The Shadow of a Gunman

Background

This is Sean O’Casey’s first play that was accepted by the Abbey Theatre. And, it is his debut into the world of Theatre as a playwright. Many of the innovations that he introduced, either by design or by sheer accident, had far-reaching implications.

There is not much of a plot in The Shadow of a Gunman. It is the exploitation, handling of a certain situation too well-known to him, in a suitable context, that made the play a forerunner in the types of plays that the Abbey Theatre was to witness later. It heralded the tenement as the hero of the Abbey Theatre. Abbey was no longer a poetic theatre; it was turned into a theatre where problems, contemporary problems of not abstract beings, but human beings, those of Dubliners began to be discussed. In a sense, Abbey became a community theatre. A Dubliner saw himself or his double discussed, projected on the stage.

For Ireland and for the Abbey, it was leap from ‘peasant theatre’ to ‘tenement theatre’.

To appreciate the play in all its ramifications, a certain knowledge of Dublin history, Irish history, is very essential. The play takes place in May 1920 and does not
include factual elements later than those of 1921. The regular troops, the "Tommies", proved neither better nor worse than occupied troops elsewhere. The Auxiliaries or "Auxies" were equally bad. The two behaved in such a way as to bring horror to everyone, at home and abroad. Protected by the Restoration Order (Act of 1920) they were given wide and exceptional powers. They raided, looted, arrested, killed, carried out reprisals, and, in a few cases, destroyed whole town areas or villages. This was a period of savagery. The average Dubliner did not know much about what was going on. He participated only in the looting of shops. This aspect is beautifully portrayed in The Plough and the Stars.

In December 1921, the "Irish Free State" was born. But in June 1922, its forces turned against its Irish opponents, who wanted nothing short of an Independent Republic. Ireland "split from top to bottom" was at war again with itself. The terrorist culture was born.

Ireland was in a state of "chassis" and it is in this context that this play must be seen.

The play takes place in "a room in a tenement in Hilljoy Square", Dublin. The time is between morning and night. "A few hours lapse" between the two Acts. The play is written in two Acts:
Act One

In a tenement room lives, Seumas Shields, a pedlar with vague nationalistic notions. He lets live with him, his friend, Donal Davoren, a self-proclaimed poet. Seumas Shields is a cynic, as it will be shown later. Davoren lives in an imaginary world. Not much is known about his background. With his talks with Seumas Shields, one gathers, Donal Davoren was staying elsewhere and only recently had he come to this tenement. His nationality is unknown. When threatened by the auxiliary, he blurts out he is Irish—a statement made under duress to save his skin. His attempts to compose poetry are shattered by continuous interruptions by outsiders, by himself and by Seumas Shields.

The interruptions begin with a knock by 'the Shadow of a woman' trying to wake up Seumas Shields. This idea is developed to astonishing levels in The Plough and the Stars. The first interrupter is Maguire, another pedlar (or so Seumas thinks) who leaves a bag in their room and rushes to 'Knocksedan', a suburban place. He is subsequently shot dead. [Incidentally, is it a play on words? Knocksedan--knock, sudden (?) as events turned out? The tenement itself is knocked out suddenly and people are killed]. The landlord
It is now informed through stop press edition of the
type-written. Their names are typed on the
minute's and davenport's love and expression only on the
think davenport is.
also subscribe to the myth of a superman--a gun man, they
that donald davenport can do this is unexpected. Probably, they
court of justice can bring them peace. How they got to know
undergo is so unbearable that they feel only the jurisdiction
be given to the republiion court of justice. The torture they
and mr. caldwell, in a complaint to
which does not materialize beyond a kiss. Finally, mrs.
tomy owens a young braggart, interrupts their love
unwittingly creates about himself.
run, a myth donald davenport unwittingly creates about himself.
not propose love to donald davenport, but the gun man on the
with from minute powell. This is a gift for him, minute does
personality, has its small rewards. It brings back love for
that he is, in fact, a gun man. This play acting, new
he is, donald plays the gun man (in shadow) to convince minute
that donald davenport for a gunman on the run. An opportunist that
minute powell, a young girl drops in. She mistakes
visits to collect his rent due.
newspaper that there is an ambush at 'Knocksedan' and that a certain Maguire is killed. Davoren pretends not to know him to prevent being lynched.

With a new identity endowed to him, Donal Davoren asks himself, "What danger can there be in being the shadow of a gunman?" With this question, the First Act is over. The title of the play is taken from this line. The original title of the play was "On the run."

Act Two

It takes place at night. Davoren is already disturbed, mentally and physically. He is unable to write. Sufficient time has elapsed between the First and Second Act.

The two friends are seen together. Seumas hears some mysterious tappings, much as Johnny Boyle sees the ghost of Robbie Tancred in *Juno and the Paycock*. He is disturbed mentally, even afraid of this tapping, a vague premonition of death.

Davoren keeps dreaming of Minnie and wants to write poetry on Ireland, his relationship with Minnie, et al. The two hear a volley of shots.

Mrs. Grigson enters and complains that her husband has
not yet returned. Why should she inform Davoren? Does she also presume that he is a "gun man on the run" and he may be able to play her resurrector? As the city is under curfew, she is anxious about her husband's safety. Mr. Grigson is an "orangeman". Soon Mr. Grigson himself enters. He is a big boast, an enlarged edition of Tommy Owens.

It is now anytime for the raid. Davoren burns the complaint to be given to the I.R.A., and discovers that the bag Maguire left behind contains "Mills bombs". Should the auxiliary discover this, both of them will be shot dead. How to dispose off the bomb before the auxiliary enters their room engages the attention of both Seumas and Davoren.

Minnie enters hurriedly, finds out the cause of Davoren's anxiety and, out of love for him (however senseless that be) takes the bag away to her quarters.

An auxiliary enters, threatens the inmates and when he learns that there is whisky available at Grigson's kitchen, sprints away. Grigson and Seumas betray that they are despicable cowards.

There is commotion outside. It is informed that there is an ambush, and rifle explosions are heard. Even as this goes on, parallelly in the room, the empty, boastful talks of
Seumas and Grigson continue as to how they braved the Auxiliary when the rest of the tenement was gripped with fear. Minnie Powell is shot while she attempts to escape. A paper is found in her breast where her name, and some other name, quite illegible, are written.

Seumas is greatly relieved that the raid is over and he is not caught. Davoren is horror-struck. He realizes the peril that his pretence has brought on an innocent, deluded poor girl, Minnie Powell. He bemoans her loss poetically.

One day in the life of tenement dwellers is over. Not the only day or the last day. Life goes on as usual with the tenement dwellers with the immense threat of a raid. They never change, but would prefer to live in their self-deluded worlds.

The Points of View

There is no well-knit cohesive plot. The play is a context in observation, a study of people in certain situations, what they profess and how they behave coming face to face with situations, the hard realities of life.

It can also be seen as a study of a deluded young girl who thinks "sacrifice" is the *summum bonum* of life and living. Sacrifice for what? For her mistaken notions about a hero, a
gunman?

