

MACMILLAN STUDIES IN ANGLO-IRISH LITERATURE

# A GUIDE TO O'CASEY'S PLAYS



JOHN O'RIORDAN



# A GUIDE TO O'CASEY'S PLAYS

*From the Plough to the Stars*

John O'Riordan

**M**  
MACMILLAN

© John O'Riordan 1984

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be  
reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means,  
without permission

First published 1984 by  
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD  
London and Basingstoke  
Companies and representatives  
throughout the world

Printed in Hong Kong

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

O'Riordan, John

A guide to O'Casey's plays.—(Macmillan studies in Anglo-Irish  
literature)

1. O'Casey, Sean—Criticism and interpretation

I. Title

822 '.912 PR6029.C332

ISBN 0-333-36428-7

# Preface

One of the characters in Graham Greene's distinguished novel, *The Power and the Glory*, remarks that 'A poet is the soul of his country'. The same can be said equally of a great dramatist or true-born novelist.

Sean O'Casey (1880–1964) is not only an outstanding Irish dramatist but a world-venerated playwright of distinction. He was born of poor Protestant parents in Dublin (the youngest of a large family) and received little formal education, mainly because of a chronic, recurring, ulcerated cornea condition of both eyes (trachoma) – a condition common in malnourished families. Weak eyesight did not hamper his determination to write vigorous, poignant plays, which, throughout his active life, brought storms of controversy, even though all were opulently written in the finest traditions of Shakespearian and Biblical English. The mixture of conflicting moods and the kind of intrusion of comedy into tragedy, manifest in all his dramas, has its roots in the splendour of Shakespearian traditions, though O'Casey alone remains the supreme exponent among contemporary dramatists of this amazingly kaleidoscopic art.

His other great strength is his marvellous sense of character portrayal. Foremost among such, of course, is the inimitable 'Captain' Boyle – the 'Paycock' of the Dublin tenements and the closest approximation we have to Falstaff in contemporary literature. 'The Irishman', O'Casey once quipped, 'hasn't any sentimentality. He behaves when he is drunk as an Englishman does when he is sentimental'. In the later plays, where the setting is invariably modern Arcadian Ireland, rural 'paycocks' strut the stage, some of whose pronouncements and behaviour outclass even those of 'Captain' Boyle. All are gifted with golden-tongued oratory, thus illustrating there can be an air of fantasy to the utterances of all but the most rigidly sober of O'Casey's mythical creations in his fantastical but irresistible stage repertoire.

In Britain, O'Casey has been woefully undervalued, so that, for

the most part, he is known principally as the author of two highly-acclaimed successes: *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). As the present analytical study reveals, he is the author of so much more. *The Silver Tassie* (1928) is now regarded by many as one of the finest anti-war testaments of the century. Fantasies such as *Purple Dust* (1940), *Red Roses for Me* (1942) and *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* (1949) are also major works that deserve the stylish productions we reserve for the indirect-action drama of Strindberg and Chekhov. So far, the English theatre has done insufficient justice to these wayward, beribboned achievements. Abroad, they have won laurelled triumphs.

In 1937, O'Casey wrote that 'The beauty, fire and poetry of drama have perished in the storm of fake realism.' Subsequently, he, more than any other English-speaking dramatist of his day, has succeeded in blending genuine realism, the inner truth about people's lives and relationships, with *the beauty, fire and poetry of drama*. In the field of tragicomedy he remains unrivalled.

This analysis is the first complete study of all the playwright's dramatic works, spanning a forty-year cycle, from the period of the early twenties to the early sixties. Space is also given to O'Casey's very early apprentice-play, *The Harvest Festival* (1919), written long before the heyday of his Abbey renown and only recently published in America and Britain. The plays are viewed chronologically: each work has a theoretical introduction, an outline of plot and characterisation, plus considerations for staging, together with a brief history of important productions and an artistic evaluation intended to assist enterprising future directors, appreciative theatregoers and, indeed, all admirers of O'Casey's plays.

Comedy and catharsis suffused are keynotes of the dramas throughout. Humour – for O'Casey – lies in the disparity between human aspiration and performance, in the rare make-believe of theatre, as reflected in the mythical rainbow between fantasy and reality: the bridge between the plough and the stars, or 'the bridge of vision' suggested in his autobiographical play, *Red Roses for Me*.

Finally, there is O'Casey's own vision which sees beyond the mythological beings of his own indomitable characters into the dark and lovely impulses of the human heart, of which those superb dramatic creations are more than just an articulate record and reflection.

