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'Our own good Editor': Brian O'Nolan, Niall Montgomery and the Drafts of the Cruiskeen Lawn

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Although the Niall Montgomery papers housed at the National Library of Ireland shows that Montgomery contributed to the Cruiskeen Lawn, researchers without access to Dublin have been unable to identify the specific columns he was involved with. To remedy this lack, our team located the drafts in the National Library within The Irish Times database and present here a list of the columns arising from Montgomery's drafts. The list and our analysis show that we cannot divide the Cruiskeen Lawn neatly into the columns written by Brian O'Nolan and those written by Montgomery. Rather, the majority of the drafts Montgomery produced were edited by O'Nolan, with further editorial work possibly conducted by The Irish Times. As a result, by mapping Montgomery's involvement with the Cruiskeen Lawn we recognise the columns as palimpsests of authorial involvement and records of co-authorship. We also gain new insights into O'Nolan as an editor who had very firm attitudes to the tone and presentation of the Myles na gCopaleen material.

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Despite the predominately negative representation of the *Cruiskeen Lawn* after Brian O’Nolan’s death, in 1973 J.C.C Mays called *The Best of Myles* O’Nolan’s ‘third major piece of writing’, even if it was ‘never conceived of by him as a book’.¹ It was, however, not until the late 1990s that critics began to give the *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns sustained attention. Stephen Young afforded it the respect of serious consideration in ‘Fact/Fiction: *Cruiskeen Lawn* 1945–66’, creating the critical grounds for Joseph Brooker to suggest in 2005 that ‘rather than viewing the column as a hindrance to O’Nolan’s creativity, we should regard it as an outlet in which his particular talent thrived’.² Building on this new scholarly appreciation for the columns, not only has research taken the decades of writing published under the Myles na gCopaleen persona more seriously as a body of literary work, but academics have used it to provide greater insight into O’Nolan’s attitudes to a wide range of themes, from genre fiction to politics, language to sports.³ Or rather, to provide greater insights into the shifting, inconsistent positions held by the character–author Myles, as with greater interest in the columns has come greater attention to Myles’ collaborative construction.⁴

That the *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns were not solely authored by Brian O’Nolan has long been known: in 1989 Anthony Cronin told readers that Niall Montgomery and Niall Sheridan ‘often wrote’ the *Cruiskeen Lawn* column,⁵ and in 2002 Keith Donohue described Sheridan and Montgomery as ‘fill-in collaborators for *Cruiskeen Lawn*’.⁶

¹ J.C.C. Mays, ‘Brian O’Nolan: Literalist of the Imagination’, in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O’Nolan*, ed. Timothy O’Keeffe (Martin, Brian and O’Keeffe, 1973), 95. For concerns about the column see Hugh Kenner, *A Colder Eye: The Modern Writers* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 255; Niall Sheridan, ‘Brian, Flann and Myles’ in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O’Nolan*, ed. Timothy O’Keeffe (Martin, Brian and O’Keeffe, 1973), 52.

² Stephen Young, ‘Fact/Fiction: *Cruiskeen Lawn* 1945–66’, in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O’Brien*, ed. Anne Clune and Tess Hurson (Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University of Belfast, 1997); Joseph Brooker, *Flann O’Brien* (Northcote House, 2005), 88.

³ For example: Jack Fennell, ‘Myles in Space: Science Fiction and *Cruiskeen Lawn*’, *The Parish Review: Journal of Flann O’Brien Studies* 3, no. 1 (2014): 64–77, <https://doi.org/10.16995/pr.3128>; Catherine Flynn, “the half-said thing”: *Cruiskeen Lawn*, Japan and the Second World War’, in *Flann O’Brien: Problems with Authority*, ed. by Ruben Borg, Paul Fagan and John McCourt (Cork University Press, 2017); Alana Gillespie, ‘The Soft Misogyny of Good Intentions: The Mother and Child Scheme, *Cruiskeen Lawn* and *The Hard Life*’ in *Flann O’Brien: Gallows Humour*, ed. Ruben Borg and Paul Fagan (Cork University Press, 2020); Tobias Harris, ‘The Catastrophe of Cliché: Karl Kraus, *Cruiskeen Lawn*, and the Culture Industry’, *The Parish Review: Journal of Flann O’Brien Studies* 3, no. 2 (2016): 7–20, <https://doi.org/10.16995/pr.3188>; Richard T. Murphy, ‘Spare-Time Physical Activities: *Cruiskeen Lawn*, the GAA and the Irish modernist body’, in *Flann O’Brien: Gallows Humour*, ed. Ruben Borg and Paul Fagan (Cork University Press, 2020); Germán Asensio Peral, ‘Myles na gCopaleen’s “*Cruiskeen Lawn*” and the Politics of Revival’, *Nordic Irish Studies* 15, no. 2 (2016): 133–48, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44363848>.

⁴ Maebh Long, ‘Plagiarism and the Politics of Friendship: Brian O’Nolan, Niall Sheridan and Niall Montgomery’, in *Flann O’Brien: Acting Out*, ed. Paul Fagan and Ruben Borg (Cork University Press, 2022).

⁵ Anthony Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O’Brien* (Fromm International Publishing, 1998 [1989]), 182.

⁶ Keith Donohue, *The Irish Anatomist: A Study of Flann O’Brien* (Maunsel & Co, 2002), 8.