No matter what happens, the loquacious tenement dwellers are not transformed by this sordid experience.

From the point of view of Seumas Shields, it is a simple episode. He has accommodated his friend, Davoren, to stay with him (or perhaps live with him) in his room. As to what is their depth of friendship there is no clue. From their conversations one can deduce that they are fairly friendly even to crack jokes at mutual expense.

For Seumas all others must do their duties well. He will only lay down the law but will be above the law. He keeps complaining about Ireland and the Irish very often for his faults and his failures.

He does not attend church and the Mass but finds fault with those who fail to got to church. He gets up late but complains that his callers, visitors do not stick to time. He will not pay his rental arrears, but will complain about the landlord. Defaulter by all standards, he finds fault with others who default by accident.

He finds his friend's presence not as a big comfort and criticizes him on all counts. He looks at society s a failing of Kathlin Ni Houlihan, and speaks in disparaging terms about
Minnie Powell and about Maguire who is the real activator. He tries to relate everything that happens as if he were the centre of the Universe. He is egocentric and has an inflated opinion about himself and his bravery. At crucial moments when he must stand up to his claims, he fails, utterly. Is he a representative rebel? Has he allowed Davoren to stay with him more as a cover for his shady activities than as an act of friendship? He overreacts and always wants to prove he is cleverer than Davoren, and something more than a pedlar.

He has neither tears, nor remorse, nor sympathy over a thoughtless sacrifice, the death of Minnie Powell. He wants to protect himself at all costs, cursing Ireland and the Irish all the time.

From the Point of View of Donal Davoren

The play can be seen from the view point of Donal Davoren. Who is he? From where did he come? What does he want to do? How did he get to know Seumas Shields? How does he relate himself to Seumas Shields and to others, his weltanschauung? He is gripped with weltschmerz; obviously he falls into Shelley’s lines in and out of the time.

Donal Davoren is the dry run for a Foxer Dally of Juno and the Paycock. He is a soi-disant poet. He keeps spouting
Shelley more to convince himself and others, mainly Seumas Shields, that he is a poet. He is in search of a place where he can write poetry in perfect harmony with nature. He is a new comer to the tenement and he draws considerable attention of the other tenement dwellers. It is very difficult to pinpoint and say he is an outsider, as Charles Bentham in Juno and the Paycock. Is he Irish at all? Only Seumas knows his antecedents but he does not comment about this except once.

While the other tenement dwellers endow him with rare courage and bravery, only Minnie Powell commits the mistake of taking him for a hero, a gunman 'on the run'. She admires him for this reason, not for what he craves to be—a poet.

Opportunist to the core, Donal accepts his new identity as it brings him the love of a young girl. This is pure gratuit. Donal lacks honesty and plays the new role feeling superior to others. In this aspect, he is no better than his roommate, Seumas Shields.

When there is an ambush, he does not go out; when there is a raid, he is scared to death. Minnie Powell takes away the box containing Mills' explosives, and as a poet he must know, Minnie is not incapable of bungling.
When information is given that Maguire is dead, and a little later Minnie as well, there is no strong remorse. He only quotes poetry, accusing himself of being a poet and a ‘poltroon’. What is he upto? Will he continue to stay to write poetry?

From The Point of view of Minnie Powell

The play can be seen from the point of view of Minnie Powell. She is a young girl who is in love with her country and also extremely sympathetic to the revolutionaries. She has romantic notions about a hero. She equates the heroic, patriotic qualities with a gunman.

She knows Seumas but cannot identify heroic qualities in him. She meets a total stranger and, mistakes him for a gunman. She makes love to him and identifies herself with him on the circuitous reasoning, loving a gunman is loving the country. She wants to prove her dedication to her love. The parcel that Maguire leaves really helps her. When Donal Davoren is shocked to learn that the parcel contains explosives, she is shocked about the consequences.

She exhibits false bravado in volunteering to remove the bag to her apartment on the wrong notion that the ‘auxies’ will not search a young girl’s apartment; and will not bother
a young girl should the bomb be discovered. These are fanciful notions.

Her line of reasoning goes wrong as she is caught and her patriotic shouts and screams bring her only a bullet. Her death is not noble, not a real sacrifice in any acceptable sense. It is plain suicide for foolishly motivated reasons. After all, Donal does not deserve such demonstrations of love. He feels sour when others call on him, but not Minnie. Only Minnie leaves, however ephemeral, an impact on him.

The question is, do the bells toll for Minnie? There is death in the tenement. As in Juno and the Paycock, the younger generation of people are killed, while the older ones continue with their delusions.

As 'Happenings' in a Tenement

The play can also be seen as 'happenings' in a tenement during the troubled times in Ireland as an 'expose' of people and their real nature.

The tenements are haunted by raids. In a room live two men who are not related to each other. One is a self-styled poet, and the other is a pedlar with some patriotic motives.

A young curious girl, Minnie Powell, drops in to get to know about the poet. She mistakes him for a 'gunman on the run' and proposes to love him. They are interrupted by a
loud-mouth, Tommy Owens. He is the Jerry Devine of *Juno and the Paycock* in incubation. Is he an informer?

A landlord, Mulligan, drops in to ask for rent. It is sad no one pays rent to him. Two residents of an adjoining tenement drop in to complain about their neighbours. Inactive as they are, they want some one else to take action for them in redressing their grievances.

Another pedlar, Maguire, very innocuously leaves a bag in the room. The bag reveals the real nature of the tenement dwellers. It unravels the unhappy life of Mrs. Grigson who is worried about her husband, an alcoholic. Curfew times bring in uneasiness. Adolphus Grigson is a big boast, and later presents himself as a brave soldier who was least disturbed by the presence of the auxiliary. He betrays himself as a glib liar. Minnie Powell, a young girl, drops in, makes love, admires the poet, takes the bag away and dies during the raid. For whose sake, and for what purpose, did she make the sacrifice?

The play offers scope to study the psyche of the auxiliaries. Here, an auxiliary enters, threatens people, loots, insults, and where there is free liquor runs for it. There is no knowing if he acts on his own, or under orders.
Nevertheless, his cruelty is unbearable. He is an object of terror, though he may be devoid of food and shelter. He forgets his mission, but rushes for food and liquor. This is amply evidenced in the *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*:

There are two deaths, that of Minnie Powell and Maguire. But death does not make any impact on the tenement dwellers as they are used to it. It is news for them. Is death glorified? In *Juno and the Paycock* Robbie Tancred’s funeral is a community act, but the deaths of Minnie Powell and Maguire have no significance.

Crises show the real character of most of the tenement dwellers who are cowards. The play can be described as a day in the life of the tenement dwellers in Dublin during 1920, when the city was under curfew. The really heroic people die and they go unhonored, unwept and unsung. At the end of the play, except there are two people less in the tenement, life goes on as usual. Grigson talks about his bravery (that he never displayed) and poor Mrs. Grigson gives a running commentary about the goings on. No one dares to go out of the building to see even a dead Minnie Powell. All of them stay
safe inside the tenement, like animals in a cage.

