NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canada

THE POLITICS OF LAUGHTER: A STUDY OF SEAN O'CASEY'S DRAMA

Neeraj Malick

Department of English
McGill University
Montreal, Canada

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, McGill University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

ISBN 0-315-87568-2

Canada

ABSTRACT

This is a study of popular festive laughter in Sean O'Casey's drama. It argues that O'Casey's use of the strategies of laughter is an integral part of his political vision. The concept of festive laughter is derived from the theory of Mikhail Bakhtin, and is related, in this thesis, to the culture of low life in O'Casey's Dublin. Through a detailed analysis of O'Casey's plays, this study shows how the forms of laughter function to interrogate the hegemonic political, economic, and cultural discourses of the Irish society of his time. The Dublin trilogy counters the nationalist ideology and its constructions of history, while the later comedies focus on the issues of cultural domination and religious authoritarianism. This negative critique of the dominant order is accompanied, in these plays, by a celebration of the rich energy of popular, collective life, and its capacity to resist domination and to create an alternative society. The study concludes by focusing on the festive nature of O'Casey's theatre.

RÉSUMÉ

Ceci est une étude du rire populaire dans le théâtre de Sean O'Casey. Elle défend l'idée que O'Casey utilise la stratégie du rire comme partie intégrante de sa vision politique. Le rire populaire en tant que concept est issu directement de la théorie de Mikhail Bakhtin et est appliqué dans la présente thèse à la culture de vie populaire de Dublin. C'est au travers d'une étude détaillée des pièces de O'Casey, que cette thèse démontre que différentes formes de rire ont pour fonction d'interroger le discours politique, économique et culturel ainsi que l'hégémonie de la société irlandaise de l'époque. La trilogie de Dublin contredit l'idéologie nationaliste et sa construction de l'histoire, alors que les comédies écrites plus tard examinent la domination culturelle ainsi que le totalitarisme religieux. Dans ces pièces, cette critique négative est juxtoposée à la richesse de la vie populaire et à sa capacité de faire face à la domination ainsi que de créer un ordre différent, voire alternatif. En conclusion, cette étude met l'emphase sur le côté populaire joyeux du théâtre de Sean O'Casey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Michael Bristol for his guidance, encouragement and patience. Myriam Altman, Stewart Cooke, and Mary Russo helped me in various ways during the preparation of this thesis. Shree Mulay, Mriganko Sur, and Daya Varma were extremely generous of their time and hospitality. The love and support of my family, Javed, Badal, and Kabeer, sustained me even in my most troubled moments. To all these I am truly grateful. A special note of thanks is also due to all those friends and colleagues in India and North America who kept reminding me that this project had to be completed.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents and to my sister, Abha Sur, with whom I share that memory. Her generous love and support has contributed to the completion of this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Sean O'Casey's drama is political in a deep and profound sense. It not only engages with contemporary political issues, but also offers a rich and wide understanding of the multiple levels at which hegemonic relations work in society. It challenges many of the dominant assumptions of culture, gender, art, and theatre that structure and control social relations, and points to the necessity and possibility of an alternative social arrangement. This political perspective is combined, in this drama, with forms of comedy and humour. Because these forms are conventionally associated with a lack of seriousness, it is often easy to miss the sincerity of O'Casey's dramatic purpose. It is my argument in this thesis that the strategies of popular festive laughter are an integral part of O'Casey's critical and political consciousness; they are used to demystify and counter authoritative claims of the dominant discourses and embody a distinct world-view.

O'Casey's political commitment grew out of his life and experience in the slum tenements of Dublin. Born in a Protestant family with a modest income, O'Casey was forced to live a life of poverty and hardship when, at the age of six years, he lost his father. A chronic disease of the eye, contracted in his early years, prevented him from acquiring a formal education. As a result, at a very young age, he joined the ranks of unskilled workers in Dublin, working as a stock-boy, sweeper, hod-carrier, docker, and railroad worker with long periods of unemployment in between. His involvement in the trade-union struggles and in socialist politics aligned him with the cause of the working class, a cause that he remained loyal to throughout his life.

This perspective was clearly reflected in the Dublin trilogy performed by the Abbey theatre between 1923 and 1926. Years later, in his autobiography, he recalled the reaction this drama had evoked among some critics and his response to their criticism:

> It had often been recorded in the Press, by those who could guess shrewdly, that Sean was a slum dramatist, a gutter-snipe who could jingle a few words together out of what he had seen and heard. The terms were suitable and accurate for he was both, and, all his life, he would hold the wisdom and courage that these conditions had given him. Wherever he would go, whomsoever he might meet, be the places never so grandiloquent or rich, the persons never so noble in rank and origin, he, O'Casside, would ever preserve, ever wear--though he would never flaunt it--the tattered badge of his tribe. Not that he thought of praise or blame for it, but simply because he had to bring his life around with him. But he would sew on to that badge, soiled with the diseased sweat of the tenements, a coloured ribbon of his own making, and, maybe, fix in its centre (like the jewel in the toad's head) a ruby or an emerald, giving the poor badge a gleam as good as that of any ancient order of chivalry, or that which goes with the posing piety of the Papal Court. (Inishfallen 370-71)

He did, indeed, continue to wear, rather proudly, "the tattered badge of his tribe", giving voice, in his plays, to the oppressed and marginalized sections of society, unmasking the myths by which the ruling classes maintained their power, and emphasizing the need for social change. If, on the one hand, his drama critiqued the dominant order and its discourses, it celebrated, on the other, the rich energies of the common people and their capacity to struggle for and create a non-exploitative and just society. The joyous vision of this utopian dream illuminates the horizons of his universe.

This political focus, leads, as in the case of many other political dramatists, to an active exploration of radically different theatrical forms and languages as old forms and vocabulary are found inadequate to express alternative ways of looking at social reality. O'Casey draws upon the forms and images of the popular cultural

tradition that were available to him both in actual life and through his unorthodox self-training. O'Casey's own accounts in the various volumes of his autobiography are a testimony to the presence, in Dublin, of a vibrant popular culture. The everyday realities of Dublin life, lived in its tenements, streets, pubs, theatres, and other public arenas, were organized around the codes and norms of this culture, which had many points of contact with the culture of rural Ireland, as Dublin maintained its links with the countryside through the constant influx of immigrants from the rural areas. O'Casey's intimate acquaintance with, even immersion in, this life--though, at the same time, maintaining the critical distance necessary for a writer--gives him an understanding of the working of this culture.

In theatre, he became familiar with, and participated in, the drama of Shakespeare and Boucicault, and the Irish melodramas performed at the Queen's and the Mechanics Theatre as well as at smaller neighbourhood theatres. The conventions of representation and the modes of reception of the popular commercial theatre were different from those of the "literary" theatre. The patrons of the literary theatre consciously dissociated themselves from the former. The project of the Irish Literary Theatre, initiated by Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Edward Martyn was conceived in direct opposition to the "vulgarity" and "triviality" of the popular theatre, with Yeats endorsing the idea of an exclusive theatre for "a few, simple people" which would be "for the most part remote, spiritual, and ideal . . ." (Essays 166). For O'Casey, however, art and theatre could not be divorced from the people. Even when he criticized popular taste and the popular reception of certain plays he did not offer exclusivity as an answer. "The people are the theatre," he stated in an essay written in 1946, and went on to argue: "Every art is rooted in the life of the

people--what they see, do, how they hear, all they touch and taste; how they live, love, and go to the grave" (Coloured Cap 213).

In this thesis I will attempt to situate O'Casey's drama in this popular or "low" cultural tradition in order to arrive at a fuller understanding of its artistic and ideological significance. I shall focus on the ways in which popular cultural norms shape the consciousness of his universe and affect its theatrical representation. I have derived the theory of popular culture and its forms from Mikhail Bakhtin who characterizes this tradition as the "culture of carnivalesque laughter." The medieval carnival, Bakhtin points out, existed outside the official spheres of ideology and in opposition to the strictly hierarchical forms of social relations. As a "theatre that does not know footlights," in which everyone participated equally, the carnival constituted a "second life" and a "second world" for the common people throughout the middle ages. Its characteristic rituals of mockery, uncrowning, reversal, parody, billingsgate, and its images of grotesque realism made up a "boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations" which provided a special way of seeing and knowing. Thus carnivalesque laughter became an "essential form of truth concerning the world as a whole," through which "the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint" (66).

Bakhtin's insights into popular consciousness and the ways in which it has interacted with and infiltrated official culture and high literature have usefully been applied to the study of many writers after his own analysis of the works of Rabelais and Dostoevsky. The drama of O'Casey provides many points of contact with Bakhtin's thought. As a proletarian writer, O'Casey brings an oppositional stance to bear upon his plays. His drama embodies a popular, collective world-view with which

he counters the dominant discourses of his time. More importantly, the strategies that this drama offers for resistance are comic and carnivalesque. It uses the idiom and forms of the carnival to construct a theatre which is both subversive and liberatory, reflecting what Terry Eagleton describes as the "vulgar cheerfulness of social hope" (143).

O'Casey and his Critics

Bakhtin wrote of Rabelais, " To be understood he requires an essential reconstruction of our entire artistic and ideological perception, the renunciation of many deeply rooted demands of literary taste, and the revision of many concepts" (Rabelais 3). In O'Casey's case, too, critical unwillingness to recognize any conventions and traditions other than the dominant ones has often come in the way of a true appreciation of his work. Such an approach is either dismissive or at best patronizing of the playwright. T. R. Henn, for instance, believes that O'Casey was "a native but strictly limited genius . . . condemned to work without having had any literary training, or aware of any steadying tradition" (212). The literary training and the steadying tradition that Henn privileges here is that of high literature, specially the genre of tragedy, which O'Casey, with his plebeian penchant for low comedy, compromises in his early plays and entirely abandons in the later ones. More sympathetic critical efforts--even attempts to establish him as a comic genius--have also been unable to reach a full understanding of his drama as their approach also remains locked in the dominant concepts of high literature and culture and its accompanying baggage of artistic evaluation.

Confusion and controversy have been the chief features of O'Casey criticism. A brief look at the critical reception of his first three full-length plays, The Shadow of a Gunman (1923), Juno and the Paycock (1924), and The Plough and the Stars (1926), first staged by the Abbey Theatre, and shortly thereafter premiered in London, provides ample evidence of this. Radically different from the usual theatrical fare that the audiences of the two cities were accustomed to, the plays presented an experience that defied any conventional categorization. The reactions varied from puzzlement and hostility to open admiration.

Even though the author himself had described the plays as "tragedies," the viewers were left in no doubt about the preponderance of the comic in them. In a review of Juno in The Irish Statesman (15 March 1924), W. J. Lawrence hailed O'Casey as an iconoclast: "One cannot place his plays in any recognized category. Nothing in Polonious's breathless, jaw-breaking list applies; and he flouts all the precepts of Aristotle. He lures us into the theatre under the pretext of affording us hearty laughter . . . and he sends us away with tears in our eyes and with the impression of direst tragedy lying heavy on our hearts. None but a neo-Elizabethan could accomplish this, since the secret of juxtaposing and harmonizing the comic with the tragic . . . has been lost to the English-speaking stage for over a couple of centuries." However, not everyone responded enthusiastically to this wilful flouting of traditional norms by an unknown author. Andrew Malone was embarrassed by the comic in what he considered "tragedies of disillusionment." In a typically confused response, he apportioned the blame for this to everyone: "Life is a rollicking farce to the audiences, and a harrowing tragedy to the dramatist; but it was not entirely the fault of the audience that they failed to be harrowed by

O'Casey's tragedies. As they were played at the Abbey Theatre it was the comic rather than the tragic aspects of the plays that were emphasized" (212). The playwright also received his share of blame for pandering to the low taste of the audience. That critical prejudice of this kind was not just an initial reaction but has persisted in O'Casey criticism is evident in John Jordan's complaints more than thirty years later that the unnecessary emphasis on comedy leads to a minimalization of the tragic tone and theme in the plays. Juno, according to him, has a diminished impact because the antics of Boyle and Joxer "inevitably convulse complacent and aware alike" (169).

There were others, however, who saw the comic as reinforcing and enriching the overall tragic impact of the play. Una Ellis-Fermor wrote: "he seems to belong most nearly to a class of writers rare in all literature and very rare in drama, the tragic satirists in whom the comedy of satire points directly to tragic implications" (196). This view was fully developed into a theory of the modern tragi-comedy or what was termed as the "dark comedy" in a book of that title by J. L. Styan. Styan saw the alternation of the tragic and the comic within a play as the chief feature of modern naturalist drama from Ibsen and Strindberg to the theatre of the Absurd. This body of drama, which Raymond Williams has described as the drama of subjective expressionism, communicates the complex and essentially tragic experience of modern life with its incongruities, contradictions, and uncertainties. Here the comedy is employed, neither for the purposes of satire which must presuppose the certainty of a norm, nor in a Freudian release of tension, but in order to maintain the tension of a skilfully controlled dramatic irony which alone can convey this complex truth.

In his attempt to harness comedy to the naturalism of the individualist and illusionist drama of the early twentieth century, Styan trivializes and marginalizes the comic tradition that can be traced from Aristophanes through the commedia dell'arte, medieval comic drama, Shakespeare and other Elizabethans right down to the nineteenth-century music-hall and vaudeville. This tradition, as Bakhtin has pointed out, is informed by the culture of popular laughter, which is oppositional and collective and does not easily lend itself to incorporation by the individualist world-view. Many of the playwrights dealt with by Styan, notably, Shakespeare, Synge, O'Casey, and Brecht, write in this tradition, the inadequate understanding of which leads to a serious misreading of their works.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in Styan's assessment O'Casey's drama lacks the sophistication and complexity found in the other playwrights dealt with in the book. In Juno, he finds that the "violent contradictions of the pathetic and comic . . . are not preposterous, but they are too flagrantly juxtaposed at the level of naturalism their author has chosen, and the mechanism creaks. The resulting effect is sometimes merely hysterical." The Plough is more successful because in it the two discordant moods blend "more naturally" (133). The Silver Tassie is O'Casey's best play; in it a calculated irony works to make a "stageworthy comment on the callousness of war." The subsequent plays are seen as marking a decline in the playwright's career, with Cock-A-Doodle-Dandy symbolizing "the sad demise of the later O'Casey" (136).

Writing roughly at the same time as Styan, David Krause, one of the most perceptive critics of O'Casey, also analysed his early drama as tragi-comedy. Basing his arguments on the works of the same playwrights that Styan deals with, Krause

points out that the writer of tragi-comedy "achieves something akin to Coleridge's balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities" (51). However, over the years, Krause has come to emphasize the essentially comic nature of O'Casey's drama and has written extensively about this. His position will be discussed in the following pages.

The tendency to see in O'Casey's use of comedy a satiric purpose is shared by many critics. However, the difficulty of this approach soon becomes apparent. Satire is informed by a moral purpose and is directed towards individual folly and social or institutional ills. The satirist usually works within the established framework of society, criticizing certain practices without questioning the very basis of that society. Satire presupposes certain clear cut norms--usually those of order, stability, reason--against which it measures the deviant and the disorderly. There is no room for ambiguity in the attitude of the satirist about either the standpoint from which he operates or the object of his attack.

O'Casey's drama refuses to allow itself to be restricted to satire, which Bakhtin has described as the "genre of reduced laughter." The neat divisions of satire--the hierarchized opposition between order and disorder, sanity and insanity--are not available in his drama in which laughter is also directed at those who laugh, and in which disorder and dehiscence are often celebrated. The puzzlement that this causes critics was initially expressed by Joseph Wood Krutch in his reaction to the original productions of Juno and Plough in The Nation (21 Dec. 1927): "No one can deny that O'Casey has an extraordinary gift for racy dialogue or that he can hit off the foibles of the Irish character with malicious wit, but his plays lack form, lack

movement, and in the final analysis lack any informing purpose . . . To this day I do not know where the author's sympathies lie. . . . "

Subsequent attempts to study his drama as satire have also produced distorted emphases. B. L. Smith, in a full-length study of O'Casey's satiric vision, sees it as a central and unifying force in his drama and traces its development from the incidental satire of the early plays to the "universal implications of the satiric fantasies of his last period" (171). Smith recognizes from the outset that O'Casey's laughter is not only destructive but affirmative as well. But this results in a methodologically clumsy juxtaposition of O'Casey the satirist with O'Casey the humorist without any concrete definition of either. His satiric purpose is described in the most general terms: "O'Casey's target in his earliest and latest satire is mankind--more specifically, the stupidity and the passivity of mankind that destroy individuals or prevent them from living life as it should be lived. In O'Casey's vision, organized religion, nationalistic organizations, and politics are all mad games played by mad men." This is followed by an equally vague, "O'Casey's vision includes ample room for joy and laughter, for having a good time, and for loving life in the process" (7). Moreover, Smith presents this bi-focal vision as a highly personal, idiosyncratic view of the author, an approach which does not provide any useful insights into the purpose and meaning of O'Casey's drama.

Heinz Kosok, in his book, O'Casey, the Dramatist, offers a reading of a single play--in this case, Purple Dust--in terms of satire. He begins by describing it as an "entirely untypical" comedy in which the elements of comedy, farce, and satire combine successfully. However, Kosok, like most other critics, fails to draw out the artistic and ideological significance of O'Casey's use of the form of farce and low

comedy. Instead, he sees the role of satire in the play as integrating the farcical elements into a "unified concept." Seen from this perspective, O'Casey's play fails to achieve perfection, for "In the field of satire, . . . O'Casey does not remain completely objective" (166). Comparing Purple Dust with Shaw's John Bull's Other Island, two plays which share a similarity of theme, situation and character, Kosok attempts to establish the superiority of Shaw's play since it offers a "rational analysis." O'Casey's criticism, on the other hand, is found to be "based on emotion, greatly simplifying the problems; by farcical means he arouses the audience's laughter, his final result is a vision that cannot be rationally substantiated. O'Casey was not capable of any such detailed analysis as Shaw . . . " (167-68). Kosok's critique once more underlines the need to get away from dominant critical concepts and to situate O'Casey in a different tradition in order to arrive at a proper assessment of his work. The fact that the two playwrights might be writing two different kinds of drama requiring different critical tools and concepts of interpretation and evaluation completely escapes Kosok here. It is not that O'Casey is incapable of making a rational analysis but that he chooses to write saturnalian comedy in which reason and order do not have a normative status and chaos and madness are positive and liberatory values.

Ronald Ayling, a usually perceptive critic, who has made a tremendous contribution to O'Casey scholarship and has worked assiduously towards countering critical ignorance and prejudice against the playwright, also brings normative notions of order and harmony to bear upon his plays. Ayling explains the persistence of disorder and disintegration in his drama as a "means to a greater end, elements subservient to . . . a more inclusive theme . . . [of] order and harmony" (Continuity

10). According to him, O'Casey uses the theme of disorder through to its reductio ad absurdum, a process which is similar to that suggested in Northrop Frye's theory of the second phase of satire, "which is not designed to hold one in perpetual captivity, but to bring one to the point at which one can escape from an incorrect procedure" (Anatomy 233). However, Ayling is unable to resolve the contradiction of the negative view of disorder and the rich entertainment it provides in O'Casey's drama. He tries to dismiss this in an uncharacteristically irresponsible statement: "That he can hugely enjoy--in his art, if not in his life--some of the complications and the consequences of dislocation should not obscure his perennial concern with bringing order out of disorder or of using chaos as a warning" (Continuity 11). The implications of O'Casey's enjoyment of disorder in art, or of his deployment of disorder as a comic (rather than tragic) category remain unexplored in this criticism. In contrast to this view, stands the unqualified celebration of disorder and knockabout in O'Casey's drama by his fellow playwright and Irishman, Samuel Beckett. In a review of Windfalls in 1934, he wrote:

> Mr. O'Casey is a master of knockabout in this very serious and honourable sense--that he discerns the principle of disintegration in even the most complacent solidities, and activates it to their explosion. This is the energy of his theatre, the triumph of the principle of knockabout in situation, in all its elements and all its planes, from the furniture to the higher centres. (167)

Beckett rightly perceives the knockabout as a central element in O'Casey's work and as expressive of a critique of social reality. It is interesting to note that Beckett's appreciation derives from his own penchant for low comedy and knockabout though, as subsequent references to him in the following discussions will make clear, there are significant differences between their social attitudes.

The confusion of comic disorder also confounds Raymond Williams' assessment of the early plays. In Drama from Ibsen to Eliot (1952), Williams had dismissed O'Casey in a small note at the end of a chapter on Synge. He had strongly reacted against O'Casey's use of heightened language and comic exaggeration as cheap tricks employed in what he felt was the degenerate art of "naturalist caricature." In the revised edition of the book, Drama from Ibsen to Brecht (1968), he tempered his former criticism somewhat, but still failed to grasp the essential meaning of O'Casey's dramatic techniques. He interpreted the inflated language of characters, the repeated tricks of colour, and the comical excesses in the plays as the playwright's attempt to at once "create . . . and criticize . . . the fact of evasion," and the poverty and inadequacy of "men avoiding experience". The paradoxical force of the language in O'Casey's plays comes across to Williams, not as a richness but as "the sound, really, of a long confusion and disintegration" (150). In effect, Williams' position comes close to those critics who see the comic action feeding into the overall tragic or ironic atmosphere of the play. His failure to recognize the symbolic significance of comic disorder in O'Casey's drama leads to his placing of O'Casey within the naturalist tradition and to a misreading of his work.

Some interesting insights into O'Casey's use of language in the Dublin plays are offered by Jack Mitchell in A Study of the Twelve Major Plays of Sean O'Casey. He perceives in the language of O'Casey's people an unruly vigour and inventiveness, which comes across as an aspect of their creative rebelliousness. Their wilful manipulation and distortion of the King's English acts to subvert the language of the colonizer and to transform it for their own purposes. However, Mitchell's insight remains limited and does not extend to a fuller exploration of the comic

energy of O'Casey's dramatic action. Instead, he falls back into the usual critical habit of a naturalist reading of the stage action when he says, "All the force, revolt and inventiveness which should by right find its main field of realization in deeds, is poured into the word." The characters are seen as squandering their energies "on trivialities, posturing and internecine bickering--word-fights" (65). One could go on from here and see in these communal activities the forms and images of popular, festive laughter that Bakhtin draws attention to. Mitchell's view of comedy, similarly, suffers from the same inadequate understanding we have encountered earlier. He sets out to read O'Casey's use of comedy as an alienating device in the Brechtian sense but only so far as it provides "a key, a way into a more profound understanding of tragedy" (73). Mitchell's project to interpret O'Casey's drama in terms of the principles of Brechtian theatre and his sympathetic understanding of O'Casey's working-class politics gives him many interesting insights but his analysis remains incomplete.

There have been some studies of other isolated aspects of festive and popular elements in O'Casey's drama. In an essay, "The Clown in O'Casey's Drama," Elizabeth Hale Winkler argues that knockabout clowning is an integral part of his playwriting technique. The figure of the clown, which has its source in the popular tradition, is seen to have a variety of functions ranging from "sheer entertainment to affirmation of life, from satire to symbolism" (IUR 79-80). Winkler draws attention to certain important features of the clown: his grotesque exaggeration in dress and behaviour; his marginality to the social order and his resilience in the face of disaster; and comic verbal techniques like misunderstandings, mimicry, repetition, comic altercations, etc. However, no serious examination of these elements is

offered. In her treatment of O'Casey's drama, Winkler argues for the subordination of knockabout clowning to the playwright's essentially satiric purpose. According to her, O'Casey portrays his clowns in a "predominantly negative light"; they are used as comic butts, and are subjected to mockery and corrective laughter. Winkler's insistent emphasis on the satiric leads her to ignore the positive functions of the clown figure. Often she treats as clown figures, especially in the later comedies, those characters which can best be described as comic villains while she overlooks the real clowns. Thus, her essay presents a somewhat distorted view of O'Casey's drama.

Another short essay by Emile Jean Dumay on the themes of merriment and celebration in O'Casey's plays deals with festivity as a "pervasive sign of free and creative life" in his work (12). Dumay sees the dramatization of the rituals of joy and celebration as an aspect of O'Casey's utopian vision. The people's festivity, characterized by spontaneity and un-ordered merry-making is correctly seen by him as antithetical to the "function, formality, and ceremony" of official celebrations, or in Dumay's terms, "counter-festivals," organized by the upholders of law and order. Dumay also draws attention to the relationship of festivity to O'Casey's theatre, where festivity is used not only as an ingredient or technical device, but often becomes a form of theatre. However, these insightful observations are not developed fully.

Easily the best evaluation of O'Casey's debt to popular tradition and its artistic and cognitive implications for his drama comes from the Marxist writer, Jack Lindsay. In an essay, "Sean O'Casey as a Socialist Artist," written in 1966, he traces back the figure of the stage Irishman from Boucicault to the culture of native folk-

humour and to the tradition of commedia dell'arte: "By purging the sentimentalities and falsities that had gathered round such types in the nineteenth century, O'Casey reached back to origins and achieved what may be called the only true recreation of Aristophanic comedy ever made; for he found the links, not in literature, but in life itself and in a folk tradition from which he had himself emerged." Lindsay aligns this plebeian cultural tradition with the playwright's socialist politics. Seen from this perspective, his understanding of the plays is incisive and cogent. He also recognized continuity of form and purpose--where most others had seen a break--in O'Casey's later comedies which exhibit "a steady deepening of the traditional and folk elements present in his work from the start" (201). John Arden, the British playwright, who admires O'Casey's drama and has acknowledged its influence over his own work, also sees at the basis of the works of the older fellow-playwright a complex trajectory of popular tradition running through the medieval morality drama, Shakespeare, Bunyan, Victorian popular melodrama, and the Irish popular street culture of ballads, jokes, and word-play.

The only critic to have made a detailed and comprehensive analysis of O'Casey's drama in terms of festive comedy is David Krause. He has consistently emphasized the significance of the comic in O'Casey from the very beginning of his interest in the author. He was the first critic to analyse the earlier tragedies in terms of tragi-comedies: "It is an impure drama which is inspired by the bastard muse of tragi-comedy" (47), he declared, thus cheerfully celebrating the hybrid pedigree of the plays even in the teeth of critical bewilderment and hostility. Krause also drew attention to the dramatic qualities of the later comedies, which had too easily been rejected by other critics as inferior work. He correctly identified the variety of comic

experiences--comedy of humours and errors, comedy of satire and music-hall, comedy of fantasy and circus--that these plays combined, thus indicating that O'Casey's comedy was on a different level from the normative, corrective comedy upheld by Jonson, Bergson, or Meredith.

Over the years, his understanding and appreciation of the playwright's comic vision has strengthened. In the preface to the revised edition of Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work (1975), Krause wrote:

> But if I were writing it [the book] at the present time, I think I would try to organize the book around O'Casey's comic genius, the sources and strategies of laughter in his work, because I believe they reflect his greatest gift. Even his tragi-comic vision, which I had previously identified as his finest achievement, is controlled by the comic not the tragic impulse in his art . . . . Above all it is the knockabout comedy of O'Casey that interests me now: the comic fall or redemptive pratfall of man, the comic profanation of what has become too sacred, the comic non-serviam, the varieties of antic laughter that reveal him at the peak of his dramatic power. (xi)

The new emphasis on the knockabout and low comedy found expression in an added chapter in the revised edition, many articles in various journals, and finally in a comprehensive, scholarly analysis of Irish comedy in The Profane Book of Irish Comedy. In this book he identified the barbarous or daimonic impulse to discredit and desecrate the sacred and the authoritative as the dominant characteristic of Irish comedy. He discusses the works of fourteen playwrights--Boucicault, Lady Gregory, Synge, O'Casey, and Beckett among them--and correctly traces this comedy to the ancient Celtic folk tradition of the Oisin-Patrick ballad dialogues.

Krause sees the laughter of low comedy as a strategy on the part of the socially powerless individual to work out his relationship to the authoritative social order. In Ireland, specifically, "Appolonian nets of religion, nationality and family" are tightly strung to frustrate the Dionysian impulses of the common people (20). But

this repressive state of affairs is not confined to Ireland; Krause sees it as characteristic of all civilized societies. Drawing upon Freud's analysis of human unhappiness in Civilization and its Discontents, Krause links laughter to man's effort to seek an emotional and psychic release from the system of guilt that modern societies have constructed around the individual. The function of laughter is cathartic: it maintains the health of the psyche by relieving it of its repressed libidinal energy. But above all, rebellious laughter proclaims the triumph of the pleasure principle over the reality principle, of the id over the superego. The laughing person is set free of the repressive order even if for a brief moment. This is the strategy of comic intervention. Krause quotes Freud: "By making our enemy small, inferior, despicable or comic, we achieve in a roundabout way the enjoyment of overcoming him." This momentary but intensely felt psychic victory of the powerless and the repressed is seen by Krause as a powerful weapon of defence, as a stratagem of survival in a world which they otherwise cannot control. It eases the burden of their existence and helps them to "live cheerfully and resourcefully with defeat" (23). Each experience of psychic victory brings about a renewal of energy which then prepares the individuals "to endure their daily repressions with uncivilized equanimity while they wait hopefully for their next climactic laugh" (26).

The strength of Krause's study is his focus on low comedy as a non-romantic and non-corrective genre. For Krause, the reformist emphasis of normative comedy with its moralistic happy endings is too solemn and righteous, and does not adequately explain the pleasure afforded by the boisterous antics of comic characters. For similar reasons, he sees Northrop Frye's classification of romantic comedy, which portrays a temporary disharmony between the hero and his society,

finally ending in the incorporation of the hero in that society, as having restrictive applicability for some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century drama and fiction, and even less relevance for much of Shakespeare and a whole host of other dramatic traditions.

Krause sees the relationship of the individual to society in the modern age as one of constant and never ending conflict in which no honest reconciliation is possible. While society must necessarily bind and control individual desire, the individual resists this policing and breaks out periodically in irreverent disorder. This view of society as necessarily repressive blocks out the possibility of an alternate order. In fact, for him "a country without sufficient alazons to goad the comic eirons into action would be an impossible and unlikely utopia . . . . A socially and religiously conservative country such as Ireland, therefore, creates a favourable climate for the dangerous risks and rewards of comic rebellion. The comic characters in Irish drama are able to act against the grain of orthodox behaviour and play Ketman in order to guard the private sanctuaries of the alienated" (53). Repression, according to this view, is not only something that is inevitable and a given in all social organization; it is also beneficial for the individual as it allows him to imaginatively create his own comic disorder and thereby transform "material defeat into spiritual victory." The carnival of disorder and the subsequent catharsis is essential for the maintenance of spiritual health as it teaches the psyche to "endure" the sufferings inflicted on it in the outside, everyday world. This experience is duplicated for the audience in the theatre, who are transported to a mythic world of anarchic freedom and who find vicarious satisfaction of their secret desires in the antics of the comedian. Thus, the experience of watching and reading a comedy also

functions as a safety-valve and equips the audience/reader with the capacity to "endure" the outside world.

The notion of a separate, hostile, external world and the inner, private space of the individual psyche which is threatened by the former is a familiar one. This is the awareness of the antinomic opposition and split between the public and the private, between society and the individual, between history and comedy (to use Krause's terms), which, as Marxist critics from Lukács to Jameson have pointed out, characterize the bourgeois individualist world-view and culture. In times of crisis, as with the failure and breakdown of liberal hope in twentieth-century Western Europe, this expresses itself as an almost tragic awareness of the utter fragmentation and chaos of the external world and the increasing impotence of the individual confronting it. Much of the twentieth-century bourgeois drama from Ibsen to Beckett expresses this structure of feeling (Williams). Krause invests the individual with an inviolable inner space the very preservation of which is then seen and celebrated as a comic victory. This is similar to what Allon White has described as subjectivized transgression, a feature of much of modern individualist fiction, in which the carnivalesque energy, no longer directed against social oppression, is linked to the exploration of the private territories of the individual psyche. Carnival laughter is cut off from collective action and consciousness and assimilated to the notion of a transcendent self-hood" ("Pigs and Pierrots").

This attempt to accommodate O'Casey to a bourgeois individualist world-view undercuts the essentially subversive nature of his art and ideology. The laughter in O'Casey's drama is not the impotent laughter (however heroically presented) of a single individual pitted against a stronger and seemingly immutable social order; it

is the laughter of a confident collectivity, which proclaims its victory "not only over supernatural awe, over the sacred, over death; it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts" (Bakhtin, Rabelais 92). In an essay titled "The Power of Laughter," O'Casey himself comments on the popular source of this laughter, on its social base in the plebeian community and on its cognitive potential:

> Every chance of leisure the medieval peasant and worker snatched from his fearsome and fiery labor was spent in low revelry, banned by the church, deprecated by the grandees; the hodden gray put on gay and colorful ribbons, and the hours went in making love, listening to and singing ditties mocking spiritual pastor and master, and whirling rapturously and riotously round the beribboned maypole. The bawl of the ballad came into the Abbey or Priory Church, irritating and distracting the lord and his lady pouring over the pictured book of hours. In story whispered from ear to ear, in song sung at peasant gatherings, they saw themselves as they were seen by their people, and they didn't like it; they weren't amused, for these things ate into their dignity, made them nearer to the common stature of common men, who learnt that the grand and the distant ones were but a hand's span away from themselves. (The Green Crow 228)

O'Casey's own recognition of the subversive power of laughter is only a first step in our investigation of his drama. In the following chapters, I will identify and elaborate the specific ways in which forms and strategies of popular laughter operate, in his drama, to counter the hegemonic political, economic, and cultural discourses of the Irish society of his time. Chapter Two offers a theoretical perspective on popular laughter in literature and drama. It begins with a historical overview of the different attitudes to the concept and goes on to discuss Bakhtin's theory of carnival and the forms of popular laughter. The final section builds the argument that the critical and interpretive instrument of carnival can be used to illuminate what has come to be called the radical or alternative theatre tradition in

the twentieth-century. The drama of O'Casey is placed in this tradition. With Chapter Three, we move into O'Casey's plays. This chapter situates his early drama within a historical context of nationalist and working-class struggle in Ireland and offers a re-reading of the Dublin trilogy in which comic laughter is deployed to critique the nationalist ideology and its constructions of history, and to posit an alternative view of history and society. Chapter Four deals with O'Casey's later plays, focusing on the issues of cultural domination and struggle in the context of post-independence Ireland. These plays dramatize a vigorous popular culture which confronts the discourses of the bourgeois state in the making and its powerful ally, the Catholic Church. In this, they point to both an essential continuity of concern as well as a broadening of focus and range in his drama. Finally, in Chapter Five, I look at two important aspects of O'Casey's theatre: his mixing of tragedy and comedy; and the influence of the forms of melodrama, pantomime, and music-hall on his drama. I argue that these aspects are inherent to the carnivalesque vision and are crucial to a fuller understanding of his drama.

The texts of O'Casey's plays used in this study are taken from the following editions: Juno and the Paycock, The Shadow of a Gunman, and The Plough and the Stars are from Three Plays (London: Macmillan, 1963); and The Silver Tassie, Purple Dust, Red Roses For Me, Cock-A-Doodle-Dandy, and Drums of Father Ned from The Sean O'Casey Reader, ed. Brooks Atkinson (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 1968). The other editions used are The Bishop's Bonfire (London: Macmillan, 1961); and Five One-Act Plays (London: Macmillan; New

York: St. Martin's, 1966); Pictures in the Hallway (London and New York: Macmillan, 1942); Drums Under the Window (London and New York: Macmillan, 1945); and Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well (London and New York: Macmillan, 1949).

CHAPTER TWO

LAUGHTER, CARNIVAL, AND THEATRE

The debate over the nature and function of laughter dates back to antiquity. E. R. Curtius has shown that a whole range of opinion and argument on the subject existed during the middle ages both within and outside the church. The ascetic view of life based on the contemplation of death as the final destiny of man had no place for laughter. It was believed that laughter prevented men from meditating on the serious and the holy, deflected them from the godly path, and thus jeopardized their souls. It was also argued that laughter was alien to human nature. The upholders of this position often cited the Bible to show that Christ, the most perfect example of human nature, never laughed. Against this was the view that asserted that laughter, which had its physical source in the spleen, was a part of human nature. The idea could be traced back to Aristotle's De partibus animalium (laughter distinguishes man from all the other animals). It not only acknowledged the presence of mirth and frivolity in human life and the delight it afforded to people but also went on to emphasize its social and moral usefulness. In literary and rhetorical theory, and in poetry also, the idea of the incompatibility of jest and earnest co-existed with a free mixing of styles and genres in actual practice.

In the laughter that was recognized and given legitimacy during the middle ages, V.A.Kolve identifies two main modes. These could be termed as the normative or satiric mode and the reconciliatory or comic mode. Normative laughter was traced back to the Old Testament (Psalms 2:2-4; 36:13; 58:9) in which God was seen

laughing in anger and scorn at the sinner. The godly could likewise laugh at the stupidity of the evil and the demonic. In fact, to do so was almost a religious duty. Such laughter was then fully compatible with the Christian point of view and could be used for pedagogical purposes.

The other view derived from the recognition of the role of laughter in the maintenance of the physiological and psychological health of human beings. The metaphors of wine-barrels and archers' bows were commonly used to explain the phenomenon. Just as wine-barrels need to be opened and aired from time to time to prevent them from bursting, or bows to be rested for fear of breaking, so too men need rest and diversion from serious pursuits. Kolve quotes from An Alphabet of Tales:

> and we hold our brothers so straight in awe that they come to no mirth nor no sport, we may lightly cause them to break their order. And herefore we must sometime lose our pithe and suffer them have some recreation and disport among all their other charges" (129).

It was also argued, as in a work known as Dives et Pauper, that just as God had ordained the week to include both workdays and holiday, a life of devotion could be structured to combine serious pursuits with mirth and playfulness. Laughter, then, was sanctioned by God, was necessary for humans, and could be used for good purposes. Mirth and sport, as in the comic action in religious drama, was to be seen not as an aberration or digression but as part of a coherent and reverent structure in which contention and discord is ultimately followed by the restoration of divine order. This was the restorative or reconciliatory mode of laughter. In both the normative and the reconciliatory modes, religious and social usefulness was established and emphasized.

These two paradigms of religious laughter were carried over in later, more secular, theories of laughter. During the Renaissance, the normative character of satirical laughter was commonly recognized. Laughter was directed against social deformity and deviance as in Ben Jonson's "comicall satyres:"

> Where they shall see the time's deformity
> Anatomised in every nerve and sinew
> With constant courage and contempt of fear." (31)

However, the author's purpose was not to grieve men but to better them by offering them "fair correctives" (239). Laughter was not to be indulged in for its own sake but had an expressly social function. Jonson carefully distinguished the subject-matter of comedy from that of tragedy. The former was to "sport with human follies, not with crimes" (91). This view of laughter as a social and ethical corrective was reiterated and elaborated about two centuries later by Henri Bergson. In his essay, "Laughter," he describes it as a social gesture aimed against "unsociability" in an individual or a group. According to him, human life is characterized by qualities of suppleness and gracefulness. Failure to meet these norms, i.e., any suggestion of rigidity or mechanical inelasticity automatically gives rise to laughter and ridicule. The comic expresses a special lack of adaptability to society. Laughter is a form of "social ragging" aimed to "break-in" or socialize the deviant into the ways of a social group. It punishes in order to correct and thereby plays a significant role in the maintenance of order and stability in social life.

The view of laughter as an instrument of social instruction and correction, however, has always been accompanied by an unease about the possibility of its negative use. Laughter directed at deformity, deviance, and inferiority is often an expression of aggression and hostility betraying an intention to humiliate its object.

The strongest and the most unambiguous articulation of this view has come from Thomas Hobbes, who describes laughter as "nothing else but sudden glory arising from sudden conception of some eminence in ourselves by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly." Ridiculing the imperfections of others in order to achieve a sense of superiority in oneself "is a signe of Pusillanimity. For of great mind, one of the proper workes is, to help and free others from scorn; and compare themselves only with the most able" (125-26).

Hobbes's view was echoed by Freud who also perceived laughter as a form of aggression. In his analysis in Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious, he saw jokes as strategies for an open and free expression of hostile impulses. "By making our enemy small, inferior, despicable, or comic, we achieve in a roundabout way the enjoyment of overcoming him . . . ." (103). A joke involves three persons: the teller of the joke, the second person against whom the joke is aimed, and the listener whose laughter signals that he shares the feelings of the narrator. The basic gesture of this laughter, then, is that of exclusion. The joke constructs a community of two persons who look down upon the deviant or the inferior from a position of intellectual, social, or moral superiority.

But whereas Hobbes saw laughter as morally reprehensible and as a sign of individual deficiency, Freud read in this aggression a personal need for liberation from social restraint. According to him, the process of civilization has restricted and repressed man's natural drives for sex and aggression by making rules of social behaviour which forbid their uninhibited expression. Jokes, comedy, and humour provide necessary and effective vehicles for the release of these repressed instincts. In another essay, Freud characterized humour as something "fine and elevating" as

it signified "the ego's victorious assertion of its own invulnerability. It refuses to be hurt by the arrows of reality or to be compelled to suffer. . . . Humour is not resigned; it is rebellious. It signifies the triumph not only of the ego, but also of the pleasure principle . . ." ("Humour" 217).

A more conciliatory notion of laughter is introduced by Northrop Frye in his analysis of comic laughter, which is traceable from the Menandrine tradition through Jonson, Molière, and the Restoration comedies down to Hollywood movies and television sitcoms (Anatomy 163-86). Frye characterizes comedy by its spirit of reconciliation, which makes the comic resolution possible. The tendency of the comic society is "to include rather than exclude" (166). The festival at the end of comedy, represented on the stage as a marriage, a dance, or a feast, generally includes all the characters. The blocking characters who impede the progress of the action towards its desired end, and are the butt of comic ridicule are more often converted and reconciled rather than simply repudiated. Comedy, like tragedy, brings about a catharsis. It raises sympathy and ridicule only to pass beyond them into the birth of a new society and a renewed sense of social integration witnessed by the audience in the theatre. The festive laughter at the end of a comedy then is not simply an assertion of superiority on the part of those watching the play but an acknowledgement of participation in the complex process of social renewal and reconciliation.

The links comedy has with primitive ritual and with folk festivals has been pointed out by many scholars (Frazer; Cornford). Frye, too, traces one tradition of comedy--established by Peele, developed by Lyly, Greene, and the masque writers, and perfected by Shakespeare--to the popular festivity of misrule and saturnalia.

Festive misrule drowns the normal, everyday world in its laughter and brings about a reversal of normal standards, establishing "a dream world which we create out of our own desires" (183). According to Frye, Shakespearean comedy "begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world" (182).[1]

The pattern of festive laughter has received a detailed analysis from C. L. Barber in Shakespeare's Festive Comedy. Barber draws a parallel between the dramatic form of comedy and the form of Elizabethan festivity. Festivals in Elizabethan England (and, in fact, all over Europe during the middle ages and the Renaissance) were marked by community observance of holiday from normal work routine and celebrations through feasts, sports, and other such activities. These festivals, which were quite frequent, not only structured the seasonal cycle of the year but had a deep structure of their own, which manifested a "pattern of culture, of a way that men can cope with their life" (6). Barber identifies their pattern as "saturnalian" with a basic movement which can be summarized in the formula, "through release to clarification" (4). According to him the celebrants of festivity, like the comic characters, experience a release from the discipline and routine of everyday life in festive license and misrule. Barber views the wanton vitality of festive mirth in Freudian terms, as the freeing of repressed energy "normally locked up in awe and respect" (7). Release is followed by clarification, "a heightened awareness of the relationship between man and 'nature'." The festive celebrants, who had mocked the unnatural, now experience an awareness of the limitations of what is merely natural. Holiday is finally put "in perspective with life as a whole" (8).

