

Appropriating Tenement Dublin: Seán O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* on the 1990s Abbey Theatre Stage

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Often lauded as a social realist who blended melodrama with the harsh reality of early twentieth-century Dublin life, Seán O'Casey wrote numerous plays that were performed at the Abbey, Ireland's National Theatre. *Juno and the Paycock*, the second play in O'Casey's "Dublin Trilogy," provides a brutally honest representation of the unfavorable housing conditions in 1920s tenement Dublin, as well as the tragic consequences (and, to O'Casey, the pointless bloodshed) of the political realities of the Irish Civil War. The play, which initially premiered in March of 1924, was performed frequently through the 1920s, 1930s, and into the early 1940s. Performances then waned through 1980. After an almost 20-year hiatus, the Abbey revived *Juno* in both 1997 (in July) and 1998 (in March), during Ireland's time of unprecedented economic prosperity and cultural revival known as the Celtic Tiger. Why revive *Juno*, a play that depicts some of the darkest truths of Ireland's past, during a time characterized by booming tourism and public optimism? A close analysis of the Abbey's archival materials available for these two productions (1997 and 1998) yields fruitful insights into the ways the Abbey subtly and not so subtly altered O'Casey's tragedy. In several crucial ways, O'Casey's *Juno* was misrepresented and edited to appeal to an emerging Celtic Tiger middle class of theatregoers who wanted to believe *Juno* characterized a world that no longer existed in Ireland. The details of the set design, the prompt script edits, and the careful construction of the program booklets reveal that the Abbey productions worked to romanticize and exploit the brutal reality O'Casey wrote about for the sake of alluring an audience who wanted to forget, at least in some measure, Dublin's dark past.

Before turning to an analysis of the archival material for the two *Juno* productions, it is important to outline what was happening during the Celtic Tiger during the 1990s and early 2000s. So named after the four original “tiger” economies in East Asia (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan), Ireland’s Celtic Tiger era was deemed a “miracle economy” (Kirby 24, 31). Ireland’s economy grew on average seven and a half percent per year, and some years in the late 1990s saw ten percent growth (Kirby 2). Additionally, income rates rose 125% between 1987 and 2005 (Kirby 32). Along with an income boom came a housing boom: privately owned housing grew from about 60% in 1961 to about 77% in 2002, a figure political theorist Peadar Kirby calls “one of the highest rates in Western Europe” (61).

Economic and housing prosperity brought along with it strong public optimism and a growing tourism industry utilized a variety of telling advertising campaigns. The public believed the days of widespread poverty and destitution were “gone forever during the golden years of the Celtic boom” (Kirby 2). The rapidity with which Ireland’s economy grew created public hype around Ireland’s success, putting Ireland on the map internationally as an example of prosperity and change of economic fortune. Kirby aptly puts it that 1990s Ireland was internationally considered a “showpiece of globalisation” (3). The country’s national image was transformed. Economist Peter Clinch, writing before the 2008 economic crash, wrote that Ireland went from “being a country to get out of to a country to get into” (24).

This international and intercontinental appeal of Ireland led to increased tourism and a concomitant advertising push to depict a certain “image” of Ireland to prospective visitors. Interestingly, the tourism slogans created by the Irish Tourist Board, Bord Fáilte, centered on three themes: a romanticized idea of Ireland’s past, heightened sentimentality of travelling, and a type of escapism that visitors could achieve by visiting. In 1993, Bord Fáilte created a national

tourism slogan for Ireland: “Ireland: The Ancient Birthplace of Good Times” (Clancy 296). In 1996, the slogan was “Ireland: An Emotional Experience,” and TV ads for Ireland often used the catchphrase “Ireland: Live a Different Life” (Clancy 299). This visit-to-escape mentality was central to the Celtic Tiger tourism push. Political scholar Michael Clancy helpfully points out that Bord Fáilte conducted a survey in the late 1990s finding that Europeans viewed Ireland as a “saved country and culture undisturbed by European history — a mythical island — a real and authentic destination that could offer escapism and freedom” (298). As will be demonstrated in the following analysis of the archival material for the *Juno* productions, the changes made between the original production of *Juno* and the two 1990s versions work to do the same things these slogans did: romanticize the past, create an emotional (nostalgic) experience, and offer escapism.

