**Manuscript details**

**Title**

‘Sean O’Casey’s *Within the Gates* (1934)*: critical misunderstandings of a new form of dramaturgy’*

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**Abstract**

The article examines the critical reception to Sean O’Casey’s Within the Gates (1934) on both the London and the American stage, during its first production. The experimental nature of play is considered alongside the lack of understanding of this stylistic experimentation by the British Lord Chamberlain’s Office and the British critics, while considering the more receptive understanding from the theatre critics in New York.

**Short biography**

Dr Michelle C Paull is an Associate Dean for Research and a Senior Lecturer in Drama at St Mary’s University, Strawberry Hill, London, UK. Michelle’s research interests include Sean O’Casey, Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde, as well as contemporary Irish drama such as Enda Walsh, Nancy Harris and David Ireland. Michelle has published on O’Casey, Shaw and Wilde as well as Enda Walsh, and Dermot Healy. Michelle is also interested in contemporary Irish literature, including Anne Enright, Eimer McBride and Dermot Hogan as well as contemporary English literature including Rachel Cusk, Ann Patchett and Colm Toibín. Michelle has a long-standing admiration for the works of Daphne du Maurier. Michelle also works on adaptation studies and teaches courses on the history and context of practitioners and London Theatre.

**Sean O’Casey’s *Within the Gates* (1934) – critical misunderstandings and a new form of dramaturgy**

Sean O’Casey’s experimental play *Within the Gates* (1934) was at the forefront of his work to establish a new form of dramaturgy. Yet the play was misunderstood by its initial readers at the Lord Chamberlain’s Office and by contemporary theatre critics - both in the UK and the USA. Because of these critical misunderstandings *Within the Gates* has garnered few theatrical productions, especially when compared to the regular revivals of his more well-known plays and this critical misunderstanding means that *Within the Gates* has been left to languish without regular theatrical productions ever since.

O’Casey’s most regularly produced plays remain ‘The Dublin Trilogy’ as they became known (since all three featured a Dublin location), *The Shadow of a Gunman,* *Juno and the Paycock*, and *The Plough and the Stars*. These plays established O’Casey’s long-standing reputation as a dramatist of the poor, the excluded and the working-class of Dublin and showed the reality of a poverty-stricken existence alongside the impact of significant moments of Irish history, in particular the Easter Rising of 1916 and the War of Independence 1919 -21. Because of the continued popularity of The Dublin Trilogy with audiences, these three plays enjoy regular theatrical revivals and are the focus of renewed critical assessments of O’Casey’s work, while the rest of his plays remain neglected.

O’Casey has long had a reputation as a theatrical maverick. His relationship with the Abbey Theatre in Dublin remained fraught for many years after an argument with Yeats over the rejection of his first experimental play *The Silver Tassie* (1928). O’Casey’s Communist views were often at odds with the contemporary politics of Eire, the UK and the USA. As a dramatist, O’Casey’s theatrical developments became increasingly directed towards a more Elizabethan influence, using song, dance and abstraction to explore his themes rather than a more recognisable naturalistic depiction of working-class life in Dublin tenements which had been the focus of his earlier work, but this led to critical isolation.

**Critical scholarship**

Theatre makers and critics alike became more detached from O’Casey’s work as he took a new artistic direction and this critical distance has largely continued. Even today theatre companies and critics brush over O’Casey’s later plays and *Juno and the Paycock* remains the most regularly produced of any of the O’Casey canon. At the Abbey between 2000-13 there were only 3 performances of plays other than the Dublin Trilogy[[1]](#endnote-1), while *Within the Gates* is rarely seen on stage and little discussed by critics or students of theatre. O’Casey’s later plays became deeply unfashionable and remain so, both for theatre practitioners and critics.

In the 1970s and 80s O’Casey scholarship thrived, notably in the USA and Canada. Recently notable scholars such as Susan Cannon Harris, Colbert Kearney and James Moran have begun to revisit O’Casey’ work again and their critical studies identify sexuality, language and contextual history and politics as particular focus of interest in O’Casey’s work. But there is critical room for further considerations of the critical reception of theatricality of O’Casey’s later plays to assess what has led to this comparative professional neglect of the later works and to explore whether this approach had justification, or has instead become a habit of criticism, creating a potential barrier to contemporary theatrical interest and thus performance of O’Casey’s later plays.

**Developing experimental representation**

*Within the Gates* is an interesting place to begin this discussion since it is this play which brings together the increasing experimentalism of O’Casey’ work and shows him reaching the theatrical destination to which he has been heading since his very first experiments with mimetic and diegetic space in *The* *Harvest Festival* (1919, though unpublished until 1980) and later *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923)*.* As he writes *Within the Gates*, O’Casey is self-consciously engaged upon a project not only to re-define the nature of his own drama, but to re-imagine contemporary drama in a new cultural context. As Robert Hogan suggests

*Within the Gates* is an important play to O’Casey…It is perhaps one of those important works that passionately engaged writers ultimately wrestle with, and in which they attempt a kind of personal catharsis, a full and complete statement of their worldview’. [[2]](#endnote-2)

In the O’Casey canon it is *The Silver Tassie*, which is often seen to mark his most decisive rejection of the phrase ‘realist dramatist’ in formal stylistic terms, while *Within the Gates* is even now seen as the first of his plays to ‘fail’, since it moved away from the focus on Irish history and context and was not a commercial success. Robert Hogan also summarises the standard critical analysis, which still often has to be refuted today:

For years the critical cliché about O’Casey’s work was that, it began to disintegrate when he left Dublin, that, in Lady Gregory’s words about Henry James “he might have found more sap and substance among his own people.” [[3]](#endnote-3)

In other words, critics felt that O’Casey should have continued to write about Irish people and situations, suggesting that when O’Casey dared to change his focus to London and British people, his best work was at an end. What critics and theatre practitioners do not take into account is the evolving nature of a playwright’s oeuvre; O’Casey wanted to develop and expand as a dramatist, while his critics were content for him to remain as chronicler of the Irish working-class. Within the Gates is at the forefront of his rejection of naturalism as a style and the development of his alternative approach to a theatrical dialogue of ideas.

