SEAN O'CASEY'S EARLY PLAYS

AS

LARKINITE STAGE PARABLES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the parabolic nature of Sean O'Casey's early plays: Kathleen Listens In, The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars. This is done in accordance with the methodology of Lucien Goldmann. Part I examines the historical and socio-political material relevant to O'Casey's development of class consciousness and introduces James Larkin, Ireland's greatest labour leader, the tribune of working class limit-consciousness. O'Casey, an active participant in Larkin's movement, shared in the Larkinite world vision of a self-governing community of workers. Therefore, he was alienated by the dissolution of working class limit-consciousness in the nationalist 1916 Uprising. Part II consists of analyses of his Dublin plays in which O'Casey criticised the historical defeat of the working class from the point of view of the Larkinite limit-consciousness. As Larkinite stage parables, they are O'Casey's indictment against his own fractionalised and alienated class. Many dilemmas in O'Caseyan criticism, such as naturalism versus expressionism and politics versus poetry, can be resolved by such an approach which envisages his plays as parabolic ones.

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RÉSUMÉ

L'intention de cette thèse est d'analyser la nature parabolique des premières pièces de Sean O'Casey: Kathleen Listens In, The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, et The Plough and the Stars. La méthodologie suivie est celle de Lucien Goldmann. La première partié examine les materiaux historiques et socio-politiques applicables au developpement de la conscience de classe d'O'Casey, et présente James Larkin, le plus grand chef ouvrier d'Irlande, le tribun de la "conscience possible" de la classe ouvrière. O'Casey, un participant actif dans le mouvement de Larkin, partageait sa vision du mond d'une communité d'ouvriers gouvernée par soi-même. Donc, il était aliené par la dissolution de la "conscience possible" de la classe ouvrière dans l'Insurrection nationaliste de 1916. La deuxième partie consiste des analyses des "pièces de Dublin" dans lesquelles O'Casey critiquait la défaite historique de la classe ouvrière du pointe de vue de la "conscience possible" Larkiniste. Envisagées comme paraboles théatrales Larkinistes, cettes pièces sont des accusations d'O'Casey vers sa propre classe alienée et fracturée. Plusieurs dilemmes dans la critique d'O'Casey, par example le problème du naturalisme vers l'expressionisme et de la politique vers la poésie, sont resolubles par cette approche qui envisage ses pièces commes paraboliques.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the parabolic nature of Sean O'Casey's early plays: Kathleen Listens In, The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars. Its contention is that these plays -- and O'Casey's whole creative horizon -- can be illuminated by treating them as Larkinite class consciousness in the form of stage parables. That O'Casey was Larkinite will be proved in Part I. The main sources used are O'Casey's Autobiographies and his The Story of the Irish Citizen Army, various biographical and critical studies on O'Casey, as well as documentation of a historical nature. As will be shown in Part I, O'Casey was from the working class and a member of the slum community which he later captured so vividly in his dramatic pieces. Alienated from his peers by his religious background, serious illness, and intellectual predispositions, he was from early childhood on a self-conscious commentator of the real life drama around him. This alienation was replaced by a growth of working class consciousness in O'Casey, the seeds of which were his own experience with the exploitation of the working class by the Anglo-Irish bourgeoisie. His class consciousness crystallised fully during his participation in the Labour movement of the 1910's. This movement was catalyzed by its leader and O'Casey's personal hero, James Larkin, a dynamic trade-unionist who lifted the Dublin workers out of apathy and helped give birth to the group consciousness in which O'Casey shared.

A member of the working class himself and schooled in English socialism, Larkin made Dublin a battleground on which he waged war against capitalism fiercely and, for a short time, successfully. He took upon himself the role of paternalistic leader whose sole purpose was to enlarge the working class consciousness, and move them towards concrete action actualising such a "limit" or "potential" consciousness. The terms of actual consciousness and limit-consciousness, borrowed from Goldmann, require definition as they play an important part in the analysis of O'Casey's plays. The actual or real consciousness is "the product of arrested development and deformation of the 'limit consciousness' under the pressure of other social groups as well as of natural and cosmic factors";[1] both Larkin and O'Casey shared an awareness of the unclear and often illusory actual consciousness of the working class. The limit or potential consciousness is the envisioning of a Marxist, classless society or utopia, the establishing of true communities having as their goal the harmonious relationships of people with each other and with nature. Larkin worked toward that vision of a workers' utopia through his trade-unionist activities, O'Casey through his activity as Secretary of Larkin's workers' army, the Irish Citizen Army. A high point of class consciousness was reached in 1913, the year of Larkin's most devastating and critically successful strike. After this date, however, the working class began to be coopted by the middle class nationalist movement, and alienated from its own class community and potential limit-consciousness by a series of national crises, none of which had as their goal a workers' self-government. Part I of this thesis examines and documents the historical background to this development, and the eventual regression of working class consciousness. In accordance with the methodology suggested

by Lucien Goldmann this is taken as the social and ideological context of Part II which is the center of the thesis.

At this point it is pertinent to give a brief account of the methodology used in this thesis, which is based upon Lucien Goldmann's theory of a "structural-genetic" approach to literature. Goldmann's method explains the writer as an exceptional individual who is able to fully express a collective consciousness of a specific social class, usually that of his own, in his plays or novels. From a social class's everyday behaviour and expressions of actual consciousness there arise mental or categorical structures which are world visions. Such a world vision is analogous to a collective consciousness or, as Goldmann prefers, a "group consciousness."[2] The study of literature can thus explain and make for the understanding not only of the individual writer but, more importantly, of the text as an expression of a not wholly conscious process, a categorical structure homologous to the class consciousness shared by the writer. If that is correct, literature cannot be comprehended without an intimate acquaintance with historico-socio-political developments as well as philosophical correspondences to its modes of thought.

To break this down further into components is to be anti-Goldmannian. This type of study has the shape of a circle, consonant with Goldmann's hermeneutics of the whole and the parts: "I hold it to be equally impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole, and to know the whole without having a particular knowledge of each part."[3] In other words, there is no vertical (up-down) or linear ($a \rightarrow b \rightarrow c$) structure but something similar to a Chinese box -- a box within a box

within a box, with all of the boxes separate yet still forming one box. Goldmann takes apart his box in this fashion: he explains mental structure first, then the components of the structures, then proceeds to historical examinations of classes and events which were significant for the formation of the described mental categories, and finally arrives at an author whose works have been chosen because they express exceptionally well the group consciousness and non-conscious processes of the world vision. Each step clarifies the picture of the parts fitting into the whole and the whole consisting of the parts. The author is seen as one part and as a rather rare occurrence. Obviously, in a work such as this thesis, many of these steps can be supposed as known -- elucidated methodologically by Goldmann and historically by authors quoted and discussed in Part I.

For Goldmann, the author is important because, acting as a member of a social group or class, he comes to terms with their particular world vision. The author does not merit attention on a psychological or individualistic level:

> It is rarely sufficient to concentrate solely on the personal life of the writer in question, and the scholar must often deal first of all with the general climate of thought and feeling, of which the philosophical system or literary work provides the most coherent expression. This climate -- which can be called group consciousness, or, in certain definite cases...class consciousness -- can also provide an historical explanation as to why a particular work came to be written in its present form.[4]

Goldmann further stresses:

> I thus maintain that the ideas and work of an author cannot be understood as long as we remain on the level of what he wrote, or even of what he read and what influenced him. Ideas are only a partial aspect of a less abstract reality: that of the whole, living man. And in his turn, this man is only an element in a whole made up of the social group to which he

> belongs. An idea which he expresses or a book which he writes can acquire their real meaning for us, and can be fully understood, only when they are seen as integral parts of his life and mode of behaviour. Moreover, it often happens that the mode of behaviour which enables us to understand a particular work is not that of the author himself, but that of a whole social group; and, when the work with which we are concerned is of particular importance, this behaviour is that of a whole social class.[5]

Thus, Goldmann's theory -- which is an equivalent of his methodology -- is this: every man (and author) is a member of a class or social group; his actual consciousness or personal experience is not isolated and he only finds expression within a social group. The social group's behaviour delineates a set of problems which it shares and wishes to overcome. A group consciousness becomes evident and, at a certain stage -- usually one of national, economic, or social crisis -- such a world vision becomes coherent enough to be expressed in words or art. Man is as much spoken by as speaking the vision:

> In a few cases -- and it is these which interest us -- there are exceptional individuals who either actually achieve or who come very near to achieving a completely integrated and coherent view of what they and the social class to which they belong are trying to do.[6]

However, written works are not only "the simple reflection of a collective consciousness," but also:

> ...a particularly unified and coherent expression of the tendencies and aspirations of a given group. They express what the individual members of the group felt and thought without being conscious of it or without being able to formulate it so coherently. They are a meeting of the personal and the collective on the highest level of significant structuring. Their function is analogous to that of thought and action: to organize social structures so that life becomes more acceptable.[7]

Thus the work expresses the vision of the trans-individual subject, a search for trans-individual values in a disintegrating world.

In agreement with Goldmann, this thesis holds that a significant study of O'Casey's plays would define the collective subject or world vision which gives the plays their form and content. This is done in Part I by examining O'Casey's social group -- the Irish working class, its antecedents and its development during his formative years culminating in the period 1900-1920. It is necessary as a first step to define the historical basis for a social crisis which would cause such a revolutionary change in class ideology and structure, which development becomes a context for literature. This can be done by examining the state of Ireland in terms of its depressed economy, the severe social imbalance, the religious antagonism, the rise of nationalism, and a climactic but finally unsuccessful drawing together of the working class in its attempt at concrete action aimed at making life more acceptable, that is, at bringing about their world vision. Most important for this study is the period 1910-1916, that of the great Larkinite Labour movement and O'Casey's participation in it, for the socio-economico-political conflicts then gave rise to a world vision of the working class. This world vision, expounded first by Larkin and then taken up by O'Casey, had to do with the awakening of the actual consciousness of the proletariat to a stage of limit-consciousness, and with the envisioning of a socialist future as an answer to the conflicts of that time.

As will be demonstrated in Part II, O'Casey, after his break with all political movements, assumed for himself the task of being

the voice of the alienated plebeians of Dublin and Ireland. He saw his purpose as playwright as a translator of this world vision into dramatic characters and events which would present the multiple universe of individual consciousness in all their diversity while also depicting -- directly or indirectly -- the coherent group experience or limit-consciousness of the working class. Part II analyses O'Casey's early plays as Larkinite stage parables, sui generis allegories (in a very wide sense of the word, not necessarily identical to its medieval connotations). These plays came after the high point of consciousness in 1913 and deal with the national events that were alienating and destructive to the working class. The plays examine and criticize the false consciousness of the working class of the late 1910's and the 1920's. This false consciousness arose from the destruction of the Larkinite world vision, as the working class became fractionalised during national crises and its limit-consciousness was replaced by the alienated consciousness of the individual separated from his class roots and incapable of providing alternative ideologies or structures to the devastating chaos and disintegration of a nation at war. O'Casey retained the Larkinite world vision throughout his life and made of it his own personal ideology; it is from the point of view of this Larkinite limit-consciousness that he criticised the actual or false consciousness of the working class as leading to the destruction of family and class communities, to illusions antithetical to, and made possible by the collapse of, the world vision preconized by Larkin. In essence, O'Casey carried on Larkin's world vision into drama and expressed, after the historical fact, the consciousness of the Irish working class to which he belonged. Thus, O'Casey acted as

the conscience of the working class, taking up Larkin's "divine mission of discontent",[8] and moving it from trade unionism to the arena of theatre and art. As Allan Lewis states, "O'Casey is the materialist with a dash of Shelley -- the earthbound trade unionist with his head in the stars."[9] This thesis examines the way he drew together these two worlds of reality and art -- how his plays became parabolic criticisms of the state of Ireland in general and its working class in particular.

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1]Darko Suvin, "Voyage to the Stars and Pannonian Mire: Miroslav Krleža's Expressionist Vision and the Croatian Plebeian Consciousness in the Epoch of World War One," Mosaic: A Journal for the Comparative Study of Literature and Ideas, VI, no. 4 (Summer 1973), p. 171.

[2]Lucien Goldmann, The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the 'Pensées' of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine, (New York: The Humanities Press, 1964), p. 98. For further works of Goldmann and his methodology, see the bibiliography and especially his The Human Sciences and Philosophy, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970).

[3]Ibid., p. 6., Goldmann quoting Pascal.

[4]Ibid., p. 98.

[5]Ibid., p. 7.

[6]Ibid., p. 17.

[7]Lucien Goldmann, "Structure: Human Reality and Methodological Concept" in The Languages of Criticism and the Science of Man: The Structuralist Controversy, edited by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 109-110.

[8]David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 18.

[9]Allan Lewis, The Contemporary Theatre: The Significant Playwrights of Our Time (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1971), p. 190.

PART I

SEAN O'CASEY'S PROMETHEAN MENTOR:

IRISH HISTORY AND JAMES LARKIN

CHAPTER I

IRISH HISTORY AS THE CONTEXT OF O'CASEY'S LIFE UP TO HIS PARTICIPATION IN LARKIN'S LABOUR MOVEMENT

Sean O'Casey was born in Dublin on the 30th of March, 1880, of Protestant parents. Separated from the bourgeois Protestant hierarchy by his poverty and living amongst a tenement population predominantly Catholic, he was an "outsider", and an "alienated onlooker", becoming a writer whose "nonconformity gives him a view of the people from the other side."[1] It is the purpose of this first chapter to retrace the historical background at that time and to delineate the economic and social clashes which would cause a growth of consciousness among O'Casey's class and the formation of his personal socialist world view which he would then express in his plays.

Irish history has traditionally revolved around the question of land. In an agriculturally based economy, Ireland in the early 18th Century was overpopulated, the 80% Catholic majority suffering at the hands of the power-wielding Protestant minority. This Anglo-Irish minority was intent on preserving its land holdings and tightly allied with the English establishment which evinced no concern for the Catholic agricultural proletarians. Frederick Engels wrote in 1837, using statistics culled from the Report of the Poor Law Commission on Ireland, that:

> According to the report quoted, there are, in a population of 8-1/2 millions, 585,000 heads of families in a state of total destitution; and according to other authorities,...there are in Ireland 2,300,000 persons who could not live without public or private assistance - or 27 per cent of the whole population paupers![2]

Engels defined the Irish problem thus:

> ...Ireland exhibits the consequences of over-dividing the soil. The great mass of the population of Ireland consists of small tenants who occupy a sorry hut without partitions, and a potato patch just large enough to supply them most scantily with potatoes through the winter. In consequence of the great competition which prevails among these small tenants, the rent has reached an unheard-of height, double, treble, and quadruple that paid in England. For every agricultural labourer seeks to become a tenant-farmer, and though the division of land has gone so far, there still remain numbers of labourers in competition for plots. Although in Great Britain 32,000,000 acres of land are cultivated, and in Ireland but 14,000,000; although Great Britain produces agricultural products to the value of £150,000,000, and Ireland of but £36,000,000, there are in Ireland 75,000 agricultural proletarians more than in the neighbouring island.[3]

In 1845-1847, this surplus population was thought to be disposed of by the Great Famine; nevertheless, the Irish economy remained in dire straits. The English landlords took the opportunity to centralise their holdings:

> In 1841 there were 135,314 holdings of less than one acre. In 1851, their numbers had shrunk to 37,728. Holdings between one and five acres numbered 310,436 in 1841; in 1851 there were 88,083. Farms between five and fifteen acres were 252,799 in 1841; in 1851 there were 191,854. There was a corresponding increase of farms from fifteen to thirty acres, and a much greater increase of those above thirty acres.[4]

In order to make the centralisation process most effective, mass evictions became commonplace. From 1845 to 1847 they numbered 3,000; from 1847-49 -- 25,700; and from 1849-1852 -- 58,423, affecting 306,120 individuals.[5] Further, it is estimated that one million people starved to death in the rural regions. By 1866, the position of the small farmers was that of a class under genocidal oppression. Karl Marx writes in Capital:

> The population of Ireland had, in 1841, reached 8,222,664; in 1851, it had dwindled to 6,623,985; in 1861, to 5,850,309; in 1866, to 5-1/2 millions, nearly to its level in 1801. The diminution began with the famine year, 1846, so that Ireland, in

> less than twenty years, lost more than 5/16ths of its people. Its total emigration from May, 1851, to July, 1865, numbered 1,591,487: the emigration during the years 1861-1865 was more than half-a-million. The number of inhabited houses fell, from 1851-1861, by 52,990. From 1851-1861, the number of holdings of 15 to 30 acres increased 61,000, that of holdings over 30 acres, 109,000, whilst the total number of all farms fell 120,000, a fall, therefore, solely due to the suppression of farms under 15 acres - i.e., to their centralisation.[6]

Marx also notes in "Population, Crime and Pauperism" that, although the population fell by over 2-1/2 million, the estimated number of paupers, according to the Catholic parishes, remained steady from 1849-1858 at around 80,000.[7] In other writings, Marx points out the one addition to the populace at the time of decreasing gross population: "an absolute increase in the number of deaf-mutes, blind, insane, idiotic, and decrepit inhabitants" by 14,098 in the years 1851-1861.[8]

The high level of poverty was due to three factors besides property centralisation: the loss of arable land to pasture land and an increase in livestock, inflation of food prices while wages remained low, and the continuing program of exporting a major part of crops and foodstuffs into England. Marx, in his notes on Ireland, stated:

> The total area of Ireland, including bogs and waste land: 20,319,924 acres. Of those 3/5, = 12,092,117 acres, form still farms from under 1 to under 100 acres, and are in the hands of 569,844 farmers; 2/5 = 8,227,807, form farms from 100 till over 500 acres, and are in the hands of 31,927 persons. Thus to be cleared off 2,847,220, if we number only the farmers and their families.[9]

However, these figures include non-arable land; the state of this land was a further problem: "Between 1855 and 1864 the arable area (excluding flax) fell from 4,276,954 acres to 3,765,059 acres."[10] This fall in profitable harvest land was due to an increase in livestock:

> In the same period from 1855 to 1866 [the] number of the live-stock increased as follows: cattle by 178,532, sheep by 667,675, pigs by 315,918. If we take into account the simultaneous decrease of horses by 20,656, and equalise 8 sheep to 1 horse total increase of live-stock: 996,877, about one million.
>
> Thus 1,032,694 Irishmen have been displaced by about one million cattle, pigs, and sheep. What has become of them? The emigration list answers.[11]

With the reduction and centralisation of arable land, the agricultural proletarians depended upon a good harvest for sustenance. In 1860-1862, the crop was very poor; the potato yield at 1.6 tons an acre in 1861 was the lowest since the Great Famine, and the wet season similarly destroyed the hay and the turf.[12] By 1867, the practice of rack-renting by English landlords drove more small farmers off the land, as food prices rose and they fell into arrears: "Wages have not risen more than 20%, since the potato famine. The price of potatoes has risen nearly 200%; the necessary means of life on an average by 100%."[13] The farmers began terrorist activities in the countryside. The Fenians, a revolutionary organisation begun in America among immigrants from the Great Famine, at the end of the Civil War in America had a membership of 200,000. Sending back money and men to Ireland, they helped to stage a rising there in 1867, an attempt by the agricultural proletarians to inform the world of the tyrannical behaviour of England toward Ireland. Isolated from city-dwellers and without proper organisation, they were quickly suppressed. However, socialist groups had by then become interested in the Irish struggle. Beginning in 1867, the International Working Men's Association's General Council, mostly at the prodding of Marx, then Secretary for Germany, began a publicity campaign for the release of Fenian prisoners through the European radical press. Marx realized that the national emancipation of Ireland was the first step in a social emancipation for the English working class. Gladstone, the Liberal

Prime Minister, protecting England's capitalist economy, attempted to appease the Irish by disestablishing the Protestant Church of Ireland in 1869 and releasing the majority of leading Fenian prisoners in 1871. As spokesman for liberal England, he would for the next three decades try to delay the formation of any independent Irish party; especially one of the working class, knowing that their existence would severely endanger England's hold over Ireland. However, in 1874, the Irish Home Rule League established a third party and gained a strong footing in Parliament. In 1875, Charles Stewart Parnell was elected for County Meath, and, together with Joseph Biggar, instituted the practice of obstructionism in the British parliament in an attempt to stop any legislation which would give England greater authority in Ireland.

Gladstone had passed a first Land Act in 1870, designed to give the small tenants and farmers property-rights to the land. In essence, the Act came down to the maxim that if the farmers could pay, they could stay. The class structure of the country can be seen from the following:

> When the first Land Act was passed in 1870, the land was owned by some 19,000 proprietors, of whom one-fifth possessed 80% of the cultivated area. There were five classes of tenant under the landlords -- leaseholders, middlemen, annual tenants, cottiers and labourers. The leaseholders, in all numbering 135,000, held the land in perpetuity, or under an agreement defined by the duration of two or more lives, and were mainly Protestants, as the Penal Laws abrogated in 1827 had forbidden long leases to Roman Catholics....The middlemen were the agents of the landlords and let off land to the remaining three classes. The annual tenants, some 525,000, formed the typical "small farmer" class settled mainly on lands valued at less than £15 per year, and were liable to eviction on six months' notice. The cottiers lived in poor cottages generally located on someone else's land, and had very little land of their own, though they normally hired a patch of "conacre" to grow a crop of potatoes or pasture their stock. Least fortunate of all were the labourers, who had no land at all, though they too would commonly hire a patch of conacre....[14]

The early 1870's were a prosperous time for farmers, as harvests were good and rents easy to pay. Prices began to fall, however, as technological improvement led to cheap transportation from North America and Australia; imported products became less expensive than the Irish or English ones. This led to a depression in the whole British agriculture, including Ireland.

