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‘... what’s far **worse**, it’ll have two mothers’:  
Rhetoric and Reproduction in Sean O’Casey’s Dublin Quartet

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**Abstract:** This article argues that the rejection of Sean O’Casey’s *The Silver Tassie* by Yeats has had consequences for how we think about O’Casey’s drama in general because *The Tassie* is now regarded as a break in O’Casey’s development. In the first instance this leads to the idea of a Dublin Trilogy rather than a Dublin Quartet. The latter sequence makes much more sense since it is unified by setting, continuous developments in the use of theatrical space and form, theme, and politics. By incorporating *The Tassie* into O’Casey’s early writing we are enabled to consider again how his work as a whole functions in formal, thematic and political terms.

**Key words:** Sean O’Casey, Dublin Trilogy, theatrical space, politics.

In what remains one of the most infamous artistic judgements in twentieth-century Ireland W. B. Yeats rejected Sean O’Casey’s *The Silver Tassie* for production by the Abbey in 1928.<sup>1</sup> Not only did this represent a faltering moment in Yeats’s usually astute ‘theatre business, management of men’, it also gave rise to a literary myth that has been at least as potent as Yeats’s more conscious mythologizing, and just as distorting. Yeats’s judgement led indirectly, that is to say, to the idea of the ‘Dublin Trilogy’, something that, three quarters of a century of literary history to the contrary, O’Casey never wrote.<sup>2</sup> If we wish to consider O’Casey as the writer of an interconnected sequence of dramas then the only justifiable basis on which to do so would be to think of him as the writer of a Dublin Quartet. This is a sequence of dramas unified by setting, continuous developments in the use of theatrical space and form, theme, and politics; what is more, recognition of such a sequence has consequences for how we think of O’Casey’s dramatic work more generally.

*The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) and *The Silver Tassie* are unified in the first instance by their Dublin setting. The famous ‘expressionistic’ second act of the *Tassie* is, of course, set in ‘the war zone’<sup>3</sup> and while this may appear to mark a radical shift in the setting of O’Casey’s plays we cannot overlook the three other acts which are all Dublin set. The move to ‘the war zone’ may take O’Casey out of Dublin for the first time, but it is a move which is very much in line with his developing and steadily expanding use of theatrical space over the course of these four plays. We move therefore from the single room of *The Shadow* through the two-roomed apartment of the Boyle family in *Juno*, which though still a domestic space is both larger and even more permeable than Davoren and Shields’s room, subject to all kinds of traffic in and out. It is, notably, traversed by Mrs Tancred and several other mourners on their way to her son’s funeral at the end of Act II. The counterpoint of interior and exterior

usually thought of as happening for the first time in Act II of *The Plough* is actually at work here in the contrast between ‘If You’re Irish Come into the Parlour’ on the Boyle’s gramophone and the hymn-singing cortege (82-3). At the end of Act II, when Johnny Boyle is left alone, his family having gone to watch the Tancred funeral, we can see the emergence of an economy of theatre space which is moving beyond the simple domestic/social or private/public opposition usually referred to in comments on O’Casey’s work. Johnny is ordered to attend a Battalion Staff meeting the following day by the ‘Mobiliser’ and at this point the distinction between inside and outside, especially given the unknown location of the meeting and the use of the ‘Hail Mary’ as the Act’s curtain lines, becomes a distinction between life and death. As in *The Shadow*, death in *Juno* may actually occur off-stage but here its presence increasingly encroaches. If there is a significant shift in O’Casey’s use of setting in the early plays it arguably occurs in *The Plough* which not only uses an exterior setting for the first time (Act III) but also varies its settings across its 4 acts. What is notable about the use of space in both *The Plough* and *The Tassie*, given the chasm that is meant to divide them, is just how similar their spatial economies are: each has domestic space, interior but social space and an exterior scene of conflict.<sup>4</sup> There is a difference of emphasis between the plays in that *The Plough* still favours domestic space (the Clitheroes’ living room, Bessie Burgess’s room) while the *The Tassie* places greater weight on social space (the hospital ward and football club), but this move is in line with the progression through the plays sketched here.

