

You couldn't feel any way else at a fine life than  
when the spirit of a man is pulling to be out

You couldn't feel any way else at a fine life than  
when the spirit of a man is pulling to be out

fighting for the world.

with his feet fronting on the way.

maybe to the gallows, and his ears ringing with

the faint far-away sound of booming rifle-shots

that'll maybe whip the last little shock of life

out of him that's left lingerin' in his bones!

maybe to the gallows, and his ears ringing with

## ONE DAY, SEAN O'CASEY

the faint far-away sound of booming rifle-shots

Edited by Burçin Erol

that'll maybe whip the last little shock of life

IRISH WRITERS SERIES 9

out of him that's left lingerin' in his bones!

# **One Day, Sean O'Casey**

Edited by Burçin Erol

Department of English Language and Literature  
Hacettepe University

and

The Embassy of Ireland

**Irish Writers Series : 9**

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## Foreword

The chapters in this volume are based on the papers presented at the “One Day, Sean O’Casey” Conference held at Hacettepe University in 2019 with the collaboration of the Embassy of Ireland. This volume intends to bring together the works of the scholars in Turkey who specialise in and have published on the works or have worked on the translations of the works of Sean O’Casey.

The chapters in this work will give the readers a chance to review the importance of O’Casey in retrospect and also to dwell on the influence he has on the present works of Irish studies. Moreover, it will provide a chance to ponder on the influence and the Turkish readership of the specific author, how he was received in Turkey shedding light on the Turkish- Irish literary relations.

Sean O’Casey’s dramatic works are generally included in the curriculum of the English Literature departments of the universities and most students of English literature are familiar at least with one drama work by him. However Sean O’Casey is known to a small number of Turkish readers, and the complete works have not all been translated yet. The first translation of O’Casey’s work is the one act play *The Hall of Health* rendered into Turkish by Professor Dr Cevat Çapan as *Sağlık Yurdu* in 1962 (published by De yayınları, 12th in the series Drama Works). *Juno and the Paycock* was translated into Turkish with the title *Dünyanın Düzeni* by Professor Dr İrfan Şahinbaş in 1965 and was printed by Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (The Ministry of Education). *Red Roses for Me* was translated again by Cevat Çapan with the title *Kırmızı Güller* in 1985 (published by Kuzey Yayınları as no 4 of the Drama Works series). *Kırmızı Güller* was reprinted in 2009 by İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları. *The Shadow of a Gunmann*, the second play in his trilogy was translated by Ülker İnce as *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* in 1989 (published by Can Yayınları as the eight in the Contemporary Drama Works Series). As can be deduced from this short list of the translations all translations were undertaken by those who were already familiar with the works of O’Casey. The late professor İrfan Şahinbaş and again professor Cevat Çapan are both eminent professors specialising in English Literature and drama. Ülker İnce is a translator and also has taught courses in the Department of Translation and Interpreting of Hacettepe University and she is well founded in English literature. The other works of O’Casey have not been translated yet.

As for the staging of these works in Turkey, *Juno and the Paycock* was translated by the eminent professor of English literature İrfan Şahinbaş with the title of *Dünyanın Düzeni* for the İzmir State Theatre and was staged during 1978-79. *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* was staged by Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu in 1987 and by the Trabzon State Theatre in 1992-93. There is also the record for the staging of *Sağlık Yurdu* by Pertevniyal Lycee in 1972. This play was also staged by Hacettepe



University Drama Club in 1966 ( see figure 1), and among the cast were Emin Kansu and İlber Ortaylı both of whom became eminent professors of medicine and history respectively.

In this volume of the “One Day” Irish writers series the extended papers of the contributors have been presented. In the first chapter Michael Pierse states that the ‘Decade Centenaries’ commemorating the very important changes in Ireland between 1912-1923 brought with it a series of new controversies. He draws attention to the fact that similar issues were also raised and debated in the immediate aftermath of the Irish Civil War ending in 1923. He states that Sean O’Casey also dealt with these issues in his ‘Dublin Trilogy’, namely, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*. Pierse, through a detailed analysis of *Juno and the Paycock* not only reconsiders the playwrights politics but also sheds light on the tensions reflected in this play and he emphasises the need for a reevaluation and reinterpretation of the plays retrospectively.

Ayşegül Yüksel, in the second, chapter argues that most of O’Casey’s characters are anti-heroes and that the playwright had the tendency to blend tragedy and comedy in his works. Yüksel through a detailed study of the ‘Dublin Trilogy’ illustrates how O’Casey’s realistic characters drawn from the lower class of Dublin during the Irish struggle for independence embody both tragic and comic aspects.

İbrahim Yerebakan, in the third chapter, reevaluates the significant themes and images such as civil war, guerrilla warfare, patriotism, ethnic nationalism, jingoism, and sectarian conflicts in O’Casey’s *The Shadow of a Gunman*. Yerebakan attempts to reevaluate what these themes and images signify, especially after the production of the plays in the light of more contemporary events.

Gülşen Sayın, in the fourth chapter which undertakes the analysis of O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars*, asserts that the playwright’s representation of the Easter Rising subverts the traditional technical and thematic norms of the national narratives of the previous Abbey plays and that by these means O’Casey aims to redefine Irish identity and Irish nationalism. She puts forth that he tries to achieve this through new themes and by employing an experimental dramatic technique. Sayın gives a detailed evaluation of the dramatic traditions of Irish drama which was shaped by the Abbey Theatre in order to shed light to how O’Casey deviated from the formerly set formula of the representations which led to the negative reception of these plays.

İmren Yelmiş, in the fifth chapter analyses O’Casey’s anti-war play *The Silver Tassie* in the light of disability studies. The play which deals with the psychological, social and economic impact of World War I on those who went to war in the specific case of the football hero Harry Heegan who joined the British army. Yelmiş presents in detail the psychological trauma Harry Heegan experiences in the aftermath of the war. In this process she deals with the discourse on normalcy and disability, and sets out to illustrate the dramatic function of disability as a metaphor for the condition of the World War I generation. Moreover, she emphasises that O’Casey provides the perspective of the disabled through the character Harry Heegan and hence fills an important gap that existed in Irish literature.

As a tradition of the “One Day” Irish writers series a chapter is always devoted to the translation/s of the writer’s work into Turkish. Hilal Erkazancı Durmuş in the final chapter deals with the translation of O’Casey’s works where she points out the importance of the stylistic features of O’Casey which are very functional in the

creation and delienation of his characters in the plays. She also underlines the importance of the social, cultural and historical references in the works of the playwright. Focusing on *The Shadow of a Gunman* Erkazancı Durmuş illustrates with specific examples how translators have rendered this play into Turkish for Turkish audiences/readers. Moreover, she points out the difficulties of translating for the stage which may require some sacrifices for the sake of performability. Additionally,in relation to the stylistic aspects of the characters' speeches which are highly funcional, she deals with the use and translation of malapropisms,pompous style, repetitions and dialect. Also she devotes a section to the translation of culture specific references.

I hope this volume will contribute to the enhancement of Irish studies by providing new approaches to and interpretation of the works of O'Casey and it will contribute to translation studies. Moreover, I hope it will provide an insight into the appreciation and reception of O'Casey in Turkey.

Burçin Erol  
May 2021



Figure 1. Sean O'Casey *Sağlık Yurdu*, (left to right) Emin Kansu, Işık Sakızoğlu, Ahmet Kurtaran, Bingül Gündes, and İlber Ortaylı. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi 50. Yıl Fotoğraf Sergisi* (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Hastaneleri Basımevi, 2017. p. 51)



## 1

**“Sacred Heart o’ Jesus, take away our hearts o’ stone, and give us hearts o’  
flesh!” Reconsidering the politics of O’Casey’s *Juno and the Paycock* in  
Ireland’s ‘Decade of Centenaries’**

**Michael Pierse**

Ireland’s ‘Decade of Centenaries’—a programme of events scheduled to commemorate the centenaries of seismic political changes in Ireland between 1912-1923—has brought with it a procession of political controversies. In shining a light on cherished myths, historical oversimplifications, vexed political debates, and still-evocative traumas, the ‘Decade’ has impacted powerfully on contemporary conversations about the past (see McGarry; Cauvin and O’Neill). Irish state commemorative practice, the legacies of Ireland’s partition, the prospect of the country’s reunification, and the social inequalities today that jar with the aspirations of the rebels who declared an Irish republic over one hundred years ago, have all been fiercely contested in recent public commentary. Concerns about historiographical revisionism and the teaching and framing of the period have been intensely argued too, with historians and politicians disagreeing, at times quite vociferously, over state-endorsed presentations of the past (e.g. Brophy). Such issues were also very emotive in the immediate aftermath of the Irish Civil War, which ended on 24 May 1923, when tensions in Ireland were high and the interpretation of recent events caused a great deal of consternation. They were dealt with compellingly in the plays of one of those who agonised intensely about the rights and wrongs of the previous decade, Seán O’Casey, who from 1923-1926 staged three plays that were controversial in their time and have remained in Irish and international theatres since. These are often termed his ‘Dublin trilogy’: *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), though he wrote other plays about Dublin in the period. In the trilogy works, he sought to interrogate the ideological narratives and totems of the Irish Free State, and it is salutary, as we approach the centenary the civil war—and no doubt another round of difficult ‘Decade’ debates—to reconsider them and the reactions they provoked then and since. This analysis, I will argue here, helps us reconsider not only the playwright’s own politics, but also the broader tensions in Irish historiography, its present-centredness and its political role over the past century. In exploring how one of these key O’Casey plays about the Irish Revolutionary Period (1916-1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1926), portrayed its political tensions, as well as how it and O’Casey’s *oeuvre* have been reinterpreted in

the shadow of further conflict in Ireland, we gain further insight into some of the key anxieties that still inform debates about the country's turbulent (and ongoing) decolonisation.

### Legacy

Though he spent the last three decades of his life outside of Ireland, O'Casey's legacy is profoundly influential in his country of origin to this day. As a political activist in the tumultuous late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century period of national cultural revival, he stirred incendiary debates and challenged cherished ideals. In this period of cultural efflorescence, the young SéanÓ Cathasaigh, Gaelicising his name as a gesture of decolonisation, played a prominent role in separatist and leftist movements, both cultural—in Gaelic sports, music, drama and language societies—and more straightforwardly political—in trade unionism and the Irish Citizens Army (ICA) that was set up to defend workers against state repression in 1913. If an avid joiner of cultural and political organisations in this period, he was, however, something of an outsider to Irish political events after he left the ICA in 1914, and more so from the late 1920s on, when he established himself in England. As a working-class autodidact whose exceptional talents took him away from poverty, his move away from direct political activism and into the theatre in the 1920s is perhaps unsurprising, but so too was his success; one of Ireland's most prolific playwrights at the time of his death in 1964, he was one of its most unlikely four decades earlier, coming to prominence only in his forties, following decades of poverty, ill-health and, when he could get it, menial labour. These experiences would, to varying degrees, inform all of his plays, problematising any easy division between O'Casey the activist and O'Casey the artist. However, it is undoubtedly the case that he became disenchanted in the 1920s with organisations he had joined and become a zealous advocate for in the previous decades. His departure from the ICA resulted from a bitter dispute over what he perceived as its drift toward bourgeois nationalism. After the Easter Rising of 1916 and as War of Independence commenced, however, he also wrote pamphlets and other literature in support of the cause of Irish freedom (see Murray 103-108). This enthusiasm for the insurrection did not last, of course. As 26 of Ireland's 32 counties gained freedom from British colonial rule in 1922, and set a more conservative political path than O'Casey had hoped for, he became an incessant critic of the fledgling Irish Free State's tyrannies and inequalities. An erstwhile republican activist (even joining the oath-bound, secret society, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, around 1905), he now earned a reputation as an acerbic critic of the emerging republic.

The extraordinary endurance of O'Casey's influence, as both a public intellectual in his times and a haunting critical voice after his death in 1964, most often centres on his trilogy. Given the breadth of his dramatic output (of more than twenty plays), this narrow focus on three works is telling: the later plays that sharply criticise the failures of the Irish Free State, then Republic of Ireland, are not very well known to the Irish public, though the trilogy works, which critique the violent period of its formation, are.<sup>1</sup> Through the particularly influential role of the trilogy as staples of the Irish education curriculum—to this day they feature regularly on prescribed curricula for state second-level examinations—O'Casey, albeit in limited form, became a formative influence on generations of Irish teenagers. The trilogy plays would also prove lucrative for Irish theatres, their repeated revivals sustaining an extraordinarily far-reaching legacy at home: between 1970 and 2012, there were more than 800 performances of individual

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<sup>1</sup>I have discussed at greater length elsewhere (Pierce 51-72).

trilogy plays at Ireland's most influential theatre, the Abbey Theatre Dublin (Moran 173). In the same period, there were only 380 performances of all other O'Casey plays (*ibid.*).

After his death in 1964, O'Casey's plays would become newly relevant for other reasons too: the conflict known as the 'Troubles' (1969-1998) commenced in the north of Ireland five years later, as demands for Catholic civil rights in the British-occupied six counties were met with sectarian and state violence, sparking a fresh Irish Republican Army (IRA) campaign against British rule. During the almost three-decades of warfare that followed, O'Casey's work in an earlier period of British-Irish conflict inevitably provided a lens through which many interpreted more recent events. For some, this meant that he could be relied upon for cautionary tales about the dangers of excessive nationalist sentimentality, 'myth-making' and militarism. During one of the most harrowing years of the new conflagration, Herbert Goldstone mused that "while as of this writing (summer 1972) the conflict in Northern Ireland hasn't reached the savage intensity of that of 1916-1922 in Southern Ireland, such an escalation remains possible. In that event the vision of the Dublin plays may take on a terrible, new urgency" (195). This urgency has of course impacted how the plays have been interpreted and used. As James Moran observes, from the onset of the conflict a range of thinkers drew parallels, "often somewhat spurious" (185), between O'Casey's work and events in Belfast and Derry. This impacted adaptation practices too, Tomás Mac Anna, for example, producing a version of *The Plough* that "gave Ulster accents to [its] Dublin Protestant characters [...] something that quickly became the theatrical norm, despite making little sense in the context of the play" (Moran 186). In this new environment, critics such as Seamus Deane, Joe Cleary, G. J. Watson and Declan Kiberd challenged an apparent anti-nationalist depoliticisation of Ireland's Revolutionary Period embedded in O'Casey's plays (see Moran 186-188). Watson crystallised the charge in his assessment of *Juno*: "The politics are a deformation of, and a threat to, the human, and O'Casey's suffering women are authorially endorsed mouthpieces of this view" (265). Given O'Casey's tendency in the trilogy to caricature or muzzle the more sophisticated threads of revolutionary republican thought, these charges certainly had merit; O'Casey frequently avoids articulating the more enlightened opinion of leftist republican friends such as Thomas Ashe. This omission is hard to fathom or forgive given his closeness to them. However, as we will see, *Juno*, like other O'Casey women, is hardly simply an 'authorially endorsed mouthpiece' who dismisses politics. Other scholars, such as Nicholas Grene and Ronan McDonald, have argued (see *Ibid.*) that O'Casey's portrayals of the politics of the period were more nuanced than some of these critics allowed. If Nora Clitheroe in *The Plough* tries to confine her husband to a vision of domestic harmony that shuts out the problems of the world, her later suffering and mental deterioration when that outside world breaks in, cast her aversion to politics as naïve and wrongheaded. As Grene notes of the trilogy, "the issue of gender is oversimplified in the traditional view of women as heroes, men anti-heroes" (Grene 125). McDonald agrees, and argues furthermore that there is "an underbelly of fatalism, even nihilism, beneath O'Casey's melioristic zeal, which strongly colours his trilogy and *The Silver Tassie*" (2002 88-89); if O'Casey wants to make the world a better place, his shock at what transpires after the uprising leaves him dispirited and confused. Out of this confusion emerges a compelling part of the plays, "the effect of dissonance, the tensions that emerge when the subterranean pessimism contradicts the overt humanistic fervour" (McDonald 95). O'Casey, McDonald shows, is far more complex and conflicted than some of his critics allow.

In nuancing the productive tensions of the trilogy, McDonald's approach undoubtedly advances our understanding of the plays. However, it makes too much

of O'Casey's disillusion, profound as it is, I will argue below. *Juno* is a play with a politically progressive and somewhat hopeful message, despite the break-up of the home and death of Johnny Boyle with which it ends. O'Casey's trilogy has anyhow also continually inspired a more hopeful politics in others, his excoriations of the failures of Irish elites post-Partition frequently resonating with those advancing leftist arguments much later. Christina Reid's play *Joyriders* (1986), for example, commences with alienated youths in 1980s Belfast reacting to O'Casey's *The Shadow of a Gunman*, which they have just seen in a local theatre. Like O'Casey's characters in the play, they too live in poverty and feel ostracised by middle-class Belfast and the theatre, a forbidding space, in which they may not be "good enough to mingle with the fur-coat brigade"(106). *The Shadow*, however, provokes a discussion among them about working-class life and republican armed struggle in the contemporary moment, inspiring critical analysis of the constitutional status quo of "people what are kep' down by the yoke of British imperialism" and indeed of the more commonplace iniquities of capitalism, "the children of the Divis Flats [...] Among the rats, among the clocks / And breathing in asbestos" (107, 111). Here, O'Casey's lasting relevance, which will no doubt be remarked once more during the trilogy's centenary years, distinguishes O'Casey as one of most important public intellectuals in the past century of Irish life. I would like to suggest here that these plays deserve greater consideration as radical interventions in the revolutionary politics of his times. Rather than discouraging revolution, or depoliticising the Irish struggle for freedom, *Juno* in particular represents a Marxist critique in the cause of revolutionary political change. Though O'Casey is undoubtedly guilty of oversimplifying and lampooning his political opponents among the rebels, his critiques are subtended by a sense that, socially, the rebellion has failed to go far enough.

O'Casey enjoys a popular reputation as not only an antagonist of military action, but sometimes indeed also as a sceptic toward all political dogmas and -isms, a perception problematised by his earlier membership of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Irish Citizen Army (albeit he became estranged from both), and his later support for the Soviet Union and the British war effort in the Second World War. By the end of the twentieth century, one of his most informed critics, Bernice Schrank, marvelled that "there is a significant body of critical thought that characterizes O'Casey as a pacifist", though any serious probing of his works reveals his "attitude toward violence and war is pragmatic" (1995 75). Such characterisations nonetheless have a stubborn endurance. Often the perception of O'Casey as a man utterly opposed to armed revolution derives from his lampooning of preening men and their enthusiasm for war, and his corresponding elevation of gentler, kinder characters, often women, in the plays. Walter Starkey, writing in 1938, opined that "O'Casey is always on the side of woman, for he is a pacifist, and he sees that in war there is no glory—nothing but the suffering of the poor and the weak" (159). This perception is easily problematised, for example by Bessie Burgess in *The Plough*. Despite her generosity to the distraught Nora late in the play, this British loyalist woman is also among O'Casey's most hectoring and jingoistic supporters of war. At other times, O'Casey is viewed as championing those characters who are averse to politics altogether. David Krause argued that O'Casey represented, in the fecklessness of his most-well known shirker of burdens, Captain Boyle, "the uninhibited pleasures of a clowning anti-hero" (78). But this inference of something attractively liberated in Boyle's aversion to the serious matters of his household and times is, as we shall see, unsustainable. More generally, O'Casey's moral abhorrence of war is reductively conflated with a pacifist political outlook. Gabriel Fallon, writing in 1965, correctly noted O'Casey's expressed distaste for guns and refusal to take part in the 1916 Rising (55-57), but was wrong to conclude



that *The Plough and the Stars* expressed a simply “pacifist point of view” (72). C. Desmond Greaves’ more astute commentary on the tense ambivalence in that play—an “essential conflict of mixed loyalties, for which there is no solution”, tallies more convincingly with O’Casey’s art and life; he had, after all, been Secretary of the ICA, and “his writings about [the 1916 revolutionary] Thomas Ashe leave no doubt that he approved of the insurrection. Friends and colleagues of many years were out risking their lives” (3). Some critics have viewed O’Casey’s politics as following a neat evolution of stages in this regard. Philip G. Hill, writing in 1991, develops a version of the argument that is in marked opposition to Greaves’. Here, Hill equates O’Casey criticism of the insurgents with a general denunciation of political violence of any hue:

[O’Casey’s] personal experience of the degrading poverty of the Dublin slums converted him to Marxism and to vigorous nationalism, but his disillusioning encounters with labor leaders and freedom fighters made him sceptical of the success of these movements. He drifted away from the strong Protestant orientation of his childhood but became a determined pacifist. (253)

Such oversimplifications are common in public perceptions of O’Casey’s work, partly because, though not a pacifist, O’Casey is indeed eminently quotable against political violence. Seamus Shields, of *The Shadow of a Gunman*, is invoked repeatedly during the Troubles’, his disdain, for “the gunmen blowin’ about dyin’ for the people, when it’s the people that is dyin’ for the gunmen” (1998 40). He is quoted, for example, by a bishop delivering a homily in the aftermath of a loyalist massacre of Catholics in 1993, and again, three years later, by a prominent Irish politician inveighing against the IRA.<sup>2</sup> There is little doubt that O’Casey, were he alive, would share these men’s horror at the loss of life during the most recent British-Irish political conflict. However, we ought not conclude that he was simply opposed to revolutionary armed struggle in Ireland. In 2018, more comically perhaps, a lecture entitled “Evolution of a Pacifist – Sean O’Casey and Buddhism” was held at the Dublin Buddhist Centre; “though not a Buddhist himself, [O’Casey] lived by the Buddhist principle of non-violence”, an advertisement proclaimed.<sup>3</sup> Here we find an O’Casey who insisted on the “futility of violence to achieve political aims”.<sup>4</sup> This must have been an odd Stalinist indeed. Though the talk itself makes a valiant effort to persuade that O’Casey saw the light of pacifism in the 1920s, beginning with his depiction of Minnie Powell in *The Shadow*, the O’Casey who joined the IRB, took a prominent position in the ICA and later argued with his son Niall, as they took opposing sides following the brutal Soviet suppression of an uprising in Budapest in 1956 (Seán backing the USSR), sits uneasily with such claims. He had some regard for pacifists—especially the most famous Irish pacifist of the Revolutionary Period, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington—but as Robert G. Lowery noted, O’Casey “did not share Sheehy-Skeffington’s pacifism [...though] he undoubtedly respected it” (80). O’Casey’s adherence to the achievements of the Russian Revolution of 1917, and his parallel respect for the Irish revolutionaries of 1916, undoubtedly sits in tension with his fierce denunciations of what he viewed

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<sup>2</sup>Bishop Edward Daly, following the Greysteel massacre, quoted by John Mullin ‘Inbetween are the innocent. At times you can’t go on’, *The Guardian*, November 1, 1993, p. 1; Senator David Norris, Seanad Éireann debate, Tuesday 20 February 1996, 146: 7. Accessed online [1 August 2020] <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/1996-02-20/speech/7/>;

<sup>3</sup><https://thebuddhistcentre.com/dublin/evolution-pacifist-sean-ocasey-and-buddhism>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=LOC3635>; an audio recording of the talk, by Maitrikaya, is also available on the website.



as a failed revolution—the failure of Ireland's 26-county Free State to live up to the social aspects of its founding ideals. Complicating things, there are also ebbs and flows to his views of the rebels, even those he criticised most bitinglly; while his ridicule of Patrick Pearse's rhetoric in *The Plough* is widely known, less so is the history of O'Casey's anxieties about this depiction. These James Moran meticulously charts, concluding: "*The Plough and the Stars* certainly does ridicule Pearse, but the playwright appears to have almost immediately regretted this, and repeatedly offered a mea culpa in later work, writing, for example, a 1942 article that describes the martyr as a 'great heart', a 'great humanist', and a 'sad loss to Ireland'" (57). There is undoubted vacillation here, but it reveals how O'Casey, even at his most critical, is beset by contradictory feelings about the Rising. *Juno and the Paycock* signals a failed revolution, but it does so neither in the service of pacifism nor fatalism.

### **Bodies and Minds**

Whatever his vacillations, O'Casey's socialism remains a constant during his playwrighting career. Schrank argued some decades ago that, "while there is growing acceptance of O'Casey's radical reinvention of the stage, there is less willingness to deal with O'Casey's ideological commitments"; critics who attempted to grapple with those commitments are "lonely voices" (1996 11). Significant scholarship in this regard has emerged since Schrank expressed these views, with research by McDonald (2002), Murray (2004) and Moran (2013) providing sophisticated analyses of O'Casey's political views. However, evidently, reductive conceptions of his works as simply humanist or pacifist have a stubborn endurance, partly because the trilogy articulates a range of perspectives that can too easily be cherry-picked and taken as the author's final word. It is easy to mistake O'Casey's focus on the ordinary citizen for a domesticated humanism that dissents from the politics of the streets in revolutionary Ireland. His critiques of Empire and capitalism were no doubt firmly grounded in a historical materialism focussed on the realities of everyday exploitation and corporeal suffering, which can often appear at odds with the radical politics of the time, as articulated by one of O'Casey's most famous mothers, Juno Boyle, as she introduces her rebel son:

MRS BOYLE. Come on, Johnny, till I introduce you to Mr. Bentham.  
[To BENTHAM] My son, Mr Bentham; he's after goin' through the mill. He was only a chiselur of a Boy Scout in Easter Week, when he got hit in the hip; and his arm was blew off in the fight in O'Connell Street.  
[JOHNNY comes in.] Here he is, Mr Bentham; Mr Bentham, Johnny. None can deny he done his bit for Irelan', if that's goin' to do him any good.

JOHNNY [*boastfully*]. I'd do it agen, ma, I'd do it agen; for a principle's a principle.

MRS BOYLE. Ah, you lost your best principle, me boy, when you lost your arm; them's the only sort o' principles that's any good to a workin' man (1998 93).

