FOUR MAJOR THEMES IN THE PLAYS
OF PAUL VINCENT CARROLL

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

1965
STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the thematic designs in the plays of Paul Vincent Carroll, primarily the following: The White Steed, Things That Are Caesar's, The Old Foolishness, Shadow and Substance, The Wise Have Not Spoken, The Wayward Saint, and The Secret Kindred. I have examined the plays critically for the following themes: 1) the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity, 2) anti-clericalism, 3) the land, and 4) the plea for the artist.

None of these themes is new to Irish writing. The theme of the mixture of paganism and Christianity is found in the plays of Yeats, Synge, Moore, and Martyn. Carroll develops it in The Old Foolishness, The White Steed, and Shadow and Substance. Anti-clericalism can be found in the plays of O'Casey and Synge. Carroll in The White Steed and Shadow and Substance gives us several fine portraits of Catholic priests. Carroll satirizes the clergy in the same vein as Dean Swift, for their formalism. The third theme, the land, can be found in the plays of Padraic Colum, and T. C. Murray, and in Carroll's plays The Things That Are Caesar's and The Wise Have Not Spoken. The plea for the artist can be seen in Carroll's play The Secret Kindred.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Why is it important to do a critical study of a relatively neglected contemporary Irish playwright like Paul Vincent Carroll?

I think that the best answer to this question, if one can take the liberty of borrowing the dictum of a nineteenth century critic, is given by Matthew Arnold in Essays in Criticism:

Why should we ever treat of any dead authors but the famous ones? Mainly for this reason: because, from these famous personages, home or foreign, whom we all know so well, and of whom so much has been said, the amount of stimulus which they contain for us has been in a great measure disengaged; people have formed their opinion about them, and do not readily change it. One may write of them afresh, combat received opinions about them, even interest one's readers in so doing; but the interest one's readers receive has to do, in general, rather with the treatment than with the subject; they are susceptible of a lively impression rather of course of the discussion itself,—its turns, vivacity, and novelty,—than of the genius of the author who is the occasion of it. And yet what is really precious and inspiring, in all this we get from literature, except this sense of an immediate contact with genius itself, and the stimulus towards what is true and excellent which we derive from it? Now in literature, besides the eminent men of genius who have had their deserts in the way of fame, besides the eminent men of ability who have often had far more than their deserts in the way of fame, there are a certain number of personages who have been real men of genius,—by which I mean, that they have had a genuine gift for what is true and excellent, and are therefore capable of emitting a life-giving stimulus,—but who, for some reason or other, in most cases for very valid reasons, have remained obscure, nay, beyond a narrow circle of their own country, unknown. It is salutary from time to time to come across a genius of this kind, and to extract his honey. Often he has more of it for us, as I have already said, than greater men; for, though it is by no means true that from what is new to us there is most to be
learnt, it is yet indisputably true that from what is new
to us we in general learn most.¹

Much is to be learned from a study of the works of Carroll.
Needless to say, such a study can not be definitive, as it would be
presumptuous for any writer to attempt a final statement about a life
and an art which are constantly and creatively evolving. But beyond
a few lectures, several scattered chapters in books, and, of course,
press reviews, little up to this point has been written on Carroll's
work, and therefore, it is my hope that this present study will en-
gender subsequent scholarly research.

It will be my intention, in the course of this study, to trace
and evaluate certain themes which seem to be evident in Carroll's
major works, namely: 1) the amalgamation of paganism and Christi-
anity, 2) anti-clericalism, 3) the land, and 4) the plea for the
artist. There can be no doubt that these themes give Carroll's plays
their permanent worth, for they endow them with a certain particular
and highly individualistic character. On the other hand, the question
may be asked whether or not these themes are fragmentary or whether
they do present a unified picture. The answer to this question can be
found by considering the final resolution of the plays. Carroll's
general aim as a playwright is to portray Irish culture satirically,
with an eye towards proposing a more advanced culture for Ireland. To
accomplish this end, he chooses what he considers to be the basic real-
ities of Irish life, that is, the amalgamation of paganism and Christi-
anity, anti-clericalism, and the land. These three themes are, then,

¹. Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism: First and Second
related so as to form a composite of Irish Life and tradition. The final theme, the plea for the artist, supplies the context within which Carroll, the seer, can both criticize and offer solutions. However, before these themes can be considered in detail a brief history of the Abbey Theatre is necessary.

Examining the early history of the Abbey Theatre, therefore, one finds the spirit of nationalism dominating much of Irish life in the opening years of this century. The consciousness of nationality permeates the first plays presented at the Abbey Theatre, Edward Martyn's two plays, *Heather Field* and *Maeve*, and George Moore's *The Bending of the Bough*. The Work of Yeats, who founded the Abbey Theatre, reflects this same spirit, but his brand of nationalism can best be understood in terms of Celtic myths, highlighted by a cycle of plays on the legendary Irish hero called Cuchulain.

This spirit of nationalism seems to take on agrarian overtones after the split over theater policies which resulted in a victory for Yeats and Lady Gregory and an eclipse of Martyn and Moore. This agrarian spirit is best reflected in the work of folk dramatists like Lady Gregory, John Millington Synge, Padraic Colum, George Fitzmaurice, and T. C. Murray. All of these playwrights drew from the riches of Irish history and folk legends, and each in his own way contributed immensely to the evolutionary process of the Irish theater. Lady

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Gregory's Irish folk-history plays, The Canavans and The White Cockade, enriched the Irish stage. Synge's legacy to the theater was in the form of the creation of mood and beautiful language, his Riders to the Sea being the classic example. Padraic Colum bequeathed to Ireland its first realistic pictures of ordinary rural life in his play, The Land, and also developed the plea for the artist theme which strongly influenced Carroll's unpublished play, The Secret Kindred. T. C. Murray drew directly from this same peasant life as a background for many of his plays. George Fitzmaurice also contributed to Irish drama by extending the theme of the plea for the artist and by developing further the theme of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity, which was first elaborated by Yeats in his Cuchulain plays.

In 1911, St. John Ervine was the first to write a play centering on the city and the working class. The years immediately preceding the 1916 Uprising and the 1922 Civil War were years of increasing nationalism, but they were not particularly fruitful years for polemic theater. Indeed, if it were not for the one-act farces of Brinsley MacNamara and Lennox Robinson, the Abbey Theatre might have died out completely in Ireland.4

Synge had ceased to excite people, and Yeats thinned the stalls down to a few ecstatic readers of poetry, most of whom came in on their cards.5

After Robinson, George Shiels took up the homely tale in such plays as

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Professor Tim and The New Gossoon, and gave a very realistic picture of the countryside in Ireland.

In the 1920's, Sean O'Casey and Denis Johnston found the expressionistic mode currently popular in America and on the Continent ideally suited to their themes but this trend did not last long in Ireland, because a new group represented by Teresa Deevy, Louis D'Alton, and Paul Vincent Carroll continued themes and modes which definitely pre-date those in O'Casey's and Johnston's plays.

The barometer of a playwright's success is always the public; and Carroll's plays have a more universal appeal than those of his contemporaries Deevy and D'Alton, which are rather parochial in scope and meaning. Unlike theirs, Carroll's plays were produced not only in his native Ireland but in virtually every country in Western Europe.

Carroll is one of the most significant Irish playwrights of the 1930's and 1940's, not only because his plays have a universal impact and meaning far beyond the shores of Ireland, but also because Carroll has given the stage several memorable portraits of priests.

Carroll was born in 1900 in a small seaside village near Dundalk in County Louth, Ireland. His mother, née Kitty Sandes, was of a family that came from Scotland as planters in the middle of the 18th century. His father, Michael Carroll, was the local schoolmaster during the week and on Saturdays was engaged by the neighboring farmers to

6. He was born almost in the same year that the Abbey Theatre opened. The Abbey Theatre was founded on January 16, 1899.
measure, with rod and chain, small lots of land which came up for auction.7

Carroll was educated by his father until about the age of thirteen, after which he went to St. Mary's College in Dundalk where in his own words: "I played ducks and drakes with the immensities of literature."8 In 1916, he enrolled in St. Patrick's Training College in Dublin where "he trained to become a teacher, learned to drink a bottle of Guinness without spluttering, and haunted the pit of the Abbey Theatre."9

During his first year at school, he witnessed first hand the chaos of the 1916 declaration of the Irish Republic and saw "the stern realization of these Abbey stage dreams when Pearse seized the G.P.O. at bayonet point and a hail of lead and the flutterings of the tri-color announced the Irish Republic."10 He saw the city bubbling with suspicion, hatred, and fear, and knew that similar elements in the past had given his literary predecessors the outlook and expressiveness which inspired them as writers.

I remained in Dublin until 1920, through these tense dramatic days, saw the lines of tanks daily crawling down O'Connell Street, saw sharp-shooting and quick sudden deaths on the streets; experienced being held up on tram-cars and searched at the gun point; lived under curfew and martial law; saw

7. The source of this information is a conversation with Paul Vincent Carroll in his home in Bromley, England, 1964.


10. Ibid.
scores of Black and Tans in cars, all roaring drunk, rumbling down the Dublin streets, letting off their rifles in the air.\footnote{Ibid.}

The whole dramatic renaissance of Ireland, Carroll feels, was born out of this turmoil. "Every good drama is born out of internal conflicts going on in the country. It keeps the nation alive and kicking; gives national consciousness."\footnote{Paul Vincent Carroll, unpublished personal scrapbook, miscellaneous and unidentified items. I wish to express my appreciation to Mr. Carroll for letting me see this record and for helpful information used throughout this study.} The war had, however, only an indirect effect on Carroll as a playwright, for one does not find any mention of his war experiences in his dramas as one does, for instance, in the dramas of O'Casey.\footnote{Carroll has written one drama about war experiences, The Strings, My Lord, Are False, but it concerns the second World War.}

In 1920, Carroll returned to Dundalk to take up the teaching position which his father had held for years, but was refused the post because the local parish priest wanted one of his relatives for the job.\footnote{Carroll's play, Shadow and Substance, has many autobiographical inferences concerning this situation.}

In 1920, I returned to my home town. I found the family grocers, the publicans and the clergy richer than ever as a result of the war. There was no learning or culture of any kind in the town. No one had ever heard of the Abbey Theatre or of the Irish dramatic or literary revival. They fed the kiddies on the bathos of mid-Victorians and hid from them the works of the poets and writers who were putting Ireland on the international map.\footnote{"The Substance of Paul Vincent Carroll," \textit{New York Times}, January 30, 1938, Sect. 10, p. 1.}
After the local pastor refused to hire him, a religious brother offered him a teaching post at two pounds a week\(^{16}\) even though three pounds was the recognized minimum. "I believe the little fat dumpling thought I was a heretic because I was impolite in my refusal."

After this episode, his father, whose life had been one continuous battle with successive parish priests, advised him to go abroad, and so Carroll sailed for Glasgow, Scotland, on a cattle boat, and began a career as a school teacher in the slums at a salary which would amount to nine pounds a week. It was in Glasgow that he once again became inspired by literature.

Here I began to re-educate myself. I re-discovered the Grecians and Shakespeare. Then I stumbled on the Romanticists, and I quoted Byron, Shelley and Keats in every pub in Glasgow till one night I blundered into the Augustan period of literature and Swift so shocked and fascinated me that to this day his influence is one of the most potent factors in my writing, and is stronger in me than that of any other great writer except Thomas Hardy whom I consider the last link of British literature with the Grecians. Yeats, my first love in poetry, remains with me today more strongly than ever, and is challenged only by George W. Russell ("A.E."), that most holy and saintly of all pagans\(^{18}\).

When Carroll was 23, he married Helena Reilly, a dressmaker, by whom he had three daughters, Elizabeth, Kathleen, and Ella. The youngest, Ella, became an actress and has starred in two of her father's plays and has recently been engaged in a major Broadway singing role in the hit musical, Oliver.

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16. Around 1920, two pounds would be worth eight American dollars.


In the late twenties, Carroll began writing plays and sending them to the Abbey Theatre.

The first ray of light broke in 1931 when Lennox Robinson said a play of mine called The Watched Pot had crude power and invited me to Dublin to see it in the little testing theatre attached to the Abbey. In 1932, I shared the Abbey Prize with Teresa Deevy for Things That Are Caesar's, which scored bravely enough in Dublin, London, and at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York.19

About Christmas time, 1936, Carroll submitted Shadow and Substance to the Abbey Theatre. In January, 1937, the Abbey Theatre opened with the play, and even though it lost money it still drew tremendous critical praise. Eddie Dowling produced Shadow and Substance in New York City late in 1937 and when the play opened it drew immediate praise from all the critics. Everyone wanted to know who Carroll was, and so the New York Press assigned a correspondent in Glasgow to interview him. A half a day later the newsman cabled back: "No one here knows Carroll. Will keep looking."20 And back in New York professors of drama at the various universities were anxious because they knew nothing about the man whom the critics had hailed as one of the finest dramatists of the generation. Eventually, an interview came by cable from Glasgow. It revealed Carroll as a $37.50 a week teacher of ten-year old boys in one of Glasgow's slums; it revealed likewise that he lived with his wife and three children in a meager cubbyhole of a flat which looked out on dismal tenements; and it also revealed that he knew little of the tremendous

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20. Carroll, unpublished personal scrapbook, miscellaneous and unidentified items.
success his play had been during the first week of its opening in New York. When he received his first weekly one thousand dollar royalty check from Eddie Dowling, the producer, Carroll's first impulse was to "buy the pub at the corner." The play ran for nearly a year on Broadway and received the Casement Award of the Irish Academy of Letters and the American Foreign Award for 1937-38.

In 1938, The White Steed, a violently anti-clerical play, was refused production at the Abbey Theatre, though it shortly had a successful and highly acclaimed run in New York. From his home in Glasgow, Carroll launched a vigorous attack on the directors of the Abbey Theatre and challenged them for their rejection of the play.

