SEAN O’CASEY'S LAST PLAYS: A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

by

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This thesis, "Sean O'Casey's Last Plays: A Celebration of Life," is a study of O'Casey's five last full-length plays: Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, The Bishop's Bonfire, The Drums of Father Ned, Behind the Green Curtains, and Figuro in the Night. The focus of the thesis is on O'Casey's dramatization of man's spiritual environment and conflicts. My point of view is that O'Casey is presenting a very humanized religion of love. The plays are, in fact, morality plays depicting the struggle of the forces of good and evil for the soul of man. The first chapter of the thesis will analyse the religious nature of the themes in O'Casey's morality plays. Chapter two will discuss the relationship between the structure of the plays and the themes. Chapter three will attempt to show that O'Casey uses theatrical effects as persuasive techniques to convince an audience of the validity of his themes.

Each of the five plays dramatizes the struggle between the true religion of life-worship and the false faith of the organized Church. The struggle is made concrete through the presentation of various conflicts. There is the conflict between youth and age, between sexual expression and repression, between love of life and love of money, between celebration and gloom, between freedom and restraint. At the centre of the conflict are two opposing priest figures. In Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, it is Father Domineer who fights against
the joy and beauty offered by the Cock. Father Domineer wins when the Cock and his followers flee in search of a better land. In *The Bishop's Bonfire*, there is no escape to another life. Father Canon prevails over Father Boheroë. The Codger is banished, Keelin and Manus must live a loveless existence, and Poorawa is shot. In *The Drums of Father Ned*, on the other hand, it is the forces of good that are completely victorious. The mythical Father Ned and his followers completely defeat Father Fillifogue. In *Behind the Green Curtains*, we are once again in the real world in which the love, kindness, and joy that Beoman struggles for are defeated by the cruelty and repression that Kornavaun, the Church's lieutenant, advocates. O'Casey's conviction, however, that man can find salvation is presented in *Figuro in the Night* where the Figuro is triumphant over all the repressive elements of traditional beliefs.

To explain his religion of life and love, O'Casey developed a structure of interlocking levels of farce, satire, fantasy, and symbolism to replace the traditional plot structure of the drama. O'Casey's last plays have only the most tenuous of plot lines. Instead, the conflict is heightened by playing off one level of development against another in a dramatic counterpoint. Each mode of development uses its own techniques, develops its particular type of character, and clarifies its individual aspect of the theme. Although the levels are largely independent of one another, each adds
contrasts and parallels to the comment made by the other levels to give density to the thematic statement of the plays. The second chapter of this thesis will attempt to show how each of the structural levels of farce, satire, fantasy, and symbolism work independently and how they are brought together into a thematic and theatrical climax.

Finally, the thesis will examine the theatrical effects of the last plays. In these plays, O'Casey uses all the possible visual and sound effects of the theatre to make his themes convincing. Essentially, the visual effects of lighting, costumes, and sets distance the audience from the events of the plays. Whereas, the sound effects tend to involve the audience in an emotional response to the ideas of the plays, not the events. Thus the theatrical effects cause the audience to make an objective assessment of the theme of the plays and, at the same time, to take part in the celebration of life that is presented in the plays.
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THE RELIGION OF LIFE

The early plays of Sean O'Casey from *The Shadow of a Gunman* to *The Silver Tassie* have justifiably received a great deal of critical and theatrical acclaim. Like the plays of Synge, O'Casey's early plays are considered classics of modern theatre. They are frequently revived by professional and amateur groups throughout Canada and the United States. They are studied in schools and universities, and they are included in anthologies of modern drama. Perhaps it is because of the early recognition and success of these plays in the theatre that critics have tended to concentrate on the early plays and generally ignore O'Casey's later plays. Unfortunately, this concentration gives a limited appreciation to an artist like O'Casey who constantly experimented with the form of the drama. Perfecting the so-called realistic method of these early plays was not enough for O'Casey. He seemed compelled to explore and develop as many dramatic methods as possible. Thus, he moves from realism to expressionism to symbolic comedy. O'Casey's development is not, however, solely the result of experimentation with form and technique. O'Casey shifts the focus of his plays from man's material world in the early plays to man's spiritual world in the later plays. Because the early plays of O'Casey have received a great deal of critical attention, and increasingly perceptive attention, I intend in this

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1 *Modern Drama*, IV (1961). The essays by Vincent C. DeBaun and Katherine J. Worth in this O'Casey issue of *Modern Drama* offer excellent studies of the expressionistic techniques in O'Casey's first plays.
study to restrict myself to the five last major plays of Sean O'Casey: Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, The Bishop's Bonfire, The Drums of Father Ned, Behind the Green Curtains, and Figuro in the Night. I will attempt to show that the progression of O'Casey's design has led him in these last plays to a completely religious point of view. Because O'Casey's religious attitude is embodied within the very theatricality of these last plays, I will look at the relation between technique and idea of the plays within their theatrical context rather than as solely literary works.\(^2\) Indeed, with his last plays, O'Casey is like a prophet preaching a very humanized religion of love and joy. But he not only preaches, he deliberately exploits all the theatricality of the stage to make his listeners actually experience the love and joy he preaches. An analysis that focuses both on the religious intent of the plays and the theatricality of its presentation will, I feel, suggest that at least Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, The Bishop's Bonfire, and The Drums of Father Ned are as worthy of theatrical and critical acclaim as are O'Casey's early plays.

Although many contemporary critics still feel that O'Casey's last plays are a deterioration of talent rather than

\(^2\) Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Eliot (Middlesex, 1964). Mr. Williams argues that modern drama criticism must consider the literary merits of plays isolated from their theatrical merits. Surely it is impossible to recognize the true form and technique of a play without considering it as a possible production because a play is not solely a literary form.
a growth, the three major critical studies currently available acknowledge the greatness present in O'Casey's last plays. Because these authors discuss the entire O'Casey canon, their emphasis naturally differs from my own narrower focus on the last plays only. Saros Cowasjee is concerned, as the title of his book, *Sean O'Casey: The Man Behind the Plays*, suggests, more with the personality of O'Casey than with the artistry of the plays. Thus, he sees the last plays as devoted "to ridiculing the clergy for he [O'Casey] is a writer mainly concerned with Ireland" who "attempts to give a comprehensive picture of Ireland." O'Casey's deliberate abandonment of the realistic structure, his vivid symbolism, and his frequent references to life outside present-day Ireland suggest, however, that Mr. Cowasjee's interpretation is too limited. Certainly the plays are grounded, as Mr. Cowasjee states, in the reality of the contemporary Irish scene, but they are also filled with an atmosphere of fantasy and magic that takes them beyond just the local scene. Partly because so many critics said that O'Casey lost touch with the Irish people and the Irish situation, O'Casey, on various occasions, has gone to some lengths to show how much the events of these plays are a part of the

3 Gabriel Fallon, *Sean O'Casey: The Man I Knew* (London, 1965). Even as late as 1965, Mr. Fallon still accepts the assumption that O'Casey's last plays are failures.

current Irish scene. This 'Irishness' gives the plays an added facet of fascination through the specific social commentary that is made. Primarily, however, O'Casey uses the Irish background because, as he says,

it is only through an Irish scene that my imagination can weave a way, within the Irish shadows or out in the Irish sunshine, if it is to have a full or at least a fair, chance to play.

It should be apparent that O'Casey used an Irish locale not to help the world understand the Irish situation, but to help the world understand itself more clearly. In the same New York Times article quoted above, O'Casey states his reason explicitly.

The action manifests itself in Ireland, the mouths that speak are Irish mouths; but the spirit is to be found in action everywhere: the fight made by many to drive the joy of life from the hearts of men; the fight against this fight to vindicate the right of the joy of life to live courageously in the hearts of men.

David Krause, whose study also tends to emphasize the biographical, sees O'Casey's last plays primarily as satires—"Jonsonian correctives" in which "the aim is the scourge and defeat of the ridiculous apes." Mr. Krause, however, finds that the farce scenes of the comedies exist simply "to provoke

6 Sean O'Casey in Cowasjee, p. 211.
laughter that is gratuitous.⁸ Because farce is a major part of each of the last plays, a view such as Mr. Krause's would seem to be rather incomplete. Robert Hogan's book, The Experiments of Sean O'Casey, helps to complete the picture begun by Mr. Krause. Robert Hogan ignores theme almost completely in his attempt to analyse the formal development of O'Casey. Mr. Hogan offers some very illuminating comments on the structure of the last plays. It is what he calls "the comic, illustrative structure" of such novels as Don Quixote, Tom Jones, The Pickwick Papers, and Lucky Jim in which ironic effectiveness is achieved by juxtaposition.⁹

There is almost no excuse for giving such an oversimplified summary of three excellent critical works. My only justification is that such an abridgment indicates the emergence of critical approval of O'Casey's last plays, and at the same time indicates that there are a number of approaches to O'Casey still to be explored. To gain a full appreciation of a dramatist, one must consider the play as a play because theatrical presentation is a basic aspect of the form of the play. A final evaluation cannot rely only on a purely literary analysis. Eventually the critic must consider a playwright's intention, the effect he hopes to achieve on an audience, and, of course, how he achieves his effect. The last

⁸ Krause, p. 177.

plays of Sean O'Casey have not as yet been discussed as plays for the theatre. Marshall McLuhan's now famous idea that "the medium is the message"\textsuperscript{10} can probably be applied to any play. A play depends upon the interplay of audience involvement and distance. One need only consider the number of plays that discuss the nature of reality to accept, at least tentatively, the notion that the medium of the play itself contributes to the "message" it offers. Mr. McLuhan's concept is certainly an exciting one when related to the last O'Casey plays in which the very theatricality of these plays is a vital part of O'Casey's message of joy and love.

Of course, the idea, the form, and the techniques of O'Casey's last plays were not a great illumination, a sudden and abrupt change from his earlier work. Like the development of most artists, O'Casey's growth follows a logical and perceptible pattern. Therefore, before concentrating on the last plays specifically, it would be wise to look briefly at the idea and technique of the earlier plays in order to account for the seemingly unique approach of the last plays.

The inclusion of an extraordinary expressionistic act within a basically realistic framework of both \textit{The Silver Tassie} and \textit{Red Roses for Me} marks O'Casey as an exciting experimenter with the dramatic form. Even earlier than these plays, however, with his so-called realistic dramas, O'Casey seems to

be struggling to break out of the confines of realism. O'Casey himself has more than once expressed his dissatisfaction with realism as a dramatic technique.

This rage for real, real life on the stage has taken all the life out of the drama..... Less of what the critics call "life", and more of symbolism; for even in the most commonplace of realistic plays the symbol can never be absent. A house on a stage can never be a house, and that which represents it must always be a symbol. A room in a realistic play must always be a symbol for a room.

From his first full-length play, O'Casey uses both symbolism and farce to break down the traditional plot structure of the realistic play and provide added levels of irony. In his pre-expressionistic dramas, O'Casey uses both a typically realistic symbolism which arises naturally out of the action, and also a symbolism which has no realistic purpose in the plays. Thus we have characters such as Mrs. Tancred in Juno and the Paycock or Mollser in The Plough and the Stars, for example, who contribute almost nothing to the development of the plot and whose symbolic significance far overshadows their realistic presentation. Even the use of colours, of flowers, of music, of church traditions in the early plays tends to relate less to actual events and characters within the plays than it does to the whole human condition. Certainly O'Casey's treatment of war in these early plays is not typically realistic. He is never really discussing a particular war, but rather using war to symbolize that which is evil and destructive in human soc-

iety. It would be possible to give many examples of O'Casey's non-realistic use of symbolism in the early plays, but the few references I have given will be sufficient to show that even in his early plays O'Casey uses symbolism to distance his audience, to carry its view beyond the particular. It is this almost abstract symbolism that O'Casey develops in his comparatively dehumanized expressionistic dramas. And it is this kind of symbolism that O'Casey develops in the last plays both to carry much of the message and to form a basic element of the structure. In the last plays, O'Casey is once again able to place the symbolism within stylized but very possible human situations as opposed to his use of symbolism within the highly patterned formulae of his expressionistic plays.

One other important element of the early plays that O'Casey is to utilize so successfully later is that of farce. Again, his use of farce distances an audience too much for a typically realistic involvement. The gloriously improbable farce scenes have almost become the proof of O'Casey's genius in these early plays. All the Boyle-Joxer scenes in Juno and the Paycock have their farcical overtones, but perhaps the most delightful is the marvelous scene near the end of Act I in which Joxer is constantly leaping out on to the window ledge to escape the wrath of Juno. That the farce scenes can add a biting ironic comment is clearly visible in The Plough and the Stars and the wonderful barroom brawl between Bessie Burgess and Mrs. Gogan. The men's war games suddenly become
just as ludicrous as the ladies' beery battle. The Silver Tassie and Red Roses for Me likewise use farce as ironic commentary. In his purely expressionistic plays, however, as his didactic purpose becomes over-emphasized, O'Casey tends to use less and less farce. With his final plays, though, O'Casey is able to integrate the farce with the message and structure even more effectively than he had done earlier. As a maturing artist O'Casey obviously recognized the effectiveness of his use of symbolism and farce and was able to develop them along with fantasy and satire into a new dramatic structure in his five last plays.

O'Casey's early struggles to break the confines of realism were probably caused not so much by his desire to experiment as by his point of view towards his human subject. O'Casey's point of view moves from a concern with man's material well-being to man's social welfare to man's spiritual well-being. With the exception of Purple Dust, all the plays before Cock-A-Doodle Dandy are concerned with the effect of the external world on the characters. These plays are, in fact, socially oriented. Cock-A-Doodle Dandy and the plays which follow it present man's spiritual environment and conflicts.

In O'Casey's so-called realistic plays, we see the effects of war, poverty, and oppression on the individual. The innocent non-participants suffer the greatest deprivation and pain. This needless suffering is, in these plays, presented in terms of material physical loss. Minnie Powell in Shadow
of a Gunman loses her life because of the dangerous glorification of false heroism that war produces. Juno's beauty and creativity in *Juno and the Paycock* are sacrificed in the struggle with the destructive power of poverty and the chaos of war. Her home is destroyed, her daughter's future is ruined, and her son is killed. In *The Plough and the Stars*, Nora, her baby, and her husband, Bessie Burgess, and Mollser all might have been saved but for the futile war and preventable poverty. *The Silver Tassie* and *Red Roses for Me* also focus on the physical suffering of one individual in conditions of war and poverty. Harry Heegan's agony is caused not by spiritual pain but by the knowledge that the physical world no longer has any meaning for him. Ayamonn Breydon must give up his artistic pursuits, the love of Sheila, and finally his life in the literal fight against poverty. In these last two plays, the physical nature of suffering is greatly emphasized by the stylization of presentation and the imagery of language. Because, however, all five plays concentrate on the individual in his physical environment, there is a basic but flexible realism in treatment, particularly in characterization.

When O'Casey turns his attention to the functions of society and the way these functions are carried out, his treatment becomes more stylized as he attempts to show the suffering and chaos of poverty, war, and oppression afflicting not individuals, but large groups of people. It is this very shift of attention from the individual to the group that makes these
plays - Within the Gates, The Star Turns Red, and Oak Leaves and Lavender - diagrams for social improvement rather than dramas of compelling human interest. Even Within the Gates and all its emphasis on the Dreamer's attempts to save Jannice's soul suggests very strongly that to banish poverty would be to banish Jannice's misery, the Down-and-Outs, and the control of the pseudo-religious hypocrites. The expressionistic plays, like the realistic plays, keep us in the realm of man's physical world. They preach social, political betterment within the actual world.

Of O'Casey's three expressionistic plays, only Within the Gates suggests that man is involved in a struggle that goes beyond just the attempt to correct social evils. The characters of Within the Gates suffer spiritual as well as material poverty, and it is the depicted struggle with spiritual poverty that points out the thematic direction O'Casey's later plays will take. Within the Gates is O'Casey's first dramatization of the battle between the true religion of life - worship and the false faith of the organized Church. The play is indeed religious in its point of view as many critics have pointed out, but it is hardly "the most Christian of O'Casey's plays"12 as Saros Cowasjee would have us believe. As Mr. Cowasjee notes in his study, O'Casey uses the symbolism and language of the Church and even the structure of the Breviary, but these are surely used as an ironic commentary on the practices

12 Cowasjee, p. 143.
of the Christian Church, for against these are placed and praised the pagan ritual of the Maypole, the rites of the seasons, the release of the dance and songs of life. Because, however, of the emphasis on the external social problems and the failure of the stage effects to integrate the spiritual theme with the material theme, Within the Gates remains a part of the experimental socially oriented plays and is only a probing towards the synthesis of the final plays.