This account of the four plays’ use of space allows us then to see O’Casey’s range constantly expanding in a smooth progression. It is *Within The Gates* (1934) that arguably marks the significant break in O’Casey’s deployment of stage space, not least in its move to a London setting. Even here, however, we should be wary of seeing too clear a break since the use of a park setting confirms O’Casey’s increasing emphasis on social spaces. If we can challenge the rather too clear-cut distinction between public and private, social and domestic, spaces in the early plays, we can recognise that O’Casey was never content to accept such distinctions

and his work is marked by a continuous exploration of theatrical spaces. The tendency to see him as consistently providing an urban counterpart to the Abbey’s staple kitchen dramas has caused this development in his work to be overlooked. *Within the Gates* may then mark a break but its park setting is rather close to the church grounds setting of Act IV of *Red Roses for Me* (1942) which in turn recalls that O’Casey had already attempted to cover some of this territory in his earliest surviving play: *The Harvest Festival*<sup>5</sup> moves from churchwarden’s drawing room, through tenement room to church grounds. O’Casey returns to interiors in his later work, but they are never quite enclosed domestic or private spaces. In some cases this is because the personalities and public status of characters such as Councillor Reiligan in *The Bishop’s Bonfire* (1955) or Alderman Binnington and Councillor McGilligan, Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Doonavale in *The Drums of Father Ned* (1959) ensure that these living rooms are designed more ‘to be displayed rather than used’<sup>6</sup> for private comfort. Domestic spaces are also frequently described in such a way as to suggest that they are open to the exterior as is the case in the opening stage direction of Act II of *The Bishop’s Bonfire* which notes that people enter and leave by large, open windows (442). In the case of *Oak Leaves and Lavender* (1946), O’Casey insists in his stage directions that the play’s setting — ‘the great room of a Manorial house’ — should be designed in such a way that we can see its ‘chaste and pleasing beauty’ while a ‘dreamy engineer’ could also see suggestions of gantries and machinery and that, as time passes, so ‘the aspect of the big room has changed with the changing world outside’.<sup>7</sup> Such settings, though domestic, cannot be thought of as quarantined from external forces nor merely as subject to the intrusion of those forces. Perhaps the most important space in the later plays is, however, one that conventional views of O’Casey would not usually associate with him at all: the gardens of *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* (1949) and *The Bishop’s Bonfire* (1955) provide a resolution of the problematic of space by being neither wholly public nor private, neither domestic nor social, not quite interiors nor yet wholly exteriors.<sup>8</sup> This is the kind of liminal space that O’Casey’s work is moving towards from the very beginning and it is one which is completely at odds with those views of his

work which would see it in terms of stark oppositions, especially oppositions between an anti-political domestic sphere and a politicized but rejected public sphere. From this consideration of O'Casey's use of theatrical space and by refusing to accept the usual break in the work represented by *The Tassie* we can see a sense of development and continuity which is not often enough explored and which in turn has consequences for both the early and late work.<sup>9</sup>

This exploration of the use of stage space shows O'Casey pressing, almost literally, against the boundaries of the domestic setting most usually associated with theatrical realism and naturalism and while these forms may provide important co-ordinates for an understanding of his drama, they are by no means an adequate account of his formal concerns. The false division between *The Silver Tassie* and the earlier Dublin plays also brings about a distorted sense of O'Casey's formal development. Yeats's unfavourable response to *The Tassie* leads to the conclusion that O'Casey was going beyond both his lived experience and his apparently proper formal métier. *The Tassie* and its 'expressionistic' second act is seen as the moment at which O'Casey begins to experiment with dramatic form and is therefore also simultaneously seen as the moment at which his dramatic powers go into decline. The underlying assumption here is wrong in several ways. For a start there is the assumption that the plays of the 'Dublin trilogy' are not in any way experimental, but are rather straightforwardly dramatic realism (which assumes that dramatic realism is itself an apparently 'natural' or 'normal' form of writing rather than the then still fairly recent development of style and technique that it actually was), and thus fails to attend to their extensions of and actual breaks with that set of theatrical conventions. One of the most perceptive early reviews of O'Casey was already able to recognise that this was work which did not adhere to, and was not interested in the kind of coherence that realism usually trades in:

Mr O'Casey is a master of knockabout in this very serious and honourable sense — that he discerns the principle of disintegration in even the most complacent solidities, and activates it to their explosion ... *Juno and the Paycock* ... communicates most fully this dramatic dehiscence, mind

and world come asunder in irreparable dissociation — "chassis" ...<sup>10</sup>

By tracking the use of stage space we have already provided a challenge to the idea of *The Tassie* as a moment of rupture in O'Casey's formal development and following Beckett's comment will allow us to elaborate on this point. As Ronan McDonald has pointed out it is in productions that there tends to be an 'emphasis on naturalist coherence and a neat opposition between domestic integrity and destructive political ideology' and that this in turn leaves out the possibilities afforded by 'The multiple tonal registers in the plays — shifting from comedy to tragedy, realism to expressionism, melodrama to vaudeville...'<sup>11</sup> This range can be easily illustrated. The use of the votive light as a symbolic counterpart to Johnny Boyle's fate in *Juno*, not to mention the denuded set at the end of the play, provide what could be symbolic and expressionistic moments in that play. The expansion and ultimate contraction of space in *The Plough* from the Clitheroes' flat to the pub and street scenes before the return to the most cramped setting of the play, Bessie Burgess's attic room, provides an arc that could be read or staged either politically or psychologically. Finally, one would be hard-pressed to see the almost musical counterpoint of the Orator's rhetoric and barroom conversation in *The Plough* as merely naturalistic. If we add to such points O'Casey's balancing of influences from a high theatrical tradition (especially Shakespeare) and his debts to popular theatrical forms such as melodrama (especially Dion Boucicault)<sup>12</sup> —this latter, crucially, being one of the forms against which theatrical realism and naturalism were in reaction— we can see that while O'Casey's tradition may be 'dishevelled'<sup>13</sup> it cannot be said simply to fit into a straightforward realism.

The dishevelment of O'Casey's influences can be read as an aspect of his class background and O'Casey is subject to a double bind in regard to his class. On the one hand there is the effort to prove that he was more properly lower middle class than working class. On the other, insofar as he is thought to be a working class writer (and the same critics frequently make both moves on him), then his writerly abilities are seen to be limited to the area of naturalism and realism as if these were not themselves sophisticated sets of literary

conventions of fairly recent invention. This is in line with the way that working class writers are most generally regarded. Having apparently automatic recourse to such seemingly 'natural' forms of writing the next assumption is that they can then fill those forms only with content derived from direct lived experience and are then of interest because of their documentary skills.<sup>14</sup> O'Casey develops as a writer and, growing in confidence, is increasingly able to use both aspects of his tradition, becoming better able to deploy popular cultural forms as well as to extend the high theatrical tradition. Once again then we should see *The Tassie* not as a radical break within the work but as a moment of development of existing formal concerns. In this light the 'expressionistic' second act of *The Tassie* could be seen alongside the transformation scene in *Red Roses For Me* (309-12) and the increasing interest in the use of colour, music and dance as not simply a response to new theatrical possibilities, including those that O'Casey learned from Yeats, but simultaneously as a return to the theatre of spectacle, of which Boucicault was such a successful exponent.<sup>15</sup>

A final point in this brief survey of theatrical form in O'Casey's work concerns his use of language. While Synge and Lady Gregory are rightly credited with the invention of Synge-song and Kiltartanese respectively and while debates are then possible as to whether these stage registers are therefore attempts to render Hiberno-English vernacular in realistic fashion or whether they should more properly be regarded as heightened and poeticised speech, little attention is paid to the heightened aspects of the speech of O'Casey's characters and the possibility that he is not attempting to render Dublin tenement speech so much as trying to do for it what Synge and Gregory had done for rural speech.<sup>16</sup> The register of realism and naturalism is a supposedly accurate vernacular speech. From *The Shadow* onwards O'Casey should be seen as providing an urban counterpart to what Synge had done for rural speech. In both cases an Hiberno-English vernacular register may be present, as also with Lady Gregory's Kiltartanese, but O'Casey's main effort is not necessarily to reproduce a vernacular so much as to provide a heightened and varied set of registers in which Shakespeare, Boucicault, the King James Bible, contemporary political

rhetoric and the language of Dublin's tenements all play a part. When the Croucher begins chanting in *The Tassie* (200) he may add a new register to the linguistic repertoire of O'Casey's work but he is not decisively breaking with a speech archive which encompasses, say, Davoren, the Captain and the Voice of the Man.