Having cited the opinions of four of the leading American critics on The White Steed, Paul Carroll observed: "These great leaders of a living and vital theatre in New York may be a foursome of raving, stupid, drveling morons, and the self-appointed magistrates of the arts on the Abbey Theatre Board, some of whom hate the living theatre and fear its full and true interpretative expression, may be infallible, impeccable and inexorable. But with dogged unreasonableness, I don't believe it." "Shortly before his death," declared Paul Carroll, "Dr. Yeats read The White Steed, and dealt with it in a letter to the Abbey board. The contents of this letter were denied to me, except for one small adverse line that seems sadistically to have been taken from its context, with the apparent intention of hurting me. Yet its full contents are known to me and I am well aware it contained generous praise from Dr. Yeats. As a test I here and now challenge the Abbey Theatre board, without recourse to the niceties of administration, to print that letter in full in the Dublin press."

21. Ibid.
22. The citations for both of these awards hang in Carroll's study in his home at Bromley, England.
Just as the New York critics had unanimously praised *Shadow and Substance* and *The White Steed*, so too did they come out in unison in their condemnation of *Kindred* in 1939. It ran for only two weeks, but the critics continued to discuss the play even after it closed. Typical of the scorn for the theme and content of *Kindred* was Brooks Atkinson's observation.

Frankly, this bewildered department does not know what Mr. Carroll is driving at. He has strange, mystical ideas about women that complicate simple situations and generate wild words. If he is offering the strolling violin-player as a prophet in a wicked world, all what the rest of us can do is to hope to be spared of prophets or salvationists on this side of Heaven. Mr. Carroll's portrait of the covetous little world of shop-keepers and politicians is forbidding enough. But it is infinitely more livable than the smug, belligerent, intolerant cosmos of the artist. Mr. Carroll is tilting ferociously at all the windmills in sight. Virtue could hardly be more odious or complex than this fulmination in praise of it.24

The play received long reviews by scores of critics. George Jean Nathan, Carroll's friend, who had an advance reading of the manuscript six months before the play was produced, warned Carroll not to allow it to be produced in New York in the autumn of 1939, and when his warning wasn't heeded, Nathan came out with a two column article listing five points on which the play should be condemned.

Evidently, Carroll wrote several versions of *Kindred* because copies of the play now bear the title *The Secret Kindred* and vary considerably as far as text is concerned. This, at least, is the opinion of the General Business Manager of the Lincoln Center who wrote the present author on February 3, 1965:

24. "Mr. Carroll's 'Kindred'," *New York Times*, October 8, 1939, Sect. 9, p. 3.
Did you know that there are several versions of Kindred? The version produced by the Abbey Theatre differs markedly from that produced in America. Can it be that there is still another version I know nothing about? This is the first time I have ever heard the play referred to as The Secret Kindred. Incidentally, Kindred was indeed a failure, but it ran for two weeks... not 7 or 8 days as Paul remembers it.25

Not only Kindred, but Carroll's The Old Foolishness produced in New York in 1940 had a very short run.26 In fact, The Old Foolishness opened in December, 1940, and lasted only three performances. The play tells the story of a dour young farmer getting engaged to another farmer's daughter all in good order before priest and family witnesses, much as he would add a new heifer to his stock. Then, the young farmer breaks with the sensible girl to whom he has been matched, and falls in love with a girl who has been the mistress of his gunman brother. In the end, the mistress goes back to the gunman brother, and leaves the unfortunate young farmer to cope with the results of his emotional sideslip.

Two years later, in 1942, Carroll wrote The Strings. My Lord, Are False, a play about the Clydeside "blitz." Despite the fact that the play had only a twelve day run in New York, it still holds the attendance record of any play produced in Dublin to date.27


27. This fact was told to me in a conversation with Carroll in the fall of 1964.
Carroll's next play, *The Wise Have Not Spoken* (1944), sets the scene of action in an Irish village where the plot unfolds the conflict between two brothers, the one a disabled soldier of the Spanish War, who burns to set right Ireland's and by implication all the world's wrongs; the other a realist who rejects the gospel of redress by force. In effect, the play appears to be a topical variation on Dostoievsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

With *The Devil Came From Dublin*, Carroll turned for the first time from serious drama to farce. The play tells the amusing story of a border village where everybody lives on smuggling; they are suddenly faced with the visitation of a new District Justice who comes down from Dublin breathing moral righteousness. The play was first titled *The Chuckeyhead Story* (1950).

Like *The Strings, My Lord, Are False*, the action of *Green Cars Go East* (1951), is set in the City of Glasgow, Scotland. The play presents the struggle of Mary Lewis, a young school teacher, to put her brother through the University and to raise her family out of the slums.

The last completely new drama to come from the pen of Carroll is *The Wayward Saint*, which was written in 1955. The play deals with the life of the Irish clergy, but in a wholly different manner than *Shadow and Substance* and *The White Steed*. In the play, Carroll presents a very human Canon who loves birds and other animals as did Saint Francis and Saint Jerome. The old Canon performs what are taken for miracles with embarrassing consequences for his superior, the Bishop, who transfers him to a remote parish where he will cause no more trouble. However, a stranger, who is really an emissary of the devil, arrives at the Canon's
parish and attempts to corrupt the Canon by convincing him that he has some supernatinal power because of his holiness. A circus lion (symbolizing the spirit of Christ) resolves the whole situation by appearing on the scene and consuming the devil.

Practically all of Carroll's plays since The White Steed which were produced in New York have been production failures there, but none of these disappointments seemsto have stifled Carroll's lively personality. He has the eloquence of the literate of his countrymen and his diminutive physique passes into a personality which is both forceful and occasionally poetic. Paul Vincent Carroll today is a small man with a leprechaun air, heavy brogue, and what hair he has is gray. He has a wide humorous mouth which he twists into all sorts of dry smiles and it is often difficult to tell whether the wrinkles beside his chameleonic Irish eyes (which change from blue to green), are smiling wrinkles or not. When he is interested in your questions his forehead gathers as many wrinkles as an Irish harp, and when he isn't, he becomes a bland looking little man who seems to be too wise to deceive either himself or you. Carroll can become really forceful about things affecting him personally, and his shyness vanishes when they are brought up. He will allow no one to write about his personal life until he is dead. His firm views are evident in his letters and writings and in his conversations, but definitely much harder to find in the latter. Shy to the point of timidity, he says what he thinks, although he almost wriggles in embarrassment as he makes his points, and hopes that no one will take offense. In regard to religion, Carroll accepts the Catholic tradition as the only desirable way of life, but at the same time he thinks the
clergy often distort the older heritage of a religion of love with an intolerant Puritanism.

I'm a good Catholic, even if I have little time for the army of little boyish Irish curates who believe in the shamrock and the harp and the glorified mud cabins we have crept from, out of the hell of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.  

Carroll is very fond of Sinclair Lewis because as he says: "We Irish, being satirists, appreciate that quality."  

He has read the works of Lewis religiously and Babbitt impressed him as one of the bitterest and best satires he has ever read. He has liked others of Lewis' books only slightly less.  

The feeling between the two writers was mutual as Lewis thought a great deal of Carroll. In fact, Lewis played the part of the Canon in Shadow and Substance in New Orleans, and he did it because he admired Carroll's play.  

In regard to Ireland, Carroll is convinced that the country, minus its political restlessness, will lose its cultural and dramatic force.  

It's the duty of men like me to interpret all these changes, to place them in proper perspective. It is the duty of the artist to interpret, to stir the people emotionally . . . not to tell them a remedy.  

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29. From a conversation with Carroll on October 22, 1964. The Secret Kindred has a reference to Lewis' Main Street.  
30. Ibid.  
31. An article in the Catholic Herald for January 19, 1940 mentions that Lewis played the part of the Canon in Shadow and Substance.  
32. Carroll, unpublished personal scrapbook, miscellaneous and unidentified items.
"As things are going at the present," he says, "Ireland will become just a small republic. They will give you a clean handkerchief every morning, look after your small, simple virtues, and tell you never to make your father and mother ashamed of you." He is deeply concerned over the fate of Ireland, which he fears is softening now. "I hope Ireland will never settle down to a smug existence, for if she does she will lose most of her life and soul." There can be no doubt about the fact that Carroll loves Ireland even though he makes no mawkish parade of it, and that is probably why he strives as best he can, with the gift of words that God has given him, against the future danger he sees for his native land, the danger that her turbulent, bright heritage may become placid when her spirit is lost. His main recommendation for Ireland is that she should cherish her folk-tales and look with pride on her past glory.

To me the cultural wealth of a nation lies in its ancient folk-tales. They remain the fundamental plaster casts holding the feet of the nation in what Yeats has called the 'earth's old timid grace.'

The playwright is also concerned over Ireland's future because of its lack of a decent system of education. He thinks that this lack is the fault of the Church, but insists that the nation would be one of the greatest in the world if it possessed an educational system comparable to that of other nations.

33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
Carroll not only has definite views on Ireland, but also well-defined ideas on drama. Explaining his own technique he says:

I've tried to follow Ibsen's example. Using a small, everyday village as my locale, I made the conflict and the lesson of that conflict universal. I've tried to prove that regimentation is the same as a living death and that we must cease making laws merely to torture one another.36

Just as Carroll worries about the future of Ireland, so too does he worry about the future of the theater. He feels modern playwrights have substituted pornography for abstract beauty and thinks that there is too much stress on sex at the expense of other aspects of human life.

Many people say it's impossible to write a good play without sex, but I think I have written good plays which have nothing to do with this man-woman business.37

At the same time, however, Carroll must not be misunderstood, for he does believe in adding some color to a play.

I believe in shooting a play through with a certain amount of vulgarity . . . not lewd vulgarity. But there must be color in every play. And you cannot get splotches of color, the various splotches that depict the picture in its entirety without some Rabelaisian traits. Rabelaisian vulgarity is healthy, something entirely different from pornography.38

As for realism in the drama, he recommends a strong dose of fantasy for the ailing theater and would make fairy tales required for the school children who would be the audiences of the future. Carroll also thinks it's time to re-define tragedy.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.
When some drunken sot gets run over by a motor car, that's not tragedy. Here's tragedy to me: where a character who is noble has a weakness that drops him to the dust. 39

Carroll's advice to all future playwrights is that they should not mix with the world if they truly wish to produce something great. His recommendations would be:

He should be like a priest. He should avoid sex, drink, even eating . . . which is contrary to the popular conception of an author turning out masterpieces while dead drunk. My best work has been done when I have been alone, leading the ascetic life. 40

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
CHAPTER TWO

THE AMALGAMATION OF PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY

If there is one theme which runs like a golden thread through the tapestry of much of the great poetry and drama of ancient and modern Ireland, it is the theme that might be called the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity. This theme is well illustrated in Carroll's *The Old Foolishness*. The play concerns love and romance in an age when men captured the grand mood and were honored for it. Carroll sets the action, however, in modern times. Peter, the head of the Sheeran family had none of the grand mood. He is a work boy of the Western World, a prisoner of priest and plough. His contempt is for his brother, an idealist turned sour, who has exchanged his books for a gun, his faith for Voltairean spleen, and is living in sin with Maeve, a wisp of a girl. Seven days after her arrival at the Sheeran farm, as a result of her glamorous presence, Peter is ready to defy his priest, leave his plough, betray his brother, and abandon himself to the Old Foolishness.

According to a critic writing in *The New Statesman* Carroll means by the title of the play, "The romantic sexual urge buried under the drabness, and Catholic timidities of modern Ireland." Carrol looks upon the Irish as being a very complex race whose very lives are an amalgamation of paganism and Christianity. In other words, there seems

to be, according to Carroll, an inherent pagan life which exists within
the Catholicism of the Irish, and he implies that there is nothing
dangerous in this. Dan Dorian's speech in *The Old Foolishness* expresses
Carroll's idea of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity quite
clearly:

Dan: Ach, home, Peter, is the refuge of the lost and the
beaten. God, did you see the--pair of silk knees that
Maeve has! It's amazin' how a little thing like that
makes you regret the presence of the Ten Commandments in
this vale of tears.42

And again, later on in the play Dan Dorian's mind is seen reverting back
and forth, from Christianity to paganism:

Dan: So I was. Fastin', prayin' and being respectable,
and the oul' foolishness buried in pagan ground. It must
have been grand in the oul days when ye lay back and said
to your women, 'Dance, yous lovely divils, dance, or I'll
chop your heads off.'43

Similarly, at the very end of the play this strange combination of
paganism and Christianity, which is so much a part of the Irish men-
tality, comes through very clearly:

Dan:--You're like Oul' Contrary's cow--your're low in
the bones. Ah sure, isn't it the terrible when a man sells
the spires of Heaven for a spoonful of petticoat earth.
Sure God be with poor Finn when he lifted the stone.44

Carroll's whole play, *The Old Foolishness*, is pregnant with
striking comparisons, and he loves to dove-tail paganism and Christianity,

42. Paul Vincent Carroll, *The Old Foolishness* (London: Samuel
French Limited, 1944), p. 27.

43. Ibid., p. 34.

44. Ibid., p. 95.
if for no other reason than to show that both are contributing factors which make up the mystical Irish spirit. Christianity made Ireland into a land of Saints and scholars, but she is also a land of poets and playwrights who have gleaned much of their inspiration from a romantic legendary past.

Throughout the play there are constant references to Finn and the times when there were heroes and giants in Ireland, and Carroll cleverly brings in legends to give his drama scope and meaning.

Tim: (teasingly). There y'are! The Canon himself said three or four times in the hall that there was no authority for believin' in Finn, and that the Catholic Church makes no mention of him in her records—we may safely put him amongst the omens, dreams and such like fooleries forbidden by the First Commandment.