Purple Dust, like Within the Gates, thematically and technically points to the later plays. Technically it is interesting because here O'Casey uses farce as the basic structural unit to depict a partially spiritual theme. Each act of the play is built around one major farce action. Act I builds to the ludicrous entrance of Basil carried in battered and bruised after his attempt at riding an Irish horse and is topped by the Yellow-Bearded Man poking his head through a hole in the ceiling to hear the news of Avril riding off "stark naked". His hilarious comment "with aggravated anguish in his voice" closes the act: "It's like me to be up here outa sight o' the world with great things happenin'!" Act II increases the buffoonery. There is the delicious scene of Poges' terrified encounter with a very mild cow which is followed by the even more riotous scene of Poges' entrance and chaotic exit with an enormous iron roller. Act III continues the farcical development with one major scene, the decidedly slapstick and uproariously funny scene in which the quatto-centro desk makes
its entrance. **Purple Dust** uses throughout a technique which O'Casey develops and refines in his later plays - intensification through farce. In this play the building of climaxes, the tension of character conflict, and the development of theme all rely on the farcical struggle between the ludicrous representatives of evil and idealized representatives of good. The intensity of the farce is weakened, however, by the over-idealization of the forces of good and by an unexpected inclusion of fantasy at the end of the play. Because **Purple Dust** suffers from a diffuseness of purpose and effect and is just a partial treatment of man's spiritual existence, it too can only be thought of as pointing to the final synthesis. O'Casey is obviously still searching for the exact form in which to express his religion of joy.

The major link that **Within the Gates** and **Purple Dust** provides with O'Casey's later plays is in the partial depiction of man's spiritual life. O'Casey moves from man's outer world of social, material problems to man's inner world of religious, moral questions. Growing up in Dublin, O'Casey was constantly surrounded by bigotry of the most violent sort. Cruelty and destructiveness were encouraged in a mistaken idea of piety. He witnessed and was often the victim of most unchristian actions by both Catholic and Protestant ministers of a Christian God of love. The question of God's allegiance to Catholics or Protestants could always promote heated discussion. But only a few, condemned by Protestant and Catholic
alike, dared to deny the existence of either God or man's eternal soul. Damnation, salvation, and God were painfully real to most Dubliners. O'Casey, like almost every other Irish writer of note, was profoundly affected by this fervent religiosity. Christian practices and beliefs form a large part of all O'Casey's writing. He returns again and again in his autobiographies to the Church's professions and practices in the name of religion. O'Casey's own faith in Christian doctrine did not long survive the onslaught of his extensive reading.

Sometimes he wished Darwin had never come into the house. He had upset everything. Everything was different from what they were before he rambled in to drag him down from the thoughts of sun-tinted clouds airily sailing the blue sky, a rug under God's feet, and force him to take an open-eyed survey of frogs and toads splashing about in the sedgy wharfage of a pond or the speary bulrushes of a marsh. For Sean, life was to begin all over again; if he decided to think on, and who wouldn't do that? He had been deceived by babblers ready to live, to love, and to die in the irised lure of a pretty fairy tale.13

In spite of the loss of Christian faith, however, O'Casey's very personal religious attitude developed and grew stronger and finally found expression in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy and the plays which followed it.

The last plays of Sean O'Casey are not included in any of the existing anthologies of religious plays such as the

Meridian collection. Nor are they included in critical studies of religious drama. Yet, the last plays of O'Casey are primarily concerned with man's spiritual nature and governed by a religious point of view. O'Casey has himself said, "If a play is what it ought to be it must be a religious function." And it is this religious quality that chiefly distinguishes O'Casey from many of his contemporaries. The point of view of the naturalists and most of the expressionists is a direct result of late nineteenth-century determinism. The absurdists, who depict man's pathetic search for purpose in a meaningless world, are a part of the general twentieth-century belief in ultimate irrationality that would seem to be a development from determinism. O'Casey's point of view is a result of a firm belief in moral values and an absolute faith in man's inherent goodness - man has the possibility of salvation within him.

The religious attitude is one of faith in eternal values. It is man's personal relation to the intangible that is stressed in most definitions of religion. Alfred North

14 Marvin Halverson, ed., Religious Drama (New York, 1959). This collection of contemporary religious drama contains plays by writers as diverse as W. H. Auden, D. H. Lawrence, and e e cummings.

15 Robert Speaight, Christian Theatre (New York, 1960). Mr. Speaight's work is typical of studies of religious drama. The major emphasis is on early specifically Christian works with a brief survey of contemporary drama.

Whitehead, for example, defines religion as "the art and the theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on the man himself and what is permanent in the nature of things. .... Religion is what the individual does with his own solitaryness." Probable most definitions of religion include a discussion of man's relation to and belief in some divine being. If belief in a divine being were essential to the religious attitude, neither O'Casey nor his plays could be considered religious. Yet, as Julian Huxley points out, Buddhism in its original form does not profess belief in any supernatural being. For Mr. Huxley and other contemporary thinkers, religion can exist without any belief in a personal god. Religion is rather

a way of life which follows necessarily from a man's holding certain things in reverence from his feeling and believing them to be sacred. And those things which are held sacred by religion primarily concern human destiny and the forces with which it comes in contact.

The definitions of both Huxley and Whitehead admirably describe Sean O'Casey's attitude. O'Casey holds life itself to be sacred. Life's permanent values are joy, beauty, and love. Therefore anything which prevents man from feeling


19 Huxley, p. 9.
and expressing joy; anything which blinds man to all the beauty around him; anything which causes man to feel hatred, cruelty, and repression instead of love is evil and must be eradicated. At the same time, education, technological progress, scientific advances must be praised because they will help to make it possible for all men to partake of the love, joy, and beauty of life. That O'Casey thinks of education, technology, and science as religious activities is evident throughout his prose works. In *Rose and Crown*, for example, he states:

> Man is busy now with a new exorcism - the expulsion of disease from man and animal and plant, defending the holy tissue of the flesh from pollution of virus and of bug; the exorcism of fear from man's way of life that he may stand up and speak out and laugh loud. Exorcism that calls for no candle, bell, or book, cassock or stole; a church where the altar is a table, the god a microscope; the ritual a bold imagination, a peer ing eye, a ceaseless searching mind; so that health may be sanctity, energy prayer, and the achievements of men and the play of children most acceptable praises to God.²⁰

The advances of science and technology are not enough, however. Belief in the sacredness of all life must be a part of man's dealings with his fellow man. The lack of joy, beauty, and love that this belief in life's sanctity causes is most apparent in political activities and the organized Church. There can be no doubt that O'Casey turned to an

idealization of Communism because he felt it would bring the finer things of life to all men and because he thought of it as a religious force. O'Casey felt that the 1917 Russian Revolution was "the Spirit of God once more moving over the face of the waters." It is man beginning to work out his own salvation.

Man must be his own saviour; man must be his own god. Man must learn, not by prayer, but by experience. Advice from God was within ourselves, and nowhere else. Social sense and social development was the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. A happy people made happy by themselves. There is no other name given among men by which we can be saved, but by the mighty name of Man.

Not only has the religious attitude affected O'Casey's personal way of life and his political beliefs, but it has also become a vital part of his artistry and his literary judgment. For O'Casey, as for a good many other writers, the artist must "be where life is, active life." But if this 'life-centre' is not apparent in a writer's work, he is a lesser artist, no matter how skillful, as far as O'Casey is concerned. While recognizing the craftsmanship of both T.S. Eliot and Hugh MacDiarmid, O'Casey much prefers MacDiarmid because, in O'Casey's opinion, MacDiarmid can be a

22 *Sunset and Evening Star*, p. 251.
part of the coarseness of life as well as the refinement; he can appreciate the joyousness of life as well as the desolation, and Eliot cannot. These qualities make MacDiarmid a more religious poet than Eliot.

An' who can claim a share in God who does not take the part of man? To Sean's mind Hugh MacDiarmid makes far more of the Thistle as a symbol for God and man than T. S. Eliot does of the Rose of Sharon.  

For the same reasons, O'Casey dismisses Kafka, Beckett, Ionesco, Greene, Genet, Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Camus as fine writers but life-frighteners rather than life-worshippers.

Every sentence they write abandons life, yet they cling to it as the ivy clings to the wall; they grip life with all their might, and call a doctor when they feel a cold coming: they refuse to live and try to stop others from living either.

Our world has grandeur and life has hope. In spite of the despairs of the American beats and the European wailers, the lark in the clear air still sings the melody of hope; and hope in action will do great things everlastingly.  

For O'Casey, the Elizabethans and a few modern writers like Shaw, Yeats, and Joyce come closer to God than all the Church's clerics and most of the commonly recognized religious writers because the works of these truly religious writ-

24 Sunset and Evening Star, p. 113.

ers contain the song and dance of life and the vigorous laughter of life. None of them was afraid of emotional passion or bold imagination. Certainly they often felt despair at the human condition, but their protests were monumental not puny whimpers of misery. In *Sunset and Evening Star*, O'Casey presents a witty portrait of Shaw, Yeats, and Joyce as Bishops working real salvation and giving real blessings. "They are man's saints; our saints, registered in the wide church of humanity." In this amusing picture particularly, but also throughout the autobiographies, O'Casey reveals his major complaint against the Church. The Church has lost its religion. It has become clerical instead of Christian. In his last plays, O'Casey presents in full, the two-part picture of this miniature satire in *Sunset and Evening Star* - a picture of true religion and a denunciation of the organized Church's lack of religion.

David Krause has called *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* a "comic morality with a universal theme for men of all countries," and this is a description which also applies to *The Bishop's Bonfire*, *The Drums of Father Ned*, *Behind the Green Curtains*, and *Figure in the Night*. Each of the five plays presents through allegorical figures the struggle of the forces of good and evil for the soul of man. In this struggle is em-

26 *Sunset and Evening Star*, p. 236.

27 Krause, p. 188.
bodied a dramatization of the way to salvation. As in all moralities, this dramatization of the way to salvation contains in it the rules and pattern of a way of life on earth. At the same time, the temptations to fall away from the 'true' way of life into sin are vividly dramatized and given intensity through the warning of imminent destruction and death. The reward and promise of remaining faithful to the true religion must, of course, also be dramatically presented. By bringing together these elements of the morality play, O'Casey, in his last five plays, gives us a dramatic definition of his religious attitude.

In all five plays the forces of good are governed by a god of love and the forces of evil by a false god of power and terror. In Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, this god of love is represented by his high priest on earth, the delightful cock who wages a constant, if losing, battle of magic and gaiety against Father Domineer, the vicious high priest of the false religion. These characters are completely unrealistic, one-dimensional representatives of good and evil as are their messengers Robin Adair, whose music and commentary carry the message of the play and are linked directly with the Cock, and Shanaar, the comic and rather frightening 'Latin-lustrous oul' cod of a prayer-blower;' and One-Eyed Larry, a horrible little crea-

ture whose nasty fantasies are encouraged by Father Domineer and the Church. These are the figures then, who struggle for the souls of the remaining characters in the play. The climax of this struggle occurs during the fantastic and hilarious exorcism scene of Scene III. The stage directions give an indication of the magnitude of this struggle.

Screeches like those of barn owls are heard from the house, with the "too-whit too whoo" of other kinds, the cackling of hens, and the loud cawing of crows... The house shakes again; the flag-pole totters and falls flat; blue and red lightning flashes from the window, and a great peal of thunder drums through the garden. Then all becomes suddenly silent. They all hang on to each other, shivering with fear, except Loreleen.

(p. 198).

When the limping and maimed, but elated, Father Domineer emerges from the lurching house, a symbol of Ireland, we know that the Cock with his spirit of love and joy has indeed been banished from the land, the powers of darkness are victorious. But it is not a complete victory for the Cock has inspired at least the women with the true religion of love and joy. Even

I (1957) Juno and the Paycock; The Shadow of a Gunman; The Plough and the Stars; The End of the Beginning; A Pound on Demand.
II (1952) The Silver Tassie; Within the Gates; The Star Turns Red.
III (1951) Purple Dust; Red Roses For Me; Hall of Healing.
IV (1951) Oak Leaves and Lavender; Cock-A-Doodle Dandy; Bedtime Story; Time to Go.
Page numbers of subsequent quotations will be given in the text immediately after the quotation.
Michael, when he sees the women following the Cock to "a place where life resembles life more than it does here" (p. 216), recognizes that without love and joy, there is nothing left for him but to die.

Primarily the Cock represents the sexuality and fertility of physical love and the vitality and well-being that physical love promotes. Opposed to the free expression of love is the perversion and lust caused by the Church's repression of love. Robin was jailed for daring to kiss Marion in a public place. Father Domineer is constantly warning the women against the sin of low-cut too-short dresses and viciously breaks up any dancing because it may lead to a healthy interest in sex. The result is lust rather than love. All the men but Robin dwell on the sin of lust because it is their only form of sexual enjoyment. "Th' circumnambulatory nature of a woman's form often has a detonatin' effect on a man's idle thoughts" (p. 146). The depiction of this lust is highly amusing in both language and action. Shanaar's lurid tales about the evils of sexual experience are fantastic. Michael's terrible conflict between fear and desire is constantly comic. Sailor Mahan's ludicrous, animal-like wooing of Loreleen is hilarious. But never far beneath the comedy is O'Casey's message. A genuine expression of physical love is idealized not ridiculed.

Because of the actions of Lorna, Marion, Loreleen, and Robin, disciples and messenger of the Cock, we realize, how-
ever, that the Cock represents not only sexuality and fertility but also love in its fullest meaning which must include love of fellow man. Because love has not withered in Lorna, Marion, and Loreleen, they are able to respond to the Cock with pleasure and affection, not fear and trembling. They are the only ones who feel genuine concern for the dying Julia. Father Domineer only considers the publicity, prestige, and power a miraculous cure would bring to him. Michael can think of nothing but the fifty pounds he gave Julia's father for which he got the two hundred acres of bog that are making him a fortune. It is Lorna, Marion, and Robin who try to protect Loreleen from the cruelty, inspired by Domineer, of the townspeople. It is these three who accompany Loreleen into exile. Their characters represent the generosity and kindness of the true spirit of love.

Fighting against the generosity and humanity of the true religion of love is the hierarchy of exploitation used and encouraged by the Church. Father Domineer, the priest of the Church, controls the actions of all those too weak to fight against him, and he uses the power of fear, death, and damnation to strengthen the control of the Church over the body and soul of mankind. In a brutal uncontrollable rage, Father Domineer kills the Lorry Driver who will not submit to his demands. For this action he is merely transferred to another parish and for the destruction of the individuality and souls of his parishioners, he is not held responsible at all. Mich-
ael and Sailor Mahan, next in line, try to enforce their wills on their wives through harshness and cruelty. Michael calls Lorna "a jade," a "bitch," a "costumed slut." Theirs is a sterile marriage based on a business arrangement only. It is the same desire for material gain that causes both Michael and Sailor Mahan to exploit their workmen utterly and causes their endless but very comic disagreements. Again, as in the handling of the theme of sexuality, O'Casey presents man's selfishness with witty satire and delightful farce, yet the undercurrent of ugliness is always present.

Domination leads inevitably to a timorous fear of life. The men of Nyadnanave are afraid of women. The women must submit themselves to both their husbands and the Church. The whole district is terrified of the Cock. "Your fathers' faith is fear, an' now fear is your only fun" (p. 161). The only music for Nyadnanavians is the gloomy hymn sung for Julia, and the martial music of fife and drum used in the attempt to rout the Cock. The only festivities for the villagers are the Church's solemn processions at Julia's departure and return, and the pretentious ceremony for the President of Eire. Michael's very funny concern for his top hat shows that his interest in festivity is only for pompous self-glorification. For the followers of the Cock, song, colour, gaiety, and dance are a far more vital part of life than gloom, despair, and oppression. Robin is seldom without his accordion to add a gay accompaniment to the dance of the women or
a sad commentary on the folly of the Nyadnanavians. The first mention of Lorna and Marion occurs when we hear them practicing dancing to a lilting waltz tune. It is the women who, with the magic of music and their feminine allure, are able to enchant Michael, Sailor Mahan, and the Sergeant into a few moments of gay dancing in which even money matters become unimportant. This moment of enlightenment is destroyed all too soon by Father Domineer, who forces all but Loreleen and Robin into servility on their bended knees. Robin and all three women always wear brilliant reds, greens, and silver, which not only symbolize their vitality but also are an inherent part of their life-worship. By contrast, the villagers only cover their drab browns and blacks with colour during the procession with Julia, the attempt at routing the Cock, and in preparation for the arrival of the President, occasions that are all related to death and destruction. Even the brilliant sunflowers, which indicated the potential for life-worship in Nyadnanave, turn to black when the Cock is banished.