Barber's view of festive and comic laughter is similar to the theories of "catharsis" or "safety valve." Festive license is seen by him as a useful vehicle for the expression of aberrant impulse and thought, the accumulated repression of which may not only cause disorder and imbalance in the individual but may also create unmanageable antagonisms in the social order. Festive disorder is a temporary affair and understood to be so by the participants. The underlying assumption of misrule was rule, to which people returned happily and willingly after the holiday was over. Festive laughter, in this view, works towards the reconciliation and reintegration of the individuals with the existing social order.

Festive Laughter and Bakhtin

Reconciliatory theories of laughter have been challenged by Mikhail Bakhtin, who proposes a notion of laughter that is strongly oppositional and subversive. In his book Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin locates laughter and its forms in the folk culture of the marketplace, in rituals and festivals which flourished all over Europe during the middle ages and the Renaissance. Going beyond what he considers the narrow and distorted concepts of popular culture that emerged in the nineteenth century, Bakhtin argues that the culture of folk humour was an expression of a coherent and sophisticated folk consciousness. As such it constituted a world of its own, with a substantive ideology or world view which distinguished it from the high seriousness of ecclesiastical and feudal culture. This view of the world, seen from below by people at the bottom of the social scale, was essentially comic and manifested itself in ritual spectacles like carnival pageants, comic shows, comic verbal compositions like parodies, and various forms of the language of the

marketplace. Its central embodiment was Carnival, an extended and elaborate period of festivity preceding the penitential fasting of Lent. However, the term "carnivalesque" denotes the pattern of most festivals like the Feast of Fools, Feast of Boy Bishop, May Festival, Midsummer's Day, etc., which dotted the medieval calendar. Carnival was characterized by festive merriment and indulgence in bodily pleasures such as eating, drinking, and sexual activity. The period of festivity was marked by a suspension of all norms of orderly social behaviour. People witnessed and participated in actual and symbolic misrule, masquerades, comic shows, and special pageants.

According to Bakhtin, these festive forms "offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom . . ." (6). The crowd of celebrants which congregated in the public square signalled a community organized on a different principle from the official hierarchical society with its rigid distinctions. Carnival dissolved all differences and divisions of status, role, and gender and affirmed the principle of collective material life. While the official feasts and pageants consecrated the existing order of things by emphasizing its stability, permanence, and truth, in the rituals of carnival people were freed from "such gloomy categories as 'eternal,' 'immovable,' 'absolute,' 'unchangeable' and instead were exposed to the gay and free laughing aspect of the world, with its unfinished and open character, with the joy of change and renewal" (83).

Carnivalesque laughter had an elaborate repertory of forms and images of reversal (world turned upside-down or inside-out), uncrowning, thrashing, pulling down, parody, and travesty, through which it collapsed the binary oppositions of high

and low, of sacred and profane, so necessary for the maintenance of hierarchical order. In doing so, it relativized the existing social structure and showed it up for what it was--not permanent and immutable, but arbitrary and capable of being destroyed and restructured.

Festive laughter, Bakhtin points out, is different from satiric laughter. The characteristic stance of satire is to look down at the deviant from a position of superiority. Folk laughter looks up instead but only to pull down to its own level, to the material bodily lower stratum, to the earth. In Bakhtin's terms, "laughter degrades and materializes" (20). The lower stratum of the body and the earth are linked to death as well as rebirth; it is both the grave and the womb. Thus folk laughter "is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives" (11-12).

This emphasis on the material bodily principle is the heritage of the aesthetic concept of grotesque realism. Grotesque realism offers an image of the body which is incomplete, ever-growing, fertile, and exaggerated. It is not a private, closed form but one which is connected to the outside world through its openings and orifices. It is a body in the "act of becoming," (317) continuing to outgrow itself, transgressing itself in eating, drinking, defecation, copulation, pregnancy, and death.

Festive laughter--embodied in Carnival and grotesque realism--functions in two ways. It simultaneously critiques the existing power structure through a cheerful transgression of its discrete categories and posits an alternative utopian world of abundance and social well-being. Bakhtin emphasizes the essentially transgressive nature of folk laughter. As pointed above, reconciliatory theories of laughter also recognize its tendencies to ignore prohibitions and erase boundaries. For Barber, the

saturnalian attitude is "a clear cut gesture towards liberty" (7). However, this is seen as a temporary break from the everyday world, a liminal experience finally leading to a reintegration into society.[2] Underlying this assumption is the notion of social order as an ensemble of relations which is ultimately beneficial for all its members and to which they return happily after achieving ritual clarification of the limitations of festive excess. It disregards the possibility of the existence in society of different social communities or classes with divergent economic and political interests interacting in a relationship of conflict and contention.[3]

An even more unproblematical view of society as an uncontested, unified entity, and also of its transgressive practices is offered by Ian Donaldson in The World Upside Down when he says: "A society with an acute sense of the necessity of everyday social distinction allowed itself briefly to re-enact an apparently 'ideal' state of anarchy which it had no wish to bring permanently into being" (15). The order of social arrangements and the symbolic disorder of festive practice is packed into a neat fit here, the latter, in fact, seen as reinforcing the former by allowing a ritual release of pent up rebellious feeling. Indeed, this view has many adherents. As Max Gluckman has argued, rites of reversal and transgression "are intended to preserve and strengthen the established order" (109). George Balandier's oft quoted statement sums up this position neatly: "The supreme ruse of power is to allow itself to be contended ritually in order to consolidate itself more effectively" (41).

However, the "safety-valve" or "catharsis" explanations of festivity are only partially true. Their underlying assumption is the notion of social control, the idea that the dominant classes have the power to control and regulate society as they wish, their power extending beyond the economic and the political into lived social

relations. But as E. P. Thompson has pointed out in his study of the relationship of the patrician and plebeian cultures in the eighteenth-century: "While cultural hegemony may define the limits of what is possible, and inhibit the growth of alternative horizons and expectations, there is nothing determined or automatic about the process" (Customs 86). The view of history afforded by this study and other such investigations into popular cultural history is that of a continuous struggle--a ceaseless process of negotiation and contestation--for power between social groups and classes, rather than that of a once-and-for-all completed or achieved hegemony. (Bennett, Popular Culture; Stuart Hall; and Yeo and Yeo). These views also recognize that, at any given historical moment, there exists, even within an overarching hegemony, areas of freedom and resistance derived from the shared experiences of popular, collective life, which pose a threat to the dominant explanations of social reality.

Seen from this perspective, popular festive forms are not merely unthinking, ritualistic contestations which could be collapsed back into the enclosing hegemony once their time was over. That festivals were part of an active, oppositional culture, and had a propensity to generate disorder and discontent and register a more than temporary effect on the social order, was amply recognized by the authorities who often subjected popular festivity to regulation and suppression. The studies of many social historians support this view of festivity. Natalie Z. Davis has argued that comic and festive inversion had a direct impact on existing social structures, which it could undermine as well as reinforce. In her study of the images of the disorderly woman in "Women on Top," she shows that the complicated play with sexual inversion did not always function to keep women in their place (124-51). On the contrary, ritual

disorders formed a part of the ongoing struggle to change power and property relations within the family and society. The dramatization of the topsy-turvy world in literature as well as festivities organized by groups like Abbeys of Misrule opened up alternative way of conceiving family structure, thus encouraging reflective enquiry into social and political behavioural norms. Sometimes these effects were felt in complex ways, even in areas outside of their original contexts. This is confirmed by David Kunzle's account of the role played by symbolic images of a world-upside-down in the German peasants' revolt of 1525. Martin Luther's publication in 1521 of Passional Christi and Antichristi, on the subject of the deviation of the Roman Church from the principles of Christianity, included a simple text with cartoon-like woodcuts with images of inversion (the Pope likened to various animals, the Pope as antithesis of Christ, etc.) to drive home the point of Papal corruption and tyranny. The book, addressed to lay middle classes for specific religious purposes, nevertheless met fertile ground in a long-standing peasants' unrest. The peasants translated these images and symbols not only into their own relationships with secular, local authority but also into actual social protest. Often carnival celebrations spilled over into real life, and the festive occasion became a site for actual power struggles. Le Roy Ladurie in his study of a similar event in 1580 in the French town of Romans comes to the conclusion that "Carnival was not merely a satirical and purely temporary reversal of the dual social order, finally intended to justify the status quo in an "objectively" conservative manner. It would be more accurate to say it was a satirical, lyrical, epic-learning experience for highly diversified groups. It was a way to action, perhaps modifying the society as a whole in the direction of social change and possible progress" (316).

For Bakhtin, too, carnivalesque laughter is a heuristic instrument, "a specific means of seeing and capturing reality" (Problems 137). It is a view from below which inverts, mocks, degrades, and destabilizes the boundaries and distinctions that a view from the top imposes upon social, political, and cultural organization. In any hierarchically ordered system, it is the dominant ideology which designates what is high and low, defining and delimiting binary oppositions of master and servant, male and female, colonizer and subject in fixed, unchangeable relationships. Carnival, in a contestatory gesture, "celebrates temporary liberation from the prevailing truth of the established order; it marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions" (Rabelais, 10).

This is effected through the symbolic processes of inversion and hybridization.[4] Inversion, as we have seen earlier, inverts the categories of social classification and reverses power relations. Popular wood-cuts show a world-turned-upside-down in which the peasants rides while the king walks behind, wife beats husband, child teaches teacher, donkey drives laden master, son beats father, etc. However, as Stallybrass and White point out, inversion, while it remodels social relations by reordering the binary terms, cannot alter the terms themselves. It critiques existing social inequalities without interrogating the notion of inequality itself. Hybridization, on the other hand, is a more complex form. In Bakhtin, the grotesque body is a hybrid body, exaggerated and excessive, transgressing its own limits, ceasing to be itself. It

> reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation to time is one determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensable trait is ambivalence. For in this image we find both poles

> of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis. (Rabelais 24)

As an example of the grotesque body, Bakhtin points to the figures of laughing, pregnant hags in the famous Kersch terracotta collection. In their simultaneously dying and begetting, they epitomize ambivalence, contradiction, incompleteness, as opposed to the finished, well-defined, cleansed classical body. The grotesque collapses all differences and produces new combinations, thereby introducing "strange instabilities in a given semiotic system. It therefore generates the possibility of shifting the very terms of the system itself, by erasing and interrogating the relationships which constitute it" (Stallybrass and White 58). The destabilization of relationships also brings about a disordering of the social space and time in which these relationships are inscribed. The fixed spaces of hierarchical divisions--high and low, inside and outside--are dissolved in the undifferentiated open space of the market square and the fair in which the crowd mingles freely. Special forms of speech and gesture, which are frank and free, liberate participants from the norms of etiquette and decency mandatory in polite society and thus abolish all distance between people. In addition, disguise, masquerade, dancing, and comic shows continually alter and re-alter social and physical space to create new sites and new meanings. Carnival time similarly is a time of change and renewal. Occurring between the celebrations fixed by the solar calendar (All Soul's, Twelve Days of Christmas, Candlemas) and those fixed by the juxtaposition of the lunar calendar with the vernal equinox (Lent, Easter), it occupies a "betwixt and between" position in the liturgical year. It was often marked with ringing the church bell at the wrong time or changing the hands of the clock (Bristol 41). From its vantage point of

liminality and its links with the social and physical productive processes it could perceive and experience time, not as an absolute, stable, eternal category, but as brief, ever-changing, protean, and self-renewing. This awareness of the possibility of change "relativizes" the absolute claims of the dominant order. Carnival becomes a demystificatory experience, which reveals power structures as arbitrary and mutable. As Terry Eagleton puts it: "its temporary retextualizing of the social formation" "exposes its 'fictive' foundations" (Benjamin 149). It brings home the cognition of the illegitimacy and relative powerlessness of the powerful, of the historical nature of ideology, of culture, of political and economic arrangements, and of their susceptibility to change.

If Carnival is a negative critique of establishment values, it also has a positive side. This is the collective principle, embodied in the festive crowd. The grotesque body is a body which proclaims its connectedness--to other bodies, to the earth, to the productive and procreative process--through its open orifices. Festive life in the marketplace is a "life lived together with others." Bakhtin describes the carnival crowd:

> The festive organization of the crowd must be first of all concrete and sensual. Even the pressing throng, the physical contact of bodies, acquires a certain meaning. The individual feels that he is an absolute part of the collectivity, a member of the people's mass body. In this whole the individual body ceases to a certain extent to be itself; it is possible, so to say, to exchange bodies, to be renewed (through change of costume and mask). At the same time the people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community. (Rabelais 255)

Since the people are linked with the daily processes of production, with material life, they perceive this unity not as static or valid for one time only. Instead, they become conscious of their "uninterrupted continuity within time," and of their "relative

historic immortality" (255). The carnival celebrates the victory of an indestructible, immortal people over established authority and truth, which is revealed as fragile and temporary.

Bakhtin's insistent emphasis on the physical and intellectual bonding of the festive crowd in the various carnival celebrations represents a form of plebeian solidarity without which no meaningful social action can take place. That is why carnival, for Bakhtin, has a dual movement. If it moves vertically towards transgression, it simultaneously moves horizontally towards solidarity. As Terry Eagleton has pointed out, the laughter of carnival is both "plebeian derision and plebeian solidarity, an empty semiotic flow which in decomposing significance nonetheless courses with the impulse of comradeship" (Benjamin 146).

This is a view that has been rearticulated by Victor Turner in Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors and The Ritual Process. According to him, the liminal state of being "betwixt and between," commonly associated with rites of passage and rituals of symbolic inversion, brings about a unique existential experience which he calls communitas. Seen as an unstructured and relatively undifferentiated community of equal individuals, communitas is counterposed to the norm-governed, institutionalized, and often hierarchically classified social-structure. While the latter is characterized by relationships of conflict and struggle, the former offers the experience of homogeneity and comradeship. Turner's concept, as he himself points out, is similar to Martin Buber's idea of community, defined as "the being no longer side by side (and, one might add, above and below) but with one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from

I to Thou. Community is where community happens" (Ritual 127). This immediate, spontaneous, and brief encounter with generic humanness is not a product of instinctual energies suddenly released from the constraints of law and custom. Rather, it is a result of the human capacity for conscious, rational thinking. Communitas is an experience of "men in their wholeness wholly attending" (Ritual 128).

Turner distinguishes between the liminal phenomena in tribal, agrarian societies and the symbolic inversions and rituals of disorder in modern, industrialized societies, which he terms as "liminoid." Among liminoid phenomena is included a wide range of genres of cultural performance such as charivaris, carnivals, theatre, novels, art exhibitions, poetry readings, films, and television. These modern forms, since they are not rooted in a commonly shared world-view, have a sporadic, piecemeal character. They are produced by specific individuals or groups and address themselves to and influence particular segments of society. Moreover, they are imbued with a historical consciousness and, therefore, are more directly implicated in their immediate contexts. In contrast to the liminality in tribal rituals whose potentially subversive character could never be realized outside of the ritual sphere, the liminoid phenomena are often actually subversive. They present a radical critique of the existing social structure and offer alternative paradigms whereby "they may even revolutionize it, when the originally ludic models are taken up by and help to mobilize the dispossessed and disadvantaged, who, by virtue of their numbers, organization, and motivation, have very real power resources in political arenas" ("Comments" 281).

Bakhtin's theory of carnival, is part of a larger philosophy of language and culture, which is firmly oriented towards the idea of social struggle and change. He rejects the structuralist notion of language as a closed, unified, ready-made system with fixed rules and norms which are then made available for individual users. Instead, he posits a model of speech diversity in which countless utterances exist in a dialogic relationship, that is, in an active, responsive relationship of contention, struggle, agreement, or supplementarity with each other. He uses the term heteroglossia to describe the complex stratification of language, at any given moment of its historical existence, into socio-ideological categories--languages of different social groups, professional groups, genres, groups defined by age, gender, economic position, etc. This stratification does not take place in terms of neutral linguistic components like vocabulary or grammar, which would allow mutual exclusiveness in a horizontal diversity. Rather, in the lived relationships of material life, these languages intersect with and combat each other, as each tries to inflect this shared language with intentions, expressions, points of view peculiar to itself and thus, appropriate it to its own use. For Bakhtin, then, language is a social activity characterized by conflict and struggle in which dominant linguistic groups exert control and power at the same time as marginalized groups resist or negotiate these manoeuvres. In other words, the forces of centralization and unification continually combat and contend with the forces of decentralization and disunification.

The relationship between the speaking subject and the word and, further, between the word and its object is never direct or singular. Words and objects are already overlaid or "overpopulated" with other words and meanings, created in

different historical times by different socio-ideological groups, which new words then have to negotiate. Bakhtin writes:

> The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile. (Dialogic 276)

There is no room here for a purely individual consciousness or a singular use of words. Bakhtin offers a notion of the individual which is different from the free-wheeling, self-sufficient subject of bourgeois ideology. He situates the individual within the social; identity and meaning exist only within a system of other identities and meanings. Language, according to Bakhtin, "lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's" (Dialogic 293).

If Bakhtin's model counters the bourgeois humanist notion of the subject as the centre of meaning, it also avoids the deconstructionist trap in which the subject is locked inside discourse. Language is central in Bakhtin because human beings have no direct access to reality. Ideological phenomena can only be apprehended by consciousness when they are realized in speech. But language, for Bakhtin, is not autonomous, engaged in a self-generating endless play of difference, a position that ultimately leads to the questioning of the very possibility of meaning. It is firmly grounded in its social context: "The organizing center of any utterance, of any experience, is not within but outside--in the social milieu surrounding the individual being" (Marxism 93). Meaning exists not in a man's head or his soul but is produced between real people with real social interests which have their basis in economic and social life.

However, all this does not preclude individual creativity. Individuals, constituted by ideological communication, by the "already said," create new meanings together with other people. In so doing they renew and recreate those very structures, thus becoming co-authors in a dynamic process of historical change and transformation. All living language, for Bakhtin, is characterized by an "uninterrupted process of historical becoming" (Dialogic 288).

The notion of any kind of formal, systematizing grammatical thought is antithetical to this conception. Volosinov/Bakhtin points to the conservative implications of the formalist position in this regard. Systematization assumes a perfected, ready-made structure, which precludes and devalues any tendency to innovate or change: "From the system's point of view, history always seems merely a series of accidental transgressions" (Marxism 78).

Bakhtin situates this perspective on historical change in a "grand narrative" of human life, which is revealed only on the level of "great time" (White, " Struggle"). This is the narrative of a mutual understanding forged over a long time between peoples and nations, resulting in a "complex unity of all humanity, all human cultures," which forms the utopian horizon of his philosophy. Bakhtin himself warned against the danger of reducing the concept of dialogic relations to contradiction and conflict and of ignoring the possibility and necessity of working towards relations of agreement (Speech Genres 123, 125).

The political significance of such a stance should not be underestimated. As Allon White states:

> Though our current fashion is to prioritize difference, and rightly, in the struggle against the false universalism and essentialism which has so oppressed all those who do not conform to the European, white, male, heterosexual shape

> which "Man" is evidently supposed to have, nevertheless, an ultimate political perspective of humanity as a unity-in-difference, a complex of co-existing and mutually understanding cultures, is just as important to any radical politics. A politics of pure difference which refuses to theorize the unity-in-difference of humanity ends by replicating the individualism of the self-sufficient bourgeois ego--a dangerous fiction if ever there was one. ("Struggle" 233)

The categories of carnival and carnivalization are part of this overall project. Carnival embodies within itself the forces of decentralization, which are situated within, or at the margins of, a hegemonic social system and which invite dialogic interaction with the enclosing system. Bakhtin shows how this heteroglot discourse, shaped through centuries, unfolded into and permeated the languages of literature filling them with laughter, irony, humour, elements of self-parody and, most importantly, inserting into them "an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality (the openended present)" (Dialogic 7). This process is called carnivalization or novelization since according to Bakhtin, the novel was the first genre to be appropriated in such a manner.

Bakhtin has been criticized for his "uncritical populism" and "naive utopianism" in his celebratory treatment of carnival. Allon White suggests, and rightly so, that "carnival and politics [are] historically shifting notions . . . the complex relationship between them makes it futile to decide in theory, in advance of historical specification, what the political vector of festive activity will be" ("Struggle" 238). This, however, is a position which Bakhtin himself would endorse. His insistent emphasis, in all his writings, that all linguistic and cultural phenomena are constituted by the prevailing economic, social, and cultural relationships in which they are inscribed would preclude any essentialist notion of the people or their

culture (Stewart). Dialogic relationships, according to Bakhtin, are "extra linguistic: although belonging to the realm of the word, they do not belong to the realm of its purely linguistic study" (Problems 182-3). In Rabelais he analyses the process of the carnivalization of high literature within a historically specific social and cultural formation during the Renaissance in early modern Europe. Although Bakhtin does not focus on the determinant extra-discursive forces in which the discourse of carnival was produced, an understanding of their role is clearly implied (Bennett, Formalism 82-92). He also briefly traces the historical transformations which the process of carnivalization underwent in subsequent ages as new social formations emerged. Again, a detailed analysis of these processes does not form the centre of his study.

Bakhtin's foregrounding of the oppositional and subversive aspect of popular culture is a political and ideological choice. It points to a vision of history as a process in which human agency, creativity, and struggle play an important role. His theory counters the notion of the people as a passive, backward-looking, and ignorant mass which the dominant classes can easily and justifiably reform and reconstitute in their own image. Instead, he presents the common people as a dynamic and resourceful collectivity which, with its firm basis in material, productive life, is capable of acting upon and transforming hegemonic cultural forms. As Bristol writes:

> The hypothesis of a dominant culture effectively secured from intrusions of the popular element and capable of administering the culture of the subordinate classes must be discarded in favor of a picture of a numerically small elite absolutely surrounded by a veritable demographic and cultural ocean of the 'inferior sort.' Popular culture is thus not hidden from view; virtually everything that survives is likely to contain some traces of its impact or to reveal a deflection from its enormous mass. (46)

If the category of carnival in Bakhtin is derived from actual, historical fact, as the work of many social historians has shown, it also functions as a utopian model for a new social order. On this level, it can best be understood in terms of his notion of the grand narrative unfolding in great time that Allon White himself draws attention to. The truly democratic relations of carnival--both of opposition to hegemony and of solidarity between people--can then be seen not as a state of affairs which always exists in its entirety but as a future social horizon to be striven for.

Carnival and Theatre

Though Bakhtin himself focuses on the novel as the chief example of carnivalized literature, his theories have a special pertinence for drama and theatre.[5] In particular, the pre-bourgeois dramatic traditions of Europe, which developed in close contact with living forms of popular culture manifest fully the latter's shaping influence. Bakhtin himself acknowledges this at many points in his references to the medieval mystery plays, and in particular, to the drama of Shakespeare (Problems 17; also Rabelais). However, his scattered pronouncements on drama as a genre and on dramatic action and dialogue show that he understood drama as an essentially monologic form:

> In drama, the world must be made from a single piece. Any weakening of this monolithic quality leads to a weakening of dramatic effect. The characters come together dialogically in the unified field of vision of author, director, and audience, against the clearly defined background of a single-tiered world . . . A true multiplicity of levels would destroy drama. . . . (Dialogic 17)

For a modern reader the bafflement caused by these judgements is somewhat explained by Bakhtin's brief footnote in "Discourse in the Novel," in which he qualifies that he is speaking "to be sure, of pure classical drama as expressing the ideal extreme of the genre. Contemporary realistic social drama may, of course, be heteroglot and multi-languaged" (Dialogic 405). Bakhtin's remarks must be read in the context of the history of the development of European drama since the seventeenth century. Renaissance drama, as Raymond Williams has pointed out, had a diversity of forms and a socio-linguistic range that was co-extensive with the whole range of its society. With the development of the bourgeois order and its individualist emphasis, this larger dimension was lost, and as dramatic action and speech became more restricted, drama became a reduced genre (Culture 154-57). The significance of the role that popular culture played in the carnivalization of drama can be gauged from the fact that the diminishing of the culture of laughter after the Renaissance in Bakhtin's account (Rabelais) corresponds with the decline of the dramatic and theatrical traditions established during the middle ages and the Renaissance.

In the twentieth century, once again, attempts were made to restore the communal and public character of theatre and to open drama towards history and society. This led to the revival of old Elizabethan and pre-Elizabethan forms with a conscious attempt at understanding and adopting popular cultural forms in the works of Brecht, Mayakovsky, Sean O'Casey, John Arden, Dario Fo and many radical theatre groups all over the world.[6] All these dramatists share a notion of drama as a form of collective social life and participatory action which is both critical and celebratory. Like the popular carnival it critiques the hegemonic forms

of political and social organization and celebrates the principle of abundant energy that the people represent and points to the utopian horizon of a collective management of society's affairs.

In a common effort to establish theatre as a strong social and political institution, these dramatists have explored old and new devices to extend and enlarge the scope of drama. This involved not only an interrogation and subversion of conventional dramatic categories and structures (dramatic effect, dramatic resolution, pure tragedy) but a re-thinking of the relationship between the author and the audience; hence, the emphasis on performance. Brecht abandoned "drama" for "epic" (later called dialectical theatre) in his search for a truly heteroglot form which would answer to the need of the times.[7] He rejected the monologic character of bourgeois drama--its tendency to smooth over contradictions and to create false harmony and idealization--in favour of a form in which contradiction and inconsistency are foregrounded, in which a complex interplay of socially and historically significant attitudes and responses and a radical separation of dramatic elements enables a critical and complex response on the part of the spectator. In opposition to illusionist drama, in which the audience is encouraged to passively identify itself with the characters and subjected to a "spiritual cleansing" by way of catharsis, Brechtian theatre aims to represent reality in a way that enables the spectator to think above the flow of the action, to understand it, to interpose his judgement, in other words, to enter into a dialogue with it. Brecht was aware that "The theatre as we know it shows the structure of society (represented on the stage) as incapable of being influenced by society (in the auditorium)"(On Theatre 189). The new theatre would treat social situations as processes; it would show that social

norms and laws emerge from people's life in society and are therefore "imperfect and provisional" and subject to change by those very people.

Brecht's conception of theatre as an arena for social experimentation and struggle led him to seek a truly popular theatre. He defined the popular as that which was intelligible to the masses, that which would express and consolidate their standpoint and would use their own forms. He shares with Bakhtin what he calls a "fighting conception" (108) of the popular, the view that the plebeian classes are not a static, superstitious, custom-bound mass but a powerful productive force capable of understanding and controlling social reality. Popular culture, likewise, for Brecht, is not encapsulated in old, existing forms or well-defined rules once and for all, but defines itself anew with each expression: "What was the people of yesterday is no longer so today, for the people of yesterday were not the people as it is today" (110). This historically changing concept of the people demands new methods of cultural expression and struggle. A truly popular literature "completely gripped by reality and completely gripping reality" (112) must make a "lively use of all means, old and new, tried and untried, deriving from art and deriving from other sources, in order to put living reality in the hands of living people in such a way that it can be mastered" (109).

In Brecht's drama, as in the work of other dramatists in this tradition, this awareness manifests itself in a destabilization of the distinctions that marked high cultural forms from the low, the serious and the tragic from the comic. Elements of music-hall, vaudeville, circus, and folk-ballads are juxtaposed with scenes of high seriousness depicting the horrors of war, death, and destruction in these plays. This fearless and irreverent heterogeneity generates an insecurity and instability which

may occasion terror when seen from the point of view of the dominant culture but can be turned into a source of enjoyment for the people for whom insecurity underlines the possibility of change, for creating new structures and meanings. In The Messingkauf Dialogues the philosopher describes a photograph of the destruction caused by an earthquake in the city of Yokohoma. Among the rubble of collapsed houses were a couple of tall buildings of reinforced concrete which had remained standing. The caption of the photograph read, "Steel stood." The philosopher's story is greeted by appreciative laughter by the worker-electrician who represents the "new audience" in this discussion-dialogue.

The image of the laughing spectators in Brecht's theatre again echoes the laughing carnivalesque crowd in Bakhtin. Armed with the critical attitude, this new audience cheerfully reverses the existing relationship between the stage and the auditorium. From being the passive, immobile receivers of awe-inspiring images of kings and great men on the stage, the spectators themselves are transformed into "kings . . . statesmen, thinkers and engineers" (Dialogues 100). The project of the "temporary redistribution of power" in the theatre was simultaneously taken up by many dramatists and theatre artists. Joel Schechter narrates the story of the Russian clowns, Vladimir and Anatoly Durov, who performed in Germany at the turn of the century. The Durovs would enter the circus-ring proclaiming themselves as "King of Jesters, but never the King's Jester. The Jester to His Majesty the People" (4). Their disciple, Lazarenko, who later collaborated with Mayakovsky in his circus-theatre, carried on this tradition as part of their effort to empower their audiences. In these new, "democratic" theatres, the spectators were invited to examine, question, approve, or criticize the issues and actions being presented on the stage. The stage

characters, likewise, were stripped of their grandeur, uncrowned as it were, and subjected to a thorough critical scrutiny. This is similar to Bakhtin's description of the force of laughter:

> Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it . . . . Laughter is a vital factor in laying down that prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically. As it draws an object to itself and makes it familiar, laughter delivers the object into the fearless hands of investigative experiment--both scientific and artistic--and into the hands of free experimental fantasy. (Dialogic 23)

To bring reality into direct and crude contact is to prepare the ground for tampering with it, to intervene in the state of affairs, and to shape and transform it to one's liking. The alternative theatre is committed to social change--it demystifies social and political issues like class oppression, religion, war, bourgeois nationalism, imperialist exploitation, etc., by what Dario Fo has described as its "exercise in counter-information" in order to facilitate a radical reorganization of the social order. That in their efforts most of these dramatists and theatre groups have occasionally fallen foul of the establishment and the dominant ideology and have been censored, exiled, arrested, and prosecuted, is a measure of their radical subversiveness.[8] This, however, has not blunted the edge of carnivalesque laughter; in fact, in most cases it has helped to sharpen its thrust. It is to this tradition that O'Casey belongs. His socialist politics combined with the significant fact that he grew up in relative isolation from the middle-class social institutions--school, university, middle-class profession, and work place--through which the ruling ideology permeates individual consciousness, helped him to develop a truly popular

perspective towards drama and theatre. In the following chapters, I will consider the specific manifestations of this popular tradition in his plays.

1. Sometimes, though, the green world is difficult to incorporate into the normal resolution. There is critical combat between the two which makes each seem unreal by the light of the other. This, however, according to Frye, leads to a "detachment of spirit" born of a "reciprocal reflection of two illusory realities" ("Argument" 72-73).

2. Barber's understanding of festivity is similar to the functional theory of festivity advanced and elaborated by anthropologists such as Van Gennep, Durkheim etc.

3. Barber's and similar views of "social consensus," especially with regard to the Elizabethan society and culture, have been persuasively challenged by many recent critical studies. See Bristol, Carnival 8-25; also Jonathan Dollimore's Radical Tragedy (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1984).

4. See Stallybrass and White. In a significant extension of Bakhtin's theory, the authors identify three processes that are at work in the carnival and the fair, the third being demonization in which the "low" social groups turn, not against authority, but against those who are even lower, e.g., women, Jews, animals.

5. Many critics have drawn attention to this fact. For example, see Bristol; Pechey; Caputi.

6. Bakhtin makes a passing reference to Brecht's work as influenced by carnival and the popular grotesque (Rabelais 46).

7. Although all the dramatists and theatre groups mentioned above have distinct dramaturgic methods and styles, there are important points of connection between their works. I have taken up Brecht's views on theatre as the connecting link not only because, viewed in a global perspective, he is the best known and most influential dramatist in the twentieth-century but also because he has theorized his practice extensively. O'Casey and Brecht were writing at about the same time but did not know about each other's work. And yet, as subsequent discussions of O'Casey's drama will show, there are interesting points of convergence between their dramatic attitudes and practices.

8. O'Casey's and Synge's plays were denounced as anti-patriotic and immoral by the Irish middle classes, forcing the former to seek exile; Arden and D'Arcy are virtually treated as personae non grata by the British cultural establishment; Dario Fo and Franca Rame have been subjected to constant censorship and persecution, even physical assault, not only in their own country but also outside.

CHAPTER THREE

REWRITING IRELAND: THE ABBEY PLAYS

> And will there be singing in the dark times?
> Yes, there will be singing of the dark times.
> - Brecht

O'Casey's career as an Abbey playwright came to a stormy end when a riot broke out in the theatre on the fourth night of the performance of The Plough and the Stars. In the public outcry that followed, it became clear that O'Casey's play had offended the nationalist sentiments of the newly-independent state. His critics saw him as a "guttersnipe of the slums" who had desecrated the heroic ideals of the Irish people and had subjected them to slander. This controversy, like many of the subsequent controversies that attended his literary career, was, in effect, a continuation of the political struggle that he had waged against the nationalists since he first espoused the cause of the working class. In a way, by choosing to work through the medium of the theatre, the most political and public of all art forms, O'Casey had ensured his continued active participation in the Irish political scene.

O'Casey began his political career as a nationalist. As a member of various political and cultural organizations, such as, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, and the St. Lawrence O'Toole Piper's Band, he played an active role in the struggle against colonial domination. He was well-known in the nationalist circles for his fiery and impassioned speeches--often in Gaelic--and for his articles in various journals. The year 1911 marked a

turning point in his life when he joined the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union led by Jim Larkin and started writing for the Union's newspaper, Irish Worker. Under Larkin's influence he moved towards working-class politics and became a militant socialist while remaining true to the best traditions of Irish republican nationalism, the tradition of Tone, Mitchell and Lalor.

During the preceding few years, "Larkinism," or what came to be known as the "new unionism," had spread rapidly throughout Ireland bringing about a revolution in the ranks of the Irish working class and infusing in it a sense of dignity, independence, and solidarity. In 1910, James Connolly had returned from America to join the struggle, and under the combined leadership of Larkin and Connolly, the labour movement had become a powerful force. The employers were understandably alarmed and sought an opportunity to crush this new movement and its leaders. In Dublin, matters were brought to a head in 1913 by William Martin Murphy, one of its leading capitalists and owner of the Dublin United Tramways Company and the Irish Independent newspapers, who demanded that his workers sign a pledge against joining the union and declared a lock-out on those who refused. The workers rose en masse to protest this infringement of their right to organize. In an unprecedented show of solidarity labour unions from all over Ireland and England rallied to the support of their striking colleagues. The forces antagonistic to labour also grouped together as about 400 employers joined hands in an effort to starve out a hundred thousand men, women, and children. The capitalists were ably assisted by the Dublin Castle police who unleashed brutal repression on the workers by forcibly breaking up meetings, raiding their homes, mercilessly batoning and even killing them. The Catholic clergy, too, were unequivocal in their opposition to what they considered

to be the new "Satanism" among the working class. From the pulpit and the press, they denounced the socialist aspirations of the workers and their leaders as anti-national and anti-Catholic, and participated actively in thwarting their plans to make the strike a success.

Ranged against such an array of powerful forces, the strikers could not hold out beyond eight months. But, even though the strike failed, and the workers had to go back to work without their terms having been met, the experience of the struggle had aroused the consciousness of the working class and shown to it the potential strength of organized labour. It had also awakened the conscience of the nation. In his warm tribute to the fighting spirit of the workers, George Russell (AE) spoke for many who had been moved by the experience:

> I am a literary man, a lover of ideas, but I have found few people in my life who would sacrifice anything for a principle. Yet in Dublin, when the masters issued that humiliating document, asking men--on penalty of dismissal--to swear never to join a trades union, thousands of men who had no connection with the Irish Transport Workers--many among them personally hostile to that organisation--refused to obey. They would not sign away their freedom, their right to choose their own heroes and their own ideas. Most of these men had no strike funds to fall back on. They had wives and children depending on them. Quietly and grimly they took through hunger the path to the Heavenly City . . . . Nobody has praised them, no one has put a crown on their brows. Yet these men are the true heroes of Ireland today, they are the descendants of Oscar, Cuchulain, the heroes of our ancient stories. For all their tattered garments, I recognise in these obscure men a majesty of spirit. It is in these workers in the towns and the men in the cabins in the country that the hope of Ireland lies. The poor have always helped each other, and it is they who listen eagerly to the preachers of a social order based on brotherhood and cooperation. (Clarkson 248)

As one of the striking workers who was involved in the day-to-day activities at Liberty Hall, the headquarters of the Union, O'Casey was deeply influenced by the events of 1913. One of the chief lessons of this struggle was the necessity of an

organized and disciplined force of the working class. As a result the Irish Citizen Army was formed. O'Casey became its secretary and actively participated in the drafting of its manifesto and constitution. The experience of these struggles also brought home to the workers that there was a basic conflict of interests and objectives between the middle-class nationalists and the proletariat. While the nationalist agenda focused only on the ending of British colonial rule and transfer of governmental power to the Irish, the socialists also aimed at a radical reorganization of the entire social structure. There was a fierce debate within the Citizen Army over the question of its attitude to the National Volunteers, a bourgeois nationalist group, which was formed at about the same time as the ICA and which had as its members some of the very employers who had provoked the 1913 strike. O'Casey wrote in Irish Worker: "Is it not clear that Irishmen differ very widely as to the end to be attained and the means to be used, and that on these points, there can be no apparent or actual union?" (Feathers 101).

As matters came to a head, he resigned from the Army but continued to argue persuasively in his writings against what he believed was the process of co-optation of the socialists by the nationalists. He was dismayed by Connolly's move to forge an alliance with the militant wing of the Volunteers, which finally led to their joint participation in the Easter Uprising. O'Casey, though moved by the heroic commitment of the martyrs, saw it as a betrayal of the working-class cause, especially on the part of James Connolly. In a short history, The Story of the Irish Citizen Army, written in 1919, he described the "revolutionary change" that had come over Connolly who had "stepped from the narrow by-way of Irish socialism on to the broad and crowded highway of Irish nationalism . . . . The high creed of Irish

Nationalism became his daily rosary, while the higher creed of international humanity that had so long bubbled from his eloquent lips was silent for ever, and Irish Labour had lost a Leader" (Feathers 226).

Subsequent events, culminating in the partition of Ireland and the establishment of the Irish Republic in 1922, merely confirmed and vindicated O'Casey's political views. The strength and dynamism that the labour movement had achieved during the Larkin and Connolly days and the hope that it had held out as a viable political force in Ireland were gradually lost. Even though the membership of the labour unions increased phenomenally over the next three years and the movement continued to try to maintain a distinct political identity by focusing on labour issues and developing a socialist programme, it was increasingly sidelined by the mainstream nationalist struggle of the Sinn Fein led by Arthur Griffith and Eamon de Valera. Neither of these leaders was known for his sympathy for the working-class cause. During the 1913 struggle of the Dublin workers and the period before that when the working-class movement was gaining strength all over Ireland, Griffith, through the pages of United Irishman and Sinn Fein, had consistently dismissed its aspirations as antithetical to the interests of nationalism and had denounced its leaders. At the time of the strike, he had sided with the employers and the clergy in their efforts to suppress the workers. De Valera, too, did not give much thought to the interests of the working class beyond inviting them to join the nationalist struggle as a subordinate partner on the basis of vague promises: "we ask Labour to join with us to free the country. We recognise that we can never free it without Labour. And we say, when Labour frees this country--helps to free it--Labour can look for its own share of its patrimony" (Clarkson 337).

Despite the fact that the working class had no illusions about receiving its share of patrimony from the nationalists, the Irish Labour Party was forced to stand down at the general elections in 1918 and 1921 for fear of dividing the nationalist vote. Its complete marginalization as a political entity by the bourgeois nationalist forces was finally made evident by the Sinn Fein takeover of political control and the signing of the treaty with England in 1921, which resulted in a bitter year-long civil war between the Republicans and the Free Staters over the question of partition.

The working class was the worst affected by the economic chaos that engulfed Ireland in the pre-independence years. The official figures of the Irish Department of the British Ministry of Labour showed that in 1921 about 26% of industrial workers were totally unemployed and 4% were on systematic short time. A large proportion of those fully employed received wages that were below the minimum requirement for the support of an average working-class family. The housing conditions of the working poor in Dublin were deplorable. The buildings were dilapidated and crowded, often with three or four families sharing a single room (Clarkson 441-44).

The establishment of the Free State did not bring about any appreciable improvement in this state of affairs. Repeated deputations and proposals made to the government by the National Executive of the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress over important issues of unemployment, import policy, decent wages, etc., evoked no response. The ideals of Connolly and Pearse, which the Dail Eireann had affirmed and officially adopted as part of its democratic program in 1918, and which had filled the utterances of the Republican leaders during the ensuing struggle, were quietly pushed under the carpet. In fact, the Free State government, characterized

as "a heavy-handed, heavy-taxing capitalistic regime" (Clarkson 472), had a worse record in matters of social legislation than the governments of Northern Ireland and Britain. It favoured policies that clearly protected the interests of the new social classes that had ridden to power on the nationalist bandwagon, namely, the landowners and rich peasants in the countryside, and the bourgeoisie and the petit-bourgeoisie in the urban centres. In this, once again, it had the blessings of the Catholic Church, which had always thrown its weight behind the men of property and, as in the days of Connolly and Larkin, opposed the social aspirations of the working poor. Thus the new republic inaugurated, what Sean O'Faolain has called a "holy alliance between the Church, the new businessmen, and the politicians" (qtd. in Lindsay, "Sean" 194) in which Connolly's dream of a "Workers' Republic" receded far into the background.

This was the immediate historical context that informed O'Casey's Dublin plays, which were written and staged between 1923 and 1926 soon after the establishment of the Free State. In all of them he went back to the major political events of pre-1922 Irish history. The Shadow of a Gunman was set amidst the guerilla warfare of 1920 between the I.R.A. and the Auxiliary units of the British forces popularly known as the Blacks-and-Tans; Juno and the Paycock in the civil war of 1922-23 between the Free Staters and the Republicans; and The Plough and the Stars during the Easter Uprising of 1916. Written from a clearly pro-people and anti-bourgeois perspective, these plays offered an interpretation of recent history that was sharply at odds with the dominant political sentiment in post-independence Ireland. From the bourgeois nationalist point of view, these events formed a part of the glorious history of an anti-colonial struggle. The Easter Uprising, in particular,

had acquired a legendary status. Though it had little popular support at the time of its occurrence--an inconvenient fact that most Irish chose to forget--events subsequent to its failure, especially the execution of its leaders by the British authorities, made them into martyrs and helped to reinvigorate the flagging nationalist struggle by providing it with a new mythology. The Easter rebellion was a powerful political symbol that could be used effectively by the dominant classes to legitimize and consolidate their position in the new political order. By interrogating and demythologizing the cult of blood sacrifice and heroic idealism that had been constructed around the heroes of the uprising, O'Casey had in fact struck at the very roots of the new power structure. It is not surprising, therefore, that his plays provoked a hostile response.

