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University of British Columbia

Frederic Wood Theatre

presents

Juno

and the

Paycock

by

Sean O'Casey

Directed by

Stanley Weese

January 13-23

1988

The Frederic Wood Theatre Magazine

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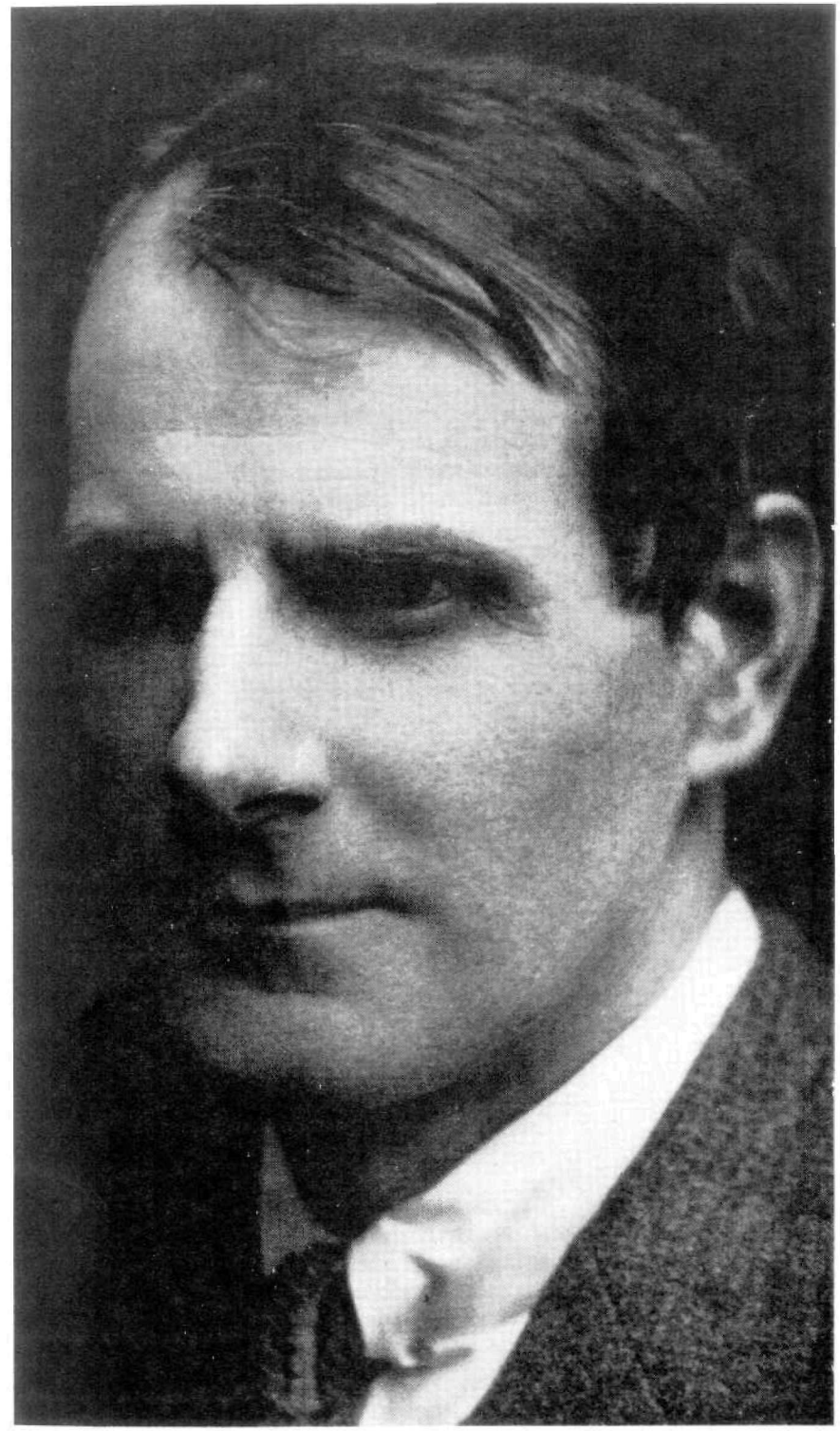
Sean O'Casey
A Brief Chronology