Dan: Ach, I'll put it in me mouth and spit it out. (Fiercely.) Sure, there—there must have been a Finn. Sure, if there was no Finn, and no great heroes, what are we livin' on for? Can we live by the Canon, gathered up in his little tempers like a weasel in a burrow? A week ago, Peter, you would have said that to climb the hills up to here would be one of the fooleries. But today you climbed them and thought it grand. And why? --You climbed them because the oul' foolishness that you thought ye buried at the back o' the hedge with the heroes and giants, came alive in you and quickened the race and the run o' the blood. Can you say no to that?45

Finn, to whom Carroll refers in the above reference and also in the subsequent one, was a legendary pre-Christian hero of Ireland who possessed great strength. In the play, Carroll makes an allusion to the story of Finn lifting a slab of Ireland and hurling it into the sea, thereby creating the Isle of Man. Also, when Finn's girl deserted him he turned over the mountains looking for the man who had stolen her from him, and in rage he threw the mountains up at the moon.

45. Ibid., p. 58.
Dan: How are ye, Francis? Ah, sure we all do it sometime or other, God help us. And poor Maeve, your heart'll leap no more, Maeve, goin' roun' the bends, and the oul' foolishness will be a memory. But let ye tell your children about it, and about Finn throwin' the boulders about the sky, and leanin' the mountains over on their edges to find the one mad woman with the wild gold hair that he could love.

The Old Foolishness is somewhat weak because of certain artificials, but it does demonstrate well how Carroll works with the theme that is under consideration. Perhaps there may be no connection whatsoever, but the theme of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity as developed by Carroll recalls to one's mind the Apollonian and the Dionysiac view of life as proposed by Nietzsche. Nietzsche's theory sounds somewhat attractive when paralleled with Carroll's theme, but one can hardly substantiate it with proof.

Proceeding a little farther with the theme of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity, one notices that Carroll loves to give his plays beauty and symbolism by dipping into Ireland's pagan legendary past, for he believes that the cultural wealth of a nation lies in its ancient folk tales. He sees Ireland lying fallow, awaiting her reseeding which he thinks can come about by a rediscovery of her historical past. In an article printed in the New York Times for January 8, 1939, Carroll makes it quite clear when commenting on The White Steed that he often purposely chooses a tale which is older than Christ as a basis or background for many of his plays in order not only to give his plays

46. Ibid., p. 108.

47. A. Knight, Some Aspects of the Life and Work of Nietzsche, and particularly of his connection with Greek Literature and Thought (Cambridge: University Press, 1933), p. 76.
substance, but also beauty. He claims in the same article that he learned the might of this type of symbolism from Ibsen and Chekhov.

Having learned from Ibsen and Chekhov a little of the might of symbolism in the theatre, I decided to strain the old story through the meshes of the centuries, in which are caught so much sweet wisdom and so much grand foolishness, and with the help of symbolism apply it to the modern world in the terms of the life of my native land, bearing in mind that the present turmoil in international affairs primarily is due to men's conflicting attitudes towards life.\(^{48}\)

There can be no doubt that Carroll works with the theme of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity very adroitly in *The White Steed*. The very title of the play comes from the tale of Ossian who is carried off to the Land of Youth on a white steed by a beautiful girl whose name is Niam. Once in the Land of Youth, Niam gives Ossian herself and all that his heart desires. But at the end of a period of three hundred years, Ossian with all the restless humanity in him begins to fret and when Niam tearfully questions him she discovers that he wants to have one more glimpse of Irish hedge, hills, and trees, and to touch Irish earth once more. Pitying him, Niam puts Ossian on her White Steed, but warns him not to touch the ground, and with that Ossian rides back to have another glimpse of Ireland. Arriving in Ireland, Ossian, much to his dismay, finds the entire country overrun by a race of little black-haired men and that the former race of giants and warriors who had previously been in Ireland had disappeared. Broken hearted, Ossian meets St. Patrick, who informs him that all his former pagan confreres are now in hell, and that the same thing will happen to him if he does not repent. A quarrel follows and the stubborn Ossian chooses a hell full

\(^{48}\) "On Legend and the Arts," *New York Times*, January 8, 1939, Sect. 9, p. 3.
of mighty warriors rather than a heaven full of little black men, and so he wanders aimlessly over the land astride Niam's white steed. One day, however, Ossian comes upon a hundred little black men attempting to raise a slab of marble. Contemptuously, Ossian leans from his horse and seizing the slab of marble, hurls it into the air, but in doing so, the saddle girth breaks and Ossian falls helplessly to the earth where he withers immediately into the dust.\footnote{49. T. W. Rolleston, \textit{Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race} (London: George G. Harrap \& Co., 1911), pp. 272-75.}

Celtic symbolism is no open book, but if one takes Father Shaughnessy and the lay vigilance committee as the little black men (which is not too flattering a simile), then one might suspect that Carroll wants in reality to say that the Irish people must cherish their independence and Gaelic traditions as well as the Church. For Carroll, these two realities are inseparable, so joined that either will wither without the other, for the Irish are by nature a freedom-loving, independent people who are dominated by a clericalism which is contrary to their whole Gaelic tradition.

To fathom what Carroll is driving at in \textit{The White Steed} the entire history of the Irish clergy must be taken into account. Ireland was converted to Christianity in the fifth century, but the Catholic priest did not occupy a central position in Irish life until the nineteenth century. Throughout the Middle Ages the monk and not the parish priest was the focal point of Irish Catholicism. Monasticism gradually died out in Ireland because of persecution and sundry other afflictions, and the secular clergy were then organized to care for the spiritual
needs of the faithful. It was the Emancipation Act of 1829 which gave
the parish priest a completely new status in Ireland. No longer was the
secular parish priest hampered by persecution and since he was the last
refuge of nationalism in a country that was completely Catholic, he
wielded vast power, not only in politics, but also in every other phase
of Irish life. Sean O'Faolain well summarizes this conflict in The
Irish: A Character Study:

The priest was now completely free and established in his
freedom. Persecution was gone forever; his was a recognized
profession; he had an enormous local personal influence;
his flock had the franchise and they were the majority of the
population. This man, who had once been hunted like a wild
beast, then barely tolerated, then grudgingly acknowledged
as a citizen, was now a power that no local or national
politician could ignore.50

Carroll in The White Steed attempts to show the end result of
the gradual destruction of Irish culture through the centuries. The
Irish, according to Carroll had in days gone by a magnificent, classical
history, but ever since the nineteenth century have degenerated into
builders, bartenders, and domestic servants. Perhaps, it is best to let
Carroll speak for himself and explain what he intended when he developed
the theme of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity in The White
Steed:

I have created an old man who lives by faith alone, a sterner
type of man who believes in rules and strict discipline, a
younger man who has come fearfully out of the centuries,
dumb and hungry, and a girl who lives by instinct kept pure
by a dreaming conception and a vivid sense of the
indestructible beauty of the world. The white steed is to
her who has read of it the symbol of truth and beauty, and
the little black men in the ancient story are rediscovered

50. As quoted in Sister Anne Coleman, "Paul Vincent Carroll's
by her in the modern world in the guise of those hordes of driven humanity who are denied the right to think for themselves, denied the right to laugh and be glad they are alive, the right to dream of hidden loveliness and the ageless foolishness of humanity.51

Evidently, Carroll's theme of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity was understood by some of the critics, for Edwin H. Schloss goes directly to the heart of the matter:

But in The White Steed, Mr. Carroll preaches no victory through non-resistant beatification. It is a play of hot revolt in which a modern survival of the wild, free wind-swept mysticism of pagan Ireland is pitted against the bitterest kind of Calvinism masquerading in the cassock of an Irish priest.52

In The White Steed as in The Old Foolishness Carroll depicts the Irish mind reverting back and forth from Christianity to paganism. Carroll's insight into the Irish mentality is clearly seen in a speech which Canon Lavelle directs to Father Shaughnessy:

You are looking for mathematical exactitudes in the spiritual and you'll not get them here as long as the Irish mind re-echoes back to the oak tree and the wishing well. In this country of ours--the people are fundamentally free. What you want to do is to replace their old wayward love of God--with a shrinking fear of God that'll knock all the life out of them.53

As has already been pointed out the title, The White Steed, is derived from an old Irish legend, but as far as the play goes it is applied symbolically by a girl, Nora, who is persecuted by the zealous


52. Record, LVIII (January 1, 1939), p. 3.

reformer, Father Shaughnessy. She is, she says, the ancient spirit of Irish poets and warriors who were there before the clergy came and who will not yield to the rule of the Church. Nora dreams of the freedom and the beauty of days gone by when men were gallant and fearless. In a way, Nora personifies the ageless struggle of the forces of paganism and Christianity. There can be no doubt that she is in search of an Ossian in the modern world, but finds only the little black-haired men who so disappointed Ossian when he returned after three hundred years. Like Niam, Nora does not want to desert Ireland and she echoes in lucid terms the inherent pagan life which somehow or other exists within the Catholicism of the Irish and which is buried deep within the Irish spirit.

Nora: No, I will never leave Ireland again. There's something here that is nowhere else. It's away back far and away deep down. A man going down a moonlit road from a fair may know it, or a child reading on a broken windowsill of Niam or Aideen or Maeve, but they will tell you no name for it.54

At the end of The White Steed Carroll suggests that an enlightened Ireland will still accept the Church, and when the rebellious girl and her fiery young man leave, the old Canon has some rather pointed words to say about Ireland's past history and the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity which is so much a part of it.

Canon: Now you're a man, Dillon, and there won't be any fighting to be done. I am afraid neither of Nora nor of her children to be. And a wiser and finer Ireland needn't be afraid of them either. I am toppling to the grave, but that is my faith. I may be wrong but I don't think somehow that I am. Now go, Denis, and even if she wants you upon a pagan steed, get right up beside her. It will not take

54. Ibid., p. 103.
you astray—her white steed has not come down the centuries for nothing. 55

In Carroll's remaining plays the theme is less prominent than in the other plays which have hitherto been considered. However, it has been suggested by Micheal MacLiammoir that Carroll subtly works with this theme in Shadow and Substance. A credible case is made for its presence in regard to Brigid. Evidently, according to MacLiammoir, the visions of St. Brigid which the Brigid of the play is supposedly to have been granted are somewhat difficult to dissociate from the visions of the old pagan goddess, Brigit. Whether or not Carroll would admit that he intended such an identity would be difficult to say, but MacLiammoir's comment is interesting just the same:

The inspirational figure of the plays is the girl who is obsessed by dreams and visions and it is as difficult to dissociate her visions of St. Brigid from the old goddess as it is to keep these two great figures apart in one's own mind. They are two figures, it is true, but so interwoven, so beautifully entwined, that they have become as one in the imagination, whether the process of their merging has been conscious or no.

The vision of these country-girls may be authentic, blameless, and genuine, but quite rightly I feel the responsibility too grave to accept it without a question. Are not—the hedge rows full of whisperings, and murmurings, the thorn trees breaking into unearthly blossom? A girl like Carroll's Brigid is the perfect type in which to hear the honied, luring voices of the pagan world, and how easily she might mistake them for the voices of authentically blessed . . . that is to me, one of the chief motives in Shadow and Substance. 56

Perhaps Micheal MacLiammoir has made a significant discovery in regard to the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity in the character

55. Ibid., pp. 104-105.

of Brigid, because Douglas Hyde in *The Literary History of Ireland* more or less concedes that several attributes of the pagan Brigit, goddess of the poets, passed over to her Christian namesake.\(^{57}\) There are those, on the other hand, who would doubt that the Brigid of the play is any embodiment of the theme of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity, and perhaps those who would be of this opinion should reflect on the fact that Brigid came from people who believed in fairy stories, and who avoided certain places in the dark. Mercier's book, *The Irish Comic Tradition*, seems to verify this point under consideration.

This ancient belief in magic, which notoriously has never died out in Ireland, pervades every form of early Irish literature, corrupting the realism of the sagas and completely overwhelming the saints' lives. Not a single Irish saint, from St. Patrick onwards and downwards, has escaped the flood of magical folklore which obliterates all but the most immovable land-marks of a saint's actual life on earth.\(^{58}\)

It may be true then to say that Brigid with her unquestioning child-like belief in the doctrines of Catholicism, and having been born on St. Brigid's day, and having heard that the legendary St. Brigid was from her own locality, could easily be confused by the mixture of legend and religion. She believes in both without knowing that they were possibly different and the goddess and the Saint are so much alike that there is a mixture of truth and legend in Brigid's mind. This seems to be clear from a conversation between Brigid and the Canon. The Canon has just told Brigid to go to bed and forget her imaginings:


Brigid: But in bed, how can I forget, if her face is there in the curtains and the mark on her face?
Canon: Now, now, now! I am trying not to be angry. There is no historical authority for that at all. The Church in its wisdom does not confirm it. It is probably just a myth. A myth, Brigid.
Brigid: What is a myth, Canon?
Canon: A legend, child.
Brigid: And what is a... a legend, Canon?59

In a way, Carroll seems to have made Brigid an embodiment of the Irish spirit, for Brigid appears to believe in her imaginings just as many of the Irish peasants would believe in fairies and little people. Her belief in her talks with St. Brigid is no less absolute than St. Joan's belief in her voices. Carroll has done a marvelous piece of dialogue writing in describing Brigid's imaginings, for at no time need the audience determine the validity of Brigid's miraculous communications. On the other hand, however, the audience must believe that the visionary herself has no doubts about the validity of the visions of St. Brigid that she sees.

Notice should also be taken at this time of how similar Carroll's treatment of Brigid and her visions are to Maeve's visions of the pagan legendary Queen Maeve in Edward Martyn's play by the same name which was written in 1900, the same year that Carroll was born. The parallelisms between the two plays are quite pronounced: both girls wish to be similar to their visions, both girls have visions of women who lived in their locality, both wish to leave this life and find relief in a life with their visions, and finally, both identify themselves with their

visions, Brigid at the play's conclusion when her face is torn by a brick, and Maeve, by her beauty which is similar to Queen Maeve's.