Cathleen of the Slums: History from Below

The critique of the bourgeois appropriation of the nationalist struggle is only a part of the overall project of these plays, which is, to restore to the history of Ireland its common people. During the long course of the anti-colonial struggle, Ireland was often described, in poetry, drama, and political speeches, as a young, beautiful woman by the name of Cathleen ni Houlihan. However, O'Casey's experiences in the working-class struggle made him aware that there were, in fact, two Cathleens, each distinctly separate from the other:

> one, like the traditional, in green dress, shamrocks in her hair, a little brian-boru harp under her oxster, chanting her share of song, For the rights and liberties common to all Irishmen; they who fight for me shall be rulers in the land; they shall be settled for ever, in good jobs shall they be, for ever, for ever; the other Cathleen coarsely dressed, hair a little tousled, caught roughly together by a pin, barefooted, sometimes with a whiff of whisky off her breath;

> brave and brawny; at ease in the smell of sweat and the sound of bad language, vital, and asurge with immortality. (Drums 336)

It is the second Cathleen, the Ireland tucked away in slum tenements, that O'Casey makes visible and celebrates in his dramatic and other writings. His principal actors are the common men and women of Dublin who are caught in historically closed situations of poverty, exploitation, and war. But for all that, they are not portrayed as passive victims of impersonal historical forces. Even in the most coercive social and political situations, these people display a capacity for purposeful action and a self-management of affairs that makes them into active historical agents. O'Casey, who had himself lived in the tenements and worked as a manual labourer for a considerable part of his life, had a deep knowledge of the culture of the everyday material life of the people, their vast resources of strength and their ability not only to cope with alienating circumstance, but also to appropriate and mould it to their own purposes and to maintain some control over the immediate conditions of their existence even in the worst of times. In more favourable times, as the historic examples of the 1913 strike and the October revolution in the Soviet Union had shown, the people could wrest initiative and power and become the vanguard of social change.

It is this particular plebeian experience and perspective, with its joys and its sorrows, that O'Casey brings to bear upon his plays. They present an alternative history, lived and created collectively by the people in crowded tenements, in streets and marketplaces, and in pubs. It is a history that is contaminated with laughter, obscenities, curses, tears, and sweat. As such, it is contrary to the serious, authorized history of the nationalist struggle in which heroes figure, and courage and sacrifice

are upheld as great values. The dramatic representation of these values can be seen in Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan where Cathleen is a young and beautiful woman who has the "walk of a queen." She travels through the country successfully exhorting brave, young men to give up their pleasures and follow her to fight for her right to her green fields.

The polarization of the two positions was clear from the fact that ardent nationalists, such as, Maud Gonne, Mary Quinn, and Dudley Digges, who had played leading roles in Yeats's play, had earlier protested against Synge's The Shadow of the Glen for its "decadent intrusion where the inspiration of idealism rather than the downpull of realism was needed" (Robinson 36). O'Casey, too, was accused of denigrating the nationalist ideals in The Plough in a public debate led by Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington. O'Casey argued against what he described as "the nationalist determination to make of Ireland the terrible place of a land fit only for heroes to live in" (Letters 1:175).

The idealization of the past, as Bakhtin points out, distances it from the present world of living reality and makes it "completed, conclusive and immutable, as a fact, an idea and a value" (Dialogic 17). History is seen to possess a single, unitary meaning imparted to it by its heroes and martyrs which holds good for all times and all people. The "history from below" breaks down this distance and examines and interrogates the past in the light of the requirements of the present. It also opposes official history's highly abstract and universalized notion of the "people," in which the interests and experiences of those at the bottom are seen to be identical with the interests and experiences of those at the top, by portraying the people in all their concreteness, sensuousness, and heterogeneity.

The most direct examples of this approach to history are found in O'Casey's autobiographies. Written in a narrative style--though the dramatic element in them is considerable--the books describe, or rather construct, in vivid detail some of the momentous political events of Ireland's history. O'Casey focuses on that part of history which is made not in courtrooms and parliaments by a handful of political leaders and legislators but by large collectives in open assemblies. His usual locale is the street or the public square where crowds gather to play their role in the political process. In a chapter entitled "I Strike a Blow for You, Dear Land" in Pictures in the Hallway, the second volume of his autobiography, he describes the period of the Boer War, an event that had generated a furious controversy among various political factions in Ireland. The nationalists had thrown their weight behind the Boers and had formed a Transvaal Committee, with James Connolly, Arthur Griffith, and Maud Gonne as its organizers, to help and support the Boer cause. But the war had entered the lives and homes of the common Irish people in a more immediate and complex manner as thousands of their men enlisted in the British army and were sent to the front to fight its war. Johnny's own brother had gone to Natal causing his "whole world . . . [to] divide . . . against itself" (197). O'Casey's account gives a picture of the popular involvement in the event by situating itself in the public space of the street.

> Ireland had become a place of stormy argument, with Dublin as its centre. Every man, woman, and child fought battles hour by hour, either for the British or the Boers. Transvaal flags were in everyone's house, in everyone's window, or in everyone's hand. At times spontaneous processions formed in the streets, marched through the city, booing every redcoat that passed, and often coming into collision with the irritated police. All fancy-goods shops and newsagents were filled with Boer symbols; streams of ribbons flashing the colours of England's enemies flowed through every street and sparkled in every second window. Every patriot carried in the lapel of his coat a buttoned picture

of Kruger, Steyn, Botha, Joubert, or De Wet; and a story went everywhere that De Wet was really Parnell come to life again, and up in arms against the English. (198)

He goes on to describe a particular scene outside a newspaper office where people had gathered to hear the latest news about the war. The account, though long, needs to be quoted in full:

> Today Johnny and Ayamonn were standing in the crowd watching the lights, when the news was flashed on the screen that the British had lost ten guns, and a great cheer, thundering defiance, made the street tremble in an agony of joy. Ayamonn, hoarse with mad emotion, whipped his hat from his heavily-haired head and waved it round in circles, as he shouted with the crowd.
>
> --We should ha' gone to where th' meetin' was to be, he said, proclaimed or no.
>
> --We're better here, said Johnny; for he didn't relish the chance of a tussle with the police; and here he knew that wasn't likely to happen.
>
> In the crowd, right in front of Johnny, stood a lissome young woman dressed in a gay dark-green dress suit, the skirt barely reaching to her ankles; a black bolero jacket, trimmed with flounced epaulettes which were rimmed with a brighter green than the green of the suit, and flecked with scarlet. She wore high-laced boots that disappeared up under her skirt, which, whenever it was swung by a lively movement of the girl's, showed the fringe of a white lace petticoat. Perched daintily on a curly roll of reddish hair was a dark-green felt hat sporting a black-and-white wing of a bird in its side. Several times Johnny's knee had touched her thigh, timidly at first, then with steadier resolution; and now, with a beating heart, Johnny found that the girl hadn't taken her leg away from his touch.
>
> Ayamonn full of himself, was gently swaying too and fro, as far as the crowd's pressure would permit, and singing, half to himself and half to the crowd, his eyes filled with a far-away look
>
> My boyish ear still clung to hear
> Of Ey-eyrin's pri-ide of yore,
> Ere Norman foot did dare pollute
> Her in-independent shore;
> Of chiefs, long dead, who rose to head
> Some gallant pathriots few;
> Till all my aim on earth became
> To strike one blow for you, dear land,
> To strike one blow for you,
> To stri-ike one blow for you, dear land,
> To stri-ike one blo-ow for youooo!

A woman striding towards middle age, wearing a disorganized straw hat on her tousled head, patched boots, one brown, one black, the brown one darkened with blacking to make it feel more at home with the other. She wore a black-and-white check skirt, the white square making up to the black ones by the grime gathered in street and house, the whole scalloped by wear and tear along the edges. She wore a large brown shawl flowing down to beyond her hips. Suddenly, she darted out from the crowd to a vacant place on the sidewalk, flung her shawl open with a sweeping flip and tucked it more closely round her body, as if she were clothing herself in armour.

--I don't care who hears me, she shouted, for we're full of life today, an'-puff-we're gone tomorra. To every man an' woman their own opinion, square or round or crooked or cornered, which is only right an' proper, an' a fair division. Sayin' nothin' calculated to hurt a soul, I'll say yous are a lot o' starin' fools, watchin' an' waitin' for somethin' yous'll never be spared to see. I wondher, she went on, raising her voice to a screaming pitch, I wondher what all of yous, what any of yous 'ud do, if England went undher!

--Die with joy! a man's voice shouted from the crowd, and a great cheer added an amen to the declaration.

The protesting woman flapped her shawl like a bird flapping its wings, gave a clumsy little lep from the pathway into the air, flapping open her shawl again, and closing it tighter as she did a nervous defiant dance on the pathway.

--There's ne'er an element of surety in your shoutin', she yelled, or the pourin' out of your poor white ignorance an' coloured venom. It 'ud be fitther for yous to work to help yourselves than to set yourselves dhreamin' of help for the Boers; for listen to me-in about as much time as it 'ud take a clever hand an' a sharp knife to peel an apple, England'll put the sign o' death on Kruger an' his gang!

The lissome young lassie standing in front of Johnny, with her leg touching his knee, moved angrily, and turned her pretty head to stare at the yelling woman; and Johnny cursed the oul' one for an ignorant, meddling bitch. Then with a handsome wriggle of her young body, the girl slid from the crowd and stood, red-faced and defiant, before the ill-dressed, blustering woman yelling out for England.

--Will you go home, for God's sake, woman, she said fiercely, an' clap yourself in bed, since you can't help yourself to a suitable understanding! We're serious people here, in no way wishin' to confuse our decency with the dirty tournament of England's attack on inoffensive peoples.

--General Robert, General French, an' General Kitchener, three Irishmen--remember that! shouted the blustering woman. They'll soon put the lonesome sign of death on Kruger an' his gang!

--Will they now? asked the young woman. You know all about it, don't you? Well, if I read the news right, Gatacre didn't do it at Colesberg, or your great Lord Methuen at Magersfontein, where he led thousands of th' poor bewildered Scots o' th' Highland Brigade to leave an everlastin' farewell to their wives, sisthers, an' sweethearts. And your Butler hasn't done it at Colenso, has he?....

--Irishmen all! yelled the older woman, flapping her shawl, doing her little lep up from the pavement after every sentence. Kitchener, Roberts, Kelly-Kenny, French, Mahon, fightin' for England. Five o' th' best, an' Irishmen all--remember that, now!

--Maybe you've forgotten how th' English went clattherin' down Nicholson's Nek, so's you couldn't see their heels for dust, went on the young lassie, an' thousands now of their best are floatin' fast dead an' down th' Tugela river, headin' out for the sea!

--Irishmen all - you can't get over that, now! screamed the oul' one. Whenever oul' England's in a quandary, up comes th' Irishman, tearin' up he comes, an' turbulent to pull her out of it - ah! me faithful, darlin' Dublin Fusiliers! (198-201)

The passage is characteristic of O'Casey's general method of describing history in the process of its making. He shows the people participating in events by commenting, arguing and acting upon them. The crowd is organized not by means of any vertical mobilization but spontaneously, on its own. It constitutes an alternative social, political formation with its own dispersed form of political power, which is different from the power that stems from a centralized or unitary political organization. The people in the crowd are unified by a single purpose, but they are also differentiated by their disparate experiences and responses. In the frenzied give and take that takes place, a dialogic situation is created in which various views contend with each other in a free and familiar interaction. Ayamonn's sentimental, dreamy republicanism, Johnny's fear of physical danger and his sexual attraction for the young woman, the old woman's defence of England combined with her insistent pride in Irishmen, and the young woman's equally insistent condemnation of England while at the same time responding pleasurably to Johnny's advances construct a multi-voiced, heteroglot reality which refuses to fit into any neat or ready-made categories of Republican, Orange or Socialist. Like the grotesque body and the carnivalesque crowd in Bakhtin, it is open, incomplete, protruding,

concrete, and sensual. It symbolizes an alternative political culture in which conflict and disorder are seen not as aberrations but rather as a powerful flow of social energy in which people animatedly question, refute, or affirm others' ideas, thoughts, and positions. It also signifies a refusal to accept the officially sanctioned truth positing against it the authority of the collective experience of the people.

In the account that follows, this collective authority asserts itself in the gay, cheerful crowd which mocks the policemen who are ordered to follow the procession and, later, when attacked by mounted policemen fights back with poles, sticks, stones, and bare fists. Barring a brief glimpse of the leaders who ride ahead, "pale-faced and tight-lipped," in a car drawn by "two frightened hearse horses," O'Casey's description continues to focus on the laughing, crying, shouting, cursing mass which swiftly adapts itself to each changing circumstance and rises to act in its own interest. In a characteristic carnivalesque gesture, the people pull the policemen from their horses and subject them to thrashing. The battle between the figures of repressive authority and the resisting force is described in bodily terms with sweat rolling down, blood oozing out of hidden wounds, flesh separating from the body and being clapped back to its place, violent retching of the stomach and vomiting.

The basic principle of grotesque realism, as Bakhtin points out, is to degrade, to transfer to the material level of the earth and body everything that is socially and spiritually exalted. The downward movement emphasizes the bodily lower stratum--the buttocks, the belly, and the genital organs, relating to the activities of alimentation, defecation, copulation, and reproduction. Degradation follows a cyclical process; to uncrown, to pull down to earth and the bodily lower stratum also means social renewal and regeneration. The grotesque body is associated with the

images of feasting. Food and drink renew the body while establishing its links with the productive lower stratum. This process can be seen in the following description of Ayamonn, Johnny, and the young woman who seek escape from the assault in a pub and are treated to free whisky by the barman in a gesture of nationalist solidarity. From there Johnny walks the young woman home and is invited inside. The chapter ends with an intimate scene in which nourishing food, a warm fire, and sexual pleasure are combined in a symbolic celebration of material, bodily life.

An example of the embodiment of the energy of plebeian misrule in a single figure can be seen in the person of Mild Millie in Drums Under the Windows whose life's experience has given her a fiercely independent spirit. A "terrible female, powerful woman, takin' ten men to lug her to the station when she goes wild with red biddy," she spreads terror in the hearts of the city policemen. As the constable warns the new sergeant, she "would have the pair of us on the broad of our backs in th' mud of the sthreets while you'd be winkin'!"(101). As drink takes effect on her, Millie comes into her full form. The sign of the English lion and unicorn carved on the gate of Hutton's coach-building factory, a reminder of colonial and capitalist exploitation, takes on the role of a symbolic antagonist. She smashes her empty bottle against it, exhorts an old street musician who has been playing a mournful tune on his fife to play something that would "show th' English lion an' unicorn that Ireland isn't even half-way outa step with life" (109), and breaks into a defiant dance, accompanied by a frenzied yelling and spitting at the British arms.

> No heaviness in her clumsy boots kept her from whirling round at the end of each bar of music like a humming-top when it had passed from the speed of a sleep to that showing its speed plain, its hum louder and more menacing; so she spun, stopping occasionally to face the lion and unicorn, to bring a foot down with a wild stamp to the ground, and send another spit flying up at the

> British arms. The crowd had grown bigger, and the fifer, old as he was, danced jerkily now, and a number of men and women in the crowd were doing spasmodic steps, sending spit after spit on to the wall over which strutted the symbolic animals of England's greatness, the rest of the crowd cheering whenever any of the moisture was carried to the wall anywhere near them; pressing nearer to the gesticulating, dancing, demented woman . . . (110)

In a final demonstration of festive disorder, Millie takes a wild leap which makes the crowd press back into a grocerwoman's shop causing a pile of boxes to fall and the fruits and vegetables to come rolling down into the street where "ferrety women and agile youngsters stretched out swift hands to gather in the harvest, taking whatever came their way through an act of God" (111). The whole scene is conceived as a people's carnival; it depicts a laughing community which mocks and desecrates repressive authority at the same time that it celebrates its own utopian desires for a fuller life. Through such scenes, which occur frequently in his writings, O'Casey makes visible a vital popular culture that existed in the Dublin of his time and that was as much a part of Irish political and social history as any elitist reconstructions of it.

O'Casey places his individual subjects firmly within this larger, shared culture as is evident in the image of Millie occupying centre stage in the crowded street. Individual transgression, far from being a subjectivized, isolated phenomenon, is always sustained by, and in turn feeds into, collective action. By de-emphasizing this collective aspect critics have often distorted the meaning and purpose of O'Casey's work. Thus David Krause sees in the comic rebellion of O'Casey's plebeian figures an attempt to work out a personal salvation in the face of an inexorable, repressive social reality. Through rituals of carnivalesque disorder individual characters achieve a transcendental freedom of soul and thus transform their "material defeat into

spiritual victory." This victory is more psychic than real as the explosion of transgressive energy shakes the rigid structures of society only "metaphorically." However, it has a pragmatic aspect as it helps the individual through a cathartic release of repressed energy to maintain his spiritual health and learn to "go on living in an unlivable world" (18-58; 223-83).[1]

Based within an individualist perspective, Krause's position argues for a subversive energy which does not really subvert anything since it is directed inwards and is not allowed to interact with the external reality that it contends against. In such a view the role prescribed for human agency is carefully restrictive. Isolated individuals can range freely in a private world of "unrestricted senses" and illusion-making without being able to create, destroy, or modify anything in the world outside. This restrictive notion of human agency derives not only from the individualist world-view--in which the individual will always be less powerful and therefore helpless before the much larger social order--but also from a view of power that sees the social order as being constituted exclusively by the ruling ideology. Krause recasts the relationship between the individual and society in terms of "comedy" and "history" in which history is seen to inhabit the public sphere where decisive events take place under the watchful control of the dominant social groups while comedy is given over to the playing out of fantasies through which the socially marginalized figures learn the art of escape from a tragic reality or at best seek an ironic accommodation with it (Profane 233-55).

In O'Casey's work, however, comedy, has a transgressive and transformative potential far beyond what any individualist ideology or any notion of absolute power could allow. Comic action is collective action grounded in the culture of popular

laughter through which the socially suppressed groups engage in a contestatory struggle against the official culture and ideology, positing against them a counter-culture and counter-ideology. History, in this perspective, is not the exclusive agency of the powerful, but is animated with what Bakhtin calls "heteroglossia," in which a multitude of social voices exist in a dialogic relationship. Again, this is not an argument for pluralism or a harmonious co-existence of separate domains, as interpreted by Krause,[2] but a view of history and society in which struggle and difference are oriented towards collective social action and change. People's culture is seen as a powerful, relatively autonomous, alternative culture which continually interacts with the dominant culture in an effort to intervene in history (Bristol, Carnival 40-53).

This pattern is clearly evident in his later comedies, but even in the early plays, set in an atmosphere of suffering and death, the sense of ceaseless struggle and resistance is always present. These plays are open-ended; their final horizons are never closed, always pointing to a utopian future of a happy and just social order. Even amidst the intense suffering brought about by the loss of her son and the betrayal of her daughter, Juno can look forward to the new life growing inside her daughter which, though fatherless, will have "what's far betther--it'll have two mothers" (71). Similarly, in Plough, Bessie's message of hope and affirmation triumphs over the ravages of death and destruction: "We'll have to be brave, an' let patience clip away th' heaviness of th' slow-movin' hours, rememberin' that sorrow may endure for th' night, but joy cometh in th' mornin'" (206). More fundamentally, the plays are open-ended not only because they illumine a future horizon but

because they embody within their structures carnivalesque energies that continually interrogate and destroy all tendencies to absolutize knowledge or power.

Bourgeois Nationalism and Carnivalesque Travesty

In post-independence Ireland the most powerful manifestation of this absolutizing or centralizing tendency was seen in the ideology of nationalism by which the bourgeoisie sought to mobilize the consent and support of the Irish people. The consolidation of the new order necessitated the minimization of social conflict and the maintenance of social discipline and respect for authority. The ideology of nationalism was an effective instrument through which the idea of a common identity of interests, both in the anti-colonial struggle of the past and the shaping of a prosperous life in future, was propagated. The religious establishment assisted in this task by aggressively upholding the values of respect for law and order, of family and work ethic.

The early plays offer a critique of the idealization of nationalism and of the values associated with it. This is done through the use of parody and travesty, images of crowning and uncrowning, of pulling down to the level of the material bodily life of the people. This material life is sustained by the processes of production and reproduction in which people participate collectively. The social energy generated by these processes gives rise to social conflict and disorder which, far from being viewed as negative or tragic, become the basis of an alternative political culture in which change and impermanence are seen as positive values. For all this, the plays are not anti-nationalist in perspective. They do not negate the ideology of nationalism, but offer a more inclusive concept of the nation based on the principles

of self-management, freedom from exploitation, and the sustenance of the material and spiritual life of all its members.

All three plays are located in the everyday lives of working people in the slum tenements of Dublin. This is the zone of the earth and the body to which all abstract ideals of patriotism and heroism are pulled down so that they can be freely investigated and unmasked of their falsities and pretensions. O'Casey's men and women, through their irreverent dialogue and behaviour, constantly mock and debase the historical events, institutions, and persons upheld as sacred by the official ideology.

The strategies of parodic travesty in Gunman centre in the figure of Davoren, the romantic poet who is insistently, though wrongly, identified as a guerilla fighter by the tenement dwellers while the real republican gunman, Maguire, remains in the background. Though not conceived as a comic character, unlike Boyle and Fluther in the other plays, Davoren nevertheless becomes a carnival king whose crowning is performed in a comic ritual. Tommy, who is slightly drunk, solemnly assures Davoren of his undying loyalty to the cause and offers him his hand: "Two firm hands clasped together will all the power outbrave of the heartless English tyrant, the Saxon coward an' knave. That's Tommy Owens' hand, Mr. Davoren, the hand of a man . . ." (94). He then breaks into a patriotic song and, as the nationalist fervour in him mounts, shouts militant slogans, "Up with the barricades . . . it's now or never, now an' for ever" (95). This is followed by the entry of Mrs. Henderson and Mr. Gallogher who ceremoniously read aloud and hand over to him a letter addressed to the "gentlemen of the Irish Republican Army" requesting them to intervene in a dispute between him and his neighbour. The finale to the crowning

comes in the form of a kiss from Minnie who is charmed by the man she is convinced is a brave gunman ready to die for his country. Through this comic crowning of the false hero, the play demystifies the idealization of revolutionary republicanism. Davoren himself counters the notion of heroic martyrdom: "No man, Minnie, willingly dies for anything" (92). His behaviour also undercuts the role that is assigned to him by the others. When the British soldiers raid the building, he is filled with fear and later shows total helplessness when Minnie is arrested and finally shot in an attempt to save him and Ireland.

Festive laughter is also directed at the system of judicial administration set up by the republicans in Ireland after their victory in the 1918 elections. At a meeting in 1919, they constituted themselves the Dail Eireann (Assembly of Ireland) and formed a parallel government backed by the moral authority of the people in opposition to the English colonial power, which stood solely on its military might. During this time republican courts were established in many areas whose decisions, administered by designated members of the IRA, were usually accepted by the people. The authorities at the Dublin Castle reacted strongly to these measures, and the Blacks and Tans frequently raided these areas and arrested people suspected of involvement in the courts.

In the play, Mr. Gallogher, assisted by Mrs. Henderson, approaches Davoren to have his "wrongs righted." In a letter as good "as was decomposed by a scholar" (98), he urges the Army's intervention in a matter of great importance. He has made out a "Primmy Fashy Case" against his neighbour Mrs. Dwyer and "all her heirs, male and female," who live in the back drawing room of the tenement, and, who, in response to the protests of Mr. and Mrs. Gallogher against the former's habit of

keeping the hall-door open and using the hall as a playground, have taken to using abusive language and making threats. While leaving the matter "entirely in the hands of the gentlemen of The Republican Army" (100), he reminds them to tell their men to bring their guns with them. The letter is delivered after a long, unhurried, mock-formal ceremony through which Minnie and Tommy and Mrs Henderson freely gloss, comment on, and debate the use of particular words and phrases in the letter in a hilariously comical scene.

The comic debasement of nationalist history through the antics of the people in the tenements does not negate this history altogether. What their laughter destroys is the serious and narrowly exclusive view of the nationalist movement. The issue of the dispute between Mr. Gallogher and his neighbour posits an alternative conception of nationalism which can accommodate the everyday needs and concerns of the people. Furthermore, the humour is double-edged. If it makes fun of the IRA, it simultaneously mocks the British authorities. Considering that the punishment for participating in the republican courts was severe, the fact that the people knowingly exercise this option indicates a will to resist colonial domination. The patriotic sentiment of the ordinary people is also reflected in their awe of Davoren and later in Mrs. Henderson's brave defence of Minnie when she fights with the soldiers and is arrested for it.

In Juno, too, carnivalesque travesty is employed to counter nationalist constructions of history. There is a critical view which sees the larger political situation as merely providing the framing conflicts for what is essentially the private tragedy of a family (Smith 36). However, throughout the play numerous references are made to Irish political events which are woven into the texture of the dialogue

and the action. Far from being incidental or gratuitous they continually point to the play's openness to history and society. The parallels between personal relationships and the larger social and political relationships are presented comically as in Boyle's "Today, Joxer, there's goin' to be issued a proclamation be me, establishin' an independent Republic, an' Juno'll have to take an oath of allegiance" (24).

The parodic relationship between the people and the official history finds its most coherent expression in the legacy plot. The news of the legacy echoes the national situation in which the leaders of the newly independent state held out promises of a new social order and a better life for its people. Some critics view the plot only as a melodramatic device designed to increase the theatrical interest of the play (Krause, Man and His Work 92; Goldstone 36). Others have recognized the allegorical reference as pointing to the parallel between the tragic condition of the people and that of the whole state (Ayling, Continuity 8; Mitchell 61). I would like to suggest, however, that the business of the legacy and the action surrounding it be read as a comic travesty of national politics. The images and forms of carnival reversal and masquerade operate within the play to demystify political power by revealing it as arbitrary and transitory. O'Casey also highlights the tragic consequences of the struggle for political power, but by simultaneously subjecting these processes to comic treatment, he undercuts the notions of absolute, inscrutable power as well as the awe-inspiring inevitability of tragedy.

The play dramatizes the process of transformation that the legacy sets into motion for the Boyle family. Mrs. Boyle orders her husband to "take off" his moleskin trousers (already established as a symbol of his working class status) and "put on" a collar and tie to receive the big news. As he goes in, she tidies up the

room in order to receive her gentleman visitor. The act of putting on a new identity is simultaneously emphasized and subverted in a comic scene. Thus Mrs. Boyle, despite her attempts at gentility, welcomes Mr. Bentham with "Himself'll be here in a minute; he's just takin' off his trousers". Soon after is heard the loud wrangling offstage between Johnny and Boyle:

> Voice of Johnny inside. What are you kickin' up all the racket for?
>
> Boyle (roughly). I'm takin' off me moleskin trousers!
>
> Johnny. Can't you do it, then, without lettin' th' whole house know you're takin' off your trousers? What d'ye want puttin' them on an' takin' them off again?
>
> Boyle. Will you let me alone, will you let me alone? Am I never goin' to be done thryin' to please th' whole o' yous? (26)

This is followed by yet another commotion as Boyle is unable to find his braces. The disorder and the confusion that attend this dressing up underline the arbitrary and fragile nature of social distinctions the official ideology upholds as divinely sanctioned and/or essential to social well-being in order to maintain order and discipline in a hierarchically organized social system. A similar demystificatory use of the symbolism of clothing also occurs in his autobiography, Inishfallen Fare Thee Well, in a chapter entitled, "A Terrible Beauty is Borneo," in which he humorously describes the spectacle of the Irish middle classes attempting to adopt the manners and dress codes appropriate to their new social status.

Juno dramatizes the comic reversal of identity and status on other levels too. When Boyle is first informed of the death of his relative, he can only call him a "prognosticator an' procrastinator" for whom "Sorra many'll go into mournin'." But no sooner does he come to know that the same gentleman had left him a fortune,

than he solemnly declares that he and his family will have to go into formal mourning for "poor Bill" (28-29). Social respectability also brings about a reversal of social attitudes. Boyle's views on the role of the clergy in Act I, when he decries their anti-nationalist politics and their domination over the lives of the people, are in sharp contrast to his attitude in Act II when he warns Joxer not to speak disrespectfully of Father Farrell. In an arbitrary reconstruction of the "History o' me country" he declares that "the priests was always in the van of the fight for Irelan's freedom" (33).

Critics have often read this and similar changes in Boyle's attitudes as evidence of his opportunism (Goldstone 41; Papke 108). In carnivalesque literature, however, the isolated individual consciousness has no place. O'Casey, in spite of Lady Gregory's early comment--"your strong point is characterisation"--is not interested in psychological verisimilitude.[3] Characters, in his drama, as in most carnivalized art, are continually defined and redefined by their dialogic relationships with others. Boyle's transformation, then, does not point to an inviolable core of his individual personality but, rather, underlines the fact of change itself, in this case a change effected by new social and political relationships.

The second reversal in Juno is dramatized through images of uncrowning. Boyle, who goes about "like a mastherpiece of the Free State counthry" (54), is gradually stripped of his possessions and pretence as people come to know that the legacy is false. Clothing is again emphasized as Nugent carries off the new suit in spite of Boyle's protestations, and the latter is left wearing his old moleskin trousers. Mrs. Madigan leaves with the gramophone saying, "You're not goin' to be swankin' it like a paycock with Maisie Madigan's money--I'll pull some o' th' gorgeous

feathers out o' your tail!" (59). Finally, as the furniture is removed piece by piece, the bare stage becomes a visual symbol of Boyle's uncrowning. The uncrowning comes across as simultaneously tragic and comic. Beyond the personal tragedy of Boyle, it points to the fragility and impermanence of the power and affluence of the new bourgeois social order.

Idealized history receives its most powerful thrashing in Plough as O'Casey takes issue with the bourgeois appropriation of the greatest Irish nationalist symbol, the Easter Uprising. The play, which has a larger action, more characters, and a more complex structure than the two earlier plays, offers a comprehensive critique of the official order through its portrayal of a disorderly community and its counter-culture. The play sets the everyday life of the tenements against the grim and bloody war that is carried on outside. The events of the outside world enter and affect the life of the people, sometimes tragically, but without ever being able to take it over completely. Carnivalesque culture is governed by its own norms. It links with the productive life of the community and provides it with special ways of interpreting and shaping social reality. Carnival emphasizes the material principle through its celebration of the body and bodily functions, especially those associated with eating, drinking, sex, and reproduction. The images of the body are juxtaposed with the rhetoric of idealized social and political behaviour in a bid to unmask the latter of its pretensions and false claims.

Act II provides a full scale dramatization of this dialectic. The scene is set in a pub in which people gather to drink and to converse. Through the window can be seen the silhouetted figure of the speaker addressing the crowd outside. His voice is heard within at intervals. The speech, which is based on excerpts from actual

speeches of nationalist leaders at the time, represents the official world in the play. Against this is counterposed the transgressive energy of the collective expressed through their celebration of low life. The Voice exhorts men to lift arms and prepare for glorious blood sacrifice: "The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields . . . . And we must be ready to pour out the same red wine in the same glorious sacrifice, for without shedding of blood there is no redemption!" (164). The people, however, pay their homage to the heroic ideal by drinking and talking excitedly. Peter remarks: "A meetin' like this always makes me feel as if I could dhrink Loch Erinn dhry!" (163). They counter the speaker's glorification of the "exhilaration of war" with their own war of words and with the physical fights which erupt between them from time to time. Bloodshed is also associated, in the official ideology, with manhood: "Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood . . ." (162). The popular conception of manhood, however, is shaped by the lower-bodily orientation. Thus Fluther asserts his manhood by his willingness to fight for Rosie's honour and by going away with her for an evening of drinking and sexual pleasure. The bawdy song they sing together as they emerge from the snug in a drunken state celebrates the continuity of life in the midst of a war that maims and kills. Earlier, too, Rosie mocks the high ideals of the men going to war:

> Rosie. 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 . . . ." (161-2)

The assertion of the material bodily principle is most powerfully dramatized in the looting scene in Act III. As news of the looting of the shops in the city comes

in, the tenement dwellers rush out to try their luck. The Covey returns with a heavy sack of flour and some ham on his back while Fluther staggers in with a half gallon jar of whisky. Bessie and Mrs. Gogan have acquired odd pieces of furniture, fancy clothes, shoes, hats, etc. The scene celebrates the collective endeavour of the people towards the satisfaction of their material needs. The carnival principle, according to Bakhtin, is a "banquet for all the world" (Rabelais 278). In popular culture the abundance of material life is viewed as an appropriate conclusion to the process of social labour and struggle. It is also the criteria of communal well-being and of a democratic and just social order.

Disorder, Conflict and the Rhythm of Alternation

The looting scene provoked strong criticism for its mockery of nationalist ideals and its denigration of the Irish people. While O'Casey concurred with the first reading, acknowledging that was part of his purpose in writing the play, he countered the second charge by stating that the looting, which was a historical fact, was a brave thing to do since it involved grave risks. Later, in his autobiography, he described the same event in terms of a people's carnival, and commented:

> Sean watched their wonderful activity, and couldn't desecrate their disorder with dishonour . . . he was glad to see they hadn't lost their taste for things material. In spite of the clergy's fifing about venial and mortal sin, they were stretching out their hands for food, for raiment, for colour, and for life . . . . The time would come when they would no longer need to take their kingdom of heaven by violence, for they would build it themselves, and warmth, adornment, and satisfaction in the midst of fair sounds and bright colours would be their own. (Drums 412)

The fulfilment of material needs and desires necessitates disorder and destruction. People break into the shops, "Smashin' th' windows, battherin' in th'

doors, an' whippin' away everything!" (187). Through their energetic disruption of the norms of law and order, they not only desecrate the ideals of heroic behaviour set up by the Voice in the pub but also radically confuse and obliterate the distinctions necessary for the maintenance of the social order. In the Carnival, images of disorder combine with those of order in a topsy-turvy arrangement. The wearing of borrowed clothing, disguise, and masks are employed to unsettle the neat divisions of rank, status, and gender, which lie at the basis of the hierarchical social order. The looting destroys the demarcation between public and private property as people generously help themselves to whatever suits their fancy. It also destroys, if only temporarily, the internal differences within the community. The people's strategic misuse and misappropriation of costumes and practical objects underline the artificiality of all social forms and point to the possibility of new social structures and combinations. Bessie and Mrs. Gogan resourcefully use a child's pram to pile up their loot; Fluther enters with a colourful woman's hat on his head, the arm of a new shirt hanging out of his pocket as he cradles a big jar of whisky in his arms; Mrs. Gogan holds a chair on her head while she talks of the pointed toes and cuban heels of the shoes she has filched. Bessie's earlier appearance, too, showed her with a varied assortment of things--a new hat, a fox fur around her neck, three umbrellas tucked under one arm, and a box of biscuits under the other. The haphazard mixing of objects and the exaggerated and inappropriate dressing transgress orderly social life at the same time that they create a utopia of social wealth and plenitude.

The disorderliness of O'Casey's people is also expressed through a chronic dissonance that characterizes their lives together. In almost all of O'Casey's plays, there are scenes depicting people fighting and bickering with each other. This aspect

of their portrayal has generally been read as evidence of their moral and intellectual degradation. Socialist critics, too, have interpreted this as satire directed against the working class. Thus Peadar O'Donnell is reported to have complained that O'Casey's drama "gave the opportunity to the good, fat Dublin middle class to have a laugh at Dublin's workers." In Carl and Anna Reeve's view the plays depict the workers "as caricatures and their revolt as laughable" (Krause, "Recent Research" 222). Mary Papke reads the Dublin plays as a criticism of the false consciousness of the working class which led to the disintegration of moral structures and of communal and family life (Papke 106).

The dominant ideology emphasizes the values of harmony and order based on a hierarchical division of society implicitly characterizing discord as foolish, disruptive, and harmful to social interests. In popular culture, however, conflict and dissonance are viewed as a normal state of affairs in social life based on labour and struggle.[4] The multiple forms of discord experienced by the people can be broadly grouped under two categories.[5] While there is a more or less permanent conflict between the people and the ruling elite, a more complex form of conflict relates to the various oppositional interests and alliances that exist within the people themselves and which divide them horizontally. Popular culture acknowledges this dissonant diversity and develops strategies to channel conflict in the best interest of the community.

This popular acceptance of conflict is manifest in the carnivalesque celebration of the opposition between Carnival and Lent. This ritualized opposition, as Bristol points out, represents the state of a perpetual, inner conflict that exists within plebeian society. Seen from the popular perspective, the battle between the two

figures does not lead to a resolution in victory or defeat, or even reconciliation, but maintains a "rhythm of alternation" in which "alternate periods of ascendancy are followed by ritualized thrashing and expulsion" (Carnival 77). The management of social conflict in this way ensures "a purposeful and dynamic pattern of social regulation" (72) in which authority as well as responsibility are shared on a reciprocal basis.

O'Casey's portrayal of low life in early twentieth-century Dublin acknowledges this aspect of popular culture. The plays dramatize fully the political, religious, and economic differences that divided the plebeian society into many vertical and horizontal formations. The class conflict between the working people and the ruling elite was overlaid with differences between Catholic and Protestant, Orange and Republican, Diehard and Free Stater, and various other gradations of rank, wealth, and social respectability. This makes for a complex network of relationships of discord and solidarity which characterize the collective life of the people.

The constant fighting and bickering that go on in the tenements travesty the myth of a singular Irish identity and purpose fostered by bourgeois nationalism. In Plough, a large part of the action is taken up by the squabbles and scuffles that frequently erupt in utter disregard of the heroic battle being waged outside. Fluther's reprimand to Mrs. Gogan and Bessie and his assertion of the need for normative behaviour during a fight between the two women falls on deaf ears: "it's a derogatory thing to be smirchin' a night like this with a row; it's rompin' with th' feelin's of hope we ought to be, instead o' bein' vice versa!" (171). It is further undercut by his own wild behaviour immediately after when he challenges the Covey to a bout.

Peter, an irascible old man, is an easy target for everyone. His enthusiastic nationalism, expressed sartorially through his elaborate Foresters' uniform, is an object of general derision, which usually results in a war of words. The Covey, on the other hand, personifies contradiction. With a face that shows "a perpetual protest against life as he conceives it to be," he remains at loggerheads with everyone else. His "twartin' animosities" directed specially at Peter generate a lot of comic action and free exchange of abusive language. The Covey's name-calling ("th' little malignant oul' bastard, you lemon-whiskered oul' swine") provokes Peter to charge after him with a drawn sword, and later when he is worsted in the fight he takes recourse to shouting and cursing (146). The Covey and Fluther also clash over the issues of religion and nationalism, and their first argument ends with each abusing the other: "you wurum," "oul', ignorant savage," "word-weavin' little ignorant yahoo of a red flag Socialist!" (142-44). The fight between Mrs. Gogan and Bessie Burgess starts as an argument over religious and political matters conducted by both while sitting at a distance from each other in the pub. However, personal and moral issues are soon brought in, passions are inflamed, and the two move centre-stage where they scream and shout and adopt aggressive postures in preparation for battle while the others stand around them. This is followed by a similar battle between Covey and Fluther, also performed in the centre of the stage as Fluther moves up, whips off his hat and coat (just as Mrs. Gogan had divested herself of her encumbrance by giving her child to the unsuspecting Peter), and challenges Covey with: "Come on, come on, you lowser; put your mits up now, if there's a man's blood in you! Be God, in a few minutes you'll see some snots flyin' around, I'm tellin' you . . . ." (176).

Fights, abuse, and curses form an essential part of carnival billingsgate, the language of the market-place. They are almost always associated with the lower domain--hell, earth, animal world, and the lower bodily functions. Bakhtin sees them as an integral part of carnivalesque celebrations as gestures of thrashing and uncrowning. But in pulling down to the body and the earth, they also regenerate and revive. This dual nature of billingsgate is also evident in the fertile and creative use of words and images that make up the abuses and curses.

The people's energetic debasement of the ideals of nationalist struggle is further contrasted with another equally valid response. After her mockery of men marching to war, Rosie suddenly remarks, "It's a tremendous meetin'". A little later, she responds to the voice of the orator with "It's th' sacred thruth, mind you, what that man's afther sayin'" (162). This is not merely ironical. The people are genuinely inspired and aroused by patriotic sentiment. Peter and Fluther enter the pub in a state of great emotional excitement, which they express in bodily terms. To Peter's recounting of his experience of the meeting outside--"Every nerve in me body was quiverin' to do something desperate!"--Fluther answers by putting his arms under Peter's face and rolling up his sleeve: "Looka here . . . . The blood was BOILIN' in me veins!" (163).

The continuous alternation of contradictory voices dramatizes a complex, multi-voiced, heterogeneous reality. The various perspectives and points of views do not live in a state of static co-existence but in an active, sometimes violent, interaction which counteracts the normative view of a neatly ordered reality capable of being organized and controlled vertically. The festive anarchy of O'Casey's plebeians not only negates the established order but provides the basis for an alternative

interpretation of social reality in which everything is destroyed and recreated continuously.

The rhythm of alternation provides the basic structural principle in Juno. Juno, introduced as a working-class woman, whose face has assumed a typical look of "listless monotony and harassed anxiety, blending with an expression of mechanical resistance" (6), is a Lenten figure which contends with the festive persona of Carnival in the form of her husband Jack Boyle. The opening scene establishes her unequivocal adherence to the values of family responsibility and social discipline. She disapproves of Mary's efforts to overstep her social limits as reflected in the latter's preoccupation with clothes: "I don't know what a girl on strike wants to be wearin' a ribbon round her head for, or silk stockin's on her legs either; it's wearin' them things that make the employers think they're givin' yous too much money" (7). In her view, a quiet acceptance of one's station in life and proper show of deference to one's social superiors constitute practical wisdom. By the same logic, the aggressive assertion of the principles of non-exploitation and justice by the working class appears foolish as it disrupts the precarious balance of production, exchange, and consumption through which the dominant order ensures the survival of the working force. Her Lenten severity is evident in her constant supervision and criticism of others, which is often resented by them. As Boyle says, "'Tisn't Juno should be her name at all, but Deirdre of the Sorras, for she's always grousin'" (11).

Her main antagonist, however, is Boyle whose daily routine consists of strutting about "like a paycock" from one pub to the other with his butty Joxer Daly, and "constantly singin', no less, when he ought always to be on his knees offerin' up a Novena for a job!" (7). Boyle's evasion of work is dictated by a transgressive refusal

to allow himself to be controlled by the norms of social discipline. "I don't want the motions of me body to be watched the way an asthronomer ud watch a star" (15), he tells Jerry when the latter chases him with information about a job. The sudden eruption of pain in his legs as soon as a job is mentioned is part of the improvisatory ability and versatility of the Carnival figure with which he puts on various masks and disguises. His fantasies of adventure as sea-captain are also part of a strategic resistance to constraining social roles that allow no opportunity to be "other."