Given the rhetorical power of Juno's retort, it is tempting to deduce in this passage a simplistic dismissal of abstract ideas that belittles the hazardous pursuit of revolutionary change. O'Casey was critical of socialists who spent too much time on abstractions, and could be admirably self-critical in this regard. His preachy and comically grandiose character, Covey, in *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), is no doubt a partial acknowledgement of his and some of his comrades' overzealous

badgering of others in spreading the word of Marx. Covey's pompous lectures to fellow slum dwellers, on such matters as "Jenersky's *Thesis on the Origin, Development, an' Consolidation of the Evolutionary Idea of the Proletariat*" (1998 186), accentuate the distance between his words and deeds in the play. His verbal promotion of solidarity and comradeship—the business of "buildin' th' barricades to fight for a Workers' Republic" (170)—jars with his physical cowardice and prudishness when he is confronted with a local worker, a prostitute, perhaps the most destitute among the working class:

ROSIE [*throwing off her shawl on to the counter, and showing an exemplified glad neck, which reveals a good deal of a white bosom*]. If y'ass Rosie, it's heart breakin' to see a young fella thinkin' on anything, or admirin' anything, but silk thransparent sockin's showin' off the shape of a little lassie's legs!

THE COVEY, [*frightened, moves a little away*].

ROSIE [*following on*]. Out in th' park in th' shade of a warm summery evenin', with your little darlin' bridie to be, kissin' an' cuddlin' [*she tries to put her arm around his neck*], kissin' an' cuddlin', ay?

THE COVEY [*frightened*]. Ay, what are you doin'? None o' that, now; none o' that. I've something else to do besides shinannickin' after Judies! [...] I don't want to have any meddlin' with a lassie like you! (186-7)

*The Plough* premiered in the Abbey Theatre, a stone's throw from Monto, Dublin's notorious red-light district, where "lassies like" Rosie were plentiful, yet the theatre and this world of misery a kilometre away were, socially, worlds apart. In this mischievously reflexive nod to the suitability of such subjects to the "National Theatre" stage (or for the "fur-coat brigade" of Reid's piece above), O'Casey hints at whose experiences are routinely silenced in the nation's public sphere. However, if Covey fails to match words and deeds, it is far from clear that O'Casey is dismissing his call to build barricades "to fight for a Workers' Republic". Rather, once more, it seems that decolonising Ireland is failing to go far enough: at the very moment it uproots English rule, it is mired in its coloniser's Victorian morality, repeating its injustices. If republican revolutionary Johnny undervalues his lost arm, and the socialist Covey recoils from Rosie's exposed body, O'Casey suggests that there is little real comfort for poor people in the apparently radical ideologies that these men preach if they do not result in fundamental changes—if they do not reach working-class bodies. O'Casey repeatedly juxtaposes the elevated and the lowly, the abstract and the material, the comic and the tragic, to bring such inconsistencies to the fore, but it is always in the service of a radical political agenda.

### **Class and national struggle**

*Juno* is set in 1922, the year of the foundation of the Irish Free State, which came into being on 6 December that year following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty one year earlier. While the Treaty emerged from a truce that ended the Irish War of Independence (21 January 1919 – 9 July 1921), it would itself usher in a new, vicious period of conflict, the Irish Civil War, in which Ireland's liberation army fragmented into two opposing factions. One side supported the new Irish state and its compromise agreement, negotiated under threat of renewed warfare from Britain. The other rejected the Treaty, mainly on the grounds that it allowed Britain to continue to occupy six of Ireland's 32 counties. As with many of O'Casey's families, the Boyles occupy a liminal space in these political events: Johnny has

been injured in the anti-colonial war and, as we later discover, is allegedly implicated in the brutality of the Civil War, but his family is more routinely preoccupied with everyday survival and domestic matters than they are with political events in the streets.

Even their domestic life, however, analogises the action outside, suggesting that, notwithstanding the relative safety of the home, political realities are ever-present. The play's plot revolves around the impoverished Boyles' unlikely discovery that they are to be made beneficiaries of a significant bequest from an estranged cousin. This unexpected windfall echoes the euphoria of a country basking in the glory of its recent achievement, a measure of political freedom from Britain. News of the will is delivered by Charles Bentham, a schoolteacher with aspirations to become a solicitor, his social mobility from lower to upper middle class hinting at the arriviste class of politicians that simultaneously delivers the good news of a new dispensation to the Irish public. But Bentham, and by implication those politicians who herald 'Irish freedom', is an incompetent and immoral fraud: his failure to properly process the Boyle benefactor's will results in the family losing their fortune, and his affectations of charm and good manners are belied by a second revelation, later in the play, that he has made the Boyle daughter, Mary, pregnant, before absconding to England. The Boyles' brief fantasy of grandeur was nothing more than a sham; the high hopes roused by decolonisation, declared by the national bourgeoisie, one infers, were products of naivety on one side and mendacity on the other. In hinging its plot on the betrayal of a working-class family by a middle-class man, whom they have come to respect—or in Mary's case, love—*Juno* indicates the class politics behind the foundation of this state. The Irish working-class has given too much heed to bourgeois nationalist leaders. That the Boyle family's descent is quickened by their imprudent borrowing and excessive consumption on the strength of the bequest indicates an Ireland that has been too easily carried away by promises and dreams. Excessive dreaming in politics risks ignoring the hard realities of political economy. This, then, is a Marxist message, which rejects the 'freedom' offered by the prospect of an alliance between proletariat and bourgeoisie, O'Casey echoing here the assertion by V. I. Lenin, who died in the year of *Juno's* first production, that "there is no middle course" of class harmony between "either bourgeois or socialist ideology" (1987 [1901] 82). Mary, the worker, and Bentham, the bourgeois, were never a realistic union.

The fantasy of the middle course is the result of being too susceptible to fanciful ideas and too insensible to fundamental realities. Symbolism of this tendency is apparent right from the outset in *Juno*, in which metaphysical and physical are symbolically counterposed. A picture of Christ's mother, the Virgin Mary, below which is "a crimson bowl in which a floating votive light is burning" (67), takes pride of place in the Boyle family living room. Set against this mystical, idealised Mary, is a real one, *Juno's* daughter. This contrast between the celestial/ideal and the earthly/fallible extends throughout the play. O'Casey frames Ireland as a country at a crossroads, caught between its 'Celtic Twilight' postcolonial obsession with an idealised, prelapsarian self (the antidote to centuries of epistemic violence that subtended English supremacism) and its practical duty to the bodies and minds of its citizens. He inscribes this narrative into (the earthly) Mary's first movements in the play. In the opening stage directions, she is a "well-made and good-looking girl of twenty two" pulled between conflicting forces: like Ireland, she is preoccupied with image, her first action "arranging her hair before a tint mirror perched on the table" (67). However, "when she isn't gazing into the mirror" (67), Mary is occupied with more practical matters; she glances at the morning paper, the violent consequences of political upheaval therein occupying her thoughts. There are further dualities in her character that suggest a national

parallel—Mary is an emerging autodidact, with the potential of reaching upwards, to knowledge, but she in danger, also, of being dragged downward by the poverty about her:

*Two forces are working in her mind – one, through the circumstances of her life, pulling her back; the other, through the influence of books she has read, pushing her forward. The opposing forces are apparent in her speech and her manners, both of which are degraded by her environment, and improved by her acquaintance – slight though it be – with literature. (68)*

Here, the symbolism of conflicting forces—the degradations of poverty versus the improving influences of Culture, inward-looking vanity set against outward-looking worldliness—suggests an epochal national conjuncture. As Frantz Fanon observed, colonialism “turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (210). Ireland’s Literary Revival set about reversing this process through a recovery, celebration and reinvention of forgotten historical greatness. Mary’s specular self-regard is akin to that of Christy Mahon, in J. M. Synge’s play *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), where Mahon gazes in a mirror and suddenly, like revivalist Ireland, sees beauty where he once recognised only ugliness and shame. But Ireland, like Mary, is in danger of letting this vanity eclipse the hard realities and pragmatic choices entailed by bringing that nation into being. It, too, has been damaged by deprivation, but is ennobled by its rich culture, of which it has, as yet, an imperfect acquaintance (“*slight though it be*”). At a critical juncture, a sort of pause in its troubled history—as indicated by the “alarm clock lying on its face” (67) on the Boyle mantle shelf—the nation must stop worshipping images and instead choose a future rooted in realities. Mary’s conflicted character inevitably nods, then, to the ‘Mother Ireland’ trope in Irish nationalist literature, whereby a woman personifies the nation—Yeats and Gregory’s *Kathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) being a classic example in theatre. But O’Casey argues the inverse to his theatrical predecessors, who conjured Mother Ireland as a spectral visitor who called Irish men to the higher plane or martyrdom in the national cause; *Juno* beseeches the Irish to live, strive and sacrifice for the real mothers of Ireland rather than an imagined one.

If Johnny is too worried about the painted and perfect Virgin Mary on the wall to care about the women in his life, Ireland’s leaders likewise have their heads too much in the clouds to see the deprivation in their ‘home’. For O’Casey, corporeality is a key theme. He stresses, for example, how ingrained the class struggle is in his characters’ lives, indeed even in their appearances, for as he writes in the stage directions on *Juno Boyle*,

*her face has now assumed that look which ultimately settles down upon the faces of the women of the working-class: a look of listless monotony and harassed anxiety, blending with an expression of mechanical resistance. Were circumstances favourable, she would probably be a handsome, active and clever woman. (68)*

Imperialism and capitalism impact the human body and mind, as does the war that results in Johnny’s wounding and the death of his neighbour, Robbie Tancred, an anti-Treaty republican recently executed by Irish Free State forces. O’Casey’s later expressionistic depiction of war’s dehumanising barbarity in *The Silver Tassie* is rooted through this symbolism in *Juno*. In the later play’s expressionistic second act, soldiers on the battlefields of France appear mostly without names. They are later also referred to by number in a hospital that cares for those who return maimed. In *Juno*, society’s callous debasement of male combatants is suggested in

the gruesomely clinical register of a newspaper report on Mrs Tancred's executed son: "seven wounds he had – one enterin' the neck, with an exit wound beneath the left shoulder-blade; another in the left breast penetratin' the heart, an' ..." (68). This is a society "losin' all [its] feelin's" (68), as Tancred's erstwhile comrade, Johnny, suggests. *Juno* portrays the politics of the civil war as too preoccupied with the abstract, too little concerned with the practicalities of human affairs.

However, this political vision is by no means *against* politics. Rather, it illustrates that, for the Irish people, the politics of the present is failing. In Act I, Juno chides Mary for her staunch trade unionism, as Mary goes on strike from her work place after a fellow employee is sacked in a case of victimisation. While Mary had not much liked her sacked co-worker, she is unwavering in her support for the union's action, for "a principle's a principle" (70). For Juno, this loyalty is folly: "When the employers sacrifice wan victim, the Trades Unions go wan better be sacrificin' a hundred" (70), she quips. Given O'Casey's staunch leftist politics, it is unthinkable that Mary's implacable solidarity is not the more admirable sentiment here; only a decade earlier, he had taken a leading role in a militia set up to defend trade unions, and if he left that organisation in a blazing row, his reasons for leaving had nothing to do with going soft on trade union principles. This imperils our vision of Juno as "O'Casey's most memorable defender of and fighter for the values of human life and love" (Blake 73). However, whereas Johnny later repeats his sister's insistence that "a principle's a principle" (93), O'Casey's depiction of the Boyle son's more abstract version of principles suggests that his Mary's words echo hollowly in her brother's mouth. The contrast between Johnny's damaged body and his neurotic fixation on candles under images of the Virgin Mary and St Anthony (72) underlines this reading. His sister's adherence to her beliefs is worldly and grounded, directed to the protection of co-workers, and, later in the play, to caring for her child. As with O'Casey's dreams of a workers' republic, her hopes for Irish men, including the brother who stigmatises and rejects her, are ultimately thwarted by those for whom principles are easily forgotten. Mary's beau, Bentham, like those selling the Treaty, turns out to be a charlatan; Mary's other potential suitor, the trade unionist Jerry Devine, is too pliable to push the proletarian cause. He is O'Casey's caricature of contemporaneous trade unionists who had arguably, by the mid-1920s, "squandered an opportunity to influence the national revolution and the state" (O'Connor Lysaght 65). Here, the socialist playwright again allegorises the choices facing 'Mother Ireland' in a seminal period of transition. 'Pregnant' with the seeds of a new society, Mary, like Ireland, is faced with the prospect of hitching her future to the visions of various vested interests.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, there is Bentham, a theosophist like Yeats, whose apparently spiritual bent belies far more material motivations. Bentham is a man with big plans, turning from teaching to a more lucrative career. But between bungling and hypocrisy, he makes a mess of his chances with Mary, botching the legal document underpinning the Boyles' new dispensation and running to England when matters turn sour. This is surely O'Casey's comment on the new Free State establishment that turned to Britain for help once the Treaty it negotiated had split the rebel forces in two (hinting at the Free State Army's much-criticised use of English weapons to suppress anti-Treaty rebels). Bentham's lofty, mystical commitment to "an all-pervading Spirit – the Life-Breath" (105) is sardonically exposed as insincere when he abandons the woman in whom his own budding "Life-Breath" is growing. This cruel turn is foreshadowed earlier when Bentham opines, following Tancred's death, that "the only way to deal

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<sup>5</sup>This plot device in *Juno* was adopted also in another O'Casey play, *Nannie's Night Out* (1924), in which a female shop owner, again personifying Ireland, is courted by three competing males who represent the vested interests vying to take over the new state (which is here represented as a shop).

with a mad dog is to destroy him” (116). Bentham’s transformation from gentle theosophy to ruthlessness allegorises a revolution that began with Celtic Twilight poet-rebels and ended in brutality and betrayal.

Mary’s political bent, if rigidly moral and inclined to make trouble for herself and others, is also preferable to the cosy politics personified by her alternative suitor and fellow trade unionist. Devine, from early in the play, seems to presage the less radical and more conformist labour movement mainstream that would indeed begin to establish itself in the Irish Free State (see Puirseil):

*He is about twenty-five, well set, active and earnest. He is a type, becoming very common now in the Labour Movement, of a mind knowing enough to make the mass of his associates, who know less, a power, and too little to broaden that power for the benefit of all. (Juno 72)*

Post 1920s O’Casey plays, such as *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* (1949) and *Figuro in the Night* (1961), would express grave concern at the Catholic Church’s influence in Irish public life, and Jerry’s first action in the play, to pass on a message from a priest about a potential job opportunity for the Captain (the Boyle *paterfamilias*), hints at the emerging power of Rome in the new state. It furthermore suggests that the labour movement may end up restricted by its subservience to such forces—as a mere ‘messenger boy’ for Ireland’s elites. Again, O’Casey is prophetic; decades later, Irish Labour Party Leader Brendan Corish would declare: “I am an Irishman second; I am a Catholic first [...] If the Hierarchy gives me any direction with regard to Catholic social teaching, or Catholic moral teaching, I accept without qualification in all respects the teaching of the Hierarchy and the Church to which I belong” (DáilÉireann Debate, 29 April 1953 para. 119).<sup>6</sup> The contradiction between the politics of the workers’ republic envisaged by Revolutionary Period socialists and that of the actual Free State they helped to found comes to a head later in the play. Devoted to Mary, though his love seems unrequited, Jerry returns in the final act to try to woo her once more. He is initially hopeful and superficially charming, but then repulsed by the revelation of her pregnancy to another man. Jerry’s love, just professed, is hastily withdrawn, his idealist vision of socialism—“with Labour, Mary, humanity is above everything; we are the leaders in a fight for a new life” (140)—undermined by his speedy retreat from the new life inside her. This humanity, Mary blasts, “is just as narrow as the humanity of the others” (141). For the new Boyle baby, as for the new Ireland, both the upwardly mobile middle class and the disappointingly conformist leaders of labour prove themselves poor founding fathers.

In an unlikely but satisfying twist, it is Juno, despite her earlier reticence about ‘principles’, whose unbending commitment to those around her goes further than that of either man when she takes responsibility for the care of the next generation. Despite O’Casey’s reliance on the Mother Ireland trope, and its conventional corollary, the male saviour, to relay the message allegorised by the Jerry-Bentham-Mary love triangle, there is a variety of feminist-socialist politics in this play, which Juno articulates near the end when she bravely takes Mary and her grandchild under her wing. O’Casey was writing at a time of cataclysmic and extreme militarism that produced an epochal hardening of gender polarisation and performance. This emerged from a “naïve self-assurance that had lain behind the Christian imperialism and militarism of the prewar decades”, in which men’s roles as soldiers was key (Wolffe 247). O’Casey’s 1929 Dublin play, *The Silver Tassie*,

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<sup>6</sup>If it sometimes “made noises of a socialist kind”, the Labour Party was in general “moderate, reformist, and, in cultural terms, conservative” (K. Theodore Hoppen 217).



would denounce the effects of this climate on hegemonic masculinities, most strikingly in its symbolism of war as 'sport', its protagonist Harry Heegan marching to the trenches of the First World War, as a vivacious young man, tellingly dressed half in army-issued khaki, half in his soccer-captain kit. He returns physically maimed and heart-broken in the third act. Harry's 'manly' pursuits mangle him, mind and body. When he and his comrades prepare to leave for battle in Act I, they drink wine in an eerily ritualised manner that amplifies this theme by mixing religion, sport and toxic, militarist masculinity. The tassie they won playing football is held aloft, as a priest holds a chalice during the Catholic mass, the soldiers' final pre-battle scenes approaching a darkly sacrilegious rite. Harry describes the bottle of wine they drink as one of his "wine-virgins" "stripp'd to the skin" (1929-34). In an odd, ugly turn of phrase, he effusively describes their drinking of the wine as a "rape", conducted "in a last hot moment before we set out to kiss the guns" (1929-34). Contemporaneous hegemonic masculinity—a cavalier, sporting, Christian militarism<sup>7</sup>—is both hideous and absurd. The transformed, wheelchair-bound Harry of the later acts, a half-paralysed malcontent, tellingly mangles the silver tassie he once prized. For O'Casey, this period of warfare had perverted Christianity, corrupted manhood, and pointed to the need for a model of social organisation in which values more commonly associated with women held sway.

In *Juno*, the seeds of these scenes in the later play are discernible in O'Casey's representation of a comparable ideological crisis. Johnny is devoted to the image of the Virgin Mary, but his worship of the idealised mother is in stark contrast to his treatment of real mothers: he blames Juno for her husband's recklessness—"you're to blame yourself for a gradle of it – givin' him his own way in everything, an' never assin' to check him, not matter what he done" (138)—and shows no empathy for his sister who "went astray" (137). Mary reads Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1882) and *The Wild Duck* (1884), plays that deal with issues of moral hypocrisy, women's oppression, and the dangers of excessive idealism. Her comically ignorant father assumes, from their titles, that these are books "for chiselurs" (Dublin vernacular for children; 85), his misapprehension indicating his failures of perception and those of men more generally, not least in terms of Ibsen's themes. It also draws a parallel between the feckless father and his political activist son: neither understand the fundamental realities of what is happening in their home. "The Captain", despite his grand title, is a deceitful, workshy layabout who runs up family debts that he knows he cannot pay. He also lets his wife shoulder the responsibility for keeping the household financially afloat. Spending much of his time hiding in pubs with his pal Joxer, Boyle avoids the reality of his daughter's betrayal and his son's peril. If he initially has the wisdom to refuse "to be beholden to any o' the clergy" (87), his denunciations of their historical social and political role in Ireland sound suspiciously like convenient excuses for refusing to accept the job that Jerry has secured from a priest. Boyle and Joxer, like Ibsen's characters in *The Wild Duck*, live in dream-worlds oblivious to the material necessities of their families' lives. Boyle regales Joxer with fabricated stories of his experiences as a sailor, while the everyday needs of his family – in this instance heating – are pointedly ignored:

**Boyle** Them was the days, Joxer [...]. Sailin' from the Gulf o' Mexico to the Antanartic Ocean [...] an' it blowed, an' blowed – blew is the right word, Joxer, but blowed is what the sailors use . . .

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<sup>7</sup> As Robert H. MacDonald observes, "the metaphor of war as sport – and its corollary, sport as war – was a commonplace in late nineteenth-century upper middle-class British culture" (1994: 20).

**Joxer** Aw, it's a darlin' word, a daarin' word.

**Boyle** An', as it blowed an' blowed, I often looked up at the sky an' assed meself the question – what is the stars, what is the stars?

**Voice of Coal Vendor** Any blocks, coal-blocks; blocks, coal-blocks!

**Joxer** Ah, that's the question, that's the question – what is the stars?

(88)

Words take precedence over deeds, abstractions over realities. These men live in the gutter, but are perhaps too fixated on the stars.

The link to Ireland's political 'captains' is made apparent in Boyle's comic invocation of contemporary political rhetoric to describe how he intends to establish greater control over his wife: "Today, Joxer, there's goin' to be issued a proclamation be me, establishin' an independent Republic, an' Juno'll have to take an oath of allegiance" (89-90). These words, which echo the political register of the time, are little more than bombast; the men in fact fear Juno, and panic, presently, when she arrives home early from work and might discover them idling. By implication, the ideals enunciated by politicians who proclaim a republic that will cherish "all of the children of the nation equally" (Proclamation of the Irish Republic, 1916<sup>8</sup>), ring hollow in the tenements of the Free State. O'Casey implies that the apparently revolutionary Ireland led by men, which has sent the British Empire packing, has, in neglecting to develop a revolutionary class analysis, failed its poor. It is telling that when First Neighbour risibly enthuses that they will bury the fallen young *republican*, Tancred, "like a *King*" (my emphasis), that Tancred's mother rejoins that she will "go on livin' like a pauper" (115). Physical deprivation—whether Johnny's lost arm or Mrs Tancred's impoverished body—are held in contrast to the young men's political ideals, which are anyhow imperfectly understood by people who would make of a republican a 'king'. If, in the new Ireland, as in the Boyle household, one can easily get carried away with imagined riches, the punishing fall back to reality will be all the more traumatic for generations to come. As Juno suggests, "when we got the makin' of our own laws I thought we'd never stop to look behind us, but instead of that we never stopped to look before us!" (104).

In Act I, Juno wonders aloud about the merits of political action, but her son's sacrifice for Irish freedom is, after all, the first thing she mentions when introducing him to Betham. If her comments at this point express disdain for idealism, there is even some subtle irony in how she articulates them. Where she reproaches Johnny that "no bread's a lot betther than half a loaf" (93)—alluding to the anti-Treaty refusal to accept a partial retreat of British forces—she suggests settling for an imperfect but safer situation is better than fighting for something more. However, this sentiment is ironised by the fact that her own settling for "half a loaf" is far from satisfactory; her subjection to Boyle's poor performance as a husband, provider and father is hardly conducive to a stable domestic status quo long term, as the calamitous events of the play will illustrate. Juno continues to indulge Boyle, serving his food and working for his upkeep, even as she attempts to change his ways, but as in Nora Clitheroe's self-deluded efforts to cultivate domestic bliss in *The Plough*, a poorly judged settlement ends in disaster. The *deus ex machine* of the unexpected windfall temporarily suspends antagonisms in the Boyle household and fleetingly suggests that the era of settling and striving is over. A lacklustre paterfamilias is restored to power, if not by dint of industry: "I'm mather now, an' I'm goin' to remain mather" (98). Yet again like the newly Free

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<sup>8</sup>Available online [accessed 1 August 2020]  
<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/pir24416.htm>



State, this poor state of affairs—in which the least deserving becomes the “masther”—puts the pompous, lazy and mendacious in charge. As a “mastherpiece of the Free State country” (126), Boyle’s personification of the new regime is further indicated by the comic *volte face* of his newfound respect for the clergy—“I don’t like any one to talk disrespectful of Father Farrell” (99)—which parallels how Irish elites cosied up to an increasingly supportive Church, which had previously had an ambiguous relationship with Irish republicans (Ferriter 180,188). A revisionist process is taking place in Irish political life, O’Casey indicates. Just as Boyle, who has recently lambasted priests for denouncing Fenians and generally having “too much power over the people” (87), now risibly characterises the clergy as “always in the van of the fight for Ireland’s freedom” (100), the erstwhile revolutionaries governing the new state facilitate a convenient airbrushing of tensions with former antagonists. False inheritance nods once more to false freedom, to a political structure built on lies, and the ignorance of harsh realities only postpones inevitable crisis—as Joxer puts it, “where ignorance ‘s bliss ‘tis folly to be wise” (100). Boyle imagines that the outside world of politics can now be ignored: “we’ve nothin’ to do with these things, one way or t’other” (116). However, just as Nora in *The Plough* is ultimately victim to her belief that she can shut out the outside world, the Boyles cannot insulate themselves from reality.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, when Juno finally faces her reality, leaves her husband and declares, rather radically, that Mary’s child will have “what’s far better” than the classic nuclear family, “two mothers” (146), her abandonment of the domestic space is not the turning away from the world of politics, dominated by men, which it might initially seem. Rather, it signals her embrace of a politics that puts the reproduction of life in the immediate, present and future (symbolised by Mary’s baby) above the idealised image of virtue to which her son has dedicated his life (as symbolised by his devotion to the Virgin Mary) and the idealised Victorian image of womanhood serving men, which Juno rejects when she abandons Boyle to “furrage for himself” (145). Here, the angel of the house breaks out of the domestic space, choosing to care for Mary her daughter rather than the idealised Mary on the wall: “it’s nearly time we had a little less respect for the dead, an’ a little more regard for the livin’” (119). The votive light under the picture of the Mother of God tellingly “gleams more redly than ever” (122) in the play’s final act, as the real Boyle mothers are about to be abandoned by their men, “The Captain” blind drunk in the final scenes, having blamed Mary’s plight on “her readin’” (134), and Johnny calling for Mary to “be dhriven out o’ th’ house she’s brought disgrace on” (135). The Ireland that will ostensibly put the family at the centre of its new social order (and will later enshrine the family in its Constitution as “the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society” (Article 41.1.1, *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, 1937)), is in fact centred on a callous, patriarchal moral order. Boyle selfishly worries that news of Mary’s child will “be bellows’d all over th’ disthict [...] an’ whenever I’m seen they’ll whisper, ‘That’s the father of Mary Boyle that had th’ kid be th’ swank she used to go with; d’ye know, d’ye know?’” (135) His concern with what others think of him is emblematic of a politics focussed on perceptions; men fighting over their public image. But Juno in the end abandons this moral order in favour of a new one centred on the cultivation of life: “we’ll work together for the sake of the baby” (145). Eamon Hughes observes “the gendered opposition as usually seen in O’Casey’s work: the women suffer and endure while the men indulge in bluster and rhetoric which is either futile or fatal” (153). But these women do more than endure—they

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<sup>9</sup>See Nicholas Grene, who draws our attention to the poverty of arguments that simply see O’Casey’s women as embodiments of depoliticised domestic harmony: Grene, *The Politics of Irish Drama*, p. 148.

upend the social order. More fundamentally aligned with O'Casey's radical socialism, his conviction that the sacrifices of the War of Independence must deliver social change for Ireland's most vulnerable, they emerge from the carnage, following Johnny's death, to establish a radically different future. Rather than being champions of political cynicism, or of pacifism, or indeed simply admirable in their tenacity against the odds, they rebel; for what greater challenge was there to contemporaneous morality than to herald a family unit without men? Goldstone's assertion, that Juno "simply doesn't realise that she has let the very conditions of life which have victimised her become her ultimate standard of value" (39-40), undoubtedly characterises the Juno of the earlier acts, but it hardly accounts for the complications of her rejection of the orthodoxies of the home. It is difficult, in this light, to sustain the argument that his "women are not offered any alternative to the lives they already have" (Wilson 328). And McDonald's claim that "the plays do not really engage in political critique at all (save for their antipathy to political rhetoric)" (93) is also unconvincing. As the worker of the house, who shepherds the next generation into a brighter future, Juno might even embody Lenin's proletariat, once cowed, now taking up its historical role and refusing all "masther[s]". Claudia Parra's conclusion is more persuasive: "Juno can be conceived as a product of her interaction with the oppressive system in which she lives, and the way she endures and rises over it, makes her representative of a full process of change from oppression to empowerment, standing as O'Casey's symbol of power" (82).