Minnie Powell and Maguire are polar opposites of Seumas Shields and Donal Davoren.

There is a little play within the play. Mrs. Grigson is so worried about her husband who does not show equal concern about his wife. Obviously there is little harmony and less understanding between them. She quite unwillingly enquires if she will get insurance money if a man, in this case, her husband, is shot dead during the curfew. Such is the insecurity that the tenement dwellers suffer. The menfolk drink and waste away their time. Mr. Grigson is the forerunner for Captain Jack Boyle in Juno and the Paycock.

The raid is over and life resumes its normality like calm setting in after a storm.

The play builds tensions of various kinds. Life's beautiful ironies are presented without saying so. Mrs. Henderson and Mr. Gallogher, unable to tolerate the hall turned into playground, file a complaint with Republican Court. They want a hero who can solve all their problems and they come to the wrong man, Donal Davoren, who is himself a day dreamer, half-baked poet and a refugee in search of quietitude.
Maguire is one character who speaks very little. One does not know if he deliberately leaves the bag of bombs more to explode the cowardice of his friend Seumas Shields and his room-mate Donal Davoren.

The helplessness of the landlord, Mulligan, is well portrayed. He is unable to take any positive action to collect his rental dues. Seumas Shields is a representative tenement dweller who is unable to pay rent. The tenement reels under such poverty. Seumas who shows such anger with the landlord is frozen with fear when the auxiliary turns up. He is a non-performer and a bully.

What does Tommy Owens do? He is a peeping Tom. Who does he represent? Is he in love with Minnie Powell? Could he be an informer? He never appears in the Second Act at all. The suspicion gets stronger as he promises Minnie Powell and Donal Davoren that he will not breathe a word about their intimacy.

The entire play is about the happenings in one day. It can be an ‘absurd’ situation where the raid itself is a kind of rigmarole. Raid-in and raid-out. It is not just a solitary raid in a tenement dwelling that shakes the inmates out of their roots. It is a daily occurrence. It is just as
possible that the next day there is another raid, in a neighbouring tenement.

The auxiliary is a symbol of brute, mad authority, and for the complaint of Mrs. Henderson, although not posted, the behaviour of the auxiliary is the answer. There is violence outside the tenement and restlessness and indignity inside. In this arid atmosphere, there exists some humour and faint love. And, life goes on.

Criticism

There are two ways of looking at a play. As a piece of performance and the impact it makes; and, as a study of the text in isolation of the performance. Looked at as a piece of performance, the textual merits may not be so immediately felt, as it is impossible to go back to the lines as the show progresses. The quality of the performance is bound to vary from group to group and place to place, of theatre practitioners who put up the play. It is possible that some of the local references, in the text may be lost in another country; and, also the relevance. But the universal values, if a play has any, will make their own impact. The universal values transcend the geographical limitations, and even language barriers. Plays translated into another language and
performed, do make their impact. Unfortunately there is no scale by which one can uniformly measure the play’s impact. One must rest content with reviews that appear after a production. They are more in the nature of obituary memoirs, a sort of record of a play production.

Some Reviews

The early reviews centered around the impact of the play, and one or two, on the characters: The views were general in nature.

P.S.O’Hegarty, remarked, "It is a play of disillusion for a people who have been disillusioned, and can take their disillusionment without bitterness. ... The dramatist keeps pace with the nation ... The new drama is a drama of disillusionment—but of great promise."(1)

The same source made a sort of mathematical equations, thus: Gunman = a show; auxiliary = fact.

Ivor Brown writes thus: "Not for a very long time has such a good play come our way. It was brilliant, truthful and decisive."(2)

Herbert Farjean strikes a different note. "The Shadow of Gunman reveals the Irish man once again as a creature whose imagination is too vivid to cope with ruthless fact ... Here
is futility in action ... But what a brilliant, bitter human little entertainment this is! How surely it strikes the keynote of reality!"(3)

Joseph Holloway writes: "... it proved a bitingly sarcastic study of many types of characters during the stirring period of our history ... The author ... set himself out to character sketch rather than write a well-knit-together play. What it lacked in dramatic construction, it certainly pulled up in telling dialogue of the most topical and biting kind."(4)

Kenneth Tynan, describing O'Casey as a writer of "English Drama" sums up the play thus: "He [O'Casey] means us to laugh at the plight of two men trapped in a lie, and he expects of his small part players the pace and timing of vaudeville."(5)

Perhaps Michael Billington writing in The Guardian [2 April 1980] has put down the most perceptive observation: "What gives [the play] such force is the way O'Casey's principal characters combine an acute awareness of Ireland with total self-deception. The pacific, Shelley-hooked Donal ruefully realizes there are plenty of Irishmen who can sleep in peace only when they have shot some one ... the real Irish
tragedy is that self-knowledge is purchased only at the expense of other people’s lives ... "(6)

Critical Studies

There has been considerable serious study of the Dublin Trilogy and a variety of opinions have been expressed both about the structure of the play and the characters. Being O’Casey’s first play performed, some opinions have been very condescending. The play as a piece of work submitted to theatre has not been studied enough. The theatrical qualities have their own strong points and weaknesses. Some critics have tried to see the play as a projection of his autobiographical experiences. The work to the exclusion of O’Casey’s predecessors or his own influences, has not been given the in-depth study it deserves. Only two major themes emerge in the entire gamut of criticism--O’Casey’s characters, and his dialogues. And, when it comes to his technique, juxtaposition is diagnosed as his forte as though juxtaposition in itself produces the theatrical impact to move the audience. And this technique looking so elementary, is not so simplistic.

Some select criticism is listed to give a sample of the type of criticism that exists.
the overwhelming sense of breakdown in this play. "Again, "yet another of the plays' personal relationships contribute to the troubles', the sum poverty, the repressed hypocrisy and the caser examine the manifestation of chaos. The Berntsson Schrank looks at the play differently from

rather than a peasant militéen,'

is a strictly modulated characteristic moment in a prologue,'

real consolation and courage. Indeed, O'Casy's Donal Davoren tendency to mistake sham heroes and false patriots for men of characterly ironic to the play of the Western World, the O'Casy's the shadow of a German re-examine a national habit hypocrisy, reckless bravery, and hollow false conceit,'

John W. Conville writes: "As a drama richly

the heresies in her long struggle for freedom.'