O'Nolan's own letters, with the bulk available at Boston College and Southern Illinois University, Carbondale prior to their publication in *The Collected Letters of Flann O'Brien*, mentioned other contributors to the column: a 'considerable amount of of [sic] material appearing in the Irish Times under Cruiskeen Lawn', he explained in 1953, 'is not written by me at all. I have two substitutes or "stand-ins"'.⁷ It was not, however, until Carol Taaffe's work on the Montgomery papers in the National Library that we began to acquire clarity on the degree of the co-authorship the columns represent. Uncovering evidence that Montgomery's 'contribution to *The Irish Times* column was much greater than has been acknowledged',⁸ Taaffe reported that she had sighted drafts of *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns by Montgomery. Taaffe's work on the Montgomery papers was followed by Christine O'Neill's *Niall Montgomery: Dublinman*, which provided further valuable commentary on the extent and content of Montgomery's contribution.

Although Taaffe and O'Neill presented proof that Montgomery had contributed to the *Cruiskeen Lawn*, scholars unable to access the papers at the National Library of Ireland have not been able to identify precisely which columns involved Montgomery's contributions. To remedy this issue, our team compared Montgomery's drafts housed in the National Library with the columns published in *The Irish Times* and provide below a list of Montgomery's drafts with the corresponding dates of the published columns. The list and our analysis show that rather than a neat distinction between the columns written by Montgomery and those written by O'Nolan, the majority of Montgomery's drafts were edited by O'Nolan, thereby not only revealing the columns to be palimpsests of authorial involvement, but writings that shed new light on O'Nolan as an editor.

The Drafts

First, there is the question of how many drafts the Montgomery papers contain. Taaffe counts 159 *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns in Montgomery's files dating from January 1947 to May 1958, while O'Neill provides dates of 1947 to 1962.⁹ Like O'Neill, we found that Montgomery's drafts date from the 3rd of January 1947 to the 6th of February 1962. Taaffe might have discounted some of the shorter columns or combined separate, single-page sketches into large composite drafts, but unlike her 159 drafts we counted 200 drafts in total, of which 139 were locatable within *The Irish Times* and 61 were not.¹⁰ These drafts,

⁷ Brian O'Nolan to Seán MacEntee, 13 March 1953, in *The Collected Letters of Flann O'Brien*, ed. Maebh Long (Dalkey Archive Press, 2018), 173.

⁸ Carol Taaffe, *Ireland Through the Looking Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles ng gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* (Cork University Press, 2008), 15.

⁹ Christine O'Neill, *Niall Montgomery: Dublinman* (Ashfield Press, 2015), 93.

¹⁰ Some continuous pieces were easily recognisable as single drafts, but we also counted single pages, either of original material or of quotations, as individual pieces when they contained the complete thought on one page, and/or contained a date, be it stamped or written by hand.

which are a mixture of full columns (usually 3 to 4 pages), shorter contributions (which O'Nolan turned into short columns, turned into sections within columns, or used as the building blocks of longer pieces), and quotations of secondary sources, were used by O'Nolan in *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns dating 8 January 1947 to 12 January 1963.

There are different ways to assess the extent of Montgomery's contribution. Taaffe was of the opinion that 'Nearly all' of the Montgomery drafts she sighted were published, and claimed that as the '*Cruiskeen Lawn* was appearing only three times a week after 1946, this comprised nearly a third of what eventually appeared in the *Irish Times*'.¹¹ According to Catherine Ahearn, there are 4,198 published columns, which means that we can prove that Montgomery contributed to 3.31% of them.¹² This is far below Taaffe's estimation of a third of all material. However, when we look at the columns year by year, we see that Montgomery's contributions in the 1940s were significant: for one year Montgomery's involvement matches Taaffe's estimate, as nearly a third of the published columns in 1948 involved his writing (see **Table 1**). In that year Montgomery wrote an average of 4 articles per month, with 6 appearing in June and December.

It is also very possible that the drafts in the National Library do not represent Montgomery's complete contribution. O'Neill reports that Montgomery's family thought he had destroyed his *Cruiskeen Lawn* material, which might indicate that the material at the National Library is just a portion of the drafts he wrote.¹³ A letter from Denis Devlin to Montgomery in 1946 implies that he was writing columns earlier than the National Library drafts indicate: 'Are you still writing? or is you [your] free time still taken up with M. n. gC.?'¹⁴ This is potentially corroborated by O'Nolan's letters: in July 1956 O'Nolan wrote to Montgomery from hospital with 'serious kidney trouble', saying that he 'would be glad of any *Cruiskeen* material'.¹⁵ *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns continued to appear while O'Nolan was in hospital and across the start of August but the only drafts in the Montgomery papers for 1956 are dated 18 March, 29 September and 13 October. Perhaps Montgomery was simply busy at work and could not oblige, and O'Nolan found either the energy to write, old material somewhere else, or another stand in. Or Montgomery did write columns for his friend but failed to keep copies or destroyed them later. Yet, even if the Montgomery papers represent the total of his

¹¹ Taaffe, *Ireland Through the Looking Glass* 127.

¹² Catherine Ahearn, "'Where you bin, bud?' Myles na gCopaleen's Disappearing Act', in *Flann O'Brien: Gallows Humour*, Ruben Borg and Paul Fagan (Cork University Press, 2020), 99.

¹³ O'Neill, *Niall Montgomery*, 93.

¹⁴ Denis Devlin to Niall Montgomery, 24 March 1946, National Library of Ireland, Niall Montgomery Papers, 50,118.26.23. Henceforth NMP.

¹⁵ Brian O'Nolan to Niall Montgomery, 28 July 1956, *Letters* 207.

