

DOMESTICITY IN THE TRILOGIES OF SEAN O'CASEY AND YU CH'I-JIN

Ji Hyea Hwang^{1*}

¹University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL, United States of America

Abstract

This article examines the portrayal of the domestic realm in both Irish playwright Sean O'Casey's 1920s Dublin Trilogy and Korean playwright Yu Ch'i-jin's 1930s Nongchon trilogy. I argue that Yu echoes O'Casey's staging of nationhood by focusing on the homeland and the home, as he deems O'Casey's methods to be most successful for catering to the general people of the colonized nation. Moreover, I recognize that this is Yu's attempt to establish a transcolonial solidarity between Korean and Irish national theatre, rather than to produce a "Westernized" theatre tradition for the Korean nation.

Keywords: Sean O'Casey; Yu Ch'i-jin; Transcoloniality; Domesticity; National Theatre

*Ph.D Candidate in Comparative Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is currently writing her dissertation, titled: "Transcolonial Nationhood: Global Interplay in Irish and Korean National Theatre." E-mail: jhwang48@illinois.edu. ORCID: 0000-0003-0273-1272



Introduction

Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy and Yu Ch'i-jin's *Nongchon* (rural area) Trilogy both enjoyed immense popularity from their contemporary audiences. The two writers take a realistic approach in depicting the home and the family amidst sociopolitical struggle in a colonial and/or post-colonial context. O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy consists of *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), and Yu's consists of *The Shack* (1932), *Landscape of the Village with the Willow Tree* (1933), and *The Ox* (1934). Due to a lack of any apparent interaction between Ireland and Korea, little is known about the influence of Irish drama on the foundational stages of the modern dramatic tradition for Korea. Yu Ch'i-jin is widely accepted as one of the precursors of the dramatic tradition in Korea, and he also played a key role in the establishment of the National Theatre, Seoul Arts College, the Drama Center, as well as some of the first Theatre departments in the nation. It is well-known that writers of colonial Korea were heavily influenced by European literature, and the study of such works was fundamental to the formation of modern Korean literature. Tracing O'Casey's influence on Yu, however, sets Irish literature apart from the other "major" literary traditions such as French or German literature, in that it is evident that the Irish Literary Revival was of utmost importance to Korean writers, especially Yu, because its success in establishing a "national literature" amidst colonial rule provided a model for Korean theater under Japanese occupation.

This transnational literary influence in a lateral, non-colonial relationship (albeit the transcoloniality) sheds light on the agency of colonial-era writers in Korea and sets Irish literature, especially theatre, apart from other European influences of the time. The transcoloniality found in this literary encounter problematizes claims that modern Korean theatre is merely an imitation of the West. Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (2005) discuss the concept of minor transnationalism, which provides a "lateral network" as an alternative to the vertical framework in understanding literary influence between two different nations. Lionnet and Shih expand from existing models of global networks, such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's rhizome structure, claiming that the existing tools presume that "the minor's literary and political significance rests on its critical function within and against the major in a binary and vertical relationship" (Lionnet and Shih 2). I use Lionnet and Shih's model of minor transnationalism to read the influence of Irish drama and theatre on Korean drama and theatre laterally, and to argue that it cannot simply be framed vertically as an instance of Westernization. In their introduction to the collection of essays, Lionnet and Shih note:

If the minor mood in music is an introspective and mournful tone different from the more triumphant "major" key, then "minor transnationalism" is perhaps the mode in which the traumas of colonial, imperial, and global hegemonies as well as the affective dimensions of transcolonial solidarities continue to work themselves out and produce new possibilities. (Lionnet and Shih 7)

The “transcolonial solidarities” that Lionnet and Shih describe here can be directly applied to the case of O’Casey and Yu, in that this relationship of influence is not bound by any vertical hierarchy. Each was bound in a different colonial relationship, yet the fact that writers from one colony can adopt a mode used by writers from another colony proves the existence of a transcolonial solidarity.

Yu even published a series of newspaper articles in the *Dong-A Daily* in 1935 entitled, “Sean O’Casey and I,” in which he introduces O’Casey’s works and outlines how they influenced his own plays. Yu (2005) begins straightforwardly by expressing his indebtedness to O’Casey: “I came under the influence of many playwrights directly and indirectly during my studies. Especially, I cannot forget such names as John Millington Synge, Anton Chehov, and Sean O’Casey. Sean O’Casey – he shows me the way to be a playwright. In some aspect, my works are merely a rough imitation of his plays. I have deep rooted admiration for O’Casey” (“O’Casey and I” 101). In this article, it is clear that Yu indeed had a deep-rooted admiration for O’Casey, and provides a very heroic painting of the playwright for the Korean readers. His statements such as “he is superior to W. B. Yeats, an Irish National Poet, in understanding the traditional Irish Gaelic” or “He was a hero who saved the Irish Theatre Movement” reveal Yu Ch’i-jin’s heavy bias, as well as his personal efforts to become a heroic figure for the Korean dramatic tradition (“O’Casey and I” 101-2). Yet, his analysis of O’Casey’s works, and his own efforts to embody some of his methods in his own plays, reveal that the “imitation” is not simply a reverential mimicry of European literary tradition, but rather one that stems from a collegial, transcolonial solidarity.