To follow the Cock into the celebration of life takes great courage and individuality. It is necessary both to recognize the error of the Church and to fight against the complacency and conformity the Church demands. Loreleen has clods of dirt thrown at her, is beaten and reviled, has her money taken from her, but she does not submit to the deadening power of the Church. It is all too easy for the masses
to accept the temptations of the Church. The Church offers ease of mind for there is no need to make decisions nor to question authority. The rosy delusion of some heavenly fairyland blinds one to suffering, pain, and cruelty. No demands are made but ignorance and absolute subservience. Thus, it is only Lorna, Marion, and Robin who have the strength to go with Loreleen on the search to find "a place where life resembles life more than it does here" (p. 216).

In spite of the delightful comedy and the charming fantasy, *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* presents a very bleak outlook. Only in a fairy tale where magic can protect one is it possible for those who believe in the joy of life to gain even a partial victory. In his next play, *The Bishop's Bonfire*, O'Casey shows what happens to life-worshippers who do not have the help of a Cock's magic. Although *The Bishop's Bonfire* is almost as unrealistic in technique as *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, it is focused on the real world not the wonderland of fantasy. Thus, using the same themes of physical love, humanitarian love, celebration of life, and individuality, O'Casey stresses the negative aspect of these themes. In the real world love is frustrated, celebration is destructive, and conformity is required.

Instead of presenting the joyous exuberance and release of physical love as in *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, *The Bishop's Bonfire* shows the fear and dissension caused by a repression of this natural instinct. Keelin and Daniel love one another,
but Daniel has not enough strength to fight both Canon Burren and Councillor Reiligan to claim Keelin. Instead, Daniel accepts the prospect of the unhappiness of life without Keelin, and in the end, cruelly rejects Keelin's love. The Canon and Reiligan, meanwhile, are attempting to arrange a completely loveless marriage but a wonderful business arrangement between fifty-year old Farmer Mullarkey and Keelin.

Foorawn and Manus, too, love one another, but Foorawn has taken a vow of chastity. The frustration caused by this foolish and forced repression of desire becomes more and more intense. By the end of Act I, Manus has only bitterness left for Foorawn, not the necessary patience and understanding. The angry tone of "the key's under your bodice on your breast within where the cross is lying on your breast without. Cross and key to keep you cold" (p. 43), is typical of Manus' response to Foorawn. Foorawn is "too deep in the vainglory of her chastity" (p. 43) to understand her own feelings or Manus'. She can only respond coldly, "Manus, you are a bad man.....A very bad man" (p. 43). The appalling outcome of this thwarted love is inevitable. Their passion can only find expression in anger and destruction.

Manus [flinging her from him]. Oh, let me go, you mournful, empty shell of womanhood!

Foorawn [running to the telephone, and whipping up the receiver]. I'll get the police! I'll watch you hauled to jail; I'll have you finished in this whole district, in this whole land!

Manus. So that's your love and that's your charity, Foorawn's love and Foorawn's charity,
you sounding cymbal, you junk of tinkling brass! [Wildly, a deep menace in his voice, taking the gun from his pocket]. Get away from that! D'ye hear? Drop that phone, you bitch!

Foorawn [wildly and passionately]. I'll settle you for ever, you spoiled priest! [He fires at her]

(pp. 118-119).

Manus kills Foorawn, and, as a result, is himself destroyed spiritually.

Rankin, a sterile sexless fanatic, represents the ultimate consequence of the Church's repression. He can only react to Keelin's joy and physical beauty with the shocking act of viciously spitting in her face. For Rankin, all women are to be hated. "[With clenched teeth] I hate the evil Eves who send men sidling into sin!" (p. 26). For him, there is only the obsession of the knee bent constantly in prayer and the barren ecstasy of absolute submission to the authority of the Church. At the opposite pole to Rankin is the wise and generous Codger, surely one of O'Casey's most marvelous creations. Like Manus, Codger sees the sterility in the land.

Codger... No heart in the soil, no heart in the grass that tops it. Hay from grass that never had a life.... That's what we have now - a midget glory: slower and slower the wheel swings, lower and lower the reel rings (p. 27)

But Codger is not embittered by the vision. He can dance and sing and laugh. He has time to show understanding and love to Keelin in her suffering. He tries with love and
gaiety to guide Foorawn away from the futility of excessive piety into the merry dance of life. Codger is, in fact, the personification of all that is good in the religion of life-worship. Yet, he is not solely a personification of an abstract ideal, but is a full-bodied human being. Father Boheroe and Canon Burren, on the other hand, are little more than abstractions. Father Boheroe simply represents the forces of good and Canon Burren, the forces of evil. Codger, however, is the very human manifestation of a victory of the forces of good.

Father Boheroe constantly strives to lift up the hearts of the people to a true religious worship. He knows and says that, "too much formal prayer sometimes makes a soul conceited; and merriment may be a way of worship!" (p. 26), and that "a man in a woman's arms may indeed be close to God" (p. 75). Father Boheroe realizes, too, the real value of joyous spirited singing.

Father Boheroe. I wish I could put into my prayers the spirit he puts into his songs. I'm afraid Monsignor, God listens more eagerly to the songs of the Codger than He does to our best prayers.

(p. 106).

As the priest of the true religion, Father Boheroe desperately attempts to lead his people to salvation. He struggles to make Foorawn recognize the value of her suppressed love for Manus. He almost succeeds in inspiring Daniel with enough bravery to fight for his love and his soul. Father Boheroe even tries to show Rankin the error of his fanatical
ways. But the powers of darkness are too much for Father Boheroe. He cannot even save Codger from the wrath of Canon Burren.

The victory of the powers of darkness is far more decisive in The Bishop's Bonfire than in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy. There is no escape from the real world to "a place where life resembles life more than it does here." Canon Burren struggles just as desperately as Father Boheroe and with greater success to maintain his reign of power and exploitation. He is delighted to help the stupid Councillor Reiligan become a Count of the Church. Reiligan is a fine source of income for the Church. It is the Canon who convinces Reiligan to dismiss Codger, whose presence is a constant threat to the Canon's authority. The Canon destroys Daniel's spirit and attempts to promote a loveless marriage between Keelin and Farmer Mullarkey. And, of course, the Canon encourages the fanaticism of both Rankin and Foorawn.

Just as the Canon owns the souls of the people of Ballyonagh, so Reiligan, the Canon's chief tool, owns their bodies. Indeed, Reiligan can recognize some of the worth of Codger and Manus. They both provide Reiligan with substantial monetary gain. His daughter Keelin is nothing more than a non-paid servant in the household. In church-oriented Ballyonagh, Foorawn's religiosity adds prestige and an aura of piety to Reiligan's position. Just as the Canon uses Reiligan, so Reiligan uses those under him. Love and kind-
ness have little chance of survival in the world of Ballyoonagh.

There are not many victories for goodness. Primarily, the world is characterized by fighting and dissension. In Ballyoonagh, the lovers quarrel rather than kiss. Rankin and Prodical are constantly carrying on very funny and completely pointless disagreements. Reiligan is forever clashing with his workmen, his daughters, and even Canon Burren. The two priests, of course, are in complete opposition to one another. In Act II, the utterly insane argument about parachuting jeeps into Ireland acts as a kind of comic stage metaphor of the discord brought about by the denial of love and life. The constant futile conflict reaches its climax in the final horrifying Manus-Foorawn scene played out against the background of the flames of the Bishop's bonfire.

Revelry and celebration, in Ballyoonagh, can take only two forms. There is the celebration of Codger, Daniel, and Prodical over the wonderful discovery of a gin keg. Their resulting inebriation is delightful rather than harmful. It may be, as Father Boheroe says, that they are "trying to get a glimpse of heaven through the wrong window" (p. 24), but their attempt at least inspires them to song and greater love of life than the Canon would consent to. With the help of gin, the timid Daniel decides to go out into the meadow and listen to the lark singing. The gin makes Prodical far
more human and far more eloquent.

Prodical (to the world and to Father Boheroe).

Prodical Carranaun demands a wider world, Father Boheroe; a world where a man can roar his real opinions out; where night becomes a generous part of a day, where rough seas tumble in on a lonely shore. Prodical Carranaun is far above the meaning of Reiligan's roses and Reiligan's wall!

(p. 44).

All the Church can offer for celebration is the arrival of a Bishop which brings about the pretentious preparations to Reiligan's house and finally a massive bonfire destroying most of the books of Ballyoonagh. O'Casey has Manus answering Prodical's question, "Where's that bastard, Dan gone to now!" with "gone into the house and into hell" (p. 14).

Again, O'Casey uses the house to symbolize Ireland and, by extension, the world. The hellishness of the bonfire is more than apparent.

In spite of the bleak picture he presents in The Bishop's Bonfire, O'Casey insists that man has the power to overthrow the powers of darkness and that, unconsciously, man always strives to destroy these powers. O'Casey uses the hilarious farce scenes involving the workmen to dramatize this unconscious destruction. The action of the play occurs during the day in which the Bishop is to arrive. But the elaborate preparations for the Bishop's arrival are nowhere near completion. Daniel, Prodical, and Rankin are to complete a brick wall around Reiligan's house and work on the church tower before Bishop Mullarkey comes to town. Pro-
gress is a trifle slow. Prodical and Rankin have a fine farcical fight over whose brick each is using. Daniel and Codger add to the delay by enticing Prodical to break his vow of abstinence and come to the gin keg. It is the gin that brings about the comic high point of Act I. Under the influence of gin, Codger slightly miscalculates his own strength. Staggering under the weight of an enormous bag of cement, Codger and cement burst into the Bishop's drawing-room. The new carpet and the new furniture will not be in quite perfect condition for the Bishop. Even when the cement has been cleaned up and the room is almost ready, it is still not safe from the unwitting destruction of the men. Both Daniel and Rankin kick and chip the door and put great gashes in the magnificent new table as they bring in the huge potted palms - the finishing touches to the room. Canon Burren's control over the people is not complete. The men are incapable of conforming to the degree demanded by the Church.

It is when man can consciously accept Father Boheroe's words, "when we have problems Foorawn, ourselves are the saints to solve them. Our weakness - and our strength" (p. 114), that a victory for the powers of goodness is assured. With the acceptance must come the fight.

Father Boheroe....Get to yourselves the courage to last it out. You've escaped from the dominion of the big house with the lion and the unicorn on its front; don't let yourselves sink beneath the meaner dominion of the big shop with the cross and the shamrock on its gable. Whatever comes, refuse
to be frightened, and take whatever the glow may bring, be it the mourning habit or the golden gown!

In *The Drums of Father Ned*, O'Casey shows the results of this brave fight.

*The Drums of Father Ned* dramatizes the same oppositions as *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* and *The Bishop's Bonfire*, but in the combat in *The Drums of Father Ned* the forces of good win the victory. Again, there are the conflicts between youth and age, between sexual expression and repression, between the love of life and the love of money, between celebration and gloom, between freedom and constraint. Again, too, these oppositions are centred on the two conflicting priests, the allegorical figures of good and evil.

From the beginning of Act I, we are aware the Father Ned is the major inspiration for the Tostal, and that nothing will stand in the way of the Tostal celebrations. The orthodox clergy, the politicians, and the businessmen are helpless before the spirit of youth and joy generated by the Tostal. Because the Prerumble has established Binnington and McGilligan as O'Casey's typical "oul' life-frighteners", whose only interests are business and absurd political beliefs, we know immediately that anyone and anything opposed to McGilligan and Binnington will be on the side of goodness. Thus, from the first scene of Act I, the battle lines between Father Ned and Father Fillifogue are clearly marked. And because we know that Father Fillifogue will be defeated,
he can become a marvelously comic figure. It is surprising that O'Casey felt that the Irish clergy would be able to accept *The Drums of Father Ned*. The Church priests of *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* and *The Bishop's Bonfire* have at least the importance of being frightening figures, but Father Fillifogue is stripped of all stature. He is only a very foolish man who becomes progressively more comic. He engages in a wonderfully farcical umbrella tug-of-war with Mr. Murray over the question of classical music coming into the parish church. By Act II, Father Fillifogue, completely bewildered by Father Ned's mystery, begins an unconscious but very funny imitation of Skerighan's description of Father Ned in a heavy Ulster accent. Poor Father Fillifogue is almost completely defeated. He staggers on stage hiding under his open black umbrella. Still more shattering knowledge is in store for Father Fillifogue. He learns that the Presbytery door has been painted a flaming red - "atheistical Communist" colour. Even worse, however, the young people will not allow the Communist timber to be burned. The final blow comes when he learns that Michael and Nora have been sleeping together. All he can do is cry in despair, "Youse see, youse hear? This is all along of th' College lettin' th' students wear jeans.....The jeans, jeans, jeans!" (p. 99). Certainly, O'Casey treats Father Fillifogue far more kindly than any of

29 David Krause gives a detailed description of O'Casey's difficulties with the Dublin Tostal Council concerning the production of *The Drums of Father Ned*, pp. 212-217.
his other Church priests. We may even feel a little pity for him, but we cannot take him seriously.

Father Ned, by contrast, is so completely allegorical that we are never absolutely certain that he does exist. We never see Father Ned, only the result of his presence in the exuberant activity of the youth. Throughout the play, Father Ned is associated with the glories of Ireland's mythic past. Bernadette's dream-like description to Skerighan relates Father Ned to the mythic figures of Columcille and Deesusk. At the beginning of Act III posters and shields bearing the faces of the old Irish gods and heroes are on display. The Man of the Pike's catalogue of these figures again directly relates them to Father Ned. And, as Robert Hogan points out, Skerighan's description gives Father Ned the mystery and grandeur of a primitive god.

Skerighan...a body that wasna there, but fierce green eyes shinin' lak umerals on fire in a white face thot was careein' aboot though stayin' stull as a evenin' star, starin' up tae me frum doon in the valley below.....a wild flop of ruddy hair, flamin' lak a burnin' bush; one long white hond pointin' up, th' ither one pointin' doon, forbye th' sound of a clear voice sayin' naethin' on' meanin' all, all sur­rounded by a michty clerical collar round a neck I couldna see.

(p. 64).

The association of Father Ned with Ireland's past does not suggest a desire for a return to the past. O'Casey was

30 Hogan, p. 139.
never one to worship the past blindly. The use of a priest figure does reinforce the religious nature of the play. More importantly, it holds a promise for the future. Once the false way of life has been defeated, the spirit of greatness that the mythic gods and heroes represent can become a part of man's life. The figures that are named in the play represent all that forms a part of O'Casey's religious attitude - holiness, justice, love, poetry, music, and youth.

Father Ned is also associated with the whispers in the night. For Michael and Nora, Tom and Bernadette, the whispers speak of love in one another's arms. The young no longer need to be afraid of the joys of physical love. Michael and Nora have been sleeping together and dare to admit it to the whole world. Even though the whispers carry the certainty of age and death within them, these whispers of age will not be frightening when,

_Bernadette..... all our deeds an' joys'll be as many as the leaves on an ash or th' blossoms on a three of hawthorn. Then we can fade in quietness, and fall with the carelessness of satisfaction._

(p. 51).

For the old, however, whose policies preach hatred, the whispers of the night are frightening and dangerous sounds. Instead of the night "whisperin' of th' gay look comin' over Doonavale" (p. 62), "th' night'll be whisperin' of madness, madness" (p. 63) to Father Fillifogue, Binnington, and McGilligan.
In *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* and *The Bishop's Bonfire*, O'Casey could only suggest in a negative way the reward and promise of the religion of life-worship. The reward of life-worship was completely opposite to the promise given by the Church. Because in *The Drums of Father Ned* victory for the forces of love and life is assured from the beginning, the entire play becomes a dramatization of the effects of such a victory. *The Drums of Father Ned* is O'Casey's least plotted play. *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* has what could be called one strong plot line - the conflict between the Cock and Father Domineer. *The Bishop's Bonfire* seems, on the surface, to be quite intricately plotted, bringing together the three stories of the two pairs of lovers and the defeat of Father Boheroe and Codger within the central line of the preparations for the Bishop's visit. *The Drums of Father Ned*, however, is the depiction of what O'Casey believes to be the possibilities of the human conditions. There is virtually no conflict and no development in the plot sense. Rather, there is an intensification of the spirit of youth and celebration. We compare the activities and thoughts of characters who are immersed in the spirit of love and Father Ned with those who are not.

Life without love and understanding brings spiritual death if not physical death. The sharply satiric *Prerumble* emphasizes the harm McGilligan and Binnington's petty feud can cause. The Officer of the Black and Tans wants them
kept alive because "these two rats will do more harm to Ireland living than they'll do to Ireland dead" (p. 10). They are, after all, concerned with their personal business interests alone. As long as they are alive one could expect the people to suffer.