Year	M's columns published	Total CL Columns ¹⁶	Percentage of CL with M involvement
1947	27	127	21%
1948	43	143	30%
1949	34	141	24%
1950	13	131	10%
..			
1953	10	162	6%
1954	4	243	2%
1955	2	186	1%
...			
1957	1	237	
1958	2	159	1%
...			
1963	1	52	2%

Table 1: The annual percentage contribution Montgomery made to the *Cruiskeen Lawn*. [Note: on the occasions where O'Nolan assembled 2 drafts into a single column, we have counted the number of the drafts rather than the single column. We have also tallied by column date rather than draft date.]

drafts, Montgomery contributed for a substantial portion of the *Cruiskeen Lawn* run. The first article was published on 12 December 1940 and the final appeared on the day of O'Nolan's death, 1 April 1966: Montgomery's drafts span 1947 to 1962. Even if his percentage contribution was small, the longevity of his involvement makes him an important part of the column's history and of the Myles identity.

From Draft to Published Column

We began this project with the expectation of providing a neat, mainly uncomplicated list of the published columns that had been written by Montgomery. Previous accounts had suggested that not only were Montgomery's contributions published with 'very minor changes',¹⁷ but that there were stylistic and content differences that rendered the O'Nolan columns and the Montgomery columns quite distinct. O'Neill cites John V. Kelleher, who said that he could 'usually guess or spot that a column was by Niall, his style, his wit, his interests were so very different from Ua Nualláin's. Ua Nualláin's writing was rather loose; Niall's was closely-woven. Ua Nualláin's jokes were usually

¹⁶ Data sourced from Ahern, 'Where you bin, bud?', 100.

¹⁷ Taaffe, *Ireland Through the Looking Glass*, 164.

obvious; Niall's were not infrequently a bit abstruse'.¹⁸ We agree that Montgomery had certain areas of interest, which Taaffe notes as including 'more critical broadsides on art and literature', although we cannot concur that the drafts provide sufficient evidence to substantiate her claim that Montgomery wrote the majority of columns on Joyce.¹⁹ O'Neill shares Taaffe's sense of the importance of Montgomery's contribution and describes the drafts as focusing on 'politics and the government; partition; town planning and traffic; CIE, the ESB, and the theatre'.²⁰ However, we argue that concentrating on the themes of the drafts in isolation erroneously implies that Montgomery was the single author of the columns he drafted. Instead, matching the drafts with the published columns reveals that the majority of Montgomery's contributions produced co-authored rather than single-authored columns. This realisation also means that the drafts offer us a new picture of O'Nolan, as an editor as well as an author. This is a side of O'Nolan that we have limited access to in the case of his early period, as we have only relatively late typescripts of *At Swim-Two-Birds* and no early drafts of *The Third Policeman*, or that appeared to be absent in his later years, as the records regarding his later novels show limited, often hasty or careless, revisions.

To the question of authorship, then, while agreeing that Montgomery was interested in particular topics and had a slightly different style, if the drafts and published columns are representative, we contend that Kelleher's certainty about his ability to spot the difference between Montgomery and O'Nolan, or a firm insistence that certain topics signal a particular author, depends on the faulty assumption that each column was written by one author. Only 11% of the columns based on Montgomery's drafts were published without changes. All other columns were a varying blend of O'Nolan's and Montgomery's work. Take, for example, this rather nice example of a collaborative building up of a pun. In a draft in 1947 Montgomery turned George Eliot's *The Mill in the Floss* into 'the mill in the flaws by T.S. Eliot', which O'Nolan changed into 'the mule in the flaws by T.S. Eliot'.²¹ Similarly, a draft by Montgomery from 31 May 1948 spoke about a play by Tierney, presumably Michael Tierney, Professor of Greek at UCD who became President of UCD in 1947. Montgomery notes that Greek tragedies are 'hearse-say', a joke that O'Nolan rejects in that form, but amends into a new closing line: Myles, he writes, did not get to see the play because he was 'too busy working on that new thing of mine "The Wooden Hearse of Tory"!'.²² At other times O'Nolan used a basic

¹⁸ John V. Kelleher to Christopher Cahill, 3 February 1966, as cited by O'Neill, *Niall Montgomery*, 93–94.

¹⁹ Taaffe, *Ireland Through the Looking Glass*, 164, 15.

²⁰ O'Neill, *Niall Montgomery*, 93.

²¹ Myles na gCopaleen, *Cruiskeen Lawn*, *The Irish Times*, 4 July 1947, p. 4. Henceforth CL.

²² CL 2 June 1948, p. 4.

idea by Montgomery, or just some of the quotations that Montgomery used, to write a whole new piece. The attempt to separate the *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns into those by O'Nolan and those by Montgomery misunderstands the layers of combined work that the published versions reveal.

