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O'CASEY AND THE COMIC

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A Dissertation

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CHAPTER I -- INTRODUCTION

Irish sensitivity to the prevailing representations of the "Teague"¹ in Anglo-Irish literature provided one of the efficient causes for the Irish Renaissance. William Butler Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory and other important initiators of the National Theatre which attracted significant literary attention during the early years of the twentieth century sought, among other things, to modify the image of the Stage Irishman of English stages as well as the less traditional image created by the Irish playwright, Dion Boucicault. Instead of continuing to present a thoroughly ridiculous Irish character, as English and Irish playwrights had done throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Boucicault's works presented an Irish hero who was sentimental in the most pejorative sense of the term. At least, Yeats, Lady Gregory, Shaw, Synge, and O'Casey considered him so. Although Boucicault's drama had been successful on the stage, Yeats, in particular, wanted to replace those works with plays which would use the best elements of Irish folklore in order to give significance to the Irishman of literature. Lady Gregory presented the

¹OED explains the origin of the word "Teague" as an Anglicized spelling of the Irish name "Tadhg." The term is used to indicate an unfavorable name for the Irish, much as "Paddy" came to be used later.

garrulous peasant as a pleasant but harmless character; Shaw, Synge and O'Casey, however, found purposes different from those of Boucicault, Yeats and Lady Gregory, when they laughed at the Stage Irishman as well as with him, as Boucicault had done. In doing so, they injected irony into the national drama. Further, they laughed at the Irish community as well as at the ~~central~~ characters of their plays; for in John Bull's Other Island, The Playboy of the Western World, and The Shadow of a Gunman, particularly, the gullibility of the community promotes tragi-comic results.

Plays which laugh at rather than idealize the Irish rogue character are revealed in their antithetical relationship to pre-renaissance Anglo-Irish drama best, perhaps, when they are studied in their sharp contrast with Boucicault's drama. Consequently, study of the use of the Stage Irishman by Boucicault, Shaw, Synge and O'Casey becomes a convenient method of delineating the comic view lying behind the tradition which those important dramatists established.

More important for the purposes of this study, it provides a frame of reference for a kind of consideration of the major dramatic works of Sean O'Casey which has not been undertaken previously. Because Bernard Shaw wrote only one truly Irish play and because John Willington Synge's career

was cut short by his early death, Sean O'Casey's fairly prolific dramatic output probably represents the most sustained body of Irish drama in existence. He has written over a long period of time--so long that his use of the Stage Irishman has changed noticeably--and, significantly, at the same time so has the nature of his comedy changed.

O'Casey and the Comic, it seems, provides a study of that playwright's drama which can analyze, first of all, his ironic uses of the Stage Irishman. These sardonic, "way of the world" plays gave him little choice but to leave his audience pondering over whether Davoren, the key figure of The Shadow of a Gunman, is a paltroon or a poet; or what disadvantages face a community in which Jack Boyle of Juno and the Paycock finds his world in "a state of chasis"; or who, in the name of serving Ireland's flag in The Plough and the Stars, has the best opportunity to keep the home fires burning; or what comfort is found in conflict which, in The Silver Tassie, drags the life-symbol Harry Heegan from his place as Masters of the Dionysian Revels to the crippled singer of a fantastic Negro spiritual of hope and deliverance. That same Stage Irishman, in another body of O'Casey's plays, can be seen as the nation's only hope for survival and happiness as he represents the life-worshipper who refuses

to become a passive, eternal slave to "humorous" men who make lamentation over Original Sin more important than celebration of Original Joy.

Thus, the comic vision of the playwright moves from imprisoning and impoverished Dublin tenements which, as microcosms of the Irish world provide no more promise than an ironic sneer, to a fantastic "Green World,"² a non-existent pastoral world of O'Casey's imagining. There the life-worshipper can manage to build a better community than can those who make him an outlaw. Realization of the power of vital impulse within the bounds of community is the norm of these ideal comedies. The "ethical" problem is how to escape from the joy-killers; and the Stage Irishman--once more idealized but drawing upon emotional depths unknown to Boucicault--is the aesthetic representation through whose best qualities deliverance may be realized. Such are the best plays which O'Casey wrote between Purple Dust and The Bishop's Bonfire.

O'Casey's total comic view, then, can be studied profitably through analysis of his ironic drama, his "archetypal masques," and his ideal comedies. Accordingly,

²Used here as in Northrup Frye's Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, New Jersey, 1957), p. 176.

this study proposes to trace the Stage Irishman's development from the conventional Teague to the romantic rogue of Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn; to his modifications into a ridiculed character whose excesses trouble the community as in John Bull's Other Island and The Playboy of the Western World; to O'Casey's ironic comedies, The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, The Plough and the Stars, and The Silver Tassie. Because the plays Within the Gates, The Star Turns Red, and Red Roses for Me seek to achieve purposes outside the essential scope of this study, these works will merely be briefly contrasted with what is here taken to be the true upward curve of O'Casey's development.

Ideal Comedy--as realized in Purple Dust, Cock-a-doodle Dandy, and The Bishop's Bonfire--best expresses O'Casey's sustained comic view.³ Far more than being mere experiments with expressionism, as some critics have claimed these works to be, they portray experience and suggest an answer to the problems of the world which they make comic. In this respect, they differ from the ironic comedies, which

³Ronald G. Rollins in "Sean O'Casey's Mental Pilgrimage," Arizona Quarterly (Winter, 1961), p. 295, quotes from a letter which O'Casey wrote to him (dated February 18, 1959), saying that in these plays he argues for "the free and energetic life for man as opposed to repressive conventions."

display O'Casey at his most ambivalent in his attitude toward the world about him. Most interestingly, though, as David Krause has suggested, they "liberate the worthy Celts," by exposing the Irish character to satirical and farcical laughter on the one hand and by offering a visionary alternative in the form of a fantasy on the other hand.⁴ This drama of the "Green World" has for its theme the triumph of life over the waste land, and that triumph is expressed in terms of ways to escape from Irish excesses which result in imprisonment of the free spirit.

p. 186. ⁴Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Works (London, 1960),

CHAPTER II: BOUCICAULT'S STAGE IRISHMAN AND THE COMIC

The Irish and the Irish Stage Before Boucicault

Dion Boucicault (1820? - 1890) is seldom given much importance as a serious playwright; however, he is strategically significant in the development of Irish theatre; for, as George Rowell makes very explicit, Boucicault placed a strain of pathos in his portrayals of Irish characters which was a refinement on the crudely comic Teagues of so many Georgian plays, a tradition stretching far back in English theatre.¹ This sentimental refinement enraged the literary leaders of Irish nationalism who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, denounced the cheapness of Boucicault's humor and sentiment. Because he created a Stage Irishman who was different from that used by his predecessors, and because he appears to be the primary dramatist to create an image of Irish character which Ireland's most important playwrights sought to reverse, Boucicault is a more significant dramatist than he seems to be at first sight. That pivotal importance is the thesis of this portion of the study. Consequently, it seems necessary to examine closely at least one of his plays in

¹The Victorian Theatre (London, 1956), p. 55.

order to determine the comic nature of Boucicault's Stage Irishman and his relationship to similar, yet vastly different, characters, created by Synge, Shaw and O'Casey.

That sentimental Irish hero which Boucicault used so freely and which Synge, Shaw and O'Casey modified so significantly followed a type of Irish theatre which had been established in the country nearly two hundred years before Boucicault's plays appeared on London and Dublin stages. James Shirley (1596-1660) actually pioneered in founding an Irish national theatre when, in 1640, he wrote and produced at Dublin's new Werbaugh Street Theatre Saint Patrick for Ireland.² His choice of Saint Patrick, Ireland's national saint and hero, as his subject indicates Shirley's awareness of the sensitiveness of the Irish people, as well as does the following excerpt from the play's Prologue:

We know not what will take, your pallats are
Various, and many of them sick I feare. . . .
We should be very happy, if at last,
We could find out the humours of your taste
That we might fit and feast it. . . .³

²Peter Kavanaugh in his The Irish Theatre (Tralee, 1946), pp. 16-21, reports that the Lord Strafford, Lord Lieutenant of Dublin, had imported Shirley from England to lend dignity to the court at Dublin by writing and producing plays there.

³Kavanaugh, p. 20.

It is not necessary to analyze Saint Patrick for Ireland at length here, but it is significant to note that the play is unlike any Shirley had written before. Bentley feels that "in the canon of Shirley's generally sophisticated plays, Saint Patrick for Ireland is conspicuous for its crudeness" and that in it the playwright relies on subject-matter, songs, and buffoonery, and raw spectacle.⁴

Another critic has remarked that Shirley's play combines local historical subjects with sentimentality in order to create a Stage Irishman who was acceptable to his local audiences.⁵ The same statement is true of Charles Shadwell's Rotherick O'Conner, King of Connought, or The Distressed Princess (1715) in which a melodramatic plot, not unlike Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn, displays a "native tragedy" in order to evoke sentimental responses. Both plays also place a strong emphasis on religious and national concerns in as much as they portray romantic love and heroism. Thus, even with these scant but significant examples, it appears that a trend became established soon after Ireland received its first theatre. The Battle of Aughrim (1727),

⁴The Jacobean and Caroline Stage: Plays and Playwrights, Volume V (Oxford, 1956), p. 1144.

⁵Hugh MacMullan, "The Sources of Shirley's St. Patrick for Ireland," PMLA, XLVIII (April, 1956), p. 86.

written by Robert Ashton, too, is a sentimental play of this type which was rewritten as late as 1841 under the title of Ireland Preserved. Duggan says that the play was particularly popular with Irish audiences, and that it may well still be played in some parts of the North of Ireland.⁶

Apparently, Francis Dobbs' The Irish Chief or Patriot King (1773) was one of the earliest Irish plays in which objections to the conventional eighteenth century portrayal of the Irish personality appear, a portrayal very far from the sentiment of the earliest Anglo-Irish plays. The following portion of the Prologue to that play is particularly significant in this respect:

Full oft hath honest Teague been here displayed
 And many a roar have Irish blunders made.
 The bull, the brogue, are now so common grown
 That one would almost swear they were your own!
 But, lo, tonight what you ne'er saw before,
 A tragic hero from Hibernia's shore,
 Who speaks as you do, both of men and things,
 And talks heroics just like other kings. . . .
 To hold forth nature once the stage was meant;
 'Tis strangely altered from that first intent.
 Were we by it to judge Ierene's sons,
 They are all honest, but they are all clowns.
 Yet truth hath said, and I shall take her word,
 That some have graced a court - and some a cord -
 Know yet what part I act who speak so well -
 I'd lay my life not one in ten can tell.
 So many lines without an Irish howl,
 Without 'By Jasus' or 'Upon my shoul,'
 'Tis strange indeed, nor can I hope relief,
 When I declare myself the Irish Chief.⁷

⁶The Stage Irishman (London, 1937), p. 288.

⁷Ibid., pp. 31-32.

The eighteenth century saw such a profusion of sentimental plays that Duggan wonders if their banality and blather might not have led Oliver Goldsmith to realize the danger that was impending for his works if he had included Irish characters in his comedies at all. Further, he concludes that by the time Dobbs wrote the complaint above, the degeneration of stage writing had produced a Stage Irishman and that the plays had reached a point where one is justified in claiming that the age was given entirely to:

. . .burlesque, farces, romantic comedies--an era of spectral shapes, of mountaineers living in operatic scenery, of mechanical stage effects, of fetes champetres. Even good plays became artificial and forced. Playwrights who were Irish might introduce a live Irishman (and, indeed, such very often saved a play from complete dullness), but the temptation to repeat what succeeded became a danger. At their best such characters had three excellent qualities--undoubted courage, bouyancy of disposition, a natural simplicity. Fun, genuine laughter and robust feeling are in themselves admirable ingredients for comedy, but these characteristics began to be travestied by writers who knew nothing of Ireland, who observed that an Irishman on the stage livened up a dull and correct play.⁸

The tradition briefly described above was available to Dion Boucicault. Consequently, his general significance as a playwright lies primarily in the degree to which he followed the dramatic conventions which were in vogue when

⁸Ibid, p. 290.

he began to write plays, though for the purposes of this study, it lies in the metamorphosis which he produced in the portrayal of the Stage Irishman.

His first play, London Assurance (1841) was a financial success for the twenty-year old Irishman, though it did not in any way deal with the Stage Irishman. It was rather like the Restoration comedy of manners and was revolutionary in its requirements for staging. According to Brander Mathews, Madame Vestris, owner of Covent Garden Theatre, mounted Boucicault's new play sumptuously, "with handsome furniture and new scenery; it was believed that the box-set, the room with walls and a ceiling was then first shown on the English stage."⁹ That play established Boucicault as a popular new playwright. The most novel additions to comedy which Boucicault made, however, are to be found in his three Irish dramas, The Colleen Bawn (1860), Arrah-na-Pogue (1865), and The Shaughraun (1870)--all melodramas with complicated scenic effects, accompanying music, deep-eyed villainy, and sublime and sacrificing virtue. More important to this study, however, all contain Boucicault's Stage Irishman, for he is the icon through which the comic view of Ireland and Irish people can be most conveniently

⁹English Comedy (New York, 1929), pp. 319-320.

investigated in the scope of the plays included in this study. The Colleen Bawn, the first and most popular of the somewhat repetitious Irish plays, is the one which will be examined here in detail, as a prototype of the playwright's comedy.

Boucicault's Stage Irishman

The Colleen Bawn, or The Brides of Gerryowen appears about mid-way in Boucicault's career. His Vanity Fair (1860) had been a failure in London at the Laura Keane Theatre, and the Boucicaults faced disaster. Townsend Walsh reports that the profits of the season had disappeared; Boucicault's fertility seemed gone; his facile Muse had deserted him; his mine of ideas seemed to be exhausted.¹⁰ In desperation, the playwright looked to Ireland and Irish folk life for inspiration, forgetting the comedy of manners in which he had had a good deal of success.

A story of how Boucicault came to find the inspiration for The Colleen Bawn is retold in Walsh, and while the full authenticity of the story is doubtful, it seems worthwhile to reproduce it here. It is rather in the manner of The Colleen Bawn itself:

¹⁰The Career of Dion Boucicault (New York, 1915), p. 79.

It was a bitter night. . . and the sleet, driven by a northern blast, lashed his face as he turned down the alley from the stage door. A few steps from the theatre, a dim lamp in a cellar showed a thrifty Italian who sold old books. Descending into the den [sic], Boucicault picked out a dozen cheap novels at hazard, and, with his overcoat stuffed with them, went home to spend the hours of the night in searching them for a play. The following morning Laura Keane received this note: "I have it. I send you seven steel engravings of scenes around Killarney. Get your scene-painter to work on them at once. I also send a book of Irish melodies, with those marked I desire scored for the orchestra. I will have the first act of a new play finished soon. We will rehearse it while I work on the second. We can get the play out in a fortnight."¹¹

The novel which had given Boucicault his inspiration for a new play was Gerald Griffin's The Collegians. The playwright never claimed that the plot was entirely his, but, in response to the charge of plagiarism, he said, "I despoil genius to make the mob worship it."¹² This statement may well be more important than a mere grandiloquent reply for his accusers, for it is compatible with an attitude which Boucicault expressed later when, in 1868, he told a Mrs. Bancroft that although the audience might pretend it wanted pure comedy, it really sought for other things. "What they want," he said, "is domestic drama, treated with broad comic character."¹³ Those other things were found in a mixture of

¹¹Ibid., p. 71.

¹²Ibid., p. 73.

¹³Allardyce Nicoll, History of English Drama: 1660-1900 (London, 1953), Volume V., p. 84.

the lessons he had learned from French drama,¹⁴ the "poetic justice" of Victorian literature, and the melodramatic treatment of the comic Irish rogue. The Victorian sentimentality he found in the many popular novels which were rapidly replacing drama in public favor, and the Irish "playboy" was what he found when he turned to native sources for fresh material. David Krause sums up the mixture: "He was at heart a rowdy and exuberant clown, and although he never deviated from the Victorian formula of vice punished and virtue rewarded, he filled the theatre with as much laughter as sentimentality. . . ."15

The rowdiness which Krause refers to is especially significant in Boucicault's drama because in it the Stage Irishman who for centuries had been passed off as the brash buffoon of English literature became the clever and mischievous rogue-hero. The playwright was at his best with the comic vagabond--the shaughraun or wanderer--who shrewdly and bravely righted all wrongs and, at the same time, was "master of the revels."

¹⁴ From 1844 to 1848 Boucicault lived in France where he acquired an intimate knowledge of French language and literature.

¹⁵David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Works (London, 1960), p. 58.

When The Colleen Bawn was produced at the Laura Keane Theatre, Boucicault acknowledged his indebtedness to Gerald Griffin by placing on the bill the following statement: "A drama by Dion Boucicault and dedicated by him to the undying memory of his illustrious countryman, Gerald Griffin, whose beautiful romance, The Collegians, furnished the subject of the play."¹⁶ Also, he indicated his attitude toward the new "native drama" which he was now writing by including in the same bill this comment:

Ireland, so rich in scenery, so full of romance and warm touch of nature, has never until now been opened to the dramatist. Irish dramas have hitherto been exaggerated farces, representing low life or scenes of abject servitude and suffering. Such is not a true picture of Irish society. THE COLLEEN BAWN, founded on a true history, first told by an Irishman and now dramatized by an Irishman.¹⁷

If these comments are to be taken seriously, one must conclude that a modification of the stock figure of the Stage Irishman was one of Boucicault's intentions when he wrote this play, although it must be remembered also that he turned to the Irish subjects only in desperation. It must also be remembered that the new play was not merely a staging of the

¹⁶Reproduced in Walsh, pp. 74-75.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 76.

complete plot of Griffin's novel, for the melodrama flavored with comedy expresses Boucicault's attitude toward the Irish character, one which was not necessarily the same as Griffin's.

Walsh believes that a comparison between the novel and the play causes one to form a higher estimate than the usual one of Boucicault's genius. Perhaps so, for it is clear that only two passages in the play were taken directly from Griffin. One is the scene in which Danny Mann tempts Hardress Cregan to put Eily "out of the way."¹⁸ The other is Mrs. Cregan's magnificent outburst when the soldiers find her son hiding in her bedroom: "Dark bloodhounds, have you found him? May the eye that first detected him be darkened in its socket, and the tongue that told you be withered in its roots."

Griffin's novel is said to be based on fact, and to have created a sensation in its day. Eily O'Conner was the humble daughter of a rope-maker who lived in Gerryowen. A young gentleman named Scanlan had married her recently. Eventually, he tired of her and sought the hand of a lady of fortune, Miss Chute of Castle Chute. Determined to rid himself of Eily, he employed his hunchback servant, Stephen Sullivan,

¹⁸References hereafter are to Dion Boucicault, The Colleen Bawn, in Nineteenth Century Plays, ed. George Rowell (London, 1953), pp. 176-231.

to take his wife out boating on the River Shannon and to drown her. When Sullivan's heart failed him, Scanlan himself got into the boat. When he threw Eily into the water, one of her hands grasping the boat-rail, Sullivan promptly chopped off her fingers with a hatchet. When Eily's body was washed ashore a few days later, a coroner's inquest brought in a verdict of murder against Scanlan and Sullivan.

At first no one seemed disposed to arrest so well-born and highly-connected a man as Scanlan; consequently, he walked about at liberty and unmolested. Eventually, Lord Monteagle wrote to the Castle, urging that the scandal be ended. The answer from Dublin reminded Lord Monteagle that he should enforce his own warrant and that the scandal was his responsibility. The trial of Scanlan took place at Limerick on March 14, 1820. He was convicted and March 16 was set for his execution. When that day came, public indignation ran so high that no conveyance could be found to bring Scanlan to the gallows. He walked to the gallows and was hanged protesting his innocence to the last.

Griffin used this series of events as the basic plot of his novel, but he softened the incidents. He concentrated on the sufferings and struggles of a weak but kindly man who wakes up to find himself a murderer. Instead of

making Scanlan the villain that his act would seem to require him to be, Griffin took the attitude that the senseless passion which had seized the man made him somehow as pathetic as the dead wife. Boucicault softened the incidents still further. In his play there is only attempted murder, unknown to and unsought by the hero. The girl is rescued from the attempted drowning and reconciled with her husband. She is rescued by Myles-na-Coppaleen, who makes a dive for her which is probably the one outstanding theatrical innovation in the play. It is, in fact, the fashioning of the character Myles which is the chief modification Boucicault made in the Griffin story.

The plot of The Colleen Bawn is melodramatic, both in its use of music to fortify the emotional tone of the various scenes and in the exact demonstration of poetic justice with which the play's problem is resolved. The final response which the play demands, despite its melodramatic plot line, is of the sort which Northrup Frye has suggested to be characteristic of all comedy. Weeping and laughing, the audience (the final cause of the outcome of the plot) indicates approval of the resolution of the difficulties which the play has displayed, a resolution

which involves a final realignment of characters and includes in the group approved by the audience as many of them as possible.¹⁹

Moreover, the plot's sentimentality expresses itself in terms of a movement from the kind of ironic comedy which displays "the way of the world," in the direction of ideal comedy. This distinction, according to Frye, appears "when we find sympathetic or even neutral characters in a comedy."²⁰ Here the sympathetic character is the poacher-Stage Irishman, whose sentimental attitudes are felt to be for the community good. The ironies of the fates of the pathetic characters are arbitrary: consequently, that arbitrariness, coupled with the strong accent on poetic justice, leads toward sentimentality. But the comic view in these domestic tragedies concludes with the vision of an as-you-like-it world suggested in place of the "true" way of the world. To that extent, then, the comedy is ideal comedy. Its broad comic character is the Stage Irishman, whom, for one of the first times in the history of the drama, the audience loves. It laughs with him rather than at him.

¹⁹Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, N.J., 1957), p. 44.

²⁰Ibid., p. 45.

"Poetic justice" comes about in the play through uses made of Mr. Corrigan, a "Pettifogging Attorney," who begins and ends as a villain in The Colleen Bawn. He holds a mortgage of 8,000 pounds on the property of Mrs. Cregan, and early in the play he begins to demand payment of the obligation. Mrs. Cregan announces that her son, Hardress, is almost obliged to marry Anne Chute in order for the Cregan family to avoid being completely dispossessed. She confides to her son's ex-schoolmate that, regardless of whether Hardress loves Anne Chute, the marriage is a matter of necessity: "You are an old friend of my son, and I may confide to you a family secret. The extravagance of my husband left his estate deeply involved. By this marriage with Anne Chute we redeem every acre of our barony. My son and she have been brought up as children together, and don't know their true feelings yet" (p. 178).

Her explanation does not, however, indicate any actual villainy on the part of Mr. Corrigan, other than that which is somehow assumed to exist in any money-lender demanding payment. Though Corrigan's total role is not at once suggested, one essential conflict of the play does become known early when it is revealed that both Hardress and his friend, Kryle Daly, have an interest in Anne Chute. Hardress

is engaged to be married to her, but Daly is in love with her. Conflict arises between Hardress and his mother when the young man is found encouraging his friend Daly to press his attention upon Miss Chute, and when Corrigan offers to drop his foreclosing procedures if Mrs. Cregan will agree to marry him. A crisis for this particular conflict is reached when, upon learning that her son intends to marry Eily O'Connor instead of the wealthy Anne Chute, Mrs. Cregan agrees to marry Corrigan. She does not know her son is already secretly married to the peasant girl.

Hardress objects strenuously to his mother's plan to become Corrigan's wife, and he says it would be impossible for him to marry Anne, but he is not prepared to tell his mother the real reason for his hesitancy in marrying the heiress. Because he is in this dilemma, young Cregan's manservant, Danny Mann, a hunchback who was made deformed by Hardress' playful pranks years earlier, offers to kill Eily as a solution. Hardress rebukes him soundly for the suggestion, but the symbol of approval which Danny says he needs in order to know that Hardress wants him to carry out his plan--one of his gloves--is given to him inadvertently by Mrs. Cregan. As soon as he receives the glove, Danny goes to the house where the Colleen, Father Tom and Danny's

mother live and spirits the young woman away in a row boat. He tries to kill her by drowning, but Myles-na-Coppaleen, a poacher who is himself in love with Eily, rescues the girl and takes her into a cave. He shoots Danny and thinks he has killed him.

Ten days later, all principals in the case realize precisely what has happened. It is Hardress' wedding day, but as the comic resolution is effected, the magistrate and the people of the community exonerate everyone except Corrigan. He is not brought to trial; he has done nothing illegal. However, he is set upon by the wedding guests, as Hardress and Eily are reconciled. Daly and Anne are able to plan to marry, and Myles makes the magnanimous gesture of setting things right and sacrificing his own love for Eily in order that she and Hardress may be happily reunited. Danny Mann dies a tormented death for his attempt to commit murder.

The thesis of this study can be best investigated through Myles-na-Coppaleen's role, the part which Dion Boucicault played in the first production of this play at London's Royal Adelphia Theatre, September 10, 1860.²¹ Myles is first introduced in the play in a scene in which

²¹Walsh, p. 77.

he meets Corrigan. The attorney has come to a cove along the lake to try to ascertain where Hardress goes with his boatman each night. The language and the exposition which occur at this point are significant, for they establish the conventional character of the romantic rogue:

CORRIGAN: Who's that?--'Tis that poaching scoundrel--that horse stealer, Myles-na-Coppaleen. Here he comes with a keg of illicit whiskey, as bold as Nebuckadezzar. (Enter Myles, singing with a keg on his shoulder.) Is that you, Myles?

MYLES: No! It's my brother.

CORRIGAN: I know ye, my man.

MYLES: Then why the devil did ye ax?

CORRIGAN: You may as well answer me kindly--civility costs nothing.

MYLES: Ow now! don't it! Civility to a lawyer means six-and-eight pence about.

CORRIGAN: What's that on your shoulder?

MYLES: What's that to you?

CORRIGAN: I am a magistrate, and can oblige you to answer.

MYLES: Well, it's a boulder belongin' to my mother's feather bed.

CORRIGAN: Stuff'd with whiskey!

MYLES: Bedad! how would I know that it's stuffed with? I'm not an upholsterer.

Thus, Myles, the Stage Irishman of this play, is introduced as a representation of the admirable ingredients for comedy--devotee to alcohol, expert phrase-turner, "master of the revels"--which G. C. Duggan says are characteristic of the heroes of Irish drama of the nineteenth century.²² But Boucicault was interested in introducing another quality into his portrayal. In the continuation of the same scene from which the above speeches were taken, one sees that Myles' role changes. Also Corrigan's villainy is established clearly for the first time; for when one remembers that he is the magistrate of the area, the following exchange of comments becomes meaningful:

CORRIGAN: Come, Myles. I'm not so bad a fellow as ye may think.

MYLES: To think of that now!

CORRIGAN: I am not the mane creature you imagine!

MYLES: Ain't ye now, sir? You keep up appearances mighty well, indeed.

CORRIGAN: No, Myles! I'm not that blackguard I've been represented.

MYLES: (sits on keg) See that now--how people take away a man's character. You are another sort of blackguard entirely.

²²The Stage Irishman: A History of the Irish Play and Stage Characters from Earliest Times (London, 1937), p.20.

CORRIGAN: You shall find me a gentleman--liberal and ready to protect you.

MYLES: Long life t'ye, sir.

CORRIGAN: Myles, you have come down in the world lately; a year ago you were a thriving horse-dealer, now you are a lazy ragged fellow.

MYLES: Ah, it's the bad luck, sir, that's in it.

CORRIGAN: No, it's the love of Eily O'Conner that's in it--it's the pride of Gerry-owen that took your heart away.

MYLES: Thim's hard words.

CORRIGAN: But they are true. You live like a wild beast in some cave or hole in the rocks above; by night your gun is heard shootin' the otter as they lie out on the stones, or you snare the salmon in your nets; on a cloudy night your whiskey still is going--you see, I know your life.

MYLES: Better than a priest, and devil in it.

(pp. 186-87)

Corrigan's purpose here is to play upon the sentiment Myles feels for Eily O'Connor and to enlist his aid as an informer. Because Hardress Cregan has objected so violently to his mother's agreement to marry Corrigan, and because Corrigan knows that Hardress makes nightly trips across the lake to visit someone, he arouses Myles' suspicion that the person Hardress visits is Eily O'Connor. Myles agrees to report to Corrigan where it is that Danny Mann takes

Hardress, and Corrigan agrees to pay Myles twenty pounds for the information. However, when the lawyer says he thinks the Colleen Bawn is Hardress' mistress, Myles has to restrain himself from striking the older man.

The characteristic which has been established is important here because it shows that the romantic rogue, operating naturally within his conventional role, is more harmless than is the magistrate. Corrigan knows precisely the illegal activity which Myles is engaged in, but instead of performing his legal responsibility by arresting the poacher, Corrigan enlists his aid. Myles, at the same time, becomes something more than a mere scoundrel. His reactions to Corrigan's plans foreshadow the heroic role which Myles is to play as the drama unfolds.

Significant too is the singing which Myles does in the first act of the play. It adds to his romantic character, and as much as his speeches to Corrigan, it helps to characterize the conventional Stage Irishman. He sings lustily of his love as he prepares to take a keg of whiskey to Father Tom's at the cottage where Eily lives, but it is obvious that the lines of the song are closer to characterization than to being mere expressions of his feelings about the lass:

Oh, Limerick is beautiful, as everybody knows,
 The River Shannon's full of fish, beside that city
 flows;
 But it is not the river, nor the fish that preys
 upon my mind,
 Nor with the town of Limerick have I any fault
 to find.
 The girl I love is beautiful, she's fairer than
 the dawn;
 She lives in Gerryowen, and she's called the
 Colleen Bawn.
 As the river, proud and bold, goes by that famed city,
 So proud and cold, with a word, that Colleen goes
 by me!
 Oh, if I was the Emperor of Russia to command,
 Or Julius Caesar, or the Lord Lieutenant of the land,
 I'd give up all my wealth, my manes, I'd give up
 the army,
 Both the horse, the fut, and the Royal Artillery;
 I'd give the crown from off my head, the people on
 their knees,
 I'd give me fleet of sailing ships upon the briny seas,
 And a beggar I'd go to sleep, a happy man at dawn,
 If by my side, fast for my bride, I'd the darlin'
 Colleen Bawn (188-189).

And when he has finished singing the song, he says
 that he must reach the cottage before Cregan arrives; that
 he must give Father Tom his "keg of starlight" for a tithe.
 He says that he gives the old priest every tenth keg of his
 illicit whiskey, for it is worth money to see the way it
 does the old man good. And, adding to the portrait of his
 roguishness, he tells himself that the only time he sees the
 priest is when he is delivering whiskey at the cottage. By
 this somewhat humorous reminder to himself, he tells the
 reader that he does not go to Mass.

When Myles arrives at the cottage of Father Tom, he and the occupants there--the old priest, Eily, and Sheela, who is housekeeper and the mother of Danny Mann--make a merry quartet representative of Irish folk life as it is conventionally portrayed. Eily remarks that Myles is not as "bad about me as he used to be," and Myles agrees that he has got "settled into the bad weather." Here Father Tom expresses the opinion that it might have been better for Eily to have married Myles than to be the wife of a man who is ashamed of her. Eily rejects Father Tom's attitude and tells the group that Hardress is not ashamed of her; that he is, instead, proud of her, except when she speaks like poor people. In another exchange of speeches which illustrates the romantic rogue in Myles as well as his tendency toward a sublime and sacrificing virtue, and which shows at the same time a kind of domestic Irish setting which must have pleased Boucicault's audiences well, we find Myles, Eily and Father Tom speaking:

MYLES: Oh! if he'd lave me yer ownself, and only take away wid him the improvements. Oh! murder, Eily, aroon, why wasn't ye twins, an' I could have one of ye, only nature couldn't make two like ye--it would be onreasonable to ax it.

EILY: Poor Myles, do you love me still so much?

MYLES: Didn't I lave the world to folly ye, and since then there's been neither night nor day in my life--I lay down on Glenna Point above, where I see this cottage, and I lived on the sight of it. Oh! Eily, if tears were pison to the grass there wouldn't be a green blade on Glenna Hill this day.

EILY: But you knew I was married, Myles.

MYLES: Not then, aroon--Father Tom found me that way, and sat beside me, and lifted up my soul. Then I confessed to him, and sez he, "Myles, go to Eily, she has something to say to you." I came, and ye told me ye were Hardress Oregan's wife, and that was a great comfort entirely. Since I knew that I haven't been the blackguard I was (191).

When Sheela invites Eily to cheer up the group "wid the tail of a song," the Colleen Bawn reminds them that Hardress has forbidden her to sing Irish songs because they are vulgar. Here Father Tom contributes the romantic Irish flavor to the conversation when he tells Eily sternly:

Put your lips to the jug; there is only the strippens left. Drink! And what that thrue Irish liquor warms your heart, take this wid it. May the brogue of ould Ireland niver forsake your tongue--may her music niver lave yer voice--and may a true Irishman's virtue die in your heart! (192).

By this time in the play, the character of Myles-na-Coppaleen has been seen to move from the "poaching scoundrel" Mr. Corrigan said he is to a peasant, romantic. When he enters the play again in the same scene, he returns as the

"righter of wrongs" for the first time. For, upon hearing Hardress demand of Eily their marriage license which she keeps in her bosom, he suddenly appears and says to Eily, "no. I'll be damned if he shall." This portion of the scene becomes particularly significant as a revelation of Myles' total character, for although he has only recently declared his continuing love for Eily, he will not permit her to cooperate with Hardress in his attempts to annul their marriage. He demands that Hardress should return the paper to Eily and says that she cannot tear up the oath. To do so, he says, will help Hardress to cheat the other girl, and only to make her his mistress. He reasons that no amount of money can be just cause for committing adultery, and that if Eily consents to destroying her marriage license and thus joins Hardress and Anne together, her love will be an adultery. Ironically, then, Hardress turns on Myles and calls him "vagabond," "outcast," "jailbird," and asks if he cares to "prate the honor of me?" Myles answers calmly that he is an outlaw--maybe a felon--"but if you do one thing to that girl that loves you so much. . .I'd turn around and say to ye, 'Hardress Gregan, I make ye a present of the contempt of a rogue.'"

Myles, the poacher, has insisted upon honoring the letter of the code which he would most clearly be expected

to break. And the ethic which he has used to argue his point is a mixture of greatest respect for the law and of the threat of brute force. Interestingly, no other person in the group--including Father Tom--has shown an ethical standard that equals Myles'. When one recalls that he is a self-acknowledged poacher and that he, himself, loves Eily, one has to conclude that this portion of the scene has served to reveal a sublime and sacrificing virtue in the evolving character of Myles.

Another indication of the conscious fashioning of a Stage Irishman into a sentimental hero in this play is found late in Act II when Danny has spirited Eily to the place where he plans to drown her. The setting is a cave through which can be seen the lake and the moon, and Myles is there preparing to distill whiskey. He speaks to himself:

And this is a purty night for my work! The smoke of my whiskey still will not be seen; there's my distillery beyant in a snug hold up there and here's my bridge to cross over to it. I think it would puzzle a guager to folly me; this is a patent of my own--a tight-rope bridge. . . (p. 120).

True, the scene is a not-too-subtle contrivance, but while Myles is in his illicit cave for purposes of making illicit whiskey he is permitted to be close to the place where Danny plans to murder Eily. Because he is there,

he is able to shoot Danny--thinking at first he is an otter--and he is able to dive into the water and rescue Eily. Consequently, the paradox in his dramatic impersonation can accomplish a kind of irony which allows him to be the saint and the rogue at the same time. And because this piece of dramatic action is so important in the plot of the play, one has to conclude once more that Boucicault was consciously fashioning in Myles an expression of his paradoxical Stage Irishman--a poacher who at the same time is a sentimental hero whose sense of decency and feeling is greater than those of the law, the gentry, or the church.

Finally, the reconciliation scene in the play is perhaps the most sentimental portion. Anne Chute is permitted to return to Kryle Daly, whom she has loved all along but whom she has been led by Danny to believe was secretly married to Eily. Handress and Eily are reconciled and not much attention is given to the method by which the mortgage on the Oregan estate is paid off. In this incredible "comedy of errors" each person who is at all culpable comes forth and agrees to take the blame for the attempted murder. Contrivance and coincidence pile upon one another, but it is Myles who, taking the hands of Eily and Handress, joins them in their reunion. And in doing so, he speaks one of

the most sentimental passages in the play:

Take her, wid all my heart. I may say that,
for you can't take her widout. I am like
the boy who had a penny to put in the poor-
box--I'd rather keep it for myself. It's
a shamrock itself ye have got, sir; and
like that flower she'll come up every year
fresh and green forenent ye. When ye do die,
lave your money to the poor, your widdy to me,
and we'll both forgive ye (p. 230).

We have seen that Griffin's The Collegians provided the basic story from which Boucicault wrote The Colleen Bawn. But one of the most significant differences between the two works is the character of Myles-na-Coppaleen. The novel has no character like Myles. Sullivan is Scanlan's accomplice, as Danny is the person who wishes to assist his master by drowning Eily. Not only is Myles a new character, but he is motivated by values which were entirely unlike the poacher-type personality. Significantly, Boucicault chose to play the role of Myles himself. These facts seem to point conclusively to the thesis that a Myles-type Stage Irishman was the major accomplishment which the playwright attempted in his first purely Irish drama.

Boucicault made no attempt to give a realistic view of the Irish. The Colleen Bawn, as Kavanaugh says, was "obviously designed to please the uninformed English and American public" with its emphasis on an abundance of tears

and popular theme of the gentleman who stoops to marry the poor girl. Continuing, Kavanaugh explains:

Boucicault had a sentimental love of Ireland. He did not really know the Irish people or if he did he failed to portray them accurately on the stage. He did not aim at originality and the Irish characters in his plays are no more than Stage Irishmen of older plays, slightly better dressed and less wild. . . His plays, taken as a whole, are only of historical interest, for they are completely detached from that vital movement that reached its zenith in the plays of Synge, Robinson, MacNamara and O'Casey.²³

No assessment of Boucicault's worth in Irish drama could be farther from the truth when one realizes that the sense of community which the figure of Myles established in The Colleen Bawn is an essential thread in the Irish Renaissance. Though he does so in the midst of a mawkishly melodramatic play and in a sentimental way, Myles embodies values which William Empson has meaningfully described as "pastoral." Shaw, Synge and O'Casey reacted strongly against the sentimentality of Boucicault's Stage Irishman; but in the end no one of them is able to get along without the values which this figure points toward. This is especially true of the later O'Casey.

According to Empson, proletarian literature usually contains a suggestion of pastoral, but not a full consciousness of class war; for the pastoral is something more strange

²³Kavanaugh, p. 406.

than class-consciousness, something more permanent; and it is not dependent on a system of class exploitation. Instead of concentrating on class struggle, in the conventional sense of the term, the "worker," who is the fool to his superiors, is the fool who sees truth.²⁴ T. Powrys, for example, chooses to write about country people in order to get a simple enough material for his purpose. In universal matters--such as a Buddhist union of God and death in Powrys--country people feel that union and are wiser about it than cultivated people. When their system of values and standard of conduct proves them to be subtly better than they had been thought to be, their portrayal makes one willing to be ruled by his betters. The higher quality of these "fools" may well come from the experiences of their harsh lives which make them feel at home with the rest of civilization, rather than suspicious of it.