At the very beginning of this section, it was hinted that there were numerous other treatments of the theme of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity in the literary history of Ireland. The theme is ancient; in fact, Robin Flower points out in his book, The Irish Tradition, that the theme was expressed as early as the eighth century in an ancient Irish poem known as Agallama Senorach.60 Looking for origins of the theme, none better can be had than that proffered by Douglas Hyde in The Irish Literary History. His excellent explanation of the strange amalgamation points up the fact that the theme is something almost indigenous to the Irish spirit.

For, as we have seen, after Christianity had succeeded in getting the upper hand over paganism, a kind of tacit compromise was arrived at by means of which bards, files and other representatives of the old pagan learning, were allowed to continue to propagate their stories, tales, poems, and genealogies at the price of incorporating with them a small share of Christian alloy.61

Irish literature (including the work of a playwright like Carroll) can never be fully understood until this strange amalgamation is taken into account. Alice Curtayne in the opening pages of her book, The Irish Story, considers this theme briefly in recounting the ancient saga of Ossian's return to Ireland and what happened when the pagan met the Saint. According to the saga, the merits of paganism and Christianity

are debated back and forth by St. Patrick and Ossian. The strong and weak points of both are contrasted and weighed with considerable dramatic skill, and in the final analysis, Ossian it seems is rather sour about the new Christian order and arrangement in Ireland. It appears that the ringing of bells and the chanting of the Divine Office bother Ossian, and when St. Patrick tries to awaken him for the monastic prayers, he grumbles and complains that in the past he has heard sweeter music than the psalms from the blackbirds in Letterlee, and he points out that there was never a priest in a church truer to his word than the Fiana, or more hospitable than Finn.62

O!, Croaking Patrick, I curse your tale.
Is the King of the Fenians to hell this night?
The heart that was never seen to quail,
That feared no danger and felt no spite.
What kind of God can yours to grudge
Bestowing of food on him, giving of gold?
Finn never refused either price or drudge
Can his doom be in hell in the house of cold?63

Douglas Hyde, the first President of Ireland, heard the above quoted version of the mediaeval dialogue between Ossian and Patrick and was rather impressed by it, for he thought that it expressed in clear terms the aloymment that is buried deep within the Irish spirit.

I have heard the censorious self-satisfied tone of Patrick, and the querulous vindictive whine of a half-starved old man, reproduced with considerable humour. The idea of bringing the spirit of paganism and of Christianity in the persons of the last great poet and warrior of the one and the first great saint of the other, was truly dramatic in its conception.64


64. Ibid., p. 511.
Yeats, the founder of the Abbey Theatre, regarded the theme of pagan and Christian elements in the Irish tradition as a kind of dual fountain-head of inspiration. It is a well-known fact that he wrote *The Countess Cathleen* out of an ambition to create a great distinctive poetic literature out of Ireland's pagan and Christian tradition. The plot of the play centers around the fact that the Countess opposes the efforts of two demon-merchants to buy the souls of her starving peasants and finally sells her own to prevent this taking place.

You've but to cry aloud at every cross-road  
At every house door, that we buy men's souls  
And give so good a price that all may live  
In mirth and comfort till the famine's done,  
Because we are Christian men.

Yeats apparently drew upon a conventional theme for his play because Samuel Ferguson in *Congal* has a similar theme concerning pagan and Christian forces and their amalgamation:

I know the man, said Ronan Finn. A pagan strong,  
beware  
Lest he repay with blasphemy your proffered call  
to prayer.  
While thus the Prelates; from their side as  
strong-cast javelin, sent  
From palm of long-armed warrior, a swift  
battalion went.

Likewise, in *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales* Yeats alludes to the theme here considered. He points out that even Giraldus Cambrensis

found the people of the western island, who were supposed to be good Catholics, a little paganish. According to Yeats, the Celts will never change, as the cromlechs and pillar-stones will always be in their background. Nevertheless, he does admit that the priests have set their faces against pagan practices, especially the wakes, but with little lasting effect.68

This same theme can also be found in the works of John Millington Synge. A good example is the scene in Riders to the Sea where Bartley's dead body is carried onto the stage. In the dialogue that follows there are references to the women kneeling and keening for Bartley's soul.

Maurya: (raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her). They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me—I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening.69

Notice should be taken here of the direct reference to keening, a survival from ancient pagan days and a feature of Irish life which the priests have made great efforts to stamp out. There is also an allusion to Samhain which was originally the pagan festival of All Hallowtide, and the Feast of All Saints in Christian times. Synge was no doubt conscious of this amalgamation of pagan and Christian elements.


69. John M. Synge, Riders to the Sea and The Shadow of Glen and The Tinkers Wedding (Dublin: Maunsel and Co., Ltd., 1911, p. 77.)
in the lives of the Irish people because he has a second reference to keening in *The Aran Island*:

Before they covered the coffin an old man kneeled down before the grave and repeated a simple prayer for the dead. There was an irony in these words of atonement and Catholic belief spoken by voices that were still hoarse with the cries of pagan desperation.\(^{70}\)

Moreover, this same trend in the Irish nature can be further substantiated by a rather humorous story which Synge tells later on in his book, *The Aran Islands*:

> On our way home he gave me the Catholic theory of fairies.

When Lucifer saw himself in the glass he thought himself equal with God. Then the Lord threw him out of Heaven, and all the angels that belonged to him. While He was "chucking them out," an archangel asked Him to spare some of them, and those that were falling are in the air still, and have power to wreck ships, and to work evil in the world.

From this he wandered off into tedious matters of Theology, and repeated long prayers and sermons in Irish that he had heard from the priests.\(^{71}\)

T. R. Henn of Cambridge University points out in his recent book on Synge that Synge clearly recognized this strange amalgamation of paganism and Christianity in the lives of the Irish while on the Aran Islands:

> Let us be frank about it. Synge's satiric view is constantly focused with more or less directness towards certain aspects of the peculiar blend of paganism and Roman Catholicism that he saw in the West.\(^{72}\)

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71. Ibid., p. 43.

Price holds a view almost identical to Henn's but expresses his opinion in connection with The Tinker's Wedding:

The Christian and Pagan elements in the character of any nation or person do not exist in isolated compartments; the one element has influence, more or less, on the other; two ways of life, existing side by side for a long time, are bound to tinge each other a little. Thus, we see, the Priest is not a Christian, but we see also, comparing him to Mary, he is not a Pagan; he is something in between, inferior in important respects to both Christian and Pagan. The Priest is unlikeable, not because he is a priest, but because he is not a true priest. He has officially renounced his pagan instincts, but he has not acquired the Christian virtues. He still has the old Pagan craving for the enjoyments of the flesh, but when he tries to satisfy this his pleasure is spoiled by the sense he is sinning.73

Numerous other examples from playwrights and poets using this theme could be given; indeed, it is a theme which is truly Irish and can be found expressed in various mediums of art. Perhaps the most striking of the examples of the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity is found depicted by two statues in Ireland. In the post office building in Dublin there is a statue of the death of Cuchulain, who has bound himself to a standing stone, so that he might die on his feet, facing his enemies, and in Croach Patrick Mountain in Galway there is a statue of St. Patrick with a staff in his hand depicting him as the founder of Christianity in Ireland.

CHAPTER THREE

ANTI-CLERICALISM

In discussing Paul Vincent Carroll's anti-clericalism, it must be kept in mind that Carroll may be at times anti-clerical, but in being so, he is not anti-Catholic, for in none of his writings can there be found even a hint that he is attacking any doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. In being a critic of the clergy, Carroll is following in the footsteps of Langland and Chaucer, who criticized certain priests and monks centuries before, not because they represented the Church, but because they misrepresented it.

The question is, even if Chaucer was anti-clerical, would he have allowed it to make him anti-Catholic? Would he have left the Church for the love of a grievance? There is not, and never has been, the shadow of a reason to think so.74

Chesterton puts it well when he says of Chaucer that "a man does not come an inch nearer to being a heretic by being a hundred times a critic, nor does he become one because his criticisms resemble those critics who are also heretics," but one becomes a heretic according to Chesterton at the very moment when "he prefers his criticism to his Catholicism."75 Likewise, Chesterton makes another excellent point when he states that Chaucer's "very strictures on the clerics are rather

75. Ibid., p. 249.
clerical than anti-clerical," which is to say in so many words, that the "priest is not merely bad when he ought to be good, but bad because he ought to be better."76 This seems to be Chaucer's whole attitude behind his satire upon the monk or friar, and it well summarizes what Carroll is attempting to convey in his satire against the clergy.

Carroll can be truly considered as the most prominent Catholic playwright satirist of the twentieth century in Ireland, and as a Catholic he criticizes not the Roman Catholic Church as such, but only those who run the Church. His treatment of the theme of anti-clericalism is both critical and creative for it blends a realistic satire of what is wrong with contemporary Ireland with reference to Ireland's legendary past, and so prefigures a hopeful enlightened culture for Ireland in the future.

In his plays, Carroll criticizes the laity for their piousness and their holy hooliganism, and the clergy for their formulism. It is almost inevitable that in the closely intertwined life of priests and people which is found in Ireland that there would be such divergent views as expressed in Carroll's plays. One thing is true, however, that while Carroll criticizes the clergy, he never at any time doubts or is puzzled about his Catholic Faith. Carroll knows the meaning of life, for there never seems to be any doubt expressed in his plays about what is the ultimate truth or what is the eventual destiny of mankind. From his plays, one can see that Carroll believes that the Catholic Church can listen with unruffled serenity to constructive criticism of policy

76. Ibid., p. 252.
and activities of herself and of her priests in all fields outside the strict domain of divinely revealed truth.

Satire of the Clergy has been an element in Irish literature for many centuries. According to Vivian Mercier, who speaks of this matter in *The Irish Comic Tradition*, satire of the clergy can be dated back to pre-Christian times in Ireland.77 Perhaps the most interesting point which Mercier makes in his book concerns the various types of clerical satire. Evidently, in the past, satire was somewhat ribaldous, but rarely immoral.78 Carroll's plays are directly in this tradition because there is not one single immoral inference in any of them.

Carroll's satiric energy is not directed at the Church, but only at those who run the Church. A good example of this is in *Things That Are Caesar's*, an early play by Carroll, where a priest by the name of Father Duffy is held up for ridicule because he runs the Church badly. He is represented as a cultureless, insensitive man, who is ignorant of Ireland's poetry, but at the same time continuously talking of Ireland's moral splendor. In the course of the play, Peter, the father, and Julie, the mother, continuously fight for the possession of their daughter, Eilish. Peter is a bookish, skeptical, anti-clerical invalid who strives to bring up Eilish, his daughter, in his own way in order to preserve her intellectual and spiritual freedom. Julie, the mother, on the other hand, is a hard, coarse, materialistic, hypocritically religious woman who calls upon Yahveh to bear witness to the

77. Mercier, p. 11.

78. Ibid.
purity of her heart. Eilish, the daughter, is pictured as being distrustful of Father Duffy and her words to him have a bitter ring: "I am to create children, that you may snatch and imprison them." The girl does but amplify her father's protest against the priest's mathematical formulae in regard to religion. The priest in turn lectures the girl on harmony and solidarity, but in so doing he is in reality counseling her to surrender to what is basest and lowly, namely the entering into a commercially advantageous marriage. Carroll does not label the priest satanic but his sympathies are obviously with Peter, an Irishman who despises the herd, reads his Swift, and is determined to save his daughter from the clutches of his wife and the dictation of the priest. Carroll implies by his character sketch that the trouble is not that the priest, Father Duffy, is a humbug, but just that he is an oaf, who is full of nonsense about Ireland's ethical nobility, but at the same time completely ignorant of Ireland's real riches. Carroll portrays Father Duffy as ignorant of Ireland's cultural heritage:

Father Duffy: Who is this AE? I'm sure no Catholic Irishman who loves his country could write that.80

Ireland's essential battle is, Carroll asserts, not between one political group and another, but rather between civilization and certain Irish priests, because many of the priests are so narrow-minded that they understand little outside the field of dogma. Father Duffy in the


80. Ibid., p. 152.
play is clearly shown to be a well-meaning civil servant whose spiritual paternity has degenerated into the duty of a moral policeman. There is a plea on Carroll's part for the restoration of those virtues which infused and gave vitality to the spiritual life of an older Ireland, particularly the virtues emanating from the ancient Irish monasticism on which the Irish spirituality was formed centuries ago. Carroll believes that the present day Irish spirituality of the priests has become obfuscated by laziness, unworthy ambition, materialism, and mediocrity.

Much of the satire against the clergy which Carroll employs in his plays cannot be understood unless one has some knowledge of the life and writings of Dean Swift. In fact, Carroll even uses Swift as a model for his Canon in Shadow and Substance. Carroll turns Swift into a Catholic in the character of Canon Skerritt in Shadow and Substance, and he attempts to give the Canon the same force that Swift had during his life time.

For years, I had been studying the Augustan period of English literature, and I always have been fascinated by its chief character Dean Swift. I decided one day to resurrect Dean Swift, make him not only a Catholic but a learned interpreter of Catholicism, and throw him into the modern mental turmoil in Ireland, which could be complicated by contact. From him came the character of the Canon.81

Whether or not this proffered information on the part of Carroll concerning a Swiftian influence contributes to the play's illumination will depend on the individual, but this inference on the part of Carroll does give an insight into the particular brand of satire which Carroll

attempted. In the person of the Canon (Carroll's mouthpiece), Carroll exposes and satirizes the spiritual snobbery which exists in the lives of many of the clergy in Ireland, and for that matter, in the lives of the clergy living throughout the world. Perhaps it may seem somewhat of a contradiction to look upon the Canon as Carroll's mouthpiece and likewise as a satiric character. How can this be reconciled? There is no easy answer to this question, but it seems to me to indicate an outlet or release from two main and exclusive attitudes of Irish writing—the hostile and the friendly, the cynical and reverential. Carroll is a product of his country and the net result of the image of the Canon which he has drawn in *Shadow and Substance* is the fact that he has given us two images of a priest so far apart that they never coalesce, and from Carroll's point of view, there is no innate necessity why they ever should. Like many other Irish writers Carroll pictures his Canon in *Shadow and Substance* as both a man and a priest who is caught in a "no man's land" between faith and surface observation—in a word a sort of parochial Jekyll and Hyde.