Finally, the Celtic Tiger brought with it an emerging, professionalized middle class. Between 1991 and 2002, there was a “dramatic increase” in the number of people holding managerial and office jobs (Fahey 72). Many people were transitioning from the laboring class to professional, white collar work. According to some economists, the data indicate a “steady” professionalization of Ireland’s job makeup (Kirby 57). Crucially, those in the growing professional class were the ones most likely to go to the theater. The theater gave this emerging middle class the opportunity to escape and feel luxurious, much like the tourism slogans of the mid-1990s “invited tourists to play the role of aristocrat” (Clancy 296-7). Ironically, however, there are data that indicate the income divide only worsened through the Celtic Tiger era. In his 2002 book, Clinch argues that “increasing relative income poverty rates and stubbornly high levels of income inequality in Ireland are just two indications that such changes do not mean that poverty and marginalisation are curiosities from the past” (84-5). Though those in the less

severe levels of poverty became slightly less poor during the Celtic Tiger, the numbers for the very poorest group of citizens only got worse. The poorest group of Irish people, those who earn just forty percent of the average income, rose from about two and a half percent of the population in 1994 to more than three percent in 1997 (Kirby 51). The oversight of Ireland's poor during this time period, unfortunately, was nothing new for the nation.

During the early to mid-1900s, the poor of Dublin experienced what was considered at the time the worst slum housing in Europe. Many, including city architects and planners, overlooked the depravity of the slums, even to the point of multiple deadly building collapses. Dublin was notorious for its tenement housing, defined as a building that has two separate living spaces on the same floor (*Henrietta*). Many formerly extravagant, single-family Georgian homes built in the 1700s were subdivided beginning in the 1880s to accommodate an influx of people to the city. Tenements comprised 40% of Dublin housing in 1880s, the same decade O'Casey was born (Murray 18). By 1914, two-thirds of these multifamily buildings—also known as “slumlands”—were considered unfit for habitation (Murray 18, Kearns 8). The houses, some of which contained more than 100 people, contained a single toilet for communal use, a single set of stairs (often in disrepair and without a handrail), and resulting deplorable sanitary conditions for residents (*Henrietta*). One such tenement dwelling, 14 Henrietta Street, contained 100 people from 17 families at its peak in 1911 (*Henrietta*). Rooms were small and crowded, sometimes with twelve or more people occupying a single “unit,” which could be just one room divided into two smaller rooms by a simple partition that didn't reach the ceiling (much like office cubicles).



The black tape on the wall represents the height of a tenement partition. Note how the partition doesn't even reach the top of the door. Photo taken by author, Amelia Mrozinski, from *14 Henrietta Street Pre-Launch Guided Tour*. 6 Jul.–8 Sep. 2018, 14 Henrietta Street, Dublin.

This is exactly the world that O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* depicts, and is the world in which O'Casey was enmeshed. Though it is a contested issue, O'Casey himself claimed to be born in a tenement (Murray 3). He also lived in a tenement while writing *Juno* in the 1920s (Murray 137). *Juno* tells the tragedy of a poor, tenement-dwelling family plagued by the economic and political hardships of 1922 Dublin. Juno, the mother and primary breadwinner for her family, struggles against her husband, Captain Boyle, a drunk who refuses to work and constantly reminisces about his fictional glory days. The family thinks they come into money, spend on credit, and end up poorer than they started, with a home bereft of furniture. Juno and Boyle's son, Johnny, who was once a member of a nationalist group but became an informer to protect himself, suffers immensely from traumatic anxiety and ends up being captured and killed by fellow nationalists. In the end, Juno and her unmarried and pregnant daughter, Mary, leave the tenement to forge a life of their own without Captain Boyle.