All three works of O’Casey’s trilogy are domestic, in that they are 1) set in Ireland, and 2) set indoors, primarily in the tenement homes. The focus on what is occurring in the homeland and the home reflects O’Casey’s efforts to incorporate the lives of the working-class people into the narratives of colonial and post-colonial Ireland. Similarly, Yu attempts to depict the tenant workers’ lives on stage, differentiating himself from other proletarian writers in that, like O’Casey, he does not prescribe or suggest an ideology. Rather, he is also writing the struggles of the rural areas into the narrative of social and political unrest in colonial Korea.

Domestic Affairs in the Trilogies

The first notion of domesticity prevalent in the trilogies of O’Casey and Yu are the domestic sociopolitical affairs occurring in their homeland. O’Casey and Yu alike choose to foreground the struggles of the people living in the homeland, highlighting the events that were occurring internally, while using the external factors such as British or Japanese forces only as points of reference. It is important to note that while the colonial setting cannot be ignored, the two playwrights create a clear boundary between what is domestic (Ireland for O’Casey and Korea for Yu) and what is happening beyond those boundaries. The incidents and circumstances happening domestically that are outlined by O’Casey and Yu

in their narratives are the direct results of colonial rule, and yet they take careful measures to distinguish the colonizers and the colonized.

In writing his trilogy, O'Casey chooses to focus on the working class, making his play and his characters easily relatable for the audience, and at the same time displaying the effects of colonialism on the everyday lives of the ordinary people. What is happening amongst the Englishmen both inside and outside the colony itself is seldom mentioned, and the scenes do not move outside the boundaries of Ireland. Instead of presenting the Irish people as a single entity, O'Casey illustrates the varying stances that Irishmen take. For example, in *Plough and the Stars* (1926), O'Casey highlights Nora and Jack Clitheroe's involvement (or lack thereof) in the Easter Rising. He depicts a diverse range of working-class people who identify themselves as Irish. However, each have their own viewpoints on the Easter Rising that are further complicated due to their allegiances and beliefs. The contrast between ideals and reality is most visibly shown in Act 2, in which nationalist speeches urging the Irish people to fight together can be heard outside the public-house window:

Voice of the Man: Comrades soldiers of the Irish Volunteers and of the Citizen Army, we rejoice in this terrible war. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields.... Such august homage was never offered to God as this: the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country. 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! (*Plough* 184)

Interestingly, the involvement in, or the glory of, these idealist speeches or movements are set off-stage. What gets highlighted is the crowd inside, characters such as the prostitute Rosie, trade-unionist Fluther, patriotic yet ineffective and pathetic Peter, Protestant Bessie, and the Covey, who fail to get along and who quarrel with one another. Act 2 ends with great irony, displaying a stark contrast between the Irish Volunteers and the crowd inside. While Captain Brennan, Lieutenant Langon, and Jack Clitheroe drink to "Death for th' Independence of Ireland," Rosie takes drunk Fluther "home" with arms around each other, representing a different sense of camaraderie.

Yu observes this tendency of O'Casey's and implements it in his own writing when he chooses to illustrate the lives of tenant farmers, called *nongmin*, who live in shacks in rural areas as opposed to tenement dwellers in the city. Yu's decision to do so was a result of demographics. (In his biography of Yoo Chi-jin, Baek Hyung-chan (2013) explains that 80 percent of Koreans during the 1930s belonged to the *nongmin* class. While *nongmin* generally refers to the peasantry, this term specifically came to refer to tenant farmers during Japanese occupation, as most of the land was confiscated by the Japanese. The *nongmin* of this time were, therefore, non-landowning peasants, and Baek notes that Yoo believed the only way these *nongmin* could be "rescued" from the commercial plays was in tragedies that dealt realistically with their lifestyle (Baek 44)). For Yu, the majority

of the population lived outside the city, and this was his way of mirroring O'Casey's methods. Most notably, Yu made sure his *nongmin* characters used a dialect that was very much different from the "standard" dialect that was being formulated in the 1930s. According to Kim Chul, "Korean spelling was officially authorized in 1931 and as in 1936 the national linguistic standard was formulated" (Kim 2018, 19). Yu was most likely aware of this linguistic standard that was set using the language that "the educated middle classes of Keijo¹ area," as he was an educated man living in the capital city and producing his plays concurrently (Kim 108). By not succumbing to the standard language of the capital city, unlike his peers such as Kim Tong-in and Yi Kwang-su who made all of their characters speak it in spite of their background, Yu was choosing to produce a more realistic and natural portrait of the *nongmin* lifestyle.