Of the 139 columns published, only 15 could be described as having no changes. The other 124 columns all have some amendments, from minor changes of names and places to the addition of new opening and concluding paragraphs to the complete rewriting of a concept. In **Table 3**, the detailed table that concludes this article, we have tried to signal change, without committing to descriptions either so detailed that they repeat the columns or provide information useful only to someone who has the drafts to hand. As such, we have divided the drafts into no changes, minor changes and major changes, adding notes where we considered them useful. Montgomery was clearly alert to the ways his drafts were amended: on most of the drafts he marked any cuts with red pencil lines and 'rewrite', but these annotations were so common that we have not repeated them below. An example of annotation we have preserved are the marks '100C' which he wrote on 5 drafts, including one we could not locate in *The Irish Times*, in 1950. 100C could mean 100 copies, as on the draft written 26 February 1950, which was published in *The Irish Times* on 1 March 1950, there is a new stamp with the date 23 September 1966 and, by hand, 'Copy to Douglas Gageby'. Gageby was then editor of *The Irish Times*, and Montgomery was potentially corresponding with him about the 'Best of Myles' column they were running following O'Nolan's death. We have noted unusual instances such as these, but we have not provided an exhaustive account of cuts and Montgomery's notations. Instead, we've approached the presentation of information on the basis that scholars have access to the digital *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns and are interested in the origin of the published work, rather than the precise fate of specific sections of the drafts. At times our annotations simply read 'minor changes' or 'major changes', but for others we provide more information. For the column published on 30 July 1947, for example, which was drafted by Montgomery on 26 July, we have noted the following: 'Changes to the first two paragraphs, with Montgomery's material from 'I am terribly sorry'. Minor changes, new ending'. In this instance, then, rather than simply designate major changes, we show that O'Nolan made substantial changes to the opening and closing but few changes to the main body of the text. As the annotations to **Table 3** show, this reflects a tendency across the drafts – O'Nolan made the largest number of changes to the start and finish, often writing completely new material for these sections.

There is no definite way to distinguish between amendments made by O'Nolan and amendments made by the editor. Jack White reports that 'Copy was scrutinized for

libel, scurrility and double-meanings: columns that offended were chopped ruthlessly or thrown into the wastepaper basket'.²³ In a column published in 1948, for example, Myles writes that 'You have professors above there in Merrion Square that can split cube roots and square the atom and all'.²⁴ But the draft had a longer sentence: '... square the atom and all and down the road in the Ann Doyle you have a show that P.T. Barnum in his hey-day never had annting like it for sheer burlesqueue'.²⁵ Montgomery had written his draft in April 1947 but it was not used by O'Nolan until November 1948. Perhaps O'Nolan felt an attack on the government was unnecessary at that time, perhaps an editor found it inappropriate. There are similar instances where the source of the edits is unclear. We are, however, of the opinion that the majority of the changes were made by O'Nolan, as the extent and nature of the amendments usually exceed what can reasonably be assumed to be the work of a copy editor. Many of the changes also reflect the interests we see in O'Nolan's work across his different genres. O'Nolan had a stronger engagement with the visual and spatial impacts of the text than Montgomery, frequently adding typographic play such as changing a simple coordinating conjunction like 'but' to read 'BUT... (and it's a big "but" as you can see)',²⁶ or the simple 'to be' into '2 B',²⁷ or adding an image, as he did to the column on 1 December 1948. Similarly, in 1950 his reworking of Montgomery's column included putting the opening paragraph at the end, and to one in 1948 that suggested readers vote for Myles he added slogans in bold caps set off from the body of the text: **'A VOTE FOR MYLES IS A VOTE FOR THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD!'**²⁸

A willingness to engage with visual play was matched with a greater tendency to add digressions and asides. O'Nolan inserted Welsh into a draft dealing with the new government: 'isn't it grand to think that there is *somebody* in the country who is willing to listen to the publicans' wails? ---- A ydych yn adnabod rhywun yma o'r enw Oliver Flanagan? [...] Sorry! And don't blame the printer – that's genuine Welsh. It was that word "wails" above that put me off'.²⁹ In June 1947 Montgomery's draft quotes an article about bacon factories, to which O'Nolan adds a speculation on whether the phrase 'bacon factory' is as bad 'as "steam-roller" and "vacuum-cleaner": trying to

²³ Jack White, 'Myles, Flann and Brian' in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan*, ed. by Timothy O'Keeffe (Martin, Brian and O'Keeffe, 1973), 70.

²⁴ CL 22 November 1948, p. 4.

²⁵ 27 April 1947, NMP 50,118.5.1.

²⁶ CL 28 May 1947, p. 4.

²⁷ CL 3 May 1948, p. 4.

²⁸ CL 24 May 1950 p. 4; 4 February 1948, p. 3.

²⁹ CL 27 February 1948, p. 4. The Welsh translates as 'Do you know someone here by the name of Oliver Flanagan?' All the material quoted above was an addition by O'Nolan.

roll steam is a futile business and who ever heard of a dirty vacuum?'³⁰ O'Nolan also had a sharp eye for potential. He changed, for example, Montgomery's 'I have a wife and six children' to 'I have a waif and sick children (sic!)', thereby not only enlivening the phrase by transcribing its pronunciation, but also building in a sense of pervasive illness and poverty into a simple description of fact.³¹ At other times O'Nolan cut rather than added, and often for reasons that are unclear. Montgomery provided many puns which were quite in keeping with the *Cruiskeen Lawn* style, though not all of them were used by O'Nolan. He rejected Montgomery's opening gambit in the draft of 25 October 1947 – 'Age has brought me Fays to Fays' – despite keeping the majority of the rest of the column.

The differences, then, that Kelleher notes are less the stark difference between O'Nolan and Montgomery, but arguably the difference between pieces written solely by O'Nolan and those co-authored by O'Nolan and Montgomery, with O'Nolan's skills in copyediting, reshaping, and seeing the potential for digressions or wordplay readily apparent. O'Nolan's canon is one of adaptation and assemblage, but the reworking evident in his writing can also be understood as an editorial process. Allowing for the final amendments by subeditors at *The Irish Times*, we find that even during periods of stress and ill-health, O'Nolan shows himself to be considered, deliberate, and often heavy-handed in his reworking of these drafts. O'Nolan frequently represented himself as engaged in the business of literature and focused on the income he could generate from his writings.³² But if that is all he cared about, then there was no need to make amendments to Montgomery's drafts – they ranged from the perfectly acceptable to quite excellent and would have stood very comfortably within the *Cruiskeen Lawn* canon. Yet change them he did. The amendments he made, from the minor to the major, might in another author seem unremarkable, as most authors prefer their own mode of expression. But given the limited access we have to O'Nolan's drafting process, given how often he insisted on his interest in writing being financial rather than aesthetic, and given what we know of the pressures resulting from work commitments, and later ill-health and poor finances, his regular decision to edit the drafts' commentary, word-play, tone, and form is a significant example of investment in his own style rather than in simply earning a pay cheque. Which brings us to the unpublished drafts in Montgomery's files.