The agon between Juno and Boyle is played out within the space of the family. In bourgeois society, the norms of social discipline are mediated through the institution of the family. In the long history of the bourgeois order, the family has come to be seen as an autonomous, non-public, and non-political unit associated with seemingly independent values of responsibility, especially related to the private care and nurture of children. Seen from this perspective, evasion of work translates as abrogation of moral responsibility, a charge often levelled at Boyle who contrasts unfavourably with Juno in the fulfilment of obligations to the family. However, in the context of the larger society, his evasion could be read as a resistance to the social relations of expropriation and domination. Boyle himself displays some awareness of the operation of power through ideological mobilization. Reacting sharply to Father Farrell's offer of work for him in return for Johnny's services to the country, he says:

> It's a curious way to reward Johnny by makin' his poor oul' father work. But that's what the clergy want, Joxer--work, work, work for me an' you; havin' us mulin' from mornin' till night, so that they may be in betther fettle when they come hoppin' round for their dues! Job! Well, let him give his job to wan of his hymn-singin', prayer spoutin', craw-thumpin' Confraternity men!" (22)

The elevation of work as a social value traps the poor in a vicious circle, which encourages them to support the very institutions that exploit them and keep them in miserable conditions. Thus, through Boyle's negation of approved forms of behaviour, the play interrogates and unsettles the bourgeois notions of work and family.[6]

Boyle also embodies the principle of material abundance, visually represented on stage by his eating and drinking in the company of friends. While Juno's relationship to food is that of practical necessity, Boyle transforms even the most ordinary meal into a feast, accompanied by singing and fantastic story-telling. Barring a temporary disowning of his butty, Joxer, during the time he was trying to become respectable, Boyle maintains a generous hospitality towards his friends throughout the play.

In material life, Carnival and Lent are alternative but not mutually exclusive principles. Their inconclusive battle follows an alternative pattern of co-existence. Boyle's uncrowning leaves him defeated and confused. As he leaves the stage, Juno takes control of the situation. Her Lenten severity mandates social discipline and abstention from physical pleasures, but it also has a positive side. Her concern for survival commits her to the preservation of the new life that is to be born. She and Mary will work together to maintain the new family that takes the place of the old one. The play, however, does not end here. Boyle's return indicates that the conflict will go on, has to go on. The principle of abundance and transgressive disorder will continue to be resurrected and celebrated. Lest the appeal for hearts of flesh, for love and for peace, should lull people into complacency, they have to be reminded again of the 'chassis' that lies at the heart of the social order.

Collective Life: Coping with Death

The rhythm of alternation provides a model of collective existence which affirms the plenitude of productive life and points to its ever-present capacity for change and renewal. This heuristic principle also operates through the popular attitude to death. Death and life wage a never-ending struggle in a bid to limit each other's ascendance. In collective life, as in nature, the individual death does not signal a final and irrevocable end inspiring fear and tragic awe. It is, as Bakhtin puts it, "not a negation of life seen as the great body of all the people but part of life as a whole--its indispensable component, the condition of its constant renewal and rejuvenation. Death is here always related to birth . . ." (Rabelais 50). Even today, in many collectively organized cultures, death is often attended by laughter, music, and feasting, thus celebrating the continuity of collective life.

In the Dublin plays, death does not observe the natural order of things. It is not preceded by a life lived to its fullness, but imposes itself prematurely, urged on by war and poverty. In spite of this, its pain and horror are never allowed to dominate and destroy the life of the community. The popular orientation to material life devises its own strategies to meet the challenge of death. Mrs. Gogan expresses her awareness of the precariousness of human existence in the slums through her constant preoccupation with death. Her cheerfully narrated stories about sudden death frighten Fluther though her own attitude remains ambivalent:

> It always gives meself a kind o' threspassin' joy to feel meself movin' along in a mournin' coach, an' me thinkin' that, maybe, th' next funeral 'll be me own, an' glad, in a quiet way, that this is somebody else's. (141)

The mingling of contradictory emotions suggests a simultaneous acceptance and resistance of dying. The acknowledgement of death does not stem from a position

of spiritual transcendence, but is firmly located in the experience of material life which at the same time and with equal vehemence asserts a claim for living. The same grotesque ambivalence is powerfully dramatized in the scene depicting Bessie's death. When shot accidentally while trying to pull Nora away from the window, Bessie screams with fear of impending death. In her agony she showers abuses upon Nora ("you bitch," you jade," "blast you") and then breaks into a hymn affirming her hope in salvation after death. Her furious battle for life as well as her affirmation of life after death reveals the vigour and confidence with which popular energy subverts the permanence of death. Death is not a grand and noble affair as in official culture. It can be treated irreverently, pulled down to its place in the earth and in the process fertilized.

Death also serves to uncrown pretensions of grandeur and heroism in other contexts. Mrs. Gogan's genuine admiration of Peter's Foresters' uniform is accompanied by a comically grotesque picture of death:

> When yous are goin' along, an' I see them wavin' an' noddin' an' waggin', I seem to be lookin' at each of yous hangin' at th' end of a rope, your eyes bulgin' an' your legs twistin' and jerkin', gaspin' an' gaspin' for breath while yous are thryin' to die for Ireland!" (167)

The concrete materiality of death, expressed in the vivid detailing of the distortions of the body, cheerfully mocks and pulls down the romanticized image of the patriotic martyr.

Death becomes funny when seen in relation to the socially powerful, but it also has a serious side. Mrs. Gogan's obsession with death is a reminder that she keeps constant company with it in the form of her diseased daughter, Mollser, who dies towards the end of the play. However, after Juno, O'Casey foregrounds the

community rather than the family in his plays. In the Plough, unlike the earlier two plays, the locale does not remain confined to the lodgings of a single family but moves to other rooms or to common public spaces. Nor does the play focus overmuch on the biological relationship between Mrs. Gogan and Mollser. Mollser, in fact, is a child of the tenement and is looked after variously by Nora, Mrs. Gogan, Bessie, and Fluther. Her death, consequently, is an event in the shared life of the people. Similarly, as war encroaches upon the tenements, bringing with it more death and destruction, the community organizes itself spontaneously to meet its challenge, cheerfully asserting its communal solidarity. Mollser dies, but Nora is saved by Fluther. Bessie takes upon herself the responsibility of tending to Nora, and when she is killed in the process, Mrs. Gogan quietly replaces her and offers to put Nora in Mollser's bed. In Juno, too, death brings about a new consciousness of togetherness as Juno, in a gesture of identification with Mrs. Tancred, repeats the very words she had spoken at the death of her son. And her formal speech, usually delivered in a non-naturalist choric style, projects not the private mourning of an individual loss but the public expression of communal grief.

A poignant example of the characteristic self-reliance and resourcefulness that the community of the poor reveals, especially when confronted with death, is found in O'Casey's one-act play, Nannie's Night Out. Nannie is a beggar woman who has never known a home and has lived on the street all her life. When she dies, there is neither a doctor nor a priest available to tend to her. Her life as well as her death are too insignificant for the State, which has bigger things like the "Boundhary Question" to settle first. In the absence of any official help, however, the people of the street form a self-sufficient community to provide her with an impromptu

religious service in which the ballad-singer chants whatever he can remember while the others act as chorus.

Seen from the standpoint of the people as a whole, and not from the limited perspective of the "sealed-off individual life," death loses its tragic finality. In popular collective life, images of death are always juxtaposed with those of renewal. In Juno, the tragic void created by the deaths of Robbie Tancred and Johnny Boyle is filled with the hope of new life in Mary's child. In Plough, as noted above, the community asserts the continuity of life through a subtle but continual transfer or reallocation of space and of responsibility in the management of the affairs of the community. The claims of life and of the future are upheld over that of the dead past. Thus, in spite of Bessie's taunts, Brennan takes the right course when he leaves the fatally wounded Clitheroe to die while he saves his own life. Act IV opens in Bessie's room with Mollser's coffin propped up on two kitchen chairs while the Covey and Fluther play cards on the floor. Death is not allowed to arrest the flow of everyday life; rather, it becomes an integral part of the struggle that constitutes life.

Shared Spaces, Shared Lives

The strength of the collective life of the poor is also revealed in their resourceful management and organization of the spaces that they inhabit. In his plays, O'Casey uses the locales of the tenement, street, and pub and their special characteristics to underline the relative autonomy of everyday collective life. These spaces, which exist outside the direct control of the social elite, enjoin their own norms of behaviour in consonance with the values and ethics of the community.

The miserable conditions in the Dublin slums have been documented adequately in many historical accounts and government reports. The tenement buildings, usually in disrepair and lacking minimal facilities, many of them officially certified as unfit for human habitation, were overcrowded with people and had become breeding places for disease and squalor. In his writings, especially in the autobiographies, O'Casey describes in vivid detail the difficult conditions under which the urban poor lived. However, even in the most coercive situations, what comes across is not the misery which confines and cripples but the vital, surging life that struggles to assert itself again and again.

Critics have generally tended to view these spaces and the life that inhabits them against the norms of bourgeois respectability. Thus William Thompson complains that "life does not have quite enough room to behave in a proper manner" (emphasis added) in the tenement setting. As examples he lists Mrs. Gogan's violation of privacy in opening and inspecting Nora's package and Peter's wandering about the room in various stages of undress--both offensive to middle-class values of individual privacy and freedom (Imagination 208). Ronald Ayling likewise feels that the lack of privacy in the tenement stifles people's attempts to better their situation and allows no opportunity for creative expression (Continuity 30-32). This, however, is a misguided view which stems from the practice of reading plebeian culture in the light of the normative standards of polite, middle-class culture.

Tenement life is lived in close and crude contact with others. As such it develops an alternative ethos of a collective sharing of experiences and concerns. The tenement room, in contrast to the drawing room in bourgeois drama, is not an individualized or private space. The doors are usually open, the convention of

knocking before entering does not exist, and people walk in and out freely. The lock put on Nora's door symbolises a proprietary individualism that marks her separation from the community. In addition, her new hat, her short skirts and "glad-neck" gowns, the painting of Venus on her wall, her consciously polite behaviour, and her general disdain of tenement life are "notions of upperosity" (137) which are subjected to derisive laughter by her neighbours. Her bourgeois refinement receives its most comical thrashing at the hands of the Covey and Uncle Peter, who cheerfully subvert all her efforts to "keep up a little bit of appearance" (147) by throwing their things about, running wildly around the room banging doors and shouting at each other, and misbehaving at the carefully laid out tea-table. When she chides the Covey for leaving his dungarees on the floor, he answers with carnivalesque incomprehension: "Ah, they won't do th' floor any harm, will they?" (150).In the Gunman, Davoren is placed in a similar situation. His desire for privacy is continually thwarted by the stream of neighbours who claim his attention. But both Nora and Davoren are self-absorbed, romantic figures, whose demands for privacy are a measure of their conscious withdrawal from the collective life of the people. As a result they are reduced to a position of isolation and helplessness as the plays progress. The reactions that they evoke from the rest cannot be explained, as Ayling does, simply as jealousy, suspicion, or apathy (Continuity 30-31), but they underline the basic difference of orientation and values between two ways of life.

The people in the tenements also reveal a creative imagination and a capacity to enjoy beauty and laughter. Their creative use of language has been commented upon by many critics. Mitchell, for example, rightly talks of the merry subversion of the "King's English" in the spontaneous manipulation and contamination of language

that goes on in the tenements all the time. The images are concrete and mimetic and display an aggressive energy and an inventive imagination (62-65). However, this rich use of language does not focus on the "individuality" and "originality" of a few people. Instead, it highlights the active and interactive life of the people in which language is collectively developed and enriched. O'Casey's characters are not defined by their specific and individual speech styles but share and continually recreate a common repository of idiom, images, and styles.

The resourcefulness and solidarity displayed by the tenement dwellers in times of trouble have been referred to already. However, even more than the solidarity forged by sorrow, it is the practice of shared pleasure that reveals fully the ethos of the collectivity. The plays dramatize the people's collective participation in the appreciation of beauty and laughter. Boyle celebrates his coming into money by singing, dancing, and drinking with his neighbours. In the Plough, after the looting scene, Bessie and Mrs. Gogan can be seen in the street animatedly discussing the lovely dresses they have jointly procured for themselves. The shared pleasure of their enterprise has dissolved their old differences. Peter and Fluther, similarly, drown their animosity in a game of pitch and toss in an effort to keep themselves from "th' sin o' idleness." (187). The collective celebration of life's joys--in song, dance, and games--transforms the space of the restrictive tenement and the street into open, carnivalesque spaces in which the people act out their utopian desires for an alternative life.

Another significant space in the life of the community is that of the pub. The centrality of the pub in working-class life has been commented upon by many social historians (Harrison; Delves; Wrightson). In Juno, as well as Gunman, we frequently

hear of characters going to or coming from the pub. In the Plough, O'Casey brings the pub onto the stage by using it as a setting for one of the acts. The direct representation of the pub enables a more immediate and comprehensive portrayal of the everyday culture of the people.

Popular drinking establishments have long been associated with the festive life of the people and consequently have been the subject of struggle for the control of popular culture by the dominant social groups.[7] The elite perceive the pub as a place of disrepute, associated with indecent, unruly, and often criminal behaviour. That the situation in Dublin was not much different is clearly borne out by the fact that the Plough was criticized for insulting the heroic men of the Easter Uprising by showing them in a public house. This was clearly an attempt by the nationalists to establish their cultural hegemony, and O'Casey countered by asserting the right of the people to their way of life. In the debate with Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington he stated that while the elite would welcome the shutting down of the pubs, he himself was "anxious to bring everyone into the publichouses to make them proper places of amusement and refreshment" (Letters 1:180).

O'Casey's cogent understanding of the Dublin pub culture and its role in popular life is evident in his autobiographies. The "warm beer 'n whisky cosiness" (Pictures 72) of the pub offered not only a place of rest and refuge from the rigours of the outside world, but it also constituted an alternative world in which the community could interact and organize itself in its own way. The pubs were characterized by their easy access, informal atmosphere, and the availability of cheap drink which, as Wrightson points out, "was an essential and ubiquitous social lubricant" (6) of free and familiar social intercourse in lower-class life.

In the politically charged atmosphere of Dublin in O'Casey's time, the pubs were the natural site for hectic debate promoting political subversion as well as solidarity. The association of anti-colonial activity with the pubs was preserved in folklore. In "Cat 'n Cage" in Pictures in the Hallway, during a visit to the pub in the company of older brothers, the young Johnny remembers the Royal Oak, a pub in Parkgate street, where the Invincibles had a last drink before assassinating Cavendish and Burke in Phoenix Park. O'Casey goes on to describe the events in the pub as his brothers, two of them in army uniform, enter into a heated argument with a group of hurlers over Parnell. In the process abuses are exchanged freely, and the barman gets hit when he ventures to offer his opinion. The events take a sudden turn, however, when some policemen try to intervene. The common hatred of the local forces of colonial law and order forges a new solidarity between the two groups. Mick starts to sing the latest street song which makes fun of the "peelers." Derisory laughter leads to a violent physical confrontation in which Johnny sees "the lovely sight of Mick sending a short jab to the constable's jaw that tilted up his head with a jerk, and . . . a straight-left beauty to the poor man's chin that sent him in a curled-up heap to the floor" (61). To escape punishment they make a quick getaway together by stealing a horse-car parked outside, which is then driven proudly by the young Johnny himself. Conspiratorial solidarity often crossed the barrier between the seller and the buyer of drink too. The barman, in wilful transgression of his dual role as a "responsible citizen" and as a businessman, would make common cause with his clients and secretly treat them to free drinks.

Thus, the carnivalesque disorder that prevails in the pub is a popular assertion of a collective social and political identity. The pub is the people's own space

regulated by the norms of the collectivity in distinction from the hierarchically organized spaces outside. The setting of the pub in Act II of the Plough symbolizes this oppositional relationship. The act begins in a deserted pub with Rosie complaining of a lack of business because of the political events taking place outside. However, the official world cannot regulate popular life for long. Soon the place starts to fill up with people who prefer to combine the "exhilaration of war" (169) offered by the Voice from outside with the "bawdy exhilaration of the pub" (Drums 33). The pub affirms bodily life and counters the ideals of abstract nationalism, positing in its place a collective desire for a truly free nation of people. This is visually represented on the stage by the placing together of the labour and nationalist flags, The Tricolour and The Plough and the Stars. O'Casey viewed the participation of the Irish Citizen's Army in the Easter Uprising as a co-optation of the labour movement by the bourgeois nationalists. In the play, he reverses the situation by bringing the two flags inside the pub in a symbolic gesture of re-appropriation of the people's symbols.[8]

The life in the pub, the tenement, and the street brings home a reality that is in conflict with the official truth. It represents the noisy, drunken, disorderly life of the people, a life that elite history, for all its efforts, is unable to control and limit. The Dublin trilogy dramatizes this tension powerfully and irreverently.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. For a similar, individualist view of comedy, see Caputi, according to whom comedy "affirms the sufficiency of the individual in the world" (203).

2. Krause approves the view held by Styan that O'Casey's plays "reproduce the sensations of life with its complexities and contradictions" (Profane 263).

3. See Lady Gregory's Journals 73. This is an attitude that has persisted in O'Casey criticism in spite of an early warning by Denis Johnston: "it is becoming more and more clear that as a realist he is an imposter . . . his dialogue is becoming a series of word poems in dialect; his plots are disappearing and giving place to a form of undisguised expressionism under the stress of a genius that is much too insistent and far too pregnant with meaning to be bound by the four walls of orthodox realism" (85).

4. This argument has been developed at length by Bristol in Carnival and Theatre. I draw upon his analysis in the following discussion of the conflictual nature of social relationships and the symbolism of Carnival and Lent.

5. See Le Roy Ladurie, who suggests this paradigm in the context of early modern European society. Mao Tse Tung offers a similar explanation in his analysis of Chinese society in 1957.

6. O'Casey's awareness of this dialectic is also reflected in the relationship between Sean and Mrs. Casside in Drums. In spite of his great love and admiration for his mother, the author presents another perspective: "Ah, t'hell with it! he thought, he wouldn't stay here to dry up and die! She'd have to stick it, but he wouldn't. Her life was nearly over. She belonged to a different world, the world of submission, patience, resignation; he, to that of discontent, resentment, resistance . . . . But his life was away from her, and he'd have to leave her . . ." (311).

7. See Delves; and Wrightson. Wrightson sees a continuity between the institution of the alehouse and the pub. According to him, the role of the pub "maybe seen as less of an innovation than might otherwise appear, for in its recreational habits, as in certain of its attitudes and values, the emergent working class drew upon a long cultural tradition" (5).

8. The gesture was indeed understood as subversive by the bourgeois nationalists who strongly objected to the desecration of the nationalist flag in this manner. See O'Casey, Letters 1:180.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURAL CONTROL AND POPULAR RESISTANCE:

THE FESTIVE COMEDIES

> You've escaped from the dominion of the big house with the lion and unicorn on its front; don't let yourselves sink beneath the meaner dominion of the big shop with the cross and shamrock on its gable.
> - Bishop's Bonfire

Registering his disenchantment with a heavily compromised and sterile labour movement in post-independence Ireland, O'Casey wrote:

> The workers must come out of their one-room tenements and out of their dimly-minded Trade Unions--occasionally at least--to pull the plough a little nearer to the stars. They must learn that self-realization is more important than class-consciousness . . . And this is the silent need of the workers: loss of ignorance and acquirement of culture. However the worker may shout for an increase in his wage, or protest against a reduction, be he at work, or waiting wearily at the Unemployment Exchange, his greatest need and most urgent claim is a share in the culture of the society of men. (The Irish Statesman Dec. 22 1923)

If organized political movements had failed to fulfil popular aspirations for a new and just order, the answer lay in a widening of struggle to encompass other areas of social life. O'Casey does not see self-realization as antithetical to class-consciousness. Rather, the claim to culture is envisaged as a vital part of the overall struggle for economic and political power. O'Casey's class-perspective as well as his close association with working-class life had given him an understanding of the distinct forms of its culture. For him, the cultural empowerment of the workers lay,

not in the replacement of their culture by forms of high culture, but in the free development of popular culture itself and in the mutual exchange between various cultures.

In the earlier chapter, I have shown how the Abbey plays make visible the vital forms and traditions of working-class life in the Dublin tenements in order to critique the exclusivity and narrowness of bourgeois nationalist ideology and its constructions of history. The plays counter elite misrepresentations of popular culture as debased and inferior, and celebrate its collective traditions which enable its survival and resistance, in however limited ways, in the most coercive situations. In his later drama, too, O'Casey continues to articulate these same concerns. As pointed out earlier, the achievement of political independence did not bring about a radical change in the situation of the working class and other marginalized sections of Irish society. In fact, the issues of cultural domination and control took on an added significance as the new bourgeois state set out to consolidate and strengthen its position in the new power structure.

The changing balance and relations of social forces in the new republic expressed itself in struggles over forms of popular culture. Even before this, throughout the history of colonial rule, there was a continuous process of re-formation and re-education of the Irish people in accordance with the needs of the dominant classes.[1] This process of the transformation of popular cultural traditions and practices was continued in the new social order under the hegemony of the Irish bourgeoisie and its powerful ally, the Catholic Hierarchy. The institutions of the state, and more particularly, of the Church, intervened actively in popular life in order to regulate and control it both through censorship and proscription as well as

through reform and re-education. However, as studies of cultural transformations elsewhere and in Ireland have shown, the course of the success of this enterprise was neither smooth nor easy. For, while popular culture lent itself to manipulation and incorporation, it also became a principal sight of resistance to the changes being imposed from above. The process of the making of the working-class, of making people what the ruling classes wished them to be, was a violent one, often involving the law and order machinery, and the religious authority. Resistance to this aggressive radicalization of popular life took different forms. This resistance could be spontaneous or organized, passive or active, private or public; it could end in containment, negotiation, or victory. But it was there. The subordinate classes intervened actively at every step against the attempts of the power bloc to legislate and regulate their traditional ways of life and fought to retain control over their conditions of existence.

This embattled terrain of popular culture, marked by a continual struggle between the holders of social power and the people forms the location of O'Casey's later drama. This chapter will focus on O'Casey's portrayal of this dual movement of control and resistance in popular culture. I will show that in plays, such as, Purple Dust (1940), Red Roses for Me (1942), Cock-a-Doodle-Dandy (1949), The Bishop's Bonfire (1955), and Drums of Father Ned (1959), O'Casey exposes, on the one hand, the attempts of social and religious authorities to contain or to disrupt existing traditions and practices and to introduce new forms of domination and exploitation, and, on the other, re-affirms the capacity of collective life to resist these intrusions and to exercise greater control over their own lives.

The subversion of official cultural norms, in these plays, are effected through the strategies of carnival and festive transgression. While the Abbey plays also drew upon the images of carnival in the portrayal of working-class life, in his later drama, O'Casey puts festivity in the centre of the dramatic action. The plays are built around festive occasions--they portray either official celebrations which are then countered and subverted by the people from an opposite notion of festivity, or popular festivals directly controlled by the socially powerless, which threaten to unsettle existing social categories. In another extension of focus, the characters in these plays represent not just the working class but other marginalized sections, such as, peasants, youth, and women whose multi-dimensional contradictions and struggles criss-cross with more specific class-cultural struggles. This extension of range and focus, I will argue, does not represent an abandonment of the class perspective and of the notion of class struggle which remains central to O'Casey's writings. If anything, it points to a deepening of that perspective since it acknowledges the presence of a complex network of social relations in Irish society in which forces of class, gender, and religion cut across each other to create a subject identity for the Irish people. Since the Catholic Church had--as it still does--a powerful presence in Irish life, I will begin this discussion by a brief account of its special position in Ireland and of its attitudes to certain political, social and cultural issues as a necessary background to O'Casey's drama. In the following sections, I turn to O'Casey's representations of popular resistance to the dominant discourses of the Church and the bourgeois state.

The Church and the People

The Catholic Church in Ireland had always been more than a devotional institution. It was a social establishment which wielded immense power and was deeply implicated in the political, social, and cultural life of the nation. In his autobiographies, O'Casey portrays the Church--with notable exceptions among individual clerics--as anti-people and reactionary. As an organization, it had invariably used its power to subjugate the people to the dominant economic and political interests. This was borne out clearly during the working-class struggle in the 1910s under the leadership of Larkin and Connolly.

The religious hierarchy had all along viewed with disfavour the rising aspirations of the poor, and as their movement gained strength, the Church came out openly on the side of the capitalists and launched a virulent attack on the workers from the pulpit and through the press. The Bishops used the Lenten pastorals to warn against the dangers of socialism which they saw as antithetical to Christianity (Connolly 60-162). Larkin and Connolly, both self-professed Socialists and Catholics, who saw Socialism as the practical application of essential Christianity in everyday life, were denounced as agents of Satan, appointed to plant unrest and discontent among the people. At the same time, the clerics upheld the "right of ownership" as a right sanctioned by the Church, thereby lending support to the lock-out declared by the employers, which had condemned thousands of men, women, and children to penury and starvation. After several months of hardship, when the Workers' Union evolved a plan to send some of the starving children to the homes of the workers in England, priests led demonstrations at the railway stations and the docks to prevent this action. The Archbishop himself issued an appeal to the

Catholic mothers exhorting them not to endanger their faith and morals by letting their children be sent away to be cared by people of other faiths or no faith at all. He also expressed concern that the food and comfort that they would receive in the English homes might make them discontented and unwilling to return to their own families (Krause, Man and His Work, 10-18).

In the nationalist struggle, too, the Catholic Church had displayed a strategic ambiguity, paying lip service to the cause of nationalism but decrying all actual militant resistance to colonial rule. The Church's traditional attitude of deference for lawful authority often resulted in its collaboration with the Protestant Ascendancy against the interests of the people. In many instances, the British government worked through the papacy in Rome to exert pressure on the Irish Church and exact its submission to the Crown. In the long history of anti-colonial struggle in Ireland--in the movement of the United Irishmen in 1798, the Young Irelanders' campaign against the tyranny of the landlords and the British crown during the famine years of the 1840s, the Land League struggles of the 1880s and 1890s, and the treatment accorded to Parnell at the height of the Home Rule campaign--the Hierarchy had always acted with caution. Not wanting to alienate the people by its open opposition to their struggles, the Church had maintained a rhetoric of patriotic sentiment while effectively quashing any movement that promised to bring about a radical change in social relations, and, above all, threatened to usurp its own power over the people (Connolly ; O'Shea).

With the establishment of the Irish Republic, the Catholic Church acquired greater power in the twenty-six counties. The alliance between the Church and the new State was never formalized, but the former was granted a "special position" as

the guardian of the faith of the majority of Irish people, which ensured its supreme authority in all matters of state. The 1922 Constitution had stated that the power of the government derived "from the people of Ireland." In 1937, this was changed to "under God from the people" which effectively meant "under the Church." The new constitution also acknowledged the Most Holy Trinity as the final authority in all matters (Blanshard 52-55). The democratic rights of the people, such as, the right to freedom of speech and assembly, were qualified with the proviso, "subject to the moral law." This gave the Church, as the sole arbiter of faith and morals, wide ranging powers, making it, as O'Casey observed, "ipso facto, the government of the country." [2] Earlier, too, O'Casey had criticized the subservience of democratic principles to religious authority as symbolized in the humiliating practice of the government officials, including the head of the state, of kneeling down in public to receive the blessings of churchmen. Commenting on the state of affairs, he wrote, "Ireland wasn't any longer a Republican state, either in theory or in practice--she was a theocracy, fashioned by the Vatican, and dressed in the brightest sacerdotal array by the bishops of Maynooth" (Inishfallen 216).

The infamous case of Dr. Noel Browne in 1952 highlighted the extent of the Church's interference in the business of a modern day democracy. In an attempt to solve the problem of the high infant mortality rate in the country, Dr. Browne, who was the Minister of Health in the Costello government suggested a programme of maternity education and care under a mother-and-child health scheme. This was immediately quashed by the Church in a characteristic behind-the-scenes manipulation of the state authorities. The Church feared that the scheme would endanger the morals of the Irish, in particular of the Irish women, by introducing

non-Catholic teachings on sex, birth-control and abortion. It also objected to the scheme on the grounds that it was not important enough an issue to be allowed to strain the resources of an already burdened welfare state. The government meekly accepted the decree of the Hierarchy on this issue of Catholic morality and, instead, forced Dr. Browne to resign from his position (Blanshard 55-66; O'Casey, Letters II:787, 810, 816).

The clergy's acceptance of social inequality as a natural state of affairs and their distrust of any social welfare scheme that might have alleviated the sufferings of the unprivileged was also evident in their disapproval, in the 1950s, of the proposal to serve free meals to poor children in schools. This move was opposed on the argument that "community meals is the thin edge of the wedge of Communism" while at the same time allowing community feeding in richer boarding schools (O'Casey, Letters II:810). Their double-faced attitude in matters relating to bribery and social taxation also showed that the picture drawn by W. P. Ryan in 1912 of the "unchristian spectacle of Catholic ecclesiastics as impassioned defenders of worldly property, honouring the rich or well-to-do in this world and bidding the poor be content with the prospect of heaven in the next; forgetting or ignoring the great fact that the Catholic ideal is collectivist, not individualistic . . . remained as valid then as before" (278).[3]

If the urban bourgeoisie formed one support base of the Church, the tenant farmers in the countryside constituted the other. The successive famines of the mid-nineteenth century had decimated the landless labourers who once formed the largest social group in Ireland. As a result of this, the class that emerged as numerically the largest and the most influential was the tenant farmers who, during

the later years of the nineteenth century and after, steadily consolidated their power and position through a set of practices that have been termed as "familism." Central to familism was a mode of property transfer that was designed to prevent fragmentation of land holdings. This entailed that the father could select one of his sons as his heir and pass on the land to him. This patriarchal structure was organized around a number of codes and procedures relating to marriage, family, gender divisions, sexual relations, etc. In order to control access to marriage, which was crucial to the perpetuation of familism as a system, and to prevent misalliances, a strict code of sexual behaviour became necessary (Arensberg and Kimball 200-5; Cairnes and Richards 42-3; 59-62).

The community of the tenant farmers thus became a natural ally of the Church with which it shared many of its assumptions and beliefs. A manifestation of this alliance of interests was the widespread acceptance, within the community, of the Church's role as the controller of individual and collective behaviour. On the part of the Church, this task was entrusted to the local clergymen whose close access and intimate knowledge of the people in their parishes made them most suitable for the purpose. The fact that most clergymen themselves belonged to the class of tenant farmers and instinctively shared their social and cultural attitudes made matters easier. The extent of the intervention of the Church in the everyday life of the people can also be gauged from the drastic increase that was witnessed in the number of Catholic priests and consequently in the ratio of priests to laity in the country in the post-famine years. According to the figures supplied by J. J. Lee, whereas in 1840 there was one Catholic priest to about 3,500 lay people; in 1960, there was one to every 600, a six-fold increase (39).

The power of the priest as the moral policeman of the parish, a power which was sanctioned by the Church as well as by the ruling ideology of familism, made him the unquestioned arbiter in even the most intimate areas of individual experience. Particularly, in small towns and in the countryside, his writ remained supreme. All issues connected with sex and marriage, including courtship, conjugal relations, birth-control, mixed marriage, illegitimacy, divorce, and "keeping company" were the domain of the clergy. The Church's strict moral code bordering on anti-sexuality also prohibited social mixing between the sexes, and laid down the acceptable codes of dress and behaviour for women. Often the local clergy personally conducted the task of policing the community and of punishing any deviation from the established norms. W. P. Ryan describes the situation aptly:

> the heart and spirit gave way in a sort of terrorism before the priest. In his day of dominance he did much to make Irish local life a dreary desert. He urged war on the favorite cross-roads dances--with exceptions here and there--and on other gatherings where young men and women congregated . . . Indeed there were cases where the priest, whip in hand, entered private houses and dispersed social parties . . . After several changes theologians had fixed the number of Deadly Sins as seven; Irish parish priests in practice made courtship an eighth. For lovers to walk the roadside in Ireland when the average priest was abroad was a perilous adventure . . . (78)

Apart from personal surveillance by individual priests, the Church also made effective use of the pulpit. From the high platform of the Church pulpit, a visual reminder of his social and moral authority over his flock, the priest created a powerful discourse on sin and evil. Bakhtin reminds us that the authoritative word "is given in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact" (Dialogic 342). The distance thus created makes the authority of the discourse absolute and complete, and enjoins unquestioned obedience upon the listeners.

The power of religious discourse also emanated from its successful deployment of the strategies of persuasion and internal discipline. The priests' ceaseless promotion of the virtues of self-denial as "the nurse of all the manly virtues" (Cairns and Richards 117) contributed to the construction of the ideal of a purified, enclosed body. Contrasted to this was the sensually active body which was associated with sin and corruption. The regulation of the deviant body depended, much more than physical coercion or personal surveillance, upon the creation of a moral threshold of shame and guilt. An internally disciplined body was the most economical and effective means of policing the community.

Popular Culture and the Grotesque Body

The Church's ideal of the purified, enclosed body is countered by O'Casey's representation of the popular grotesque body. In Rabelais, Bakhtin maps out the conflict between elite and popular culture on the site of the human body, identifying two conflicting conceptions of the body: the "classical" and the "grotesque." As contrasted with the image of the "finished, completed, strictly limited body . . . a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world" (326), the grotesque body is "a body in the act of becoming . . . it outgrows its own self, transgresses its own body . . . it is continually built, created, and builds, and creates another body" (317). The deeper implications of this opposition within culture as a whole, and its interrelationships with other hierarchically constructed symbolic domains have been elaborated by Stallybrass and White. As they write: "The grotesque physical body . . . is not simply a powerful image but fundamentally constitutive of the categorical sets through which we live and make sense of the

world" (23). The grotesque body privileges the lower stratum as against the classical emphasis on the head as the seat of reason. All the binary oppositions of high and low that structure social formations--class, gender. geographical space, language etc.--are encoded through bodily divisions.

O'Casey's drama celebrates the grotesque body in a gesture of defiance to the old and new ruling classes of Ireland. The uncontrollable, protruding, exaggerated body of the people romps through the countryside demanding physical gratification, asserting the sensual pleasures of food, drink, music, dance, and sex. Refusing to live within the enclosures prescribed for it by the authoritative discourse, it bursts forth into the open, public spaces from where it interrogates and contests the hegemonic discourses of the dominant groups. Even in the Dublin plays, as I have shown in the earlier essay, O'Casey's emphasis was never on the individual consciousness alone. His characters functioned as part of a group, in a dialogical relationship with others. And yet some of the figures were given certain distinct traits which distinguished them as individuals. In these plays even that level of individuation is abandoned. The characters represent attitudes, points of view, types of behaviour. This is one reason why they can coexist merrily with non-realistic, fantastic figures like that of the Cock, the Spirit of the Waters, and Father Ned. What is foregrounded in these plays is the collective, acting together in combined oppositional interest to the entrenched orthodoxy.

According to Bakhtin, the main arena of the popular carnivalesque performance was the market square and the streets adjoining it. The square was a meeting place for the whole community where heterogenous people could enter in free and familiar contact with each other. In Red Roses For Me, the social and

cultural awakening of the people is associated with an epiphanic encounter in the open street near the river Liffey, which affords a view of the whole city. The first two scenes, set in Dublin tenements, portray the tenements as breeding grounds of superstition, fear, and hopelessness. The workers' emergence into the open street signals their recognition of their collective strength and will to struggle. Bishop's Bonfire and Cock-A-Doodle-Dandy are set in large courtyards open to the streets to which all strata of people have free access. Purple Dust and Drums of Father Ned are located in large houses which take on the character of a market square as people invade them and transform them to suit their habits and requirements. The Englishmen's house in Dust is given an unstable and provisional character--it is an old, broken-down house which is going to be repaired and renovated--thus facilitating an equal struggle between its owners and the people for its transformation. Drums dramatizes the celebration of a ritual carnival. As part of the Tostal festival--an annual Irish event--the celebrants take over the bourgeois drawing-room, replace its heavy and ornate furniture with carnival banners and other symbolic objects, and convert what was initially a private space into a public arena.

Bakhtin uses the category of the "chronotope," which refers to the "intrinsic connectedness of spatial and temporal relationships" for the purposes of literary analysis. "Time, as is were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (Dialogic 84). The carnivalesque chronotope combines spatial freedom with a temporal openness. Bakhtin writes : "Popular-festive forms look into the future. They present the victory of this future, of the golden age, over the past. This is the

victory of all the people's material abundance, freedom, equality, brotherhood. The victory of the people is ensured by the people's immortality. The birth of the new, of the greater and the better, is as indispensable and as inevitable as the death of the old" (Rabelais 256).

In Red Roses, in the Liffey scene mentioned above, the protagonist, Ayamonn, inspires the people to create a vision of a future society, of a fair, new city based on the principles of collective labour and the collective sustenance of material needs. It is a vision which reverses the existing order of things: "We who have known, and know, the emptiness of life shall know its fullness" (308). In Dust the colonial project is doomed to destruction by the rising flood, the "foaming energy of the waters." This picture of an alternative future is concretized on the stage in an ominous figure dressed in black oilskins, black hood, and blue mask, and illumined by lightning before which the terror stricken colonizers are shown to cower. The conception of the future also necessitates the acknowledgement of the past and an imaginative harnessing of tradition in the service of that future. The social elite, however, see no such organic connection between the past and the future. The Englishmen in Dust are interested in a dead past, while the bourgeoisie in Drums are so occupied with multiplying their wealth in the immediate future that they think it is a "waste of time" to resuscitate the past. The temporal horizons of the people, on the other hand, stretch back into history, and even beyond history, into the Irish mythic past, and forward into a utopian future. It is politically important for the crowd of down-and-outs in Red Roses to remember and renew their links with their past heritage. Through "dauntless memories" of Ireland's heroic past, they are able to forge connections with the great Fenian heroes and the race of Mileseus.

Similarly, the workmen in Dust counter the impudent intrusion of the moneyed Englishmen in their society with assertions of the superiority of their ancient civilization.

Tradition, in O'Casey's drama, is a vital part of popular life. It is not valued for its own sake, nor does its meaning remain fixed in history.[4] Rather, it is constantly linked to the present and future needs of the community, and is often transformed in the process. "think of what we can do to pull down th' banner from dusty bygones, an' fix it up in th' needs an' desires of today," declares Ayamonn in Red Roses (415). The living force of tradition, its ability to take on new meanings makes it an important part of an active, contemporary class struggle. The forces of capitalist development represent tradition as backward-looking and conservative, opposing it to its own "superior" values of "progress" and "development." From the point of view of the people, however, the fight for tradition is a fight for economic and cultural power.[5] O'Casey's drama reflects this perspective. In Dust and Bonfire, to which I will now turn, he raises questions about the meaning of tradition for different social classes, its appropriation and transformation by the bourgeois forces, and popular resistance to these processes.

The Struggle Over Tradition: Purple Dust

The action in Purple Dust revolves around the efforts of two English businessmen, Stoke and Poges, to settle in the Irish countryside and take to village ways.[6] Having acquired money, the two men have now decided to acquire some culture. For this purpose they buy an old Tudor mansion and proceed with great gusto to renovate the building with the hired assistance of local workmen. In their

minds culture is associated with the observance of traditions--"the only things that count in a cultured man's life" (301)--and by living in an old historic house they think they will be able to keep close to the old traditions. The two men talk in cliches of the beauties of the past, and pride themselves on their expensive antiques which later turn out to be spurious.

Their notion of country life is also an idealized one. The village is expected to provide perfect peace and goodwill as against the alienations of the city. Determined to enjoy the pastoral surroundings and the company of primitive people whom they initially find "so quaint and charming," they take on the task of making themselves at home with great gusto and enthusiasm. They refuse to allow the use of electricity in the house (except one bulb over the desk) in spite of warnings from the local people that the house will be cold, damp, and uncomfortable. In their initial enthusiasm they insist on rising at the crack of dawn to go running in the fields. In the opening scene, the two men, accompanied by their mistresses and city servants, are seen wearing white smocks painted with stylized pictures of animals. Each one carries a dainty version of a country tool as they sing and dance in what they think is the country style. This fancy-dress pastoralism even extends to plans to breed hens and cows and to take up horse-riding in the true country tradition.

The intrusion of the urban, moneyed English elite into the Irish countryside, and their arrogant attempts to appropriate the latter's culture and traditions are met with resistance from the peasants. For there is a fundamental difference of attitude between the upper classes and the plebeians. What the Englishmen view, from the outside, as an a-historical, static and self-enclosed way of life, one which can be imitated mechanically by them when they please, forms an integral part of the lived

daily experience of the country folk. The cultural forms and practices of the peasants have their roots in their material life and are closely bound up with the community's social, economic and political concerns. In contrast to the sentimental, idealized approach of the elite, the villagers show a lively and practical orientation towards cultural issues. They do not valorize the past for its own sake. Instead, there is a healthy acknowledgement of the ever changing nature of reality and, therefore, of the changeability of cultural beliefs and practices. "We are no saints," O'Killigain says, "and so can abide by things that wither, without shudder or sigh . . ." (297). Thus, while the Englishmen preen themselves over their acquisition of the old Tudor mansion, the local people can only watch the drama with amused wonder. As one of the workmen says with characteristic popular Irish wit: "It's a strange thing, now, that a man with money would like to live in a place lonesome an' cold enough to send a shiver through a year-old dead man!" The owners' enthusiastic discovery that the place once belonged to a certain Duke of Ormond, and their plans to rename the building Ormond Manor and put the Ormond crest on the household silver are subjected to irreverent raillery by the workers who highlight the absurdity of the situation by recalling similar other incidents: "Remember oul' Miss MacWilliam who used to faint with ecstasy the times she told the story of sittin' for a second in the King o' Denmark's chair; an' oul' Tom Mulligan who swaggered round for years afther the son o' the Earl of Skibbereen had accidentally spit in his eye!" (294).

The adoption of the Irish country by the English capitalists follows the well-known process described by Raymond Williams as the "penetration, transformation and subjugation" of the country by the city in which "long-established rural communities [are] uprooted and redirected by the military and economic power of

a developing metropolitan imperialism" (Country 343). For all their idealization of simple country living, the two men have done a good bit of hard-headed economic planning. They have calculated and ensured that the business of settling in the Irish countryside will be economically advantageous to them. The subservient position of the Irish rural worker in the hierarchical structure of colonial industrial relations will ensure the availability of cheap labour to the Englishmen. Their scheme of breeding cattle and poultry is influenced not just by the desire to acquire pastoral ambience, but by its feasibility as a profit-making venture. Again, though they decide to do without electricity, they insist on having an efficient telephone communications system so as to be able to continue to direct and control their financial affairs in the world outside. Thus, as the play unfolds, it becomes evident that the celebration of the simplicity and peace of the countryside is closely tied up with complex political and economic considerations. What we see on stage is an ostensibly innocuous transformation of the old Tudor mansion directed by the personal whims and eccentricities of its new owners. But behind this, there is a more insidious movement which purports to reorganize or disorganize the existing patterns of social and economic life in the village. The country folk themselves perceive it as such, recognizing in it an aggression against their traditional norms and practices. The popular reassertion of tradition in the face of displacement from above is an assertion of the authority of the community to govern itself by its own standards. It is, thus, a form of resistance deployed by the people to fight powerful interference from outside.

