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'Cultural Affairs': A Newly Discovered Myles na Gopaleen Article

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This note details 'Cultural Affairs,' a newly discovered article that Brian O'Nolan contributed, under the pen name Myles na Gopaleen, to a 1953 special supplement of *The Statist* magazine dedicated to 'The Economy of Ireland.' In its primary aim of advertising Irish industry to English investors, 'The Economy of Ireland' reflects the shift in post-war Irish economic policy away from the protectionist Free State era and towards the increasingly open economy of the 1950s and 60s. Myles's contribution addresses the supplement's theme by arguing for a form of cultural liberalism that rejects isolationism and bad-faith nationalism by opening Irish culture to foreign influence, rather than packaging it for export to foreign markets. However, 'Cultural Affairs' also departs from the economic supplement's focus on courting foreign investment by advocating for meaningful government subsidies for Irish cultural regeneration.

Introduction

This spring, I visited the National Library of Ireland to track down an article that H.L. Morrow had written on Irish journalism for a 1953 special supplement of *The Statist* magazine on 'The Economy of Ireland.'[1] Settling in to scan the table of contents, I found, to my surprise, that the supplement also featured a contribution by Myles na Gopaleen titled 'Cultural Affairs.' I believe this to be a previously unknown article – at least, it was unknown to me, and from a search of O'Nolan criticism, I can find no reference to it in the field. Admittedly, scholars might not anticipate Myles popping up in a mid-century British financial journal (basically, the equivalent of *The Economist* today) comprised of articles on the Irish economy by government officials and industry heads. In its primary aim of advertising Irish industry to a readership of potential English investors, 'The Economy of Ireland' is remarkable as a bellwether of the shift in post-war Irish economic policy away from the protectionist Free State era and towards the increasingly open Irish economy of the 1950s and 60s. Beyond bibliographic completism, it is this publication context, and Myles's response to it through the prism of contemporary Irish culture, that makes 'Cultural Affairs' stand out as a noteworthy discovery.

In what follows, I first outline the circumstances of the supplement's publication and consider the possible reasons for O'Nolan's inclusion in such a financial journal, including his position in the Irish civil service and his writing about economic matters in his *Irish Times* column. Next, I detail the specifics of Myles's contribution and compare them with his previous writing on cultural and economic affairs. Alongside familiar bugbears, such as the export of 'counterfeit' Stage-Irish self-presentations by figures such as J.M. Synge, 'Cultural Affairs' celebrates recent achievements in Irish architecture (Michael Scott) and fashion design (Sybil Connolly), and points to the potential of contemporary writers Samuel Beckett, Walter Macken, and Benedict Kiely. Overall, Myles's piece addresses the supplement's theme by arguing for a form of cultural liberalism that rejects isolationism and bad-faith nationalism by opening Irish culture to foreign influence, rather than packaging it for export to foreign markets. However, 'Cultural Affairs' also departs from the supplement's focus on courting foreign investment by advocating for meaningful government subsidies for Irish cultural regeneration. In conclusion, I reflect on some insights and provocations 'Cultural Affairs' might provide to the field on O'Nolan's evolving thinking on the interrelation of Irish cultural and economic affairs in this still under-analysed period of his work.

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[1] 'The Economy of Ireland,' *The Statist* (24 October 1953). National Library of Ireland, NLI C354.

The *Statist* and 'The Economy of Ireland'

The Statist: A Weekly Journal for Economics and Men of Business was established in London in 1878 by Thomas Lloyd (1833–1920), an Irish author of books on monetary theory, and Robert Giffen (1837–1910), a Scottish financial journalist and the chief of the statistical department of the Board of Trade. Primarily targeted at a readership of British investors, *The Statist* pioneered a new form of financial periodical which combined statistical data, opinion pieces, and investment advice.[2] While self-avowedly non-partisan in terms of party politics, *The Statist* had a clear worldview and mandate, using its 'detailed and technical accounts of the stock exchange and money markets'[3] to support laissez-faire, pro-free trade economic principles. In 1950, the journal signalled an increased focus on the production of materials, goods, and services for export through its updated title, *The Statist: An Independent Journal of Finance, Trade, and Industry*. Following the Second World War, the journal started publishing a series of standalone supplements on nation economies comprised largely of short articles by local experts, economists, academics, and politicians.

On 24 October 1953, *The Statist* published a 104-page supplement on 'The Economy of Ireland.' The publication marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of *The Statist*'s founding, and its unsigned 'Editor's Note' suggests that it is 'a reciprocal gesture' to the land which gave the journal its first editor, Thomas Lloyd.[4] Such pleasantries dispensed with, the editorial establishes Ireland as one of the UK's 'most important export markets,' in so far as it 'is one of our principle sources of food supplies, sends to this country almost nine-tenths of her total exports, and derives from the UK the vast bulk of her income from tourism, investments, and other items.' The supplement's objective, the editor explains, is to better understand 'the extremely close economic and financial ties' between the two countries. Of course, these ties had a fraught history, which is conspicuously not addressed by the contributors yet is key to the supplement's significance as an indicator of post-war Ireland's changing economic policies.

Writing in 1951, Roy C. Geary, founder of the Central Statistics Office and the Economic and Social Research Institute, asserted that 'popular sentiment in Ireland has always been protectionist: there is no political cleavage on the issue.'[5] Indeed, nationalists had long blamed Ireland's de-industrialisation on its union with Britain and argued

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[2] Melissa Score, 'The Business Press,' in *Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press, Volume 2: Expansion and Evolution, 1800–1900*, ed. David Finkelstein (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 493.