³⁰ CL 16 June 1947, p. 4.

³¹ CL 12 March 1948, p. 4.

³² See, for example, his letter to William Saroyan 25 September 1939, *Letters* 59–60; to Pat Duggan 4 March 1940, *Letters* 70–71; to Timothy O'Keeffe 17 May 1959, *Letters* 229–230.

The Unpublished Drafts

We primarily matched drafts in the Montgomery papers with the published columns through keyword searches. Some we found after a single word or phrase – the 9 March 1949 column was located with the first search term, in this instance 'silver-haired' – while some required multiple searches before we located the edited match. The column published 18 August 1954, for example, was not located until the 23rd keyword, in this case the phrase 'single malt'. Some, despite being checked by all three researchers on the team, we could not identify. For one of the drafts from 3 January 1947, for example, we tried 30 words and phrases to no avail: silver tassel; spheroid; gaskets; micky scott; frivolity; spoliation; repugnance; buccal; sparrow-hawk; inexhaustible; light-houses; scalded; manx coastal; livery; swollen; exovation; spoilation; frailty; admonitions; repugnance; inexhaustible; debasement; tortured grin; incapacity; fish-eyes; bloody sunshine; frivolous propositions; lengthen my mouth; natural phenomenon; fool's contempt. Perhaps O'Nolan rewrote the draft so extensively that none of these words remained, but it is also possible that the scan was faulty, so the optical text recognition could not catch similarities. For these reasons and despite extensive checks, 61 columns remain unlocated.

If, then, we cannot say with certainty that all unlocated drafts were unpublished, we are also not able to make definite claims about why certain columns did not appear. Given the extensive rewrites that O'Nolan performed on many of the columns, it is also possible that he did not like the topic or Montgomery's treatment and simply did not use them. 36% of the unused drafts were quite short – 1 or 2 pages in length – so perhaps O'Nolan found them less useful. Given that there was sometimes a gap between Montgomery's date on the drafts and the date when the material was published, perhaps O'Nolan put them aside to be used later and misplaced them or forgot. However, as O'Nolan wrote to Basil Clancy in 1960 asking that he be paid for the *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns that *The Irish Times* received but did not print, it is also possible that some of Montgomery's columns were rejected by their editors rather than O'Nolan. This is implied by the notes that Montgomery wrote on some of his drafts: on four draft articles, none of which we could find in the published columns, he wrote a version of 'LEADING ARTICLE MUST NOT BE ATTACKED'.³³ On a short draft from October 1948 that addresses confrontations regarding the Abbey Theatre via, Montgomery explains, strategic changes to a letter signed 'Pat' originally published in *Ireland Today* 2, no. 3 March 1937, Montgomery wrote in red pencil 'Suppressed by I.T.'³⁴ This information perhaps came from O'Nolan, who

³³ 30 April 1947 NMP 50,118.5.1; 8 May 1947 NMP 50,118.5.2; 12 October 1947 NMP 50,118.5.4; and an undated column most likely from the end of 1947, NMP 50,118.5.4.

³⁴ 23 October 1948, NMP 50,118.5.8.

would have had greater experience with editorial preferences about the leading article, or directly from the editor and was reported back by O'Nolan for future reference. Either way, the 61 unused drafts give us significant insights into the amount of wasted time and effort the *Cruiskeen Lawn* column involved (see **Table 2**).

Year	M's columns written	M's columns published	Percentage published
1947	48	26	54%
1948	49	43	88%
1949	42	33	79%
1950	20	13	65%
1951	6		0%
1952	2		0%
1953	11	10	91%
1954	6	4	67%
1955	3		0%
1956	3		0%
1957	1	1	100%
1958	3	2	67%
...			
1962	2		0%
1963		1	

Table 2: The annual percentage of Montgomery's drafts that were published in the CL. Note: there is some slippage, particularly between 1962 and 1963, as some columns were written in a different year to the year they were published.

To the question of whether the unlocated columns were unpublished because they are of inferior merit, we cannot give a conclusive response, not least because assessments about quality will always be subjective. That noted, we are not of the opinion that Montgomery's drafts are consistently poor versions of the Myles style and manners. Take, for example, this draft of a Keats and Chapman anecdote by Montgomery, a contribution that appears unpublished. The opening lines tell us that Chapman has graduated from university and is thinking of marriage.