Love, however, has filled the youth. Life has a greater purpose than gaining financial success and the Church's blessing. The youth of Doonavale are working together to bring beauty and joy to the town through the Tostal celebrations. The elders of the town cannot stand in youth's way. When it is necessary to find rehearsal space for the Tostal pageant, the young people take over Binnington's parlour quite unceremoniously pushing Binnington and McGilligan out the door. In the same way, Binnington's drawing-room has been turned into a workshop for the manufacture of gay window boxes to decorate the town. The town is bustling with the activity of the young people who labour industriously for the sole purpose of bringing pleasure to the town and to themselves. Binnington and McGilligan suddenly have no place to discuss business, and they also have no men to work for them.

The Church suffers as much as the businessmen from the Tostal-generated exuberance. The young people readily sing the Tostal song with gusto, but the doleful Church hymn is too much for them. They never master it. Their enthusiasm for splashing colour over the town causes them not only to
hoist the Tostal flag over the Presbytery door, but also to paint the presbytery door a brilliant red, much to Father Fillifogue's horror. Their assault on the Church, however, strikes deeper than gay songs and bright paint. Christ becomes important to the youth not merely as a symbol for the Church, but because He must have seen and loved the beauty of the lilies of the field and the rose of Sharon.

Nora. If He didn't dance Himself, He must have watched the people at it, and, maybe, clapped His hands when they did it well. He must have often listened to the people singin' and been caught up with the rhythm of the gentle harp and psaltery, and His feet may have tapped the ground along with the gayer strokes of the tabor and the sound of the cymbals tinkling.

(p. 33).

The young can certainly recognize much of the foolishness of pseudo religious argument. After the staunch Protestant Skerighan's fantastically ridiculous argument with equally dedicated Catholics, Binnington and McGilligan, Nora and Michael's comments seem refreshingly sensible. They know that God is neither "ipso a Protestant or a Roman Catholic" (p. 92). For Michael,

If God be what He ought to be, must be, if He be God, then He has no time to bother about the Anglican Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Confession, or the Creed from the Council of Thrent.

(p. 91).

In fact, God may be "more than He is even claimed to be; He may be but a shout in th' street" (p. 92). The Church, as it is depicted in the play, cannot survive such unorthodox
thinking. The defeat of the Church-business union is dramatically presented in the Act III scene in which the whole town demands a statement from Binnington, McGilligan, and Father Fillifogue about the Communist timber. When none of these men can give a satisfactory answer, the town turns to Michael and Nora, who now reveal that they are going to run in the elections to the Dail against their parents. The Church-State-Business triumvirate is utterly defeated.

Thematically, O'Casey's vision in *The Drums of Father Ned* has expanded considerably from that in *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* and *The Bishop's Bonfire*. The three plays should, however, be regarded as a single unit. Together, they form a trilogy of O'Casey's vision of man - an allegorical description of man's fall away from goodness, the results of this fall, and finally, man's redemption. It is a vision that encompasses the cruelty and viciousness of man and also the love of which man is capable. In O'Casey's vision, man is certainly responsible for his sins but man is also able to save himself. The trilogy of *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, *The Bishop's Bonfire*, and *The Drums of Father Ned* dramatize O'Casey's full point of view about the human condition.

Just as *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, *The Bishop's Bonfire*, and *The Drums of Father Ned* must be thought of as a thematic unit, so too, must *Behind the Green Curtains* and *Figuro in the Night* be considered a unit. Although the last two plays contain the basic idea of the celebration of life, love, and
freedom, these plays are concerned primarily with the question of sexual repression and sexual freedom.

Using the same basic form of the morality play as the three earlier plays, *Behind the Green Curtains* dramatizes the struggle for the souls of Reena and Chatastray by the forces of good and evil. Goodness is represented by Beoman, the factory foreman, and evil by Kornavaun, the Church's 'strong man'. Beoman wins Reena over to the cause of life, but Chatastray is lost. Kornavaun's terrorizing so intimidates Chatastray that he is unable to summon the courage to fight for what he would like to believe in. He is doomed to a living death.

Again, in this play, O'Casey strives to demonstrate that the terrible sin of submission is man's. The tyranny of the Church-State-Business union flourishes because man will not fight against the evil even when he can recognize it. In *Behind the Green Curtains*, O'Casey slashes out at the artists and intellectuals. They have the ability and the power to lead the people to the truth. Yet, for the most part, they ignore their duty and accept the easier role of resignation. Their bravery is only strong enough for petty squabbles amongst themselves or for bold words shouted out behind the privacy and protection of the heavy green curtains.

The contrast between a healthy attitude towards physical love and the ugly lust that restrictiveness causes is
certainly a part of the three earlier plays. In *Behind the Green Curtains*, this contrast becomes the major means of illustrating the struggle for man's soul. It is also the principal motivation for all the characters' actions. Scene I of the play is solely an exposition of the conflict between the power of the Church and the individual who knows that his moral duty is to break away from this power. Scenes II and III illustrate the Church's control by showing the effect of this control on sexual attitudes. The artists in their ignorance think that Chatastray's collection of reproductions of great paintings are 'dirty' pictures, and in their lust, search frantically for more to ogle. Noneen, who is a charming and perfectly innocent young girl, is abducted, stripped, beaten, and tied overnight to a lamppost in a singularly perverted form of punishment by the pious ladies of the Church. This brutality is rationalized by the assumption that no young girl could be sexually safe working for an unmarried man - yet another reflection of a perverted sexual attitude. The most obvious example of this perversion of physical love into ugliness is shown in the character Kornavaun. Kornavaun's one form of excitement is imagining, in lurid detail, the sexual activities of Noneen and Chatastray. When Noneen rejects his nasty attentions, Kornavaun vilifies her and vows revenge. Kornavaun overcomes his frustrations with cruelty and viciousness. Kornavaun and his methods have so terrified Chatastray that not even the
promise of a healthy relationship based on love is able to overcome his terror. Chatastray, in his fear, forsakes Reena and love for the hair shirt and domination of the Church. Noneen, Reena, and Boeman must flee if they are to live.

William Armstrong points out thematic links between Cock-A-Doodle Dandy and Behind the Green Curtains, and between The Drums of Father Ned and Figuro in the Night. In the first two plays the spirit of youth and life is exiled by death-causing corruption. Youth and life are completely victorious in both The Drums of Father Ned and Figuro in the Night. Figuro in the Night is also, of course, related directly to Behind the Green Curtains because each play presents the struggle between the forces of life and death in terms of sexual liberty or repression.

Figuro in the Night is O'Casey's most stylized play. It could almost be called a dramatized ballet with dialogue. In two scenes, the play presents a complete picture of O'Casey's vision of the struggle between the forces of good and evil and O'Casey's faith in the ultimate victory of the forces of good.

Scene I opens on a young girl surrounded by a bleak death-like street. She is waiting anxiously for her lover.

to return. To present what might happen to the girl if her lover does not return, we are shown the Old Woman and the Old Man. The sterility of their lives is more than apparent. To hide their knowledge that life has been empty for them, they foolishly praise their parents and the Church for separating them from love. All that they have left are their foolish fantasies and comic arguments. Suddenly, however, a strange spirit takes possession of the Old Woman. She knows the folly of their ways. "Life with a lover and his lass sits singing on the tomb, and mocks the stone" (p. 110).

She now understands that,

The fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil set us free from coddling, and gave us the pain and the power to do our own thinking, walk on our own feet; clap our own hands at what ourselves had done.

(p. 100).

This understanding does not last for long, and both old people revert to their original foolishness.

The setting for Scene II is the same as Scene I, but now it is flooded with light and colour and sound symbolizing the victory of life and love that is described in the scene. Again, we see the Old People, but this time they are not complacent in their ignorance; they are frightened. Something strange is happening in the city. The youth in the city are rebelling against all the rules which once held them so rigidly in control. The symbol of their release is an erotic statue in a fountain that has suddenly mysteriously appeared in the city. A "Figuro of a Peter Pan cas-
cading consequential shame and disgrace on all beholders” (p. 108) according to the Old People, but to the young he has brought salvation. They cry out, “Behold, them who were lost have been found, and them who were dead have come to life again!” (p. 108). Each of the Old People has his own suggestive account to give of the abandoned revelry in the city. The Old People may have repressed their desire, but it still is very present in them.

There is one young man on stage during Scene II. His comments present the same point of view of the young. Although the Old People try desperately to bring the Young Man back to the restrictiveness of the old days, the Young Man will no longer succumb to their unpleasant tales of sin. "To hell with the lot o' yous - I'm for the thrust and throe of Figuro!” (p. 119). The Old People are defeated. The Young Man goes in to the Young Girl, and the play ends on a gay colourful dance of young couples, indeed, a ritual celebration of marriage suggesting germination and rebirth.

Figuro in the Night shows most obviously O'Casey's use of both the content and form of the dramatized myth. As Robert Hogan points out, both Cock-A-Doodle Dandy and The Drums of Father Ned are also intimately related to the myth. The recognition of O'Casey's deliberate use of the myth adds weight to the interpretation of O'Casey's last

32 Hogan, p. 139.
plays as religious plays. Since the work of such people as Sir James Frazer and Gilbert Murray, there is no question of the relation between early drama and religion. O'Casey emphasizes the religious atmosphere of his plays by exploiting this primitive relation between drama and religion. Just as he uses the myth to suggest the religious nature of the plays, O'Casey uses the Christian Church and its ministers to represent forms of tyranny and domination. Thus, it is not necessary to make an apology for O'Casey to the Church as Mr. Cowasjee does throughout his book. O'Casey does not place all the evils he sees in the world on the Church. In fact, he feels the true religion of life-worship can and must be a part of the Christian Church. As well as the domineering bigoted priests, O'Casey has, after all, created Father Boheroe and Father Ned. By using the figures of the priest, O'Casey is able to develop a dramatically effective opposition in his modern morality plays. Two ways of life and two ways of religion are depicted, and the spectator must choose.
LEVELS OF STRUCTURE

We have called O'Casey's five last plays modern morality plays which would be, perhaps, an affront to O'Casey who intensely disliked the traditional morality plays of the Middle Ages. "Most of them are clumsy and terribly dull - including the worshipped preciousness of Everyman." Regardless of O'Casey's opinion of the morality play, the intent, the techniques, and the structure of his own final plays point very clearly to the morality play. To avoid dullness in his own morality plays, O'Casey had to make his drama live: "live as a part of life, and live in its own right as a work of drama. Every Character, every life, however minor, to have something to say, comic or serious, and to say it well." In his last plays, O'Casey perfected a very complex and original structure to give these plays the necessary life. It is, in fact, a kind of multiple structure that O'Casey uses to build his last plays. These plays have little of the traditional structure based on plot. They are an almost plotless interweaving of methods of presentation. Eric Bentley, who disapproves of O'Casey's style, gives a reasonably accurate description of O'Casey's structure.

Mr. O'Casey tries in the later plays to build the music, dancing, and incidental

33 Sunset and Evening Star, p. 259.

fun, into the structure of the whole - to
the point, indeed, where these elements im­
pose and are the structure, and it is the
narration which is incidental.35

Mr. Bentley goes on to say that such a method cannot succeed
because plot is "the soul" of drama. It is surprising that
Mr. Bentley would reprint such a comment as late as 1956,
after the critical, literary, and commercial success of the
plays of the Theatre of the Absurd. It is surely no longer
necessary to require plot as an absolute criterion for dra­
matic success. O'Casey's morality plays can, however, be
considered to have what A.P. Rossiter calls the allegorical
plot of the English morality plays.36

Whether or not we choose to label the series of events
in O'Casey's last plays as allegorical plot, the structure
of O'Casey's last five plays can be described as a simultan­
eous development of the levels of farce, satire, fantasy,
and symbolism. The traditional structure of both comedy and
tragedy develops the drama by focussing on a strong central
plot line and may or may not include secondary plots to add
facets to the central plot. O'Casey's last plays have only
the most tenuous of plot lines. Instead, O'Casey develops
his last plays by playing one level off against the other in
a dramatic counterpoint. Each mode of development is largely

36 A.P. Rossiter, English Drama from Early Times to the
independent of the others - each level using its own tech­
niques, having its particular type of character, and clari­
fying its individual aspect of the theme. None of the se­
quen­ces of farce, fantasy, satire, or symbolism are inciden­
tal events added to fill out the play. Each level presents
a continuous line of development through the play, but the
levels are interlocked and given continuity through a strong
statement of theme. Each level adds contrasts and parallels
to the comment made by the other levels as well as making its
particular statement to give great density to the thematic
statement.

To be convinced that the structure of O'Casey's last
plays is indeed formed by four independent modes of develop­
ment, it is essential to analyse how each of the levels
works in isolation. Such an analysis will show at the same
time, I believe, that the levels of development are closely
related. That the levels of farce and satire have a close
affinity is quite obvious. Both farce and satire look at
man's behavior and comment on man in his social world. With
farce and satire we look at the actual material world. Fan­
tasy, on the other hand, leads us away from the actual into
the world of the imagination. A study of the fantasy in
O'Casey's last plays, of course, leads directly to a consid­
eration of the allegorical statement made primarily at the
level of symbolism. If we look at the structural levels in
the order of farce, satire, fantasy, symbolism, we can re-
cognize the pattern of O'Casey's movement towards an emphasis on man's spiritual reality. O'Casey's religious ideal does not, however, separate man from his physical world. Thus, we can see that the levels must be carefully integrated.

Because the element of farce is so immediately apparent in O'Casey's last plays, it is appropriate that we begin our examination of the structural levels with that of farce. O'Casey fills his last plays with many of the conventional elements of farce essentially, of course, to create laughter. We cannot help laughing at the exaggerated and repeated activity of chases, fights, falls, and courtings created by some of the most comic and appealing characters of the stage. O'Casey is not, however, using farce just to obtain gratuitous laughter. In addition to making an audience joyous, farce always focuses on man's body, and thus keeps part of our attention on the realm of the physical. One of the aspects of this physical world that farce emphasizes is violence. Farce allows O'Casey to present the brutality of the "anti-life" forces without losing the emotional effect of laughter. At the same time, he can point up the ludicrous pomposity of the pseudo-religious. Rather than continue a general discussion of farce, however, let us note some of the scenes that occur in the plays from Cock-A-Doodle Dandy to Figuro in the Night to see O'Casey's thematic methods. We will look at a different aspect of farce in each play, and if we remember that all these aspects occur in each play,
we will recognize the intricacy of O'Casey's farce.

The hilarious physical activity of these plays shows O'Casey to be a master in handling farce. As with all farce, the entertainment occurs primarily because of the visual spectacle of frenzied activity that has no sensible purpose of direction. *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* has many memorable farce scenes in which much of the comedy is derived from seeing the absurd posturing and the chaotic rushing about of characters trying to escape from self-created enemies. There is the marvelous scene of the chairs collapsing and Michael and Sailor Mahan landing on their backsides just as Michael says, "We won't be able soon to sit steady on our chairs" (p. 159). The men, except Robin and Father Domineer, are constantly crouching behind the chairs, the table, the wall, or lying flat out on the ground in futile farcical attempts to hide from their magical tormentor. Sailor Mahan's comic courtship of Loreleen becomes a farce dance as he awkwardly swings his leg over the chairs, stiffly vaults on to the table and finally attempts to 'shinny' up the flagpole. Of course, the major farce scene of the play is that of the men desperately trying to keep their trousers up in the mysterious wind that constantly pulls them down. With such scenes as these in *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, it is difficult to take too seriously Robert Hogan's comment that the major distinction between *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* and *The Bishop's Bonfire* is that *The Bishop's Bonfire* contains much farce and *Cock-A-Doodle*
Dandy is written as a fantasy throughout.37

Certainly, The Bishop's Bonfire contains many scenes of marvelous visual farce. The constant half-hearted wrestling matches of the Prodical and Rankin, two rather cowardly men, are given a decidedly farcical treatment as they push, and shove, and waver on the very edge of the scaffold. Finally, one falls off, pulling the other with him. They both jump back up and go through the motions all over again. This is a farce pattern that has been used successfully in countless silent movies. The most beautiful farce scene of all O'Casey's plays is surely that scene in which the Codger, with drunken dignity, attempts to carry an enormous bag of cement. Unfortunately, after much staggering under the weight, Codger goes careening through the open glass doors. In the silence that follows, clouds of cement waft on to the stage. This must be a classic farce scene for the elements are refined to perfection. The level of farcical action continues throughout to the second last scene of the play where the Codger and Prodical furtively attempt to steal back Prodical's bottle of whiskey from under the statue of Saint Tremolo. As well as providing hilarious entertainment, these farce scenes give the play a pattern of very comic frenzied activity. As in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, this frenzy of misdirected energy suggests visually the general chaos that O'Casey

37 Hogan, p. 117.
sees in the world around him. Not only does the frenzied activity suggest the chaos of the world, it also shows us an undercurrent of violence. In almost all farce there is comic physical conflict. Farce characters are constantly falling on their behinds, fighting, pursuing, and beating one another. It is funny because it is never realistic, but we cannot ignore that it is only an exaggeration of the violence that actually exists in the world. O'Casey is certainly using farce, in part, to ridicule and underline the danger of man's violence. Because the exaggerations of the ridiculous in man's activity are very funny, we never feel that the chaos or violence is irremediable. The comic characters are loveable even in their folly and their energy could be directed to the good. The farce scenes of all five plays give the same visual effect of frantic and absurd activity.