Ireland has had a tendency to confuse the foes with

\(7\)"..."so is O'Casy's."

with after the event, and so is O'Casy's."

disturbingly which the historian aims at, he is unusually but records them with that air of detachment and of observation, "O'Casy records things as they were, play, but there is good character drawing and tremendous power. There is little or no dramatic idea to Mr. O'Casy's
characters in The Shadow of a Gunman are terrified as well as terrifying. They may perpetuate chaos, but they rarely initiate it. They exist in a hostile and chaotic world not of their own making and their verbal manoeuvres are, in one sense, only an unsatisfactory adaptation to the world."(10)

Raymond Williams writing on O'Casey, under the Rhetoric and the Reality (1968) observes: "The Shadow of a Gunman is at once a response to this experience of violence and, in its way, a bitter post-script to Synge's 'The Play Boy of the Western World'. The Irish drama ... has come to town."(11)

William Armstrong in History, Autobiography and The Shadow of a Gunman writes "... the personal element in the play is more important than the historical one because it helped determine its form and the interpretation of life which that form was designed to emphasize."(12)

Again, "Minnie Powell represents the most positive set of values in The Shadow of a Gunman. These values emerge chiefly from the interaction between Minnie, Davoren and Shields".(13)

Ronald Ayling makes a different observation: "The topicality of the piece was an especial delight, but it led to a common belief in Dublin and elsewhere, not only that this
aspect was the major reason for its popularity. but that once this ephemerality had passed the play would almost cease to have relevance for theatre goers and critics." (14)

This is countered by another view: "... the most successful and most often revived dramatic works in O’Casey’s native city ..."

"The Abbey, understandably apprehensive about the violent ‘noises off’ during the raid in Act II of The Shadow of a Gunman thought it necessary to print a warning in the play’s programme assuring the lorry sounds and rattle of machine guns were merely harmless stage effects.” Lennox Robinson adds, "if we had not done this, the audience would have fled in terror from the theatre..." (15)

Contemporary critic James Simmons is more precise in looking at this play structurally and as a piece meant to be realized as a production. He is right when he writes, "We sense at once that it is a play about interruptions ... the first act sets up the main characters and their predicament by day, and the second exposes them to dangerous night in which there is a raid by the Auxiliary." (16) Again, "The plot centres on one character, the slum poet, Donal Davoren... it gives Davoren a glamour he does not have as a poet." (17)
Dilating on Davoren he remarks: "He is revealed as a coward, his civilizing notions do not support him in the crisis."(18)

About Minnie he comments: "Minnie is both brave and silly ... Minnie shows sort of heroism as Sidney Carton in A Tale of Two Cities."(19)

There are two areas where James Simmons criticism is most original—O'Casey's impact, and his technique. "O'Casey leaves us in confusion artistic and moral and we are curiously invigorated. This is something new in drama." About the characters who visit Donal Davoren and their behaviour, he concludes and, quite rightly, thus: "The theatrical effect is as simple and brutal as that would not seem out of place in an Abbot and Costello film."(20) Again, "Cogent criticism from a dubious character is a characteristic O'Casean ambivalence ... O'Casey picks on ... makes a dramatic virtue of episodic construction..."(21) Elsewhere, he writes on the sense of confusion: "We are not left with a smile on our faces or a lump in our throats; but a sense of confusion."(22)

Discussing his techniques, he observes, "He is original and stimulating and must be seen as the precursor of the more coherent black comedies."(23)

While there are critics who only speak in terms of the
topicality of the plot and therefore deduce the success, almost ignoring O’Casey’s originality as a playwright, Heinz Kosok alone sees the play from the play’s perspective. “The transformation of the historical material into a plausible dramatic material is the success and art of O’Casey. Much more remarkable is the fact that O’Casey should have shaped these personal experiences in so short a time-span with such high degree of objectivity that they depict a typical situation of insurrection.”(24)

He discovers ‘irony’ as his tool of impartiality.

Heinz Kosok maintains that “the stage directions contain important hints for an understanding of an action.”(25) Again, it is only Heinz Kosok who writes about the visual quality in O’Casey’s plays. He opines that O’Casey “always made full use of the visual dimension of drama.”(26)

Commenting on the structure of the play he declares: “In contrast to later plays where a dramatic idea frequently the dominating element, The Shadow of a Gunman is formed around its characters. They ... determine the structure of the play.”(27)

Summing up the play in all its aspects Heinz Kosok distils the central idea thus: ”All these (Characters) caught
in the web of their illusions have in common that they gain no insight into the discrepancy between their own convictions and reality.”(28)

Dismissing the views that the play is realistic, William A. Armstrong writes, "O’Casey ... like Synge, has the myth maker’s great gift of discerning archetypal characters and situations, of distilling from every element of quintessence of life far superior to the products of any documentary form of realism.”(29)

It will be clear that nearly all criticism has been either on the impact of the play whenever it was performed, or on the text basing its conclusions on the printed word. There has not been any attempt so far to see the play in its own ambience—the Aural and Visual spectrum. It may be recalled that O’Casey had desires to be a painter, and he possessed an inherent value for the aural and visual qualities. And, it is a lovely and artistic combination of these two that makes the play compelling and gives it its force.

O’Casey’s plays are complete blueprints and also producer-and-actor proof. If only his instructions (he instructs in every area, costume, speech, deportment, business, et al) are strictly followed, the play will make
its own assault on the audience’s sensibilities. His descriptions of characters are thumb-nail sketches, passport size photographs, serving as a guide to the performer. He gives instructions about the illumination on the stage and also indicates the positions of the characters on the stage geography. It is an almost story board. He possessed a camera-eye and created the aural score by a combination of dialogues, noises, sounds and music. It is a bombardment on the senses. Like an intelligent composer, he knows his musical silences. And the silences will tear the audience’s heart and mind asunder.

The question is not whether The Shadow of a Gunman has a plot, whether the characters are properly developed and whether the structure is proper and sound. O’Casey has introduced a new pattern of play structure. This differs from the well-made play that the audience was used to. The only point that can be made against O’Casey is the exit and entry of characters. It is almost on traditional lines. Only after an exit of a character is an entry made. The characters have their own motivations and they achieve them in the time span. This is precisely the point. A case in instance is that of Maguire. He enters, speaks a few lines, in fact, he speaks
the least in the play, leaves a bag and excuses himself. No one realizes the explosive nature (theatrically explosive too) of this act and its import till the auxiliary arrives.

There is a vague poetic justice in the death of Maguire even before the contents of the bag are discovered. No one mourns his death, not even Seumas Shields, his pedlar-mate. His death is reported just. It is possible to surmise whether Seumas Shields is also involved in such bomb-planting operations, and that is why perhaps he is superstitious and is apprehensive about the 'knocks', and 'taps' on the door.

**Structure of the Play**

The First Act takes place in the day and the Second Act takes place at night. The First Act is full of visitors and full of interruptions. The first interruption is made by a woman, though seen only in silhouette. As the curtain goes up, one hears the typewriter's sounds; very mild, like the echoes of effete bullets, which towards the night assumes frightening proportions, when only rat-tat of the rifles and bombs are heard. What is rather striking is the almost poetic stage picture O'Casey has created.

One is sound asleep burying his appointments. Davoren makes an appeal through his verse:
Then sorrow, woe and pain lose all their powers. For each is dead, and life is only ours

Ironically enough life is only hours as the auxiliary moves in. It is in the nature of an apostrophe. The typewriting sound stops, the recitation of verse follows and as this is over, a woman's silhouette is seen, to the taps on the window, counter pointed by 'loud knocking at the door'! The key-note of the play is struck by Davoren when he states: "A land mine exploding under the bed is the only thing that would life you out of it."