As he suggested in the fourth volume of his biographies, *Inishfallen, Fare Thee Well* (1949), which deals with the years 1917-1926, O'Casey was no man to indulge in "the holding high of an abstraction" (1972 [1949] 94), a failing he diagnosed in some of those who fought in Ireland's revolution. However, his sympathetic depictions of men on either side of the War of Independence—for example Cathal Brugha and Michael Collins (94, 96)—indicates his respect for enemies who had once fought, as comrades, for Ireland's liberation from British rule. Their fight for freedom then was admirable—Brugha not one of those martyrs "covered with an Irish tricolor that will be too big for them", but rather a soldier whom "the flag fits well, exchanging honour for honour with the gallant dead beneath it" (94). The fight of brother against brother in the Civil War was, however, "not to abolish poverty. No; just for a spate of words that Alice in Wonderland wouldn't understand" (96). O'Casey lamented that the daring of revolutionaries would end in a conflict over what he viewed as abstract ideals, and thereafter result in a deeply unequal, bourgeois theocratic state: "Sturdy stalks of power were springing up, and blossoms of privilege would soon be bright on them, petalled with scarlet thorns to keep envious, pulling hands away" (101). The analysis above suggests that in 1924 he still had hope that those pulling hands might yet uproot the fresh stalks of power—that something might be retrieved from the sacrifices of Robbie Tancred and Johnny Boyle.

O'Casey rejected the hierarchies of the new state, then, but hardly the fight against tyranny that had brought it about. A swift reading of a later play, *Oak Leaves and Lavender* (1947), set amid the Battle of Britain, reveals a writer whose inclinations were far from pacifist too. O'Casey's support, in that play, for the British war effort and for Stalin, along with its mockery of the conscientious objector Pobjoy, starkly illustrates the extent to which he was willing to grant "pragmatic" support, as Schrank has it, for warfare. In *Oak Leaves*, an Irishman living in England urges an Englishman to 'Go forth to fight, perchance to die, for the great human soul of England. Go forth to fight [...] the enemies of mankind [...] righteousness and war have kissed each other' (1947 36). Here, it is the pacifist who appears fanatical and dangerous:

## Reconsidering the Politics of O'Casey

POBJOY

Let them who take the sword perish by it—that is their funeral.

FEE LIM

Thousands of children who never took the sword perished by it;  
perished by it because we took it into our hands a little late. (135)

There is no reason to think these words were insincere, or against the author's own sentiments, or, when we look at his earlier work, the product of a radically changed mindset occasioned by new circumstances. As McDonald notes, the tensions in O'Casey's plays and the confusion and misinterpretation they cause have led to him being "adopted by some ironic sources", including during the period of renewed conflict in Ireland from the 1960s-1990s: "Militant labour agitator feted by the theatre-going middle-class; hardline Stalinist beloved by a generation of American liberal critics during the McCarthy era. That this ex-IRB man and Gaelic Leaguer should be championed as an anti-nationalist is the latest of many paradoxical allegiances" (91). If the 'Decade of Centenaries' has taught us lessons about commemorative practice, one of the most salient, surely, is that the politics of the present continually shapes our understandings of the events of the past. O'Casey's legacy has too often fallen victim to the processes of historiographical erasure and distortion that subtend such processes. It is to be hoped that trilogy reproductions in the coming decade will enable more sophisticated centenary analyses of his legacy and indeed of the Irish Revolutionary Period.

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## **The Tragic and the Comic Vein of Sean O'Casey's Drama**

**Ayşegül Yüksel**

Sean O'Casey's realistic plays provides us with a gallery of characters most of which turn out to be anti-heroes. The clash between the contradictory acts of characters brings out the tragicomic twists that abound in his drama. That is why we find it impossible to identify his plays as purely tragic or comic.

The tendency to blend tragedy and comedy most probably comes from O'Casey's readings of Shakespearean comedy and tragicomedy in which the tragic and the comic are usually inseparable. "When I was a lad" he says, "paper covered plays could be bought for a penny each" ('On Playwriting', xxiv). (He came from a big working class family, but he always had a penny for a cheap edition of an important dramatic work). After getting acquainted with the plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan, young O'Casey, who only had three years of formal education, got involved in Shakespeare's work, which infatuated him. Shakespeare's treatment of his lower class characters with sympathy as well as with a critical eye, must have also made a deep impression on O'Casey's characterization of the lower class Dubliners of his time.

A convenient approach to the discussion of how O'Casey builds his tragic and comic approaches in his treatment of anti-heroes would be to go over his *Dublin Trilogy* –namely, *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), all of which had their world premiere at The Abbey Theatre. The contextual background of the *Trilogy* is life in Dublin slums at critical moments of unrest during the various phases of Irish resistance to British domination.

O'Casey has used as 'dramatic space' the impoverished neighborhood of tenement houses, in which mostly working class people lived in cramped quarters. Such buildings, some of which were originally built as private mansions, were later divided into one or two-room apartments with poorly built partitions, so as to accommodate as many families as the space could allow. Some tenement houses held up to one hundred people, and it follows that there was no privacy for anybody accommodated in such quarters. The walls were thin and there was no peace and quiet for people living in those small flats. It was also natural that there was a lot of

gossip, since the dwellers were continuous witnesses to what was going on next door. Having to live too close to each other caused tension and led to frequent rows among the dwellers. O'Casey knew this kind of life only too well, since he had spent his childhood in one of those tenement houses.

At times of political unrest, tenement houses were under suspicion and frequently raided by the British auxiliary police force, since they were convenient spaces for the gunmen of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to hide themselves or to store their weapons.

The general framework of the *Trilogy* thus set at the 'time' of Irish struggle for independence and in the 'space' marked by tenement houses provides the potential for both tragedy and comedy.

The plays all start with the exposition of characters that either carry on an idle chat or start a row with their neighbours in the tenement house. The characters fill the stage with an exploding kind of rhetoric. Most of them are hard-headed men. A good number of them are caught up with patriotic arrogance usually juxtaposed against religious or socialist attitudes. And most of them love to drink and boast of their wisdom and courage. These people seem to have been born for political disagreement with others and never-ending domestic disputes within their family. The stand of each is that of an anti-hero. O'Casey's characterization of these people is enhanced by his masterful dialogues in vivid working-class language. The noisy interaction of the characters paves the way to funny scenes that bring out the comic vein of O'Casey's drama.

Yet, the tragic moment arrives as the plays move towards the serious finale that -most of the time- involves violent death. At that moment the characters forget about their daily conflicts and stick together against the threat of outside forces.

The finale of each play, also contains an ironical tinge and makes a semi-pathetic impact on the audience. This final effect reinforces the realism that makes up the basis of O'Casey's craftsmanship. In O'Casey's dramatic work, tragedy or comedy is not an end in itself. On the contrary, both serve to represent, on the one hand, the results of political violence and on the other, the devastating effects of having to live in poverty.

A brief analysis of the characters and the plot of *The Shadow of a Gunman*, O'Casey's first play, serves as a proper example for the general pattern of his early dramatic writing. The play takes place during the guerilla strife between the Irish Republican Army and British forces. Seumas Shields, who is a pedlar and a former republican, is woken up by the knocking and a lot of shouting at his door. He has forgotten that the previous night he asked one of his neighbors to let him know when they were going to church, since he also wanted to come along. Yet, in the morning, sleep seems sweeter than church mass and comedy starts by Shields' cursing his neighbours for disturbing him. "The way these oul' ones bawl at a body" he shouts; "Upon my soul! I'm beginnin' to believe that Irish People are still in the stone age" (80).

Shields has the habit of putting the blame on other people or in general upon the Irish nation. He is a comic character, who pretends to know all about the world and has assumed the role of complaining about the weaknesses in the Irish character. "No wonder this unfortunate country is as it is" he says, "for you can't depend upon the word of a single individual in it" (81).



He is also angry because Maguire, another pedlar, whom he works with has not yet appeared. When Maguire finally comes, he leaves his bag in the room and departs immediately, saying that he has urgent business somewhere else. (The bag serves as an implicit sign of the tragic event that will occur at the end of the play).

Shields shares his room with Donal Devoren, who is not a regular lodger, but has been a guest to Shields for months. Devoren claims to be a romantic poet and complains that one cannot produce decent poetry with the noise that constantly goes on in the building. The contradiction between the poor living conditions of the people in the house and Devoren's idealistic aspirations helps to set his stand in the play also as an anti-hero.

Shields leaves after raising a row with the landlord who has come for the rent. Devoren, alone in the flat, is now visited by Minnie, a young working class beauty in smart clothes. She is the kind of woman who takes good care of herself although her means does not allow her to live in a more decent neighborhood.

Minnie is obviously attracted to Devoren and a scene of flirtation topped with comical nuances follows. Devoren soon finds out that Minnie thinks of him as a 'gunman on the run', a member of the Irish Republican Army, hiding himself in this crowded building. Devoren also finds out that the whole neighborhood is talking about him. The idea of being identified as a gunman first sounds horrifying, but soon Devoren gets used to this false identity that makes him a hero in the eyes of Minnie.

The knocks on the door continue. First Tommy, a neighbour, who is a young nationalist, comes in to pay his compliments. Thinking that Devoren is a gunman, he announces tearfully, "Mr. Devoren, I'd die for Ireland" (95). He is no doubt sincere in what he says, but he is probably also responsible for letting everybody know of the presence of a gunman in the house. O'Casey also marks him as an anti-hero.

Soon there is a visit by a group of petitioners from the neighbouring tenement house. Another funny scene follows with Devoren pretending to be a gunman and the petitioners complaining of a gypsy family whose children are too noisy and making a mess of everything in the building. O'Casey is showing us the discrepancy between the political cause of the Irish Republican Army and the domestic attitude of the common people who believe that the army can also settle all sorts of social problems in civilian life.

In the meantime, the news of an ambush nearabouts reaches the neighborhood. A gunman called Maguire has been killed. (This bit of news serves as the second hint that foregrounds tragedy). We remember that the bag Maguire left is still in the room. Devoren, who has heard the news, is so intoxicated with his new identity that he fails to properly think about avoiding the possible danger that might threaten their safety.

The scene ends with Minnie asking Devoren to type 'Donal' and 'Minnie' on a sheet of paper and they seal their mutual affection with a kiss. Devoren, now alone in the room, addresses himself dreamily: "A gunman on the run! Be careful, be careful, Donal Devoren. But Minnie is attracted to the idea and I am attracted to Minnie. And what danger can there be in being the shadow of a gunman?" (34). This beautiful piece of dramatic irony closes Act I.



The second part of the play starts at night time, Seumas complains about hearing a 'tapping on the wall', which for him is a bad omen signifying death. This is another indirect pointer at tragedy. Yet, the comic vein is not cut off. There is a knock on the door and we find that Mrs Grigson, a worn-out housewife living downstairs is asking whether anybody has seen her husband who has not come home yet. Mr. Grigson, who is obviously drunk, soon appears in the doorway and presents his dramatic status as anti-hero by boasting of being a brave, knowledgeable, outspoken person, who is by no means tied to a woman's apron strings. Soon, however, when the Black and Tans (a reserve force for constables) start a raid in the neighborhood and begin to search the house, we find that he is completely stripped off his assumed manliness. Mrs. Grigson will then report that the Auxiliaries, who had the reputation of treating people badly and ruining or getting hold of private property, are throwing a party in their flat and Mr. Grigson is being forced to entertain them.

Meanwhile, Shields and Donal Devoren open the bag left by Maguire and find out that it contains 'bombs'. It is now clear that Maguire was the gunman who was killed a few hours ago. Here O'Casey marks the character of Maguire, the 'true gunman' in the play, also as an anti-hero, because he has irresponsibly put the life of civilians into danger by planting his explosives in the crowded tenement house.

Shields and Devoren are in a panic because they do not know what to do with the bag and the letter of petition addressed to the IRA. It is Minnie who comes to their rescue, by proposing to take the bag to her room, as nobody would suspect her having to do anything with political action. She is obviously trying to shield Devoren, her beloved gunman against the approaching danger. While Devoren does not know what to say, Shields quickly welcomes the idea and Minnie goes out with the bag.

Soon an Auxiliary forces himself into the room. Before the search begins, however, Mrs. Grigson comes up to announce that Tans are torturing her husband and drinking his whisky. With the mention of whisky the Auxiliary rushes out of the room to get his share of the loot. Thus, comedy lingers in spite of the critical situation the lodgers are caught up with.

The raid continues and Mrs. Grigson is once more at the door, announcing that Minnie has been taken because they found explosives in her room. Believing that Minnie is associated with the IRA, Mrs. Grigson now pours out loudly all her jealousy of her pretty neighbour. "With her fancy stockings, and her pompoms, an' her crepe de chin blouses," she says, "I knew she'd come to no good!" (63)

Comedy once more gets heightened when Mr. Grigson comes up to tell Shields and Devoren how he had put up a bold face when the Tans poked their revolvers at his nose and he had bravely said "a man can only die once!" (64) This remark, he asserts, had impressed the Auxiliaries and they had respectfully left.

Soon, shooting starts in the street. The Auxiliary police force has been ambushed by the IRA. A few minutes later, a single rifle shot is heard and everybody is talking all at once. Making use of the general confusion, Minnie had attempted to run away, but was shot and mortally wounded.

The tragic moment of the play is articulated by Mrs Grigson, who, having forgotten all about her jealous remarks about Minnie, is now tearfully reporting the details of the tragic event: "She was shot through the buzzom. (...) Oh it was

horrible to see the blood pourin' out, and Minnie moaning.(...) They found some paper in her breast, with 'Minnie' written on it, an' some other name they couldn't make out with the blood" And she adds, "Poor little Minnie, poor little Minnie Powell, to think of you full of life a few minutes ago, an' now she's dead." (66)

In spite of her mistakenly believing that Devoren is a gunman, Minnie appears as the only heroine in the play, for, at least, she has been true to her heart. Devoren, who will never be found out, since his name typed on the piece of paper is covered by Minnie's blood, on the other hand, has deceived himself and others. At the end of the play, however, we find that he has at least shaken off his assumed idealism and admits his cowardice.

As for Seumas Shields, he closes the play by putting the blame -this time- on "the tappin' on the wall", which, as he said earlier, was a sign of death. With this finale the pathos of the tragic event is thus dissolved in comedy.

The dramatic pattern that combines tragedy and comedy is repeated in a variety of situations in O'Casey's two other plays that make up the *Trilogy*. *Juno and the Paycock*, the second play, gives us a glimpse of the Civil War that followed the War of Independence (1919-1921). During the Civil War, those who agreed to an independence as a dominion of the British Empire and those who reacted against such a treaty were mostly lower class people and were neighbours in the same tenement houses.

Right from the beginning of this play tragedy and comedy go hand in hand. The scene opens to the two-room tenancy occupied by the Boyle family, but there is continuous reference to the Tancred family, their neighbours, whose son had been found dead on a lonely road with seven bullets in his body. In the course of the play, it is understood that Johnny, the son of the Boyle family, who had lost an arm during the War of Independence, opposed Irish independence on the terms agreed with England and betrayed his former comrade Robbie Tancred, who was of the opposite opinion. (At the end of the play Johnny will be taken by Robbie's group of friends in turn and killed in the same manner).

The main comic character is Jack Boyle, who imposes himself on others with his fake identity as 'Captain'. He walks about like a noisy peacock with colourful feathers. Juno, his wife is the only one who works for the family and is desperately trying to make ends meet. Mary, their daughter, dresses and behaves as if she were living in a middle-class situation like those characters she reads about in novels. Johnny, her brother is hailed as a patriotic hero.

Captain Boyle's arrival at the flat starts the comedy. He comes in with his friend Joxer, who is a parasite of the Boyle family. He and Captain Boyle spend their time drinking at the bar and only come home for a meal. Joxer is a typical anti-hero who says "It's better to be a coward than a corpse!" (90) Joxer, like Seumas Shields in the previous play, will be able to avoid all kinds of tragedy.

Juno is hoping that her husband will finally become another bread-earner for the family, but Jack Boyle rejects the idea of becoming a labourer with his usual excuse of the pains in his legs. Actually he has never properly worked. As for his title 'Captain', Juno points out that he never became one. "Everybody calling you Captain," she says, "an' you only wanst on the wather, in an oul' collier from here to Liverpool, when anybody, would listen or look at you, ud take you for a second Christopher Columbus!" (82)

Boyle will, however, take no notice of Juno, and go on boasting about his imagined sea adventures: "Them was days, Joxer, them was days. (...) Sailin' from the Gulf o' Mexico to the Antanartic Ocean. I seen things, I seen things, Joxer, that no mortal man should speak about..." (94)

Soon there arises another situation that promises a comic development with Mary bringing in Charlie Bentham, a young gentleman in smart clothes, who, they assume, is a bright student of law. He announces that Captain Boyle has inherited a fortune from a distant aunt.

The rest of the play moves on with tragic and comic twists. The happiness of the Boyles contrasts with the mourning of the Tancred family. Captain Boyle borrows money from his neighbours to furnish his flat and throws a party, promising to pay his debts when his inheritance arrives. While the Boyles are enjoying the fruits of their good luck, Robbie Tancred's mother, bears her grief all by herself.

Then, there is a rapid reversal. Bentham has made a mess of the legal procedures and the Boyle inheritance will only be a very small amount. Hearing this, the neighbours take away all the furniture for which they had paid.

With her son dead and her daughter abandoned by Bentham in her pregnant state, Juno, the only proper character in the play, leaves her husband for good, to take refuge in the home of her sister, where Mary will give birth to her child without having to face gossip as she would in their present neighbourhood. Now, aware of the fact that she did not feel sorry enough for Mrs. Tancred, Juno leaves the flat with Mary.

The ironical, semi-pathetic finale belongs to Jack Boyle. He and Joxer, arrive at the empty flat very drunk. They are not aware at all of what has happened. Therefore, Boyle's drunken comment about the general state of affairs has a funny effect, although it rings the truth: "I'm telling you... Joxer... the 'whole worl's... in a terr... ible ... state of chassis (*presumably meaning 'chaos'*)!" (157) O'Casey's parade of anti-heroes is over.

*The Plough and the Stars*, the third play of the *Trilogy* takes place before and during the Easter Uprising of 1916 by the Citizens Army, a civilian force originally organized for better rights for the working class. (This organization of about 2000 people had later given up its originally socialist ideals and turned nationalistic). A good number of the members of the Citizens Army were neighbours in the tenement houses in Dublin.

The first two acts of the play are full of comedy, while the remaining two move towards tragedy. The first act opens to the flat of the Clitheroes. Jack, a bricklayer, and Nora, his pretty wife who aspires to middle-class ways, are celebrating Nora's birthday, while her uncle Peter is dressing up for the traditional patriotic ceremony. Jack's cousin the Young Covey, who is a socialist, drives Peter mad by his sarcastic remarks. The loud clash of opposite political attitudes is coupled by the biting remarks of two gossipy female neighbours, Bessie Burgess, a street fruit vendor, and Mrs. Gogan, a charwoman, who both pour out their jealousy of Nora's genteel manners. Jack is unwilling to take part in the Uprising, because he has not been given the rank of commander. But, a last-minute call that also recognizes him as a commander serves to bring out the patriot in him and he leaves hurriedly to carry out his duties, while Nora, who is expecting a baby, tries desperately to stop him.

The next act also paves the way to comedy when a prostitute chats about her profession with a customer at a nearby tavern, while, outside, a representative of the Citizens Army delivers a lofty patriotic speech.

The last two acts take place during the Easter Week. The uprising against the British takes a different twist when a widespread plundering of shops begins. It is no wonder that the needy people of the tenement house will also take part in the looting.

Tragedy thickens a few days later, when Mrs. Gogan's daughter Mollser dies of consumption and Nora's baby is still-born. The unfortunate young woman has gone mad and Bessie Burgess, who used to hate her, now takes care of her in her flat upstairs. All the characters are up there so as to take away the coffin of Mollser. As we have seen in *The Shadow of a Gunman*, O'Casey loved the way those people living in tenement houses could stick together at times of need, although in normal everyday situations they failed to treat each other kindly.

In the meantime Jack has been killed during the fight and the play closes with Bessie shot by mistake through the window. It is now Mrs. Gogan's turn to take care of Nora, who, in her insanity, has been preparing the tea table for her husband. Two British soldiers come up to see what happened. The play reaches its ironical and semi-pathetic finale with the soldiers sitting at Nora's table, drinking her tea and singing a song about young men fighting for their country in far-away lands.

Throughout the *Trilogy*, O'Casey gives us a painful picture of an urban community that has surrendered itself to poverty and violence. He mourns for human lives wasted on account of never ending disagreements on political issues. Once a devoted patriot, O'Casey soon realized that Irish working class people needed to defend their economic rights instead of losing their life, their arms or legs in the fight for political ends. He asserts that working class people lead such impoverished lives that, as the Young Covey says in *The Plough and the Stars*, "... more (*people*) die o' consumption than are killed in th' wars" (249).

As we see in the *Trilogy*, all those who lose their lives have been bread earners before they performed their so-called patriotic acts. O'Casey leaves us with the feeling that they are a wasted lot. Likewise, in *The Silver Tassie* (1929), O'Casey's anti-war play that also takes place in Dublin, young Harry Heegan, who is a manual worker and a football star, returns from World War I, tied to a wheel-chair. Unable to walk and move freely and having lost his girlfriend to his close friend Barney, who can still dance, he feels that his life has been wasted and cannot even enjoy the idea of his having become a war hero. Like Johnny Boyle and Robbie Tancred and Jack Cilitheroe, he is an anti-hero, victimized by dedication to violence.

The comic vein of O'Casey's realistic drama gives us a picture of working class people, whose minds are so confused about political and economic issues that they cannot bring themselves to peacefully think of proper ways of action. Although he criticizes them for being incapable of giving a socialist direction to the Irish cause, he raises our sympathy for them by exposing the tragic situation of the economic and political impasse they are faced with. He shapes them as anti-heroes whose action cannot bring any radical change. Yet, while he is critical of the way they think and act, he also admires them for their invincible spirit, vitality, and endurance.

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### 3

## ***The Shadow of a Gunman* from the Perspectives of Anglo-Irish War and Beyond**

**İbrahim Yerebakan**

It may not be a rational idea to get back to the old days of a nation that was so deeply traumatized under the grip of British colonialism, and its people suffered as a result of intercommunal conflicts and civil wars. Probably it would be more rewarding, instead, to draw a lesson from this desperate tragic history and, to use Sarah Kane's words, "to create something beautiful about despair, or out of a feeling of despair" [...] which is "the most hopeful, life-affirming thing a person can do" (qtd in Sierz 91).

At a very delicate time when we have already taken a speculative step into the first decades of the twenty first century, ethnic nationalism, and division of the world communities along religious and ethnic lines are still rampant, and are posing an enormous threat to the integrity and well-being of contemporary societies at large. The present century, therefore, can readily be categorized as the century of violence, oppression and terror as an ultimate consequence of inter-ethnic and sectarian divides in so many hotspots of the world, not to mention our own geography, the Middle East, in particular, just our own backyard, which has already turned into a colossal graveyard.