Pomposity has always been the target of farce. In *The Drums of Father Ned*, O'Casey and the audience have a great deal of fun at the expense of the pompous fools in the play. Mr. Murray and Father Fillifogue are the centre of numerous farce scenes. Perhaps the funniest occurs at the end of Act I. They engage in a vigorous tug-of-war with Father Fillifogue's umbrella while carrying on a shouting match about the merits of Mozart in the Church. During the tumult of the argument, the choir surreptitiously steals away one by one. In this and other similar encounters of the play,
Mr. Murray loses no stature. He has no false front to be stripped off. Only Father Fillifogue has his pomposity pricked. In the same way, in the delightful scene between Bernadette and Skerighan, it is only Skerighan who suffers. This foolish man is afraid to be seen dancing with a young girl. This scene of Bernadette's pseudo-pious response to Skerighan's attentions and Skerighan's absurd reactions is pure farce. So too, are the numerous exhibitions of Mrs. Binnington and Mrs. McGilligan's curtseying and "graceful" movement. They invariably land on their bottoms rather than on the chair they were aiming for. As soon as they give up their natural approach and attempt to adopt pretentious attitudes, they lose their sensible outlook and become ludicrous. Binnington and McGilligan are so self-inflated that they are ludicrous from beginning to end. The ridicule of pomposity is a most important thematic aspect of farce in all O'Casey's last plays. Each of the plays has numerous scenes in which man's affectations are exaggerated to farcical limits. For O'Casey, natural man is good and beautiful, but when man adopts false fronts, he becomes absurd and an easy prey for the forces of evil. But if we can see and laugh at the folly of pretension, we may yet be saved.

The major farce scenes of *Behind the Green Curtains* show yet another aspect of O'Casey's use of farce. The farce in this play centres around Lizzie and Angela and their nagging desire for another pint in spite of their vows
to give up drink. Of course, they succumb to their desire, and at the end of Scene I, they stagger on to the stage only to fall flat out on the ground. These two characters have no integral relation to the other characters and actions in the play. At first, it would seem that they are used solely to provide laughs, which indeed they do. By the end of the scene, we realize that their comic speculations about the saints, their absurd vow, and their very funny final entrance are meant to be seen as comic parallels to the antics of Chatastray and the artists. Indeed, by comparison, the actions of the artists are far more farcical than those of Angela and Lizzie. Farce generally has this two-edged effect. The buffoons certainly point up their own folly, but because their actions are only exaggerations of the norm, the normal itself is ridiculed even more than the comic character. O'Casey makes effective use of this two-edged aspect of farce. The comic characters not only unconsciously ridicule the normal attitudes of society in general but also unconsciously ridicule the attitudes of other characters within the actual play. This is one of O'Casey's methods of counterpointing levels of development. O'Casey uses this particular method of farce parallels in all the last plays except Figuro in the Night, where there are no representatives of the existing normal point of view.

The farce of Figuro in the Night places the emphasis on man's physical nature even more obviously than do the
farce scenes of the other plays. The entire play contrasts the beauty of natural physical responses with the ludicrousness of inhibited physical responses. At the end of Scene I, we see the tottering decrepit old couple suddenly become afraid of being seen on the road together. Someone might come to the conclusion that this ancient pair was planning some evil sexual activity together. Scene II presents the revolving deaf and blind reporters and numerous old people with exaggerated tatters, groans and bandages describing the turbulent events in the city. This turbulence is caused by a miraculous glorification of sexuality occurring in the city. Here, as in the other four plays, the emphasis of the farce is on the physical nature of man, which is important to the thematic development of the plays. O'Casey is, after all, concerned about society's repression of wholesome sexual desires. The farce always brings our attention back to the physical world.

O'Casey also uses farce scenes in somewhat the same way as the playwrights of the theatre of the absurd to suggest man's loss of dignity. The difference between O'Casey and the absurdists is that the lack of dignity is not, for O'Casey, a part of the human condition. Rather, the lack of dignity occurs because man has allowed his natural dignity to be corrupted by the pretensions of Church, State and social position. In each of the five plays we can see that, similar to the absurdists, O'Casey frequently shows a lack
of dignity through lost or outlandish clothing and through many vaudevillian pratfalls.

As a farewell gesture, the Cock stirs up a mighty wind to whip the trousers off all the "life-frighteners" of Nyadnanave. Under the force of the Cock's wind, the men desperately and very comically try to hold on to their trousers and their respectability to no avail. In Ballyoonagh, Councillor Reiligan forces Daniel, Prodical, and Rankin to wear dress suits for the Bishop's visit. But Daniel's is much too baggy, Prodical's too tight, and Rankin goes without his dress shoes that hurt. Certainly, the three look very foolish for submitting to such ridiculous garb, but Reiligan looks even more foolish for thinking that this preposterous trio looks at all impressive. Binnington and McGilligan of Doonavale look sufficiently outlandish in their over-elaborate robes of office that fit, and when, at the end of the play, these robes have become enormous, Binnington and McGilligan become hilarious. Although the mockery in Behind the Green Curtains is much more bitterly satiric, O'Casey's exaggerated presentation of the sackcloth garb of the artists has much of the farcical loss of dignity through absurd clothing. In Figuro in the Night, the extensive bandages and the extremely torn and tattered clothing comically suggest the lack of human dignity in false piety.

The occurrences of the pratfall are too numerous to list. The comic characters are constantly landing on their
backsides in highly undignified sprawls. Of all the characters who land so unceremoniously on their behinds, only Codger can arise with his dignity intact. Because of Codger's wisdom and humanity, and because of the concern shown by the other characters on stage, we find our hilarity tempered by a certain amount of alarm. O'Casey does not actually show Codger's fall on stage. We only see Codger staggering and disappearing, the clouds of cement, and the stunned expressions on the faces of the onlookers. Probably even Codger's dignity would not survive such a magnificent fall on stage. The other comic characters retain almost no dignity after their numerous falls. Even Mrs. Binnington and Mrs. McGilligan, to whom O'Casey gives a measure of sense, cannot be taken too seriously. They are so concerned with their social appearance that they cannot see how foolish they look. And although they recognize their husbands' folly, they do nothing to fight it.

Farce makes particularly effective use of repetition. Anything ridiculous seems even more so when repeated. As we have already suggested, O'Casey increases the intensity of his farce through a great deal of repetition. With O'Casey, the repetition certainly increases the laughter, but, more important, what is repeated and laughed at is thematically significant. For example, in *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, every time any violent activity generated by the Cock occurs to frighten them, Michael and Sailor Mahan leap for protection
behind some flimsy object. Their folly, lack of judgment, and their cowardice are ridiculed, but it is their foolish desire to hide from life that becomes increasingly apparent and ludicrous. When we see poor Rankin, of The Bishop's Bonfire, interrupted three times at prayer before he can get beyond the opening statement, we are highly delighted. We laugh at his over-elaborate proceedings, his extreme caution, and his fear, but particularly at the subservience of his kind of prayer. In The Drums of Father Ned, a play about the victory of the forces of life, there is a very interesting use made of repetition to underline the theme. Just as Binnington and McGilligan appear in their suddenly overgrown robes of office, we hear a death march. The Town Clerk and The Macebearer dropped dead at a shout from Father Ned - "plonk, plonk". Murray and Father Fillifogue repeat the plonk plonks five times in their description of the deaths. These are comic deaths. The fear of death has been overcome by love and life, and to use this fear as means of domination is ridiculed. Although we have given only a few examples, we can see that O'Casey effectively uses farce repetition in all the last plays to intensify the humour and underline the theme of the farce level.

It is obvious that O'Casey's use of farce is both skillful and complex. Structurally, the farce establishes the sides of the battle between the forces of good and evil. Except for Codger, who transcends all levels, none of the
characters who believe in the religion of life are treated farcically. The farce, however, by exaggerating the very human qualities of the comic characters, makes these characters extremely appealing. Because of this appeal, we never feel that these characters are hopelessly damned. As we have seen, the farcical destruction they carry on illustrates O'Casey's belief that man by nature must fight the forces of tyranny, even if the individual is unconscious that he is, in fact, fighting tyranny. The farce also illustrates the mindless fear that grips the comic characters. They are almost completely controlled and dominated by the forces of evil. Finally, of course, the laughter produced by the farce establishes the right emotional attitude in the audience. The sense of release and joy that good farce produces is a part of O'Casey's religion of life.

Just to laugh at the folly of the buffoons, however, is not enough to bring about any change in the world. The causes for their absurdities must be attacked. It is for this purpose that O'Casey introduces satire. Satire and farce are closely linked because they both reveal aspects of man's social folly. The major distinctions between the two are of appeal and tone. Farce appeals to the emotions whereas satire appeals to the intellect. We never despise the objects of ridicule in farce. We enjoy them. Satire is generally bitter and harsh and we must hate what is ridiculed. Certainly, O'Casey's farce creates an appeal and sympathy
for his characters, but his satire makes no allowance for sympathy. He slashes out at the folly of his human subjects. Satire criticizes, at least on the surface, more specific problems and attitudes than farce does. Thus, it is on the satiric level that the Irishness of the last plays is most apparent. O'Casey certainly feels that Ireland's major problems are a direct result of the control exercised by the Church. The most constant targets of O'Casey's censure are the Irishman's faith in the magic of the Church, rampant materialism, and pompous self-glorification.

O'Casey's bitterest attack is, of course, directed against the power of the Church in Ireland. For O'Casey, the Church is the most enslaving destructive force in Ireland to-day because, instead of having a true religious spirit, the Church has nothing but a desire for domination. In addition to commenting on the actual Irish situation, the satiric level of the last plays adds depth to O'Casey's basic religious theme of the celebration of life. Throughout the satiric level, O'Casey contrasts what actually exists and what might exist within the Church. In O'Casey's view, the Church should help to create self-reliance, initiative, and independence in men. Instead, the Church makes man weak and totally dependent by controlling his spiritual, physical, and even economic affairs. O'Casey's message to the Irish people is:

You've escaped from the big house with the lion and the 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.

(The Bishop's Bonfire, p. 77).

In his essays and autobiographies, O'Casey quotes numerous
eamples from Irish newspapers of the present strength of
this control. The four major O'Casey critics, Jules Koslow, David Krause, Robert Hogan, and Saros Cowasjee, all give in-
dependent examples of the destructive effect of the Irish
Church's domination. The reaction of the Irish clergy to
the work of many of Ireland's creative talents, makes us
more than willing to accept the truth of O'Casey's charges.
Certainly, any serious writer who uses the Irish scene as a
background must consider the position of the Church in this
scene.

O'Casey's satire of the Irishman's faith in the magic
of the Church is often savage and not particularly subtle.
There is the obvious satire contained in the names of the
Church figures and saints. It is impossible to mistake the
significance in the names Father Domineer, Father Fillifogue,
and Canon Burren who lights the bonfire. The satiric com-
ment on the attitudes of the inhabitants of the towns is
quite apparent in the names of these towns, Nyadnanave (the
nest of fools, and for non-Irish speakers emphasis is on
knavery), Ballyoonagh (the implications of eunuch), and
Doonavale. So, too, we cannot mistake the satiric tone of
the names of the saints. O'Casey's gallery of Saints in-
cludes the Saints Casabianca, Ishkabahee, Sinfoilio, Custo-
dious, Crankarious, and Tremolo. To make the satire of saints more pointed O'Casey tells us about the statue of Saint Crankarious standing on his head at the sight of Loreleen "to circumvent th' lurin' quality of her presence" (Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, p. 220), and the statue of poor St. Patrick "makin' a skelp at her [Loreleen] with his crozier; fallin' flat on his face, stunned, when he missed!" (p. 220). The statue of St. Tremolo is a grotesque piece of modern sculpture which sounds a huge coiled horn every time the saint is annoyed with the gaiety and freedom the people occasionally express. This exaggeration of the saints ridicules the idea of saints, but particularly ridicules the people who will worship such fantastic creatures. Only those who are completely caught up in Church piety hear Tremolo, the "boyo with the buckineeno".

The idea of saint worship is also rather cleverly mocked in the jeep scene of The Bishop's Bonfire. Just before Lieutenant Reiligan, Prodical, Daniel, and Codger carry on their gloriously insane argument about the necessity of parachuting thousands of jeeps into Ireland in the event of a Russian invasion, O'Casey has the four men comment on the value of saints. In spite of Codger's sarcastic remark, "the one thing increasin' in Ireland - the population of stone an' wooden saints" (p. 52), the other three men believe that "the way the country's in, we need all the help we can get from the saints" (p. 54). This is the remark that sends
Lieutenant Reiligan off on a torrent of praise for the jeep. His mindless worship of the jeep is no more irrational than the whole country's mindless worship of saints. An audience cannot fail to see the similarity in the two kinds of worship. At the same time, we recognize a satire of the faith in weapons that has afflicted the entire world. Catholic Ireland may be plagued with too much saint worship, but the whole world suffers from weapon worship.

In the Lizzie-Angela scene of Behind the Green Curtains, O'Casey strikes sharply at the absurdity of praying to and expecting help from saints. Typically, the characters' own statements make a devastating comment on their folly.

_Angela_...A Saint has to know your outs an' ins before he gives a beck; a Blessed buzzes down, all ears, minute he hears his name mentioned. What I say is that th' Saints get kinda stuck-up y'know, an' th' one chance a body has is with th' Blesseds.

_Lizzie._ Don't I know it! Th' Blesseds has to keep on their toes to get notice, if they wants to be hoisted up into higher place. (pp. 12-13).

Neither Saints nor Blesseds come out too well on the tongues of Angela and Lizzie. Angela and Lizzie, like most Irishmen, have come to rely so completely on the non-existent help of the saints that they no longer realize that, "when we have problems....ourselves are the saints to solve them" (The Bishop's Bonfire, p. 114).

O'Casey satirizes the reasons for prayer and the
attitude of prayer apparently required by the Church. O'Casey's comic characters always utter prayers whenever something startling or frightening occurs. The prayer is an automatic response, just as falling to the knees, admitting guilt and begging forgiveness if the priest commands it is automatic. The priest may be more guilty than the man on his knees, but because he is a priest one must bow before him. The irony of asking forgiveness for being joyful from Father Domineer who has, in a blind rage, killed a man is deliberately obvious. With Rankin's prayers, O'Casey's satire is amusing rather than savage, but Rankin's mad obsession with prayer and sin is a comic parallel to that of Foorawn. As a result, the satire has darker overtones. In *Behind the Green Curtains*, O'Casey's satire of the prayerful attitude of submission becomes bitter again. The picture of the artists wearing their sackcloth garb and clasping their hands in prayer is very funny, but it is also very harsh in view of the ugly violence that has gone before. Instead of recognizing the true sense of prayer contained in a gay song or in useful activity, the Church uses a submissive form of prayer to assert its power.

O'Casey also lashes out at the belief in supernatural miracles that the Church teaches. For O'Casey, there can only be man-made miracles. In *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, the Church dominated characters believe as implicitly in the incredible tales of miraculous events of Shanaar as they do in
the certainty of a miraculous cure at Lourdes for Julia. For O'Casey and the audience, belief in either becomes equally fantastic. Belief in both does great harm. O'Casey's satiric handling of belief in miracles is more comically and less savagely treated in *Behind the Green Curtains*. Poor Basawn believes completely that the Statue of the Blessed Virgin of Syracuse wept real tears because the husband of a woman of Syracuse was a Communist. Unfortunately, Basawn becomes so confused in his explanation of Beoman that both he and his belief become ludicrous.

The major criticism of the Church in Ireland that O'Casey makes again and again in his plays is that, by enforcing absolute reliance on its teachings, it destroys all initiative in the people and replaces this initiative with fear. Thus, O'Casey directs his sharpest satiric comments against the fear of knowledge, of beauty, and of sex that he insists the Church has brought about. In each of the plays, there is a book-burning desired or actually planned under the auspices of the Church. The contrast between the folly and destructiveness of such ignorance with the accomplishment and joy of knowledge is made very clear. By the same use of obvious contrasts and exaggeration, O'Casey satirizes the fear of beauty in all its forms. The Church's restrictions on music, on dancing, on colourful alluring clothing become ridiculous.