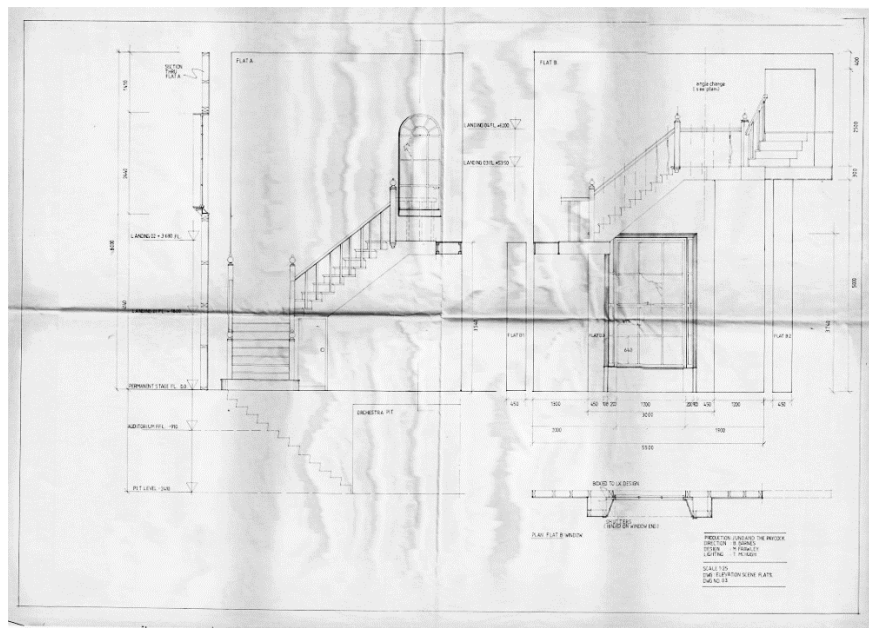
The political backdrop of *Juno*, which takes place in the same year as the start of the Irish Civil War, is something on which O’Casey had strong opinions. O’Casey was outraged at the violence and viciousness of the war. He believed that the violence of the war was senseless and crushing; he wrote that “such brutality demoralises a country” (O’Casey, in Murray 148). He told Lady Gregory in 1924 (the same year as *Juno* premiered) that the 1916 Easter Rising was a “terrible mistake” and meant “nothing but confusion” (Murray 102). Christopher Murray writes in his seminal biography of O’Casey that *Juno* was O’Casey’s “humanistic deploring of waste and suffering” (2). The character Johnny is the ultimate representation of the waste O’Casey saw in the war’s violence, especially for young men.

The archival materials that address the initial reception of *Juno* in 1924 indicate that O’Casey’s political message and the disturbing social reality of the play was what stood out to audiences. Spectators seemed to understand the poignant images in the play that reflected the country’s tragic situation, both political and economic. Abbey architect and avid theater critic Joseph Holloway wrote that at the play’s premiere, audience members “were gripped by the awful actuality of the incidents enacted so realistically and unassumingly before them” (Holloway, in Ayling 83). In an archived handwritten collected of publicity documents that contains early reviews of the play, theater critic A.E. Malone said in 1929 that “*Juno and the Paycock* is modern tragedy at its best, almost at its greatest” (*Publicity* 6). On opening night, the audience called the cast back to the stage so many times that “in the end the exhausted stage-hands left the curtain up for good” (Murray 151). The audience’s appreciation of the politics of the play seems also to have persisted into the play’s later history into the 1960s: in 1961, reviewer Katharine Worth wrote that “[In the final scene, the furniture-removal men] leave

behind them a dismantled stage which stands there as a physical symbol of a disintegrating family and a disintegrating country” (*Publicity* 6).