In 1879, the potato crop failed and famine struck again among the great mass of farmers and labourers:

> Up to and including the harvest of 1879, agriculture had been prosperous. Three bad harvests in the following seasons altered things. The output of the main agricultural crops, measured in fixed prices, fell, especially in the disastrous harvest of 1879 when output at £22.7 million compared with £36.5 million in 1876. Valued at market prices, output fell even more sharply because farmers, in contrast to the invariable experience after past bad seasons, found that declining yields were accompanied by falling prices. The reason was the advent of foreign competition created by the transoceanic steamship and the opening up of new agricultural lands overseas. In the second and third quarters of 1879 there was rain in two out of every three days on average. Crops, hay and turf were ruined. Poor and rich farmers alike had difficulty in meeting their rent obligations. Among the smallholders of the west the situation was disastrous. The potato yield at 1.3 tons to the acre, roughly a third of a normal yield, was lower than in 1861. The price of potatoes alone among food prices rose. The year 1879-80 was a year of near-starvation among the smallholders.[15]

> Farmers found themselves unable to pay labour because of the falling prices for grain and cattle, and themselves fell deeply into debt to landlords, shopkeepers, and moneylenders - the despised gombeen men. Labourers, their own little potato patches suffering from bad weather and blight, which reduced the total crop to less than half its usual size, found it impossible to get their usual seasonal employment on the English harvest because of the effects of depression there.[16]

The landlords, mostly English and all pro-Unionists, began again with mass evictions. Between 1879 and 1882 a Land War against the landlords, fought by Fenians and the small farmers, labourers and cottiers, broke out under the leadership of Michael Davitt and the Land League. The Land League believed

the land should be redivided and the process of centralisation ended:

> Over 6,000,000 acres of Irish land is owned by less than 300 individuals, twelve of whom are in possession of 1,297,888 acres between them, while 5,000,000 of the Irish people own not a solitary acre. For the protection of the proprietorial rights of the few thousand landlords in the country a standing army of semi-military police is maintained which the landless millions have to support, while the conduct of the landocracy in the exercise of its legal privileges occasions almost all the evils under which our people suffer.[17]
>
> If the land in the possession of 744 landlords in this country were divided into 20-acre farms it would support in ease and comparative independence over two millions and a half of our people.[18]

Terrorism and violence in the rural areas was countered by England's Coercion Act whereby anyone "reasonably suspected" of seditious behaviour could be arrested and detained indefinitely. Arrests were massive, and Parnell was suspended from Parliament. Attempting to end violence which continued unabated despite police activities, the English Parliament passed a Land Act in 1881 which was designed to take pressure off the small farmers by instituting a system of "fair rents" to be set by the Government. Parnell and his party, suspicious of the Act, brought trial cases to court to determine if the tenants would really be assisted by the English against English landlords. Parnell was arrested, and the Land League instructed all tenants to withhold further rents. Gladstone met with Parnell and they secretly worked out the Kilmainham Compact. Gladstone promised to suspend the Coercion Act, release state prisoners, and allocate state aid to the tenants which would enable them to pay due rents; Parnell, in turn, promised to use the Land League to stop further terrorism and to have his Home Rule Party cooperate with all "liberal principles" put forward by Gladstone. All this bargaining, however, was fruitless for on the 6th of May, 1882, the Viceroy, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and

his undersecretary were stabbed to death by a group called the Invincibles -- a fanatic offshoot of the Fenians -- in Phoenix Park. The Compact, never made public, was forgotten as it was now impossible for Gladstone to carry out his plans.

Parnell's attention shifted from the land problem to the national question. With the Coercion Act reinstated after the murders, he realized that he would have to dissolve the Land League if any positive legislation was to be passed in the British parliament for Ireland. In 1882, the Land League was transformed into the Irish National League, putting a new emphasis on Ireland as a land to be freed rather than pieces of land to be leased. Gladstone put forward two amendments to the new Land Act which gave grants to small farmers to help pay arrears and fixed rents on housing for labourers, hoping to lure Parnell into political collaboration. In the British general election of 1885, Parnell won the balance of power between the Liberals and the Tories; within days, Gladstone presented the first Home Rule Bill to Parliament. Parnell became known as Ireland's "Uncrowned King".

The feelings for Parnell in Ireland were very strong. O'Casey, in his Autobiographies, has a cab-driver speak for the people:

> ---That's Parnell himself that's passed, he said, when the cheering had subsided, Ireland's greatest son. I'd sell me hat, I'd sell me horse an' cab, I'd sell meself for him, be Jasus, I'd nearly sell me soul, if he beckoned me to do it. He's the boyo'll make her ladyship, Victoria, sit up on her bloody throne, an' look round a little, an' wondher what's happenin'.[19]

O'Casey's mother, who was pro-Unionist and against Fenianism, told him: "...his father had said that Parnell was a great protestant, a great Irishman, and a grand man; and it was a good thing there was someone, anyway, fit to hinder the English from walking over the Irish people."[20] After Parnell fell, such unanimous reverence for a leader would not be seen in the Irish

for three more decades.

In 1886, the Tories began a propaganda campaign against Parnell linking him with the Phoenix murders by a series of forged letters. The Times printed a series of libelous articles which so enraged Irish Party members that a Special Commission was formed to look into the matter. Parnell was exonerated of all blame, and the hearings caused an upsurge in support from the English working class radicals and socialists who sympathised with the aims of the Land League and Parnell's anti-landlord principles. In Ireland, there was a rise in interest in a working class party similar in organization and ideology to Parnell's Irish Party. Irish labour, at this point still unable to break ties with Britain, was organized on a totally nonpolitical level which gave it little voice in Parliament. But it was not until 1896, when James Connolly formed the Irish Socialist Republican Party that there would exist a strong political Trade Union movement.

However, what appeared to be the beginning of Ireland's national liberation became, instead, another postponement. In 1887, a perpetual Coercion Bill was passed and the Land League and its reformed offshoots were suppressed. In 1889-1890 Parnell was discredited before the Irish people by the divorce proceedings initiated by Captain O'Shea against his wife, Katherine, naming Parnell as correspondent. Despite the fact that O'Shea and his wife had been separated years before her meeting with Parnell, and that Parnell's relationship with Katherine had long been public knowledge, Gladstone used this "scandal" as the death-blow to Parnell. With the help of the Catholic hierarchy of Ireland, Parnell was hounded out of politics in 1890; by 1891, he had died.

Following Parnell's defeat, these changes took place: "(1) the Tory policy of killing Home Rule with kindness; (2) the degeneration of the Parliamentary Nationalist Party; (3) the rise of a succession of popular movements

in opposition to the Party (the Gaelic League; Sinn Fein and the Connolly-Larkin Socialist and Trade Union agitations)."[21] Agricultural struggles gave way to those in the cities; trade unionism would become the new politics. Ireland would move from a stance of patient expectation to unexpected revolution. O'Casey would enter the movement but, before the climax of 1916, pull out again to his position as onlooker and critic.

O'Casey was eleven when Parnell died. O'Casey's father had died in 1886 from a spinal injury; his brothers, pro-Unionist as was his mother, had enlisted in the British forces. His formal education had been cut short by a serious eye ailment which was to afflict him throughout his life, and also the pressing need of money to support himself and his mother. His mother and he lived in the Dublin slums in a state of abject poverty. The conditions surrounding them are best described by the following:

> Early in 1880, the year of O'Casey's birth, the death-rate in Dublin was 44.8 in every 1000 of the population, in comparison with 27.1 in London, and The Medical Press commented: "Upon comparison with English, European, and Asiatic cities it appears that Dublin out-strips the world in its unhealthiness--calculating upon this week, which is by no means exceptionally bad. Excepting Plymouth, the worst record of the week in England is that of Liverpool, 36.0, while that of Dublin is 44.8. Calcutta shows for 37.0 and Alexandria 40.0; but no other city--no matter where situated--approaches Dublin in unhealthiness.
>
> In January 1890 the death-rate was 44.2, largely due to the high incidence of respiratory diseases in children...in January 1900 it rose to 46.0...[22]

The 1913 Labour strike under Larkin's leadership led to the establishment of a Government Housing Commission which in a study reported:

> ...25,822 families of 87,305 people, or almost one-third of the population of Dublin, lived in 5,322 tenement houses, the majority of which were declared to be unfit for human habitation. And 20,118 of these families, or seventy eight per cent of the people in the tenements, lived in one-room dwellings.[23]

David Krause further adds:

> Working conditions were no better than the housing. More than half of the population of the city, 169,736 out of 305,000, had been classified under the heading of "Indefinite and unproductive class." In the "Unskilled labour class" there were 45,159 people, or about one-seventh of the population. The average wage for men was 14 shillings for a week of 70 hours; and women worked in some cases as many as 90 hours for anywhere between 5 and 10 shillings a week. Steady employment in the city was to be found in prostitution, a thriving and wide-open tourist industry that was in evidence on most of the main streets.[24]

Nearing fourteen years of age, O'Casey got his first job in 1894, as a stock-boy in an establishment where only Protestants were allowed to work as clerks. After one year, he was discharged because of a dispute with his employer over working conditions. In the following years, he worked at a series of menial jobs -- navvy, hod-carrier, railroad man -- staying only as long as he felt he wasn't being exploited; he never made enough money to move himself and his mother away from the tenements. Educating himself by means of his father's library and what books he could afford to buy or steal, he became interested in politics and drama. With his brother Archie, he began the Townsend Dramatic Group, acting in lead roles in both Boucicault's The Shaughraun and Shakespeare's Henry VI. The two dramatists -- and, later, G.B. Shaw -- became his dramatic models. His library included Darwin, Ruskin, and Milton. He began to explore socialism and to move away from traditional Protestantism.

Several movements had come into force since the fall of Parnell:

> Irish nationalism now claimed two distinct groups of adherents. One, ostensibly non-political, was dedicated to the revival of Irish language and culture. Its organized arm was the Gaelic League, founded in 1893 under the presidency of Douglas Hyde. The other was political, but within it there

> was a cleavage. In one camp was the Irish Parliamentary Party, committed to constitutional methods by its post-Parnellite leadership, and willing to settle for less than complete independence. In the other was the oathbound Irish Republican Brotherhood, whose members advocated total separation from Britain by physical force. Constitutionalism had always been alien to the Irish for want of an appropriate forum. Now, with the Parliamentary Party fractionalized and leaderless after Parnell's death, and frustrations mounting in the wake of repeated legislative rebuffs, the initative [sic] was rapidly passing to the militants.
>
> O'Casey, like many of his contemporaries, moved in both circles. He had taught himself Irish and, at about the turn of the century, he joined the Lamh Dearh (Red Hand) branch of the Gaelic League, with headquarters in Drumcondra.[25]

O'Casey also joined the Teeling Circle of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and sat on the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee. Together with a friend, Frank Cahill, he founded and acted as secretary for the St. Lawrence O'Toole Pipers Band.

For a time, O'Casey was content with his involvement within these movements. He became a secretary and a teacher for the Gaelic League. He irishized his name to Sean O'Cathasaigh, and a nickname of his makes more obvious his sympathies:

> Because of his enthusiasm for the Gaelic League and for his never-ending efforts to get all whom he worked with, and all whom he met, to join the Movement, he was known along the line, from Dublin to Drogheda, as Irish Jack. He had three names: to his mother he was Johnny; his Gaelic friends knew him as Sean; to his workmates he was Jack, and when they wished to distinguish him from another Jack, they added the title of Irish, so Irish Jack he became to signalmen, engine-drivers, firemen, porters, shunters, and all others who worked along the permanent way. He was becoming famous, and he was proud of it.[26]

His self-satisfaction was short-lived. Living as a worker and with workers, he saw the necessity of aligning himself with a Labour movement. He became convinced that Ireland should cut itself free from England and, of more

immediate need, that a power alliance should come about between nationalist movements and working class.

Trade unionism had begun on a small level with James Connolly in 1896, but he had gone to America in 1903 and the Socialist Party had all but evaporated. The working class was not strongly united against the employers who, backed by the British Government, had grown tyrannical. A Labour movement had started in Belfast and was about to descend to Dublin. O'Casey as a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood "persuaded them into selecting a Committee from the Supreme Council and the centres to see how the IRB could be brought into closer touch with the militant Labour movement."[27] The meeting never occurred through conscious misplanning on the part of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. O'Casey, outraged, broke connections with them:

> So they have decided against bringing the rough energy and virile splendour of the workers to the definite aid of the National movement. Well, to hell with them then! Why should he give up all his energy and the little money he had to spare to a movement that left almost all the people out of it?[28]

He broke with the Gaelic League and "in 1909 was drifting between old and new enthusiasms."[29] He felt that: "Few of the Republicans were of his kinship. Here, in these houses in the purple of poverty and decay, dwelt his genuine brethren. Why shouldn't he fight for them against the frauds that kept them prisoners there?"[30] Finally finding his place with the working class, he waited for an organization to fulfill his desires -- a voice for his people, a nationalist movement, and a community of workers. He, like the working class, "still waited for a Prometheus to bring down a brand of the divine fire and set the leaden hearts of the poor aflame from one end of Ireland to the other."[31]

In 1908, James Larkin had come from Belfast to start a Labour Union movement in Dublin. He would become O'Casey's personal Prometheus, and his

Irish Transport and General Workers' Union would become O'Casey's "new church militant."[32]

As can be seen in this brief account of O'Casey's childhood and early years, he was born economically within the working class of the tenements, yet at the same time psychologically in part an outsider to them. Born to poor Protestant parents, he was alienated from both the Catholic majority and the Protestant upper class. Nearly blind, his chance of cementing relationships with other working class children was cut off with the end of his formal schooling. Supporting a pro-Unionist mother by taking on poorly paying jobs, he educated himself through his pro-Fenian father's books. Well-read beyond his economic and social position, he was capable of understanding the needs and problems of the labourers; at the same time, this "bookishness" set him apart, if not above, his co-workers. Theirs was a physical understanding of the meaning of exploitation; he possessed not only this knowledge but also an intellectual comprehension of historical processes and the necessity of revolution. He knew at first hand the actual class consciousness of the workers but saw the potential of a higher limit-consciousness to be achieved through education and economic and/or social reform. Disappointed by the short-sightedness of the current national movements, his world view early became that of a socialist. An isolated individual, yet yearning for a common goal, he joined a Promethean mentor. James Larkin would be the dynamic force necessary to the unleashing of consciousness, the hero O'Casey wished to emulate.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

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[8] Ibid., pp. 137-138.

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[13] Marx and Engels, Ireland..., p. 122.

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[16] Tom Corfe, The Phoenix Park Murders: Conflict, Compromise and Tragedy in Ireland, 1879-1882 (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1968), pp. 36-37.

[17] Edmund Curtis and R.B. McDowell, eds., Irish Historical Documents 1172-1922 (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1968), p. 257.

[18] Ibid., p. 258.

[19] Sean O'Casey, Autobiographies I, Volume I: I Knock at the Door (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 9.

[20] Ibid., p. 76.

[21] Jackson, p. 358.

[22] David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 19.

[23] Ibid., p. 20.

[24] Ibid., p. 22.

[25] Martin B. Margulies, The Early Life of Sean O'Casey (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1970), p. 36.

[26] Sean O'Casey, Autobiographies I, Volume III: Drums Under the Windows (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 443.

[27] Ibid., p. 551.

[28] Ibid., p. 552.

[29] Margulies, p. 48.

[30] O'Casey, Drums..., p. 552.

[31] Ibid., p. 549.

[32] Margulies, p. 49.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY OF JAMES LARKIN -- O'CASEY'S "PROMETHEUS HIBERNICA"

James Larkin was born in Liverpool on January 21, 1876, of Irish Catholic parents. His ancestors were Ulstermen, his grandfather a small farmer and a Fenian. Life in Ireland, according to the family tradition, no longer proved tenable for Larkin's father: small farms were consolidated into larger holdings, unemployment was high in Irish cities because of the continuing influx of evicted small-holders from the countryside, and strong discrimination was applied against those having Fenian sympathies. Thus he became one of the many immigrants to Liverpool after the devastation of the Great Famine. He found a steady job as a fitter and worked there until his death from tuberculosis in 1887.

Young Jim spent the first five years of his life in Ireland with his grandmother on what was left of the family holding. Returned to England, he attended classes until 1887, leaving off at the fourth standard when his father died. As a gesture of kindness, his father's employer took him and his brother on as apprentice fitters. Jim did not like that work and for four years drifted through a series of small jobs, eventually ending up as a docker. Around the age of fifteen, he was injured while working and the following nineteen weeks of recuperation (supported by a pound a week compensation) would become to him, the "crowded hour of glorious life" as he discovered the joys of reading and socialism. He felt that the socialists "promised they could close the gap between what should be and what was, and

he was heartened. They told him that he could have a part in the making of the brave new world, and he was converted."[2] At sixteen, he returned to the docks. At seventeen, seeking adventures, he stowed away on a steamer for South America. Discovered on the fourth day out, he was given work as a seaman but without wages. He refused this condition and was put in irons. Accounts differ after this. R.M. Fox insists he was put on another ship bound for New York, tried in court there and imprisoned for a few months.[3] Emmet Larkin's biography states that he

> ...jumped ship when it put in at St. Lucia, and lived as a beachcomber until he signed on a steamer bound for Rio de Janeiro. He then worked his way up to Galveston, down to Valparaiso, and picked up a schooner bound for Buenos Aires, where he was hired by an Irish-American as a five-dollar-a-day mercenary, for one day, in an abortive insurrection.[4]

Whichever the case may be, he had returned to Liverpool within a year and re-established himself as a docker. The stowaway experience was a formative one according to Fox. It was his first real

> ...conflict with Authority which Larkin carried on all his life. Beginning with the feeling that he had been denied justice, he came to believe that there were whole groups - particularly the unskilled workers - who were unjustly treated...[5]

Working steadily as a docker, thereafter, his interest in socialism and the working class developed:

> As he grew up, Jim Larkin developed a 'patriarchal' feeling for his fellow workers. They came to him for counsel. He gave them moral leadership and a good example. Industrial leadership came later. But the seeds of social discontent began to germinate as a result of his reading, his work and experience. His ideas became more definite when he associated with a group of socialists who met in the Clarion Café in the city.[6]

Before 1893, he had become a member of the Liverpool Branch of the Independent Labour Party. This organization had become quite weak by the time of his return from abroad and no longer hewed to a pure socialist line. In 1898, Larkin assisted in the opening of a branch for the Workers' Union of Great

Britain and Ireland in Liverpool but never joined himself.

By the beginning of the 20th Century, it was obvious that the socialists and unions would have to combine if any effective legislation was to be passed in Parliament, and an independent Labour Party was being formed. In 1901 Larkin joined the National Union of Dock Labourers. The following years would be ones of his rise into politics and labour leadership.

By 1903 Larkin was the "youngest and toughest" labour boss on the docks.[7] He worked his men hard, earning the nickname "The Rusher", allowed no drinking, whoring or inter-worker strife among his men. He also gave fair wages and job security at a time when this practice among foremen was extremely rare. By 1904 Larkin had become a spokesman for his workers:

> Every Sunday Larkin spoke in the neighbourhood of Liverpool. Whether it was Birkenhead, Blackpool, or Widnes, the message was always the same -- Socialism. The world was what it was because the basis of society was wrong. A society based on self-interest and the profit motive was an immoral and unclean thing. The vicious system would only perish when the eyes of the working classes were opened. The masses were exploited by an unscrupulous capitalist class and gulled by their kept handmaidens, the politicians and the Press. Vice, poverty, slums, unemployment, disease, and crime were all the fault of a system in the last stages of moral and economic bankruptcy. That which would save the working classes, the nation, and the world was the nationalization of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. When the workers finally put their own representatives in the seats of the mighty, the Social Revolution would be at hand. The resulting emancipation of the working classes would inevitably bring in its wake the millennium. Then the goodness of man and the largeness of his spirit would at last have uninhibited horizons, and the glorious time spoken of by the poets and the prophets would surely come to pass. Larkin's vision of the millennium was as hazy as that of most British Socialists of his generation. He kept his attention focused sharply on the abominable realities of a decaying industrial system, singing a song of undiluted discontent, and Shelley, Whitman, Francis Adams, and William Morris were his poets. In these years on the hustings he learned all the techniques and tricks of demagogy, the theatrics, the repartee, the rhetoric, and the poetry that were to make him one of the most successful mob-orators of his day.[8]

In 1905 Larkin began his career as strike leader during a walk-out by dockers on the Harrison Line, the company he worked for. "The strike lasted just over ten weeks and ended in defeat, but during the dispute, Larkin had organized a new branch of the union some 1,200 strong."[9] During the general election of 1906, he worked as an election agent for the Labour Party in support of James Sexton who ran for the Liverpool seat. Sexton was narrowly defeated but the Party gained several other seats and grew in power. Larkin was elected to the position of General Organizer of the National Union of Dock Labourers despite the misgivings of Sexton, then General Secretary. Sexton feared that Larkin "was playing for his own hand"[10] but Larkin proved to be a more than competent officer. He had signal successes, such as reorganizing the dockers in Scotland. Here he battled against the employers' practice of keeping "blacklegs", or scab labour, in reserve so that effective strike measures by the workers were impossible. He failed, however, in an attempt to organize the iron-ore workers and returned to Liverpool:

> By the end of 1906, and at the age of thirty, Larkin had finally brought the apprenticeship phase of his career as an agitator to a conclusion. He was now to begin his journeyman stage not only a convinced Socialist but a trade union official as well. As a Socialist, every day was denunciation day with the promise of a better tomorrow. As a trade union official, every day resulted in another compromise with a system that was dedicated to the frustration of a better tomorrow.... James Larkin's Socialism became his faith, and his trade unionism became his work. Essentially a Catholic, Larkin believed that both the faith and the work were necessary to the social salvation of the working classes.[11]

In 1907, he travelled to Belfast and led a dockers' strike that May. His goal was to standardise wages and abolish the persistent use of blacklegs. He called for a sympathetic strike among carters who responded favourably, as did the coal workers. As a final touch:

> To add to the general pandemonium, with some 2,500 men out, including roughly 500 dockers, 1,000 carters, and 1,000 coal labourers, the Belfast police mutinied. The police, or, to be more precise, the Royal Irish Constabulary, had for some time been dissatisfied with their wages and working conditions.[12]

Larkin had been behind that particular strike also: "Larkin's power was that he acted like a lightning conductor drawing all those forces of discontent to a head. He did not run these forces to earth, he expressed them in action."[13] The strike in Belfast lasted through September. In August the Government had tried to break it by fomenting religious discord and had instituted a police state, bringing in troops from England and the countryside. Larkin had overcome mutual Catholic-Protestant prejudice, but increasing violence and lack of support on the part of Sexton, and therefore the National Union of Dock Labourers, put an end to his Belfast effort:

> In the long run Larkin achieved little of a tangible nature in Belfast, not because he was something less than what he should have been, but because his enemies were too powerful and circumstances too adverse. In the short run he shook Belfast to its roots. There had not been such an upheaval in a hundred years....[14]

Sexton, who considered Larkin "a devil" and "a red-hot fish-hook in the mouth",[15] cut off any further funds to support strike activities in an attempt to forever ruin Larkin's power in the Party. Larkin, bitter because of this lack of confidence and knowing Sexton's personal animosity against him, prepared to break with the Dockers' Union. In 1908 he would be suspended by its Liverpool Executive for alleged misuse of strike funds, but by then he had found a new arena to wage war against the capitalists -- Dublin.