In his article about O'Casey's role as a precursor and significant contributor to the lineage of "politicised proletarian writing," Michael Pierse explains that O'Casey was devoted to discussing the working class of Dublin and situating it within mainstream Irish culture (Pierse 2010, 83). Pierse notes that O'Casey's main themes in writing his plays on the working class are "a sense of answerability to disadvantaged communities, a desire to valorize their counter-hegemonic character, and a wish to undo their historiographic invisibility" (Pierse 70). O'Casey looks to the everyday lives of the common people in Dublin and writes them into literature and history. In his plays, he shows how "he and his class were central to the history of Irish decolonization, through participation in the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) and other radical groups, but both were also ironically ostracized by it" (Pierse 74).

Amongst the *nongmin* characters, the older generation is generally depicted as being conservative and disillusioned, while the characters of the younger generation tend to seek ways to escape their impoverished lifestyle. With a nod to O'Casey's representation of the dramatically different degrees of interest in nationalist ideals, this clash is epitomized in a scene from *The Shack* (1932), the first play of Yu's trilogy. *The Shack* is centered on the Ch'oe family, living in a shack and waiting for their son Myongsu to return from Japan. The stage only features the shack, situated in a Korean countryside, and the audience learns of the colonial context, or of the colonials' fate in Japan, through the characters' dialogue. In this play, Yu closely follows the story of a family waiting to hear back from their son who has left for Japan to find work and are eventually devastated to hear that he was executed for his involvement with the independence movement. Conversations amongst Myongsu's father, mother, and sister reveal that they are all convinced he will return from Japan with money, or at least be able to send back some money, despite having no information about his status or occupation. The naiveté of Myongsu's family is captured in a scene in which the village supervisor brings them news of their son's involvement with the independence movement. While Myongsu is imprisoned in Japan, his family remains completely oblivious of this movement:

SUPERVISOR: Myongsu, the childish one, staged an independence movement with a few fellows in the quarry.

WIFE: What do you mean by independence movement?

HUSBAND: Oh, you mean, he interfered with someone else's work?

SUPERVISOR: Independence, not interference. INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT. You have no idea what that is, do you?

HUSBAND: No, I don't.

SUPERVISOR: What a pity. People are so ignorant in this village. An independence movement is, how can I explain it? All right. It's like the Poch'on Church, for example.

WIFE: You mean a kind of deception?

SUPERVISOR: That's right. Your son was doing these things in secret and got caught. So, the police arrested him and he was tried in a court of law. (*The Shack* 39-40)

This exchange between Myongsu's parents and the supervisor presents a highly controversial characterization of the independence movement, especially considering that the play was written and staged during the colonial period. It effectively portrays how colonial circumstances affect the livelihood of the *nongmin* and at the same time sets up the tragic ending met by supporters and non-supporters alike. Yu utilizes what he calls the "off-stage effect" found in O'Casey's plays, such as the aforementioned *Plough and the Stars*, to keep the political situation off-stage, and at the same time this tension from off-stage is constantly transmitted to the audience through the dialogues of characters on stage.

Ronan McDonald notes that the Dublin trilogy does not "really engage in political critique at all (save for their antipathy to political rhetoric)" and that it "rather draw[s] their energy from the human suffering that all war brings." Furthermore, he notes that, despite their critical portrayal of political turmoil, the plays do not attempt to deliver a political message: "Whatever one's stance on the events in Dublin during these turbulent years, the truth is that these plays in the final reckoning do not have too much to say about Irish politics, only about war in general, which, it will come as no surprise, is hell" (McDonald 2004, 139). It is true that O'Casey's bitter commentary on the different political turmoil and war all come down to a condemnation of the suffering that families and ordinary people have come to bear. His commentary on the delusion which leads to such tragedy is focused on the people of Dublin, and it is always the people of Dublin who are suffering. Nobody wins in any of the circumstances, and everything is done at the cost of the lives of working-class people living in tenement homes. The only character who comes close to winning is Jack Boyle, and perhaps his family, as they are led to think that they have a great inheritance from the Englishman Charles Bentham. Nobody is lucky, however, and there is no way out of the devastation. Jack's sudden fortune proves to be a mishap, Juno's hard work will never be able to support her family, Johnny as an IRA member loses his arm, a Free State supporter loses his life, and Mary's out-of-wedlock pregnancy leads to her being abandoned by her father, brother, and fellow striker, and to a certain extent, her fiancé. Bentham can flee back to London to resume his lifestyle, but Mary does not have the luxury to do so. This chain of events