[3] Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 34.

[4] Anon., 'Editor's Note,' in 'The Economy of Ireland,' *The Statist* (24 October 1953): 1.

[5] R.C. Geary, 'Irish Economic Development Since the Treaty,' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 50, no. 160 (1951): 403.

that free trade policies would prevent a post-independence Ireland from becoming self-sufficient – the necessity of which had been reinforced by the devastating effects of the Great Famine (1845–52) – and keep it colonially linked to UK markets.[6] These nationalist sentiments were translated into an economic platform by Arthur Griffith's Sinn Féin, who developed an Irish iteration of Friedrich List's nationalist theory of political economy, which advocated targeted tariff protection for industries that were critical to economic growth and national sovereignty. Following independence, these economic principles were enacted first in the 'selective protection' of the Cumann na nGaedheal governments of the 1920s, and then more stringently by the Fianna Fáil governments of the 1930s, which pursued 'comprehensive protection' measures towards a policy of import-substituting industrialisation.[7] For instance, the Emergency Imposition of Duties Act (1932) empowered the Irish government to impose tariffs on all imports, while the Control of Manufactures Acts (1932 and 1934) established a licensing system designed to ensure that new industries established in the Free State would be Irish-controlled.

While such protectionism had the political and ideological motivation of disengaging the post-independence Irish economy from its existing arrangements with the UK, it was also practically shaped by the Great Depression (1929–39), which had led to the implementation of protectionist policies across Europe, the US, and the UK. Ireland's restrictions on foreign investment were unexceptional in this context, and, in fact, the Emergency Imposition of Duties Act had been drafted as a *response* to the UK's Import Duties Act (1932), which introduced a flat 10% tariff on most imports. The Fianna Fáil government's refusal to continue reimbursing the UK with land annuities was countered by British tariffs on Irish beef, leading to the Anglo-Irish Trade War (1932–8), in which reciprocal tariffs were placed on a wide range of Irish and British goods, damaging Irish agricultural exports in ways that largely countervailed any 'protection-boosted industrial output.'[8] The 1938 Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement lifted all duties imposed during the previous five years on both sides, but, in truth, the Irish economy had remained deeply linked to the UK throughout the trade war – as the Irish punt was pegged to sterling, it shared in any inflation or deflation in the latter's value

[6] For instance, in 1929 Seán Lemass declared that 'the agitation for the protection of industries […] is identical with the struggle for the preservation of our nationality.' Quoted in Mary E. Daly, *Industrial Development and Irish National Identity, 1922–1939* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 63–4.

[7] Anna Devlin and Frank Barry, 'Protection Versus Free Trade in the Free State Era: The Finance Attitude,' *Irish Economic and Social History* 46 (2019): 4.

[8] Cormac Ó Gráda and Kevin Hjortshøj O'Rourke, 'The Irish Economy During the Century After Partition,' *UCD Centre for Economic Research Working Paper Series*, WP21/08 (2021): 13.

(with interests rates determined in London) and continued to depend on exports to, and remittances from, the UK.

Cormac Ó Gráda and Kevin Hjortshøj O'Rourke reflect that while '[i]n the long run Fianna Fáil's policies would prove a *cul de sac*, [...] from the contemporary comparative perspective of the 1930s they were not so misguided,' as 'industrial employment expanded considerably for a while under protection.'[9] However, the events and aftermath of the Second World War meant that 'the costs of protection would come to outweigh the benefits,'[10] as the effects of wartime dislocation on the 1940s Irish economy – rationing, inflation, emigration – and growing public dissatisfaction with monopolisation, pushed the government away from a form of nationalist economic protectionism that was increasingly seen to be 'less suited to the more liberal [international] post-war environment.'[11] Bernadette Whelan writes that these economic and financial realities left Ireland in 1947 with 'little choice' but to participate in the US government's European Recovery Programme (the Marshall Plan),[12] which transferred $13.3 billion in economic recovery programmes to post-war European economies in order to address the dollar gap that had been caused by the inability of 'important industrial and population centers of the continent to recover by dint of their own efforts.'[13] As Whelan elaborates, Ireland's inclusion in the Marshall Plan, which entailed the removal of trade barriers, was not motivated by 'concern for the plight of the Irish economy' but rather by Washington's idea that Ireland would 'produc[e] food for export to Europe, and particularly Britain.'[14] This was the context in which *The Statist* supplement was published, as the Fianna Fáil government – back in power following the inter-party coalition government of 1948–51 – were responding to these conditions by shifting to open up the post-war Irish economy to foreign investment.

The Statist's 'Editor's Note' alludes to this situation in its description of Ireland's 'paradoxical position of being, on a population basis, one of the world's principal owners of capital invested and exporters of her own human stock.'[15] The editor foregrounds Ireland's consequent move towards open markets – and, thus, the journal's own

[9] Ó Gráda and O'Rourke, 'The Irish Economy,' 15. As Ó Gráda and O'Rourke document, '[m]anufacturing employment rose by almost half (from 111,000 to 166,000) between 1931 and 1938' (15).

[10] Ó Gráda and O'Rourke, 'The Irish Economy,' 15.

[11] Martin Mansergh, 'The Political Legacy of Seán Lemass,' *Etudes irlandaises* 25, no. 1 (2000): 142.

[12] Bernadette Whelan, 'Adopting the "American Way": Ireland and the Marshall Plan, 1947–57,' *History Ireland* 16, no. 3 (2008): https://historyireland.com/adopting-the-american-way-ireland-and-the-marshall-plan-1947-57/.