My overall intention in presenting *The Shadow of a Gunman* in the context of the Anglo-Irish war is to re-evaluate the significant themes and images of the play such as civil war, guerrilla warfare, a crude form of patriotism, ethnic nationalism, jingoism and sectarian conflicts. It is also a significant part of the contention of my presentation to reinterpret what these unpleasant images come to have meaning almost a century after the production of the play. Given that the world at large still carries on with giving credit to these fundamental themes, *The Shadow of a Gunman* probably makes even more sense today than it was first performed in 1923; its brutal vision, and violent images exposed throughout the play probably still continue to reverberate in the twenty first century.

*The Shadow of a Gunman* was written in 1922 and first performed in The Abbey Theatre in 1923, when the Anglo-Irish war was still raging between the Irish

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Republicans and the British police as well as between Irish splinter groups. At the time of O'Casey's writing *The Shadow of a Gunman*, Ireland was in a state of great political and social turbulence. Nobody was sure when there would be a police raid or when curfew would be imposed. Nationalistic feelings against the British domination were running extremely high. Soldiers were marching along the streets of Dublin, shots of guns, blasts of bombs and random knockings on the doors were formidable part of everyday realities in the context of the religious and ethnic clashes in Ireland at that time.

What is inconceivable and a rather bizarre situation, however, is that while Irish revolutionaries indulged in a guerrilla fighting against the British occupation forces, who systematically slaughtered, evicted imprisoned those on the Republican side, Irish people themselves also slaughtered, imprisoned and evicted each other in the process of achieving national independence. As the dramatist so nakedly exposes in the play, Irish people's struggle for national independence was at the same time some form of an Irish versus Irish war, and in many respects, the most uncivil of all civil wars; "Kingdom against kingdom, Sassenach against Gael, landlords against tenants, Protestants against Catholics, Unionists against Republicans, Orange against Green" (Hunt 3). The long and passionate history of Ireland is rather complicated and immensely dramatic. And sadly these intercommunal disturbances are not even today conclusively resolved in spite of the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998.

*The Shadow of a Gunman* is a comic-tragic play, during the turbulent years of the revolution in the 1920s, amidst guerrilla fighting between the IRA and the British police force. The Anglo-Irish war, by the way, is considered to be the first modern guerrilla warfare in history. The juxtaposition of comic and tragic elements in the play reveal much of the waste of war, as well as the absurdities of sectarian violence, hypocrisy, ignorance, poverty and false nationalism of Irish people during their struggle for national independence. Throughout the play we the audience find ourselves both laughing and at the same time in tears as the grim story of Dublin slum life unfolds. The comic Vaudevillian elements in the play provide much of the aesthetic as well as a relief and distraction from constant pressure of the relentless clashes between warring factions in Dublin streets.

The setting and action of the play immediately strike a contemporary tone, a war zone, a conflict zone. The very first scenes of the play deliver an impressive meditation over violence and terror, and the reality of Dublin life in the 1920s, which feels exclusively modern. In a way, the whole atmosphere is a microcosm of an intercommunal warfare not just in Dublin, but in any conflict zones today where violence between different ethnic and religious groups exists. In the context of a civil war here, sectarian animosities between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, in other words, Christian-Christian conflict is unequivocally presented. In that sense, this Christian-Christian conflict in the play can easily be taken as a typical earlier version of the Muslim-Muslim conflict that we witness in our geography, in the Middle East on an everyday basis.

The whole action of the play revolves around random police raids, brutal home invasions and intrusions by the Irish irregulars, arbitrary arrests, blasts of gun fires in the middle of the night, loud and unanticipated knockings on the doors of the slum dwellers, killing of civilians as well as insurgents as a result of the skirmishes between the Republican gunmen and the British police force. Everyone is suspicious of everybody else in that community. The whole city is under curfew

as a result of sporadic fights and many other actions which make life in Dublin rather unbearable and bloody. Dublin is a spot of intense military activity; streets are full of British regular forces, and constant street noises also create a vicious and ominous atmosphere. All these brutal images and atmosphere are forcing the audience to sit up and confront the unpredictable terror of life during wartime.

The onstage characters all belong to different ethnic religious and political groups varying from a real IRA gunman to an Orangeman, a drunkard, young rebels, an informer, a poet, a patriot, Republican sympathisers, also an active member of Royal Irish Constabulary known as Auxiliary. One outstanding feature of these characters is that they are all part of the same nation, the same family, the same community divided by a common religion only. Ironically, however, all these culturally different groups of people seem to come together in an attempt to tear Ireland apart as much as the vicious police force. In terms of the definition of Seumas, one of the leading characters, in the play:

Upon my soul! I'm beginnin' to believe that the Irish People are still in the stone age. If they could they'd throw a bomb at you [...] Oh this is a hopeless country! [...] Upon me soul, I'm beginning to believe that the Irish people aren't, never were, an' never will be fit for self-government. They made Balor of the Evil Eye King of Ireland, an' so signs on it there's neither conscience nor honest from one end of the country to the other<sup>10</sup>.

Seumas goes on to make rather comic, sarcastic and grotesque statements about the identity and character of Irish people, and their lack of unity and cooperation, in particular. He steadfastly criticises his countrymen's shallow perspective in harsh and explicit terms: "No wonder this unfortunate country is as it is, for you can't depend upon the word of a single individual in it (5). The crumbling slum house in Dublin, in which much of the play is set, comes to symbolize the crumbling Ireland, disjointed Ireland itself. With all these symbolic setting and atmosphere, O'Casey most probably intends to offer a mock heroic representation of Irish society. The play therefore provides an enduring insight into human nature, its unwavering, unappealing take on the Irish temperament, lampooned and ridiculed for its hopelessness and sluggishness.

In any intercommunal struggle as such, it is the innocent civilians, men, women and children that suffer most. The most explicit critique of this senseless conflict, war between two communities, intercommunal tension in the play is articulated by Seumas who is "disillusioned now that violence has become all too real and civilians are suffering the most" (Heany):

It's the civilians that suffer; when there's an ambush they don't know where to run. Shot in the back to save the British Empire, an' shot in the breast to save the soul of Ireland. I'm a Nationalist myself, right enough –a Nationalist right enough –a Nationalist right enough, but all the same – I'm a Nationalist right enough; I believe in the freedom of Ireland, an that England has no right to be here, but I draw the line when I hear the gunmen blowin' about dyin' for

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<sup>10</sup>Sean O'Casey, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, in *Seven Plays by Sean O' Casey*. Ed. Ronald Ayling, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), pp. 4-7. All other references to the play are from this source.



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the people, when it's the people that are dyin' for the gunmen! (28-29).

Thus, O'Casey's views of common people of Ireland is "violently deflationary of the pieties of mesmerized patriots" (Hunt 19), who are campaigning to drag the whole Irish people, men and women, into an inconclusive intercommunal conflict. For the dramatist, therefore, innocent women of Ireland, as well as common people of Ireland are more significant than nationalist constructs. Although nationalism is a source of inspiration for both would-be Republicans like Davoren and Seumas in the play, their nationalism "probes deeper into the soul of a nation than the patriotic idealisations that too often lead to violence and death" (Hunt 19).

It can readily be claimed that in the context of the Anglo-Irish war it is the tenement people, slum dwellers, the poor people of Dublin, who bear the brunt of senseless cruelties and animosities among the nationalists and the occupation forces. One of the women characters, Minnie, for instance, a young girl, who falls victim to police for no obvious reason at all during the years of trouble, is representing a prototype of innocent civilians caught up in an internal conflict. This young woman is a symbol of Irish nationalism, never involved in any obvious violent actions, crimes or wrongdoings, but severely punished in the play just because she was mistakenly assumed to be the owner of an IRA explosive material found by the police in another person's room. Indeed, this explosive had nothing to do with her, but belonged to others. Ironically she is killed when the IRA ambushes the police vehicle that is transporting her to prison. Most probably she is killed by a friendly fire, or by a police fire, a collateral damage of the civil war, as they call it in the modern world. We nakedly see the brutality and unjust treatment of a civilian population in the streets of Dublin through the eyes of this working class young woman rather than through the haze of sentimental patriotism.

This young girl's only guilt is that she happens to be at a very wrong place at a very wrong time. The story of the young woman who is punished for being in a wrong location has its contemporary parallels: take American-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, for instance. After the invasions of these countries, terror suspects were randomly and arbitrarily captured by American soldiers and transferred to the other corners of the world through what they call 'rendition flights', many of whom ended up in Guantanamo Detention Camp, which is still disgracefully operational as a torture camp. And these detainees are still awaiting the delivery of American justice. The crime of most of these suspects was that, as in the case of this young girl, they happened to be in a wrong spot at a wrong time either in Iraq or in Afghanistan, when the former American President George Bush and his allies were searching for terrorists behind every bush in the Middle East, in Asia.

In the context of an intercommunal tension as presented in *The Shadow of a Gunman*, nothing seems to be sacred. In the middle of the night, terror may suddenly erupt, and friendships, neighbourhood, alliances, close relationships can abruptly come to nothing. Civil unrests recognize no boundaries at all; terror does not exempt anyone from being terrorized. Whether your sympathies are aligned to one particular group or another, you can be subject to harsh treatment. In this particular play, Mr. Grigson, for instance, seems to be the most dependable supporter of the occupation forces, British forces; he retains the picture of King William of Orange. He is the representative of the Protestant community in Ireland. However, he is not immune from the police harassment and intimidations, and

becomes a victim of the police force. As Mr. Grigson sarcastically makes it public, “You’re sure of your life nowhere now; it’s just as safe to go everywhere as it is to anywhere. An’ they don’t give a damn whether you’re a loyal man or not. If you’re a Republican they make you sing ‘God Save the King’, an’ if you’re loyal they’ll make you sing ‘The Soldiers’ Song’ (35). Thus, it is quite evident that the Protestant community is also suffering from the violence in the hands of the British forces as much as the Catholic Republicans.

Another aspect of this prolonged fight towards an attainment of national independence in Ireland is that people who are devoted to independence causes can easily give up their beliefs, their faiths, when they are confronted with realities, and when it comes to making genuine sacrifices. Two leading characters in the play, Donal Davoren and Seumas Shields, former Republican volunteers, are now disillusioned by the independence movement and seem to have lost their hopes, their enthusiasm, and given up their causes. They wish that the struggle for independence would come to an end soon:

SEUMAS: I wish to God it was all over. The country is gone mad.  
Instead of counting their beads, now they’re countin’ bullets;  
their Hail Marys and Paternosters are burstin’ bombs –burstin’  
bombs, an’ the rattle of machine-guns; petrol is their holy water;  
their Mass isa burnin’ buildin’; their De Profundis is ‘The  
Soldiers’ Song, an’ their creed is, I believe in the gun almighty,  
maker of haven an’ earth – an’ it’s all for ‘the glory o’God an’ the  
honour o’ Ireland’.

DAVOREN: I remember the time when you yourself believed in  
nothing but the gun.

SEUMAS: Ay, when there wasn’t a gun in the country; I’ve a  
different opinion now when there’s nothin’ but guns in the  
country.... An’ you daren’t open your mouth [...]You’re not goin’  
– you’re not goin’ to beat the British Empire – the British  
Empire, by shootin’ an occasional Tommy at the corner of an  
occasional street (28).

Instead of fighting and standing alongside the Republicans, these two Republican nationalists in a moment of fear, terror and violence can easily abandon their high-minded ideologies of patriotism and easily retreat into the shallow nationalism and romantic illusions of patriotism. They seem to be very good at talking about how they would love to go out and fight for their country even die for their causes, but in reality, they never participate in any struggle for the national independence. When their residence is raided by the police in the middle of the night, for instance, they are even unable to disclose their true identity, their Irish identity out of fear and panic. Instead, they give English names to the police, which is an outright manifestation of the nationalism and patriotism in words, not in core:

AUXILIARY: What’s your name?

DAVOREN: Davoren, Dan Davoren, sir,

AUXILIARY: You’re not an Irishman, are you?

DAVOREN: I-I-I was born in Ireland.

AUXILIARY: Ow, you were, were you; Irish han’ proud of it, ay? [To

SEUMAS] What’s *your* name?

SEUMAS: Seuma... Oh no; Jimmie Shields, sir,

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AUXILIARY: Ow, you're Selt [*he means a Celt*] one of the Seltic race  
that speaks a lingo of its ahn, and that's going to overthrow the  
British Empire-I don't think! 'Ere, where's your gun?  
SEUMAS: I never had a gun in me hand in me life (38-39)

When alone on the stage, Davoren describes himself not a real gunman, not a real fighter for nationalist cause, but only 'the shadow of a gunman', the title of the play: "And what danger can there be in being the shadow of a gunman?" (23).

*The Shadow of a Gunman* was written at a time when Irish nationalism was at its height. Therefore, the characters in the play frequently refer to patriotic glorification of gun, even death and violent use of force. Making references to her ancestors and Irish patriots like Robert Emmet, who got killed by the British security forces, Minnie says to Davoren: "it's time to give up writing an' take to the gun" (11). Another character, Tommy, Republican himself, stresses the importance of solidarity and cooperation in the process of defeating imperialism: "give me your hand. [*He catches DAVOREN's hand.*] Two firm hands clasp together will all the power outbrave the heartless English tyrant, the Saxon coward an' knave. That's Tommy Owen's hand, Mr Davoren, the hand of a man, a man" (15). Asked whether he would die for his country, Tommy replies enthusiastically: "Mr Davoren, I'd die for Ireland! [...] I never got a chance – they never gave me a chance – but all the same I'd be there if I was called on – Mr Shields knows that – ask Mr Shields, Mr. Davoren" (15).

In the personality of those nationalist or would-be nationalist characters, the dramatist exposes and on many occasions demystifies the popular concept of false nationalism, and jingoistic approach to a political struggle, which involves loss of innocent human lives. The author also emphasises that nationalism and patriotism perpetuate communal hatred and bring about more violence, more impediment, and more division for the ordinary citizens of the country. Irish mothers, wives, girls should watch with false pride and joy as their loved ones are dragging into violence, and for the most part lethal struggle for independence. Their support for nationalism only costs lives in the fighting for independence causes. Thus, with these jingoistic and excessively emotional characters like Davoren and Seumas, O'Casey reflects the "confusion of patriotism and religion which he saw as a basic cause of Ireland's problems" (Templeton 47). Likewise, the dramatist is equally critical of ethnic nationalism which advocated separatism from England by force of armed struggle, "a policy which became increasingly repugnant to O'Casey" (Maxwell 96). Before the Easter Uprising in 1916, O'Casey is claimed to have already dissociated himself from the prevailing attitudes of Irish nationalism, the Catholic puritanism of the new state and from militant separatist groups who wanted to separate from England by use of force (Maxwell 96). Instead, he concentrated his focus of attention and his energies on left-wing Republicanism, cultural nationalism and labour movements.

It is understood that the dramatist's sympathies are never aligned with any of his characters in the play, who are adherently supportive of nationalism or any particular religion. Instead, he seems to denounce the attitudes of his characters, who manipulate the rest of the communities through politics, patriotism, religion and jingoism. Throughout history, humanity has suffered from such popular idealisations of false nationalism, idealisation that have led brave, young men like Mr. Maguire in the play to sacrifice their lives in the belief that they were fighting for the only true faith, for God's own country. In that respect, the play invokes the

memories of the Gulf War in the 1990s where Western politicians propagated nationalism, jingoism, circulating popular support for war, claiming that they are waging a 'just' war in order to overthrow a dictator, entertaining false hopes of international advantage by military action in the region, manipulating their citizens through the rhetoric of patriotism and jingoism.

Once again, political nationalists or would-be nationalists are at work in the play, playing on patriotic emotions and especially religion in their effort to suppress any movement that did not glorify their abstract ideals. Religion is central to the Ireland of this play. Protestant-Catholic divide as depicted by O'Casey is still sparking under the surface over a hundred years later. The only difference is that the battle-ground has moved from Dublin to further North. *The Shadow of a Gunman*, therefore, speaks to today's audience with its explicit exploration of sectarian violence. Religious icons and statues are obviously present throughout the play. We see that characters are turning to religion as a sanctuary, a survival technique, a means of escape from the grim reality of their poverty-stricken lives in the tenement. As Seumas plainly utters in the play, "There's a great comfort in religion; it makes a man strong in time of trouble an' brave in time of danger. No man need be afraid with a crowd of angels round him; thanks to God for His holy religion!" (29). As in the Anglo-Irish war, most civil wars, ethnic and religious wars seem to be waged in the name of religion, in the name of God, or in the name of Allah, depending on where this particular war is fought. Like Seumas, other characters in the play make constant references to religion and God in their attempt to wage a guerrilla war against the British occupation forces. Mr. Gallogher, for instance, invokes God for strength and courage necessary to fight for the salvation of 'Faith and Fatherland'. Mrs. Henderson gives her blessing to pseudo-nationalist Davoren, imploring God: "Well, good-day, Mr Davoren, an'God keep you an' strengthen all the men that are fightin' for Ireland's freedom" (22).

*The Shadow of a Gunman*, therefore, speaks to today's audience with its exploration and manipulation of religion in a warfare situation. We understand that even the police raid in the middle of the night is carried out in the name of God. Invoking God in times of civil war, sectarian war is not peculiarly an Irish phenomenon itself. This applies to our modern world as well. Likewise, religious extremist groups in our immediate geography are killing each other, and cutting each other's throats, and even biting each other's organs in the name of Allah. Western leaders launched most lethal military offensives against Iraqi dictatorial regime and Iraqi civilians during the Gulf war in 1990, praying to God for their combating soldiers and nations. Young, disillusioned, disaffected, and directionless rebels or would-be rebels like Davoren, Seumas, and Tommy Owens, who are so desperate to join the militant armed struggle for the Republican cause, would seem to be equally at home on the streets of the Middle East, Palestine or Afghanistan today, as the characters did in the Dublin of 1920s. Absolutely in similar motives, Taliban, Isil fighters or other religious extremists can be easily tempted to join terrorist organisations out of desperation, out of frustration and disillusionment, or out of vanity.

The play embarrasses the modern times armed insurgents today as much as it embarrassed the armed insurgents of the past. This anti-war play still packs the punch. War is awful, it tears apart everything even the most vibrant communities in the world. O'Casey saw what was about to happen with the armed revolutionary movements. War leads people into a life full of poverty, fear and terror. He was terrified about how nationalist revolution by the use of force would decimate

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pluralism and diversity. In Ireland, civil war has produced deep divisions between the communities, and has lasted longer than anywhere else. Irish people were divided and ruined each other for hundreds of years for Britain's gain. Even today they are politically still fighting each other for the benefit of Britain during the process of the Brexit saga. We simply do not know what situation might be in post Brexit Ireland. Still problems between Ireland and Britain remain unresolved. Peace walls and towering barriers separating two communities, Loyalists and Irish Republican area, in Northern Ireland are still closed at night to prevent the skirmishes. Future borders between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is still unclear. The introduction of physical, hard border would be a very serious risk to a return to sectarian violence of the troubled years.

Almost over a hundred years later, *The Shadow of a Gunman* is still an immensely powerful statement about the horrors of war and absurdities of sectarian violence. Blending romance and reality behind militant Irish nationalism, the play couldn't be more topical. Now today, *The Shadow of a Gunman* offers many themes in search of authors as prophetic and far-sighted as O'Casey. O'Casey prophetically predicted what was about to happen with the nationalist revolution. He foresaw the devastating impact of nationalist revolution on pluralism and diversity of the Irish community. *The Shadow of a Gunman* was written a century ago, its cruel images are still reverberating in the twentyfirst century, the century of barbarism, terrorism and rebirth of an older form of European nationalism. These images still continue to make an immediate relevance because of the dramatic upsurge of ethnic nationalism around the world.

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## Sean O'Casey as a Revisionist: *The Plough and the Stars*

Gülşen Sayın

"I am sorry, but I'm not Synge; not even, I'm afraid, a reincarnation. Besides, things have happened since Synge: the war has shaken some of the respectability out of the heart of man; we have had our own changes, and the U.S.S.R. has fixed a new star in the sky".

Sean O'Casey  
(qtd. in Murray 105)

Sean O'Casey, known in Irish drama as the voice of "the poor, the uneducated and the dispossessed" (Murray 88) represented in his plays, especially in the *Dublin Trilogy*, the social and political conflicts and their destructive effects on the working class men and women living in Dublin tenements during the social and political turmoils in the country, like the Easter Rising (1916), the Treaty (1921) and the Civil War (1922-1923). Although his early plays made a high box-office success and re-vivified the Abbey in the 1920s, and although he was the first Irish dramatist to give voice to the urban subaltern during the crucial historical moments, the reception of his plays by the critics and the audience, especially the reception of the representation of the Easter Rising in *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), ten years after the Rising, was highly controversial. Most of his critics treated his works as the plays that denied "generic boundaries" (Grene 134) because his tragedies often contained comic elements. Another criticism was about the loose structure in his plays because they were hardly well-made plays.<sup>11</sup> Some of his critics also evaluated his characters as shallow. Seamus Deane, for example, comments that "all of O'Casey's gunmen are shadows, and consequently all his aggression on politics is a form of shadow-boxing" (109). Also thematically, as O'Casey, in his plays, prioritized the individual over the community, private sensitivities and loyalties over public and national ones, he was often accused not only of being an

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<sup>11</sup> On the same subject, however, Nicholas Grene states that "the heterogeneous and anarchic form of O'Casey's drama was admired because it was held to mirror the disorderly formlessness of the tenements" (134).

anti-nationalist and anti-revolutionist but also of writing for the English audience.<sup>12</sup> Also Declan Kiberd criticizes *The Plough and the Stars* on political grounds (only) and complains that “the nationalist case is never put, merely mocked” (228).

However, this paper proposes that in *The Plough and the Stars* O'Casey's representation of the Rising subverts the traditional technical and thematic norms of the national narratives of the previous Abbey plays in search of new and more unifying themes, and an experimental dramatic technique to revise the definition of Irishness and Irish nationalism on stage, and the traditional Irish drama.

Yet for a clear grasp of ideas behind these negative evaluations of O'Casey plays it would be right to have a look at the dramatic traditions of the period that were shaped by the Abbey.

The Abbey, evolved from the Irish Literary Theatre, was founded in 1904 “to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland” (Gregory 9), or in other words, to restore the self-image of the Irish people by erasing the boastful, unreliable, and hard-drinking stereotypical image of the “Stage Irishman” (Fitz-Simon 94) created by English playwrights between the years 1827-1890; and since then, The Abbey has been considered a central place to define and discuss the nation, nationhood, and Irish nationalism on the stage. However, as Loren Kruger notes, “the idea of representing the nation in the theatre, of summoning a representative audience that will in turn recognize itself as a nation on stage, offers a compelling if ambiguous image of national unity, less as an indisputable fact than as an object of speculation” (3). Thus, not to spark off any national speculation, with the plays of the founders like W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J.M. Synge the early Abbey aimed to establish a strong nationalistic canon and a realistic/naturalistic technique of representation to create a positive image of Ireland and Irishness on the stage. The early Abbey plays, therefore, sometimes with their mythological subjects and characters, like Cuchulain, Conchobar, and Cathleen ni Houlihan, borrowed from Irish mythology, but mostly with their poor peasant families in a countryside cottage, or a pub decorated with authentic Irish cultural objects - like a cross on the wall, hearth, turf, or decorative figurines of Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ - established a formula for the national Irish drama. In this formula, the secluded rural cottage in a remote place represented the sacred home and family, the home and family represented the community, and the community represented the nation. Also as Nicholas Grene puts it, “The reduction in scale down to the offshore island, the small village, the one family, the setting in a topographical beyond and an archaic present, make for an originary model of the community” (133). Therefore, it is quite natural for the Abbey audiences to expect *The Plough and the Stars* to comprise these touchstones of the Abbey formula on the stage.

However, like the other two plays of the trilogy, *The Plough and the Stars*, too, subverted the formula. When the play opened at the Abbey in 1926, “on the fourth night of the production” (Murray 99), his contemporary audience was shocked by O'Casey's deviation from the formula, and they severely reacted to the play. O'Casey, rather than depicting glory, self-sacrifice, heroism, and national honor attached to the Easter Rising (1916) and its significant leaders and heroes, like

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, as David Krause emphasizes, “to be completely Irish, he studied and became fluent in the Gaelic language and changed his birth name of John Casey to Sean O'Cathasaigh (...); he joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the secret organization dedicated to the overthrow of British misrule” (29).

Padraic Pearse and James Connolly, represented the responses of the inhabitants of Dublin tenements to the Rising. O'Casey's poverty-stricken men and women deviated from the conventional roles determined for them by the previous plays and playwrights of the Abbey. Unlike a patriot ready to die for his/her country, or a mother/wife who suffers silently behind her dead son/husband, O'Casey's characters in *The Plough and the Stars*, looted the shops for a loaf of bread or free whisky, or women were not ready to send their husbands/sons to die for the struggle, and men - like Jack Clitheroe, the hero of the play - had regrets about leaving their wives behind.<sup>13</sup> Thus, O'Casey was accused of being an anti-revolutionist, and anti-nationalist, and mocking the nation at a very critical historical moment.

*The Plough and the Stars* consists of four acts, and it covers a period of six months from November 1915 (Act I and Act II) to the Easter Week in April 1916 (Act III and Act IV). Act I opens with a long stage direction which describes the tenement home of the Clitheroe family in expressionistic style. One eye-grabbing piece of decoration in the room is a half-drawn drapery of "*casement cloth of a dark purple, decorated with a design in reddish-purple and cream*" (*The Plough* 135, italics indicate stage directions) hung between the back and front drawing-rooms, and creates a stage curtain image which implies that this is a theatrical set, and whatever happens in this tenement room is just a play. This reinterpretation of the conventional Irish setting, or in other words, this "metatheatrical portrayal of domestic space" (Clarke 210) is new on the Irish stage, and it has also an affinity with Brecht's alienation effect although Brecht has not theorized his views in those years. The first character on the stage is Mrs. Gogan, a neighbour who "*has a habit of taking up things that may be near her and fiddling with them*" (*The Plough* 13, italics indicate stage directions). She comfortably goes in the unprotected flat of the Clitheroes (because the door lock is broken) and like a camera zoom she presents some objects for the audience to take their attention to the Clitheroes' class aspirations. For example, Mrs. Clitheroe's expensive new hat, books on the shelf, a cavalry sword, and the reproduction of *The Sleeping Venus* hung on the wall. Besides, in this very cinematographically crafted first scene, the broken lock of the door is symbolic enough to show O'Casey's thematic challenge to the sacred and secure home atmosphere of the early Abbey plays. While Fluther Good, a carpenter, tries to repair the lock other characters are all free to come in and violate the privacy of the Clitheroes' home.