When Poges expresses his wish to consult the Department of Agriculture in the matter of buying hens and cocks, the two workmen who have been trying to sell him

their own produce, and who till now have countered each other's claim of the superiority of their stocks, rally round to resist any such move on the part of Poges:

> 1st Workman. (horrified--partly to Poges and partly to Souhaun). Oh, listen to that, now! Didja hear that, ma'am? The Department of Agriculture, is it? Wisha, God help your innocence, sir. Sure, it's only a tiny time ago that the same Department sent down a special sthrong covey o' cocks to improve the sthrain, an' only afther a short probation, didn't they give the hins hysterics?
>
> Poges. Hysterics? Good God!
>
> 3rd Workman. Ay, an' hadn't the frightened farmers to bring guns to bear on the cocks when they found their hins scatthered over hill an' dale, lyin' on their backs with their legs in the air, givin' their last gasp, an' glad to get outa the world they knew so well! The few mighty ones who survived were that stunned that there wasn't an egg in th' place for years! (308-9)

Similarly, Poges's demand that the all-night telephone system be available to him at all hours of the night and day is met with a fierce remonstrance from the village postmaster who insists on his own rightful share of an honest night's sleep. Till now it has been the customary practice in the district to not use the telephone after half past nine in the night except in the case of "sudden death or disasther." Poges' disruption of these "sensible and thriedd institutions of the neighbourhood" is clearly unwelcome and is collectively resisted by the villagers. Poges' ethics that "as long as I pay for the service, the service will have to be supplied" may be perfectly intelligible as a part of the metropolitan capitalist value system but is totally alien to the simpler economy of the village where money considerations have not yet supplanted human concerns (360-1).

The clash between the value system of metropolitan capitalism and the sensible and tried institutions of the village is fought out in many ways. The capitalist enterprise demands a certain work style and efficiency. The rural workmen, on the

other hand, insistently refuse to conform to the norm of the efficient, conscientious worker. Instead of following their masters' instructions quietly and docilely they are wont to put forth their own views in every matter, often interrupting their work in the process. Not in the least overawed by the importance and dignity of the Englishmen's project, they go about their business unselfconsciously in their usual bumbling, bungling manner. In the beginning, the Englishmen try to cope with their eccentricities good-humouredly, regarding them as part of their rustic charm. However, soon things begin to go out of control as the workmen spread all over the house causing confusion and chaos. In the course of their operations, many accidents take place in which the Englishmen's precious antique bowls and vases are smashed to pieces. Poges's prized quattrocento bureau is severely damaged and a whole wall caves in as a huge roller is sent crashing into it. And while all these activities are taking place on the floor of the house, the Yellow-Bearded Man is busy making holes all over the ceiling in an attempt to find the right place for the single light bulb that is to be installed in the house.

As one disaster follows another, the group of workmen come to look more like a demolition squad than a building crew. Poges throws up his hands in despair exclaiming, " Oh, they're knocking down more than they're building up!"(315). Outnumbered, and outwitted by the workers' tenacity to their own style of working, the two Englishmen are reduced to the position of being helpless observers in the rapid dissolution of their grand schemes. The Irish workers, on the other hand, become increasingly cheerful and confident as they obviously begin to enjoy the feel of their subversive powers.

The celebration of disorder is accompanied, in the play, by the carnivalesque uncrowning of the socially powerful persons. For all their efforts to maintain a proud and dignified appearance, both Basil and Poges, are again and again placed in awkward circumstances which degrade their persons and make them the butt of derisive laughter. Basil, overconfident of his skills in horse-riding, insists on going out for a canter despite O'Killigain's warnings. As a result, he is reported to have been flung off his horse coming "down in th' grass on his poor bum" (314). Bruised more in his pride than in his body, he is seen to enter the house supported by the workers. His torn and mud-spattered clothes and the battered tall hat that he had worn with such flamboyance a while ago complete his degradation.

In another farcical incident, a cow which happens to stray inside the house, is mistaken for a bull causing great commotion and panic. Poges is prevented from running away in fright by Cloyne, who is equally hysterical and clasps his legs in terror, then faints, and makes him topple to the floor. A gun is summoned to deal with the situation but both the gentlemen are too frightened to handle it and, instead, start wrangling with each other. Basil is later reported to be trying to throw himself out of the window in a bid to escape from the house. The final act of uncrowning comes when the two Englishmen are abandoned by their mistresses, Souhaun and Avril, whom they have tried to please by bribing them with gifts and even settling fortunes on them. The two women elope with two Irish workers, opting for a life of fond and fruitful love which is more than the "pair of miserable, old, hypocritical, wizened old getts" (339) can offer them. Deserted by everyone the two men are left alone to face the storm and the flood that will ultimately destroy them and their house.

In Bonfire, the official festivities are associated with the impending arrival of the Bishop in the town of Ballynoogah. There is hectic activity around the house of Councillor Reiligan, who, along with the Very Reverend Canon Burren, is directing the welcome preparations. Engaged in the task are a host of working men and women who are busy making last minute arrangements. The celebration is conceived by the social and religious elite as a solemn and dignified affair. Like all official festivals, it is marked by a strict observance of social hierarchies, spatial boundaries and norms of polite and orderly behaviour. The workers, however, have their own notion of celebrating the event. They interrogate and subvert the official norms, and articulate a way of life that is antithetical to the dominant ideology.

Official processions and pageants are highly ceremonial in nature and form. The observance of rank and the various symbols of authority are designed to create awe and deference in the spectators, thereby reinforcing the hierarchical structures in the social order. In Bonfire, the Bishop's regal accoutrements--purple cassock, golden mitre and satin shoon--underline his authority. But for many of the workers he is no more than "old Bill Mullarkey," who, as a kid, used to run wild through the streets of Ballynoogah. Says Codger, "Bill Mullarkey under a bishop's robe's a different one to the one I knew with a patch on the seat of his trousers. Makes a helluva difference when the hand that held a hay-fork now grips a crozier! An' withal his golden mitre and his purple petticoat, he's Bill Mullarkey still" (52). The homely familiarity of "old Bill" and the revelation of his antecedents pull the Bishop down to the level of the ordinary, erasing the cognitive distance that buttresses his authority. In this characteristic carnivalesque gesture, of pulling down and turning

inside-out, the image of power is shorn of its naturalness and permanence; it is shown up as arbitrary and transitory.

The plot of the play charts a series of confusions and disruptions that constitute a parallel festival of the people. The Codger brings in a keg of wine which is freely handed around to all the workers. In their high-spirited state, they begin to argue and challenge each other. Codger, in an attempt to show his prowess, lifts a heavy bag of cement, and unable to balance it, crashes straight into the window of Reiligan's drawing-room, spilling cement all over the new carpet specially laid out for the Bishop. The scenes underlines the invasion of the private space of the elite, and its contamination with dirt. The bourgeoisie builds barriers to demarcate itself from its social inferiors. Throughout Act I, an outer wall around Reiligan's house is being constructed. These improvements to the building coincide with Reiligan's recent promotion as Count of the Papal Court. The workers, at their end, erase these boundaries by transgressing them or, as in the felling of the wall with the roller in Dust, by destroying them.

In what follows, the workers drink up the Bishop's special brandy, walk all over the house with muddy boots, repeatedly kick newly painted doors, splash paint around, and put scratch marks on expensive furniture. Reiligan, who is reduced to a state of helpless anger, and is reminiscent of Poges's condition in Dust, is left exclaiming: "They'll make everything unfit for the Bishop by the time they are done doin' violence to them" (95). Unmindful of the Councillor's exhortations about the seriousness of the event, the workers casually abandon their work in the middle to engage in long conversations with each other which often result in impassioned arguments and physical fights. The action of the play is carefully structured on a

rhythmic pattern of movement and counter-movement: a particular job gets started and is arrested or disrupted by a counter activity.

O'Casey's portrayal of the Irish people as an inefficient, bumbling group in this and other later plays has often been read as negative. Edna O'Brien, for instance, charges the playwright for reproducing the Irish "as a nation of muddled nincompoops" which she then attributes to an understandable bitterness stemming from O'Casey's ill-treatment at the hands of his countrymen (qtd. in Goldstone 165). Similarly, Heinz Kosok points to the negative traits of the Irish workers in Dust whose negligence and irresponsibility leads to the destruction of "things of real value" (166). However, to see the Irishmen in these plays as confused idiots, incapable of intelligent thought and action, or as hopelessly undisciplined and careless is to see them from a particular perspective, from above. As E. P. Thompson has shown, the notions of efficiency, conscientiousness, discipline, regularity etc., far from being the natural and universal values that they are commonly seen as today, are a specific product of the long process of capitalist development in Europe. The main difficulty that the factory system encountered was in training human beings to renounce traditional habits of work, and to subordinate themselves to a vast and complex automaton. It demanded no less than a "transformation of human nature, the 'working paroxysms' of the artisan or outworker must be methodised until the man is adapted to the discipline of the machine" (Making 362).

The history of the making of the working class, however, is also the history of the people's resistance to being constituted thus. Viewed from below, efficiency, discipline and other related virtues work to serve the economic interests of the

employers and, thus, to strengthen their dominant position in the unequal power relations between the two. In such a situation, alternative modes of behaviour become strategies of resistance on the part of the people against incorporation and subjugation. O'Casey's portrayal of the relationship between the employers and the workers reflects this understanding. O'Casey was writing at a time when the prospects of an organized working-class movement in Ireland seemed remote. Instead of bemoaning the fact, he chose to focus on the subversive and liberatory potential of popular life, and to point out that beyond the violent and spectacular revolts of politically organized workers, there exist forms of resistance inscribed in small, everyday acts which are part of the repertoire of popular life and culture. The refusal to conform to the dominant norm of behaviour, the refusal to understand the boss's orders, and to fail to carry them out to his satisfaction, even if unaccompanied by a direct challenge to the basic power structure of domination and subjugation, constitutes a transgressive act.

The Church and the Ideal Worker: The Bishop's Bonfire

If the capitalists upheld the values of efficiency, discipline, and regularity, and sought to adapt the worker to the machine, the Church enjoined further restrictions on the human body in the name of saving the soul. The Irish priesthood's image of the ideal workingman was embodied in the figure of Matt Talbot, a Dublin labourer who had been an inveterate drinker till the age of twenty-eight when he suddenly reformed and adopted a life of extreme mortification and devotion. For more than forty years he followed a rigorous daily schedule of ten hours of prayer, ten and a half hours of work, and three and a half hours of sleep. On Sunday, he would spend

eight hours in the Church kneeling before the altar. When he died in 1925 at the age of seventy, it was discovered that he used to wear heavy chains around his body which had become embedded in his flesh. The purpose of the chains was to prevent sexual sin. Talbot became a national hero for the Irish priests and many attempts were made to canonize him as a saint. In his book, Matt Talbot, Alcoholic, Father Albert Dolan exalted his example thus: "There was packed into Matt Talbot, everything that was best in Irish character" (qtd. in Blanshard 176).

Matt Talbot was exalted by the religious establishment as an epitome of Irishness, not only because of his renunciation of the sins of the flesh, but also because of his unquestioning fidelity to the social system of which he was a part. The significance of his glorification by the Church has to be understood in its full historical context. Seen against the powerful workers' struggle in Ireland in the first two decades of the twentieth century, a struggle that had threatened to destroy the very foundations of the existing social and economic order, and had forced the combined powers of the bourgeoisie, state, and religious establishment to come out openly against it, the example of Talbot was designed to counter the rebellious and subversive tendencies that had taken root among the working-class. Through Talbot, the Church glorified the values of moral conformity and social discipline. Matt Talbot's case points up clearly the interconnections and dependencies that exist between the domains of private morality and the social order. The individual body becomes a site where anxieties about social and class contestations of power are produced and managed. By disciplining the meaning and behaviour of the individual body, the Church authorities could ensure security and stability to the existing social order.

In a predictably strong reaction to the Church's glorification of Talbot's pietism, O'Casey wrote: "Ecce hobo sapiens! Blow, crumpeter, blow! So, workers of Dublin, and the world, you know now what you have to do. Follow Matt Talbot up to heaven. You've nothing to lose but the world, and you've the holy chains to gain . . . Make the world safe for the bosses. If you do, you're sure to get to Heaven when you die" (Inishfallen 224-25). In his letters, O'Casey often referred to Matt Talbot derisively as "Mutt" Talbot.

O'Casey mocks the ideology of the model workman and model Catholic in the portrayal of Rankin in Bonfire. Rankin is a somewhat milder version of Matt Talbot. Obsessed with a sense of "ever present sin" he keeps as far away as possible from wine and women. When his co-workers take time off from work to drink and converse among themselves, Rankin simply kneels down and prays. In the rigid categories of "good" and "evil" fixed by religious authority, Rankin fits squarely into the first. He displays an unchanging, complete identity which he asserts with dogmatic repetitiveness: "I am what I am."

His co-worker Prodical, though a "decent, God-fearing man", fails to keep up with the former's standards of piety because of his one weakness for drinking. As a result, he is shown to vacillate between Rankin's stern admonitions and the other workers' invitation to join them. Speaking about the idea of the static and complete individual, Brecht had once remarked: "The continuity of the ego is a myth. A man is an atom that perpetually breaks up and forms anew." And this changeability, for Brecht, was a laughing matter: "to see a man forced to surrender his precious ego" is "a jolly business" (Theatre 19). O'Casey, too, creates jolly business out of man's

struggle with himself. Rankin tries a number of strategies to prevent Prodical from slipping back into temptation. He reminds him of his promises:

> Rankin. You said a short time ago that it was goin' to be never again with you.
>
> Prodical (protestingly). I'm not to blame for you over-hearin' silent things. What I murmured was sotte vossie. I'm not a factotum to me own whisperin's into me own ear.
>
> Rankin. It wasn't said sotto vossie. It was outspoken, an' next door to a vow.
>
> Prodical (indignantly). It was no vow! It had no habiliments of any vow on it. It was a sub rosa understandin' or misunderstandin' with meself.
>
> Rankin (plaintively to Prodical). Your good angel's trying to pull you back, Prodical, but if you once get to the keg, you're cornered! It's an occasion of sin, an' may do immortal harm to your poor soul!
>
> Prodical (coming over to Rankin and thrusting his face upwards towards Rankin--indignantly). Looka, me good angel, I won't have you hoverin' over me soul like a saygull over a fish too deep for a dive down! I'm not goin' to let foreign bodies write down messages on me soul the way a body writes down things on a Christmas card. (Preparing to jump from the scaffold) Me soul's me own particular compendium. Me soul's me own spiritual property, complete an' entire, verbatim in all its concernment.
> (He jumps down to the ground, and goes to the tree). (18-19)

A religious vow is the declaration of a permanent stance. By denying that he had taken anything like a vow, Prodical refuses to allow himself to be frozen in a particular position; instead, he demands the right to err (simply described as a "misunderstandin with meself"), to make amends, and to change with every new circumstance. Rankin's attempts to impose the coercive authority of the angel in violation of Prodical's strongly felt needs and desires have a demystifying effect, however temporary, on the latter who recognizes it as such, and asserts his claim over his own soul.

Later again in Act III, the conflict between transgressive desire and acquiescence is dramatized in a superbly executed comic scene. Prodical, who has again taken a "vow" against drinking, decides to surrender his whisky bottle to the Canon himself. However, before he can explain the situation to the Canon, Codger appears at the window. The latter is trying to prevent Prodical from taking such a disastrous step. There follows a long argument between the two about the pros and cons of Prodical's action, while the Canon and Reiligan are made to wait, during which time they get increasingly impatient and irritated. When they try to find out what the basic issue is, they are either ignored, or greeted with a terse "Oh, shut it, will yous, for a minute?" (90). Though this round is won by the authorities as Prodical ultimately hands over the bottle to them, it is only a nominal victory. For their authority has already been subverted in other ways during the whole process. It is also a temporary victory for, as we see a little later, Prodical, having had second thoughts over the matter, returns quietly to the spot with Codger to steal the bottle back.

In opposition to the idea of a fixed, isolated identity symbolized by Matt Talbot, O'Casey highlights the split, conflict-ridden consciousness of the subaltern through these incidents. His subjects are placed in society, they live and function within the field of social relations of domination and power, and, as such, are shaped by them. Attitudes of submission, fear, resentment and transgression co-exist within their consciousness. The social order is defined not only by the hegemonic, but by resistance by those over whom it exerts its power. The dominant discourse acknowledges only the first of these possibilities. It tends to see its own power as complete and permanent. The Canon is confident of his ability to control the people

by alternating the use of force with persuasion. In his essentialist perspective, the people are "low-minded"; they have a natural deference for and fear of authority. They can either be coaxed like children or given the harsh word and the lash. The play, however, depicts the tenuousness of the relationship between the coercive order and the people. If they show fear and awe of the powerful in the ordinary folk, they also focus on conflict and subversion. Fear of authority may not remain a permanent condition as is seen in the many incidents in the play when the workmen express their resentment at being ordered about excessively and arbitrarily and simply refuse to perform the tasks assigned to them. At times when fear of authority inhibits them, they take recourse to sly subversion as in the case of Prodical's stealing of the liquor bottle when no one is around.

The dominant ideology favours the notion of a unified and fixed subject because it negates the possibility of change, and thus of any threat to the social order. Social identity, too, is fixed in a hierarchically ordered structure which is God-given and permanent. Everything in it has an appointed role and position. Individual and social well-being is dependent upon everyone's knowing his or her place and functioning in accordance with it. A change of social position in this ranked and ordered world can take place only when sanctioned by constituted authority. Thus while Reiligan is made a Papal Count, Daniel "can never be other than he is" and therefore cannot be allowed to marry Keeling who is his social superior.

O'Casey's drama unsettles these notions by drawing attention to an unbound, plural identity forged through participation in social and productive processes. It points to the insufficiency of the individual who produces meaning only in relation to other individuals. Prodical's vacillations emanate from an energetic interaction

with people around him--his social superiors as well as his co-workers--and with his material world. This is revealed, as we saw earlier, in the impassioned dialogue that takes place between him and the others. In contrast, Rankin represents the idea of a static and autonomous individuality. He refuses to be contaminated by other people and for this reason will not enter into conversation with them. "I don't want to be entered into the talk. He is what he is; you are what you are; I am what I am. I don't want to be led into a tangle of talk" (15). "Each individual utterance," as Bakhtin points out, "is a link in the chain of speech communication." (Speech 93). In the moment of its utterance, the word enters into "a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents . . ." (Dialogic 276). Dialogue is a constant interaction between meanings which assimilate or appropriate each other. In contrast, Rankin's short and crisp sentences ("He is what he is") permit no play with their framing context. They are enclosed and complete; they can only lead to a cessation of all dialogue. In contrast, Prodical is open and receptive to others. In the whisky bottle scene mentioned above, he continues to hold a dialogue with Codger even while he is implementing his decision to go against the latter's wishes.

The autonomous individual is also sealed off from his material environment. Religion emphasizes the spiritual; the everyday world is seen as a trap for the soul. It denies the materiality of the body and the demands of sensual life. Rankin's reaction to the sudden revelation of Keeling's legs as she mischievously lifts up her skirt is that of horror. He quickly turns away from her exclaiming, "I didn't look, I didn't see!" (13). Later, he suggests the same strategy to Prodical when he sees the latter being drawn to the keg of gin.

Rankin (persuasively). Be careful, man. Look the other way, Prodical. Have a little spiritual spunk, an' act as if the gin-keg wasn't there.

Prodical (firmly). It is there, isn't it? I didn't call the keg into being, did I? I haven't the power to conjure the keg into bodiless existence, have I? I can't work miracles, can I? Your likes or dislikes isn't goin' to control the progress of the world. The keg's here now, an' can't be avoided, can it? We'll have to suffer it, like it. or dislike it.

Rankin. There's the church tower to think of, too.

Prodical. That's a perspective contingency; a primae facie. That other subject's a factuality of here and now. (18)

Rankin's rejection of the demands of the senses is met with a firm assertion of the reality of material life on the part of Prodical. The transcendence symbolized by the church tower is abstract and uncertain while the immediacy and concreteness of the here and now presses to be acknowledged and dealt with.

Female Sexuality as Evil: Cock-A-Doodle-Dandy

The priestly distrust of the material world was part of an elaborate discourse of evil constructed by the Church authorities to instil fear and obedience in the people. O'Casey's earlier play, Cock-A-Doodle-Dandy, had addressed this question in some detail. The play dramatizes the efforts of Father Domineer, the parish priest of Nyadnanave, and Shanaar, an old man, to keep the villagers in a perpetual state of terror and submission. They constantly preach against the dangers of evil, warning people to be on guard against "sinisther designs" and "evil evocations" that abound in every nook and corner. Evil is all pervasive; it can strike the unwary at any time, in any circumstance. Shanaar, who claims to have a long experience of such things, issues a stern warning to the others: "Big powers of evil, with their little powers, an' them with their littler ones, an' them with their littlest ones, are everywhere" (447).

The easy accessibility of the forces of evil and their extreme capacity for accommodation adds to their dangerous powers rendering their victims especially vulnerable. The greatest threat comes from the human beings themselves, for by surrendering to the everyday needs of the body they lay themselves open to the assault of the forces of corruption. Shanaar paints a grim picture for his already frightened audiences: "A last warnin'--Don't forget that six thousand six hundhred an' sixty-six evil spirits can find ready lodgin's undher th' skin of a single man!" (455). Further, evil has the propensity to transform itself and to appear before the human eye in all sorts of guises. Often it uses an ordinary, everyday form as its vehicle. "You might meet a bee that wasn't a bee; a bird that wasn't a bird; or a beautiful woman who wasn't a woman at all" (447-8). When Mahan dares to protest about the inclusion of "innocent birds and bees" in the category of evil, showing his unwillingness to treat natural phenomenon as other than natural, he is promptly silenced by a series of narratives which tell of the temptation and destruction of good men by evil spirits that had appeared in the guise of innocent things. Thus, a circular argument is constructed through authoritative statements and stories to establish and maintain the right of the clergy to examine, interpret, and control the everyday behaviour and experience of the common people.

As pointed out above, an important aspect of the Church's regulation of the social body was the surveillance and control of sexuality, especially of female sexuality. Within a patriarchal system, in which sex was considered solely as a function of the perpetuation of the family and its property transactions from generation to generation, the notion of sex as bodily pleasure or desire was

perceived to have a dangerous and destabilizing influence on society. Therefore, there was a general agreement on the need to curb and regulate desire.

The Church sought to deal with the problem by an absolute equation of sex with sin. The body, seen as the root of all evil, needed to be subjected to rigorous controls. Celibacy was often extolled as the perfect state of life compared to which even marriage was an imperfect condition. In an article on "Keeping Company" in the Irish Ecclesiastical Record (April 1935), Father Sean Macguire proclaimed:

> Chastity is not a mystic virtue, a virtue of the cloister and the initiated; it is a moral and social virtue, a virtue necessary to the life of the human race. Without it, life withers in its sources, beauty is effaced from the visage, kindness withdraws itself from the heart . . . . All evils, in fine, enter by that door. (qtd. in Blanshard 148)

Within a patriarchal system, the fear of the unenclosed, open body through which all evils can find ingress is often expressed through an anti-woman stance. The Catholic Church's debasement of bodily needs and desires and their hierarchical subordination to the soul could easily be displaced on to the woman-man relationship in which the woman became the source of all evil and thus posed a constant danger to the morality of the male population.

The Church viewed the woman as essentially recalcitrant, impure and disorderly. Like the grotesque body in Bakhtin, which is "unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits," the woman posed a threat to the clerical valorization of the finished, complete, autonomous subject. Significantly, Bakhtin's grotesque body was also female; it is exemplified by the Kerch Terracota figurines depicting laughing old hags. The procreative capacity of the female body establishes its openness, its commerce with the world. It is, therefore, in constant need of

surveillance, for the unregulated female body could not only upset hierarchical gender divisions but also compromise the legitimacy of the patrilinear family.

The success of the clerical project of constituting woman as evil is evident in the attitudes of the people in Cock. Michael Marthraun, who has a beautiful daughter by his first wife and has acquired a second wife much younger than himself, has been persuaded to see evil in a "pretty face" and "lurin' legs." His response to Sailor Mahan's scepticism to his attitude is a quick refuge in religious authority. "Oh, man, your religion should tell you th' biggest fight th' holy saints ever had was with temptations from good-lookin' women" (441). Later, Shanaar reinforces the concept of the essential instability and corruptibility of women: "Women is more flexible towards th' ungodly than us men, an' well th' old saints knew it . . . for th' circumnambulatory nature of a woman's form often has a detonatin' effect on a man's idle thoughts" (454).

The association of the woman with the beast is a commonplace in misogynistic discourse. The creation and propagation of stories about women transforming themselves into animal and bird forms to lead the godly to sinfulness is actively carried out by those who feel threatened by women. And these tales always have the desired effect upon the listeners who are terrorized into believing them. The demonized women are most often single women who live without male protection--widows or young, unmarried women--as in Michael's story about Widow Malone, and Shanaar's story of the young naked woman.

A woman acquires social legitimacy only when she is subordinated to a male. This also facilitates surveillance. The convention of female subordination in the familistic system was so generally accepted that any departure from the norm was

equated with sinful behaviour. Loreleen's defiance of the convention can only lead to Michael's disclaimer that she is not his daughter or anyone's daughter, for that matter, but an evil spirit masquerading as one. As it is, Loreleen's status is presented as ambivalent--she is Michael's daughter by his deceased first wife and has been living away from him. Thus she is never fully inside the conventional family enclosure.

The wife, similarly, is subject to the husband's authority. She is seen as the man's acquisition together with his other material possessions. Michael's marriage with Lorna was an economic transaction brought about against her will because of his superior purchasing power. It is a measure of this power that he is further able to exploit this alliance to his own advantage and make large profits on the bog which he had generously agreed to buy from her poor father. Now his concern about losing out in his business deals is matched by a nagging fear of losing control over his young wife. Thus, in between his haggling with Sailor Mahan over money, which goes on for most part of the play, he is shown occasionally to express his suspicion of his wife's unfaithfulness to him. His anxiety, as is generally the case, is more a result of his own insecurity and imagined fears than of any real threat posed by Lorna.

As the husband's property, the wife is to be protected from the encroachment of the outside world. The family and the home provide an enclosed space where the woman can be placed with relative safety. The patriarchal image of an ideal woman is one who is chaste, obedient, and home-bound. As the Sergeant cautions: "We'll have to curtail th' gallivantin' of th' women afther th' men. Th' house is their province, as th' clergy's tired tellin' them. They'll have to realise that th' home's

their only proper place" (471-2). Not only is the woman's movement to be regulated; her dress, speech, and behaviour are also under constant surveillance. All the three women in the play, at some time or the other, are criticized for their gay dresses: "shameless women, dhressed to stun th' virtue out of all beholders!" (479). The priests often made specific recommendations regarding women's apparel. Shanaar tells Michael to compel the maid, Marion, "to lift her bodice higher up, an' pull her skirt lower down . . ." (454). The wife is not expected to interfere in men's affairs. Lorna is severely reprimanded by her husband when she suggests that he give in a little to Mahan's monitory demands. He invokes the law of nature and the law of God to enjoin silence upon her. Loreleen meets a worse fate. Her sin, among others, is her inability to guard her speech in front of her social and religious superiors. She is, therefore, accused of blasphemy and ordered into exile.

Unruly conduct on the part of women threatens the very basis of the hierarchical social structure. It is for this reason that it is punished severely, often with violence. Michael frequently uses abusive language and physical threats to keep Lorna in control. Loreleen is brutally manhandled by the Rough Fellows after they find her with Sailor Mahan. They drag her on the ground tearing her clothes in the process; they push and kick her and twist her arms savagely. All of this receives the sanction of Father Domineer, who clearly revels in her torture, believing as he does that this is but a "little twinge of pain" (499) as compared to the pains of hell that lie in store for her. The scene also underlines the double-faced morality of the religio-patriarchal structure. While Loreleen is scapegoated, Sailor Mahan is praised for being a decent, honest soul, "full of good works for clergy an' his neighbours" (498)--obviously, a reference to his regular donations to the Church. Loreleen is in

fact accused of attempting to corrupt a godly soul by her sinfulness. Also, the same men who constantly preach to women to cover themselves and dress modestly gleefully make a spectacle of Loreleen's exposed body. While she is herself embarrassed about her dishevelled state, no attempt is made by her accusers or judges to provide any cover for her. Instead, Father Domineer orders that she be placed in the centre of the crowd so as to be able to provide a good view for everyone.

Disorderly Women

Degraded and demonized in the religious and patriarchal discourse, the disorderly woman becomes an agent of subversion in popular culture. Natalie Davis has pointed to the widespread use of the image of the unruly woman in popular literature, art, and festivity in pre-industrial Europe. On the basis of her research, she argues that "it was a multivalent image that could operate, first, to widen behavioral options for women within and even outside marriage, and, second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women in a society that allowed the lower orders few formal means of protest" (131).

In Cock, O'Casey, too, uses this popular cultural image to interrogate not only male domination but all social and religious hierarchies. Loreleen embodies the unruly woman. She is an outsider to the society of Nyadnanave. As such she refuses to be subject to the norms of behaviour that govern others. As pointed out above, her status as Michael's daughter has an ambiguity that allows her a space outside the patriarchal family. From this space she functions to unsettle the fixed categories that underpin Nyadnanave's social structure. Thus, while she is a victim of

demonization by the dominant social and religious forces in the village, she also becomes a powerful symbol of transgression and rebellion. In fact, what is propagated and perceived as evil by the patriarchal and religious authorities becomes a liberatory force in the popular orientation. The misogynistic eliding of the "evil" woman with the animal, as noted above, is thus used by O'Casey to inject a further ambiguity in Loreleen's portrayal which functions powerfully to disturb and confuse the notion of fixed, enclosed identities which buttresses the strictly hierarchical social world of the play.

Loreleen's association with the figure of the Cock is deliberately kept mysterious throughout the play. Her first appearance coincides with the lusty crowing of a cock, and her dress of dark-green, red, and brown includes a green hat which sports a scarlet ornament "suggestive of a cock's crimson crest." Soon after the two Rough Fellows report seeing Loreleen change into the "look of a fancy-bred fowl," which they take as a warning and confirmation of the clerical assertion of the evil powers of wayward women. Also, it is significant that throughout the play Loreleen and the Cock are never present on the stage at the same time.

There are, however, voices of scepticism, like that of Sailor Mahan, in this case, which counterbalance the ready acceptance of superstitious belief. Mahan refuses to be taken in by the two men, and, instead, dismisses their assertions as the influence of drink. Regarding the Cock, too, the villagers have opposing views. The dominant group is convinced that the Cock is no ordinary bird but a demon let loose among them. They spend their time in arguing whether it is a cock, a hen, a goose or a wild duck, and try to find ways to protect themselves from its evil powers. The popular attitude, on the other hand, is represented by the Messenger who casually

walks into the house and comes out leading the cock by a green ribbon and assures the company that it is "Just a gay bird, that's all. A bit unruly at times but conthrollable be th' right persons" (453).

However, the play makes no attempt to resolve these contradictions. Instead, the playwright creates, out of a confusion of boundaries and new combinations between humans, animals, and monsters, hybrid carnivalesque figures to unsettle and interrogate existing social relationships. The grotesque image, according to Bakhtin, is "ambivalent and contradictory;" "it can outgrow itself and be fused with other objects" (Rabelais 25;308). The figures of the Cock and Loreleen, together with the suggestion that they may be one and the same, represent a symbolic transgression of the confines between the individual bodies and between the body and the world. Through them the play celebrates the phenomenon of transformation. O'Casey uses magic and fantasy to dramatize and highlight the ability of the grotesque popular body to metamorphose itself and take another's shape. The demonized figures of the Cock, Loreleen, and other women go through a series of strategic transformations which function to confound the dominant group and their ideology of the closed, individuated, and hierarchical body. For the deviant figures, it is also a strategy of evasion as their sudden, magical change of outward form thwarts official attempts to apprehend them and arrest their free movement. Loreleen and the Cock refuse enclosure; they are open, revealing, and resistant throughout. Unconstricted by space or circumstance, they romp around freely, signalling defiance to their detractors and at the same time holding out alternative possibilities within the social system.

In Scene I, the Rough Fellows report seeing Loreleen change into a cock. In Scene II, we meet the Sergeant who has been pursuing the Cock with the purpose

of killing it. He narrates to Michael and Mahan the story of the transformation of the demon Cock into a "silken glossified hat" just after he himself had shot at it three times with the bullets going right through it each time. Immediately following this account, another transformation takes place, this time enacted on stage. Effected through the simple device of alternating bright light and darkness, Michael's newly-delivered tall-hat which has been lying in the garden is shown to metamorphose into the Cock which lifts up its head and crows lustily in defiance of the raised gun of the Sergeant. The vision, which lasts only for a brief moment till normal stage lights return, dramatizes the uncrowning of the socially powerful. Even after the disappearance of the Cock, Michael and Mahan are seen cowering on the ground, speechless with fear, while the Sergeant is on his knees, praying fervently. It is also significant that as soon as they recover from the shock, they talk about the need to exercise control over the activities and behaviour of women, thus intuitively linking the women with the figure of the Cock. In their subconscious minds they also recognize that the loosening of patriarchal authority will have far reaching implications for the maintenance of the social order as a whole.

The association of the Cock with the women is highlighted again towards the end of Scene II when the Bellman's announcement that the Cock is abroad in the shape of a woman is followed by the arrival of Loreleen. The scene dramatizes the comic transformation of official demonization into a carnivalesque celebration. The chief agents of this transformation are the women who not only undergo a change of identity themselves but successfully manage to transform the men's attitudes also. There is an inversion of sexual roles as the women take on the task of wooing and

leading the men, who, after the initial hesitation, enter into the spirit of carnival and become fearless and willing participants in the festivity.

The theme of festive transgression is powerfully dramatized through an intermixing of comedy, fantasy, pantomime, and spectacle. When Loreleen enters the stage, the men are found sitting on the ground, singing loudly in an effort to hide their fear. Unmindful of, or deliberately ignoring, the consternation that her presence is causing to them, she expresses surprise at their behaviour. Then, deciding to have a little fun, she invites Marion and Lorna to come down and join the company. The women appear in fancy dress. In O'Casey's characteristic manner, the didascalia gives a detailed description of the colours and designs of their costumes emphasizing the bare arms, low-cut bodices, and short skirts. Their dresses and manners suggest a defiance of the idea of the enclosed, hidden body, signalling an openness towards others, and a desire to be part of an interactive, joyful community. In earlier scenes, too, Lorna and Marion display a remarkable ease and lack of inhibition in dealing with other people. Their attitude to the Cock, also, after the initial confusion, is relaxed and friendly.

The appearance of the women in this scene sets a new mood. There is a suggestion of magic in the way the women succeed in weaving a spell around the men. In a symbolic gesture, the Sergeant surrenders his gun, his weapon against the demon Cock, to Marion, who removes it from the scene. The men join the women in drinking, which signals their final surrender to the forces of merriment and gaiety. Holiday mood takes over, dispelling not only the men's distrust of women but even the animosity between the men themselves as Michael and Mahan happily resolve their long standing business differences. The carnival culminates in joyous dancing

in which men and women interact with one another with sensual pleasure and abandon. In Red Roses, too, people's festivity was dramatized through communal singing and dancing. However, there the emphasis was on a utopian vision of a social order without economic exploitation, and the dance of Ayamonn and Finoola celebrated the working people as the agents of this transformation. Cock, written in the context of an increasing concern with clerical repression in Ireland, foregrounds the need for sexual liberation. Mixed dancing was one of the favourite targets of the clergy in their project of the purification of the Irish society. The dance, here, represents a symbolic reversal of the dominant social and cultural values asserting popular values of sensual pleasure and freedom.

O'Casey makes emblematic use of another traditional image to further underline the theme of festive reversal. During the course of the dance, performed by three couples, the ornaments on the women's heads are seen to change into graceful, curving horns. The horn is an multivalent image: its traditional religious association is with the devil, but it is also an emblem of "power and might," a "means of defence or resistance." In yet another usage, "to make horns at" refers to "an insulting gesture" (OED). Thus in the process of festive transformation, what is considered evil and debased in the dominant discourse is made positive and celebratory. The event, though short-lived, represents a complete transformation. The men, who on earlier occasions had felt terrorized by visions of horns growing on women's heads, are now unaffected by the change and continue to hold their partners by the waist and dance vigorously to the beat of the music. The carnivalesque spirit engulfs everybody; it is a gay time in which people surrender themselves to sensuous pleasure. The fast whirling movement of the dancers on the

stage blurs their separate identities revealing instead a communal body which is interconnected, open, and free.

The Cock/Loreleen's transgression of the boundaries of the socially fixed, discrete body calls into question not only the norms that sanction patriarchal authority but all the rules of inclusion and exclusion, domination and subordination that make up the social structure. Father Domineer charges the Cock with destroying "desire for prayer, desire for work, an' weakenin' th' authority of th' pastors an' masters of your souls" (479). Sailor Mahan is also heard complaining that the world has become topsy-turvy "since the damned Cock got loose" (483).

The contradiction of the spirit of freedom represented by the Cock and Loreleen with the established religious authority--of living priests as well as of canonized saints--is hinted at right at the beginning of the play. An awe-stricken Michael tells Mahan about the commotion Loreleen's presence is causing among the "holy objects" in the house: "an invisible wind blows th' pictures out, an' turns their frenzied faces to th' wall; once I seen the statue of St. Crankarius standin' on his head to circumvent th' lurin' quality of her presence; an' another time, I seen th' image of our own St. Pathrick makin' a skelp at her with his crozier; fallin' flat on his face, stunned, when he missed!" (441). O'Casey's use of the image of the Cock as an embodiment of popular energies also emphasizes this contradiction. The Cock is a non-Christian symbol, a part of the folk repertoire of myths and tales. The priests denounce its pernicious influence among the villagers as "pagan poison."

The forces of subversion also challenge the instruments of state power. Among the objects that are damaged and destroyed in the house by the Cock is Michael Marthraun's new tall-hat, bought for the occasion of his meeting with the Irish

President. Later, when another tall-hat is ordered, it is again damaged in the shoot out to destroy the Cock. The tall-hat has a special significance for O'Casey in the context of the post-independence middle-class society in Ireland. In Inishfallen, he mocks at the new sartorial concerns of the Irish bourgeoisie who were keen to match their outward appearance with their new social positions, and were busy fitting themselves with new jackets, ties, tail-coats and tall-hats. In a parody of Yeats, O'Casey commented that "A terrible beauty of a tall-hat is born to Ireland" (209). In Cock, too, the image of the tall-hat is used to mock at the pretensions and hypocrisy of the bourgeois order. The play obtrusively positions Marthraun's tall-hat at the centre of many comic incidents and subjects it to carnivalesque fun, thereby degrading its dignity and power, and pulling it down to the level of the earth. Social inequalities are also symbolically erased through the "exchange of bodies" that takes place between the hat and the Cock in the transformation scenes described above.

The authority's pretence to absolute power is demolished again in the incident in which the appearance of the Cock magically immobilizes the people in order to prevent them from pursuing Loreleen. While the rest are unable to move their legs, the Cock disappears, reportedly, with Father Domineer on its back. It returns a little later to spread further confusion and mayhem as it raises a fierce wind with the beating of its wings, which whips off the guns from the hands of the Civic Guards and soldiers and strips people of their clothes. As a result the Sergeant appears on stage not only without his gun but also without his cap and trousers. While he stands shamefaced, in what Marthraun in his irritation describes as a state of "half-naked finality," he is made the butt of the women's mockery with their laughing references to his "fancy" attire.

The fragility of the social order is further reinforced through a visual representation of the shaking of Marthraun's house. Believing that the house is occupied by evil spirits, Father Domineer resolves to purify it and marches in with bell, book, and candle. In the ensuing struggle, the house shakes violently, sounds of the breaking of crockery are heard, and the flag pole totters and, finally, falls flat while the rest of the people look on with fear at the prospect of the house falling asunder. Loreleen, however, remarks cheerfully that it was the best thing that could happen to it. Samuel Beckett's observation about O'Casey's ability to discern "the principle of disintegration in even the most complacent solidities and activate it to their explosion" is amply demonstrated here. The house, which has been part of the stage scene throughout the play, is brought close to being totally destroyed suggesting the possibility of the breakdown of a whole social order based on patriarchal authority, clerical control, and exploitative economic relations.

As it turns out, the threat of breakdown does not lead to an immediate and spectacular demolition of authoritative structures. The forces of the powerful are successful in establishing their authority: the house is purged of the demon; Loreleen is humiliated, thrashed and exiled; and the men are silenced into submission. It is, however, the women, once again, who call into question the value of such an authority. Lorna and Marion reject the security of their enclosures, and in a show of solidarity with Loreleen, choose exile with her. This is a superb dramatic move which turns Loreleen's scapegoating into a powerful gesture of rebellion. Lorna provides Loreleen with shoes and cloak in defiance of the "Priest an' his rabble" and accompanies her out. They are followed by Marion and a little

later by the Messenger in their pursuit of a place "where life resembles life more than it does here" (502).

Exile as Resistance

Left by itself, the decision to opt out would mean nothing more than seeking after personal salvation by a few while the life of the rest of the community continues undisturbed. But the play undercuts any such interpretation. It does this by hinting at the confusion and unease that is caused by the exile of the women. The hegemonic order seeks to contain misrule by, first, carefully defining and separating it, and then expelling it from the social body. But even as the agents of discipline and purification gloat over their success, gaps appear within this social body, revealing a contamination that is deeper and more difficult to manage. The men who are left behind do not seem to share the priest's enthusiasm about a world without women. Father Domineer's confident claim that Marthraun can at last have "happiness an' peace" in his home evokes a sceptical response from the latter who perhaps begins to feel that home means much more than material wealth stored up in a structure of bricks and mortar. While Shanaar tries to boost up his sagging spirits by fulminating against the evil that women embody, all Marthraun can do is to regret his harshness towards Lorna and hope that she will one day return to him. Marthraun's response is no less powerful because it is confused and uncertain. In a sharp contrast to his earlier readiness to believe Shanaar's stories, it marks a cognitive change in his attitude.

The significance of the above episode is located within the articulation of a specific historical crisis in Irish society around the time of the writing of the play.

This had to do with the realization, in some quarters, of the steady decline in the country's population since the post-famine years. Amidst reports that the total population of the Republic of Ireland had reduced to less than half its former size in the years between 1841 and 1946, fears began to be expressed about the prospect of the disappearance of the Irish as a nation. In studies conducted on the subject, it was suggested by several people that the low rate of marriage, late marriages, and emigration were the chief causes that had led to the decline in numbers. Ireland had the lowest marriage rate in the world. More and more men and women tended to marry late. Added to this was the alarming number of young people who were emigrating to foreign lands in search of a better life. Though various social and economic factors, such as, low standard of living, conditions of inheritance, etc. were seen to play a role, the psychological repression unleashed by the Church was largely held responsible for the prevailing state of affairs. W. P. Ryan commented:

> The Irish priests have been so triumphant in imposing their sexual standards upon the people that they are now somewhat embarrassed by their own success. They have exalted virginity to the point where it is almost a national catastrophe; they have surrounded the sins of the flesh with such a poignant sense of guilt that they have weakened the Irish mating instinct. (141)

O'Casey's dramatization of clerical repression resulting in emigration also draws attention to the self-destructive nature of the attitudes and policies fostered by the dominant groups in the country. Without the women, Nyadnanave would be lonely and lifeless. When a subdued Marthraun asks for advice, the Messenger tells him, "Die. There is little else left useful for the likes of you to do" (503).