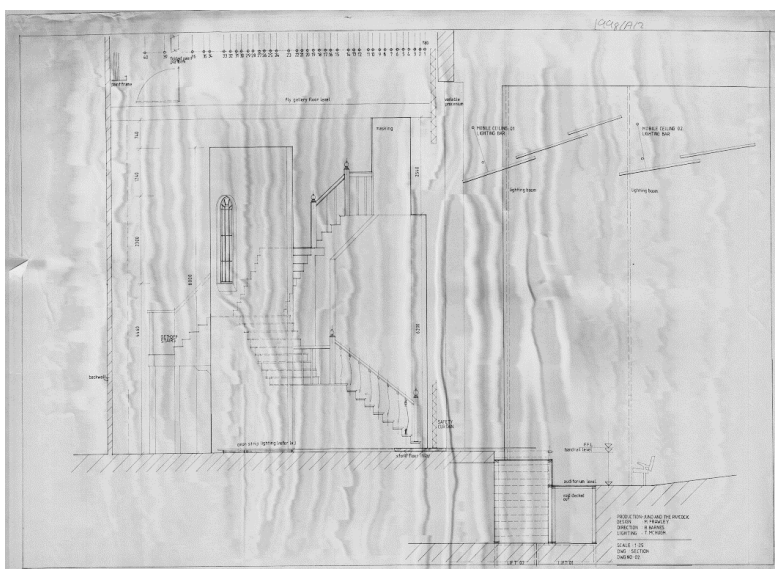
All of this changed when the play was put back on the Abbey stage by director Ben Barnes in 1997 and 1998. Starting as early as the late 1960s, O’Casey’s political radicalism started to be “largely ignored,” and his plays were commodified and made “available as spectacular entertainment” (Murray 441). In this way, *Juno* was repurposed for the sake of nostalgic entertainment. Indeed, ““while there [was] growing acceptance of O’Casey’s radical reinvention of the stage, there [was] less willingness to deal with O’Casey’s ideological commitments”” (Bernice Schrank in Pierse 51). Key changes obscured the reality behind the play and turned it into something more grandiose, emotional, escapist, and romantic than it was originally intended to be. The Abbey’s ample archival materials for both the 1997 and 1998 productions—including set design information, prompt scripts, and, most incriminating, the production programs—provide unambiguous evidence that O’Casey’s messages were softened to appeal to a group wearing rose-colored (or, in this case, Celtic Tiger-colored) glasses who wanted to see Dublin’s history as something positive, sentimental, and far ago.

The 1997 and 1998 production sets, designed by Monica Frawley, gave the impression of a more impressive and open space than what an actual tenement would look like. The 1997 set included a massive, winding staircase at stage right that stretched a total of four stories from the top to the bottom in the pit (“set designs” 1997).



From Abbey Theatre. *Juno and the Paycock*, 09 Jul 1997 [set designs]. Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at National University of Ireland, Galway, 20_SD_0001, p2.

The staircase was utilized several times throughout the play: for a neighbor’s funeral procession, for the furniture removal men, and for Johnny’s dramatic exit to his death. This staircase was made even more grandiose and imposing in the 1998 production (“set designs” 1998).



From Abbey Theatre. *Juno and the Paycock*, 12 Mar 1998 [set designs]. Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at National University of Ireland, Galway, 24_SD_0001, p2.

Its inclusion on stage, however, indicates a rewrite of the reality of tenement housing. In places that were so overcrowded, no space would be wasted with an additional staircase. As mentioned before, there was just one staircase in the back of the house (originally intended for servants), and the sweeping Georgian staircases to the front of the house were removed to provide two extra rooms (*Henrietta*). The 1997 and 1998 sets also featured two types of windows—one at the top of the stairs, and one upstage. One of these windows, a simple double-hung window, was typical for Georgian architecture. The other, however, was a Palladian window with a dramatic, arched glass top, which was not used in Georgian homes (Rosenzweig). Aside from the staircase, the stage itself was kept quite open, with no partitioning that characterized tenement housing aside from a small sheet upstage. Again, this is unrealistic.

Though the set design documents from early productions of *Juno* have been lost and were likely destroyed in the Abbey's 1951 fire, it is quite unlikely that early versions included these types of elevated architectural features that Frawley included. Regrettably, these added features worked to give the impression that tenement dwellers had vastly more space than they did in reality, that they lived in a romantic, old building that retained its former features from its glory days, and that they had mobility to physically move about their roomy dwelling. These are dangerously misleading architectural statements to make, considering the play was written to depict the horrors of 1922 Dublin life.