1880	Born John Casey in Dublin, the youngest of a large family of whom five survived childhood.
1891	Introduced to the theatre at the age of eleven by accompanying his brother Archie to the Queen's Theatre, Dublin (mostly Boucicault and Shakespeare).
1894	Started work at fourteen in the stockroom of a hardware store.
1907	First published work an article on Irish educational system in *The Peasant and Irish Ireland.*
1911	Irish railways strike, setting for *Red Roses for Me* (1942).
1913	Irish Citizen Army formed by trade unions to protect their members from police brutality.
1914	O'Casey becomes secretary of the Irish Citizens Army.
1916	The Easter Uprising: combined forces of the Citizens Army and the Volunteers last only a couple of weeks in the face of British superiority in numbers of men and quality of weapons.
1917-21	Guerrilla warfare in Ireland between the Irish Republican Army (successor to the banned nationalist bodies) and the British forces: counter terrorism by the Black and Tans - background to *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1925).
1919	Publication of *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army,* much censored by the military authorities.
1921	Peace Treaty signed, partitioning country into an independent Irish Free State and a Northern Six Counties within the United Kingdom.
1922-23	Civil War in the south over the terms of the Treaty - background to *Juno and the Paycock.*
1925	***Juno and the Paycock.***
1926	Visits London to receive Hawthornden Prize for *Juno and the Paycock.* Settles in England for the rest of his life.
1935	Abbey Theatre production of *The Silver Tassie* provoked vociferous clerical opposition.
1939	Publication of first volume of autobiography, *I Knock at the Door* (banned in Eire); five further volumes completed sequence, the last appearing in 1954.
1945	*Drums Under the Windows.*
1949	*Inishfallen Fare Thee Well.*
1952	*Rose and Crown.*
1955	*The Bishop's Bonfire* produced in Dublin by Tyrone Guthrie.
1964	Dies of a heart attack in his home in Torquay, Devon, September 18.

Opposite:
O'Casey at 44



A State o' Chassis

The action of *Juno and the Paycock* takes place between September and November 1922. In that year there were no fewer than four governments in Ireland simultaneously. This dangerous chaos had been brought about by the Government of Ireland Act (1920) by which Britain sought to achieve peace by partitioning the island (creating the semi-autonomous state of Northern Ireland), and by the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) by which Britain conferred dominion status on the rest of Ireland (the Irish Free State). Many 'diehards' in the new Free State refused to accept what were termed "full Canadian powers," preferring to hold out for total independence. In June 1922 the civil war fought between the anti-Treaty Irregulars and the National or Free State forces commenced in earnest and was to last a year.

The terrible state o' chassis which Captain Boyle from the Abbey stage famously bemoaned would appear to have little in common with the grim anarchy bloodying the political stage out of his (and our) sight. The Boyles and their fellow tenement dwellers are a kind of under-class ("slum lice," a character in *The Plough and the Stars* calls them) removed not only from power but even from the ideological coherence of class itself. In 1914 a Government Housing Commission classified half the population of Dublin under the heading of "Indefinite and unproductive class." The resourceful working mother and daughter supporting a feckless father and son suggest not only economic injustice and necessity but also a degree of moral choice, the parasitism of the under-class whose values parody the traditional values of society.

The Boyles' is a life of clutter and commotion, with the Captain as the worst offender (or perpetuator), Juno an embattled force for order and the traditional decencies. It is a clutter of domestic paraphernalia and also of what passes for culture. Nationalists were dying in the cause of Irish culture, whereas O'Casey's slum-dwellers take their songs and sayings, their ways and wisdom, from anywhere. The most egregious magpie is Joxer Daly and it is fitting that he cannot complete a song when called upon. This comic creation of genius is the most vivid embodiment of a culture bereft of integrity.