Quite unwittingly but nonetheless truly, Davoren epitomizes the things to come. "... I'm not going to get much quietness in this house."

If the tenement can be taken as a microcosm of Dublin, this is a prophetic statement. The two start mud-slinging at each other. This can be taken as an undressing of a tenement dweller. There are remarks thrown at religion, politics, and the nation. Surprisingly after the first knock from a woman, she never turns up afterwards. There are only verbal fireworks generated by the inmates. Seumas takes fustian postures.

The entry of Maguire changes the atmosphere. Even
before his entry, Seumas makes an enquiry if Maguire turned up, which means that he was in fact c:;acting him and there is much more to it than what is shown and talked about. The exit of Maguire appears so innocuous that even the audience may not perceive the consequences of this bomb plant. By this act, two lives are lost. One is Maguire's own, and later, the least expected one dies--Minnie Powell, the difference is Maguire did not disclose the contents of the bag. Minnie is fully conscious of her act, and the contents of the bag.

Seumas sums up his and Davoren's character: ... "[the Irish people] they treat a joke as a serious thing and a serious thing as a joke."

With the entry of the landlord, the quarrel is extended to an outsider. Seumas behaves a bully. O'Casey has planted this sequence assuredly deliberately to reveal Seumas' cowardice when the auxiliary appears. This is a piece of structural strategy to reveal more and more shades of Seumas' personality. He is so full of venom, that he takes it out on every body, first on abstract, futile levels with Davoren and on real material levels with Maguire and the landlord. A streak of sadism is evident. O'Casey himself has summed it up beautifully:" [it is] impossible to effect an improvement in such a place." Donal is in a world of dreams, of poetry,
whereas Seumas is in a world of sleep.

A certain intolerance, unpardonable at that, is evident in Seumas. Nothing is common in Seumas and Davoren. Maguire defies Seumas while Davoren is passive and takes all the taunts of Seumas. Maguire does not say he will return to collect the bag.

Seumas draws a self-portrait very much like Captain Jack Boyle later in *Juno and the Paycock*. "I taught Irish six nights a week, when in the Irish Republican Brotherhood I paid me rifle levy like a man, an' when the church refused to have anything to do with James Stephens, I tarred a prayer for the repose of his soul on the steps of the Pro-Cathedral. "O’Casey does this deliberately so as to allow the audience to draw its conclusions when the auxiliary lands. Donal is only a passive observer wallowing in self-pity quoting Shelley. "Alas, pain, pain--ever, for ever." The scene is lively and brings off some humour exposing the helplessness of the landlord.

Donal is gripped with insecurity. He is already a refugee here. To scare him off, Seumas further adds that Mulligan, the landlord, has scented that Donal Davoren is a gunman on the run. This is purely a defensive technique to throw the blame on Donal Davoren. Be that as it may, a doubt
is cast in the minds of the audience if Donal could be a

It is worth noting that the scene with Maguire is the

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gunman and his poetry is after all a mask.

briefest in the play, while the encounter with Mulligan is

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rather unduly long in contrast. The scene provides a clue to

briefest in the play, while the encounter with Mulligan is

understand Seumas' lack of financial integrity and Davoren's

rather unduly long in contrast. The scene provides a clue to

rootlessness is further threatened. The scene is verbally

understand Seumas' lack of financial integrity and Davoren's

explosive.

event.

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Davoren's quest for quietude. Seumas also makes his exit.

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Surprisingly and ironically enough, he quotes poetry as he

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exits. Davoren compares himself to Prometheus but only on a

exits. Davoren compares himself to Prometheus but only on a

bare physical level. He is alone on the stage. 'There is a

bare physical level. He is alone on the stage. 'There is a

gentle knock at the door'. Davoren makes a literary analogy,

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"Another Fury come to plague me now! Another knock, a little

"Another Fury come to plague me now! Another knock, a little

louder."

louder."

Davoren's cowardice is seen in his reaction: "you can

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knock till you're tired." The type of reaction that the

knock till you're tired." The type of reaction that the
tenement dwellers would indulge in is seen as a dry run in

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Davoren.
Minnie Powell lets herself in. She has lost her parents. She enters with the pretext of borrowing milk. The first and youngest woman to enter. On a physical level a well-shaped woman and the first representative of the younger generation of the tenement dwellers. The entire atmosphere slowly changes, becomes romantic and there is an absence of quarrel, of fighting, whatever. Minnie mistakes Donal for a gunman on the run, --a hero; her concept of a hero and worships him. Her mistaken identity results in her needless and meaningless sacrifice for a ‘hero’ who did not exhibit enough courage to open the door when she knocked, mistaking her for an auxiliary. This scene has to be seen along with the Maguire’s. What is planted by Maguire is realized by Minnie, though this is least indicated. And it is ironical in its own, way that these two entries are structured successively. The impact can be fully understood only at the end of the play, as there is no second entry for Maguire, and Minnie’s second entry is done for purposes of resurrecting her hero--a crumbling shadow of a poet, Davoren.

Minnie stays on even after her pretext is over. It may be observed that Davoren addresses her by her first name. Is it a liberty, or do they know each other before? O’Casey does
not make this clear. Some shades of Davoren’s philosophy in life emerge, “No man, Minnie, willingly dies for anything”, and his interpretation of Emmet’s death reveals Brechtian attitudes. “... he died not to deliver Ireland. The British Government killed him to save the British Nation.” And would he die for his country? By his own admission “I don’t know so much about that.”

It may be observed that Minnie keeps committing one mistake after another. First, she calls for Shields, while Davoren is in, later talks of weeds, then about Tommy’s father as Orpheus, about a poet’s role, patriot’s and finally imagining that Davoren has a sweetheart. But her one question is extremely relevant. “Do you never be afraid?” The audience will judge for themselves when the raid takes place. The tender love scene is not allowed to develop. There is no knock on the door, but Tommy Owens enters.

O’Casey is rather cunning in structuring Tommy Owens’ entry right immediately after he is talked about by Minnie. Minnie over builds him. Tommy’s behaviour will betray him. But he has an overbearing attitude. He breaks into a song and promises he will not gossip about their now-formed love. A very ironical situation when Minnie and Davoren would like
their love to be private, Tommy blares it up with a semi patriotic song. Nothing can be more embarrassing to Minnie and Davoren. Tommy brands him a Republican. Only a little earlier has Seumas hinted to Davoren that Tommy Owens also is aware that Davoren is a gunman on the run. How can Davoren accept praise from a man who may turn out to be an informer? But there is clear-cut definite change of atmosphere after Tommy’s entry. He plays a dubious role.

Could Tommy be a future Charlie Bentham in Juno and the Paycock? The need for Tommy Owens’ entry is not established. Why should he meet Seumas, when all the while he proclaims he knows Seumas Shields well? As a piece of theatre strategy, the embarrassing, awkward moments of Donal are the hilarious moments for the audience. In misquoting, he is the dry run for Joxer Daly in Juno and the Paycock. His song even as it sends cold shivers down the spine of Davoren, is the first in the First Act.