makes the audience and the readers wonder, *what is in it for these Irish people?* It seems as though all of the actions outlined in the story happen at the expense of an Irishman's happiness, and not just *Juno and the Paycock* (O'Casey 1998), but all three plays of his Dublin Trilogy accentuate the immense sense of loss that is shared by the Irish people throughout the years, from the Easter Rising to the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War. Yu himself also comments on this, although he sees O'Casey's writing to be different from "other radical proletarian plays" ("O'Casey and I" 104). Yu believes that O'Casey is rather nihilistic in the sense that "While O'Casey describes the miserable life of the Irish, he does not suggest a clear solution" ("O'Casey and I" 104).

A similar sentiment can be found in *The Ox* (1934), in which each person in Kukso's family believes that selling their family's prized ox will somehow liberate them from their devastating situation. As tenant farmers, they have no means to earn any income, since they must pay the Japanese landowners fees and crops each year, regardless of droughts and unforeseen circumstances. Heavily in debt due to years of bad harvest, all that is left in the family's possession is the ox. At first, Kukso adamantly refuses to sell the ox of "quite a different pedigree from all other shoddy oxen" (*Ox* 65). He claims, "The ox that is our ox's cousin's father's eldest brother, that is, our ox's cousin's elder uncle, received the first prize from the governor at the county fair. Take note! He won the first prize!" (*Ox* 66). This beloved ox is a means of escape for Kukso because holding on to it gives him a sense of pride; for others, it is something that can be sold to reach their goals. For his first son, Malttong'i, selling the ox would provide him enough money to buy out a girl whom he wants to marry. Her family has already received an advance payment for selling her to a certain Mr. Nakajima from Japan, and the only way to cancel this transaction would be for Malttong'i to pay back the amount to her family. For the younger son, Kaettong'i, selling the ox would provide him with the means to go to Manchuria to work and earn money. He notes, "As soon as the ox is sold, I'll run off to Manchuria. That way we can all survive" (*Ox* 78). His comment reveals the helplessness he feels living in colonial Korea, knowing that there is no way out of their impoverished situation if they continue to live there. Even for Saum, the estate agent, selling the ox would be beneficial as he is in charge of collecting fees from the tenant farmers on behalf of the Japanese landowners. Kukso's wife is not so clear as to what she wants from the ox, although she is later convinced that selling it would be worthwhile. After all, she notes: "The young ones are different from us. They express their likes and dislikes crystal-clear. If they like something, they'll bubble about it, and if not, they'll sulk" (*Ox* 92). She is a passive character who sways from agreeing with her husband to agreeing with her firstborn son, and her wishes always remain unfulfilled, since both her husband and her son are met with catastrophe. After Saum sells off the ox behind everyone's back, he faces the wrath of Kukso's family, but the money he collects settles Kukso's debt, which takes care of his own work as a debt collector. Kukso's pride and Malttong'i and Kaettong'i's dreams are crushed, and the family is once again

left with nothing. Before they could even appreciate the fact that their debt has been settled, exasperated Malttong'i decides to set fire to the debt collector's house and leads the family into a "state of chassis" again, just like the Boyle family in *Juno and the Paycock*.

Domestic Sphere in the Trilogies

The focus on families and homes is made explicit by both O'Casey and Yu in their choice of stage setting. All six plays almost exclusively take place inside the homes, and it is through characters' lines that what goes on outside, which ultimately affect the dynamics inside the homes, is delivered to the audience. It is important to note that while both of the trilogies are tragedies, most of the violence and fighting are kept off-stage. The tragedy lies not just in the deaths and injuries, but also in how they affect and disrupt the familial and personal space. Both O'Casey and Yu illustrate, often comically, the shared feeling of desperation and helplessness amongst the characters. O'Casey's tenement workers and Yu's tenant farmers are overwhelmed by the increasingly unendurable circumstances, and there is a sense of confinement in that none of the characters succeed in escaping from their miserable situations.

In the *Plough and the Stars*, the contrast between tenement dwellers and the participants in the Easter Rising is highlighted through Jack and Nora Clitheroe, although the play does not focus solely on this couple. While Jack is eager to be made Commandant for the Irish Citizen Army, pregnant Nora is desperate to keep Jack at home and away from the dangers of war. Despite Nora's efforts, Jack is heard commanding the Dublin Battalion off-stage at the end of Act 2 ("**Clitheroe's Voice:** (*in command outside*) Dublin Battalion of the Irish Citizen Army, by th' right, quick march!"), and Nora continues desperately to convince Jack to return in Act 3, for fear of his death (*Plough* 202). Jack cannot be seen to betray his troops, and in Act 4, he is reported dead. Jack's actions as Commandant are largely absent from stage, and it is Nora's desperation and her eventual miscarriage and madness that are shown onstage.