In the main, Canon Skerritt's polished acerbity in *Shadow and Substance* is directed at his two curates, Father Corr and Father Kirwan, who bear the brunt of the Canon's spiritual snobbery and withering ridicule. The Canon does not like their uncouth manners, their failure to shave, or to dine with grace and urbanity, and finally, he is annoyed with their enthusiasm for such unspiritual matters as football. He lectures them as if they were school boys and their appellation of "father" seems ludicrous when juxtaposed against their puerility.
Through the mouth of the Canon, Carroll strongly satirizes the clergy who attempt to propagate the Catholic faith by clubs and fraternities.

Father Kirwan: But you misunderstand me, Canon. I strip and play with the men to entice them all into the Sacred Heart Confraternity. Sure, Canon, that's a grand motive for a grand end!82

But the Canon is disturbed by such boobery as Father Kirwan manifests and he lets him know in no uncertain terms that such motives are ludicrous. According to the Canon, the Catholic Church has a classical, intellectual past and has historically steered clear of all dangerous emotionalism.

Canon: . . . I suggest to you, that since Catholicism rests on a classical, almost abstract, love of God, rather than on the frothy swirl of stirred emotionalism, that these popular heroics of yours are not, canonically speaking, the duties of a Catholic curate.83

The Canon continues to be adamant in his opinions concerning the stupidity of propagating the Faith by football games and other sports.

Canon: I see . . . And since when has the Sacred Heart of our Redeemer, that kings and emperors and queens like Violante and Don John of Austria and the great Charles V, and the soldier Ignatius, walked barefooted for the love of—since when has it become a sort of snap-door chamber where dolts and boobs come to--kick ball and find themselves tripped up on an altar-step instead of a goal-post?84

Not only is the Canon forced to live among boobs, but he is even related to them. Carroll never misses a trick, and in the character of

82. Carroll, Shadow and Substance, p. 20.
83. Ibid., pp. 19-20.
84. Ibid., p. 20.
Thomasina, the Canon's niece, the Irish vice of spiritual nepotism is held up to ridicule. The Canon is intensely upset by his relatives who never cease informing people that they are related to him.

Canon: The Canon's niece! (Fuming, up R. C., and down again). That Irish matrimonial luggage-label! That ecclesiastical buckle on a female shoe! Go, Brigid! Restore my room to its--austerity.85

Carroll criticizes the relatives of the clergy in Ireland who love to be mentioned in newspapers on the occasions of weddings as being a cousin or niece of Canon "so and so," and he refers to this vice as spiritual snobbery. The Canon in Shadow and Substance has a rough and tumbling vulgarian as a brother-in-law whose daughter is called Thomasina, in honor of the Canon's first name which is Thomas, and it infuriates the Canon immensely that his name should be used on such a girl as Thomasina. By means of such minor characters as the Canon's niece, Thomasina and the curates, Kirwan and Corr, Ireland is castigated.

If the character of the Canon is studied closely it will be discovered that there is a lack of a certain spirituality (he is proud and materialistic) which, in the opinion of his opponent, O'Flingsley, the schoolmaster, is symptomatic of the decay of the Church. It is largely by using O'Flingsley as a mouthpiece as he did the Canon that Carroll displays his anti-clericalism. In his book, "I Am Sir Oracle,"86 O'Flingsley states his and of course Carroll's objections to the clergy.


86. Carroll took the title of O'Flingsley's book from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice.
The book stirs up violent feelings which are fanned to the point where
the curates and the people in their ignorance and indignation wish to
burn the book publicly at every crossroad in Ireland.

Father Kirwan: The editor of this paper, from my home town,
Canon, calls for it to be burned on every market square in
Ireland.87

Father Corr is of the same opinion as Father Kirwan and it is he
that suggests the book be condemned by the Board of Censors. Brian
Inglis in his book, West Briton, leads one to believe that Carroll is
on rather solid ground when he ridicules the Censorship Board:

But the board's notion of what constituted indecency and
obscenity was such that it also cut a swath through the
most important literature of the day, as the list of
authors, some of whose works were banned revealed: in the
"s's alone were J. D. Salinger, William Saroyan, Jean-
Paul Sartre, Budd Schulberg, R. J. Sender, Bernard Shaw,
Vincent Sheean, Ignazio Silone, Upton Sinclair, Howard
Spring, John Steinbeck and Marie Stopes.88

The Canon's attitude toward O'Flingsley's book is one of merely
ignoring it for he has no intention of making the schoolmaster important
by taking notice of his writing. In so many words, Carroll admits that
the Canon is right when he gauges that the book might be important if
it had been written by an intelligent person, but since it was composed
by such a callow person as the schoolmaster it should be passed over
with a mere gesture. The book incident is an attack on the poor Catholic
educational system in Ireland:

87. Carroll, Shadow and Substance, p. 39.

88. Brian Inglis, The Story of Ireland (London: Faber and Faber
Canon: ... As I have no desire, Father, to make a presumptuous young man bogusly important in an age that is itself bogusly important, or to condone a procedure too undignified to be Catholic, I therefore decree that no action of any sort be taken in the case of this book, except such action as I, in my official capacity, shall think fit to perform. 89

So much commotion does the book cause that the Canon finds it necessary to receive a deputation of the parishioners. In the scene that follows, the Canon condemns their ignorant intolerance because they are ready to heap fuel on bonfires which are to serve as pyres for a book critical of the Church. The Canon corners the delegation of parishioners who come to see him about the book and he makes them confess that they have not read the book and therefore are in no position to condemn it. Then, when some of them sheepishly suggest that they have read it "judiciously" by skipping the heretical portions, he rails at them for daring to read such a book as O'Flingsley's without the express permission of the Church. This scene, while intensely amusing, contains a bitter satire against the Irish people and the hooliganism which they sometimes practice.

Canon: I suppose I am to regard this outbreak of hooliganism in my study as a typical spasm of ... Catholic Action. 90

Moreover, the Canon not only attacks the laity for their holy hooliganism, but his own curates as well. The Canon condemns hooliganism as unbecoming to the Catholic Church because of the historical background of the Church which has been classical and non-emotional.

89. Carroll, Shadow and Substance, p. 39.

90. Ibid., p. 34.
Carroll satirizes all the externals of the Church which give it an image of being uncultured and ignorant. He makes a bitter attack, not only on the Censorship Board which curtails the circulation of good books, but also on the vulgarian tastes which many Catholics have in regard to religious art. The Canon has reproductions of Velasquez's Philip IV Entering Lerida, and Murillo's Immaculate Conception, but these are considered secular and base by Father Corr and Father Kirwan. With bold words, the Canon criticizes his curates for their vulgar concepts in regard to art, and in so doing satirizes in general the artistic tastes of many Catholics.

Canon: I am a man, Fathers, who by study, travel and observation, has seen the decline and decay of the great classic ideals and the steady vulgarizations of our way of life by that tributaried stream of barbarians who have taken all that was royal in conception, and given nothing by their vulgar deluge in return. Their achievement is the Nordic civilization, in which the passport to fame is financial scoundrelism, and the scholar of taste is ever the avowed enemy of the people. They have vulgarized our reading, our music, our art, our very privacy. They have reduced us all to the lowest social class by teaching us how to get from excess the same emotionalism the classicist used to get from music and art, and as you can see here . . . (he points to the picture) they deal with a whitewash brush in terms of the divine. Yet you stand agast when I point it out to you . . . when I refuse to allow barbarians to impose on me their vulgar conceptions of Christ and His Saints.  

Carroll goes on to imply through the mouth of Father Corr that there is an unhealthy sentimental motive on the part of many Catholics in regard to these "so-called" holy pictures.

Father Corr: I was just followin' the pious custom, Canon, of havin' colored pictures of religious subjects near us to give a feeling of sanctity.

91. Ibid., p. 22.
92. Ibid.
Furthermore, there are other scenes in addition to the one referred to above where Carroll satirizes the disease of piousness in the spiritual lives of a great many Irish Catholics. With searching honesty and persuasive clarity, Vivian Mercier points out the fact that there are satiric overtones in every Irish play which deals with ecclesiastical miracles. If one follows Mercier's suggestion and searches *Shadow and Substance*, one might find such satiric overtones in the Canon's speech to Brigid where he tells her that the Church does not always need to prove herself.

Canon: (gently). Listen to me, Brigid. When a woman in marriage gives birth to men, she proves herself to be a mother. Her men are all about her--justifying her. Suppose, Brigid, a fool came along and said, 'Prove yourself a mother again,' what would happen?

Brigid: Sure, they'd laugh, Canon.

Canon: (touching her shoulder). They'd laugh! Excellent, Brigid. You are following me with intelligence. Now, it is just like that with the Church. Her children have justified her eternally. She is venerable with holiness and heavy with the wisdom of ages. And yet, Brigid, you want her to give birth to a new child--to prove herself by a new miracle. St. Brigid would laugh heartily at such a thing. She, Brigid, that redeemed the world, you want her to produce rabbits out of a boob's hat.93

In the above passage, Carroll is satirizing the piousness of those Irish Catholics who think that the miracles which occur at the shrine of Our Lady of Knock, etc. are necessary to prove the divine origin of the Church. According to Carroll, the Divine origin of the Church was proved centuries ago by Christ Himself and no modern miracle would add one iota to this dogma which has been held by Catholics for centuries.

93. Ibid., p. 66.
As the play approaches its resolution, O'Flingsley has one final argument with the Canon, and Carroll in the argument seems to give O'Flingsley the better lines as he makes the most telling points in his attack on the physical delapidation of the school building, its shabbi­ness, its dirtiness, and its lack of comfort. It should be noticed that the bitter remarks on the part of O'Flingsley probably contain some of the play's most explicit examples of the theme of anti-clericalism.

O'Flingsley: If it's something ancient, very ancient you want, here you are: No coal, no handle on the sweeping­brush, no caretaker for the school, no windows that aren't stuck fast; eighteen crumbling desks, six broken panes of glass, no lighting on dark days, and the public highway of Saorstat Eireann for a playground.94

When one recalls that Carroll's father was once a Dundalk schoolmaster, it would seem as if he were talking of him, and of and for all Irish schoolmasters. His attack is bitter until the end, for he summarizes in clear terms just what a schoolmaster amounts to in Ireland.

O'Flingsley: ... In other words, a clerical handyman, a piece of furniture in a chapel house, a brusher out of barns schools, a Canon's "yes" man.95

In this final encounter with the outspoken schoolmaster, it is the Canon who is worsted in spite of the urbanity of his manners. He can only refute O'Flingsley's arraignment weakly. One feels at this point that the cultured Canon in essence agrees with the schoolmaster.

At the very end of the play, Brigid learns that the town has discovered who has written the excoriating book, "I am Sir Oracle."

94. Ibid., p. 53.
95. Ibid., p. 55.
A group of men, stirred up by the holy hooliganism of the curates, go out to do violence to O'Flingsley, the author of the book. In a fit of passion because of her fear for the life of O'Flingsley, Brigid rushes out to warn him, but in so doing is struck on the side of the head by a rock which is intended for O'Flingsley. As the final curtain drops, the Canon and O'Flingsley, because of the tragic death of their mutual friend, Brigid, both weigh what constitutes the shadow and what the substance of their own spiritual lives.

Perhaps at this point it might be best to turn to a consideration of the theme of anti-clericalism in Carroll's second most popular play, *The White Steed*. The protagonist of *The White Steed* is another priest, but of a completely different cut of cloth than the Canon in *Shadow and Substance*, for Father Shaughnessy of *The White Steed* is of far coarser stuff than Canon Skerritt of *Shadow and Substance*. Canon Skerritt is immured in an ivory tower of pride and is satirized by Carroll for being a spiritual snob. Father Shaughnessy, on the other hand, with his moral police force and his snoopings, is satirized for his mathematical exactitudes in things spiritual. Carroll ridicules Father Shaughnessy for his "so-called" formulism in matters of religion because he is so fanatically and dogmatically insistent that the parish live up to the letter of the Church law, and consequently sets out like a modern Savonarola to puritanize the town with the aid of his vigilance committee. It is through the mouth of the older Canon Lavelie that Carroll holds up such mathematical formulism for ridicule:

Canon: . . . If you want that sort of thing, go and live in Scotland, where the people have measured every word in the Bible with a screw gauge and knocked every ounce of
beauty out of their national life, and what have they achieved? Merely a reputation for the Bible amongst intelligent people as the most volatile and dangerous book ever written.  

In the passage quoted above, Carroll is railing against a religion which stems from the old formulized beliefs which contain all routine and no faith.

The formulistic approach to religion is clearly outlined by the methods of Father Shaughnessy who attempts to clean up the town by starting with the free lending library which the old Canon had established for the intellectual betterment of his people. Father Shaughnessy comes to the rectory laden with "pernicious" books, such as the works of Swift, Shaw, AE, and Ibsen which have been removed from the library and are probably destined to be burnt. It is quite evident here that Carroll is satirizing a certain anti-intellectualism and a rigorous class of Irish Catholic priests of which Father Shaughnessy is a good example:

Father Shaughnessy: There is sufficient. (Pause). Here the laxity is incredible. Dean Swift's filth, Bernard Shaw's blasphemous humour, AE's pantheistic cant, and the ravings of a humbug called Henrik Ibsen, and a score of others here all either blasphemous or anti-Catholic or both.