**Changing theatrical direction**

What is so distinctive about *Within the Gates* is the very sense of release and theatrical defiance that the play contains. This is O’Casey returning to writing for the theatre, still sore from the Abbey’s rejection of *The Silver Tassie* (1930), on the grounds of its experimental second act, with a play which continues the abstract expressionism across the whole play in *Within the Gates*. The rejection of *The Silver Tassie* caused O’Casey to give up writing for theatre at all, instead he focused on writing short stories and poetry for his collection *Windfalls*, but finally decided to return to theatre and carry on to produce the kind of drama that he truly wanted to write. C.B.Cochran, who had produced *The Silver Tassie* in London after the Abbeydébâcle, acknowledges the increasing complexity and range of O’Casey’s style. Though he rejected the script of *Within the Gates* in 1933 noting that it was ‘too highbrow’ for a production by him and as Cochran ruefully remarked in his letter to O’Casey on 1st August 1933:

I suppose you are tired of people advising you to get back to the method of ‘Juno’. I wish you would.’ [[4]](#endnote-4)

Cochran’s remark is indeed symptomatic of those who were anxious that O’Casey should have another certain ‘hit’; he speaks as a commercial theatre producer keen to acquire for himself the box office successes of O’Casey’s previous Dublin plays for the Abbey. However, O’Casey’s response in his reply to Cochran on the 7th August 1933 underlines his own awareness of what the most straightforward dramatic path for himself should be, ‘Your advice to go back to the genius of ‘Juno’ might be good for me but bad for my conception of drama’.[[5]](#endnote-5)

O’Casey himself described *Within the Gates* as ‘a strange play – music, song & dialogue running through four acts […] & will be something different to anything I have yet written’. [[6]](#endnote-6) O’Casey’s first play presenting a non-Irish environment, the play is set in post -WW1 London’s Hyde Park, showing daily events in the park over four seasons of the year, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. The play features representations of characters from all different walks of life, from the Nursemaid to the Man in the Trilby hat, from the Placard Evangelist to the Salvation Army Officer. The man figures of the play are The Bishop, The Young Whore an in what might be seen as an attempt to characterise a poet, the figure of ‘The Dreamer’. The play does not focus on a realist plot, though conversations and meetings between visitors to the park take place throughout. As Brooks Atkinson suggests ‘Hyde Park is a microcosm of modern England [….] Although *Within the Gates* has only the most trifling story, it is essentially a drama of life in opposition to death’.[[7]](#endnote-7) The style is experimental and features a much larger cast than O’Casey’s previous plays. The main focus is the character of Jannice, the ‘Young Whore’ and her meetings with ‘The Dreamer’ and The Bishop, who, it is discovered later in the play, is actually her father, and who had abandoned her mother and left Jannice to be raised in a Catholic children’s home. Later neglected by her mother (who drifted into alcoholism after the Bishop abandoned her) Jannice has fallen into prostitution and is now gradually dying of a heart condition, torn between a desire for religious faith and the atheist ideas passed on to her by her step-father.

The difficulties of staging this play with its large cast and experimental style may in part be responsible for *Within the Gates* being ‘generally neglected by the theatre’[[8]](#endnote-8). The perceived attacks on religion and the perception of immorality in the presentation of a prostitute on stage was also part of the anxiety the play caused and led to the proposed tour in the US to be cancelled.

**New theatrical style**

For O’Casey, *Within the Gates* is his defining theatrical moment. He sees the play as providing the opportunity for him to develop a new dramatic form, pushing at theatrical boundaries. O’Casey’s later work is part of the broader European experiments, and *Within the Gates* is probing the limits of theatre as surely as the work of Brecht and Lorca. As Katharine Worth noted:

O’Casey … has an important place among the playwrights who fashioned Irish drama out of Europe and it is natural to discuss his plays in that context even though his own European affiliations were very different from theirs. [[9]](#endnote-9)

Worth reminded us that O’Casey may have been influenced by the German Expressionists, in particular Ernst Toller, though she saw the links to Yeats and O’Neill as more pertinent to an analysis of O’Casey’s dramatic style.[[10]](#endnote-10)

O’Casey’s work provides an important and often unrecognized connection through the line of theatrical experimentation in twentieth-century English-speaking drama, which culminated in the theatre of Beckett and Pinter in the1950s and early 1960s. As Worth has noted ‘O’Casey stands unmistakably behind Beckett’, [[11]](#endnote-11) and we can see O’Casey as the precursor of the New Wave of post–war drama, a period that Dan Rebellato wittily terms as the title of his book *1956 and all that*. Kenneth Tynan also makes the link between O’Casey and New Wave drama in his pithy, though patronising, review of Brendan Behan’s *The Hostage* (1958):

It seems to be Ireland’s function every twenty years or so to kick English drama from the past into the present. Mr Behan may well fill the place vacated by Sean O’Casey.[[12]](#endnote-12)

 O’Casey was not primarily interested in what he could do for the English or indeed Irish theatre in a purely national sense, but was looking to explore how his drama might transform the experience of theatre on an international scale. He was interested in exploring the reach of theatre, its boundaries and possibilities. He recognized that extraordinary potential of the theatre to involve, uplift and to provoke its audience, and he did not see this potential addressed in contemporary drama.

O’Casey tried to bring a new kind of drama to an audience he saw as being duped by theatrical naturalism which, as O’Casey is at pains to point out in *Blasts and Benedictions*, is not at all ‘real’:

If we are to confine the drama to a sober and exact imitation of life, then the drama is dead, for life itself is much more interesting than its sober and actual imitation. What realists take for life is but a faintly warmed up corpse.[[13]](#endnote-13)

This stark gothic image of realism as a kind of Frankenstein’s monster behind the drama is confrontational, but for O’Casey, this was simply part of waking-up his audience to the kind of theatre they are watching. This sense of theatrical de-mystification sits comfortably alongside O’Casey’s communist sympathies. It is not simply that O’Casey wishes to re-define drama through theatrical form for its own sake. This re-definition of the stage, as for Brecht, is part of O’Casey’s political activity; there is a moral imperative for him to breakdown the strictures of naturalism. Naturalism is the opiate, and audiences must have their eyes opened to its distortions and obfuscations. If drama is ‘dead’, then for O’Casey the potential for social change has been thwarted; and he was not one to let this happen without a fight. This article tracks O’Casey’s attempt to find this ‘new’ audience for his new drama. He finds it in neither Britain nor Ireland, but rather in New York. Here on Broadway, with its musical traditions and most recent developments in the modern musical, finally O’Casey finds an audience ready to understand his pivotal experimental drama *Within the Gates*.