Tommy accuses Davoren though indirectly for the suggestion of dinner. "Oh, damn the dinner; who’d think o’ dinner an’Ireland fightin’ to be free--not Tommy Owens, anyhow. It is only the Englishman who’s always thinkin’ of his belly". It is possible that Tommy considers Davoren an
English, an outsider. It is worth nothing that Tommy Owens also does not appear in the Second Act.

Only voices from outside give a turn to the progress of action, as the earlier episode cannot develop any further. "Voices are heard outside, and presently Mrs. Henderson comes into the room, followed by Mr. Gallogher, who, however, lingers at the door, too timid to come any further.

As the Hendersons are in, it is Tommy Owens who does the talking and attempts to dominate the show, on the specious philosophy being close to a gunman is close to justice and security. Davoren's role is underplayed. O'Casey himself draws Tommy's position thus: "Tommy takes out a well-worn notebook and a pencil, stump, and assumes a very important attitude."

The episode makes it clear that the Hendersons find the tenement living hell. Ironically, the letter is read to Davoren who is himself in search of peace, and quietude. The letter is an exercise in comic demonstration. As the letter is comic enough now, it becomes a piece of threat to Seumas when the auxiliary lands. Seumas accuses Davoren of accepting such letters, as the letter may endanger his existence.
O'Casey plays the letter for a double purpose—as a comic catalyst now, and as an unexploded bomb later! Almost everyone exhibits either feigned or real traits of a poet except Davoren who is self-acclaimed poet, but yet to prove his credentials. Davoren is given a new personality, that of a trouble shooter. The entry of the Hendersons confirm and reiterate Minnie Powell's assumptions about Davoren. There is an in-built irony in this sequence. Davoren finds the presence of Tommy Owens and the Hendersons in exactly the same measure as the Hendersons find their neighbours and their children. Only, they live out now in their person to Davoren, what they feel about their neighbours. The comedy that is generated is purely verbal perhaps because Davoren is a poet, a word-minter.

The sequence would peter out but for the fact that the action on the stage is arrested by an off-stage shout 'Stop Press'. "Outside is heard the shriek of a news boy calling 'Stop Press'". O'Casey makes the audience identify itself with the characters on the stage to know the happening off-stage. The technique he has enlarged and exploited, in Juno and Paycock and The Plough and the Stars. The voice gives information: "an ambush out near Knocksedan". The death of Maguire is informed as innocuously, as his entry and exits
were, a little earlier. This is the first salvo of death, coming immediately after the comic rigmarole with the Hendersons. This technique of strong ironic contrast is a favourite sleight of hand of O’Casey. He is to indulge in this in even a stronger way in the two plays that followed—Juno and Paycock and The Plough and the Stars.

Minnie’s innocent question brings out the real character of Davoren.

**Minnie:** Maguire, did you know him, Mr Davoren?

**Davoren:** Yes—no, no, I didn’t know him, no I didn’t know him Minnie.

To another question if Seumas Shields could know him, he replies assertively, “Oh, No, not at all, it couldn’t be.” O’Casey lets the audience to draw its own judgement about Davoren’s capacity to speak truth.

The exit of the Hendersons is natural and Tommy Owens’ exit looks a little forced. On the stage only Minnie and Davoren are left. Minnie wants her name typewritten. It is Davoren who demands the ‘kiss’ from Minnie. “Davoren kisses her and she runs out. Davoren returns thoughtfully to the table”. Now, instead of ruminating over Maguire’s death [whom he disclaimed for no good reason] he mumbles about his new
role - 'A gunman on the run'. Davoren resents other visits but encourages Minnie’s, a little-known girl. He demands her love also. Is he depraved?

The logic that “Minnie is attracted to the idea, and I am attracted to Minnie. And what danger can there be in being the shadow of gunman?” shows a loss of values and that is precisely the play. The curtain falls on this note.

Act Two

The locale has not changed. But the time is ‘night’. It is tenement by night. The stage picture that O’Casey creates is poetic. “Davoren is seated near the fire, to which he has drawn the table. He has a fountain-pen in his hand, and is attracted in thought towards the moon, which is shining in through the windows.” A beautiful naturalistic picture. “The bag left by Maguire is still in the same place.” This is a very important instruction.

There is no logical reason as to why Davoren describes the room ‘thrice accursed?’ And ... “there is an ugliness that can only be destroyed, and this is part of the ugliness.” What is he referring to? His own hypocrisy?

He unconsciously plays the role of Seumas Shields now in blaming everything around. “All beautiful and happiest
things are dead." Again, "Donal, Donal, I fear your last state is worse than your first." Coming immediately after the curtain fall and curtain rise, these sentiments seem out of place. It is a piece of structural imbalance. The curtain falls on Davoren, and as the curtain goes up, one finds only Davoren. What has happened between, except Maguire's death, to warrant these platitudes remains unexplained. True to 'absurd' traditions, the scene begins exactly as the earlier act began. Seumas is seen lying in bed. Is he asleep? There is no clue.

In this episode, O'Casey gives much information so subtly that the audience might well miss. Donal and Seumas are talking at cross-purposes. Donal spouts poetry, while Seumas' thoughts are on Maguire. Could Seumas be an informer resulting in Maguire's death? Is it settling an old score? Could Maguire and Seumas be homosexuals? Later, "Did he think of me when he was goin' to Knocksedan? How can he expect me to have any sympathy with him now?" Again, "The Republicans'll do a lot for him, now." "How am I goin' to get back the things he has belongin' to me, either?" There is some 'black humour' in his observation. "Maguire is sorry now that he didn't come with me instead of going to Knocksedan. He caught
something besides butterflies--two of them he got, one through each lung." Davoren's sympathy for Maguire is rather belated and comes only as a reaction, not sui generis. "The Irish people are very fond of turning a serious thing into a joke; that was a serious affair for poor Maguire." And, yet he denied all knowledge of Maguire when questioned by Minnie. The audience can draw its own conclusions. That is the O'Caseyean stroke, breaking two bones by hitting them against each other.

Contrasted to Act One, there is no ambient noise, as there is 'curfew'. The audience can feel the curfew by mere suggestion, as they are used to it. Seumas and Davoren are shadow boxing as they did in the beginning of Act One. But the quality differs. This time Seumas becomes personal. Davoren has tasted love and is bothered by callers. And one of the callers is no more. Seumas attempts to prove that Davoren's call to poetry is illusive, by quoting profusely, and by a display of his veneer scholarship.

Davoren makes a distinction between poet and people. It is left to the audience to judge if Davoren is a poet at all by his own definition. "...to the poet the end of life is the life that he creates for himself,...the poet views creeds,
customs and necessities through life..."

The audience may not be interested in listening to the discussion and, quite advisedly, O’Casey changes the course of the action by suddenly revealing the superstitious facets of ‘tappings’. He handles this device on a more dramatic scale in Juno and the Peacock when Johnny Boyle claims he sees the ghost of Robbie Tancred. It is possible that O’Casey might have taken the idea from Shakespeare, particularly from Macbeth and Richard III. It must be mentioned that the bag is given a casual reference.