Then there is the clutter of ideas concerning trade unionism, capitalism, spiritualism, Catholicism, republicanism, women's rights. These were part of the intellectual ferment of the time, in Dublin and elsewhere, but they are betrayed or belied by O'Casey's characters when they aren't travestied from the start. "A principle's a principle," says Mary early in the play, but the memorable characters are appallingly apt practitioners of expediency, be they pure exponents like Joxer and the Captain or mere hypocrites like Benthan and Devine. Either way, life is a garrulous posturing, a wordy fanfare that is more enthralling than it ought to be. It was not its colour or exoticism that captivated the early Irish audiences but its utter realism (save for Devine's maundering love-talk) that can still be corroborated to some extent on the housing estates and corner pubs of northside Dublin.

O'Casey's world may seem, then, beneath political contempt (like the world of Joyce's *Dubliners)*; but the shadow of the gunman fell across it anyway in those bad years. The end of the play might suggest that the Joxers and Captain Boyles will survive political incursion, giving the lie to the kind of high-flown political rhetoric that the characters have parroted and parodied throughout the play. But if this answers O'Casey's anti-nationalism and essential humantarianism, it hardly answers the revolutionary socialism he expounded elsewhere. Nor can we be sure of the relationship between that socialism and the quasi-feminist solution to the Boyles' problem that almost ends the play.

Does O' Casey's Dublin slum constitute a real world alternative to the mad Ireland of 1922, a world with its vices and incorrigibilities but human and recognizable? (If so, the obliviousness of political causes to reality are the dramatist's target, as well as all the fancy philosophies of life.) Or does it mimic and stand in for an Ireland seemingly characterized in 1922 by the betrayal of principles, by opportunism, by division and "the intestine shock and furious close of civil butchery"? (If so, O'Casey's own creations are in their representativeness his target.) The "sabbath of misrule" (to borrow Joyce) that comprises O'Casey's world is ordered for us, of course, by the necessities of plot, including elements we recognize from the fairy tale as well as from drama, even melodrama. Several of the characters are little more than types. Joxer, who believes it "better to be a coward than a corpse," and the Captain, the braggart 'sailor', resemble Falstaff having undergone binary fission.

Indeed, the problematic relationship between slum and state might put us in mind of the equally problematic relationship between tavern and court in *Henry IV, 1,* in which Eastcheap is at once subversive and symbolic of a kingdom, subversive of its order, symbolic of its civil commotions. The House of Boyle disintegrates through hubris as in some Greek tragedy, and as in Greek and Elizabethan tragedy the fate of the family mirrors, indeed dramatically *is*, the fate of the state. Life in the family is a continuous state of civil war. Alliances are made and broken. Power is vied for. There are casualties. The answers are a change of heart ("Sacred Heart o' Jesus, take away our hearts o' stone") and the love of mothers, but these are merely prayers or fragile resolutions. Chassis is triumphant in November 1922 and all the principles and causes capable of ending it "is Null and Void."

John Wilson Foster

John Wilson Foster is Professor of English at the University of British Columbia and author of *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction* (1974) and *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival* (1987).

Juno and the Paycock
By Sean O'Casey

Directed By Stanley Weese

Set Design By
Robert Gardiner

Costume Design By
Mara Gottler

Lighting Design By
Robert Hamilton

CAST

Captain Boyle . . . . . Timothy Hyland
Juno Boyle . . . . . Janine Payne
Mary Boyle . . . . . Victoria Maxwell
Johnny Boyle . . . . . Neil Ingram
Joxer Daly . . . . . Dennis James Kuss
Charles Bentham . . . . . John Murphy
Mrs. Madigan . . . . . .Laura K. Burke
Jerry Devine . . . . . Jason Smith
Needle Nugent . . . . . Thomas Conlin Jones
Mrs. Tancred . . . . . Dyan Lynch
First Irregular . . . . . Peter Golding
Second Irregular . . . . . .John Rule
Mobilizer . . . . . Michael Shepard
Coal Vendor . . . . . .Nick Davis
Sewing Machine Man . . . . . .Jason Dedrick
First Furniture Man . . . . . Harley Harris
Second Furniture Man . . . . . .Craig Nelson
First Neighbour . . . . . .Rhena Amyotte
Second Neighbour . . . . . .Christine Cedarberg

Act I - The living apartment of a two-roomed tenancy of the Boyle Family, in a tenement house in Dublin. 1922.
Act II - The same. A few days later.
Act III - The same. Two months later.
During Act III the lights will be lowered to denote a lapse of one hour.