[13] 'PPS/4: Certain Aspects of the European Recovery Program from the U.S. Standpoint,' in *The State Department Policy Planning Staff Papers 1947–1949*, *Volume I*, ed. Anna Kasten Nelson (New York: Garland, 1983), 31.

[14] Whelan, 'Adopting the "American Way".'

[15] Anon., 'Editor's Note,' 1.

economic worldview – as its major pitch to the journal's British readers: 'Ireland has now reached a stage in her development where increased opportunities appear to exist for mutually advantageous co-operation between domestic and external capital, and British industrial, trading, and financial interests may well find here possibilities worth investigating.' This purpose is noted in the 26 October 1953 'London Letter' to *The Irish Times*, which reflects that the *Statist* supplement comes 'at an appropriate time, when English investors are turning an interested eye on the Irish Loan.'[16] In conclusion, the editorial suggests that the supplement may also 'help' its Irish readers 'to see in better perspective the opportunities for better advancement' which lie in opening up their economy to British investment.[17]

In his introduction to 'The Economy of Ireland,' Seán Lemass, then Minister for Industry and Commerce, announces that the Fianna Fáil government's objective in contributing to the supplement is to set out 'the details of Ireland's developments in the economic field' since independence, despite the 'many acute economic and social difficulties' which (he states diplomatically) it had 'inherited from the past.'[18] While he had been one of the major figures behind the import-substituting protectionist measures of the 1930s, Lemass here concedes that 'Ireland lacks the materials' necessary to develop self-sufficient manufacturing industries, and that '[d]ependence on imports of these materials leaves Irish manufacturers exceptionally vulnerable to violent fluctuations in prices on the world market.' However, he also defends the large-scale enterprises that have been 'successfully carried out by State-sponsored organisations' since independence, including the development of bog lands ('a task beyond the scope of private enterprise'), the production of beet sugar (a previously imported commodity in which Ireland had become nearly self-sufficient through state subsidy), and the development of the tourist industry. Lemass concludes that current Irish government policy is to maintain a mixed economy: even as 'reliance is placed mainly on private business enterprise, a further extension of State activities in the industrial field may be necessary if all possibilities are to be exploited.' This dual position – spotlighting the successes of state subsidies and market interventions while advertising the opportunities that diverse Irish economic and industrial sectors present to foreign capital – is broadly argued throughout the supplement.

'The Economy of Ireland' comprises 39 individual articles grouped into 5 named sections – 'National Finances and External Trade,' 'Agriculture,' 'Industry,' 'Regional Survey of Industrial Development,' 'Banking and Insurance' – followed by a 'Statistical

16 Anon., 'London Letter,' *The Irish Times* (26 October 1953): 7.

17 Anon., 'Editor's Note,' 1.

18 Seán Lemass, 'Introduction,' in 'The Economy of Ireland,' *The Statist* (24 October 1953): 1.

Appendix.' The supplement features contributions on these topics from Fianna Fáil government officials and ambassadors, chairmen of state boards, managers and chairmen of Irish state, semi-state and private companies, academics from Irish universities, and figures from the creative industries. It is, perhaps, not too surprising to find the senior civil servant Brian O'Nolan in this company, given that he moved in this world in his day job in the Custom House. O'Nolan was the Private Secretary to a series of Fianna Fáil Ministers for the Department of Local Government and Public Health, including (from 1941–6) Seán MacEntee, who, as Minister for Finance, also contributes a piece to the *Statist* supplement, titled 'The National Finances.' O'Nolan's work for the department's Finance, Local Loans, Grants, and Surcharges section involved sanctioning loans for local authorities' investment in waterworks and sewerage schemes, a task which 'required close attention to costings, quotations, contracts, and the monitoring of expenditure.'[19] In this capacity, 'O'Nolan had unique access' both to internal debates regarding Irish economic policy and to 'the private reactions of senior members of the Fianna Fáil administration' to proposals for post-war planning.[20] However, there are two details that make his inclusion in the supplement more extraordinary.

First, 'Ireland and the Economy' was published some eight months after O'Nolan had been forced to resign from the civil service, following the 5 February 1953 instalment of his *Cruiskeen Lawn* column in *The Irish Times*, which was interpreted as a derogatory portrayal of Patrick Smith, then Fianna Fáil Minister for the Department of Local Government.[21] Following his dismissal, O'Nolan wrote a lengthy personal letter to MacEntee asserting that he had been 'illegally removed from an important State position by a person of ill-judgment.'[22] It is possible, then, that O'Nolan's inclusion in the supplement is a favour or concession from an influential figure such as MacEntee following the circumstances of his dismissal, although in the absence of further evidence this remains pure speculation.

Secondly, O'Nolan's contribution is attributed to, and written in the voice of, 'Myles na Gopaleen of the *Irish Times*.' The subjects of trade and Irish economic policy animate many of *Cruiskeen Lawn*'s wartime columns,[23] often with comically absurd results but also, at

[19] Martin Maguire, 'A Distasteful Milieu: Brian O'Nolan and the Civil Service, 1935–51,' *The Parish Review: Journal of Flann O'Brien Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2022): https://doi.org/10.16995/pr.4748.

[20] Steven Curran, '"Could paddy leave off from copying just for five minutes": Brian O'Nolan and Eire's Beveridge Plan,' *Irish University Review* 31, no. 2 (Autumn–Winter 2001): 355.

[21] Myles na Gopaleen, *Cruiskeen Lawn*, *The Irish Times* [hereafter *CL*] (5 February 1953): 4.