Thinking about a Dublin Quartet also allows us to see a thematically-unified sequence. The tendency to see the Dublin Trilogy as thematising the impact of militant nationalism on the Dublin working class must be displaced by the quartet's over-arching concern with the impact of militarism, in all its forms, on the Dublin working class. Thinking in terms of a Dublin trilogy distorts O'Casey's work in several ways. It suggests that he took his subject matter for his earliest (and, the constant assumption is, best) work from first-hand experience and that that subject matter was effectively nationalist violence and its effects on the Dublin working class.<sup>17</sup> To talk about militarism overturns this idea and makes visible the often overlooked presence of **various** military forces within the plays from Irish republican to British military in various guises in *The Shadow*, *Juno*, and *The Plough* as well as more obviously in *The Tassie*. In this view only the Civil War based *Juno and the Paycock* excludes the British Army from its consideration, and it is then balanced by *The Silver Tassie* with its equivalent concentration on the British Army. Those who would see O'Casey's plays as solely concerned with nationalism and its destructive effects on the lives of the Dublin working class tend, surprisingly perhaps, to overlook several crucial factors, not the least of which is just how many of the deaths in the plays are directly attributable to the British Army in its various forms, from the shooting of Minnie Powell by the Black and Tans in *The Shadow* (43-4) to that of Bessie Burgess by the regular British Army in *The Plough* (172-4). In turn *The Plough and the Stars* ends with the occupation of Bessie's room in the tenement, both literally and symbolically, by indifferent representatives of the British Army in parallel with the 'general attack on the Powst Office' (175). The singing of 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' provides an ironic challenge to the sense of the space in which the scene is set being merely domestic and in turn raises a question about 'home' that will recur in

O'Casey's work. The overlooking of British militarism as a presence within the quartet has then several broad consequences. The most obvious of these is that the militarism of World War I is separated from the experience of the Dublin working class in the 1910s in a way that repeats and reinforces the invisibility, until very recently, of World War I in the Southern Irish political and cultural landscape. As Lionel Pilkington points out 'Not the least of the reasons why a Dublin performance of *The Silver Tassie* in 1928-9 might have been politically troublesome was that the First World War, and the manner of its commemoration remained a matter of fierce political dispute. De Valera's newly formed party, Fianna Fáil, argued that while it respected the wish of ex-soldiers to honour their dead comrades, it did object very strongly to the exploitation of such commemorations for the purpose of celebrating imperialism...' <sup>18</sup> Despite Yeats's rather condescending remark that O'Casey was going beyond his personal experience in the subject matter of *The Tassie* O'Casey certainly had a continuing interest in this aspect of Dublin working class life starting with his brothers' service in the British Army and continuing in his later debate with St John Ervine about Irish neutrality and the relative contribution of the North and South of Ireland to the first and second world wars. <sup>19</sup>

Important though it is to replace the First World War in the socio-political landscape in which O'Casey was writing, discussion of the Dublin Quartet adds rather more than World War I to the range of concerns. Another consequence, and again one already touched on, of seeing a division between *The Tassie* and the earlier plays is that the arena of O'Casey's politics is, in line with ideas about his class-bound inability to range beyond his own lived experience, seen to be limited to a particular area of Dublin. Adding *The Tassie* begins to suggest that the sweep of O'Casey's politics can take him from the room of *The Shadow* to the battlefields of the First World War and beyond, not such a surprising sweep for an international socialist. It is necessary to stress this aspect of O'Casey's politics in order to consider how his politics have been treated more generally. The concentration of critical attention on the supposed Dublin trilogy tends to limit O'Casey's political concerns to the struggle within Ireland between socialism and nationalism, and he is seen in turn as anti-