# Censors and Critics

One of the changes in the theatrical context of *Within the* *Gates* (1934) as an O’Casey play is that it is the first of his dramas to reject the specificity of the historical moment. Although the play does allude generally to its political context in its comments on the international post-war world, it does not take as its focus a particular local, national or international event. This ellipsis of time, the refusal of a particular focus, is quite deliberate on O’Casey’s part. This decision is an attempt to forestall critical responses to the play as naturalist or non-naturalist and may well have been a reaction to Yeats’s criticism, of *The Silver Tassie* (which suggested, amount other criticisms, that while O’Casey knew about the conflicts of which he wrote in Ireland, he had not been part of the Great War and so should not attempt to write about it as a subject). Though O’Casey reacted stridently to Yeats’ criticism, he may have felt that the only way to avoid the presumption that he would always represent a ‘real’ historical moment was to reject any specific temporal focus altogether.

But it was not history this time that caused O’Casey problems. When a license was applied for a proposed London production at the Royalty Theatre in 1933, there were grounds for complaint. In London too O’Casey faced objections from the clergy and a possible ban on the play on the grounds of morality, although the extent of the debate about its suitability has remained largely undocumented. Because protests about the play were received after the end of its London run, the objections seem to have been ignored by O’Casey’s critics. Yet it is clear that there were initial fears that the play would face the objection of the censor, particularly on the part of Norman MacDermott, manager of the Royalty Theatre. These foreshadow the objections to the play on morale and religious grounds later in the year in Boston USA.

The play was eventually staged at the Royalty Theatre in London in February 1934 and the critic James Agate dismissed the play as ‘pretentious rubbish’[[14]](#endnote-14), causing life-long antagonism between him and O’Casey. But while the London production did not impress the critics, the printed version of the play inspired American critics George Jean Nathan and Brooks Atkinson and *Within the Gates* was set for a production on Broadway at the National Theatre in September 1934, followed by a tour to Boston. Unlike in London, in New York the critics ‘seemed familiar with the published text’[[15]](#endnote-15)of the play and responded well to O’Casey’s article to the New York Times just before the play opened, where he enthusiastically rejected realism in favour of his more Elizabethan conception of the drama and the New York critics, in contrast to those in London ‘made a big effort to see *Within the Gates* in the light of O’Casey’s intentions.[[16]](#endnote-16)

These problems of understanding the play in London stem can be seen from the very first readers and critics of the play script – the Readers of the Lord Chamberlain’s office, who were essentially the British theatrical censor at the time. In accordance with the requirements of British censorship to obtain a licence for production on the London stage, MacDermott submitted a copy of the play to the Lord Chamberlain’s office in November 1933. The first record of reaction to the play in the Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence, is an anonymous half- page plot summary, which presents the action of the play in three brief paragraphs – one of which contains only one sentence. There is a note of bemused incredulity that anyone could make a play out of such events:

Everyone in the play from the Bishop and his shrewish sister downwards seems inevitably doomed. The London Press is represented as ‘featuring’ little beyond rape, murder, and so on. The Christian orator is as ignorant as the Atheist and nobody seems to be quite well.[[17]](#endnote-17)

The reviewer here is probably referring to the representation of the headlines of the papers being read by the businessmen in the park, featuring the latest scandalous details summarised usually by one word displayed ‘like a placard’ in front of each reader ‘Murder!...Rape…Divorce…Racing Suicide…Execution…Great cricketer talks about God’. [[18]](#endnote-18) The reader here has immediately focused on the perception of these words as ‘real’ headlines, rather than a vignette critique on the nature of scandal and banality published by the British press.

Almost immediately, on the 12th December, The Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence shows that Norman MacDermott sent another letter to Major Gordon, informing him of his return to theatre management and asking for a personal meeting with Gordon: ‘I should like to call and have a general talk with you on the [sic] Censorship sometime if you will allow me’. [[19]](#endnote-19)

 We can speculate that MacDermott’s return to theatre management and his proposed production of *Within the Gates* were linked to the request to discuss the issue of censorship so urgently with Major Gordon. He clearly foresaw some possible objections to *Within the Gates* and was attempting to forestall trouble.

The General Secretary of The Public Morality Council (whose President was the Lord Bishop of London), Howard M. Tyrer, sent a letter to the Lord Chamberlain’s office only after the play had been withdrawn, chiefly, it seems, because they had not sent a reviewer to the production in time. Unfortunately, his enclosure containing ‘impressions of what was said from one of our visitors’ in response to the London production does not survive in the Lord Chamberlain’s papers, though even Tyrer himself cautions against too great a reliance on such evidence as a means of assessing the play: ‘of course it is very difficult to secure a verbatim report in the darkness of the theatre’. Tyrer’s main object, however, is not to report on the play but to obtain censorship of the work before any further public performances. In this way Howard M.Tyrer letter to the Lord Chamberlain’s Department, 24 April 1934 exactly prefigures the response of the Mayor of Boston as censor in October of the same year when the production is due to transfer to the city when Tyrer comments:

…I am writing in the hope that very drastic censorship of this play may be exercised in the event of its being sent on tour in the Provinces, where I am sure very great exception would be taken thereto.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Tyrer’s main anxiety finds expression in a curious confusion in the letter. Alongside the literalism of this response, Tyrer’s comments demonstrate that he is able to respond to drama at the level of mimesis:

The language, in our opinion, is most objectionable and certainly if the scenes depicted were presented in an open space, would call for the intervention of the authorities.[[21]](#endnote-21)

It seems that Tyrer is trying to argue that if any of the events in O’Casey’s play actually took place in a public park (that is, if O’Casey’s play were actually ‘real’), then ‘the authorities’ would have to intervene to stop such real life taking place. Tyrer is anxious that some of the scenes that O’Casey depicts might be based on real life; that a Salvation Army man might caress the knees of a Young Whore in the play while talking to her about saving her soul and that a Bishop might also indicate a sexual interest in her seems for Tyrer part of an affront to contemporary morality rather than a consideration of human sexual drives battling against the strict tenents of faith.