When it comes to the dwellers of the tenement, as the dialogues reveal, the leading character, Jack Clitheroe has already left the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) because he was not given a leading position there. Another character The Covey, a pedantic Marxist young man who likes talking and lecturing does not do anything to change the society. Another neighbor Bessie Burgess is a Protestant unionist whose son is fighting in the British army in the World War I, and finally Mrs. Gogan's child, Mollser, who is dying of consumption because of poverty. With the Mollser character O'Casey shifts the emphasis from the ones who die for the country in the Rising to the ones who die because of poverty. The whole act is devoted to provide the audience with the contrastive worldviews of the tenement characters about life, the Rising, nationalism and republicanism. For example, Nora Clitheroe's efforts to protect her own family (she hides the letter coming from the ICA to inform Jack about his military promotion and new position as the captain)

<sup>13</sup> In Act III, during the ambush, when Nora and Jack meet on the street, Jack (*kissing her, and speaking brokenly*) says, "My Nora; my little, beautiful Nora, I wish to God I'd never left you" (*The Plough* 194).

against military nationalism; Fluther's blind Catholicism against the young Covey's Darwinism and Marxism, Covey's anti-militarism and anti-nationalist socialism against "Peter's do-nothing nationalism" (Greene 144); Bessie's unionism and Protestantism against republican Catholicism of Mrs. Gogan, Clitheroe, and Brennan, and finally, Covey's theoretical pedantic worldview about the working classes against practical down-to-earth view of life of Rosie, a prostitute in Act II (Greene 144).

The representation of this tenement with its dwellers and their diverse worldviews and values exhibits a panorama of the Irish society of the time. They are O'Casey's Dubliners. Amanda Clarke points out that "in portraying numerous identities or subject positions, O'Casey interrupted traditional propaganda that suggested a singular Irishness" (219). On the same subject, Nicholas Greene states:

The O'Caseyan tenement room is thus a metonym for society at large that is different from the dramatic spaces of Synge, Gregory or Yeats. (...) In the case of O'Casey's rooms (...) the wholeness of the country cottage which could figure a putative wholeness of the nation is replaced with a fragmentariness which can represent a people only in refracted shards, if at all. (135)

However, O'Casey points out the fact that it is still possible to create a nation out of the heterogeneous and diverse groups. The following dialogue between Fluther and The Covey takes place immediately after a disagreement between them but the reconciliation at the end emphasizes O'Casey's much wider, more unitary and universal ideology against the insular nationalism of the previous playwrights:

**Fluther:** We're all Irishmen, anyhow; aren't we?

**The Covey** (*with hand outstretched, and in a Professional tone*):  
Look here, comrade, there's no such thing as an Irishman, or an Englishman, or a German or a Turk; we're all only human bein's (...). (*The Plough* 143)

In terms of technique, the most striking and also notorious scene is the representation of the Rising in Act II. The Rising is represented on the stage like a live broadcast, which is another Brechtian alienation effect and another innovative use of scenography to prevent the audience from emotional involvement, and certainly shocking for them because the great leader of the Rising, Padraic Pearse is reduced into a voice, a "*silhouette*" (*The Plough* 164, italics indicate stage directions) or a talking shadow. He is not given a name as a character and listed in the cast as "The Figure in the Window", and in the dialogues he is just the "Voice of the Man". His speech and the people gathering together to start the Rising are all conveyed to the audience either through the off stage voices and sounds or the dialogues of the onlookers. Some of the onlookers are on the street but Fluther, Peter and The Covey are in a pub watching the show while having their drinks in the accompaniment of Rosie, a prostitute who mockingly complains that she is losing her customers that evening because nobody is in the mood of noticing her "pretty petticoat" as "they're all in a holy mood" (*The Plough* 161).<sup>14</sup> Here O'Casey not only shifts the emphasis

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<sup>14</sup> When the audience reacted against the presence of a prostitute on the stage Yeats defends that "O'Casey is contrasting the ideal dream with the normal grossness of life" and that Rosie is "an essential part" of that life (qtd. in Harris 209).

from the heroic mythology of the Rising to the different responses of common people, but he also parodies it.

As for the speech of the silhouette, O'Casey uses a collage of quotations obviously selected from Pearse's historical speeches placing in the foreground the violent call to arms and an invitation to death for Ireland.

**The Voice of the Man:** It is a glorious thing to see arms in the hands of Irishmen. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the sight of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the use of arms .... Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood .... There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them! (*The Plough* 162)

Another quotation, which is even more violent than the first one is as follows:

**The Voice of the Man:** Comrade soldiers of the Irish Volunteers and of the Citizen Army, rejoice in this terrible war. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields (...) And we must be ready to pour out the same red wine in the same glorious sacrifice, for without shedding of blood there is no redemption! (*The Plough* 164).

In the meantime, Peter Flynn who listens to the speech in the pub and prefers drinking whiskey, instead of the sacramental blood, responds: "A meetin' like this always makes me feel I could dhrink Lock Erinn dhry" (*The Plough* 143). Rossie, who still moans and groans about losing her customers, responds to the speech like this:

It's no joke thrying' to make up fifty-five shillin's a week for your keep an' laundhry, an' then taxin' you a quid for your own room if you bring home a friend for th' night ... If I could only put by a couple of quid for a swankier outfit, everthin' in th' garden ud look lovely. (*The Plough* 162)

Furthermore, O'Casey's irony is revealed when Jack Clitheroe and his comrades, who are also in the pub, drinking in their uniforms and so disgracing the republican cause (Krause 34), declare their allegiance to the Figure in the Window without seeing the material reality, or in Yeats's words, "the grossness of life" (qtd. in Harris 209) around them, and declaring their allegiance to a shadow.

On the other hand, The Covey the pedantic Marxist responds to the Rising in his own way. The Covey says: "There's only one war worth havin': th' war for th' economic emancipation of th' proletariat" (*The Plough* 170). However, when he looks down on Rossie just because she is a sex worker, as Susan Cannon Harris puts it, he "commits the republican movement's original sin, insisting on the primacy of theory and dogma over the workers' bodily experience of pain" (211). David Krause comments on this scene by stating that "O'Casey the dramatist, not O'Casey the socialist" (34) created this scene not only to ridicule "the heroic rhetoric of Pearse" (34) but also to offer "a parody of Marx and Lenin in the Covey's pompous, repeated invocation of Jenersky's *Thesis on the Origin, Development, and Consolidation of the Evolutionary Idea of the Proletariat* as a panacea for the Irish people" (34). However, O'Casey never looks down on his characters, but as Michael Pierson states, he

“observes humanity in its many guises, with a clarity and complexity that denies the existence of heroes, but trumpets the ordinary heroism of flawed human beings” (74).

Moreover, when the armed fight breaks out, the scenes of some people running away from the fight, and some others looting the shops dismantle “the very iconography of the nationalist imagination, sacralised in the Rising” (Greene 144). As another critic Susan Cannon Harris puts it, this is an attack to “sacrificial paradigm” (171) of the Irish politics. Similarly, bringing the Irish flag, the tricolor, together with the Irish Citizen Army’s flag, the Plough and the Stars, into the pub is seen by many conservative republican audiences of the time as offensive for the republican movement. The supporters of the movement think that these scenes do not fit the idea of a single and unitary nation promised by the Proclamation and already represented in the early Abbey plays (Greene 143-144). What is even more, pregnant Nora’s looking for her husband hysterically on the street, and Mrs. Gogan’s abandoning her sick child in the pub and running outside during the ambush are other thematic attacks to the previous Abbey plays in which heroic concept of womanhood and motherhood are defined as an indispensable part of the Irish sacrificial politics that defines nation and nationhood. However, Nora rejects this in the following words: “An’ there’s no woman gives a son or a husband to be killed-if they say it, they’re lyin’, lyin’, against God, Nature, an’ against themselves” (*The Plough* 184). As Ronan McDonald puts it, “O’Casey debunks the mythology of Mother Ireland, who sends her sons out to die” for herself, “replacing it with images of real suffering mothers”(137), like Bessie Burgess, and “of families torn apart” (137), like Nora and Jack.

Shortly, O’Casey represents the reality of the Rising from a wider spectrum of social and political viewpoints, contrasting the attitudes and viewpoints of different Irish men and women. O’Casey provides the audience in rapid succession, in a cinematographic technique with different views. In this way, O’Casey does not directly critique Pearse’s speech but in a Brechtian manner invites the audience to think and to judge. As Michael Pierson puts it, “Like Brecht, O’Casey married wider social upheaval in his work with subjective stories, in order to create a sense of his class’s real role in historical change” (274). On the same subject, Ronald Ayling who thinks that “too little critical attention has been paid to practical aspect of Sean O’Casey’s stagecraft” (29) states:

In the *Plough and the Stars*, (...) the effects of poverty and warfare are depicted in both a personal, subjective manner and an external, objective one. Such shifts of viewpoint are achieved by using expressionist and symbolic as well as naturalist techniques, of course, but character alienation contributes a significant part of the effect. (38)

The final act is set in Bessie Burgess’s living room a few days later as Bessie, the unionist whose son is fighting at the front for England in World War I, is the central character now. Mrs. Gogan’s sick child Mollser has already died of consumption, Jack Clitheroe, the Captain of the Irish Citizen Army is also dead, and Nora has had a miscarriage and lost her sanity. Bessie tries to calm her. Mollser’s coffin, with two lighted candles on it, stands in the room while The Covey and Fluther are playing cards. As the stage directions reveal, “*There is no light in the room but that given from the two candles and the fire. The dusk has well fallen, and the glare of the burning buildings in the town can be seen through the window, in the distant sky*” (*The Plough* 200).

In the final act, O'Casey exhibits various theatrical techniques. For example, the dialogues, interrupted by songs whose lyrics complement the social and political messages of the play, are both Brechtian and melodramatic elements. Off stage voices and the sounds of the guns and ambulances that interrupt the dramatic action on the stage are the expressionistic elements. Finally, the scenography of the coffin of an innocent child, Mollser and the two men playing cards next to it not only comes as a Brechtian alienation effect but it has anachronistical echoes from Beckett's Absurd plays.

Moreover, in Bessie's death scene, O'Casey completes his ironic secure hearth and home threatened image that he initiated in Act I with the broken door lock. This Act gives the message that there is no secure place for the poor inhabitants of the tenements. Ironically enough, the threat comes not through the door but the window. Since there is fight outside, windows are dangerous places because the British soldiers outside are ready to shoot down anybody at a window thinking they may be an Irish gunman. However, poor insane Nora, still looking and calling for her already dead husband, Jack, goes to the window. Bessie pulls her away, but she, herself is shot. In Bessie's death scene, O'Casey deviates once again from the heroic self-sacrificial discourse of the previous Abbey plays because although Bessie sacrifices herself for Nora, there is no heroism in her self-sacrifice as she dies cursing at her.

**Bessie** (*with an arrested scream of fear and pain*). Merciful God, I'm shot, I'm shot (...) The life's pourin' out o' me! (*To Nora*) I've got this through... through you (...), you bitch, you! ... O God, have mercy on me!...(*To Nora*) You wouldn't stop quiet, no, you wouldn't, blast you! Look at what I'm afther gettin' (...) I'm bleedin' to death, an' no one's here to stop th' flowin' blood! (*Calling*) Mrs. Gogan! Fluther, Fluther, for God's sake, somebody, a doctor, a doctor! (*The Plough* 215)

Two British soldiers, Corporal Stoddart and Sergeant Tinley, who shot Bessie, come inside the room, and comfortably drink the tea that maybe Bessie has made earlier while "*in the distance is heard a bitter burst of rifle and machine-gun fire, interspersed with the boom, boom of artillery*" (*The Plough*, 218). Ironically enough, other soldiers outside sing the British patriotic First World War song, "Keep the Home Fires Burning", while the homes are destroyed one by one and home fires are already extinguished in the tenements. Nicholas Grene conspicuously interprets this final picture: "The two British soldiers sitting down to tea enjoying the home fire of the woman they have just shot could be read as a fiercely satiric image of colonial occupation" (149). It would not be wrong to interpret the final scene as an epitome of Brechtian alienation effect as the final scenography encourages, once again, "spectators to criticize and judge the dramatic action" (Ayling 30).

Going back to Sean O'Casey's words at the beginning of this paper, "*I am sorry, but I'm not Synge; not even, I'm afraid, a reincarnation. Besides, things have happened since Synge: the war has shaken some of the respectability out of the heart of man; we have had our own changes, and the U.S.S.R. has fixed a new star in the sky*", they refer to the fact that Ireland and Irish society had their own changes just like other societies in the West in the second decade of the twentieth century, and now there is a need for both new spectators and new theatrical ways of representing these changes in the world and in the new nation. In other words, O'Casey was in search for a new dramatic language to represent the urban realities of a post-revolutionary, modern, and an independent Ireland.



All in all, in *The Plough and the Stars*, O'Casey challenges audience expectations of nationalist drama by deviating from the previous role-models that the Abbey established, such as "the home as a synecdoche of the nation" (Clarke 224), Cathleen Ni Houlihan myth and a sacrificial discourse. In the play, O'Casey replaces all of them by a "fresh vision" (Murray 96), which aims to lead the audience into a form of Brechtian "complex seeing" (qtd. in Murray 96) to lead them to change their perspective or find new ways of seeing. In this context, as Christopher Murray puts it, *The Plough and the Stars* "was a revisionist play before the term was coined. The Rising, in this account, was the fruit of vanity, demagoguery and romantic idealism, entrenching further the dispossessed into dispossession and the poor into greater poverty" (94). Also David Krause praises the play as a symbol of the victory of artistic independence and creative thinking.

*The Plough and the Stars*, which has been revived since 1926 more often and more successfully at the Abbey Theatre than any other play, and continues to be performed regularly in English and in translation all over the world, remains an enduring symbol of the artist's independence from ideology. Nationalism may have triumphed over socialism in Ireland, but it has not been able to repress the Irish artist (40).

This paper, therefore, concludes that O'Casey was neither an anti-revolutionist nor an anti-nationalist but only a modern revisionist playwright in terms of technique and themes, who tried to revise/renovate the traditional Abbey formula in accordance with the changing concepts of nation and Irishness as well as with the modern developments in the theatre. His metatheatrical representation of the Rising challenged the state-controlled Abbey template in Irish Drama of the period. Therefore, Sean O'Casey should be respected as a playwright who dared to free his plays technically and thematically from the repressions of the mainstream ideology and dramatic conventions of the time.

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## Representations of (Post-)War (Dis-)abilities in Sean O’Casey’s *The Silver Tassie*

İmren Yelmiş

Now, he will spend a few sick years in institutes,  
And do what things the rules consider wise,  
And take whatever pity they may dole.  
Tonight he noticed how the women’s eyes  
Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.  
How cold and late it is! Why don’t they come  
And put him into bed? Why don’t they come?  
(From Wilfred Owen’s “Disabled,” 1917)

There have been a vast number of literary works on World War I that have either severely criticized it or supported it by means of nationalist or militarist discourses. This war’s direct relationship with the theoretical concept, disability, and even “disability studies,” which is a sociopolitical and cultural field, however, has been generally ignored. Hence, with the aim of filling in the gap in the field (particularly in relation to literature), the focus of this chapter will be on the discussion of Sean O’Casey’s anti-war play, *The Silver Tassie* (written between 1927-1928) within the light of “disability studies,” which is an interdisciplinary field that “explores the critical divisions our society makes in creating the normal versus the pathological, the insider versus the outsider, or the competent citizen versus the ward of the state” (Linton 2).

*The Silver Tassie* starts in one of the Dublin slums where the Heegans and Forans reside. The reader encounters Harry Heegan who is a football hero, the winner of the silver tassie (cup) for the Avondale Club in Act I, and who is about to leave Ireland to fight as a soldier in the British army in World War I. The play is about this war and its psychological, social and cultural impact upon particularly the ones who attend the war. The psychological depth of the play deepens as the play progresses, and it culminates in the last act (Act IV) which focuses on Harry’s disabled body and the psychological trauma that he encounters in the post-war period. Within the frame of disability studies and Harry’s disabled body, the chapter aims to divide the subjects to be discussed into two major sections. The first section will be centred on the discourses on normalcy as reflected in *The Silver Tassie*, while the focal point of the second one will be on the discourses on disability and

abnormality again in relation to the play. Throughout these discussions, the centre of attention will also be on the dramatic function of disability as a satirical metaphor for the conditions of the World War I generation, including the ones engaged in the war or who stayed at home, in the (post-)war period. Before the analysis of *The Silver Tassie* within the framework of these two sections, the "adventure" that O'Casey encountered in relation to *The Silver Tassie* between 1928 (the year in which O'Casey presented the play to the Abbey Theatre) and 1935 (the year when the play first premiered at the Abbey Theatre) will be briefly explained.

### **Sean O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie* "Adventure"**

The completion of *The Silver Tassie* in 1928 with new hopes to stage it at the Abbey, unexpectedly, brought Sean O'Casey disappointment, and opened him the route of "self-exile" that would distance him physically (but not emotionally) from his Irish roots. O'Casey, as Brooks Atkinson asserts, expected the Abbey to put *The Silver Tassie* on stage as he was the one who prevented the bankruptcy of the Abbey Theatre with his *Juno and The Paycock* (first performed at the Abbey in 1924) and *The Plough and The Stars* (first staged at the Abbey in 1926) (xv). Contrary to his great expectations, however, *The Silver Tassie*, which might be considered as a satire that relates to Ireland and England, and is universal in scope, was rejected with a letter written by William Butler Yeats with these harsh words:

But you are not interested in the Great War; you never stood on its battle fields or walked in its hospitals, and so write out of your opinions. You illustrate those opinions by a series of almost unrelated scenes, as you might in a leading article; there is no dominating character, no dominating action, neither psychological unity nor unity of action; and your great power of the past has been the creation of some unique character who dominated all about him and was himself a main impulse in some action that filled the play from beginning to end. (467)

It is not certain for which reason exactly Yeats rejected *The Silver Tassie*; yet, his reaction to war poetry in 1936 when he was the editor of *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* might be of evidential value in terms of his approach to war in general, and, in particular, works that thematically concentrate on war. As David Krause informs, Yeats, on the basis of personal whim, excluded from the book Wilfred Owen alongside all the other poets whose poems were about World War I (*Sean O'Casey* 105). His following statements in the Introduction of the book also prove his disdain for war poetry: "If war is necessary, or necessary in our time and place, it is best to forget its suffering as we do the discomfort of fever, remembering our comfort at midnight when our temperature fell, or as we forget the worst moments of more painful disease." He continues his words as follows: "'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished, but the tragic disease of war is not so easily forgotten. Nor can one make it disappear by thinking of the comforts of peace, by editing it out of books, or by rejecting plays that deal with it" (qtd. in Krause, *Sean O'Casey* 105-106). Whether due to Yeats' "personal bias against the use of war" or his dislike for *The Silver Tassie*, there was a fact that the play was not accepted by the Abbey Theatre. This prejudice against the play and Yeats' assertion without making sure that O'Casey had no interest in the war, consequently, seem to have created a serious disappointment in O'Casey. The dispute over this work resulted in a clash between these two Irish playwrights, which left a deep metaphorical scar on O'Casey. Henceforth, nothing could prevent O'Casey from responding to Yeats' letter in a harsher manner and "turn[ing] it into a public scandal" (Atkinson xv):

You say [...] that 'I am not interested in the Great War.' Now, how do you know that I am not interested in the Great War? Perhaps because I never mentioned it to you. [...]. Throughout its duration I felt and thought of nothing else; brooded, wondered, and was amazed. In Dublin I talked of the Great War with friends that came to see me and with friends when I went to see them. I talked of the Great War and its terrible consequences with Lady Gregory when I stayed at Coole. I have talked of the Great War with Dr. Pilger, now the cancer expert in Dublin who served as a surgeon at the front. Only a week before I got your letter I talked of the Great War to a surgeon here. And yet you say I am not interested in the Great War. And now, will you tell me the name and address of the human being who, having eyes to see, ears to hear and hands to handle, was not interested in the Great War? I'm afraid your statement (as far as I am concerned) is not only an ignorant one, but it is a silly one too.

You say 'You never stood on its battle-fields.' Do you really mean that no one should or could write about or speak about a war because one has not stood on the battle-fields? Were you serious when you dictated that – really serious now? Was Shakespeare at Actium or Phillipi; was G. B. Shaw in the boats with the French, or in the forts with the British when St. Joan and Dunois made the attack that relieved Orleans? And some one, I think, wrote a poem about Tir nan nog who never took a header into the Land of Youth. And does a war consist only of battle-fields?

But I have walked some of the hospital wards. I have talked and walked and smoked and sung with the blue-suited wounded men fresh from the front. I've been with the armless, the legless, the blind, the gassed, and the Shell-shocked; with one with a head bored by shrapnel who had to tack east and tack west before he could reach the point he wished to get to, with one whose head rocked like a frantic moving pendulum. [...]. And does war consist only of wards and battle-fields? (O'Casey, *The Letters* 271-72)

The consequence of Yeats' serious and aggressive letter was O'Casey's vociferous remonstrance in a more aggressive tone. His letter, full of reproachful manner, proves how much he internalised the war that caused so much physical and psychological damage upon the soldiers, which was not understood by Yeats. The rejection of *The Silver Tassie* by Yeats was only one of the reasons for him to leave Ireland for England. Already questioning the values of the Irish Citizen Army to which once he was devotedly attached, O'Casey, with the additional disappointment resulting from Yeats and the Abbey Theatre, chose to leave Ireland to live voluntarily as a self-exile in London after his resignation from the Council of the Irish Citizen Army "when a vote went against him" (Atkinson xv).

His rebellion against the political issues of Ireland and against the Abbey Theatre opened a new phase in his life, and paved the way for a new beginning for him in the theatre. Contrary to the negative reactions he received in Ireland to *The Silver Tassie*, he was held in high esteem in England. The good reception of the play in London proves that he managed to reflect his own true self there. The play was staged in London in 1929, and "[i]t was a great success critically" (Simmons 20).

Moreover, in James Simmons' words, "he had conquered London and would go on to conquer America" (20).

The following information about the future reception of the play by the Abbey Theatre might help one have a clear-cut idea about the "full adventure" of the play. Lady Gregory, after she watched the play in London, admitted in her journal that they "ought to have taken it and done [their] best to put it on and make such cuts of the bad language as he would allow"; and Yeats, too, reflected his repentance by claiming that "the rejection was a mistake" (qtd. in Atkinson xv). O'Casey was reconciled now with the Abbey Theatre, and particularly with Yeats after nearly seven years when *The Silver Tassie*, at last, premiered at the Abbey Theatre on 12 August 1935. The play, however, this time, caused another dismay in Dublin. Many priests complained about the "blasphemous" content of the play, Brinsley MacNamara had to resign from his profession at the Abbey's board of directors, and the play could stage only five performances at the Abbey, as a result of which the Abbey experienced another term of turmoil, and O'Casey, once more, had to leave Dublin "disgusted at the insularity of the Irish imagination" (Keating, "Storm in a tassie"). The reception of the play specifically by the Catholic Church as "blasphemous" shows that the Church had centred its focus only on the surface meaning of the religious content of the play, and it ignored what lies underneath this surface meaning. It is clear from O'Casey's "*The Silver Tassie* adventure" which is full of ups and downs that the play could not get the value it deserved in Ireland in the 1920s and 1930s, neither did it cease to be a wearisome problem for O'Casey. As a matter of fact, a detailed analysis of the play shows that it has a great number of valuable social, cultural, political and psychological details, all of which are directly linked with disability studies, as well, which will be the discussion topic of the following parts of the chapter.

### ***The Silver Tassie* and the Normalcy/ Normality Discourse**

Before the analysis of the play in relation to "disability," it might prove useful to discuss the term, "normal," the discourses on "normality" and their representation in *The Silver Tassie*, because of the fact that both ("disability" and "normality" discourses) serve the same system. Besides, to internalise the field of "disability studies" and the concept of "the disabled body," first, the terms, "normalcy," "the normal body," "the norm" should be understood. The concepts, "norm" and "normalcy" have been used in different ways throughout centuries. This section which will be about the "normalcy" discourse will be mainly grounded in their two different definitions, one of which will be related to the term, "the ideal," and the other one which will be based on its relationship with the terms "average," and "similar," both of which are applicable to *The Silver Tassie*.

Throughout various historical periods, the term, "normal" has been defined in different ways, and in the seventeenth-century, for example, it was synonymous with the term, "ideal." This definition that is generally associated with classical art, however, did not emerge all of a sudden. It, first, began to take shape in the Renaissance, when the concepts of proportion, beauty and harmony began to be reshaped and redefined. After perspective and proportion began to be regarded as the general characteristics of Renaissance art with particularly Leonardo da Vinci's drawing the *Vitruvian Man*, an "ideal" image of the human body came into being in the fifteenth-century. As a consequence, in the Renaissance period, the idea of beauty meant perfection of the body. This Renaissance association of the aesthetic body with "perfection" gave way to different conceptual framing in the seventeenth-century in which the "norm" and "normalcy" began to be used to mean "ideal." As



Lennard J. Davis explains, in the seventeenth-century, this “ideal” created “the hegemony of normalcy” and “what we have is the ideal body, as exemplified in the tradition of nude Venuses, for example. This idea presents a mytho-poetic body that is linked to that of the gods” (“Constructing Normalcy” 10). These gods and goddesses are legendary beings; hence, the “ideal body” definitions and descriptions in classical art might be applicable only to the gods and goddesses or heroes and heroines who dwell not in this world but who have their own specified places like Olympus. This world, according to this description, is not the place where one might find the “ideal.” As Davis points out, “[c]lassical painting and sculpture tend to idealize the body, evening out any particularity. The central point here is that in a culture with an ideal form of the body, all members of the population are below the ideal. [...]. There is in such societies no demand that populations have bodies that conform to the ideal” (“Constructing Normalcy” 10).