The theater critics at the time who disapproved of the set pointed to the ways in which the set, and the production more generally, abstracted the reality behind tenement life to a certain extent, but not enough to move *Juno* entirely outside of realism. Writing for *The Critix*, Mary Carr said “the characters appear less restricted than is normally allowed for within the close confines of tenement life” ([press cuttings] 1997, 9). *Second Opinion*'s Fintan O'Toole pointed

out an important problem with the set and realism of some of the characters, particularly Boyle and his friend, Joxer: “Barnes [the director] too has sometimes moved away from a sense of the reality of the world in which the play happens,” so much so that “it never manages to make dramatic sense, to fuse into a single, compelling movement towards tragedy” ([press cuttings] 1997, 27). In a radio interview, playwright Vincent Woods remarked that the characters “seemed very well fed and affluent for tenement Dublin of 1922,” indicating that there was an issue with costuming and choreography as well as set design ([press cuttings] 1997, 18).

Some critics, perhaps not very familiar with tenement life or *Juno*’s message, praised the set’s inventiveness: Patrick Brennan from *The Examiner* called the setting a “sacred place,” said that it had a “tenement-baroque feel to it that captures a paradoxical aura of poverty and sanctity,”¹ and wrote that the staircase situates the characters in the “midst of an ironic heaven and hell” ([press cuttings] 1997, 15). Emer O’Kelly of *The Irish Times* wrote that the staircase was “wonderfully emotive” because it literally dwarfed family’s life and the problems that finally consume them ([press cuttings] 1998, 3). Though these critics liked the set, the issue they overlook is that the audience is given an unclear impression of the reality of the characters’ inhabited space. They are not given enough clarity on whether the play is supposed to be realism or something more abstract. What the set does instead is appear “sacred” and ethereal, prioritizing an ambiguous emotional response over accuracy. This does no justice to O’Casey’s original messaging.

Minor prompt script alterations also indicate that the production softened the unpalatable historical reality of 1922 Dublin. There are not many changes between the 1997 prompt script and the 1998 one, but one stands out as crucially important. When Boyle introduces Mrs. Madigan to Joxer, the line where he calls Madigan an “oul back-parlour neighbor” is changed to

him calling her an “oul top floor neighbour” ([prompt script] 1998). This, paired with the even more lavish staircase than the 1997 version, obviously works to enhance the idea that neighbors are not as close as they would have been in reality. It also implies that each family had an entire floor to themselves, which contradicts the very definition of a tenement as having two or more living spaces on a single floor.

Another significant prompt script change that occurs in both the 1997 and 1998 versions is the omission of a few of Johnny’s lines where he strongly expresses anxiety over the political situation. This minimizes the violence of the political reality that forms the foundation of *Juno*, and also minimizes Johnny’s symptoms of trauma. For example, when a strange man in a trench coat (presumably a nationalist spying on Johnny) knocks at their door, Johnny’s line, “Who’s that at the door; who’s that at the door? What gave that knock—d’ye you hear me—are you dear of dhrunk or what?” is shortened to “What’s that? Are you deaf or dhrunk or what?” ([prompt script] 1997/1998, 20). Later, when Johnny thinks the nationalists are at the door (but in reality, it’s just Mrs. Madigan and Joxer), his line “Sit here, sit here, mother...between me an’ the door” is changed to “Stay mother, stay here” ([prompt script] 1997/1998, 38). These changes lessen the imminence of the physical threat on Johnny’s life and simultaneously make him appear like he cares more about his mother than he did in the original script. The tone of the brutality of war and the way it tears apart families is gone with the change in the line. This is disloyal to O’Casey, the man who firmly believed that the brutality of war “‘demoralises a country’” (Murray 148). Additionally, when the nationalist who takes Johnny away says to him, “Boyle, no man can do enough for Ireland!,” both prompt scripts note that a drum beat will start, and restart at the end of the Act (Act II) ([prompt script] 1997/1998, 50). This drum adds a superficial patriotic quality to the play: Johnny’s true pain caused by the war is reduced, while

the “signs” of national loyalty in the play are heightened. In the 1998 production, when Johnny thinks the man is at the door, his line “shut the door, shut the door, quick, for God’s sake!” is taken out entirely ([prompt script] 1998, 38). This indicates the 1998 production worked to soften the political tone of *Juno* even more than the 1997 production did.