As described in the previous chapter, economic conditions in Dublin were very bad indeed. In 1910:

> ...the head of the Dublin Distress Committee reported that the Committee would have 10,000 unemployed to register if they had work for them...it must be remembered that the

> problem of unemployment and under employment among the female work force has not even been mentioned.[16]

Other accounts put the percentage of unemployed unskilled labour much higher -- "perhaps as much as one-fifth of the male labour force was at any point of time out of work."[17] Because of this enormous potential work-force, employers could afford to keep wages very low:

> In the building trades, for example, the wages in Ireland for unskilled men were anywhere from one-quarter to one-third lower than for the same work in Britain. For the skilled men in the building trades it was anything from one-tenth to one-fifth lower. These figures for the building trades give a general indication of the general rates paid on the docks and in the carrying trade.[18]

The Dublin Housing Commission reported:

> ...that of all the workers living in tenement houses (all heads of families), 5,604 received 15s. or less per week, 9,000 received from 15s. to 20s., 2,585 received from 20s. to 25s., 1,627 received from 25s. to 30s. and 2,384 received over 30s.[19]

Lack of jobs and poor wages led to the high crime rate of 100 per 10,000 as compared to England's 27.2 per 10,000 (these statistics were based on indictable crimes such as murder and larceny, but did not include such offenses as drunkenness).[20] Drinking, considered in England as the chief vice of the Irish, had decreased since the turn of the century but still remained a serious problem in the slums. No statistics are available on the male population's alcoholism but how serious it was is clearly indicated by the following statistics on women and children (out of a total population estimated at 250,000): "Twenty-two public houses in Dublin were observed for two weeks, and 46,574 women and 27,000 children, of whom 5,807 were babies in arms, went into them."[21] Further:

> Drink was one of the contributing factors in accounting for the large proportion of lunatics, idiots, and insane people in Dublin. The rate of 63.5 per 10,000 was due, in part, according to Dr. W.R. Dawson, to drinking methylated spirits and sometimes turpentine.[22]

Prostitution was common, a flourishing tourist trade. No figures are known to have been compiled but it was general knowledge that certain streets were the domain of these women. Dying of starvation on the streets was known to occur within the city.

On August 11, 1907, Larkin formed the National Union of Dublin. He would find his experience as a dock organizer invaluable due to the peculiar technological development of Dublin:

> Unique among the capital cities of the western world, this Dublin city...; capital city of 'a sheep walk and a cattle pasture.' Upwards of 400,000 of a population, yet no real industries to speak of; the 400,000 engaged in government offices, in agencies for British firms, in taking in one another's washing via the hundreds of little shops; and as far as the workers were concerned engaged not so much in producing things (save for Guinness's, Jacob's and a few other firms) as in transporting things, in toiling on the quays and railways and roads, unloading British manufactures, loading up rail trucks and cattle boats with farm produce for British consumption.[23]

One year later he had 2,700 members who had already begun using agitation as a tool against the employers. Swift strikes took place in Cork and Dublin among the coal workers, dockers, and carters, and some of their wage demands were met. Larkin harangued the workers about socialist principles and the need to stand united:

> 'The secret of all the poverty and unemployment in Ireland... was that Irishmen were willing to take 50 per cent less wages in Ireland than they would demand in England and Scotland.' This was pure selfishness, for 'men were so selfish here that they would work for low wages at long hours to do a brother out of a job.' He asked them to 'stand on a higher ethical plane than that, and look at the good of the whole...The workers held out the hand of fellowship to every man in Ireland; but this was a class struggle; it was a bigger thing than a bob a day.'[24]

On January 4, 1909, he founded the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, its headquarters Liberty Hall, its slogan "An Injury to One is the Concern of All." A new and powerful trade-union front was in the making which would change the face of Irish politics:

> The new union was unique in several respects. It was the first Irish union to adopt a socialist programme; seeking the nationalization of all the means of transport and 'the land of Ireland for the Irish people', it had as its ultimate object a new social and economic order -- an 'industrial commonwealth'. It declared its dedication to the organization into one union of all workers -- skilled and unskilled -- in an industry. This objective was to be attained by means of militant union tactics, such as the boycott and the sympathetic strike, and by the use of class-orientated propaganda.[25]

The working class had found its leader.

O'Casey joined Larkin's Union sometime around 1911, before the big Tramway Strike of 1913:

> In the early days of the strike, he was a familiar but not important figure at Liberty Hall, where he did odd jobs around the office, worked in the soup-kitchens, helped dispense strike benefits, and wrote for the union paper....Years later he was to look back at those days and picture Larkin as the new Chief whom God in His infinite compassion had sent to the troubled Irish people to replace the martyred Parnell -- Jim Larkin, "Prometheus Hibernica".[26]

Larkin became O'Casey's "little God"[27], almost a mythological hero with whom the working class did identify themselves:

> Larkin was the voice of social revolt, a living expression of the militant underman, breaking his chains and hurling defiance at his enemies.[28]
>
> Larkin typified the unskilled workers of the tenements in their bursts of fury, their anger, their hatred of the oppression and starvation which they had to endure.[29]

Larkin was the voice of the workers compressed into one voice:

> Looming above his hearers in the gloom, this giant agitator -- he was fully six feet high and had a massive frame -- heartened his followers by the sweeping way in which he poured contempt on their enemies. With each fresh insult he snapped his jaws menacingly. He was extraordinarily expressive -- vivid, virile, dramatic: he spoke with pungent, forceful sentences. As a strike orator, Larkin was unequaled. An observer (David Garnett) has written: "...There, striding about the platform, one beheld the whole of the sweated, starved, exploited working class suddenly incarnate in the shape of a gigantic Tarzan of all the slum jungles of the West."[30]

Schooled in English socialism, he was always the activist and -- unlike James Connolly -- never the theoretician:

> He had no taste for theory at all, but made up for that by a strong sense of justice and a belief in his personal mission to lead men in combat, in all manner of struggles for a better life, a little more dignity, a little more freedom. He made no appeal to reason, advanced no theories, only recited wrongs and outrages in angry tones, labour's wrongs and Ireland's together.[31]

His concerns were immediate as were those of the workers:

> Larkin went straight to the men in the workshops and the unions -- though he also talked to them in ringing tones abroad -- and dwelt far more on what was pressing and painful at the moment than on what might be permanently true or ideally right.[32]

> He was not so deep a thinker as Connolly nor did he look so far into the future. He dealt only with the living realities around him: the employer's greed, the boss's tyranny, the long hours and low wages of the workers, the slums in which they dwelt, the poverty and squalor in which they often lived and died.[33]

Many later historians, both Marxist and bourgeois, would call Connolly the resourceful brain behind the Labour movement; more workers would define Larkin as the heart and soul of the working class. He was for the oppressed "some great primaeval force rather than a man."[34] O'Casey himself would write in 1947: "In the great things he did for the Irish workers is everlasting life. Not life that will remain as it is now; but life growing into a fuller consciousness of its own work, of its own power, its own right to the ownership of all things."[35] In the 1910's, during O'Casey's association with Larkin, his socialist ideology was defined and the mode of his drama determined. O'Casey wrote: "Sean was no warrior. A harper, maybe, playing others into battle; but no warrior himself."[36] In Larkin he found his Warrior Chief; behind him O'Casey would orchestrate -- first, an army, and then, his plays.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1] Emmet Larkin, James Larkin: Irish Labour Leader 1876-1947 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965). p. 4.

[2] Ibid., p. 5.

[3] R. M. Fox, Jim Larkin: The Rise of the Underman (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1957), p. 17.

[4] Larkin, p. 6.

[5] Fox, p. 16.

[6] Ibid., p. 18.

[7] Larkin, p. 8.

[8] Ibid., p. 10-11.

[9] Ibid., p. 14.

[10] Ibid., p. 17.

[11] Ibid., p. 22.

[12] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[13] Fox, p. 38.

[14] Larkin, p. 40.

[15] Sir James Sexton, Sir James Sexton: Agitator. The Life of the Dockers' M.P. (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1936), p. 202.

[16] Larkin, p. 45.

[17] L. M. Cullen, An Economic History of Ireland since 1660 (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1972), p. 165.

[18] Larkin, pp. 45-46.

[19] Brian O'Neill, Easter Week (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1936), p. 7.

[20] Larkin, p. 47.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] O'Neill, p. 5. O'Neill's figure of 400,000 for the population of Dublin is a gross overestimation. Emmet Larkin, p. 42, puts the number closer to 300,000.

[24] Larkin, pp. 57-58.

[25] Arthur Mitchell, Labour in Irish Politics 1890-1930: The Irish Labour Movement in an Age of Revolution (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. 1974), p. 26.

[26] David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 35-36.

[27] Sean McCann, ed., The World of Sean O'Casey (London: Four Squares Books, 1966), p. 172.

[28] R. M. Fox, The History of the Irish Citizen Army (Dublin: James Duffy & Co., Limited, 1943), p. 41.

[29] Ibid., p. 12.

[30] Ibid., p. 2.

[31] Bertram D. Wolfe, Strange Communists I Have Known (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1965), pp. 60-61.

[32] W. P. Ryan, The Irish Labour Movement: From the Twenties to Our Own Day (New York: B. W. Huebsch, Inc., 1920), pp. 202-203.

[33] The Right Reverend Monsignor E. A. D'Alton, History of Ireland From the Earliest Times to the Present Day, Volume VII: Ireland Since 1906 (London: The Gresham Publishing Company, 1925), p. 175.

[34] Elizabeth Coxhead, Daughters of Erin: Five Women of the Irish Renaissance (London: Secker & Warburg, 1965), p. 88.

[35] Quoted in Emmet Larkin, p. 2.

[36] Sean O'Casey, Autobiographies I, Volume III: Drums Under the Windows (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 441.

CHAPTER III

THE HIGH POINT OF WORKING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN O'CASEY'S IRELAND

The years 1913-1914 were the climax of both Larkin's career and O'Casey's involvement with Nationalist as well as Labour organisations. In this period Larkin achieved his greatest success as a strike organizer, strongly undermining the Dublin employers' power over the proletarian class. By extremely effective propaganda techniques and an advantageous alliance with Connolly, he and his organization, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, were able to orchestrate a brief but impressive explosion of class consciousness among the unskilled workers of Dublin.

From 1909 to 1913, Larkin had worked at recruiting more members for his Union and at gaining political representation in the Trades Council and Irish parliament. Membership had grown to 14,000 workers in four years' time, with many more non-enrolled sympathizers among the skilled workers. Larkin had even succeeded in enlisting agricultural proletarians into his Union by winning higher wages for them from their landowner employers. By the spring of 1911, Larkin was in control of the Dublin Trades Council, and in elections of that and the following year, labour representatives won seats in various city corporations.

The reason for this increase in political activity in a basically trade-unionist, economic movement was the upcoming passage of the Home Rule Bill. The Bill was being held until 1914. "In the meantime, the Irish

Party claimed to be the official guardian of this guarantee of nationhood and disputed the right of any section of the Irish nation to contest for independent representation on a parliamentary level."[1] Larkin feared that, if Labour sat by quietly until the Bill was passed, no representation would ever be forthcoming and the Labour movement would fall to the powerless non-political level from which it had just arisen. On the side of the employers, there was a fear that Labour would gain too strong a footing and, come Home Rule, Ireland would be transformed into an industrial commonwealth or a worker's republic. Larkin used every possible tool, the most effective of which was his paper, the Irish Worker, to keep the workers aware of the struggle between capitalist and worker. Leading several small strikes, winning all demands, becoming virtual master of Dublin ports by unionisation of dock workers, Larkin built up a powerful reputation as an effective strike caller and sole negotiator for the unskilled labourers:

> In the six years between 1907 and 1913 all Ireland was shaken by Jim Larkin's dynamic personality, by the militancy and semi-syndicalist methods of the new union, by the aroused spirit of that section of the working class which had felt the most crushed and helpless and only now realized its power.
>
> The employing class were horrified as they saw the new power tackle firm after firm, raising wages, improving conditions.[2]

The employers armed themselves, morally and materially, for the impending class war. Larkin was ready to face their challenge for control by August 1913. This and the following year would be both zenith and nadir of the Irish Labour movement.

The Larkin Labour War, as it was commonly called by the newspapers, began in earnest in Dublin with what is known as the Great Tramway Strike

of 1913 or the Dublin Lockout. William Martin Murphy, "the richest man in Dublin, Chairman of the Employers' Federation, virtual owner of the Dublin Tramways, and owner of the Independent"[3], was intent upon destroying Larkin and his Union. W.P. Ryan analyzes the attitude of Murphy and his class as follows:

> Larkin and Connolly were a danger to the socially selfish and spiritually stagnant society in which the Irish employing parties lived and moved and had their being. They wanted as a beginning to curtail profits, and eventually to abolish them; or, as capitalist moralists would express it, to 'plunder' the 'princes of business'. The theory of toilers being on the same human plane as employers, the conception of industrial unionism, the vision of a co-operative commonwealth, were much farther from the imagination of the masters and their friends than was the picture of independent peasant proprietors from the minds of Irish landlords...over thirty years earlier.[4]

Using his paper as mouthpiece, Murphy denounced Larkin's trade-unionist activities and formed a united employers' front against the ITGWU. Workers employed by Murphy and his sympathizers were told to sign pledges promising no support of the ITGWU; if not, they would be locked out. O'Casey satirized Murphy's document in his autobiographical Drums Under the Windows retranslating the pledge into:

> Under the holy and undivided patronage of St. Ellessdee [i.e., £./ s./ d.], I, M, or N, do solemnly swear, without any reservation whatsoever (cross your heart, and say I hope to die), that from this day forthwith I shall cease to be a member of Larkin's Union, and will forswear his company, give him no aid, in thought, word, or deed, cross to the other side of the street when I see him coming, inasmuch as he has persuaded me to try to bite the hand that doesn't feed me; and I further promise and undertake and expressively

> swear that I will faithfully serve my employers, assisted by whatsoever Union they may form, or allow me to join; and so I shall incur the beloved and much sought-after brazen benediction of the holy St. Ellessdee, and the goodwill of bishop, priest, and deacon, till the act of God, in old age or through an accident, shoves me from the job I'm no longer fit to fill: all this I swear for the third time grinning. Aman. Inscribed with solemn derision on the twelfth day of the eighth month in the year of our Lord, William Martin Murphy.[5]

O'Casey refused to sign and lost his job.

Murphy began to fire ITGWU members and brought in scabs or non-Union workers. Larkin retaliated by calling a walkout of tramway workers on August 26 and a boycott of all "tainted goods" produced by Murphy's firms. That evening he and other Labour leaders spoke in Beresford Place. His statements led to his arrest the following day for seditious libel and seditious conspiracy.

> The employers had political reasons for trying conclusions [sic] with Larkin. Not only had he stirred up those who carried the whole of Dublin society on their backs. His organisation had infused a new spirit into both Trades Council and T.U.C. [Trades Union Congress], and the political outcome was a Labour Party. They [the employers] were expecting Home Rule, and whether it was to be 'Rome rule' or not, they intended to be the beneficiaries. He had disturbed their dream of an Ireland safely insulated from the 'profane class struggle of the sinful world'. Self-government was being conferred only to be snatched away on the one hand by Carson, on the other hand by the resurgent mob. The dream became a nightmare.[6]

Undaunted and out on bail, Larkin spoke again that night and publicly burnt the Proclamation of the King. On August 31, with the help of Countess Markievicz, he evaded police detection by disguising himself,

and appeared on the balcony of one of Murphy's hotels to speak to the workers. O'Casey, who was in the crowd, described O'Connell Street and compared the work of Shelley and Larkin.

> In this very street, not so very long ago, the gentle Shelley had stood, handing out to the staring, passing people his Declaration of Rights. From one of the windows of the restaurant, almost facing Sean, he tossed his leaflets of hope and stormy encouragement to the gibing Dublin citizens. Shelley who sang,
>
> What is freedom? Ye can tell that
> which slavery is too well,
> For its very name has grown to an
> echo of your own.
> Rise like lions after slumber....
> Shake your chains to earth like
> dew...Ye are many - they are
> few.
>
> Maybe he is looking down upon this very crowd now, seeing, and applauding the change that has come to the mind of the Irish workers.[7]

Larkin spoke a few words and was arrested. The police overreacted to the crowd's temper and began attacking with batons. The crowd rioted. Two men died, 200 police were injured as were innumerable workers and bystanders. This Bloody Sunday was the turning point in the growth of consciousness of the locked-out workers. The lines of class war were clearly drawn. O'Casey gives a Larkinite war cry: "Up Jim Larkin! Nor baton, bayonet, nor bishop can even down us now - the Irish workers are loose at last!"[8]

On September 3, Murphy and 403 employers locked out all ITGWU members or sympathizers. By September 22 about 25,000 workers had been dismissed. Including families, this involved some 100,000 people, or about one third of the total Dublin population.

O'Casey, out of work and living on his mother's pension, took

active part in Union activities aimed at maintaining a high morale amongst the workers. He arranged plays and other entertainment at Liberty Hall. He collected funds to support families of strikers and stood with Larkin when the first food ships arrived from England. Robert Hogan concludes that:

> ...for O'Casey the Great Lockout was the central public event of his first forty years. I think that it solidified in him the yet unaltered conviction that a man of good will must strive for the international abolition of poverty and the ownership of the means of production by the worker.[9]

Though the strike initially received massive support from both the Irish intelligentsia and the young neo-Fenians, by the early part of 1914 Larkin was defeated and the men went back to work. The opposition to the sirike had been too great as

> ...the working masses of Dublin found themselves faced with an alliance of Dublin Castle (with its police), the Orange-Tory magistrates, the Nationalist employers, and the Catholic hierarchy. To make the united front of reaction complete, Arthur Griffith denounced Larkin, unsparingly, in the name of Sinn Fein.[10]

Larkin toured England begging for funds but his fiery campaign only succeeded in alienating the British Labour movement, whose leaders were by no means willing to have industrial warfare break out in England as a result of their supporting the Irish strike. The British Trades Council withdrew all funds in February, and the strike officially ceased.

The end was not a complete victory for the employers, however. T.A. Jackson analyzes February 1914 as "an inconclusive finish". Further, some results of the strike were definitely not advantageous to the employing

class: "a great growth in militant class-consciousness among the Dublin workers, a great enhancement of the reputation of Larkin and Connolly as leaders, and the establishment of class relations between the young neo-Fenian intellectuals and the Labour movement."[11] The long struggle had:

> ...taught Irish labour more in twelve months than the twelve years before had taught. It welded it together, gave it a sense of its unity and power, gave it the basis of an outlook of its own. The Irish working-class was on the high road to becoming a class für sich, a class for itself.[12]

Lenin, in an article for the Russian illegal press, praised Larkin's activities during the strike highly and warned that this growth of class consciousness among the proletariat was only a beginning:

> The Dublin events mark a turning point in the history of the labour movement and of Socialism in Ireland. Murphy threatened to destroy the Irish labour unions....He has helped to harden an independent revolutionary movement in Ireland, free from nationalist prejudices.[13]

And even the conservative Irish Times was quick to point out:

> The settlement of the strike has, in fact, settled nothing. The very necessary business of 'smashing Larkin' is successfully accomplished; but that is very far from being the same thing as 'smashing Larkinism'. There is no security whatever that the men who are now going about their work brooding over the bitterness of defeat will not endeavour to reorganise their broken forces, and, given another leader and another opportunity, strike a further and a more desperate blow at the economic life of Dublin.[14]

Reorganisation into a new front was already taking place. Labour's new leader would be James Connolly, his force the Irish Citizen Army, and the (from the Larkinite point of view rather ambiguous) blow the 1916 Uprising.