There will be two intermissions of ten minutes

Juno and the Paycock is produced by special arrangement with Samuel French (Canada) Ltd.

PRODUCTION

Technical Director . . . . . .Ian Pratt
Properties . . . . . Sherry Milne
Costume Supervisor . . . . . .Chelsea Moore
Set Construction . . .Don Griffiths, John Henrickson, Robert Moser

Stage Manager . . . . . Cathy Golf
Assistant Stage Managers . . . . . .Alan Brodie, Luke Fredeman
Properties Assistant . . . . . Darryll Patterson
Costume Assistant . . . . . .Blanka Jurenka
Lighting Design Assistant . . . . . .Elana Honcharuk
Lighting Operator . . . . . .Jim Schiebler
Sound Design/Operator . . . . . Jill Buckham
Scenic Painters . . . . . .Kaiirin Bright,Elana Honcharuk
Catherine King, Gary Muir
Makeup . . . . . .Cynthia Johnston

House Manager . . . . . Heather Kent
Box Office . . . . . Carol Fisher, Timothy Hyland, Linda Humphries
Business Manager . . . . . Marjorie Fordham
Production . . . . . .Norman Young

Dialect Coach . . . . . .Rod Menzies

A Curtain Call for Stanley Weese

Juno and the Paycock marks Stanley Weese's farewell to the Frederic Wood Theatre and the Department which he joined in 1965, and from which he is now retiring as director, actor, and teacher. In tribute to his many years of creative work on our stages, we applaud his contribution as director of *Long Day's Journey into the Night, Waiting for Godot, Look Back in Anger, The Crucible, Endgame, The Playboy of the Western World, The Wild Duck, When You Comin' Back Red Ryder?, A Moon for the Misbegotten, Three by Beckett, The Father, Entertaining Mr. Sloane, and The Glass Menagerie.* His dozen or so roles, in Frederic Wood productions, have ranged from Pantalone in *A Servant of Two Masters,* to Ferapont in *The Three Sisters,* Polonius in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead,* and Gloucester in *King Lear.* And the most enduring tribute to Stanley's teaching (apart from a Master Teacher's Certificate of Merit) is the celebratory inscription on the T-shirts of his last Summer School acting class: *The Stanleyavsky Method.* Whatever this method, it has been undertaken with unfailing good nature, dedication to his craft, and generosity of spirit. With a resounding "Bravo!" we offer this Curtain Call for Stanley Weese.

Patterns of Betrayal in Juno and the Paycock

Juno and the Paycock, subtitled by the author a "tragedy in three acts", was written sixty-five years ago but what is remarkable about witnessing a good stage performance of *Juno* is how fresh and vital it still appears. While using (probably instinctively) seemingly hackneyed materials and methods, the playwright has transformed and re-invigorated them by the sincerity of his experience and approach and the power of his imagination. Although in the last analysis it is often impossible to say what exactly makes familiar material take on a new and enduring life in a work of art, it is pertinent to observe the strong autobiographical elements in *Juno* and -- what is even more important -- the strength of personal concern which the author felt for the people caught up in the horror of civil strife. The compassion that emerges from the dramatic action as a whole evidently proceeded from O'Casey's deep sense of pity for the victims of the Anglo-Irish guerilla war and subsequent Civil War (the setting for *Juno*) that had devastated the country, and Dublin most particularly, for the eight years immediately preceding the play's first appearance; moreover, he was especially empathetic to the poverty-stricken tenement dwellers among whom he lived and worked, many of whom were innocent victims of the sectarian violence and of Dublin's appalling slum conditions. The original of Mrs. Boyle, as O'Casey told me, was a woman for whom he had great admiration as well as sympathy. On another occasion he revealed that all that happened in the play, or almost all, happened in the house where I once lived; a tenement house still standing. Even the young man who was "found dead on a lonely road in Finglas" lived there and was a friend of mine -- I have his photograph here with me now. A terrible thing when romantic youth start shooting each other, all mad for a curious abstract idea of their native land.