The archival materials that most implicate the 1990s productions in appropriating O’Casey, however, are the two program booklets. Various components in the programs, including the graphics, ads, and program introduction notes, work to situate the play as simultaneously historic (though inaccurately historic) and romanticized. The programs’ overall designs emphasize the historic quality of the play: both productions feature a page on which the 1924 version of the program overlays half the page, while the other half lists all the past productions of *Juno* ([programme] 1997/1998, 8). The next page includes several pictures from the 1979 production of *Juno*, which was part of the Abbey’s 75th anniversary celebration ([programme] 1997/1998, 9). The centerfold page of both programs displays bold, unmissable text telling audiences that “The play is set in Dublin tenement. The year is 1922” ([programme] 1997/1998, 11).



From Abbey Theatre. *Juno and the Paycock*, 09 Jul 1997 [programme]. Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at National University of Ireland, Galway, 0020_MPG_01, p1-24.

This centerfold also interrupts the cast and crew biographies, giving a sense that the play's historicity and setting is of more importance than the people in it. Finally, the first sentence of director Ben Barnes's biography states that he studied history at University College Dublin (UCD) ([programme] 1997/1998, 13). For an accomplished director who is well beyond his college years, this seems a suspect thing to emphasize about him. All of these history-focused details emphasize a theatrical tradition that underpins *Juno* and focus on the fact that this play is a revival situated in a long-ago and far-away history. Again, this creates a false distance between theatregoers and the brutality of Dublin's past. As income data demonstrate, appalling poverty was still very much a part of Celtic Tiger Ireland.

In both years' programs, the included advertisements paint the picture of an aspirational, artistically united, Irish-as-can-be middle class that fits with Celtic Tiger messaging but downplays the crumbling and fractured society O'Casey represents in *Juno*. Included in the programs' pages are ads for nationwide companies like the Bank of Ireland and Raidió Teilifís Éireann (a national broadcasting company). Also advertised is Vhi Health and Travel Insurance, which targets both tourists and Irish theatregoers who have the means to travel ([programme] 1997/1998). Travel and tourism were of paramount importance to the Celtic Tiger era, so an ad like this indicates the Abbey was playing to the economic messaging of the time. An ad for An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), the Training and Employment Authority in Ireland, talks about Ireland as "we" and the FÁS's "role in the continuing development of Irish art" ([programme] 1997/1998). This type of patriotic, united, singular messaging about Ireland and its art aligns with Celtic Tiger messaging, like the slogans that Bord Fáilte created for tourism ads. Lastly, it is interesting to note that Murphy's Irish Stout is advertised in both years' programs. The

company, which is actually owned by Heineken, brews what is considered a “craft” stout and was, at its market peak in the 1990s, Guinness’s top competitor (Bell). Again, it’s obvious the program and ad creators were trying to generate a sense of “true” Ireland and “true” Irish art, even though the ads were perpetuating false and overly simplified ideas about the nation.

The attempt to “rebrand” O’Casey is very overt in both programs’ introductory notes. The 1997 introductory note was written by Kevin Kearns, leading authority on the history of Dublin tenements and author of *Dublin Tenement Life*. Kearns’s message, while it does admit to some of the desolate reality of tenement life, romanticizes and softens aspects of 1920s Dublin. For example, he aptly notes that the ““human piggeries”” existed “conspicuously throughout Dublin as physical blight, political scandal and moral outrage” ([programme] 1997, 4). He also references the squalid living environment of tenement dwellers: “prevalent poverty, large families, unemployment, illness and confinement created a stressful environment” ([programme] 1997, 4). Yet there is also huge effort made, either by Kearns or, one cynically hopes, an uncredited Abbey employee who edited the introduction, to give a positive spin on the situation. The note painfully and repeatedly emphasizes the resilience of the human spirit: “Yet in dramatic contrast to this dismal image of tenement life there existed a marvelously vibrant, close-knit community in which the poor found great security and even happiness;” those in tenements were ““extraordinarily happy for people who were so savagely poor”” ([programme] 1997, 4). The introduction also states that “amidst the banter and badgering there was usually genuine affection and love” ([programme] 1997, 4). Reading *Juno*, it is hard to see genuine love from Boyle or Joxer, who are the ultimate sources of banter and badgering. The closest line we get from Boyle that indicates any sort of affection for his family is when he calls his daughter “lovely,” a line that is in fact taken out of the 1998 prompt script (Harrington 245; [prompt script] 1998, 84).