In the midst of the strike year, Larkin and his military expert, Captain White, had decided that the formation of a working class army

was necessary "partly to enable the locked-out men to defend themselves in clashes with the police, and partly to combat the demoralising effects of unemployment by giving them some cohesion and sense of purpose"[15] or, as O'Casey more optimistically said, to make the strikers "into a huge, immovable, unbreakable Roman phalanx."[16] Unarmed and lacking any formal organisation, interest in the Irish Citizen Army was low throughout 1913. O'Casey diagnosed the Army's initial failure as one caused by faulty consciousness:

> The people of Ireland were not ripe enough to be shaken from the green tree of Nationalism into the wide basket of an Irish Labour Army. A Citizen Army can only be formed from a class-conscious community of workers, and the Irish workers still slumbered on in the dark shade of unawakened thought.[17]

Further, the formation of the Irish Volunteers, a well-armed middle class army, took away potential members and made the Irish Citizen Army in its then chaotic state seem ridiculous. Larkin had envisioned the Irish Citizen Army as an "army of the people" which would enable Irish Labour to "march at the forefront of all movements for the betterment of the whole people of Ireland."[18] It was O'Casey, however, and not Larkin, who would save the Irish Citizen Army from an early death and make it a force to be contended with.

O'Casey had realised as early as 1913 that arms made an army and that some element of organisation was necessary if Labour and the cause of Socialism were to succeed in Ireland. He was intensely anti-Volunteer, and firmly against nationalism as a guiding ideology for the Irish Citizen Army. He believed strongly that the workers should shun all association with the "wage-slave Volunteers" and wrote in the Labour paper, the Irish Worker: "Workers, ye are fools to train and drill for anything

less than complete enfranchisement, for the utter alteration of the present social system...".[19] In March, 1914, O'Casey approached Captain White and

> ..,suggested that definite steps should be taken to form the Citizen Army into a systematic unit of Labour; that a Constitution should be drafted and submitted for approval to a general meeting of workers; that a Council should be elected to see after the revival of systematic drills, to open a fund for equipment purposes, to arrange for public meetings, to form companies of the army wherever Labour was strongest, and to generally take steps to improve and strengthen the condition and widen the scope of the Irish Citizen Army.[20]

O'Casey drafted a Constitution and presented it at a general meeting in Liberty Hall where it was passed with the addition of one clause by Larkin. A simple document, it had four major points:

1. That the first and last principle of the Irish Citizen Army is the avowal that the ownership of Ireland, moral and material, is vested of right in the people of Ireland.
2. That the Irish Citizen Army shall stand for the absolute unity of Irish nationhood, and shall support the rights and liberties of the democracies of all nations.
3. That one of its objects shall be to sink all differences of birth, property and creed under the common name of the Irish People.
4. That the Citizen Army shall be open to all who accept the principle of equal rights and opportunities for the Irish People.[21]

Larkin added a fifth clause which stipulated that all Irish Citizen Army members must be members of unions recognized by the Trades Union Congress. O'Casey was elected Secretary and plans were made to carry out all these proposals.

O'Casey's work as Secretary included recruitment and publicity. In April he accompanied Larkin into the rural districts and gave a number of speeches in an attempt to boost membership. He was at first disappointed with the response at their rallies, but he saw this venture into the country

as a profitable one. Returning to Dublin, he was re-assigned the role of fund raiser, this time towards the purchase of uniforms. O'Casey was a proponent of guerrilla warfare and felt that uniforms were a dangerous luxury. Speaking to the Executive Committee of the Irish Citizen Army:

> He put Shaw's comparison before them of Ireland's fight with England as a perambulator up against a Pickford van; and tried to point out that their military art must be that of strike and dodge; dodge and strike.[22]

The uniforms already bought, O'Casey was outvoted on his motion not to purchase them. He was later to use uniforms as one of the main symbols of vanity and illusion in some of his "Dublin" plays.

In June a tentative peace was made between the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, and they marched together in the pilgrimage to Bodenstown in honour of Wolfe Tone. O'Casey distrusted this development, fearing that the Irish Citizen Army would become "the militant Left Wing of the Irish Volunteers."[23] He also felt that Connolly, who sat on the Executive Council and who was being prepared for eventual leadership of the Irish Citizen Army, was too nationalistic for the Labour army. By the end of the year, O'Casey had split with the Irish Citizen Army over this issue of separation of causes. Countess Markievicz, a member of the Executive and a woman whom O'Casey personally disliked, refused his demand to sever her connections with the Irish Volunteers. Voting for herself, she won over O'Casey's motion to keep the two armies apart. O'Casey, disgusted, resigned. Though O'Casey continued writing in Labour papers, this event marked the end of his active participation in politics and the Labour movement. Larkin left for America at the end of the year, supposedly on a fund-raising campaign but also on a much-needed vacation for his strained nerves. With his leader gone, O'Casey turned his energy from drafting

agendas to writing plays.

By the time of the 1916 Uprising led by Connolly, O'Casey had become a pacifist, hoping "to die in bed surrounded by medicine bottles."[24] In his Autobiographies, written many years after the Uprising and its aftermath of civil war, O'Casey praised the revolution as potentially bringing about great changes -- economic, social, political -- and, borrowing a line from Yeats' poem "Easter 1916" (written in that same year), he eulogized the events of Easter Week:

> But Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan, walks firm now, a flush on her haughty cheek. She hears the murmur in the people's hearts. Her lovers are gathering around her, for things are changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born.[25]

However, O'Casey became disillusioned by the aftermath of Anglo-Irish war and realized that any changes brought about by the 1916 Uprising were negative ones. As Ireland and Britain debated a peace settlement in 1920, and the Irish internecine war broke out in the following year, he had come to the new opinion: "The terrible beauty is beginning to lose her good looks."[26] Disenchanted with the new, pro-nationalist Labour leadership, he turned his eyes toward Russia and called himself openly a Communist.

About 1918, O'Casey, still supporting himself through manual labour, began writing a series of one-act plays with an eye toward the Abbey Theatre. He had written, between 1910 and 1912, a one-acter called The Frost in the Flower, intended for production by the St. Lawrence O'Toole Pipers Club. It had been rejected because of O'Casey's satirical treatment of various Club members. In 1918, he finished another one-acter called The Robe of Rosheen which he described as a play--

> satirising the contesting parties and putting official Labour against the wall for its stupid and selfish pursuit of jobs, instead of flinging themselves between the opposing guns, calling out the question of which of you will fire first![27]

Published in The Plain People, a Republican newspaper, O'Casey never saw it in print and only learned of its publication ten years after the fact. In 1919, he submitted The Frost in the Flower to the Abbey Theatre; it was promptly rejected but with the encouraging comment: "Not far from being a good play."[28] The following year he sent the Abbey a one-act play, The Harvest Festival.[29] It dealt:

> ...with the efforts of militant members of the unskilled unions to put more of the fibre of resistance to evil conditions of pay and life into the hearts and minds of the members of the craft unions whose gospel was that what was good enough for the fathers was good enough for the sons.[30]

O'Casey was encouraged by the critical praise of Lennox Robinson, then manager of the Abbey Theatre, and though this play was also rejected, he began a new project immediately. In 1921, he sent Robinson The Crimson in the Tri-Colour, another one-acter the theme of which again dealt with workers and their struggle. Robinson mislaid the manuscript, O'Casey's only copy; O'Casey felt unable to rewrite the play without notes and began another. Repeated rejection of scripts, many of which O'Casey thought of as fine pieces of writing, discouraged him. However, Lady Gregory, a noted Abbey dramatist, co-director, and patroness of the arts, became interested in O'Casey's efforts; this encouragement as well as his determination to see "that the Abbey Theatre curtain would go up on a play of his"[31] spurred him on to continue experimenting with dramatic form. Eventually, O'Casey departed from the constrictive one-act format and moved

toward the Chekhovian four-act structure, his next step being the two-act The Shadow of a Gunman. This play was accepted by the Abbey Theatre and successfully produced. This convinced O'Casey to give up his job and devote all his energy to playwriting. His next full-length plays, Juno and the Paycock and The Plough and the Stars, established him as the Abbey Theatre's leading dramatist and its most controversial.

As will be discussed in the next chapters, O'Casey envisioned himself as the voice of the Larkinite working class consciousness and of its (largely failed) Labour movement. His ideology had been formed in the years preceding 1916, so that he felt an exile in his own land as the Labour and political movements shifted away from the socialist outlook to which he was dedicated. The rising class consciousness O'Casey had hoped and worked for had receded: "This Ireland was not the workers' republic for which Larkin and Connolly had fought"[32]; it was not O'Casey's Ireland either. In 1926, he left this Ireland and settled, ironically enough, in England. But even before that self-exile, he had lived in an "internal emigration," writing all the time of the Ireland he had known and of the one he had dreamed possible; of the grubby reality of the tenements and the lofty hopes and silly illusions of its dwellers who no longer strove toward the true community of slum people that Jim Larkin had tried to bring about. O'Casey's early Dublin plays showed the changes brought about by the 1916 Uprising and its aftereffects -- the cooptation of the workers' movement by the middle class nationalists, the consequent alienation of the workers, the regression of limit-consciousness in the working class, and the disintegration of communities during periods of crisis. For O'Casey, the Irish working class had come full circle. At first leaderless and lacking group consciousness, this class had been drawn together into a powerful

force by Larkin, with O'Casey as helpmate, who defined their world vision and who introduced the new horizons of their limit-consciousness: a Marxist, utopian state in which the workers would no longer be slaves but self-governing people. This shared group consciousness was at the back of the 1913 Tramway Strike and the formation of the Irish Citizen Army. Coopted by the middle class nationalists in 1916, leaderless after the departure of Larkin and the death of Connolly, the working class regressed to a very low level of class consciousness and its utopian horizons were destroyed. After 1916, the Larkinite true community of workers no longer existed, and O'Casey's Larkinite stage parables describe the caricatural, fragmentary pseudo-communities of the alienated and isolated working class. Only a second Prometheus -- such as the hero of O'Casey's later play, Red Roses For Me -- could again show them the path to a socialist utopia.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1] Emmet Larkin, James Larkin: Irish Labour Leader 1876-1947 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 104.

[2] Brian O'Neill, Easter Week (London: Lawrence & Wishart, Ltd., 1936), p. 7.

[3] T.A. Jackson, Ireland Her Own: An Outline History of the Irish Struggle for National Freedom and Independence (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 377.

[4] W.P. Ryan, The Irish Labor Movement: From the Twenties to Our Own Day (New York: B.W. Huebsch, Inc., 1920), pp. 239-240.

[5] Sean O'Casey, Autobiographies I, Volume III: Drums Under the Windows (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), pp. 576-577.

[6] C. Desmond Greaves, The Life and Times of James Connolly (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 305.

[7] O'Casey, Drums..., p. 582.

[8] Ibid., p. 589. The police charge will be remembered in his play, Red Roses for Me, and the militant struggle of the 1913 strike in his The Star Turns Red, the latter dedicated: "To the men and women who fought through the Great Dublin Lockout in Nineteen Hundred and Thirteen" (in Collected Plays, Volume II, London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1964, p. 239).

[9] Sean O'Casey, Feathers From the Green Crow: Sean O'Casey 1905-1925, edited by Robert Hogan (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962), p. 44.

[10] Jackson, p. 377.

[11] Ibid., p. 378.

[12] O'Neill, p. 12.

[13] Ibid., p. 14.

[14] Larkin, p. 157.

[15] F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (London: Collins/Fontana, 1973), p. 285.

[16] P. O Cathasaigh (Sean O'Casey), The Story of the Irish Citizen Army (New York: Oriole Chapbooks, n.d.), p. 3.

[17] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[18] Ibid., p. 5.

[19] R.M. Fox, The History of the Irish Citizen Army (Dublin: James Duffy & Co., Limited, 1943), pp. 61-62.

[20] Cathasaigh, The Story..., pp. 11-12.

[21] Ibid., p. 14.

[22] O'Casey, Drums..., p. 610.

[23] Cathasaigh, The Story..., p. 53.

[24] O'Casey, Drums..., p. 657.

[25] Ibid., pp. 665-666.

[26] Sean O'Casey, Autobiographies II, Volume I: Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 74.

[27] Ibid., p. 95.

[28] O'Casey, Feathers..., p. 270.

[29] The Harvest Festival is the only play of his first four of which a copy is known to exist. Recently discovered, the manuscript belongs to the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. Due to distance and cost, it was not available for examination for this thesis.

[30] O'Casey, Inishfallen..., p. 96.

[31] Ibid., p. 98.

[32] David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 67.

PART II

SEAN O'CASEY'S EARLY PLAYS

AS

LARKINITE STAGE PARABLES

CHAPTER I

THE STAGE PARABLE OF KATHLEEN LISTENS IN

O'Casey, as has been shown in Chapter Three, early on realized that drama could be an effective political tool. As an organizer of the St. Lawrence O'Toole Pipers Club, he had worked on pro-nationalist dramatic productions. Later, during his association with the Larkinite movement, he wrote and produced plays in Liberty Hall for an audience of workers. After his break with the Labour movement, he continued to write plays dealing with the working class and the post-Larkin Labour movement. These dramatic topics were then taken up and developed in full in his plays for the Abbey Theatre. Part II will be the analyses of three early plays, commonly known as "The Dublin Trilogy": The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars.

These Dublin plays are considered by many critics as masterpieces of realism or naturalism, "slices of life" from O'Casey's slum background. Yet, upon closer examination, it can be shown that they are of a highly allegorical or parabolic nature. This allegorical level is, for the most part, beneath the dramatic surface in his Dublin plays, and only emerges fully in his later plays, those written after 1926. The second parabolic or tenour level is there, nonetheless, and it is difficult to see how the plays' import can be arrived at without uncovering it. This hypothesis can be approached by way of an explanation of O'Casey's overtly allegorical play,

Kathleen Listens In, one of his earliest and yet critically almost quite overlooked plays. Though it is not clear whether it was written, or at least finished, before or after The Shadow of a Gunman, it was certainly written before the final two full-length plays of the Dublin Trilogy, and it will be discussed here as a proof that O'Casey's apparent naturalism was from his very beginnings parallelled by and allied to parabolic, expressionist forms.[1]

Kathleen Listens In is an obvious allegory or, as O'Casey subtitled it, "a political phantasy."[2] It is a parable on politics in Ireland during its earliest Free State period. At this time, the Irish nationalist movement had made many concessions to Britain in order to gain some form of independence, the major one being the separation of Ulster from the rest of Ireland. Various socio-political groups and the "Republican" opposition had sharply opposed interests and views to this compromise. This dissension led to civil war which O'Casey depicted in his next play, Juno and the Paycock.

In Kathleen Listens In, O'Casey shows the conflict of such social and political groups. The plot is simple and the moral obvious. Miceawl O'Houlihan has sold the family cow at a poor price to buy a house for his daughter. Kathleen, the traditional symbol of Ireland, sits inside glued to the radio -- "listening in." Her suitors, each named after and representative of a political faction or social group -- Free Stater, Republican, Business Man, Farmer, and Johnny the socialist worker -- come to woo her. She answers them with: "I have to practice me Fox Trots and Jazzin' so as to be ladylike when I make me deboo into the League o' Nations" (282). The men fight among themselves about bringing her a chair to sit in, and an apolitical onlooker succinctly sums up the situation: "Be God, yous are

changin' th' proverb from united we stand, to united we fall, divided we stand!" (295). Kathleen faints from the excitement and her Doctor's orders are "she'll need perfect peace and quietness for the rest of her National life" (295). The play ends with the characters surrounding the house, shouting demands at her as The Orangeman -- symbolic of the loss of and threat from Ulster -- passes by the house (the Irish State) beating a big drum.

O'Casey lambasts all of Kathleen's suitors in this play; each looks backward to past history and none have a forward-looking corrective ideology to offer. The National Party, two characters who open the play, is indicative of the stagnation of old ideas or illusions: "We think what we thought, we say what we said, we stand where we stood seven hundred years ago; the world may change but Ireland'll never alther" (279). Within the House, The Old Man in the Kilt -- O'Casey's bitter indictment not only of the Gaelic League but also of the whole "Gaelic" ideology -- tutors Kathleen using the Book of Kells as text. Feeble and near senility, he is a death-like figure standing for the old mythical history of Ireland as used for and by the various nationalist groups. This explains why, despite his weaknesses, almost all the others cower and do his bidding. Though they insult him behind his back and wish him dead, they break into Irish (Gaelic) song when he orders them to do so; pointedly, the song is a quasi-nursery rhyme which ends in a nonsensical refrain. Aware of the apathy of the adults, The Old Man turns his attention to a younger generation -- the new hope of Ireland -- which he plans to bend to his will:

> I'll ram it into th' chiselurs. Unless they learn their Irish, they're to get nothin' to eat, nothin' to eat, do yous hear? I'll ram it into th' chiselurs, I'll ram it into th' chiselurs. (294)

Each suitor brings Kathleen a present; each gift is symbolic of the giver. The Republican brings a 1916 portrait of Kathleen, again an attempt to force history backwards. The Free Stater offers a "manual on the Government of a house according to a Constitution" (291); the Farmer, a bag of flour; and the Business man, "a little clockwork motor car" (291). The socialist Johnny brings nothing; it is Kathleen who owes him something in return for repainting her house green. Kathleen neither accepts nor returns any gift; she is said to be searching for new young men and not "oul' fossils" (281). In an attempt to appease her anxiety, the suitors move to form a coalition. This proves impossible for, as Miceawl says of this new band, "every member...wants to play a differen' tune" (284). O'Casey uses the character of Sheela, Kathleen's mother, to describe the state of Ireland: "I don't think there's a house in the whole world that there's so much washin' to be done as there is in this house" (288).

O'Casey also presents two types of workers to show the conflict between Larkinite and post-Larkinite lower or plebeian class consciousness. The latter is represented by Tomaus Thornton who is described in the didascalia thus:

> His countenance is one of quiet cunning serenity; he tries to take the world as easily as the world will allow him. He is fond of talk but not of discussion, which he endeavours to avoid by passing it off. He is dressed in working clothes, which bear no marks of work. (283)

Thornton is poorly worked out as a character and functions mainly as a foil for Miceawl, but it is clear from his actions and words that he represents the apolitical small man. Further, his dress of a worker who does not work hints at a character-type O'Casey will return to in later plays -- that of the alienated worker with a zero level of working class conscious-

ness. Totally apolitical, Thornton's attitude toward all other ideologies is: "I wouldn't be botherin' me head about them at all" (283). He does not give support to the demands of Johnny, a socialist worker akin to a Larkinite who goes on strike against working conditions, because he fears Johnny is a "Bolshie" (291) and, like the O'Houlihans, Thornton views communism as evil. He leaves before the final shouting match both to avoid work (painting the house green) and to catch the horse races. He foreshadows the elemental, old and lazy, common man seen later in the characters of Joxer Daly and Jack Boyle in Juno and the Paycock.

Johnny, the young socialist worker with communist sympathies, stands for the alienated working class who still upheld the traditions of the Larkinite movement. He also, by virtue of his age, represents the younger generation which was considered the new hope of Ireland. Kathleen is said to desire young men and Johnny is the only character of the play who fits this stipulation. She, however, will have nothing to do with him; as he says: "she passes me by with her nose in the air" (290). This snub makes it clear that genuine working class socialism is, at that point, unacceptable to Ireland. Since Johnny is ostracized by Ireland for his views, O'Casey hints that Russia may be the only answer for the workers' problems. This marks his first attempt at putting forth political propaganda through a character. Johnny, however, also proves himself an unsympathetic character. Despite his protestations, he is still attached to the bourgeoisie -- "holding on to the coat tails of the Business Man" (293) -- and by the finale he is seen screaming his demands as ineffectually as do the other suitors.

O'Casey's moral is an obvious one. The community of Irish people is a false one if each member works in opposition to the rest of the people.

Old ideologies or illusions are stagnant and potentially death-dealing; The Old Man in the Kilt who stands at the back of all the other characters in the new Nationalist Ireland threatens to starve the younger generation if they refuse to accept old illusions. No new ideologies, such as socialism or communism, are acceptable to or strong enough to win the new, fashionable, fox-trotting Ireland, but neither do the old factions have viable alternatives to the existing chaos and the further threats looming inside and outside the house of the Irish state. Ireland's future is dubious if unity among its people is not forthcoming.

These themes will reappear in O'Casey's Dublin plays as do the allegorical techniques, though they are hidden as the deeper level of a Larkinite stage parable. Furthermore, in Kathleen Listens In, O'Casey introduces the use of ages, clothes, songs, flags, and certain physical actions as semiotic signifiers of political or social attitudes, all of which will recur in his next two plays.

Besides the description of Thornton, one other self-contradictory costume is worn, this by Sheela. The didascalia state:

> She has a worn and harrassed look; her sleeves are tucked up indicating that she is busy. If her entire body could be seen; she would appear in a rough skirt, wearing heavy boots, but she is wearing a fancy Crepe de Chine blouse. (284)

Her first appearance, then, as she sticks her head out the window, is of a well-dressed woman. Later, when she comes out of the house, she is seen as a working-class one pretending to gentility. She represents that segment of the working class who aspired to a place amongst the bourgeoisie -- a character-type seen later in Mary Boyle of Juno and the Paycock and in Nora Clitheroe of The Plough and the Stars. Other clothes are more obviously representational: The Old Man wears a kilt which signifies the Gaelic

ideology, and, though there is no explicit description, the remaining characters obviously have to wear equally-symbolic costumes -- the Business Man wears a business suit, Johnny wears workers' clothes and so on.

