we stand on"⁷ are barbed attacks using laughter as a weapon which simultaneously reveals and destroys the sham and hypocrisy of the arbitrary way of the world fostered by those who have reason to fear laughter and joy. Among O'Casey's villains,

Laughter is allowed when it laughs at the foibles of ordinary men, but frowned on and thought unseemly when it makes fun of superstitions, creeds, customs, and the blown-up importance of brief authority of those going in velvet and fine linen.⁸

The same forces that would destroy life would also threaten the survival of the drama, which for O'Casey is also a religious experience -- the forces being fear, hypocrisy, and catering to the tastes and demands of Big Business. These in themselves are evils, but they create and perpetuate the greater evils of bad critics and bad authors who, by virtue of money and popular demand, replace good critics and good authors. The perpetrators of such evil wish "not to see what dramatist and actor can do, not to hear what a critic can say; but just to see what money can buy."⁹ The logical result is Bigger and Bigger Big Shows which simultaneously reflect the taste and investment of the big business man. O'Casey's view is that even the evil

⁷"The Lark In the Clear Air Still Sings," Under a Colored Cap, p. 140.

⁸"The Power of Laughter: Weapon Against Evil," The Green Crow, p. 227.

⁹"Overture," The Green Crow, p. 15.

triumvirate of "the rotten dramatist, the rotten critics, and all the bastard blazonry of big business"¹⁰ cannot destroy the living theater without destroying life itself.

Using the same kind of logic, he attempts to convince the readers of his plays that life itself cannot be destroyed so long as one Ayamonn Breydon, one Father Ned, one Father Boheroe, or even one Angela Nightingale is loose in the world.

Perhaps it is fittingly ironic to note in conclusion that O'Casey refused to sell his plays for great wealth, for he didn't want them tampered with by those who could pay, any more than he wanted Yeats to tamper with The Silver Tassie or the Archbishop to tamper with The Drums of Father Ned. While O'Casey lived, he would not permit Hollywood, U.S.A., to film his autobiographies and would not sell screen rights to his plays. Since his death, filming of his autobiography has begun and one of the chief technical problems and greatest expenditures is to remove the television antennas and the automobiles from the Dublin area where O'Casey was born and reared in abject poverty. This circumstance offers material for satire worthy of the sardonic sense of humor and the sense of burlesque so integral to the satiric writings of Sean O'Casey.

¹⁰

Ibid., p. 15.

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