Is it Maguire’s ghost that does the tapping? O’Casey leaves the guessing to the audience. He keeps them also in suspense for a while.

Seumas is uncharitable in his remarks about Minnie Powell. Davoren discovers her as a ‘brave girl’. Does Seumas attempt to destroy Donal’s image of Minnie? Is it likely that it O’Casey’s strategy to point up, Minnie’s sacrifice and martyrdom, by allowing Seumas to deride her. While it is a ploy of Seumas on Donal, it is as much one of O’Casey’s on the audience. Very cunningly. Seumas lets his doubt open that Donal is a gunman. "...she’d give the world and all to be gaddin’ about with a gunman."
The two indulging in a conversation about the change of values in Ireland has no pointed relevance. That gun culture has come to stay is the only point made out apart from mutual mud-slinging, and mental undressing. The course of action changes only by sounds: "A volley of shots is heard in a lane that runs parallel with the wall of the backyard." O’Casey himself comments thus, "Religion and Philosophy are forgotten in the violent fear of nervous quality."

Suddenly both of them invoke God’s name. Though certain strong irony emerges, it will get lost, as the audience, used as they are to gun shots, are likely to focus their attention on the outcome.

For the first time, Seumas lets out the truth that the stable behind the house and ‘peculiar noises at night’, is, in fact, a bomb-manufacturing unit. This is a combined coup of O’Casey and Seumas. Only now and here does the play really take its root. A new dimension to fear is introduced by a knock at the door, enough to let the audience Donal and Seumas hold their breath.

O’Casey demonstrates a classic piece of ‘black comedy’ in the entry of Mrs. Grigson. She has her own anxieties about her alcoholic husband’s non-return when the city is under
curfew; but, her entry at this moment when the two inmates and the audience are gripped in fear of a landing by the auxiliary is an instance of 'comic irony'. Her anxieties and tensions are no less true but pitted with the terror that the duo suffer on a different scale gives rise to laughter. Incidentally, O’Casey portrays a tenement wife as a person caring for her husband’s welfare. It may be noted here that Mrs. Grigson did not appear in the First Act. She can be construed as a continuation of Mrs. Henderson in the First Act from a functional point of view. Another important thing that must be noted is Donal is just a passive observer in this episode.

Adolphus Grigson’s entry is a continuation of the already sadly comic and ironical situation when the inmates are expecting the auxiliary and the consequent violence. But the inmates suffer only peripheral pin pricks by the presence of the Grigsons.

Adolphus Grigson is a future Jack Boyle. The atmosphere changes with his entry. Seumas and Donal are pushed to the background. Adolphus bursts into a song while Davoren is dumb. His role is played in proxy.

O’Casey’s master stroke in play structuring can be seen
in the astounding audio-mix. Adolphus Grigson’s song is drowned by “the sound of a rapidly moving motor is heard, faintly at first, but growing rapidly louder, till it apparently stops suddenly, somewhere very near the house, bringing Grigson’s song to an abrupt conclusion. They are startled, and listen attentively to the throbbing of the engines, which can be plainly heard.” While the audience also are involved upto this point, now there is a petty comedy from the four. “Grigson is considerably sobered, and anxiously keeps his eyes on the door. Seumas sits up in bed and listens anxiously. Davoren, with a shaking hand, lights the candle, and begins to search hurriedly among the books and the papers on the table.”

The whole course of action is given a violent change. This technique is agains used for tragic purposes in Juno and the Paycock. When the Boyle family is preparing itself for a celebration with the gramophone music, it is over-shadowed by the funeral music of Robbie Tancred emanating from the street, adjoining the tenement.

The behaviour of the quartet suddenly changes. They try to find to accuse some one, and Tommy Owens comes in very handy for them. The off-stage threatening commands. “Halt,
Halt, halt!' to the background of shots brings in fear at the doorstep.

Mrs. Grigson exits, the two fight among themselves over the letter that Donal accepted in the morning. The audience’s interest is drawn to the bag left by Maguire. Actually the suggestion comes from Seumas. He (like future Jack Boyle in Juno and the Peacock) wants Seumas to open the bag. O’Casey prepares the audience for the shock. He describes the action as follows “Davoren goes over to the bag, puts it on the table, opens it, and jumps back, his face pale and limbs trembling.” The scream of Davoren is the play “My God! it’s full of bombs, Mills bombs!”

The mutual recrimination betrays the lack of mutual trust. And, that is the play. Who can be trusted and who works for whom? Seumas’ defensive utterances, “Did I know he was a gunman; did I know he was a gunman; did I know he was a gunman?” confirms his knowledge and, perhaps, complicity! Seumas repeats a single phrase, "Just a moment..." thrice. This is the crux of the play. Davoren clinches the argument by a direct onslaught “What’s...the use of trying to tell damn lies!” That is a revelation for him, and for the audience.

O’Casey does not display his verbal power. The dialogues are short and to the point. When cornered, Seumas
sheds his pretensions and comes only with repetitive broken sentences. Seumas raises his voice; and Minnie Powell enters.

"Minnie Powell rushes into the room. She is only partly dressed and has thrown a shawl over her shoulders. She is in a state of intense excitement." She barges in calling for Davoren while in the First Act, she calls for Seumas. Now, she addresses Davoren directly. Minnie's care for the tenement people is revealed by her admission, "I do be on the watch every night; have you anything? If you have..." This act and this line confirms that Minnie has indeed taken Davoren for a gunman on the run.

O'Casey does not allow any time for a reply from Davoren. What follows is sound. "There is heard at the street door a violent and continuous knocking, followed by the crash of glass and the beating of the door with rifle-butts."

Again by off-stage sounds, O'Casey works directly on the sensibilities of the audience, who are in no better position psychologically than Donal and Seumas.

Minnie identifying and placing the movement of the auxiliaries increases the fear and intention in Davoren and Seumas on the one hand and in the audience on the other.
"There they are, there they are, there they are!"

Seen from the point of view of Seumas and Donal, "There they are" can as well mean Maguire's bag containing the bombs. O'Casey's stage instructions gives room for this interpretation. "Davoren reclines almost fainting on the bed; Seumas sits up in an attitude of agonized prayerfulness; Minnie alone retains her presence of mind. When she sees their panic she becomes calm, though her words are rapidly spoken, and her actions are performed with decisive celerity."

She takes the centre stage and asks the cowards commandingly: "What is it? What have you got? Where are they?" These short commands are more powerful than the shots from outside. O'Casey lets the audience judge Seumas and his views on Minnie Powell. It is Davoren who answers: "Bombs, bombs, bombs! my God! in the bag in the table there; we're done, we're done!" Minnie now knows who is the real Donal Davoren.

Minnie takes away the bag and bids good-bye to Donal. "Good bye Donal." She virtually ignores Seumas. "She glances lovingly at Donal--who's only semi-conscious--as she rushes out with the bag." This is O'Casey's master stroke in putting Seumas, a loud-mouth, in his place.
In this brief sequence, O’Casey takes to the technique of repeating the dialogues, crisp and short as they are, thrice.