For allowing me to quote extensively from the text of the plays, I

am immensely grateful to Eileen O'Casey for her help, affection and sustained interest.

I am also gratified by the persuasion and encouragement of drama historian J. C. Trewin – doyen, unchallengeably, among theatre critics – whose faith has been unwavering from the start. My appreciation, too, to Michael Foot, who once predicted to me in a letter that O'Casey would 'come back, with your assistance, again and again'.

Bibliographically, my debt to Professors Ron Ayling, David Krause and Edward Mikhail is apparent; also to Bob Lowery, editor of the *O'Casey Annual*. My thanks, additionally, to Bob Johns for his continuous and friendly advice; and to my publishers for their editorial perception and helpfulness.

J. O'R.

# Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	ix
1	* <i>The Harvest Festival</i> (1918–19): an Ironic Melodrama	1
2	* <i>The Shadow of a Gunman</i> (1923): Kaleidoscope of the Troubles	12
3	<i>Kathleen Listens In</i> (1923): a Post-Civil War Whimsicality	33
4	* <i>Juno and the Paycock</i> (1924): a Camouflage of the Irish Civil War	37
5	<i>Nannie's Night Out</i> (1924): a One-Act Vignette	65
6	* <i>The Plough and the Stars</i> (1926): Evocation of the Irish Easter Rising	70
7	* <i>The Silver Tassie</i> (1928): Testament of World War I	109
8	* <i>Within the Gates</i> (1933): an Epiphany of Peace	143
9	<i>The End of the Beginning</i> (1934): a <i>Jeu-d'Esprit</i>	167
10	<i>A Pound on Demand</i> (1934): a Farcical Sketch	171
11	* <i>The Star Turns Red</i> (1940): a Futuristic Extravaganza	174
12	* <i>Purple Dust</i> (1940): a Pastoral Frolic	204
13	* <i>Red Roses for Me</i> (1942): a Phantasmagoria of Dublin	241
14	* <i>Oak Leaves and Lavender</i> (1946): an Oleograph of World War II	272
15	* <i>Cock-a-Doodle Dandy</i> (1949): a Mock-Allegorical Fantasy	297
16	<i>Time to Go</i> (1951): a Satiric Fantasy-Sketch	335
17	<i>Bedtime Story</i> (1951): a Sophisticated Farce	338
18	<i>Hall of Healing</i> (1951): a Therapeutic Diversion	341
19	* <i>The Bishop's Bonfire</i> (1955): a Celtic Lament	345
20	* <i>The Drums of Father Ned</i> (1960): a Prefigurative Comedy	375

21	<i>Behind the Green Curtains</i> (1961): a Tragi-Comedietta	396
22	<i>Figuro in the Night</i> (1961): a Farfetched Fantasy	402
23	<i>The Moon Shines on Kyleneamoe</i> (1961): a Realistic Fantasy	406
	<i>Select Bibliography</i>	411
	<i>Index</i>	414



# 1 *The Harvest Festival* (1918–19): an Ironic Melodrama

O'Casey's earliest extant play – an ironic melodrama focusing on class struggles in the strife-ridden atmosphere of Dublin in 1913, the year of industrial turmoil – is of historic importance in that it established in the thirty-nine-year-old Irish labourer the unflinchable resolve to continue his repeated efforts to attain recognition as a major, universal dramatist in the well-sprung traditions of Shaw, Strindberg and O'Neill – and even no less a luminary than Shakespeare himself.

Written around 1918 or 1919, it was the second play O'Casey had offered the Abbey Theatre – home of Ireland's national drama. It was turned down, along with the first, *The Frost in the Flower* and the third, *The Crimson in the Tricolour* – both of which do not appear to have survived: in the opinion of Yeats and other Abbey directors, 'We don't think either [of the first two] would succeed on the stage'. About the third, there were mixed feelings: Lady Gregory favoured a production, Yeats was against. The undaunted workman-writer gritted his teeth and carried on. His fourth effort was his well-known two-acter, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, his first produced play. It was an immediate triumph; and along with *Junó and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars* won him international acclaim.