How this pastoral convention works may be explained in the following comment from Empson:

The essential trick of the old pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the best subject in the best way.)

²⁴English Pastoral Poetry (New York, 1938), p. 6.

From seeing the two sorts of people combined like this you thought better of both; the best parts of both were used. The effect was in some degree to combine in the reader or author the merits of the two sorts; he was made to mirror in himself more completely the effective elements of the society he lived in.²⁵

Boucicault brings off a similar trick in The Colleen Bawn. Simple people--and especially Myles, the rogue-hero--are in possession of universal truths which, in the end, are acknowledged even by the rich and proud. They do not speak these truths in "learned and fashionable language" but in the Irish brogue, which, however, is acknowledged by sympathetic characters to be the "best" language. (In fact, a small warfare on the subject of the nature of the "best" language is waged between the aristocrats and the simple ones--a warfare which is ended with the acknowledgement of defeat by the aristocrats.) In The Colleen Bawn, then, the melodramatic plot line does contain the total significance of the play; for Myles-na-Coppaleen, the special type of Stage Irishman whose character the play forges, provided that vitality which is the link between Boucicault, Synge, Shaw and O'Casey. That portion of Boucicault's comic view which contains the higher value and that which the later Irish

²⁵Ibid., pp. 11-12.

dramatists employed saw the Stage Irishman without sentimentality, but as Empson explains the "fool" in Shakespeare:

The simple man becomes a clumsy fool who yet has better "sense" than his betters and can say things more fundamentally true; he is in "contact with nature," which the complex man needs to be, so that Bottom is not afraid of the fairies; he is in contact with the mysterious forces of our own nature, so that the clown has the wit of the Unconscious; he can speak the truth because he has nothing to lose. Also the idea that he is in contact with nature, therefore "one with the universe" like the Senecan man, brought in a suggestion of stoicism; this made the thing less unreal and profound.²⁶

When viewed in this light, Myles becomes in The Colleen Bawn a "mythical" character whose significance embodies complex feelings which become a symbol to the audience--a symbol whose implication enjoins the viewer to keep this type of character in mind and to follow him because he is Natural. Following him will induce Nature to make us prosperous. Aside from the Victorian "poetic justice" which The Colleen Bawn enforces, and aside from the sentimentality with which that quality in the play offends modern audiences, Myles gives to the play the realistic sort of pastoral which leads to a Natural expression for a sense of social injustice. His ironic characterization may be explained by Empson's comment:

²⁶Ibid., p. 14.

So far as the person described is outside society because too poor for its benefits he is independent, as the artist claims to be, and can be a critic of society; so far as he is forced by this time into crime he is the judge of the society that judges him. This is the source of irony both against him and against society, and if he is a sympathetic criminal he can be made to suggest both Christ as a scapegoat (so involving Christian charity) and the sacrificial tragic hero, who was normally above society rather than below it, which is a further source of irony.²⁷

Myles as poacher, whiskey-seller, singer of romantic ballads and turner of clever phrase is introduced in The Colleen Bawn as a man socially and temperamentally lower than the other male characters in the play. The social alignment finds him hopelessly outside the approved circle. However, as we have seen in the synopsis, he is the only character in the play whose elements are Natural; he is the one who sees truth more clearly than any of the more complex characters who deal with him. He is the pastoral figure, though, whose sense of justice reveals the injustice of his betters; he is the man who relinquishes his love--that to which he never held a hopeful claim; more judiciously than his betters, he upholds the law which he had little, if any part in making. The play questions who is the true man of quality, and suggests the answer clearly. Myles becomes,

²⁷Ibid., p. 17.

therefore, the "righter of wrongs" in a social and moral sense, and that role is new for the Anglo-Irish Stage Irishman. Too, that quality is the one which O'Casey adopts for the heroes of his later comedies. That indebtedness to Boucicault's drama, then, becomes the chief link between the two Irish playwrights.

These pastoral emphases in Boucicault's drama are overlooked by David Krause when he attempts to essay the older dramatist's influence on O'Casey's works. When he calls The Colleen Bawn, among Boucicault's other Irish "native" plays, "hurly-burly action. . .all on the surface since it was clearly intended to be merry Celtic moonshine,"²⁸ Krause fails to point out the nature of the Stage Irishman which Boucicault fashioned as well as the significance of that link between the works of the two playwrights. That important critical consideration forms the basis of the two chapters of this study which follow.

²⁸Krause, p. 59.

CHAPTER III: THE REACTION AGAINST
BOUCICAULT'S STAGE IRISHMAN

John Bull's Other Island:

In one of his early play reviews, George Bernard Shaw complains that Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn does not represent real Irishmen.¹ But he is careful to point out that he does not deny that the worst Stage Irishmen are often real Irishmen. "What I mean," he says, "is that Dion Boucicault, when he invented Myles, was not holding the mirror up to nature, but blarneying the British public precisely as the Irish car-driver." In short, the specific objection which Shaw raises is to Boucicault's romanticizing of the lovable qualities of his Irish heroes. Contrary to Boucicault, Shaw felt that an Irishman who has any sort of social conscience is exasperated by the idealization of Killarney moonlight, colleens in crimson cloaks, and round towers. Irish peasants are primarily farmers, concludes his review, and the implication here is that these peasants cannot afford the romantic luxuries which Boucicault makes so significant in his plays. Shaw feels that there are

¹"Dear Harp of My Country," in Our Theatres in the 90's, II (London, 1948), p. 28.

virtues which the Irish peasant possesses, but they are his intense melancholy, his surliness of manner, his incapacity for happiness and self-respect--all of which are virtues, but which make the Irish peasant "unfit for a life of wretchedness." On the other hand, the Irish peasant's vices, according to Shaw, are the arts by which he accommodates himself to his slavery. These are the qualities which deserve to be despised:

. . . The flatters on his lips which hide the curse in his hide; his pleasant readiness to settle disputes by leaving "it all to your honor"; in order to make something out of your generosity in addition to exacting the utmost of his legal due from you; his instinctive perceptions that by pleasing you he can make you serve him; his mendacity and mendacity; his love of stolen advantage; the superstitious fears of his priest and his church which does not prevent him from trying to cheat both in the temporal transactions between them, and the parasitism which makes him, in domestic service, that occasionally convenient but on the whole demoralizing human barnacle, the irremovable old retainer of the family.²

To Shaw the most outrageous trick the Irish nation had played on the slow-witted Saxon was palming off on him the imaginary Irishman of romance. The worst result of that trickery is that this "spurious type" of Irishman gets into literature. This aspect of his criticism of the Bouicault

²Ibid.

tradition is significant because it suggest Shaw's theory of the purpose of art as expressed in his preface to Mrs. Warren's Profession (1893): "I am convinced that fine art is the subtlest, the most seductive, the most effective instrument of moral propaganda in the world." Also, in this "unpleasant" play, he sets forth his idea that all plays which deal sincerely with humanity wound the monstrous conceit which it is the business of romance to flatter. Thus, as early as 1893, Shaw had set out to write plays which would argue the excoriation of the "romantic" and would instruct. He "fulfilled from the start his own critical dictum, writing drama from its own inner necessity."³ Because he thought Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn, specifically, did not hold the mirror up to nature; because he felt that romanticizing the Stage Irishman of the drama around him was ludicrous; and because he thought good art should be didactic, Shaw set out to write John Bull's Other Island (1904) in order to give an accurate and critical portrayal of the Stage Irishman.

The play was requested by W. B. Yeats of the Abbey Theatre, and it was expected to be "a patriotic contribution

³Edmund Fuller, George Bernard Shaw: Critic of Western Morale (New York, 1950), p. 24.

to the repertory of the Irish Literary Theatre."⁴ But Shaw's dramatic purposes were different from Yeats' "who had written that, to him, the new Irish Theatre movement was chiefly concerned with cutting below the Modern Drama movement by providing plays which were based on the conception that beneath the surface of middle-class Irish civilization there was a peasant culture possessing a living speech which could motivate simple human response if written into 'mythical drama!'"⁵ Unlike Shaw, he thought myth and symbol rather than ideas central to the drama. Instead of romanticizing the Stage Irishman or writing plays in a mythical or symbolic manner, Shaw held the mirror to nature in John Bull's Other Island. He was not sympathetic to the spirit of the Celtic Movement. He ridiculed going to the hills to look upon Dublin and ponder. If he had done so, he wrote, he might have become a poet like Yeats, Synge and the rest of them. Instead, "because I prided myself on thinking clearly,"⁶ Shaw could not remain in Ireland; whenever he took a

⁴Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman, and William Burto, The Genius of the Irish Theatre (New York, 1960), p. 12.

⁵Eric Bentley, "Yeats As a Playwright," Kenyon Review, (November, 1948), p. 198.

⁶Barnet, p. 13.

problem or a state of life which his Irish contemporaries sang sad songs about, he pursued it to its logical conclusion and it inevitably resolved itself into a comedy.

Moreover, Shaw's personal interests were broader than Boucicault's. Because he was concerned with government, international affairs, economics, and a host of other human problems, he could hardly have been expected to limit his plays to the province of domestic comedies. His comic view was broad enough for him to ridicule at the same time British institutions and the Stage Irishman's conventional temperament. As has been said of Shaw's intention in this play: "It was a dramatization of the differences between the Irish and English temperaments, to destroy once and for all the stereotyped notions which the tradition of the Stage-Irishman had constantly reinforced in the minds of the English, and which the Irish, in their subjection, accepted and used to gain petty advantages over their English masters."⁷

Consequently, John Bull's Other Island is a "pleasant" play which was more acceptable to the English than to the Irish.⁸ That Shaw was pleased with his play and

⁷ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁸ The play saw its Dublin premiere in September of 1916, but it had enjoyed a successful run of more than a decade in England. Edward VII's reaction to a command performance of the play assured Shaw's popularity as a playwright.

that his intention was to "laugh out of existence" the pretensions of the English as well as the sentimentality of the Irish is clear in the following statement:

I never achieved such a feat of construction in my life. Just consider my subject--the destiny of nations! Consider my characters--personages who stalk on the stage impersonating millions of real, living, suffering men and women. . .I have shown the Englishman to the Irishman and the Irishman to the Englishman, the Protestant to the Catholic and the Catholic to Protestant. . .I have shown the Irish saint shuddering at the humour of the Irish blackguard--only to find, I regret to say, that the average critic thought the blackguard very funny and the saint very impractical. I have shown that very interesting psychological event, the wooing of an unsophisticated Irishwoman by an Englishman, and made comedy of it without one lapse from its pure science. I have even demonstrated the Trinity to a generation which saw nothing in it but an arithmetic absurdity.⁹

Whether or not Shaw achieves all of the objectives he mentions, he makes clear very early in the play his attitude toward the conventional Stage Irishman. When Tim Haffigan, an Irishman in England, calls upon Broadbent at his office, he quickly shows that using conventional Irish sentimentality on the English will gain for him the five-pound note he has come to borrow. With his "top-of-the-morning" approach to Broadbent, he is willing to condemn or praise Ireland at the will of his English benefactor. "Dhrink is the curse o' me unhappy counthry," he claims,

⁹Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century (New York, 1956), p. 619.

as he excuses his own drinking in the favor of his heart and digestion. Otherwise he is a teetotaler, he says, just in time to agree with Broadbent that a good Liberal will close all of the public-houses at any cost.¹⁰ In short, he foreshadows the reactions which Broadbent will find in Ireland when he arrives there, and he indicates the type of automatic condescension the Stage Irishmen show to the English. Interestingly, Shaw chooses to place the significant portion of the play's action in Ireland, though.

The comedy at the expense of both the English and the Irish in the play is effected by the use of Tom Broadbent and his foil, Larry Doyle, an Irish expatriate. Thus, Shaw, unlike Boucicault, goes outside the limits of Irish conventional life to choose the dramatic event which his play unfolds, although to some extent, Boucicault enters slightly into the English-Irish temperamental and political conflict in The Shaughraun (1860). Again, unlike Boucicault, Shaw's principal Irish character is an expatriate who has been living in England for eighteen years,¹¹ and who has become disillusioned by his self-exile. When the play

¹⁰John Bull's Other Island in The Collected Works, XI (New York, 1930), pp. 77-78. All other references to play refer to that source.

¹¹Shaw himself had been living in England eighteen years when he wrote this play.

opens he dreams of a fusion in Ireland of native intellectual lucidity with English "push." Yet, he has absorbed in these eighteen years the English view of his own race--this "clear-headed, sane Irishman," "so hardly callous to the sentimentalities and susceptibilities and credulities," as Shaw describes him. Unlike any of Boucicault's Stage Irishmen, Larry Doyle is not a peasant. He is a civil engineer. Accordingly, Shaw found it necessary to place Doyle in England in order to give him aesthetic distance from which to view the Irish. Thus, he could gain new ambitions which would place him in competition with a "real" Englishman who views the Irish people as charming and irresponsible. Broadbent is more typically an Englishman than Doyle is an Irishman. Yet, with these two men and their contrary outlooks, together with the character of Keegan, the unfrocked priest, Shaw proposes to argue the English-Irish problem. To some extent Keegan is the Shavian spokesman in the personae of the "ideal spectator." The ex-priest is a clear-headed Irishman who, despite his being given to a highly romantic form of behavior for himself, is able to understand Broadbent's motivations and to define his own uncommitted views on the purpose of life.

Edmund Fuller feels that Broadbent is an impersonation of the demagogic type of character Shaw had

defined in "The Revolutionists' Handbook":

Though he professes (and fails) to readjust matters in the interest of the majority of the electors, yet he stereotypes mediocrity, organizes intolerance, disparages exhibitions of uncommon qualities, and glorifies conspicuous exhibitions of common ones. He manages a small job well, he muddles rhetorically through a large one. . . Finally, when social aggregation arrives at a point of demanding international organization before the demagogues and electorates have learnt how to manage even a country parish properly, much less internationalize Constantinople, the whole political business goes to smash; and, presently we have Ruins of Empires.¹²

In these respects he is the Stage Englishman who, operating within Roscullen with people who seem to him to be the conventional Irish of English theatre-going experience, becomes the political mounteband.

Broadbent is the vital, obtuse, blundering Englishman.¹³ He possesses the exaggerated self-confidence which, in Shaw's satirical comic view, is typical of the Englishmen. He resolves to study the apparently insoluble Irish question by going to Ireland, but his incurable ignorance of Ireland's plight stands revealed in his complacent faith that the panacea for all of the country's ills is to be found in the "great principles of the great Liberal party." Almost from

¹²Fuller, p. 49.

¹³Henderson suggests that Broadbent is characterized on Cromwell's saying that no man goes farther than the man who does not know where he is going. p. 620.

the time that he arrives in Roscullen, Broadbent is overwhelmed by Celtic melancholy, the Irish voice, the rich blarney, and the poetic brogue. However, he possesses a kind of blundering shrewdness which motivates him to become a candidate for a parliamentary seat on the ground that he is a Home Ruler, a Nationalist, and Ireland's truest friend and supporter. His role as an Englishman in Ireland is summarized well by Henderson:

. . .a robust, full-blooded, energetic man in the prime of life, sometimes eager and credulous, sometimes shrewd and roguish, sometimes portentously solemn, sometimes jolly and impetuous, always bouyant and irresistible, mostly likeable, and enormously absurd in his most earnest moments.¹⁴

However, the comic irony through which the unrealistic view of the romanticism of the Stage Irishman is made tragi-comic in the play lies in the successes which so brash and bungling an Englishman can find in Ireland. Shaw expresses the essence of this "tragic" incongruity in the preface to the play, when he says about the relations between the Irish and the English:

Writing the play for an Irish audience, I thought it would be good for them to be shown very clearly that the loudest laugh they could raise at the expense of the absurdest Englishman was not really

¹⁴Henderson, p. 621.

a laugh on their side; that he would succeed where they would fail; that he could inspire strong affection and loyalty in an Irishman who knew the world and was moved only to dislike, mistrust, impatience and even exasperation by his own countrymen; that his power of taking himself seriously, and his insensibility to anything funny in danger and destruction, was the first condition of economy and concentration of force, sustained purpose, and rational conduct.¹⁵

This statement of purpose is explicit, and certainly it supports the claim that Shaw intended his play to be instructive. The essence of its tragicomic tone may be found in a Shavian statement about an incongruity in the conventional view of Englishmen and Irishmen:

. . .when I see Irishmen everywhere standing clearheaded, sane, hardly callous to the boyish sentimentalities, susceptibilities, and credulities that make Englishmen the dupe of every charlatan and the idolator of every numskull, I perceive that Ireland is the only spot on earth which still produces the ideal Englishman of history. Blackguard, bully, drunkard, liar, foulmouth, flatterer, beggar, backbiter, venal functionary, corrupt judge, envious friend, vindictive opponent, unparalleled political traitor; all these your Irishman can easily be, just as he may be a gentleman. . .but he is never quite the hysterical, nonsense-crammed, fact-proof, truth-terrified, unballoted sport of all the bogey panics and all the silly enthusiasms that now call itself "God's Englishman." England cannot do without its Irish and its Scots today, because it cannot do without at least a little sanity.¹⁶

¹⁵Works, XI, p. 14.

¹⁶Preface, p. 16.

With these theses in mind, it seems wise to examine the play in order to illustrate how Shaw embodies these dicta in his portrayal of Tom Broadbest's responses to the Irish and his portrayal of the Irish themselves.

The Englishman's blunders begin in the second act of the play. His first night in Roscullen, when he is having tea with the Doyle family, he is introduced to a local drink, "potcheen," and he decides to take a walk to get a better look at the Round Tower. He has already expressed his fascination with bits of tales of Irish lore which have been explained to him; for, with guide book in hand, he has remarked about the explanation of a huge stone, "probably of Druidic origin," in the neighborhood. Loathe to go to bed and perhaps to dream of prosaic England, he insists on going out to smoke a cigar and to look for Nora Reilly at the Round Tower. She is there "straining her eyes in the moonlight," watching for Larry, who has been detained because of car trouble. When Broadbest comes upon her, she thinks he is Larry, and when he speaks, she realizes he has an English accent. "You see, as a stranger and an Englishman, I thought it would be interesting to see the Round Tower by moonlight," he tells Nora. When she asks him how he likes Ireland, he replies that he can hardly trust himself to say how much he likes it; that the magic of the

Irish scene, coupled with the charm of her voice, is overwhelming. Nora chides him for breaking his love already for her, "after seeing me for two minutes in the dark." Before the brief scene is over, Broadbent has told Nora that although he is an Englishman--a fact which guarantees his disinclination to act hastily or romantically--he wants her to be his wife. She shrugs off the sudden proposal by asking him whether he is accustomed to potcheen punch in the evening after tea. He complains that he has had only two tumblersful; she maintains that he is drunk and she leads him home to bed.

Thus, Broadbent has been shown as one whose celebration of the romance of the Irish countryside and the Irish voice make him vulnerable to stupid blunders. But Nora, the same Irishwoman, has in no way been affected by Broadbent's protestations of love. She sees him precisely for what he is at that moment, but Shaw editorializes in the stage directions at the end of the scene:

He is led down the road in the character of a convicted drunkard. To him there is something divine in the sympathetic indulgence she substitutes for the angry disgust with which one of his own countrywomen would resent his supposed condition. And he has no suspicion of the fact, or of her ignorance of it, that when an Englishman is sentimental he behaves very much as an Irishman does when he is drunk (p. 116).

Next morning, Broadbest is embarrassed about his blunder with Nora Reilly, but the universality reaction to stage Irish romanticism is illustrated when Larry Doyle reveals that when he first went to London he nearly proposed to walk out with a waitress in a bread shop, "because her whitechapel accent was so distinguished, so quaintly touching, so pretty," and Broadbest retorts: "You think every young Englishwoman an angel. You really have coarse taste in that way, Larry." The irony here seems to be that anyone may sentimentalize the erotic, even the terribly "sane" Irishman.

As the third act progresses, the more serious dialectic--that which is obviously more important from Shaw's point of view than the incontinent display of English sentimentality--begins when Broadbent is introduced to Barney Doran, the owner of the fine mill the Englishman had admired the day before. At this point, the central problem of a new member of parliament arises, and the sort of irony at the expense of both Irish and English sentimentality which we have just noticed becomes more prominent. Cornelius Doyle raises the issue by asking his son Larry whether he is thinking of going into politics. Larry is not--but Broadbent is soon in the center of the stage,

advocating successfully, of all things, the principles of the Liberal Party. "Peace," "retrenchment" and "reform" are the keystones of his party, Broadbent announces, and the automatic response of approval which Cornelius Doran and Father Dempsey give to his pronouncements becomes the tragicomic vehicle through which he wins their endorsement. He continues to attack the gullibility of the Irishmen about him as he speaks of the "humanity" of the Liberal party. He makes full use of the romantic dispositions of his audience as he eloquently says he looks forward to the time when "the Irish legislature shall arise once more on the emerald pasture of College Green, and the Union Jack--that detestable symbol of a decadent Imperialism--be replaced by a flag as green as the island over which it waves" (p. 136). At the same time, he appeals directly, for example, to Father Dempsey when he declares that the main thing is that the candidate should be a man of some means; that he should be able to help the community instead of burdening it. That is, in Dempsey's eyes, one who will not drain money from the church into politics. When he leaves the men to their deliberations, Doran agrees that having plenty of money is a sufficient qualification, and Broadbent has that. When Broadbent sees Larry again very shortly, he says he has gained the natives' confidence by straight talk. "Everyone

of those men believes in me and will vote when the question of selecting a candidate comes up," he prophesies. He orders his valet to be more gregarious with the citizens of Roscullen, and he offers to take Hoffigan's pig for a ride in his car, in order to do the poor farmer a favor and because with the pig in the car, he will feel quite like an Irishman.

Broadbent is a newcomer to the community, but the platitudes which he speaks to the Irishmen are eloquent--as is his appeal to their self-interest. They turn down Larry Doyle's logical and impassioned speeches on the legislative manifestations of humanity for Broadbent's double-talk. Because of this senseless enthusiasm which they feel for Broadbent's campaign talk, they, as stage Irishmen, act in true character. As men who think shrewdly of their own self-interest they provide a comic commentary on their presumably romantic motives. Thus, the act ends with the comic qualities of representatives of both the English and the Irish, providing the irony which is the essence of Shaw's comedy.

Shaw places Thomas Broadbent, the symbol of the English attitude toward the Irish, in Ireland where he can be totally successful in achieving his goals. As Peter Keegan says in the final act of the play, Broadbent is the

"conquering Englishman":

Within twenty-four hours of your arrival you have carried off our own heiress, and practically secured the parliamentary seat. And you have promised me that when I come here in the evenings to meditate on my madness; to watch the shadow of the table lengthening into the sunset; to break my heart uselessly in the curtailed gloaming over the dead heart and blinded soul of the island of the saints, you will comfort me with the bustle of a great hotel, and the sight of little children carrying the golf clubs of your tourists as a preparation for the life to come (p. 172).

This speech outlines Broadbent's accomplishments in Ireland, and it also leads to the revelation of the land syndicate through whose machinations he intends to acquire the properties of the villagers. More significantly, though, it establishes Keegan as the antagonist against whose ideas Broadbent has to defend his plans; further, the essential argument of the play is permitted to be enacted here with Broadbent and Keegan playing the principal roles in the conflict. Thus, Keegan's characterization seems especially important.

He is, at present, an "uncommitted man." He is a defrocked priest whose crime is somewhat shrouded in mystery. In a conversation with Nora, it is revealed somewhat sketchily that Keegan was said to have heard the confession and to have given absolution to a black man who "put a spell on me and

drove me mad," (p. 102). He does explain carefully, however, that the church let him be its priest as long as it thought he was fit for its work; that when it took his papers away it meant for the parishioners to know that he was only a madman, "unfit and unworthy to take charge of the souls of the people." Because Father Dempsey--not Peter Keegan--is the parish priest now, the old "mad" Keegan is not important to Broadbent at first. However, when the enterprising Englishman realizes that Keegan still commands respect from many voters, he engages in the debate over the merits of the plans he has for Roscullen. This is the dramatic strategy by which Keegan becomes Broadbent's antagonist. However, the argument is only academic. Yet, Keegan, the uncommitted man, the "mad seer," the romantic upholder of Ireland as the land of the saints, is chosen to be the foil to Broadbent; and that character alignment seems significant in the play.

Andrew Malone concludes that "comedy is the humour of character; farce is the humour of situation," and upon this delineation he reasons that the comedy in John Bull's Other Island springs directly from the contact of the personalities of Doyle and Broadbent with Ireland.¹⁷ However, a more penetrating comment of his is that while there are

¹⁷The Irish Drama (New York, 1929), p. 157.

Peter Keegans in Ireland, there are far more Matty Hoffigans and Larry Doyles.¹⁸ With this latter observation in mind, one can attach the key upon which the tragicomedy hinges to the ironic treatment which Keegan's role receives in the play. Shaw seems to contradict Yeats in this drama; he seems to say that, despite the emphasis on the "Celtic Firelight and the avowed purposes of the national theatre movement in Ireland at the time,"¹⁹ he was not in sympathy with the Yeats-Lady Gregory philosophy. Shaw believes here that Ireland has no great mystical tradition--no Saint Francis, no Swedenborg, no Blake--but that there is a "mystical strain" to be found in Ireland, the same as in any country where there is a Catholic environment and where the Catholic tradition has not been interrupted or broken. Thus, Peter Keegan, by implication, becomes a worthy antagonist to Broadbent because he is a defrocked priest. He, alone, is a person in Roscullen who can combine "madness" of his remaining mysticism with the freedom of penetrating thought which release from commitment brings; consequently, he can best Broadbent in their

¹⁸Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁹It must be recalled here that this play was written, at the request of Yeats, for the Abbey Theatre.

debates. Tragically, though, the Irish penchant for controlling the logical thoughts of men of insight through the inviolable hand of the Church renders Keegan incapable of any overt action. Indeed, he does not actually seek to curb Broadbent; he only serves as his catechizer. Therefore, through posing the questions dictated by reason and filtered through traditional Irish sentimentality, he can arrive at a tacit agreement with Broadbent's plans. In effect, he is far enough from being a Matty Hoffigan or a Larry Doyle--so far from their positions that he can become what may well be the Shavian spokesman in the play.

Strategically, Shaw allows Father Keegan to become Broadbent's foil in such a manner that English efficiency is permitted to be a panacea for Ireland. But the agreement must come from a character whose vision is as complex as Keegan's. For all his economic, social, and political schemes, Broadbent's character does not reach the complexity in Peter Keegan. True, the unfrocked priest is simple--or "mad"--yet, he is the "Fool in Christ," not acceptable to "good," conventional, hard-headed society. Yet, too, he is the possessor of exceptional powers of reasoning on the basis of his intuitions. He is Empson's "simple man" who, in spite of becoming a clumsy fool, makes better sense than his betters and can say things more fundamentally true. He is "in contact

with nature," which the complex man needs to be,²⁰ and as Shaw carefully describes him in the stage directions:

A man with the face of a young saint, yet with white hair and perhaps 50 years on his back, is standing near the stone in a trance of intense melancholy, looking over the hills as if by mere intensity of gaze he could pierce the glories of the sunset and see into the streets of heaven. He is dressed in black, and is rather more clerical in appearance than most English curates are nowadays; but he does not wear the collar and waistcoat of a parish priest (p. 97).

That he is in contact with nature is emphasized when in the first few lines of the second act "The Man" talks with a Grasshopper, concluding that chirping helps to face out the misery, poverty, and torment of Ireland. When a laborer comes upon Keegan while he is talking to the Grasshopper, the illiterate and superstitious man indicates the automatic stage Irish response to what he has heard by begging Keegan to see him home safely. He expresses the conflict which is prevalent in the countryman when he says: "Father Dempsey sez you're not a priest; we all know you're not a man; how do we know what ud happen if we shewed any disrespect to you? Sure they say wanse a priest always a priest" (pp. 99-100). Immediately Keegan indicates the logic which he will show later in the play when he

²⁰English Pastoral Poetry (New York, 1938), p. 14.

from his quasi-Franciscan role by castigating Patsy for questioning the instruction of his parish priest.

And when Broadbent asserts his faith in the new Ireland which he wishes to help build, Keegan replies significantly:

And we have none: only empty enthusiasms and patriotisms, and emptier memories and regrets. Ah yes: you have some excuse for believing that if there be any future, it will be yours; for our faith seems dead, and our hearts cold and cowed. An island of dreamers who wake up in your jails, of critics and cowards whom you buy and tame for your own service, of bald rogues who help you to plunder us that we may plunder you afterwards (p. 174).

Fool and seer, Keegan is the paradox of the best in the Irish character--a pastoral best, in Empson's sense. Yet, ironically, in Shaw's view, he is incapable of making himself felt. Thus Shaw both directly attacks Boucicault's king of stage Irishman and gives us in Keegan an Irishman who embodies some of the pastoral values which Boucicault sees in Myles. That Irish image--unlike that of the citizens who have remained in Roscullen, the Englishman who comes there to "enlighten" them, the expatriate who goes to England to get away from his homeland, or the active representative of the Catholic church--represents to Shaw the essential and approved vitality of the Irish character. Too, unlike Yeats' romantic characters, Peter Keegan is

placed in direct contact with argument on the practical needs of his country. In that world of practical considerations, Keegan's reluctant conclusions about Ireland reflect a "tragic choice," one in which he has to admit that Ireland is "like no other place under the sun; and no man can touch its sod or breathe its air without becoming better or worse"; for it produces two kinds of men in strange perfection: saints and traitors (p. 178).

In the fashioning of his Peter Keegan, Shaw takes the pastoral quality of Boucicault's Myles, as we have seen, but he rejects the image of the lovable poacher and righter of wrongs. The play's irony hinges on the ineffectiveness of a Peter Keegan in what Shaw believes to be a typical Irish village setting. As we have seen, Tim Haffigan is counterpart for the village fathers in Roscullen who repudiate Peter Keegan and Larry Doyle in favor of the blundering, but successful, Broadbent. There is a native vitality, however, present in the community--one whose vision of Ireland would benefit the community, if it were accepted. That is the Irish vitality which O'Casey emphasizes in his late comedies; for in those plays, set in imaginary, rural Irish villages where matters of the importance of life are being argued, a "seer," made complex and conventionally

unacceptable by his nearness to nature, points the way to a solution to the community's problems. This quality of character, then--established by Boucicault and refined in this play by Shaw--forms the essential link in comic view among this group of Irish playwrights.

J.M. Synge and THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD:

Synge, like Shaw, reacted unfavorably to Irish melodrama in general and to Boucicault's work in particular. In his preface to The Tinker's Wedding, he expresses his theory of the content of drama: that it should not be taken up with problems that are serious in themselves, "but by the degree in which it [drama] gives the nourishment, not easy to define, on which our imaginations live."²¹ That nourishment--more delight than analysis--is pleasure and excitement. Analysts with their problems, and teachers with their systems, are soon as old-fashioned as the pharmacopoeia of Galen, the preface continues. Humour is one of the most needful of things which nourish the imagination; thus, when a country loses its humour, there will be morbidity of mind. Synge thought Ireland was losing its humour, as was illustrated

²¹The Complete Works of John Millington Synge, I (New York, 1935), pp. 177-178.

by works of late nineteenth and early twentieth century dramatists; consequently, he makes this significant observation on Irish life:

In the greater part of Ireland. . .the whole people, from the tinkers to the clergy, have still a life and view of life; that are rich and genial and humorous. I do not think that these country people, who have so much humor themselves, will mind being laughed at without malice, as the people in every country have been laughed at in their comedies.²²

Boucicault's The Shaughraun prompted Synge to write a short note for the English magazine The Academy and Literature. The comment came after Synge had attended a performance of the Boucicault play in Dublin in 1904, and it is an important one, for not only is it perhaps the only critical review Synge ever wrote, it is also a significant comment on the Stage Irishman:

Some recent performances of The Shaughraun at the Queen's Theatre in Dublin have enabled local playgoers to make an interesting comparison between the methods of the early melodrama and those of the Irish National Theatre Society. It is unfortunate for Dion Boucicault's fame that the absurdity of his plots and pathos has gradually driven people of taste away from his plays, so that at the present time few are perhaps aware what good acting comedy some of his work contains. The characters of Conn the shaughraun and in a lesser degree those of Mrs. Kelley and Moya as they were played the other day by members of Mr. Kennedy Miller's company had a breadth of naive humour that is now rare on the stage.

²²Ibid., p. 178.

Mr. James O'Brien especially, in the part of Conn, put a genial richness into his voice that it would be useless to expect from the less guttural vocal capacity of French or English comedies, and in listening to him one felt how much the modern stage has lost in substituting impersonal ~~with~~ for personal humour. It is ~~un~~fortunate for the Irish National Society that it has preserved--in plays like The Pot of Broth--a great deal of what was best in the traditional comedy of the Irish stage, and still has contrived by its care and taste to put an end to the reaction against the careless Irish humour of which everyone has had too much. The effects of this reaction, it should be added, are still perceptible in Dublin, and the Irish National Theatre Society is sometimes accused of degrading Ireland's vision of herself by throwing shadow of the typical Stage Irishman upon her mirror.²³

A year earlier, Synge's In The Shadow of the Glen had been presented by the National Theatre Society, and the performance had brought forth a storm of protest. The Irish Independent considered the play a libel on the character of the Irish peasant woman, and The United Irishman attacked the whole Abbey Theatre movement because of its reaction to Synge's play.²⁴ Interestingly, Synge had used in his first play dramatic action based on a folk tale which Boucicault had used in The Shaughraun. Boucicault used the wake at which Conn listened to his neighbors praise him, thinking

²³The entire text of this article is reproduced in Krause, p. 60.

²⁴Account of reactions in Ireland and the United States is given in Bulletin of the New York Public Library (October, 1960), pp. 515-533.

he was dead, to provide boisterous humor in his play; Synge used the same basic tale to portray a painfully comic situation in which a young woman who is married to a dullard actually hopes he is dead so she may go from her cottage with a stranger who comes along. Conn, in The Shaughraun, is the conventional righter of wrongs as Stage Irishman when he helps Robert Ffoillot, the Fenian, to escape from his British pursuers. He is known in the play as "the sould of every fair, the life of every funeral, the first fiddler at all weddings and patterns."²⁵ His "death," and his smiling acceptance of the good things being said about him--interrupted by him as he slides from his bed to take intermittent swallows of whiskey from the jug nearby--gives the audience an opportunity to laugh with the sentimental rogue. Synge's Dan Burke, the character whose role is patterned on the same basic folk character as Conn, forms the image which motivates his wife's pathetic expression of the destitution of Irish rural life. What he looks like to his wife as he lies "dead" in his bed and what she says about him cause him to jump out of his bed in queer white clothes, with a stick in his hand, and to put his back against the door crying, "Son of God deliver us!" Raymond Williams notes that the community of

²⁵ Kavanagh, p. 405.

expression which Synge's language realizes in this scene gives the play its "naturalistic comedy" quality.²⁶ Thus, the basic folk character is shared by both playwrights, but the difference lies in the particular use made of it.

That contrast may well serve to illustrate the chief difference between the respective comic views of Irish life held by the two men. Whereas Boucicault uses folk material at times to provide good-natured humour, Synge uses it ironically. In the tales which he had heard during his stay in the Aran Islands he saw ironic implications which did not flatter the Irish at all. So far as use of material and shaping of general dramatic representation of the Stage Irishman go in the theatre of Boucicault and Synge, Krause's evaluation of the contrast between their purposes seems relevant and significant:

...what Synge saw in Boucicault turned out to be vital to the new drama at the expense of the new nationalism. Rowdy farce and broad satire were not calculated to exalt the national ideals. Comic rogues however brave they might be were too full of mischief and irresponsibility to inspire people bent on turning their thoughts to the noble needs of ancient Celtic heroes. . . .The Stage Irishman was his target not his weapon, and he used Boucicaultian comedy as an ironic method of exposing an inflated idealism.²⁷

²⁶Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Eliot (London, 1954), p. 158.

²⁷Krause, pp. 61-62.

Clearly, Synge's purposes were far different from Boucicault's, and their respective representations of the Stage Irishman reflect the contrast. Because The Playboy of the Western World (1907) is Synge's best known comedy, and because it drew strongly unfavorable reactions from Irish audiences in Europe and in America, this play is examined here for its essential departure from Boucicault's conventional Stage Irishman.

Despite the wild riots which took place in theatres where The Playboy was presented and despite the flurry of newspaper and magazine criticism which the play received, one must recall Synge's own claim that the language of the play, with the exception of one or two words, is that which he had heard from country people of Ireland or that which he had heard in his childhood. He claimed that the wildest actions and sayings in the play were actually tame when compared with the fancies one may hear in any little hillside cabin in Geesala, Carraroe or Dingle Bay.²⁸ In fact, in his The Aran Islands, Synge tells the source of this folk-comedy. It is an anecdote which he heard during his stay in the Aran Islands about a Connaught man who killed his father in a rage and fled to the islands where the native hid him in a hole for three weeks before shipping him off to America.

²⁸Works, II, p. 3.

The natives' attitude toward the law interested the playwright, as can be seen from this excerpt:

This impulse to protect the criminal is universal in the west. It seems partly due to the association between justice and the hated English jurisdiction, but more directly to the primitive feeling of these people, who are never criminals yet always capable of crime, that a man will not do wrong unless he is under the influence of a passion which is as irresponsible as a storm on the sea. If a man has killed his father, and is already sick and broken with remorse, they can see no reason why he should be dragged away and killed by the law. Such a man, they say, will be quiet all the rest of his life, and if you suggest that punishment is needed as an example, they ask, "Would any one kill his father if he was able to help it?"²⁹

The central problem in The Playboy is to dramatize ironically this naive confusion. The method is to create constant shifts in tone from high comedy to farce to melodrama, and to produce frequent changes in the audience's attitude toward the characters and the characters' attitudes toward one another. Like John Bull's Other Island, The Playboy's hero--Christy Mahone--does not present a Stage Irishman totally for ironic purposes; instead, the gullibility of the persons in the village is represented as an Irish quality which is naive, shifting, and dangerous. The play's attitude toward Christy is ambivalent, too, largely

²⁹Works, III, The Aran Islands, p. 370.

because Synge has modified the folk tale noticeably, as we shall see.

Attack on the ignorance and crass hero-worship, or bully-worship, of the Irish common folk in a small community on the wild coast of Mayo when Christy Mahon appears there announcing that he has killed his father becomes obvious in the play when the villagers accept Christy as a hero. Pegren, the romantic daughter of the public house owner, gives up her love affair with Shawn Keogh in order to plan to marry Christy, and the Widow Quinn makes it clear that she would be glad to have him move in with her. While Christy is at the height of his glory, the "slain" father appears. Widow Quinn attempts to dissuade him from looking for his son, but he insists on making the community know that Christy is far from the hero he says he is. Then the fickle villagers turn against Christy who, in desperation, tries to kill his father in order to prove that he is the hero he has made himself believe he is. When the horrified local people want to deliver Christy to the police, his father joins the boy in the fight to keep himself free. They set out for home again on equal terms after Christy has found his manhood and his confidence. Peegeen alone is left grieving over the loss of the only "playboy" of the western world.