The use of flags -- here the Tri-Colour and the green flag of the National Party -- prefigures their reappearance as central symbols in The Plough and the Stars, the title of which is the name of the Labour flag. Differentiation of age, as has been discussed, serves to give birth to O'Casey's recurring theme of the death-dealing old generation and the life-giving young generation. The use of song and music -- the singing in Irish of the men, the singing of a patriotic love song to Kathleen, the Orangeman's beating of the drum -- foreshadows the communal songfest of tenement dwellers in Juno and the Paycock and the multiple patriotic love songs of oppositional political groups in The Plough and the Stars. Also, O'Casey makes use of certain physical gestures or events to clarify the tenour of his parable. One fine example takes place when the men enter the house to get Kathleen a chair. From within is heard the sounds of "furniture being knocked about, and the breaking of delph" (293) as the men struggle with the chair, each attempting to carry it alone. Parabolically, the chaos and disordering of the house signifies the chaos and destruction within the Irish state as opposed political groups and social classes fight for power. This same signifier will reappear with greater development in Juno and the Paycock where the carrying out and disordering of furniture symbolizes the destruction of family, community, and Ireland. Thus, O'Casey has here, by means of not only verbal declarations but also a wide range of stage signs (clothes, objects, song and music, actions), sketched in his later, basically parabolic use of characters, each standing for a political or social group and forming communities of class or, as in the case of Kathleen Listens In, a country.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1] This thesis will not discuss O'Casey's "expressionism," a dubious categorization of his technique at this early stage of his writing. According to his own Autobiographies, O'Casey's dramatic models were Boucicault, Shakespeare and Shaw, and he claims to have seen few plays before his own were produced. At some point, O'Casey became familiar with the Expressionist movement in drama. Juno and the Paycock, written after Kathleen Listens In, mentions three Ibsen plays. Robert Hogan says, in The Experiments of Sean O'Casey, that O'Casey had seen a production of Ernst Toller's Masse Mensch but gives no date; Krause in Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work, states that by 1926 O'Casey had also read Strindberg and O'Neill. The analysis in this thesis, however, will concern itself solely with the parabolic nature of O'Casey's plays, which - if demonstrated - would be the basis of his affinities for expressionism, and not vice versa.

[2] Sean O'Casey, Feathers From the Green Crow: Sean O'Casey 1905-1925, edited by Robert Hogan (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962), p. 277. Further quotes from the play will be from this text, with the page number given in parenthesis immediately following the quote.

CHAPTER II

THE STAGE PARABLE OF THE SHADOW OF A GUNMAN

The Shadow of a Gunman, originally called On The Run, was written about 1922-23 at the time of O'Casey's ever increasing disenchantment with the condition of Ireland. Its political context is as follows: Following the 1916 Revolution and at the end of the First World War, the British government had determined to destroy the growing Republican movement in Ireland. Using its own police force and recruiting auxiliary troops from its soldiers to form regiments like the "Blacks-and-Tans" (a name derived from the colour of their uniforms), the Unionist government instituted a police state throughout Ireland. The Republicans broke up into highly secret guerrilla groups and, dropping all pretense of uniforms and public displays of power (two of their fatal mistakes in 1916), they worked undercover out of the tenements. The Gunman in hiding quickly became a mythical hero to the Irish people who suffered open oppression and seemingly endless servitude. O'Casey's play is set in May 1920, a midpoint date of the Blacks-and-Tans Raids, and concerns a false gunman, a worker posing as revolutionary, and the consequences of playing with illusion.

The Shadow of a Gunman takes place in the tenement room of Donal Davoren, worker poet, sub-tenant of Seumas Shields, pedlar. The plot is minimal: a friend, Maguire, comes to see Shields and leaves a bag in his room. That night, with Blacks-and-Tans surrounding the house, Davoren

discovers the bag to contain Mills bombs. Minnie Powell, a tenement girl who has become enamoured of Davoren thinking him a gunman on the run, takes the bag to her room, is arrested and finally shot when the Irish Republican Army ambushes the Blacks-and-Tans outside the tenement. The play ends with Davoren bemoaning his cowardice and Shields coldly unconcerned over the death of the murdered girl.

Act One takes place around noon and details the creation of the imaginary gunman or false hero. Davoren is composing pseudo-Shelleian poetry as Shields sleeps. Shields has made plans to go peddling with Maguire but has overslept their appointment. Maguire arrives with the news that he must go otherwhere on business, and leaves a bag in the room to be picked up that evening. Shortly thereafter, the landlord comes to serve Shields with an eviction notice because he has been supplying newspapers with accounts of the wretched conditions of slum life. In Shields' opinion, the real reason behind the eviction is that the entire tenement believes Davoren to be a gunman on the run. Davoren is somewhat irritated by the rumour but his real concern is not to be thrown out into the streets. After Shields leaves, Minnie, a simple but fearless working girl, strikes up a conversation with Davoren whom she considers an infamous and heroic revolutionary. Giving into the promise of her kisses, Davoren takes on willingly the pose of a gunman, and boasts that "...a gunman throws a bomb as carelessly as a schoolboy throws a snowball."[1] Cleverly, O'Casey postpones their first kiss until the end of the act by the entry of neighbours come to bask in Davoren's false glory as hero and potential martyr.

It is in this scene that Davoren's and Minnie's fates are sealed. Playing the hero, Davoren allows a false community to grow about him. Tommy

Owens, a young braggart and coward who is all words and little action, seeks Davoren's acceptance by advocating a fiery and violent death for the English. Singing patriotic songs, he angrily queries: "Why isn't every man in Ireland out with the I.R.A.?" (113), though he himself does not seem to be its member. Mrs. Henderson, O'Casey's prototypical domineering and busybody housewife, drags in a meek Mr. Gallogher who gives Davoren a letter for the I.R.A. with complaints against his neighbours. Davoren accepts it without hesitation though he, of course, has no access to Republican officials. Reality forces itself into Davoren's fantasy briefly when he learns that Maguire has been killed in an ambush. Within minutes, however, he forgets this news and its implications, and returns to Minnie begging for the kiss. He types their names on a piece of paper as a love-note for Minnie, and upon her departure rationalises his masquerade thus: "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?" (124). This question is answered in the terror of Act Two.

The second act takes place at night and is a masterpiece of suspense. It is clear from early on that it will culminate in a raid; attention is focussed on Maguire's bag and its possible contents, Shields mentions the possibility of a raid after the ambush in the afternoon. The raid does not come until the end of the act and takes only about ten minutes of stage-time, but O'Casey has carefully constructed the preceding scenes and the final climax in such a way as to vividly depict a typical night of terrorism and horror for the slum people.

The act opens, as did the first, with Shields in bed and Davoren composing poetry. Unlike Act One, however, Davoren finds no solace in poetry

but sees Shelley's verses as emphatic reminders of the ugliness of his life and surroundings. In the first act he read:

> Then sorrow, war and pain lose all their powers,
> For each is dead, and life is only ours. (94)

but now he melancholically intones the words:

> All beautiful and happiest things are dead. (125)

Shields is not asleep but thinking of Maguire's death. In the first act, he could not be awakened by repeated tumultuous pounding on the door, now he hears a mysterious tapping on the wall, to him an unmistakeable omen of death. They talk of politics and poetry and death. Davoren boasts of his courage and affects an atheist's disdain for death, his personal god being "philosophy," whereas Shields admits his fears and cites religion as the only true consolation for a weak man. But when their discussion is cut short by gunfire in the lane, both cower; both their philosophies of courage are of no avail in a real situation. Complaining of the widespread violence throughout the country, Shields hints that he believes bombs are being manufactured in their backyard. A knock is heard, and the privacy of the enclosed room is again broken into by the other tenement dwellers, this time in the person of Mrs. Grigson who is ostensibly concerned over her husband still on the streets outside but who really wants to know: "Do the insurance companies pay if a man is shot after curfew?" (137). Within minutes, Grigson returns drunk and with the information that Tommy Owens has been boasting of his acquaintance with a gunman, i.e., has turned informer by this feeble attempt to raise himself in the eyes of others. Davoren madly searches for the incriminating letter to the I.R.A. and burns it. Only then does he finally open the bag to find that his joking had been right, it is full of bombs. At this point, the tenement is encircled, and the doors forcibly opened by Blacks-and-Tans;

the raid has begun.

The raid exposes the characters' true natures, a revelation in crisis. Minnie, the naive romantic, selflessly takes the bombs as the raid begins. Shields and Grigson are subservient to the Auxiliary, who relishes his role of terroriser, to the point of complete humiliation by him. Davoren worries about Minnie, but his concern, like Shields' is: "Holy Saint Anthony grant that she'll keep her mouth shut." (152) After she is captured, shot, and dies yelling "Up the Republic" (152), when Davoren learns the details of her death -- "...she was shot through the buzzom. Oh, it was horrible to see the blood pourin' out, an' Minnie moanin'. They found some paper in her breast, with "Minnie" written on it, an' some other name they couldn't make out with the blood..." (156) -- he lapses into total self-pity at this event which exposes him as sham and coward:

> Ah me, alas! Pain, pain, pain ever, for ever! It's terrible to think that little Minnie is dead, but it's still more terrible to think that Davoren and 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! (156-57)

Shields, the superstitious primitive, absolves himself of any blame by saying it was the tapping on the wall. The play ends with "...no change, no pause, no hope." (105)

As Herbert Goldstone points out[2], O'Casey's tenement plays take place in a national crisis and center upon the false or shattered community of the slum dwellers in Dublin. To take this analysis one step further is to see O'Casey's fractionalized community as a symbol for Ireland as a whole and the play as a parable concerning Ireland's political and economic state. The 1916 Uprising had been fought under the illusions of glorious revolution

and honour arising out of war; the promises given by the insurgents to the people had been a Worker's Republic, a free Ireland and social and economic equality for all. The Revolution failed to bring about any of these changes and, in fact, precipitated a period of regression in the Labour movement; socialist leaders like Connolly and Larkin were replaced by officials having bourgeois ambitions whose first concern was not at all the workers' economic advancement but on the contrary a campaign to destroy the powerful Larkinite legacy in favour of a capitalistic philosophy. The Republican movement shifted from its 1916 stance of sympathy toward socialism and the workers' cause to a purely nationalistic and acquisitive one. Both the Republican and the Labour movements in Ireland thus gave birth to new guiding illusions in order to rationalize their already committed and ongoing actions. This process amounted to the creation of new illusions to counteract the alienation arising out of the failure to fulfill the old promises. O'Casey took it to task in The Shadow of a Gunman. His depiction of the enclosed and then shattered community of slum dwellers is a powerful comment on what he saw as the alienation of the working class during the national crisis after 1916 and the shift in emphasis from the importance of securing safety for the community -- within the play a community of the tenement people, but in the broader sense one of the entire working class -- to that of self-interest and survival of the alienated and isolated individual. O'Casey does this by focussing the play on the creation of powerful but destructive illusions by the false hero, Davoren as gunman, and by analysing the consequences of such a charade.

O'Casey's characters can be categorized as filling a spectrum between the poles of passive and active attachment to illusions. They are divided into two major groupings ranging from passive belief to active participation in some form of political illusion. The first group consists of

four characters -- Grigson, Shields, Owens and Gallogher. The passive belief -- associated with the politically old illusions -- is seen in Adolphus Grigson, the Unionist Orangeman, who is a traditionalist even down to his attitudes concerning the inferiority of women. Representative of the Protestant minority who maintained a political attitude antagonistic to the new Republicans, he is one of the most alienated of the characters and finds escape in drinking and dominating his wife. His beliefs, however, are only skin-deep: during the raid he consents unhesitatingly to throw his Bible on the floor and sing in honour of the Irish Republic. His illusions of Protestant supremacy and loyalty to the Crown provide him with a certain superficial sense of self in an alienating world that runs contrary to his beliefs.

Seumas Shields, who had been a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and a teacher of Gaelic, is now a superstitious pedlar, separated from any active politics and taking a dim view of the present state of Ireland. He represents the Irishmen alienated by the new politics of the Republican movements, which bear little resemblance to those which they had originally fought for. Shields is aware of the community of suffering around him and the unromantic cost of the nationalist struggle to the people:

> It's the civilians that suffer; when there's an ambush they don't know where to run. Shot in the back to save the British Empire, an' shot in the breast to save the soul of Ireland. I'm a Nationalist meself, right enough -- a Nationalist right enough, but all the same -- I'm a Nationalist right enough; I believe in the freedom of Ireland, an' that England has no right to be here, but I draw the line when I hear the gunmen blowin' about dyin for the people, when it's the people that are dyin' for the gunmen! (132)

However, he has no alternative plan for a free Ireland he has worked toward and claims to still believe in as a right of the people. He has reverted

to the stage of a consciousness preceding the Uprising; his crutch is now religion, his business akin to scavenging, and his survival technique an unmitigated and unrelenting hypocrisy. Immensely superstitious, intent on survival to the absolute disregard of others' safety, he is a man cowering noisily in the tenements of his birth -- another isolated character with "the fear and the malignity of primitive man," as O'Casey's didascalia indicate (94).

Tommie Owens and Mr. Gallogher each, for their own reasons, put their faith in the new I.R.A. and its power as a force for social amelioration They represent that part of the working class which aligned itself, if passively, with the nationalist political movement, with an eye toward personal profit or advancement. Both are alienated by their surroundings: Mr. Gallogher complains of the crowded and noisy life of the tenements; Tommie is discomfited by his low, working class status, and sees the I.R.A. as a means of rising above it. Both seek to escape the reality of their situations and see change as possible only if brought about by an outside force with a merely verbal participation by themselves. These workers form one group characterised by passivity and self-interest and they all survive the raid.

The second grouping comprises three characters -- Mrs. Henderson, Minnie and Maguire -- actively involved in the new belief of militant struggle; all are either killed or arrested by the end of the play. Mrs. Henderson, believing in the power of the I.R.A. to improve conditions in the slums, is taken away by the Blacks-and-Tans for fighting with the soldiers. Minnie Powell, caught up in the illusion of the heroic gunmen, wishes to aid their struggle and takes up the bag of bombs, not because of political awareness

of the goals of the Republican movement but because of her emotional attachment to Davoren; this leads to her death. The pragmatic realism of Mrs. Henderson and the naive idealism of Minnie encompass the attitudes of the working class women who buttressed the Republican movement. Maguire is the only real member of the I.R.A. seen in the play. He represents the workers that actively participated in the underground movement, acting under the hegemony of the middle class nationalists and to the immediate disadvantage of his own class: it was the tenement people who suffered through the raids and the working class girl Minnie who dies because of his bag of bombs. His brief span onstage, pale characterization, and quick death stand for the role of that segment of the Irish working class.

Davoren stands in the center of the play, between the active and passive groups, both as being the most consciously alienated individual (as evidenced, paradoxically, by his inappropriate quotes from the revolutionary suffering poet Shelley), and also as being the mediator bringing the two groups together by his posturings as gunman. He is the embodiment of the conflict of illusions and reality, an aspiring working class poet posing as heroic gunman -- a mirror-image, alter ego or reverse alternative to O'Casey himself. Self-exiled in his escapist position of lofty poetic dreamer, he defines his attitude toward the community of the lower class and his vision of self as:

> The People! Damn the people! They live in the abyss, the poet lives on the mountain-top...To the people the end of life is the life created for them; to the poet the end of life is the life that he creates for himself; life has a stifling grip upon the people's throat -- it is the poet's musician. The poet ever strives to save the people; the people ever strive to destroy the poet. (127)

However, it is not his mediocre poetry that attracts Minnie, but rather the illusion of Davoren as gunman. Self-exiled yet afraid of isolation, he succumbs to the temptation of taking on an even more romantic character than poet, that of gunman, to win Minnie's favours. The role that he creates for himself is thus a total illusion. This masquerade is perpetrated not out of affection for Minnie but out of vanity. By allowing Minnie her vision of himself as hero, Davoren uses her for his own emotional profit; in turn, he is used by the tenement dwellers for theirs. Posturing as a hero, he allows a community to grow about him which is necessarily a false or transient one as it is based on an absence or illusion. As gunman he makes -- if not directly then implicitly, through his acceptance of his role -- certain promises to the tenement people. These are to better conditions in the tenements, to rouse the people into active participation with the I.R.A. in its continuing militant struggle which assuredly will lead to Ireland's freedom, and to function as a hero for the working class. These promises are not fulfilled by the end of the play. On the contrary, the illusions concerning Davoren are shattered, and the tenement people return to their initial zero state of belief, to a total political alienation.

The shattering of illusions and of the false community comes during the raid and at the hands of the Blacks-and-Tans represented onstage by the Auxiliary. The relationships between the tenement dwellers, tenuous at best, disintegrate completely as the realities of war -- arrests, terrorizing, and death -- invade the tenements. The breaking of loyalties between characters is foreshadowed by two actions: Mrs. Grigson's question about the insurance companies reveals that the false and inhuman relationships in the tenement community have invaded even the marital bed; and

the news of Tommie Owen's boasting about and thus informing on Davoren exemplifies the theme of loyalty to self alone and utter irresponsibility to others. With the entrance of the Auxiliary, the beliefs of the first, passive group of workers are seen to be false: within minutes the Auxiliary has accomplished the breaking down of appearance and illusions. Shields swears that he has never held a gun or a pro-nationalist attitude, both he and Davoren give their English names instead of the Irish; Mr. Grigson offers a prayer for the Irish Republic; and, of course, Davoren drops all pretence of being a gunman. But Davoren's humiliation does not absolve him of the sin of deception: Minnie's death is thrust upon him as the consequence of his playing at heroics. Her action of concealing the bombs and then shouting "Up the Republic" in the face of the Blacks-and-Tans is a heroic gesture for an idealised, mythical gunman--and a foolish one for a working class girl momentarily deluded by a poltroon-poet's lies. But her actions are not solely her own mistakes, for she has been led astray purposefully by Davoren. Her ability to hold a belief, if only an illusory one, transcends Davoren's conscious alienation; the realization of her courage emphasizes his (and the tenements') cowardice.

The Shadow of a Gunman, then, establishes O'Casey's major themes of the disintegration of plebeian community under siege and of conflict between illusion and reality within individuals and whole movements. It also introduces his major setting, that of the tenements, which he draws masterfully utilizing his own personal experiences, informed by his political involvement and later disenchantment. Earlier on in this thesis, O'Casey has been defined as a member of a marginal group, an onlooker to the working class, alienated from its actual consciousness by his religious

background, personal aspirations, and political beliefs. Through his involvement with Larkinism, he was able to see both the actual consciousness and limit-consciousness of the Irish working class. In his early plays, he analyses the actual--in the case of The Shadow of a Gunman, almost totally alienated--consciousness of the tenement dwellers. In this play he is concerned with politics in the abstract, with illusory beliefs and the process of believing. His concern is to portray, from the point of view of the tenements, the political state of Ireland and the effect of the national struggle on the working class. O'Casey also begins to build his characterology, each figure being symbolic of one stage of consciousness or representative of one sociopolitical sub-class or group. Most importantly, he introduces the themes of the need of the working class for heroes, of the destructive powers of false leaders, of the illusions rampant in an Ireland struggling for freedom, and of the deep working-class alienation which arose from the unfulfilled promises springing from these philosophies of illusion. The model structure of his Dublin plays begins to evince itself: it is that of one family surrounded by neighbours in the tenement community, both the family and the neighbours harbouring different but equally dangerous illusions, showing forth the fears, malignities and devotions of various and variously alienated characters, and finally bringing about their communal destruction.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1] Sean O'Casey, The Shadow of a Gunman in Collected Plays, Volume I (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 110. Further quoted in the text by the page number of this edition.

[2] Herbert Goldstone, In Search of Community: The Achievement of Sean O'Casey (Cork and Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1972).

CHAPTER III

THE STAGE PARABLE OF JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK

Juno and the Paycock takes place in 1922, a time of civil war in Ireland between two Irish factions -- those who accepted the peace treaty with England which made Ireland a Free State except for Ulster and for swearing allegiance to the British Crown, and those who did not accept this compromise. The Irish Republicans divided into two factions, the ruling "Free-Staters" and the oppositional "Republicans" or "Diehards," which battled it out in a new reign of violence where cities were the battlegrounds and sudden death a common occurrence.

This play, like The Shadow of a Gunman, is set in a tenement apartment, that of the Boyles. The play has a main plot and a sub-plot, both of which emphasize the influence of national crisis and resultant chaos upon the seemingly sheltered life of the common, apolitical man. The main plot concerns a fortune suddenly found and as suddenly lost. Early in Act I, the economic status of the Boyles is shown. "Captain" Jack Boyle, the father and "paycock" (peacock) of the title, is seen to be a man detesting physical labour. Jerry Devine, a Labour-movement member and lover of Mary Boyle, has come with the news that jobs are available for both Boyle and his drinking companion, Joxer Daly. Juno, Boyle's wife, presses him to take the job, berating him for past laziness and irresponsibility towards the family. Her work does not bring in enough to support the family and the only other source of income, that from Mary's job, has stopped as Mary has walked out in a strike against her employer. Before Boyle leaves for work, Mary brings home a visitor, a man Jerry

has seen her with at dances, Charles Bentham. He tells the Boyles that they have inherited a small fortune from a distant relative, so that they will never have to work again.

In Act II the effects of the inheritance upon their lives are seen. Drawing credit on their mythical money, the Boyles make of their tenement apartment a vulgar parody of a middle class home. Boyle has exchanged his moleskin, working class trousers for a suit, and talks now to Joxer and Bentham of stock-market reports and politics in contrast to his drunken sea-fantasies in Act I. Mary shifts all her attention from the worker-atheist Jerry to the bourgeois-theosophist Bentham. Their engagement is discussed at a party Boyle has for the neighbours, which is interrupted as the funeral of Robbie Tancred, a Diehard shot in ambush by the Free-Staters and a neighbour of the Boyles, passes by their door. Juno is at first sympathetic to Mrs. Tancred's grief but becomes irritated by a further interruption by Needle Nugent, a tailor, who criticizes the Boyles for their carousing and playing of a gramophone as the cortège passes outside. Juno's attitude is now: "Maybe, Needle Nugent, it's nearly time we had a little less respect for the dead, an' a little more regard for the livin!"[1] At the end of the act, they go down to watch the funeral, incorporating it into the evening's entertainment, for as Joxer says: "Oh, it's a darlin' funeral, a daarlin' funeral!" (59).