His choice fell on a lady named Minnie Waters, by whom his regard was not reciprocated, as she was enamoured of the poet, Keats, who found her attentions very distressing. Chapman, to the lady's mortification, was assiduous in pressing his suit. The result was that the three were seen everywhere in each other's company. Chapman was insistent in his attempts to obtain an interview tête à tête with her;

finally she consented to this and appointed an hour and a place where they should meet. Chapman, elated at his success, purchased a quantity of very valuable clothing and arrived, wearing most of it, at the appointed spot. The lady, however, was not there to meet him. After about a quarter of an hour he became impatient. His devotion was soon rewarded in an unexpected manner for, suddenly hearing a window open overhead, he looked up and was greeted by an enormous shower of water which deluged him from head to foot and caused irreparable damage to his new raiment. He rushed home to change and lost no time in recounting the incident to Keats. I take it, said Keats, that you are cured of your infatuation for this lady; for Chapman had told him how his retreating figure had been followed by her ringing laughter. Chapman however assured him that this was not the case and that he fully forgave her the childish prank. I see; says Keats sententiously, Minnie Waters cannot quench love.³⁵

The closing pun plays with the line from the Song of Solomon 'many waters cannot quench love', and while its play is predicated on a pursuit that might make us uncomfortable today it would not have troubled Montgomery or O'Nolan. This story might not rank among the greatest contributions to the Keats and Chapman canon, but it is an acceptable example of the form and it is difficult to see why it did not meet muster.

Nor do hints in letters between O'Nolan and Montgomery add much clarity. On 29 March 1956 O'Nolan wrote to Montgomery:

I am much obliged for the material I received this morning. [...] The stuff about censorship is good but I think you have overlooked a few of the more violent details. First, a thing marked Personal and Confidential arrives in an open envelope bearing a threehalfpenny stamp. The recipient is invited to send the ludicrous petition back marked "Private and Confidential". The use of the Irish article "an" by illiterate persons deserves a department of pain to itself; "Anne Tostal" always sounds like a beautiful Hungarian spy. The "An Taoiseach" spiel breaks down in the petition, where "the" is mentioned. But there is a week's fuel in the whole dreadful thing.³⁶

It seems probable that O'Nolan is referring to a draft dated 18 March 1956, which engages with censorship and the Irish Association of Civil Liberty. The IACL had sent a letter in which they questioned the efficacy of the Censorship act. They have, they write, been

considering the present operation of the censorship act, and the undesirable banning of publications of widely recognized literary merit. While not questioning the

³⁵ 17 April 1947, NMP 50.118.5.2.

³⁶ Brian O'Nolan to Niall Montgomery 29 March 1956, L 206.

necessity for some form of censorship they believe that the time is opportune for an investigation by An Taoiseach into the wording of the Censorship Act, 1946.³⁷

The IACL urged recipients to sign the enclosed petition asking for a review of the Act. The petition does, as O'Nolan's letter states, move between the phrase 'An Taoiseach' and 'the Taoiseach'.³⁸ Yet An Tóstal, which O'Nolan describes as sounding like Anne Tostal, the Hungarian spy, does not appear in this or any of the extant drafts. Despite his certainty that there was a 'week's fuel' in Montgomery's draft, we were not able to locate any published columns on the topic. The only time that the Irish Association of Civil Liberties is mentioned was some years earlier in a column published on 20 October 1948. Did O'Nolan decide not to turn the material into columns or were they censored by the editors? The question remains, for now at least, unanswered.

The Drafts and their Publication

The following pages of this article present a table that connects the drafts and the published columns. The first column provides the date on which the *Cruiskeen Lawn* installment was published, the second shows the date Montgomery wrote on the draft, the third presents our notes on the differences between the two, and the final any relevant annotations by Montgomery. Any content in the fourth column by us is in square brackets. We also have a list of unlocated columns that we have not included here but are happy to provide to any interested researcher.

Conclusion

As we have outlined above, the differences between the drafts and published columns illuminate the ways O'Nolan and Montgomery worked together, while also showing O'Nolan's clear investment in reshaping drafts according to his preferences. The realization that the columns arising from the Montgomery papers are primarily co-authored rather than single-authored is a significant development in our understanding of Myles and the *Cruiskeen Lawn*. Comparing the archival and newspapers versions of the column also affords us new insights into O'Nolan as an editor. While we cannot offer readers the full experience of reading the archival and newspaper versions line by line, we hope that our analysis and the details of **Table 3** are a useful resource for scholars seeking insight into the authorship of the *Cruiskeen Lawn*.

³⁷ 18 March 1956, NMP 50.118.5.16.

³⁸ As what appears to be the original of the petition is included in the Montgomery files it's clear that this error is not Montgomery's invention.

Published version	Niall Montgomery Papers	Changes	Notes by Montgomery
8 January 1947	3 January 1947	Minor changes	
28 April 1947	24 April 1947	Major changes	
9 May 1947	4 May 1947	Minor changes, with new material after 'Hone knows everybody'	
19 May 1947	14 May 1947	Minor changes	
28 May 1947	24 May 1947	Major changes	
30 May 1947	25 May 1947	Major changes	
11 June 1947	6 June 1947	Major changes	
16 June 1947	7 June 1947	Minor changes	
18 June 1947	8 June 1947	O'Nolan used only the short quotation 'we are a peasant people'	
4 July 1947	26 June 1947	Different opening and closing paragraphs, then minor changes	
18 July 1947	22 April 1947	No changes	18 vii '47
21 July 1947	17 July 1947	Major changes: O'N used only the opening three lines of Montgomery's draft (with minor changes)	
25 July 1947	19 July 1947	Minor changes, different concluding paragraph	
30 July 1947	26 July 1947	Changes to the first two paragraphs, with Montgomery's material from 'I am terribly sorry'. Minor changes, new ending	
1 August 1947	26 July 1947	New opening paragraph, with Montgomery's material from second sentence of second paragraph. Major changes subsequently	
6 August 1947	18 May 1947	Major changes	
15 August 1947	10 August 1947	Minor changes	
5 September 1947	31 September 1947	Changes to the opening, then minor changes	
22 September 1947	13 September 1947	O'N entirely rewrote the article, using only the quotations	
3 October 1947	29 September 1947	Minor changes	
6 October 1947	26 September 1947	Minor changes	
31 October 1947	25 October 1947	Minor changes	

(Contd.)