One rather violent glimpse of the battle that is brought indoors can be found in the aforementioned scene of Act 3, when Jack enters with Captain Brennan and Lieutenant Langon and Nora tries to convince Jack to stay behind. Jack and Brennan enter while carrying Langon, who is injured from battle. Despite fatal losses on "their side," Jack expresses his inability to fully attack "the other side": "bad as they are they're Irish men an' women" (*Plough* 219). Meanwhile Langon is moaning in agony, "Th' stomach is ripped out o' me; I feel it - o-o-oh, Christ!" (*Plough* 219). Langon's pain is juxtaposed to that of Nora, who is clinging to Jack and begging him to not return to battle, an act which soon embarrasses and infuriates him. The two characters in agony in this scene, Nora and Langon, illustrate contrasting forms of tragedy that result from battle. The scene is much more focused on the dialogue between Nora and Jack, and Langon's outbursts of pain only interrupt the dialogue once every few lines. This spotlight on the couple and the emphasis on

Nora's involuntary involvement in this tragic situation reveal O'Casey's purpose of writing the stories of families into the narratives of the Easter Rising.

In the following Act, Protestant Bessie ends up caring for Nora after her stillbirth and dies while trying to protect Nora from getting shot by English soldiers through the window. This scene represents O'Casey's criticism of the inescapable vulnerability that is spread to people even inside of their homes, as the act of merely looking out from a window is marked as a threat. While the scenes O'Casey displays on stage provide a sharp contrast to the fighting that is happening simultaneously off-stage throughout the first three Acts, this outcome of events in the final Act of the play forces the audience to face the ubiquitous danger that pervades not only the battle grounds, but also even the tenement homes. The aim of this play, along with that of others of the trilogy, is not necessarily to debunk the ideals of those who led the independence movement or of those who fought against it, but to depict a realistic picture of how individuals were inevitably affected by the sociopolitical situation.

Likewise, Yu's *Landscape of the Village with the Willow Tree* (1933) provides a closer look at tragedies of the home amidst colonial rule. This play is the most uneventful of the trilogy, in that there is no major contention between characters, and most of the play narrates Gye-soon's excitement about moving to Seoul. The conversations reveal that her family's selling her is by no means a voluntary act, since they do it in order to survive, although Gye-soon does consider this an opportune chance to escape the village. At a time when tenant farmers must work endlessly to fall less slowly into debt, Gye-soon's worth is less than that of an ox, for an ox is crucial for crop harvesting. The comparison between the worth of an ox and children can also be found in *The Ox*, the last of the trilogy, although in this play the child is sold off instead of the ox. Although the characters in this play are unaffected and unmoved by ideology, they are quite similar to characters dwelling in the tenement homes of *The Plough and the Stars*. The village girls have no agency and are quite jealous of Gye-soon's departure, while she gloats. They all seem to think that the only way they can escape the village is by being sold off to Seoul or Japan as a prostitute.

In focusing on the family and the home in their plays, O'Casey and Yu present domestic struggles due to differences in age, class, gender, nationality, and religion. Like O'Casey, Yu utilizes clashes between family members to portray generational gaps that may represent different attitudes toward their roles in society during colonial times. Going back to *Juno and the Paycock*, Mary is a working woman like her mother, and at the beginning of the play she is seen walking out to strike with the employees' union. Her behavior provides a contrast to her father, who spends most of his time drinking with his friend Joxer. While neither of them has any income at this point, the reasons for their rejection of work are different. Boyle avoids work by feigning pain in his legs, while Mary temporarily puts work aside in order to participate in the strike. Mary is both independent and loyal, and while she does lose much of the "principle" that she emphasizes at the beginning of the play, she does not become the "chiselur," as

her father claims. In fact, it is Boyle who is constantly lying. When Boyle learns of his “inheritance,” he immediately renounces his friend Joxer: “Juno, I’m done with Joxer; he’s nothin’ but a prognosticator an’ a ...” (*Juno* 96). While Boyle is never completely loyal to Juno, always running from responsibilities and turning to Joxer and whiskey, he is quick to abandon Joxer as well, once his circumstances change. Even though Boyle seems to value patriarchal and religious traditions, he fails to be a reliable family head and friend, in times of both trouble and joy. On the other hand, at the beginning of the play, Mary claims that “a principle’s a principle” and that she must walk the streets for a “Jennie Claffey” that she never really cared for (*Juno* 70). Despite the fact that she is putting her own job at risk, she chooses to do what she considers to be the right thing.