The chief target of Synge's irony is the habit of accepting appearances for reality, of taking things at their face value, which is the community Stage Irish quality portrayed in the play. Further, the exaggerated chastity of Shawn who, even though there is news of danger about, refuses to spend the night with his fiancée because he is convinced that Father Reilly, the parish priest, would not approve of his action, is ridiculed. Not only is Shawn presented as a prude, but when Christy appears on the stage for the first time, "a slight young man. . .very tired and frightened and dirty," Shawn becomes totally frightened by him. Immediately he knows that the stranger will take Pegreen away from him. And as soon as it is established that he is a hero, he does.

Synge's view of the Irish community of this play is not tragic, nonetheless; it is ironic comedy which, to Frye is "a vision of what in Theology is called the fallen world, or simple humanity, man as natural man and in conflict with both human and non-human nature."³⁰ Its explanation is implicit in audience response. Because the social response commands the playwright's intentions more than

³⁰Frye, p. 42.

does his portrayal of a single character, Christy Mahon's fantasy and his ultimate transformation are no more important than is the fantasy of the whole community. The villagers are equal makers of Mahon's illusion; consequently, they are the prime victims of the play's irony. They raise Mahon's illusion of greatness to the heights because "the mythology of force," in Raymond Williams' words, is dominant there.³¹

Synge's "playboy" of the western world is Boucicault's Stage Irishman in his world, in that each is given to fast talking, romancing and game playing. However, the sense of the community in Boucicault comes in the "good heart" of the poacher as he rights wrongs. In Synge, those same qualities--fast talking, romancing, and game playing--play an ironic trick on the community. Here the emphasis is on fine language; not on good deeds. Thus, the comedy is more complex than Boucicault's. Ronald Peacock sums up both the nature of the hero and the irony of the community reaction in this manner:

The basis of the comic here is a delicate and capricious mockery at the very idea of fine language, closely related as it is to fine ideas. Synge plays in this comedy with his own discovery. Through his mock-hero Christy Mahon he allows his instrument to elaborate its most splendid ornaments. Some have been so entranced as to take it at its high face-value as sheer poetry. Yet it is

³¹Williams, p. 164.

the most precise exaggeration, a distillation of his own speech-material, conceived in a vein of irony. Christy Mahon is a wonder to the people of Mayo and he talks himself into a wonder too for his own imagination. Their reactions are focused on him. The figurative phrases that pour from his lips are his own beautiful amplifications of their response to the lad he was, of their fancy for the stupendous notion that he had killed his dad. Fine words argue the fine idea, the alert imagination. The people who play up Christy are quick in esthetic reaction; for the sake of a fine story they instantly suspend their moral judgment.³²

Synge brings the villagers back to their judgment, however, when he has Pegeen say: "I'll say a strange man is a marvel, with his mighty talk; but that's a squabble in your backyard, and the blow of a loy, have taught me that there's a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed."³³

In a larger sense--and in one especially relevant to this study, however--Christy Mahon is a pastoral figure. The grounds on which his "wise fool" qualities are illustrated are entirely different from the pastoral elements in Peter Keegan of John Bull's Other Island, for Playboy is not concerned with politics or economics.³⁴ Instead, this play

³²Ronald Peacock, The Poet in the Theatre (New York, 1946), p. 113.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Peacock makes the significant point that Synge is a pure artist, "without any admixture of the political intentions that always have to be reckoned with in Yeats and other adherents of the Celtic renaissance," p. 111.

provides a romantic feeling for nature impinging on genre picture of peasant low life, one in which a lyrical mood, mingled with realism, allows Synge to "throw a halo around an everyday of primitive, sordid, almost brutish motive."³⁵ Synge refines the Stage Irish character, atmosphere and speech which is exotically attractive, and he gives conscious emphasis to his subtle handling of the imaginative peasant language discovered in the Aran Islands. The "mythology of force;" and the ironic impact which that force carries upon a gullible community lies in the sobering illustration that such a "playboy" in such an Irish setting can make fine words become fine deeds. Christy is not what he appears to be, but that fault is no hindrance to his becoming the hero he wishes to be. That the play emphasizes a community's reckless love of a tall tale becomes even clearer when one contrasts Synge's play with the anecdote which he says was its germ.

Clearly, the attitude of his characters to the doer and his deed illustrate Synge's purpose in the play, and that aim is accompanied by emphasis on fine words. Christy, for all his stage verbosity and perchance for the reckless lie, affects a kind of reality which is realized in Pegeen's final evaluation of him as the only "playboy of the western

³⁵Ibid., p. 113.

world." Thus, the hero becomes all the more convincing because he emerges from the irony of being not what he says he is into a more complex irony of being believed to be precisely what he is. By using fine language he, as a simple pastoral figure, illustrates a universal truth--that appearance is often more acceptable than reality--and to that degree he is above the society in which he lives, rather than below it. His criminal act--or the one he reports he has committed and the only image the villagers have of him until his father appears--is dwarfed by the conception the community insists on attaching to him.

This interpretation of Playboy leads to the conclusion that Synge's major modification of Boucicault's Stage Irishman lies in his departing from the conventional sentimentality found in a character such as Myles. The love of fine words for their own sake, symbolized in Christy Mahon, is to Peacock a result of Synge's search for something ethereal and esthetically refined. That he followed closely and polished brilliantly one quality of the conventional Stage Irishman lies, too, in Peacock's observation: "It was very original of Synge to discover this in a milieu that was in no way artificial or recherche or ultra-sophisticated; nevertheless it shows him in closer relation to

some literary tendencies of the atmosphere he deserted than is generally expected."³⁶ That "deserted atmosphere" was, in one respect, the careless Irish humour which Synge mentions in his reference to early Irish melodrama. Using that humour which is found in the Stage Irishman's addiction to the tall tale and the community's acceptance of that appearance as reality links Synge's ironic view of the "Teague" with O'Casey's mock-heroes. They who are transplanted from pastoral settings into an urbane life and who concern themselves with civil affairs become, in O'Casey's ironic comedies, a heavily condemned part of the Irish character whose fine words and empty pretensions leave the country to death, destruction, and disillusion.

³⁶Ibid., p. 114.

CHAPTER IV: O'CASEY'S IRONIC DRAMA

A brief survey of the development of that body of O'Casey's work which is classified as ironic drama in this study reveals that his songs, written as early as 1918, contain the tone of "lively satire."¹ His first book, The Story of Thomas Ashe (1918), is a dramatic narration of the last days of Thomas Ashe, one of the martyrs of the Easter Uprising who, to O'Casey, was a fallen hero of Irish labor and liberty as well as Irish nationalism. Strong interest and personal involvement in the strike and lookout of 1913-14, as well as the 1916 Rising, led O'Casey to write The Story of the Irish Citizen Army (1919), an organization in which he served as secretary. Clearly, his loyalties lay with the Citizen Army--to labor's Plough and the Stars, a banner with the seven stars of the symbolic heavenly Plough on a background of bright St. Patrick's blue.² Despite his strong partisanship, though, O'Casey saw early that Ireland's security lay in the unification of the forces of labor with the nationalists. Neither was sufficient of itself; labor was democratic but not "Irish" enough to capture the

¹Krause, p. 29.

²Krause gives this description of the Citizen Army's flag, p. 31.

popular imagination. The Nationalists were fanatically Irish, but they lacked working-class sympathies and sound democratic principles. That basic conflict and the ironic situation which it imposed upon Ireland became the emphasis of O'Casey's early successful dramas.

Moving from writing history into fiction which embodied his ironic view of Ireland's divisive state, O'Casey published his first work of fiction in Erskine Childer's weekly Republican paper, Doblacht Nah-Eireann (The Republic of Ireland). This work is an allegorical tale, The Seamless Coat of Kathleen, which is an ironic comment on the many-vested interests than fighting for control of the new Free State government. In it he mocks the various attempts to weave a new Republican coat for the unfortunate Kathleen Ní Houlihan--mythical name for Ireland--and the technique of the work is parody. It follows the general pattern of Jonathan Swift's A Tale of a Tub, but it did not appeal to partisan audiences when it was presented at the Abbey when its theme was used later by the playwright as the basis for his comic, one-act fantasy, Kathleen Listens In (1923). He found a more appealing dramatic technique to carry his ironic view of discordant Ireland when in the short story, The Corncoake (1922), he used a free translation

of a farcical Gaelic folk tale whose main characters are two "argufying" old codgers who have been made dupes by some practical jokers. Their characterization foreshadows the kind of comic characters O'Casey was to create in his successful plays.

This brief tracing of the early literary works of O'Casey leads to the conclusion that his intense interest in labor and politics was a significant factor in them. Also, his connection with the Gaelic League probably made him sympathize with the avowed purposes for which the Abbey Theatre was established. Thus, labor's democracy and nationalism's "Irishness" meet in the themes of O'Casey's ironic drama. The comic characters which he fashioned in The Corncake gave him a satisfactory symbol through which to deal with the everyday life of the Irishmen he knew best. Consequently, he found a theatrical method by which he could bring the "realism" of Irish urban life to the stage while at the same time presenting his own criticism of it. In short, he found a method to treat the Stage Irishman ironically. This development of his writing up to 1923, then, is a fusion of his intense nationalism and his ironic view of the shallow men who sought to weave for Kathleen so various a coat. Bitter parody failed, but the new direction was to

fashion an indirect attack on the folly of his countrymen--one which intrigued him with its folksiness while it bludgeoned them with the serious implications of their levity. This bitter-sweet portrayal became the dramatic method of O'Casey's earliest plays in which "the tear and the smile" come into the drama of a man who "detects fallible man falling short of certain reasonable conditions and standards of behavior."³

Of Kathleen Listens In, O'Casey says: "It was written specifically to show what fools these mortals were in the quarrelling 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."⁴ As he extended that ironic view of Ireland and applied it to social conditions which he felt contributed largely to the undesirable elements of the Dublin setting of his early successful plays, O'Casey portrayed in those major works:

. . .a world of want and filth [which] drives young women like Rosie Redmond to prostitution; it checks the hopes and destroys the homes of women like Juno Boyle, a heroic mother of immeasurable charity and endurance; it rushed

³ Ronald G. Rollins, "Sean O'Casey's Mental Pilgrimage," Arizona Quarterly, XVII (Winter, 1961), 293.

⁴ O'Casey's comment on the first publication of Kathleen Listens In, Tulane Drama Review, V (Summer, 1961), 37.

Mollser, a frail child of the slums, to an early death; it reduces women like Bessie Burgess to the humiliating condition of a street fruit vendor; it causes Minnie Powell to sacrifice her life in a futile attempt to bring some ray of romance into her drab life; and it produces extended periods of unemployment and idlers like Captain Jack Boyle and Joxer Daly. In short, poverty denies many people the right to labor, to leisure, to education, and to a meaningful existence.⁵

These plays concern themselves with more than Dublin's poverty, however, and their wider concern is the study of O'Casey's work which has not concerned critics sufficiently. Consequently, analyses which follow here concentrate on the aesthetic response which the works require; for although O'Casey called all three of War Plays "tragedies," one recognizes at once that they are not "tragedies" in the purist's sense of the term. Neither is it sufficient to say they are an impure art which is neither exact tragedy nor pure comedy.⁶ In a larger sense, though, these plays are more than that; for they are akin to tragedy but they are a genre apart. Their aesthetic quality may be examined in terms of Frye's spectrum which includes the notation that:

As tragedy moves over towards irony, the sense of inevitable event begins to fade out, and the sources of catastrophe come into view. In irony catastrophe is either arbitrary and meaningless, the impact of an unconscious . . . world on conscious man, or the result

⁵Rollins, p. 293.

⁶Krause, p. 47.

of more or less definable social and psychological forces. Tragedy's "this must be" becomes irony's "this at least it," a concentration on foreground facts and a rejection of mythical superstructures.⁷

As we have seen earlier, ironic drama presents us with "the way of the world," minus theological implications of man's fall. For O'Casey, then, the poverty in the world of his plays is not his major concern; instead, he is repelled by the hypocritical preenings of sham patriots who, much in the fashion of Synge's Playboy, create their own transitory reality by the tales they tell about themselves. But, as with Synge, O'Casey is also repulsed by the community which is gullible enough to create a Playboy even when he wishes to tell the truth about himself, as does the chief Stage Irishman in The Shadow of a Gunman. Pretensions are ridiculed, but willful victims of indirect claims to hypocritical importance are lambasted as well.

Unlike the later comedies, the analysis of which will follow, O'Casey's first ironic dramas provide no social integration whatsoever. The world which they portray is a pathological world; thus the plays present no remedies for its ills. No "normal" character appears here as a direct foil for the ludicrous. The entire community, in most cases, is in some kind of mental bondage, and the

⁷Frye, p. 283.

major irony of the plays is that they remain in that bondage. This complete inability to gain self-knowledge is the quality which prevents the plays from qualifying as comedies in the New Comedy tradition which Frye describes when he argues that such comedy always portrays a "new social integration":

This new social integration may be called, first, a kind of moral norm and, second, the pattern of a free society. We can see this more clearly if we look at the sort of characters who impede the progress of the comedy toward the hero's victory. These are always people who are in some kind of mental bondage, who are helplessly driven by ruling passions, neurotic compulsions, social rituals, and selfishness. The miser, the hypochondriac, the hypocrite, the pedant, the snob: these are humours, people who do not fully know what they are doing, who are slaves to a predictable self-imposed pattern of behavior.⁸

The irony, then, comes from the failure of these characters to realize their lack of self-knowledge and the dangers which come to persons who are victims of hypocrisy. This is "the way of the world" of these plays, and it is a lamentable way. It is what makes Kathleen ni Houlihan's way thorny; it is represented by the qualities of the Stage Irishman; it carries a conclusion which is more directly ironic than Synge's in The Playboy; it suggests no remedy for Ireland. Interestingly, though, this same Stage Irishman is used as the major positive character, more subtly

⁸Frye, pp. 179-180.

presented, in the ideal comedies which came later in the playwright's career.

The Shadow of a Gunman

Sean O'Casey is said to prefer The Shadow of a Gunman to his greater success, Juno and the Paycock⁹; and his preference may well be based on his satisfaction with the history, comedy and social criticism which that play achieves. However, the choice of historical material used in the play is selective and the treatment is consistently ironical. Here the Stage Irishman is not a caricature. These attributes of the play may be some reasons for its full acceptance by Dublin audiences. For, unlike The Plough and the Stars, this play contains no overt symbolic action or partisanship which would offend any specific faction of Irish society.

When the Abbey accepted The Shadow of a Gunman the theatre's policy was that works of unknown playwrights played a three-day run during the last week of the season. However, when O'Casey's first play was produced there, "House Full" signs were hung out the final night. Krause

⁹William A. Armstrong, "History, Autobiography and The Shadow of a Gunman," Modern Drama, II (February, 1960), p. 417.

reports that this was the first time this had happened in the Abbey's fourteen-year history.¹⁰

The Shadow of a Gunman presents an anti-heroic view of life, as do the three plays which follow it. All of these are pacifist works in which the main characters are not the National heroes actually engaged in the fighting. Instead, they are the non-combatants in a city under military siege. and the dramatic emphasis illustrates the ironic experiences of these citizens. The setting of this play is a tenement house in Dublin during the Irish War of Independence in May, 1920. The external conflict deals with guerilla warfare between the insurgent Irish Republican Army and the British Auxiliary Troops, commonly known as the Black and Tans. The theme of the play revolves around a series of illusions of heroism in which Donal Davoren, a minor poet, strikes grand stances. His neighbors think he is a brave "Gunman" on the run. But the play reveals that he is actually the "shadow" of a gunman and the "shadow" of a poet.

Perhaps the major irony of the play is set forth in the paradox found when through the land the cry, "Up the Republic," is echoed by rifle and pistol shot. Life is dangerous, as Seumas Shields describes the conditions: "The country is gone mad. Instead of countin' their beads

¹⁰
Krause, p. 37.

now they're countin' bullets; their Hail Marys and pater-nosters 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 Soldier Song,' an' their creed is, I believe in the gun almighty, maker of heaven and earth--an it's all for the glory o' God an' the honour of Ireland!"¹¹

The plot revolves about Seumas, Davoren and pretty Minnie Powell, a working girl. Davoren speaks so eloquently of Irish independence that the other people in the house believe him to be a gunman on the run. Basically, he is weak and cowardly, but he is so pleased that he is considered a dangerous fellow that he does not deny it. A friend leaves a piece of luggage in their room, and Seumas and Donal discover too late that it contains bombs. The Black and Tan troops arrive, Minnie Powell takes the suitcase to her room, is discovered and subsequently killed on the way to headquarters when she tries to escape. Upon hearing of Minnie's death, the "Heroes" are conscious stricken and Davoren cries: "Ah me, alas! Pain, pain, pain ever, forever! It's a terrible thing to think that little Minnie is dead, but it's still more terrible to think that Davoren and

¹¹Collected Plays, I (London, 1957), pp. 91-157. All references to this play used hereafter refer to that edition of the play.

Shields are alive! Oh, Donal Davoren, shame is your portion now till the silver cord is loosened and the golden bowl be broken. Oh, Davoren, Donal Davoren, poet and poltroon, poltroon and poet!" (pp. 156-7).

In Seumas' speech and this one, we find the ironical treatment of the Irish characters which the play is unfolding. But the two men do not represent precisely the same values. Each claims proudly that his creed sets him above fear, as is seen in the following passage:

SEUMAS: No wonder this unfortunate country is as it is, for you can't depend upon the word of a single individual in it. I suppose he Mr. Maguire was too damn lazy to get up; he wanted the sheets to get well aired first. Oh, Kathleen 'ni Houlihan, your way's a thorny way.

DAVOREN: Ah me! Alas, pain, pain ever, forever!

SEUMAS: That's from Shell's "Prometheus Unbound." I could never agree with Shelley, not that there's anything to be said against him as a poet--as a poet--but. . .

DAVOREN: He flung a few stones through stained-glass windows.

SEUMAS: He wasn't the first un he won't be the last to do that, but the stained-glass windows--more than ever of them--are still here, and Shelley is doing a jazz dance down below.

DAVOREN: (shocked) And you actually rejoice and are exceedingly glad that, as you believe, Shelley, the sensitive, high-minded, able-hearted Shelley, is suffering the tortures of the damned.

SEUMAS: I rejoice in the vindication of
the Church and Truth.

DAVOREN: Bah. You know as little about truth
as anybody else, and you care as
little about the Church as the least
of those that profess her faith;
your religion is simply the state
of being afraid that God will torture
your soul in the next world as you
are afraid of the Black and Tans
who will torture your body in this.

SEUMAS: Go on, me boy: I'll have a right
good laugh at you when both of us
are dead.

DAVOREN: You're welcome to laugh as much as
you like when both of us are dead (pp. 96-7).

Davoren suggests that truth is found in the literary culture of the race; Seumas suggests that he prefers religion as his creed. In another passage in which Seumas is affirming his faith in being surrounded by a crowd of angels, Davoren retorts, "You're welcome to your angels; philosophy is mine; philosophy that makes the coward brave; the sufferer defiant; the weak strong." But before they can continue their argument further, a second volley of shots outside reduces both of them to the same state of abject fear. This contrapuntal style is, in fact, the method of the drama. It is not dialectical. But the two men do not represent the same values in the irony. As Armstrong puts it, "O'Casey's imagination makes Davoren an embodiment of frustrated life,

Shields the embodiment of life turned sour and superstitious."¹² Neither is a direct spokesman for O'Casey, although some incidents in the play are autobiographical.¹³ Instead, both men are personnae for the playwright, and their personal values are reflected in their responses to the battle going on outside the tenement house and to Minnie Powell, the embodiment of an ideal fullness of life, though a life lived under difficult circumstances.

Davoren's frustration is that of an artist at odds with society; Shields is a nationalist who has degenerated into abysmal selfishness. He represents, in effect, one of the classes of Irishmen O'Casey predicted in The Story of the Irish Citizen Army--those who love themselves so well that they have no love left for Ireland.¹⁴ The two characters are aptly symbolized by their possessions in their room: the self-protective superstition of Shields by the crucifix and the statues of the Virgin and the Sacred Heart on the mantelpiece; the aesthetic aspirations of Davoren

¹²Armstrong, p. 422.

¹³In O'Casey's Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, the fifth of his autobiographical novels, incidents almost identical to those in the first act appear.

¹⁴This work was published under the name of P. O'Cathasaigh, (London, 1919) and the comment mentioned above appears on p. 67 of that volume.

by the flowers, the books and the typewriter on the table. Seumas' superstitions ally him with a certain type of harmless--even if frightened--Irish temperament. He speaks the last line of the play--"I knew something ud come of the tappin' on the wall!"--clearly reflecting the superstitions, the poetic recitation of Irish history, and his reliance on religion which are his chief characteristics throughout the play. Davoren, on the other hand, is the character who, in the unfolding of the drama, moves from the sophisticated poet into the disillusioned and degenerated "poltroon and poet" which he calls himself at the end. He the "shadow of a gunman" who has consciously enacted a disguise which brings tragedy to the isolated tenement house. At the end of the first act he asks himself the question, "And what danger can there be in being the shadow of a gunman?" O'Casey's answer to that question makes up the remainder of the play--called a tragedy by the playwright. Thus, it seems logical to conclude that Donal Davoren--not Seumas--is the Stage Irishman of the piece; that it is his sentimental role which O'Casey wishes to portray in the play; that, unlike Boucicault's rogue-hero, O'Casey fashioned in Davoren an anti-heroic character whose roguishness brings tragedy to the character in the play who is the embodiment of the fullness of life. Together, Seumas and Davoren may

represent two elements of "Kathleen's coat" to O'Casey, but the irony of the play's theme on the social level is that one of the elements is more harmful to Ireland than the other, notwithstanding the fact that Davoren's character is biographically close to O'Casey's own life. It is significant in this study, then, to investigate the sentimental "stage" qualities of Davoren and to indicate the inherent danger which O'Casey sees in those pretensions.

Coincidence leads Davoren to impersonate a gunman. He has no way of knowing that bombs are in the bag which Maguire leaves in his room. But that impersonation is only a part of his role; for because of his detachment from his neighbors, his contempt for them, and his role as a poet in the house, most of the occupants there see him as a romantic figure. In this respect, the Dublin tenement house in which Davoren lives becomes the microcosm through which O'Casey's comic view of Ireland can be reflected. Davoren's element in society is treated ironically through the poet's relationship with Minnie Powell, Mr. Gallagher, Mrs. Henderson, and Tommy Owens in order to more manifest the instructive element in the play. Through Davoren's exchanges with these characters he is able to mock the national excesses and still affirm his faith in the Irish people.

In this manner he is able to execute the sense of one of his statements on the purpose of comedy: "We couldn't live without comedy. Let us pray: Oh, Lord, give us a sense of humour with courage to manifest it forth, so that we may laugh to shame the poms, the vanities, the sense of self-importance of the Big Fellows that the world sometimes sends among us, and who try to take our peace away. Amen."¹⁵

Davoren becomes a mystery to the other tenants of the house largely because he is a newcomer there. The apartment is rented to Shields, as is seen when the landlord comes to attempt to collect the rent and to leave a notice to quit. After the comical dispute is over, Shields returns to the room and tells Davoren that the landlord is insisting upon having the rent paid because Davoren is living there temporarily:

SEUMAS: The aul' sod's got the wind up
 about you, that's all.

DAVOREN: Got the wind up about me!

SEUMAS: He thinks you're on the run. He's
 afraid of a raid, and that his
 lovely property'll be destroyed.

DAVOREN: But why, in the name of all that's
 sensible, should he think I'm on
 the run?

¹⁵The Green Crow (New York, 1956), p. 237.

SEUMAS: Sure, they all think you're on the run. Mrs. Henderson thinks so, Tommy Owens thinks it, Mrs. an' Mr. Grigson think it, and Minnie Powell thinks it (pp. 103-4).

Although Davoren is surprised that the tenants think he is a gunman on the run, he is not concerned about the misconception until Minnie Powell comes to his room early in the first act (pp. 105-11) to borrow "a drop o' milk for a cup o' tea." She confides to Davoren that she knows he is a gunman, but she is equally fascinated by his poetry and his typewriter. The man does not deny he is a gunman. "Maybe I am, and maybe I'm not," he answers; but he is obviously pleased to have Minnie continue under the misapprehension. In fact, when she admits the fear she has when she hears shots go off, Davoren leans back in his chair, lights a cigarette and says, "I'll admit that one does be a little nervous at first, but a fellow gets used to it after a bit, til, at last, a gunman throws a bomb as carelessly as a schoolboy throws a snowball." Fascinated by what she believes is a personal relationship with a romantic character, Minnie offers to clean Davoren's apartment. When he complains that other tenants will gossip about Minnie if she takes too many liberties in his apartment, the young woman says she doesn't care whether they talk or not. Expressing admiration for her independent spirit, Davoren begins to make love to Minnie.

Tommy Owens enters the room at this point and introduces himself to Davoren as a patriotic Irishman who wishes he could serve his country by fighting. But the disguise which Davoren has accepted becomes even more firmly fixed. If he thinks being a gunman will help him to have a love partner readily available in Minnie, he can hardly be blamed for making use of her naive excitement. However, when Tommy Owens refers to the "Up the Republic" theme, Davoren says honestly that he knows nothing about the Republic; that he has no connection with politics; that he does not wish to have any such connections. Tommy mistakes these statements for mystery as he says knowingly: "You needn't say no more--a nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse--you've no meddlin' or makin' with it, good, bad, or indifferent, pro nor con; I know it and Minnie knows it--give me your hand" (p. 112).

Consequently, Davoren has to be an idealized hero whether he wants to be one or not. The "tragedy" of the play is foreshadowed, for it is that misconception--that Davoren is a gunman and that he has a love interest in Minnie--which causes her to take Maguire's bag to her room when soldiers invade the tenement house.

If, as we have seen, Minnie is the embodiment of an ideal fullness of life, it becomes clear that Davoren's

romantic idealization of himself as a gunman is the efficient cause for the girl's death. Because she worships the romance of a gunman on the run she attempts to protect him, not so much because she is a Republican as because she sees in Davoren an opportunity for a full realization of her values. That realization is tragically frustrated by Davoren's pretensions. The romantic attitude toward warriors both leads Minnie to a misconception and Davoren to a pose. Thus it snuffs out the free flow of love which might have existed had she not been so deeply immersed in the sentiments of time. The Troubles bred sentimentality of a kind which gets in the way of relationships based on true perceptions. That irony becomes a popular theme in the later O'Casey plays.

Davoren's relationship with Minnie is not the only type of relationship which is treated ironically in the play, though, for while the image of Davoren as a romantic rogue is not entirely of his own making, his conscious role as a poet also brings out sentimental reactions which O'Casey uses humorously, if not ironically. Mrs. Henderson and Mr. Gallagher come to interview Davoren about a letter to the Irish Republican Army. They believe Davoren "is wan of ourselves that stands for government of the people with the people by the people," and that as a poet he can evaluate the worth of their letter. Again, Davoren does not overtly

encourage the tenants to think he is a gunman, but when they leave he reflects: "Minnie, Donal; Donal, Minnie. Very pretty, but very ignorant. A gunman on the run! Be careful, be careful, Donal Davoren. But Minnie is attracted to the idea, and I am attracted to Minnie. And what danger can there be in being the shadow of a gunman?" (p. 124).

It becomes clear that although O'Casey used historical and autobiographical material in this play, he arranged that material into a drama which makes an ironic and at times humorous comment on several elements of Irish life for their substanceless feelings. He preferred to restrict the drama to one tenement house and to the group dynamics of its tenants. None of the issues of political troubles are argued seriously in the play, but the action imposes elements upon elements to indicate what noncombatants thought and felt on one afternoon in May, 1920. To the poet he gives a self-consciousness which is more dangerous than that of the "seer." Davoren's role, then, becomes anti-heroic; but Shields is the Shakespearean wise fool whose superstitions and foolish remarks reveal Davoren's true weakness. The play is hardly a tragedy in the classical sense of the term, but the pathetic death of Minnie Powell and degeneration of Davoren indicate that the purpose of the play is

to "laugh to shame the poms, the vanities, the sense of self-importance of the Big Fellows." And in this drama the Big Fellow is Donal Davoren. Ironically, though, he is made pompous largely by his neighbors' attitude toward him. Because this is true and because the climax of the play is pathetic, the playwright has written a comedy which "scourages those apes" and angels who assign to the political fighters a roguish and master-of-the-revels role which he cannot execute successfully. To that extent, this play is antithetical to Boucicault's type of melodrama. Too, here the "tear and the smile" are realized.

O'Casey called the play a tragedy, but by that he probably meant nothing more than that it did not end happily.¹⁶ However, the "tragic" implications in the comedy--the other side of the dichotomy--"tragicomedy"--are important in the play. For in the biting irony of the comedy, Ireland is the "tragic hero." This idea is expressed several times by the wise fool, Seumas, when he says, "O Kathleen ni Houlihan, your path is a thorny one." This "tragedy" in the comic is obviously an important element to O'Casey; therefore, it may be profitable to view the play's tragic overtones in the light of a definition of the tragic spirit--Joseph Wood Krutch's:

¹⁶Kenneth Tynan in Curtains (New York, 1961), p. 286, makes the point that when the Irish wish to compose pure tragedies, they generally do so in Gaelic.

. . .and if, then, the Tragic Spirit is in reality the product of a religious faith in which, sometimes at least, faith in the greatness of God is replaced by faith in the greatness of man, it serves, of course, to perform the function of religion, to make life tolerable for those who participate in its beneficent illusion. It purges the soul of those who might otherwise despair and it makes endurable the realization that the events of the outward world do not correspond with the desires of the heart, and thus, in its own particular way, it does what all religions do, for it gives a rationality, a meaning, and a justification to the universe.¹⁷

The Shadow of a Gunman does not possess the sweep and depth of heroic drama; in fact, as we have already seen, the plot is unheroic. The play provides a clear perspective of humanity; it shows the heroism of some persons and the stupidity of others, but its action does not center around any one hero whose struggles mirror those of humanity. Ireland has strayed the highway of human life,¹⁸ an eccentricity which is shown in the futility of death by gun shot. Although this investigation has used Davoren as the "hero" of the piece, he certainly is no tragic figure. He never encounters opposition in trying to convert ideals into reality. He is merely inadequate in action. There is none of the "greatness" which Krutch mentions in him. If

¹⁷The Modern Temper (New York, 1929), p. 127.

¹⁸L. J. Potts in Comedy (London, 1948), p. 20, expresses the idea that eccentricity of being off the highway is what brings laughter in comedy.

there is any ground on which to claim Davoren's role has tragic implication, it is because he has been deceived by the illusion that there is no danger in being the shadow of a gunman. As for the position which fate has placed him in, one may well point to the hopeless state Davoren finds himself in when Minnie's mistaken hero-worship leads her to her death, while the poet's idealism, supported only by weakness of will, forces him into a position worse than death.

The play dramatizes the range of experience which the inhabitants of one tenement house in Dublin might face in one day. But, as we have already seen, O'Casey is not arguing the political issues which divided the country at the time. Instead, he shows the touch of tragedy in the picture of hopeless persons who, in a crisis, exhibit an inability to meet the occasion squarely because they are hopeless sentimentalists. Still, Davoren remains the "unheroic hero" of the piece, for it is his sentimental idealism--one which O'Casey borrowed from Louis Dubedat's creed in Shaw's The Doctor's Dilemma--which is the essence of his vanity. He cannot believe in the "might of design, the mystery of colour, and the belief in the redemption of all things by beauty everlasting," in the world in which he lives that day in 1920. Specifically, his weakness

parallels Dubedat's who, as has been interestingly analyzed by Norbert F. O'Donnell, is not at all the great artist Dr. Ridgeon seems to take him to be. "True, in his dying speech he allies himself with Michaelangelo, Valesquez, and Rembrandt; and he speaks the 'message' of art."¹⁹ Because he is a phony aesthete, though, as the lines from Shaw's play and the position which those passages take in the drama indicate, he cannot be considered a true artist. When O'Casey places Davoren in a position strikingly similar to Dubedat's one feels that the playwrights had the same purposes in mind; for Davoren's perverted sense of "beauty" and his vanity lead him to play a role which produces wrong. Ironically, he allies himself with Shelley, but he is not capable of making manifest a Promethean strength which will be effective in the Troubles. Thus he is more poltroon than poet. If he were more poet than poltroon, he would possess a more penetrating vision than any of Boucicault's romantic heroes. But, unlike them, he cannot correct the wrongs about him.

He realizes his impotent position, but his tardy vision of himself does not actually give the play a comic resolution, for the lack of freedom within the society of the play remains large. The tawdriness of a society which

¹⁹"Doctor Ridgeon's Deceptive Dilemma," The Shaw Review, II (January, 1959), p. 2.

through the love of vanity creates a hero where none deserves to be created is important in the work. Herein lies a parallel between The Playboy of the Western World and The Shadow of a Gunman which has not been explored. For the community in each case creates a hero because it wants one. This inability to distinguish between appearance and reality is a community trait in both plays, but it is more ironically treated in The Shadow of a Gunman, for in the Synge play Christy Mahone promotes himself by the tales he tells. In the O'Casey play, as we have seen, Davoren is idealized by the tenants in the house in Hilljoy Square who are as ridiculous in their gullibility, their "stage" qualities, as is Davoren. The fine words he speaks and the empty pose he strikes are not able to transform him as do Christy Mahone's. In fact, they significantly fail to do so. To this extent, Davoren is a kind of anti-Playboy who represents that phase in O'Casey's career where he felt a good deal of resistance to the pure aesthete and to the myth-making tendency noted in a simple way in Boucicault. That strain is made more complex, of course, in John Bull's Other Island and in The Playboy of the Western World, as well as in O'Casey's ideal comedies.

Minnie Powell may be excused for her hero-worship; she is a young woman whose personal responsibilities have

robbed her of a fulfillment of life which she might have known under different family circumstances. She idolizes Davoren; also she pays for her error with her life. Somewhat like Juno, though younger and more innocent, she is one of the idealized women that people talk about so often in O'Casey. In her simplicity, although she lives and dies in an urban world where she is largely alien, she becomes a representation of what is naturally untarnished. However, other characters in the play parallel the gullibility and sentimentality of Pegeen Mike, Widow Quin and the village girls in The Playboy. Tommy Owens, for example, is a hero-worshipper. More impressive, though, from a comic standpoint, is Mrs. Henderson whose speech when she calls on Davoren more clearly reveals the play's irony. She not only misunderstands Davoren's profession; she also misunderstands his relationship with Minnie. Significantly, she, Tommy, and Minnie express their idealization of Davoren almost immediately after he has been attacked by the landlord for not having paid his rent. Because of the arrangement in the play of these pieces of dramatic action, Mrs. Henderson's speech becomes all the more comically ironic:

. . . Mr. Davoren, we won't keep you more than a few minutes. It's not in me or in Mr. Gallicker to spoil sport. Him an' me was young once, an' knows what it is to be strolling at night in the

pale moonlight, with arms round one another. An' I wouldn't take much an' say there's game in Mr. Gallicker still, for I seen, sometimes, a dangerous cock in his eye. Bet we won't keep you and Minnie long asunder; here's the letter an' all written. You must know, Mr. Davoren--excuse me for not introducing him sooner--this is Mr. Gallicker, that lives in the front drawin' room ov number fifty-five, as decent an' honest an' quiet a man as you'd meet in a day's walk. An' so signs on it, it's them as 'ill be imposed upon--read the letter, Mr. Gallicker (p. 115).

Mrs. Henderson has persuaded Mr. Gallagher to compose a letter to the Irish Republican Army which complains of the behavior of some of the tenants in the house. Their coming to Davoren indicates that they have heard that he is a gunman, although, in truth, he and Shields are on the verge of being put out of their room for non-payment of rent. But the neighbors make a hero of Davoren and wish to take advantage of having him for a tenant. Their mistake is emphasized by the language of Mrs. Henderson whose lack of self-knowledge and wealth of self-importance causes her to speak of "these tramps' cleverality," in referring to her errant neighbors, and her statement that the good letter Davoren is about to hear has been "decomposed by a scholar," Mr. Gallagher.

The letter which is reproduced here as reinforcement for the ironically comic view which the play takes of

the hero-worshipping Mrs. Henderson and the cooperative Mr. Gallagher follows:

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME,
GREETINGS

Gentlemen of the Irish Republican Army. . .
I wish to call your attention to the persecution me and my family has to put up with in respect of and appertaining to the residents of the back drawing-room of the house known as fifty-five, Saint Teresa Street, situate in the Parish of St. Thomas, in the Borough and City of Dublin. This persecution started eighteen months ago--or to be precise--on the tenth day of the sixth month, in the year nineteen hundred and twenty.

We, the complainants, resident on the ground floor, deeming it disrespectful to have an open hall door, and to have the hall turned into a playground, made a solemn protest, and, in consequence, we the complainants aforesaid has had no peace ever since. Owing to the persecution, as aforesaid specified, we had to take out a summons against them some time ago as there was no Republican Courts then; but we did not proceed against them as me and my wife--to wit, James and Winifred Gallagher--has a strong objection to foreign courts as such. We had peace for some time after that, but now things have gone from bad to worse. The name calling and the language is something abominable and shocking. My wife has often to lock the door of the room to keep them from assaulting her. If you would be so kind as to send some of your army or police down to see for themselves we would give them full particulars. I have to be always from home all day, as I work with Mr. Hennessy, the harness maker of the Coombe, who will furnish all particulars as to my unvarnished respectability, also my neighbors. The name of the resident-tenant who is giving all this trouble and who, pursuant to the facts of the case aforesaid, mentioned, will be the defendant, as Dwyer. The husband of the aforesaid Mrs. Dwyer, or the

defendant, as the case may be, is a seaman, who is coming home shortly, and we beg the Irish Republican Army to note that the said Mrs. Dwyer says he will settle us when he comes home. While leaving it entirely in the hands of the gentlemen of The Republican Army, the defendant, that is to say, James Gallagher of fifty-five St. Teresa Street, ventures to say that he thinks he has made out a Primmy Fashy Case against Mrs. Dwyer and all her heirs, male and female as aforesaid mentioned in the above written schedule.

NB--If you send up any of your men, please tell them to bring their guns. I beg to remain the humble servant and devoted admirer of the Gentlemen of the Irish Republican Army. Witness my hand this tenth day of the fifth month of the year nineteen hundred and twenty.

James Gallagher (pp. 117-119).

Mr. Gallagher's mock-cavalier manner and his heroic attitude toward the "Gunman on the run," who actually even in the biographical facts of the drama's incidents, is a "poet on the run,"²⁰ adds to the irony of the play once when, upon leaving Davoren's room he thanks him profusely:

Mr. Davoren, sir, on behalf ov myself, James Gallicker an' Winifred, Mrs. Gallicker, wife ov the said James, I beg to offer, extend an' furnish our humble an' hearty thanks for your benevolent goodness in interferin' in the matter specified, particularated an' expanded upon in the letter, mandamus or schedule, as the case may be. An' let me interpretate to you on behalf ov myself an' Winifred Gallicker, that whenever you visit us you will be supernally positive ov a hundred thousand welcomes (p. 122-3).