Published version	Niall Montgomery Papers	Changes	Notes by Montgomery
3 November 1947	25 October 1947	Minor changes, different final paragraph	
24 November 1947	14 November 1947	New opening two paragraphs, major changes throughout	Leading article must not be attacked
5 December 1947	4 December 1947	No changes	
17 December 1947	12 December 1947	No changes	
24 December 1947	21 December 1947	No changes apart from a short Christmas message at close	
7 January 1948	4 January 1948	Minor changes	
14 January 1948	12 January 1948	Minor changes	
21 January 1948	16 January 1948	Minor changes	
4 February 1948	30 January 1948	Major changes, with addition of slogans by O'N	
9 February 1948	6 February 1948	Minor changes	
18 February 1948	15 February 1948	2 files, both dated 15 Feb, combined into article with minor changes	
25 February 1948	10 January 1947	Minor changes to the final paragraph	
27 February 1948	22 February 1948	Minor alterations until 'Discourse-Thrower' and then rest of the article by O'N	
12 March 1948	Undated	Minor changes	
17 March 1948	2 March 1948	M draft just a single quotation from Ancient British and Irish Churches that O'N used	
19 March 1948	12 March 1948	No changes	
5 April 1948	4 April 1948	No changes	
14 April 1948	10 April 1948	No changes	
21 April 1948	18 April 1948	Minor changes, new final paragraph	
3 May 1948	30 April 1948	Minor changes	
21 May 1948	17 May 1948	Minor changes	

(Contd.)

Published version	Niall Montgomery Papers	Changes	Notes by Montgomery
2 June 1948	31 May 1948	Minor changes, final 'Wooden Hearse of Troy' joke by O'N	
14 June 1948	10 June 1948	Opening 3 paragraphs by O'N. Then minor changes, until O'N writes new material from 'whisha'	
16 June 1948	13 June 1948	Minor changes, final sentence by O'N	
18 June 1948	13 May 1948	No changes, O'N uses first half of M's draft	
21 June 1948	13 May 1948	Minor changes, O'N uses the second half of M's draft	
30 June 1948	27 June 1948	Minor changes	
28 July 1948	13 July 1948	Opening paragraph by O'N, material by M from 'all the protagonists', then minor changes	
30 July 1948	26 July 1948	Minor changes	
4 August 1948	5 May 1947	Minor changes, final paragraph by O'N	Published 4.viii.'48
11 August 1948	8 August 1948	Minor changes	
18 August 1948	5 August 1948	Minor changes	
25 August 1948	15 August 1948	Minor changes, final paragraph by O'N	
10 September 1948	Undated	Major changes. New material after quotation ending 'commerce'.	
17 September 1948	11 May 1947	Major changes	17 viii 48
20 September 1948	19 September 1948	Complete rewrite with O'N using only one of the sections M quoted	
13 October 1948	11 October 1948	Major changes	
25 October 1948	29 September 1948	Opening by O'N. M's material begins from 'Myles sat back' with no changes	
1 November 1948	21 October 1948	Major changes	
3 November 1948	21 October 1948	Major changes	
10 November 1948	7 November 1948	Major changes	

(Contd.)

Published version	Niall Montgomery Papers	Changes	Notes by Montgomery
22 November 1948	27 April 1947	Minor changes	
1 December 1948	21 November 1948	Minor changes, including an image and changes to the conclusion	
13 December 1948	5 December 1948	Minor changes, new final paragraph	
15 December 1948	? December 1948	Minor changes	
17 December 1948	11 December 1948	Minor changes	
20 December 1948	16 December 1948	Major changes before first quotation, then minor changes	
22 December 1948	16 December 1948	Opening on Goethe by O'N, then minor changes	
19 January 1949	14 January 1949	New opening by O'N until first indented quotation. Then minor changes, with final two paragraphs by O'N	
26 January 1949	23 January 1949	New opening by O'N, with M material beginning from 'procrustean apparatus'. Then minor changes and new closing lines	
11 February 1949	9 February 1949	Major changes	
16 February 1949	14 February 1949	Minor changes	
23 February 1949	18 February 1949	New opening, M material from 'The reader is familiar'. Minor changes, new concluding paragraph	
4 March 1949	27 February 1949	Draft comprises single page by M, included with minor changes as the 'What's in a Name?' section of column	
9 March 1949	6 March 1949	Opening paragraph using just one phrase by M, major changes thereafter	
11 March 1949	6 March 1949 and 7 March 1949	Two single pages by M, one used by O'Nolan in opening paragraph, other in 'Trouble in Paradise' section	

(Contd.)

Published version	Niall Montgomery Papers	Changes	Notes by Montgomery
23 March 1949	11 March 1949	Draft comprises a single quotation, which O'N used in the 'Concerning Classical Learning' section	
30 March 1949	27 March 1949	Minor changes, with addition of digression on name by O'N	
1 April 1949	27? March 1949	New opening paragraph by O'N, then minor changes	
4 April 1949	27 March 1949	New opening, M material from U\$A section. Minor changes, new final sentence	
11 April 1949	20 March 1949	Draft comprises single page by M, which O'N uses with minor changes in opening section	
22 April 1949	18 April 1949	Minor changes, new closing line	
27 April 1949	10 April 1949	New opening by O'N, M material begins at the 'car full of stuff', then minor changes	
18 May 1949	8 May 1949	Opening section by O'N. M material from 'The End of Carlton' section, minor changes	
1 June 1949	29 May 1949 and 30 May 1949	Column uses 3 separately dated drafts: one page becomes opening section with major changes, two pages make up 'The General has Feet of Clay' with minor changes; two sentences (dated 30 May) added to the opening section	
15 Jun 1949	8 May 1949	Opening section of article adapted from shorter, 2-page piece by M	
13 July 1949	10 July 1949	2-page piece by M, used with changes by O'N in opening paragraphs, ending at 'O'Connell Street, now and again!'	
25 July 1949	17 July 1949	New opening, M material from second paragraph. Minor changes.	
10 August 1949	8 August 1949	Opening sections keeping only M's theme, later sections using only the long quotation beginning 'Happening to be'	
2 September 1949	29 August 1949	Minor changes	

(Contd.)