The sub-plot revolves around Johnny Boyle, the son. Once a member of the Irish Republican Army, he has been crippled in the 1916 Uprising and later skirmishes during the civil war, now cowering frightened and uncommunicative in his room. Act I opens with Mary reading a newspaper account of Tancred's death; Johnny, greatly agitated, leaves the room as Mary details Tancred's wounds. Juno excuses his belligerent manner as caused by

suffering from his wounds and she makes sure votive candles are lit before statues of St. Anthony and the Virgin, a superstitious religious practice most important to Johnny. He comes out of his room only two more times during the act. The first entrance occurs when a thunderous knocking sounds at the front door; when told: "It's a fella in a thrench coat" (22), he retreats into his room in great fear. (This unanswered visitor later turns out to be Benthan with his news.) His second entrance takes place when Mary brings Bentham home to announce the legacy. While the Boyles see the money as an escape from further work or money problems, Johnny's reaction hints at deeper worries now possibly resolved: "We'll be able to get out o' this place now, an' go somewhere we're not known" (33).

The second act reveals the spectre of guilt and fear that Johnny is running from. It becomes, very gradually, clear that his turning informer had led to the killing of Tancred. Still distracted, he finds no comfort in the refurbishing of the apartment. As Juno says, he has been "sleepin' wan night in my sisther's, an' the nex' in your father's brother's -- you'll get no rest goin' on that way"; his answer is a despairing one: "I can rest nowhere, nowhere, nowhere" (41). Johnny's nerves approach the breaking-point during Bentham's Theosophist explanation that ghosts may exist:

> They say that sensational actions, such as the killing of a person, demand great energy, and that that energy lingers in the place where the action occurred. People may live in the place and see nothing, then someone may come along whose personality has some peculiar connection with the energy of the place, and in a flash, the person sees the whole affair. (45)

The theory proves correct: Bentham has been the cause of Johnny's first scare by his pounding on the door; now his talk precipitates Johnny's panic-striken vision of Tancred's ghost:

> I seen him. . . . I seen Robbie Tancred kneelin' down before the statue . . . an' the red light shinin' on him . . . an' when I went in . . . he turned an' looked at me . . . an' I seen the wouns bleedin' in his breast. . . . Oh, why did he look at me like that? . . . it wasn't my fault that he was done in. . . . Mother o' God, keep him away from me! (46)

When the others leave to view Tancred's funeral, he stays behind, and is served with a Diehard summons to attend a Battalion Staff meeting on the Tancred murder. Johnny refuses: "I won't go! Haven't I done enough for Ireland! I've lost me arm, an' me hip's desthroyed so that I'll never be able to walk right agen! Good God, haven't I done enough for Ireland!"; the messenger answers: "Boyle, no man can do enough for Ireland!" (60).

In Act III, two months after Act I, the inheritance has proved a false one because Bentham has incorrectly worded the will. The apartment is stripped of all possessions -- first Boyle's suit, then the gramophone, and finally the new furniture -- to repay the massive debts accrued. Bentham has abandoned Mary who is pregnant, and Jerry, proving himself a hypocrite, leaves her when he learns that. Boyle throws Mary out and Johnny's response to her disgrace is: "I wish to God a bullet or a bomb had whipped me ou' o' this long ago!" (78). His anger turns to horror when his votive light blows out. Two Irregulars (Diehards) break in and take him away to be shot for his betrayal. Juno learns of his death and comes to a realization of her misplaced priorities:

> I forgot, Mary, I forgot; your poor oul' selfish mother was only thinkin' of herself....Maybe I didn't feel sorry enough for Mrs. Tancred when her poor son was found as Johnny's been found now -- because he was a Diehard! Ah, why didn't I remember that then he wasn't a Diehard or a Stater, but only a poor dead son! It's well I remember all that she said -- an' it's my turn to say it now: What was the pain I suffered, Johnny, bringin' you into the world to carry you to your cradle, to the pains I'll suffer carryin' you out o' the world to bring you to your grave! Mother o' God, Mother o' God, have pity on us all! Blessed Virgin, where were

> you when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets, when me darlin' son was riddled by bullets? Sacred Heart o' Jesus, take away our heart o' stone, and give us hearts o' flesh! Take away this murdherin' hate, an' give us Thine own eternal love! (87)

O'Casey's final comment comes in the last scene which shows the highly drunken Paycock and Joxer in the stripped and disordered apartment, bemoaning that: "...th' whole worl's. . . in a terr. . . ible state o'. . . chassis!" (89).

Juno and the Paycock, set in the tenements, reintroduces the "slum viewpoint" of O'Casey on the themes of the confusion and destructiveness of war, the disintegration of communities and moral structures in time of crisis ("chassis"), the emphasis on material advancement rather than humanistic awareness, and the conflict of idealistic principles with ruthless action. He also develops a theme faintly seen in The Shadow of a Gunman, the conflict between the death-dealing or death-accepting male principle and the life-giving or life-accepting female one. Ireland is seen as a country depopulated in war, the men dead or dying and the women left grieving. Carrying this image further, O'Casey details the ineffectualness of the remaining men (except in killing) and shows an Ireland composed of not only dead rebel-soldiers but also fathers who are, in effect, absent and sons who can no longer deal with politics and revolutions but merely try to survive in isolation and alienation from the community.

These themes are developed by means of each main character expressing or representing a certain social or political stage of working class consciousness. The spread of characters begins with those that have no loyalty at all to their class community -- the false Captain Jack Boyle and his parasite Joxer Daly, who construct fantasy worlds in order to escape the

responsibilities of family and community. Boyle exemplifies the morally if not physically absent father and husband, the vain dreamer who abdicates paternal authority and then complains about the disrespect of his children and wife. His interest in the civil war is non-existent, and he echoes nationalist terminology to define, with unconscious parody, authoritarian but wishful solutions to his private problems: "Today, Joxer, there's goin' to be issued a proclamation be me, establishing an independent Republic, an' Juno'll have to take an oath of allegiance" (27). Mortally afraid of physical labour, he mimicks "crippling" pains in his legs -- again a cruel, if unconscious, parody of Johnny's truly crippled and helpless state. He is vain and full of false bravado; his gestures and words try to project an image which conceals the dismal reality of the true man. O'Casey's didascalia describe Boyle at the outset as one who: "... carries himself with the upper part of his body slightly thrown back, and his stomach slightly thrust forward. His walk is a slow, consequential strut. His clothes are dingy, and he wears a faded seaman's-cap with a glazed peak" (10). He claims to be a sea captain and to have sailed "from the Gulf o' Mexico to the Antanartic Ocean" (26) but, as Juno points out, this is a bold-faced lie: "Everybody callin' you 'Captain', an' you only wanst on the wather, in an oul' collier from here to Liverpool, when anybody, to listen or look at you, ud take you for a second Christo For Columbus!" (14). Boyle maintains his masquerade carefully: it functions as his escape from a poverty-stricken existence. In his fantasies he envisions himself as an able navigator steering his ship through dangerous waters to safe landing. In the real world of the tenements he is at a complete standstill and can neither navigate his life successfully nor bring to safety the lives of his wife and children who depend on him as father. He laments the state of "chassis" that Ireland and his

representative microcosm has fallen into but can offer no alternatives to the disorder. In Act I he defines the chaos as arising out of the disintegration of relationships between fathers and children. Act II, in his false bourgeois condition, he attributes the disorder to the insecure economic situation of the Free State. In Act III, he laments his personal world as being in "chassis" but does not comprehend the cause which is the melding of the two influences cited before -- the effect of the national crisis upon the family and community as well as the breaking apart of both socio-economic (bourgeois) and political (nationalist) illusions. Ineffectual throughout the play, he consciously blinds himself from perceiving the disorder that he has in large part created by his laziness and drinking, and relies upon Joxer's audience for his sense of identity.

Joxer is the clever hypocrite, a symbol for the new apolitical man in Ireland who supports any faction if it means personal profit but who actively takes part in none. O'Casey's description of him characterises the willingly subservient listener and confidant who agrees to any opinion while carefully concealing his own attitudes and motivations: "... he has a habit of constantly shrugging his shoulders with a peculiar twitching movement, meant to be ingratiating. His face is invariably ornamented with a grin" (10). Joxer uses Boyle's partonage for all it is worth in food and drink; in Act III, he goes so far as to steal a bottle of stout from Boyle, later placing the blame on Needle Nugent, and commiserating with Boyle over the theft: "Oh, that's shockin'; ah, man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn!" (69). Aware of Boyle's need for him, he plays along with the Captain's masquerade and maintains an attitude of respect for the opinions of the equally hypocritical Paycock. Just as Boyle's political attitude oscillates from one extreme to the other -- his opinions keeping in step with the economic and social class

he finds himself in or aspires to -- so Joxer's keep in step with Boyle's. For example, when poor and unemployed, they hold the Republicans' attitude toward the Church -- that the priests were traitors to the people; when Boyle comes into money, they hold the popular bourgeois opinion that "the priests were always in the van of the fight for Irelan's freedom" (38). Joxer and Boyle, then, are drawn together by exploitative necessities rather than personal attachment and true community, and remain throughout loyal only to themselves. They share the Falstaffian philosophy that "it's betther to be a coward than a corpse!" (22) -- a belief in passivity which extends beyond fear of involvement in the civil war to the avoidance of work, wife, children and all responsibilities for them.

A minimal but rising level of class consciousness is represented in Juno. At the beginning of the play she is hostile to her working class status, but at the end she has accepted it, and suggests a possible community based on the female principle. She is the prototypical working class mother:

> She is forty-five years of age, and twenty years ago she must have been a pretty woman; but her face has now assumed that look which ultimately settles down upon the faces of the women of the working-class; a look of listless monotony and harrassed anxiety, blending with an expression of mechanical resistance. Were circumstances favourable she would probably be a handsome, active, and clever woman. (4)

Her sole concern at first is the support of her family, so that she has no sympathies for strikes, militant struggles, or personal weaknesses, but sees idealistic principles and fantasies as illusions leading to suffering and death. She is quick to lambast Boyle for lying and sees through his convenient "crippling" pains: "... if you think you're able to come it over me with them fairy tales, you're in the wrong shop" (13). She is deeply hostile to Joxer's and Boyle's surface mannerisms, realizing that their mutual relationship is an exclusive and corrupt one, hence inimical to family cohesion: "There'll never

be any good got out o' him so long as he goes with that shoulder-shruggin' Joxer. I killin' meself workin', an' he sthruttin' about from mornin' till night like a paycock!" (9). When her son says he would fight again for Ireland, despite his wounds, giving as his reason (just as her daughter did for going on strike) "a principle's a principle" (31), she answers: "Ah, you lost your best principle, me boy, when you lost your arm; them's the only sort o' principles that's any good to a workin' man" (31).

Politically disillusioned -- "... when we got the makin' of our own laws I thought we'd never stop to look behind us, but instead of that we never stopped to look before us!" (43) -- Juno does not think of the civil war as a struggle aimed at freedom or the insuring of a viable community but as a death-dealing massacre. When Tancred's funeral passes by, she becomes upset at the suffering of his mother. Boyle tells her: "That's the Government's business, an' let them do what we're payin' them for doin!" (56). Her answer points to the nationalist struggle as a killing off or maiming of the young male generation by men, the militant illusions leading to a sterile community of women mourning their lost children and husbands:

> I'd like to know how a body's not to mind these things; look at the way they're afther leavin' the people in this very house. Hasn't the whole house, nearly, been massacreed? There's young Dougherty's husband with his left leg off; Mrs. Travers that had her son blew up be a mine in Inchegeela, in Co. Cork; Mrs. Mannin' that lost wan of her sons in ambush a few weeks ago, an' poor Mrs. Tancred's only child gone west with his body made a collandher of. (56)

However, Juno is not yet willing to see herself as member of this community, even though her son stands as an embodiment of the atrocities she has listed. The false money and the belief that her son has quit politics give Juno an assurance of safety, and this confidence leads her to express an appalling

disregard for the dead. At first she feels sympathy for Tancred's mother -- "God help his poor oul' creature of a mother, for no matther whose friend or enemy he was, he was her poor son" (55) -- but this emotion is quickly replaced by insensitivity in guise of political prejudice: "In wan way, she deserves all she got; for lately, she let th' Diehards make an open house of th' place..." (56). With her son's death, her daughter's pregnancy and the dissolution of the false prosperity, Juno comes to regret her lapse into harshness and inhumanity. She takes her place in the community of the suffering with Mrs. Tancred, who had earlier used the image of "the two of us oul' women, standin' one on each side of a scales o' sorra, balanced be the bodies of our two dead darlin' sons" (54). Now this image has come true for Juno. Yet, unlike Mrs. Tancred, she can still find consolation in the future -- there will be Mary's child to give birth to and raise. Since the male principle has proved ineffectual or destructively inhuman, Juno tells Mary, who grieves already for her fatherless child: "It'll have what's far betther -- it'll have two mothers" (86). Juno is rightly termed an Earth Mother figure; however, in the O'Caseyan view of Ireland, she also is instrumental in the development of a new generation and a possible peaceful future of a new Ireland, informed by past mistakes. A blending of Kathleen ni Houlihan and Deirdre of the Sorrows, she embodies O'Casey's first faint realistic hope in the indestructible life-force of the Irish tenement dwellers or plebeians.

The apparently highest level of political consciousness in the play -- though it is still a minimal one -- is seen in the strike-supporting Mary, and her lover, the socialist Jerry Devine. Both initially accept responsibilities to their working class comrades and share a belief in socialism as a salvation for the working class. However, for both of them that consciousness

is divorced from everyday existence. Therefore their beliefs are revealed as skin-deep and false -- for Jerry totally, and for Mary during most of the play.

Jerry is a reformist bureaucrat, a labour official with bourgeois ambitions, a worker from the same mold as those who took over Larkin's movement after 1916, depoliticized it and used it for their own profit and that of the Irish nationalist bourgeoisie. O'Casey describes him as:

> ... about twenty-five, well set, active and earnest. He is a type, becoming very common now in the Labour Movement, of a mind knowing enough to make the mass of his associates, who know less, a power, and too little to broaden that power for the benefit of all. (8)

In Act I, he proposes to Mary, offering her economic security and a move upwards in class standing, since he is sure to be elected to the Secretaryship of their Union. She rejects him because she has already become enamoured of the budding bourgeois lawyer Bentham (a suggestive pragmatist name!), and is assured of rising above the tenements by power of her legacy. When Mary is abandoned by Bentham, Jerry proposes a second time. His appeal then is aimed at her sentimental belief in socialism as a healing force: "Mary, Mary, I am pleading for your love. With Labour, Mary, humanity is above everything; we are the Leaders in the fight for a new life" (80). But when he learns of her pregnancy, he expresses his regrets and leaves quickly. The concrete "new life" he is faced with is not included in his clichétized rhetorics of love, and Mary defines his hypocrisy with her words: "... your humanity is just as narrow as the humanity of the others" (81).

Mary is also presented early on in the play as having high ideals, which move her to align herself with the workers actively fighting for the socialist cause. Naive and romantic, she is the embodiment of the conflict

between illusion and reality, as O'Casey's didascalia stress:

> Two forces are working in her mind -- one, through the circumstances of her life, pulling her back; the other, through the influence of books she has read, pushing her forward. The opposing forces are apparent in her speech and her manners, both of which are degraded by her environment, and improved by her acquaintance -- slight though it be -- with literature. (3-4)

Her reading, which Boyle points to as the cause of her moral downfall, includes prominently three Ibsen plays -- The Doll's House, Ghosts, and The Wild Duck -- the themes of which reflect her life of enclosure and subjugation. Her attempt at self-education heightens her susceptibility to the learned seducer, Bentham. Verbally eloquent, dressed to perfection, he is jealously described by Jerry as: "... a thin, lanky strip of Micky Dazzler, with a walkin-stick an' gloves!" (19). A Theosophist, he is the direct opposite both of her first love, the socialist-atheist Jerry, and of her Catholic family. Like the Serpent in Eden, he offers her a (false) taste of a new knowledge and a different life, and she succumbs to the temptation. To win him, she gives over all talk of socialism and worries instead about her appearance and the manners of her family. Not realizing that he is a fortune-hunter, she lapses into total despair when he leaves her. Jerry gives her a moment of hope with his proposal, but when she realizes his hypocrisy, her disillusionment is complete. For both Jerry and Mary, the union of politics and everyday existence has proved impossible: for Jerry because of his active betrayal, for Mary because of her sentimental illusions. But whereas the former is unredeemable, the latter is not; by the end of the play, her illusions shattered, Mary joins Juno to cope with "the new life" growing within her. Though only faintly suggested, she -- with her child and her mother -- is the bearer of future perspectives in this microcosm.

On the contrary, Johnny is the bearer of lost Irish perspectives. Like Seumas in The Shadow of a Gunman but even moreso, he represents the workers who have become wholly alienated from the political struggle and consciousness. O'Casey describes him as:

> ... a thin, delicate fellow, something younger than Mary. He has evidently gone through a rough time. His face is pale and drawn; there is a tremulous look of indefinite fear in his eyes. The left sleeve of his coat is empty, and he walks with a slight halt. (7)

He symbolizes the maimed and dying young male generation, the effects of the nationalist struggle, and his presence onstage or cowering in his room reinforces the theme of the negative male principle.

In the play, the inheritance gives birth to embourgeoisement, a false consciousness which temporarily cuts off the working class roots of the Boyle family. The "Paycock" initially exiles Joxer from his presence and takes on the role of bourgeois patriarch, stock-market expert, and retired captain soon to own a little house by his beloved sea. Juno becomes desensitized to the suffering around her, while Mary aspires to a secure place in the middle class through her engagement with Bentham. Breaking all ties with their class -- an action analogous to Davoren's masquerading as a gunman rather than accepting his position in the working class -- the Boyles revel in their new identities without understanding the implications of this vain, peacock-like action. The illusion of middle class security is destroyed by the discovery that there will be no inheritance money -- just as the Irish working class will see no prosperity from the nationalist revolution. Self-exiled from their class and no longer capable of entering what they see as a bourgeois heaven, they are left totally stranded.

Here the main plot and sub-plot are meant to join, for Johnny has

followed a similar route -- he divorced himself from his "principles" and class, harming his former community. His regression from communal to individual concerns and betraying of past loyalties leads to a life of isolation and fear. When the reality of his past actions and affiliations catches up with him, death is the outcome. The other Boyles experience a parallel catastrophe -- albeit not a physical death -- in the destruction of their new life, symbolised by the removal of their possessions: first Boyle's suit, then the gramophone, and finally the new furniture. When the "Paycock's" suit is taken, he must clothe himself once again in moleskin trousers; this reestablishes him, to his deep disgust, as a member of the working class, and spells the final defeat of, though not his liberation from, his fantasies. This, coupled with the fact that he concealed for some time the falsity of the will, makes him a liar, a hypocrite, and a fool in the eyes of the tenement people -- an exceedingly severe injury to his ego. The other two repossessions affect the entire family. The first is the gramophone, which has in Act II been played after a round of songs were performed by the guests at Boyle's party. It represents middle class entertainment, culture, and art, elements unknown to the Boyles prior to the legacy. As discussed between the characters, it is meant to replace the feeble but convivial attempts at singing made by the tenement dwellers, and is to be played in absolute quiet, a condition impossible to achieve in the slums. The strong implication is given that this rarity is for the moment open to enjoyment by all; but that afterwards, its use would enable the Boyles to achieve independence from the neighbours if they want music as well as to escape from slum conditions and mentality. (The gramophone is, in fact, O'Casey's prophetic prefiguration of the role the television set will play in working class homes and consciousness one generation later.) When it is taken away, the fall from middle class horizons is emphasized. However, most symbolic is the removal of the furniture.

It is the breaking up of a home and of a family; it foreshadows Johnny's death and Mary's exile by her father. At the end, the emptied stage is a powerful visual comment upon and metaphor of the action of the three acts: families communities, and the whole country have fallen into disorder and disintegration leaving only two old, drunken men sitting on the floor amidst the chaos, oblivious of its roots, meanings, and consequences in their lives. For them, as for old Ireland, there is only isolation and confusion and their world becomes chaos and alienation: "a terr. . . ible state o'. . . chassis!" (89).

Juno and the Paycock is a parable for the regression of working-class consciousness in Ireland during the nationalist civil war and the inhuman cost of such a struggle to the people. O'Casey's critique can be summarized in Joxer's hypocritical and misapplied but nonetheless true statement: "ah, man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn!" (89). This moral O'Casey builds upon by repetition -- first in Mary's definition of Jerry's hypocrisy a finally, as its greatest dramatic presentation, in Juno's tragic speech when sh discovers the murder of Johnny. The plot again centers on destructive and dea dealing illusions, this time not only political but also socio-economic ones. O'Casey's main point is not to detail the lives of a family of tenement dwellers and thus present a highly naturalistic "slice of life" from the slums all critics who have stressed this seem to have misunderstood him.[2] Rather, his concern here is to portray a historical socio-political situation which wa disastrous for the Irish working class. This he does by using the characters as parabolic symbols for larger socio-political groups or attitudes, so that their struggles and aspirations stand for those of the nationalist and the working class in a time of crisis. He shows that Republican "principles" lea to massacre and total political impotence among the slum dwellers, while on i socialist margins the reformist, socialist or trade-unionist "principles",

conceal a hypocritical disregard for the lower class and its future. Two forms of illusion are detailed -- nationalist and bourgeois. Both are finally shown as false ones which, when believed in or worked toward, lead to alienation, to loss of class consciousness and identification, to personal isolation, and finally to a total destruction of the community of workers in the tenements -- standing for the community of the Irish people as a whole.

