PREFACE

As a post-graduate student when I came across the plays of Sean O’Casey and Clifford Odets, the Irish and American playwrights what impressed me much was their concern for the suffering common man. Even while depicting the miserably devastating life of people caught in unending conflicts, they have their humanity. In 1983, when I approached Dr. Srinivasan, then Professor of English, University College, Kerala University, it was he who suggested me to study the plays of Clifford Odets. Though enthused by the life and works of the American playwright, I could not locate myself. Later when in search of a career I went to Ranchi and where the late Dr. M. D. Raj, Department of English, Jamshedpur Co-operative College, Ranchi University, persuaded me to study Odets with special reference to the Depression influence on his plays.

It was Professor P. Marudanayam, my teacher during post-graduation and M. Phil at Madurai Kamaraj University who initiated me into the world of Sean O’Casey and also to find out how similar the backgrounds portrayal and attitude to life of these playwrights look. I was wonder-stuck to see how realistically and entertainingly
these two dramatists unravel the tragi-comic nature of the unknown and unsung inhabitants of the slums of Dublin and the underside of New York. Again, it was Dr. Marudanayagam who introduced me to Professor P. Balaswamy, my guide and research supervisor when I evinced interest to pursue research at Pondicherry University after joining as a member of the teaching faculty in the Department of English, St. Jude's College, Thoothoor.

Dr. Balaswamy further led me to the world of John Steinbeck, the American novelist and the non-teleologically thinking attitude to life as envisaged in his work, the *Log from the Sea of Cortez*. Odets and Steinbeck have been products of the Depression who happened to live under the inhuman conditions of the time and there by experienced life during that traumatic period. O'Casey being the product of the tenement with rich experience of life as a manual labourer is depicting on stage the follies, idiosyncrasies and eccentricities of the very people whom he lived with. Destined to live in such dehumanising environments and sharing common cause with the very people whose life they depict, it is nothing strange that they share similar vision of life, which Steinbeck calls as the non-teleological attitude.
Having pursued my research in right earnest and after going through the text and critical works, it was felt that an exhaustive study comparing O'Casey and Odets was not done with special reference to the attitude to life shown in their early works. Hence I thought of doing something tangible in this area.

With profound sense of gratitude I recall the services rendered to me by many in the process of my completing successfully the Ph.D. thesis.

Dr.P.Balaswamy, Professor and Head, Department of English, who suggested this title, guided and oversaw this study with extraordinary patience, unfailing courtesy and considerate wisdom. In his disinterested generosity and humane care, he was an exemplary figure and source of inspiration—both as man and scholar. My debt to him is immeasurable.

I owe my debt of gratitude in abundant measure to Dr.P.Marudanayagam, formerly Professor and Head of the Department of English, Pondicherry University. But for his constant encouragement, I would not have joined under Professor P.Balaswamy and pursued my research work. His positive approach to me, timely suggestions, scholarly insight and ideas have sustained my research fervour.
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(R. Wilson)