[22] Brian O'Nolan to Séan MacEntee, 13 March 1953, in Flann O'Brien, *The Collected Letters of Flann O'Brien*, ed. Maebh Long (Victoria, TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2018), 172–7.

[23] See *CL* (10 November 1941): 6, (9 January 1942): 3, (12 November 1941): 3, (2 May 1944): 3, (10 May 1944): 3, (6 November 1944): (8 December 1944): 3.

times, expressing views that were broadly in line with those of his Fianna Fáil ministers. Steven Curran and Carol Taaffe have both highlighted instances during his tenure as Private Secretary in which Myles used his *Irish Times* platform to express MacEntee's case for wartime economic retrenchment (as opposed to Lemass's more expansionary policy proposals), or to throw cold water on the opposition's calls for investments in social welfare reform.[24] A fair assumption, then, is that O'Nolan shared his minister's view that Ireland was too sparsely populated for expansionary state investment or major welfare reform to work.[25] Indeed, MacEntee's daughter, Máire Mhac an tSaoi, attributed 'the state of good relations' between him and O'Nolan 'as much to shared temperament as to proximity of political views,' and noted that O'Nolan's 'skills as a speech writer' gave MacEntee confidence that he 'could be entrusted with the accurate presentation of the Minister's thoughts.'[26] Based on these connections and compatibly conservative economic views, Taaffe suggests that *Cruiskeen Lawn* could be 'a useful ally' to O'Nolan's ministers 'in any public debate,' especially as it was 'well-placed to undermine' the 'anti-Fianna Fail commentary' that Myles's editor R.M. Smyllie regularly published in the same paper.[27] Intriguingly, James Fraser has recently shown that Myles's columns during the 1948–51 inter-party government were vocally critical of the 'little army of self-appointed monopolists [...] entrenched behind the great bastions of Protection.'[28] Although expressed in terms that would surely have irked defenders of Fianna Fáil's record of market intervention, such as Lemass, this view would also be amenable to *The Statist*'s readership and not incompatible with the supplement's objectives.

Of course, we might point to many instances where Myles's columns created headaches for, or outright angered, O'Nolan's superiors; and we can note that O'Nolan did not write a number of the *Cruiskeen Lawn* instalments himself,[29] so that the economic views expressed therein cannot be straightforwardly attributed to him (or his ministers). However, the point is rather that Myles's inclusion in the *Statist* supplement, especially after O'Nolan's departure from the civil service, suggests that:

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[24] Curran, 'Brian O'Nolan and Eire's Beveridge Plan,' 353–75; Carol Taaffe, *Ireland Through the Looking Glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles na gCopaleen, and Irish Cultural Debate* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008), 150–53. On Lemass and MacEntee's different economic worldviews within the Fianna Fáil government, see J.J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912–1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 224–5.

[25] See Myles's expression of this view in *CL* (10 May 1944): 3.

[26] Curran, 'Brian O'Nolan and Eire's Beveridge Plan,' 356, n. 7.

[27] Taaffe, *Ireland Through the Looking Glass*, 151.

[28] James Fraser, '"more to it than the monstrous exchange of tissue for metal": Reading the O'Nolan Bicycle,' in *Flann O'Brien and the Nonhuman: Environments, Animals, Machines*, ed. Katherine Ebury, Paul Fagan, and John Greaney (Cork: Cork University Press, 2024), 188, quoting *CL* (22 February 1950): 4.

[29] On Niall Montgomery's composition of columns attributed to Myles na Gopaleen, see Taaffe, *Ireland Through the Looking Glass*, 163–6.

1. O'Nolan himself remained well-connected with key figures in the Fianna Fáil government, even as he had made enemies of others, and
2. the persona or brand of 'Myles na Gopaleen of the *Irish Times*,' at least in regard to Irish economic and cultural policies, was not considered to be adverse at this time to the aims of a government-led economic supplement targeted at British investors.

Myles's contribution appears at the back end of the supplement, in an untitled section of articles on cultural matters. All three contributors to this coda – H.L. Morrow, Thomas Hogan, and Brian O'Nolan – share a similar profile as figures who both drew state salaries and wrote cultural commentary in national publications.[30] Morrow's article on 'Ireland and Fleet Street' argues that the formative contribution of influential Irish journalists and editors is 'among Ireland's most significant "invisible exports" to Britain during the past two centuries.'[31] Morrow's contribution here engages a similar focus, although with a notably different inflection, as a 1944 *Cruiskeen Lawn* instalment in which Myles claims, hyperbolically, that Ireland has 'given hundreds of editors' to *The Statist*, but attributes this fact purely to 'the physical propinquity' of the two islands and (inversely to Morrow's position) to the Irish's status as 'unenterprising copycats.'[32] Hogan's piece on 'The Theatre in Ireland' describes the mid-century as a 'fallow' and 'unproductive' period for institutional Irish theatre, but sees hope for the future in young innovators such as M.J. Molloy, Seamus Murphy, Walter Macken, Maurice Meldon, Seamus de Faoite, and, 'remotely, perhaps,' Brendan Behan.[33] In a forward-looking conclusion, Hogan argues that '[w]ith the deadweight of tradition removed,' the hope for Irish theatre lies with '[y]oung people' who have 'set out to make their own little theatres.' Hogan's identification of Irish theatre's future with young entrepreneurs appears in line with *The Statist*'s advocacy of free market liberalism – yet, his conclusion that '[o]nly the marriage of the displaced dramatist with an established theatre can produce the desired' combination of energy and craft

[30] The Belfast-born Morrow was a journalist and newspaper editor, who served as Productions Director at Radio Éireann from 1947–53. 'Thomas Hogan' was the pseudonym of civil servant Thomas Woods, who served as First Secretary in the economic section of the Department of External Affairs from 1949–57 and wrote reviews and polemical articles on Irish culture for *The Irish Times* and *The Bell*. Moving in these similar circles, it is unsurprising that all three would encounter each other in their work. In 1946, Hogan wrote a highly critical article about 'Myles na gCopaleen' for *The Bell* (2 November 1946): 129–40. In the late 1950s, Morrow adapted and produced three Radio Éireann broadcasts based on O'Nolan's writing – *Thirst*, *Something in the Air*, and *Faustus Kelly* – and adapted *Thirst* for the BBC as a half-hour television broadcast titled *After Hours*.