Throughout the play, the vigilance committee and Father Shaughnessy pounce upon every open or hidden instance of what they deem wrong-doing, whether it be courting a non-Catholic or snatching a kiss in the hedge or riding in an automobile with a married man. Father


97. Ibid., p. 9.

Admittedly, in days gone by, we had many a priest who resembled the curate in Paul Vincent Carroll's *The White Steed*. When I was a child in Kildare, Father Laughlin (God be good to him) made a practice of walking through leafy Boran's lane in the dim summer evenings where with the aid of his horsewhip, he tore boys and girls from their lover's embrace. Today, the horsewhip castigation of courting couples is as obsolete as a bay mare on which Father Laughlin used to ride to his sick calls. 98

Father Shaughnessy wants to reform Nora Fintry and the whole parish by imposing on them a narrow Calvinistic standard of morality which ignores all laws, civil and religious. He meets rebellious defiance in the person of Nora. Her sin is largely that of impertinence, but it is sufficient to blacken her character through the little seaside village where superstition and fear of the priest dominate daily life and thought. Father Shaughnessy's methods of spying on her are inquisitorial to the point of being a kind of cruel fascism. Moreover, morality is encouraged by force, supplemented by vigilance committees, spying, tale-bearing, petty tyranny, and political deals with the net result that all the shrews, gossips and hypocrites ally themselves on Father Shaughnessy's side. The resultant state of affairs is sardonically described by Nora:

> The Christian State! A schoolmaster that scrapes and bows, a father that is afraid of old shadows, a mean stupid old woman and a priest as cold as the mountain stones. 99


The struggle of the old Canon against Father Shaughnessy is in summary really the struggle of humanity against tyranny and it is chiefly this point which best describes what the play is about. At the end of the play, the old Canon in a speech to Father Shaughnessy states in clear terms the case against religious feeling infected by Puritanism and zealotry:

Canon: Of course you won't, because you're a hot-headed pioneer full of spiritual snobbery. Ten thousand sages of the Church have refused to write certain laws on paper, but you, rushing in with a Gaelic tag in your mouth, scrawl them across a page with a schoolboy's pen. Let me tell you this, that we rule this nation with laws that no one writes but everyone instinctively accepts. You can cross out a law that has never been written. The day you put these laws on paper in this country, you and I and all we stand for will have to take the field and fight to the death for our continuance. You think I'm an oul' fool because I speak to my people in their own language, but instead I am what Christ cautioned us to be, as simple as a dove, but as wise as a serpent.100

There can be no doubt as to where Carroll's sympathies lie and throughout the play he satirizes the Jansenistic tendencies of Father Shaughnessy, hitting with savage rage at the rigidity of his mathematical and formulistic approach to God and people.

Carroll continues to hammer away at the corruptive influences in a Christian society in his war play, The Strings, My Lord, Are False. As in The White Steed there is in this play a loveable, large-hearted Canon who opens the crypt of his church and his own house in order to shelter people during the Clydeside air raids. First aid and food are administered regardless of creed. All through the play we see the Canon helping to retune human strings . . . human lives. He is pictured by

100. Ibid., p. 72.
Carroll as an unwearying shepherd succoring the sheep within and without his fold.

Canon: With humanity. My very heart used to shake in me when I'd see them coming and going on the cobbled streets. Now I wander through broken things with my heart crying itself out. I turn over the bodies of people who once told me their poor secret sins. I lift up the crushed bodies of children who once sanctified me with their laughing eyes. . . . But I have faith. . . . This is Calvary again—the Calvary of humanity I believe in.101

His gentle forbearance with human frailities is set against the religious intolerance and hypocrisy of some among his flock who hide their viciousness behind facades of respectability as they mercilessly condemn a "fallen" woman of the parish. The central situation of this play provides Carroll with the occasion for his angriest invective, directed at those Christians who, even in the most savage war in history, would sacrifice the safety and preservation of people for their own personal gains.

Despite Carroll's frequent anti-clericalism, he appears to have an affection for a kind of Franciscan spirituality, for in *The Wise Have Not Spoken* the only attractive character in the bitterly tragic play about Ireland is Tiffney, the silenced priest. Father Tiffney is shown to have a deep and gentle love for the Church and a tender anxiety for her welfare, but his notions of the brotherhood of man are judged to be so evangelical as to be considered radical. As a result of having fostered an extravagant scheme for co-operative farming, which was destroyed by commercial trickery, he has been silenced. Himself a man

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of simple faith and human understanding, he deplores in words, vibrant
with sorrow, the tragic shortcomings of Ireland's educational system.
Tiffney sees too, with a clearer insight than any of Carroll's other
characters, what has happened to Ireland since 1921:

Tiffney: . . . We have been given our freedom, but none
of us has ever accepted the responsibilities of that freedom.
It has not given us greater sanctity, greater dignity,
greater understanding of each other. It has given us instead
swarms of unnecessary statepaid humbugs: a new class of
insufferable Gaelic snobs: and a young priesthood who run
motor-cars and the Gaelic Athletic Association for the
greater glory of God.102

One thing that should be noticed about Carroll's priest charac-
ters is the way he juxtaposes against the tolerant and understanding
priest, one who is petty minded and scheming. One has the sense that
Carroll's favorite type of priests is found in The Strings, My Lord,
Are False and in The Wayward Saint. In both of these plays, the
priest is a mellow, understanding, whiskey-tippling Catholic Canon who
tends his flock with patriarchal devotion. On the whole, nevertheless,
his most loveable priests are eminently worthy priests, and it is these
that usually carry the weight of the play's meaning.

At this point perhaps it is best to compare Carroll with Synge
in order to get a clear picture of how different Carroll's satiric
method is from that of one of his predecessors. One finds, for example,
that Synge's method of satire is somewhat in the same vein as O'Casey's.
However, one thing should be noticed: Synge's anti-clericalism is never
overt, except, as T. R. Henn points out, in The Tinker's Wedding, and

102. Paul Vincent Carroll, The Wise Have Not Spoken (London:
Samuel French Limited, 1947), p. 44.
even there the priest is pictured after the manner of the traditional comic figure. Perhaps the one who has come the closest to analyzing the particular brand of anti-clericalism of Synge is Eric Bentley, who points out in *In Search of Theater* that the sinful priest is not the real offense, but the implied preference throughout for the vagabond paganism instead of the official religion.

The real offense is not in any indecency of event, but in the sensuous poetry evoking the delights of a pre-Christian era and a post-Christian possibility.

Synge realized the possibilities of an offense in his play and made several revisions in his preface before offering it to a publisher. According to David Greene, an earlier draft read:

In a great part of Ireland, however, to this day the whole people from tinkers to the clergy have a life and a view of life that are rich and genial in themselves and I do not think these country clergy, who have so much humour, and so much heroism when they face typhus or dangerous seas for the comfort of their people on the coasts of the west will mind being laughed at for half an hour without malice, as the clergy in every Roman Catholic country were laughed at through the ages that had real religion.

Alan Price states that the priest in *The Tinker's Wedding* is very fond of playing cards, drinking and singing songs, but that he does not seem to get enjoyment out of these activities. This portrait of the priest is a credible one, for he has taken on the vocation of a


priest but does not want to live according to it. He wants certain comforts and graces from his religion but he does not progress far enough to experience what it might be like if he truly lived his priesthood.106

 Perhaps the best way to study Carroll's theme of anti-clericalism is to compare it with the anti-clericalism which appears in the plays of his contemporary Sean O'Casey. For in so doing, one is immediately struck by the complete dichotomy which exists because O'Casey, unlike Carroll, seems to mock the very existence of religion. O'Casey's The Silver Tassie, for example, was attacked by several Catholic papers and periodicals in Ireland. The Irish Catholic, for example, wrote the following:

It is cheap. Where there is an attempt at humour it is cheap farce relying largely on vulgarity for its effect.107

In some of his plays, for example The Bishop's Bonfire, O'Casey attempts to draw a likeable priest, such as Father Boheroe, but when the character of the priest is closely examined it is too nebulous to be credible. It seems as though O'Casey does not have the knowledge of Catholicism nor the ability to represent both sides of the question that Carroll has. Probably the most salient point in favor of Carroll's work when compared to O'Casey's is the fact that Carroll treats both kinds of clerics . . . not only the puritanical, Jansenistic, and bigoted priests, but also some highly intelligent and sympathetic ones.

106. Irish Independent, August 13, 1935.

107. Carroll and O'Casey seem to be of one mind, however, about the highhanded way the clergy treat their people.
In summary, there is an abundance of fine satire in Carroll's plays and it is generally directed against piousness in which there is neither innocence nor enthusiasm, but cunning and self-interest. At the heart of some Catholic family life Carroll sees and attacks all the pharisaical bitterness and jealousies; and finally, he sees and deplores spiritual pride born of a narrow concept of religion.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE LAND

The theme of The Land has its foundation in the peasant farmer's love of the land. Writing of the peasantry from a first hand knowledge, as is exemplified in his plays The Old Foolishness and The Wise Have Not Spoken, Carroll responds to a certain deep Celtic tradition which has survived in Irish literature up to the present time. Carroll brings the peasant farmer into his drama because he believes that the country people have preserved the beliefs, the legends, and the practices which have given rural Ireland a national identity.

In The Wise Have Not Spoken the primitiveness of rural Ireland is translated into terms of modern tragedy. The central figure of the drama is Francis MacElroy who has fought with the "Reds" during the Spanish Civil War and has returned to his brother's uneconomic farm outside of Dundalk to eke out a living. A debt on the farm of some three hundred pounds is due the bank and Francis' harrassed brother, Peter, has been threatened with a forced sale of the property.

Peter: Bad enough. It's the Easter Bank that's threatenin' us with the Sheriff's Court to get possession of the farm.108

Behind the tragic story of the bankruptcy which is recounted in the play, Carroll sees the whole economic as well as political history.

of Ireland since the Independence of 1922. As Tiffney says: "We have been given our freedom, but none of us has ever accepted the responsibilities of that freedom."\(^{109}\)

Ireland, as Carroll well realizes, is essentially an agricultural country. The ancient Irish established no major cities for they clung to the land with a fierce independence. According to Carroll, Ireland of the present day is at odds with this ancient tradition and consequently there is a definite drift in recent years from the land to the cities of Britain and America. In fact, Ireland is one of the few countries in the world whose population has declined in the first half of the twentieth century, mainly because of the large number of Irish young men and women emigrating to other countries. Peter appears to be summarizing Carroll's thoughts on the matter in the following quotation:

> Sure, what can I do. The farm's not payin' any longer. We haven't the seed, nor the machines to plant them, nor the men. The men are goin' in droves to England.\(^{110}\)

And in another scene in the play, it is Francis who laments the deplorable migration which is occurring in Ireland.

> Francis: (seizing Paddy by the collar). Do you know that Peter has left his farm forever and gone to a hellhole called Glasgow. (He moves slowly round below the table.) Do you know that thousands of other Peters are doin' the same? Do you know that the banks and vested interests own nearly all the land of this country? Do you know that a doctor says that twenty thousand people in Dublin are living on sixpence a day?\(^{111}\)

\(^{109}\) Ibid., p. 44.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., p. 7.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., p. 56.
Probably of all the characters in this play centering on the agrarian problems in Ireland, the one who leaves the deepest impression on us is Tiffney, the silenced priest. He is a man of deep understanding, one who speaks the mind of Carroll concerning the inherent weaknesses in Ireland. Tiffney's philosophy sounds somewhat like that of G. K. Chesterton's:

Every ideal, Francis, including yours, degenerates after a while into yesterday's tyranny. Can history dispute that? We must realize that the centuries have made us warped, and given us positive evil tendencies. That's why no system of reform, by any government, can ever cope by itself with the inherent social and economic wickedness of this or any country.112

The social struggle resulting from agrarian problems which is manifest in The Wise Have Not Spoken is almost identical to the conflict that takes place in Padraic Colum's The Land (1905). Both plays tell of the conflict between the older generation which fought for the land and the younger generation which follows the call of emigration to other lands. The older generation won the land, but the young and strong fly from it and only the weaklings remain to eke out a living. As Sally states in Colum's The Land:

There are a good many going on this flight. The land never troubles them in America, and they can wear fine clothes, and be as free as the larks over the bogs.113

The whole situation in The Land becomes more poignant when one realizes that those who won the soil are abandoned by their children,

112. Ibid., p. 45.

who know only of the hardships of the fight for the soil, but now are unwilling to stay on to share the victory.

Cornelius: "Men of Ballykillduff," you might say, "stay on the land, and you'll be saved body and soul; you'll be saved in the man and in the nation. The nation, men of Ballykillduff, do you ever think of the Irish nation that is waiting to be born." 114

Colum wrote his play in order to celebrate the redemption of the soil of Ireland, an event which was made possible by The Land Purchase Acts of 1891 and 1903, and thereby initiated the actual transfer of ownership from the landlord to the farmer. This event, as it represented the passing of Irish acres from an alien landlordism was considered to be of national importance. For years the landlords were hated by the people who knew that until these despots were eliminated they had absolutely no hope of rising out of their position as serfs in their own country.

In Colum's play, The Land, Murtagh Cosgar is a slave to the land and in turn attempts to make his children remain on the farm with him in Ireland. Murtagh's hard will finally drives ten of his children to foreign lands by emigration. Murtagh's son, Matt, one of the last members to stifle the love of the land, finally emigrates with his wife to America. The picture which Colum presents is one of peculiar power: namely, the clash of wills of two generations of peasantry, that of Murtagh Cosgar and of his son, Matt. By confining himself to the realistic interpretation of everyday country life, Colum is able to give us a clear picture of peasant Ireland.

114. Ibid., p. 136.
In addition to *The Wise Have Not Spoken*, Carroll wrote a second play, *The Old Foolishness*, which deals with the theme of the land. Although both plays have a similar theme, the background of *The Old Foolishness* owes much to Carroll's instinctive delight in the use of myth and symbol. By the use of the myth of Finn in *The Old Foolishness* one can see that as Carroll views the Irish scene he is conscious of a continuity of tradition and spirit which attaches the people to distant origins of which they know perhaps nothing but what is revealed by some surviving legend or story. This consciousness of the tie with tradition is best viewed by Dan whose speech is constantly colored with references to legendary heroes like Finn:

> I'll be up tomorrow, Maeve (Maeve takes her bag), to drive you to the place Finn lifted the lump out o' the mountain, and hurled it ten mile in the air, as a blast against the rottenness of the world.\(^{115}\)

Carroll, likewise, preserves a certain characteristic interest in the picturesque realism of unspoiled life of the land. He constantly senses a deep relationship between the Ireland of the legend and that of Gaelic Ireland in which the old spirit still lingers.