In *Juno and the Paycock*, the dichotomy between the conservative, repressive ways of the traditional family and the new, liberal society she is a part of is evident from the outset. Mary is introduced as “a well-made and good-looking girl of twenty-two” who is struggling due to the presence of two opposing influences:

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. (*Juno* 67-8)

That the circumstances of her life are “pulling her back,” and what she learns from her books is allowing her to move forward, indicate to the readers from the beginning that it is her current circumstances which embody the past and which she will leave behind as she embraces her future. Mary has already become a member of Dublin society, finding a workplace and even joining a union for workers. She is well read, much to the dismay of her father: “she’s always readin’ lately – nothin’ but thrash, too. There’s one I was lookin’ at dh’other day: three stories, *The Doll’s House*, *Ghosts*, an’ *The Wild Duck* – buks only fit for chiselurs!” (*Juno* 85). The list of readings reveals Mary’s interest and knowledge of gender equality and women’s rights, and also provides explanation for her ability to speak more grammatically and eloquently than her father. Moreover, Boyle’s response to such interests, claiming that they are suitable for chiselers, suggests that he is not interested in promoting the equality that Mary might be striving for and rather thinks that such ideas are contrary to the truth.

Even though the Boyle family resides in Dublin, Boyle still regards himself as “Captain” and cannot let go of his past experience at sea. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Boyle cannot become accustomed to the modern lifestyle of Dublin, and is especially resistant to finding a job and functioning within society. Boyle repeatedly claims, “the whole counthry’s in a state o’ chassis” as if to blame his circumstances on the state of Ireland, when in fact it is his own irresponsibility and vanity that bring chaos to his family (*Juno* 104). For Boyle, moving forward and joining the urban modernity of Dublin only occurs in Act II, but by Act III he

returns back to his former lifestyle. When promised a large sum of money, Boyle buys himself a suit, along with many other extravagant items that he soon grows into. He begins to consider himself a member of society, as Mary has always been doing, and engages with the people of town. As Robert Brazeau explains, “[t]he accumulation of property carries with it a strongly subjectifying element. Captain Boyle, at least by his own accounting, is able to circulate differently in the city as a newly minted man of means” (Brazeau 2008, 34). The sudden wealth enables him to see himself as a part of society, unlike his previous attitude of spending most of his time drinking with Joxer, the only person who recognized him as a captain. With his sudden wealth, Boyle appreciates Father Farrell’s attention, dresses in appropriate clothes, and spends much time in public space. He becomes so accustomed to his new suit, that when in Act III Nugent takes back his suit, Boyle exclaims, “Here, what am I going’ to dhress meself in when I’m goin’ out?” (*Juno* 128). Unlike the effect books have on Mary, which enlighten and strengthen her to overcome the downfall of her family, Boyle’s sense of belonging quickly wears off when his possessions and “wealth” are taken away from him. After his wife and daughter leave, Boyle walks into the house with Joxer, quite paralyzed from heavy drinking. No longer wearing a suit or appreciated by the townspeople, Boyle reclaims his previous title: “If th’ worst comes...to th’ worse...I can join a...flyin’...column....I done...me bit...in Easter Week...had no business...to...be...there...but Captain Boyle’s Captain Boyle!” (*Juno* 147). In the end, Boyle is left unchanged by the entire affair, and it is expected that unlike Juno and Mary, he will not be able to escape his old habits.

While Yu follows a similar pattern, his version encompasses Confucian ideals in that the daughters are not necessarily representations of modernization and progress, but rather demonstrate those who reluctantly submitted to the Japanese rule for survival. Examples are Gye-soon from *Landscape of the Village with the Willow Tree*, or Kwichan from *The Ox*, who are sold by their families to the capital city to become prostitutes for Japanese officials. In both cases, the parents have to make this decision in order to receive money for survival in return. While Kwichan’s opinion in this matter remains unclear, neither show signs of rebellion. In fact, Gye-soon of *Landscape of the Village with the Willow Tree* is naively thrilled, for she thinks that life in the city will be much better than in the village. She looks forward to being able to afford clothes and cosmetics and seems to be quite oblivious to her family’s dire situation.

There are, however, younger characters who correspond to Mary and Loreleen. Such characters are Kaettong’i (the second son) of *The Ox*, who wants to sell the family ox so that he can afford to travel to Manchuria for work, and Myongsu of *The Shack*, who went to work in Japan, joined an independence movement, and got killed after he was caught and jailed. Myongsu is reminiscent of Mary, as he was supposedly actively involved in an independence movement while working in Osaka, Japan. When the village supervisor delivers news of Myongsu’s involvement, he implies that this is a trend for ungrateful youth who are not fulfilling their duties and explains that it is a deceptive movement:

Husband What on earth did those rascals do something like that for?