Published version	Niall Montgomery Papers	Changes	Notes by Montgomery
5 September 1949	29 August 1949	Draft comprises single page, O'N used only the quotations on the Americans on Ararat	
12 September 1949	8 September 1949	New opening, M material from 'It was in 1922' in second paragraph. Minor changes	
19 September 1949	11 September 1949	Minor changes. M material ends at quotation concluding 'this form of war'	
14 October 1949	11 October 1949	Only a very short quotation used [the last quotation from National Student]	
21 October 1949	18 October 1949	Draft comprises 2 pages of quotation from the Manchester Guardian which O'N uses for opening section	
24 October 1949	Undated	New opening, M section from 'epi-phenomenon of inefficiency', minor changes, new final paragraph	
11 November 1949	9 November 1949	Draft comprises 2 pages, O'N used only the quotation and the pies/peace pun for his opening section	Contrary Sense
18 November 1949	14 November 1949	Draft comprises 2 pages, used with major changes in final section 'To be serious for a moment'	
21 November 1949	16 November 1949	New opening, M section from 'I am sure the reader is familiar'. Major changes	
23 November 1949	16 November 1949	Minor changes	
25 November 1949	17 November 1949	New opening, M material from paragraph beginning 'Joe Hone'. Text supposedly by Hone by M, the rest by O'N	
6 January 1950	18 November 1949	Opening section on Klee by M, minor changes, final 2 paragraphs of section by O'N, rest of column by O'N	
25 January 1950	21 January 1950	Minor changes	100C vol. 18
3 February 1950	30 January 1950	Minor changes, new concluding paragraph	100C

(Contd.)

Published version	Niall Montgomery Papers	Changes	Notes by Montgomery
8 February 1950	3 February 1950	O'N used M's quotations and theme, but almost complete rewrite	100C
1 March 1950	26 February 1950	Minor changes, new concluding paragraph	100C. 23 Sep 1966 [stamp] Copy Douglas Gageby
20 March 1950	14 March 1950	New opening paragraph, then minor changes	
24 May 1950	21 May 1950	Major changes and O'N adds typographic joke of putting the opening at the end	
16 June 1950	11 June 1950	Minor changes and addition, with note on old Irish by O'N	
7 July 1950	27 June 1950	Minor changes, new concluding paragraph	
29 September 1950	17 September 1950	Opening paragraph from M with minor changes, rest of column by O'N	
11 October 1950	4 October 1950	Draft comprises single page – quotation from Dublin Diversions by M, rest by O'N	
27 October 1950	26 October 1950	No changes	
8 November 1950	5 October 1950	Draft comprises single page of quotation from Peter Coste's translation of Montaigne, used by O'N in column	
6 March 1953	3 March 1953	Minor changes	
28 July 1953	24 May 1947	Major changes	
15 December 1953	13 December 1953	No changes	
16 December 1953	14 December 1953	No changes	[Column title typed]
17 December 1953	15 December 1953	Minor changes	[Notes two words cut (Aga in giant Aga cooker and lower in Fitzwilliam Street, lower)]: CUT OUT BY ED [by Aga] and ED. CUT! [by lower]

(Contd.)

Published version	Niall Montgomery Papers	Changes	Notes by Montgomery
19 December 1953	16 December 1953	No changes	
21 December 1953	17 December 1953	No changes	
22 December 1953	20 December 1953	No changes	[Column title handwritten]
23 December 1953	21 December 1953	No changes	[Column title handwritten]
24 December 1953	22 December 1953	No changes apart from names	[M notes that Sean T. changed to Frank Aiken, Joe Griffin to John O'Leary, and Smyllie and Alec Newman removed]
1 June 1954	26 May 1954	Minor changes, but majority of final section by O'N	
30 July 1954	27 July 1954	No changes	
2 August 1954	29 July 1954	Draft comprises single page, which become final two sections of column with minor changes	
18 August 1954	12 August 1954	No changes	
30 April 1955	23 April 1955	Draft comprises 2 pages, much expanded upon by O'N. Minor changes to third section, rest major or new additions	
3 May 1955	26 April 1955	Draft comprises 2 pages, much expanded upon by O'N	
	27 June 1957	O'N used only Montgomery's phrase 'Kildare plaice (stet) cod (stet)' as the title for a series of articles beginning 13 July 1957	
11 March 1958	5 March 1958	Draft comprises 2 pages, much expanded upon by O'N	
2 August 1958	31 May 1958	O'N used the first part of M's draft for the first section of his column, with minor changes. Rest by O'N	
12 January 1963	5 December 1962	O'N padded column with long quotation – the rest by M with minor changes	

Table 3: Matching Montgomery's drafts with published *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns.

Competing Interests

Maebh Long is one of the editors of the *Journal of Flann O'Brien Studies* but was not involved in the peer review or acceptance process. The other authors have no competing interests to declare.

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