Dan: Round the bends on the oul' car and up the mountain to where Finn lifted the half of it in his fist, and near knocked the teeth down the neck of the man in the moon. Sure when the grand moods came upon him, Maeve, he dragged the dead out o' their graves and kicked them till they wakened and begged for mercy. (p. 37).

All the dignity, beauty, and pathos of Irish country life is preserved by Carroll in his development of the theme of the land in *The Old Foolishness*, for he has at his command a prodigal wealth of color and imagery.

Peter: Ach, sure a . . . a fine stock o' hair, with a
colour that is halfway between ripe barley and the skin
of a Golden Wonder potato. They say she rubs a bit o'
butter in it to make it shine, but sure, that's no great
sin (p. 46).

Moreover, Carroll makes the peasant's idiom a powerful vehicle of
literary expression; his dialogue has all the qualities of peasant
conviction.

Peter: I saw you many a day ploughin' the Shells Hill and
the steam comin' off the two mares, and the oul' pipe goin'
bravely in your mouth. If you must have a woman, why the
hell can't you take a good sensible girl like I'm doing and
go back to your plough? (p. 14)

In summary, one must conclude that Carroll's dramatic work on
this theme is in quantity rather small, and yet, this theme cannot be
ignored if one wishes to study the entire canon of Carroll's plays.
O'Casey definitely knew the slums of Dublin, but Carroll as a modern
playwright is one of the few important Irish dramatists who have
treated the theme of the land in a dramatic way since Padraic Colum.
The land will always be a dominating and a formative influence in
Irish life, and Carroll by using this theme as a background for two of
his dramas has attempted to dramatize realistically the life he knew
so well in Dundalk.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE PLEA FOR THE ARTIST

The plays of Carroll which have been examined up to this point for thematic design were either concerned with the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity, or with the problem of anti-clericalism, or finally with the land. However, these three themes alone which concentrate on the mythological glory of Ireland and certain social problems in modern Ireland will not render the complete thematic elements in the plays of Paul Vincent Carroll. To examine the entire thematic design which Carroll intends, one must also study Carroll's plays with reference to a fourth theme, involving his desire for an artistic utopia for Ireland. For want of a better title, perhaps it is best to refer to this final theme in Carroll's works as the plea for the artist. For want of a better title, perhaps it is best to refer to this final theme in Carroll's works as the plea for the artist.116

The theme is prominent in several of Carroll's plays, but perhaps is most noticeable in one of his latter dramas, the unpublished play, The Secret Kindred.

The theme of the plea for the artist appears to have three distinctive elements: the longing for the inexpressible or for great beauty; the sensitiveness of one artist for another; and finally the concept of the unappreciated artist wandering in the world.

116. "The Secret Kindred," Irish Monthly, LXXVII (November, 1939), 785-91. The title the plea for the artist, is not original but was taken from the review of The Secret Kindred which is cited.
Examining the works of the earliest writers for the Abbey Theatre, one can find the first of the above elements, namely the longing for the inexpressible or for great beauty in Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field*. The reclamation of the field from the heather symbolizes a man's efforts to attain a bond of unity with "the great beauty." Tyrell in the play sacrifices everything in order to reclaim a certain field from the heather. His wife and friends know the whole project is completely hopeless, but he continues his work in hopes that the heather will not overrun the field again. The man hears voices in the field and occasionally undergoes a mystical experience there. In the final analysis the field is equated with beauty itself:

Tyrell: Well then, have you ever seen on earth something beautiful beyond earth . . . that great beauty which appeals in divers ways? And then have you known what it is to go back to the world again.  

It has been argued that the field represents Ireland and Tyrell, as an artist, desires to bring it to perfection. Throughout the play, the longing for the inexpressible or for great beauty is certainly prominent and it is this same element in the plea for the artist which will be expressed later in Carroll's *The Secret Kindred*.

In Martyn's second play, *Maeve*, the same longing for beauty which cannot be realized is also present. Only this time, the longing for great beauty is developed by means of the story of an Irish girl by the name of Maeve, the daughter of one of the chieftains, who is to marry in order to gain a fortune for her father. She has an artistic

soul for she lives in the past and wanders about her father's estate thinking of the ancient glories of Ireland. She contemplates the great days when Queen Maeve (who is a pre-Christian contemporary of Cuchullain and Ferida) lived and she meets an old woman who tells her that she, Maeve, is descended from Queen Maeve and is the last of her race. Then it is revealed to Maeve that her dream-lover will die if her marriage takes place, and so she waits up all night at her window for Queen Maeve to come and take her away. In the morning her family find her frozen lifeless body in the window. This longing for great beauty on the part of Maeve is almost identical to the longing for great beauty in Martyn's play, The Heather Field, for Tyrell's soul has the same quest for artistic or esthetic fulfillment.

In Carroll's first important play, Things That Are Caesar's this element of longing for the inexpressible is found in the soul of Peter. He is a man of artistic temperament whose sensitive soul is constantly engaged in a struggle with his coarse and greedy wife, Julia, for the love of their supersensitive daughter, Eilish.

Peter: Listen, Eilish. When your mother first married me, she dug out a niche in her scheme of things and tried to fit me into it. I didn't fit. She's got old working on me, and I've got old resisting her. We are now like two spent animals, staggering against each other, waiting for an opening for the last blow. Just now she is making a new niche in there . . . this time for you. You'll not fit either, and she'll begin her tactics on you presently.118

As can be seen, Julia represents all that is mean and sordid in the life of a small shop owner, and she wishes her daughter to marry for money

so that the shop might keep running. In a word, she is the polar opposite of her husband and daughter in temperament. Eilish and her father, Peter, represent the conflict of artistic spirits seeking to maintain their integrity against the grasping world desires of the mother, Julia. The father, Peter, who is a visionary and a poet at heart, wants his daughter to develop the artist in herself and to make something of her life by lifting herself from her mundane surroundings.

The second element of the theme of the plea for the artist centers on the sensitiveness of one artist for another. A good example of this is obviously present in the mystical union that exists between the father and the daughter in Things That Are Caesar's. Peter in the play is pictured as an idealist and he succeeds with Eilish because much of himself is in her. But before he can teach her to be an individualist (as all artists must be) and live her own life, he dies as a result of a stroke. Peter and Eilish are very much like Mary and Dermot in Carroll's The Secret Kindred, for their dreams of an esthetic fulfillment likewise come to nought. The last scene in Things That Are Caesar's shows what is in front of Eilish in her life, namely a drudgery amongst people with whom she'll have nothing in common and with people whose only effect will be a coarsening one.

Eilish: If only you could know pain as I know it ... feel it like a chill in the soul, like a cloud darkening all you once knew and felt. Oh, cannot you see? ... I must find my way out of this dark! I must! No matter what I break! 119

119. Ibid., p. 191.
Eilish's future life is lived for her and for us in *The Secret Kindred* in the character of Mary. In speaking of Mary, Eilish will be recalled and the interweaving of the themes of these two plays will become apparent.

This same element of the sensitiveness of one artist for another is seen clearly also in Carroll's *Shadow and Substance* where Carroll as an artist himself gives a quite sympathetic if satiric treatment to the Canon. The Canon as depicted by Carroll is seen to be a man of refinement and of culture with a tasteful study, with pictures by Murillo, El Greco, and da Vinci. He looks down from his Salamancan training on the half-baked provincial anti-clericalism of O'Flingsley, and likewise down on his two uncouth, insensitive curates from Maynooth. Both Father Corr and Father Kirwan are simplified portraits of two contemporary types of priests: Father Kirwan, athletic, slovenly, well-meaning—a priest whose image of the faith rests on the clean sporting man with the team spirit; Father Corr, emotional, fiery, and a fervent defender of Catholic piousness in Ireland. Only the character of the Canon looms large enough in *Shadow and Substance* to depict tragedy, for clearly his pride clashes with his priestly vocation. The Canon's artistic taste and sensibility is more refined than that of his curates. When Father Corr puts up the gaudy oleograph (which has been banned by the Vatican) of the Sacred Heart on the wall "to give himself a feeling of sanctity" the Canon is disgusted and he points to his Murillos

120. Carroll, *Shadow and Substance*, p. 22.
and Raphael retorting: "Secular? Could any picture in this room be called secular if we knew anything of the might of the thing that has given us birth?" (p. 22). It should be noticed, however, that the Canon's culture, his gospel of "the classic mind of the Church" (p. 23) has made him withdraw from his parish, his people, and his country. He despises "the vulgarity of it all" (p. 23). He will not leave his books and wine to see his parishioners. Father Corr, therefore, has his moment of truth when he claims that the Canon does not understand the country (p. 23). Above all, the Canon's classicism quite unfits him for dealing with visions or supposed visions of Brigid, the one simple being whom he loves. "Excess in anything is bad, Brigid, in work, in play, in religion. It is not classical" (p. 31).

Although Carroll dislikes a great deal of what the Canon stands for as is evidenced by his description of the Canon's method of speaking to his curates and parishioners (such as: "tiredly," "with veiled contempt," "acidly," "with suave irony," "cruelly," "leading him on, hand to ear" etc.) yet, at the same time Carroll (as an aloof artist) obviously feels a deep sympathy for this learned imprisoned man amid an environment of knaves, fools, spiritual clerical football kickers, and palavering C.C.S.s. The sympathy which Carroll expresses for the Canon is the sensitivity of one man of artistic soul for another which is the living, vital link between one artist and another.

With Carroll's last play, The Secret Kindred, this element of the sensitiveness of one artist for another finds its fullest expression.

121. Ibid., pp. 15-30.
The play presents the artist's reaction to the ugliness of a material age, for the politicians and men in power have failed to bring about the moral and esthetic betterment of mankind. The rule of the politicians and men of power have only plunged the world into another war within the short span of some twenty years. Carroll appeared to allude to this intention when the play was first produced in an earlier version by the Abbey Theatre in the following account:

*Kindred* is an attack on the cock-eyed values ruling our daily lives. It shows the creative minds of humanity in conflict with the mind of the grafter, the money grubber, and the self-seeking politician, and it is a play about a background of political claptrap, love, hatred, ignorance, brass bands and Guinness' porter. It is a plea for the abolition of Nationalism which has outlived its usefulness, and for a new international kinship without blood-ties that would sweep boundaries, racial hatreds, and religious bigotries to the hell they belong to. It is a denunciation of heroes and martyrs and the death they glorify, and a justification of life and humanity at its finest and best.\(^\text{122}\)

Carroll in *The Secret Kindred* advocates a Shelleyan solution to the problems of the world whereby the poets, artists, idealists, and the creators of beauty would take over and rule the world with a new order. According to Carroll, politicians like J. K. Keefe and gombeen (selfish) grocers like Robert Fenet have failed in their mission of civilization. As far as Carroll is concerned, the artist and those who sense the artistic sensitiveness which exists between the brotherhood of creative spirits are the only ones who have given the world admirable and lovely things, whereas the war mongers and their like have used these same admirable and lovely things for base purposes and thereby have destroyed civilization.

The Secret Kindred's plot concerns a young girl, Mary O'Regan, who associating with Dermot O'Regan, a painter, is imbued with the ideals of the mind of the artist in opposition to a materialistic public. Her struggle between two ideals is sympathetically portrayed in the prelude. From the first act Mary O'Regan, now married to a successful grocer, named Feneti, meets a wandering fiddler who turns out to be the son of Dermot O'Regan, the painter. He enters the Feneti's family life, disturbing the placid calm of Mary's mind, by bringing her back to the ideals of his father in opposition to her social environment. Her own son, for whom she has artistic hopes, is an anchor in her life. The play comes to a tragic conclusion when the son shatters all Mary O'Regan's ideals by going off and becoming a politician.

The secret kinship between Mary O'Regan and Dermot O'Regan, as was pointed out when talking of Eilish and Peter in Things That Are Caesar's and of the Canon and Brigid in Shadow and Substance, exists for Carroll between people of sensitivity or artistic temperament. One need only consider the latter play to see this exemplified in one of Brigid's speeches referring to O'Flingsley and the Canon.

Brigid: Isn't it funny now that I think there's no one like aythur of yous? Would that mean that the two of yous are maybe the one? Or am I batherin?123

This remark by Brigid is of great importance, not merely for the plot development of the play, but because it contains the secret kinship idea. In The Secret Kindred, this oneness of mind and heart that exists

123. Carroll, Shadow and Substance, p. 6.
between creative souls is expressed in one of Dermot's speeches to Mary.

Dermot: . . . Here! Take that! (he snatches the painting from the easel and thrusts it into her arms). It is me in you, and you in me, near to you, intimate, living without my rotten seed. . . . It is sufficient that we have kindred without blood . . . kindred as you and I are kindred.124

The kinship of one artist for another as developed in Carroll's The Secret Kindred is a searing indictment against the Main Street people of the world. Robert Fenet is a good representative of Main Street for he is the very antithesis of the artist. Carroll pictures him as a mean, grasping, gombeen grocer; he has all the shrewd cunning of an ambitious Irish peasant who has turned shop-keeper. In fact, Robert Fenet might even be labeled an Irish Babbitt.