What is particularly troubling about Kearns's introduction is the way it ends: "Those elderly Dubliners who today recall being born and reared in the old tenements hold poignant memories of a bygone world" ([programme] 1997, 4). This production was staged in 1997; the world of the tenements was not really something "bygone." In Kearns's own book on tenements, he notes that that it the Housing Act, which focused on slum clearance, wasn't passed until 1932 (21). The process was tedious. Most tenements were cleared by the end of the 1950s, but many stayed in tenements through the 1970s, "especially on the neglected northside of the city around North Great George's Street and Mountjoy Square" (21). 14 Henrietta Street, located on the north side, still had 6 families totaling 29 people living in it in 1970, and didn't close its doors until 1979 (*Henrietta*). Certainly, then, it would not be just a handful of "elderly Dubliners" who would remember the tenements. Calling their memories of the slums "poignant" also evokes a touchingly emotional aspect of the tenements, which effectively romanticizes the brutal struggle to survive. Kearns concludes by calling *Juno* an "inspiring chronicle of struggle, survival, and triumph of the human spirit" ([programme] 1997, 4). The Abbey thus re-casts O'Casey's tragedy, initially focused on representing the reality of poverty and horror of war, into a sugar-coated story of resilience and community. O'Casey was, as Murray says, a "commentator on living conditions" (1). He was not, as Kearns's introduction tries to make him, a motivational speaker about overcoming adversity.

Disturbingly, Kearns's introductory note is completely taken out in the 1998 program and replaced by a note written by Medb Ruane of *The Irish Times*. Ruane doesn't comment at all on the tenement aspect of the play, instead giving a cursory, saccharine treatment of its underlying political context. This indicates the Abbey wanted to distance the production even more from its intended reality. As previously stated, the set's staircase was made more physically central and

impressive in the 1998 production, meaning the physical reality was also further abstracted from what would have been authentic in 1922. Ruane ignores the tremendous external pressures of the play's characters (the political pressure on Johnny, the financial pressure on Juno, the domestic pressure on Mary, etc.): "Here, the action is confined to a domestic space, which never changes. So abstract is the outside world that its public concerns become irrelevant..." She then goes so far as to state in O'Casey's time, "what counted were the truths of the heart" ([programme] 1998, 4). This is so far from the truth of the play,² which is about the effects of the outside world—war, political turmoil, and proliferative alcoholism included—on domestic space. Like Kearns, Ruane brands *Juno* as a story of resilience: "so also must [O'Casey] bear witness to that deep human impulse which somehow survives such assaults" ([programme] 1998, 4).

Ruane has a misinformed view of O'Casey's politics. She tells *Juno*'s audience that "whatever the politics of salon or street, O'Casey might say, we are all in the bloody world together" ([programme] 1998, 4). O'Casey was skeptical of ideology, yes, but was certainly not a pacifist who was sympathetic to all persons involved in conflict. He was very stubborn about his views on the Irish Civil War as something wasteful and wrong. Over time, his stubbornness meant that he separated himself from all major political groups: "Having isolated himself from the main-stream of Irish nationalism O'Casey proceeded to alienate himself from the ICA [...] One sees here [...] on O'Casey's part [...] an unfortunate tendency to push matters to an extreme, refuse to compromise, and leave himself no alternative but to drop out" (Murray 89). Thus when Ruane concludes that O'Casey was trying to say that "it's not ideology that saves you, but simple statements of objective human compassion," she distressingly ignores the truth of O'Casey's tenacious personal convictions ([programme] 1998, 4). Even more than the 1997

introductory note by Kearns, the 1998 note works to abstract O'Casey's real views and the not-so-distant historical reality of the play.