²⁰ Armstrong, p. 421.

Mrs. Grigson also comes to Davoren to complain that her husband has not returned from his after-supper walk. She fears that he may have been shot by the Black and Tans. She inquires of Shields whether insurance companies pay if a man is shot after curfew, but before long her husband comes back home. He is quite drunk, but he, too, participates in the hero-worship, in his own way, as he assures Davoren that he is safe in that house, for there is not a drop of informer's blood in Dolphus Grigson. Moreover, he is a Protestant who abides by his Bible which he keeps turned to the passage which reads, "The woman shall be subject to her husband." When the Black and Tans search the tenement house on a tip which, according to Grigson, has been given them by Tommy Owens' public bragging, Grigson only turns his big Bible to a passage which reads:

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. Love the brotherhood, Fear God. Honour the King (p. 150).

The most striking irony along these lines which is hurled at the community which provides the setting for the main action of the play, however, is that when Minnie Powell commits what is essentially an heroic act, the hero-worshippers in the house do not realize what she has done. Mrs.

Grigson informs the other tenants that the searchers have gone to Minnie's room and that they have found there "enough stuff to blow up the whole street." While Seumas is beside himself with fear, asking whether Minnie said anything--meaning whether she has called his name in any way--Mrs. Grigson speaks of Minnie as being deceitful, a little hussy who might have had the house blown up. "God tonight, who'd think it was in Minnie Powell!" she exclaims. And as she continues to inform the other characters of what has transpired on the street, she reveals the reason for this dislike for Minnie: "With her fancy stockings an' her pompoms, an' her crepe de chine blouses. I knew she'd come to no good" (p. 153).

Mr. Grigson adds to the emphasis on the community's lack of understanding of itself or of the persons in its midst when he explains to Davoren that all women are nervous; that what a man must do is show them he is the stronger and they will not walk over him. Ironically, no man in the tenement house has made an attempt to show any strength of character which can approximate that which is shown by Minnie Powell. Even when Mrs. Grigson finds that Minnie has been shot by the soldiers, her response is a purely emotional one which, according to the stage directions, shows she is "excited

and semi-hysterical, and sincerely affected by the tragic occurrence" (p. 156). At no time, however, does any one in the play acknowledge that Minnie's act has been heroic, nor Mrs. Henderson's. It was she who fought violently with the soldiers, knocking several of them down before they forced her into the lorry.

We can see in this play, then, that not only are the Stage Irishman qualities of pretense and mock-heroism in Davoren ridiculed. That much is clear throughout the play's unfolding; furthermore, the sense of the community and its comic weakness is also shown through Mrs. Henderson, Mrs. Grigson, Mr. Gallagher, Tommy Owens, as well as in Minnie Powell. Like Pegreen and the other village characters in The Playboy of the Western World, the community has honored shadow instead of substance. This national characteristic is the butt of the play's irony, for it is a national excess which, on the system of values of the play, can only lead to death and destruction; that when a truly heroic deed is committed within full sight of the community, it will not recognize it. It prefers to honor the shadow of a gunman. This is the ironic aesthetic response which the play presents.

Juno and the Paycock:

Juno and the Paycock (1925) continues the same anit-heroic vision of life which O'Casey exhibits in The Shadow of a Gunman. Also, it is a play whose characters--with the exception of Johnny Boyle--are noncombatants at a time when, in 1922, the "Free Staters" and the Republicans were engaged in civil war. Unlike the plot of the earlier play, Juno and the Paycock covers a period of several weeks. But it, too, is focusing on the problems which the inhabitants of a tenement house face because of the fighting going on outside. Melodrama appears in the death of the sons of Mrs. Tancred and Mrs. Boyle, as well as in the unexpected legacy which the Boyle family learns it is to receive. Rowdy humour which is used so heavily in this play may cause laughter to overshadow the irony. The plot of Juno is more narrowly restricted to domestic life than is the plot of The Shadow of a Gunman, and the ideals for which the characters strive are only loosely related to the ideals for which the civil war is being fought.

Juno has its Stage Irishman, and because he is a more broadly comic figure than Donal Davoren as a poet could possibly be, the comic irony of this play applies more widely to the Irishman-on-the-street. In fact, the application is

so broad that O'Casey finds it necessary to create for Captain Boyle a foil in his wife, Juno. She serves as a more direct foil for Boyle than Seumas is for Davoren, and the strategy by which the playwright achieves this relationship is secure when he writes the comedy around the problems of one family. Within this setting of the conventional responsibilities of a father and a husband, O'Casey is able to show that Boyle is a burden to his family. Even the title of the play suggests the irony which the drama unfolds when one recalls that the goddess Juno, queen of the heavens, was considered the protectress of women and marriage. Special attention is called to the name "Juno" in the play, and Bentham says it reminds him of Homer's gods and heroes. Boyle is appropriately referred to as a proud, strutting peacock. The title also has ironic significance in that the classical poets considered the peacock sacred to Juno.²¹ In a larger sense, on the macrocosmatic level, O'Casey applies the same irony to Ireland as a "family" that he applies to the Boyle family. It is, then, the "peacock" pretensions of Captain Boyle which provide the symbolism by which the play moralizes on the "tragedies" which can happen to either "family"--Ireland or the Boyles--when a Captain Boyle is in their midst.

²¹This allusion is noted in Paul M. Cubeta in Modern Drama for Analysis (New York, 1955), p. 617.

Laughing out of existence of the "paycock" as a Stage Irishman, then, is the dramatic purpose which this play manifests. And in doing so, it is again, as O'Casey says in the Green Crow, "the poms, the vanities, the sense of self-importance of the Big Fellows" that he wishes to laugh to shame in Juno and the Paycock, probably his most widely-read play.

With this avowed purpose of the playwright in mind, it seems significant to investigate the pretensions which Captain Jack Boyle exhibits, attributes which are usually assigned to the lovable, romantic rogue, and to note that to O'Casey these qualities are more dangerous than advantageous, although they do provide theatrical humour.

As we have seen, the action of the play takes place during the highly complex and confusing period around 1922 when the Irish Free State had been set up but had not succeeded in unifying the country around it. A bitter internecine struggle terrorized the country, yet life had to go on. Juno is not so much the story of the factional struggle (although important elements of it are woven into the play) as a delineation of the life of the Boyle family as it now humourously, and now tragically, pits itself against the demoralizing and disintegrating forces of poverty and

confusion. Against this background of civil war, we find the Boyles poor and down-at-the-heel, trying to eke out an existence. Juno Boyle, now forty-five and mother of the family: "twenty years ago. . . must have been a pretty woman, but her face now has assumed that look which ultimately settles down upon the faces of the women of the working-class, a look of listless monotony and harassed anxiety, blending with an expression of mechanical resistance" (p. 4).

She tries courageously to keep her family together while her husband, "Captain" Boyle, the "paycock," is idling away his time with another wastrel, Joxer Daly. When the play opens, Mary, the daughter, is out of work on strike, and Johnny, the son, who has been shot in the hip during Easter Week (and later loses his arm), is ill. An unexpected stroke of good fortune descends upon the family in the form of a supposed legacy, and the Boyles begin to buy articles on credit to refurnish their home; the paycock sports a new suit of clothes; a new gramophone is installed in the living room; Mary leaves Jerry Devine, a union organizer, and takes up with Charlie Bentham, a school teacher and aspiring lawyer. But the bequest proves to be a mirage, and bad luck descends swiftly upon the family: Mary is

abandoned by Charlie Bentham and discovers that she is pregnant; and Johnny, who has informed on a comrade, is taken away by two Irregulars and executed. Juno, with the wreckage of her family all about her, cries: "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 eternal love!" The paycock lets fall on the floor the last sixpence he has in the world and exclaims: "The blinds is down, Joxer, the blinds is down!" The play ends with Boyle, roaring drunk, sitting in the empty apartment with his drinking companion, Joxer, and mourning his ineffectual complaint that the "whole world's in a terrible state of chassis!"

Because Boyle is a more fully developed character than Davoren, he can be seen more easily in the tragicomic conflict. Illustration of incongruity is the strategy by which O'Casey characterizes Boyle, and the use of Juno as his foil is the technique by which the primary ridicule is achieved. Incongruity between what the unheroic character conceives himself to be and what the unfolding of the play shows him to be is the dramatic method by which the antithetical characters--Boyle and Juno--are pitted against each other. This strategy appears first in the play when,

in the opening act, Boyle discusses with Joxer the possibility of getting a job. The implication is strong that the family's pitiful economic plight could be righted because Boyle is able-bodied and because a job is available to him:

BOYLE: The job couldn't come at a betther time; I'm feeling in great fettle, Joxer. I'd hardly believe I ever had a pain in me legs, an' last week I was nearly crippled with them.

JOXER: That's betther an' betther; ah, God never shut wan door but He opened another!

BOYLE: It's only eleven o'clock; we've lashins o' time. I'll slip on me oul' moleskins afther breakfast, an' we can saunther down at our ayse. (Putting his hand on the shovel) I think, Joxer, we'd betther bring our shovels (p. 12).

Within a very few minutes after that exchange of speeches, one in which Boyle indicates his anxiety to find a job, Jerry Devine comes into the apartment and the following conversation takes place:

JERRY: Oh, there you are at last! I've been searchin' for you everywhere. . . .I have a message from Father Farrell: he says that if you go to the job that's on in Rothmines, an' ask for Foreman Manogan, you'll get a start.

BOYLE: That's all right, but I don't want the motions of me body to be watched

the way an asthronomer ud watch a star. If you're folleyin' Mary aself, you've no pereeeogative to be folleyin' me. (Suddenly catching his thigh) U-ugh, I'm afther gettin' a terrible twinge in me right leg!

MRS. BOYLE: Oh, it won't be very long now till it travels into your left wan. It's miraculous that whenever he scents a job in front of him, his legs begin to fail him! Then, me bucko, if you lose this chance, you may go and furrage for yourself!

JERRY: This job'll last for some time too, Captain, an' as soon as the foundations are in, it'll be cushy enough.

BOYLE: Won't it be a climbin' job? How d'ye expect me to be able to go up a ladder with these legs? An' if I get up aself, how am I goin' to get down agen?

MRS. BOYLE: (viciously.) Get wan o' the labourers to carry you down in a hod! You can't climb a laddher, but you can skip like a goat into a snug!

JERRY: I wouldn't let myself be let down that easy, Mr. Boyle; a little exercise, now, might do you all the good in the world.

BOYLE: It's a docthor you should have been, Devine--maybe you know more about the pains in me legs than meself that has them? (pp. 16-17).

Of course, Boyle does not go to the job, but after his wife leaves, he berates Jerry and Mary for speaking of their romance in front of him, declaring for the first time

that the "whole world's in a state o' chassis." He says he still has a little spark left in him, and, as he prepares to eat his breakfast, he sings merrily until his wastril friend, Joxer, arrives. Thus Juno has spoken truthfully of the real character of Boyle, and although his protestations have been to the contrary, his role as an irresponsible husband and father has been established. His biting denunciation of Juno as a nagging wife and his vagabond-type singing provide ribald humour; yet audience sympathies for Juno are beginning to accumulate.

Another major pretension of Boyle's which is explained early in the play is his title, "Captain," when Juno is trying to shame him into going to work:

MRS. BOYLE: Shovel! Ah, then, me boys, you'd do far more work with a knife than ever you'll do with a shovel! If there was e'er a genuine job goin' you'd be dh'other way about--not able to lift your arms with pains in your legs! Your poor wife slavin' to keep the bit in your mouth, an' you gallivantin' all the day like a paycock!

BOYLE: It ud be betther for a man to be dead, betther for a man to be dead.

MRS. BOYLE: (ignoring the interruption.) Everbody callin' you "Captain," an' you only wanst on the wather, in an oul' collier from here to Liverpool, when anybody, to listen to you, ud take you for a second Christo For Columbus! (pp. 13-14).

Again, the passage indicates the technique by which Mrs. Boyle serves as a foil to her husband, and at the same time her language provides humour. Her "Christo For Columbus" is one of the many malopropisms which O'Casey uses in his ironic dramas. Throughout the early passages of Act I of Juno, Boyle's character becomes established as a humorous one externally. His saying, "I've a little spirit left in me still" five times during the act underlines the automatic quality of the character, and the words themselves are typical of the Stage Irish Soldier.²²

Boyle's illusion of himself as a Captain--characteristic of the sentimental touches so often given portrayals of the Stage Irishman--is in no way destroyed by Juno's realistic revelation of his service on a "collier"; for on the same morning when Joxer recalls the non-existent young days when Boyle was "steppin' the deck of a manly ship, with the win' blowin' a hurricane through the masts," Boyle waxes eloquent with a speech which re-establishes his pomposity as he says: "Them was days, Joxer, them was days. Nothin' was too hot or too heavy for me then. Sailin' from the Gulf o' Mexico to the Antanartic Ocean. I seen things, I seen

²² Duggan's The Stage Irishman (London, 1937) gives over several chapters to types of Stage Irishmen. One of them is the Irish Soldier who considers himself a man of courage and spirit instead of being a fire-eater and a swash-buckler.

things, Joxer, that no mortal man should speak about that knows his Catechism." (p. 26).

When Boyle declares he has not had a drop of intoxicating liquor for the last three weeks and, a very few minutes later Jerry Devine proves that the "Captain" was in Foley's "snug" only a little while earlier, the dialogue adds humour to the play. Boyle swears to Juno on the prayer-book that he is "as innocent as the child unborn" of having been to Foley's. When he is proved wrong and Juno quips, "An' he swearin' on the holy prayer-book that he wasn't in no snug," the harrangue provides farce. But the incident also helps to forge Boyle into the Stage Irishman whom Shaw sneers at as the "generous, drunken, thriftless Irishman with a joke on his lips and a sentimental tear in his eye."

Curiously, Boyle relates his romantic illusion of himself to his contempt for the Church, for, after suggesting that he has no respect for Jerry Devine for bringing word of a job nor of Father Farrell for sending it, Boyle confides a secret to Joxer that he says he would not tell to anybody else: "The clergy always had too much power over the people in this unfortunate country." Then, with his crony's encouragement, he recites enthusiastically the Church's culpability in Ireland's troubles. It prevented the people from seizing

the corn in '47; it downed Powell; it said hell wasn't hot enough to punish the Fenians; it took everything waay "except our memory." Then, still smarting over the effrontery of the priest, Boyle reasons strangely:

Father Farrell's beginnin' to take a great interest in Captain Boyle; because of what Johnny did for his country, says he to me wan day. It's a curious way to reward Johnny be makin' his poor aul' father work. But that's what the clergy want, Joxer--work, work, work for me an' you; having us mulin' from mornin' till night, so that they may be in betther fettle when they come hoppin' round for their dues! Job! Well, let him give his job to wan of his hymn-singin', prayer-spoutin', craw-thumpin' Confraternity men! (p. 25).

While Boyle is drunk with the illusion of his importance which he and Joxer have created, he decides that Juno will have to sign an oath of allegiance in his independent Republic. But before he can complete his strategy conference, Juno returns with Charles Bentham, who has come to inform Boyle that a cousin of his has bequeathed him property worth between 1500 and 2000 pounds. That one melodramatic incident brings the one short-lived change in the character of Boyle. Until that time he had conceived of himself as anything but the garrulous person that he is. Now, however, each member in the family is brought into a brief tableau which returns Boyle to his self-importance:

MARY: A fortune, father; a fortune!

JOHNNY: We'll be able to get out o' this place now, an' go somewhere we're not known.

MRS. BOYLE: You won't have to trouble about a job for awhile, Jack.

BOYLE: (fervently) I'll never doubt the goodness o' God agen (p. 33).

Boyle even drives Joxer out of the house and swears never to see him again. "I'm a new man from this out," he exclaims.

From this point until close to the end of the play, O'Casey either changes his attitude toward Boyle, or he exhibits a kind of ambivalence toward him. Throughout the first act, as we have seen, Boyle's pretensions have been manufactured from his own sense of self-importance. Juno serves as his foil, as we have also seen. However, when one remembers that the Boyle family is extremely poor, it is easy to understand how the "Captain" has a different motivation for his pretensions during most of the remainder of the play. The comic effects are varied, for example, in the first scene of Act II. Boyle becomes officious, signing papers, superciliously impressing his friend with his importance as a "man o' money" and "masther" of his house. His political opinions have been completely reversed, yet as usual Joxer agrees heartily with all his assertions. Boyle later even

tries to impress his family and Bentham with his knowledge of high finance. Instead of being on the defensive as he has been in the previous act, Boyle actually does become a "new man" somewhat. Juno is not a foil to him any longer. She shares most of his grandiose plans.

The first breaking of the gay mood which the promise of escape from poverty has brought to the Boyles comes when Johnny becomes hysterical and thinks he sees Robbie Tancred kneeling before the statue in the room. Here the awful civil war intrudes upon the family, but this disturbance is not of Boyle's making. When Johnny is quieted, the family returns to its revels, and all the members of the group contribute to the entertainment. Again, the tragic mood of the outside world intrudes when Mrs. Tancred is going to her son's Rosary service. Her impassioned speech moves the entire household to sympathize temporarily with her. But, although the Boyle's own son is a half-crazed and crippled victim of the same conflict; although it is he who has been accused of having brought about young Tancred's death by having informed on him; and although Johnny's hysteria has been a poignant if temporary reminder to the revelling party that the civil war is very real and near, the Boyles and their neighbors return easily to their merry-making. More significantly, Boyle's

irresponsibility is no more prevalent at this point than that of any other person at the party.

As the last act of the play progresses, the action develops on an ascending scale from minor difficulties, which often have comic overtones; yet they suggest a foreshadowing of disaster. A family tragedy, quite apart from the war outside, strikes when Juno learns that Bentham has deserted Mary and that she is pregnant. Boyle is descended upon by various creditors at about the same time. Further, he learns that the legacy is non-existent, men come to remove the furniture, Jerry walks out on Mary, and Johnny is led to his doom. None of these family reverses comes as the direct result of Boyle's qualities as a Stage Irishman. Certainly, he had no way to know the will was a hoax, and he had no part in Bentham's villainy. In fact, Boyle alone viewed Bentham with suspicion, and if the young man had not come to bring his unexpected good news, Boyle probably would not have catered to him at all.

It is only in his reaction to hearing that Mary is pregnant that Boyle returns to his platitudes which are unsympathetic, but they are probably all a man like him can utter at such a time. Understandably, then, it is the pressure of the succession of reverses which causes Boyle to

revert to the characterization which was his in the earlier portions of the play. Only here does his shallow sense of self-importance return:

BOYLE: Goin' to have a baby! --My God,
 What'll Bentham say when he hears
 that?

MRS. BOYLE: Are you blind, man, that you can't see
 that it was Bentham that has done this
 wrong to her!

BOYLE: (passionately) Then he'll marry her,
 he'll have to marry her!

MRS. BOYLE: You know he's gone to England, an'
 God knows where he is now.

BOYLE: I'll folly him, I'll folly him, an'
 bring him back, an' make him do her
 justice. The scoundrel, I might ha'
 known what he was, with his yogeess an'
 his prawn!

MRS. BOYLE: We'll have to keep it quiet till we
 see what we can do.

BOYLE: Oh, isn't this a nice thing to come on
 top o' me, an' the state I'm in! A pretty
 show I'll be to Joxer an' to that oul'
 wan, Madigan! Amn't I afther goin'
 through enough without havin' to go
 through this! (p. 74).

He returns to his false pride here, and with Juno returning to her role as his foil, Boyle is shown again to be more interested in sustaining his short-lived role of importance with his friends and neighbors than with rising

to his family responsibility. At this point, Juno rises to something of heroic status, but that elevation is compatible with that which has been established in her character in the first act of the play. In essence, her attitude is one which may well be expected of her, and its heroic quality is only made impressive in comparison with Boyle's empty pretensions. Only to this extent is the comic irony a stinging condemnation of Boyle as a father. He is not a Davoren-type Stage Irishman--one whose pretensions directly contribute to a tragic ending. Coincidence has been his chief adversary.

But the final, comic resolution of the play focuses on Boyle's incontinency. The audience response which this resolution seems to wish to elicit is directed through the shocking contrast between visible essence of the family's despair which the empty house exhibits and Boyle's and Joxer's drunken final appearance in the play.²³ Mrs. Boyle has taken Mary away to her sister's; Johnny's funeral arrangements have been made. While these important family problems are being solved, Boyle is away from home. He has been

²³ Marjorie Boulton, in her The Anatomy of Drama (London, 1960), writes that contrast is a dramatic device which O'Casey uses for the most intense dramatic action in Juno, a technique which Miss Boulton thinks heightens the effect of the drama.

drinking heavily, and one can easily understand why he has reverted to role. He realizes his own helplessness in his exclamation, "The blinds is down, Joxer, the blinds is down."

The most devastating irony is seen in Joxer's expression of levity in his parody, "Put all. . .your troubles. . . in your oul' kit-bag. . .an' smile. . .smile. . .smile!" Boyle responds by stating ironically that the country must steady itself. He says that if "th' worst comes. . .to th' worse. . ." he can join the flying column. He reminds himself that he is Captain Boyle; that Commander Kelley dies in his arms. If we are to believe Juno's revelation early in the play that Boyle was no military leader at all, we have to know that this pretension is the one which O'Casey condemns most heavily. It is the romantic, shallow, exaggerated self-importance of the Irish who fashion themselves as saviors of Ireland who, actually, are of no more value than the veracity of their pretensions, that O'Casey views ironically. Boyle says again that the world is in a "state o' chassis," and the irony is expressed in the malapropism as well as in the incongruity between concept of himself and reality which the statement reveals. Interestingly, Boyle makes this final expression in response to Joxer's mention of The Colleen Bawn. Although one cannot expect Boyle to

be thinking coherently in his state of being, he is, at this moment, the direct antithesis of the rogue-hero of Boucicault's play. For instead of being romantic and, at the same time, a righter of wrongs, Boyle remains the sentimentalized character--sentimentalized by himself, that is.

Boyle ends up with a strong anti-pastoral quality, just as does Davoren. Both characters use fine language; both live by pretensions which they assume to be realities. Davoren, of course, is not assumed to be simple, but the fine words he uses--those which make him a Playboy in his way--are derived from foreign tradition. Shelley's words are ineffective in the mouth of a Davoren. O'Casey goes a step beyond, though, in his portrayal of Boyle. He ironically uses fine words which are completely out of keeping with the realities of his life and which produce no transformation in the fashion in which the acquiring of the habit of "romancing" transforms the Playboy in Synge's drama. This is the simple man who should be a source of wisdom, but instead he is a source of ironic laughter. Boyle is a clown because he cannot help being one--the victim, in O'Casey's view, of Irish temperamental excesses and of his emergence from Dublin tenement life. His role becomes all the more ironic when one realizes that Juno rises from the same social

and economic circumstances as does her husband. That contrast between the two characters places the blame on Boyle for his own choice of being the self-styled "Captain" of the tradition of the Stage Irish Soldier. That Juno, as his foil, succeeds in rising to a stature much higher than anything to which he can rise only compounds the irony. No pastoral wisdom, in Empson's sense of the term, is found in Boyle; but Juno does lean generally in the direction of reality, largely because the abject circumstances under which she is forced to live make her a more reliable character. Symbolically, Boyle hints at the ostentatious Irish leader of some little faction of his own, as is seen in his attempt to establish his own Republic in his home. His idea of doing so only makes him a larger clown when one realizes that he is fully incapable of ruling anything. Throughout the play, at times when he is able to act from the motivations which are his own character, Boyle is the Stage Irishman whose pretensions are amusing, but this kind of man has no value in the practical problems of Ireland. He pretends to be a military figure, but he remains in his home, far from the actual struggles. It is his pretensions--whether they are excuses to avoid working or exaggerated statements of his importance--which incapacitate him. Thus,

the "scouraging of the apes" which the play enacts is the satirizing of the ineffectiveness of the romantic "hero" who cannot rise to the heroic stature of Myles-na-Coppaleen. Again, as in The Shadow of a Gunman, the Stage Irishman has been the central symbol through whose actions O'Casey has expressed his ironic drama with its strong strain of comedy.

The Plough and the Stars:

As we have seen, Juno and the Paycock is basically an ironic drama enacted through the irresponsibilities which Jack Boyle shows toward his family. His romantic pretensions cause him to inflate himself with self-importance, leaving his responsibilities unattended in the meantime. The comic view of the play is criticism which exposes human beings for what they are in contrast to what they profess to be.²⁴ And although the Irish Rebellion intrudes upon the family in the form of reactions to the death of Johnny, this external conflict is incidental to the play. Conceivably, Jack Boyle would have been as convincing an anti-heroic character if the death of his son had not been included in the drama. O'Casey's next play, The Plough and the Stars, however, does not restrict itself so narrowly to the family, although

²⁴Louis Kronenberger, The Thread of Laughter (New York, 1952), pp. 6-7.

"personal loyalties" are pitted against "public loyalties" in that work also. More emphasis is given to the political struggle in this play than in June, although the personal "tragedy" experienced is primarily a domestic one. O'Casey has said of this play that he lived in the midst of all the events which are described in it. And he adds: "There I was a part of them, yet subconsciously commenting on all that was said, much that was done, to be colored afterward . . . through my imagination, seeing at the same time the sad humour and vigorous tragedy of this historic time to Ireland."²⁵ The play is filled with social and political ironies which are very effective in their reflection of Irish disillusionment, and it is the purpose of this discussion to seek in The Plough and the Stars the theme that again, as in the two previous works investigated, is the basic characteristics of the Stage Irishman motivating the "tragedy" of the drama.

Specifically, the shattering of dreams and the survival of communities seems to be the theme of The Plough and the Stars. But there is conflict between dreams of personal happiness and the achievement of the aims of the community here, a conflict realized through the stubborn intrusion of war. At this point in his play-writing career,

²⁵"Memories of a Farewell to Ireland," The New York Times, December 4, 1960, K, pp. 4-5.

O'Casey's concern was with alienation. Davoren of The Shadow of a Gunman is an urban aesthete whose values cannot bring about community good; Jack Boyle is an urban clown who can be nothing else. Both are entranced by fine words which express pure sentiment and nothing more. This study holds that the main stream of the playwright's development is a moving from this kind of alienation from Irish background and temperament to the sense of the possibility of the reconciliation of personal and community aims which is evident in the late plays.

The Plough and the Stars is an important play in that development, for in the supremacy of political strife over the personal hopes of John and Nora Clithroe, newly married, one sees that the playwright has broadened the scope of Juno and the Paycock. The Clithroes live in a tenement house, but they are different from the normal tenement inhabitants. With them live Peter Flynn, Nora's uncle and the young Covey, Clithroe's cousin. Peter is a sentimental patriot who dresses like Robert Emmet and speaks platitudes from the beginning of the play. The Covey is a class-conscious proletarian, anti-religious and anti-patriotic. In fact, he is an extension of what Jerry Devine and Mary Boyle together might have been if O'Casey had developed their characters more fully in Juno. Jack Clithroe is a Commandant in the

Citizen Army, unknown to himself, as his wife has destroyed, without his knowledge, the letter appointing him to the position.

That O'Casey intends to make that destruction of the appointment letter significant becomes evident early in the play when Captain Brennan comes to the Clithroe home to inform Jack that he is to command a battalion at a big demonstration. His wife's appeal is vain; he throws her off and goes. The demonstration is a success, but a public-house near which it is held is packed. Patriots and viragos mix there indiscriminately, and even the "Plough and the Stars" banner of the Army is borne into the bar while its bearer has a drink. Back at the tenement again a consumptive child is brought to the door to take the air. While she is there, three men play pitch and toss and discuss the fighting. The women and men go off to loot. Nora Clithroe is brought home by Fluther Good, an independent man, after a fruitless search for her husband, and a stray lady wanders aimlessly. Then comes the great moment of the play. Jack Clithroe comes by covering the retreat of a wounded volunteer. Nora hears him and comes to the door. She clings to him, beseeching him to give up the fight and come back home. "They are all afraid," she says, "don't you be afraid to

be afraid!" Again he throws her from him, and she lies inert upon the steps until she is taken into the house. A doctor is fetched. The consumptive child has died, and men are playing cards on the coffin.

Nora Olithroe's baby is born dead and she becomes demented. Captain Brennen brings to her a last message from Jack, who has been killed and left in a flaming hotel. Soldiers come to escort the funeral of the dead child, and when the coffin has been taken away Nora appears in a state of delirium. She prepares the table for a meal, oblivious of the sleeping neighbor who tends her. The rattle of musketry wakes the sleeper, and attracts Nora to the window. The volunteer nurse, following her, is killed by a volley, and Nora is taken away by another neighbor. Soldiers have herded the men away, and now return to sit down to the meal Nora has prepared. They sing "Keep the Home Fires Burning" at the end of the play.

To say this is a pacifist play would be not entirely correct; to say it merely places a higher value on marriage and the home than it places on Ireland would be an oversimplification. However, the comic pretensions portrayed are basically patriotic ones. Primarily, the values of Olithroe and his wife are antithetical. She is his foil in a general sense. But since other men besides Olithroe are portrayed

in their sentimental pretensions, it seems important to examine the dramatic working of their incongruities and to relate them to the tragic consequences which they cause.

Irony is the method of the comedy in The Plough and the Stars, as in Juno and the Paycock, and the ludicrous qualities of Clithroe are delineated largely through the use of his wife as a foil. It is important to note, though, that Jack and Nora Clithroe are a somewhat special kind of Dubliner. Together, they form a marriage which is most vulnerable to the type of danger which the unfolding of the drama brings. Even in the stage directions for Act I, O'Casey uses his setting to indicate the contrast in the values of the man and wife:

The large fireplace at right is of wood, painted to look like marble (the original has been taken away by the landlord.) On the mantelshelf are two candlesticks of dark covered wood. Between them is a small clock. Over the clock is a hanging calendar which displays a picture of "The Sleeping Venus." In the center of the breast of the chimney hangs a picture of Robert Emmet, on the right of the entrance to the front drawing room is a copy of "The Gleaners," on the opposite side a copy of "The Angelus;" underneath "The Gleaners" is a chest of drawers on which stands a green bowl filled with scarlet dahlias and white chrysanthemums. Near to the fireplace is a settee which at night forms a double bed for Clithroe and Nora. . . on top of the table a huge cavalry sword is lying (p. 161).

Nora is not an ordinary tenement wife, as can be seen by the articles in the room which indicate an attempt to make

a fairly attractive home out of the slum quarters. But the picture of Robert Emmet and the large sword are reminders that potentially antithetical qualities are in the home. As the play begins, Nora's distinctive character is established further by Mrs. Gogan's comments. First, the neighbor woman receives a hat which is delivered during Nora's absence, and, upon opening the parcel, Mrs. Gogan complains that the hat must have cost "more than a penny" and that Mrs. Clithroe is getting "such notions of upperosity." She speaks with Fluther Good, a carpenter who is repairing the door, about Nora's dress, her prettiness, and her politeness--all of which she deprecates--and shows her contempt for Nora's desires to maintain higher values than those of her neighbors. "Vaults that are hidin' th' dead, instead of homes that are shelterin' th' livin'," is what Mrs. Gogan says the younger woman calls the tenement houses.

When Nora comes home she has to make peace between her Uncle Peter, the arch-patriot, and her husband's cousin, the young, testy socialist. But in the very midst of her peace-making, she is set upon by Bessie Burgess, a fruit-vendor, who also lives in the tenement house. That Nora is resented by Mrs. Burgess as well as by Mrs. Gogan is established in the following brief scene:

BESSIE: Puttin' a new look on her door. . .
 afraid her poor neighbors ud break
 through an' steal. . . (In a loud tone)
 Maybe now, they're a damn right more
 honest than your ladyship. . . checkin'
 the children playing on the stairs. . .
 gettin' on th' nerves of your ladyship
 . . . Complainin' about Bessie Burgess
 singin' her hymns at night, when she has
 a few up. . . (she comes in halfway on
 the threshold and screams) Bessie
 Burgess'll sing whenever she damn well
 likes! (Nora tries to shut the door,
 but Bessie violently shoves it in, and,
 gripping Nora by the shoulders, shakes
 her.) You little over-dressed throllope,
 you, for one pin I'd paste th' white
 face o' you!

NORA: (frightened) Fluther! Fluther!

BESSIE: Why is she always thrying to speak proud
 things, an' lookin' like a mighty wone
 in th' congregation o' th' people! (p. 178).

Thus, through reactions to Nora which the other women
 in the house have shown, up to this point, O'Casey has been
 able to establish Nora as being more than a cut above the other
 women. He has approved of her pride, in a tacit manner, and
 as the play progresses, he indicates that the basis for his
 approval is that Nora and Clithroe are a young couple.
 Because they are young and because they would be capable of
 establishing a happy and meaningful family life together--if
 the outsider did not intrude--their marriage begins as a
 thing of which the playwright approves. But the intrusions
 frustrate any possibility that the dream can survive.

Clithroe arrives at home just as Bessie Burgess is venting her spleen on Nora, and Clithroe drives her off. "There, don't mind that old bitch, Nora, darling," he says soothingly and after kissing his frightened young wife tenderly, he promises to give Bessie Burgess "a taste of me mind that'll shock her into the sensibility of behavin' herself" when she is sober. But even before Nora and Jack come home, Uncle Peter has been getting ready to go to a demonstration meeting of the Citizen Army. This meeting and Clithroe's intense desire to attend it are the first indications of his addiction to the romance of speeches, parades and uniforms. It is the meeting which brings a shadow over the tranquil picture of domestic life which the Clithroes enjoy once Bessie Burgess has been thrown out.

"Tonight is th' first chance that Brennan has got of showing himself off since they made him a Captain," Clithroe says to Covey. He reveals his envy of Brennan's new position by saying it would be a treat to see him "swankin' it at th' head of the Citizen Army carryin' th' flag of the Plough and the Stars," and Covey quips, "They're bringin' nice disgrace to that banner now." He continues by claiming that the flag is Labour's flag, he sings a labor song, and leaves the house. When Nora and Clithroe are finally alone,

the wife realizes that although Jack is sitting quietly on the sofa-bed, he is thinking of the meeting. She reminds him that when they were first married and she wanted to go to the meetings, Clithroe always said, "oh, to hell with the meetin's," how she complained that before they had been married a month, Clithroe couldn't keep away from the demonstrations. Nora's role as a foil to her husband's romantic attraction to "playing soldier" is established in the following exchange of speeches:

CLITHROE: Oh, that's enough about th' meetin'. It looks as if you wanted me to go, th' way you're talkin'. You were always at me to give up the Citizen Army, an' I gave it up; surely that ought to satisfy you.

NORA: Ay, you gave it up--because you got th' sulks when they didn't make a Captain of you. It wasn't for my sake, Jack (p. 184).

The essential conflict of the play is established here. This confusion between "private and public loyalties" is a plague which Clithroe faces throughout the play. Also, Nora's revelation that her husband is not staying home for her sake and that he would be at the meeting if he had been made an officer spells out the child-like romance with which Clithroe regards the pomp of "playing soldier." Private loyalty gets the better of Jack as he tries to disavow his

wife's ridicule. Again, a family scene follows in which Clithroe is singing a love song to Nora. But, as is typical of O'Casey's dramaturgy, when the young husband is singing, "An you said you lov'd only me!", a knock is heard at the door. It is the intrusion of the outside world; for Captain Brennan comes to bring a message from General Jim Connally which demands that Clithroe, as a Captain, lead a battalion against Dublin Castle that night.

Clithroe does not know he has been made a Captain in the Citizen Army; his wife had destroyed the order. But when he learns that he is an officer, he quickly forgets his romantic home setting and prepares to go to his duty. His wife seeks to prevail upon him not to go. She asks him: "Is General Connally an' the Citizen Army goin' to be your only care? Am I goin' to be only sumthin' to prove merry-makin' at night for you? Your vanity'll be th' ruin of you an' me yet." The conflict between the values of home and love and those of vanity and glory is made explicit. Clithroe chooses the latter. He goes away to the singing of "The Soldiers' Song," and the burden of the violation of personal loyalties which women feel in times of war is re-emphasized when the playwright brings in speeches by Mollser, Mrs. Gogan's fifteen-year-old, consumptive daughter and the

volatile Mrs. Burgess:

MOLLSER: (to Nora) Mather's gone to th' meetin', an' I was feeling terrible lonely, so I come down to see if you'd let me sit with you, thinkin' you mightn't be goin' yourself. . . I often envy you, Mrs. Clithroe, seein' th' health you have, an' the lovely place you have here, an' wondhering if I'll ever be strong enough to be keepin' a home together for a man.

Just before Mollser ceases to speak, there is heard in the distance the music of a brass band playing a regiment to the boat on the way to the front. The tune that is being played is "It's a Long Way to Tipperary"; as the band comes to the chorus, and the voices of the soldiers can be heard lustily singing the chorus of the song. . .

BESSIE: (speaking in towards the room) There's th' men marchin' out into the dhread dimness o' danger, while the lice is crawling about feedin' on th' fatness o' the land! But you'll not escape from the arrow that flieth be night, or th' sickness that wasteth be day. . . An' ladyship an' all, as some o' them may be, they'll be scattered abroad, like th' dust in th' darkness (pp. 190-91).

Mrs. Burgess' speech serves as a nonrealistic quality in the play, and her words are prophetic. It is interesting to note, however, that this scene is probably the first place where O'Casey foreshadows the expressionism with which he experimented in later plays. The unifying idea which makes a transition between Act I and the rest of the play is

spoken by Mollser, "Is there anybody goin', Nora Clithroe, with a titther o' sense?"

Thus, by the end of Act I, The Plough and the Stars has extended and broadened the theme which unifies O'Casey's Irish War Plays. Still its comic incongruities hinge upon the same absurd vanity and pomposity which are the comic characteristics of Davoren in The Shadow of a Gunman and of Boyle in June and the Paycock. But the action of those first two plays was restricted to the tenement house and largely to the personal feelings of the tenants. The extension in The Plough and the Stars is that a principal character, Jack Clithroe, is motivated by his own vanities to go outside his home and to danger. Unlike Davoren and Boyle, Clithroe is not a "shadow." He is a committed man who makes a conscious choice to prefer public loyalties over private ones. The unfolding of the drama shows the wisdom of his choice. And if the thought that in each of these plays the tenement house is an Irish microcosm is valid, the choice Clithroe makes and the consequences of that choice represent Irishmen in times of war.

The play focuses on Clithroe again in the final scene of Act II, in which he, Captain Brennan and a Lieutenant Langon enter a snug for a quick drink. Brennan carries The

Plough and the Stars with him; Lieutenant Langon carries the Tri-Colour. The three men 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 say. The stage directions say, "They have been mesmerized by the fervency of the speeches," just before this outburst of patriotism:

CAPT. BRENNAN: We won't have long to wait now.

LT. LANGON: Th' time is rotten ripe for revolution.