With *The Harvest Festival* (an incomplete revised draft of the first act was retained among his papers, along with the original manuscript of the entire play), O'Casey became gradually disenchanted, not with the theme but its structure – 'interestingly conceived', declared the directorate, 'but not well executed'; though he himself was sufficiently enamoured of theme and purpose to have wished to have preserved it intact over the years. It was, of course, to become precursor of *Red Roses for Me* (with a near-identical theme treated instead in a phantasmagorical way) and,

characteristically and thematically, influences many of the later plays, such as *The Star Turns Red*, *Hall of Healing* and *The Bishop's Bonfire*. Its theme of mercy, towards the close, suggests pre-echoes of *Juno and the Paycock*. The play, therefore, merits consideration among the rich and capricious reserves of O'Casey's fertile repertoire.

Until recently, the playwright's earliest, surviving drama – like Shaw's final whimsicality entitled *Why She Would Not* – had remained altogether unpublished and unproduced. On the publication side, this has now been rectified. (A German translation is also available.) Pressures in the expanding field of research and O'Casey studies had prevailed upon the playwright's widow, Eileen, and trustees of the New York Public Library – which had purchased the manuscript of the play in 1969 for inclusion in its extensive O'Casey archive in the Berg Collection – to publish the text ten years later, in America in 1979, and in Britain and Ireland, as part of centenary celebrations of the playwright's birth, in March 1980.

The plot, in the wording of the dust-jacket to the English edition,

deals with Irish workers' battles against economic oppression and religious hypocrisy, with that vital combination of passion, humour and pathos that distinguishes O'Casey's later plays.

A rich melodrama, involving representatives of Church, employers and labour, the play, O'Casey tells us, in his fourth autobiographical volume, *Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well*:

dealt with the efforts of militant members of the unskilled unions to put more of the fibre of resistance to evil conditions of pay and life into the hearts and minds of the members of the craft unions whose gospel was that what was good enough for the fathers was good enough for the sons. The action took place in the busy preparations made by a church for holding the annual harvest festival, which the Anglo-Catholics sneeringly called the Feast of Saint Pumpkin and all Vegetables.

Although *The Harvest Festival* lays no claim to greatness, historical reasons dictate that it should be included in the corpus of O'Casey's

works. The dramatist himself, in his meridian years, never strove to promote it. The play is a three-act drama set in contemporary Dublin, portraying industrial conflicts and internecine unrest. It is strongly autobiographical.

The cast includes Jack Rocliffe, a young radically-minded, socially aware unskilled labourer – a virile likeness of the playwright at the time – who leads his fellow-workers in a justifiably motivated strike, in the face of overwhelming odds, and dies for their cause; his widowed mother, heroically conceived, hard-working woman of the tenements, who bears a likeness to O’Casey’s own mother, eulogised more fittingly in the early volumes of autobiography, such as *I Knock at the Door* and *Pictures in the Hallway* and, again, in *Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well*; the kindly and sympathetic clergyman, the Reverend J. Jennings, Rector of St Brendan’s, where Mrs Rocliffe – despite infirmities of her age – still worships, even though Jack has become an infidel and pins his faith instead on a revolutionised society of the future; the Reverend W. Bishopson, Curate of St Brendan’s, narrow-minded and sanctimonious; Melville Williamson, ignorant, protestantising Churchwarden, obsessed with tawdry self-importance and a tinkling symbol of human hypocrisy; his wife, sycophantic and shallow; their colourless daughter, Clarice, aspiring to the hand of the Curate; Sir Jocelyn Vane, arrogant, possessive, prosperous merchant and leading Synodsmen – an intractable hard-liner, flaunting his influence as wealthiest parishioner; Mrs Duffy, a poor parishioner and neighbour to Jack’s mother; Tom Nimmo, a bricklayer – conceived in the Irish romantic tradition and firmly against strike-action and employed in tasks at the Williamsons’ home; Bill Conway, a docker on strike and comrade-in-arms with Jack (his name appears as Brophy in the *Dramatis Personae*); and Simon Waugh, prevaricating Sexton of St Brendan’s.

The theme, basically, is the problem of conscience in a society that does not allow for conscience on one side of the great social divide; and the eventual triumph of conviction over intolerance, even though inequity and inhumanity prevail.