It is the fear of sex, however, that is the focal point
of O'Casey's satire in every play. O'Casey is at his most harsh when he depicts the fanatic aversion to any form of natural sexual behavior in the religious zealots like Shan-aar, One-Eyed Larry, Rankin, Kornavaun. These characters express their aversion in ugly violence and lurid startling language. Instead of Christian men of love, these characters are vicious dirty-minded men whose natural instincts have become perverted. O'Casey treats his less rabid male characters much more kindly. They, too, are caught up in the general fear of natural sexual desires. They see horns sprouting from the heads of attractive young women; they believe in the power of the demons "Velvetthighs, Kissalass, Dancealong"; they cower before the priest who warns them of the sins of the flesh. In spite of themselves and the Church, however, they constantly succumb to the beauties and attractions of women. Michael Marthraun, Sailor Mahan, Daniel, Skerighan, Chatastray, all respond naturally, on occasion, to the delightful promise of physical love. They may be fools in their fears, but they are not dangerous fools.

O'Casey not only accuses the Church of promoting ignorance and sexual perversion, he also accuses the Church of complete materialism. O'Casey makes numerous satiric jabs at the Church's desire for money. In The Bishop's Bonfire, for example, Canon Burren warns Reiligan against his love of money.

Canon. You think too much of mere money-making, Councillor. I must remind you
that there are more important things than
even half a thousand pounds. (p. 5).

Only a few speeches later the Canon exclaims "Roses? Pshaw! ....Roses cost money, Councillor. The church needs money
more than your wall needs roses!" (p. 6). It is this double
attitude toward money that O'Casey's businessmen imitate.
Michael and Sailor Mahan constantly complain about the "grow-
ing materialism" as they argue over paying their workmen two
shillings more. The only value Councillor Reiligan can see
in Codger and Manus is that they save him a great deal of
money. Of course, Binnington and McGilligan can forget their
violent feud, their political beliefs, and their religious
teaching when they are concerned with making more money.
After all, "business is business". Chatastray would like to
accept the love of Reena, but he cannot give up his factory.
His friends are only friends for the money they can get out
of him.

O'Casey's satiric pen also ridicules foolish self-
glorification, fuzzy dangerous political thinking, self-
seeking ignorant artists, a blind, deaf and tied press, and
an unreasonable childish fear of Communism. The satiric
level of O'Casey's last plays is, then, both general and
specific. O'Casey satirizes follies common to all men, but
the weight of his satire falls on the particular Irish prob-
lem of Church power. Thus, the satiric level of these plays
presents a severe social commentary on contemporary Ireland.
That O'Casey is one among many Irish writers to criticize particularly the control of the Church in Ireland makes us willing to accept his dramatic social commentary as valid and justified.

Although O'Casey's satire is often bitter and scathing, his point of view, when we consider the five last plays together, is remarkably positive. This positive quality is most clearly evident on the fantasy level of the plays. The fantasy effects which O'Casey uses are those of the fairy tale. Colour, stylization, music, dance, and magical events characterize the fantasy level of the last plays. The two darkest plays of the group, The Bishop's Bonfire and Behind the Green Curtains, have very few actual fantasy effects. The Bishop's Bonfire has only two events of the magic that is usually associated with fantasy. There is the horn blast of St. Tremolo every time he is displeased with the joyousness of the characters, and there is the sudden darkness and wind in the house at the end of Act II that disappears as suddenly as it appeared. Behind the Green Curtains has none of this fairy tale magic. Both plays have just a hint of the stylization and colour of setting and costumes of the other three plays. Of course, both The Bishop's Bonfire and Behind the Green Curtains are deliberately more bleak. They present the real world where there can be little relief gained from fairy tales. The only fantasies possible are those distorted ones that the Church encourages.
Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, which is only slightly less bleak than The Bishop's Bonfire and Behind the Green Curtains, is the play which exploits fantasy techniques to the greatest extent. The Cock is constantly playing marvelous magical tricks on the unbelievers of Nyadnanave. The older men in the play are tormented by demons in whiskey bottles, chairs that suddenly collapse, gay horns that suddenly appear on the girls' heads, top hats that change into the Cock, an amazing assortment of jeering sound effects, and a strange wind that insists on pulling their trousers off as it forces them into a wonderfully weird dance. The brilliant colour and very marked stylization of both costumes and setting could readily be thought a part of a children's play. The figure of the Cock himself could have stepped out of any number of fairy tales. Finally, the play is filled with music and dancing which are also traditional in fairy tale fantasies. In spite of all this gaiety, the play is terribly sombre at the final curtain. We realize more and more strongly that all the exuberance and joy the play expresses is not part of the real world at all. Even the possibility of fighting those who would kill gaiety belongs in the realm of the fairy tale. The only salvation the Cock can offer is to take his followers to "a place where life resembles life more than it does here". But Julia tells us that "she's [Lorna] a long way to go, then. It's th' same everywhere."

The fantasy that O'Casey uses in The Drums of Father
Ned and Figuro in the Night offers a far stronger affirmation than the rather grim hope presented in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy. Interestingly, neither of these plays exhibits on stage nearly as many fantasy effects as Cock-A-Doodle Dandy. Certainly, both plays are surrounded with the aura of fantasy's magic, but we actually see very little of this magic. O'Casey utilizes the imagination of his audience. Instead of showing us the marvelous events, O'Casey has his characters describe the events, and he shows us the results of the magic on his characters. The atmosphere of fantasy on stage is conveyed through music, dancing, sound effects, and through an increasingly colourful and stylized setting. As youth's victory becomes more certain, the colour and stylization seem to become a part of the real world. In these plays, the victory of the forces of love and joy are positively asserted. Thus, there is a lesser need to present magical events to the audience. Once youth has taken up the battle in earnest, they no longer need such obvious help from the supernatural. Their imagination, strength, and determination are magic enough.

The use of fantasy allows O'Casey to make two important thematic comments. Victory is still to be achieved, but it is possible. The fantasy treatment in even the most positive of the five plays does, however, stress that the victory is not yet won. In fact, the battle itself is still on the stage of the imagination. The use of the fantasy, though,
helps to mellow the bitterness of O'Casey's satiric social commentary. The fantasy treatment thus makes the promise of victory an acceptable possibility. In addition, of course, the fantasy is structurally significant, as we shall see.

Just as the farce scenes serve to identify the characters who should be or are about to be defeated, so the fantasy effects identify the characters to whom victory can ultimately come. Only the characters on the side of goodness wear brilliant colours, particularly combinations of red, green, and black - the Cock's colours and, for O'Casey, the colours signifying life. The other characters are mainly clothed in drab browns and unrelieved blacks, or they wear a virginal blue and the papal colours of white and yellow. Also, only the characters on the side of joy and life can sing and dance in abandoned gaiety. They are the characters who delight in the gaiety and magic. It is the 'life-frighteners' who are terrified by the magical events of the plays. Thus O'Casey identifies the saved and the damned in his religion of life.

That the fantasy allows the inclusion of otherwise unmotivated action, songs, and dances is also important structurally. Even the most non-realistic play must have a logic of construction to be acceptable to an audience. In a realistic play only events which are appropriate to character, plot, and setting can be included. When a playwright gives up plot and realism, he must find some other cohesive element
to bring together the diverse aspects of the play. The fantasy in O'Casey's last plays makes it possible for us to accept such actions as Michael Marthraun and Sailor Mahan taking part in a gay dance and each being willing to absorb a two shilling loss in profits. Nor do we find it disturbing that businessman Skerighan should suddenly become a Father Ned convert. In *Figuro in the Night*, we are even able to accept the Old Woman's momentary complete reversal of character. She was bewitched by a strange force in the air.

In a fairy tale, we expect the extraordinary just as we expect sudden complete reversals. It is the fantasy, too, that allows the inclusion of the mythical figures of the Cock, Father Ned, the Figuro, and their human representatives who give the plays the aura of magic, mystery, and the ritual of religion. If the action is related to the theme, almost anything can happen in a fantasy. The music and dance scenes of the fantasy help to link all the levels of the plays. O'Casey uses fantasy then to provide a rationale to replace that of plot as well as to make a thematic statement.

The symbolic level of O'Casey's last plays carries and makes obvious the message of these plays. It is on the symbolic level that we recognize the actual dramatization of the struggle of the forces of good and evil for the soul of man. The symbols show the effects and the final outcome of the struggle in terms of O'Casey's vision of the future of mankind. Throughout these plays there is a repeated use of
the same symbols in the same manner which gives us yet another reason for linking these five plays. Simply stated, O'Casey uses symbolism to present the opposing forces of good and evil. Thus, for example, brilliant colour is an attribute of the forces of good, and lack of brilliant colour is an attribute of the forces of evil. This example is, of course, an over-simplification, but it does show the kind of oppositions that O'Casey uses to develop the symbolic level of his plays.

One of the most apparent recurring symbols is that of the house. As we have already stated, the house represents Ireland, and by extension, the contemporary world. The house in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy is, from the beginning, painted black and leans slightly askew. As the play progresses, the house becomes more completely black. It shakes and is almost torn apart, and finally is almost completely evacuated. The house of The Bishop's Bonfire is filled with ugly middle-class ostentation. It is disrupted by the confusion and disorder of the rebuilding and refurbishing. The confusion and disruption suggest that the attempts at adornment are false and futile. Reiligan's purpose is not to provide beauty, but rather to make a good impression on the Bishop. Finally, the reflection of the bonfire flickers over the walls of the house. The houses of The Drums of Father Ned are likewise filled with ugly pretentiousness, but the ugliness is gradually stripped away and replaced by the brightness of the
Tostal decorations. These are in complete harmony with the brilliant night sky that is shown at the end of the play. In *Behind the Green Curtains*, we see only the interior of Chatastray's house. The predominant feature of his rooms is the heavy green curtains which shut out the world. As Kornavaun and the Church gain greater control, the rooms become completely disorderly. In *Figuro in the Night*, we see the opposite kind of transformation. The houses of Scene I are dark and desolate. In Scene II, when the forces of life and joy sweep the land, the houses become bright and brilliantly colourful. In all of the plays except *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, the bleak background is dominated by the spire of a church. With this symbolic use of the house and church, O'Casey's comment on the conditions of the country is quite clear.

Just as the house represents Ireland and all countries of the world, so the presence of flowers represents the fertility of the land and the vitality of the people. There are the great golden sunflowers which become completely black by the end of *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*. Reiligan would like to cover his wall with roses, but the rose of the Church will have to be enough beauty for him. The Tostal committee brightens Doonavale with highly coloured window boxes filled with wonderfully brilliant flowers. Chatastray's rooms contain a large flower vase but no flowers. The trees and plants of *Figuro in the Night* change from bare skeletons to brilliantly flower-covered trees. Even the cross and the
obelisk now have wreaths of flowers decorating them. O'Casey shows the presence of youth and love in the people by the presence of flowers on the stage. Those without joy and love have only potted palms or evergreens. O'Casey obviously feels that these plants are artificial intrusions and signs of superficial pretentiousness.

In his last plays, O'Casey develops the use of symbolic characters that was a minor part of his earlier plays to an important thematic statement. In the discussion of O'Casey's themes we have seen how important the symbolic character has become. Although these last plays contain some marvelous realistic characters, the message of each play is developed through the symbolic characters - the conflict of the forces of good and evil.

Most of O'Casey's symbols are directly related to his characters. The costumes are frequently used for their symbolic suggestiveness rather than to emphasize character traits. The most obvious example of this occurs in Figuro in the Night. When the Young Man is persuaded to follow the path of the Figuro and goes in to the Young Girl, both he and she emerge wearing sparkling silver and blue, and gold and blue clothes. The young girls and lads who enter to dance in celebration are also dressed in brilliantly coloured clothing. The contrast with the Old People is extremely marked. As we have already seen, all the characters of Cock-A-Doodle Dandy who have some of the joy of life in them wear the Cock's colours, red, green, and black as a part
of their ordinary dress. It is true that the Porter, the Bellman, and One-Eyed Larry all have brilliant red on their costumes. These costumes are obviously uniforms, however, which simply disguise the drabness beneath. In much the same way, Councillor Reiligan in Act III of The Bishop's Bonfire wears the brilliant regalia of a Papal Count. Again, it is a uniform that merely covers up temporarily, the colourless life beneath. In The Drums of Father Ned, this use of clothing as a disguise is extremely effective. We can see that under McGilligan and Binnington's very colourful robes of office is their true dull appearance. Finally, when these robes have mysteriously grown to enormous size, we realize that these robes are used to cover up the drabness and incompetence of Binnington and McGilligan. By contrast, the young people of Doonavale are able to wear their colourful costumes for the Tostal pageant so naturally that Skerighan cannot recognize them as costumes at all. So it is in all the plays, the colourful clothing of the genuine life-worshippers reveals the joyousness of the characters, whereas for the non life-worshippers, colourful clothing acts as an ironic comment on actual drabness that exists beneath the disguise.

Just as some of the characters wear highly coloured disguises to hide from reality, so many of these same characters seek to protect themselves from the reality of life with equally futile defenses. The heavy draperies of both
The Drums of Father Ned and Behind the Green Curtains obviously symbolize this attempt to shut out life. The high stone walls of Cock-A-Doodle Dandy and The Bishop's Bonfire, too, indicate the desire to protect oneself from life.

Perhaps the most characteristic method of escape for O'Casey characters is into the world of the imagination. In all his plays, O'Casey obviously regards the imagination as a necessary creative faculty which has great beneficial value if governed by the right attitude to life. O'Casey, like Shaw before him in John Bull's Other Island, feels that the Irishman uses his imagination to keep from thinking too clearly and to block out reality. As early as The Shadow of a Gunman and continuing through to Figuro in the Night, O'Casey has depicted numerous male characters who have completely lost touch with reality. They are men who have become so involved in their fancies that they are almost incapable of functioning usefully in the real world. There are the memorable figures of Davoren, "Captain" Jack Boyle, Peter Flynn, Sylvester Heegan, the Atheist, Roory O'Balacaun, and almost all the comic characters of the last plays. They are all afflicted with a misguided imagination.

Although in the earlier plays O'Casey seems to feel that hiding in the wondrous world of the imagination is a fault particularly common among Irish men, in the later plays he uses the fantasies of his characters to symbolize all the illusions men use to blind themselves to reality. Michael
Marthraun would far rather believe Shanaar's fantastic tales than judge them and the Church critically. To blind himself to the allure of attractive women, Rankin thinks constantly and vividly of the sins that women cause. Just as Skerighan is completely convinced of the evil of Catholicism, so McGil­ligian and Binnington are convinced of the evil of Protestantism, but none of them can give a single rational reason for his hatred. Kornavaun's ugly imagination is not only faulty, but is positively destructive. Kornavaun's deranged ravings have their comic counterparts in the wild tales of the Old People of Figuro in the Night. In all cases it is a willful blinding of self to both the ugliness and the beauty of reality.

Another characteristic of all O'Casey's plays - almost a trademark of an O'Casey play - is the hilarious but completely pointless arguments that his comic characters indulge in. The repetition of the arguments gives them a symbolic significance. These arguments seem to symbolize man's willingness to evade important and often disturbing issues which require attention in favour of ridiculous subjects about which no argument is possible. Instead of questioning the practices of the Church, Michael and Sailor Mahan argue endlessly about whether or not God is more likely to listen to the prayers of "Bing Bang Crosby an' other great film stars" than He is to those of the common man. The marvelous jeep argument of The Bishop's Bonfire comically illustrates how
often impossible arguments are preferable to possible action on very current problems. There is Skerighan, McGilligan, and Binnington's argument on whether God is "ipso a Protestant or a Roman Catholic". Behind the Green Curtains gives us Lizzie and Angela's insane argument about the nature of St. Peter's beard. Almost the whole of Scene I of Figuro in the Night is a deliciously comic argument between the Old Man and the Old Woman on a multitude of subjects. In each of these examples the wild arguments symbolize a too common rejection of important issues - that are supposedly being attended to by the authorities - in favour of argument about abstractions. The major issues seem too overwhelming, too out of control for the individual to cope with. Yet, he cannot blind himself completely to the problems that exist. He must be involved in some way. Seemingly, the only way to cope with the dilemma is to become involved in verbal action only. The individual character feels involved without having to act. O'Casey's use of the symbolic argument is an effective dramatic presentation of the contemporary problem of involvement without action that is also treated by such writers as Marshall McCluhan and the playwrights of the theatre of the absurd.