nationalist. Pilkington argues that O'Casey's opposition to anti-Treaty republicanism was helpful to the Abbey at a time when it needed to placate the Free State government. <sup>20</sup> This does not, however, leave him secure as a socialist artist, for his anti-nationalism is in turn seen as a challenge to programmatic politics and is then extended into his own socialist beliefs. Pilkington's attitude is that 'Like O'Casey's two earlier plays, [*The Plough and the Stars*] presents a sentimentalized version of patriarchal sexuality as the ethical norm against which **all** forms of political militancy are found wanting.' <sup>21</sup> If this suggests that O'Casey cannot defend his own principles in his work, more favourably-disposed critics are inclined to praise O'Casey for being able to set aside his own dogmatic politics in favour of a more liberal approach. Socialist as a citizen but liberal as an artist seems to be the verdict of critics who have little sense, as O'Casey did, that liberalism was part of the very system of exploitation against which he struggled. When, in figures such as the Covey, O'Casey makes fun of left wing politics, he is engaging in internal leftist debates rather than ceding the ground to liberalism. A critique of the scientific socialism of the Covey does not equate to an acceptance of the tenets of liberal capitalism.

In the light of all of this we can then go back to the 'Dublin Trilogy' and start to re-read the politics and dramatic form of those plays as not merely naturalist representation of Dublin working class life as O'Casey had directly experienced it, but as a rather more sophisticated critique and representation of that life and those circumstances. Ronan McDonald has pointed out that 'home' and 'family' in the early plays are much more complex and less settled concepts than is the case with their representation by those critics who would see them as the locus of O'Casey's values in the face of destructive external ideologies. <sup>22</sup> This allows us in turn to reconsider one of the oldest clichés about O'Casey's work, the orthodox opposition of male and female characters on the basis that the women are heroic, practical and loving, while the men are cowardly, dreamers and egotists.

There has been a tendency in some recent criticism, taking a lead from the feminist involvement in protests against *The Plough* in 1926, <sup>23</sup> to regard O'Casey's gender politics as misogynistic <sup>24</sup> (though quite why his

apparently noble mothers are more misogynistic than Mother Ireland is never fully explained) and while this is useful in at least taking another tack in regard to O'Casey's gender politics, it does leave the orthodox opposition of male and female in place. Jack Mitchell has, however, challenged this orthodox opposition by pointing out that that far from anchoring secure and happy homes the female figures in early O'Casey, especially the mothers, are heroic but only to the degree that they endure rather than challenging their circumstances; he goes on to quote Herbert Goldstone on Juno as someone who 'simply doesn't realize that she has let the very conditions of life which have victimized her become her ultimate standard of value'.<sup>25</sup> We can in fact go further than this and point out that her adherence to such values is an active reproduction of those exploitative conditions. Hence, the deliberate misquotation in my title: the future mothering of Mary Boyle's baby by both Mary and Juno is usually taken as a sign of optimism, but viewed in this light the thought that the baby will have two mothers becomes a chilling guarantee of the reproduction of exploitation. In the light of this we can at least raise the question of whether Nora in *The Plough* is actually to be condemned for what is usually taken as her anti-nationalist efforts to keep Jack at home, or whether there is a possibility that she is in fact a development from Mary Boyle and is really being critiqued in the text for her bourgeois aspirations which give her a vested interest in the continuity of an exploitative system. (A further and entirely speculative question might consider whether if Nora were more securely bourgeois she might actually be more in favour of Jack's nationalist politics.)

This takes us to the basis of 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. If the mark of the female characters is endurance and suffering we have to ask what they endure and suffer from. It is not just simply the shiftless males in their immediate environment, but the system that allows those males to be shiftless, and which oppresses and victimises everyone. What then of the male characters? From Davoren onwards we see those males who prefer futile rhetoric getting off scot-free. More maudlin than maudit in his poetic aspirations, Davoren is

famously allowed to end the play as he began, with no apparent moment of self-recognition or change. But Davoren is not perhaps the best instance to use here. Turning to the later, more Falstaffian figures who are what many consider to be O'Casey's finest achievement, we find that this lack of change or self-recognition is repeated. Even at that moment when his prediction of 'chassis' has come to pass, the Captain drunkenly ignores the facts in front of him, just as he has done throughout the play. In this he is usually taken to be the exemplar of the non-hero who will finally wake to the hung-over sense of what he has lost. What he has lost, however, was itself illusory —a set of consumer bagatelles produced out of the machinations of a legal system more interested in property than people and ultimately held out as a lure by the middle-class Bentham. The allegorical reading of *Juno* as being about the illusory nature of nationalism as far as the working class is concerned has some merit, but tends to overlook the more obvious class allegory in play: Boyle as the working class tricked by bourgeois illusions. Regardless of which allegory we read, however, Boyle remains irreducibly himself, able to enjoy the fruits of the illusions while they last but equally able to return to his old ways once they have passed. In this he seems to me to be reminiscent of the anarcho-socialist as described by Walter Benjamin:

The more antagonistic a person is toward the traditional order, the more inexorably he will subject his private life to the norms that he wishes to elevate as legislators of a future society. It is as if these laws, nowhere yet realized, placed him under obligation to enact them in advance at least in the confines of his own existence.<sup>26</sup>

The point about the male figures like the Captain is that they do not suffer because they refuse to suffer: 'Here, there, that's enough about them things; they don't affect us, an' we needn't give a damn.' (81) Boyle can be described as shiftless, workshy, lazy and drunken and each term is accurate, but each term is also moralising as long as we assume that the morality to be upheld (and so often upheld by the women) is the morality of capitalism which requires that workers should be purposeful, upright, energetic and sober in the cause of a capitalism that will reward them with oppression. Boyle, Fluther and their ilk

refuse this very bad bargain and live according to their own Falstaffian lights rather than by the tenets of a morality that they have never made or accepted:

It's a curious way to reward Johnny [for what he did for his country] be makin' his poor ould father work. But that's what the clergy want, Joxer —work, work, work for me an' you; havin' us mulin' from mornin' till night, so that they may be in betther fettle when they come hoppin' round for their dues! (61)

There is something almost Wildean about this attitude (the Captain may be in the gutter but he is looking at the stars), a noble and strikingly unillusioned unpicking of contradiction which suggests that there may be more justice and less irony than is usually thought in his 'proclamation be me, establishin' an Independent Republic' (62). Boyle's rhetoric may not be empty bluster but a way of coping with and facing down an unjust world. The Captain and his like can be understood then as utopian figures pointing the way towards O'Casey's later, future-set, pastorals.

To suggest this way of reading O'Casey politically is, of course, to run counter to O'Casey's biography and his sense of his mother's heroism, but this too is no bad thing, since one of the consequences of the treatment of him as a working class writer is that, in

being deemed capable only of writing from direct experience, it is as if his work is not, for many critics, subject to the intentional fallacy. This is to say that O'Casey's work does not have to, cannot any more than any other literary text, conform solely to what he lived and then intended. To assume that it does is to repeat Yeats's mistake, and like O'Casey's women to continue to reproduce oppressive errors. That said, I would want to argue that reading O'Casey's gendered politics outside the biographical frame of his feeling of indebtedness to his mother, leads to a political reading of the plays which is more in tune with his actual politics. In all of this we can begin to see that *The Silver Tassie* instead of being (as is usually thought) a barrier between the earlier good and the later bad, the earlier realist and the later experimental, works, is actually a bridge between the early and late work which allows for continuity and development both formally and politically. Although I would never want to challenge an historicising criticism there are some pitfalls in it that must be avoided, particularly in regard to the theatre. The impetus to recover the historical moment of a play's first production can lead to a sense that this is the only possible or worthwhile production of that play and can cause us to overlook the need for drama to be re-produced.

## NOTES

1. W.B. Yeats to Sean O'Casey, 20 April 1928 in David Krause (ed.) *The Letters of Sean O'Casey, Vol. 1: 1910-1941*. (London: Cassell, 1975), pp. 267-8.
2. The publishing history of the early plays itself runs counter to any sense of a 'trilogy'. *The Shadow of a Gunman* and *Juno and the Paycock* first appear as *Two Plays*. (London: Macmillan, 1925) and are followed a year later by *The Plough and the Stars: a tragedy in four acts*. (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1926). While the three plays are collected for the first time in *Collected plays*. Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1950), the volume also contains *The End of the Beginning* and *A Pound on Demand*. It takes some thirty years for them to appear as *Three Plays*. (London: Macmillan, 1957).
3. Sean O'Casey, *The Silver Tassie* (1928) in *Seven Plays by Sean O'Casey: a student's edition*, selected, with an introduction and notes by Ronald Ayling. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), p. 200. Further references to O'Casey's plays are taken from this edition and appear in the text, unless otherwise specified.
4. Richard Allen Cave makes the intriguing point that one possible reason why Yeats rejected *The Silver Tassie* was that the Abbey was not yet able to represent exterior scenes to Yeats's satisfaction. The street scene in *The Plough* conformed to the Abbey tendency to set such scenes against an exterior wall but, while Act 2 of the *Tassie* still shows some signs of this conformity in being placed against a ruined monastery wall, O'Casey's developing use of theatrical space was obviously outstripping the capabilities of the Abbey. See Richard Allen Cave, 'On the siting of doors and windows: aesthetics, ideology and Irish stage design.' in Shaun Richards (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 93-108.