“Did I know he was a gunman?”

“Just a moment”

“There they are...”

“Bombs”

It is Seumas who makes a distinction between ‘Tommies’ and the ‘Tans’.

The play is almost over now. O’Casey wants to portray, nay present an auxiliary to the audience. Now, the characters on the stage are silent, gripped as they are with fear. The audience are made to involve only in off-stage sounds and noises. “The street door is broken open and heavy steps are heard in the hall, punctuated with shouts of ‘old the lighter’ ere, ‘Put ‘em up’ -- etc. An auxiliary open the door of the room and enters, revolver in one hand and electric torch in the other. His uniform is black, and he wears a black beret.”

The presence of the auxiliary makes the audience feel endangered. Seumas does not behave any differently than earlier. The auxiliary puts the most relevant question to Davoren. “You’re not an Irishman, are you?” Davoren’s reply
does not positively affirm he is Irish. "I-I-I was born in Ireland". Seumas' mortal fright of the gun, as the auxiliary totes, displays, the gun, and his appeal "The gun; it-it-it might go off" is theatrically portrayed.

Another classic piece of 'black comedy' is in the entry of Mrs. Grigson complaining about the inhuman and callous behaviour of the auxiliary in her apartment. Even as the audience abhor such terrorizing behaviour, her manner of informing the incident is replete with faint, misplaced humour. The humour takes real proportions when the auxiliary hears the word whisky, and rushes out.

This pattern is repeated with minor variations in The Plough and the Stars towards the end of the play. What an average soldier, or an auxiliary wants is free food and freer liquor at the expense of the tenement dwellers. This is a piece of sad humour, when terror-generated, peters out to a search for liquor and food.

It is interesting to note that the auxiliary shoots out all the questions only to Seumas, which may give a clue that Seumas might be under the suspect list, and a noted person by the Tans and the Blacks.
The auxiliaries have no respect for religion or humanity. Mrs. Grigson’s mimicked account of her husband’s trembling behaviour is humorous enough, exposing the cowardice of men.

While Mrs. Grigson relates the raid, the two are concerned about the prospect of Minnie being caught and her subsequent possible betrayal. Minnie is still their obsession. Bomb and Minnie are much more a living threat than the bomb in their room. The fear is more on the instability of Minnie at the hands of the auxiliaries. This is a new dimension in fear.

Seumas confesses that he would let others suffer for him, if he could escape the clutches of authorities. Davoren uses a plural subject. "We’re a pair of pitiable cowards to let poor Minnie suffer when we know that we and not she are to blame."

Mrs. Grigson "is standing at the door, looking out into the hall" while the two are confined to the room. They find her presence a nuisance. The action is almost static and it is activated only by off-stage sounds, actions. The audience also are at the mercy of some one, an outsider giving them information about the details of the raid. This is how O’Casey breaks the monotony. "...the various sounds of a raid --
orders, the tramping of heavy feet, the pulling about of furniture, etc., -- are heard. Now a more definite and sustained commotion is apparent. Loud and angry commands of "go on", "get out and get into the lorry", are heard, mingled with a girl's voice--it is Minnie's -- shouting bravely, but a little hysterically, "up the Republic."

There is no distinction between the audience and those on the stage. It disintegrates. Mrs.Grigson's action is that of humanity's: She runs out screaming. "What in the name of God can have happened?" O'Casey does not allow the stage to be dead, and, therefore, he makes Mrs.Grigson run in and inform, the audience of the happenings. Throughout this small sequence, Seumas keeps on expressing his anxiety if Minnie would betray him. The entry of Grigson brings in relief. Grigson promptly sends Mrs.Grigson out.

Grigson's antics about his heroism is yet one more instance when O'Casey reveals the cowardice of the male Dubliner. This monologue, in particular, is to be a model for Jack Boyle, later, in Juno and the Paycock. Seumas also joining him in his facetious encounters falls low in the eye of the audience.

O'Casey does not allow the two to keep bragging about
their valour. He brings sounds to turn the pace of the play.

"Explosions of two bursting bombs are heard on the street outside the house, followed by fierce and rapid revolver fire. People are heard rushing into the hall, and there is general clamour and confusion. Seumas and Davoren cower down in the room. Grigson, after a few moments' hesitation, frankly rushes out of the room to what he conceives to be the safer asylum of the kitchen. A hell follows, punctured by an odd rifle-shot; then comes a peculiar and ominous stillness, broken in a few moments by the sounds of voices, and movements. Questions are heard being asked: 'Who was it was killed? 'Where was she shot?' which are answered by: 'Minnie Powell', "she went to jump off the lorry an' she was shot; 'she's not dead, is she?'

They say she's dead--shot through the Buzzom!"

O'Casey has involved the audience into listening, Minnie's death, so that the comments of Seumas sound callous and ridiculous enough.

O'Casey gives out the audience's opinion of these two people by a statement from Davoren: "...we're pair of dastardly cowards to have let her do what she did."

"Mrs.Grigson enters. She is excited and semi hysterical, and sincerely affected by the tragic occurrence."
She narrates Minnie’s bravery. In this instance, Mrs. Grigson is a prototype of Bessie Burgess in *The Plough and the Stars*.

O’Casey brings the curtain down on two confessions, one by Donal, "...Donal Davoren, poet and poltroon, poltroon and poet"; and another by Seumas: "(solemnly) I knew something’d come of the tapping on the Wall!" He lets Seumas cling to his superstition.

O’Casey lays bare two pretenders. One pretends to be a poet, and another a patriot. Both are devoid of humanism. There are two known deaths. Maguire’s and Minnie’s.

O’Casey strikes a new dramatic form without loss of dramatic quality. A will is the fulcrum in *Juno and the Paycock*, and a ‘bag’ is the lever of action in *The Shadow of Gunman*. Without a formal plot, O’Casey is able to project true to life characters and the changing atmosphere in a Dublin’s tenement during the curfew. Wherever there is terrorism, the play is bound to be successful and meaningful.

**An Assessment of the Play**

It is not surprising that *The Shadow of a Gunman* brought a new lease of life to the Abbey Theatre. The merit lies not merely in the immediacy and the topicality of the subject, but in the newness of the approach in the writing of
a play. No doubt O'Casey was the first to bring tenement, 'tenement life' and 'tenement dwellers' into his plays. It was radically different from the 'present theatre' of Synge.

The play defies to be dated and is still in the repertory of major theatres in the world, because it contains universal values. That accepting a certain 'hero-personality' that one does not possess brings in havoc all around seems to be the objective. An innocuous character, (who is the real gunman on the run) leaves a bagful of bombs, and an innocuous young girl with wrong notions of bravery, and sacrifice removes the bag away and is killed. What is the point of all this killing? No one seems to change.

Wherever there is 'terrorism' the play will be relevant and meaningful. That way O'Casey will continue to exert theatrical interest with his trilogy.
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