As the depictions of beauty and “the ideal” in different periods in history show clearly, the definitions of these terms are always re/formulated in accordance with the changes in the meanings of the concepts according to the social, cultural or political circumstances of a period. Within the following centuries, too, one might witness different definitions of the terms, “normal” and “normalcy.” In the nineteenth-century, for example, they are observed to have been associated with being similar, not departing from an established course or agreed route, complying with the rules and laws. As Davis points out,

[t]he word ‘normal’ as ‘constituting, conforming to, not deviating or different from, the common type or standard, regular, usual’ only enters the English language around 1840. (Previously, the word had meant ‘perpendicular’; the carpenter’s square, called a ‘norm,’ provided the root meaning.) Likewise, the word ‘norm,’ in the modern sense, has only been in use since around 1855, and ‘normality’ and ‘normalcy’ appeared in 1849 and 1857, respectively. (“Constructing Normalcy” 10)

As it might be understood from these explanations, the terms, “norm,” “normalcy” that should be considered as regards the terms “average,” “similar to,” and “ordinary” began to be used in the nineteenth-century. These definitions of “ideal” or “ordinary” bodies prove to be normative, and help the emergence of the “idealised norms” in society. Hence, the bodies become the spaces governed by the hegemonic powers that have a say even on each individual body. All these show, as Susan M. Schweik highlights, that “all the ways in which the naming and production of standards of perfection and beauty – and conversely, imperfection and ugliness – still operate and influence everyday interactions” (6), which brings to mind Oscar Wilde’s statement in his *The Picture of Dorian Grey*: “to define is to limit” (225). Within the restricted, predetermined and socially/ culturally constructed definitions and frame of “ideal,” “beauty,” “normal” arranged by the regulatory norms, the remaining bodies that do not represent the “normal” are again defined by some others, they might even be otherised or limited. In this sense, the body becomes the subject of the constructed regulatory norms, which gives way to constructed body images. As Davis accentuates,

[w]ith such thinking, the average then becomes paradoxically a kind of ideal, a position devoutly to be wished. As Quetelet wrote, ‘an individual who epitomized in himself, at a given time, all the qualities of the average man, would represent at once all the

greatness, beauty and goodness of that being' (cited in Porter 1986, 102). 'Quetelet meant this hegemony of the middle to apply not only to moral qualities but to the body as well. He wrote: 'deviations more or less great from the mean have constituted [for artists] ugliness in body as well as vice in morals, and a state of sickness with regard to the constitution' (ibid., 103). Here Zeuxis's notion of physical beauty as an exceptional ideal becomes transformed into beauty as the average. ("Constructing Normalcy" 12)

In relation to these arguments, it might be claimed that the body is not an independent space, but has always been open to interpretation, codes, symbols, metaphors, and is a kind of battleground where the definitions that are made by the hegemonic power and the owners of the body might sometimes clash with each other. Hence, the body is re/interpreted according to the cultural and social values that came into being at a certain period of time and place.

In relation to these discussions on the concepts of the "ideal" and "normal," Harry Heegan, the "hero" of *The Silver Tassie* might be considered as "a herculean young athlete" (Krause, "The Anti-Heroic" 103), as he is described "in his athletic glory" (Sternlicht 94): "He is twenty-three years of age, tall, with the sinewy muscles of a manual worker made flexible by athletic sport" (I.194). In the times when Harry is the representation of a "perfect" masculine man, he, similar to the "ideal" body representations of the gods in the seventeenth-century, is put on a pedestal. In the stage direction about Harry's girlfriend, Jessie, Harry's strength is exalted more: Jessie is "responsive to all the animal impulses of life. [...] She gives her favour to the prominent and popular. Harry is her favourite: his strength and speed have won the Final for his club [...]. It is a time of spiritual and animal exaltation for her" (I.194). Harry, throughout Act I, is treated and praised by all the people surrounding him such as the girls, his neighbours, his family members like a pagan god before the Great War leaves him disabled. So, he becomes the epitomisation of the gods, goddesses, heroes and heroines in this world inhabited by the "average" humans. As Krause states, "[i]n the first act Harry's tumultuous spirit shines through the mundane world like the image of a legendary hero. He is an open-hearted primitive, an instinctive hero who glories in the joy of his uninhibited emotions and the vigour of his powerful limbs. [...] [H]e is [...] Victor in all games, races, and fights, and the darling hero of all the girls" ("The Anti-Heroic" 104). With his athletic depiction, with his strength and heroism in football, which enables the Avondale Club to be the champion and to win the silver tassie, Harry is above the "average." This high status is symbolised in the play when Harry's friends carry him and Jessie, his girlfriend on their shoulders and they cry,

'Up the Avondales!'; 'Up Harry Heegand and the Avondales!' Then steps are heard coming up the stairs, and first Simon Norton enters, holding the door ceremoniously wide open to allow Harry to enter, with his arm around Jessie, who is carrying a silver cup joyously, rather than reverentially, elevated, as a priest would elevate a chalice. (I.193)

In this scene, Harry is only obsessed with his manliness and masculinity, and the tassie represents, in Harry's words, "sign of youth, sign of strength, sign of victory" (I.194).

O'Casey seems to have used all these elevated characteristics attributed to Harry as instruments to support his discussions on the need for strong, athletic and masculine bodies to fight in World War I, which was, as Peter Doyle informs, "to become five years of slaughter" at the end of which "the death toll from a conflict fought on three continents was to reach ten million military deaths, twice that many in total" (7). Besides, when the link between the Great War and sport activities is taken into consideration, O'Casey's choice of football as a sport activity and a powerful masculine young man like Harry in such a war atmosphere in *The Silver Tassie* becomes more meaningful. O'Casey provides a symbolic link between this sport activity which represents mental, spiritual and corporeal health and the imperial ideologies of the British Empire. His choice of football as the sport activity does not seem to be a coincidence as there are many traces of the link between football playing and World War I. During the war, there were so many calls to particularly sportsmen to recruit in the armed forces. The following writing upon a poster, whose date is 18 November, 1914, proves this fact:

#### An Appeal to Good Sportsmen

The need for more RECRUITS for our Army is VERY URGENT – appeals should not be necessary. Every man must know his duty to himself and to his country. There are approximately three millions of men with no family responsibilities, I ask these to show that they are GOOD SPORTSMEN and to ENLIST NOW and help the other GOOD SPORTSMEN who are so bravely Fighting Britain's Battle against the world's enemy.

F. J. WALL  
Secretary,  
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION  
(qtd. in Mason, "9 Facts about Football")

This call to war particularly to "good sportsmen" is meaningful in that each strong, athletic and healthy body represents a strong soldier, and each strong soldier is a tool within the hands of the state that increases the chance of victory in the war. Accordingly, Harry, as a "football hero" might be considered as one of these strong soldiers needed in the war. As Kiberd discusses,

[i]n creating a sporting hero, O'Casey deliberately establishes an ideal of physical excellence which will be shattered in the war; and he mocks by implication the link between sport and empire in the upbringing of youth. Sport in the English schools had been long regarded as a sound preparation for battle, for the empire was built 'on the playing fields of Eton'; and one company at the Somme went over the top kicking four balls, produced by officers seeking to give courage to their men. (242)

In relation to these discussions, Harry might be regarded as the representations of such "good sportsmen" who will serve the country throughout the war period. Harry's strong, muscled fit body is shaped by playing football, and is an "ideal" instrument for the power upholders, that is, for the state itself. The convention of "preference for the man of action over the intellectual" (Ashley, qtd. in Akilli 20) in the British public schools before the 1850s as a means of strong bodies to fight at wars during the British colonial period is valid for World War I, as well. In both

cases, the bodies are trained to serve as combatants in the battlefields. Similarly, in *The Silver Tassie*, Harry's football heroism is linked with his heroism at the trenches. The fact that a soldier's or a sportsman's body is governed not by himself but the organs of the regulatory orders is observed in *The Silver Tassie* with the following stage directions that emphasise Harry's physical rather than intellectual capability:

*He is a typical young worker, enthusiastic, very often boisterous, sensible by instinct rather than by reason. He has gone to the trenches as unthinkingly as he would go to the polling-booth. He isn't naturally stupid; it is the stupidity of persons in high places that has stupefied him. He has given all to his masters, strong heart, sound lungs, healthy stomach, lusty limbs, and the little mind that education has permitted to develop sufficiently to make all the rest a little more useful. He is excited now with the sweet and innocent insanity of a fine achievement, and the rapid lowering of a few drinks. (I.194)*

In relation to these discussions, it might be argued that O'Casey, in a way, shows that the regulatory order tries to politically govern the body by means of ensuring the physical and mental health of the body, sanity and management programs. The relationship between the power and the body of the individual, at this point, is brought close to the discussions of biopolitics, which means political intervention of the regulatory bodies or order in the population. In biopolitics, biological bodies become the subject/tool of the system, and is used and re/shaped by this system for its own benefit.

Harry's depiction in relation to sports and war, consequently, once more brings to mind the arguments about the concepts, "norm" and "normalcy" that "pin [...] down [the] majority of the population that fall under the arch of the standard bell-shaped curve. [...]. When we think of bodies, in a society where the concept of the norm is operative, then people with disabilities will be thought of as deviants" (Davis, "Constructing Normalcy" 13). According to this "normalcy" depiction made by Davis, to be able to be accepted as "normal" or "ideal" according to the norms of the *status quo*, one has to have a body physically not deformed in order to be able to serve the country. In this sense, the soldier with physical strength is of great significance for the national army of a country, which reminds one of what Michel Foucault calls as "the soldier as the machine" in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Foucault discusses the point as follows:

By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit. (135)

What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy,' which was also a 'mechanics of power,' was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes,

but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies. (138)

Disciplining the submissive bodies of the soldiers according to the "norms" and "normalcy" of the power upholders, in the case of *The Silver Tassie*, the British Empire, meant that if the soldiers conform to the rules with their healthy and fit bodies, and if they, like a "machine," are directed into the direction that they are asked, then, they are regarded as people who contribute to the country. Otherwise, they might be thought to be "abnormal," and not contributors to the national identity of the country. The significance of these fit and healthy bodies might be observed in the following quotation that shows how the soldiers who are *able to fight* and who are non-disabled are needed when the enemy attacks them/when they fight against their enemies:

*The Staff-Wallah rushes in, turbulent and wild, with his uniform disordered.*

Staff-Wallah: The enemy has broken through, broken through, broken through!

Every man born of woman to the guns, to the guns.

Soldiers: To the guns, to the guns, to the guns!

Staff-Wallah: Those at prayer, all in bed; and the swillers drinking deeply in the pubs.

Soldiers: To the guns, to the guns.

Staff-Wallah: All the batmen, every cook, every bitch's son that hides

A whiff of courage in his veins,

Shelter'd vigour in his body,

That can run, or can walk, even crawl -

Dig him out, dig him out, shove him on -

Soldiers: To the guns! (II.216-17)

This quotation shows the significance of the non-disabled bodies of the soldiers for the war. They have to be healthy, in other words, "normal," to be able to contribute to the nation, and nation-building process. In Davis's terms, "deviations from the norm were regarded in the long run as contributing to the disease of the nation" ("Constructing Normalcy" 18). He also quotes an official in the Eugenics Record Office, who states that "the calculus of correlations is the sole rational and effective method for attacking ... what makes for, and what mars national fitness ... The only way to keep a nation strong mentally and physically is to see that each new generation is derived chiefly from the fitter members of the generation before" (qtd. in Davis, "Constructing Normalcy" 18). Davis goes on to point out that "[t]he emphasis on nation and national fitness obviously plays into the metaphor of the body. If individual citizens are not fit, if they do not fit into the nation, then the national body will not be fit. Of course, such arguments are based on a false notion of the body politic - as if a hunchbacked citizenry would make a hunchbacked nation" ("Constructing Normalcy" 18). Hence, discourses on "normalcy" and "normal" serve the political ideologies of the administrators and dominant powers of the nation. Discussions about representation of the soldier image as "the machine" or as "normal" might also contribute to the discussion of "disability studies" that will be the central discussion point of the second section of this chapter.

**Analysis of *The Silver Tassie* in Relation to Abnormality/ Disability Discourse**

The term, “disabled,” might simply be defined as a “person with a visible physical impairment (someone with an injured, nonstandard or non-functioning body or body part) or with a sensory or mental impairment (who has trouble hearing, seeing, or processing information)” (Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* 2). Accordingly, the ones who have physical and/ or mental problems are within the category of “the disabled.” “Disability” is more than this, however. It has also so much to do with cultural, social and normative discourses. In relation to these discourses constructed by the regulatory forces, it, in a way, is “formulated as by definition excluded from culture, society, the norm” (Davis, “Constructing Normalcy” 11). According to this definition, any person who is not included within the borders of the rules predetermined for the society or culture might be regarded as an “abnormal” person who should be “tamed” or “normalised” by their “author.” In this definition, a kind of hegemonic relations or hierarchical order exists. In a society dominated by the “norms,” “normalcy,” “average” and “ideal,” it would be wrong to think optimistically that there will never be, in Davis’s terms, any kind of “hegemony of normalcy” (Davis, “Constructing Normalcy” 10). Within the borders of each society, there is an unseen yet efficient hierarchical ladder where humans are placed according to their physical, mental, psychological, cultural, economic or even political characteristics, and where the ones who are “different” from the “ordinary” are categorised as “the other.” This section will mainly be based on the analysis of *The Silver Tassie* within the framework of these two definitions of disability, the first of which is related to the malformation upon the body or mental problems, and the second one of which is directly linked to the “hegemonic normalcy” idea.

Before the analysis of *The Silver Tassie* as regards the theoretical framework of “disability,” it might be worthy first to clarify the transformation of Harry, the masculine and non-disabled bodied hero, into a disabled person. The key symbol of the transformation that Harry experiences is the boat on the sea that carries the soldiers who will go to the trenches at Somme in France. The boat that carries the British soldiers to the hottest trench of the war is depicted as follows in the play:

Teddy: Come on from your home to the boat;  
Carry on from the boat to the camp.  
[...]  
VOICES OUTSIDE: From the camp up the line to the trenches”  
(I.199)

The soldier characters depicted throughout the play’s Act II are representative of the soldiers who physically fought at the Somme trenches where the British Empire and France fought against the German Empire between 1 July and 18 November, 1916, and where more than three million soldiers from both sides fought and more than one million men had been either killed or wounded (“Battle of the Somme”). The battle here was one of the bloodiest and the severest ones at the Western Front during World War I, and on the first day of the battle, there were 60,000 casualties only in the British troops (“Life in the Trenches”). When this information is taken into consideration, the serious and bloody atmosphere of “the trenches” mentioned in the quotation, too, should be kept in mind. Considered in connection with these details of the trenches, the boat on the sea in *The Silver Tassie* might represent Harry’s and many other soldiers’ life voyage or transition into disability, paralysis, and for some, even to death, and the siren that calls them might represent the ship’s call to these soldiers to their downfall, doom and tragedy. The following song sung by Harry, with the “silver tassie” in his hand and raised above reflects his

gradual downfall from the exalted successful and heroic life into the tragedy of the “bloody” war:

*The ship's siren is heard blowing.*  
*SIMON: The warning signal*  
[...]  
Harry “*raises the Silver Cup, singing:*  
[...]  
The boat rocks at the pier o’ Leith,  
Full loud the wind blows from the ferry;  
The ship rides at the Berwick Law,  
An’ I must leave my bonnie Mary’  
[...]  
The shouts of war are heard afar,  
The battle closes thick and bloody.” (I.197-98)

His raising the tassie, here, still signifies his glory, heroic deeds, his future dreams, and his happiness after his victory. In such a glorious atmosphere in which he is surrounded by his “admirers,” it might not be possible for Harry to imagine his body as “disabled.” He is still everyone’s young, strong, victorious and heroic Harry. The song, in fact, foreshadows the soldiers’ future tragedy, the “great work” of the man to man. The trenches, throughout World War I, reflected extreme examples of the damages caused by humans. At the “hardly new” trenches that “became a fundamental part of strategy with the influx of modern weapons of war,” soldiers were exposed to extensive use of chemical poison gas, which necessitated the use of gas masks, the majority of them suffered continuous shell and mortar bombardment, as a result of which, soldiers had been entrapped within the limits of the trenches, which itself resulted in shell shock or PTSD, which stands for post-traumatic stress disorder (“Life in the Trenches”). These facts about the life in the trenches prove how the trenches represent a hellish atmosphere where many soldiers had been killed, wounded seriously, left disabled, experienced psychological problems, and the bombardment on the trenches caused as much carnage as possible. The following stage directions summarise how wide and great the damage of the war on the spaces affected seriously during the war and upon the soldiers who fought at its trenches is, and here the war zone is depicted in ruins, which symbolises the ruined lives of individuals, too:

*In the war zone: a scene of jagged and lacerated ruin of what was once a monastery. At back a lost wall and window are indicated by an arched piece of broken coping pointing from the left to the right, and a similar piece of masonry pointing from the light to the left. Between these two lacerated fingers of stone can be seen the country stretching to the horizon where the front trenches are. Here and there heaps of rubbish mark where houses once stood. From some of these, lean, dead hands are protruding. Further on, spiky stumps of trees which were once a small wood. The ground is dotted with rayed and shattered shell-holes. Across the horizon in the red glare can be seen the criss-cross pattern of the barbed wire bordering the trenches. [...]. Within the broken archway to the left is an arched entrance to another part of the monastery, used now as a Red Cross station. In the wall, right, near the front is a stained-glass window, background green, figure of the Virgin, white-faced, wearing a black robe, lights inside making the figure vividly apparent. Farther up from this window is a life-size crucifix. [...]. Almost opposite the crucifix is a*



*gunwheel to which Barney is tied. At the back, in the centre, where the span of the arch should be, is the shape of a big howitzer gun, squat, heavy underpart, with a long, sinister barrel now pointing towards the front at an angle of forty-five degrees. (II.200)*

The depiction of the war atmosphere reflects the destroyed architectural buildings used as the Red Cross station that tries to heal the wounded soldiers, a space where all the traces of life have been lost, where the daily routines of common people who used to go to the church have been replaced by the guns.

A peaceful atmosphere has been transformed into an infernal one, another "great work" of man caused by the use of technology as a means of destructive force. The howitzer gun and the gun wheel to which Barney is tied, as Bernice Schrank explains, "[i]nstead of affirming the civilizing role of wheels, one of humanity's most ancient and important tools, [...] illustrate[...] how wheels serve the forces of destruction" (45). As technologies advanced, human beings began to use them more for selfish reasons, which gave way to advanced weapon industries by means of which people began to even kill each other not only for personal reasons between individuals, but at a wider global level, to destroy each other in wars. Advanced technology used in the weapon industry has become significant, so much so that it has begun to be seen as a new religion. The following scene in which the soldiers are greeting the gun, their new god, in a worshipping position in *The Silver Tassie* is suggestive in this respect:

*The Corporal goes over to the gun and faces towards it, standing on the bottom step. The Soldiers group around, each falling upon one knee, their forms crouched in a huddled act of obeisance. They are all facing the gun with their backs to the audience. The Croucher rises and joins them.*

Corporal [*singing*]:

Hail, cool-hardened tower of steel emboss'd  
With the fever'd, figment thoughts of man;  
Guardian of our love and hate and fear,  
Speak for us to the inner ear of God!

Soldiers:

We believe in God and we believe in thee.

Corporal:

Dreams of line, of colour, and of form;  
Dreams of music dead for ever now;  
Dreams in bronze and dreams in stone have gone  
To make thee delicate and strong to kill.

Corporal:

Jail'd in thy steel are hours of merriment  
Cadg'd from the pageant-dream of children's play;  
Too soon of the motley stripp'd that they may sweat  
With them that toil for the glory of thy kingdom. (II.215)

Civilisation, for our contemporary life, considered in line with its destructive force, is synonymous with monstrosity. The following depiction of the war atmosphere in which a cross is shown to have been destroyed by a shell is meaningful, as it signifies the tyrannical replacement of the old religion, Christianity with the new one, which is destructive and stronger: "A shell has released an arm from the cross,

which has caused the upper part of the figure to lean forward with the released arm outstretched towards the figure of the Virgin. Underneath the crucifix on a pedestal, in red letters, are the words: 'Princeps Pacis' (II.200). The shell that has destroyed the arm of Jesus Christ on the cross has so much to say. Here, on the cross there is the writing which is representative of Christ as "prince of peace" (*Princeps Pacis*), which emphasises the fact that civilisation/the new religion destroys everything associated with peace. As Schrank points out, "[w]heels are particularly important in *The Tassie* not only because they are circular, but because they rotate" (45); "[t]he circle keeps turning; life goes on and on; but progress does not. Through the use of wheels [particularly upon the guns] and circles, O'Casey presents reality as an endless cyclical repetition that is no more satisfying than the religious view of life in which human experience is placed into a pattern that promises resurrection yet delivers devastation" (45-46). The war depictions in *The Silver Tassie* which are reflected as the outcome of civilisation and which are described in the play as "man's wonderful work, well done" (II.210), "[t]he blood dance of His [God's] self-slaying children" (II.214), and which are likened by Croucher to "a valley of dry bones" (II.201), in this sense, reminds one also of T. S. Eliot's "waste land" image. All these representations as a whole show how human beings might be transformed into monstrous figures by creating such a horrible atmosphere. Here, "*homo homini lupus* (man to a man is a wolf)" is experienced with all its nakedness in a kind of battlefield where everyone is programmed to kill each other and killing or destroying the lives of the individuals has been considered as something "normal." This war atmosphere reflects the other face of humanity, its violent and carnal side.

*The Silver Tassie*, by reflecting all these destructive and monstrous facts, might be regarded as a representative work that shows what war does to the psychology and bodies of the soldiers who fought in World War I. It not only stole their life energies but also left many disabled, and confined to some machines (due to the limitations to their activities and motions as a result of the wounds that they got while fighting). As William A. Armstrong accentuates, "the play certainly has a dominating action for it offers a sustained illustration of how the brutal processes of war inexorably cut off many common soldiers from the joy of life" (16-17), which is exemplified, in the play, with Harry. Harry, who, before the war, had "already gone romancing through a romping life-time," and was "in the full flush of a new victory" (Krause, "The Anti-Heroic" 104), now, after the war, is depicted as a war victim who has fallen from the heights. He is paralysed and impotent due to the wound that he got in the spine in the war; hence, he is confined to a wheelchair, which is a constant reminder of the war and the pain felt at the bloody trenches. His disability traumatises him, and makes him nothing more than an "object" to be gazed at, which depresses him more. He is seen shouting at Simon who watches him: "[*Raising his voice*] Don't stand there gaping at me, man. Did you never clap your eyes on a body dead from the belly down? Blast you, man, why don't you shout at me, 'While there's life there's hope!'" (III.223). Harry is no longer the joyous and heroic character of Act I. In Act III, he is once more in Dublin, however, now, in a war hospital. Now he is the "fallen hero" who is psychologically and physically disturbed as might be seen in the depictions made by Sylvester and Simon to Susie Monican, who was, in Act I, the housekeeper at Harry's tenement, and is now "*in the uniform of a VAD nurse*" (III.219), during her control of the patients: "Travelling," "dumb," "brooding," "cogitatin'," and "his general health" is in a "low state" (III.219).