[31] H.L. Morrow, 'Ireland and Fleet Street,' in 'The Economy of Ireland,' *The Statist* (24 October 1953): 95.

[32] *CL* (13 April 1944): 3.

[33] Thomas Hogan, 'The Theatre in Ireland,' in 'The Economy of Ireland,' *The Statist* (24 October 1953): 97.

needed to inspire new Irish theatre implicitly endorses the mixed economy that Lemass advocates in his introduction. As we will see, in his contribution on 'Cultural Affairs,' Myles advances a position that resonates with those laid out by Morrow and Hogan, albeit with important distinctions.

'I am not wholly Irish': Myles on Irish Cultural Exports

At the outset of 'Cultural Affairs,' Myles announces that his objective is to 'diagnose [...] the condition of the nine Muses in Ireland today.'[34] This lofty goal is soon revealed to be the set-up to a characteristic piece of wordplay, as Myles declares that in Ireland, 'the father of the Muses' is not Zeus, but Johann Kaspar Zeuss (1806–56), 'the great nineteenth century German philosopher, who re-discovered the Celtic language and its ancient world.' The pun sets up Myles's familiar theme of inauthentic Irish self-presentation for international audiences, as he claims that Zeuss's *Grammatica Celtica* (1853) – which demonstrated that the Celtic languages belong to the Indo-European group – 'led to the saturation of the arts' in Ireland 'with the green hue, reminding the individual of emeralds or gangrene, according to his view.' The article's first subject, then, is how the superficial Celticisation of modern Irish culture for export is evaluated either positively (as a precious jewel) or negatively (as a type of tissue death caused by a lack of blood supply) in foreign and domestic cultural markets, and how these appraisals, in turn, produce different artistic responses.

Myles traces the spread of this green hue from the Celtic Revival to the present day:

> Fifty years ago Jack Yeats was painting Irish donkeys galloping through the townlands of bog and rock, inhabited mostly by barefoot urchins wearing enormous caps; to-day his fame as a painter is world-wide, probably because he never got very far away from those donkeys. Synge is still performed, the country kitchen is still the *mise en scène*, and the stone walls of Aran are still much admired and painted by visitors – happily, not by the application of paint to the stone walls.

Synge is a familiar target for Myles's critique that Irish theatre, despite its claims to 'de-Anglicisation,' continues a relation to English audiences that is 'culturally colonial.'[35] An oft-cited 1942 instalment of *Cruiskeen Lawn* chastised the playwright's depiction of Irish life as a 'counterfeit bauble,' inflated by 'the ignorant valuations of

[34] Myles na Gopaleen, 'Cultural Affairs,' in 'The Economy of Ireland,' *The Statist* (24 October 1953): 98. All subsequent references are to this page of the two-page article, unless otherwise stated.

[35] Joseph Brooker, '"The Play, boy, of the Wet, Stern World": Flann O'Brien and John Millington Synge,' *The Parish Review: Journal of Flann O'Brien Studies* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2023): https://doi.org/10.16995/pr.8648.

outsiders on things Irish.'[36] In that piece, Myles asserted that the inflated export value of the green-saturated arts had made the Irish too ready to play 'up to the foreigner' in order to receive cultural and economic capital: 'putting up the witty celtic act, doing the erratic but lovable playboy, pretending to be morose and obsessed and thoughtful – all that is wearing so thin that we must put it aside soon in shame as one puts aside a threadbare suit.' Writing eleven years later in *The Statist*, he claims that this process has begun, as the Celtic green 'dye is indelible but seems mercifully capable of thinning.'

Indeed, Myles contends that 'to-day this artificial over-awareness of being Irish – and Gaelic to boot – has become much modified and diffused.' He develops this point with a reflection on the legacy of Cork-born socialist and feminist activist Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend, who married playwright and fellow Fabianist George Bernard Shaw in 1898. When she passed away in 1943, Charlotte Shaw's will made the National City Bank, Dublin, trustees of a fund of £100,000 to be put, in part, towards teaching the Irish 'self-control, elocution, oratory, deportment, and the arts of personal contact and social discourse.'[37] Myles quotes the *New Yorker*'s snide comment that the National City Bank had earned 'the sympathy of the whole world' as '[a]nybody who thinks the Irish can be taught self-control is a crazy optimist.'[38] He here allows himself a throwaway dig at G.B. Shaw to the effect that in choosing this wording in her will, the 'distinguished Cork lady [...] was probably only permitting herself an oblique jeer at her hard-to-put-up-with husband.' Yet, Myles's real interest is how the Shaw Trust's international reception demonstrates that the nation's export of Stage-Irish self-presentations is losing its value on the cultural marketplace, even to the point where 'apostate literary practitioners do not hesitate to employ it to prove that Irishmen are not heroes at all, only louts.'