**Intrepreting the responses of the Lord Chamberlain’s readers**

Again, O’Casey’s work is at the mercy of a confused logic of naturalism and fixed notions of good drama on the part of his critics. In London, as well as later in Boston, the play is seen as a threat because it might be real. The implication here is that it is one thing to allow an Irish dramatist to write about ‘real’ Irish events, as O’Casey did in the Dublin Trilogy, but quite another to allow him to write about ‘real’ events in England. However, aside from an acknowledgment letter on 25 April 1934 assuring Tyrer as the General Secretary of The Public Morality Council that ‘this matter is receiving the Lord Chamberlain’s attention’ no further account of the correspondence survives and the Lord Chamberlain’s response remains unknown.[[22]](#endnote-22) This short exchange reveals that the apparent naturalism of *Within the Gates* was already causing consternation and anxiety for moral reasons during its London run, although these ‘moral’ objections never became public knowledge nor moral capital as they did later in Boston.

The initial Reader’s Report on *Within the Gates* 15th November 1933, submitted to the Lord Chamberlain’s office by G.S.Street also underlines the familiar critical reaction to O’Casey’s later work, but interestingly also focuses on immorality as the principal objection to the play. Street’s report opens with the recurrent critical refrain: ‘Mr O’Casey’s work has deteriorated sadly since “Juno and the Paycock”, that attractive blend of tragedy with genuine comedy and irony.’ Street considers *Within the Gates* ‘a pretentious satire, sometimes as pointless as when stupid people argue about God and Christianity and so on – they are their own satirists on both sides’. O’Casey’s ideological debate about religion is thus swept out of the way, and Street summarises the action of the play concluding his report with a list of five ‘details’ of ‘coarseness, or suggestiveness’ which trouble him in the script.[[23]](#endnote-23)

Yet there is a curious tension in Street’s analysis. While he carefully lists five instances of ‘unpermitted words’, he is not dogmatic, indeed is even somewhat blasé about the presentation of the specifics of prostitution. Highlighting what was probably The Young Whore’s speech on page 35 of the script he was reading, where she describes feeling ill during a meeting with a client ‘I had a man with me, an’ when I was half-stripped it [faintness] came on me as he was coming over to paw me’.[[24]](#endnote-24) Here Street marks the language as potentially problematic, but qualifies his concern with the recognition that such openness would only create difficulty in another kind of play. O’Casey’s work is of a different calibre, and so while Street marks the incident for the attention of the blue pencil - ‘p35. the prostitute business’ - he underplays its significance: ‘-but not offensive I think in a serious play’. Nevertheless, it is the ‘frankness’ of the play, from the girl’ s title of ‘The Young Whore’ to ‘the pervading “whore” business’, which troubles him most distinctly. Yet he is not prepared to ban the play’s production on these grounds alone: ‘Personally I think this is an offence rather to “niceness” than to real delicacy, and I see no sufficient reason for condemning the play’. Street is simply pointing to a potential for prudery amongst the audience or critics, but he certainly does not want to ban the play on such grounds. Street does, however, recommend that, because the play ‘is so frank’, a further ‘one or two’ opinions of its suitability for performance should be obtained.[[25]](#endnote-25)

The second reader’s report, dated 7th December 1933, concurs with the five points of objection noted by Street [[26]](#endnote-26) and agrees that ‘subject to the above’ *Within the Gates* should have its licence granted. Yet the Lord Chamberlain was nothing if not cautious; two further opinions on the play are canvassed. One is another full report and the other a swift letter from Violet Bonham Carter, dated 4th December 1933 headed ‘Within the Gates’. Bonham Carter is brief, but to the point:

I do not see how this play (an exceedingly tedious one in my opinion) could possibly be banned. The occasional coarseness of the language can be pruned in five or six strokes of the blue pencil – if this is done the only possible objection to it left is the fact that it “features “a “Young Whore” as its central figure.

The only unusual thing about this - not unusual - procedure is the use of the Biblical name for her calling - & I don’t think we could take exception to the play on these grounds.[[27]](#endnote-27)

Bonham Carter, like Street, felt that the main problem with the play was not its morality of perceived coarseness, but its uneven quality. The London censor in 1933, in contrast to that in Boston in 1934, simply felt that the play was not very good rather than a threat to decency. Both Street, his colleague and Bonham-Carter, unlike SJ T Connolly or the Mayor of Boston, felt able to tolerate its perceived Naturalism and did not see O’Casey’s representations of events in a public London part as problematic. The readers can seen that the location of the park, the figures of the gardener, the Bishop and the prostitute are all ‘real’ enough, since these are recognized roles in society, in a way that the Dreamer, for example, is not. The characters speak in English, some in the faux Cockney dialect that O’Casey adopts and so they are understood by the readers as real people. These readers however, do not see that the plays’ dialogue consists of a blend of statement and symbol, that the songs are closer in style to sung poems and that the chanting closer to a mass than a mass-gathering. They confuse a real place setting with a naturalistic drama, which is not what O’Casey is trying to achieve in this play.

**Astute critical insight from the Lord Chamberlain’s office**

The most striking of these early reader’s reports of *Within the Gates* however, comes from Viscount Buckmaster, whose depth of understanding and perception of the play’s ambition is revelatory and puts his contemporary London critics to shame with its perspicacity. His report is a calm, measured assessment of the play, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of O’Casey’s work notably lacking in the later critical reactions to the production. Buckmaster cautions against just the kind of learned responses to drama that O’Casey himself is trying to prevent, and is more insightful about O’Casey’s aims in this play than many critiques interpreting O’Casey’s later plays ever since:

The difficulty in forming an opinion upon this play lies in the fact that there is a natural tendency to criticise new work by old standards. Conceptions of literature and art have changed. Much modern literature attempts to describe thought instead of narrative, and art tends to produce symbols instead of form. These considerations are very relevant to this play, which is essentially symbolic. It is ridiculous to imagine that real people in the situations of those who are its prominent characters would use the language put into their mouths.[[28]](#endnote-28)

Buckmaster is very clear that *Within the Gates* should be interpreted as part of the developing canon of ‘modern literature’ with its concomitant ‘essentially symbolic’ style. Such an insightful reading of the play makes it seem a pity that this reader’s report would not be seen by O’Casey himself. Buckmaster is consistently at pains to distance the play from naturalism, emphasising the essential unreality of the dialogue and reiterating the point later in his report:

This play…contains passages of great eloquence and beauty, although as I said it would be impossible to expect them from the different characters if they were real people.[[29]](#endnote-29)

Buckmaster could be reflecting on the character of The Dreamer in particular here, whose role is poetic throughout and who often sings his feelings rather express them in dialogue. At the end of the play for example, his creed of continual individual resistance to dogma and oppressive morality is expressed through his song ‘Life that is weak with the terror of life let it die; Let it sink down, let it die and pass from our vision forever!’[[30]](#endnote-30) The Dreamer constantly encourages Jannice the Young Whore to resist her physical decline in the play and to retain her defiant spirit in the face of those who would encourage her to feel shame and self-loathing ‘Sing them silent; dance them still; laugh them into open shame!’[[31]](#endnote-31) But many of the ideological positions presented by O’Casey in this play are represented in a similarly metaphorical or symbolic way in exactly the manner Buckmaster suggests. The implication of his comments is that the Censor cannot take offence at dialogue that was not written to imitate actual speech, as we can see from the above examples.