O'Casey believes that a situation of authoritarian domination will result in violence and destruction. In the three dark comedies, he shows the destruction of the individual and all that gives him his individuality. These
scenes of violence have therefore a symbolic significance. In *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, Father Domineer kills the Lorry Driver because he will not submit to the will of the Church. Loreleen is beaten, vilely treated, and finally expelled because she has dared to express her individual joy, beauty, and love to a world which allows itself to be controlled by any form of tyranny. This loveless joyless existence is symbolized at the end of the play by the picture of the empty house, Michael gloomily holding his head in despair, and the dying Julia covered entirely in black. There is nothing left but death.

The *Bishop's Bonfire* presents the destruction of the individual on three levels. The Canon makes certain that love between Keelin and Daniel will never come to fruition. Instead of love and joy, they are doomed to despair and barren loneliness. The Church has so dominated Foorawn that the love between herself and Manus can only express itself in a growing frustration that must inevitably result in Foorawn's death. The *Bishop's Bonfire*, too, expresses the loss of joy through a symbolic expulsion scene. Here, it is Codger, the one truly alive person in Ballyoonagh, who is turned away. Again, the total destruction of joy is symbolized in a final picture. We see the body of Foorawn in the Bishop's darkened sitting room, and the flames of the bonfire which not only burn all the "evil" books of the town but also seem to engulf the whole of Reiligan's house.
The same kind of visual presentation of the destruction of the individual by tyrannical forces occurs in Behind the Green Curtains. Here, we see the abduction of Noneen and Chatastray by Kornavaun's masked thugs, and later hear of the brutality that they both suffered. Noneen, Reena, and Boeman choose a voluntary exile rather than accept the defeat and despair that Chatastray does. In each of the three plays O'Casey depicts through symbolic scenes of violence those who have the strength to fight domination exiled and those who have been weakened by domination forced to suffer living death.

In the two joyous plays, O'Casey presents another kind of symbolic destruction—the necessary destruction of all that would destroy the joy of life. There is violence in this destruction, but it is treated comically. As we have seen, the deaths of the Macebearer and the Town Clerk in The Drums of Father Ned are funny. So too, are the injuries suffered by the Old People of Figuro in the Night. Primarily, however, the destruction of evil is accomplished by active joy, a power once widespread that cannot be overcome by the forces of evil. In both plays, this victory of joy is symbolized by an increasing amount of colour on the stage, and finally by a victory celebration. In The Drums of Father Ned, we see the gay procession of the young people to the notes of a bugle and the roll of Father Ned's drums while McGilligan, Binnington, and Father Fillifogue are slumped in
their chairs in a lamentable condition of absolute defeat. The victory celebration of Figuro in the Night takes the form of a brilliant dance of young couples as the two Old Men sink to the ground, one clasping the Cross and the other clasping the Obelisk.

O'Casey's most characteristic symbolic expression of joy is that of the song and the dance. The song and the dance, like colour, is, for O'Casey, an actual attribute of the religion of life. At the same time, however, O'Casey uses singing and dancing to dramatically symbolize the joy, freedom, and release that the religion of life can generate. This joy is such a strong force that it is almost capable of winning over the most determined of the "life-frighteners". Michael Marthraun and Sailor Mahan are almost enchanted into abandoning the falsity of their Church-fostered beliefs by the dance ritual that the women inspire. Father Boheroe is almost able to instill enough courage into Daniel to stand up to Reiligan by inspiring a dance of love between Keelin and Daniel. The Codger is able to transform Foorawn, if only momentarily, into the happy vivacious girl she should be by leading her in a gay goose-step dance. Chatastray is almost won over to love by a lilting love song. Unfortunately, the forces of evil are too strong for the beauty of song and dance. The song and dance do, however, signify the love, joy, communion, and release of individuality that should be a part of life.
The most theatrically exciting aspect of O'Casey's symbolism is that most of it is depicted through scenes of action. On the whole, the symbolic objects which appear in an O'Casey play are common symbols that are frequently used and easily recognized. O'Casey's real contribution is the incorporation of symbolic scenes of action into the flow of his dramas. The analysis of symbolism completes our study of the structural levels as independent aspects of development in the plays. We have seen that each level has its particular style, form, and type of character. Each level thus develops a very particular feature of the basic theme. The levels are not, however, completely independent. The levels are held together primarily by the controlling allegorical message of the plays. Each of the plays depicts O'Casey's way of salvation for man. As we have seen, each of the levels develops aspects of this central theme through parallel and contrasting statements.

O'Casey uses another important technique in addition to parallels and contrasts to counterpoint the levels of development. The mood and climax of individual scenes are broken by the deliberate intrusion of another mode of development. It is a method of undercutting one level with another. Perhaps a few examples from the plays will give a clearer idea of both the method and the effect of the undercutting that occurs continuously in the five plays.

The gaiety and enchantment of the ritual drinking-dance
scene near the end of Scene II of *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* is undercut before it reaches a climax of joyous exuberance by the entrance of Father Domineer. The gay fantasy is completely destroyed by the vicious comment of Father Domineer. The nastiness of the Canon and Reiligan's plans for Keelin's marriage, in *The Bishop's Bonfire*, is broken by the farcical argument between Codger and Prodical about giving a bottle of whiskey to the Canon. Of course, the final scene of the play is an excellent example of how O'Casey plays off the mood of one levels against another. Codger and Prodical, completely unaware of the tragedy within the house, pass the window drunkenly singing and arguing. In *The Drums of Father Ned*, the mood of the idyllic love scene between Bernadette and Tom is killed before it reaches its fullest expression by the cruelty of Father Fillifogue. The ridiculous argument between McGeelish, McGeera, and Horawn of *Behind the Green Curtains* over McGeera's admission into the Irish Academy is broken by the fantasy sound effect of the doorbell and Reena's entrance. In *Figuro in the Night*, the fantasy of the bird sounds is constantly used to undercut and turn in new directions the farce of the Old Man's and Old Woman's discussions.

It can be seen that the undercutting is structurally and thematically vital to the plays. The undercutting succeeds not only in playing the effect and statement of one level off against another but it also gives to the plays the
The kaleidoscopic effect of shifting patterns. The constantly shifting patterns are emotionally suggestive of the chaos that O'Casey feels exists in the actual world. It is a deliberate shattering of what Suzanne Langer calls "the comic, the light rhythm of thought." Also, this effect of constantly shifting patterns builds an increasing sense of frustration which can be resolved only in an inevitable tragic conclusion or released in a ritual celebration. It is only at the climax then that the constantly shifting patterns of structure are stilled for a final dramatic comment.

The levels are brought together into a thematic and theatrical climax in the final scenes of each play. In *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy*, this climax builds from the wild wind dance scene into the ugly Father Domineer-Loreleen scene. The quiet Julia scene with its bitter underlining of the climax could be equated to the traditional denouement. The climax of *The Bishop's Bonfire* occurs in the Manus-Foorawn scene. In this scene, O'Casey substitutes, not entirely successfully, melodrama for fantasy to bring the four levels to a unified climax. The climax of *Behind the Green Curtains* has an even greater weakness. The climactic union of levels occurs in the final struggle for Chatastray between Reena and Kornavaun with the "denouement" in the following Reena-Chatastray scene. Unfortunately, O'Casey does not end the

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play here, but continues it with the rather sudden Reena-Beoman love scene. This scene may be pleasing sentimentality, but the effectiveness of the climax is dissipated. The climax of the two joyous comedies, of course, occurs in the glorious affirmation of the Comus-like celebration ritual.

Perhaps the final words to describe the structure of O'Casey's five last plays should be left to O'Casey himself. In a letter to David Krause, O'Casey gives an accurate metaphoric description of the structure of his last plays.

This microcosm \textit{The Drums of Father Ned} is meant (successfully or not, I don't know) to portray the whole condition of Ireland as she is; is for today, a colorless kaleidoscope, a kaleidoscope, twist it how you may, never shows a colorful or settled pattern; that is the technique which no one seemingly could accept;\textsuperscript{39}

This metaphor of the kaleidoscope describes rather effectively the shifting patterns of movement that form the structure of these last plays. In another letter, to Robert Hogan, O'Casey makes an additional illuminating comment on the structure of \textit{The Drums of Father Ned} which applies equally well to all five plays.

\textit{...the form was an effort to do something like what R. Strauss did in his music to Don Chichote, picture following picture in sounds of lovely music. The play tries to show some dramatic pictures of present-day Ireland; of course, the drama form is no way comparable to Strauss' lovely creation tho' when I was writing it, I didn't think of Strauss, hadn't even heard it; but some}

\textsuperscript{39} Quoted in Hogan, p. 134.
time ago, I listened to Strauss, and said to myself - That's something like what I aimed at doing in The Drums of F. Ned.40

40 Quoted in Hogan, p. 135.
Eric Bentley makes a surprising distinction between "good drama" and "good theatre". Without explaining the nature of this distinction, Mr. Bentley accuses O'Casey's plays of being "good theatre" but not "good drama". It is impossible to imagine that a serious play could be "good theatre", meaning, presumably, that all the stage techniques are effectively utilized, without being good drama. The drama must by its nature exploit the stage on which it is to be presented. The drama is not solely a literary genre; it is also a theatrical form. Certainly, O'Casey in his last plays makes the most of the theatricality of the drama. The last plays are full of visual and sound effects, but it is not a purposeless use of the stage.

O'Casey very carefully uses all the theatrical effects in his last plays to gain a two-fold response of objectivity and involvement. To make his doctrine of salvation apparent, O'Casey must create objective awareness in his audience. The audience must recognize that a new morality is needed in the world by seeing clearly what is wrong with man's present spiritual state. The audience must, at the same time, realize what has to be done to achieve a new morality. The audience cannot become involved with particular characters acting out a particular story. Instead, they must look at the

41 Bentley, p. 110.
plays as representing the pattern of man's current spirituality and possible salvation.

To convince an audience that the message which they recognize is worth acting upon, O'Casey must develop a sense of involvement as well as objectivity. In these last plays, O'Casey attempts to make his audience actually take part in the joy, vitality, and creativity of his religion of life. He also forces us to respond with shock and anger when we see beauty and joy destroyed or corrupted. As we shall see, it is O'Casey's handling of theatrical effects that arouses our emotional response.

To facilitate a detailed analysis of the stage effects, we shall separate them into visual effects and sound effects. Although we will note the thematic significance of the effects, our focus will be on how the effects create audience involvement and objectivity. Basically, the visual effects distance the audience and create objectivity, whereas the sound effects intensify the emotional response of involvement.

We have already seen how important, thematically and symbolically, visual stage effects are in O'Casey's last plays. The settings, for example, are carefully integrated with the play as a whole. The brightly coloured, stylized setting of Cock-A-Doodle Dandy becomes increasingly darker as the forces for spiritual death gain greater control. The generally realistic settings of The Bishop's Bonfire are
dominated by a large ash tree which is constantly associated with Codger, the one true life-worshipper. Because of the approaching nightfall, the tree, seen from the inside of the house, becomes blacker and blacker and, finally, is seemingly enveloped by the reflected flames of the bonfire. The Codger is more and more harassed and finally banished by Reiligan. The setting for Behind the Green Curtains, too, is basically realistic with just the suggestion of stylization in a few dominant images. The mistiness of Scene I is cut by the very clear picture of Parnell, who, O'Casey obviously feels, was destroyed by religious bigotry and fanatical pietism. That this same kind of destruction still occurs is exemplified in Scenes II and III, whose realistic settings are controlled by the stylized green curtains. In The Drums of Father Ned, the stylized war setting of the Prerumble governs our attitude to the pompous wealth displayed in the realistic settings of Acts I and II. And, of course, as the forces of life gain the victory, a new brightly gay stylization emerges. In Figuro in the Night, the settings for the whole play are stylized. Here the stylization underlines the contrast in mood of Scenes I and II - bleak despair in Scene I and buoyant hope in Scene II.

O'Casey's use of setting has an additional purpose to that of its symbolic, thematic significance. A brightly coloured cleverly stylized setting or even an elaborately detailed realistic setting invariably draws applause from
the audience. O'Casey would of course be aware of this. Interestingly enough, at the beginning of each of the five plays, there is a quiet moment, almost a tableau, which would allow for this applause. Coming in the middle of a play, applause can certainly break a mood or destroy tension, but applause at any point in a play is a sign of the audience's recognition that it is watching a play. Audience objectivity is established. There cannot be complete involvement.

For O'Casey's didactic morality plays, audience objectivity is essential. From the beginning of each play, O'Casey wants his audience to be very aware that it is watching a play. Thus, he stresses the theatricality of the settings. The stylized settings immediately mark Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, The Drums of Father Ned, and Figuro in the Night visually as fantasies. The preposterously large gay-coloured flowers, palm trees that have become strangely brilliant blue and yellow, other trees that suddenly sprout many-coloured fruits like shining lighted globes, a purple sky filled with vast amazingly coloured stars, crazily tilted buildings all delight our fancy much as a child's imagination is charmed by the wonderful world of the fairy tale. Adults, of course, seldom can become as totally involved in the fairy tale as a child can, and given the events of the plays, total involvement is absolutely impossible. It is too obviously unrealistic for us to be caught up in the scene. The fantasy
settings become visual distancing devices.

O'Casey uses yet other visual theatricality in his five last plays. Lighting effects are extremely important in all the plays. There is the misty dream-like lighting of Scene I in *Behind the Green Curtains* and the Prerumble in *The Drums of Father Ned*. There is the growing darkness of both *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* and *The Bishop's Bonfire*. There is the sudden change between Scenes I and II of *Figuro in the Night* from "ghostly" darkness to "a full, graceful and delightful glow."

During the plays we see sudden flashes of lightning, periodic flashes of gunfire, and sudden unaccountable darkneses. The sudden strangeness of the last effects emphasize the fantasy and startle the audience into objectivity. In much the same way actually seeing the "magic" effects on stage increases our objectivity. We know the "magic" is the result of stage tricks. Again, we become aware of the play as a play.

That O'Casey wanted his audiences to be aware of the play as a play is more than apparent in his frequent use of variations of the play within a play technique. The most direct use of the technique occurs in *The Drums of Father Ned* - the rehearsal of the Tostal Pageant, a reenactment of the battle of Wexford. The pageant speeches that we hear demanding political liberty are certainly meant to parallel the present situation, but now it is spiritual liberty that must be demanded. Although "the things said be Ireland's
old leaders are livin' still, and are needed as much today as when they were first spoken" (p. 32), O'Casey seems to be saying that the political emancipation Ireland gained through her bitter struggles for independence can be little more than an amateur play rehearsal until a like spiritual freedom is gained. The young people are charmingly earnest about the rehearsal, but they are obviously amateurs. We are not caught up in the emotions of the Pageant but instead probably smile at the efforts of the young people.

The Daniel-Prodical parody of the Bishop at the beginning of Act III of The Bishop's Bonfire is another fairly obvious use of the play within a play technique. Here, the purpose is largely satiric. The pomp of the Bishop's welcome is mocked, but so are the people like Daniel who recognize the folly of accepting the Bishop's position and yet are afraid to act on their knowledge. Keelin and Codger are silent observers of Daniel's show of bravado. Their reactions set the audience's response to Daniel and establish the pathos of Keelin's futile love for Daniel.

In Cock-A-Doodle Dandy and Behind the Green Curtains, O'Casey again uses one character as a detached observer and commentator on the action. This detached observer causes the scene of action to become a variation of the play within a play technique. Frequently, the Messenger in Cock-A-Doodle Dandy is quite separate from the action. His amused reaction to Michael and Sailor Mahan's argument, at the beginning of
Scene II, about the worth of different prayers intensifies the audience's reaction to the folly of the two men. The Messenger is the silent observer of Father Domineer killing the Lorry Driver. The Messenger's sadly bitter comment voices the audience's reaction to the scene.

Father Domineer [to the others]. You all saw what happened. I just touched him an' he fell. I'd no intention of hurting him - only to administer a rebuke.

Sergeant [consolingly]. Sure, we know that, Father - it was a pure accident.

Father Domineer. I murmured an act of contrition into th' poor man's ear.

Messenger [playing very softly]. It would have been far fitter, Father, if you'd murmured one into your own.

At the end of the play, the messenger, who silently watches the departure of Loreleen, sings a soft comment.

In Scene I of Behind the Green Curtains, O'Casey uses Beoman as an observer commentator in much the same way as he had used the Messenger. Beoman's strong outburst at Lizzie and Angie's fantastic statements, "Pshaw!", "Dummies", "Th' harps an' th' hoboes - a Phil th' Fluther's Ball!", are an extreme version of the audience's reactions. In the same way, Beoman stands apart from the artists and comments on their cowardly wavering, their selfishness, and their lack of any principles. His comments ridicule the artists and keep the audience from feeling pity or concern with the artists' predicament. We are forced to see these characters through Beoman's eyes.
By opening *Figure in the Night* with a tableau that has at its centre the silhouette of the Young Girl, O'Casey sets up yet another variation of the play within the play. The Young Girl is waiting for her lover. We see her silhouette in the window throughout the scene as the Old Woman and the Old Man elaborate on the merits of their piously sterile lives. The Old People are acting out what will become of the Young Girl if no lover comes for her. The audience response to the Old People is controlled by the awareness of the Young Girl.