These depictions not only reflect the psychological depression experienced by Harry but also have many links with the discourses on normality and abnormality formulated by the regulatory orders. As it has already been discussed in the section about the normalcy discourses, the state or the regulatory order needs non-disabled

or “normal” bodies to guarantee the circulation of its regulation, and in relation to it, the well-being of its population that will serve the system/the country, too. Since the eighteenth-century, this order has invented a great number of instruments to enable the continuation of this normalising process and the well-being of the population, to “separate out those whose bodies are non-recuperable to the norm, and - as a part of the struggle to preserve the purity of the ‘healthy’ body - position them as radically different” (Price and Shildrick 67-68). As Tremain argues, such “practices, procedures, and policies have created, classified, codified, managed, and controlled social anomalies through which some people have been divided from others and *objectivized* as (for instance) physically impaired, insane, handicapped, mentally ill, retarded, and deaf” (5-6). The disabled minority, therefore, has been politically regarded as the “problematic other” to be “normalised” or “tamed.” For this purpose, many architectural buildings such as asylums, hospitals, prisons, schools, rehabilitation centres, too, have been constructed in order to be able to serve the system by, in Foucauldian discourse, observing the “abnormal” bodies and “disciplining” them if/when it is necessary to make sure that they are submissive to the system. As an effective apparatus of this surveillance system, rehabilitation centres and hospitals are of great significance as they function as the regulatory tools that try to “normalise” people by means of training, therapy and medical treatment. It would be meaningful to state here that rehabilitation as it is known today emerged during World War I. As Whyte states,

World War I marked the beginning of rehabilitation as we know it, both in Europe and the United States. Stiker asserts that a broad paradigm shift occurred as Western societies dealt with the enormous numbers of mutilated men left behind by the war. As prostheses were developed, so also developed the more general notions of replacement, substitution, and compensation which in time were applied to all congenital and acquired impairments. As the catastrophe of war required reconstruction, so damaged people were to be rehabilitated, returned to a real or postulated pre-existing norm of reference, and reassimilated in society. (270)

Such practices show how they made great efforts to restore the disabled to health and normal life and reintegrate them into society. Stiker sees the rehabilitation tools as the “responses” to the difference that the disabled signify. Whyte reports what Stiker discusses on this issue as follows: “[Stiker] traces the emergence of disability as a specific category of difference, and the responses that difference has invoked: charity, medical analysis, special education, and rehabilitation” (269). Therefore, each medical, educational or therapeutic practice under the service of a rehabilitation organisation also serves the regulatory organisation’s aim to “reduce the corporeal difference, of strangeness, and thus normalise the disabled body” (Price and Shildrick 67). Confinement in institutions is a comparatively newer idea, which is associated with the taming and normalization activities or processes, or at least the effort to bring the disabled to the closest level of the “normal” bodies with the help of, in Foucault’s terms, “general ‘police’ of health” whose “political objective” is to “ensure” “the health and physical well-beings of populations” (*The Foucault Reader* 278). There might be many ways applied by the medical staff in order to be able to bring the disabled bodies into the closest appearance to the able-bodied people, and one of these ways is to provide them with some tools or machines that would enable them to walk, hear, see. As Price and Shildrick state,

[f]or those who perceive themselves as matching the norm, there is a drive to mastery of the other. Within disability, this is clearly seen in the actions of medical staff as they encourage disabled people to achieve ways of being, of moving, that in the name of rehabilitation approximate more closely to the bodily actions and practices of 'able-bodied' people. And where 'nature' does not suffice, technology can be recruited to produce the effects or appearance of normality. (67)

For Harry's case, it is the wheelchair that is used as a closer means to the normalcy in *The Silver Tassie*. His first depiction in his wheelchair in the hospital ward is like this: "*Harry Heegan enters crouched in a self-propelled invalid chair; he wheels himself up to the fire. [...]. Harry remains for a few moments beside the fire, and then wheels himself round and goes out as he came in*" (III.218-19). Harry's body, which is the central focus of Act I, becomes once more central in Act III in a completely different way. His exalted body image is transformed into a "fallen" and "deformed" "object" of surveillance in the clinical use.

Throughout World War I, war hospitals received many soldiers from the battlefields. Many charity organisations like the Red Cross are observed to have served the state. The Red Cross represents "Charity Organization Societies, whose leaders played major roles in promoting the ordinance as a tool for the state" (Schweik 17). In *The Silver Tassie*, Susie is the one who represents the function of the charity organisations as servants of the state that try to heal the wounded to be able to send them back to their "normal" lives so that they can continue to serve the country. As Doyle notes, "VADs, volunteer nurses belong[ed] to the Voluntary Aid Detachments, run by the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John of Jerusalem" (50-51). Susie, as a VAD nurse, by means of helping these organisations together with the military nurses at the hospital, makes a great effort for the normalisation process of the patients for the well-being of the nation in the name of the regulatory orders. The following quotation, in which Susie is seen to be soothing Harry and to be overloading nationalistic feelings upon him, shows she tries to do her best in order to perform her task:

Harry: If I could mingle my breath with the breeze that blows from every sea, and over every land, they wouldn't widen me into anything more than the shrivell'd thing I am.

Susie [*switching off the two hanging lights, so that the red light over the fireplace alone remains*]: Don't be foolish, Twenty-eight. Wheeling yourself about among the beeches and the pines, when the daffodils are hanging out their blossoms, *you'll deepen your chance in the courage and renewal of the country. (Italics are mine.)*

[...]

Harry: I'll say to the pine, 'Give me the grace and beauty of the beech'; I'll say to the beech, 'Give me the strength and stature of the pine.' In a net I'll catch butterflies in bunches; twist and mangle them between my fingers and fix them wriggling on to mercy's banner. I'll make my chair a Juggernaut, and wheel it over the neck and spine of every daffodil that looks at me, and strew them dead to manifest the mercy of God and the justice of man!

Susie [*shocked*]: Shush, Harry, Harry!

Harry: To hell with you, your country, trees, and things, you jabbering jay!

Susie [*as she is going out*]: Twenty-eight!

Harry [*vehemently*]: To hell with you, your country, trees, and things, you jabbering jay! (III.231)

Here, represented by means of Susie's performance, rehabilitation organisations like the Red Cross show clearly that "it becomes necessary to organize [...] an apparatus which will ensure not only their subjection but the constant increase of their utility" (Foucault, *The Foucault Reader* 279). Considered in parallel with the discourses of normalcy, it would not take too much time to observe that "[n]ormalcy and disability are part of the same system" (Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* 2), hence, both constitute a political process. In other words, both of them have been written by the same "authors," and what both try to do is to guarantee the continuation of the system. The fact that Susie calls Harry as "Twenty-eight" rather than with his individual name proves that each patient is nothing more than a number among the masses, which also shows that each person in the system is significant as numbers rather than his/her individual characteristic as each "body" represents only a number in the "population," with its numerical variables of space and chronology, longevity and health, to emerge not only as a problem but as an object of surveillance, analysis, intervention, modification" (Foucault, *The Foucault Reader* 279). All these show that "the object of disability studies is not the person using wheelchair or the deaf person but the set of social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that regulate and control the way we think about and think through the body" (Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* 2-3). Considered in relation to these discursive discussions, "disability studies" is observed to be a field not confined to the limits of the biological facts. It also has close links with cultural, political and social, psychological discursive formations of "a more general project to control and regulate the body" (Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy* 3).

The "hierarchy of normalcy" which is dominant in the medical and political fields is also projected into social life where the disabled minority and non-disabled majority share the same environment. The Avondale Club, at this point, becomes the place where the gap between the disabled and non-disabled is so wide that Harry, a war veteran, feels alienated and lonely among so many people as he is left alone by his self-centred family members and friends, and deserted by his previous girlfriend, Jessie, who, now flirts with Barney, the tragedy of which is explained by Harry as "the shell that hit me bursts for ever between Jessie and me" (IV.241). In such an environment, "[f]or those who perceive themselves as matching the norm, there is a drive to mastery of the other" (Price and Shildrick 67), which is clear in the last act of *The Silver Tassie* which takes place in the Avondale Club where the characters meet to entertain themselves. Here, Harry is treated as an "object" of pity, even by his own mother, Mrs Heegan who uses the words, "a poor helpless creature" (IV.246) for Harry. The following dialogues, too, show how his demobilisation is used as a means of pity by the other characters, as well:

Sylvester: To bring a boy so helpless as him, whose memory of agility an' strength time hasn't flattened down, to a place wanin' with joy an' dancin', is simply, simply-

Simon: Devastating, I'd say. (IV.236)

Maxwell: Now, now, Heegan – you must try to keep quiet.

Susie: And when you've rested and feel better, you will sing for us a Negro spiritual, and point the melody with the ukulele.

Mrs Heegan: Just as he used to do.

Sylvester: Behind the trenches.

Simon: In the rest-camps.

Mrs Foran: Out in France.

Harry: Push your sympathy away from me. For I'll have none of it.

[...]

For mine is a life on the ebb,

Yours a full life on the flow! (IV.241)

As Davis explains, “[t]he average, well-meaning ‘normal’ observer feels sorry for that disabled person, feels awkward about relating to the person, believes that the government or charity should provide special services, and gives thanks for not being disabled (as in ‘I cried that I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet’)” (*Enforcing Normalcy* 1-2). Even Harry's mother, Mrs Heegan focuses on the state allowance that Harry will get by saying, “he'll never be dependin' on anyone, for he's bound to get the maximum allowance” (III.228), which shows that everything is reducible to calculation. Now, the non-disabled seem to continue the discourses on “normalcy,” “the average,” “the norm,” and the “hegemony of normalcy,” and serve the construction and re/circulation of these discourses. This shows how the body might be problematised, and become the centre of the gaze and conceptualisation, and a space to be defined or governed by somebody else rather than the owner of the body who is ineffective in the definition-making process. This gaze is a clear-cut representation of categorisation of the humans as disabled and nondisabled, and hides within itself a kind of humiliation. It is seen that it is difficult for culturally and socially constructed concepts/discourses to change immediately within the context of disability construction as one encounters them in every sphere of life because it is not possible to escape the norms encircling us.

As Linton emphasises, “[t]he absence of subjectivity and agency of disabled people is evident in a review of standard curricula in history, psychology, women's studies, literature, philosophy, anthropology, and on and on. Moreover, the problem is compounded by the absence of disabled people's perspectives in the general culture” (Linton 134). In this respect, *The Silver Tassie's* dealing with the psychology of a disabled person, Harry, might be argued to fill in the gaps in the literary field, and to open a fresh perspective in it. This characteristic prevents the play from being called only as a war-criticism play. Particularly the scene in the club where Harry voices his deep disturbed psychology, it might be possible to approach an event from the perspective of a demobilised man among so many self-centred non-disabled people. He says: “And legs were made to dance, to run, to jump, to carry you from one place to another; but mine can neither walk, nor run, nor jump, nor feel the merry motion of a dance” (IV.234). Disappointed with his disabled body which desires to dance like the people around him, to enjoy the desires of the youth with his ex-girlfriend, Jessie, he is forced to content himself only with watching the non-disabled who dance selfishly, which mirrors the fact that “[t]he fantasy of self-mastery [...] applies as much to disabled as to non-disabled people” (Price and Shildrick 68). This has a psychological reason behind it. As Davis explains,

[t]he disabled body is a nightmare for the fashionable discourse of theory because that discourse has been limited by the very

predilection of the dominant, ableist culture. The body is seen as a site of *jouissance*, a native ground of pleasure, the scene of an excess that defies reason, that takes dominant culture and its rigid, power-laden vision of the body to task. [...] The nightmare of that body is one that is deformed, maimed, mutilated, broken, diseased. (*Enforcing Normalcy* 2)

In relation to this argument, Harry's body might be considered as a metaphorical battleground where his desires and "nightmares" fight with each other. His fight is with his disturbed psychology that does not want to accept the fact that he has lost the chance of moving like the people who dance joyously. As a result, dancing, for him, becomes "an act [...] that underlines the gulf between the able-bodied and the disabled" (Mulhall, "From Somme to *Silver Tassie*").

When *The Silver Tassie* nears the end, Harry's perspective is presented by Sean O'Casey more clearly. When he understands that Jessy and Barney dance and kiss to make him jealous of them and stop following them wherever they go, he cannot keep silent any more, and bursts out in all his anger: "So you'd make merry over my helplessness in front of my face, in front of my face, you pair of cheats! You couldn't wait till I'd gone, so that my eyes wouldn't see the joy I wanted hurrying away from me over to another?" (IV.245). Later, Barney, who cannot stand their continuously being followed by Harry, shouts at him: "You half-baked Lazarus, I've put up with you all the evening, so don't force me now to rough-handle the bit of life the Jerries left you as a souvenir!" (IV.246). These words that include verbal and psychological violence elements have traumatic impact on Harry. The fact that the non-disabled see the disabled as "the other" is as clear as the humiliation that Harry is subjected to. Both of these together are contributors to the activation of the regulatory norms that divides the world into two halves: the self and the other. Barney's humiliation and his effort to other Harry, along with all the pitying gazes of the other characters, in a way, emphasise their selfishness, and lack of empathy for the diseased or disabled people, without even thinking for a while of the fact that each individual in this world is a candidate for disability. With his great disappointment and pain, Harry utters these tragic words:

Dear God, this crippled form is still your child. (*To Mrs. Heegan*)  
Dear mother, this helpless thing is still your son. Harry Heegan, me, who, on the football field, could crash a twelve-stone flyer off his feet. For this dear Club three times I won the Cup, and grieve in reason I was just too weak this year to lay again. And now, before I go, I give you all the Cup, the Silver Tassie, to have and to hold for ever, ever-more. (*From his chair he takes the Cup with the two sides hammered close together, and holds it out to them*) Mangled and bruised as I am bruised and mangled. Hammered free from all its comely shape. Look, there is Jessie writ, and here is Harry, the one name safely separated from the other. (*He flings it on the floor*) Treat it kindly. With care it may be opened out, for Barney there to drink to Jess, and Jessie there to drink to Barney. (IV.247)

Harry, already experiencing a post-war traumatic syndrome and the trauma as a consequence of being confined to a wheelchair, is forced to contend with another trauma, this time due to his being discarded from his own society, which lacks any trace of empathy. He is so much filled with the anger towards the ones around him that he, in a way, vomits his anger by throwing the silver tassie. The silver tassie,



which, at the beginning of the play, symbolises his victory, heroism, and strength, now, stands for his disappointment, his loss of physical strength, an alienated ex-hero. It might also represent his rebellion against the regulatory orders that limit the definitions of the body according to their political discourse. Hence, Harry's throwing the tassie represents the body politics, which explains the hegemonic and political struggle of the body to express the reactionary and rebellious nature of the individual. As Grosz states, "[b]odies speak, without necessarily talking" (35). His throwing the silver tassie, which shows his violent outburst of emotion, also represents his reaction to the suppression of "laws, norms, and ideals" (Grosz 35). With his bodily protest, he, in a way, becomes a spokesman of all the disabled/otherised bodies.

After all Harry does in order to voice his disturbed psychology, however, the ones around him are still ignorant, they leave Harry and Ted, who is a blind war veteran, behind, and continue their entertainment as if nothing has happened, and the gap between the disabled and the non-disabled becomes wider, which is clear in the following quotation from the play:

Maxwell: Come on, all, we've wasted too much time already.

Susie [to Jessie, *who is sitting quietly in a chair*]: Come on, Jessie – get your partner; [*roguishly*] you can have a quiet time with Barney later on.

Jessie: Poor Harry!

Susie: Oh nonsense! If you'd passed as many through your hands as I, you'd hardly notice one. [*To Jessie*] Jessie, Teddy Foran and Harry Heegan have gone to live their own way in another world. Neither I nor you can lift them out of it. No longer can **they** do the things **we** do. **We** can't give sight to the blind or make the lame walk. **We** would if **we** could. It is the misfortune of war. As long as wars are waged, we shall be vexed by woe; strong legs shall be made useless and bright eyes made dark. But **we**, who have come through the fire unharmed, must go on living. [*Pulling Jessie from the chair*] Come along, Barney, and take your partner into the dance!

[...]

Maxwell:

Swing into the dance,

Take joy when it comes, ere it go;

For the full flavour of life

Is either a kiss or a blow.

**He** to whom joy is a foe,

Let **him** wrap himself up in his woe;

For **he** is a life on the ebb, **we** a full life on the flow. (*Italics and emphases are mine.*) (IV.248)

This conversation, in a way, summarises all criticism made by O'Casey. It shows how the disabled experience, in Aimé Césaire's term, "thingification," how they are placed in the peripheries unlike the "normal" ones who put themselves into the centre, how "us/insiders" and "them/outsideers" terms are used to show the disabled as "the other" similar to the colonized, the black, in short, all the suppressed and oppressed groups in the world. The non-disabled ones widen the gap between the disabled and themselves. As Mulhall argues, "[a] deeper division is present between those scarred by the battle and those surviving who move on without looking back" ("From Somme to *Silver Tassie*"). In this sense, the ones who

stayed in their homes throughout the war process and even the soldiers who could easily overcome the trauma and wounds of the war have failed to understand the psychologies of the disabled. As Kiberd notes, "O'Casey demonstrates, with rare empathy, how the demobbed soldiers hated returning home, because they were tortured by their inability to describe the wars to relatives" (244). People seem to have too quickly forgotten about the impact of the war upon the country and its people, but, most important of all, they have forgotten their humanity, the war has ceased to be the problem shared by the whole society with a common bond. This oblivion of the bondage of society as a whole in the (post-)war period is enhanced with the "self-sacrifice" (II.213) symbol that is voiced by Harry when he is asked to make a choice between the red wine or the white wine:

Red wine, red like the faint remembrance of the fires in France; red wine like the poppies that spill their petals on the breasts of the dead men. No, white wine, white like the stillness of the millions that have removed their clamours from the crowd of life. No, red wine; red like the blood that was shed for you and for many for the commission of sin! (IV.241)

It is understood from the ignorant behaviours of the non-disabled that the sacrifices of the soldiers, the war veterans, the casualties and the disabled "have produced no ameliorative social change, no new consciousness by those who have survived unharmed of the pointlessness of the suffering and loss caused by World War I" (Schrank 46). The play provides a unique and empathetic response to the cries of the disabled who no longer reflect their pre-war conditions (such as heroic, athletic, and strong). The following dialogue between Harry and Teddy represents O'Casey's satire on the ones who have eyes, hands, feet but who use them to destroy, injure, kill, hurt and disable humans:

Harry: There's something wrong with life when men can walk.  
Teddy: There's something wrong with life when men can see.  
Harry: I never felt the hand that made me helpless.  
Teddy: I never saw the hand that made me blind.  
Harry: Life came and took away the half of life.  
Teddy: Life took from me the half he left with you.  
Harry: The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away.  
Teddy: Blessed be the name of the Lord. (IV.242)

Harry: What's in front we'll face like men! The Lord hath given and *man hath taken away*.  
Teddy: Blessed be the name of the Lord! (*Italics are mine.*) (IV.247)

The replacement of the sentence "The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away" with "The Lord hath given and man hath taken away" keeps a severe satire underneath the surface. These lines satirise, first, the destructive impact of the wars which are man-made. As Morris states, it is easy to comment on these killings or all these monstrous acts "as men behaving 'like animals,' but if we could find a wild animal that showed signs of acting in this way, it would be more precise to describe it as behaving like men. The fact is that we cannot find such a creature. We are dealing with another of the dubious properties that make modern man a unique species" (125). Human is not only the sacrifice but also the destroyer of this modern "civilised world." Civilisation, in this respect, is synonymous with monstrosity. They, secondly, criticise the ones who are indifferent to many facts

around them such as disability, psychological traumas, or any kind of problem when they are in the comfort zone and are not affected at all by any of them.

Maybe the following questions that summarise O'Casey's satire should be asked as a conclusion to this chapter: Who are the real blind; the ones who physically cannot see or the ones who are blind to the facts and problems around themselves? Who are the real paralysed; the ones who physically cannot walk or the ones who are confined to their own selfish webs? Lastly, who are the real disabled; the ones who cannot walk, see, hear, who are mentally ill, wounded in the war or the ones who blindly serve the regulatory order that formulates and re/shapes, re/circulates the discourses on normalcy and disability, and who serve the deployment of such discourses, the ones who cannot sympathise and empathise with the disabled, the ones whose only concern is calculated relationships? O'Casey's answers to these questions seem to be clear.

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## **The Discourse and Style of Sean O'Casey in Translation: the Case of *The Shadow of a Gunman* in Turkish**

**Hilal Erkazancı Durmuş**

Sean O'Casey was an Irish working-class revolutionary dramatist who sought to create social transformation in order to improve working-class people's life and employment. Upon the failure of the 1913 strike, he left the Irish Citizen Army, considering that it abandoned its principles in preference to a Gaelic nationalism which, according to him, would not evolve into a socialist republic (Simmons 7). His disillusionment with nationalist politics had a great influence on his works. Furthermore, since he was born to a Protestant family in a Catholic tenement, "a beleaguered Protestant" often shows up in his plays (Simmons 4). Having rose to prominence as a 'slum genius' (Ayling 5), O'Casey reproduced the idiom of the people among whom he lived. His plays mainly focus on Irish people's inward-looking nature, which emerged as a consequence of the loss of workers' rights in favor of a new nationalism after the War of Independence.

*The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923) is a two-act comic-tragic play in O'Casey's Dublin trilogy, which also involves *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). Set in the tenement slums in Dublin in 1920, a depressing and chaotic time when the Irish War of Independence was heightened, the play highlighted the guerrilla fighting between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Black and Tans of the British police force. In an attempt to escape from poverty, lawlessness and violence, many of the characters (e.g. Adolphus Grigson and Tommy Owens) get drunk. The characters consider that Donal Davoren is an IRA hero hiding from the Black and Tans (i.e. English forces in Ireland). Hence, the play reveals the clash between true and false heroism.

Davoren's mistaken identity is a key feature that engenders a chain of both comic and tragic events in the play. The other characters who live in slum misery under the repression of Black and Tans do not have much to look forward to. Therefore, in order to alleviate their misery, they masquerade as literate, cultivated and intellectual people who can speak a pompous language and who can philosophize. It is significant that certain characters are portrayed through the use of deviant language in the play. O'Casey uses certain stylistic features such as malapropism, repetition, attempted profundity and dialect to heighten the play's



comic effect. Those stylistic features serve a characterizing role in that they influence the way readers form an impression of the characters in their minds.

At this point, it is necessary to note that nationalism is central to the play: many of the characters (e.g. Tommy Owens and Minnie Powell) have a strong nationalist desire for a free Ireland. Religion is also of significance in the play. Since the Dublin tenement dwellers are predominantly Catholic, there is a tension between Protestants and Catholics. Catholic and Catholic-Nationalist references are frequently used to characterize the speech of some characters (e.g. Donal Davoren, Seamus Shields, Tommy Owens, Mrs. Henderson, and Minnie Powell). In this context, Simmons underlines that O'Casey "was writing for a Dublin audience and presumed a detailed knowledge of recent Irish history" (35).

O'Casey was introduced to the Turkish literary system in the 1960s as a working-class writer. Note here that the year 1962 coincides with the period of new rights and liberties brought by the 1961 constitution that came into force after the 1960 military coup. As Tahir Gürçağlar suggests, "new freedoms promised by the constitution led to a flourishing of leftist thought in Turkey", and "the translation of political and especially left-wing writings" served to develop class consciousness among the Turkish people (260). The first translated O'Casey play was *Hall of Healing*. The Turkish translation *Sağlık Yurdu* was composed by Cevat Çapan and published by De Yayınevi in 1962. *Dünyanın Düzeni* (the Turkish translation of *Juno and the Paycock*) was composed by İrfan Şahinbaş; and the translation was published by Milli Eğitim Basımevi in 1965. Then *Red Roses* was translated by Cevat Çapan, and the Turkish translation *Kırmızı Güller* was published by Kuzey Yayınları in 1985.

As for *The Shadow of a Gunman*, the play was translated by Ülker İnce in 1987; and, in the 1987-1988 theatre season, the translation *Silahşörün Gölgesi* was staged by AST (Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu), a revolutionary and progressive private theatre that often staged socialist and leftist playwrights' works. İnce's translation was later published by Can Yayınları in 1990. It is necessary to underline here that İnce is an important lecturer and translator in Turkey. She translated various literary works, won several translation awards and wrote academic books on literary translation. Against the background of these points, this study will focus on the most representative examples in *The Shadow of a Gunman* in order to seek answers to the following questions:

- (i) given that O'Casey's use of the stylistic features functions as a characterizing trait and is far from serendipitous, how is the communicative role of his stylistic choices transferred to the Turkish translation; and
- (ii) given that O'Casey's discourse is replete with social and historical references to Irish Gaelic society and culture that require extensive knowledge of Irish history (Simmons 35), how are the religious, political, historical and mythological allusions translated into Turkish?

Before focusing on the answers to these questions, three main intertwined points should be emphasized regarding the translation of theatre texts. First, translation is "always a compromise", to use the words of Tyulenev (51), particularly in the case of theatre texts that have a double nature as both literary texts and performance scripts. Therefore, it is significant to consider not only the dual addressee of those texts (i.e. readers who read for pleasure owing to their interest in

theatre versus spectators), but also the dual dimension of the act of translation (i.e. translating for the page versus translating for the stage). As Bassnett emphasizes, “[t]heatre texts cannot be considered as identical to texts written to be read because the process of writing involves a consideration of the performance dimension [...]” (110). This point testifies to the fact that some translators may need to sacrifice the textual and stylistic properties of the source text in favour of the performability and speakability of theatre texts.

In light of this point, the basic premise from which this study departs is that the translational strategies would potentially unearth the purpose of translating a theatre text. Put differently, finding textual evidence of translation strategy would give us insight into whether the translated theatre text is intended for page or for stage. In this context, a striking example is given by Ersözlü, who focuses on the English translation of Haldun Taner’s *Keşanlı Ali Destanı* (*The Ballad of Ali of Keshan*), underlining that a twenty-nine page paratextual material is added to the translation which covers information on the work, the playwright, the composer and the characters, along with a synopsis, an interview with the playwright, the composer’s note and the translator’s note (211). In line with these points, Ersözlü argues that specific paratextual features are added to the English translation that is sought to serve as a literary text in a foreign culture (210).

Second, a significant characteristic of translating for stage is economy; hence, those who translate for performance may have to make omissions or significant changes in the source text. As Aaltonen underlines, “theatre translation is more tied to immediate context than literary translation [...]. Unlike readers, who can take their time in forming their individual reading of a text, a theatre audience functions as an item in a severely restricted time and place” (40-41).

Third, “theatre texts, perhaps more than any other genre, are adjusted to their reception, and the adjustment is always socially and culturally conditioned. Theatre as an art form is social and based on communal experience” (Aaltonen 53). Therefore, the translator may have to alter the source text in order to make it more accessible to the target culture and to have an immediate effect on the target-language spectators. The alterations in the source text may involve the substitution of poetical language with a plain language, paraphrasing and explicating metaphors and allusions, summarising repetitions into a single phrase, transferring verse into prose, excluding typical references to the source culture, translating dialect into standard language and the like. Therefore, this study will analyse the translator’s strategies to reach a conclusion as to whether the Turkish translation of *The Shadow of a Gunman* was primarily intended for stage performance or for page.