CLITHROE: You have a mother, Langon.

LANGON: Ireland is greater than a mother.

BRENNAN: You have a wife, Clithroe.

CLITHROE: Ireland is greater than a wife. . .

(The tall, dark figure again is silhouetted against the window. The three men pause and listen.)

VOICE OF
THE MAN:

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!--They have left us our Fenian dead, and, while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland, unfree, shall never be at peace! (p. 213.).

The Voice of the Man adds to the mesmerization of the three military leaders, and they declare, in automatic fashion, "imprisonment for th' Independence of Ireland!", "wounds for th' Independence of Ireland!", "death for th' Independence of Ireland!" Their feverish response to the injunction in the Voice requires a commitment; the men give it unreservedly. But the speaker's demand for dedication is a highly romantic one. As soon as the three revolutionists leave the stage, Rosie Redmond, a prostitute, and Fluther Good appear. Rosie invites Fluther to go home with her. She asks whether he is afraid;²⁶ he says of course he is not. This brief exchange of speeches is counterpointed by the sound of an officer's voice in the distance, "Irish Volunteers, by th' right, quick march!" And when Rosie sings a love song as she and Fluther go toward her house with their arms around each other, Clithroe's voice is heard calling the Dublin Battalion to attention. This significant, short, and semi-expressionistic scene recalls at the end of Act II the values which the play examines; for

²⁶The significance of being "afraid" is emphasized in the play, for this scene places Fluther in an antithetical position to Clithroe. When Nora admonished her husband not to be "afraid to be afraid," she was giving him a way to escape public loyalties. When Fluther is asked whether he is afraid, his response establishes his attitude toward willing participation in a personal view of life.

in juxtaposing basic sensual desire with automatic patriotism, the play creates a paradox: Which is better--"love of life" or love of Ireland? And here the woman is not Nora's type. Rosie Redmond is an uninhibited prostitute who complains that the parades and demonstrations ruin her business for that night. At this point, Fluther is as unconcerned about Ireland as he was when he first heard about the meeting. But he has defended Rosie--as a symbol of sexual freedom--in an argument in the bar. Thus, his lack of concern for the meeting and his decision to go home with Rosie qualify him for approval on the grounds of the play's values at this point. Clithroe, on the other hand, has acted in an entirely opposite manner. He has chosen the romance of war and revolution. And, even more ironically, his wife is the "cream of the crop" of womanhood characterized in the play. The strategy of returning to the theme of the play--the conflict between personal and private loyalties--at this closing scene of Act II sustains the irony at the expense of this major ludicrousness on the part of Stage Irishman Clithroe. And it prepares for the "tragic" events in the two following acts.

Clithroe returns to the stage again in the third act, where, in company with the same comrades who drank and chanted slogans with him in the previous act, he returns to

his home. Captain Brennan is almost carrying wounded Lieutenant Langon, and Clithroe is in a "state of calm nervousness," looking back in the direction from which he came and carrying a ready rifle in his hands. This scene is in stark contrast to the pub scene. The men are now either injured or afraid. "Why didn't you fire to kill?" Brennan asks Clithroe. He answers, ". . .they're Irish men an' women." Shortly afterwards, Nora rushes into the street crying, "Jack, Jack, Jack; God be thanked. . ."; Clithroe expresses the disillusionment which he feels in the simple statement, "My Nora, my little beautiful Nora, I wish to God I'd never left you." Moments later he begs her not to make a scene. He is urged by Brennan to hurry back to the barricades, but Nora prevails upon him not to leave her. "D'ye want me to be unthru to me comrades?", he asks, and when she answers that his comrades only want him to face the same danger they're facing, Clithroe asks her again to let him go. Throughout the scene he shows himself to be afraid that he will be shamed if he gives in to the requirements of personal loyalty. His self-consciousness at his position and the foils which his wife presents to his image of himself are shown in the following dialogue:

NORA: All last night at th' barricades
I sought you, Jack. And I didn't
think of th' danger--I could only
think of you. . . I asked for you
everywhere. . . Some o' them laughed
. . . I was pushed away, but I shoved
back. . . Some o' them even struck
me. . . an' I screamed an' screamed
your name!

CLITHROE: (in fear her action will give him
future shame) What possessed you to
make a show of yourself, like that?
. . . What way d'ye think I'll feel
when I'm told my wife was bawlin'
for me at the barricades? What are
you more than any other woman? (pp. 234-5).

He continues to show the threat he feels Nora makes to the image he wishes to present as he asks, "Are you goin' to turn all the risks I'm takin' into a laugh?" In this encounter with Nora, Clithroe has changed from the man who merely wishes to engage in dangerous activity in order to affect a patriotic romanticism. Now he is concerned about sustaining the image of himself as a man who is not touched by his personal loyalties. This is the last time he sees his wife, for early in Act IV, Captain Brennan comes to give the following account of Clithroe's death:

In th' Imperial Hotel; we fought till th' place
was in flames. He was shot through th' arm, an'
then through th' lung. . . I could do nothing for
him--only watch his breath comin' an' going in
quick, jerky gasps, an' a tiny sthream o' blood
thricklin' out of his mouth, down over his lower
lip. . . I said a prayer for th' dyin', an' twined
his Rosary beads around his fingers. . . Then I had

to leave him to save meself. . . Look at the way a machine-gun tore at me coat, as I belted out o' th' buildin' an' darted across the sthreet for shelter. . . He took it like a man. His last whisper was to "Tell Nora to be brave; that I'm ready to meet my God, an' that I'm proud to die for Ireland." An' when our General heard it he said that Commandant Clithroe's end was a gleam of glory. Mrs. Clithroe's grief will be a joy when she realizes that she has had a hero for a husband (pp. 243-44).

Nora is not able to accept the General's condolences; she has become demented. But it is Bessie Burgess who retorts, "If you only seen her, you'd know to the differ." It is at this point that O'Casey's plot becomes heavily sentimental, for Nora has also lost her unborn baby, although no indication that she has been pregnant is given earlier in the play. Also, it is Bessie Burgess--the neighbor who attacks Nora in the early scenes of the play--who attempts to calm Mrs. Clithroe when she becomes delirious. Bessie is killed while she is trying to shield Nora from danger. The purpose for the sentimentality seems to be a forceful attempt to moralize on the absurdity of Clithroe's fervent patriotism. Three times he has been given an opportunity to make the choice between personal and private loyalties. But even the third time--when the Volunteers' cause is obviously lost--Clithroe is still not able to return to his wife.

Captain Jack Clithroe is far different from Captain Jack Boyle. He is an active combatent in the Civil War. But

he is granted no more approval than Boyle receives. It follows, then, that O'Casey satirizes the shallow pretensions of the Irish warriors, even if they are serious and active participants. At no time is Clithroe made to seem purely ludicrous, though; instead, his most sincere rationalizations are made to appear unwise when they are viewed alongside the appeal for him to perform his family responsibilities. He is a rational Stage Irishman--personification of the dilemma O'Casey had predicted for the Irish in the Afterword to The Irish Citizen Army: "like tares and wheat, the good and evil will grow up together. It will roughly be composed of two classes of thought--those who love themselves so well that they have none left for Ireland, and those who love Ireland so well that they have none left for themselves. The first love is selfish; the second is foolish."²⁷

The Easter Rebellion was fought by the cooperation of Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army. The Covey and Peter argue over whether the flag represents labor or nationalism. Clithroe was a member of the Citizen Army; Captain Brennan was in the same organization; Lieutenant Langan was a member of the Irish Volunteers. Langan was dying in Brennan's arms; Clithroe was trying to protect

²⁷The Irish Citizen Army, p. 67.

the two of them from snipers. Yet, this cooperation did not impress O'Casey favorably. At the very moment that the men representing the two Irish factions were closest, Clithroe was repudiating his wife. Consequently, O'Casey did not see much value in the fusion of the political factions. Here is the "foolishness" of those who love Ireland so well that they have none left for themselves, even though there is an admixture of vanity in Clithroe's motives. The "foolishness" led to warfare and to tragedy which the playwright thought was inevitable in warfare. The Clithroe couple are the couple through whose antithetical values the conflict and tragedy are illustrated. Jack Clithroe is the principal symbol through whom the romantic patriotism was reflected and ridiculed.

But there are other elements of Irish community life which are also ironically portrayed in the drama. One significant comic character is the Covey. He is a fitter who objects to the demonstrations because his job has stopped. He represents the basic concept of the Citizen Army as a labor army. He argues with Fluther Good that Irish nationalism is absurd because "There's no such thing as an Irishman, or an Englishman, or a German or a Turk; we're all only human bein's." Education is what he says Fluther lacks, and in

order to show his own scientific information, he claims that the world is 800,000,000 years old; and even when he sings "native songs," he paraphrases them into labor sentiments: "Dear harp o' me counthry, in darkness I found thee, The dark chain of silence had hung o'er thee long--". He reads Jenercky's Thesis on the Origin, Development, and Consolation of the Evolutionary Idea of the Proletariat. As we have seen, he complains that the Plough and the Stars should be used only when "we're buildin' th' barricades to fight for a Worker's Republic!" Obviously, he represents the Marxist-oriented laborer. When, in the Act II barroom scene, the Covey is in the company of Fluther, Peter and Rosie, he deprecates the gathering meeting outside because no freedom is important unless it is economic freedom. He tells Rosie that the only freedom for the working man is control of the means of production, rates of exchange and the means of distribution. When Rosie attempts to seduce him, he runs away, saying he doesn't want to have anything to do with a lassie like her. When he returns later, he says when he thinks of all the problems in front of the worker, it makes him sick to see "aul' codgers goin' about dhressed up like green-accoutred figures gone asthray out of a toyshop!" Throughout the act, his responses are automatic. Even in the

highest "tragic" portions of the drama, he implies that his brand of workers' republic is the answer to Ireland's problems. Without being a doer, he deprecates the fighting that is going on. His role is bystander. He does not enter significantly into any dramatic action in the play. At best, he is the character through whom O'Casey is able to bring a varied response to the Easter Week sentiments.

Peter Flynn, a laborer who is also Nora's uncle, is another character whose pretensions are expressed often in the drama, but whose actions have little consequence. In his home, his greatest desire is that he should not be pestered by the Covey; for although they are both laborers, their social, economic and political views are different. He is going to the meeting, and he wants to be dressed properly for it. And when the Covey claims that the design of the field plough and the heavenly plough on the banner means Communism if it means anything, Peter puffs at him derisively. Although Peter does not argue his own view of the meaning of the flag, he thinks the Covey's purpose was agitation.

In the bar scene, Peter shows that his real feelings are romantic, as he recalls that hearing "The Soldier's Song" reminds him of his last military formation, "with th' people starin' on both sides at us, carryin' with us th'

pride and resolution o' Dublin to th' grave of Wolfe Tone." But his memory motivates him only to order two more drinks--not to become a combatent. He says that he goes to Tom's grave yearly and plucks a leaf off which he places in his prayer-book, but he remains safely inside the bar while the preparation for attack is going on outside. When he has an opportunity to escort The Woman into the direction of Wrath-mines, he asks her indignantly, "D'ye think I'm goin' to risk me life throttin' in front of you?" And when the big guns sound in the distance, his greatest concern is that Mrs. Gogan and Mrs. Burgess might be killed while they are plundering. He is not seriously committed to anything other than what he calls his peace of mind. It is, though, O'Casey's ironic point that his pretensions are romantic ones when he does comment on the troubles outside.

Fluther Good, a carpenter whose presence in the Clithroe home when the play opens is predicated upon his having been hired by Nora to fix the lock on her door, is the mock-hero of the play. He appears throughout the drama, and he seems to be outside the ring of irony which the other male characters in the play forge. To this extent, he is a different type of Irishman--one who is closer to the Boucicaultian mould. Because he is an uncommitted man--unallied with the artificial codes of behavior which plague

the successful performance of other men--he represents in his vitality and humour a hope that man may endure. Because he is committed to nothing more than "the joy of living," the comic spirit which he represents is not a malign one. Placed alongside the Covey (Dublin slang for "a smart aleck"),²⁸ Jack Clithroe as the embodiment of misguided patriotic fervent, and Peter as a non-combatant lover of the spirit of romance, Fluther Good is motivated by a contradictory view of life. That contradiction is seen primarily in his dual role as buffoon and as Knight-errant. But his view of his world causes him to be too shrewd to be a patriot and too wise to be an idealist. Because he is more loyal to personal considerations than he is to public ones, he becomes the only man in the play whose deeds are beneficial.

Fluther's distrust of patriotism does not come from explicit disillusion; instead, it comes from a kind of rationalization which is shrewd enough to allow him to remain uncommitted in a terrible time of war. His attitude along this line is illustrated in the following dialogue with Peter:

PETER: I felt a burnin' lump in me throat
 when I heard the band playin' "The
 Soldiers' Song," rememberin' last
 hearin' it marchin' in military
 formation, with th' people starin'

²⁸Krause, p. 80.

on both sides at us, carryin' with us
th' pride and resolution o' Dublin to
th' grave of Wolfe Tone.

FLUTHER: 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', when th' slim thinkin' counthry
boys ud limp away from th' first faintest
touch of compromization!

PETER: . . .Th' memory of all th' things that
was done, an' all the things that was
suffered be th' people, was boomin' in
me brain. . .

FLUTHER: Jammed as I was in th' crowd, I lis-
tened to th' speeches pattherin' on
th' people's head, like rain fallin'
on th' corn; every derogatory thought
went out of 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 with-
out a tither o' courage for centuries,
we're vice versa now! . . .The blood was
BOILIN' in me veins! (pp. 194-95).

Obviously, O'Casey did not intend Fluther to represent here
a man who had grown disillusioned with the fight over philo-
sophy which had brought a split in the Irish Citizen Army.
Fluther's disgust comes from his attending other demonstra-
tion meetings as a by-stander. No part of the play's action
shows that he has been a patriot, but it is not unreasonable
that as an Irishman, he would know the romantic heritage
which Peter is espousing. He does not claim the military
experiences which Captain Boyle claims; he fights only with

rhetorical invectives. Peter and the Covey erect sham defense against their environment:²⁹ Covey by his inane and feckless interpretations of Communism, Peter by his uniform with its connotations of splendor and purpose. Fluther Good is ruled by society once--when he is herded into a church. But, unlike Peter and The Covey, Fluther refuses to erect sham defenses. Also, unlike Clithroe, he refuses to join the Citizen Army, perhaps largely because he knows that one man cannot commit himself to change an environment when such large factions of men are not sure what they should do after they have committed themselves.

Still, he is a brave man. He demonstrates his bravery among the women instead of among the men. With the women he is a peacemaker and a protector. He rescues Nora when she goes out half-crazed to find her husband, and he defends Rosie Redmond against the Covey. Mrs. Gogan praises him for risking his life to arrange a decent burial for Mollser; Rosie says he is "well flavored in th' knowledge of th' world he's livin' in"; Nora calls him a "whole man." Actually, he "keeps the home fires burning" while the men go off to fight a war they hardly understand. In this

²⁹Robert Hogan, The Experiments of Sean O'Casey (New York, 1960), p. 44.

role he protects the national virtues which are more clearly defined than politics. Further, he champions the everlasting value of life and love, as is seen when he protects Nora and when he arranges to go home with a prostitute, even in the shadow of war.

Not only is he a brave man, when he is compared with the other non-combatants in the tenement house, but he is the "wise fool" in his relationship with men. His roar is worse than his bite; he starts more arguments than he can settle; he rages and boasts. But when his "flutherian wrath" is aroused, as when the shops are being looted, he can drown himself in Irish whiskey from the looted pub and can cry "Up the Rebels" and "Th' whole city can topple home to hell" in the same speech. The contradiction which comes from his lack of commitment to organized values causes him to frustrate the "rational" men around him and to witness their disintegration. Within his impersonation one sees the mighty Comic Spirit which laughs to ridicule the pretensions of men unlike himself, and he laughs at them with a Dionysian-type ribaldry. To that extent, he is the mock-hero of the piece whose view of life is not treated ironically. Instead, he serves as a complex foil for the pretensions of all of the men who share the stage with him. Yet, his repudiation of them is not a

studied one. He simply lives as he wishes, so far as the difficulties of the time will permit him to live.

Fluther Good, then, is close to the Myles-na-Cappoleen type character of Boucicault's drama. He is an embodiment of the romantic Stage Irishman who argues, boasts and drinks whiskey. But he is a righter of wrongs and master of the revels. The revels he masters, though, are the irrational behavior of uncommitted men. Consequently, he is not the satirized "hero" of the play, largely because the external world of the play is a world at war. But when the war intrudes itself upon the individual and personal values of Dubliners, he is the only protector of values. He is able to remain free of traditional values and of social contracts. Thus, he becomes a foil to the levels of stock characters in the microcosm represented by the Covey, Peter, and Jack Clithroe.

The Plough and the Stars raises the issue of the potential tragedy which is inherent in the violation of personal loyalties, although the two earlier plays raise the same problem to a lesser degree. The opportunity to become committed is a pressing one in Clithroe's case, where in Davoren's case it is purely accidental and in Boyle's case it is never urgent. The play repudiates two types of Irishmen:

those who cling to romantic national tradition³⁰ and those who commit themselves wholly to the revolution. As we have seen, O'Casey lived through the experiences which are dramatized in this play. Further, the dramatic characterization enacts the dilemma which he had predicted in 1919 in The Irish Citizen Army. Clithroe is an embodiment of the feeling which O'Casey said was foolish; Fluther Good is an embodiment of the one which O'Casey said was selfish. Both characters represent stock qualities; but in this play, the playwright seems to imply that the selfish type character is, in any event, able to attend the "widows and orphans." To that extent, he is a more significant character in the preservation of Irish life than is the foolish character. Perhaps neither gives Ireland the solution it needs, but each represents the "horns" of the dilemma which faced the country in the days of the Easter Rebellion. Here was a dichotomy which probably required a fusion, but when O'Casey wrote the play, he was neither willing nor able to visualize a character who might conceivably resolve the dilemma.

³⁰ Jack Clithroe's motivations in war are precisely the same as Michael Gillave's in W.B. Yeats' Cathleen ni Houlihan. In that play, a young man deserts his bride-to-be on his wedding day in order to help Cathleen to recover her fair green fields. In the question of the violation of public or private loyalties, Yeats seems to approve of responding to public obligation only.

The Silver Tassie:

O'Casey subtitled his fourth major play, The Silver Tassie (1928) "A Tragi-Comedy in Four Acts," after having called the other three plays "tragedies." It is a play about war, but it does not condemn war directly. That quality alone makes the play unlike other writings about war of its time. But O'Casey, who had come to London to live after the controversies his The Plough and the Stars had caused in Dublin, wanted to show in his new play "The shattered enterprise of life to be endured by many of those who, not understanding the bloodied melody of war, went forth to fight, to die, or to return again with tarnished bodies and complaining minds."³¹ Unfortunately for him and for the play, though, O'Casey chose to experiment with expressionism in this play more directly than he had in any previous work. Expressionism had appeared in earlier plays, including Kathleen Listens In (1923) which was not published in any form until recently and with whose publication O'Casey explains that the play's expressionism is its only value to him now.³²

To view The Silver Tassie solely as the first significant departure from realism and as the play which caused

³¹Bromage, p. 140.

³²Tulane Drama Review, V (Summer, 1961) pp. 36-50.

the famous O'Csey-Yeats controversy is to divorce the play from its significant place in the playwright's emergent comic view. For just as The Shadow of a Gunman and The Plough and the Stars had shown bitterly how Irishmen's blundering resulted in the abuse and death of innocent victims, The Silver Tassie portrayed in its large ramifications what a demoralizing effect the impersonal force of war can have upon a young man who wants, not mutilation in the trenches of Europe, but peace and happiness in marriage to the girl he is compelled to leave behind. Pacificism is strong in the play, and the inefficacy of its religious characters makes a mockery of Juno's "Holy Mother of God" speech or Bessie Burgess' "I do believe"; for it suggests that lip service to a stagnant church by people who have thought to prefer faith in their guns to faith in God through no choice of their own, is as much a waste of man's glorious potential as is physical wounding. The church cannot keep man from killing his neighbor, and in doing so it fails to preserve the wonderful creation which is Man. This theme is general in the play, but the major irony falls closer to a condemnation of the values of Harry Heegan's neighbors than to an abstract condemnation of man who cannot live without war.

The play opens at an unspecified time, in the Dublin tenement home of the young athlete, Harry Heegan, who has just won a Silver loving cup for his football club and is about to go off to the war. Harry, taking a last swig from the cup and a kiss from his enamored Jessie, joins the outbound troopship accompanied by his pal Barney, singing, "Goe fetch to me a pint o' wine/And full it in a silver tassie." The chief protagonist, War, does not appear until no man's land comes into view far from Ireland, bounded by devastation, dead hands protruding against a fitfully illuminated horizon where the central image is a Howitzer. Amid the ruins of a church wall, the figure of Christ leans brokenly from its crucifix. The major metaphor of the setting (Act II) is expressed in the conflict in the soldiers' minds which is probably best revealed by the lines they chant: "Christ who bore the cross, still weary,/Now trails a rope tied to a field gun." And the litany of the mock mass is a reinforcement for the metaphor in a solemn litany to the Howitzer as a field altar: "We believe in God and we believe in thee."

The play comes back to earth in a Dublin hospital ward where the wounded veteran, Harry, is committed to "the horrible sickness of life from the waist up." Jessie as a visitor has switched her affections from Harry to

the decorated Barney. A dance is held at the athletic club, the scene of Harry's one-time triumph, his winning of the silver tassie. He, attending in his wheel chair, refuses to play the ukulele, yet will not go home until after the toast he is to propose from the loving cup. When Barney, defending Jessie's honor against Harry's bitter indictments, attacks the helpless man, Harry hurls the cup to the floor, its lips pressed together in battered form, and addresses himself:

Dear God, this crippled form is still your child. Dear Mother, this helpless thing is still your son. Harry Heegan, he, who, on the football field, could crash a twelve-stone flyer off his feet. For this dear Club three times I won the Cup, and grieve in reason I was just too weak this year to play again. And now, before I go, I give you all the Cup, the Silver Tassie, to have and to hold for ever, ever more. . . Mangled and bruised as I am bruised and mangled. Hammered free from all its comely shape. Look, there is Jessie Writ, and here is Harry, the one name safely separated from the other. Treat it kindly. With care it may be opened out, for Barney there to drink to Jess, and Jessie there to drink to Barney (p. 102).

As the dance resumes, Harry is wheeled away reciting, "The Lord hath given and man hath taken away."

The tragic movement of Harry's life goes from liberation and triumph to impotence; thus he is symbolically the universal soldier destroyed in a world war. But he is also a particular Irishman; and because he is clearly set

into an Irish urban environment, except for the second act of the play where all characters are generalized, O'Casey is able to begin this play on a broad comic note. The first act is, Krause thinks, a comic-ironic prologue that builds up to the moment of Harry's triumphant arrival.³³ This portion of the work is consistent with O'Casey's technique of portraying ironically the intercourse of Stage Irishmen.

Here the two old men, Sylvester Heegan and Simon Norton are clowns of the Captain Boyle and Joxer variety. In their encounter with Susie Monigan, they are laughed at and laughed with; thus they represent a type of harmless character who, unlike Donegan, Boyle or Clithroe, have no serious commitments which can allow them to contribute to a tragedy. To that extent, they are more broadly comical than ironic. At the same time, however, their attitudes reflect the natural joy and exuberance that Harry represents against what Sylvester calls Susie's "persecution" tambourine theology. She is a religious fanatic who has a thou-shalt-not fear of life, largely because of her frustrated love for Harry. Thus, the play's initial value system is set upon celebration of Harry as "an open-hearted primitive,

³³ Krause, p. 110.

an instinctive hero who glories in the joy of his uninhibited emotions and the vigor of his powerful limbs."³⁴

As the play opens, Sylvester, Harry's father, is boasting about his son's strength, as he and his friend Simon await Harry's return from the football game. Susie Monagan is polishing Harry's rifle, but she reacts to Sylvester's boasts by chanting: "Man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain: He heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them."³⁵ Sylvester says to Simon that he feels "curious, sickenin'" when he hears the name of the Supreme Bein' tossed into the quietness of a sensible conversation, and the two men continue to recall Harry's physical prowess. Susie, apparently irked at being ignored by the two men, complains that "we don't go down on our knees often enough"; that is why we are not able to stand up to the Evil one. As she speaks these lines, she is polishing a bayonet, thereby allowing the contrast between her words and her actions to present a tension: War is the Evil one in the play.

Sylvester and Simon continue their boasting in the convention of the Stage Irish braggart, but soon they become

³⁴Krause, p. 109.

³⁵Collected Plays, II (London, 1952), p. 7. Subsequent references to this play refer to this edition.

embroiled in an argument--another common quality of the rogue--over whether Harry had knocked out his latest opponent with a left-handed hook to the jaw or a right-handed hook to the jaw. Mrs. Foran, a neighbor, comes into the room to broil a steak before the fire, saying how happy she will be that her husband is returning to the trenches. She tells Susie that she will be in "doxological mood" tonight not because the Kingdom of heaven will be near, but because her husband will be far away tomorrow. In the first scene of the drama, several observations have been made, all of which have some bearing on the outcome of the play: (1) Three women's roles have been presented as being largely divergent--Harry's mother is waiting for his return on the steps outside in the cold, Susie has repeated her preference for religion over war, Mrs. Foran has shown herself completely uninterested in any physical combat; (2) Sylvester and Simon have expressed the elderly man's only opportunity to celebrate the young man's vigor of his limbs; (3) The realistic view of what may well be a hero's family's feelings on the night he is to return to the trenches has been presented. However, no speaker in this scene predicts clearly the tragedy which awaits Harry as the play unfolds.

Susie foreshadows her own character development in the play, in part, when she announces that she, too, will go

away in a few days to help nurse the wounded. Soon after the announcement, Simon gives a hint of Susie's motivation for going into nursing as he says of her:

She's damned pretty, an' if she dressed herself justly, she'd lift some man's heart up, an' toss down many another. It's a mystery now, what affliction causes the disablement, for most women of that kind are plain, an' when a woman's born plain she's born good. I wonder what caused the peculiar bend in Susie's nature? Narrow your imagination to the limit and you couldn't call it an avocation (p. 16).

The Silver Tassie's sardonic comic irony unfolds as bitter a portrayal of ironic drama as any of O'Casey's plays.

Contrast Harry Heegan in Act I:

. . . twenty-three years of age, tall, with sinewy muscles of a manual worker made flexible by athletic sport. He is a typical young worker, enthusiastic, very often boisterous, sensible by instinct rather than by reason. He has gone to the trenches as unthinkingly as he would go to the polling booth. He isn't naturally stupid; it is the stupidity of persons in high places that has stupified him. He has given all to his masters, strong heart, sound lungs, healthy stomach, lusty limbs, and the little mind that education has permitted to develop sufficiently to make all the rest a little more useful. He is excited now with the sweet and innocent insanity of a fine achievement, and the lowering of a few drinks. . . (p. 24).

with Harry Heegan who has smashed his Silver Tassie, wept bitterly when, as a cripple, he can only exclaim, "The Lord hath given and man hath taken away!" (p. 103). These passages indicate the scope of the play's irony. But that irony is not limited to the involvement of any given young man in a world war.

War itself has little to do with Susie Monigan's conversion from the "gospel-gunner" of Act I into the person who can pull Jessie Taite away from Heegan at the play's end with the candid and thoroughly non-religious reasoning:

Oh nonsense! If you'd passed as many through your hands as I, you'd hardly notice one. (To Jessie) Jessie, Teddy Foran and Harry Heegan have gone to live their own way in another world. Neither I nor you can lift them out of it. 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 unharmed, must go on living. (Pulling Jessie from the chair.) Come along, and take your part in life! (To Barney.) Come along, Barney, and take your partner into the dance (p. 103).

Since the joy of living and the full exercise of physical pleasure is Harry's concept of life when he is seen at his happiest in the play's beginning, the concluding scene which finds him helplessly singing a passive, life-surrendering Negro spiritual, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," presents the play's major irony. Jessie Taite who is so willingly his lover in the early portions of the play now makes love to Barney Baynal, who has been Harry's best friend. That fact makes the following exchange of speeches all the more bitter:

HARRY: So you'd make merry over my helplessness in front of my face, you pair of cheats! You couldn't wait till I'd gone, so that my eyes wouldn't see the joy I wanted hurrying away from me over to another? Hurt her breast pulling your hand quick out of her bodice, did you? (To Jessie) Saved you in the 'nick of time, my lady, did I? (To Barney) Going to enjoy yourself on the same little couch where she, before you formed an image in her eye, acted the part of an amateur wife, and I acted the part of an amateur husband--the black couch with the green crimson butterflies, in the yellow bushes, where she and me often tired of the things you're dangling after now!

JESSIE: He's a liar, he's a liar, Barney! He often tried it on with coaxing first and temper afterwards, but it always ended in a halt that left him where he started.

HARRY: If I had my hands on your white neck I'd leave marks there that crowds of kisses from your Barney wouldn't moisten away (p. 99).

As was the case with Minnie Powell in The Shadow of a Gunman, Heegan's family and neighbors cannot celebrate him for the acts of true bravery, one being his rescue of Barney during the war. This ironic fact, more than an abstract denunciation of war, gives the play's final effect. Even the setting of Act IV in the recreation rooms of the club for which Heegan won the Silver Tassie suggests the total

convolution which the characters have undergone. The play ends in a dance, and to its accompaniment, Surgeon Maxwell, a man who is still able to love and dance sings the final injunction:

Swing into the dance,
Take joy when it comes, ere it go;
For the full flavour of life
Is either a kiss or a blow.
He to whom joy is a foe,
Let him wrap himself up in his woe;
For he is a life on the ebb,
We a full life on the flow! (p. 103).

As all persons in the hall dance with streamers and balloons flying, those who have not been the tragic victims of war celebrate the fullness of life. In that semi-ritualistic ending for the play, O'Casey affirms once again his Ode to Life. The drama's irony becomes all the more bitter when one realizes that Harry Heegan, unlike Davoren, Jack Boyle or Jack Clithroe, does not face tragedy because of his conscious pretensions. Instead, War, as antagonist, has made him incapable of joining in the Dance of Life. Because he has been the symbol of Life earlier in the play, his situation at the end of the drama is all the more ironic. Circumstances, though, and in this case circumstances on a world-wide scale have intruded into personal life and have left Heegan no choice but to look forward to death, largely because he is not able to be a mere spectator to life.

What, then, are the consistent threads of theme and characterization which relate these plays to one another? The illusion of heroism and its attending ills is the chief strain, and in each play, that comic fault produces its ironies by stifling the realizations of one member of the cast who embodies an ideal fulfillment of life as it can be lived even in warfare. That person's fulfillment is frustrated by the behavior of an antagonist whose anti-heroic attitude is motivated by his pretensions to "artistry." In The Shadow of a Gunman, Minnie Powell is able to love and to trust Donal Davoren, despite his pretensions. She, in her pristine simplicity, even disavows his protestations when he says he is a gunman. Consequently, she represents the durable fibre of claims to a right to a fulfillment of life, even in a completely confused environment. Not only is she denied the realization of her expectation, but she loses her life. Whether Davoren is thought of as poet or as a gunman, he is the ironic character in the play. For as poet, he can sing of love, but he complains to Minnie that his song is not about any particular girl; thus, his pretensions are artificial. As a gunman, he is entirely a shadow. But alongside him in the same room, there is another person whose attitude and commitments are less rigid than Davoren's, but

they are also less dangerous than his. Neither character is entirely approved of by the play's implied standard of values, but the one whose attitude motivates the tragedy is Davoren. And, as we have seen, the gullibility of the community is the larger and clearer "stage" quality, as is seen by the tenants' willingness to create a sentimental hero where one is not needed.

In Juno the dichotomy is not so clear-cut. Dreams for some basic security for her family motivates Juno's nagging at Jack Boyle about work. They also cause her to ally herself closely with him when there are live hopes for the fruition of the legacy. Joxer Daly is Boyle's minion; but despite his idle and purposeless life, he is not the prime mover in any "tragic" happenings in the play. He is to Boyle as Seumas is to Donal. It just happens that the unfolding of the plot gives him no responsibilities; therefore, he is uncommitted and blameless in the consequences. But he is used in the play to help focus on Boyle's pretensions and on his failure to assume responsibility. Unlike Seumas Shields, Joxer Daly echoes Boyle's pretensions, and he even leads the "Captain" to make more of them. Mary Boyle's pregnancy is the indication of the fulfillment of ideal life which is to Juno and the Paycock as Minnie Powell's

"love" for Davoren is to The Shadow of a Gunman. And, although she is seduced and deserted by Bentham--a character who is never actually developed in the play--it is her father who frustrates her fulfillment by his ironical turning her out of his house which does not exist. Also, he had objected to her romantic conversations with Jerry Devine. To that degree, then, he is the Davoren of the earlier play, the force whose pretensions thwart the fulfillment O'Casey seems to imply is more important than wars and romantic revelry.

Jack Clithroe in The Plough and the Stars becomes closer again to the characteristics which O'Casey fashioned in Davoren. And his culpability is greater, for he is engaged in a marriage which offers promise. His wife is expecting a child, and he chooses three times not to heed the significant call to cooperate in the ideal fulfillment of life. The only basis for his choice is his romantic pretensions, and, like Boyle's ridiculous concern about what Joxer would think if he heard Mary was pregnant, Clithroe frets about what he soldier-comrades would think of him if they knew that he was susceptible to the call to fulfill the ideal life. Also, as with Davoren and Boyle, Clithroe has a character who delineates an alternative but not wholly

acceptable course of action in *Fluther Good*. These two men do not experience the same closeness of association which belongs to the Seumas-Donal or the Joxer-Boyle relationships, but the play does give sufficient significance to Good's role so that readers may compare his outlook on life with Olithroe's.

And in *The Silver Tassie* war prevents Harry Heegan's fulfillment of his potentiality for life; but war is not the play's only villain. Harry's mother frets over her pension; his Jessie deserts him when he is no longer full of the issues of life; Barney, whom he has rescued from death in the trenches, wishes to beat him into submission when the invalid man begs to be noticed. The community, then, bears culpability in the play's ironic unfolding. Like *Playboy of the Western World*, *The Silver Tassie* comments ironically on a community which does not know a hero when it sees one.

These are the major threads which relate the plays and they operate in each play's war-time setting. Each character who is the efficient cause for "tragedy" is an "artist": Davoren a poet; Boyle a "paycock"; Olithroe a Captain; Barney a lover. The motivations which inspire each to "artistry" are, at basis, a Stage Irish attribute. And the comic criticism is of the personal brand of idealism which each character espouses. By subjecting their character-types to criticism, O'Casey portrays the kind of cynicism

in these comedies which Kronenberg says is born in self-love.³⁶ He reasons that comedy is the enemy of hypocrisy and pretense. But at the same time comedy is more than criticism; it is also understanding. "It is always jarring us with the evidence that we are no better than other people," Kronenberg continues, and that observation seems to be one reason that O'Casey presents the male correlaries mentioned above. Seumas, Joxer and Fluther are broadly comic characters, but they are not "artists" in the sense that Davoren, Boyle, and Clithroe are. They are more honest than the men who share the stages with them.

These representations seem to have been O'Casey's intentions in the ironic dramas. Because he was intimately familiar with life in Dublin tenements during the war periods, he wished to laugh out of existence the pretensions of the Irishmen, the counterparts of these plays' central characters. The setting in which their tragicomic roles were enacted is a local one, but the comic implications are universal. As time went by, the playwright turned to fantasies where he used a form of satirical and fantastic entertainment to continue his protest and his vision in a mood of ripening humour, as Krause puts it.³⁷ Here he used comedy of humour

³⁶The Thread of Laughter, p.p. 5-6.

³⁷Krause, p. 167.

and errors, comedy of satire and the music hall, comedy of fantasy and the circus to fashion a broadening comic spirit.

CHAPTER V: THE ARCHETYPAL MASQUES

Apparently, O'Casey thought when he left Dublin after the furor which the production of The Plough and the Stars caused at the Abbey Theatre that he could continue to write plays for the Irish National Theatre. As we have seen, The Silver Tassie's rejection caused a great deal of disturbance both in London and in Dublin. However, the playwright had married Eileen Reynolds Carey, who had played Nora Clithree in the London production of The Plough, and with the growth of his family, he found it necessary to make a living by the sale of his plays and by the publication of three principal works: Windfalls (1934), a collection of early poems, four short stories and two one-act plays; The Flying Wasp (1937), a collection of essays on the London theatre; and I Knock at the Door (1939), the first volume of his six-volume autobiography.¹ During the same period, his only full-length play was Within the Gates (1933). This play, along with The Star Turns Red (1940), Red Roses for Me (1941), and Oak Leaves and Lavendar (1946) represents a body of O'Casey's work which is unlike the early ironic dramas and entirely unlike the later ideal comedies. Instead, these

¹ Perhaps the best account of these years in O'Casey's life is found in Mary C. Bromage, "The Yeats-O'Casey Quarrel," Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review, LXIV (Winter, 1958), 135-144.

plays seek to reflect the sociology of the times--the relationship between man and society--and to locate the humours which are apparent in mankind in general.

These works point clearly toward the ideal comedies which began with the publication of Purple Dust, for their resolutions are realized in terms of a dance of life, especially in Within the Gates and in Red Roses for Me. Contrasted with the ironic drama of the Irish War Period plays, Red Roses for Me transforms the poverty infested and hopeless old city of Dublin through an epiphany of joy. And in Within the Gates, Jannice, the young whore, breaks into a frenzied dance of reconciliation before she dies. The plots of these plays are scant, and because of this quality, they probably have not the "dramatic" power of the ironic comedies. Unlike the conventional dramatic quality of the ironic plays, these dramas move farther from the standards of the usual theatre piece on the pattern of the "well-made" play. They are close to what Frye calls "archetypal masques," a genre he describes as one which "tends to individualize its audience by pointing to the central member of it: even the movie audience. . . is a relatively individualized one."² This type of drama tends to detach its setting from time and place, and it presents an action which takes place in a world of human types, breaking

²Frye, pp. 290-291.

down characterization into "elements and fragments of personality." Sometimes this art form produces "epiphanies," moments of perception of some principle of "reconciling unity" in life. As comedy, the archetypal masque's direct antecedent is the morality play. Further, their settings are urban, unlike those of later ideal comedies, and the plays do not lean so heavily on condemnation of the Catholic priesthood, as do most of the later plays. They do move into a somewhat larger world than the Irish War Plays, however, either in their settings or in what they imply about the final causes of the actions they display. And, rather than seeming to see no solution to Irishmen's (and the world's) thorny problems, they strongly suggest remedies. They move toward Expressionism, even as the third act of The Silver Tassie does, and in a study of this type, they illustrate an important juncture in the development of the playwright's emerging comic view. Within the Gates and Red Roses for Me are particularly important here in that respect.