At this juncture, Myles turns from the punning, ironic, and indirect style of *Cruiskeen Lawn* to state his thesis directly: 'The foregoing is aimed at making the point that a deeply seated nationalistic syndrome creates its own antibodies.' He contends that these antibodies are healthy for Irish culture, because to do good work, the artist 'must be permanently dissatisfied, and even angry, [...] hence the artistic potential of the Irish.' Thus, Myles contends, the artist's 'survival and achievement' is a matter of 'climate,' in so far as Ireland's 'best work in literature has not been "inspired" by the native environment, but savagely provoked by it.' He spotlights Jonathan Swift 'as

[36] *CL* (28 August 1942): 3.

[37] Quoted in na Gopaleen, 'Cultural Affairs,' 98.

[38] Russell Maloney, 'Comment,' *New Yorker* (18 February 1944): 15.

the proto-martyr' of this tradition, in the Dean's recurrent mode of 'hating Ireland, defending her, and never escaping.' This type of Irish artist – the 'good writers' who function, in Myles's analogy, as the antibodies to the 'nationalist syndrome' – are distinguished from Synge and the Revivalists by virtue of the fact that they 'have tried, or affected, to be as un-Irishmen as possible, and the result was very good for art, as happens in most cross-breeding.' Myles's endorsement of 'cross-breeding' in the Irish arts is reminiscent of a 1951 *Cruiskeen Lawn* instalment condemning the campaign to ban English Sunday newspapers from Ireland:

> I do not think any responsible Irish newspaper has asked for [this] type of 'protection' [...]. [I]t seems to me that all national publications, of whatever country, gain in vitality by a process of interaction with imported papers. The same is true of Irish people's blood. It is more and not less foreigners we want here. And there is no limit to our requirements of foreign mental germination.[39]

In both this 1951 instalment and the 1953 *Statist* article, we observe a changed stance from that generally expressed in *Cruiskeen Lawn* throughout the 1940s, when Myles tended to condemn nationalism and 'foreignism' in comparable terms.

In typical Mylesian fashion, this opening section of 'Cultural Affairs' culminates in a pun: '*Non omnis moriar*, Horace said in his proudest ode to himself. *Non omnis Moriarty* is how a fellow like Joyce would have irately defined himself.' The reference is to Horace's *Odes*, book III, poem 30, and translates as 'not all of me will die,' or 'I shall not wholly die.' By rendering '*moriar*' as the Irish surname Moriarty (Ó Muircheartaigh), Myles suggests something like 'not all of me is Irish' or 'I am not wholly Irish' as the motto of good Irish art. His argument, in short, is that Ireland's bad-faith nationalistic self-presentation has not been underpinned by the logic of protectionism, but of trade: a commodity made for export (the international performances of Synge's representation of Ireland) which creates an influx of capital into the country through tourism (the visitor who comes to paint the walls of Aran) but also a loss of self-knowledge, 'authentic' culture, and international standing (the *New Yorker*'s mockery of Charlotte Shaw's will) that produces a net loss for Irish society. In the context of this forum, his critique of bad-faith nationalism in Irish cultural affairs, and his endorsement of the liberalisation of the Irish cultural economy through exposure to foreign 'antibodies,' reads as an oblique criticism of nationalist economic policy and advocacy of the supplement's stated goals of economic liberalisation.

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[39] *CL* (14 February 1951): 4.

'a good writer who will be better': Myles on the Contemporary Cultural Scene

It is possible that the opening section of 'Cultural Affairs' is re-purposed from other writing or drafts, given the extent to which it reads like an instalment of *Cruiskeen Lawn*. However, the piece's second section appears to be written specifically for the supplement. Here, Myles offers his sincere evaluation of the Irish cultural scene in the 1950s – although he concedes that his survey will not be as ambitious as Vivian Mercier and David H. Greene's *1,000 Years of Irish Prose*, which Myles notes (with the civil servant's eye for extravagant expenditures) a 'fearless American publishing house recently offered the public for six dollars.' Although he does not mention it here, the 1952 anthology includes Myles's short story 'Drink and Time in Dublin' as well as the 'Mad Sweeny *versus* Jem Casey' extract from *At Swim-Two-Birds*, and the editors' introduction identifies both Myles and Flann as pen names of Brian O'Nolan. However, what Myles offers in his survey for *The Statist* is more interesting than an indirect form of self-advertisement.

Myles claims 'without hesitation' that 'the country's most considerable achievement in the aesthetic sphere in recent years' is 'Dublin's new Bus Station.' His reference is to Áras Mhic Dhiarmada, known to Dubliners as Busáras, which was opened on 19 October 1953, five days before the publication of the *Statist* supplement. It is possible, at first blush, to assume that Myles is being somewhat back-handed in praising a bus station as Ireland's greatest recent cultural achievement. Indeed, in a 1944 *Cruiskeen Lawn* instalment on 'Irish Culture,' he had insisted that 'young architects blathering about pre-fabrication, plastics and "planning",' was decidedly not to be categorised as culture.[40] Yet, it seems evident to me that Myles is being sincere in his evaluation here of both Busáras as a significant cultural achievement, and of its architect as a significant Irish artist, and is expressing a more expansive understanding of culture than he had a decade earlier.

Busáras was designed by Michael Scott (1905–89), who is remembered today as 'the most vocal force of Irish architectural modernism' in the mid-century period.[41] His designs, which combined Irish traditional styles with international movements – such as Art Deco, Bauhaus, Dutch modernism, and the French modernist style of Le Corbusier – can be seen in hospitals, transport hubs, cinemas, and theatres[42] across Ireland, and he notably designed the prize-winning Irish Pavilion at the 1939 New York

[40] *CL* (20 October 1944): 3.