Supervisor If you know one fact, then you can imagine ten different theories to explain it. Look at the things that they do, those young ones overseas. They've got nothing under their belts, nothing, not so much as a rat's ass. But they get soaked with foreign influence, top to bottom. At home their families can barely feed themselves. We manage with tree bark and wild plants. But instead of working diligently like they're supposed to, they raise their voices to claim, "Men must eat to live!" They run around like wild horses. What need have they for dress shoes? They were born poor! That's not all. They dress themselves up in tailored suits. With those shiny clothes on, how can they perform their duties?" (*Shack* 40)

The supervisor's caution against foreign influence and his inability to understand why the younger generation *nongmin* refuse to accept their social class are reminiscent of Father Domineer. While Myongsu's parents are not in agreement with the supervisor, as they refuse to believe that their son is such a character ("**Mother:** Your child might be like that, but ours is different"), they are nevertheless reluctant to believe that their son is not committed to working and earning money (*Shack* 41). While Myongsu's father, mother, and sister all yearn for Myongsu's return, their attitude toward his involvement is very different. While the sister hears from a friend of his what exactly he was involved in, she tells her mother: "Even if Myongsu perishes in prison, we should have no regrets. On the contrary, we should be proud of him. My brother fought for us all. Can you think of anything else to be more proud of?" (*The Shack* 55). Myongsu's sister is different from the village elders in that she does not believe that once you are a *nongmin*, you must forever be confined to the village and therefore to poverty.

A similar disagreement can be found in *The Ox*, where Kukso and his two sons, Malttong'i and Kaettong'i, have very different opinions on what should be done with the family's prized ox. Kukso is a tenant farmer in the countryside, and is unhappy because his two sons do not participate in the rice-threshing. Kukso is proud of this ox, whose "pedigree goes back to the one that received the first prize from the governor" (*Ox* 98). He is unable to let go of the ox and the past glories it represents, and despite the ox's poor condition, he prizes it over anything else. He is reluctant to sell the ox, despite his two sons' desperate struggles to escape the family's dire situation. Malttong'i, the oldest son whose name translates as "horse dung," is uninterested because he is disillusioned and knows that they will not escape poverty by harvesting crops. He wishes to sell the family ox so that he can buy out Kwich'an, who will otherwise be sold off to Japan so that her family can afford rent. Kaettong'i, the second son whose name translates as "dog dung," is not seeking his individual escape; rather, he claims that the money from selling the ox would be used for his travels to Manchuria, so that he could come back rich:

Mother, look! I'm going to sell the ox and make my way to Manchuria. What matters is that I return home a rich man, right? I heard that making money in Manchuria is as easy as cutting a horn off a dead animal. I heard

there are hundreds of jobs available. Think for a second. How are we ever going to rest as long as we keep tenant-farming here? Don't you want to save money so that we can live a comfortable life? Even if we never earn great riches, we need at least to eat, don't you agree? Mother! (*Ox* 77)

While Kaettong'i had the most plausible plan to save the family from their devastation, it was all contingent on the condition and price of the ox. After all, the ox was not well taken care of, and even if the family agreed to sell it, it would not have provided enough funds for Kaettong'i to travel to Manchuria. Nor was there any way of knowing if indeed there were jobs available in Manchuria. The disagreement amongst family members over their only hope and their inevitable downfall reflect on the helpless situation that Yu was trying to replicate on stage.

As Yu states in "Sean O'Casey and Me," one of the main purposes of his plays is depicting "depressed slum life" and he does so by presenting helpless characters who are "on the whole the same as Seumas in *Shadow of a Gunman* and Boyle, Joxer in *Juno and the Paycock*" ("O'Casey and I" 105). Malttong'i and Kukso of *The Ox*, and Myongso Ch'oe and Booger of *The Shack* are all Boyle, Michael, and Father Domineer-type characters who cannot understand the younger characters' desire to escape the village, seek personal and/or national independence, and most importantly, remove themselves from the family. The wishes of these characters clash with those of the younger characters, which keeps the audiences emotionally engaged.

Conclusion

As illustrated by the last line of the closing scene of *Juno and the Paycock*, O'Casey's characters are lost, hopeless, and overwhelmed: "**Boyle:** I'm telling you...Joxer...th' whole worl's...in a terr...ible state o'...chassis!" (*Juno* 148). Similarly, the characters in Yu's plays struggle to navigate through the "chassis" in which they find themselves. However, the vulnerability of O'Casey's and Yu's characters is not represented as an innate quality but rather a consequence of their time. Therefore, the presentation of such characters is noticeably different from the colonizers' caricatures of the colonial. O'Casey and Yu encourage audiences to identify with and at the same time be repulsed by the candid portrayals of daily life in the home and the homeland. In this way, they urge audiences to come to terms with the "chassis" that they are caught up in.