Within the Gates:

This play portrays many sections of society, even as Frye says the archetypal masque presents fragments of personality, and for the first time in a major play, O'Casey

moves to a setting other than a Dublin tenement.³ The play sets out to describe weaknesses of each of the several segments of society which it explores, because it is "proletarian drama"--the term being used here in Empson's sense--to describe those works which may not be called narrowly propagandistic; for in the general sense "any improvement of society could present wastage of human powers; the waste even in a fortunate life, the isolation even of a life which is rich in intimacy, cannot but be felt deeply."⁴ That wastage is taken for granted in the play, however, and the emphasis is placed on testing each segment of society by a system of values which can give significance to the apparent meaninglessness of life. The play represents the bourgeoisie, in the characters of the Man in the Bowler Hat, the Man with the Stick, and the Man in the Trilby Hat, as smug and misinformed. Thus, ignorance of the true meaning of life becomes the major indictment against the various ineffectual segments. "The service segments of the working-class" represented by the characters of the Gardner, the Nursemaids and the two Attendants are pictured as riddled with cheapening thoughts, middle-class propriety and brassy patriotism; the outcasts

³This statement excludes, of course, the final two acts of The Silver Tassie.

⁴Some Versions of Pastoral, p. 5.

from life, the Down-and-Outs, are a drag upon the body of society; the financially and socially comfortable, in the character of the Bishop's Sister, are narrow-minded, selfish and incapable of feeling the suffering of those who are less fortunate than themselves. Thus, the morality play genre is seen in the dramatic representation of virtues and vices which have "tag" names; however, the consistent quality which justifies calling these works "morality plays" lies more significantly in the playwright's role of "a visionary poet and chastising prophet in the struggle for the new Jerusalem of the world."⁵

The play takes place in a public park in England, presumably Hyde Park, and the characters are a combination of individuals and symbols; individuals in that they have the flesh and blood reactions of human beings; symbols in that they represent defined segments of society. The Hyde Park setting simulates a well-known place for argument of the values of many ideologies. Koslow writes that because of this peculiar arrangement of symbols and individuals, Within the Gates may be called "an allegory of the modern world."⁶ O'Casey has said precisely what he intends the characters to represent. The Dreamer is to him the symbol of a noble restlessness and discontent; of the stir of life

⁵Krause, p. 134.

⁶p. 61.

that brings to birth new things and greater things than those that were before; of the power of realizing that the urge of life is above the level of conventional morality; the 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, or venerate, nor shelter those whom poverty of spirit has emptied of all that is worthwhile in life. Other symbolic characterizations include the following which are important for an understanding of the play:

THE ATHEIST: A symbol of those who, trying to get rid of God, plant Him more firmly on His throne.

THE YOUNG WHORE: A symbol of those young women full of life and a fine energy, gracious and kind, to whom life fails to respond, and who are determined to be wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear.

THE EVANGELISTS: Symbols of those preachers who daub the glories of God with mockeries.

THE GARDNER: Symbol of the multitude mind moving on head down, shrinking from thought, and finding inspiration in all things cheap and everything easy. Seeking the things that present no risk and leave no risk behind them.

THE CHORUSES: Symbol of the energy and stir
 in life.⁷

A great deal of the action in the play has to do with the failure of religion, for in the Bishop's encounter with the Young Whore, when he threatens to call the police if she does not stop asking him for his blessing, Jannice, the whore, speaks one of the play's most significant passages:

Easy way of getting over a difficulty by handing it over to a policeman. Get back, get back; gangway, there. Policeman making a gangway for Jesus Christ. You and your goodness are no use to God. If Christ came again, He'd have to call, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance. Go out in the sun and pick the yellow primroses! When you go to where your God is throned, tell the gaping saints you never soiled a hand in Jesus' service. Tell them a pretty little whore, well on her way to hell, once tempted you to help her; but you saved yourself by the calm and cunning of a holy mind, and went out into the sun to pick the yellow primroses, leaving her, sin-soddened, in the strain, the stain, the horrid cries, and the noisy laugh of life. Tell them you were ever calm before the agony in other faces, an', an' the tip of your fingers never touched a brow beaded with a bloody sweat! 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 shivering sham, an' go away into the sun to pick the yellow primroses.⁸

The play's action is divided among the four seasons, and it is in the last scene, Winter, that the final chorus

⁷This helpful summary of the characters and what they stand for is worked out carefully by Koslow, pp. 70-71. It is based on explanations which O'Casey made in New York upon the October 11, 1935, opening of the play at the National Theatre.

⁸Works, II, p. 163. All further references to that play refer to this volume.

of the Down-and-Outs sighs instead of singing. The fate of man, however, is not with the Down-and-Outs. If man is willing to travel the road which is laid, his fate can be with the Dreamer; thus salvation is only in the daring originality of a Prometheus. He refuses the pessimism of the Down-and-Outs, as he forces his way through their ranks and changes the sigh into a song again, a chant which is vigorous and defiant:

Way for the strong and the swift and the fearless:
 Life that is stirr'd with the dear of its life,
 let it die; let it sink down, let it die, and
 pass from our vision for ever.
 Sorrow and pain we shall have, and struggle unending:
 We shall weave courage with pain, and fight
 through the struggle unending.
 Way for the strong and the swift of its life,
 let it die;
 Let it sink down, let it die, and pass from
 our vision for ever (pp. 230-231).

More than being a visionary poet and a chastising prophet, the Dreamer possesses "the power of realizing that the urge of life is above the level of conventional morality." That belief is translated into action when, as a Prometheus, the Dreamer's "prophecies" cause the Young Woman and the Down-and-Outs to see a new faith in human beings. To the chanting of the Down-and-Outs, the Young Woman performs her dance as these stage directions indicate:

Faintly, as if the tune was heard only in the minds of the Dreamer and the Young Woman, the

notes of the dance tune are heard, coming from the subdued playing of a flute and other instruments. The Young Woman and the Dreamer dance to the melody, she a little unsteadily. They dance for about a minute, then the movements of the Young Woman become a little uncertain; she staggers, recovers herself, dances again, but with faltering steps. The music of the dance becomes fainter (pp. 228-229).

Interestingly, and quite unlike what he has to say in the later comedies, in this play, O'Casey expresses an ambivalence toward the final efficacy of the conventional religion which the earlier portions of the play have criticized severely. For as the Young Woman dies, the Bishop, representative of the ineffectual church in the play prays: "O Lord, who taketh pleasure in Thy people, let this dance be unto Thee as a Merry prayer offered by an innocent and excited child" (p. 229). The Dreamer says to the Young Woman, almost at the same moment: "Fear nothing: courage in the hearts of men and women is what God needs most; and He will find room for one scarlet blossom among a thousand white lilies!" (p. 229). Ambivalence may be seen in O'Casey's failure to leave the Young Woman outside the possible salvation of conventional religion. As she dies, the impression is left that the Dreamer has enriched and corrected conventional religion, as expressed by the Bishop; that the play is not at all intended to have an atheistic emphasis; but that the Bishop, alone, is incapable of realizing the qualities

of life which the Dreamer celebrates. Together the ministrations of the Bishop and the Dreamer give the Young Woman a satisfaction in death.

This play represents a modification in O'Casey's comic view of life primarily in its contrast with The Silver Tassie. There, too, a dance ends the significant action of the play, but it is a sardonic dance from Harry Heegan's standpoint. He, the symbol of the life-force earlier in the play, cannot participate in the dance at his athletic club, for he is now a cripple. The world, through World War I, has robbed him of the most notable manifestation through which he can express his allegiance to the power of the life force. But in Within the Gates, despite the use of Expressionism in what is basically an allegory, the young whore--a moral cripple from the Bishop's point of view--not only participates in the ritual dance to life; only she and the Dreamer dance. Consequently, a Prometheus like the Dreamer can give to life a meaning that brings to birth new things and greater things than those that were before, even at the moment of the death of any one individual. That emphasis in the play is O'Casey's first use of the ritual celebration of life which, in one form or another, appears in each of his ideal comedies.

Granting that the theme of the comic is the integration of society, Within the Gates gives glimpses of the possibilities of the community in its ending. But these insights are not precisely totally triumphant endings in which that vision dominates utterly. The same is true of Red Roses for Me. In these archetypal masques O'Casey is straining toward the vision of community which emerges in the ideal comedies but is checked by the ironic sense of life which is present in the earlier plays. The tension within him is great enough that he can give way to direct didactic attack on his world in A Star Turns Red. Further, this play sees the beginning of a diffusion of the Stage Irishman who is no longer the central character used for ironic purposes. As we have seen, the scope of the dramas has broadened to include all of humanity. Still the drama is comedy, for the dance of life which concludes the play has to do with the ancient rituals celebrating fertility and community. Comedy has its roots in feelings which are not always productive of laughter; consequently, it contains its own catharsis, and may well be a blend of the heroic and the ironic. Within the Gates, then begins for O'Casey dramas which are at once heroic and ironic, but the ironic strains become less pronounced than they are in the earlier

plays. As we shall see in the ideal comedies, the character of the Stage Irishman returns to be used for purposes more heroic than ironic.

The Star Turns Red:

So far as his career in the theatre is concerned, it is unfortunate that O'Casey returned to Irish local problems in his next play without embodying in that work the direct "epiphany of joy" which had been realized in Within the Gates. The Star Turns Red (1940) is dedicated "to the men and women who fought through the great Dublin Lockout in nineteen hundred and thirteen."⁹ But unlike other plays written about historical incidents, this work argues political systems with a didacticism and lack of humour which weaken its dramatic quality. This evaluation is supported and, indeed, broadened in the following critical comment:

In The Star Turns Red O'Casey turns from the personal prophecy of Within the Gates back to the specific preaching of The Silver Tassie. There are, of course, several differences between Star and Tassie. The Star, like Within the Gates, is almost completely Expressionistic, and, while in the Tassie O'Casey was expounding a personal indictment of war, in the Star he is working within the bounds of proletarian literature.

⁹This dedication appears on the title page of the play.

O'Casey himself has grudgingly admitted that the play may be a bad one, and I would quite agree and class the play, together with Within the Gates, as his poorest work. The play seems to be an attempt at proletarian tragedy, perhaps partially impelled by O'Casey's admiration for Toller's Masse Mensch, and its failure can be best explained by the intentions and limitations of what Gorki called social realism.¹⁰

That intention, as reported by Empson, is to invent means to extract from the totality of real existence its basic idea and to incarnate this in an image; its limitation is that by an ineffective and didactic adding of the desirable to the real, sentimentality is achieved.¹¹ This limitation is certainly present in The Star Turns Red, for there is a monotony of tone and a completely stylized manner which makes the work more nearly a morality play than a realistic one.

Apparently, O'Casey intended to write a straight piece of anti-Fascist propaganda. The play is about a strike that resembles closely the 1913 Dublin Transport strike, although the conflict is between Fascism and Communism more than it is one between capital and labor. The storm-troopers of the Saffron Shirts combine with the Catholic priests of the Christian Front to represent the evils of Fascism, and the striking workers under the leadership of Comrade Chief

¹⁰Hogan, p. 81.

¹¹Empson, p. 18.

Red Jim represent the virtues of Communism. The allegorical action takes place on Christmas eve in a city very much like Dublin. The paradoxes and tensions which the play will enact become clear as the curtain opens, for on Christmas eve night when someone is singing "O Come, All ye Faithful," Jack, the young man inside the house is practicing playing "The Internationale" on his cornet. This symbolic action presents the uncompromising positions of the two sides on the matter of labor which the play will present. In fact, the play's action permits no compromise.

The dominant colors in the room at the opening scene are black and white. On one wall is a sketch of a bishop; on another is a sketch of Lenin. Outside the window a church tower can be seen, but inside it in the sky shines a large silver star that will turn red when the workers strike. One of the sons of the Old Man and Old Woman is Kian, a die-hard Fascist; the other son, Jack, is a die-hard Communist who wears a red star on his jacket. It is he who plays "The Internationale." O'Casey's deep interest in socialism, his activities in various working-class organizations, and the years of toil and poverty he experienced as an unskilled laborer, as well as his abiding interest in the social problems of his friends and neighbors in the Dublin

slums, might have led to his decision to make this conflict the theme of the play. Further, various references which the play makes to the civil war in Spain, the seizure of Germany by the Nazis and the alignment of the Catholic Church with the forces of France appear strongly in the play, references far from the history of the Dublin Transport strike. They point the way to which the overall use of O'Casey of his material turns the play into little more than a political tract.

The home of the Old Man and the Old Woman, a microcosm of the modern world, is being torn asunder by the violent hatred of their two sons for each other, as the play opens. The old folk must take sides; consequently, we find the Old Man has a tendency to agree with Kian, "the fascist," while his wife agrees with Jack, "the Communist." Julia, the daughter who is also a Communist, urges Jack not to attend a strikers' demonstration but to go to a dance with her instead. He refuses and leaves the house with Julia bitterly complaining that she is as good a Communist as he is. Here one is reminded of the conflict between public and private loyalties which appears in The Plough and the Stars, where Jack Clithroe has the choice of committing himself to the promises of the joy of life--Nora's pleading

that he should remain at home with her, his pregnant wife--and his own desire to go to a political rally. Further, the ironic use of the dance reminds one of the emphasis in Within the Gates. The "unfortunate choice" which the young communist makes between going to the dance and participating in the strike demonstration in which he loses his life may well be the only valid suggestion of human values in the play that is one which issues directly from the dramatic action.

The family conflict is well established, and the Red and Brown Priests enter it on their respective sides. But despite the opportunity to portray the ironic comedy of divided families as microcosms of the nation, as O'Casey's does so well in his earlier plays, here the principal action concentrates on the conversion of Kian to the Saffron Shirts. Communism is the answer to the world's problems, but no valid reason is dramatized for feeling its superiority over Fascism. O'Casey's hatred of Fascism is the only force which makes the decision as to which faction is the more desirable. Thus, at the play's end, when the soldiers are finally joining the workers, "The Internationale" is heard in the distance as Red Jim tells Julia now she can nurse something far greater than a "darling dead man" who fought for life (p. 353). Life

now is devotion to Communism, not the epiphany of joy which it is in Within the Gates.

When Red Jim speaks these words to Julia, she stands up with her right fist clenched, as the playing and singing of "The Internationale" grow louder. Soldiers and sailors appear at the windows, and all join in the singing. The Red Star on the wall glows, and seems to grow bigger as the curtain falls. Kian, who has been the Fascist, is the only disconsolate person as he stands sad, gazing down on the stiff face of his dead brother who has been killed earlier in the struggle. Clearly, the system of values of the play expects him to be penitent because he has caused the death of his brother. Had he come over to the Communists earlier, his brother would not have died, the play seems to say. In all of the O'Casey canon, this is the only full-length play which advocates allegiance to any one systemized theory of politics. The Irish War Plays point toward no solutions; other morality plays suggest the merits of a wide range of systems of thought and feeling; both they and the ideal comedies give the nod of approval to man's celebration of the highest elemental values in him, something quite different from any organized and categorized philosophy.

Even the "morality" which the play enacts, despite the straining of the playwright, is unconvincing. Communism is not more attractive than Fascism in the bitter exchange of invectives which makes up most of the dialogue. The one point at which the play might have redeemed itself is where the Old Man and the Old Woman make a momentary display of wisdom similar to that which O'Casey might have implied in a play written during the period of his ironic dramas:

OLD WOMAN: What about our own two boys, always at each other's throats, for the sake of a slogan? What with the Saffron Shirts prodding us on one side, and the Communists pouncing at us on the other, life's lost everything but its name.

OLD MAN: Ask your communist son, Jack, and he'll tell you that, to the workers, life is nothing but a name.

OLD WOMAN: What about your Fascist son, Kian, going about as if he was the deputy of God Almighty?

OLD MAN: (shouting) I never held with either of them! I never held with either of them! (p. 167).

This passage seems too "realistic," in that it permits an emphasis on the "way of the world" comedy which is the essence of ironic drama. The fault of the play lies not in the use of Expressionism, as the claim is often made, for we shall see that O'Casey was able to write more successful drama which is basically expressionistic in his ideal comedies

as his effective use of expressionistic technique in The Silver Tassie and Within the Gates suggests. Instead, the major fault lies in O'Casey's inability to overcome the tension which he had expressed in the ironic dramas. Even more than in Within the Gates, this play gives way to direct propaganda which cannot be softened, although the familiar setting of the Irish family life is the setting of the play.

Red Roses for Me:

The most serious weaknesses which have been suggested in The Star Turns Red do not appear in Red Roses for Me (1943); for here the tone is more mild, the lines between worker and bourgeois are not so tightly drawn, and ideologies of Communism and Fascism are not presented in hard, uncompromising terms. Moreover, the characters themselves take on a more human aspect than those in the previously discussed work. Koslow thinks that one reason for the more satisfactory accomplishment of this play lies in O'Casey's return to the Dublin slums for the setting. He says the hero is, to a large extent, O'Casey himself; the minister is O'Casey's Protestant minister who was sympathetically portrayed in the autobiographies, and that many of the incidents and characters in the play may be found in the autobiographies.¹²

¹²Koslow, p. 87.

Aymonn Breydan, the hero of Red Roses for Me, is a young Protestant worker in Dublin who is eager for knowledge, absorbed in Shakespeare, active in the labor movement, disturbed by the conflicts between Catholicism and Protestantism--as well as the complex views of the atheists--and a somewhat respected man in his community. The problem of the main plot arises from Aymonn's love for a Catholic girl and the confusions which that love affair motivates. He suffers and dies for his ideals just as does Jack in The Star Turns Red, but his death comes through his love for humanity. He is willing to suffer so long as humanity gains from his suffering. More significantly, though, the play returns to the dance of life which, as in Within the Gates, suggests an epiphanic realization of a sense of community in the face of death.

Again, a strike serves as background for the action of the play. Workers fight with the police, religious factions struggle, and the living are pitted against the dead, as in the earlier play. But here, instead of having the play end with the waving of standards and the singing of the "Internationale," the curtain falls with the lines ". . . deep in th' darkness a slim hand, so lovely, carries

a rich bunch of red roses for me."¹³ This image becomes the symbol for the feeling which Sheila, Aymonn's sweetheart, promotes. She has tried to make him leave the ranks of the strikers by holding before him the security and peace of the home and a comfortable marriage--a current which appears often in O'Casey's works, as we have seen. But whereas Nora in The Plough and the Stars rises to noble stature through her husband's neglect, Sheila emerges from the experience of Aymonn's death as a petty creature whose life revolves around her own petty desires. She is made to seem small and mean alongside Aymonn's ideals of sacrifice. His grand stature lies in his idealism, as well as in his ability to lead the community into a dance of life.

Aymonn Breydon is to Red Roses for Me what the Dreamer is to Within the Gates, but his function is enlarged to include not a symbolic force which gives to the Young Woman a creed by which she can die peacefully. Here, as prime mover in a play whose setting is realistic, he enunciates the prescription for joyous life which animates the chief dramatic action of the play's third act. Although he,

¹³ Although the word "Red" appears in the titles of the two plays, one must be reminded that as Harold Clurman writes--in Nation, CLII (January 19, 1956), p. 39, "The red roses mean the blood of human kinship, the bloom of life's energy, the stirring melody of man's march to a more spacious world."

as a strike leader, is going to his death, he becomes the sacrificial force which gives the community an intuition of what its God must be. And that vision is not realized in terms of any given political system. Symbolically, the gloom of Dublin hangs most oppressively one day when Aymonn comes among the "Down-and-Outs," telling them enthusiastically that no one knows what a word may bring forth. Kathleen ni Houlihan, the old woman who, in the play Yeats named for her, wanders about trying to convert young Irish men to the vocation of winning back her "four green fields," is both a bent old woman and a queen to Aymonn--both false and beautiful; hated not because she is true but because she is ugly (p. 197). Forgetting God--the conventional God of priest-ridden Ireland where beautiful maidens become dedicated members of the Order of Saint Frigid--and remembering themselves, he says--"thinking of what we can do to pull down the banner from dusty bygones, an' fix it up in th' needs an' desires of today," is what Dubliners should be doing. He speaks of the transport strike when he says: "our strike is yours. A step ahead for us today; another one for you tomorrow. We who have known, and know, the emptiness of life shall know the fullness. All men and women quick with life are fain to venture forward. . . Young maiden, another world is in your womb" (p. 198).

As Breydon's words become richer, and as the people in the streets are caught up in the enthusiasm of his expression, the scene brightens. The following ritual dance, done in the rhythm of a gavotte, illustrates the epiphany which Aymonn has motivated in a hitherto dark and discouraged Dublin:

AYMONN: (lifting his right hand high) Home of
th' Ostmen, of th' Norman, an' the Gael,
we greet you! Greet you as you catch
a passing hour of loveliness, an' hold
it tightly to your panting breast!
(He sings)
Fair City, I tell thee our souls shall
not slumber
Within th' warm beds of ambition or gain;
Our hands shall stretch out to th' full-
ness of labor,
Till wondher an' beauty within thee
shall reign.

THE REST: (singing together)
We vow to release thee from anger an' envy,
To dhrive th' fierce wolf an' sly fox
from thy gate,
Till wise men an' matrons an' virgins
shall murmur
O city of splendour, right fair is thy
fate!

AYMONN: (singing)
Fair city, I tell thee that children's
white laughter,
An' all th' red joy of grave youth goin'
gay,
Shall make of thy streets a wild harp
ever sounding,
Touch'd by th' swift fingers of young
ones at play!

THE REST: (singing)
We swear to release thee from hunger
an' hardship,

From things that are ugly an' common
 an' mean;
 Thy people together shall build a
 brave city,
 Th' fairest an' finest that ever
 was seen!

(Finnoola has been swaying her body to the rhythm of the song, and now, just as the last part is ending, she swings out on to the center of the bridge in a dance. The tune, played on a flute by someone, is that of a Gavotte, or an air of some dignified and joyous dance, and, for a while, it is played in fairly slow time. After some time it gets quicker, and Aymonn dances out to meet her. They dance opposite each other, the people around clapping their hands to the tap of the dancers' feet. The two move around in this spontaneous dance, she in a golden pool of light, he in a violet-colored shadow, now and again changing their movements so that she is in the violet-colored shadow, and he in the golden pool.)

ERADA: (loudly) The finest colours God has to give are all around us now.

FINNOOLA: (as she dances) The Sword of Light is shining!

1ST MAN: (exultantly) Sons an' daughters of princes are we all, an' one with th' race of Milesius!

(The dance comes to an end with Aymonn and Finnoola having their arms around each other.) (pp.200-201).

Then the dance ends, Aymonn tells the group he must leave, and he goes to join the strike where he is killed.

Finnoola, the young woman who is the first to join Breydon

in the dance says: "Dhreamin' I musta been when I heard strange words in a city nearly smothered by stars, with God guidin' us along th' banks of a purple river, all of us clad in fresh garments, fit to make Osheen mad to sing a song of the revelry dancin' in an' out of God's vision" (p. 203). Thus, the romantic Dreamer, man of faith in the joy of living, has brought a city the realization of its deliverance. In his song--and in their chorus--he combines the native love for heroic tales with the power of the life-force to provide a panacea for the city-dwellers' ills. As the act ends, the voices of the people, singing quietly and meditatively, chant: "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" (p. 204).

These plays display a "prophetic" or visionary emphasis, in which the prime mover is an Irish urban character who, partly through his "Dreamer" qualities and partly through his social consciousness as a militant worker or as a Communist, shows a better world to the public. His ingredients are, except in the case of Jack in The Star Turns Red, loose attention to systems of thought, an infectuous vitality which retains the penchant for fine language which characterizes the Stage Irishman, and a keen perception of the

potentialities of life. His comic vision is that of the as-you-like-it world; that world is possible through free-thinking and use of irrepressible vitality. With the exception of the Dreamer of Within the Gates, whose vision cuts across many segments of life, these visionaries are associated with the problems of the urban Irishman. As we have seen, the dramatic methods are largely expressionistic. The best of these plays' qualities were carried over into the ideal comedies--drama in which the vision of the good society appears close to the end of the play and suggests strongly that in the open structure of the drama all persons who are capable of joining the new social alignment are vital members of it. Those persons who are "humourous" and who cannot throw off the shackles of that affliction--even after they have been shown the proper escape from "this place"--are left to the torment of their own choices. The choices are theirs to make; consequently, the as-you-like-it world is also always capable of supplanting the world of reality. That comic view, though awkwardly illustrated and made to appear so magical that its seriousness may be questioned strongly--permeates O'Casey's dramatic output of the "middle period," and it becomes refined in plays which he is still writing. That ideal comedy is probably best understood in terms of Frye's explanation:

As an imitation of life, drama is, in terms of mythos, conflict; in terms of ethos, a representative image; in terms of dianoia, the final harmonic chord revealing the tonality under the narrative movement, it is community. The further comedy moves from irony, the more it becomes what we here call ideal comedy, the vision not of the way of the world, but of what you will, life as you like it. Shakespeare's main interest is in getting away from the son-father conflict of ironic comedy towards a vision of a serene community, a vision most prominent in The Tempest.¹⁴

This is the context within which the plays discussed in the following chapter will be viewed.

¹⁴ Frye, p. 286.

CHAPTER VI: O'CASEY'S IDEAL COMEDIES

O'Casey's Irish War Plays were a direct outgrowth of his social, political and economic attitudes toward Ireland. As we have seen, they excoriated the Stage Irishman--his pretensions, his vanities, his desire for pomp, his love of titles, his preference for uniforms. The ironic treatment which the playwright gives to the mock-heroes in these plays deplores the pathetic state of the nation when it finds itself in their hands. The women of the plays are the greatest sufferers, for their fates are bound to the men with whom they live. Those men's drunken stupors--drunk on alcohol as is Jack Boyle, drunk on the desire to be called a poet as is Donal Davoren, or drunk on the desire for military prestige as is Jack Clithroe--lead to trouble for those around them and for Ireland. The ending of Juno portrays the dramatic irony which is largely the statement of the entire trilogy: Boyle declares the world is "in a state of chassis," but he is unable to see that it is he and his kind who have brought the world to that state. The comic spirit, then, in the Irish War Plays is one which views the Stage Irishman in an ironic, tragicomic light, but one which, in its final analysis, is potentially tragic. Also, these plays are local and specific in their settings.

Ireland's struggles for independence from England and its own civil wars are the backgrounds against which the pretensions of the Stage Irishman are reflected.

As we have seen, the archetypal masques contain no heroic Stage Irishman. Their strained vision of the good society cannot be realized by the traditional Irish character whose humourous antics make the ironic dramas at once funny and sad. Their heroes are "prophets" whose specialized insight places them a cut above the average member of the community. In The Star Turns Red and in Red Roses for Me the heroes gain their status because they have chosen to be members of the "right" side of a society which is segmented by political considerations. But in the three comedies, Purple Dust (1940), Cock-a-doodle Dandy (1949), The Bishop's Bonfire (1950) a broader comic view is utilized--one which makes its points and entertains outside Ireland's political and economic wars.

To this group of late comedies, Krause ascribes a variety of comic experience--comedy of humours and of errors, comedy of satire and the music hall, comedy of fantasy and the circus.¹ The action is set in imaginary Irish villages, and the plays are specifically concerned with Irish and English follies; yet they can be said to deal with the universal

¹Krause, p. 178.

vanity of human wishes and the universal quest for freedom and happiness. This purpose, it seems, is not ironic, as is the purpose of the Irish War Plays. Neither is it the explicit, didactic instruction of the archetypal masques. Instead, the playwright turns to a kind of comedy which is at once a catharsis and a carnival with strong expressionistic dramatic devices.

Until recently, O'Casey scholars have failed to realize, however, that the comedies of the forties and the fifties do not represent a complete reversal of theatre on the part of the playwright; for Kathleen Listens In (1923), O'Casey's second play to be presented in the Abbey, makes use of the kind of expressionism which characterizes the late comedies. Of that early work O'Casey writes:

The one interest Kathleen Listens In has for me is that it is a "phantasy" done after my first play at the Abbey, showing this form was in my mind before the "major" realistic plays were written, tho' most critics maintain that phantasy began when I left Dublin. This, of course, is what they want to believe, and so, God be with them. There are two things connected with this play that may add just a little interest: it was written specifically to show what fools these mortals were in the quarrelling factions soaking Ireland in anxiety and irritation after the Civil War. I imagined satire might bring some sense to the divided groups so busy practicing envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. . . .²

²Introduction to "Kathleen Listens In," Tulane Drama Review, V (Summer, 1961) 37-46.

These "humours" were the vices which O'Casey wanted to treat ironically as early as 1923, and in the late comedies, he was still concerned with excoriating them. Now, among other things, comedy was to him a certain corrective, not merely a helplessly ironic delineation of the shadow and substance which had constituted the Stage Irishman and his dangerous nature in the early plays. Neither is it merely a hopeful, but bitterly doubtful, striving toward the sense of the community exhibited in the archetypal masques. This comic view of life implies that man is capable of correcting his pretensions by a discerning look into the mirror which the stage provides for him. This view is less clearly stated in the Irish War Plays, is hopelessly suggested in the archetypal masques, but becomes very clear in the comedies after Purple Dust. In these plays, as Watson and Pressey say, "dialogue abounds in outspoken ridicule of religious and social beliefs and practices without any clearly defined ideology to offer except scorn for man-made codes and faith in full and independent mentality, like the author's own."³ "Clearly-defined ideology," however, is not the aim of ideal comedy--the type of drama O'Casey is writing in his late plays. Instead, as Frye points out, in this particular

³E. Bradley Watson and Benfield Pressey, Contemporary Drama: Fifteen Plays (New York, 1959), p. 371.

form of drama, "ideals are seldom defined or formulated; definition and formulation belong to the humours, who want predictable activity."⁴ O'Casey had written about ideas in his archetypal masques, his least successful plays. But when he abandoned specific and predictable ideas, he was able to resolve the tension which had been within him all his life.

Perhaps he did give himself over to his dream life, but that circumstance is not a valid adverse criticism of his work as art work. As early as 1934, O'Casey had written that new dramatic forms will take qualities found in classical, romantic and expressionistic conventions; that they will blend those qualities together to "breathe the breath of life into the new forms and create a new drama."⁵ This conviction seems to have been his modus operandi in the first of his experiments in the new comedy, for ritual patterns of Old Greek Comedy and the comic resolution of New Comedy appear strongly in Purple Dust, as we shall see in the detailed analysis of that play.

These ideal comedies celebrate and move toward a "Green World," in the Shakespearean sense of the term.

⁴Frye, p. 289.

⁵The Green Crow (New York, 1956), p. 227. (This publication contains a collection of O'Casey's critical writings on drama.)

They correspond closely to Frye's theory that the more comedy moves from irony, "and the more it rejoices in the free movement of its happy society, the more it takes to music and dancing," for one thing. Too, this type of comedy which Frye calls the ideal masque is usually a compliment to the audience, and it leads up to an idealization of the society represented by that audience. Its plots and characters are fairly stock, as they exist only in relation to the significance of the occasion.⁶ Such drama is designed to emphasize ideals which are desired or are considered to be already in the possession of the community. No discipline, faith or system of thought is advocated in this type of comedy. The essential feature of this ideal comedy is the exaltation of the audience; it is expected to accept the story without judgment. Again, Frye is helpful in delineating the qualities of this particular dramatic genre when he makes these distinctions which are significant in a study of O'Casey's comedy: "In tragedy there is judgment, but the source of the tragic discovery is on the other side of the stage; and whatever it is, it is stronger than the audience. In the ironic play, audience and drama confront each other directly; in the comedy the source of the discovery has moved across to the audience itself. The ideal masque places

⁶Frye, p. 287.

the audience in a position of superiority to discovery."⁷ Placing O'Casey's ironic drama within Frye's spectrum, one recalls that the tragic ingredients of the Irish War Plays cause the watchers of death and disillusionment to do nothing but wait for its inevitable coming. Irony directs the implied "lesson." But in the ideal comedies, death is no longer the subject: something is getting born instead. These plays work toward a happy ending in which the audience sees on the stage the birth of a new society or at least the possibilities for that birth.

Taking Frye's descriptions of the limitations and characteristics of the various genres which have been pointed out above, we can analyze the three plays, Purple Dust, Cock-a-doodle Dandy, and The Bishop's Bonfire, as self-conscious theatre which makes its statement through an almost complete reversal of the uses made of the Stage Irishman in the ironic dramas. In these comedies the stage character is no longer treated ironically. Instead, more like Boucicault's sentimental hero than like the pretentious mock-heroes of The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock and The Plough and the Stars, the heroes of the ideal comedies generally serve as successful foils to the "humourous" community leaders who, because of their economic, political or religious

⁷Frye, p. 289.

entrenchment, require a bondage of the entire social group. The weapon which the rogue characters use to level their overlords is not a better political theory, as appears in the archetypal masques. These plays emphasize those qualities which members of the community already possess in abundance; for the final cause of the drama motivates the audience, as the larger community than that which is portrayed on the stage, to make the discovery that it already knows the solution to the problems of life which "humourous" people impose. Therefore, the settings do not have to be realistic; for within the collected consciousness of the Irish audiences, as well as world audiences in general, knowledge which is effective already exists. What is more important: that knowledge can be put to effective use if the audiences try to do so.

When the ideal comedies are compared with the ironic dramas, we can see that O'Casey's attitude toward the Stage Irishman has changed. Now the complex dreams of the uncomplicated peasant are more nearly a solution than they are a problem. He can confound the man of ideas whose pretensions in the early plays have been dangerous for the community. And his weapon is a quality which he has possessed for all time. Too, the treatment of the Stage Irishman is no longer

dubious as it is in the archetypal masques, in which, as we have seen, a clear-cut presentation of the stage figure is noticeably missing. Perhaps that group of plays suffered most from O'Casey's straining to impose spectacular exhalations as endings upon dramas which were fundamentally realistic in their plots. With the writing of the ideal comedies, however, he had found a generalized and non-realistic setting for plays whose conclusions could appear more logical as they moved toward a reasonably motivated dance of life. Here heroes and generally approved characters begin their lives at the end of the play. This movement from pistis to gnosis⁸ realizes its final cause in an audience response which intends to praise the development from a society controlled by habit, ritual bondage and arbitrary law into a society in which freedom is fundamentally pragmatic.

Purple Dust:

Analysis of the structure of Purple Dust reveals at once that strong elements of ancient comedy appear in the

⁸The movement described here simply refers to a development from faith (pistis) to knowledge (gnosis). The implication holds that community knowledge is gained from the dramatic experience which the play enacts.

play. One important example lies in the plot itself where the action revolves around a fantastic plan. That scheme is explained in the beginning of the play in which we see a strong reminder of what Moses Hadas says is the Prologue of Aristophanic comedy--a portion of the play in which the audience is put into possession of a plot based on some wildly fantastic idea, contrary to human experience.⁹ The first part of the dramatic action, according to Hadas, has to do with plans for achieving the idea, and usually there is an agon, or conflict, which is vigorously enacted by the two parts of the chorus, advocating and opposing the innovation. That basic pattern is seen clearly in Purple Dust.

Briefly, the plot emphasis of that play reveals two wealthy Englishmen, Basil Stokes and Cyril Poges, who have acquired an old Tudor mansion in which they have installed themselves and their Irish mistresses, Souhaun and Avril, in a place in Ireland called Clune na Guerre. The Englishmen are determined to repair the decayed mansion, to create therein the grace of a vanished day and to live like rural gentlemen. Three Irish Workmen and their foreman, O'Killigan, are given the task of making the house livable. Unable to forget their English customs, unwilling to give up their

⁹Moses Hadas, A History of Greek Literature (New York, 1950), p. 17.

interests in business which constantly reminds them of England, and incapable of understanding the Irish who plague them on all sides, Stokes and Poges find that life becomes one difficult situation after another. Irish temperament clashes with English temperament; working-class outlooks conflict with bourgeoisie outlooks; rural mannerisms collide with city mannerisms until the whole household is in an uproar. The rains come and the flood waters rise; the Irish girls, tired of their stuffy ould Englishmen and entranced by the music and romance of the Irish, run off with workers. The Englishmen are determined to see their project through. They disregard warnings to leave in order to escape the flood, but the play ends with the water engulfing the house and the Englishmen.

The fantastic idea which Hadas says is characteristic of Aristophanic comedy is seen in Purple Dust through Stokes' and Poges' plan to remodel the old mansion and to live an idyllic life there with their mistresses. But their ludicrousness is emphasized when First, Second and Third Workmen discuss the wildly fantastic idea, contrary to human experience. First Workman says: "Well, of all th' wondhers, to come to live in a house that's half down and it's wanin' over," and the three continue: "They're goin' to invest in hins an' cows and make the place self-supportin'" to which

the Third Workman adds that the English "like that sort of thing."¹⁰ The ludicrousness of the women's part in the fantasy is discussed in the same conversation when the Workmen reveal that Avril and Souhaun have probably captured their benefactors in England: "Irish, too, an' not a bit ashamed o' themselves. Foreshadowing of the outcome of the project is suggested by the same laborer who predicts, "The two poor English omadahauns won't have much when the lasses decide it's time for partin'," and the Second Workman, the one who turns out to be a direct contributor to the frustration of the Englishmen's plans, injects the folk attitude toward the Irish-English political conflict by reciting the sentiment: "That day'll hasten, for God is good. Our poets of old have said it often: Time'll see the Irish again with wine an' ale on the table before them; an' th' English bare-foot, beggin' a crust in a lonely sthreet, an' the weather frosty" (p. 5).

Thus, the agon is set in the Workmen's opposition to the innovation, and at this point Poges and Stokes are introduced into the play, along with their mistresses and the household servants, Barney and Cloyne. The group comes on the stage doing a dance which, according to the stage direction,

¹⁰ Collected Plays, III (London, 1958), pp. 4-5. All quotations appearing in this text refer to that edition of the play.

they think is a country dance. The Dionysian revelry, expressed in terms reminiscent of ancient comedy, is formed as these characters appear in the following guises:

Avril has a garland of moon-faced daisies 'round her neck and carries a dainty little shepherd's crook in her hand; Cyril Poges, a little wooden rake with a gaily-colored handle; Souhaun has a little hoe, garlanded with ribbons; Cloyne, a dainty little hay-fork; Barney, a little reaping hook; and Basil Stokes, a slim-handled little spade. Each wears a white smock having on it the stylized picture of an animal; on Pages' a pig; on Basil's a hen; on Souhaun's a cow; on Avril's a duck; on Cloyne's a sheep; on Barney's a cock (p. 5).

Aristophanic comedy is being enacted here, in the manner which is described by John Gassner, and when the troupe comes on stage it dances and sings, presenting the anti-heroic attitude which, according to Gassner, represents in ancient comedy the "associated element of release in sexual magic from which was born the addition to unbridled fantasy and exaggeration of reality."¹¹ Thus, by using a convention of ancient drama, O'Casey reinforces the extravagant satire on the English in Ireland which is the surface substance of Purple Dust. The pastoral ditty which the characters sing is an allusion to Marvel's "Thoughts in a Garden," in which the poet retreats from the city's turmoil

¹¹ John Gassner, Masters of the Drama (New York, 1952), p. 87.

to the idyllic peace of nature. And, as Krause reminds us, the names of the two Englishmen are taken from the churchyard of Gray's "Elegy."¹² Irony has already been established through parody by O'Casey's use of reference to genuine pastoral experience in contrast to the burlesque of pastoral affectations which the dance scene represents.