[41] Ellen Rowley, 'Modern Ireland in 100 Artworks: 1948 – Busáras, by Michael Scott,' *The Irish Times* (27 June 2015): https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/modern-ireland-in-100-artworks-1948-busáras-by-michael-scott-1.2264080.

[42] In *Cruiskeen Lawn*, Myles praises the 'seemly idea to ask Michael Scott to design the new [Abbey] theatre,' especially given his experience with the institution as an actor. *CL* (28 October 1958): 6; (20 January 1960): 8.

World's Fair.[43] In 'Cultural Affairs,' Myles praises Scott's 'cross-breeding' with other facets of culture, as the architect had attended both the Metropolitan School of Art and the Abbey School of Acting,[44] and references Scott's tour of 'America with the Abbey Theatre Players' as an actor in a 1927–8 season of Sean O'Casey's work. Admiring these credentials, Myles emphasises that Scott's control of the Busáras project has 'ensured that no lapse in matters of décor was permitted to disenoble his grand creation.' In these terms, Busáras is suited to the supplement's theme, as Myles foregrounds the station as an example of what is possible when an individual creative talent is supported financially by the state (at a cost of over £1,000,000).

Regarding the building itself, Myles hails Busáras as a

> delightful seven-story structure of glass, bronze, and Portland stone rising behind Gandon's famous Custom House, two million pounds of strictly functional fantasy. It aims to serve the long-distance bus passenger in the manner of the great continental railway stations with shops, bars, restaurant, cinema,[45] and all the trimmings (– yes, there is a barber's shop!).

I'm not sure whether Myles's evaluation would be shared by the majority of Irish commuters today; however, the station was internationally lauded upon its completion. Busáras 'was the biggest single building project started in Europe after the end of the war and architects came from far and wide just to see it under construction.'[46] Following its completion, 'British and American journals published extensive articles, hailing' its architectural, engineering, and aesthetic achievement.[47] In the 2015 *Irish Times* series 'Modern Ireland in 100 Artworks,' Ellen Rowley praises the station as a 'masterpiece of modern architecture' and 'a beautifully crafted object,' noting its cosmopolitan composition, which featured 'Italian mosaic [...] on pillars, canopies and walls; Irish oak floors in its rooftop restaurant; Danish bronze for windows; Portland

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[43] For more on Scott's life and architectural works, see Lawrence William White, 'Scott, Michael,' *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (2009): https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.007950.v2.

[44] His overlapping architectural, governmental, and theatrical work meant that Scott moved in the same circles as O'Nolan, and there is evidence they were on relatively close personal terms. It was from Scott's Sandycove house, next to the Martello tower where the opening episode of *Ulysses* is set, that O'Nolan, Patrick Kavanagh, Anthony Cronin, and others began the first Bloomsday pilgrimage on 16 June 1954. In *CL* (20 April 1959): 8, Myles recollects a trip to Sligo he had taken with Scott.

[45] The newsreel cinema in the Busáras basement was closed in 1955. In 1959, it was converted into the Eblana Theatre, where the Myles na Gopaleen revue *Cruiskeen Lawn* – the first major stage adaptation of O'Nolan's *Irish Times* column – premiered on 21 March 1972.

[46] Frank McDonald, 'The Making of Busáras,' *The Irish Times* (29 May 1984): 10.

[47] Rowley, 'Busáras.'

stone cladding and Roman brick externally; and terrazzo stairways.'[48] In its status as a 'forceful statement of modernism in a post-Emergency Ireland,'[49] we can understand Myles's focus on Scott's architectural feat as a concrete instantiation of the modernist, 'not wholly Irish' ethos that he endorses in the article's first section.

And yet, given the context that Myles is writing for an economic publication in which the majority of contributors are Fianna Fáil politicians, it is hard to avoid the implication that his praise is in part political, as well as aesthetic. The national bus station had been an ongoing Fianna Fáil project since 1944; however, it was halted in 1948 by the newly elected inter-party government, who saw it as a 'Fianna Fáil scheme'[50] and proposed to use the building as office space for the new Department of Social Welfare, the Tánaiste's office, and an unemployment office for women. Frank McDonald claims that this last detail led 'Myles na gCopaleen' to refer to the project derisively in private company as the 'Bust Station.'[51] The joke is juvenile, but, if O'Nolan did indeed make it, it also suggests a greater sympathy with the modernising infrastructural goals of the Fianna Fáil government than the social welfare objectives of the inter-party government.[52]

Continuing this more expansive understanding of 'Cultural Affairs,' Myles avers that 'it is right to acknowledge the unique achievement of Miss Sybil Connolly,' the celebrated Irish fashion designer. Connolly, Myles insists, 'has courageously disputed the contention of Messieurs Fath, Dior, Hartnell et al. that it is illegal for a lady to be a ladies' dress designer and has shown herself to be as good as the best of them at the practice of what is surely an art.' Known as 'Dublin's Dior,' Connolly was one of the first Irish designers to achieve international success through her innovative use of traditional Irish textiles in *haute couture* – again fitting Myles's 'not wholly Irish' theme – with her clients including Jackie Kennedy, Elizabeth Taylor, the Rockefellers, and the Mellons. Myles would reference Connolly on a handful of occasions in *Cruiskeen Lawn* as a shorthand for gags about fashion,[53] but here his evaluation is uncharacteristic not only in his expansive view of fashion design as art, but also in his direct praise for a woman creative. However, as we shall see, when it comes to his evaluation of the Irish literary scene, Myles has nothing to say, one way or the other, about contemporary Irish women writers (Elizabeth Bowen, Kate O'Brien, Teresa Deevy, Mary Lavin, Maura Laverty, *et al.*), reserving his comments exclusively for their male counterparts.