Juno and the Paycock, intimately bound up as it is with the private drama of particular personalities, vividly reflects the turbulent times of the Irish Civil War which the writer had just lived through but a few months previously. The incident of the will that proves to be valueless because it was erroneously drafted by a school-teacher was another known personality to the playwright, who told me that the poverty-stricken family to whom the bequest had been made did not receive a single penny because the will was too vaguely written. Such details reveal that what might have been for another writer commonplace melodramatic elements, introduced because of their tried success in the theatre, were for O'Casey fresh and familiar material, the stuff of everyday life.

It is valid to note the work's closeness in time to the historical affairs it portrays, not just because this gave an ephemeral boost to public interest originally -- though no doubt it did do so -- but because we can better understand with what intensity and personal commitment O'Casey wrote the play. The nearness in time and emotional involvement could have made it just another documentary of an exciting period in Irish history: instead, transformed by genius, it is an enduring and universal dramatic experience. Of course it could be said that the work realizes what would appear to be an archetypal political process, the tragic pattern of civil war following guerilla strife against an alien colonial power having been more recently repeated in countries like Cypress, Aden, Vietnam, Biafra, Angola and elsewhere. Yet one doubts whether this is the chief reason why present day audiences can still be completely caught up in the events involving the Boyle family; instead, it is more probably because the action is realized in human terms transcending abstract political issues *and* local considerations, though both of the latter richly enforce the drama's conviction. In other words, the national and political situation -- though it is everpresent in the narrative, so that private and public tragedies are inter-related -- is projected in a way which emphasizes its relevance to all mankind in a similar dilemma.

In *Juno* the basic theme is betrayal: this operates on both the private and the public levels in the betrayal of Mary by Bentham and the political betrayal of Tancred by Johnny. Moreover, beyond these individual acts, there is in the play a pervasive sense of national treachery, of a whole country split into warring factions as the result of treason on a epic scale. Each of the three distinct strands of the play's plot is concerned with legality and betrayal. Like the Boyle family, Ireland itself has come into a modest inheritance whose legality is likewise soon disputed. In the civil strife that followed the Treaty of Independence with Britain, the contending parties argued over the legality of certain clauses in the Treaty. Here, as in the Boyle will, a very small difference in wording makes a world of difference, in the eyes of the Law: in the one case, the Boyles eventually have no more claim to the inheritance than any other relative of the deceased man, while, in the national sphere, the difference is between a united independent country and a partitioned land divided into hostile power blocs. The "will" theme in *Juno*, then, reflects, more than the importance of economic factors in the life of the poorer Irish people. It also obliquely mirrors the hollow inheritance of a newly-independent state, betrayed by vested interests, self-deception, and legal chicanery, all factors to be found in the protracted treaty negotiations between the British government and the Irish representatives in 1921, the controversial terms of this Treaty being a direct cause of the Civil War in Ireland.

Both sub-plots concerned with the Boyle children pick up the same theme. In one we see Johnny's violation of his oath of allegiance to the Republican cause, his betrayal of a comrade within the movement, and his subsequent punishment by the rough justice of an irregular insurgent army. The third thread of the narrative deals with the deception of Mary Boyle by Bentham: in subsequent matter it is again concerned, if only peripherally, with legality and justice -- and, of course, betrayal. Here the deception is three-fold, for Mary is betrayed by her own emotions and ideals, and by Jerry Devine -- who pretends to a humanity that he sadly lacks -- as well as by Charles Bentham. Indeed, with the exception of her mother, Mary is also let down by her own family; Johnny and her father disown her, a betrayal of family loyalty and honour.

The Civil War in Ireland (1922-23) created grave constitutional problems and heated legal controversies (as one might expect in such a situation), characterized

by tortured logic, paradox, and moral ambiguity on a grand scale. From the point of view of the die-hard Republicans (upon whose side Tancred and Johnny Boyle fought), the signatories to the Treaty with Britain were traitors to their country and to republicanism by accepting the partition of Ireland and formally recognizing the British monarchy by an oath of allegiance to the crown. The moderate nationalists or Free Staters, who succeeded in getting the Treaty passed by the majority of the freely elected representatives of the newly-independent Dail Eireann (Irish Parliament), regarded the bitter opposition of the Die-Hards to the Treaty as a betrayal of their hard-won political compromise; and, once the Treaty had been accepted by the Dail, the Free State Government saw the violence and intimidation of the anti-Treaty forces as treason to the state.