Then, still in the structure of ancient comedy, O'Casey proceeds with the problem of achieving the idea which has been conceived by the main characters in the drama. "It's a bad sign to see people actin' like that an' they sober," the first Workman complains, and the third Workman agrees that the English are a strange people to "come gallivantin' outa the city to a lonely and inconsiderate place like this" (pp. 8-9). The third Workman also notices that Avril, Poges' mistress, "wilts" her eyes when she sees what she calls her husband and widens them wonderfully whenever they happen to light on O'Killigain. Clearly, the conversation among the Workmen establishes them as types of Stage Irishmen, and Stokes and Poges become a type of stage Englishmen. O'Killigain, though, is a special kind of Stage Irishman who has not entered the play when he is first spoken of. He does appear, "a tall, fair young man twenty-five or

¹²Krause, p. 177.

twenty-six years old. . .with a rough, clearly-cut face; doggedly-looking when he is aroused, and handsome when he is in a good humour" (p. 10). Then the conflict which the Workmen began in conversation is made concrete; for it is O'Killigain who eventually woos Avril away from Poges, the "brains" of the utopian scheme.

He becomes the stylized opponent to Poges when he enters singing, apparently oblivious to the complaint which the Workmen make about the Englishmen's ludicrous plan for a Cuckooland in Ireland. He sings:

They may rail at this life, from the hour
I began it,
I found it a life full of kindness and bliss;
And until they can show me some happier planet,
More social and bright, I'll content me with
this (p. 10).

He exudes a confidence which foreshadows, as does the hero of ancient comedy, that he will be the winner in the conflict; and although O'Casey does not use the Aristophanic parabasis to speak directly in his name, O'Killigain's introduction into the dramatic action at this point might well establish his role as an O'Casey spokesman.¹³ Consistent with the ancient comedy convention of having the details of the work on the ludicrous project to proceed once the

¹³Hadas, p. 103. (This portion of that book explains carefully the conventional usage of the various portions of the drama.)

parados has been established, the remainder of Act I of Purple Dust is concerned with attempts to repair the mansion and to furnish it. Significantly, O'Killigain says sarcastically of the project: "Sure when we're done with it wouldn't it be fit for the shelther an' ayse an' comfort of Naud of the Silver Hand, were he with us now, or the great Fergus himself of the bronze chariots" (p. 13).

Irish mythological characters are named in the play for the first time; and here, it may perhaps be significant that Naud of the Silver Hand was a king and/or an Irish original god who lost his arm in battle and was unfit to rule without one until a satisfactory substitute could be provided in silver. Fergus of the unconquerable sword was a holy man who carried a cross in a pagan place.¹⁴ It does seem important, though, that O'Killigain values the suitability of the house's restoration in terms of its fitness for the housing of Irish heroes, not for Englishmen looking for a utopia. Also, when Avril suggests that the manor might be fit for a nephew of the Duke of Ormond, O'Killigain admonishes her to "bow to the bards," giving her an approved alternative and expressing his disapproval of an Irish-woman's alignment with an Englishman. With a sharp "skelp

¹⁴Thomas W. Rollerston, Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race (New York, 1957), p. 74.

on the behind" of Avril, O'Killigain initiates concrete emphasis on the sexuality of his role in the play as opposed to the lack of unbridled fantasy and release in sexual magic which Poges, Avril's English lover, is displaying. O'Killigain's confederate, the Second Workman who escapes to the hills with the other Irishwoman when the flood comes, understands and expresses the superior feeling of revelry when he retorts to Avril's indignation at O'Killigain's advances, "If I was asked anything, I'd say I saw a spark of pleasure in the flame of pain that come into her eyes when she was hit." (p. 14).

Here is the ribald humour and sexual raillery which is characteristic of ancient comedy, but more important to this study, here in the Irish Workmen are the general qualities which we have seen in the Stage Irishman--of Boucicault, Shaw and Synge, as well as in those figures in the O'Casey plays which have been analyzed earlier. But now that character is not being portrayed ironically, as in the Irish War Plays, nor is he a special type of visionary whose perceptions are deeper than those of his associates. Further, the Workmen are not communists and the Englishmen are not fascists; instead, the Irishmen are motivated by their vitality. That quality which they possess does not belong to the Englishmen who, we remember, are named for a cemetery. The

characters in the play who are alive are pitted against those who are "dead" and the reason for O'Casey's classifying the Englishmen in that manner may be found in this statement from the playwright about the play's purpose:

"It hits, of course, at the adoration of the old, outworn things, and leans towards new thought and young ideas."¹⁵

He achieves that purpose dramatically by allowing O'Killigain to be the hero of the play and by making the Second Workman the "seer" who is the mystical preserver of Irish lore.

Together, they provide the vitality which defeats the Englishmen. But the historical, dramatic conventions which the play employs reflect a blend of several elements of classical tradition, as we have seen.

When we consider the social resolution which the play enacts, we are reminded of Northrup Frye's explanation that in New Comedy the main theme is the successful effort of a young man to outwit an opponent and to possess the girl of his choice.¹⁶ Viewing Purple Dust in the light of this convention may serve as a way of analyzing the play, for although we have already seen that the agon is established in the play when the Irish Workmen learn that the Englishmen's

¹⁵This comment is taken from a letter O'Casey wrote to the author, dated March 16, 1961.

¹⁶Frye, p. 86.

project is "contrary to human experience," the major conflict--or that which Frye calls the "individual theme"--comes into focus when, after having returned O'Killigain's secret glances, Avril asks him "Where is the real world?" He tells her it is "With th' bitterness an' joy blendin' in a pretty woman's hand; with the pity in her breast; in the battlin' beauty of her claspin' arms; an' rest beside her when the heart is tired." And shortly thereafter, he sings to her:

Come in, or go out, or just stay at the door,
With a girl on each arm an' one standing before;
Sure, the more that I have, the more I adore,
For there's life with the lasses,
Says Rory O'More (p. 20).

Here the "individual theme" of the play is localized. At the close of the somewhat generalized invitation which O'Killigain has made to Avril, Poges and Stoke return to the dramatic action. They come on stage inquiring about the repairs which are being made to the garage, thereby re-emphasizing their interest in the fantastic project and their ignorance of the essential struggle which is shaping up.

The verbal conflict between Poges and O'Killigain begins rather indirectly when Poges speaks of the "finer things of Life" and mentions a line from William Wordsworth's sonnet, "The World Is Too Much With Us." O'Killigain deprecates the poet as a "tired-out owl blatherer," sensitive

to everything but man; "a fool who thought the womb of the world was Wordsworth; a poet who jailed the strivings of man in a moral lullaby." (pp. 22-23). These speeches set up the senex-adolescens relationship on an external basis, but at the same time they prepare for the satiric argument on sensuality. Poges begins to discuss nature, and in response to Souhoun's mention of the wild flowers of the district, he speaks of the primrose, a significant symbol in the play. In the stage directions for Act I, O'Casey has written that in the center of the room there is a small Elizabethan or Jacobean table on which there is a vase holding a collection of violets and primroses, "mostly primroses" (p. 25). This flower is a literary symbol for sensuality, but Poges, whose eye catches the vase mentioned in the stage directions, remarks: ". . . we all actually know all there is to be known about the little primrose." Basil joins him, but this time argumentatively as he complains: "That's just ignorant complacency, Cyril. Of course, if we regard, assume, or look at the plant purely as a single unity, then a primrose is a primrose, and there's nothing more to be said about it" (p. 32).

Stokes continues his harangue about the flower, and discusses it in a gibberish of lock-logic, interrupted by Avril's statement that "Great men are speaking," and while

the Englishmen drag out the ridiculous discussion, listing names of several philosophers, each deprecating the other for his respective shortcomings, O'Killigain remains silent. Apparently, O'Casey wishes to make clear here that Stoke and Poges are ignorant and artificial; that they do not understand the true nature of their pastoral experience with Avril and Souhaun. The Irish mistresses become explicit about their feelings toward their English benefactors for the first time as Souhaun tells Avril: "Go on up an flatter and comfort your old fool by ridiculing my old fool; and when he's half himself again, wantin' still more comfort and flattery, wheedle a cheque out of the old prattler" (p. 32). Avril agrees that it is a splendid idea.

The problem of supplying the estate with livestock is the dramatic situation which allows O'Casey to bring Poges into direct contact with the Second Workman, Philib O'Dempsey. The two men argue about the installation of the telephone, among other things, and Poges calls O'Dempsey a fool. That realistic argument seems to provide an avenue into the relative merits of English and Irish culture, with Poges and O'Dempsey becoming respective prototypes. Although the case being argued is simply whether the telephone has been installed, O'Dempsey speaks as a "stage" Irishman

when he unleashes his attack on Poges as the "stage"

Englishman:

Comin' over here, thinkin' that all the glory an' grandeur of the world, and all the might of man, was stuffed into a bulgin' purse, an' stickin' their tongue out at a rose that's oldher than themselves by a little like 1,000 years; greater in their beginnin' than they are in their prime, with us speakin' with ayse the mighty language o' the world when they could barely gurgle a few sounds, sayin' th' rest in the movement of their fingers (p. 35).

Poges tries to dismiss O'Dempsey's tirade, but the Second Workman continues to recite the superior history of the Irish, setting up the social theme of the conflict and, at the same time, placing the remainder of the play's action into the framework of the fable of the Flood. "Wait till God, sends the heavy rain, and the floods come," O'Dempsey admonishes Poges, and the Englishman brushes aside the warning with the comment:

There's Erin, the tear and the smile in her eye for you! The unmannerly ruffian! Venomous, too--wanting me to wait till the floods come! (p. 36).

Here a somewhat irrelevant twist in the motivations for action appears in the play: What do the right-thinking people do when the Flood comes? Nowhere in the play has this possibility been mentioned before, and the working out of this fable orientation remains loose throughout the play; however, it is the external efficient cause for the alignment

which is the comic resolution of Purple Dust. The individual theme, sexual attraction, though, is the more carefully developed motivation; for the major forces of Act II only seem to reinforce the already clearly-defined forces. The English are shown incapable of handling weapons and new inventions, and they indicate their willingness to use the Irish clergy to hold the elementary traits of the country-men in check.

Also, in Act II O'Casey uses symbols in the stage directions which seem to reinforce the conflict. At the beginning of the act, Poges and Stoke are lying on two mattresses on the floor of the living room of the house. It is early morning, the morning after the day Avril has foreshadowed the end of the play by riding out with O'Killigain. Poges pulls the covers over his head when a cock crows outside, an indication of a cockalorum which suggests a little man with an exaggerated conception of his own importance; and the call of a cuckoo, symbol of adultery, is heard. The owl, too, is heard, and this sound might well express O'Casey's irony which comes through in the following exchange of speeches between the two Englishmen:

- POGES: The country's not going to be so quiet as I had thought. Still, I'm glad we came.
- STOKE: So am I, really. These sounds are just part of a country's attractions--pleasant and homely.
- POGES: And stimulating, Basil, stimulating. Look at the sunlight coming in through the windows. . . . Every day in the country brings another chance of living and a new life (p. 48).

Significant action of the conflict on both the social and the individual level moves now to the point late in Act II when the rain begins and O'Killigain and O'Dempsey decide to "knock off" work on a "tumblin' house." Souhaun says the house will be lonesome without the Second Workman, and he implores her, in the tradition of the Passionate Shepherd, to:

Come, then, an' abide with the men o' th' wide wathers, who, can go off in a tiny curragh o' thought to the New Island with the outgoing tide, an' come back by th' same tide sweepin' in again! (p. 105).

Souhaun asks what gift is offered when the tide returns, and O'Dempsey promises laughter round a red fire with firm-fed men and comely, cordial women; to which Souhaun responds, speaking directly to Poges: "There now, dear, is there anything more in the world than these that you can give?" and Poges, becoming the straw man again, says he has been beaten.

Souhaun accepts the invitation and says there is no lady who would be slow to give her pillow to a man with such a coaxing way; but Avril protests. She tries to distract Souhaun's attention by mentioning new dresses, but the older woman has been entranced into speaking in the Irish idiom. It is then O'Killigain's turn to woo Avril with the same promises, and although his language is even more poetic than O'Dempsey's, Avril hesitates. O'Dempsey reminds her that at the manor there is nothing but "creakin' grandeur an' poor witherin' talk; salt food without a dhrink to go with it; an' a purple dhryness turnin' timidly to dust" (p. 106).

O'Casey sings through O'Killigain's lines, but Avril feels that she is no longer capable of being an Irish "mystic." Poges and Stoke catch the spirit of the wooing again for a few speeches before realizing that they do not know the Irish mind and mythology well enough to compete with the Workmen. Again, Poges realizes that Erin has "the tear and the smile." Then the Figure comes in to say the river has left her banks and is rising high; that those who have lifted their eyes unto the hills are firm of foot, for in the hills is safety (p. 115). Sounds of a storm more violent than that which rages among the people in the house

are heard. Souhaun has already left with O'Dempsey; Avril goes with O'Killigain when he comes for her, and he says that a pretty girl looks handsome in arms fit and fond to hold her. He, along with other voices, sings a song which is reminiscent of a Greek chorus. From O'Casey's standpoint, the sentiment which O'Killigain expresses is the right one.

Stoke and Poges alone are trying to escape from the flood waters. Poges laments the damage to his quattrocentro and his house of pride, and he wishes he were in England, "now that winter's here." That idea seems to express his own consciousness of the new social alignment which the play has encasted. He has come full circle from his wildly fantastic idea of setting up a utopian situation in a land where he does not belong. He and Stokes cannot be included in the new social integration. Avril, Souhaun, O'Killigain and O'Dempsey form the approved section of the reconciliation; and the implied didacticism of the play--perhaps correctly called the system of values of the play--suggests that youth and love are favored over pomposity and aged inefficiency as well as intruders who do not understand the Irish mind. Certainly, this conclusion is consistent with O'Casey's own statement (referred to earlier), which expresses a preference for "new thought and young ideas" over old, outworn things.

Obviously, O'Casey was not directly concerned with making dupes of Englishmen, as one might think upon a casual reading of the play, although Jules Koslow may be correct when he writes that the play could not have been produced in London during the days of the German blitz.¹⁶ But a wider view of the comic spirit of the play can include the pride of Poges and Stoke and their ignorance, regardless of their nationality. Thus, the gap between Englishmen's concepts and their perceptions might well be symbolized in the "purple dust." Norms placed beside them in O'Killigain and O'Dempsey point up the ludicrousness of the foreigners and give direction to the comic situation. The response to the play follows what Frye refers to as the final cause being the audience, where applause is expected to indicate approval of the working out of the comic resolution.¹⁷ Consequently, something more universal is in the play than first reading might reveal. Neither is the farce merely haphazard, for it seems consistent with O'Casey's theory that laughter tends to mock the pompous and the pretentious: "all man's boastful gadding about, all his petty pomps, his hoary customs."¹⁸

¹⁶Koslow, p. 78, explains that the play's "waspish stings at the expense of certain British pretensions might have aroused political resentment that would have handicapped its great merit.

¹⁷Frye, p. 60.

¹⁸The Green Crow, p. 227.

Markedly, the structure of this play provides a comic norm which is absent from the Irish War Plays and from the archetypal masques. It is, in fact, the fusion of the loose Greek Comedy patterns which allows for the play's rationale: in the Irish peasants, Jack O'Killigain and Phillib O'Dempsey, O'Casey fashions a pair of shrewd foils for his English buffoons, foils whose primitive sense of values and high-spirited rustic antics provide a norm of genuine pastoral life. In contrast to Stoke and Poges, the Irishmen possess a wise and mystical understanding of the traditions and values of the Celtic heroes, and when they ride off into the hills with the girls at the fantastic conclusion, they go to seek a pastoral utopia which offers a new vision of an old way of life. Aside from the rational social alignment which the comedy enacts, though, it contains ribald humour which is reminiscent of the Stage Irishman.

O'Dempsey and O'Killigain are as loquacious as Boyle and Joxer, but their talk is channeled into the basic agon which defeats the Englishmen. In his role as the Irish "seer" O'Dempsey is a worker and a man of the soil; he is a "natural" scholar who, in his own words, "knows everything worth knowing about Ireland past and present" (p. 25). Because his characterization is natural to the pastoral

experience Stoke and Poges are trying to affect, he can make shambles of the pseudo-learning of the Englishmen who think Brobdingnag is a Celtic god. As we have seen, this natural "Irishness" infects the prizes--Souhaun and Avril--and wins them for the native men. And, as we have seen through Frye's description of the ideal masque, the weapon which has won the conflict for the play's heroes is a quality which they have possessed for all time: natural vitality and a strong respect for their culture. When he was writing his Irish War Plays, O'Casey probably could not have written a play like Purple Dust--one in which he abandons specific political ideas to a generalized conception of the value of life. He was perhaps too close to the Troubles. However, our point in this whole analysis has been that he was able to use the same basic qualities of the Stage Irishman in the best of his dramas. And the striking critical observation here is that those same characteristics were used at one point in the playwright's career for ironic purposes and in another for idealistic directions.

That modification in his use of the Stage Irishman is the link which connects the major aesthetic representation in this group of ideal comedies. Donal Davoren is a "fake" poet whose pretensions lead to a snuffing out of the life force which is portrayed by Minnie Powell. Jack Boyle is

the irresponsible braggart who cannot provide for himself and his family and cannot show compassion for his daughter when she becomes pregnant. Jack Clithroe is the comic military man whose fancy words and uniforms are more important to him than are the values of home. Harry Heegan, though less directly comic than the other three characters mentioned above, is the easy romancer and bragging athlete who collapses completely when his body becomes tragically disfigured. But in Purple Dust, and in the ideal comedies which follow it, the Stage Irishman is a successful foil to those persons whose systemized approaches to life are stultifying. Nevertheless, the broadly humorous character of the Irishman appears throughout O'Casey's dramas.

Cock-a-doodle Dandy

O'Casey calls Cock-a-doodle Dandy (1949) his favorite play and his best play without giving reasons for his opinion.¹⁹ He does explain, though, that by the time he wrote this play he had found that "what is called naturalism, or even realism, is not enough. They usually show life at its meanest and commonest, as if life never had time for a

¹⁹"Cock-a-Doodle Dandy," in Playwrights and Playwrighting, Toby Cole, ed. (New York, 1961), p. 245.

dance, a laugh, or a song."²⁰ That the play is a radical departure from realism is, doubtlessly, one of the reasons that O'Casey likes it. It is to him a successful work which uses expressionism as objective reality. However, it would be a mistake to consider the mere experiment in expressionism the total intention of the playwright. Unlike Purple Dust, Cock-a-doodle Dandy is a sad play, but its conclusion expresses the confirmation of Ideal Comedy.

That naturalism and realism "are not enough" for the comic view of the world which O'Casey wished the later comedies to portray is emphasized in the rather specialized type of expressionism these plays employ. Unlike the German expressionistic drama which usually aims to show the way an abnormal character sees the world, O'Casey's drama of this period reflects a comic, not a psychotic world. His political views, which are roughly Marxist, are strongly conducive to a non-realistic stage-world; but unlike the Soviet stress on realism in art, O'Casey leans toward the more purely Marxian view that the present society is doomed; that what now seems so real is an illusion; that what seems an illusion will be real. The expression found in Rose and Crown (1952), for example, that people in Noel Coward's music hall world "think they dance through life, but the dance denies its own

²⁰Ibid.

merriment; that those persons are jiggling on the tomb of their own dead endeavors" may well be the metaphor which is the spirit of the plays O'Casey wrote after leaving Ireland.²¹ This may be especially true of Cock-a-doodle Dandy.

The world of comedy is traditionally a world where young lovers meet, outwit old dullards, and reaffirm the sheer joy of living. Purple Dust had celebrated the victory of the zest for life over antiquarian obstacles where the life of fulfillment and of generation form the comic resolution of that play. But even O'Casey's strong faith in the death of the ruinous past and the regeneration of the freedom of the "Green World" could not bring him to feel that Purple Dust was the final word in his argument for the world which should be the real one. Consequently, Cock-a-doodle Dandy is, in a sense, a "dark" comedy in which the triumph of laughter is not so successful as it is in the earlier play. The forces of evil are too strong to be defeated easily.

Cock-a-doodle Dandy represents a more noticeable return to a specific time and place than does Purple Dust, where, as we have seen, the author created an imaginary

²¹Rose and Crown (New York, 1956), p. 125.

Irish village for the setting of the play. O'Casey said of that setting: "the action manifests itself in Ireland, the mouths that speak are Irish mouths; but the spirit is to be found in action everywhere."²² However, the universal application of the significant action of the play is not by any means divorced from the concerns O'Casey had for the Ireland he still viewed from the English home he had taken twenty years earlier. In many respects, the play, together with the fourth volume of his autobiography Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well is something of a view of Ireland after twenty years of self-exile from it. Because both works were written in the same year, it is reasonable to note some of the parallel allusions to Ireland which appear in them.

Eamonn de Valera had been elected President of the Irish Republic after the Civil Wars, but O'Casey regarded his election with suspicion, as the following excerpt from Inishfallen indicates:

It was a curious choice to Sean, for to him, De Valera seemed to be no Gael either in substance or in the face, although he was probably one in theory. Though it is recorded he played hurley when he was a kid, Sean couldn't see an excited De Valera rushing around a hurling field; and, certainly, he had never known him in a team attached to the Central Branch of the Gaelic League; he couldn't see De Valera abandoning himself to

²²Playwrights and Playwrighting, p. 246.

sweat and laughter in the dancing of a jig, nor could he see him swanking about in sober green kilt and gaudy saffron shawl; or slanting an approving eye on any pretty girl that passed him; or standing, elbow on counter, in a Dublin pub about to lower a drink, with a Where it goes, Lads. No, such as he would always be in a dignified posture at Dail or Council, or helping to spray prayers at a church gathering. He knew, like Griffith, next to nothing about the common people. He was of the house with the box-window, lace curtains, and the brass knocker--planetoids to the planet of the Big House He was outside of everything except himself.²³

The Roman clergy, too, came in for its share of disapproval. When De Valera came to power, O'Casey was disturbed that most of his followers were Catholic, and he wrote that they looked upon De Valera as a "Bonnie Prince Charlie in sober suiting"; that the priesthood stood to profit immeasurably from the new favor which they would gain from the new regime. O'Casey's primary objection to the alignment of De Valera and the Roman clergy rose from his fear that the rights of labor, the cause he had championed most of his life, would be forgotten. His first effort to rekindle that fight, after the inauguration of De Valera, was to write a ballad, "The Call of the Tribe," which he asked Seumas Hughes to set to music. Hughes returned the song a few days later, telling him that orders not to have

²³Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well (New York, 1956), pp. 3-4.

anything to do with O'Casey had come from above. Further, De Valera's uncommon touch and the new tendency of men in the Irish government to wear smart uniforms and "tall hats" irritated O'Casey, as may be seen in his description of Mike Cloverly: "The wearer of this glory was ill at ease. The smart elegant uniform fitted the body, but it failed to fit the spirit of the man."²⁴ In short, O'Casey saw the new Ireland as the new Irish aristocracy--the "devalerians"--and he conceived of it as a theocratic state whose greatest dangers lay in the purple biretta of the Roman Catholic Church and the tall-hat of the De Valera politicians.

Because his interest still lay primarily with the workers and the poverty-stricken of Dublin, O'Casey thought that the entire nation had been betrayed by the common-place bourgeois class "who laid low the concept of the common good and the common taste, and were now decorating themselves with the privileges and powers dropped in their flight by those defeated by the dear, dead men."²⁵ His bitterness at De Valera's Ireland can be seen further where he speaks of its catering to the Roman Catholic Church:

²⁴Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, p. 162.

²⁵Ibid.

. . . scarlet cassock and purple cassock were blessing them and their gew-gaws--the low-cut balldress, the top-hat, the tailed coat and the white tie, the foolish wig and gown, and all the tarnished decorations of a dead state. And Christ, the clergy said, was in the midst of it all. Ecce Homo! Ecce Homo Noster! Here was their Christ, like unto themselves--morning suit, top-hat, gold full-links, and dud-diamond stud, with a nearly-rooled umbrella in lieu of a cross.²⁶

These political and religious backgrounds, in short, were the setting against which O'Casey fashioned Myadnanve, the village where Cock-a-doodle Dandy is set. This is the joyless little Irish village where the priest-led people have been taught to fear any possible reincarnation of the devil. But the fantastic Cock is the satiric mocker of Nyadnanavery. He is a barnyard Dionysian who is turned loose in the village to scourage the puritanical apes led by Father Domineer and Shanaar and to show them up as dangerous bigots. Although the village is an imaginary one, it is Ireland throughout the play, a land which is represented as an unhappy country of thou-shalt-not's--a land that "bites away the soul." The theme embodies a comic morality which is universal in its application for all countries, but the point here is that factual Irish historical background--or at least that which was factual for O'Casey--makes up the atmosphere in which the dramatic action takes place.

²⁶Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, p. 224.

The play is a fantastic extravaganza which celebrates man's freedom and joy in the Cock, who is the active spirit of life as it weaves its way through the Irish scene. O'Casey gives this explanation for placing the village in Ireland: "It is only through an Irish scene that my imagination can weave a way, within the Irish shadows or out in the Irish sunshine, if it is to have a full, or at least a fair, chance to play."²⁷ The play is symbolic in more ways than one, he writes, for the spirit is to be found in action everywhere. And the play's attitude toward the clergy may be found in the following comment:

. . . the flight made by many to drive the joy of life from the hearts of men; the fight against this flight to vindicate the right of the joy of life to live courageously in the hearts of men. It isn't the clergy alone who boo and bluster against this joy of life and living, in dance, song, and story. . . and interfere in the free flow of thought from man to man. Playwrights and poets have had, are having, a share in squeezing the mind of man into visions of woe and lamentations. Not only is there none who doeth good; no not one, with them; but also they seem determined to deny the right of man to laugh. . . They labor hard to get us all down.²⁸

Krause makes the interesting point that this play is significant in modern literature at a time when so many

²⁷Playwrights and Playwrighting, p. 246.

²⁸Ibid.

writers have been concerned with Original Sin, and he feels that O'Casey expresses in the play what may be called his faith in Original Joy:

In the beginning there was Joy, O'Casey seems to be saying, and he would have men rediscover it in dance and song, in love and laughter, and in the freedom of the mind as well as the heart. As the merry champion of these primordial virtues, the enchanted Cock is an inspired magician. He can make chairs and flagpoles and houses collapse; he can make whiskey bottles go dry and glow red-hot; he can imitate cuckoos and corncoakes; he can take the shape of a top-hat or a beautiful woman; he can create a powerful wind that blows off men's trousers; he can bring down thunder and lightning and cast all sorts of mischevious spells on whole objects and on people who oppose the way of life he represents.²⁹

The basic conflict in Cock-a-doodle Dandy presents a mock-battle between the allegorical forces of good and evil, where Father Domineer, the Catholic priest; Michael Marthraun, the bourgeoisie merchant; and Shanaar, the religious quack, are the evil forces. The Cock is their chief adversary, but aligned with him are the three young women in the house--Marthraun's young wife Lorna; Loreleen, his daughter by a previous marriage; Marion, the maid; and Robin Adair, the Messenger. The two sub-plots concern the intended strike of the surf workers who are demanding a shilling raise in wages and Lorna's sister Julia's plans to go to

²⁹Krause, p. 186.

Lourdes in hopes of finding a miracle that will save her life from the ravages of an incurable disease. The major comic pattern, though, is enacted through the conflict between Father Domineer, Shanaar and Michael Marthraun on the one side and the three women and Robin Adair on the other. The fantastic comedy runs through all of the dramatic action, except in the dark-comedy ending.

Visible essence of the abode of evil plays an important part in the setting of the entire drama when O'Casey describes Michael Marthraun's garden and the appearance of his house. The garden presents itself "unweeded." It is rough and uncared for, with tough grass everywhere, sprinkled with buttercups and daisies.³⁰ The garden is surrounded by a stone wall, and even the sunflowers there ray their petals out widely and sharply "like rays from an angry sun." The house, seen to the left, has a porch attached to it whose twisted pillars of wood, "looking like snakes," are connected with lattice work like "noughts and crosses." These are painted a dazzling white, reminding one that O'Casey once wrote: "We have forgotten that Christ wore a crimson cloak and Mary a bright blue mantle."³¹ The sashwork holding

³⁰Collected Plays, IV, p. 121, to which edition of the play all subsequent passages refer.

³¹Playwrights and Playwrighting, p. 247.

the windows is twisted into irregular lines; the house is black, but its window frames are painted a brilliant red. Moreover, the time of the play is a brilliantly fine day in summer, but in Marthraun's garden nothing provides shade; consequently, the place is "a deep pool of heat" where the grass has turned to a deep yellow hue, save where the house and porch throw a rich black shadow. Stretching away in the distance, beyond the wall, is a "bog of rich purple color."

The play's relevancy to Kathleen Listens In has never been noted in O'Casey scholarship, but now that the text of the earlier play is available, it is interesting to note the parallel between the descriptions of the settings of the respective works. The earlier play takes place in the garden beside the O'Houllihan family's home, as the stage directions provide:

To the right the front of the house is seen. A door leads into the house; above the door are two windows, resembling church windows, in which the panes are broken. A low wall runs along back; a gate in wall on left. Outside the wall, partly hidden by the house is a tree. In the center of the garden is a flagstaff from which flies a small Tricolour. . . .³²

Interestingly, Michael O'Houllihan from Kathleen Listens In becomes Michael Marthraun in Cock-a-doodle Dandy.

³² Tulane Drama Review, V (Summer, 1961), p. 3.

Some distance away from Marthraun's garden, an accordion plays a dance tune, and the Cock comes dancing around the gable of the house. When he goes out of sight, the music ceases. He is "of a deep black plumage, fitted to his agile and slender body like a glove on a lady's hand, but he wears bright green flaps like wings, a big crimson flower crests over his head and crimson flaps hang from his jaws"; "his face has the look of a cynical jester." As soon as the Cock disappears, Marthraun and Sailor Mahon come in arguing about the mysterious pranks that have upset the whole neighborhood; that "Sinister signs are appearin' everywhere." But, in the tradition of the Stage Irish "two oil' buttles," one finds that while Marthraun is convinced that the three women in the house--his young wife, his daughter by a previous marriage, and his maid--have been bewitched by an evil spirit, Sailor Mahon insists that "there's nothin' evil in a pretty face." Marthraun directs their argument to the play's satire on the priesthood's control over the village when he says that a wind that follows his step-daughter through the house turns the holy pictures with their faces to the wall. "Your religion should tell you," he warns Mahon, "th' biggest fight th' holy saints ever had was with temptations from good-lookin' women" (p. 125).

Symbolically and dramatically, then, the agon is established: the Cock has invaded Marthraun's "unweeded garden"; he conceives of the life force as an evil spirit. But while the Cock and Michael-Marthraun quickly become the primary antagonists of the play, each will have his confederates: the suspected women will ally themselves with the Cock, and Michael will enlist the help of all local authorities--particularly the priest--to help him to banish the evil spirit from his house and garden. Already, too, the playwright's satiric purpose has been established: for the visible essence of sadness, distortion and restraint which permeates the stage directions for the scene lays stress to the play's values. The conflict will revolve around the functional designation of which force is absolutely good and which is absolutely evil.

How the evil spirit manifests itself in Michael's house occupies the bulk of the first scene, where, through Marthraun's own observations, O'Casey allows the manifestations of the life force to be designated as dangerous. Excerpts from a series of his speeches will support the point here:

1. Looka, Sailor Mahan, there's always
a stern commotion among th' holy
objects of th' house, when that one,
Loreleen, goes sailin' by; an invisible

wind blows th' pictures our, an' turns their frenzied faces to th' wall; once I seen the statue of St. Crankarius standin' on his head to circumvent th' lurin' quality of her presence; an' another time, I seen th' image of our own St. Patrick makin' a skelp at her with his crozier; falling flat on his face, stunned, when he missed!

2. Have sense, man! An' me own wife, Lorna Marthraun, is mixin' herself with th' disordher, fondlin' herself with all sorts o' mismayin' decorations. Th' other day, I caught her gapin' into a lookin'-glass, an' when I looked me-self, I seen gay-coloured horns branchin' from her head!
3. I tell' you, I seen th' way th' eyes of young men stare at her face, an' follow th' movements of her lurin' legs--there's evil in that woman!
4. Up there in that room she often dances be herself, but dancin' in her mind with hefty lads, plum'd with youth, an' spurred with looser thoughts of love. . . There, d'ye hear that, man! Mockin' me. She'll hurt her soul, if she isn't careful (pp. 124-125).

Michael and Sailor Mohan have come together to discuss labor problems among their workers, but they are constantly diverted from their purpose in a manner which makes their business secondary. But the fantastic main plot of the play begins to present itself when Marthraun tells his friend that Shanaar, a neighborhood religious fanatic, has told him that the thing to do "when you hear a sound or see a

shape of anything evil is to take no notice of it" (p. 127). Symbols of what Michael considers evil enter when the cock crows and Loreleen appear in the doorway of the porch simultaneously. A "very attractive young woman with an air of her own," she has a jaunty air which is called a sign of a handsome, gay and intelligent woman; she is dressed in green and wearing scarlet ornaments which match the Cock's crimson crest. Thus, by the invention of color symbolism rather than by the dialogue of debate as in Purple Dust, the audience is given the basis of the play's agon. However, the satire of the setting is heightened when the First Rough Fellow enters, wearing a bright green scarf, pushes Loreleen aside momentarily, looks at her again and asks what a good-looking lass like her is doing "in this hole." "Seeking happiness, an' failing to find it," is Loreleen's retort. In the manner of O'Killigain of Purple Dust, First Rough Fellow answers:

It isn't here you should be, lost among th'
rough stones, th' twisty grass, an' th' moody
misery of th' brown bog; but it's lyin' laughin'
you should be where th' palms are tall, an'
whereever a foot is planted, a scarlet flower
is crushed; where there's levity living its
life, an' not loneliness dyin' as it is here (p. 124).

The devastation which Michael's home, bog and garden impose on his daughter who is allied symbolically with the life force the Cock represents is reinforced when The Second

Rough Fellow enters and, seeing how charming Loreleen is, exclaims:

Arra, what winsome wind blew such a flower into this dread, dhried-up desert? Deirdre come to life again, not to sorrow, but to dance! If Eve was as you are, no wondher Adam fell, for a lass like you could shutter th' world away with a kiss (p. 130).

"Wait, lass, till I'm done with these fellas, an' I'll go with you till youth's a shadow a long way left behind," The Second Rough Fellow says to Loreleen, as he passes through the gate. She complains that she's not good for decent men; that "the two old cronies will tell you a kiss from me must be taken undher a canopy of dangerous darkness," and she waves goodbye, after throwing a kiss to both the men. That the "humourous" Marthraun exploits the labor in addition to the life force of the women in his house may be seen in the following passages:

MICHAEL	What d'ye th' two of yous want her?
MAHAN	Why aren't yous at work?
(together)	

FIRST ROUGH FELLOW	Looka, you; you give us th' exthra shillin', or we leave you lorries standin', helpless an' naked on th' roads:
-----------------------	---

SECOND ROUGH FELLOW	. . .D'ye think a good week's wages is in a cheque for tuppence?
------------------------	--

MICHAEL	You didn't work a week, because of th' rain, an' canteen contribution
---------	---

an' insurance brought your wage for the week to tuppence.

SECOND ROUGH

FELLOW Tell me how I'm goin' to live a week on tuppence?

FIRST ROUGH

FELLOW Seein' th' both of them's Knights o' Columbanus, they should be able to say.

MICHAEL

That's a social question to be solved by th' Rerum Novarum.

SECOND ROUGH

FELLOW Fifty years old; not worth much when it is born, an' not worth a damn now. You give a guaranteed week, or th' men come off your bog! (pp. 130-131).

The Rough Fellows ally themselves with the forces opposing the "humourous" characters only temporarily, though, for while they are speaking with their employers, they see Loreleen at a distance and notice "a cloud closin' in on her, flashes like lightning whislin' round her head"; at the same time they hear the Cock crowing. Frightened, they fail to understand the life force fully, as they declare the sight and sound they are witnessing an omen--a warning--a reminder of what "th' missionary said last night that young men should think of good-lookin' things in skirts only in th' presence of, an' undher th' guidance of, old and pious people" (p. 132). Religious superstition prevents them from identifying themselves fully with the life force, even when their most natural and unconscious reactions to the

sight of Loreleen are free and joyous.' Their primary purpose in the play, however, delineates the secondary theme--the conflict between employer and laborer. This passing emphasis is strengthened by Michael's complaint that one evidence of evil in the community manifests itself in workers "threatenin' to come off th' bog altogether"--men who are influenced by a materialism which is "edgin' into revolt against Christian conduct" (pp. 133-34).

That labor troubles are not the main emphasis of the play's conflict becomes clear when, almost immediately following the interview between labor and management, Shanaar enters Michael's garden. The dramatic persona has described him as "a very wise old crow thumper, really a dangerous old cod," and the essential elements of his character as set forth at the time of his entry into the play emphasize his decadency:

He is a very, very old man, wrinkled like a walnut, bent at the shoulders, with longish white hair, and a white beard--a bit dirty--reaching to his belly. He is dressed peasant-wise, thin, threadbare friege coat, patched blackish cordurouy trousers, thick boots, good and strong, a vivid blue muffler round his neck, and a sackcloth waist coat, on which hangs a brass cross, suspended round his neck by twine (p. 134).

Michael and Shanaar immediately establish an alliance when the ancient man describes conditions of evil when "you

might meet a bee that wasn't a bee; a bird that wasn't a bird; as a beautiful woman who wasn't a woman at all" (p. 135). He recites tales of the temptations of the saints and of the priesthood; he uses religious folklore as reality; and he proposes bog-Latin as the fantastic remedy for the exorcism of evil in the village. His character is an artifact whose ironic treatment is seen in the meaning of his name, and in the biblical reference to a similar name.³³ The irony of characterization may be seen in the absence of wisdom in the community's old man; instead of dispensing the wisdom of the play's system of values, Shanaar is totally motivated by his reliance upon ancient and confused religious superstitions.

The principal agon of the drama is reinforced when, after Shanaar gives his remedy for defeating evil, the Cock springs into action again. A great commotion comes from the house, as Marion appears at the window to announce that "a strange flying thing, a wild goose or a duck or a hen, is tearing the house apart." When they hear this, Michael, Sailor Mahon and Shanaar hide behind the garden wall, an

³³ Krause relates this ironic characterization through translating Shanaar into Gaelic (Shanahr) which means "Old man," and in the reference in Genesis (11:2,9) to Shinar as the land of confused languages where the Tower of Babel was built, p. 189.

action which further satirizes Shanaar's role as the village wise man. Moreover, this symbolic action presents one of the play's ambiguities: for when the women in the house indicate their fear and lack of understanding of the Cock, the life force becomes, momentarily, an extraneous entity whose purpose may seem to be the mere troubling of the community. Almost immediately, though, the Messenger from the post office arrives, quiets the bird and causes the women to realize it is their friend. Significantly, the Messenger (whose real name is Robin Adair) is in love with Marion the maid.