Robert: (with a shrug) Okay, son, I'll say it for you . . . it'll save you embarrassment . . . I graft and backhand and lick J. K.'s behind. I mix margarine with the butter, I put iron filin's in the tea, I water the whiskey, I fake the labels, I let the boys drink into the small hours, I bribe the bloody Sergeant, I'm generous in me Mass offerings to the Canon, I send each of the councillors a gurgley parcel for Xmas and Easter, I steep defective hams that I get from the local factory for a song in vinegar and spice them to destroy the smell, I sell doctored cheese that would turn a hearse back, I . . . Do you want any more?125

The third element of the plea for the artist theme concerns the artist wandering in the world, unappreciated by his fellowmen. The figure of the artist as the wandering tramp as used by Carroll might have been borrowed from Synge or Colum. Synge, for example, writes


125. Ibid., p. 18.
In *In Wicklow and West Kerry* about the gifted son of a family who was very poor, and yet, it was often this same gifted son who turned out to be the writer or the artist in the family. Synge goes on to point out that it was often the artistic son in the family who would also sink to the level of a tramp.\textsuperscript{126} This same tradition of the artist as a tramp can be seen also in a play by Colum titled *The Fiddler's House*. In *The Fiddler's House* a tramp artist walks the roads of Ireland most of his life, but at last settles down on a small farm with his two daughters. Conn, the fiddler, as pictured by Colum is an artist with great sensibilities and consequently is very bored, not only with farm life, but also with his neighbors. He feels that he is not playing his violin for equals when he entertains at the local public house:

Conn: Many's the day I put in with the scythe in Ireland, and in England too; I did more than stroll with the fiddle and I saw more places than where fiddling brought me.\textsuperscript{127}

At the end of the play, Conn goes off to perform with his peers in order to find a proper audience. He knows he must play with the best fiddlers and his journey takes on the aspect of the search for the inexpressible beauty which was spoken of earlier in this chapter.

Conn: No man knows how his own life will end, but them who have the gift have to follow the gift. I'm leaving this house behind me; and maybe the time will come when I'll be climbing the hills and seeing this little house with the tears in my eyes. I'm leaving the land behind me too, but what's land after all against music that comes from the far,


strange places after all when night is on the ground, and
the bird in the grass is quiet. 128

Throughout the play, Conn is in revolt against his family and against
his two daughters, who wish to keep him at home in order to keep up
appearances among the neighbors. Above all things, however, Conn is
an artist and the play is resolved when the girls realize this and
allow their father to leave. By developing the awareness of the artist,
Colum gives us the eternal awareness of all artists, the awareness of
any man who knows he has a gift above his fellowmen. Perhaps of all
the tramp-artists whom one might come in contact with in studying Irish
drama, Conn is probably the best embodiment of the type.

One need only look at Dermot, the leading character of The
Secret Kindred to see how Carroll follows the tradition established by
Synge and Colum. Dermot in the play is not an artist in the accepted
sense of the word, but a vagabond violinist, an unprepossessing and ill
tempered player of unwritten folk ballads, a sort of Old Testament
Jeremiah who denounces the shams, conventions, and submissions that
fetter the soul.

Michael: (referring to Dermot) a tramp!
Mary: That's what you'd have called him. But he had
under his rags what A.E. called 'The majesty of fallen
gods.' 129

As can be seen from the above quotation, Dermot, the fiddler, is a vaga-
bond artist and directly in the Conn Hourican tradition which was ex-
amined earlier.

128. Ibid., p. 75.
Considering all the elements in Carroll's theme of the plea for the artist, two things stand out more than others, namely, his critical love-hatred of his race and his close attachment not only to the Irish Catholic Church, but also to the universal Church Eternal. Mary in *The Secret Kindred* summarizes Carroll's continuous nostalgic reference to "the glory that was once Ireland's":

It means, dear, someone a little like Christ who would go amongst the poor gently and take away their false values and the flags and slogans that have exploited them so long. Someone, Michael, who would show them their true selves and their splendid souls, and lift them up to the finer values . . . Ah, Michael, the glory that was once Ireland! And look at them now! Lost music . . . lost art . . . lost nobility . . . We just export them now to be the labourers, bartenders and domestic servants of Britain and America.130

Mary's words are almost identical to those expressed by Michael Mac-Liammoir in his book, *All for Hecuba*:

We Irish are accused eternally of brooding over the images of the past, but in reality it is by the future, more it may be than other people in the world, that we are driven. It is for the vision of a most questionable posterity that we walk out from our homes, that we dream and plot and play the fool, that we suffer and die. We have created a past for ourselves that we may the more clearly see the future of our hearts' desire, and in the continual striving and sacrifices offered up for that future lies perhaps the only Irish virtue. For people who love the past and future with passion, to whom everything that is not has sweetness and splendour, our age, of course, is not an ideal one; for somehow or other the present must be born, the perilous street under the hooting traffic must be born, the perilous street under the hooting traffic must be crossed, and one needs all one's eyes about one not to be crushed underfoot.131

130. Ibid.

In *The Secret Kindred* Carroll gives Christ the place of a leader in his plea for the artist which clearly demonstrates his love for the Church Eternal. Carroll seems to be saying that the artist is in reality a free, uncorrupted spirit, and he implies that the creative urge which poets and artists in general possess is basically a religious one, a creative urge which they share with the Almighty Artist, God. Moreover, Carroll goes on to declare that Christ is the Chief Artist, the One who established forever Eternal Beauty and Art on earth. The "figures" (off stage voices used in the flash back scene to fill in the audience on what has happened twenty five year previously) state Carroll's concept of Christ:

Figure 1: ... The age of military excellence followed and in time gave way to the Almighty Artist, Christ, that re-echoed down and round the Earth. To Him must be given the mighty credit of establishing the forts of Eternal Beauty and Art on Earth.132

And what has been done on earth will likewise be done in heaven, for Figure 2 goes on to declare:

The outcome of that thought will be the revolution. When it comes, we, Beachcombers, who wait over the ages, will march both in Heaven and on earth, armed with the true meaning of Life, and re-establish the Almighty Artist as the divine and incorruptible Aristocrat of all Beauty and Art.133

As a final consideration of Carroll's theme of the plea for the artist let us consider the conflict between artistic and cultural civilization and the clergy. From the following quotation taken from

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133. Ibid.
Things That Are Caesar's, one can see that Carroll believes that the priest is centrally involved in the impact of secular culture on the Irish Catholic Faith, and one can also glean from this how Carroll dovetails his theme of the plea for the artist with his theme on anticlericalism.

Father Duffy: (sadly). Yes, Laughed . . . And the pagan world laughed with you . . . (he shoves back the book as if it were unclean). Oh, this . . . this stuff! They call it intellectual, they call it beautiful. But is anything beautiful that disillusions innocence or destroys simple faith in a person or nation? That, Eilish, should be the attitude of all true Catholics.\textsuperscript{134}

Carroll in his satire of the priest in regard to his lack of awareness of culture and art never goes as far as to reject the dogmatic and moral system of the native Irish Church for an artistic search of freedom. Even though Carroll develops the characters of Eilish and Peter in Things That Are Caesar's as individualists of highly artistic temperament, he never jettisons the Church as Joyce did in his artistic quest for freedom. Joyce expresses the conflict between dogma and literature in Stephen Hero, for his Stephen Hero at the University talks wildly about "the plague of Catholicism." Joyce's attitude toward artistic freedom is further clarified in the episode in Stephen Hero where the president of the University condemns Stephen's Ibsen paper:

Yes, we are happy. Even the English people have begun to see the folly of these morbid tragedies, these wretched unhappy, unhealthy tragedies.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{134} Carroll, Three Plays: The White Steed, Things That Are Caesar's, The Strings, My Lord, Are False, p. 152.

\textsuperscript{135} James Joyce, Stephen Hero (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), p. 103.
The irony is, of course, slanted the way Joyce wants it to be, but one should notice that here he anticipates a very contentious issue, namely, of the destiny of culture when manipulated as a means to an end. Joyce makes the words of the president of the university sound somewhat trite in order to develop fully the antithesis intended. It should be noticed, however, that Joyce did not publish Stephen Hero nor retain the episode cited above in A Portrait of the Artist. For in A Portrait of the Artist, Joyce abandons his rhetorical protest for a highly imaginative creation and he proposes for the modern Ireland the image of the priest as an imprisoning one, for as far as Joyce is concerned, it is the priest who stands as the direct antithesis to the artist. Joyce's artistic vocation comes clearly to him in the mystical appearance of the girl on the sands where he accepts his destiny because he has finally rejected a call to the priesthood. The invitation to "the plain service of the altar" had come to Joyce in a rather misty way, and consequently throughout the story art is associated with a plunge into the profane life.

He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others, or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world . . . The snares of the world were its ways of sin . . . He would fall. 136

The image of the priest as standing as a direct antithesis to the artist can also be seen in the writings of Canon Patrick Augustine Sheehan, Joyce's contemporary, and the only priest-novelist of note in the past century in Ireland. One of the main themes in his novels is

136. James Joyce, A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man (London: The Egoist Ltd., 1916), p. 188.
the clash between secular culture and spirituality in his priests. Somewhat different from Joyce, Canon Sheehan narrows his vision of the whole problem to something that takes place within the lives of the priests. In a way, Sheehan's method is more subjective than Joyce's for he carries the conflict into the mind of his priest characters with the result that the priest is not seen as a villain but as a hero. Moreover, the tension between culture and the priesthood in Sheehan's works is narrowed to the reality of the priest's own work within the confines of his own parish. The two artists, Joyce and Canon Sheehan, are miles apart as far as influence and ability goes, and yet Sheehan is stating the same issue as Joyce, but in wholly different terms. Sheehan's queries concerning Maynooth (the most important seminary in Ireland for the training of men for the Roman Catholic priesthood) grew out of his reactions to Maynooth of the 1880's.137

The priests of the novels of Canon Sheehan are almost identical to the priests depicted in *Shadow and Substance* and *The White Steed*. Canon Sheehan (in a much lesser degree than Carroll) satirizes the anti-literary attitude in certain priests through his character portrayal of his young curates, Father Letheby of *My New Curate*, and Luke Delmege and Father Liston in *The Blindness of Dr. Gray*. Canon Sheehan's priests in *My New Curate* and in *The Blindness of Dr. Gray* lack a certain sophistication but their ideas are radical and liberal in regard to scientific and cultural pursuits.

Fiction about the priest in Ireland seems to split into two different currents, one idealizing the priest or pastor, the other satirizing the professional leader and lord of his flock. From all appearances, Carroll seems to follow the latter current. Conjecturally examining his plays, one might conclude that Carroll has used the Soggart Aroon\textsuperscript{138} of Sheehan's My New Curate, but in doing so has introduced a great deal more satire by giving his priests far more dominance and air of authority than Canon Sheehan ever gave his priests in his novels. There can be no doubt that the Soggart Aroon of Sheehan's novels and Carroll's plays corresponds to a common type of Irish priest from real life, but one must remember that both writers are artists who used the complex and variable archetypal figure of the priest as a mere starting point from which they fashioned their own individualistic designs.

\textsuperscript{138} Soggart Aroon is an Irish expression for the good priest or pastor.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

As has been seen, Carroll's plays do not center on any single theme. Looking back, however, one can readily see that the four themes which have been examined in the course of this thesis are woven together with a certain unity. This unity arises from Carroll's sense of tradition. More than anything else, Carroll is deeply aware of an Irish tradition, a tradition which has adapted itself en route in its development and which has not superannuated either Ossian or Cuchullain and has made admirable use of Greek philosophy through the centuries. It is this sense of tradition which impels Carroll to write (as T. S. Eliot would say), not merely with his own contemporaneity in mind, but with a feeling that the whole of Irish literature from Ossian to the present has a simultaneous existence, for Carroll believes strongly that the wealth of a nation lies in its ancient traditions and cultures.

One can readily see this reversion back to the past in the development of his first theme: the amalgamation of paganism and Christianity. With his deep sense of the past, Carroll captures the distinctive elements of Celtic legend, myth, and folklore and translates these same elements in terms of present-day Ireland. Gleaning something of the simplicity of Ireland in her ancient glory, Carroll surveys with great detachment the present maelstrom of ignorance, bigotry, persecution, and puritanism in Ireland.
This same pervading sense of tradition is present in the development of Carroll's second theme, the satire on clericalism. According to Carroll, Ireland of the present day is at odds with her ancient traditions. In order to preserve a certain characteristic interest in the picturesqueness of the unspoiled life of ancient Ireland, Carroll parallels his satires of the Irish clergy with the ancient legends of the days of antiquity, the days of the great legendary heroes of pagan Ireland. Working with the legends, Carroll says in effect that the Irish people must cherish their independence and Gaelic traditions as well as the Church because these two realities are completely inseparable. In a word, Carroll wants a return to the fundamentals, to the beautiful, gentle, and simple realities of life. His treatment of the theme of the land is also developed out of his sense of tradition.

Lastly, even with Carroll's treatment of the theme of the plea of the artist there is the same sense of tradition. As expressed by Carroll, the plea for the artist is a passionate yearning for culture, for inexpressible beauty. Carroll desires that the country of Ireland be ruled by the influence of creative artists as it was in the past when she was an Island of Saints and scholars. Carroll maintains that artists, the brotherhood of creative spirits, have in the past history of the world given nations all their admirable and lovely things, and that

139. T. S. Eliot, Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1963), p. 24. Eliot expresses this whole idea in very poetic terms: "There is accordingly something to which he must sacrifice himself in order to earn and to obtain his unique position. A common inheritance, and a common cause unite artists consciously or unconsciously. It must be admitted that the union is mostly unconscious. Between the true artists of anytime there is, I believe, an unconscious community." (The underscoring is my own).
profiteers, war mongers, gombeen men, and politicians are using them for their own base ends and coarsening civilization to the common and ordinary in which the Church is imprisoned. As can be seen, Carroll's universal vision extends far beyond the shores of his own native land. Ultimately, however, Carroll wants the world ruled by the most creative artist, Christ, so that the world will be governed by a Christian philosophy which might restore to us a new Christ-centered humanism based on the doctrine of the essential human love of each other.


____. *The Old Foolishness.* London: Samuel French Ltd., 1940.


____. *Shadow and Substance.* London: Samuel French Ltd., 1944.


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