"Man's inhumanity to man" is the pervasive theme throughout *Juno*. Captain Boyle's betrayal of wife and family is symptomatic of a national tragedy; the selfish blindness and irresponsibility of men like Boyle and Joxer has in effect led to the moral confusion which pervades the whole of society. Boyle has "fed the heart on fantasies" -- of himself as a deep-sea sailor and a fighter in Easter Week -- and these, however amusingly realized, contribute to his evasion of reality and responsibility. The action of the play centres on the Boyle family, the head of which has at no time in his life undertaken his family duties. Even after being told of Bentham's betrayal of his daughter and the failure of the expected legacy, as well as being made to apprehend the whole family's denunciation of his fecklessness, the "Captain" is still capable of escaping into a world of patriotic fantasy. The final drunken scene of the play affords the supreme instance of the lengths to which self-absorption and fantasy can extend. Man's inhumanity can surely go no farther. Boyle's complete self-absorption, his unawareness of, and indifference to, the horror and anguish all around him is the ultimate treason: it is a betrayal of life itself.

Ronald Ayling

Ronald Ayling's friendship with Sean O'Casey dates from his student days at Leeds, and persists in his many critical studies, bibliographies and editions of O'Casey's work. He is O'Casey's literary executor, and one of his most distinguished scholars. Professor Ayling is a member in the English Department at the University of Alberta.

The Signet of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin

The Play in Context

When Michael Collins and "the Free Staters" signed the treaty of 6th. December, 1921 with the coalition government of Lloyd George, they secured independence for the major part of Ireland, but as a special kind of Dominion, not an Irish Republic. The six northern counties remained separate under Britain with their own parliament in accord with the 1920 Government of Ireland Act.

De Valera, who had wanted "External Association" of an undivided, independent Ireland described in his "Draft Treaty A" document, felt betrayed by the negotiators and refused to accept the compromise; guerrilla violence and then civil war ensued. The civil war setting of 1922 is the context for the events of O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*. The play opened on 3rd. March, 1924 at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and broke all previous box office records at that theatre by being played a second week to accommodate crowds of people unable to get in for the first week's performances. It was the most popular play in the Abbey's twenty year history. Since then it has remained one of the favourites in the repertoire there, and has had numerous productions elsewhere in the English-speaking world, as well as "marked theatrical success," as Ronald Ayling has noticed, "in Europe, especially in West and East Germany." Its first London performance was distinguished by a West End run of 202 performances in 1925-'26.

His most widely respected as well as his most popular play, O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* marks the height of his stage realism. The reason for its success, as James Simmons in his *Sean O'Casey* (1983) explained is that "In it everything works." The three act structure is strong and direct, centred on the device of the will, with its testing of all the characters it affects. Moreover, the characters are vital and well-differentiated, their comings and goings perfectly consistent with the Dublin tenement setting. Juno is tough and capable, a breadwinner coping with an unreliable husband. Mary, their daughter, is a working-class girl of some refinement, a self-improver not fully understood by her elders. While she is eager to get on in the world, her brother Johnny has been involved in violent political action, which has made him a mental as well as a physical wreck. He is hiding in fear from those he has betrayed. But the central relationships in the play are those between Captain Boyle, the "Paycock" or Peacock, and his wife Juno, a tragic figure, on the one hand, and his crony Joxer on the other. Joxer is one of the classic comic creations of the Irish drama.

Arthur Sinclair as "The Paycock" Caricature By Hynes 1925

The energetic dialogues of Joxer's scenes perfectly express all his quirks and blandishments. He is a perfect foil and "parasite" to the braggart Captain Boyle. Such comic pairing is as old as Greek and Roman comedy, but their scenes are shot through with an intensely vital realism which makes them more than stock comic types.