The scene in the first act is the lounge of the Williamsons, styled in the worst excesses of Victorian decor. As Tom Nimmo is engaged in restyling the hearth with decorative tiles, the Churchwarden’s wife is hovering prominently in the foreground, watching over him as he works and sanctimoniously humming a hymn. Noticing his effective use of a craftsman’s straight-edge, she remarks – before a ring at the

door-bell interrupts the flow of her mannered conversation – that the Bible is ‘The Christian’s Straight-Edge . . . that makes us feel the roughness and unevenness of sin’. While she is out of the room, the workman relaxes for a moment with his pipe, soliloquising, from a wry, Catholic standpoint, that ‘Protestants is curious animals’. (He repeats the catchphrase later.) When Mrs Williamson re-enters, carrying huge home-grown vegetables handed in at the front-door for display in the church – in readiness for the Harvest Festival – the workman’s reaction is one of caustic comment and risible incredulity as he soliloquises yet again: ‘. . . I heard that Cromwell turned churches into stables, but it beats all to think of them turnin’ churches into market gardens. God save us but Protestants is curious animals’.

Discoursing on the dangers of strike-action spreading throughout the capital, the workman is told by Mrs Williamson:

When will the poor ignorant workmen get common-sense, and realise that God intended that they should be content to do the work that come to their hands. Oh, if they only knew the blessedness of content, & a quiet trust in God they would never trouble their heads about a strike. Oh, if they would only become converted and think only of that beautiful home that awaits all those that suffer patiently the few passing tribulations of this world . . .

ending on a sanctimonious note with a hymn: and interrupted again by a ring at the door. In the short interval the workman soliloquises again on the dangers of strike-breaking from his position as conscience-stricken outlaw in an early, raw industrial society, where acceptance of trade union principles and practice – in the face of general incomprehension and prejudice – is as controversial as it is today.

Before the return of Mrs Williamson, with the Curate and Clarice, Jack Rocliffe has entered and mocks Nimmo for his passive reluctance towards the impending strike, and for ever resenting, yet accepting, the *status quo* of stagnation. His earnest plea is accompanied by a humorous cynicism:

If this strike develops much more there will be a Harvest Festival in Dublin, in which the Labour Leaders will be the clergy, the strikers the congregation; in which curses will be prayers, hymns

will be lamentations, the choir will be police and soldiers, the seed will be the blood of the proletariat, and the crop will be the conception of the New Idea of Labour in Ireland.

With such a volatile climate prevailing in Ireland's capital at the time, one can imagine the reluctance of Yeats and other directors to stage such talk of wild insurrection and workers' bravado. The Harvest Festival ceremony itself (undertaken by the better-off parishioners in the community) is resented both by Jack and Nimmo, the poorer workers: it becomes the target for irony in the unpredictable atmosphere of stark melodrama as the play develops.

When Nimmo bemoans the strike, Jack quotes Emerson – and later Tennyson – in defence of emancipation of the workers' cause (the workers who, in Tennyson's phrase from *Locksley Hall*, were 'ever reaping something new'). Emerson's dimensions and self-reliant ordinances are Jack's: 'society everywhere', Emerson had foretold, 'is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members'. Nothing great, nothing adventurous, Jack reminds his faint-hearted colleague – in the assimilation of Emerson's ideals – would ever be achieved without superhuman effort and enthusiasm. Emerson's view of poverty is also voiced by Jack (and later by Red Jim in *The Star Turns Red*) from the cold hand of personal experience – through the recollections of ineradicable scars of a poverty-stricken upbringing – though the Curate, Mrs Williamson and Clarice – confronted with the robust and studied 'insolence' of Jack, holding forth before them – are clearly sceptical.

Finally, when the Churchwarden makes his entrance, reminding his wife, in a fit of chauvinism, that she is also an oblate in his house as well as in church – demonstrating the fact by flinging the vegetables littering the table on to the floor – he reprimands Jack for his demagogic behaviour and disengaging radicalism in his own household (Jack's reply is that 'the Church teaches that it is a work of charity to instruct the ignorant'), amid sudden vociferous interruptions from an angry crowd, offstage, storming the house and stoning the windows. In the ensuing panic, Jack tells Mrs Williamson not to be alarmed: 'It's only the opening hymn', he affirms, 'of the workers' Harvest Festival'. (Just as in *The Silver Tassie*, later on, the twin themes of irony and mercy are exploited, in an unusual combination, within a melodramatic framework.)