The theme of a dying country is reinforced in Julia's return from Lourdes. Her failure to find a cure will result not only in her own death but takes away the only hope of renewal left for the rest of the people. It also spells the final defeat for the

ideology of repressive clericalism. Julia's sick and helpless figure is another example of the use of the woman's body as a passive terrain on which differing claims for social power are fought out. She is a part of the bargain Marthraun makes to secure a good marriage deal with Lorna. Equally, she is used by Father Domineer to enhance his own authority among his flock. By having her return uncured and empty-handed, the play shows up the illusoriness of the miracles promised by the priests. In contrast, the fantastic miracles worked by the Cock and the women are life-giving and liberatory. If they are rejected by the people, Ireland will be the poorer for it. The last song of the Messenger celebrates the rites of May and the love of the lad for his lass but it points to a space beyond Nyadnanave, beyond Ireland, where "life resembles life more than it does here" (503).

The self-imposed exile of the forces of carnival at the end of Bonfire and Dandy does not signal abject surrender or defeat. Their decision to withdraw from the social scene rather than collaborate in their own subjection and marginalization is a form of resistance, albeit, the only form of resistance available to them in the present circumstances. To choose to stand outside is to threaten the system of differences that gives meaning to clerical and patriarchal absolutism. It is also to carve out a space from which the vision of an alternative order can continue to be articulated.

Alternative Social Order: Drums of Father Ned

The possibility of the interrogation of authoritarianism through exile or voluntary withdrawal, represented in the two plays, was re-enacted in the events associated with the staging and production of O'Casey's next, and last full-length

play, Drums of Father Ned. The play was scheduled to have its world premiere at the Dublin International Theatre Festival, which was part of the annual Tostal, or Spring celebrations in Ireland. The organizers had selected the works of three Irish writers--O'Casey, Joyce and Beckett--to be adapted and produced for the stage. However, the Tostal Council was pressurized to cancel its plans as the Archbishop of Dublin objected to the inclusion of O'Casey and Joyce and refused to bless the festival with the celebration of the Mass, as he had done in the past, if his advice was not heeded. The Archbishop was also able to generate a "public controversy" on the issue, and the Dublin Council of Irish Unions came out strongly in support of the Archbishop's position. The De Valera government, responsible for funding the festival, was quick to fall in line with the Church authorities and also thought it "inadvisable" to produce the plays.

Unable to withstand the mounting pressure from both the State and the Church, the Tostal Council tried to wriggle out of its commitment. To save embarrassment to themselves, they announced that they were being forced to reject O'Casey's play as he had refused to even allow "structural alterations to make it suitable for the Dublin public," and that there was no connection between the Archbishop's opinion and the rejection of the play. O'Casey reacted by withdrawing his play from the festival. This was followed by an announcement from Samuel Beckett that he too was withdrawing his plays from the festival in protest against the treatment meted out to the other two writers. The whole controversy, which received international coverage, resulted in the collapse of the Theatre Festival for that year, causing great embarrassment to the Irish. A few months later, the Irish exiles dealt

an even stronger blow to clerical absolutism when, first, O'Casey, and then, Beckett placed a total ban on the performance of their plays in Ireland.

The play which initiated all this , Drums, had a happier ending. It too celebrated the Tostal Festival as a festival of song, music and dance. But contrary to the situation prevailing in Ireland, the fictional representation shows the successful disruption of the power of the clergy and bourgeoisie by a group of young men and women, who gradually wrest control over the Tostal and, in the process, work towards the reorganization of their society.

The Tostal offers a carnivalesque understanding of social relations, provides a way to action, and becomes an instrument of social change. The festive occasion brings to the fore a coherent and energetic popular culture, which struggles to establish its initiative and authority over the ordering of social and political life. A failure to understand O'Casey's project leads critics like Desmond Greaves to complain that "O'Casey has no policy for social transformation and it is always symbolized by a magical effect... Social problems are solved through "joy" (190-91). The joy of life, in O'Casey, is not a vague or woolly concept; it is deeply implicated in the material life of the people, and in the question of social, economic, and political power. And, though he uses magical symbols like the Buckineeno (Bonfire), the Cock (Cock), and Father Ned (Drums) to enhance the theatrical effect, they never become substitutes for human endeavour. Instead, the plays clearly foreground the people's will to joy and their intervention in communal life. The festive rites of inversion, masquerade, and uncrowning celebrated by the people are not just traditional rituals followed unselfconsciously, nor are they merely a part of the holiday mood. They reveal a cogent understanding of their social and political

situation and a concrete strategy of action. As Le Roy Ladurie has argued in the context of carnival celebrations in the sixteenth century French town of Romans: "turning society temporarily upside down implied a knowledge of its normal, vertical position, its hierarchy" (301).

In Drums, it is this knowledge that shapes the events surrounding the Tostal festival. The Tostal is an annual, national festival authorized by the State and Church of Ireland. As an official event it is expected to play a conservative role in society by reinforcing the values and ideals of the existing social order. Official pageantry, as Michael Bristol has pointed out in another context, figures forth "the governing concepts of degree and difference, hierarchical plenitude, and social and political harmony" thereby promoting social cohesion and social discipline among the community (Carnival 59-63). In Drums, however, the official festival is appropriated by the workers and the youth for their own ends. As the Tostal activities get under way it becomes clear to the local elite that the festival, far from emphasizing obedience to the existing order, may become an instrument of open conflict and resistance to that order.

The upper rung of the social hierarchy is represented by the two main businessmen of the town, McGilligan and Binnington, who are sworn enemies but do not hesitate to collaborate in mutually profitable economic deals. Their expectation that the Tostal, like most official festivals, would provide them an opportunity to enhance their social prestige and economic power is thwarted by the gradual unfolding of events. Mrs. Binnington sounds the warning early on in the play: "This Tosthal's goin' to cost us something." Her husband also complains that he is "Losing money instead of makin' it" (543-44). He has been forced to lend

twenty-five of his best men for the festival preparations besides being persuaded to give huge subscriptions to various cultural activities associated with the Tostal. For the participants, festive time is a time for the enjoyment of the pleasures offered by natural and social life, a time to discover the "mysthery of life." For the bourgeoisie, however, time is measured in terms of economic loss or gain. The appropriation of the festival by the people has turned it into a financial disaster. Binnington attempts to prevent this by counterposing a different set of values: "Mysthery of life! There's no mysthery in it, girl. There's nothin' more in it than gettin' all you can, holdin' what you have, doin' justice to your religious duties, and actin' decent to a neighbour" (544-45). The contradiction between the two value systems is underlined again when the maid, Bernadette's soft singing, which she describes as "a murmurin' practice for th' Tosthal concert," causes Binnington to hopelessly mix up his calculations and prevents him from preparing his business accounts. A more direct assault on his authority follows when his foreman, Tom, refuses to obey his orders to unload the timber from the ships onto the lorries. Delay in the work would mean an increase in expense for the businessman, but Tom merely reverses priorities: "Th' timber can wait, the Tosthal can't" (554).

If the businessmen are besieged by the merrymakers, so are the clergy. Father Fillifogue becomes a comic figure in his desperate bid to retain control over the festival and its participants. He is constantly chasing after them, issuing threats and warnings which seem to have no effect. Harassed and exhausted, and unable to match the energy and enthusiasm of the youthful revellers, he, too, begins to realise that the festival may be subverting its official purpose: "Oh, this Tosthal in lifting us up is getting us down!" (561). The holiday reverses the normal hierarchy between

the sacred and the profane. The clergyman's attempt to put things back in their proper order--"I'll show your Father Ned that th' Church comes before th' Tosthal" (558)--is thwarted by the crowd at every step. When he orders them to sing hymns instead of Tostal songs, they sing out of tune, refuse to make the right pauses in spite of repeated instructions, and shout out the words irreverently. The music provided as accompaniment by Murray, the music teacher, is also far from devotional; it is what Father Fillifogue angrily describes as the "riddle-me-randy" music of the profane kind (560).

As the preparations for the Tostal get under way, Father Fillifogue's authority is countered and replaced by the figure of Father Ned. Described in terms of popular emblematic imagery--"fierce green eyes shinin' lak umeralds on fire in a white face . . . wild flop of ruddy hair, flamin' lak a burnin' bush; our long white hand pointin' up, th' ither one pointin' doon, forbye th' sound of a clear voice sayin' naethin' on' meanin' all . . ." (573)--Father Ned is conceived as a popular leader who guides and directs the people in all their actions and behaviour. And yet he remains in the background, never once appearing on the stage. This ambivalence in itself makes him into a powerful adversary of the official priest who has a hard time tracking him down. As Bernadette says about Father Ned, "he might be anywhere, though some may think he's nowhere; again he may be everywhere . . ." (568). Things go "beyond the beyonds" when it is reported that under the personal supervision of Father Ned the people have hoisted the Tostal flag on Father Fillifogue's presbytery, and have repainted its white door in flaming red colour.

Drums, like Cock, Dust, and Bonfire, is a flamboyantly theatrical play whose full meaning can be realized only through its life on the stage. O'Casey uses a lively

combination of words, colour, music, dance, pantomime, spectacle, farce, and fantasy to represent the transgressive energies and the utopian desires of the people. In the theatre, social transformation is dramatized through a virtual transformation of the stage space. The play begins in a bourgeois drawing room, characteristically furnished with heavy and large furniture, thick curtains, carpets, items of silver, bronze, and gilt, and a piano--all clearly designed to underline the economic and social power of the owner. It is, as its proud owner declares, a room "only for them that know how to walk with threpidation" (552). However, in bold defiance of Binnington's exclusive stance, the crowd of revellers, dressed in all kinds of fancy dress, some of them carrying muskets and pikes, troop in unselfconsciously to rehearse the Tostal play. The unsuitability of the room does not pose any problem, for as they report: "shift the furniture outa th' way, says Father Ned, an' yous'll have all th' space yous want, he says; wide an' truly commodious, with no one, says he, to disturb your improvin' an' positive exertions" (552). As they proceed to make themselves at home, appropriating the carefully preserved objects to their own ends (the piano is hammered to produce loud and vigorous music), the private space of the drawing room is transformed into a public space.

Act II is set in McGilligan's drawing-room which is furnished exactly like Binnington's, except for slight variations here and there. The revellers have occupied the table, which is laid with a number of coloured window-sill boxes filled with stylized, larger-than-life flowers. The Pope's picture is half covered by a Tostal poster announcing the various festive events and displaying the words, "WE were DEAD and are ALIVE AGAIN" in large print. The neatly ordered drawing-room has been transformed to look like a workshop in which flags, coloured festoons,

pikes, spears, boxes, and posters lie about in disarray. When the action returns to McGilligan's house in the next act there is a similar rearrangement of the room in keeping with the needs of the festival. The heavy furniture has been unceremoniously pushed back to make room for the Tostal props which include, among other things, shields depicting popular heroes from Irish folklore and mythology. The revellers are also reported to have transformed the whole town by decorating windows of houses with flower-boxes and flags and by painting their doors in vivid red, yellow, blue, green and orange colours.

The continually changing pattern of the stage space reinforces the changing balance of relationships between the revellers and the elite. The Tostal crowd enters the homes of the bourgeoisie, takes over their private spaces, and from there spreads out into the whole town to establish its hegemony on the life of the community. The festive rearrangement of the social space, in accordance with the artistic tastes of the people, assaults the moral and aesthetic standards of the dominant groups. Father Fillifogue complains that "they have our respectable, modest town looking like a grinning, gaudy whore!" (561).

Symbolic gestures are accompanied by social and political action. The festive experience brings about a clarification which does not lead to a reintegration into the existing social order but rather towards a dismantling of corrupt and oppressive structures. Nora articulates this experience:

> You see, Father, we're fed up bein' afraid our shaddas'll tell what we're thinkin'. One fool, or a few, rules th' family life; rules th' school, rules th' dance hall, rules th' library, rules the ways of a man with a maid, rules th' mode of a girl's dress, rules th' workers in fields and factory, rules th' choice of our politicians, rules th' very words we try to speak, so that everything said cheats th' truth; an' Doonavale has become th' town of th' shut mouth" (595).

Therefore, the end of the Tostal will not signal a return to the old order, but the beginning of a new one as the people prepare to participate in the decision-making processes in social and political life. The festive articulation of an alternative social vision and the community's determination to set its own norms of behaviour and social discipline has another pragmatic aim, that of ensuring its own survival. It is the only effective way to stem the tide of emigration and to conserve collective resources. The Tostal revellers know that if they are not successful in their venture many more young people will leave the land in search for a better life elsewhere.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. It is now widely recognized that the formation and development of agrarian and later, industrial capitalism in many parts of Europe was accompanied by a long process of struggle over forms of popular culture and traditional practices. The Irish situation shares many similarities with this overall process though it has its own particularities. See Bennett, Mercer and Woolacott; Cairns and Richards; E. P. Thompson; Stuart Hall; and Yeo and Yeo.

2. Programme notes for the Mermaid production of Bonfire. Quoted in Goldstone 157.

3. The Church actually reasoned that an individual could justifiably withhold a part of the income-tax levied by the government after consulting with his priest since most governments fix a higher rate of income-tax anticipating that a considerable number of people will manage to avoid paying their share. See Blanshard 173.

4. I have drawn upon the ideas of Stuart Hall, Stephen and Eileen Yeo, and Anthony Delves in this paragraph.

5. As Anthony Delves writes in another context, "the appeal to custom and tradition underlying the resistance to suppression seems to have sprung not from some vague, anachronistic attachment to things past but from a sense that "traditionalism" protected real and immediate interests" (92).

6. By choosing to give an English identity to his protagonists, O'Casey introduces an added socio-cultural dimension to his play. Even though Ireland had achieved political independence almost two decades before O'Casey came to write the play, the issue of colonial subjection continued to have contemporary relevance for the Irish people. The colonial discourse had constituted the Irish as essentially inferior to the English, representing them variously as barbarian, pagan, rude, ineffectual, and feminine. O'Casey's play contributes to the dismantling of colonial stereotypes and the reconstruction of Irish subjectivity. However, the Englishmen are also businessmen, and it is this aspect of their identity that is foregrounded in the play.

CHAPTER FIVE

'TILL SHE TAKES TO DRINK AGAIN':

THEATRE AS FESTIVAL

> We are tired of glum and gloom; let voices sound from the wilderness--heed them not. . . . Never mind the wailers, lads and lasses--come to the Fair--the dangerous and delightful Fair of Life. Through the desert places and the rose gardens. Come, lasses, with a bow of ribbon in your hair; come, lads, with a bow of ribbon on your shoulder. Come you who can play a Beethoven Symphony, and you who can play on the old banjo.
>
> The Green Crow

The Clown in the Theatre

In Inishfallen, O'Casey offers a survey of the literary and art scene in Dublin in the early years of the Republic. This includes an interesting account of an evening spent at Yeats' house in Merrion Square. The occasion was the staging of Yeats' play, The Hawk's Well, before a select group of the city's literati. Yeats, who had developed an interest in the Japanese classical theatre, had written the play in the Noh style. The performance drew the following comments from O'Casey:

> No; charming and amiable as it all was, it wasn't a Noh Play. Poet and all as he was, Yeats wasn't able to grasp a convention, grown through a thousand years, and give it an Irish birth in an hour. Zither and flute and drum, with Dulac's masks, too full of detail for such an eyeless play, couldn't pour the imagination into the minds of those who listened and saw. The unfolding and folding of the fanciful cloth couldn't carry the stage to the drawing-room. No, the people's theatre can never be successfully turned into poetical conventicle. A play poetical to be worthy of the theatre must be able to withstand the

> terror of Ta Ra Ra Boom De Ay, as a blue sky, or an apple tree in bloom, withstand any ugliness around and beneath them. (373-4)

For O'Casey, the energy and vitality of theatre derives from a multi-faceted, lived reality. In contrast, the play staged in the exclusive confines of an upper-class drawing-room before a well-dressed, polite audience could, at best, have a lifeless elegance. An art or culture which cuts itself off from popular concerns and experiences and limits itself to a few can neither be socially meaningful nor truly enjoyable.

O'Casey goes on to record how, as the evening wore on, and he grew more and more alienated from the smug, self-enclosed world of the Dublin intellectual elite, his mind began to conjure up the image of Fluther Good, his favourite character from The Plough. In his fantasy-recreation he imagines Fluther bursting into the room in his usual drunken state looking for someone to fight him. The sudden eruption of the working-class, clown figure in the exclusive gathering leads to violent disorder and break-up of the assembly. O'Casey's narrative visualizes the full impact of the carnivalesque scene: "What headlines his visit would make in the morrow's newspapers! Fluther runs wild in Yeats's drawing-room; Shocking scene; The poet tries to reason with him; A number of dress-suits ruined; Six constables remove Fluther Good!" (375).

Like the traditional clowns, Fluther shows an irreverent disregard of place or person. He transgresses the conventional boundary between the high and the low with considerable ease because of his refusal to acknowledge differences of rank or status. The clown operates from the margins of society, exchanging identities freely, showing up other fixed identities as false or relative. He is not amenable to rational

discourse as it only helps to explain and maintain the existing structure of differences. As "the constant accredited representative . . . of the carnival spirit out of carnival season" (Bakhtin, Rabelais 8) he introduces laughing matter into the most serious of situations. Through his wild energy, he brings people into a zone of crude contact where they are subjected to carnivalesque thrashing and stripped of their social pretensions.

As a dramatist, O'Casey bears a close resemblance to Fluther Good as well as to many of his other clown figures. Like them, he is a man-of-the-streets, or the "little man," who insists upon bringing the street into the theatre of the middle classes and in the process radically transforms the latter. In his impure theatre, the forms and languages of the "low" freely mingle with and contaminate the forms and languages of the bourgeois theatre, challenging and rupturing existing aesthetic structures in favour of a truly carnivalesque theatre.

In the earlier chapters, I have argued that this perspective of the little man" informs and shapes O'Casey's representation of political, social and religious structures. His plays demystify or uncrown authority and its justificatory ideology and posit an alternative tradition of collective life. This essay extends the scope of this perspective through a consideration of the deployment, in O'Casey's drama, of certain forms of representation which are radically different from and often inimical to bourgeois aesthetic norms. These forms derive from popular cultural traditions inscribed in a wide range of social, cultural, and literary texts. O'Casey found this tradition in the living culture of the streets and taverns of Dublin; in the dramas of Boucicault and Shakespeare; as well as in the popular theatrical genres of melodrama, pantomime, vaudeville, music-hall, variety etc.

Analysis of his drama has in general proceeded on the assumptions of the dominant tradition. One of these assumptions relates to a hierarchized view of tragedy and comedy with tragedy as the superior genre. Thus when the two appear simultaneously in a play, as in the earlier drama of O'Casey, it is taken for granted that the lower, i.e. the comic element, would be subservient to the main, i.e. the tragic element and that both together would contribute to the overall tragic impact of the play. O'Casey's drama, however, refuses to fit into this neat mould as his penchant for the comic and the farcical often threatens to submerge the tragic. The typical critical response to this artistic practice has been, either, one of puzzlement ("To this day I do not know where the author's sympathies lie") or, of disparagement ("It fails to become great or moving tragedy because it possesses no inner core").[1] The devaluation of the artistic and cognitive significance of the comic is also reflected in the charge of crudeness and superficiality that was levelled against O'Casey's later comedies. In a review of Bonfire, Kenneth Tynan pronounced somewhat definitively that " he is no longer a great craftsman" (Curtains 85). This view was shared by many others who believed that the playwright was essentially a two-or-three-play author whose creativity had burnt out after the initial sparks. Secondly, O'Casey's uninhibited use of popular theatrical forms of melodrama, music-hall, pantomime, farce etc. and his equally unorthodox mixing of these with other, more recognized, forms created, in these later plays, difficulties for interpretation as well as performance. Despite the fact that these plays were theatrically exciting and enjoyable, the critics could not help but complain, as in the case of another reviewer of Bonfire: "Even the funniest scene in the play had the echo of the music-hall" (qtd. in Green Crow 131). The lack of understanding of

popular forms and the unwillingness to grant them respectability was also a chief reason for the neglect of these plays by theatre producers and directors. Cock had to wait for eleven years before it could be professionally produced. The other plays too, received scant attention for a long time while the Dublin plays continued to be in great demand.

The discussions that follow will focus on these aspects of O'Casey's dramaturgy in order to reach a better understanding of its meaning and goals. I will argue that his dramaturgic choices are in conscious opposition to the bourgeois theatrical conventions and are a part of a popular aesthetic tradition. Further, that, in its ideological and cognitive emphasis, this aesthetics is closely bound up with O'Casey's political vision.

"Mungrell Tragedy-Comedie"

The three Dublin plays, set amidst the tragic circumstance of a city torn by colonial war and civil strife, were described as 'tragedies' by the author himself. But as James Agate noted in his review of the London production of Juno, " the tragic element in it occupies at the most some twenty minutes, and . . . for the remaining two hours and a half the piece is given up to gorgeous and incredible fooling" (76). Similarly, in Shadow and Plough, and again in The Tassie which deals with the physical and emotional ravages of the World War, the tragic and the comic are piled upon each other in a continuous counterpointing movement. Sir Lawrence Olivier's observation that Juno reminded him of an Irish 'hooley' can easily be applied to the other plays as well: "The whole essence of a hooley is this sudden switch from

hilarity to sadness and the equally sudden explosion back to noise, song and laughter" (qtd. in File 23).

O'Casey's own defence of this alternation of moods is unequivocal though couched in general terms: "As for blending 'Comedy with Tragedy', it's no new practice--hundreds have done it, including Shakespeare up to Don Boucicault in, for instance, 'Colleen Bawn' & 'Conn, the Shaughraun'. And, indeed, Life is always doing it, doing it, doing it. Even where one lies dead, laughter is often heard in the next room. There's no tragedy that isn't tinged with humour; no comedy that hasn't its share of tragedy--if one has eyes to see, ears to hear" (Harvey 8). This is not to be read as a statement of the "essential" tragi-comic nature of life in which the tragedy and the comedy blend inseparably into each other or "become one another" (Murphy 98). Nor does it denote an impartial attitude that records equally the tragedy and the comedy of life. O'Casey's attitude is also radically different from the view of tragi-comedy expressed by J. L. Styan in his book length study of the development of modern comic tragedy. Styan sees tragi-comedy as the representative literary form of the modern age, an age which no longer has a God at its centre and which, as a consequence, is marked by uncertainty and moral indifference. While pure tragedy belongs to a rocklike civilization which was religious in its "affirmation of human greatness," the dark comedy foregrounds the essential uncertainty, incongruity, and ambiguity of the human situation. Dramatic irony becomes the chief mode through which this structure of feeling is communicated. The alternation of tragedy with comedy functions to maintain the tension of irony in the play. The comic scenes "serve to enrich the pathos both by measuring the wealth of our feeling on the objective and precise scale of our more normal resilience to emotional

experience, and by complicating the significance of the drama with a new and exciting ambivalence of attitude" (268). Dramatic ambivalence gives the dark comedy its unity of tone and climate. It is the "'fourth' unity in which opposites may flourish together in the audience's mind" (283), not allowing it to seek relief from one to the other but, instead, causing it to maintain the delicate balance between order and disorder, hope and despair, to the very end of the play. However, in the development of the bourgeois individualist drama from Ibsen and Chekhov to Beckett and Pinter, this "new and exciting ambivalence" is seen turning towards cynicism and despair. This later drama gestures towards the "sordidness of the human condition" recognizing the futility of even "trying to reach a decisive conclusion about its problems" (290).

The world-view of O'Casey's drama is radically opposed to that of the individualist drama. O'Casey's attitude to Beckett's plays is clear and unambiguous as expressed in a short piece on Waiting For Godot that he wrote for the magazine Encore in 1956: "I have nothing to do with Beckett. He isn't in me; nor am I in him. I am not waiting for Godot to bring me life; I am out after life myself, even at the age I've reached. . . . That Beckett is a clever writer, and that he has written a rotting and a remarkable play, there is no doubt; but his philosophy isn't my philosophy, for within him there is no hazard of hope; no desire for hope; nothing in it but a lust for despair, and a crying of woe, not in a wilderness, but in a garden" (Reader 965).

O'Casey's drama deals with poverty, disease, exploitation, war, and death but these are not presented tragically. Comedy intrudes much too often to counter any tragic effect from dominating the play. There is, in such plays, a constant and

relentless opposition between the tragic and the comic which is maintained till the very end. The comedy, far from reinforcing the pathos, actually works to interrogate the tragedy and to place it in a critical perspective. Individual tragedies do take place, and these are powerfully realized but they are never allowed to dominate the entire play, to make up its total mea· · and, therefore, to represent the quintessential truth about the human co· .ition. They remain individual, or even group tragedies, rooted in a particular historical time and social space. Juxtaposed with this is another time or another space within the same time, dramatizing a different reality. Beyond the individual also lies the larger life of the community which is fluid and ever-changing, pointing to a future that is open-ended. In a letter to a critic, O'Casey had once written, "The individual is important, relatively, only to himself and a small group around him. Whatever tragedy may happen to him or to her is a small thing to life, which goes on careless of, indifferent to, his "fate"; because life must go on, stretching itself from the present out into the future" (Ayling, Continuity 154). Juno does not close with the moving prayer of Mrs. Boyle; as she moves out the stage is handed over to the drunken fantasizing of Boyle and Joxer. In Plough, there is a grim scene in which Fluther leads in a distraught Nora after she has spent a whole night at the barricades searching for her husband. The neighbours rally round her in a poignant show of solidarity to offer her comfort and solace. However, the tragic mood is not allowed to last. As soon as she is led into the house, Fluther and Covey are seen to engage in a game of tossing coins to keep themselves from "th' sin o' idleness." After a while, Bessie enters with the news of the looting of the shops in the city. The sight of her own fancy acquisitions brings new excitement to the tenements. The shared grief in Nora's trauma and the fear

of their own death temporarily forgotten, they all rush out to try their luck in the bullet-ravaged streets. This constant breaking of the tragic situational frame by a sudden switch to comedy--usually uproariously funny comedy--reveals an understanding of different levels of reality and of the dialectical relation that exists between them.

Bourgeois tragedy emphasizes the inevitability and unalterability of human fate. It shows man as determined by forces over which he has no control. The comic intrusions in O'Casey's plays deflate these metaphysical solemnities in the rich laughter of ordinary, unheroic people placed in ordinary, unheroic circumstances. Their interaction with each other, even when they are fooling and fantasizing, has a social concreteness that discourages abstraction and mystification. In Brecht's The Messingkauf Dialogues, the Philosopher also offers a demystifying notion of tragedy: "Nothing human can possibly be outside the powers of humanity, and . . . tragedies have human causes" (32). Earlier on, the Philosopher had talked about his interest in human beings: "I have an insatiable curiosity about people; it's impossible for me to see and hear enough of them. The way they get along with each other, the way they develop friendships and enmities, sell onions, plan military campaigns, get married, make tweed suits, circulate forged bank-notes, dig potatoes, observe the heavenly bodies; the way they cheat, favour, teach, exploit, respect, mutilate and support one another; the way they hold meetings, form societies, conduct intrigues" (17). O'Casey's theatre, too, reveals an insatiable curiosity about people and their shared life with all its contradictions and complexities. In its continual shift from individual tragedy to the comic community, it poses an alternative to the conventional tragic view suggesting that the fate of man is man himself.

In the classical theatre, as Althusser has pointed out, the meaning of tragedy and its conditions is communicated through the speculative consciousness of a central character (129-51).[2] This consciousness, although constituted within the existing ideology of a society or a period, is presented in such drama, as the universal, timeless, human consciousness. Consequently, the themes of classical tragedy, the values that it upholds (politics, morality, religion, honour, glory, passion etc.) are also presented uncritically, as universal, absolute values. Even when this consciousness is shown to be in conflict with itself, torn between two or more values, the point of reference is never anything outside or other than itself. In Brecht's theatre, on the other hand, as Althusser goes on to show, all pretensions to an exhaustive self-recovery and self-representation in the form of a central consciousness are excluded. The epic theatre dramatizes the confrontation between this single consciousness and the indifferent and strange reality that lies outside it to produce a critique of the "illusion of consciousness" and of the ideological values that accompany it. No single character or single incident is allowed to contain in herself or itself the total meaning of the play. The counterpointing of disparate elements makes for an asymmetrical structure. Althusser calls this the "dialectic-in-the-wings" structure which he sees as essential to any materialist theatrical practice. There is no organizing centre in this kind of drama. Often the different forms of temporality in a play have no obvious relation to each other, producing internal imbalances and dissociations through which a complex and contradictory reality is communicated.

The absence of an organizing central consciousness has important implications for the spectator-stage relationship. The smooth, uninterrupted flow of events

arouses empathy among the spectators allowing them to lose themselves in the play. There is a steady intensification of emotional response as the play moves single-mindedly towards its tragic catharsis. The asymmetrical, decentred drama encourages a different attitude among the spectators. The constant interruptions disallow any sustained identification with the play's characters or action, and places the spectator not within but above the flow of the action from where they can judge these actions critically. In a discussion on Brecht's drama, Walter Benjamin distinguishes between the spectator who "with every fibre of his being, is intently following a process" and one who is following the play in a relaxed manner (15). The unrelated sequence or zig-zag progression of events makes for a relaxed attitude which allows space for a thinking response. As Brecht himself put it: "Instead of sharing an experience, the spectator must come to grips with things" (Theatre 23) This was part of the concept of Verfremdung or estrangement that Brecht had developed in relation to his theory of the non-Aristotelian or epic theatre. The task of the epic theatre, according to Brecht, was not merely to reproduce conditions but to reveal them so that theatre could be both an entertaining as well as an educative experience.

O'Casey, who was writing at the same time as Brecht was developing his theories of the epic or dialectical theatre, arrives at somewhat similar dramatic methods and goals. His plays, too, do not follow a linear progression moving towards a single climax, but are made up of self-contained scenes that often interrupt, even contradict each other. Brecht uses music, songs, gestic acting, scenic compositions etc. to interrupt the flow of dramatic action. In O'Casey's drama, some of these techniques are used to achieve a similar effect. However, his most effective estrangement technique comes from the old popular tradition and the tradition of

Shakespeare's drama, i.e. the alternation and juxtaposition of the modes of the tragic and the comic. Though Brecht never used this technique in the same way as O'Casey, he, nevertheless, assigned great importance to comedy. "Sensuousness and humour" were, for him, essential elements of the epic theatre. "A theatre that cannot be laughed in is a theatre to laugh at," he remarked in The Messingkauf Dialogues (95). Walter Benjamin also points to the relationship of laughter to epic drama: "there is no better starting point for thought than laughter; speaking more precisely, the spasms of the diaphragm generally offer better chances for thought than spasms of the soul" (101).

In the following pages, I shall examine O'Casey's play, The Silver Tassie, in order to highlight his method and its ideological implications. The Tassie, which was written immediately after the Abbey plays, makes certain new departures in subject matter and technique and yet the overall method remains similar to that of the trilogy.

Red Laugh of War

Set against the background of the first World War, The Tassie, is generally read as an unrelieved portrayal of the horrors of the war. The impression gains strength from the powerfully executed second act in which O'Casey records the crippling and dehumanizing effects of war on the ordinary people. The whole play, however, is more than that. O'Casey himself described The Tassie as "A Tragi-Comedy in Four Acts." While the second act is written in the expressionist style, in the rest of the three acts O'Casey's returns to the method of the Abbey plays. In these parts there is a constant shift in the dramatic action from the tragic to the

farcical, from poignant soliloquizing to music-hall turns, from a mood of despair and helplessness to a cheerful determination to look beyond the present. In the midst of a cruel and stupid war, there is also people's laughter and their collective capacity to carry on with their lives. This is the same vision that animates the three Dublin plays--the affirmation of the human will and of hope in the alternative possibilities of the future.

Expressionism, whose beginnings can be traced to the plays of Strindberg at the turn of the century became a theatrical movement around the time of the World War. In the works of such playwrights as Ernst Toller, Georg Kaiser, and Eugene O'Neill, expressionism became a means of projecting the fragmentation and disintegration of man in a machine-dominated world. As the old tradition of realistic dramaturgy was found to be inadequate to express this new view of life and society, more suitable dramatic forms and styles of presentation were evolved in the new drama. De-personalized characters, the absence of a recognizable, or specific, time or space, the absence of a logical progression of events, broken and distorted dialogue are some of the features of these plays. In much of this drama, the use of expressionist technique is related to what Raymond Williams defines as the "subjective-critical consciousness," i.e., a consciousness which is critical of the bourgeois society and, yet, because it cannot conceive of an alternative, accepts the existing situation as inevitable. Trapped within this closed world, it can only give vent to an impotent anguish and despair which, through its sheer persistence, leads to a conviction in the meaninglessness and absurdity of the human condition itself. This, as Williams points out in Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, is a significant slide in

which the subjective consciousness begins to perceive a particular social condition at a particular historical moment as the universal human condition.

In The Tassie, O'Casey experiments with expressionism to realize the horror of senseless destruction caused by the war without surrendering to subjectivist despair. The second act is situated in the war zone. The scene is given a grotesque and unreal atmosphere--the human figures, the setting, and the language are deliberately distorted to convey the nightmarish experience of war. The scene is made up of the ruins of a monastery and rubbish heaps of destroyed buildings from which lean, dead hands protrude. A part of the monastery is used as the Red Cross Station. The other religious symbols are the figure of the Virgin in a stained-glass window, and a crucifix with a partially blown-off arm. In the centre, at the back, is a big howitzer gun whose barrel points menacingly towards the front. The flesh-and-blood characters of the earlier scene disappear altogether and are replaced by a mass of soldiers who can only be distinguished by their numbers or by designations (The Staff-Wallah, The Corporal, 1st Soldier, 2nd Soldier, etc.). The men express their bewilderment, "But wy'r we'ere, wy'r we'ere -- that's wot we wants to know!" (39); their feeling of being trapped in a no-win situation, and their fear of death and total oblivion. As the news of the enemy attack comes in, the soldiers assemble around the howitzer to sing a hymn to this new god of war, an act which underlines the collaborative relationship between the Church and the agents of destruction. The use of stylized language further reinforces the senselessness and horror of war. The soldiers express their shell-shocked, lost state of mind and their physical pain through a rhythmic chant with parodies of the Biblical language and of contemporary songs. These are interspersed with the staccato dialogue of the Visitor

and the Staff-Wallah, outsiders who have come to observe or to bring orders from the high command.

Thus, in the second act, O'Casey employs expressionist techniques to express what was a significant and authentic experience of early twentieth-century Europe brought about by an absurd and cruel war. It is indeed a bitter and a savage portrayal of the paralysing and mutilating effects of war and modern technology on human life. But, significantly, O'Casey refuses to perceive this as the inevitable and ultimate condition of human society. Instead, his portrayal of the absurdity of the situation, and of the human suffering attendant upon it, remains a historically specific experience beyond which still lies the possibility of other experiences and modes of apprehending and organizing life. Expressionism, with its tendency towards a nihilistic view of life was incapable of representing these alternatives. O'Casey's own awareness of the limitations of expressionism as a dramatic form is evident in his many discussions on the subject. Once, when asked to comment on the influence of expressionist writers, such as Kaiser, Toller and Piscator, on his own work, he responded: 'Too much skeletonised; not enough of the plumpness of life, and little humour. The Elizabethans, on the other hand, were dizzy with life, prancing humour, and when the need is there, a sad journey through a via dolorosa " (qtd. in Ayling, Continuity 106). Therefore, one finds, that in The Tassie, O'Casey combines Expressionism with Elizabethanism (a term used by some critics to describe his dramatic style of the Abbey plays) in order to realize a larger and multi-dimensional perspective on reality.[3]

The expressionist second act is framed by a vividly realized world of life and blood people who possess a tireless energy and a great capacity for enjoyment and

action. They relate to each other readily, as neighbours, relatives, friends, even enemies. Never at a loss for words, they are quick to establish an easy communicability between themselves even in the most difficult of situations. The notion of the impossibility of communication between human beings which becomes a dominant idea in the writers of the absurd drama is alien to O'Casey's world-view. The war reduces the men to an undifferentiated mass of lifeless, mechanized figures, replacing the spirited exchange of words by a monotonous chant, but only temporarily. As the war ends, as all wars must, we see these uncrushable, resilient men and women return to put their lives in order and once again express their urge for shared social pleasures.

O'Casey counters the grotesque absurdity of the war experience with comic grotesque. The two main comic clowns in the play are Sylvester Heegan and Simon Norton, both employed workmen in their sixties. Drawn in the tradition of Boyle and Joxer, the two butties keep up a constant chatter and argument with each other. They possess a strong common-sensical and this-worldly attitude and do not like their ordinary pleasures and comforts to be unnecessarily disturbed. When we meet them in Act I, they are animatedly recounting tales of Harry Heegan's athletic exploits to each other. In this they are constantly interrupted by Susie Monican who reminds them of the dangers of sin and God's retribution and exhorts them to follow the path of religious devotion and repentance. They try to ward off this intrusion of the sacred in their leisure time with all the persuasiveness they have at their command: "It's persecutin', that tambourine theology of Susie's. I always get a curious, sickenin' feelin', Simon, when I hear the Name of the Supreme Bein' tossed into the quietness of a sensible conversation" (141). Susie's unrelenting sermonizing,

and the various strategies employed by the two men to either ignore her or somehow restrain her fanatic religious zeal even while they are themselves becoming increasingly self-conscious and uneasy about the issues she raises, make up the comedy in the opening scene. Like the traditional clown or fool figure, these two are both the laughing subjects as well as the objects of the audience's laughter. We laugh with them and also at them.

In Act III, the two butties resurface in a hospital ward. The setting of the hospital, the presence of injured soldiers, and above all Harry's desperate brooding underline the terrible effects of the war on the people. In a simultaneous counter-movement, however, the wildly funny comic routines of the two clowns work to confute and dissipate the sense of gloom and helplessness. Simon and Sylvester are the little men grappling with powerful events and powerful men (in this case, the doctors and nurses who hold their lives in their hands). Their stubborn refusal to conform to orders, their jesting responses to events, and their improvisatory competence counters the sense of abject helplessness produced by the coercive environment of the war situation. Susie Monican's attempts to maintain decorum and keep a distance between herself and the injured men is undercut by their insistent show of familiarity with her. While she addresses them by their numbers, they repeatedly sing out her first name, and when chided for it, break out into a wild mimicry:

> Sylvester (mimicking Susie). Twenty-six, if you're going to remeen in a comatowse condition, you'll have to keep your bed in a tidy an' awdahly mannah.
>
> Simon. Dtch, dtch, dtch, Twenty-seven, it's disgraceful. And as long as you're heah, in the capacity of a patient, please remember I'm not to be addressed as "Susie", but as "Nurse Monican." (175)

The cold impersonality of the hospital and the reduction of men into numbers is an extension of the war-front situation in Act II. Now that the war is over the men bounce back to regain some control over their lives and assert their right to be themselves again. However when it suits their purpose they use these very numbers to create strategic misunderstandings and confusion in order to escape from unpleasant tasks. When orders are shouted for Twenty-six to take a bath and for Twenty-seven to prepare it for him, Sylvester makes a desperate attempt to reverse things while Simon tries to stand his ground against him. This is represented through an uproarious cross-talk routine between the "straight" man and the "funny" man which uses echoing repetitions to enhance the comic effect.

Sylvester (angrily). A bawth: well, be God, that's a good one! I'm not in a fit condition for a bath!

(Another pause).

Sylvester (earnestly, to Simon). You haven't had a dip now for nearly a week, while I had one only the day before yesterday in the late evening: it must have been you she meant, Simon.

Simon. Oh,there was no dubiety about her bellowing out Twenty-six, Syl.

Sylvester (excitedly). How the hell d'ye know, man, she didn't mix the numbers up?

Simon. Mix the numbers up! How could the woman mix the numbers up?

Sylvester. How could the woman mix the numbers up? What could be easier than to say Twenty-six instead of Twenty-seven? How could the woman mix the numbers up! Of course the woman could mix the numbers up!

Simon. What d'ye expect me to do --hurl myself into a bath that was meant for you?

Sylvester. I don't want you to hurl yourself into anything; but you don't expect me to plunge into a bath that maybe wasn't meant for me?

Simon. Nurse Monican said Twenty-six, and when you can alter that, ring me up and let me know.

(A pause; then Simon gets up and goes toward bathroom door).

Sylvester (snappily). Where are you leppin' to now?

Simon. I want to get the bath ready.

Sylvester. You want to get the bawth ready! Turn the hot cock on, and turn the cold cock on for Number Twenty-six, mixin' them the way a chemist would mix his medicines--sit still, man, till we hear the final verdict. (176)

The comedy also functions to undercut the heroic perspective represented by the central character, Harry Heegan. Vigorous, warm-hearted, and fun-loving, Heegan is the community's hero. He enjoys the love and admiration of people around him who derive vicarious pleasure from telling stories about his physical feats to each other. It is largely due to his physical prowess and athletic skill that his club has won the football match and the silver tassie for the third time in a row. A reckless courage and unquestioning self-confidence marks his everyday behaviour. He displays a similar attitude even when he is preparing to go to the battlefield.

In contrast to Heegan, the other characters are pragmatic and deliberately unheroic. They are basically survivors, all of them. The ideology of survival as a form of subversive wisdom, as Joel Schechter has pointed out, has been a hallmark of many literary clowns from Falstaff to Brecht's Schweyk. The ability of small people to survive in this arbitrary and uncertain world is no mean achievement as Sylvester tells his friend, "We have our hands full, Simon, to keep alive" (182). It is perhaps this instinct for self-preservation that saves them from any permanent physical or emotional injury in the war. That the two are old hands at the game is made clear from the First Act itself not only in their successful evasion of Susie's evangelical assault but also in a hilariously funny scene that follows this. When Mrs. Foran, the

upstairs neighbour, gets the full brunt of her husband's wrath for serving him burnt steak and the noise of the fight and of the crash of breaking delft is heard downstairs, Simon, in a moment of reckless courage, decides to intervene on behalf of the poor wife and save her from being killed. He is however later reported to have abandoned the idea and instead run for his life when threatened by the angry Foran. In the mad chase that follows, Mrs. Foran comes crashing into the room, sending Sylvester, who is frantically trying to shut the door on danger, headlong to the floor. As both of them fight their way under the bed to escape Foran's fury, the latter enters and after an unsuccessful attempt at making her come out from under the bed, smashes her precious wedding bowl and walks out. The images of Simon running out to save his own life and of Sylvester cowering under the bed create strong visual counterpoints to the ideology of heroism.

The women characters, Mrs. Foran and Mrs. Heegan, too, display a down-to-earth, practical approach to life. Their anxiety to send their menfolk to the army camp is prompted by their clear-headed realization that the men's failure to report back on duty in time would result in the loss of the family allowance. Thus while Heegan and his friends lose themselves in the excitement of winning the match, Mrs. Heegan keeps interrupting their merry-making to remind him to get ready to leave home. Mrs. Foran also adds to this comic chorus by periodically appealing to everyone in general to "run up an' bring Teddy down for fear he'd be left behind" (153).