Before concluding, it is crucial to emphasize the disparity between O'Casey's personal politics and the softened politics of 1990s *Juno* by way of revisiting and elaborating on O'Casey's staunch affiliations with the working class and strained relationship with the middle class. A man who lived in tenements and worked for years on the railways, O'Casey was a constant champion of the poor, working class of Dublin. He was a passionate, then temperate, nationalist, because his top priority was representing and working for the rights of the laboring class. He joined the Gaelic League in 1906 and changed his name, which was John Casey, to the Gaelicized "Seán Ó Cathasaigh" (Murray 66). In 1914, he drafted the constitution for the nationalist Irish Citizen Army and helped design its flag with the plough and the stars (Murray 82, 90). He did not, however, take part in the Easter Rising because he viewed it as meaningless bloodshed. He ended up distancing himself from the IRA-associated Sinn Féin movement because he felt they sidelined work for the rights of the laboring class (Murray 104). He also separated himself from the nationalist group the Irish Volunteers, who he viewed as not committed to the working class and instead having a "bourgeois agenda" (Murray 89). In his early working years, he was unambiguously working class and, as he became increasingly political as the years went on, a ceaseless advocate for the proletariat. Without appropriating and minimizing O'Casey himself, then, it is not possible to stage his play to appeal to a Celtic Tiger middle class as something escapist and romantic. Murray puts it perfectly when summarizing O'Casey's affiliation with the laboring class: "No blank slate he, to be inscribed by bourgeois conformism" (5). That, unfortunately, is what the Abbey did to him in 1997 and 1998—forced his work to conform to the bourgeois agenda of Celtic Tiger Ireland.

In a 1997 radio interview about *Juno*, UCD Women's Studies professor Alva Smith said, "I feel very disappointed that we were given a summer version of a sense of Juno" ([press cuttings] 1997, 21). This was echoed by *Dubliners* theater critic Frank Shouldice, who entitled his 1997 review of *Juno* as a question: "Summer stage for tourism theatre?" ([press cuttings] 1997, 38). The 1997 revival did premiere at the height of summer tourism in July, during a high point in the Celtic Tiger era. It is clear that the Abbey worked in a variety of ways to soften O'Casey's messaging to appeal to a touristic audience who wanted an emotional, romantic experience. The messaging, however, was only further muted in the 1998 version, which did not premiere in high tourism season. As it turns out, the Abbey forcibly tailored O'Casey's work, no matter the season.

Tenement life wasn't something emotionally touching, and certainly wasn't something O'Casey instrumentalized to glorify the resiliency of the human spirit. Kevin Kearns himself transcribed various oral accounts of tenement dwellers, one of whom bluntly stated, "They weren't the good old days, they were *brutal* days" (Kearns 3-4, emphasis original). Analysis of archival material for these two productions reveals that *Juno* was turned into a subdued drama to appeal to a burgeoning middle class as well as to visiting tourists looking for a Bord Fáilte-slogan-approved escapist experience.

Reviving a "20th century classic," as it was termed by the *Irish Tatler* in 1997, then, isn't as uncomplicated as Celtic Tiger-era Abbey tried to make it ([press cuttings] 34). Having deliberately minimized *Juno*'s original radicalism, the Abbey reinforced an imagined distance Dublin had from its harrowing past of poverty. This approach is diametrically opposite to what O'Casey wanted; he himself wrote in 1955 that "[t]o give a lasting sunny disposition in poverty

is not possible; the whole damned, rotten system must go, before the good word always comes to the tongue, [and] the smile shines forth from the eye” (O’Casey, in Ayling 86). The Abbey sacrificed O’Casey and his characters in *Juno* for the sake of the Celtic Tiger economic boom, and left audiences with a warped view of Ireland that fit with the sunny tourism messaging of the time. It would be interesting, once the materials are added to the Abbey’s archive,³ to renew this analysis by looking at the production of *Juno* put on the Abbey stage in September 2011, three years after the nation’s economic crash.

Notes

1. Ironically, though the Baroque and Georgian periods of architecture did overlap, the Georgian period extended much further into the 1800s while Baroque was out of fashion by the end of the 1700s. Brennan's comment doesn't really carry historic accuracy.

2. Ruane also states that O'Casey "kicked against the grain" when making Juno the breadwinner and bread-baker for her family ([programme] 1998, 4). In reality, women were often the head of household in tenements; one-third of women on 14 Henrietta Street were the main source of income for families (*Henrietta*). Ruane's factual error here only further discredits her authority on writing about O'Casey and *Juno*.

3. As of August 2018, the Abbey has not digitally archived any material for the 2011 production.

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