However, it is the tension between symbolic ideas and their theatrical expression that Buckmaster sees at the core of possible objections to the play. He speculates that the reason for the possible ‘realist’ interpretation lies in its use of dialect:

The fact that so much of the play is in distorted and wholly unreal cockney dialect is, I think, unfortunate, and tends to invest the play with a reality which it does not possess.[[32]](#endnote-32)

Buckmaster is pointing out that even in this deeply experimental play O’Casey is not being quite symbolic enough. O’Casey has not quite let go of the desire for the representation of actual speech, and the implication of Buckmaster’s comment is that he feels that this works against the style of the drama, compromising its symbolic essence. This is intelligent analysis, but what Buckmaster may have missed is that in this play O’Casey was attempting to re-invest ordinary speech with a poetic quality as a means of suggesting the symbolic nature of all speech. O’Casey’s blend of style of naturalism and the poetic are deliberate and evidence of where O’Casey wants to take the development of dialogue as a formal construction in his work.

**Exploring the language of the play**

The voices of the general public, for example, who open Scene II with communal singing, become the voice of the collective unconscious, extolling one another in the best Wordsworthian tradition to put down their books and come outside to celebrate the value of nature above business and profit:

*SOME OF THE CROWD*: Ye who are haggard and giddy with care,

busy counting your profits and losses,

Showing the might of your name unto God in the gay-coloured page of a cheque book;

Storing the best of your life in a drawer of your desk at the office:

*ALL TOGETHER*: Bellow good-bye to the buggerin’ lot ‘n come

out

To bow down the head n’ bend down the knee to the bee, bird, n’ the blossom,

Bann’ring the breast of the earth with a wonderful beauty![[33]](#endnote-33)

This is not real dialogue nor even the real lyrics of a song, but rather the poetic evocation of the simple pleasure of nature. The play is not ‘realistic’ any more than it is simply about the activities of a prostitute in a public park. It is more interesting to think of O’Casey’s theatrical style in *Within the Gates* in the way that Mary C. King has re-defined Synge’s realism in his work:

The term ‘anthropological Naturalism’ applied to the Abbey productions on which Synge advised should perhaps be replaced by ‘ethnographic veracity’. His is not a ‘slice of life’ theatre, but a highly stylized liturgical drama. Experienced actors accustomed to ‘stage Irish’ noted the strangeness of Synge’s language, its artificial rhythms. He coached them rigorously, longing for the formality of musical notation. The delivery he favoured shared something of Yeatsian incantation: language was not reducible to the cerebral.[[34]](#endnote-34)

The language O’Casey constructs for *Within the Gates* may initially be read as naturalistic, but like Synge, it actually has a very different rhythm to real speech. O’Casey shares Synge’s desire to remove language from the sphere of the literal ‘cerebral’ interpretation and create a sense of felt language. This desire to stretch interpretation beyond the prosaic is part of the drive behind O’Casey’s use of the dance in the play (which requires a separate discussion altogether).

**British critics respond to the play**

There was, however, one British critic Ivor Brown in *The Observer,* 11 February 1934 who shared something of Viscount Buckmaster’s understanding of the play:

Mr O’Casey is struggling towards a new mode of expression (or, more accurately, an old and forgotten one), and his play is not for those who want an ordinary ‘show’. …Honourable it certainly is and exciting for those who are fascinated by theatrical technique…Mr O’Casey has gone a long way further than he did in *The Silver Tassie*  towards a theatre of poetic power as well as prosaic fun.’ [[35]](#endnote-35)Buckmaster is again insightful here and draws attention to the structure and design of the play, identifying this as a new kind of O’Casey play. The figures of the ‘Down and Outs’ in the play for example, express a political apathy and hopelessness not in the language of the political tract, as O’Casey’s great friend G B Shaw might have done, but as a lyrical incantation which encourages the audience to both engage with and reject the abject nature of their despair ‘ We challenge life no more, no more, with our dead faith and our dead hope; We carry furl’d the fainting flag of hope and a dead faith’.[[36]](#endnote-36)

Ivor Brown also identifies the ‘poetic power’ of the play, which had similarly struck Buckmaster; and Brown identifies this, along with the ‘experiments with theatrical form ‘, as the key to the enjoyment of the play. Other critics, however, such as PLM in the *Daily Herald*,though sympathetic to the style which he found ‘impressive’, felt that audiences ‘will certainly regard [O’Casey’s] method as pretentious’. James Agate’s famous dismissal of the play is on similar lines. The antagonism between the two men is well known and Agate’s dismissal of the play in his review in the Sunday Times on 11th February 1934 as ‘pretentious rubbish’ is brutal and unthinking.

 Gordon Beckles in his review for the *Daily Express* on 8th February 1934 simply avoids any critical engagement with the production since‘The piece is a cry from the heart. *Is not a play’*;and he challenges O’Casey instead to do his own job for him and ‘to tell the world what this play is *really* about’.[[37]](#endnote-37) Strangely, Beckles does note the Greek echoes of the production. He points out, ‘There is music and dancing, in the manner of Greek drama’, but lamely concludes that O’Casey ‘is trying to say something, desperately, but incoherently’. Agate considers the play’s failure is that it is a kind of propaganda, but ultimately he suggests it is unsuccessful because it is written by an Irishman:

… I try to grapple with symbols, sublimations, subfuscations, and substantiations whereby an author shelves his characters to substitute himself. … The trouble is Mr O’Casey is essentially an Irishman who, while labelling his characters English and dropping the accent, still retains the Irish idiom.[[38]](#endnote-38)

**O’Casey replies to his critics**

O’Casey responds both to Beckles and Agate, but his response to the latter is more interesting. In his public reply to Agate published in The Sunday Times the following week on 18th February 1934, O’Casey agrees with Agate that ‘I make my characters real and unreal… I do so sir first because change is needed in the Theatre and second because life is like that – a blend of fantasy and realism.’[[39]](#endnote-39) Agate sees O’Casey’s artistry as a kind of authorial self-indulgence. O’Casey however, was rather more keen to stress poeticism of real life, naturalism require more creative representations of speech, than the more mannered constructions of conventional drama, however carefully crafted they may be.