In this play, O'Casey developed the structure first seen in The Shadow of a Gunman in order to better express these central themes. He again focussed on one working class family and their neighbours in the slums of Dublin, and relied upon factual experience to support his dramatic imagination. In Juno and the Paycock, he made the significant move to a three-act structure and enlarged the number of both central and marginal characters. In The Shadow of a Gunman, the characters, except for Davoren and Shields, were mere sketches functioning simply as highly concentrated embodiments of different forms of illusion. Moving from this type of abstraction, O'Casey built "three-dimensional" but yet powerfully representative or parabolic characters in Juno and the Paycock, which interact both in tragic and comic ways. Further he made the parable nature of the play, pointing to the conflict of bourgeois illusions and tenement reality as his central theme, more accessible to his audience by introducing semiotic systems in the character presentations. His didascalia stress attitudes or levels of consciousness which find expression in the gestures, speech patterns, and walks of the character. This blending of dialogue and visual appearance to define the characters' consciousness and representative status made O'Casey's task of defining them easier even on the individualistic level. More importantly, however, it emphasized the universality of these characters and proved O'Casey again to be the voice of the people and the critic from, of, and for the working class.

Juno and the Paycock is considered by many critics to be O'Casey's best play, and still stands as his most popular play in England. However, it is not without its weaknesses. The main one arises out of its being O'Casey's first attempt at the use of a sub-plot to inform the main plot. Johnny's story is poor in terms of exposition; it is never made clear what caused him to break with the nationalist movement and turn informer. Instead, O'Casey relies on his fairly melodramatic physical presence on stage as a crippled, fear-struck boy to act as a criticism of the militant struggle and its effects on the slum people. Johnny's story runs parallel to the fortune-tale which itself relies on a stage gimmick, that of a false legacy, and a deus ex machina in the shape of Bentham, satanic seducer and bringer of false tidings. However, it may be doubted whether the intensity and scope of the main plot and the sub-plot are really conducive to their jelling into an unified resolution: death and loss of money are not equal bases for either tragedy or comedy. Neither has O'Casey really developed his themes of the necessity of community as against the self-interest of individuals, which is merely hinted at by the negative conclusion of the play. The one hope of a potential future, that of Juno's new community of women, is itself limited; by its very exclusion of men, it is in a temporal prospect sterile and finite.

Rightly considered as a minor masterpiece, Juno and the Paycock is best analyzed in the context of O'Casey's development. He himself felt that: "it was a good enough play for a man just beginning but no more than that",[3] and he considered his next full-length play, The Plough and the Stars, to be the culmination of his experimentation with realism and his best play. With that play he produced the full model of his early period -- a model first seen as a mere skeletal frame in The Shadow of a Gunman and then partly fleshed out in Juno and the Paycock.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I-II

[1]Sean O'Casey, Juno and the Paycock, in Collected Plays, Volume I (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 58. Further quoted in the text by the page number of this edition.

[2]As discussed in footnote 1 to Kathleen Listens In, there is a group of critics who claim O'Casey for the Expressionists. Paradoxically, there is an even larger group, beginning with Dublin critics of the late 1920's and extending to those writing today, who heatedly affirm that O'Casey is a naturalist playwright. O'Casey, himself, said this labelling of his style was totally incorrect, and he wrote countless articles attacking naturalism as a constrictive and unedifying form of dramatic presentation. This label of naturalist dramatist, given to him first by his contemporaries, no doubt arose from the shock impact of his "slum plays" on the middle class Irish theatregoers. Before O'Casey, the Abbey Theatre had concerned itself chiefly with the production of Lady Gregory's peasant plays and Yeats' mystical and mythical ones. O'Casey's plays opened new horizons on the Irish stage (as did his Autobiographies for that prose form), but these were horizons for which his audiences were ill-prepared. O'Casey's pessimistic and sordid parables were made acceptable, if not fashionable, by critics focussing on his "photographic realism" (voyeurism) instead of his politics and criticism of Ireland. For the purposes of this thesis, O'Casey's naturalistic presentation of slum life acts as vehicle in his parable; this naturalism then is only one portion of the play's import and not separable from the equally if not more important level of tenour.

[3]E. H. Mikhail and John O'Riordan, eds., The Sting and the Twinkle: Conversations with Sean O'Casey (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1974), p. 57.

CHAPTER IV

THE STAGE PARABLE OF THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS

The Plough and the Stars, the last play of O'Casey's "Dublin Trilogy," was written between the years 1924 and 1926, and was produced by the Abbey Theatre on 8 February 1926. For the play's historical context, O'Casey reconstructed an event eminently important if not legendary to the Irish, the 1916 Easter Uprising. His treatment of it, however, was manifestly different from that of the legion of writers who sought to immortalise Ireland's martyrs in prose and poetry. Breaking through the mystical aura surrounding the events of the Uprising, O'Casey showed the real consequences of nationalistic revolution with its illusion of false heroes and false consciousness -- the disintegration of the plebeian community under siege, and the isolation, maiming, and death of both rebels and other slum people. O'Casey again used the tenements as his setting, and it is through the words, actions, and loci -- that is, from the point of view -- of the slum dwellers that the false heroics and disastrous effects of the Uprising are shown.

In order to understand the plot of The Plough and The Stars, it is necessary to give a brief history of the preparations, the carrying out, and the aftermath of the Easter Uprising.

The Uprising took place during Easter week of 1916. By the beginning of that year, the working class Irish Citizen Army and the middle class Irish Volunteers had overcome economic and political differences and had been brought together under the joint leadership of James Connolly and Eoin MacNeill,

Unbeknownst to MacNeill, Connolly had also joined with the underground Irish Republican Brotherhood. Connolly, after Larkin's departure, had come to believe that revolution was the only way in which a Workers' Republic would come about in Ireland. The leaders of the I.R.B., among them the mystical poet Padraic Pearse, convinced him that in joining with them, rather than leading his own revolt, the future of the working class would be safeguarded. Since the I.R.B. had been planning a revolt for months, bringing Connolly into their organization not only added the Irish Citizen Army to their number but made sure that Connolly would not independently call the working class into battle, thus upsetting their plans.

The I.R.B. believed that, if they could take Dublin and hold it for a week, the people would rise in their favour and fight beside them, and that the revolution would then be taken up by the agricultural proletarians, thus sweeping city and country. Most importantly -- for the I.R.B. suspected that they might be defeated -- the revolution would give rise to a blood sacrifice, a concept especially cherished by Pearse; this would give Ireland new martyrs and a new religion of nationalism. Mystically transubstantiated, bloodshed would become life-force; Ireland would worship the honourable dead and new leaders would arise to carry on the sacred task of continual revolt. Eventually the seeds of revolution would come to fruition, and Ireland would rise en masse and find redemption by casting off the yoke of the oppressor, England.

Such mythical plans quickly went awry. Ammunition coming from Germany was intercepted; the rebels' secret intelligence code was broken by British and American agents. Most disastrously, MacNeill learned of the insurgents' plans and published countermanding orders stopping all manoeuvres scheduled for Sunday. Despite this chain of events, Connolly and the I.R.B. decided to rise on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916. A bank holiday, it was easy for the insurgent forces to take the General Post Office and other buildings.

Padraic Pearse acting as President of the Provisional Government declared Ireland a Republic, and a green banner flew above the Post Office announcing in gold letters "Poblacht na hEireann".

The rebels held on for a week with ever diminishing numbers. The people never did rise in their support nor did they grasp the seriousness of the situation until privation struck the tenements. It was among the lower classes that suffering due to the Uprising was greatest. British forces encircled the rebels' strongholds by Tuesday. Within the circle of battle stood the tenements. Food became scarce, crossfire took its toll among civilians, and looting broke out with the Irish insurgents then turning their guns on the people. Never numbering more than 2000, the inadequately armed rebels were outnumbered by the British who had ready access to supply lines from the Unionist North and from England itself. By Wednesday, artillery had been introduced by the British and the gunboat Helga began shelling the Post Office from the Liffey. Connolly knew the end was near if the capitalist English would sacrifice their own property (for they owned Dublin) in putting down the rebellion. By Friday, much of the city was destroyed or in flames; Connolly lay twice wounded in the burning Post Office; over 300 soldiers and civilians were dead with over 2000 wounded. On Saturday, Pearse surrendered, and by Sunday the Revolution was over. As the remaining insurgents were led to prison down O'Connell Street, the people of the tenements rained abuse and rotting food down upon their heads.

Sentiment changed quickly during the next week after the British government ordered the execution of fifteen leaders. The carrying out of these sentences took nine days, the British taking their time in order to make an example. This reprisal accomplished what the Rising had been unable to do; these men were made martyrs in the eyes of the Irish people, and their final blood sacrifice sanctified the debacle of Easter Week.

O'Casey was convinced of the senselessness and vanity of "honourable war." Well aware of the cost of this romantic illusion of glorious revolution to the lower classes, he took upon himself the role of voice of the people and retold the story of the Uprising stressing its effects on the lower class.

Act I of The Plough and the Stars takes place in November 1915 and is set in the tenement apartment of Jack and Nora Clitheroe; its function is to introduce the characters and the antagonisms between them. Fluther Good, a carpenter, is putting a stronger lock on the door as Peter Flynn, Nora's uncle, dresses for a Republican meeting scheduled that night. Mrs. Gogan, the house busybody, enters with a hat Jack has bought for Nora's birthday. The unveiling of the gift and Mrs. Gogan's comments on it serve to define her attitude toward Nora. She describes Nora as a lower-class woman aspiring to the middle class with dangerous "notions of upperosity" (163). Nora is newly married to Jack but Mrs. Gogan hints that they are no longer "like two turtle doves always billin' an' cooin'" (164). Mrs. Gogan ascribes this to Nora's unhappiness with living in the tenements -- "'Vaults,' says she, 'that are hidin' the dead, instead of homes that are sheltherin' th' livin!" (164-165), while Jack has only Nora for company since his break with the Irish Citizen Army, an organization he seemed to have been firmly committed to a few months before. Jack's political involvement in the Labour movement ended, as Mrs. Gogan says: "Just because he wasn't made a Captain of. He wasn't goin' to be in anything where he couldn't be conspichuous" (166). Mrs. Gogan's critique of the Clitheroes is interrupted repeatedly by the bumbling Peter who agitatedly prepares his uniform. Mrs. Gogan's conversation shifts to her favourite topic -- that of morbidity and death. She has almost convinced Fluther that he is dying, even though he feels healthy, when the workers on the street outside down their tools in order to attend the Republican Demonstration, and a cheer is heard.

The Covey, Clitheroe's cousin and a fitter, enters the room thoroughly disgusted with the mobilization of the workers for the nationalist meeting. A Darwinist, an atheist, and a professed socialist, he argues that internationalism is the only cause worth supporting 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. Scientifically speakin', it's all a question of the accidental gatherin' together of mollycewels an' atoms." (170) Fluther, the good Catholic, finds this both confusing and sacrilegious and totally upsets the Covey's scientific explanation by asking him to explain the existence of Adam and Eve. Mrs. Gogan breaks up their argument by focussing their attention on a picture on the wall -- "Georgina: The Sleepin' Venus" -- which she mistakes for an obscene photograph; she leaves the room "giggling hysterically" (173). Almost immediately another row breaks out, this time between the Covey and Peter who are long-standing enemies. Nora's entrance brings a stop to all the rowdiness on stage, as she chastises both men:

> Are yous always goin' to be tearin' down th' little bit of respectability that a body's thryin' to build up? Am I always goin' to be havin' to nurse yous into th' hardy habit o' thryin' to keep up a little bit of appearance? (176)

Order is restored only briefly; Bessie Burgess, an obnoxious pro-Unionist Protestant fruit-vendor, appears at the door to castigate Nora for "Puttin' a new lock on her door. . . . afraid her poor neighbours ud break through an' steal. . . . (In a loud tone) Maybe, now, they're a damn sight more honest than your ladyship..." (178). Nora, thoroughly frightened, is saved by the entrance of her husband Jack.

The major plot development of Act I comes in a scene between Nora and Jack as they sit alone in the apartment after the other men have left for the Demonstration. After initial bickering over Jack's suspected desire to go to the meeting and his merely sexual interest in Nora -- "Oh, yes, your

little, little red-lipped Nora's a sweet little girl when th' fit seizes you, but your little, little red-lipped Nora has to clean your boots every mornin', all th' same" (184) -- they reconcile their differences and Jack sings her a love song. A knock is heard which Nora refuses to answer. A voice, that of Captain Brennan of the Irish Citizen Army, is heard asking for "Commandant" Clitheroe. Jack learns that he has held this much-wished-for position for two weeks but that Nora had burned the letter of promotion. Nora's reason for her deception is:

> Your vanity'll be th' ruin of you an' me yet.... That's what's movin' you: because they've made an officer of you, you'll make a glorious cause of what you're doin', while your little red-lipp'd Nora can go on sittin' here, makin' a companion of th' loneliness of th' night! (189)

The scene ends with Jack telling Nora not to wait up for him; his love song is replaced by Brennan whistling "The Soldiers' Song" -- by implication, Ireland's new love song.

The act ends abruptly shortly after the entrance of Mollser, Mrs. Gogan's consumptive daughter. While Clitheroe joins a torchlit procession in honour of the coming Irish Republic, in the background, Irish soldiers, marching to war fronts in Belgium to fight for England's honour, are heard singing "It's a Long Way to Tipperary". The music passes and Bessie appears at the door to deliver her prophecy which foreshadows the climax of the play: "But you'll not escape from th' 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!" (191). The ailing Mollser passes a final quiet judgment on the scenes before: "Is there anybody goin', Mrs. Clitheroe, with a titther o' sense?" (191). Familial and communal structures have been shaken; within the next act they will have broken down completely.

Act II takes place in a pub adjacent to the Demonstration; through its window can be seen the shadow of the Speaker, and his speeches are heard intermittently throughout the act. Rosie Redmond, a prostitute, describes the new revolutionary atmosphere to the barkeep as bad for business:

> They're all in a holy mood. Th' solemn-lookin' dials on th' whole o' them an' they marchin' to th' meetin'. You'd think they were th' glorious company of th' saints, an' th' noble army of martyrs thrampin' through th' sthreets of paradise. They're all thinkin' of higher things than a girl's garthers... (193)

The Voice of the Speaker interrupts her; his first speech[2] calls for blood sacrifice: "Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. . . . There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them!" (193-194). Fluther and Peter rush in after the speech overcome with emotion. Bellowing for drink (a habit later forbidden by the rebel leaders), they translate the words of the Speaker into patriotic gibberish. His Voice again interrupts; this next speech restates in stronger language the ideals of the first. At this further excitation, the men leave and the Covey enters. Rosie attempts to seduce him, and discovering that he does not approve of the Demonstration because it aims for national rather than economic freedom, she plays up to his opinions on the wonderful qualities of socialist ideology. The Covey, misconstruing her intentions, offers her his personal Bible, the apocryphal Jenersky's Thesis on the Origin, Development, and Consolidation of the Evolutionary Idea of the Proletariat, a pompous title if there ever was one. When it becomes clear that she has more of the physical than the mental in mind, he panics and leaves in haste, as Peter, Fluther, and Mrs. Gogan with a babe in arms enter. The Covey returns with Bessie, a formidable bodyguard, and the stage is now peopled completely and ready for a confrontation. Outside, the Voice calls all Irishmen to unite and fight for a utopian Irish Republic.

Inside, religious, political, social and moral prejudices come to the fore as the characters break into factions which center about Mrs. Gogan and Bessie, who clash first verbally and then physically. Disunity reigns supreme as Mrs. Gogan places her baby on the floor in order to face Bessie, the men fluttering about them trying to prevent a scene. Bessie and Mrs. Gogan are finally forced out by the barkeep, and Peter, much to his chagrin, is placed in the compromising position of having to return Mrs. Gogan's baby, whom she has completely forgotten. Fluther and the Covey stay for another drink, and Rosie, ever practical, homes in on Fluther as potential customer. Again a verbal and physical fight breaks out, this time between the two men over the theoretical and practical applications of socialism. Rosie, having found the Covey useless, jumps to Fluther's defense; the Covey is thrown out by the barkeep, leaving Rosie and Fluther to make their way into the snug in the back.

The last scene is one of the soldiers drinking. Commandant Clitheroe enters with Captain Brennan and Lieutenant Langon of the Irish Volunteers, and they carry in the flags of the two rebel forces with them. They are totally enraptured by the speeches of the Voice which promised immortality and honour if they were willing to sacrifice their lives. In choral fashion, they intone the lines:

> Lieut. Langon. Th' time is rotten ripe for revolution.
>
> Clitheroe. You have a mother, Langon.
>
> Lieut. Langon. Ireland is greater than a mother.
>
> Capt. Brennan. You have a wife, Clitheroe.
>
> Clitheroe. Ireland is greater than a wife. (213)

Further, they offer sacrifices for the independence of Ireland: Brennan, imprisonment; Langon, wounds; and Clitheroe, death. These promises foreshadow precisely their fate which comes about in the next two acts. As they

leave, Fluther and Rosie come out of the snug and sing a bawdy love song for the end of the act:

> We cuddled an' kissed with devotion, till th'
> night from th' mornin' had fled;
> An' there, to our joy, a bright bouncin' boy
> Was dancin' a jig in th' bed! (214)

Act III is set outside the tenement house of Act I. Using dramatic license, O'Casey encapsulates the events of the Uprising week into one day. By the opening of this act, the Irish Republic has been declared; shooting has broken out with a growing death toll, and the gunboat Helga has commenced shelling the city. Nora has gone into the battle-lines to search for Jack fearing for both his life and hers without him. Fluther has gone after her and brings her back to the dubious safety of the tenements. Bessie, who has been singing "Rule Britannia" all morning, appears and makes further dire predictions for the rebels. She leaves the tenement yard, and on the way out gives a glass of milk to Mollser, but she swiftly returns with the news that looting has broken out in the city. A woman with a middle class accent appears and asks help to get her back to her house. Unaware that the Uprising was more than a myth, she has been trapped by bullets in the tenements. None of the men offer assistance; their greatest desire is to loot. Bessie and Mrs. Gogan come out of the tenement house fighting over a pram, a convenient receptacle for plunder. They compromise and wheel the pram off together. Returning with stolen goods later, they have become the closest of friends.

Jack passes by the tenement with the fatally wounded Brennan, who chides him for not firing on looters as ordered by the insurgent leaders. Nora pleads with Jack to stay, but -- admitting his horror over the danger and death surrounding him -- he returns to battle, an action motivated by his fear that his honour has been compromised by her searching the barricades for him. Bessie rushes into the street to bring in the prostrate Nora. Fluther

enters from the city, roaring drunk, and Bessie pushes him into the house where the other men are by now cowering amid screams coming from the tenement. At the end of the act, Bessie leaves to get Nora a doctor amid "the sound of some rifle shots, and the tok, tok, tok of a distant machine gun" (238), with only her shawl and a prayer to protect her.

Act IV takes place in Bessie's apartment, a dingy set of rooms in the uppermost section of the tenement house. The Uprising has failed; and the rebels are fleeing. The city is on fire, the flames glowing red on the windows. Onstage is a coffin holding Mollser, who has died suddenly, and Nora's miscarried baby. Around the coffin the men sit and play cards. Off-stage is heard the moaning of Nora who has gone mad. A chant is heard from outside the tenements intermittently throughout the act: "Red Cr...oss, Red Cr...oss! Ambu..lance, Ambu...lance!" (241 et passim). Single shots ring out followed by screams of pain as rebels and Tommies pick off one another.

Bessie, who has been tending Nora all night, tells the men to keep still and to stop their continual arguments. Captain Brennan enters in civilian clothes bearing the news of Jack's glorious and heroic death. He is convinced that if he tells Nora Jack's last words -- "'Tell Nora to be brave, that I'm ready to meet my God, an' that I'm proud to die for Ireland'" -- that "Mrs. Clitheroe's grief will be a joy when she realizes that she has had a hero for a husband" (244). Bessie points out his foolishness; Nora enters shortly thereafter delirious and incoherent. Bessie leads her back to her room soothing her with a Protestant hymn. An English soldier enters to escort the coffin out, asking also how many men are in the house. All males are to be imprisoned for questioning, an attempt by the British to clear the streets of snipers. The men, including Brennan who is now trying to pass as a civilian, are taken away. As Bessie sleeps, Nora comes out and sets the

table for tea under the impression that Jack lives and will be coming home soon. Suddenly remembering her dead child, she rushes to the window to call for her husband. Bessie awakes and rushes after her, pulling her from the window but in that act herself getting shot by an English soldier who thought she was a sniper. Mrs. Gogan takes Nora away as the English Tommies enter the room. Upset that they have shot a woman, they rationalize their action -- "Well, we couldn't afford to toike any chawnces" (260) -- and then they pour themselves tea in the cups Nora has set on the table. The play closes with voices in the distance singing "Keep the home fires burning" as Dublin burns, the two Tommies left onstage joining in the chorus.

The Plough and the Stars is O'Casey's most powerful dramatization of the destructive power of illusions which lead to the total disintegration of communities both on a class and a national level, and the conflict of these illusions with reality. By focussing the play on the 1916 Uprising, O'Casey aimed at re-presenting a significant historical event from the 1916 point of view of a largely alienated working class as well as the 1926 view of O'Casey himself acting as voice for the people. As David Krause states:

> From O'Casey's point of view, if the patriots were now the guardians of the national honour, the playwright had to be the guardian of the national honesty. No matter how noble the cause, death was a dirty business, and the attempt to die for one's country could bring out the worst as well as the best in men, particularly as it was seen through the eyes of the dispossessed poor people of the Dublin tenements.[3]

The title itself -- The Plough and the Stars -- defines O'Casey's viewpoint and hints at themes within the text. "The Plough and the Stars" was the flag of the Irish Citizen Army, the workers' force. The plough symbolized the reality of labour while the stars stood for the ideals of the working class movement, and the placing of the two together implied a balanced relationship between illusion and reality. O'Casey thus emphasized the struggle of the

lower class rather than the middle class ideology of the Irish Volunteers whose flag was the Tri-Colour. The Covey, who sometimes functions as O'Casey's mouthpiece, decries the use of "The Plough and the Stars" for a nationalist struggle. O'Casey, like Larkin, did not sanction the assimilation of the working class movement into a middle class one. Both realized a fact that Connolly never seemed aware of, that the workers' aspirations -- a Workers' Republic -- had been coopted from the very start of the amalgamation of the two armies and that the promise given by the I.R.B. was an illusory one. The design of the flag stresses a necessary balance between illusion and reality, one that is seen in the play as missing in both the national and the working class community. This play traces the zero level of working class consciousness, substituted by a false nationalistic consciousness which was predicated upon illusions of honourable war and glory in heroic death. Again, O'Casey introduces in this play the death-dealing male principle though it is, by the end of the play, no longer death-accepting. However, an important change from Juno and the Paycock is that the female principle here moves toward a death-accepting position or has its life-force destroyed by the war. Each character again represents one alienated portion of the working class, and each suffers from a force which alienates it from the plebeian community or an illusion which conflicts with the reality of its situation.