The laughter of the people underlines a cheerful acceptance of human frailty and imperfection. For all their admiration of Heegan as a local hero, the people about him go on with their daily business on their own terms without in the least

attempting to emulate his example. In fact, as pointed out above, they steadfastly and persistently resist the heroic ethos, offering in its place a pragmatic and materialist approach to life. The women's concern for financial security is not, as some critics tend to believe, an evidence of the corruption of motherly feelings by money (S. Williams 102; Harkness 132-33). Instead it shows a frank acknowledgement of the true material basis of social existence. The women never lose their grip on material reality because they know that their survival depends upon it. O'Casey draws attention to this consciousness again later in the play, this time in a poignant moment which actually highlights Mrs. Heegan's motherly concern for her wounded son. After the war, when it becomes certain that Heegan will remain an invalid all his life, she draws comfort from the fact that his incapacitation allowance would at least enable him to live with self-dependence and dignity even in the worst of times.

O'Casey situates his protagonist within this comic community, thereby distancing him and placing the heroic ethos in a critical perspective. The reality of everyday material life unsettles the abstractly heroic, making Heegan's behaviour appear somewhat foolish and naive at times. O'Casey's own didascalia refers to his incogitancy: "He has gone to the trenches as unthinkingly as he would go to the polling booth" (152). Also opposed to the collective life of the people is Heegan's excessive preoccupation with himself and his own achievements. The same self-indulgence can be seen in his morbid playing up of his own tragic fate in the later scenes. This does not necessarily preclude admiration or sympathy for the protagonist but makes for a complex vision of reality which encompasses conflicting

views of experience. Heegan is both admirable and ridiculous. His tragic plight evokes sympathy but it also points to the need to look beyond it.

The basic structure of the play is rooted not in the individual consciousness of the central character but in the larger life of the community. Yeats was not off the mark when he complained that there was no dominating character, or dominating action in The Tassie though for him these were artistic flaws, which together with other weaknesses, marred the play and resulted in its rejection by the Abbey.[4] For, in spite of the presence of a hero whose fate follows a tragic trajectory, the play does not concentrate single-mindedly on his story but weaves together a variety of strands of different colours and moods. This necessarily leads to a lack of structural coherence in the traditional sense. For the presence of dispersed, plural and collective voices in the play make for a much more diffused and open-ended structure than a strictly hero-centred play would allow. Not only do the various Acts differ from each other in mood and style but even within each act the arrangement of the units of action follows a pattern of shifting perspectives. Thus in Acts III and IV, the dramatization of Heegan's tragedy shares an equal focus with the portrayal of the rest of the community. Act III properly belongs to Sylvester and Simon, while Act IV is given over to the collectivity which participates in the dance celebrations.

The antics of Sylvester and Simon transfigure the sterile, awesome atmosphere of the hospital ward. They not only subvert the authority of the hospital staff by mimicking them and by transgressing the hospital rules but also provide a comic counterpoint to the agonized suffering of Heegan by their incessant talking, arguing and contradicting each other. The laughter that is generated by them does not function as simple parody or satire directed at any particular individual, nor does it

provide comic relief. Rather it offers an alternative interpretation of the social and existential reality in which everything, even death and suffering, becomes a laughing matter. In a comic parallel to Heegan's bitter anxiety over his impending surgical operation and his future, Sylvester is shown expressing his fear about his own minor operation scheduled for the next morning. Simon's foolish advice and the former's exasperated response evokes laughter in which the danger of death is collapsed with the misfortune of having a foolish friend.

> Sylvester (with a groan). When they once get you down your only hope is in the infinite mercy of God.
>
> Simon. If I was you, Sylvester, I wouldn't take this operation too seriously. You know th' oul' song--Let Me like a Soldier Fall! If I was you, I'd put it completely out of me mind.
>
> Sylvester (subsiding on to the pillow--with an agonised look on his face. Let me like a soldier fall! Did anyone ever hear th' equal o' that! Put it out of me mind completely! (He sits up, and glares at Simon.) Eh, you, look! If you can't think sensibly, then try to think without talkin'! (He sinks back on the pillow again.) Let me like a soldier fall. Oh, it's not a fair trial for a sensible man to be stuck down in a world like this! (185)

The comic exchange mocks at the abstractions of heroism as well as at the tragic contemplation of death. For death and mutilation may be tragic when viewed from the perspective of a single, individual life but placed with the larger social and biological process it merely marks a temporary discontinuity, a moment of transition which is then linked with change and renewal. The last act of the play celebrates this renewal through communal festivity and dance. Susie's invitation to the people to join in the dance is a recognition of this complex reality of the social process in which death and rebirth are inextricably linked: "Teddy Foran and Harry Hegan have gone to live their own way in another world. Neither I nor you can lift them out of it. . . . We would if we could. It is the misfortune of war. As long as wars are

waged, we shall be vexed by woe; strong legs shall be made useless and bright eyes made dark. But we, who have come through the fire unharmed, must go on living. . . . Come along and take your part in life!" (202).

The action in the last two acts of the play registers a dual movement. While the hero, with his excessive self-pity and a refusal to come to terms with his situation, approaches a state of isolation, the rest of the community comes together and commits itself to rebuilding their broken lives. The urge for survival and renewal is so strong that it even seems to affect Heegan as he struggles to come out of his morbid solitariness and begins to respond to the friendliness and sympathy of the others. His last lines before he agrees to leave the dance-hall with Teddy--"What's in front we'll face like men! . . . The Lord hath given and man hath taken away" (202)--indicate the possibilities of recovery and a new beginning.

The Tassie, like the Dublin trilogy, rejects the idea that suffering is inevitable or ennobling. Heegan's recognition that his tragedy is inflicted by human beings, reminiscent of Juno's powerful "Ah, what can God do agen the stupidity o' men!" (70), unambiguously connects human suffering to its social and historical context. In doing so, it suggests the possibility that this particular kind of suffering could have been avoided.

Dublin and its Popular Theatre

When in the 1920s, O'Casey became associated with the Abbey Theatre as a playwright whose success at the box-office literally saved the theatre from financial bankruptcy, he did not tell anyone that he had known that stage well some twenty years ago when it was "a well-soiled tumble me down theatre in Abbey Street, where

no fairly respectable man or woman would dare to be seen" (Pictures 26). The Abbey Theatre was known as the Mechanics in those days. Owned by the co-manager of the Queen's Theatre, it was used to house the Queen's second company, led by a young actor, Tommy Talton, who was a close friend of O'Casey's brother, Archie. Archie himself was interested in theatre ("completely gone on the stage," according to O'Casey) and often acted in plays staged by Talton while the young Sean watched the rehearsals and sat among the audience during the shows. Sometimes he was even invited to stand in for an absent actor at the last moment, a job that he performed without any difficulty since he knew all the dialogues by heart.

It was sometime during this period that Archie, together with a few friends, formed the Townshend Dramatic Society for which they rented an unused stable for a shilling a week. By removing the partitions, and whitewashing the walls, they managed to convert it into an auditorium. The walls were decorated with the Irish symbols of harp, wolf-dog, round tower, and shamrock. The timber for the loft was used to erect a stage at one end and some benches for the audience. Old lanterns shaded with coloured cardboard functioned as footlights while landscape sets were designed from old canvas discarded by the Queen's. Thus was created, through collective endeavour and from meagre means, a cosy, intimate theatre in which an audience of 40 to 50 people paid twopence each to see scenes from Shakespeare's Henry VI, Julius Caesar, Henry VIII, or Boucicault's The Shaughraun, Arrah-na-Pogue, and The Octoroon.

It was here, in these theatres, that O'Casey received his apprenticeship in theatre. He was introduced to the drama of Shakespeare, Boucicault and the scores

of melodramas published in Dick's penny-editions of Standard Plays. The plays were chosen for their strong theatricality and their ability to engage the spectators' emotions. As Talton told the young Sean: "Shakespeare was a great choice: but Dion Boucicault was really quite as great a choice as Shakespeare. Shakespeare's good in bits; but for colour and stir, give me Boucicault!" (28-29).

Though melodrama was the one popular theatrical form with which O'Casey was in direct contact during his formative years, it was by no means the only one available to him at that time. The turn-of-the-century Dublin provided a rich theatrical fare to its people, including pantomime, extravaganza, music-hall, minstrel show, burlesque and revue. If the Queen's was known principally for melodrama, the Gaiety put on pantomimes together with the Royal, the Queen's and smaller halls which staged Christmas season extravaganzas. Dan Lowery's Star of Erin (Empire), The Lyric Theatre of Varieties, The Harp, The Tivoli, Mechanics and Leinster Hall were a few among those which hosted music-hall performers, minstrels, and variety entertainers. The popularity of these shows is evident from not only the large number of theatres in the city but also from the capacity of some of these to accommodate large audiences. Dan Lowery's Empire is reported to have increased its capacity from 600 in 1879 to 3000 in 1897. By modest estimates, at least 2000 people went to watch these performances nightly in Dublin.[5] While the pantomime was largely, though not exclusively, a middle-class entertainment, music-hall, melodrama, and the minstrel shows, appealed to a cross-section of the working and the middle- class audiences.

O'Casey himself acknowledged his acquaintance only with melodrama. When, after the performance of his Abbey plays, some critics disparagingly suggested the

influence of the revue, burlesque, and music-hall on his drama, he dismissed their observations as based on ignorance, since he had never attended any of these theatrical performances. It may be true that he had no first-hand knowledge of these dramatic forms and styles. However, given the way theatre was organized in the city made it possible for its influence to be more extensive than one would have been conscious of. There were two main reasons for this. First, there was a free and easy mingling of genres on the nineteenth-century popular stage. Popular forms have traditionally had a protean quality and this theatre was no exception. As a result, it would have been difficult for anyone involved in theatre, even of a particular kind, not to become acquainted with other forms and genres. Secondly, the pervasive presence of popular theatre all over the city made its experience available to everyone in some form or the other even outside the halls.

The crowded and varied theatrical landscape of Dublin at this time was characterized by a lot of intermixing and overlapping. As Cheryl Herr puts it, this was a theatre which was highly and self-consciously intertextual: "Melodrama begat burlesque, pantomime begat extravaganza, pantomime quoted burlesque, and music-hall interpenetrated the lot" (120). The various genres freely borrowed forms and styles from each other in order to keep up with the tastes of their audiences. An instance of this was the new practice of inviting popular music-hall artists to play principal roles in pantomimes which brought about a definite change in the form of the pantomime. Variety turns were frequently introduced to punctuate the action, and not necessarily because of the logical requirements of the action. Moreover, the actors transported with them their typical songs, dances and "gags," thereby altering the very character of a form that had been regarded as a wholesome family

entertainment for so long. Extravaganzas and burlesques, too, started the convention of incorporating topical songs to generate local and topical interest.

Also, theatres usually offered a mixed fare of entertainment for their patrons. O'Casey tells us that the Mechanics often billed melodrama--including scenes from Shakespeare and Boucicault--together with minstrel shows. For what were undoubtedly sound economic reasons, the same theatre organized, on alternate nights, vaudeville, boxing matches and competitive games where "men, with hands tied behind their back, struggling to swallow boiling-hot suet puddings; in their haste, knocking them from the table to floor, and so forcing themselves to stretch there, eating with voracity, for ten shillings reward was to be given to him who finished his pudding first" (Inishfallen 228).

The presence of this varied and vigorous theatrical activity could be felt all over the city as part of what went on inside the halls spilled over into the outside everyday world of the ordinary Dubliner. Playbills carrying plot summaries of melodramas were usually hung in pubs and in shops. Billboards displayed large advertisements with pictures of actors and of scenes from the shows. Lowrey's Empire was especially known for its aggressive publicity. They printed their posters in large numbers which were plastered in every nook and corner of the city. Sometimes, actors issued their personal posters depicting themselves in gorgeous theatrical costumes and striking poses. The popular songs were invariably printed in cheap songsheets and either sold separately or distributed through newspapers. Thus most people knew the songs and hummed the tunes even if they had not actually been inside the theatre to hear them being sung. O'Casey describes an incident in Pictures when, waiting for Talton at the Mechanics, he is gazing at the

"photographs and coloured pictures of lovely ladies in lovely dresses (206)" (perhaps music-hall artists since Mechanics used to be a music-hall before it was taken over by the Queen's) that hung on the walls of the actor's dressing-room. The sight evokes in him memories of a "naughty song" which O'Casey quotes in his narrative.

The shaping influence of this cultural and theatrical milieu was recognizable in his drama from the very beginning. Most critics tended to view this as an unwelcome intrusion of the popular on the Abbey stage and an affront to its "serious", "artistic" purpose. In stark contrast, however, was the enthusiastic response of the Dublin audiences made evident by the long queues outside the theatre with shows running to a packed hall each night.[6] This was not surprising given O'Casey's familiarity with the artistic tastes and demands of popular audiences. During his nightly attendance in working-class theatres in his youth, he had observed the people around him closely and had a fair assessment of their reactions. In his autobiography he describes them as "a rough-and-randy crowd who came to while away the time, but who put great pass on the suffering and rollicking that shivered and shone on the stage; with the lights dim when the tears were falling, and the lights high when bravery took the branch, or when fun gambolled its way from the stage into the hearts of the laughing people watching from the darkness" (Pictures 204). It was an audience which liked to ride high on emotion; they laughed and cried with the changing fortunes of the characters in the plays, and did so without inhibition. In middle-class theatres, on the other hand, there was a growing trend towards the suppression of emotion as any expression of feeling was considered sentimental and mawkish. No doubt this itself was a reaction against the worst examples of nineteenth-century sentimental drama but this reaction tended to go to

the other extreme of an excessive preoccupation with the cerebral. The result was a drama totally devoid of emotion and imagination, a drama of realistic unpleasantness which invited the spectator to a "contemplation of the baseness and brutality of life."[7] In Ireland, Synge decried the drama of Ibsen and Zola which dealt with the reality of life in "joyless and pallid words." He went on to point out that "On the stage one must have reality and one must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed . . ." (174-75). For O'Casey, too, emotion, imagination and fantasy were the most important elements for any theatre worth its name. He wrote: "imagination is a far greater power in the drama than intellect of the highest," and "Intellect can never banish emotion from the theatre . . ." (Blasts 83-84). In another essay, he argues against "slice of life", naturalistic representations in contemporary theatre spelling out the threat this poses to theatre as a whole: "Poetry, passion, song, rhythm, rhetoric; exaggeration of emotion and gesture have been gutted out of the so-called modern drama; it has been purified out of existence . . . she has been made sober by the law of technique, and will never come to her senses till she takes to drink again" (116).

O'Casey often harked back to the older dramatic traditions of the Elizabethans and the Greeks in which all these elements were combined to create a larger-than-life, intellectually and aesthetically vital theatre. Some of this vitality was preserved and continued in the popular dramatic forms of nineteenth-century England and Ireland. Melodrama, pantomime, and music-hall were part of a popular theatre which appealed to wide sections of society and provided robust entertainment to them. This theatre is characterized by thrilling action, heightened emotion,

spectacle, fantasy, and humour. It afforded a space in which the spectators could be transported to a make-believe world of wonder, magic, colour, and delight.

"I am still interested in melodrama"

Melodrama presented a clear-cut morality with its rigid moral distinctions, and stereotyped characters and situations. The action followed a pattern of sudden alternation between pathos and low comedy and was accompanied by surprising revelations and coincidences, and spectacular scenic effects. Many of these plays featured lower-class men and women and dealt with familiar problems of class exploitation, poverty, industrialism, urban environment etc. The capitalists and landlords were generally portrayed as villains. This realistic thrust is balanced by the insistence on showing virtue as triumphant and vice punished in the end. These were no doubt simplistic and neat resolutions, but what came across powerfully through these plays was a strong utopian element: a vision of life as it should be, and the glorification of the values of true love, honour, loyalty, patriotism, courage and steadfastness of purpose. In these flattering self-images, the socially deprived sections could experience a sense of self-pride and dignity. This idealization, however, had another aspect. The dramatization of the invariable reversal of the hero's fortunes in the end could also function to contain social discontent and class antagonisms. Often, social issues were taken up for their mass appeal and saleability rather than for any genuine social concern.

When O'Casey's Dublin plays were first staged at the Abbey, some critics categorized them as melodramas rather than as tragedies. A.E. Malone clearly distinguished the two genres: "Tragedy must present a solemn view of life with

depth, with feeling . . . if the imagination be not led upwards and onwards from the individual to the universal, the play . . . is but superficial melodrama" (213). Seen from this perspective, Juno alone qualified for the status of tragedy because though it had "its superficial qualities" it was ennobled and uplifted by the character of Juno who represented the great universal mother. In the other plays, any tendency towards such universalization was seen to be persistently undercut by the playwright's penchant for treating the spectators to sudden and violent turns of mood from the grimly tragic to the low comic and farcical. I have already discussed this aspect of O'Casey's dramaturgy in the earlier part of this chapter. I need only to reiterate here that the complex, multi-dimensional experience that these plays offer is integral to O'Casey's ideological and aesthetic purposes. Unlike his middle-class detractors, he neither despised melodrama nor dismissed it as a low genre but willingly borrowed from it the devices and techniques that suited his own needs. T.S. Eliot, who had a keen understanding of popular dramatic forms, once pointed out "You cannot define Drama and Melodrama so that they shall be reciprocally exclusive; great drama has something melodramatic in it, and the best melodrama partakes of the greatness of drama" (431).

O'Casey often uses stock melodramatic plots and situations which are expertly woven into the overall thematic texture. The plot of the will in Juno--its sudden appearance and its equally sudden demise--is straight out of melodrama. Similarly Bentham is modelled on the deceitful seducer who abandons the girl and disappears from the scene. However, as pointed out in Chapter 3, in O'Casey's hands this hackneyed plot becomes a vehicle of a powerful political parable on the nature of the newly independent state. Similarly, in Gunmen, Maguire's mysterious figure and

the sudden discovery of bombs in his bag just as the Blacks-and-Tans arrive to raid the tenement are effective devices which produce shock and suspense. But, on a deeper cognitive level, Maguire's brief appearance, in which he hardly speaks more than five sentences, together with the news of his ambush, creates a pattern of contrasts between the gunmen and the people, between the political conspirators and the innocent victims, and between the silent doers and the dreamers and babblers.

These plots, however, do not extend to the last-minute rescue, or miraculous change of heart that led to the inevitable happy ending in melodrama. As a political dramatist, O'Casey's focus is on social reality and on the way social and political forces influence and shape this reality. The Dublin plays document a difficult period of Irish history, a period of disillusionment and betrayal for the working-class movement. With the ascendance of the bourgeoisie in the new state, there was no hope of an immediate deliverance for the working people. Consequently, the plays do not provide the false security of a happy ending but leave the spectators with an experience of unnecessary death, destruction and suffering. At the same time, however, the plays are open-ended; they open out towards a future horizon of self-fulfilment and happiness. For O'Casey, the contours of this utopia are unmistakably shaped by collective human will and effort. Even in a play such as Red Roses which models its protagonist on the gigantic figure of Larkin, the ultimate salvation is shown to lie in collective endeavour and not in any individual figure.

Another aspect of O'Casey's dramaturgy that underlines its closeness to melodrama is his use of broad gestures and strong incidents on stage. Nineteenth-century melodrama was a drama of "great effects." In order to achieve these great effects, it sought to place its characters in bold and striking situations. There was

little room for intricate emotion or subtlety of delineation: instead meaning was conveyed through broad gestures. O'Casey, too, had a strong sense of theatricality and made effective use of these melodramatic conventions. In her speech after the death of her son, Juno repeats the words of Mrs. Tancred, who had also lost her son earlier in the play.

> What was the pain I suffered, Johnny, bringin' you into the world to carry you to your cradle, to the pains I'll suffer carryin' you out o' the world to bring you to your grave! Mother o' God, Mother o' God, have pity on us all! Blessed Virgin, where were you when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets, when me darlin' son was riddled with bullets? Sacred Heart o' Jesus, take away our hearts o' stone, and give us hearts o' flesh! Take away this murdherin' hate, an' give us Thine own eternal love! (72)

In some productions, on both these occasions, the actresses step forward and address their speech to the audience. Some critics find this awkward as it disturbs the naturalistic frame and, therefore, the supposed intensity of the tragic emotion. However, besides being theatrical, what the scene does achieve, and what is important to O'Casey's artistic purpose in the play, is that while conveying the private grief of the mothers it also points to the larger social tragedy of which they are a part. The scene of Bessie's death in The Plough is another example of theatrically effective drama. It is a long-drawn out scene in which, realizing that she has been shot, Bessie begins to curse and abuse Nora, then becomes frantic and shouts for help and finally as life ebbs outs of her sings a hymn affirming her faith in Jesus. The portrayal of violent shifts of emotion, again, though not consonant with bourgeois dramatic norms, point to a complex and rich characterization.

Perhaps, the most essential aspect of melodrama's popular appeal was its spectacular nature. No melodrama was considered complete without at least one grand spectacular scene. Catastrophes, both natural and man-made, became an

integral part of the structure of these plays as they could not only produce an intense emotional response but were ideally suited for spectacular action. Burning buildings and hair-raising rescues, sinking ships with water gushing through them, avalanches, erupting volcanoes, etc. were simulated with the help of lights, sound, and complicated machinery. Other spectacles featured supernatural elements such as ghosts, apparitions, and hooded figures. There were also elaborately staged battles and royal processions with columns of soldiers, horses, waving banners, boom of cannon, clouds of smoke etc. Such scenes were advertised prominently and were known to draw audiences to the theatre. The popular audience's fondness for spectacle is reflected not only in melodrama but also in pantomime, to which we will now turn.

Pantomime:Spectacle and Transformation

Though an essential part of pantomime, the spectacle was used for a different purpose in this theatre. If melodrama employed spectacle for the reproduction of social verisimilitude and to produce emotional and physical sensation, in pantomime it was directed towards fantasy, helping to create a fairy world of ideal beauty and splendour (Booth, Victorian 60-92). Pantomime followed a three part structure: an opening story, which usually dealt with an authoritarian father trying to impede his daughter's union with her lover, and offering her to a suitor of his choice; the harlequinade, which follows when a benevolent fairy transforms the characters into Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, Clown, and Lover; and the final scene, which returns to the fairy world and celebrates the triumph of love and happiness. The transformation scene was generally a lavish spectacle which evoked the magic and

wonder of the fairy world. In The World Behind the Scenes (1881), Percy Fitzgerald provides a detailed description of a typical transformation scene:

> All will recall in some elaborate transformation scene how quietly and gradually it is evolved. First the "gauzes" lift slowly one behind the other--perhaps the most pleasing of all scenic effects--giving glimpses of "the Realms of Bliss," seen beyond in a tantalizing fashion. Then is revealed a kind of half-glorified country, clouds and banks, evidently concealing much. . . . Now we hear the faint tinkle--signal to those aloft on "bridges" to open more glories. Now some of the banks begin to part slowly, showing realms of light, with a few divine beings--fairies--rising slowly here and there. More breaks beyond and fairies rising, with a pyramid of these ladies beginning to mount slowly in the centre. Thus it goes on, the lights streaming on full, in every colour and from every quarter, in the richest effulgence. . . . While, finally, perhaps, at the back of all, the most glorious paradise of all will open, revealing the pure empyrean itself, and some fair spirit aloft in a cloud among the stars--the apex of all. Then all motion ceases; the work is complete; the fumes of crimson, green, and blue fire begin to rise at the wings; the music burst into a crash of exultation; and, possibly to the general disenchantment, a burly man in a black frock coat steps out from the side and bows awkwardly. Then to shrill whistle the first scene of the harlequinade closes in, and shuts out the brilliant vision. (qtd. in Mander and Mitchenson 28)

Sometimes, the pantomime began with a gloomy scene in the realm of the evil spirit which then shifted to the brightly lit domain of the good fairy. Often these scenes had a seasonal theme. The 1894 production of Dick Whittington at the Gaiety in Dublin had a transformation scene called "Through Storm and Snow to Sunshine." In 1895, the Queen's production of The Forty Thieves presented "Spring's Triumph over Winter" (Herr 162-3). Such seasonal themes provided ample scope for technically clever and visually pleasing effects in theatre.

Like melodrama, these transformation scenes in the pantos presented an idealized picture of the triumph of good over evil. The magical transformations from rags to riches, from despair and loneliness to happiness, from a hostile environment to a benign one were attractive to the people because they voiced their individual

and collective dreams and fantasies. Again, as in melodrama, these worked in a double-edged manner. While they awakened utopian impulses, they also functioned to manage and defuse these impulses through cathartic release in the theatre. It is also important to bear in mind that often commercial considerations determined its style and content. Further, developments in stage technology and the immense popularity of the Victorian spectacle made it grow bigger and more lavish till scenic splendour and sheer pageantry marginalized all other elements of the show. Its exclusive emphasis on the visual and the corresponding paucity of content was noticed by many critics. Bernard Shaw criticized this tendency to create spectacle for its own sake in a review of a Drury Lane pantomime: "It is a glittering, noisy void, horribly wearisome and enervating like all performances which worry the physical senses without any recreative appeal to the emotions and through them to the intellect" (Saturday Review, 1 January 1898).

In his love for spectacle O'Casey is the true inheritor of the nineteenth-century popular theatre. He decried the post-Ibsenian modern, intellectual drama for presenting dull and lifeless pictures on stage and sought to bring back to the theatre the colour, magic, and wonder of his young days. In his drama, the visual effect is always important, it is never subordinated to, but combined with, dialogue, action, and character to create the total dramatic effect. O'Casey had to work within the limitations of the Abbey stage, which had none of the complicated machinery used by some of the London theatres or even the Dublin theatres like the Queen's or Gaiety. In any case, he had only known small theatres in his youth and had learnt the art of creating spectacle out of meagre resources. In his autobiography, he recalls the vivid colours of the costumes laid out neatly on his bed just before he was

to play a role against his brother in a scene from Shakespeare. He would represent Henry VI in black tights, black silk shoes with roses, black velvet coat, dazzled with silver and lined with blue silk, while Richard III would wear black tights, red satin slippers with gilt buckles, white embroidered silk shirt, fluffy velvet cap with feather topped with a gorgeous crimson velvet cloak. The king's throne was created by joining together two chairs and covering them with crimson cloth (Pictures 20). In Red Roses, O'Casey recreates the scene from his boyhood as Ayamonn and his mother are shown rehearsing Shakespeare. They are wearing colourful, regal robes over their working-class clothes. Throughout his plays, O'Casey continued to specify the colour scheme for each scene in his detailed didascalia. In Figuro in the Night, one of his last plays written at the age of 81, he carefully itemizes the colours of each part of the actors' costumes and the sets. In the first scene, the Young Girl's bright-red skirt and black jumper, stockings, and shoes are offset by the dirty, drab brown and black in the dresses of the Old Man and Old Woman. The second scene, introduces gaily painted houses and windows in red, blue, yellow, white, green and orange. The bare trees of the former scene are now laden with foliage and many-coloured fruits. The cheerful atmosphere of the scene is enhanced by the introduction of the various sounds of birds, the lowing of cattle, baaing of sheep, and the crowing of the cock. The colours of costumes are also more flamboyant. While the old men continue to wear tattered and dull clothes, the young lads who come out to dance are given green, red, orange and blue coats, while the girls wear white, grey, brown and black skirts with brilliant blue ribbons in their hair. The Young Girl has a blue skirt and silver bodice while the Young Man wears blue trousers and a golden coat. The Blind Man and the Deaf Man who appear earlier

in the scene are dressed in costumes which are reminiscent of the music-hall--tall hats, coat with tails/dinner jackets, and red/green trousers with collar and tie. The Birdlike Lad is also dressed in tight black clothes with bright yellow socks, yellow sandals, and a green cap.[8] One can clearly see here that the colour scheme becomes a part of the composite theatrical language that O'Casey uses in the play to communicate his meaning. Together with the dialogue, movement, music, dance, O'Casey employs colour to represent, first, the repression and then the assertion of sensual life in Irish society (Worth, "Symbolism"). In Plough, we have the example of a different kind of spectacle the simplicity and economy of which make it all the more effective. This is in the second act, which is set in a pub where the tenement dwellers assemble for a drink and some conversation. Simultaneously, an important public meeting is taking place off-stage. O'Casey uses the pub window to silhouette the figure of the speaker through it. The silhouette appears at intervals--four times in all in the scene--and during its appearance, the voice of the speaker can be heard clearly in the room. Through this brilliant juxtaposition O'Casey not only creates effective spectacle but is able to reproduce theatrically the relationship of the tenement dwellers to the nationalist movement.[9]

Image and meaning are again blended together in the grand transformation scene in Red Roses. As in pantomime, the scene represents a change from gloom and darkness to a bright vision of happiness. The first two acts of the play are set in the Dublin tenements and dramatize the bleak and depressing condition of the working class. The third act is brought out into the open street near a bridge that runs across the river Liffey. It is here that the poet, dreamer, and working-class leader, Ayamonn, leads his people to a vision of an alternate order. The horizons

of Ireland's past, present and future are invoked to stir tired minds and hearts: "think of what we can do to pull down th' banner from dusty bygones, an' fix it up in th' needs an' desires of today" (415). With this the stage grows darker and only a silver spire and crimson pillar can be seen in the distance. Ayamonn's head is set in a streak of sunlight, looking like the severed head of the mythical Irish warrior-poet, Dunn-Bo. Just as the ancient hero had continued to sing for his comrades, Ayamonn talks to his people: "We who have known, and know, the emptiness of life shall know its fullness. . . . Take heart of grace from your city's hidden splendour. . . . Look there! Th' sky has thrown a gleaming green mantle over her bare shoulders, bordhered with crimson, an' with a hood of gentle magenta over her handsome head--look!" His words are accompanied by a visual realization of the images he invokes. The didascalia states:

> The scene has brightened, and bright and lovely colours are being brought to them by the caress of the setting sun. The houses on the far side of the river now bow to the visible world, decked in mauve and burnished bronze; and the men that have been lounging against them now stand stalwart, looking like fine bronze statues, slashed with scarlet. (415)

As people begin to respond to Ayamonn's exhortations, they lift up their heads and turn towards the vision and slowly go through a process of self-transformation. The men now appear like "bronze statues, slashed with a vivid green" and the women exchange their black dresses for silver scarves and green robes. The new world is a world of material abundance and social harmony. Eeada exclaims: "The finest colours God has to give are all around us now" (417). The affirmation of this new world has as its basis the de-mystification of the permanence and unchangeability of the established order. This is expressed through a song in which people resolve to act collectively for the realization of their utopian dream. As the song ends,

Finoola, the youngest of the women, steps out to the centre of the bridge swaying gracefully to the rhythm of the music. As her steps begin to quicken into a dance, she is joined by Ayamonn while the others clap their hands to keep up the beat of the music. O'Casey's didascalia specifies the kind of music and dance that he would like used here. It also provides for golden and violet pools of light to cover the two dancers. The scene ends with the sound of marching feet in the distance and with Ayamonn's departure leaving the people puzzled by their encounter. As the colours fade out, people return to their old existence but something of their new experience remains with them. This carnival of colour, light, song, dance, music, and poetry forms an exhilarating theatrical spectacle through which O'Casey represents the utopian dream of the Dublin poor. Interestingly, O'Casey reverses the normal order of transformation scenes as found in most pantomimes of his time. While in the latter, it is mainly the change of place--from normal world to fairy land--that effects the change in characters, in O'Casey the vision of the new city is only made possible after the people themselves have undergone a change. Thus, he not only provides a spectacle that is pleasing to the eye but invests it with a cognitive richness which was often absent from the popular pantomime.

The second part of the pantomime--the harlequinade--offered a different kind of experience. If the opening part was romantic, scenically beautiful and spectacular, the harlequinade comprised fast-paced, extravagant low comedy celebrating misrule and anarchy. It generally dealt with the chase of Harlequin and Columbine by Pantaloon and his men. The action consisted of the magical tricks employed by Harlequin to thwart the designs of the oppressive father-figure who is repeatedly subjected to physical assaults and other humiliations. From the middle of the

nineteenth century, the harlequinade had begun to decline with a lengthened first part taking its place. Several writers and critics complained of the loss of what they considered to be the modern descendant of Aristophanic comedy and commedia dell'arte. A reviewer of the harlequinade in The Castle of Otranto (1840) describes a typical scene:

> The fun consists in the gradual progress made from a well-furnished room to bare walls, under the influence of Harlequin's wand, to the great annoyance of the two lodgers. Chair after chair slips through the wall or floor, fire-irons find their way up the chimney, candles whirl round when wanted to light a cigar, window-curtains dissolve to nought, sofas and tables take their departure, the chimney ornaments fling themselves at the clown, and the huge looking-glass falls on his head with fearful smash, leaving him standing in melancholy astonishment in the empty frame. (qtd. in Booth, Prefaces 155)

O'Casey recreates some of its flavour in his later comedies by incorporating in them its characteristic bustle and excitement. Dandy, Drums, and Time to Go dramatize variations of the plot of the chase. Both Dandy and Drums present a series of scenes in which young men and women confound their pursuers in all sorts of comical ways. There is abundant use of magical tricks and fantastic happenings to keep up the continuous activity that marks these plays. Strange and unpredictable things happen all of a sudden: cups and saucers come flying out of windows; horns grow on women's heads; chairs collapse under people; whisky bottles become fiery red; tall-hats change into cocks; barren trees suddenly blossom; people get stuck to their seats; others disappear into chimneys. It is world dominated by goods, things and objects, which as Michael Booth has pointed out, was a chief characteristic of the Regency Harlequinade. Inanimate objects come suddenly to life, indulge in strange behaviour and then go through frightening transformations. Their hostility is directed towards figures of authority and power. The more control these men try

to exercise on them, the more anarchical and violent they get. As a result, the surrogate Pantaloons--in O'Casey, the new Irish bourgeoisie, clerics, oppressive husbands and fathers--are subjected to carnivalesque uncrowning. They are made victims of sudden physical assaults, are immobilized by fear, or seen cowering on the ground in abject postures, and, sometimes, are even stripped of their clothes. Like the harlequinade and its precursor, the commedia dell'arte, O'Casey dramatizes extravagant events to produce laughter. The emphasis, in O'Casey's plays as well as in the pantomime, is not so much on novelty of incident but on devising theatrically interesting variations of well-known effects.

Music-Halls' 'Divarsions'

Perhaps the most influential and the most loved theatrical entertainment of the latter half of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century was the music-hall. In Dublin, Dan Lowery's Star of Erin, Grafton Theatre of Varieties, Lyric Theatre of Varieties, and The Mechanics were among the theatres that sponsored music-hall performances. The entertainers were often brought from England and the normal music-hall fare included clowning acts, jugglers and acrobats, singers and dancers, tightrope walkers, performing animals, and quick-change artists. Besides the halls, Dublin also had local artists performing in pubs for neighbourhood audiences. These were generally singing comedians who combined songs with a series of gags.

The music-hall songs were the most widely known and many of them came to acquire a life of their own outside the shows. With catchy words and tunes which made them easy to remember, they permeated the general life of the people in interesting ways. O'Casey's own plays and writings are full of references to these

songs. Sometimes he incorporates the songs within a play as in the case of "Has Anybody Here Seen Kelly" in Time to Go where Kelly is the name of a character. In Plough, the famous British marching song which was also a music-hall favourite, "It's a long way to Tipperary" can be heard in the background at the end of Act I. In Inishfallen, the chapter title "The Girl He Left Behind Him" evokes another popular number. There is also the phrase, "Ta ra ra boom de ay" (quoted at the beginning of this chapter), which was a well-known "naughty girl" song of the period, and which occurs quite frequently in O'Casey's writings. These are only some of the examples of the pervasiveness of these songs and of O'Casey's familiarity with the genre without his having been a frequent visitor to the actual music-halls himself.[10]

The emphasis on variety was one of the chief features of the music-hall. In fact, as John McGrath has pointed out, most traditional working-class entertainments, including the pantomime, club entertainment, the ceilidh in Scotland, and one may add, the hooley in Ireland, share this characteristic (Good Night 56-7). The popular audiences prefer a mixed fare of short, unconnected acts performed by a large group of people. In the post-Elizabethan middle-class theatres, on the other hand, the dominant trend has been that of three acts of concentrated, spoken drama with five or six main characters at most. O'Casey's artistic preference for plurality or variety is evident in nearly all his plays. He constructs his drama as a series of self-contained units of action which possess a diversity of mood and style. There is a constant shift not only from the tragic to the comic, but from physical comedy to dance to spoken dialogue to visual spectacle. To take just one example, Father Ned begins with a short scene which enacts a kind of a pre-history. In the scenes that follow, the action is punctuated by chorus-singing, slapstick, dance movements, even a mummers' play.

In fact, the presence of variety, and the lack of a unified structure that is upheld as a great value in middle-class theatre has been one of the major points of criticism against O'Casey's drama.

Another characteristic that O'Casey's drama shares with the popular theatre is its topicality. Music-hall, burlesque, and pantomime frequently made use of topical allusions, commenting on current political, economic, and social issues. These were generally satirical references, in songs and jokes, to local matters such as the fashions and foibles of different social groups, or the functioning of the governmental machinery. As a theatre in which large audiences participated actively, the music-halls became a forum for debating and creating social and political attitudes. Sometimes, the reception of a topical song in the theatre became a reliable indicator of the dominant mood or opinion concerning important national, and even international, issues.[11]

The lack of local references was usually considered a drawback in a performance as is evident from John Holloway's remark about the 1908 Gaiety production of Robinson Crusoe: "It might as well be played at the North Pole as in Dublin for all the reference there is to the latter in it" (qtd. in Herr 109). Playbills prominently advertised the names of writers who specialized in localising productions. O'Casey, similarly, incorporates topical references in his plays. Even after he had settled in England, he kept in touch with Irish affairs through newspapers and journals, and through correspondence with friends. In Dandy, he introduces a scene, based on an actual incident, in which a worker dies when he is hit by a priest. The scene is difficult, though not impossible, to stage since it presents a sudden and violent shift of mood in the play. It is, nevertheless, indicative

of the playwright's desire to keep close to local preoccupations and sentiments. Topical references almost always had an immediate impact in the theatre generating appreciative or derisive laughter or loud comments from the audience. It is just such a response that O'Casey invariably evokes in Irish performances of The Plough through Fluther's retort to the English Captain Stoddart who claims to be a socialist but also feels impelled by his duty to fight for his country: "You're not fightin' for your counthry here, are you?" (209). Often, O'Casey's use of topical references created a lively debate in Ireland as they invariably offended the nationalist or religious sentiments of particular social groups.

The influence of the halls on O'Casey's drama can also be seen in his use of humour which ranges from the low knockabout and slapstick to verbal wit and linguistic playfulness. O'Casey also employs various forms of the music-hall comic act. One can easily recognise the monologues, the cross-talk acts, or the clown shows which are skilfully incorporated within his plays. His penchant for knockabout comedy, and its increasing use, especially in the later plays, has already been referred to earlier. The hilarious scene of the fight between Mr. and Mrs. Foran in The Tassie, the antics of the villagers in Dust, and of the townspeople in Bonfire are some instances of the superb craftsmanship with which he builds the action towards its climax. Perhaps the best example of this can be found in the short one-act play, End of A Beginning, which was greatly admired by Samuel Beckett for its brilliant use of knockabout. After introducing the initial situation, in which Lizzie and Darry Berrill reverse their traditional roles in the house on the insistence of the latter who thinks women make unnecessary fuss over housework, the play moves towards a series of disasters brought on by the bumbling husband and his near-blind friend,

Barry Derrill. Starting with the over-winding of the clock which results in broken springs, the duo go about destroying crockery and window-panes, pulling down whole shelves full of household objects, and spilling food and oil all over the house. In addition the two men are knocked about mercilessly as they bang their noses into doors, fall from heights and injure themselves. The climax is reached when Darry, the initiator of the whole action, is pulled into the chimney by a rope that he has tied around him, and then, as suddenly, is thrown down with a thud. The sheer human energy and vitality that marks this theatre is a direct legacy of the lively and vigorous tradition of the music-hall. The success of the music-hall turns depended upon the degree of control that the artists could exercise over their material. Timing, pace and rhythm were of the utmost importance in the execution of the pieces. O'Casey's drama also requires a careful handling of these elements. Often a lack of adequate understanding of the nature of his drama leads to a conventional staging which fails to bring out its correct emphasis. In a review of the 1958 revival of the Gunman in New York by Actor's Studio, Kenneth Tynan pointed out some of the failures of an otherwise exuberant production: "he (O'Casey) expects of his small-part players the pace and timing of vaudeville. And this is where the Actors' Studio lets him down. Instead of expedition, they give us exploration. Where O'Casey prescribes panic, they offer rational concern. Under Jack Garfein's direction, they present a number of thoughtful investigations into character, entirely ignoring the element of volatile caricature that is the glory of the play, its essence and life" (286).

The same is true of verbal humour. In the music-hall, the gags were aimed at producing an instantaneous response. The jokes had a powerful punchline which acted as a stimulus to laughter. O'Casey makes superb use of this technique. In

Dust, Basil is heard complaining that Avril has gone off with O'Killigain: "Naked and unashamed, the vixen went away with O'Killigain," he says. This piece of news is gleefully reported by the workers to one another with each one adding his own bit to the story. At the end of the line the 1st Workman seeks out the Yellow-Bearded Man who has been working on the ceiling.

> 1st Workman. Didja hear th' terrible thing that's afther happenin'?
>
> Yellow-Bearded Man. No; what terrible thing?
>
> 1st Workman. The lassie o' th' house's gone careerin' all over th' counthry on horseback with only her skin as a coverin'!
>
> Yellow-bearded Man [horrified]. G'way!
>
> 3rd Workman [up to him]. An' th' poor men workin' in th' fields had to flee to th' ditches to save th' sight of their eyes from th' shock o' seein' her!
>
> Yellow-bearded Man [with aggravated anguish in his voice]. Oh, isn't it like me to be up here outa sight o' th' world, an' great things happenin'! (316)

Or in the repartee of the irascible husband as in End:

> Darry. What is there to be done about the house--will you tell us that?
>
> Lizzie. There's the pig'n the heifer'n the hens to be fed'n tended. There's ironing, cooking, washing, 'n sewing to be done.
>
> Darry. Sewing! An' only a button back 'n front of me so that it's next thing to a miracle that my trousers are kept from starting the neighbours talking. (10)

Often the characters' tendency to exaggerate is expressed in near-poetic humour as in Fluther's boast: "He's lucky he got off safe. I hit a man last week, Rosie, an' he's fallin' yet!" (177). Verbal wit, puns, alliterations, invectives, playful distortion of words are an intrinsic part of O'Casey's verbal comedy. Much of this is derived from the colloquial speech of the urban Irish and in particular the colourful Dublin idiom.

But here again, the connections with the popular theatre of the time are obvious. The language of the music-hall was known for its rhetorical energy and extravagance. Peter Davison comments on the role of the music-hall and the popular theatre: "It has helped to keep alive an awareness of language and the delight in words . . . which the legitimate drama has not, on the whole, succeeded in doing" (156).