In O'Casey, farcical situations remain funny, but they also acquire unexpected significance; Captain Boyle's determination to rebel against Juno is part of the domestic comedy, but it clearly and rather grandly finds its analogy in the rebellion of Easter Week, 1916, a revolt that was also put down: ". . . there's goin' to be issued a proclamation by me," he declares, "establishin' an independent Republic." But with the advent of a "fella in a trench coat" (the world of gunmen and political assassination) the condition of Ireland intrudes with more than metaphorical force. O'Casey's tragic sense of history finds expression along with an almost Dickensian love for the comedy of grotesque details. His vision of life, at once comic and tragic, has a comprehensiveness and balance in this play, as in *The Plough and the Stars*, that are warm, humane, and very appealing to audiences.

The Boyle family in their slum tenement project more surely and accurately than any other stage characters of the period, enact the feelings, the aspirations, and the very real fears of ordinary Irish people in the civil war period. One of the play's most telling exchanges occurs when the crippled Johnny protests, ". . . haven't I done enough for Ireland?" but meets only the implacable response, "Boyle, no man can do enough for Ireland!" This is the true tone of fanaticism with a steel trap mentality. When Juno reminds Needle Nugent, ". . . it's nearly time we had a little less respect for the dead, and a little more regard for the livin'" she is voicing the sentiments of a majority of the Irish people who, at the time, supported the new government of the Irish Free State, despite its compromise with Lloyd George. Her simple prayer which asks the Sacred Heart to ". . . take away our hearts o' stone, and give us hearts o' flesh!" is no definitive statement about Irish politics, but a sudden moment of humanity following Juno's recognition that she should have felt more deeply the death of Mrs. Tancred's boy, even though he was one of the Diehards (militants who responded with armed violence to the 1921 treaty between Britain and the Free State). But it is the Captain's justly famous curtain line that best expresses the sense of powerless, befuddled incomprehension which most of us feel in the face of the arrogant violence of our century: "I'm telling you . . . Joxer . . . th' whole worl's . . . ina terr . . . state o' . . . chassis!"

Sean O'Casey died aged eighty-four in 1964. Since then it has become evident that his two greatest plays, *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*, have lost none of their power; that his earlier *The Shadow of a Gunman* survives as a powerful stage vehicle suitable for many different cultures around the world, and makes a brilliant television play; and that his later experimental work is finding more favour now in a critical climate willing to broaden its notions of what is "dramatic". Once dismissed as weak stuff, resulting from the combined effects of his justifiably bitter disappointment at W.B. Yeats's decisive rejection of *The Silver Tassie* and O'Casey's life of exile in England, plays like *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* (1949) now appear to be among the most innovative and fantastic of their time. O'Casey's long life spans that most intriguing epoch--the era of change from a largely horse-drawn "lifestyle" to one which saw the use of atomic energy in war and peace. He was born in poverty and became world-famous, if never rich. He never stopped celebrating life, despite a painful eye condition which made him all but blind, and despite the death of his son Niall from leukemia at twenty-one. Perhaps the best tribute he received was from Samuel Beckett, whose play *Waiting for Godot* he had attacked for its nihilism. The Archbishop of Dublin objected to works by Joyce and O'Casey appearing at the Dublin International Theatre Festival in 1958. O'Casey's *The Drums of Father Ned* had to be withdrawn, whereupon Beckett retaliated by withdrawing his own works from the Festival, causing it to collapse altogether.

Andrew Parkin

Andrew Parkin is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at UBC. He has written extensively on Irish Literature and is the Editor of *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*.

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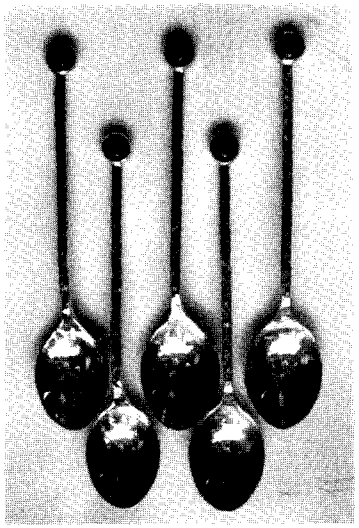

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