### **The Turkish translation of *The Shadow of a Gunman***

#### **O’Casey’s style**

#### **Malapropism**

Malapropism is the use of an inappropriate word in place of a similar-sounding word, which creates nonsense and humour particularly in literary texts. For instance, when Mrs. Malaprop, in Sheridan’s *The Rivals*, asks another character to “illiterate” someone from her memory, she uses ‘illiterate’ (i.e. uncultured, poorly educated) as a substitute for ‘obliterate’ (i.e. wipe out) (79). Another example can be Mrs. Malaprop’s expression “[s]he is as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of

the Nile”, where ‘allegory’ (i.e. the use of events and characters as symbols) replaces ‘alligator’ (i.e. a large reptile) (46). Hence, the word malapropism originates from Mrs. Malaprop, who has the habit of substituting words with inappropriate and nonsensical expressions.

O'Casey marks his characters (e.g. slum tenants) as ignorant poseurs who are feckless, naïve and self-deluded, on the one hand and, on the other hand, high-spirited and imaginative people who wish to overreach the limits of their environment. O'Casey marks this contradiction through certain stylistic features. In the following example, Mrs Henderson speaks in praise of Gallogher's letter, saying that “it is as good a letter as was decomposed by a scholar”:

**ST 1:**

MRS HENDERSON. Well, now, Mr Gallicker, seein' as I have given Mr Davoren a fair account ov how you're situated, an' ov these tramps' cleverality, I'll ask you to read the letter, which I'll say, not because you're there, or that you're a friend o' mine, is as good a letter as was decomposed by a scholar. Now, Mr Gallicker, an' don't forget the top sayin'. (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 98)

**TT 1:**

Bayan Henderson: Evet Bay Gallogher, Bay Davoren'e sizin hangi şartlarda oturduğunuzu, o serserileri falan olduğu gibi anlattığıma göre, şimdi sizden mektubu okumanızı rica edeceğim, inanın burada olduğunuz için söylemiyorum ya da arkadaşım olduğunuz için değil, o mektubu tahsil terbiye görmüş biri telif etse ancak bu kadar ederdi. Evet, Bay Gallogher, başını okumayı da unutmayın ha. (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 37)

In this example, ‘decompose’ (i.e. to get reduced to components) is used in the place of ‘compose’ (i.e. to write). The translator's use of ‘telif etmek’, though not an example of malapropism, recreates the comic effect of the source text since ‘telif etmek’ is used in Turkish to ‘compile’ a work of art but not a letter. In the following example, Mrs. Grigson confirms her husband's claim that he is not referring to Shields as a swindler. She uses ‘deluding’ (i.e. deceiving and fooling) in place of ‘alluding’ (i.e. hinting at or referring to).

**ST 2:**

MRS GRIGSON. Oh, you're not deludin' to Mr Shields. (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 116)

**TT 2:**

GRIGSON: Evet, Bay Shields'i ima etmiyorsun. (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 47)

Obviously, the play's humorous effect comes from the characters' ignorance of their malapropisms, mispronunciations, misquotations, misinterpretations, attempted profundities, and extravagant repetition. This is why O'Casey uses ‘deluding’ in the

place of ‘alluding’; yet, in the example above, the humourous effect of the stylistic marker is not transferred to the target text.

### **Attempted profundity**

Another stylistic property that features in O’Casey’s writing is the bombast of his characters’ speech. Bombast is a stylistic feature, an inflated and pretentious manner of speaking and writing which sounds impressive but is usually balderdash. O’Casey’s characters speak an extremely elaborate and pretentious language that can be mocked by the others. The Turkish translator also resorts to high-flown style to recreate the characters’ turgid and pompous language that sounds important but has little meaning:

#### **ST 3:**

MR GALLOGHER. Mr Davoren, sir, on behalf ov meself, James Gallicker, an’ Winifred, Mrs Gallicker, wife ov the said James, I beg to offer, extend an’ furnish our humble an’ hearty thanks for your benevolent goodness in interferin’ in the matter specified, particularated an’ expanded upon in the letter, mandamus or schedule, as the case may be. An’ let me interpretate to you on behalf ov meself an’ Winifred Gallicker, that whenever you visit us you will be supernally positive ov a hundred thousand welcomes – ahem. (O’Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 103)

#### **TT 3:**

BAY GALLOGHER: Sayın Bay Davoren, mektupta, isterseniz arzuhal diyelim, belirtilen ayrıntılarıyla anlatılan konuya müdahale etmek iyilik ve hayırseverliğini gösterdiğiniz için şahsım James Gallogher ve Winnifred, yani Bayan Gallogher, yani adıgecen James’in karısı adına naçiz ve icтен teşekkürlerimi sunmak isterim. Şahsım ve Winnifred Gallogher adına size şunu da söylemek isterim ki evimize gelmek lütfunda bulunursanız kapımız size her zaman ardına kadar açık olacaktır, öhö. (O’Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 40)

O’Casey uses ‘furnish humble and hearty thanks’, ‘benevolent goodness’, ‘mandamus’, ‘particularate’, ‘supernally’, and ‘interpretate’ to demonstrate the character’s pompous style. The source text’s ‘mandamus’ refers to a “judicial writ issued from the Queen’s Bench division as a command to an inferior court” (O’Casey, Vol. 1 501). There are also instances of such style as is the case in ‘the matter specified, particularated an’ expanded upon in the letter’, which is used to refer to ‘specify’ or ‘be meticulous about details’. ‘Particularate’ is used in place of ‘particularise’, and ‘interpretate’ is an archaic use of ‘interpret’, which is used in place of ‘interpose’ (i.e. say (words) as an interruption). The translator also recreates the characters’ grandiose language through the use of old Turkish words such as ‘arzuhal’ (i.e. petition), ‘naçiz’ (humble), and the like, along with the use of a formal style as is the case with ‘adıgecen’ (i.e. aforementioned).

In the example below, Mr Gallogher wishes to raise his opinion that Shields is a person of exceptional mental quality:

**ST 4:**

MRS HENDERSON. Them words is true, Mr Gallicker, and they aren't. For to be wise is to be a fool, an' to be a fool is to be wise.

MR GALLOGHER (*with deprecating tolerance*). Oh, Mrs Henderson, that's a parrotox.

MRS HENDERSON. It may be what a parrot talks, or a blackbird, or, for the matter of that, a lark- but it's what Julia Henderson thinks [...] (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 102)

**TT 4:**

BAYAN HENDERSON: Bu söyledikleriniz doğru, Bay Gallogher, ama aynı zamanda yanlış. Çünkü akıllı olmak aptal olmak demektir, aptal olmak akıllı olmak demektir.

BAY GALLOGHER (*Hoş görüyle karşı çıkarak*): Aman Bayan Henderson, öyle saçma şey olur mu?

BAYAN HENDERSON: İster saçma olsun, ister barut. Julia Henderson'un düşüncesi bu [...] (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 41)

This is a very striking example which reveals the translator's creative potential in reproducing the source text's stylistic features. In order to recreate the humorous tone of the source text's pompous word 'paradox' ('parrotox'/'parrot talks' in the excerpt), İnce uses 'saçma' which refers both to 'nonsense' and to 'gunpowder' in the Turkish context.

In order to venture a boastful speech laden with verbal ornamentation, the source-text characters frequently quote the expressions of famous historical figures. In the following example, Mrs Henderson quotes Abraham Lincoln, who, in his Gettysburg address in November 1863, honours the soldiers that sacrificed their lives by saying that "this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth" [Tanrı'nın şahitliğindeki bu ülkenin yeni bir özgürlük doğuşu yaşamasını sağlayalım ve halkın, halk tarafından halk için yönetimine sahip olan bu devlet yeryüzünden silinmesin]. O'Casey seems to create a humorous effect by having his character make a misquotation (i.e. the use of 'government of the people with the people by the people' in place of 'government of the people, by the people, for the people':

**ST 5:**

MRS HENDERSON (*entering the room*). Come along in, Mr Gallicker, Mr Davoren won't mind; it's him as can put you in the way o' havin' your wrongs righted; come on in, man, an' don't be so shy – Mr Davoren is wan ov ourselves that stands for government ov the people with the people by the people. (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 96)

**TT 5:**

BAYAN HENDERSON: Girsenize, Bay Gallogher, Bay Davoren'den çekinmenize gerek yok; size yol gösterecek birini aramıyor muydunuz, işte burada; girsenize canım, bu kadar utangaç

olmayın, Bay Davoren bizdendir, sırtını halka dayayan halkçı bir halk yönetiminden yanadır .(O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 35)

Obviously, due to the linguistic differences between Turkish and English, the source text's misquotation is not reproduced in the target text. It is also safe to argue that an ordinary Turkish reader who is not familiar with the linguistic intricacies of Abraham Lincoln's original speech would not identify the misquotation even if it was somehow transferred to the translation.

### **Repetition**

O'Casey frequently benefits from repetition as a stylistic device to create rhythm particularly to characterise Seumas' speech. As the following excerpt illustrates, the translator recreates the rhythm through repetition; yet, in some cases, she reduces the number of repetitive words, which may be considered a result of the limitations of stage performance:

#### **ST 6:**

SEUMAS (*sitting up in bed*). If I was you I'd give that game up; it doesn't pay a working man to write poetry. I don't profess to know much about poetry- I don't profess to know much about poetry- about poetry- I don't know much about the pearly glint of the morning dew, or the damask sweetness of the rare wild rose, or the subtle greenness of the serpent's eye - but I think a poet's claim to greatness depends upon his power to put passion in the common people. (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 49)

#### **TT 6:**

Seumas (*Yatakta oturur*): Senin yerinde olsam bu oyundan vazgeçerdim. Şiir yazmakla bir emekçinin karnı doymaz. Şiirden anladığımı söyleyemem: şiirden sabah çiyinin incimsi parıltısı ya da nadiren bir yaban gülünün koyu pembe güzelliği, ya da yılanın gözünün keskin yeşili gibi şeylerden anlamam, ama bence bir şairin büyüklüğü sıradan insanların yüreklerinde tutku uyandırmak gücüne bağlıdır. (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 6)

### **Foreignizing language**

As "a master of the Irish Gaelic language, and a literary exponent of the proletariat" (Snowden 322), O'Casey uses language in different ways to mark social status. For instance, Donal Davoren is portrayed as regularly using British Standard English, whereas the status of the other characters is marked by the use of dialect. It is significant to point out that "[t]o anyone familiar with Dublin speech much of the language of a play such as *The Shadow of a Gunman* catches the sharpness of contemporary Dublin idiom" (Snowden 387). On the other hand, it seems that other English-speaking readers are expected to cope with the foreignizing effect of the Irish vernacular. As Snowden suggests, O'Casey's use of dialect attests to his "obvious belief in its power to transform reality" (387).

In this context, the translation of dialect gains utmost significance because, as Suominen underlines, 'if the story and the structure are the skeleton' of a literary work, its dialectal voices "could be compared to the muscles that move the skeleton and give it its final form and meaning" (n.p). Potential strategies for dialect translation are (i) dialect compilation (i.e. integrating the characteristics of different TL dialects), (ii) parallel dialect translation (finding a TL dialect which serves similar functions), and (iii) pseudo dialect translation (creating a new dialect) (Berezowski 42-81; Perteghella 47-52). However, since, in the case of these strategies, the geographical aspect is totally sacrificed, the translation may lose significant connotations contextually triggered in the source text; and the target language representation of the source-language dialect may produce undesired, gratuitous and connotative effects in the translation. This point in turn explains the translator's systematic use of standard Turkish to translate the source text's foreignizing language:

**ST 7:**

SEUMAS. Oh, proud were the chieftains of famed Inisfail.  
Is truagh gan oidher 'na Vfarradh.

The stars of our sky an' the salt of our soil. (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 88)

**TT 7:**

SEUMAS: "Göklerimizdeki yıldızlar toprağımızdaki tuz. (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 26).

'Inisfail' (i.e. isle of destiny), a poetic name for Ancient Ireland, features in the song sung by Shields. The line 'is truagh gan oidher 'na Vfarradh' is a Gaelic expression for 'what a pity that there is no heir remaining of their company'. These Gaelic expressions are removed from the Turkish text, which might be considered a potential consequence of their alienating effect in the Turkish context.

**ST 8:**

MINNIE. It wasn't you, really, that writ it, Mr Gallicker?

MRS HENDERSON. Sinn Fein Amhain him an' him only, Minnie, I seen him with me own two eyes when me an' Winnie – Mrs Gallicker, Mr Davoren, aforesaid as appears in the letter – was havin' a chat be the fire. (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 101)

**TT 8:**

MINNIE: Herhalde bunu siz yazmadınız değil mi, Bay Gallogher?

BAYAN HENDERSON: Kendisi yazdı hem de tek başına, Minnie. Winnie ile, hani mektupta Bayan Gallogher olarak adı geçiyor ya, Bay Davoren, işte onunla biz ocağın başında sohbet ederken yazdı, gözlerimle gördüm. (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 41)

As is the case in the example above, the Gaelic expression 'Sinn Fein Amhein' (i.e. We Ourselves Alone) is not transferred to the Turkish translation possibly due to the fact it would create a totally alienating atmosphere on stage.



### O'Casey's discourse

O'Casey's discourse is replete with political and historical allusions in *The Shadow of A Gunman*. An allusion is an implied reference to political, historical, mythological, literary or religious events, titles of works, people, statements of historical figures, and the like. Allusions can be classified into two groups as "proper name allusions" (e.g. real-life and fictional figures) and "key phrase allusions" (biblical references, songs, clichés, catch-phrases, and the like) (Leppihalme 4). Allusions may serve to attract the reader's attention, create a cognitive challenge to the reader, or reveal a specific message to the reader. Leppihalme underlines that "the words of allusion function as a clue to the meaning, but the meaning can usually be understood only if the receiver can connect the clue with an earlier use of the same or similar words in another source or the use of a name evokes the referent and some characteristic features linked to the name" (4). The culture-bound nature of allusions may pose challenges in cross-cultural communication since their connotation may not be activated in the target reader's reading process.

Leppihalme lists the following strategies for the translation of proper name allusions: (i) "retention of the proper name by using the proper name as such or by providing the reader with a detailed explanation" such as a footnote; (ii) "replacement of the proper name by replacing the proper name by a more popular SL name or by replacing the proper name by a popular TL name"; and (iii) "omission of the proper name but transferring its meaning by any other means or omission of the proper name and the allusion altogether" (79).

As for the strategies for the translation of key phrase allusions, Leppihalme underlines that the translator may resort to the following strategies: (i) composing a literal translation without regard to connotative or contextual meaning the allusion bears; (ii) using paratextual material such as footnotes, endnotes, and translatorial prefaces to explain the allusions; (iii) using additional stylistic markers (marked wording or syntax) which signal the presence of an allusion; (iv) transferring the sense and meaning of the allusion; (v) creating a passage that provides the target-text reader with the connotations of the source-text allusion; and omitting the allusion (84).

In the following example, 'Morpheus' refers to the "God of Dreams" in Greek mythology (O' Casey, *Vol.I* 497). The translator both uses the mythological name and explicates what it refers to in the target text:

#### ST 8:

SEUMAS (*stretching himself*). Oh-h-h. I was fast in the arms of Morpheus -he was one of the infernal deities [...] (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 80)

#### TT 8:

SEUMAS (*Gerinir*): Ah-h-h. Uyku Tanrısı Morfeus'un kollarının arasında mışıl mışıl uyuyordum. Morfeus, lanetli tanrılardan biriydi [...] (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 17)

The 'Angelus', which refers to the Roman Catholic practice of paying tribute to the Incarnation of Jesus, is used as an allusion in the following example. It can be referred to as 'İsa'nın vücut bulma duası' in Turkish to denote the church bells that announce the sound of the Angelus bell. The translator uses a more familiar expression 'öğle duası çanı', which may also evoke the word 'öğle ezanı' in the Turkish context:

**ST 9:**

DAVOREN. The Angelus went some time ago.  
SEUMAS (*sitting up in bed suddenly*). The Angelus! It couldn't be that late, could it? I asked them to call me at nine so that I could get Mass before I went on my rounds. Why didn't you give us a rap? (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 81)

**TT 9:**

DAVOREN: Öğle duası çanı biraz önce çaldı  
SEUMAS (*Birden yatakta doğrulur*): Öğle duası çanı mı? O kadar geç oldu mu ha? Saat dokuzda beni uyandırmalarını söylemişim, işe çıkmadan önce ayine gitmek istiyordum. Neden tıkladıvermediniz kapımızı? (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 17)

The following example alludes to Ecclesiastes 12.6, which reads: "[...]before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it". The source-text line 'till the silver cord is loosened and the golden bowl be broken' can be translated into Turkish as 'gümüş tel kopmadan ve altın tas kırılmadan'. However, the Turkish translator uses a domesticating strategy to translate the allusion that refers to the 'the Judgement Day' (mahşer günü):

**ST 10:**

DAVOREN. Ah me, alas! Pain, pain, pain ever, for ever! It's terrible to think that little Minnie is dead, but it's still more terrible to think that Davoren and Shields are alive! Oh, Donal Davoren, shame is your portion now till the silver cord is loosened and the golden bowl be broken. Oh, Davoren, Donal Davoren, poet and poltroon, poltroon and poet! (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 44)

**TT 10:**

DAVOREN: Eyvah! Heyhat, acı acı, sonsuza dek hep acı! Minnie'ciğin öldüğünü düşünmek korku ç bir şey, ama Davoren ile Shields'in yaşadığını düşünmek ondan da korkunç! Ah Donal Davoren, artık mahşere kadar bu utancı taşıyacaksın. Ah Davoren, şair ve korkak, korkak ve şair. (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 3)

The example below is also packed with several religious allusions. 'Mass' refers to 'Holy Communion in the Roman Catholic Church', 'Paternoster' alludes to 'rosary', 'De Profundis' is based on 'the opening words of Psalm 130' that refers to

'a heartfelt cry indicating sorrow', and 'Hail Mary' is a 'Catholic prayer to Mary, the mother of Jesus'. As the example indicates, the Turkish translator adopts a domesticating approach by translating these allusions through the use of culture-specific words ('tespîh', 'dua' and 'besmele') that reverberate in Turkish society:

**ST 11:**

SEUMAS. I wish to God it was all over. The country is gone mad. Instead of counting their beads now they're countin' bullets; their Hail Marys and Paternosters are burstin' bombs- burstin' bombs, an' the rattle of machine-guns; petrol is their holy water; their Mass is a burnin' buildin'; their De Profundis is 'The Soldiers' Song', an' their creed is, I believe in the gun almighty, maker of heaven an' earth- an' it's all for 'the glory o' God an' the honour o' Ireland'. (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 110)

**TT 11:**

SEUMAS: Bütün bunlar bitse diye Tanrı'ya yakarıyorum. Bu ülke delirdi. Tespîh çekip dua edecek yerde kurşun sayıyor insanlar. Bunların besmelesi bomba sesleri; bomba sesleri, makinalı tüfek şakırtıları; kutsal suları petrol, ayinleri yanan yapılar; dinleri imanları silah, göklerin ve yerin yaratıcısı olan ulu silah, herşey "Tanrı'nın Ululuğunu ve İrlanda'nın onurunu korumak için". (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 53)

It is necessary to note here that 'De profundis' features in many literary works. For instance, an excerpt from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* reads: "[t]he priests, the choristers, and the two choirboys recited the De profundis" (253). The Turkish translation published by Ötüken Yayınları in 2016 involves a translatorial note that reads: "İncil'de Mezmurlar (129) kısmında 'profundis clamavi ad te domine' olarak geçer. İslam kültüründe, Fatiha suresine 'elham' denilmesine benzer olarak, Hristiyanlar da kısma 'de profundis domine' derler" (71). In this context, it is reasonable to argue that the lack of such translatorial notes in the Turkish translation of *The Shadow of a Gunman* testifies to the fact that the translation may have primarily been intended for stage performance.

**ST 12:**

DAVOREN. [...] Ah, life, life, life! (*There is a gentle knock at the door.*) Another Fury come to plague me now! (*Another knock, a little louder.*) You can knock till you're tired. (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 88)

**TT 12:**

DAVOREN: [...] Ah, hayat, hayat, hayat! (*Kapı hafifçe vurulur*) İşte canımı sıkmaya gelen bir acuze daha! (*Biraz daha hızlıca yeniden vurulur*). (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 24)

In the example above, the word 'Fury' alludes to a 'goddess of Greek mythology sent by Tartarus to punish crime' (O'Casey, *Vol.I* 499); and this allusion is translated as 'acuze' (i.e. shrew) into Turkish. In the following example, "British Tommy with a Mons Star" refers to 'a battle-hardened veteran of the Great War' (O'Casey, *Vol. I*

502). 'Jacket Green' is a "sardonic reference to a nationalist ballad, 'The Jackets Green', by the Limerick poet Michael Scanlan" (O' Casey, *Vol. I* 502):

**ST 13:**

SEUMAS. A Helen of Troy come to live in a tenement! [...] An' what ecstasy it ud give her if after a bit you were shot or hanged; she'd be able to go about then -like a good many more- singin', 'I do not mourn me darlin' lost, for he fell in his Jacket Green. An' then, for a year an' a day, all round her hat she'd wear the Tricoloured Ribbon O, till she'd pick up an' marry someone elsepossibly a British Tommy with a Mons Star. An' as for bein' brave, it's easy to be that when you've no cause for cowardice; I wouldn't care to have me life dependin' on brave little Minnie Powell - she wouldn't sacrifice a jazz dance to save it. (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 109)

**TT 13:**

SEUMAS: Bu işçi apartmanında yaşamaya gelen bir Truvalı Helen! [...] Bir gün vurulsan ya da asılsan nasıl da hoşuna gider. O da öteki kızlar gibi "Sevgilimi yitirdiğim için yas tutmuyorum, çünkü yeşil ceketıyla öldü o" teranesini dilinden düşürmez. Bir yıl falan şapkasında üç renkli kurdelayla dolaşır, vakta ki bir gün bir başkasını bulup evleninceye kadar, hem de omuzu yıldızlı bir İngiliz askeriyile. Yürekliğine gelince, insanın korkması için bir neden yokken yürekli olması kolaydır; hayatımın küçük Minnie Powell'in ellerine kalmasını hiç istemem, benim için dansı feda edeceğini hiç sanmam. (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 42)

As is the case in the twelfth example, the translator does not add a translatorial note to her translation to explain the allusions. In the following example, 'Cuchullain' (i.e. 'Cu Chulainn' in Irish) refers to 'Chullain's hound' (i.e. Culan'in tazısı in Turkish) that is "the most important legendary Irish warrior whose heroic deeds are embodied in the great Gaelic prose saga known as the *Tain Bo Cuailnge*, or 'The Cattle Raid of Cooley' contained in the Red Branch or Ulster cycle of tales" (O' Casey, *Vol. I* 498). As the following example indicates, the translator does not involve the source-text allusion 'Cuchullain' in her translation and uses the expression 'taş gibi' (hard as stone) to denote one of the characteristics of 'Chullain's hound' in the Turkish version:

**ST 14:**

SEUMAS. They're great value; I only hope I'll be able to get enough o' them. I'm wearing a pair of them meself- they'd do Cuchullian, they're so strong. [*Counting the spoons*] There's a dozen in each of these parcels- [...] (O'Casey, *Shadow of a Gunman* 83)

**TT 14:**

SEUMAS: Çok kazık bunlar, yasak savacak kadar alabileceğim herhalde bunlardan. Kendim de kullanıyorum, öyle sağlam ki, taş gibi (Kaşıkları sayar) Bu paketlerin herbirinin içinde bir düzine var [...] (O'Casey, *Silahşörün Gölgesinde* 20)

At this juncture, it would be reasonable to focus on Ülker İnce's discourse on literary translation in order to trace the motivation behind her use of domesticating strategies throughout *Silahşörün Gölgesi*. According to İnce (Kızılcık 28), translatorial faithfulness is not synonymous with the translator's fidelity to the source text, which would only create "mechanical similarity to the source text". She suggests that "in order to compose a translation which is "functional" and "palatable" in the target culture, it is necessary to consider how it reads in the target language (Kızılcık 28). Furthermore, İnce points out that those who attempt at maximum fidelity to the source-text author's style may run the risk of producing "incomprehensible and confusing" target texts ("Çevirmen Makine mi?" n.p.). As evidenced through İnce's own discourse, it seems reasonable to suggest that both stylistic and discursive alterations in the Turkish translation originate from her conceptualisation of translation and fidelity.

### **Conclusion**

This study has set out to explore how O'Casey's style and discourse were transferred to the Turkish translation *Silahşörün Gölgesi*. The study has also sought to reveal that the translator's strategies may attest to whether the translation was intended for stage or for page. The translator's inclination towards domestication indicates that performability was an essential criterion in the Turkish translator's decision-making process. As the analysis has shown, the translator systematically minimizes the foreignness/otherness/Irishness of O'Casey's play for the Turkish audience.

The omission of certain stylistic and discursive features (e.g. malapropisms, repetitions, allusions, and so on) points to the fact that both the translator and/or the other agents of translation (e.g. the commissioner of translation) prefer fluent speech rhythms in the Turkish text. The lack of translatorial notes to elaborate upon specific foreign names and culture-specific items also justify this point. As Zatlin notes, "readers who are committed to learning more about another culture may have no problem with translated novels that offer explanations in footnotes or that inspire them to research unfamiliar references. [On the other hand], spectators in the theatre must grasp immediately the sense of the dialogue" (1). In such cases where the foreignizing effect of a play is retained in translation, the impermanence and irreversibility of the time of the dialogues may prevent spectators from concentrating on lexical ambiguities, repetitions, foreign words, and the like. An analysis of İnce's discourse on translation has revealed why she created a speakable and playable text at the sacrifice of some of the features of O'Casey's discourse and style (see Kızılcık ). It is hence reasonable to conclude that İnce prioritizes "performable translations of theatre plays" over "the so-called faithful translations of dramatic texts", to use Dinçel's words (83). The fact that İnce's translation was first staged by AST in the 1987-1988 theatre season and then published by Can Yayınları in 1990 also signifies this point.

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