 O’Casey worked hard to defend his play, though he did consider the London production ‘paltry’, [[40]](#endnote-40) complaining in a letter to George Jean Nathan on 31st March 1934 that ‘the Producer strained himself to try to make it appear as “human as possible.” He withered up before every suggestion of symbolism that was in the play’.[[41]](#endnote-41) This blend of the mythic, romantic and experimental is what O’Casey had been producing with great subtlety in his plays to date. However, the banner was out and O’Casey was rigorously developing what he felt was a powerful ‘new’ style of drama. *Within the Gates* would itself be part of this process of revivifying theatre for the modern age: ‘That is the main thing to be done if the drama of today is to be in the main stream of the great drama of the past’.[[42]](#endnote-42)

As part of this attempt to forestall the kind of criticism O’Casey had long become used to O’Casey made a point of trying to educate his American critics about the content and style of his new work *before* the play opened. Although not tremendously accommodating with his time, O’Casey did make himself available to the New York critics and in a particularly significant choice of subject matter, spent time ‘Commenting on plays old and new and the lack of new writing’ to Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times*.[[43]](#endnote-43)The day before the production opened, O’Casey published a piece in the *New York Times* entitled ‘From Within the Gates’ (later published in his collection of essays *Blasts and Benedictions* in 1967*)*. Christopher Murray points out that this piece gave ‘critics a stick with which to beat him [O’Casey] when the curtain went up’.[[44]](#endnote-44) Yet this article is also a very powerful *cri de coeur* from O’Casey which works in two ways. First, it is a plea to his critics and to his audience specifically asking for the rejection of naturalism *per se*, and secondly it is a passionate attempt to forbid the critics’ rejection of *Within the Gates* on formal grounds.

 O’Casey opens the article with a carefully judged rhetorical gesture– appealing to the superior sensibilities of his new critical audience by telling them of the interpretative mistakes made by the London critics when faced with the production of the play:

When *Within the Gates* was first performed in London, some of the English critics began to run around in circles, rumble out protests, and do everything but face firmly the form of drama that had been impudently thrust upon them. It was over their heads and they immediately began to try to trample it under their feet. They were perplexed and then they were frightened. Like the Bishop in the play they called for a fuller manifestation of life, but when it came they fled from before it and hurried for refuge in the ranks of the down and out critics.[[45]](#endnote-45)

Immediately, O’Casey has set out his stall. His London critics are dismissed as cowardly, intransigent and reactionary, leaving the American critics to take up the space left for imaginative, open and forward looking analysis, appreciative of his innovative ‘form of drama’. Brooks Atkinson for the New York Times for example, did recognize the change in style in O’Casey’s work and praised the New York production in October 1934;

a glorious drama rose last night with songs and dances, with colors and lights, with magnificent lines that cried out for noble speaking. For Mr O’Casey is right. He knows that the popular theatre has withered, and he also has the gift to redeem it with a drama that sweeps along through the loves and terrors of mankind’.[[46]](#endnote-46)

O’Casey was trying to educate his audience about the kind of drama he is producing in a pre-emptive strike and Atkinson in particular, got the message.

**Preparing for a new style of theatre**

But O’Casey’s article does more than pander to the vanity of the American theatre critic and audience. It becomes O’Casey’s manifesto for theatre. The piece functions as a public explication of all he had tried to do in his work so far, but that critics had not wanted to recognize. O’Casey’s tone is one of frustration, since he believes that he is writing exactly the kind of play that theatre critics *say* they want to see in the theatre, he feels that he is already producing the kind of modern drama that they are looking to see developed – the representation of ‘real life’ on stage. It is the question of what form this representation this takes and how that can be reconciled with O’Casey’s formal development which creates a potential contradiction here. O’Casey’s Brechtian strand of critical engagement perhaps seems at odds with his parallel desire to go beyond naturalism. The play’s success in New York, running for 114 performances with Lilian Gish starring as The Young Whore and Mervyn Douglas as The Dreamer did lift O’Casey’s spirits, but despite his engagement with the critics beforehand, *Within the Gates* was still not the palpable hit that O’Casey had hoped would match the Dublin Trilogy.

It is significant that the reaction to *Within the Gates* was not the same all over America. Though the Broadway reaction was mostly positive ‘respectful, sometimes worshipful’[[47]](#endnote-47), but, after a week’s performance in Philadelphia in January 1935, the projected transfer to Boston was thwarted, when the Mayor Mansfield asked the Schubert Theatre in Boston not to accept the production there on 21st January 1935 as arranged. As Christopher Murray records, *Within the Gates* was banned by the Mayor before it even had a performance in Boston on the grounds of its immorality. This ban on performances was shortly followed by a ban on the sale of the text. Despite a petition from Harvard students and the stalwart support of Brooks Atkinson, the play was censored in Boston, a decision repeated in Toronto, prompting the projected tour of ten other cities to be cancelled.[[48]](#endnote-48) The opportunity for O’Casey’s reputation to be re-figured as a result of the American tour of his latest work was summarily curtailed. Despite O’Casey’s best efforts to lead his critics to a new way to receive and interpret his drama, he had once again been thwarted by his own ‘naturalism’ – the depiction of a ‘real’ prostitute, which, according to the main objector to the work, the academic Terence L. Connolly, ‘until his [O’Casey’s] time had never been portrayed on the stage in his native country’[[49]](#endnote-49). Again, O’Casey is caught between two versions of the real – criticised by theatre critics in London for not being ‘real’ enough and for being too ‘real’ by academic religious critics in Boston.