The Messenger's role in the conflict pattern becomes two-fold as the scene progresses: (1) he exemplifies the Robin Hood of Adair de la Hale's pastoral play, Jeu de Robin et Marion, and in F. J. Child's English and Scottish Ballads, (1, 219),³⁴ where Maid Marion sought Robin in the forest disguised as a page and fought with him for an hour before she recognized his voice; and (2) he becomes a foil to Michael, Mahon and Shanaar as he wishes to ask only one question of them: "Where are th' lively holy spots to be found?" His own answer is that "They're all gone west long ago, an' the whole face o' th' land is pock-marked with their ruins."

³⁴Encyclopedia Brittanica, XIV, p. 682.

He ridicules places founded by Finian, Finbarr; he questions the location of the Seven Churches of Glendalough, the Durrow of Offally, and he claims that these historical-religious Celtic superstitions are now known only by the name of the name of the Book of Durrow. When Michael protests ferociously that "our father's faith," rather than books, is the approved guide for the young, the Messenger hurls the denunciation, "Faith, your father's faith is fear, an' now fear is your only fun." Immediately, then, Marion appears in the window of the house, Robin calls up to her, "Oh Marion, Marion, sweet Marion, come down till I give you a kiss havin' in it all the life an' longin' of th' greater lovers of th' past," and Michael reminds him that earlier he has had to spend a month in jail and pay a forty-shilling fine for kissing Marion in public. Robin declares, much in the manner of Boucicault's Shaughraun, that he'd do a year in a "cold cell of pressed-in loneliness, an' come out singin' a song, for a kiss from a lass like Marion." Then the principal question the Messenger has come to ask of Michael is revealed: Have you seen the Cock here? Just at that moment, the Cock crows from the bog, and Marion promises Robin a wreath of roses if he will fetch the Cock to Michael's house.

Clearly, then, Robin Adair is intimately familiar with the life force. And as an aggressive ally with the joy of living--one totally unlike the two Rough Fellows whose fear of religious injunctions inhibits their natural inclinations toward the women--he is unafraid to reject the political and religious superstitions of the village. When he leaves the estate, the Porter arrives to bring Michael's top-hat, another symbol of pretensions which the play satirizes. O'Casey dislikes the new snobbery of Ireland as is shown in a parody of Yeats' lines, "The terrible beauty of a tall-hat is born to Ireland."³⁵ Then the Sergeant, representing the forces of the law, arrives at the garden to report that he has shot three bullets through the Cock without stopping it. He allies himself with the authorities when he tells Michael, "We'll have to curtail th' gullivantin' of th' women afther the men. Th' house is their province, as th' clergy's tried tellin' them. They'll have to realize that th' home's their only proper place" (p. 173). After him comes the Bellman, dressed as a fireman, who, ringing his bell, reads loudly from his written orders: "Into your

³⁵Katherine J. Worth in "O'Casey's Dramatic Symbolism," Modern Drama, IV (December, 1961), p. 264, notes that in Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well (p. 162) O'Casey deplores the new snobbery of Ireland in a parody of Yeats' lines, "The terrible beauty of a tall-hat is born to Ireland."

houses all! Bor th' doors, shut th' windows! Th' Cock's comin'! In the shape of a woman! (p. 175).

Thus, the Cock has been identified as the symbol of evil. Businessmen, civil officials and the priest seek to protect themselves and the community from the dangers which are inherent in women who express a love for life. Farce, in the form of bewitched whiskey bottles and collapsing chairs, has reinforced the discomfort which the life force brings to Michael Marthaun and his allies. So far Michael, as a bourgeois, has been able to dominate the members of his community. But the larger and more serious problem--that of imposing his own morality upon his young wife and his daughter--becomes too big for Michael. Further, the play's satire has been generalized up to this point. Now, however, O'Casey seems to need to point his criticism toward a definite force in the village. Accordingly, he has Michael send for the priest.

But before he arrives, a Dionysian revel takes place in Michael's garden which indicates the un-selfconscious joy of which all men are capable. Lorna, Loreleen and Marion mingle freely with Michael, Mahon and the Messenger for the first time. Lorna reasons that if there is danger about, they should all have a drink to give them courage to fight

it; Lorna feels that if she cannot wrap herself in the arms of a man, she can wrap herself in a cordial. The three women drink to the Cock-a-doodle Dandy. Lorna offers a glass to the Sergeant, commanding him to drink and praise the good things life can bring, and he drinks. Sailor Mahon, too, joins the women in a drink, as does Michael, who does not wish to seem odd. In the communion of good fellowship which accompanies the drinking scene, Michael and Mahon settle their business problem in one short salute to each other, indicating the play's didactic implication that free and irrational action can bring spontaneous harmony. At this point, the horns which sprout on Lorna's head are not noticed by Michael. A dance is taking place and all persons in the garden participate in it.

While the ritual to joy (a reversal to Krause's thought that this play's basic assumption holds that "in the beginning there was joy,") is being enacted excitedly, a loud peal of thunder is heard as Father Domineer enters; thus the contrast caused by the dramatic import between the revel and the entrance of the priest, plus the tag name O'Casey gives him, brands the Roman Church as the joy-killer:

Father Domineer appears in the gateway, a green glow enveloping him as he glares down at the swinging dancers, and as a loud, lusty crow

from the Cock rings out through the garden. The dancers, excepting Loreleen, suddenly stand stock still, then fall on one knee, facing the priest, their heads bent in shame and some dismay. . . (p. 184).

Loreleen and the Messenger, alone, defy the priest and reject his demand for penance. When Father Domineer claims that generous doses of films, plays and books are the pagan poison which is flooding the world and Ireland; the Messenger reminds him that the devil was about before there were films, plays and books. When the priest admonishes the revellers to arise and never let him find them negligent again in the fight for good against evil, all except Loreleen are penitent. She strolls defiantly toward a table and sits upon it. Father Domineer turns to Mahon to insist upon his firing a lorry driver who is living with a woman who is not his wife, and when Mahon protests the man is a good worker, the priest ignores that practical consideration. When the lorry driver refuses to be dominated by the priest, Father Domineer shoves him to the ground. Thinking he may be dead, the priest murmurs in his ear what he says is an "act of contrition," but the Messenger retorts, "It would have been far fitter, Father, if you'd murmured one into your own" (p.189).

Together with a one-eyed lad Larry, who is armed with "a small bell, a book, and an unlighted candle," Father Domineer sets out to banish the evil from Michael's house.

Loreleen, alone, refuses the priest's services, as she returns to the garden from being stoned by the villagers and exclaims:

(out of breath) God damn th' bastards of this vile disthric! They pelted me with whatever they could lay hands on--the women because they couldn't stand beside me; the men because there was ne'er a hope of usin' me as they'd like to! Is it any wondher that th' girls are fleein' in their tens of thousands from this bewildhered land? Blast them! I'll still be gay an' good-lookin'. Let them draw me as I am not, an' sketch in a devil where a maiden stands! (p. 194).

When Father Domineer returns to the garden after having cleansed the house of evil, he says to Michael:

be assured. . .all's well now. The house is safe for all. The evil things have been banished from the dwelling. Most of the myrmidons of Anti clericus, Secularius, an' Odeonius have been destroyed. The Civic Guard and the soldier of Feehanna Fawl will see to the few who escaped. We can think quietly again of our Irish Sweep. Now I must get to my car and go home, and have a wash an' brush up (p. 199).

When Michael reminds him that the women have been reading books, the enraged priest orders them to be brought out and burned. Michael comes in to the garden carrying "a book about Voltaire and Ulysess"; Domineer says they have both been banned. Loreleen's retort is that she must read them then, and she attacks the priest with: "You fool, d'ye know what you're thrying to do? You're thrying to keep God

from talking! She snatches the two books and runs away as the Cock makes another entrance. But Loreleen who has been denounced as the personification of evil--Kissallass, Velvet Thighs, Dancealong--has been dragged into the garden by a mob from the village. Father Domineer banishes her from the country, but as she goes, she tells the priest: "When you condemn a fair face, you sneer at God's handiwork. You are layin' your curse, sir, not upon a sin, but on a joy" (p. 201).

Lorna, Loreleen, Marion and Robin Adair are eventually banished. When Michael realizes his women have left him and asks what he should do, Robin answers: "Die." Then, much in the fashion of the conclusion of Purple Dust, the hero--Robin Adair--sings a ballad of the love which may be found in the "green world."

Catharsis and Carnival abound in Cock-a-doodle Dandy, but the expressionism, together with direct dramatic action and subjective speeches, enact the play's comic resolution. It is a dark comedy, for the final realignment only implies the heroic side in the play's conflict. Obviously, Loreleen and Robin Adair are the strong and consistent forces for joy; the Cock is merely a manifestation of that spirit. However, Father Domineer wins his fight with the life force. He tackles it directly, and he arouses the village to battle it.

Extrinsically, the church wins: it regains its stronghold on the natural inclinations of the worshippers of joy. To that extent, the social realignment appears to include in it all persons who, by their subserviance to the church, are cleansed. But in its intrinsic didacticism, being expelled from Michael's garden is a boon to the lovers of joy. Their feelings are incompatible with a world of rational morality; their spirits are too strong to be broken. Thus, the women and Robin Adair, those characters who have braved all of the powers of Father Domineer, of the civil authorities and of the villagers, are thought to be destined for a life of eternal joy in their banishment.

Michael Marthraun, then, becomes something less than a conventional villain. He has partaken in the revel before the appearance of Father Domineer; consequently, his feelings are not unlike those of the joy-worshippers when, upon realizing that Lorna is being banished, he reflects: "Maybe I mightn't have been so down on her fancy dhressin!" (p. 221). He complains that he will be lonely without her, and, left only with his rosary and his daughter who found no miracle at Lourdes, he sincerely asks Robin "what would you advise me to do?" Robin's answer--"Die"--speaks one of the clearest didacticisms of the play, for it implies that he would live

only by the rationalism of a stultifying religious code which denies joy and would have no alternative but to die. Within this contest, the "dark comedy" becomes a triumph for the heroes and heroines of the strife; for while Father Domineer is an automatic embodiment of the dicta of the joyless Irish-Catholic Church, Michael is a victim of that institution's intransigance; but he is also a man of feeling. His own weakness is in his blind following of the priest's code. Consequently, he cannot be included in the final realignment. The play's catharsis, then, holds up to ridicule a man who, despite the concrete evidence of his capacity for joy, chooses rosaries and gloomy, "correct" life.

Julia, Lorna's paralytic sister, connects Michael's circumstance with the poverty which the priest's religious vigor establishes when she speaks upon returning, unhealed, from Lourdes:

(after a long look at Michael) He, poor man, is dyin' too. No-one left, an' th' stir there was when I was goin'--th' mayor there, with all his accouthered helpers; th' band playin'; Father Domineer spoutin' his blessin'; an' oul' Shanaar busy sayin' somer saultin' prayers; because they thought I would bring a sweet mystery back. . . (p. 220).

When she asks Robin for a "questionable blessing," he says softly, "Be brave," in the scene whose dramatic function presents an interesting irony: no one is on hand to offer

comfort to Julia now that she has returned unhealed; she has no one except the leader of the religious rebellion to ask for a blessing.

Michael Marthraun is the victor in the principal dramatic agon of the play, but even after he and his allies have succeeded in banishing the life-lovers from his "unweeded garden," the garden remains gloomy for him. Within this frame of reference, Krause may not fully understand O'Casey's motives in the play when he states that Nyadnanavery is victorious in the comedy.³⁶ When the play is examined in terms of social reorganization, one finds that the life force and its worshippers are the victors in terms of the play's system of values. The women and Robin will, ostensibly, go to what the Messenger calls "a place where life resembles life more than it does here" (p. 220). But the didactic implication throughout the dramatic action rests on the strength of the individual will of the life-worshippers to successfully defy those powers which would destroy them.

Michael Marthraun becomes one of O'Casey's most significant characters when one sees his relationship to Michael of Milton's Paradise Lost; for, indeed, he banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. We have seen that

³⁶Krause, p. 199.

O'Casey presents Marthoun's estate as a garden. Too, as we have seen, the officials and the church win in the surface struggle in this drama. However, Michael becomes an ingenious and telling piece of characterization when one realizes that the expulsion of the life-worshippers from the garden is a fortunate fall. Within this context, the whole argument of the play is on the side of the fall; for in order to become "human" one must escape the official paradise. When the play is viewed in this light, it becomes more exact in its resolution even than does Purple Dust.

Further, the play does not suggest that ability to survive the on-slaught of religious superstition is born in consistent degree even by the "right-thinking" people. Through symbolic costume, O'Casey arrays his approved characters according to the strength of their individual wills. The three women sport vivid headgear from which fantastic horns sprout occasionally. Loreleen, the most spirited of the three, wears the colors of the Cock--a scarlet ornament in her hat that is suggestive of the cock's crest. The other two, Lorna and Marion, have to make a greater effort to free themselves, but as they do, they become symbolically associated with the life force--Marion as a gay nippy, Lorna as a gypsy. Nothing could be further removed from life in Father

Domineer's parish than a gypsy way of life, and it is this life that triumphs when Loreleen and Lorna set out on the road to freedom at the end of the play.

The "dark comedy" aspect of the play, though, and its note of sadness comes when one remembers the Rough Fellows whose natural inclinations toward joyous living is evidenced before it is throttled by their recall of their religious teachings. These individuals are strong enough to remain in the garden to see, understand and undergo the "sea changes" which provide the symbols of alignment with the play's approved values. Consequently, the "happy ending" is limited; for the suggestion stands clear that a vigorous individual will is the sole effective defense against the Church's inclination to kill joy.

Visible essence, farce and fantastic dramatization, then, support the play's meaning in a technique quite unlike Purple Dust. There the humours of the mock-heroes are generalized: they merely come to an inevitable doom because their project is fantastic; it is ridiculous because of its setting and because of the incompatibility of the English and Irish temperaments. Too, it satirizes the worship of "old things" in general--especially heirlooms. But Cock-a-doodle Dandy, without suggesting Anglomania, uses totally Irish characters in a totally Irish situation! Thus, the comic intent more

closely parallels that in the Irish War Plays. But the method and subject matter are different. The ironic treatment of the Stage Irishman is missing; instead, the devastating incongruity is laid directly to the dominating priesthood, a topic which O'Casey would repeat in The Bishop's Bonfire and The Drums of Father Ned. The play may be summed up as a parable which celebrates the efficacy of the life force, in that the Cock can mock Ireland with its miracles and can stir up an affinity with those persons who think Ireland is a prison for their love of life. But it also reminds one that the Shanaar's, one-eyed Larrys and Father Domineers can defeat the Cock. And the parable is hardly restricted to Ireland; for, as we have seen, O'Casey wrote that the spirit of the fight to drive the joy of life from the hearts of men is to be found everywhere.³⁷ Thus, the wider view of comedy as a corrective force was O'Casey's chief intent in writing this play:

As ideal comedy, Cock-a-doodle Dandy moves from ironic comedy and its "way of the world" emphasis to a happy and free society. Its characters are stock, and they exist only in relation to the significance of the occasion. Too, no specific discipline, faith or system of thought

³⁷"Credo," New York Times, Section 7, December 10, 1959, p. 2.

appears in the drama. Instead, the audience is led to believe that any person who has the fortitude to withstand the harsh lashing which the church gives can triumph if he is sufficiently strong in his belief in the joy of life. Significantly, the characteristics of those who are the approved persons in the play engage in the same forms of behavior which are common to the Stage Irishman throughout O'Casey's drama. They drink whiskey freely; they dance easily; they love at first sight; they quickly turn a phrase of fine language. But, whereas in the ironic dramas those qualities have led to catastrophe, and in the archetypal masques they have provided only a brief glimpse of full joy before death, in Cock-a-doodle Dandy they go to a fantastic life at the play's end. Their destination is the "green world," a place of the playwright's own imagining, which does not appear on the stage during the play. And most ironically, as we have seen, Michael, too, seems to wish he could be eligible to go to that world. This idealization of society represented by the audience is the essence of ideal comedy whose description we have seen in Frye's definition. This drama encompasses the "As You Like It World" of Shakespeare's festive comedy, a strain in O'Casey's plays which is continued in The Bishop's Bonfire.

The Bishop's Bonfire

The enchanted Cock's dance of life in Cock-a-doodle Dandy is a comic ritual of all men who would be free, and achievement of that freedom requires strong courage and consistent rejection of binding superstitions. Motivation for freedom is the age-old subject of comic drama: the young want love and they will fight to find it in each other's arms. To O'Casey, difficulty in getting into each other's arms rises from the rages and vengeance of priests, bishops and bourgeois fathers, in the face of whose wrath bravery and courage are the only remedies. Freedom of love and life cannot be found in the deadening settings of these plays; consequently, heroes and heroines must leave "this place" for a "Green World" of their own. This is the central theme of O'Casey's ideal comedies, as we have seen. However young Foorawn, Councillor Reiligan's daughter in The Bishop's Bonfire, has not the courage of Avril or Loreleen; thus, she never realizes the ideal conditions for her fulfillment. But one essential difference between this play and the others analyzed in this portion of the study lies in the frustration which Prodical and Codger bring to Reiligan's and the Canon's plans for a celebration worthy of the return of the native, Bishop Bill Mullarky, to his home village.

Here the conflict is similar to that in the two earlier comedies, but the antics of the Stage Irishmen are the true foils to authority. Hence, the play's rationale is closer to Purple Dust and its antithesis to the ironic treatment of the Stage Irishmen which characterizes the Irish War Plays. Accordingly, this play suggests the essence of escape to the ideal world, even if that escape is not fully realized.

This duality between Stage Irishman foiling burgeoise plans for grandeur and the sadness which comes when a person potentially equipped for the freedom of love and life enslaves those passions into religious devotion is the paradox which motives the theme of Bonfire. But it also provides a basic fault in the play's responses. Kenneth Tynan calls this quality "manic-depressive"³⁸ and that label is reasonable. For so clearly and expertly has O'Casey written into the first act of the play the Stage Irishman's rapacious capacity to foil the joy-killing pretensions of the bourgeoisie and the priesthood that Act I seems of itself sufficient material for a one-act play. It is dramatic; its characterization is rich; its dramatic event is complete; and its ridicule is clear. Its rationale is wedded to O'Casey's

³⁸Curtains (New York, 1961), p. 84.

panacea for the survival of persons who adamantly devote themselves to the worship of joy and freedom by shaping their own lives instead of trying to form Ireland's life.³⁹ This strategy is sufficient to foil their would-be masters; consequently, the melodramatic love struggle in the play is almost a non sequitor.

For purposes of convenience, an analysis of Act I of Bonfire seems reasonable at this point.

Dick Carranaun, Richard Rankin, Manus Moanroe, David Clooncooky, Odger Seehaun are Councillor Reiligan's employees. He has engaged Rankin and Carranaun (called The Prodicall throughout the play) to build a brick wall in his garden and a church steeple in honor of the arrival of the Bishop. As the play opens, these two laborers are standing on a scaffolding discussing the long absence of Daniel Cloonsky who is expected to supply them with mortor. O'Casey's traditional pattern of argument between two "butties" carries the dramatic action of the early portion of the act, as the two men quickly establish their diametrically opposing attitudes toward the work they are doing. Rankin complains that Daniel has been gone too long; Prodicall thinks Rankin wants the job

³⁹ This sentiment is expressed in Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well, pp. 151-52, and it refers to his feelings when he resigned his secretaryship of the Irish Citizen Army.

to end quickly so the two of them will not have to work together. "You can't abide to be near a decent, God-fearin' mortal whose one failin' is an occasional drink," he accuses Rankin, and the other man refuses to comments, foreshadowing the look-the-other-way attitude he shows toward all "earthly" things.

Only the two speeches separate the opening lines of the play from the introduction of the conflict pattern, though, for almost immediately the Councillor and the Very Reverend Timothy Canon Burren enter the garden. Here visible essence, in the form of stage directions which stipulate the dress of the two officials, establishes them as the overloads before they give any speeches. The Canon is a short man, below middle height, plump, and a little awkwardly built, whose legs are short and who seems to trot as he walks. His clothes are ill-fitting--a coat a little too big, and trousers coming down only a little below his boot tops. Emphasis is placed, though, on the two things about him that are "spick and span": his collar and the "canonical flash of purple under his chin."⁴⁰ Reiligan's "small, piercing, pig-like

⁴⁰ The Bishop's Bonfire (New York, 1955), p. 4. Unless otherwise indicated, all references are to that edition.

eyes," his morning clothes which are "all a little too baggy for him" and the explanation that he is the biggest money-man in the district, "a loyal pillar of the clergy," and his great power and influence in the affairs of state establish him as an O'Casey mock-hero. His carrying a silk tall-hat relates him specifically to Michael Marathaun of Cock-a-doodle Dandy and to O'Casey's antipathy to his silk as expressed in the previously quoted allusion to Yeats' poem. Thus, through visible essence and emotive language in stage directions, the play quickly establishes its Oedipal element in the priest and the bourgeoisie.

When they speak the Canon clarifies the opposing elements he wants to stamp out as he tells Reiligan that Manus Moanroe is not a fit person to have around the place because he has designs on Reiligan's daughter and because he gave up his study of the priesthood to join the English Air Force. When the Councillor protests weakly that Manus is a good accountant; that he has saved the estate more than a half thousand pounds, the priest attacks Reiligan's love for money. When the Councillor suggests that another priest, Father Boheroe, thinks well of Manus, the Canon reminds him of the village's church authority with the statement: "I am Parish Priest of Ballyoonagh!" (p. 5).

As soon as the Canon has finished expressing this lack of concern for Manus' worth other than in terms of whether he is a good "moral risk" in the community, he responds to Rankin and Prodical by reminding them that when they are working for the Councillor, however menial the job may be, they are serving God. This platitude permits the two laborers to further reveal their own differences of opinion; for while Rankin answers with a respectful "gis, Canon," Prodical says nothing. However, in an argument with Rankin a few moments later about whose bricks each is laying, Prodical scorns his partner:

You're a nice Christian cut-throat, denyin' a buttie a few bricks! Remember what your Canon said that when you served oul' Reiligan, you served God; so as I'm serving Reiligan, by servin' me, you're servin' God, too. Good catholic an' all as you call yourself, you're not goin' to be let bounce yourself into an authority you've no legal or Christian right to! I'll not be bounced (p. 7).

The two men scuffle over a brick, with Prodical threatening to bring back Rankin's catholic conscience, castigating him for "muskin' me about like you were on a prairie outa sight of God an' scholarship," the other man is outraged that anyone would say anything against his religion. They shout to each other about the long-suffering aspects of the true religion, indicating in burlesque that who is

properly religious and who is not may largely be a battle of words and show. While they are fighting, Manus comes on stage, but immediately establishes his role as more than a Stage Irishman who flourishes on bravado. He speaks angrily of the play's attitude toward "this place" as he flings at the workers:

Give over your fightin' for bricks of clay,
the way Reiligan fights for the gold ones,
you god-frightened fools. You spoilers of
men's hopes and men's fancies; you curses on
Ballyoonagh where the rust of hell is on every-
thing that's done here (p. 10).

But he is not without his "stage" quality, for when Daniel Clooncooky arrives telling that the Codger has discovered a keg of whiskey, Manus turns off Rankin's reminders that the church tower must be built tomorrow by exclaiming, "We have to keep building our temples higher and higher till the shouting of heavenly pride encases and hides the growling-grumble of men" (p. 11). His vision is different from that of men who argue aimlessly about God's work on earth, and that vision is reinforced as a system of value in the play by the appearance of Reiligan's daughter Keelin, who taunts the automatically pious Rankin by making him look at her legs. When Keelin asks Daniel to come into the bedroom to help her move furniture, Manus reasons that he is aching with desire

but nothing will come of it. He disposes of Rankin and Prodical by telling them, "I don't know which of you's the biggest bum--him who thinks he's given to heaven, or you who know you're given to drink" (p. 15).

The Prodical speaks for himself, though, on terms which indicate that his ideas are close to the play's values, for when he is ridiculed by Rankin for his whiskey-drinking and Rankin gives the attack a moral basis, Prodical complains that his soul is his "own spiritual compendium"; his "own spiritual property, complete an' entire, verbatim in all its concernment" (p. 19). With that pronouncement of his individual freedom, Prodical goes to sample the newly found whiskey while Rankin prays. Keelin aligns herself with the forces of freedom, and reminds Rankin that another priest, Father Boheroe, is human and liberal. (He is described in the stage directions as "A man of the world as well as a man of God"), and while discussing work with the pious Rankin, the bricklayer thinks naturally of the work he is doing for the Church. "I'd be afraid to say anything against a sacred place," he tells the priest. Father Boheroe answers in terms which again speak the play's values:

All places are sacred, man; 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! Work,
 Rankin, can bless, but it can blast,
 too, as it is blasting little Keelin,
 who should be living with a gay young
 lad in a house of her own (p. 25).

And again when he says:

Keelin's a fine girl but works too
 hard for too little. Too much work
 misfits a soul for heaven and for
 here, Rankin. Keelin's a grand girl,
 an' should have a wide an' merrier
 corner in life. Too much formal prayer,
 Rankin, sometimes makes a soul conceited;
 and merriment may be a way of worship (p. 26).

Throughout the play, Father Boheroe represents an
 attitude toward life which is unlike Father Domineer's in
Cock-a-doodle Dandy; however, the dramatization of the
 play's significant point relies primarily upon a relation-
 ship between Foorawn, Reiligan's daughter who has taken a
 vow of chastity and perpetual devotion, and Manus Moanroe,
 an ex-seminarian who deserted the Church for the Air Force.
 She is a tall, handsome woman of twenty-seven, whose large
 blue eyes gleam, even when she tries to give her fair face
 a look of resolute and austere serenity. Because she wears
 a large enamel cross about her neck and a blue mantle over
 her hair, workmen "lift their hats respectfully in tribute
 to her reputation for piety, and in reverence for the vow
 of perpetual chastity with which she has burdened herself"

(p. 35). Her father says she belongs to God and is separated from menial work, for prayer is her work.

The encounter between Foorawn and Manus provides the play's manifest conflict as the love theme finds its opportunity to be enacted. It is one in which the stifling religion of the Community places a pall over the humanity in Foorawn. Manus, having thrown off the Church's influence over him and his obligation to it, becomes the Mephistophaleen figure in his relationship to Foorawn in the following confrontation:⁴¹

MANUS: Foorawn!

FOORAWN: (in a slightly frightened voice) Oh, Manus don't stop me; let me go quietly in for both our sakes. I never thought I'd meet you.

MANUS: (firmly) You knew I'd be near. You saw me as you were going. You hoped to meet me. You wanted to meet me. You meant to meet us!

FOORAWN: Not us, I didn't. When you stopped me yesterday, I beseeched you not to trouble me again.

⁴¹ Compare with the following passage from Margareta in Goethe's *Faust* (Philip Wayne, ed., Baltimore, Maryland, 1958, p. 196): "What evil thing has risen from the ground? He, ah, not he! Forbid him from my sight. On holy ground he has no right, He wants my soul, to torture and confound, He waits my death."

- MANUS: You wanted to see me yesterday; you wanted to see me today. You would like to see me till your eyes were old, and could see no more.
- FOORAWN: (poignantly) God forgive me! Don't torment me, Manus. Let me go quietly into my refuge. I am not under the pure white moon of heaven. Gone for ever from you, Manus. Look at me all in black an' blue. I am no longer a lure to your seeking eyes.
- MANUS: Oh, you cannot hide the lure of your figure under a tenebrae cloak, or masquerade your handsome face under a hiding hood. Oh, Foorawn, my love and my longing for you go under them all.
- FOORAWN: Go away from me! I prayed to help you on your way to the priesthood; and while I was praying, you were creeping from your intention during the slow, cold hours of an early morning, leaving your name marked down as dead in the sacred register of the College. . .
- MANUS: Where I flew towards death at every chance I got so that I might die from all that had happened; but God laughed, and presented me with a medal; and when in another chance, I pushed closer to death, He laughed again, and added a silver bar to ripen the ribbon. . . . Yes, look at me now. A man with the same soul, the same mind, the same defiance of shabby life, and the same outlasting and consuming love for Foorawn, my own, and for ever.
- FOORAWN: (pulling herself out of his arms) No, no! I must go, I belong to God now, and Him only can I serve (pp. 41-42).

Here Father Boheroe, who stands in Manus' way when he attempts to go after Foorawn, speaks the play's attitude toward the young woman's chastity: "She is too deep now in the vain glory of her chastity to come to you." His advice to Manus is that he should let himself fall in love with life and become another man, at war with most things. Here the play's essential action is established; for although Act II contains further preparation for the Bishop's visit and indications of Foorawn's saintly virtues, its farce is almost extraneous to the play's basic conflict.

That conflict is picked up again, however, in Act III, beginning with Manus' announcement that he has decided to leave Balloonagh. Reiligan, who is dependent upon him to oversee his workers, tries to discourage Manus from leaving the community; Foorawn indicates that she hopes he will not leave; the Canon thinks the village will be better without him. But when he has left the group and Foorawn and Father Boheroe are alone, she confesses she has not forgotten her love for Manus. In fact, she begs the priest to help her to forget. When she complains that the Bishop could never release her from his vows, Father Boheroe says, "Then ask God, my daughter" (p. 112).

Father Boheroe, much like unfrocked Father Keegan in John Bull's Other Island, represents in the play a liberal

view of the priesthood which is infinitely more desirable than that presented by The Canon. The basis on which the two churchmen disagree is the significance of vows of chastity. The following exchange of speeches between Foorawn and Father Boheroe further emphasizes the human behavior which the play ridicules:

FOORAWN: Ask God? How could I possibly know that God wouldn't be angry with me for breaking my vow?

FATHER
BOHEROE: How did you know that God was pleased when you took it?

FOORAWN: The Canon told me, the Bishop told me.

BOHEROE: Oh, yes, the Bishop and the Canon. I forgot them. They hear everything God says.

FOORAWN: (with uneasy indignation) What kind of a priest are you, sayin' such things! Muddlin' a young girl's mind against turnin' her face to God, an' turnin' her back on the world, the flesh, the devil.

BOHEROE: Ah, Foorawn, it is easy to turn one's back on things, but it is better and braver to face them. I shall never turn my back on a beautiful world, nor on the beautiful flesh of humanity, asparkle with vigour, intelligence, and health; and as for the devil, what we often declare to be the devil is but truth who has at last mustered the courage to speak it (pp. 111-112).

Through these lines the approved standard of human behavior is stated; for here, as in Cock-a-doodle Dandy, "Original

Joy," rather than Original Sin, is the life quality which is celebrated. Unlike the earlier play, however, the conflict between the two ideologies is not so dramatically portrayed. In Bonfire, this argument is largely dialectical, and the final essential action of the play is forced into a mould which fits the essence of Father Boheroe's attitude as over against Foorawn's, her father's or the canon's. For this reason, the conclusion of the play is poorly motivated. Foorawn's folly in placing the pall over her natural love for life becomes the most heavily satirized action in the play's ending, but the introduction of the church's guilt in "stealing" money from the workers is totally irrelevant to any thoughts or actions which have been presented previously. The playwright strives so hard to show the tragic consequences which follow young women who stifle themselves by taking the vow of chastity that he falls into a melodramatic trap in which Foorawn becomes fanatic in her defense of the church.

Manus returns to Reiligan's house to persuade Foorawn to go away with him to what is essentially and implicitly a "Green World." That world is undefined in this play; consequently, the Ideal Comedy convention is not fully realized here. Instead, Manus wishes to rob the Chapel of money which has been blessed and kept near the statues of

patron saints of the estate and of the village. That money represents villainy on the part of the Church, he reasons.

"If the Canon complains, tell him Manus took the notes from their sacred hiding-place as David took the shewbread from the holy altar," he says. This sacriligious act enrages Foorawn who struggles with Manus, imploring him to give back the money and go his wicked way. She calls him a "spoiled priest" after he calls her an "empty shell of womanhood," and in the struggle Foorawn is shot. Because she loves Manus and tells him so as she dies, Foorawn also attempts to write a note which claims her death is a suicide.

In its melodramatic ending Bonfire has all of the sentimentality of a Boucicault play.⁴²

Ostensibly, the play intends to confirm an appreciation of life which is preferred to a religious vocation. However, O'Casey's bias against most of the Roman Catholic priesthood will not permit him to use a reasonably even struggle as the conflict of this play. Because Bonfire ends melodramatically, it is not a fully realized Ideal Comedy. However, because the play does present a group of humours outwitted by the opposing group, and because its conclusion does signify the establishment of a more desirable society, Bonfire can be classified as an Ideal Comedy.

⁴² Sentimentality is realized not in terms of the rogue-hero, but in the melodramatic conclusion.

The play's weakness probably lies in O'Casey's use of the secondary plot--the love emphasis--to resolve the general theme. Action begins with antithetical attitudes toward the Church and, specifically, toward the Bishop's impending visit. The Canon and Councillor Reiligan represent the serious attitude toward these preparations and their significance. Father Boheroe, whose vision is broader and deeper than that of the conventional Irish village priest, represents an attitude toward the Church which O'Casey probably would prefer to the Canon's. He advocates self-reliance instead of saint-reliance, and he warns that Ireland should not exchange the "domination of the big house with the lion and unicorn on its front" for the "big shop with the cross and shamrock on its gable." Manus Moanroe, as a man who forsook the study for the priesthood, provides O'Casey a character whose independence makes somewhat concrete the priest's theories. Foorawn provides a foil in her total resignation to chastity. However, the clowns of the play, particularly Rankin and Prodical, provide a laudable "norm," or attitude of a desirable society, which represents the play's best value.

They are the clowns whose buffoonery, for all its farce, displays not only a superior, sophisticated type of

humour, but also presents a thematic conclusion which is more acceptable than the melodramatic suicide. That quality in Bonfire which also appears in the other ideal comedies is the theme of repression and piety versus freedom and joy. Father Boheroe expresses this theme often; Manus tries to manifest it concretely; Foorawn struggles against it. But Prodical, alone, achieves that freedom. He who sings merrily, enjoys his work and his drink as best he can, and makes no pretense at social, political, religious or military significance, maintains his independence throughout the play.

Prodical motivates action in which he is involved, although at the play's end, he and Codger stand somewhat together as Bonfire's redeeming comic characters. Early in the play Prodical pronounces his own "declaration of independence" in one of his arguments with the rigidly religious Rankin. The following exchange of speeches illustrates the point here:

RANKIN: You said a short time ago that it was goin' to be never again with you.

PRODICAL: (protestingly) I'm not to blame for you overhearin' silent things. What I murmured was sotto vossie. I'm not a factotum to me own whisperin's into me own ear.

RANKIN: It wasn't said sotto vossie. It was outspoken, an' next door to a vow.

PRODICAL: (indignantly) It was no vow! It had no habiliments of any vow on it. It was a sub rosa understandin' or misunderstandin' with meself.

RANKIN: (plaintively to Prodical) Your good angel's trying to pull you back, Prodical; but if you once get to the keg, you're cornered! It's an occasion of sin, an' may do immortal harm to your poor soul!

PRODICAL: (coming over to Rankin and thrusting his face upwards toward Rankin--indignantly) Looka, me good angel, I won't have you hovering over me soul like a saygull over a fish too deep for a dive down! I'm not goin' to let foreign bodies write down messages on me soul the way a body writes down things on a Christmas card. . . Me soul's me own particular compendium. Me soul's me own spiritual property, complete an' entire, verbatim in all its concernment (pp. 18-19).

True, Prodical possesses "stage" Irish qualities; he is quarrelsome, he loves his whiskey, he coins his language in his most fervent expressions, and he dupes those who believe they are his superiors. But instead of satirizing the Prodical for these qualities, O'Casey permits this comic character to frustrate the plans of the Councillor and the Canon repeatedly. Consequently, the farcical action--arguing about souls and bricks, horseplay with potted plants, spilling cement on the new rug and arguments with the statues of the saints--is wedded to the power of the comic character in his struggle with "humourous" civil and church authorities.

In this manner the consistent characterization of Prodical, whose name is actually Dick Carranaun, coincides with the literal meaning of the word.⁴³ His extravagances are legion, as his entire role has shown, but, from the standpoint of the play's satirized characters, perhaps his most damaging excesses lie in his insistence upon maintaining his individual freedom from the bondages which the play condemns. His role is certain and consistent; hence, it provides a clear view of life which makes unnecessary the melodramatic ending.

Prodical becomes the norm in the play; for unlike Foorawn and Manus, who find no way to live acceptably in a world which takes its religion so seriously that it negates life, he lives and works in a manner which satisfies him. Thus, when he ends the play singing a song with Codger, that celebration of life--though he says he is in a mournful mood--expresses the play's conclusion in terms of social good. "With our bottle of wine an' whiskey, and a tasty snack in my little shanty, we'll keep the night aglow by a tait-a-tait talk about the woes an' wonders of the world" (p. 120), he tells Codger, "Merrily mournful" is the way Codger describes the mood of the two men, but the impression

⁴³Webster's New International Dictionary, p. 673, defines the word as: (1) "given to reckless extravagance" That is the literal meaning referred to here.

they leave is totally unlike Boyle's and Joxer's at the conclusion of Juno and the Paycock. In that play, whose comedy is ironic in the terms of this thesis, the audience response should censor the two Stage Irishmen whose irresponsibility has caused the disintegration of family life. But the Prodigal and Codger have succeeded in finding a life which can be lived outside the scope of the Bishop's bonfire. They have remained aloof from the serious preparations for the festival; they have frustrated the serious plans which involved their services as workmen; they have found a way to live on their own terms, although their needs and ambitions are simple ones. In this respect, they resemble O'Killigain and O'Dempsey of Purple Dust. But in a larger sense, they are pastoral figures who, as "wise fools," find a limited but satisfactory "Green World" within the setting of the play.

When we recall that the theme of young love carries the melodramatic strain of this play and that the willingness to die for lack of courage to escape from ritual bondage is placed with Foorawn and Manus, Prodigal and Codger become the totally approved characters in The Bishop's Bonfire. Not only have they frustrated the ritual bondage which the predictable characters, in the person of Reiligan and the Canon, have tried to perpetrate upon them, but they have

found a way of living in their own village without sadness and without responsibility to the "wrong" ideals. They are noticeably more successful in their conflict than Manus Moanroe is, for he fails to carry sufficient strength for him to be the norm of the play. He simply rebels. And in the end, his life of rebellion is no more important to him than is Foorwan's. In fact, he begs her to shoot him before she dies. But the two old "buttles," Prodicol and Codger, the true Stage Irishmen of the play, end happily singing, "My Bonnie lies over the Ocean," indicating in the confidence of their triumph over the Church and the bourgeoisie that they have found a successful mode of living.

Most significantly, this play illustrates one end of O'Casey's full swing in the use of the Stage Irishman; for whereas that figure had been the tour de force for ironic comedy in the Irish War Plays, and had been absent from the archetypal masques, he became the emerging norm for expressing an approved audience response as a new social point of view in the ideal comedies. That emergence culminates in The Bishop's Bonfire.

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