Throughout the second act, the contrasting background in the poorly-furnished surroundings of the Rocliffes' upper tenement

home reflects the daily anguish and heartbreak which afflict Mrs Rocliffe in her struggle to make ends meet for herself and Jack, even though her son's intellectual pursuits and polemical sympathies are beyond her simple though sincere understanding. In conversation with Mrs Duffy, a humble parishioner, both are mystified by Jack's crusading enthusiasm and avowed Gospel of Discontent, and regret his recent, continued absence from church services, especially on such occasions as the Harvest Festival. Both, who are incontrovertibly pious and planning to attend the Festival service, are suddenly taken aback when Jack rushes in, aflame with expectation, to tell them that his role as workers' tribune is now assuming an urgent, embattled twist, as many hundreds of his fellow-strikers have been arrested on the quaysides and streets and serious trouble is expected.

While Jack is hurriedly taking his tea, the Rector and Curate pay a surprise visit to persuade Jack to attend the Harvest Festival and also to introduce, both to Jack and his mother, the new Curate, who, of course, unbeknown to the Rector (in a neat, melodramatic touch on the playwright's part), has already met Jack in a hostile encounter at the Williamsons' during the first act. Because Jack affirms his life's purpose is now the total overthrow of poverty and industrial tyranny, he cannot promise to attend, even though he acknowledges a debt of honour and gratitude to his kindly pastor and former friend. The Rector respects his radical thinking – admiring his messianic self-confidence – though his Curate roundly condemns it and is noticeably aloof and antagonistic.

After Jack has departed to scenes of unrest and impending violence, offstage – with armed police and scabs – the Rector comforts Mrs Rocliffe in the belief that the leadership in Jack will outshine and outstrip all danger. Jack's steadfast, as well as headstrong qualities are the subject of admiration between the Rector and Mrs Rocliffe, who both retain a reverential attitude to the reforming zeal and passionate intensity that have replaced the apostasy of her son. Like his dead father, during Jack's early childhood, Mrs Rocliffe affirms, he belongs in a world not hers or theirs.

From cosmic outposts, sounds of distant disturbances can be heard. The Rector consoles Jack's mother but the Curate voices the hope that the strength of law will be invoked and the strikers taught a lesson. Suddenly, Mrs Duffy, who left earlier – when the Rector paid his call – now dressed for attendance at the Harvest Festival,

rushes in to confirm that bloodshed and disorder are spreading, with crowds blocking the entrance to the church. After sounds of uproar have subsided, voices can be heard coming towards the house and upstairs, offstage, as Jack – in a seriously wounded state – is carried into the room, with the aid of Bill Conway, a fellow-striker, and another colleague. As he is laid gently on the sofa, Conway explains that in attacking a convoy of scabs, in the course of the conflict, Jack risked his life and was shot. In his last dying moments, he pleads forgiveness and asks both Bill and the Rector to take care of his aged mother and predicts that out of tribulations and woe will come industrial peace and stability and assured happiness in this transcendentalised ending, while Mrs Roccliffe laments the passing of her son. His plea of mercy ('Oh God, that it may please Thee to have mercy upon all men') is later echoed by the Rector in the ironic final conclusion to the play.

As preparations are being made for the burial of Jack, the setting, in the final act, is in the grounds of St Brendan's Church. Ravaging conflicts disturbing the peace of Dublin are symbolised by religious feuds which provoke contention among the Rector's own flock. The Rector is a ritualist determined to carry out the rites of faith, as he sees it, in the rubrics of tradition and order, which upsets the extreme Protestant viewpoint among his Select Vestry, who are determined to put a stop to such 'romanising' practices. They are motivated by an ignorant evangelism and hatred of the Rector's admiration for Jack, whom they look upon not as a former parishioner but as a scoundrel. They have a powerful ally in Sir Jocelyn Vane – local Citizen Kane – wealthy, dominant merchant and chief benefactor, and backed by Curate Bishopson. The Rector has only isolated support among the poorest of his parishioners, such as Mrs Roccliffe and Mrs Duffy; and, wedged in support of both sides, is the abject Sexton, the lugubrious Simon Waugh.

As a backcloth to the play, we should remember that Ireland's whole world was sharply divided against itself. England was on the verge of a fierce Continental war that was to conflagrate into world-wide catastrophe: at the same time, industrial warfare as well as nationalistic demands were wracking Dublin. When O'Casey wrote the play, in 1918–19, Anglo-Irish conflicts, leading to guerrilla war, were in full swing, following Sinn Féin's victories at the polls in Ireland in the General Election of 1918. As the Rector declines to listen to the dictates of his Vestrymen and ignores the counsel of Vane and Bishopson to disallow a church funeral for Jack – with a

cortège supported by Republican working colleagues, whose spokesman is Conway – he reflects that he is isolated and alone. And he accepts, with weary though august resignation, that this is due, predominantly, to what he terms the ‘terrible unrest of the lower-classes’ in ‘overthrowing all our long-settled ideas of peace and happiness’. His parish, he reflects, is also sharply divided and lacks, he regrets, charity.