Jack and Nora Clitheroe are O'Casey's best examples of characters alienated from their class and whose self-interest is reduced to a loyalty to self alone. Both are basically selfish and vain characters, with grandiose ambitions but not enough power to attain them; both place undue importance on appearance and believe in illusions which lead to their destruction.

Nora is symbolic of the working class women who consciously attempted to alienate themselves from their roots in an attempt to rise above the tenements and into the security of the middle class. Her clothes as described in the

didascalia point to her bourgeois aspirations: "She is dressed in a tailor-made costume, and wears around her neck a silver fox fur" (175). Like Mary in Juno and the Paycock she is aware of the powers of a charming appearance, and she uses her sexuality to tease and control her husband. The danger of her illusions about bourgeois respectability comes through her total separation from reality. In Act I, she has hired Fluther to put a strong lock on her door, an action symbolic of two of her desires. She wishes first to lock out the squalor of the tenements and thus divorce herself from that world; second, she wishes to lock herself and Jack into an isolated world over which she has complete control. She is content in maintaining an appearance of respectability and comfort in her own rooms, and does not concern herself with bettering conditions throughout the tenement house though she pays lip-service to that desire (164-165).

Her carefully constructed world is destroyed within the first act when Jack learns of his promotion and abandons her. Her burning of the letter to him was motivated by her own selfish needs; she did not wish to share Jack with other people or an impersonal cause. Nora has a clear understanding of Jack's motivation -- vanity -- and that it acts against her self-interest. In Act III, she shows a deeper awareness of the roots of Jack's attachment to the nationalist cause: his playing at being a hero. Coming back from the battle-lines, she defines his false heroism: "An' he stands wherever he is because he's brave? No, but because he's a coward; a coward, a coward, a coward!" (221). Yet she has little true sympathy for Jack as an individual. Fundamentally, Jack is her security; he is a crucial part of her sense of identity and without him she is destroyed: "I can't help thinkin' every shot fired'll be fired at Jack, an' every shot fired at Jack'll be fired at me. What do I care for th' others? I can think only of me own self" (220). Nora proves to have an understanding of the insanity of following illusions -- "An'

there's no woman gives a son or a husband to be killed -- if they say it, they're lyin', lyin', against God, Nature, an' against themselves!" (220), -- but she cannot perceive that her petty bourgeois dream of herself and Jack set apart from the world is an illusion also. When her actions in Act III indirectly give rise to a new sense of community consciousness, as other characters offer unsolicited assistance to her at the cost of their own safety, she neither acknowledges these humanistic gestures nor helps others in return but remains intent upon rebuilding her exclusive and therefore false community of two. Her inability to move beyond this preoccupation precipitates the climax of Bessie's murder and her self-destruction. At the end of the play, she is seen as an O'Caseyan Ophelia, a symbolic figure which denotes the effects of the 1916 fighting on those who did nothing and understood little. To the end she keeps up the pretense of an isolated community of herself and Jack, setting the tea things on the table, but it is all too obvious now that her conscious separation from tenement reality has finally led to her separation from her own consciousness. Literally, she has lost all conscious touch with reality, and is a horrifying symbol of mental autism and death, a woman living totally in the world of illusions, medically as well as ethically alienated from the rough but real world of the tenements.

Jack Clitheroe represents that portion of the male working class who joined the Irish Citizen Army not because of belief in the Larkinite socialist ideology but rather from a desire to be seen as a leader clothed in the raiment of soldier, and he too represents a zero level of working class consciousness. O'Casey describes him as "...a tall, well-made fellow of twenty-five. His face has none of the strength of Nora's. It is a face in which is the desire for authority, without the power to attain it" (178). He has broken from the workers' army because Connolly did not promote him to an officership as he did Brennan. He tells Nora he quit the movement to please

her; in reality, when informed of his promotion, he is more than willing to break out of his isolated existence with Nora and serve in the nationalist ranks.

In Act II, the zero level of working class consciousness is replaced with a false nationalist consciousness. During the soldiers' stichomythia, Jack swears allegiance to a new Ireland, "greater than a wife" (213) and pledges death for it, much like Johnny Boyle. This turns out to be a sacriffcial offering which destroys him and Nora too. In Act III, Jack's illusion of glorious war begins to break down and his attachment to the false community of soldiers begins to deteriorate, foreshadowing its ultimate destruction in Act IV. Jack has refused to fire on looters, an order given by the leaders of the Uprising. His reason is: "bad as they are they're Irish men an' women" (231), and his identification with them is stronger than with the imaginary people and community invoked in the speeches of the Voice. On seeing Nora he admits his foolishness: "I wish to God I'd never left you" (232), but is not strong enough to tear himself away and stay with her. His desire for survival is overshadowed by a fear of shame. His death in Act IV is described by Brennan as being that of a hero, but O'Casey makes it clear that Jack's death is the tragic end of life of a working class bricklayer led astray by his vanity and susceptibility to illusion.

The Covey, Peter Flynn, and Mrs. Gogan form a second group of characters related to the self-interested one of Jack and Nora. Peter is close to Jack in having a zero level of consciousness and shares with him a preoccupation with uniforms, of which more will be said later. He is a querulous old man: "His face invariably wears a look of animated anguish, mixed with irritated defiance, as if everybody was at war with him, and he at

war with everybody" (162). He represents the old non-militant illusions; a member of the Foresters, an organization who also claimed Joxer of Juno and the Paycock as participant, he spends his time preparing his uniform, adorning himself for meetings of Republicans, and drinking in celebration of nationalist struggles. He assiduously avoids any active participation in the Uprising and does not even join with the other tenement dwellers in the looting, fearing that a stray bullet will pick him off. A coward throughout, he functions as a counterpart to the Covey, their arguments and petty bickering revealing the Covey's true nature.

The Covey symbolises those workers who aligned themselves with the socialist cause in theory but not in action. The didascalia describe him as "...about twenty-five, tall, thin, with lines on his face that form a perpetual protest against life as he conceives it to be" (169). Beyond citing of propagandistic statements from the Jenersky book, which seems to be his only source of information concerning socialism, he has no alternative plans for the workers. In discussions on socialism, he reverts to insults about the ignorant working class, and Fluther sums up best the Covey's ineffectual propagandising attempts: "shoutin's no manifestin' forth of a growin' mind" (171). When confronted by workers who have actively participated in the socialist cause, Fluther and the English Tommies, he makes up for his lack of actual working experience by invoking the names of Marx and Darwin to prove his superiority. A development of the Jerry Devine character in Juno and the Paycock toward a dogmatic Marxism, he too balks at the pragmatism and reality of working class conditions when faced by Rosie selling her wares. Hypocritically, his concern with the working class is from a distance, and interaction on a direct level is for him frightening. Thus, his socialism proves to be as false an illusion as is Jack's nationalism.

Mrs. Gogan is a minor character, a further development of the proto-typical busybody:

> She is fidgety and nervous, terribly talkative, has a habit of taking up things that may be near her and fiddling with them while she is speaking. Her heart is aflame with curiosity, and a fly could not come into nor go out of the house without her knowing. (163)

She is significant as a reversal of O'Casey's life-giving female principle. Unable to take proper care of her own children or herself for lack of money, she is critical of Nora, who lives better than she, and of Bessie, who is no longer trying to rationalise tenement life as respectable. Throughout the play, she reintroduces the theme of morbidity and death into commonplace conversations, finding solace in convincing other people of hidden illnesses and their possible sudden demise. Her preoccupation ends with the actual death of her own daughter, Mollser.

Fluther Good and Bessie Burgess form a third group; in terms of growth of consciousness, they are the only non-static characters. Fluther harks partly back to the primitive Shields in The Shadow of a Gunman. Once a member of the Larkinite movement -- wounded in the "Bloody Sunday" riot in 1913 and at a meeting in Phoenix Park -- he has now divorced himself from that cause for reasons never disclosed in the play. He is O'Casey's reversal of the death-dealing male principle. An elemental man, his concern is with enjoying life and he accepts responsibility toward the tenement community, aiding in its furtherance and very existence. Amidst the illusionary fervor of Act II, he goes off with Rosie, an earthy reaffirming of life amidst the building up of a death-illusion by the nationalists. Finally, he proves himself selfless and brave when he retrieves Nora from the battle-lines and then ventures out again to buy a coffin for Mollser and Nora's dead child.

Bessie Burgess is the most complex of the play's characters.

Isolated by her religious and political beliefs from the tenement community, she is at the beginning antagonistic towards all her neighbours save Mollser. A harbinger of doom in Act I, Act II sees her physically defending her beliefs against the prejudices of Mrs. Gogan. By Act III, however, she has laid aside personal prejudices and moved from self-interest to selflessness. Without sympathy for Jack and his illusion of glory in war, she still helps Nora whom she perceives as helpless and destructible, just as she is kind to Mollser, equally ignored throughout the fervor of the Uprising. Of all the characters in the play, Bessie feels the greatest sympathy for the misguided helpless people who do not actively take part in the militant struggle, and she acts to protect her actual community, though she has been initially alienated from and ostracized by it. Her death in a last heroic attempt to save Nora from danger presents the individual, no matter how brave or selfless, as incapable of defense against the forces of war and illusion.

One more group of characters needs mention, that of the English Tommies. They are O'Casey's first successful attempt to embue the invaders with human qualities. The soldiers, English oppressors according to the fanatical Voice of Act II, have occupied the Irish tenement; however, their desire is not to remain as victors but to return to their own homes and communities. Their drinking tea over the dead body of Bessie does not emphasize a cruel attitude toward the Irish -- seen in the Blacks-and-Tans special auxiliaries of The Shadow of a Gunman -- but rather points out that they too, like Jack and Brennan, would like to escape the illusion of war and return to the safety and commonplace existence of the English working class, but that they too are caught up in it and subservient to the English nationalist attitudes.

O'Casey broke new ground in this play by his experimentation with

new dramatic techniques and polishing of old ones. One important example is shown in the characters of Mollser and of The Voice of the Man (or The Speaker). Mollser is naturalistically a rather weak secondary character, but symbolically a very strong one. She is a representation of the dying and diseased young generation, and, by implication, of the dreadful state of life in the slums. She foreshadows death and provides a counterpoint to the illusion of immortality promised to the insurgents. The Voice of the Man -- a political speaker seen only in silhouette through the window of the public-house -- is more mystical than human. This Voice weaves dreams of destruction couched in an emotionally wrought language calculated to make men believe themselves heroes. This speaker, never clearly seen, is himself an illusion, as is the concept of honour in death of which he speaks.

The illusion of heroism is undercut by O'Casey's treatment of uniforms, the visual accoutrements of the false nationalist consciousness. They are first criticised as vain; Clitheroe is said to have bought a Sam Browne belt -- a purely prestigious addition to the regular uniform since ammunition was scarce in Ireland -- and to be "always puttin' it on an' standin' at th' door showing it off, till th' man came an' put out th' street lamps on him" (166). Peter Flynn's Forester uniform and his laborious procedure of getting dressed in it is seen also as a ridiculous preoccupation with appearance. The Covey describes him as Peter leaves for the Demonstration: "Isn't that th' malignant oul' varmint! Lookin' like th' illegitimate son of an illegitimate child of a corporal in th' Mexican army!" (182). In Act II the uniforms and flags of the militarized men contrast with the cheap hair ornament and seductive dress of Rosie and the worn and tawdry working clothes of the tenement dwellers. But it is not until Act IV that it becomes clear that the uniform is a dangerous extension of illusion itself and capable of bringing about the death of the man wearing it. Brennan discards his for

civilian clothes to be able to escape the battle-lines and the shooting of the British. Illusion, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, is proved to be death-dealing.

The Plough and the Stars is, then, a parable for Ireland and, more particularly, the Irish working class in the 1916 Uprising. The nationalist illusion is seen to bring about destruction of families, communities, and lives. For the first time, O'Casey uses space to express fully his theme of illusion as destroyer and breaks from his earlier and somewhat constrictive practice of setting entire plays within one room. The action of Act I takes place in the tenement rooms of Nora and Jack and, as has been discussed, is symbolic of an illusory enclosed and exclusive community of two which locks out the larger potential community of tenement dwellers. Act II occurs in the public-house on the margins of the Demonstration, a move which emphasizes the shift from places in which people live and work, to escapist places in which people drink and dream. The dual quality of this set, having an inside and an outside, enables O'Casey to contrast the real but splintering community of tenement dwellers with the ideal but illusionary one constructed in the speeches of the Voice and contrasted with the equally illusionary but more harmless public-house community of wine, women and quarrelling. This inside undercuts the grandiose illusions of the Voice outside as the rebels, hypnotised by the new false consciousness, enter the tavern bringing in with them the army flags. Ireland's mythic martyrs are shown to be working class men who were, on the one hand, anti-heroes baptising the sacred revolution with ale, and yet, on the other, became doomed to prison, wounds and death by their involvement with its illusions. Act III takes place outside the tenement house of Act I. As different from the attempt at isolation in the Clitheroes' room, this is a common communal ground, an unenclosed space which becomes by the end of the act a defenceless and dangerous arena of war. Here the consequences

of the insurgents' false consciousness begin to be seen. Jack enters with the dying Langon, retreating from the encroaching battle. Bullets fly into walls and the quiet, sun-filled air at the beginning of the act is replaced by the noise of artillery and crossfire. The bullets finally force the slum dwellers inside as the insurgents retreat further into the city. The false community of rebels begins to break down as the true, if minimal, community of tenement people is forced together in time of crisis. Act IV sees the tenement dwellers driven inward by bullets into a last possible corner of safety, Bessie's apartment. Parallel to the shrinkage of space, the disintegration of tenement life takes place. The breakdown of community consciousness among the workers is made evident by the men playing cards around the coffin of Mollser and Nora's baby. They have returned to their mannerisms and attitudes of Act I in an attempt to avoid the situation at hand which is no longer in their control. Their playing of cards does not so much indicate unconcern for the dead children as fear and unacceptance of reality. They are now pawns in the hands of rebels and Tommies. The minimal community of the slum people is destroyed just as the false one of the Irish insurgents is by the illusions of the Republicans; the game of war begun by Irish amateurs is ended by English professionals. This last sanctuary is broken into by the Tommies who take away all men. Finally it is shattered by the bullets which kill Bessie and bring about the total dissolution of the community centered about her. The play ends with no element of hope. Unlike Juno's community of two mothers, what is left here is a community of two mothers grieving for their dead children. The true heroes, Bessie and Fluther, have been arrested; the rebels are dead or imprisoned. The last scene of the Tommies singing of longing for their homeland shows Ireland to be a depopulated, dead country with no future and a terrifying past.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1] Sean O'Casey, The Plough and the Stars in Collected Plays, Volume I (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963), p. 163. Further quoted in the text by page number of this edition.

[2] The speeches of the Voice are taken from those of Padraic Pearse, reorganized and in some parts rewritten by O'Casey. Pearse's vision of revolutionary redemption was: "the people itself will perhaps be its own Messiah, the people labouring, scourged, crowned with thorns, agonising and dying, to rise again immortal and impassible" -- F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (London: Collins/Fontana, 1973), p. 336.

[3] David Krause, "Sean O'Casey and the Higher Nationalism: The Desecration of Ireland's Household Gods," in Theatre and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland, edited by Robert O'Driscoll (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 126.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to analyse the parabolic nature of O'Casey's early Dublin plays, defined as an artistic correlative to the Irish working class' limit-consciousness, that is, as Larkinite stage parables. In order to approach such an analysis, it was necessary to define the actual consciousness and limit-consciousness of the Irish working class and, thus, of O'Casey himself as a member of that class. This was done by first introducing the historical and socio-political background to the Larkinite labour movement. Documentation in Chapter I of Part I stressed the immaturity of the working class of the cities in an Ireland where the main social tensions concerned land and its ownership. O'Casey entered the work force in 1894, at a time when nationalist organisations were developing and the cause of a free Irish Republic was taking shape. O'Casey, like a majority of the working class, joined with these movements, hoping that they would advance the workers' cause. However, the interests of the working class were not a nationalist priority, so that this class (and O'Casey) sought elsewhere for an organisation primarily devoted to a workers' struggle. Chapter II introduced James Larkin as a rebel trade unionist singularly capable of building on the workers' actual consciousness and of expressing their limit-consciousness in concrete action, thus transforming an alienated and fragmented number of individuals into a "class-for-itself" rather than a "class-in-itself".[1] O'Casey aligned himself with Larkin and his working class movement, and together -- as "harpist" and "Warrior Chief" -- they actualised the world vision of the working class in the concrete actions of the 1913 Tramway Strike and the subsequent formation of the Irish

Citizen Army. Chapter III delineated this high point of class consciousness as well as its subsequent regression to a pre-Larkinite level. O'Casey's disillusionment and alienation after the events of 1913 arises from this historical defeat of the Irish working class and of its world vision. However, he had since 1913 made the Larkinite limit-consciousness his personal belief and, acting as its priest, he continued throughout his career as writer to extoll it as a salvational world vision and to present a working class fallen through what he saw as the original sin of the 1916 Uprising -- the bourgeois cooptation of its consciousness and world vision. O'Casey's plays, then, can be analysed as allegories or parables concerning this defeat or fall of the Dublin working class, which is criticised from the point of view of the Larkinite limit-consciousness.

This parable model develops toward full clarity in his "Dublin Trilogy" plays, The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, and The Plough and the Stars, each of which is analysed in one chapter of Part II. The parable model is seen as having for its setting the tenements, and its characters the slum dwellers. The action of its plot, which is usually a minimal one, arises from the interactions between the variously alienated tenement dwellers and is always placed in the context of national crisis. This parallel use of internal conflicts -- worker pitted against worker, each motivated by self-interest -- and outer conflicts -- the workers caught up with or, as in the case of the climactic The Plough and the Stars, actively involved in a death struggle directed by the nationalists -- is a first indication of the parabolic levels of O'Casey's plays. His allegorical use of characters, each representative of a segment of the working class or a social group, further points to the parabolic nature of his morals.

At first, O'Casey's didacticism (which is not identical with rationalism nor opposed to poetry) evinced itself in a highly abstract form

as seen in his political "Morality play", Kathleen Listens In. Here he introduced his major theme of illusions at war with each other and antithetical to the formation of a true community of the Irish people.

Similarly, The Shadow of a Gunman centers upon the theme of destructive -- and in this play death-dealing -- illusion. In a skeletal form of the parable model, O'Casey here introduces the use of both vehicle and tenour level. The vehicle is the love story between two lonely and alienated workers, detailing a false relationship based on illusion. The tenour level relates this individualistic experience to the present state of Irish politics and stresses the falsity of nationalist illusions. Just as Minnie dies for her belief in the illusion of Davoren as gunman, so too is the Irish working class suffering death and terror at the hands of the nationalists. The tenement community, here small and sparely sketched, is a false one in that it depends on the lying Davoren as its focal point. In terms of O'Casey's limit-consciousness, this illusion of a false community is seen as representative of the disintegration of the true Larkinite working class community after the disillusionment of 1916 and during the Civil War.

Juno and the Paycock develops the parable model further in its depiction of the false and finally shattered micro-community of the Boyle family. Here O'Casey draws the political tenour level directly into the play -- though still on the outskirts of the action onstage -- with his sub-plot concerning Johnny, the alienated worker and political informer. Bourgeois illusions are seen as leading to the disintegration of the family community while outside it the cooptation of the Labour movement by reformist officials has destroyed the Larkinite world vision and its true community of workers. Nationalist illusions are again presented as death-dealing and are criticised as having caused the alienation of the working class as well as its fractionali-

sation into isolated individuals cowering in the slums and helplessly bemoaning the chaos surrounding them.

With The Plough and the Stars, O'Casey finally works back to the original Fall of the working class and defeat of the Larkinite world vision, in the national crisis of the 1916 Uprising. This play completes his early parable model and records his total disenchantment with the historical regression of the working class from its high point of 1913. In his critical presentation of the Irish Citizen Army -- in the characters of Jack Clitheroe and his friend Brennan -- O'Casey shows the working class as having dealt itself a death-blow when it separated from the Larkinite labour movement and its world vision, and took up instead the middle class nationalist movement based on illusion, false promises, and a death-accepting ideology. The play ends with the destruction of the tenement community, representative of the working class community, and offers no hope for an Ireland which O'Casey saw as dead and sterile, without a future comparable to that envisioned by Larkin and cherished by O'Casey.

If the here-summarised analyses of Part II have shed some new light on O'Casey's early plays, then the usefulness of the Goldmannian methodology of a historical and sociological approach to literature has been vindicated. It would then be further possible to discuss his subsequent plays, in which the strength and weaknesses of the Larkinite parable model are even more clearly defined, for example in his two communist plays which use the 1913 Larkinite strike as background -- The Star Turns Red and Red Roses for Me. Such further study, however -- which might lead to a reevaluation of O'Casey's entire opus -- is beyond the scope of the present investigation.

FOOTNOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

[1] Lucien Goldmann, The Human Sciences and Philosophy (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), p. 119.

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