In his autobiography, Yu recounts the chaos and excitement of the playhouse, especially in response to *The Shack*, as the audiences would cry, rage, and cheer at the stage. In fact, he notes that the success of *The Shack* caused audience members to follow him and director Hong Hae-sung backstage and hoist them shoulder high in celebration of "the long-awaited creation of dramatic literature on this land." Reflecting on such reactions and those of critics who claimed that his stage allowed the audience to understand reality as well as appreciate the actors' embodiment of reality, Yu notes that his primary purpose as a writer is to point out the inconsistencies of his time (*Autobiography* 112). Moreover, he claims,

“while drafting my plays, I always thought of Sean O’Casey, the outraged man of Ireland, and tried my best to become a writer such as he” (*Autobiography* 107).

Yu’s own accounts of his writing and directing career reveal his indebtedness to O’Casey’s writings and his desire to emulate him by staging in his own plays the reality of everyday life in colonial Korea. The likeliness delineated in the trilogies discussed above reveals Yu’s preoccupation with creating for the Korean audience what O’Casey created for the Irish audience. This precisely illustrates an instance of how “transcolonial solidarities continue to work themselves out and produce new possibilities” as Lionnet and Shih suggest, for Yu played a pivotal role in establishing the tradition of modern drama and theatre in Korea. This comparative study of O’Casey and Yu’s plays calls for a closer examination of the impact of Irish literature and the Irish Literary Revival on the shaping of new literary genres such as modern drama, as well as their contributions to existing forms of literature in colonial Korea.

Notes

1. In his biography of Yoo Chi-jin, Baek Hyung-chan explains that 80 percent of Koreans during the 1930s belonged to the *nongmin* class. While *nongmin* generally refers to the peasantry, this term specifically came to refer to tenant farmers during Japanese occupation, as most of the land was confiscated by the Japanese. The *nongmin* of this time were, therefore, non-landowning peasants, and Baek notes that Yoo believed the only way these *nongmin* could be “rescued” from the commercial plays was in tragedies that dealt realistically with their lifestyle (Baek 44).
2. Keijo is the precursor of Seoul.

References

- Baek, Hyung-chan. *Han’gugyesur’ui K’un Pyöl Tongrang Yu Ch’i-jin*. P’aju, Sallimch’ulp’ansa. 2013
- Brazeau, Robert. “Sean O’Casey’s Dublin Trilogy and the “Promise” of Metropolitan Modernity.” *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2008, pp. 21-46.
- Kim, Chul. *Reading Colonial Korea through Fiction: The Ventriloquists*. Translated by Hye-Joon Yoon, Lexington Books, 2018.
- Lionnet, Françoise, and Shu-mei Shih, editors. *Minor Nationalism*. Duke University Press, 2005.
- McDonald, Ronan. “Sean O’Casey’s Dublin Trilogy: Disillusionment to Delusion.” *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*, edited by Shaun Richards, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 136–149.
- O’Casey, Sean. “Juno and the Paycock.” *Sean O’Casey: Three Dublin Plays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998, pp. 63–148.
- O’Casey, Sean. “The Plough and the Stars.” *Sean O’Casey: Three Dublin Plays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998, pp. 149-247.
- O’Casey, Sean. “The Shadow of a Gunman.” *Sean O’Casey: Three Dublin Plays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998, pp. 1-62.
- Pierse, Michael. “The Shadow of Sean: O’Casey, Commitment and Writing Dublin’s Working Class.” *Saothar (Irish Labour History Society)*, vol. 35, 2010, pp. 69–85.

Yu, Ch'i-jin. *Complete Works of Dongrang Yoo Chi-jin: Autobiography/Correspondences*. Vol. 9, Seoul Institute of the Arts Press, 1993.

Yu, Ch'i-jin. *Landscape of the Village with the Willow Tree*. Translated by JiHyea Hwang.

Yu, Ch'i-jin. "Sean O'Casey and I: *Dong-A Ilbo* (Dong-A Daily) 1935.7.7-7.10" *Three Plays*. Translated by Won-Jae Jang, Colin Smythe Limited, 2005, pp. 101-109.

Yu, Ch'i-jin. "The Ox" *Korean Drama under Japanese Occupation*. Translated by Jinhee Kim, Homa & Sekey Books, 2004.

Yu, Ch'i-jin. "The Shack" *Korean Drama under Japanese Occupation*. Translated by Jinhee Kim, Homa & Sekey Books, 2004.

Recebido em: 31/10/2019

Aceito em: 13/02/2020