5. Sean O'Casey, *The Harvest Festival*. (1919) Foreword by Eileen O'Casey, Intro. John O'Riordan. (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1980).
6. Sean O'Casey, *The Drums of Father Ned: a Mickrocosm of Ireland*. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1960), p. 13.
7. Sean O'Casey, *Oak Leaves and Lavender or a World on Wallpaper* in *Collected Plays* Vol. 4. (London: Macmillan & Co. 1958), pp. 5, 85. This is another war play which in both its setting and subtitle refers back to Yeats's criticism of *The Tassie*.
8. Robert Hogan argues that O'Casey's later work is a version of pastoral and these settings contribute to that argument. See Robert Hogan, 'In Sean O'Casey's Golden Days.' in Thomas Kilroy (ed.) *Sean O'Casey A Collection of Critical Essays*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), pp. 119-132.
9. Christopher Innes, 'The Essential Continuity of Sean O'Casey.' *Modern Drama* 33 (1990) 419-33.
10. Samuel Beckett, 'The Essential and the Incidental: a review of *Windfalls*.' (1934) reprinted in Kilroy (ed.) *Sean O'Casey A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 167-8, 167.
11. Ronan McDonald, 'Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy: disillusionment to delusion.' in Richards (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*, pp. 136-149, p. 139.
12. On O'Casey's debts to and use of popular cultural forms see Stephen Watt, *Joyce, O'Casey, and the Irish Popular Theater*. Irish studies. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1991), pp. 143-87.
13. Seamus Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*. (London, Hutchinson, 1986), p. 162.
14. For some more general comments on this issue see: Eamonn Hughes, "'a melancholy task": William Carleton's *Autobiography*.' *Bullán* VI, 1 (Summer/Fall 2001) 29-46.
15. See Katharine Worth, *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett*. (London: The Athlone Press, 1978), pp. 224-5.
16. Christopher Murray, *Twentieth-century Irish Drama: a Mirror up to Nation*. (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 88 notes that O'Casey's language is controversial but must still be regarded as a foundation of his reputation.
17. See Shakir Mustafa, 'Saying "No" to Politics: Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy.' in Stephen Watt, Eileen Morgan & Shakir Mustafa (eds) *A Century of Irish Drama: Widening the Stage*. (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 95-113.
18. Lionel Pilkington, *Theatre and the State in 20th Century Ireland*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 105; see also 126-131.
19. See David Krause (ed.) *The Letters of Sean O'Casey, Vol.2: 1942-54*. (New York: Macmillan, 1980) pp. 167-175.
20. Pilkington, *Theatre and the State*, pp. 91-6.
21. Pilkington, *Theatre and the State*, pp. 99.
22. McDonald, 'Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy: disillusionment to delusion.' p. 148.
23. Christopher Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre, 1601-2000*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 167-70 notes this involvement and also notes that some Republican and feminist voices supported the play.
24. Pilkington notes that *The Plough* celebrates 'sexuality (albeit a sexuality that is sexist to the point of misogyny...'. Pilkington, *Theatre and the State*, p. 102; see also Mustafa, 'Saying "No" to Politics: Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy.' p. 110.
25. Herbert Goldstone quoted in Jack Mitchell, *The Essential O'Casey: a study of the twelve major plays of Sean O'Casey*. (New York: International Publishers, 1980), p. 58.
26. Walter Benjamin, 'Ministry of the Interior.' (1928) *One-Way Street and Other Writings*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott & Kingsley Shorter. (London: Verso, 1979), p. 53.