In the face of such overwhelming opposition, the Rector backs down and tells Jack's mother that a funeral in his church is now impossible, reminding her that ‘a priest-ridden laity was a terrible tyranny, but a laity-ridden priesthood is a more terrible one’. Mrs Rocliffe, in a bitter aside, exclaims: ‘You are just as bad as the rest of them; you are afraid to go again’ them . . . My poor, poor Jack was right – the Church is always again’ the workin’-class’.

As the cortège approaches and a band playing *The Dead March* is heard in the distance, the Vestrymen mount guard outside the church, and the cortège is finally turned away (in the direction, instead, of Union Hall, more fittingly, for a workers’ wake). When Sir Jocelyn enters the porch, he is taunted by Bill: ‘Go on . . . and sing your psalms an’ read your Bible, an’ thump your craw . . . We’ll stan’ by the man that kep’ himself down by fightin’ the rich, again’ them that lifted themselves up by fighting the poor’. Outside the church grounds Jack’s work-mates, in true Socialist tradition, intone *The Red Flag*, while the church bell tolls, ironically, for the Harvest Festival. (The closing mood, as in most of O’Casey’s early dramas, is one of bathos.) As the Rector sadly enters his church, to officiate instead at the planned service, he utters a prayer (similar to Jack’s at the end of the second act) for all in danger and in tribulation. It is a prayer of mercy that God will have pity on *all* humanity, even families of renegade workers and those responsible, such as Vane, for offsetting their blacklegs against locked-out workers.

The ending foretells the conclusion to *The Star Turns Red* and Shaw’s *Too True to be Good*: even though we may have outgrown our religion and our political system – is the inference – the preacher must preach the way of life; even the dawn of a new one.

As an early prefigurative effort, *The Harvest Festival* shows great potential. Its dialogue is original and racy in parts, its construction – as the Abbey directors had admitted – is commendable; and,



though by no means a masterpiece, there is no naturalistic evidence to suggest that the Abbey Theatre, with its range of actors ideal for the leading parts, could not have staged a worthwhile production. It is, after all, a working-class play, written by a labourer, told from a labourer's standpoint.

The play is melodramatic in conception, but tragicomic in execution, presenting a panorama of social progress, not unlike Galsworthy's *Strife*. Its weakness is partly due to a lack of fully rounded, flesh-and-blood types of characterisation – well-marked in succeeding plays by the dramatist – as befits a naturalistic-styled play; and partly in the plot (the leading character dies at the end of the second act and is outwardly more of a trouble-making dissenter than a dramatic hero. The character of the Rector, in a conflict-torn situation, arouses our sympathy more). Sir Jocelyn Vane, the employer against whom the strike is directed, is not very much concerned with the main action, which is invested instead in the characters of the Churchwarden, Williamson, his wife and daughter who are fanatically devoted to the concept of Harvest Festival. Even so, the labourers themselves – as is to be expected – are more convincingly drawn.

Of the main characters, Jack Rocliffe is based on an idealised version of O'Casey himself, though a somewhat faceless, twenty-five-year-old revolutionary, who lacks the broad, humanistic vision of Ayamonn Breydon, the magnetic hero of *Red Roses for Me*. He is little more than a stock allegorical figure; though the raw youthfulness of his character is important. Mrs Rocliffe, the maternal mother-figure, in her seventy-sixth year, is also rather negative, compared to the firmness and indomitability of O'Casey's later characters, such as Juno, Bessie Burgess and Mrs Breydon. The fifty-five-year-old Rector, the Reverend Jennings, white-haired and white-bearded, with a handsome face and gentle smile, is in the same apostolic succession of Protestant pastors O'Casey knew personally from the days of his church-going youth. He is a less forceful prototype of the equally understanding and enlightened clergyman, the Reverend E. Clinton, portrayed in *Red Roses for Me*. Bill Conway is the earlier model for Brannigan in *The Star Turns Red*. He is based on O'Casey's former colleague, Barney Conway, and loyal assistant to Jim Larkin (model, in turn, for Red Jim in the same play). The remaining characters tend to be fixed, conventionalised representations.

Factions that occur between the Rector and his Select Vestry