O’Casey had tried to allude to this key area of debate without using the loaded term ‘Naturalism’ and substituting his phrase ‘a fuller manifestation of life’ instead. O’Casey points out that what he and his critics are actually in dispute about is not the play *per se* but something rather more intangible; the very nature of the real and its representation on stage. As O’Casey remarks:

Realism, the portrayal of real life on the stage, has failed, for the simple reason that real life cannot be shown on the stage; Realism has always failed to be real.[[50]](#endnote-50)

**Presenting staged reality**

In *Within the Gates* O’Casey thought that he had found the answer to a more authentic presentation of the essence of life on stage. He felt that this blend of music, dance and the interrogation of ideologies was his ‘form’. From the colors used to indicate the passing of the seasons in each of the four acts, to the stylised dancing and incantatory singing, O’Casey sought to re-frame the representation of ideology and social and political principles on stage. Whereas Shaw concentrated his discussion of ideologies in language, O’Casey sought to remove the concerted focus on the linguistic, perhaps in an effort to challenge the sense of dogmatism and often undramatic nature of Shaw’s work. For this play in particular it is clear that it requires a grand realisation on stage to gain the full effect of its power. A gamut of members of society are presented here, from the Bishop to the Down and Outs, the Salvation Army, the Plachard Evangelists -the Man in the Bowler Hat and The Man in the Tribly Hat, the Nursemaid and The Gardener, all walks of life and stations in life have their place in the park and their voices are given a right to be heard in O’Casey’s play, and it was the New York production in October 1934, that was able to give the play its resonance Atkinson noted:

Being the theatre of spiritual magnificence, it [WTG] needs all the glories of stage art and it has them in this superb production.[[51]](#endnote-51)

That the New York critics were prepared for the anti-naturalism of *Within the Gates* may well be in part due to O’Casey’s advance preparation, but also its own indigenous vaudeville and musical traditions. One critic in particular, Edith J. R. Isaacs reviewing the play for *Theatre Arts Monthly*, directly refers to O’Casey’s lesson to the critics, while also acknowledging the specific power of the New York production:

As it is produced at the New York theatre, with the lavish talents of an unusually fine company devoted to its performance, it comes out as a moving drama, with ‘simple austerity, swinging merriment, beauty in music of word and color of scene, and (almost, but not quite) with a tragedy too deep for tears’. Those are the qualities that Mr O’Casey desires to bring back to the theatre, according to his own words in an interview he gave to the New York Times before the play opened.[[52]](#endnote-52)

Obviously, the strategy had worked. These American critics read and responded to O’Casey’s instructions concerning the interpretation of his new work. Would that the London critics had been so amenable – but in fairness, they had not seen a production which could do justice to the power of O’Casey’s most confidently symbolic work. O’Casey’s friend and most stalwart supporter, George Jean Nathan, writing in the *American Spectator* remarked of *Within the Gates:*

As the play is a test the resources of the theatre, so it is too, a test of the resources of criticism.[[53]](#endnote-53)

Nathan recognized that this new kind of drama would need a new kind of criticism – just as O’Casey himself had hoped in his earlier comments to James Agate. It is this lack of a new kind of criticism however, absent at the time from the reception of O’Casey’s work in London in particular, from which interpretations of O’Casey’s later plays still appear to suffer.

**Conclusion**

What was highly significant about his article published ahead of the New York production of *Within the Gates* is that O’Casey ends the piece with a passionate statement about his vision of theatre. What he proposes in the piece is a theatre closer to postmodern conceptions of theatre, familiar to contemporary British theatre companies such as *Punchdrunk,* *Knee High,* or companies in Ireland such as *Anu.* O’Casey wants a dynamic between audience, actors and creator that conjures an organic experience of theatre and requires interdependence, in order to create meaning:

The new form in drama will take qualities found in classical, romantic and Expressionist plays, will blend them together, breathe the breath of life into the new form and create a new drama. It will give rise to a new form of acting, a new form of production, a new form of response in the audience; author, actors and audience will be in communion with each other - three in one and one in three. If a play is what it ought to be it must be a religious function, whether it be played before a community of thousands or a community of ten.[[54]](#endnote-54)

This requirement of the critical engagement of the audience has been a consistent feature of O’Casey’s previous plays. It may even be that O’Casey imagined future theatre developing along the lines of Forum theatre – with the actors presenting a play, the audience being invited to stop the action and explain how they would have done things differently, and the author then working with the suggestions of the actors and audience to revise the play before the next performance. The Brechtian sense of theatre leading to action and change and of the audience remaining active, thinking and dynamic throughout the production is common to O’Casey’s conception of theatre as he portrays it in his article. For O’Casey, there must always be a spiritual dimension to the theatre which he characterises as ‘a religious function’. He wants theatre to inspire a sense of awe as well as action and to work as a unifying force for the audience, who may then, in a traditional communist sense, go on to see their interests as common. This group aesthetic experience should not only work to unite the audience but should, perhaps paradoxically, also encourage individual thought. In this way theatre would invite an emotional connection for the audience which would be close to the sense of spiritual engagement created through attendance at a religious service, but would not require the acceptance of dogma or denomination to achieve its sense of personal fulfilment.

In the final irony, W.B.Yeats and O’Casey were in some sense re-united over *Within the Gates*. Yeats had supported O’Casey’s in the furore over the typesetting of his short story ‘I Wanna Woman’ and this may have helped the process of reconciliation; and after separate cases of illness the men began corresponding with one another again. In a surprising about-turn, Yeats, who had been so unhappy with the Expressionistic second act of *The Silver Tassie*, asked O’Casey for his permission to produce *Within the Gates* at the Abbey in 1935. O’Casey recalls their meeting in his autobiography and gives his account of Yeats’s comments on the play:

O’Casey, he said, bending towards him, you have succeeded in your last play *Within the Gates.* The co-ordination of mood, dialogue and technique there is a success, where, I think, it is a failure in your *The Silver Tassie….*I believe it to be a most successful achievement in your newer manner.[[55]](#endnote-55)

O’Casey was flattered at the praise but nevertheless refused Yeats a production of the play at the Abbey, not out of pique, but because he had learned the lessons of the London and New York stagings in 1934 well. He realised that the Abbey stage and their resources were too small to offer the play a suitable production. O’Casey offered Yeats *The Silver Tassie* instead and eventually Yeats suggested both plays, so that he might have *Within the Gates*. However, Brinsley MacNamara vetoed *Within the Gates*, so another controversial staging of *The Silver Tassie* was added to the O’Casey canon, closing after only a week to be replaced, ironically enough, by Shaw’s *John Bull’s Other Island.*[[56]](#endnote-56)