The music-hall form of cross-talk is a favourite device of O'Casey. His clown figures usually come in pairs--Boyle and Joxer, Prodical and Rankin, Darry Berrill and Barry Derrill--and are modelled on the traditional straight man and low comedian pattern. They carry on a continuous patter which is full of absurd and incongruous situations, fanciful exaggerations, and zany word associations. Their relationship, based as it is on a fundamental conflict of personality, shows a blend of antagonism and camaraderie, and consequently, their conversation moves freely from mutual insult and ridicule to sympathy bordering at times on flattery. Most of these exchanges are verbal, dealing with small, inconsequential subjects which are made to seem important. Sometimes--again in the tradition of the music-hall--the comedians are provided with a prop. This can be seen in a very funny scene with the telephone in The Tassie. Simon and Sylvester gorgeously mishandle the mysterious instrument while priding themselves on their ability to "manipulate" it, and feeling a sense of superiority over those at the other end who "couldn't make themselves understood." The scene, which begins with the characters' awe of the telephone and their hesitation in handling it, deftly builds up towards a supreme self-confidence with which they, literally and metaphorically, put it into its place.

The chief feature of music-hall humour was its momentary, reflexive response to stimulus. What mattered was the laughter of the moment in which everyone joined. It offered to the people a welcome release from the tensions and anxieties generated by an industrialized, urban society. After a day of hard labour in drab surroundings, the workers came to the theatre to seek relaxation and excitement. Reflexive laughter, produced by the comic routines, fulfilled these needs. The verve and the vigour, and the sheer human energy that sustained these performances made theatre an exhilarating experience for them.

O'Casey recognised the important function of this laughter. However, while borrowing from the music-hall its comic strategies, O'Casey is also careful to avoid some of its pitfalls and excesses. The single-minded emphasis, in some music-hall artists and managers, on producing instantaneous laughter sometimes ran the risk of over-kill. The oppositional and anarchic irreverence towards order and authority got diffused in the onrush of jokes. Also, while this laughter was often directed against the bosses and upper classes, it could, equally, be ideologically conservative. Much of the humour was racist, sexist, and even anti-working class. It confirmed existing social stereotypes through jokes against women, and against marginalized ethnic groups. O'Casey's drama combines the emphasis on the theatrical experience of the moment with a more thoughtful and longer-lasting impact. As seen in the earlier part of this chapter, his deployment of the comic and its juxtaposition with the tragic and heroic perspectives in his plays offers a comprehensive, multi-dimensional view of social reality.

The entertainment offered by the music-hall was often criticized--sometimes correctly--as being escapist. And yet the halls gave expression to the real concerns

of the workers and imparted a sense of dignity to their lives. The workers who came to the halls entered into a collective identity as they together applauded, or booed a particular performer, or spiritedly joined in the chorus. The laughter generated by the satirical jokes against the social system further enhanced their sense of solidarity. The music-hall created not only a feeling of intimacy but also gave to the workers a sense of control and mastery over affairs which they otherwise lacked in their daily lives. In this sense the halls had a reciprocal relationship between the performers and the spectators. No joke was complete without its responsive laughter. The very rhythm of a turn was heavily dependent upon the establishment of the right contact between the performer and his audience. T. S. Eliot commented on this significant aspect of the halls and contrasted this form of entertainment to the cinema which was rapidly replacing the halls: "The working man who went to the music-hall and saw Mary Lloyd and joined in the chorus was himself performing part of the act; he was engaged in that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art. He will now go to the cinema, where his mind is lulled by continuous senseless music and continuous action too rapid for the brain to act upon, and will receive, without giving, in that same listless apathy with which the middle and upper classes regard any entertainment of the nature of art" (458-59).

O'Casey's Total Theatre

O'Casey's theatre is also a place of communal celebration. The primary aim of theatre, according to him, is to promote pleasure, to entertain, and to stir up the emotions and imagination of its audience. He disapproved of the middle-class post-Ibsenian reduction of theatre as a dry and lifeless intellectual exercise. His emphasis

on the sensual and the cerebral instead of on the purely cerebral makes him closer to the popular conventions of theatre-making and entertainment than to the middle-class theatre of his time.

As pointed out earlier, O'Casey's early experiences in theatrical practice were in small working-class community theatres. The atmosphere in the performances of the Townshend Dramatic Society and at the Mechanics was informal and intimate. Unlike in the middle-class theatres, the audiences here were uninhibited and articulated their responses unambiguously. In a different kind of a way this reciprocal relationship between the stage and the auditorium continued to occur in O'Casey's case even at the Abbey. We know that The Plough caused a near riot when performed in the charged political climate of nationalist feeling. It is difficult to say whether the Abbey would have continued to be able to accommodate his theatrical language and to provide the kind of communication he desired with his audiences. Yeats's magnificent defence of his plays notwithstanding, many of the Dublin critics were derisive of his "slum" drama. In his autobiography, O'Casey also hints at the differences of opinion that were developing between him and some of the Abbey directors and actors concerning the method of staging the plays (Inishfallen 235-36). In England, while he steadily developed and consolidated his particular theatrical style and language, he was unable to find either a theatre that would translate this into practice or a recognizable, cohesive community with which he could communicate.[12] Most of his plays were performed on commercial stages in London and New York, and the flamboyant theatricality of the later plays usually acted as a deterrent for most directors. Thus, what was daring and experimental in his craft came to be labelled as "unproduceability," "formlessness," or "pretentious

twaddle." As a consequence, his plays were either neglected totally or, when performed, not given the kind of staging that would have done full justice to their meaning and intent. Thus, O'Casey's reputation came to rest more and more in the hands of conventional critics and directors whose approach inhibited a proper assessment of O'Casey's art by the theatre-going public. This has been all the more unfortunate because there has invariably been a wide gap between the responses of the critics and the audiences. This has been evident from the very beginning when, after the performance of Juno, A. E. Malone chastised the Dublin play-goers for laughing uproariously at what was, according to him, a harrowing tragedy (212). A similar disjunction characterized the reception, again in Dublin, of Bonfire where the critics tore the play to pieces, screaming their ire from headlines such as "A Damp Squib," "Bonfire Peters Out" while the people in the theatre greeted the play with laughter and applause (Cusack 24). Eric Bentley sums up the argument against this critical scorn and neglect with some disquieting questions in What is Theatre?:

> If the plays Mr. O'Casey has been printing are increasingly "unproduceable" the reason . . . is that they've been increasingly unproduced; a playwright without a theatre is far too free. And yet we don't really know whether Cock-a-Doodle-Dandy is good theatre, bad, or different, because we haven't tried it. There is also the question how good the theatre is in which it would be tried. . . . Where are the actors who will give us, not repetitions, nor even revivals, but discoveries? Do we reject O'Casey because as a communist he is beneath us or because as an artist he is beyond us? (27-8)

During the last two decades or so there has been a definite change in the attitude towards O'Casey's theatre. The earlier bias against the post-Abbey plays has given way to a greater understanding and appreciation of the distinct nature of his drama. In the United States, Germany, France, and Ireland, a reassessment of the playwright's form and method has been undertaken by literary critics as well as

theatre directors. In the theatre, particularly, the realization of O'Casey's theatricality and of the need to exploit its full potential on stage has helped to bring the later plays out from their shelves into the public eye. In a review of the two short plays, Pound on Demand and Hall of Healing, performed at the Theatre National de Strasbourg, Emile Jean Dumay praises the productions for their imaginative pictorial effects. The director, Jean-Pierre Vincent countered the suggestion of grimness and death in the doctor's dispensary, in the Hall, by emphasizing colours, light and warmth. The tiling on the floor and the stained-glass partition were given bright colours as also certain articles of clothing like a muffler or a pair of socks. Similarly, in the other production also, strong visual images were created to bring about the effect of burlesque.

Tomás MacAnna, Director of the Abbey Theatre, who has largely been responsible for resurrecting O'Casey's later plays for Irish audiences, also highlights their spectacular and fantastic quality. He sees this drama as essentially a part of the "exciting idea of Total Theatre" which combines a variety of styles and elements to present a colourful stage image (131). In his own productions, he has used every available stage technique from vaudeville, pantomime, melodrama, and farce to realize this. In a rendering of Dust in Belfast, the last scene depicting the destruction of the Tudor mansion by the rising waters of the flood was dramatized by laying blue cloths across the front of the stage and having them moved up and down by stage hands. In the Abbey production, because of the availability of greater stage resources, the spectacle of the sinking of the old house, as the waters poured in on the stage, was effected with the help of three lifts. The theatrical impact of the

scene, MacAnna recalls, was tremendous--"one of the best curtains I have ever arranged" (135).

The attitude to O'Casey's theatre, represented by directors like MacAnna, is in direct opposition to the sentiment expressed some fifty years before by Fred O'Higgins. After the productions of The Plough, Higgins had questioned O'Casey's credentials as a "serious artist" and denigrated his technique as that based on the "revue structure, in the quintessence of an all-Abbey burlesque, intensified by 'divarsions' and Handy Andy incidents . . ." (Inishfallen 247). The difference between the two attitudes goes beyond O'Casey to theatre-making itself. Higgins's contemptuous dismissal of popular theatrical styles reveals a perspective from above which upholds the concept of a pure, unified, and exclusive theatre. The other view celebrates variety and discontinuity. "Theatre," says Tomás MacAnna, "is a vulgar art and if style turns back on itself or contradicts itself half way through Act One, Act Two or Act Three--so who cares? Is it entertaining? Are the audiences with it? That's what its all about" (143). O'Casey would have agreed whole-heartedly.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Joseph Wood Krutch, The Nation, 21 December 1927; Henn 213.

2. Althusser makes important exceptions in this regard, namely, the theatres of Shakespeare and Moliere.

3. The critical storm raised by the play immediately after it was submitted to the Abbey directors is familiar history today. Yeats objected to the play's lack of unity of action. The Tassie, according to him, was made up of a series of unrelated scenes and barring the realistic first act, it had nothing to recommend itself (Ayling, Sean 86). In a more appreciative review of the play, Ivor Brown, too, expressed his reservations about its admixture of disparate dramatic styles, "Elizabethan into Expressionism won't go; at any rate the fitting process involves some strains and contortions" (qtd. by O'Casey in a letter to Brown, June 24, 1928. Ayling, Continuity 131).

4. Yeats was, however, wrong in contrasting The Tassie to the Dublin plays which according to him derived their great power from "the creation of some unique character who dominated all about him and was himself a main impulse in some action that filled the play from beginning to end." See Yeats's letter to O'Casey (Ayling, Sean 86). For despite the presence of strong and colourful characters like Juno, Boyle, Fluther, Bessie etc., the plays dramatize a plurality that makes up the life of the whole community.

5. The figures may be small in comparison to such halls in London which could accommodate about 45,000 people nightly. But considering that Dublin's total population was only 290,000, this is a fairly large percentage. See Herr 195.

6. This was an unusual phenomenon for the Abbey which had a select and small audience. Not only did O'Casey's plays attract a larger crowd but they also brought about a radical change in the social complexion of the audience. People who had kept away from the theatre until now started to show interest in plays. Later, Yeats acknowledged the theatre's debt to O'Casey: "I bore in mind that the Abbey owed its recent prosperity to you. If you had not brought us your plays just at that moment I doubt if it would now exist" (Letters 740).

7. Clement Scott, "Why Do We Go to the Play?" The Theatre (March 1888): 123-4 (qtd. in Booth, Prefaces 47).

8. The flamboyant colourfulness of the music-hall costumes as well as their disapproval by non-working class critics is evident in these remarks: "No phase of human nature can be more odious and repulsive than that presented by the typical Music-Hall singer, who, dressed in a bright green coat, a yellow waistcoat, and chessboard-pattern trousers, swaggers on to the stage with his hat on one side . . ." ("Our Popular Amusements" Dublin University Magazine 84 (1874): 233-44. Qtd. in Herr 199).

9. For a detailed discussion of the relationship of the working class to the nationalist movement, see Chapter 2.

10. It should also be pointed out that the music-hall was only one of the many sources of the large and varied repertory of songs that are found in his plays. He also draws upon traditional Irish and English folk-songs , ballads, literary poems, religious hymns etc.

11. It is said that the response to The Great MacDermott's patriotic song "We don't want to fight but by jingo if we do" helped Disraeli make up his mind on the question of England's intervention in case of the Russian occupation of Constantinople, thus averting a war (Cheshire, Chronology 41).

12. John Arden makes this point. Some of the reasons he advances for O'Casey's not being able to break free of the commercial middle-class theatre circuit are: 1) that he was not rich enough to experiment with unconventional theatre groups; 2) his and his wife's social circle belonged to the West End/ Broadway theatre and he did not know his way around anywhere else; 3) the lack of imagination of left political groups in cultural matters and policies prevented any meaningful support that could have provided to progressive playwrights such as O'Casey (61-76).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES (in Chronological Order)

A. Collected Works:

Collected Plays. 4 vols. London and New York: Macmillan, 1949-51. Rev. 1962-64.

Mirror in My House: The Autobiographies of Sean O'Casey. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1959. Rept. as: Autobiographies. 2 vols. London: Macmillan, 1963.

The Letters of Sean O'Casey, 1910-41; 1942-54; 1955-58. 3 Vols. Ed. David Krause. New York: Macmillan, 1975; 1980; Washington, D.C.: Catholic U. of America Press, 1989.

The Complete Plays of Sean O'Casey. 5 vols. London: Macmillan, 1984.

B. Separate Works:

Songs of the Wren. 1st and 2nd series. Dublin and London: Maunsel, 1918.

More Wren Songs. Dublin and London: Maunsel, 1918.

The Story of Thomas Ashe. Dublin and London: Maunsel, 1918.

The Sacrifice of Thomas Ashe. Dublin and London: Maunsel, 1918.

The Story of the Irish Citizen Army. (Under the pseudonym "P. O. Cathasaigh".) Dublin and London: Maunsel, 1919.

Two Plays. London and New York: Macmillan, 1925.

The Plough and the Stars. London & New York: Macmillan, 1926.

The Silver Tassie. London & New York: Macmillan, 1928.

Within the Gates. London: Macmillan, 1933; New York: Macmillan, 1934.

Windfalls: Stories, Poems and Plays. London & New York: Macmillan, 1934.

Five Irish Plays. London & New York: Macmillan, 1935.

The Flying Wasp. London & New York: Macmillan, 1937.

I Knock at the Door. London and New York: Macmillan, 1939.

The Star Turns Red. London and New York: Macmillan, 1940.

Purple Dust. London and New York: Macmillan, 1940.

Red Roses for Me. London and New York: Macmillan, 1942.

Pictures in the Hallway. London and New York: Macmillan, 1942.

Drums Under the Window. London and New York: Macmillan, 1945.

Oak Leaves and Lavender: Or, a World on Wallpaper. London and New York: Macmillan, 1946.

Cock-A-Doodle-Dandy. London and New York: Macmillan, 1949.

Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well. London and New York: Macmillan, 1949.

Rose and Crown. London and New York: Macmillan, 1952.

Selected Plays of Sean O'Casey. New York: Braziller, 1954.

Sunset and Evening Star. London and New York: Macmillan, 1954.

The Bishop's Bonfire. London and New York: Macmillan, 1955.

The Green Crow. New York: George Braziller, 1956.

Three Plays. London: Macmillan, 1957.

Five One-Act Plays. London: Macmillan, 1958.

The Drums of Father Ned. London and New York: Macmillan, 1960.

Behind the Green Curtains. New York and London: Macmillan, 1961.

Feathers from the Green Crow: Sean O'Casey 1905-25. Ed. Robert Hogan. Columbia: U. of Missouri Press, 1962; London: Macmillan, 1963.

Under a Coloured Cap. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963.

Three More Plays. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 1965.

Blasts and Benedictions. Ed. Ronald Ayling. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 1967.

The Sean O'Casey Reader. Ed. Brooks Atkinson. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 1968.

The Harvest Festival: A Play in Three Acts. New York: New York Public Library, 1979.

Seven Plays by Sean O'Casey. Ed. Ronald Ayling. London: Macmillan, 1985.

C. Bibliographies on O'Casey:

Mikhail, E. H., ed. Sean O'Casey: A Bibliography of Criticism. London: Macmillan, 1972.

Krause, David, ed. "Sean O'Casey. An Annotated Bibiliography. Anglo-Irish Literature: A Review of Research and Recent Research on Anglo-Irish Writers. Ed. Richard J. Finneran. New York: MLA, 1976 and 1983: 470-517 and 216-55.

Ayling, Ronald and Michael J. Durkan, eds. Sean O'Casey: A Bibliography. London: Macmillan, 1978.

"Sean O'Casey: an Annual Bibliography." O'Casey Annual. Ed. Robert G. Lowery. 1-4 (1982-85).

File on O'Casey. Ed. Nesta Jones. London: Methuen, 1986.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Achilles, Jochen. "Sean O'Casey's and Denis Johnston's National Plays: Two Dramatic Approaches to Irish Society." Kosok, Studies 269-77.

Agate, James. "Juno and the Paycock & The Plough and the Stars." Ayling, Sean 76-82.

Althusser, Louis. For Marx. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: Verso, 1986.

Arden, John. "Ecce Hobo Sapiens: Sean O'Casey's Theatre." Kilroy 61-76.

Arensberg, Conrad and Solon Kimball. Family and Community in Ireland. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1968.

Armstrong, William A. Sean O'Casey. London: Longman's Green, 1967.

Atkinson, Brooks. Sean O'Casey: From Times Past. Ed Robert Lowery. London: Macmillan, 1982.

Ayling, Ronald. Continuity and Innovation in Sean O'Casey's Drama. Salzburg: Institut Fur Englische Sprache Und Literatur, 1976.

---. "Feathers Flying: Politics in the Early Life and Thought of Sean O'Casey." Dubliner 3.1 (1964): 54-67.

---. "Ideas and Ideology in The Plough and the Stars." The Sean O'Casey Review 2.2 (1976): 115-36.

---. "Nannie's Night Out." Modern Drama 5 (1962): 154-63.

---. "Popular Tradition and Individual Talent in Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy." Journal of Modern Literature 2.4 (1972): 491-504.

---. "Portrait of the Artist as a Slum Gutter-Snipe." O'Casey Annual 1 (1982): 3-16.

---. "Sean O'Casey, 1880-1964: A Retrospective Survey." Research Studies 39.4 (1971): 259-70.

---. "Two Words for Women: A Reassessment of O'Casey's Heroines." Canadian Journal of Irish Studies 8.2 (1983): 91-114.

---, ed. Sean O'Casey: Modern Judgments. Nashville: Aurora, 1970.

Babcock, Barbara, ed. The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978.

Bagget, Patricia. "Sean O'Casey's Development of a Basic Theme." Dublin Magazine 31.4 (1956): 25-34.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. "The Art of the Word and the Culture of Folk Humor (Rabelais and Gogol)." Soviet Studies in Literature 12.2 (1976): 27-39.

---. The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U. of Texas P, 1981.

--- / P.N.Medvedev. The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship. Trans. Albert Wehrle. Camb., Mass. and London: Harvard, 1985.

--- / V.N.Volosinov. Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. Trans. Ladislaw Matejka and I.R.Titunik. Camb., Mass. and London: Harvard, 1986.

---. Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. Ed. & trans. Caryl Emerson. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984.

---. Rabelais and His World. New Edition. Trans. Helene Iswolsky.Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984.

---. Speech Genres and Other Late Essays. Ed. Caryl Emerson and M. Holquist. Trans. Vern McGee. Austin: U. of Texas P., 1986.

Balladier, George. Political Anthropology. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1970.

Barber, C.L. Shakespeare's Festive Comedy. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1972.

Beckerman, Bernard. Dynamics of Drama: Theory and Method of Analysis. New York: A. Knopf, 1970.

Beckett, Samuel. "The Essential and the Incidental." Kilroy 167-68.

Benjamin, Walter. Understanding Brecht. Trans. Anna Bostock. London: New Left Books, 1977.

Bennett, Tony. Formalism and Marxism. London: Methuen, 1979.

---, Colin Mercer and Janet Woolacott, ed. Popular Culture and Social Relations. Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open UP, 1986.

Benstock, Bernard. Paycocks and Others: Sean O'Casey's World. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976.

---. Sean O'Casey. Lewisburg: Bucknell U.Press, 1970.

---. "Three Cheers for Irish Drama." Contemporary Literature 28.1 (1987): 122-28.

Bentley, Eric. In Search of Theatre. New York: Random, 1953.

---. The Life of the Drama. London: Methuen, 1966.

---. What is Theatre? Incorporating 'The Dramatic Event' and Other Reviews 1944-67. New York: Atheneum, 1968.

---, ed. The Theory of the Modern Stage: An Introduction to Modern Theatre and Drama. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.

Bergson, Henri. "Laughter." [1900] Trans. Fred Rothwell. Comedy. Ed. Wylie Sypher. New York: Doubleday, 1956.

Blanshard, Paul. The Irish and Catholic Power. Boston: Beacon Press, 1953.

Blitch, Alice Fox. "O'Casey's Shakespeare." Modern Drama 15.3 (1972): 282-90.

Bloom, Harold, ed. Sean O'Casey. New York: Chelsea, 1987.

Booth, Michael R. Prefaces to English Nineteenth-Century Theatre. Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1980.

---. Victorian Spectacular Theatre. London: Routledge, 1981.

Bramsback, Birgit & Martin Croghan, ed. Anglo-Irish and Irish Literature: Aspects of Language and Culture. 2 vols. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell, 1988.

Brecht, Bertolt. Brecht on Theatre. Trans. John Willett. London: Methuen, 1964.

---. The Messingkauf Dialogues. Trans. John Willett. London: Methuen, 1965.

Bristol, Michael D. Carnival and Theatre: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England. London: Methuen, 1985.

---. "Lenten Butchery: Legitimation Crisis in Coriolanus." Shakespeare Reproduced: the Text in History and Ideology. Ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor. London: Methuen, 1987.

Brown, Malcolm. The Politics of Irish Literature: From Thomas Davis to W. B. Yeats. Seattle: U. of Washington Press, 1973.

Brunet, David. "The Visual Image: Spectacle in Melodrama and in O'Casy's Plays." Sean O'Casey Review 5.2 (1979): 157-66.

Brustein, Robert. Season of Discontent: Dramatic Opinions 1959-1965. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965.

Burke, Peter. Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe. New York: New York UP, 1978.

Cahill, Susan and Thomas. A Literary Guide to Ireland. New York: Scribner's, 1973.

Cairns, David and Shaun Richards. Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988.

Callinicos, Alex. "Postmodernism, Post-Structuralism, Post-Marxism?" Theory, Culture & Society 2.3 (1985): 85-101.

Caputi, Anthony F. Buffo: the Genius of Vulgar Comedy. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1978.

Cheshire, David F. "A Chronology of Music Hall." Theatre Quarterly 1.4 (1971): 41-45.

---. Music Hall in Britain. Newton Abbot, England: David and Charles, 1974.

Clarkson, J. Dunsmore. Labour and Nationalism in Ireland. New York, Columbia UP, 1925.

Coakley, James and Marvin Felhein. "Thalia in Dublin: Some Suggestions About the Relationships Between O'Casey and Classical Comedy." Comparative Drama 4.4 (1970): 265-71.

Connolly, James. James Connolly: Selected Political Writings. Ed. Owen Dudley Edwards and B. Ranson. London: Jonathan Cape, 1973.

Connolly, Sean. "Popular Culture in Pre-Famine Ireland." Talamb An Eise: Canadian and Irish Essays. Ed. Cyril Byrne and M. Harry. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nimbus, 1986.

Cornford, F. M. The Origin of Attic Comedy. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1934.

Corrigan, Robert, ed. Comedy: Meaning and Form. San Francisco: Chandler, 1965.

Cowan, Louise, ed. The Terrain of Comedy. Dallas: The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1984.

Cowasjee, Saros. O'Casey. Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966.

---. Sean O'Casey: The Man Behind the Plays. London: Oliver Boyd, 1963.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages. Trans. Willard Trask. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

Cusack, Cyril. "In the Beginning was O'Casey." Irish University Review 17-24.

Daniel, Walter C. "The False Paradise Pattern in Sean O'Casey's Cock-A-Doodle-Dandy." CLA Journal 13 (1969): 137-43.

---. "O'Casey and the Comic." Ph.D. Diss. Bowling Green University, 1963.

---. "Patterns of Greek Comedy in O'Casey's Purple Dust." Bulletin of the New York Public Library 66 (1962): 603-15.

Davis, Natalie Zemon. Society and Culture in Early Modern France. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1975.

Davison, Peter, comp. and ed. Songs of the British Music-Hall. New York: Oak, 1971.

DeBaun, Vincent. "Sean O'Casey and the Road to Expressionism." Modern Drama 4.3 (1962): 254-59

Delves, Anthony. "Popular Recreation and Social Conflict in Derby, 1800-1850." Yeo and Yeo 89-127.

Dillon, Myles. The Cycle of the Kings. New York and London: Oxford U.P., 1946.

Donaldson, Ian. The World Upside-Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970.

Dumay, Emile Jean. "Merriment and Celebration in Sean O'Casey's Plays." Sean O'Casey Review 2.1 (1975): 12-21.

Dupree, Robert S. "The Copious Inventory of Comedy." Louise Cowan 163-94.

Durbach, Errol. "Peacocks and Mothers: Theme and Dramatic Metaphor in O'Casey's Juno and the Paycock." Modern Drama 15.1 (1972): 15-25.

Dye, William S. A Study of Melodrama in England from 1800 to 1840. Philadelphia: Nittany Publishing Co., 1919.

Eagleton, Terry. Walter Benjamin: Towards a Revolutionary Criticism. London: Verso, 1981.

---, Frederic Jameson,and Edward Said. Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature. Intro. by Seamus Deane. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1990.

Eliot, T.S. Selected Essays. London: Faber & Faber, 1951.

Elliott, Robert. The Power of Satire. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1960.

Ellis-Fermor, Una. The Irish Dramatic Movement. 2nd. ed. London: Methuen, 1954.

Empson, William. Some Versions of Pastoral. London: Hogarth Press, 1986.

Esslinger, Pat. "Sean O'Casey and the Lockout of 1913: Materia Poetica of the Two Red Plays." Modern Drama 61 (1963): 53-63.

Etherton, Michael. Contemporary Irish Dramatists. London: Macmillan, 1989.

Evans, E. Estyn. Irish Folk Ways. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957.

Fallon, Gabriel. Sean O'Casey, the Man I knew. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965.

Fisher, John. Funny Way to Be a Hero. St. Albans: Paladin, 1976.

Fo, Dario. "Popular Culture: A Speech by Dario Fo." Trans. Tony Mitchell. Theater 14.3 (1983): 50-54.

Frayne, John P. Sean O'Casey. New York: Columbia UP, 1976.

Frazer, Sir James. The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1900.

Freud, Sigmund. Civilization and Its Discontents. Ed. and trans. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1961.

---. "Humour." Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud. Ed. Ernest Jones. 5 Vols. London: Hogarth, 1953.

---. Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious. New York: Norton, 1960.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton, N.J.:Princeton UP, 1971.

_____. "The Argument of Comedy," D. A. Robertson English Institute Essays. New York: AMS Press, 1965. 58-73.

Gailey, Alan. Irish Folk Drama. Dublin: Mercier, 1969.

Gassner, John. Masters of the Drama. New York: Dover, 1954.

---. Theatre in Our Times. New York: Crown, 1954.

Genet, Jacqueline and Richard Allen Cave. Perspectives on Irish Drama and Theatre. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1990.

Gluckman, Max. Custom and Conflict in Africa. Oxford: Blackwell, 1955.

Goldstone, Herbert. In Search of Community: The Achievement of Sean O'Casey. Dublin: Mercier, 1972.

Greaves, C. Desmond. Sean O'Casey: Politics and Art. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979.

Gregory, Lady Augusta. The Collected Works of Lady Gregory. 4 vols. London: Colin Smythe, 1970.

---. Gods and Fighting Men. New York: Oxford U.P., 1970.

---. Lady Gregory's Journal, 1916-30. Ed. Lennox Robinson. New York: Macmillan, 1947.

---. Our Irish Theatre. London: Colin Smythe, 1972.

Hall, Jonathan. "Falstaff, Sancho Panza and Azdak: Carnival and History." Contemporary Criticism: An Annual Journal. Ed. E. S. Shaffer. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985. 127-145.

Hall, Stuart. "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular'." People's History and Socialist Theory. Ed. Raphael Samuel. London: Routledge, 1981. 227-40.

Harkness, Marguerite. "The Silver Tassie: No Light in Darkness." Sean O'Casey Review 4.2 (1978): 131-37.

Harrison, B. "Pubs." The Victorian City, Images and Realities. 2 vols. Ed. H. J. Dyos and M. Woolf. London & Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973. 1: 161-90.

Harvey, Anthony E. "Letters from Sean O'Casey to a Randolph-Macon Senior." Bulletin of Randolph-Macon College 26.3 (1954): 8.

Henn, T.R. The Harvest of Tragedy. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966.

Herr, Cheryl. Joyce's Anatomy of Culture. Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1986.

Hirschkop, Ken. "Bakhtin, Discourse and Democracy." New Left Review 160 (1986): 92-113.

---. "The Domestication of M.M. Bakhtin." Essays in Poetics 11.1 (1986): 76-87.

---. "Response to the Forum on Mikhail Bakhtin." Critical Inquiry 11.4 (1985): 672-78.

---. "The Social and the Subject in Bakhtin." Poetics Today 6.4 (1985): 769-775.

Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan. Ed. C. B. MacPherson. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1968.

Hogan, Robert. The Experiments of Sean O'Casey. New York: St.Martin's Press, 1960.

---. "O'Casey's Dramatic Apprenticeship." Modern Drama 4.3 (1962): 243-53.

---. "Since O'Casey" and Other Essays on Irish Drama. Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1983.

Holloway, Joseph. Joseph Holloway's Abbey Theatre: A Selection from His Unpublished Journal. Ed. Robert Hogan and Michael O'Neill. London: Southern Illinois U.P., 1967.

Hunt, Hugh. The Abbey, Ireland's National Theatre 1904-79. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1979.

Irish University Review. Special issue. "Sean O'Casey, Roots and Branches." 10.1 (1980).

Jackson, T. A. Ireland Her Own: An Outline History of the Irish Struggle. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976.

James Joyce Quarterly Review. Special issue on O'Casey. 8.1 (1970).

Johnston, Denis. "Sean O'Casey: An Appreciation." Ayling, Sean 82-85.

Jonson, Ben. The Works of Ben Jonson. London: Edward Moxon, 1846.

Jordan, John. "The Irish Theatre: Retrospect and Premonition." Contemporary Theatre. Ed. J. R. Brown and B. Harris. London: Edward Arnold, 1962.

Kearney, Colbert. "Sean O'Casey and the Glamour of Grammar." Bramsback 2: 63-70.

Kearney, Richard, ed. The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions. Dublin: Wolfhound, 1985.

Kenneally, Michael, ed. Cultural Contexts and Literary Idioms in Contemporary Irish Literature. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1988.

---. Portraying the Self: Sean O'Casey and the Art of Autobiography. Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1988.

Kilroy, Thomas. Sean O'Casey: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975.

Kleiman, Carol. "Sean O'Casey's Bridge of Vision: Four Essays on Structure and Perspective. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1982.

Knight, George Wilson. "Ever a Fighter: The Drums of Father Ned." Ayling, Sean 177-182.

Kolve, V.A. The Play Called Corpus Christi. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1966.

Koslow, Jules. Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Plays. Toronto: Forum House, 1968.

Kosok, Heinz. "Juno and the Playwrights: The Influence of Sean O'Casey on 20th Century Drama." Irish Writers and the Theatre. Ed.Masaru Sekine. Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1986. 71-86.

---. O'Casey, The Dramatist. Irish Literary Studies 19. Trans. Kosok and Joseph Swann. Totowa, N. J.: Barnes & Noble, 1985.

---, ed. Studies in Anglo-Irish Literature. Bonn: Bouvier, 1982.

---. "The Three Versions of Red Roses for Me." O'Casey Annual 1(1982): 141-47.

Krause, David. "The Ironic Victory of Defeat in Irish Comedy." O'Casey Annual 1(1982): 33-63.

--. "The Paradox of Ideological Formalism." Massachussetts Review 28.3 (1987): 516-24.

---. The Profane Book of Irish Comedy. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982.

---. "The Risen O'Casey: Some Marxist and Irish Ironies." O'Casey Annual 3: 134-68.

---. Sean O'Casey and His World. London: Thames and Hudson, 1976.

---. Sean O'Casey: the Man and His Work. London: Macmillan, 1975.

--- and Robert Lowery, eds. Sean O'Casey: Centenary Essays. Irish Literary Studies 7. Gerrard Cross: Colin Smythe, 1980.

Kunzle, David. "World-Upside-Down: The Iconography of a European Broadsheet Type." Babcock 55-78.

Lee, Joseph J. "Women and the Church since the Famine." MacCurtain and Corrain 37-45.

LeRoy Ladurie,Emannuel. Carnival in Romans. Trans. Mary Feeney. New York: Braziller, 1979.

Lindsay, Jack. "The Plough and the Stars Reconsidered." Sean O'Casey Review 2.2 (1976): 187-95.

---. "Sean O'Casey as a Socialist Artist." Ayling, Sean 192-203.

Lowery, Robert G., ed. An Annotated Index to Sean O'Casey's Autobiographies. New York: Greenwood, 1983.

---, ed. A Whirlwind in Dublin: The Plough and the Stars Riots. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1984.

---, ed. Essays on Sean O'Casey's Autobiographies: Reflections upon the Mirror. London: Macmillan, 1981.

---. "Sean O'Casey: Art and Politics." Krause, Centenary Essays, 121-164.

Lynd, Robert. Home Life in Ireland. London: Mills & Boon, 1909.

MacAnna, Tomás. "An Interview about the Later O'Casey Plays at the Abbey Theatre." Irish University Review 130-145.

McCann, Sean, ed. The World of Sean O'Casey. London: Four Square Books, 1966.

MacCurtain, Margaret and Donncha O Corrain, eds. Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimesion. Contributions in Women's Studies 11. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979.

McGrath, John. The Bone Won't Break: On Theatre and Hope in Hard Times. London: Methuen, 1990.

---. A Goodnight Out: Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form. London: Methuen, 1981.

McLean, Albert F. "US Vaudeville and the Urban Comics." Theatre Quarterly 1.4 (1971): 47-52.

Mcmullen, Glenys. "The Fool as Entertainer and Satirist, on Stage and in the World." The Dalhousie Review 50 (1970): 10-22.

Malone, Andrew. The Irish Drama 1896-1923. New York: B. Blom, 1965.

Malone, Maureen. The Plays of Sean O'Casey. Carbondale: Southern Illinois U.P., 1969.

Mander, Raymond, and Joe Mitchenson. Pantomime: a Story in Pictures. New York: Taplinger, 1973.

Mao Tsetung. "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People." Selected Works of Mao TseTung. Vol. 5. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977. 384-421.

Margulies, Martin. The Early Life of Sean O'Casey. Dublin: Dolmen, 1970.

Mayer, David and Kenneth Richards. Western Popular Theatre. London: Methuen, 1977.

Mercier, Vivian. The Irish Comic Tradition. New York & London: Oxford U.P., 1962.

Mikhail, E. H. and Michael OhAodha, eds. The Sting and the Twinkle: Coversations with Sean O'Casey. London: Macmillan, 1974.

Mitchell, Jack. The Essential O'Casey: A Study of Twelve Major Plays of Sean O'Casey. New York: International Publishers, 1980.

Modern Drama. Special issue on O'Casey. 4.3 (1961).

Murphy, Robert Patrick. Stubborn Vision: Daramaturgy of Sean O'Casey. Ph. D. dissertation. University of Virginia, 1971.

Nathan, Jean George. Art of the Night. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1928.

O'Brien, John A. The Vanishing Irish: The Enigma of a Modern World. New York: McGraw Hill, 1953.

O'Connor, Frank, ed. and trans. Kings, Lords, and Commons: An Anthology from the Irish. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1959.

O'Connor, Garry. Sean O'Casey: A Life. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988.

O'Casey Annual. 4 vols. Ed. Robert G. Lowery. London: Macmillan, 1982-1985.

O'Casey, Eileen. Sean. Ed. J. C. Trewin. London: Macmillan, 1970.

O'Driscoll, Robert. Theatre and Nationalism in Twentieth Century Ireland. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.

O'Faolain, Sean. "Love Among the Irish." Life 16 March 1953.

O'Hanlon, Rosalind. "Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia." Modern Asian Studies (1988): 189-225.

OhAodha, Michael. The O'Casey Enigma. Dublin: Mercier, 1980.

---. Theatre in Ireland. Oxford: Blackwell, 1974.

O'Riordan, John. A Guide to O'Casey's Plays: From the Plough to the Stars. New York: St. Martin's, 1984.

O'Shea, James. Priests, Politics and Society in Post-Famine Ireland. Dublin: Wolfhound 1983.

Papke, Mary. "Juno and the Paycock as Larkinite Stage Parable." Sean O'Casey Review 3.2 (1977): 105-116.

Partridge, A. C. Language and Society in Anglo-Irish Literature. London: Gill & Macmillan, 1984.

Pasachoff, Naomi. "O'Casey's Not Quite Festive Comedy." Eire-Ireland 12.3 (1977): 41-61.

Patrick, Murphy Robert. Stubborn Vision: The Dramaturgy of Sean O'Casey. Ph.D. diss. University of Virginia, 1971.

Pechey, Graham. "On the Borders of Bakhtin: Dialogization, Decolonization." Oxfod Literary Review 9.1-2 (1987): 59-84.

Redlich, Patricia. "Women and the Family." MacCurtain and Corrain 82-91.

Reilley, Joseph. "The American Bar and the Irish Pub: A Study in Comparisons and Contrasts." Journal of Popular Culture 10.3 (1976): 571-78.

Rhodes, Neil. Elizabethan Grotesque. London: Routledge, 1980.

Ritchie, Harry. "The Influence of Melodrama on the Early Plays of Sean O'Casey." Modern Drama 5.2 (1962): 164-73.

Robinson, Lennox. Ireland's Abbey Theatre: A History, 1899-1951. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1951.

Rollins, Ronald Gene. Sean O'Casey: Verisimilitude and Vision. Alabama: U. of Alabama Press, 1979.

Rosenberg, James. "Melodrama." Tragedy: Vision and Form. Ed.Robert Corrigan. San Francisco: Chandler, 1965.

Ryan, W. P. Pope's Green Island. London: Nisbet, 1912.

Schechter, Joel. Durov's Pig: Clowns, Politics and Theatre. New York: Theatre Communication Group, 1985.

Schrank, Bernice. "Anatomizing An Insurrection: Sean O'Casey's The Plough." Modern Drama 29.2 (1986): 216-22.

---. "There's Nothin' Derogatory in th' Use o' th' Word: A Study in the Use of Language in Plough." Irish University Review 15.2 (1985): 169-86.

Scribner, Bob. "Reformation, Carnival and the World Turned Upside-Down." Social History 3.3 (1978): 303-29.

Sean O'Casey Review. Volumes 1-6 (1974-1980).

Sekine, Masaru, ed. Irish Writers and the Theatre. Irish Literary Studies 23. Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1986.

Simmons, James. Sean O'Casey. New York: Grove, 1984.

Smith, B. L. O'Casey's Satiric Vision: The Man and His Work. Kent: Kent State UP, 1978.

"Staging of Sean O'Casey's Plays: A Symposium." The Sean O'Casey Review 5.2 (1979): 131-56.

Stallybrass, Peter. " 'Drunk with the Cup of Liberty': Robin Hood, the Carnivalesque, and the Rhetoric of Violence in Early Modern England." Semiotica 54.1/2 (1985): 113-45.

---. "Patriarchal Territories: the Body Enclosed." Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe. Ed. Margaret Ferguson, et al. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986. 123-42.

---, and Allon White. The Politics and Poetics of Transgression. London: Methuen, 1986.

Stam, Robert. "On the Carnivalesque." Wedge 1: 47-55.

Stewart, Susan. "Shouts on the Street: Bakhtin's Anti-Linguistics." Critical Inquiry 10 (1983): 265-281.

Stridbeck, C. G. " 'Combat Between Carnival and Lent' by Peter Bruegel the Elder." Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 19 (1956): 96-109.

Styan, J. L. The Dark Comedy: The Development of Modern Comic Tragedy. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968.

Synge, John M. The Plays and Poems of John M. Synge. Ed. T. R. Henn. London: Methuen, 1963.

Templeton, Joan. "Sean O'Casey and Expressionism." Modern Drama 14.1 (1971): 47-62.

Theatre Quarterly Special Issue on People's Theatre. 1.4 (1971).

Thompson, E.P. Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture. New York: The New Press, 1991.

---. The Making of the English Working Class. New York: Vintage, 1966.

Thompson, William Irwin. The Imagination of an Insurrection, Dublin, Easter 1916: An Study of an Ideological Movement. New York: Oxford UP, 1967.

Tynan, Kenneth. Curtains: Selections from the Drama Criticism and Related Writings. London: Longmans, 1961.

Turner, Victor. "Comments and Conclusions." Babcock 276-95.

---. Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1974.

---. The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977.

Van Erven, Eugene. Radical People's Theatre. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988.

Watt, Stephen. Joyce, O'Casey, and the Irish Popular Theatre. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse UP, 1991.

Weimann, Robert. Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins U.P., 1978.

Welsford, Enid. The Fool: His Social and Literary History. London: Faber, 1935.

White, Allon. "Bakhtin, Socio-Linguistics and Deconstruction." The Theory of Reading. Ed. Frank Gloversmith. Brighton: Harvester, 1984. 123-146.

---. "Pigs and Pierrots: The Politics of Transgression in Modern Fiction." Raritan 2 (1982): 51-71.

---. "The Struggle Over Bakhtin: Fraternal Reply to Robert Young." Cultural Critique 8 (1987-88): 217-241.

Willett, John. The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study from Eight Aspects. New York: New Directions, 1968.

Williams, Raymond. The Country and the City. St. Albans, Herts: Paladin, 1975.

---. Culture. Glasgow: Fontana, 1981.

---. Drama from Ibsen to Eliot. London: Chatto and Windus, 1952.

---. Drama from Ibsen to Brecht. New York: Oxford, 1968.

Williams, Simon. "The Unity of The Silver Tassie." Sean O'Casey Review 4.2 (1978) 99-112.

Winkler, Elizabeth. "The Clown in O'Casey's Drama." Irish University Review 77-90.

Worth, Katharine. The Irish Drama in Europe from Yeats to Beckett. London: Athlone Press, 1978.

---. Sean O'Casey's Dramatic Symbolism." Ayling, Sean 183-191.

Wrightson, Keith. "Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660." Yeo and Yeo 1-27.

Yeats, W. B. The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats. London: Macmillan, 1952.

---. The Letters of W. B. Yeats. Ed. Allan Wade. London: Macmillan, 1954.

Yeo, Eileen, and Stephen Yeo, ed. Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914. Sussex: Harvester; New Jersey: Humanities, 1981.

Zeiss, Cecelia. "Sean O'Casey's Final Tragicomedies: A Comment on the Dramatic Modes Employed in Cock-a-doodle-dandy and Bishop's Bonfire." Kosok, Studies 278-86.