O'Casey's manipulation of many of the song and dance scenes in the five plays, too, has much the same effect of the play within a play technique. The scenes make the audience very conscious of watching a performance. We appreciate the beauty, the vitality, the colour of the dances almost as if they were separate from the plays. The dances give a unique visual and emotional pleasure that is not directly caused by characterization, situation, or theme. It is the feeling of spontaneous pleasure that O'Casey uses to suggest the full joy of his religion of life. Thus, the dances distance us from the events of the play, but involve us in an emotional response. Again and again the pleasure of the dance is harshly disrupted by the reassertion of the world of the Domineers and the Burrens with their unnatural comments on the sin and evil the dance represents. We respond with indignation to these vicious outbursts because we
have seen and shared in the real attractiveness of the dances. The only time this harsh disruption does not occur is at the ending of The Drums of Father Ned and Figuro in the Night. The audience's emotional response to the dance makes the affirmation of these plays even stronger.

The theatricality of O'Casey's last plays is emphasized by the inclusion of a great many varied sound effects as well as the multitude of visual effects. Thematically, probably the most important sound effect is that of the song. O'Casey's plays have as much emphasis on song as they do on the dance. Just as with the dance, only those who truly worship life can sing with any fervor. Throughout the plays the joyous songs of the life-worshippers are contrasted to the doleful music of the life-frighteners. The gloomy tones of the Church's hymn for Julia contrasts sharply with Robin's lilting musical accompaniment. Even Sailor Mahan's attempt at song is but a poor cowardly imitation of real singing. Canon Burren's fatuous rendition of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling", a song O'Casey obviously regards with great disdain, bears no similarity to singing when compared to Codger's robust joyous outburst of song. This kind of contrast is more sharply stated in The Drums of Father Ned, where the chorus of young people can put all their youthful spirits into the vigorous Tostal hymn. Their attempts at the Church's extraordinary "Oh Mother! I could weep for mirth" are ridiculously humorous. In Behind the
Green Curtains, the contrast is between Noneen's favourite Irish folk song and the hymns of the fanatical marchers sung to the sound of tramping feet. Here, with the additional sound of the tramping feet, the contrast becomes rather frightening. In Figuro in the Night, O'Casey uses the same song "Oh dear what can the matter be", to illustrate the contrasting attitudes to life. The difference between the Young Girl's singing and the Old Woman's could not be stronger.

The thematic significance of the songs is obvious, but O'Casey puts his songs to additional uses. Like the dance, music can very quickly evoke an emotional response in an audience. For the most part, O'Casey uses simple, often familiar, folk melodies in these plays. Because of these melodies, we can be quite caught up in the lilting gaiety of the songs. It is easy to imagine many members of an audience going home from a good production of any of O'Casey's last plays singing or whistling the gay songs of the show. Again, the music, like the dance, simulates the feeling of joy of the religion of life. Emotionally, too, the music breaks the feeling of despair at the ugly viciousness of the forces of evil. Thus, even the "dark" plays can express a kind of grim affirmation. The release from the brutality is secured by the music. There is always music present in spite of the cruelty of life, and O'Casey emphasizes this music and the sense of hope that it stimu-
lates in all his last plays.

Like many a playwright, O'Casey uses music also for its structural value. O'Casey's last plays are filled with frenzied activity and movement. In order to give these scenes the sharpness and point they must have, it is necessary to provide moments of quietness for the audience to catch its breath. The music gives the required moments of quietness. As we have seen, O'Casey develops his last plays through different levels of presentation. The music serves to link the diverse levels of presentation into a cohesive whole.

From his earliest plays, O'Casey has made extremely skillful use of a great variety of sound effects to add an ironic commentary to the action on stage. In Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, the most vital sound effect is that of the crowing cock. Throughout the play, we see the Cock briefly only five times, but we hear him crowing lustily ten times. Because of the crowing his presence permeates the play. We first hear him when Loreleen enters. She and Robin are directly related to the Cock with visual and sound images. The Cock also crows in derision at the farcical Latinims of Shanaar. Occasionally, he will playfully crow to frighten the foolish Michael and Sailor Mahan. And in Scenes I and II he defiantly crows in direct opposition to Father Domineer, whose characteristic sound effect is an ominous roll of thunder. Not only are the characters struggling in
opposition, but so too are the sound effects. Significantly, in Scene III where Father Domineer gains ascendancy, we do not hear the Cock once, but we hear the thunder three times. In addition to the Cock's crowing, there is a great collection of other bird sounds. During Shanaar's incredible recital of the sinfulness of women and sex, we hear "the call of a cuckoo, the mocking laughter of a girl, and a young man's sobbing" (p. 136), and the "'crek, crek, crek, crek' of a corncrake" (p. 137). The sounds are a very funny commentary on the men's absolute belief in a rather lurid fantasy, and perhaps on our gullibility, too, for we hear the sounds as clearly as the men do. During Father Domineer's exorcism of the house, we hear a whole symphony of bird sounds — a variety of owls, cackling hens, and cawing crows. All that is delightful and amusing in nature is taking its leave of the house. It is interesting that the bird songs O'Casey so obviously loves are those that are strident, vigorous, and often rather funny. The use of sound effects in *Cock-A-Doodle Dandy* emphasizes the humour and the fantasy of the play, and occasionally just suggests the violence that is also present in the play. The sound effects in *The Drums of Father Ned* and *Figuro in the Night* are used for much the same intensifying purpose.

*The Bishop's Bonfire* and *Behind the Green Curtains* primarily use heightened realistic sound effects to intensify the feeling of foreboding. The sound effects build up an
intense feeling of real terror. The sound of the death march heard during the Lizzie-Angela scenes tempers our response to the farcical antics of these two old tipplers. It is a rather startling juxtaposition. Occasionally, when the women actually discuss the music, our laughter is increased. But as the solemn music continues, it begins to affect us much as it does Angela. "Ugh! That music stuff gives me the creeps!" (p. 6). It is this response that leads us into the serious part of Scene I. The sound effects of Scene II build the sense of fear to the ugly climax of the entrance of Kornavaun's thugs. The sounds are all related to people entering Chatastray's sitting room. The sound is heard and we see the reaction to it by those in the room. Each time a knock or the doorbell is heard "the artists become more nervous and upset. The doorbell is heard, and becomes increasingly louder, four times before the entrance of the thugs. The ominous tempo is increased with the entrance of the thugs for the final action of the scene. We hear a scream from Noneen, the bang of a door, the sound of a car starting up and moving away. As Boeman outfaces the thugs and takes Reena safely away, we hear a car arriving. The thugs take Chatastray off. They bang the door shut. We hear the turn of a key in the lock, the sound of the four men descending the steps, and the sound of a car leaving. The ugliness and brutality of the Church's protectors of decency is described with almost unbearable tension, not visu-
ally but with sound. The effect is quite expressionistic. In Scene III the use of sound effects is less pronounced. The tension has been decreased; we are certain of Chatas-tray's capitulation.

Another expressionistic technique which O'Casey effectively utilizes in these last plays to ridicule the conformity and abject submission of his living dead is stylized speech patterns. The language itself becomes, quite literally, a sound effect. Complete submission creates mechanical creatures not human beings. In Cock-A-Doodle Dandy, we hear this mechanical speech just before the terrible scene of Loreleen's expulsion. Once humanity is lost, there is nothing left but vicious cruelty.

Father Domineer [stormily]. Stop where yous are! No hidin' from the enemy! Back to hell with all bad books, bad plays, bad pictures, and bad thoughts! Cock o' th' north, or Cock o' th' south, we'll down derry-doh down him yet. Shoulder to shoulder, an' step together against th' onward rush of paganism! Boldly tread, firm each foot, erect each head!

One-Eyed Larry
Michael
Bellman
Sergeant

Father Domineer. Fixed in front be every glance, forward at th' word advance!

One-Eyed Larry
Michael
Bellman
Sergeant
Father Domineer. We know where we're goin', an' we know who's goin' with us.

Michael. The minstrel boy with th' dear harp of his country, an' Brian O'Lynn.

Bellman. Danny Boy an' th' man who struck O'Hara.

One-Eyed Larry. Not forgettin' Mick McGilligan's daughter, Maryann!

(pp. 211-212).

The speeches here have some of the same terrifying effect as the expressionistic speeches in the second act of The Silver Tassie. For the most part, however, O'Casey uses the choral effect in his last plays as a satiric weapon. The technique appears in all five plays. There is the very funny scene of The Bishop's Bonfire in which Prodical and Rankin try to urge Daniel to greater efforts because "the Canon said so". McGilligan and Binnington frequently break into comic chorus speech when they discuss business. The artists with hands piously folded in a prayerful attitude describe their fireside chat with the Bishop in an expressionistic chant. Large sections of Figuro in the Night are done in the same comic chant. There are many examples of the choric chant in the five plays and one additional quotation will be sufficient to illustrate the satiric effectiveness of the technique.

Horawn. We have had a fireside chat with our Bishop, Chatastray, and he very softly and good-humouredly showed us the error of writ­ing as we did.

McGeera. He gave us tea.
Bunny [delightedly]. An' shook us all be th' hand when we were leavin'.

Reena. Did he say anything about th' attack on little Noneen or the batterin' given to Mr. Chatastray?

Horawn. That's over, an' bygones is bygones. Mr. Chatastray's keepin' Noneen here was wrong, an' he knows it now; but doesn't bear any ill will - do you, Chatastray?

Chatastray. Oh, I suppose not.

McGeelish. Th' Bishop touched our hearts.

McGeera. Yes, an' opened our eyes.

Horawn. We know now that we have to be care­ful not to include a word in our writin' that might arouse any sinful desire.

Kornavaun. Domine dirige nos.

McGeera. Sex desire isn't easy to control, but it must be done, or be damned in Hell to all eternity. So says St. Paul.

McGeelish. Reading immoral literature makes control almost impossible; and our thoughts must ever be on a higher level.

(Behind the Green Curtains, pp. 68-69).

The difference between Reena's and Chatastray's short com­ments and those of the others is obvious. Reena and Chatastray speak naturally. The inanity of the artists' position is made apparent not from the content of their statements, but from their costumes, their prayerful attitude, and their rhythmic chanted repetition of the Bishop's statement. The satire is quite harsh.

Most critics agree that the language in an O'Casey play is magnificent, if occasionally over-elaborate, in its gorge­ous humour and its abundantly rich rhetoric. As yet, however,
critics have not noted how carefully O'Casey has related the language to the total experience of the play. Language is one of O'Casey's impressive theatrical achievements. By examining just two quotations from The Bishop's Bonfire and Figuro in the Night, we can see how effective a device the language can be. A large part of O'Casey's religion of life requires an appreciation and enjoyment of the sensuous beauties of the world. The atmosphere is conveyed through language as well as through visual effects. In The Bishop's Bonfire, most of the Codger's speeches are full of vivid sense impressions. Two of Codger's speeches from Act I will show this emphasis.

Codger. What are the things that God gives to one man to the things God gives to all? What's the gold on the bishop's mitre to the gold on the gorse? The sheen of his satin shoon to the feel of a petal on the wildest rose? What's a bishop's purple to the purple in the silky plume of the speary thistle?

Prodical. Still an' all, the Bishop'll bring a few golden days to Ballyoonagh.

Codger. Ay, golden days of penance an' prayer indicating Rankin] for God's gaum there; but not for me. Me golden days is over. [He chants gaily and a little gloomily]: Ah, them were the golden days with an arm round a waist, When everything shone so shy and gay; When a man had heart to toss the girls as well as time to toss th' hay - Oh, them were th' days when life had something fine to say! (pp. 28-29).

In these two short speeches are contrasted the light brought
by the Church and the bonfire and the light perceived by Codger's way of life - the destructive light of evil and the envigorating light of goodness. Throughout the play there are contrasting images of light developed. Not only do the images in these speeches appeal to the eye - gleaming gold, shining rose, purple, the picture of a man tossing hay and girls - but they also appeal strongly to the sense of touch - the feel of satin and the petal of a rose, the silkiness of the thistle flower and the barbs of its leaves, the feel as well as the sight of a man's arm around a girl's waist. The Codger's speeches are richly full, yet concise, and these two speeches are by no means unusual examples from the play. O'Casey uses the language to suggest subtly the need for sensuous appreciation.

O'Casey is considerably less subtle in his use of language in *Figuro in the Night*. Much of the humour of the play comes from the audience recognizing instantly the fantastic circumlocutions that characters go through to avoid mentioning anything sexual. At the same time the language of the Old Men, in speeches similar to those of Shanaar, Rankin, and Kornavaun, is positively lascivious.

2nd Old Man. I seen Kathleen Mavoorneen sailing straight for a gossoon of a Civic Guard, and he standing gaping at her condescendin' bodice slipping, slipping down lower and lower, his innocent mouth open, eyes a-poppin', helpless; waiting to be coddled be the sin ablaze in her; then she whipt him into her arms, and then I saw them gone, leaving only two red flames twisting round one another.

( pp. 113-114).
Through a skillful use of language, O'Casey repeats over and over one of his basic themes - thwarting natural desire produces lewd, lustful, unnatural fantasies that can often be extremely harmful. O'Casey's use of language catches us up in its elusive coils and involves us in both the humour and the lurid descriptions. We are never permitted to separate ourselves completely from the events depicted on the stage. Fortunately, however, other of O'Casey's devices distance us from the action.

O'Casey's theatricality in these last plays achieves a complex effect of objectivity and involvement while suggesting that the play is a metaphor for the flowing rhythmic movement of life itself. Each of the plays is filled with movement - the frantic farcical action patterned against the lyrical flow of the dance and completed with suggested stillness of death or the rejoicing in new life. We become involved in an emotional response to the effects. Our participation in the gaiety and exuberance of the action convinces us that the promise contained in the plays will one day turn into reality. Our despair at seeing the joy destroyed makes us want to try to bring about changes. Because of the distancing effects, we become aware of our own involvement and emotional responses. We are forced to judge our involvement in both the good and evil aspects of life presented. The result is a very disturbing combination of involvement and objectivity that is both deliberate and
effective. For O'Casey's didactic purposes it is necessary that the audience feel uneasy. The message of the plays may then be acted upon.

The drama, by its very nature, works through the paradox of creating reality within an illusion. In the sense that the author's vision is given form by living human beings and the actual objects of reality, it is perhaps the most realistic of art forms. But, because the author and the audience can never escape the limitations and artificiality of the stage, drama is, at the same time, the most formal of the arts. It is life, but it is art. The reality of the stage world involves us while the obvious artificiality of the stage distances us. The drama is an art form, but it is never a completed art form. Every production before every new audience is, in a sense, a new creation. Thus, the drama attempts to evoke the timeless within the moment by recreating the artistic vision in an immediate living form. Drama can be then a complex metaphor for the nature of reality. For O'Casey true reality is perceived in the spiritual realm of religion. It is the reality of the religion of life-worship that O'Casey attempts to reveal through his last plays.

We have examined O'Casey's themes in his last plays, and seen how carefully he has developed his structure and techniques to elaborate the themes. The five plays are not, however, equally successful in this integration of theme and technique. We have already seen the major weaknesses of
**Behind the Green Curtains.** Although the play has some very powerful and effective moments, the total effect is unconvincing. It is as if the play were unfinished. **Figuro in the Night** is not as seriously flawed as **Behind the Green Curtains**, but it too is not entirely successful. It is a play that is quite without action. Samuel Beckett's plays have shown that action is not a necessary component of an effective play. The anti-action play must have, however, great intellectual complexity to compensate for the lack of action. Although **Figuro in the Night** has a great deal of humour, charm, and colour, it has very little complexity. Because of this lack of intellectual stimulation, audience interest cannot be sustained.

The three plays of the trilogy are almost completely successful. O'Casey has put all that he loves and much that he hates in the world into these plays. Technically, **Cock-A-Doodle Dandy** is the most perfectly worked out of the three plays. But all three plays exhibit the greatness that O'Casey's early plays show. They are technically extremely skillful; there are marvelous characterizations; and most important, there is emotional intensity. **Cock-A-Doodle Dandy**, **The Bishop's Bonfire**, and **The Drums of Father Ned**, are fine and original plays that should long be a part of our theatrical and literary heritage.
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