Although the contemporary UK and USA theatre critics did not in large part recognise *Within the Gates* (1934) as a play which demonstrated O’Casey’s newly evolving form of dramaturgy, the play did have two particular effects on his oeuvre. First, it overtly established O’Casey as a different kind of playwright and, secondly, it established his work as needing a different kind of criticism. Far from having reached ‘the bottom of a critical cul-de-sac’ as a result of *Within the Gates,[[57]](#endnote-57)* O’Casey was finally in the liberated position of being able to write as he wanted to and to see that his dramatic vision could take shape successfully on stage. He was now ready to continue his theatrical developments and his future plays such as *Oak Leaves and Lavender,* *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy* and *The Bishop’s Bonfire* see him moving forward boldly into the avant garde.

Endnotes

1. James Moran, *The Theatre of Seán O’Casey* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2013), 174. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Robert Hogan, *The Experiments of Sean O’Casey* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1960), 77. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Hogan, *The Experiments of Sean O’Casey*, 205. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Sean O’Casey, *The Letters of Sean O’Casey Vol 1 1910-41.* Ed. David Krause (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 460. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. O’Casey, *Letters Vol 1*, 482. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Christopher Murray, *Sean O’Casey A Biography* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2004), 221. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Brooks Atkinson, *Sean O’Casey: From Times Past*. Ed. Robert G. Lowery (New York: Barnes and Noble: 1982), 65. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Moran, *The Theatre of Seán O’Casey,* 23. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Katharine Worth, *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett* (London: Macmillan,1986), 221. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. This link to O’Neill’s work may indeed be part of the enthusiastic reception of O’Casey’s work in America, indicating a recognition of their experimental connections. Certainly, the admiration was mutual, for when O’Neill read *Within the Gates* he wrote a letter on 15th December 1933 to congratulate O’Casey on his achievement: ‘It [*Within the Gates]* is a splendid piece of work…I was especially moved –and greenly envious, I confess!- by its rare and sensitive poetical beauty. I wish to God I could write like that!’, see O’Casey, *Letters Vol 1*, 482. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Worth, *The Irish Drama of Europe,* 221. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Kenneth Tynan, *Tynan on Theatre* (London: Penguin, 1964), 74. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Sean O’Casey, *Blasts and Benedictions* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 117. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Murray, *Sean O’Casey,* 226. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Murray, *Sean O’Casey*, 237. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Murray, *Sean O’Casey,* 237. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284, Department of Manuscripts, The British Library, London. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Sean O’Casey, *Within the Gates: A Play in Four Acts* (London: Macmillan, 1934), 90. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. The version of the script that the Lord Chamberlain received does not survive in the Lord Chamberlain’s archive. However, as the play was published by Macmillan before its first production, it is likely that the office was sent the 1933 printed edition of the play. Certainly the page numbers of the potentially objectionable passages seem to tally with recognisable incidents on the pages of the published script. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. The second note is filed in red pen on the reverse of the original letter, indicating that the second Reader had read the First Readers’ report before compiling his own and was potentially influenced by the initial interpretation and comments on the play. John Johnston’s account of his work as Assistant Comptroller in the Lord Chamberlain’s Office in *The Lord Chamberlain’s Blue Pencil* , suggests that he took account of the views of previous readers : ‘I always read the reader’s synopsis as well as those plays scripts which the readers asked me to examine…In those text where attention had been drawn to certain language or ‘business’ I would mark the passages ‘leave’, ‘cut’ or ‘alter’ as appropriate – and the Lord Chamberlain would concur or otherwise’, see Johnston, John, *The Lord Chamberlain’s Blue Pencil* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 20. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284 [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. O’Casey, *Within the Gates,* 167. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. O’Casey, *Within the Gates,* 165. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284 [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. O’Casey, *Within the Gates*, 48-49. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Mary C. King, ‘J.M.Synge, ‘national’ drama and the post-Protestant imagination’ in

Shaun Richards Ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 89. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Lord Chamberlain’s Correspondence 1933/1284 [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. O’Casey, *Within the Gates,* 196. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Gordon Beckles, “Review of *Within the Gates.”* *Daily Express.* February 8, 1934. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. James Agate, *“*Review of *Within the Gates.” Sunday Times.* February 11, 1934. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Sean O’Casey, *“*Reply to Mr James Agate*.” Sunday Times.* February 18, 1934. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Sean O’Casey, *Autobiographies 2*. (London: Macmillan, 1980), 359. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. O’Casey, *Autobiographies 2,* 510. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. O’Casey, *Blasts and Benedictions*, 116. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Murray, *Sean O’Casey,*236. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Murray, *Sean O’Casey,* 236. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. O’Casey, *Blasts and Benedictions,* 111. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Atkinson, *From Times Past*, 60. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Murray, *Sean O’Casey*, 237. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Murray, *Sean O’Casey* 238-39, notes that two Jesuits who saw the last performance of *Within the Gates* in New York made a number of objections, and suggested alterations, including changing the name of ‘The Young Whore’. These changes were accepted and it seemed that the tour would go ahead until Mayor Mansfield of Boston, possibly under pressure from Boston academics including Terence L. Connolly, requested that the play should not transfer to the city. Boston still had an official censor and Connolly spoke against *Within the Gates* at the hearing where the play was eventually banned by a vote of two to one. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Murray, *Sean O’Casey*, 239. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. O’Casey, *Blasts and Benedictions*, 116. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Atkinson, *From Times Past*, 61. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Isaacs, Edith J. R. ‘Review of Within the Gates’ in *Theatre Arts Monthly* December 1934

reprinted in *File on O’Casey*. Compiled by Nesta Jones, (London: Methuen, 1986), 44. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Murray, *Sean O’Casey*, 237. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. O’Casey, *Blasts and Benedictions,* 116. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. O’Casey, *Autobiographies 2*, 281. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Murray, *Sean O’Casey*, 241-243. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Murray, *Sean O’Casey,* 245.

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 ‘PLM’. “Review of *Within the Gates.”* Daily Herald.February 8, 1934. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)