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[48] Rowley, 'Busáras.'

[49] Rowley, 'Busáras.'

[50] McDonald, 'The Making of Busáras,' 10.

[51] McDonald, 'The Making of Busáras,' 10.

[52] The 1951 election of the new Fianna Fáil government ensured the project was completed for its original purpose, although with the compromise that the office space remained with the Department of Social Welfare.

[53] See Myles's references to Connolly in *CL* (5 June 1954): 5; (14 July 1954): 4; (24 January 1955): 6; (14 October 1955): 6; (20 February 1956): 6; (27 February 1959): 6; (5 June 1959): 8; (13 April 1960): 8.

On the subject of literature, Myles divides Irish writers into 'old' and 'new' hands. Of the former, he observes that Seán O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, Austin Clarke, and Brinsley MacNamara 'continue to ply their trade,' while the 'long silence' of 'the country's best poet' Patrick Kavanagh 'suggests that he may be up to something considerable on the quiet.'[54] Myles's prediction might have seemed misplaced in the short term, given Macmillan's rejection of Kavanagh's new poetry collection in 1955; however, Kavanagh's critical value rose with his move to London and the publication of his poetry in the English literary journal *Nimbus* in 1959 and his 1964 *Collected Poems*. Joseph Brooker has written at length about O'Nolan and Kavanagh's mutual respect;[55] still, I imagine O'Nolan scholars will be interested to read Myles describe the latter as 'the country's best poet,' of which profession he 'estimate[s] there are at least 200 in active, printable practice.'

While Myles's contemporaries continue to 'write away,' he contends that 'it must be bluntly said that no new man has obtruded much from the general ruck.' Be that as it may, he identifies three names who show promise. He observes that 'Sam Beckett, who was once Joyce's secretary, has caused quite a stir with a new book, but he has done it in Paris, in French.' The reference is to the novel *L'Innommable*, which had been published in May 1953, but Myles is writing in the same year that *Waiting for Godot* made Beckett an international name. It is noteworthy that Myles focuses on the response to Beckett's writing, rather than the work itself (suggesting, perhaps, that he has not yet read *L'Innommable*), and his choice of the conjunction 'but' implies a view that Beckett was in the process of becoming *wholly* un-Irish. Still, Myles's acknowledgment of a fellow Irish modernist is unlikely to surprise readers of this journal, especially in light of the numerous comparative articles that have been published on O'Nolan and Beckett in recent years. However, the other two writers that Myles identifies as showing promise for Irish literature in the 1950s are more surprising, and may suggest opportunities for new comparative readings in the field.

Myles praises Walter Macken as 'an actor, playwright, and novelist of considerable and growing capacity.' Macken had been a player with An Taibhdhearc, the national Irish-language theatre, and the Abbey, with an growing international profile following his 1951 Broadway performance as Bartley Dowd in M.J. Molloy's *The King of Friday's Men*. In the year prior to the *Statist* supplement, Macken's own play *Home is the Hero* enjoyed the then longest run in the Abbey's history with 98 performances over 17 weeks. He was also emerging as a novelist, with his third book, *Rain on the Wind* (1950) receiving

[54] At the time that Myles was writing 'Cultural Affairs', it had been six years since Kavanagh's last poetry collection, *A Soul For Sale* (1947).

[55] Joseph Brooker, 'Ploughmen without Land: Flann O'Brien and Patrick Kavanagh,' in *Flann O'Brien and Modernism*, eds., Julian Murphet, Rónán McDonald, and Sascha Morrell (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 93–106.

the Literary Guild award in the US. It is not hard to see why Myles saw Macken as an ascending talent, although the almost exclusive focus on Irish rural life and history in his work appears, at first blush, to be at odds with Myles's over-arching theme in this article of Irish culture's thinning green hue. Yet, Myles had been a champion of Macken's work in *The Irish Times* since 1946, when he praised his first play *Mungo's Mansion*, a comedy set in the Galway tenements, as depicting Irish life without recourse to Stage Irishry:

> Mr Macken understands that the high drama which alone can be written without shame must also, on the Irish stage, be written without Shamus (aye, and Shawn) [...]. He has written and – miracle! – induced our good friends at the Abbey to produce a play in which no peasant appears, no parish priest, no land-agent![56]

In line with Myles's prediction in 'Cultural Affairs,' Macken did go on to enjoy some success with his trilogy of Irish historical novels *Seek the Fair Land* (1959), *The Silent People* (1962), and *The Scorching Wind* (1964). However, writing in 2018, Michael Paye reflects that the author 'has remained a peripheral figure in Irish literature' owing to the 'perceived populism and conservatism' of his work.[57] Paye calls for a re-evaluation of Macken's writing, for instance by exploring how his depictions of coastal fishing commons *critique* the 'cultural devaluation of the ocean' that attended 'the capitalist development of the new, "modern" Ireland.' O'Nolan is not beyond populism and conservatism in his own writing, but perhaps some new comparative work on him and Macken – spurred on by his praise for the author in 'Cultural Affairs' – could be a part of the re-evaluation that Paye calls for, especially in light of recent Blue Humanities analyses of O'Nolan's work.[58]

Next, Myles spotlights Benedict Kiely as 'a good writer who will be better.'[59] Again, Myles exhibits a taste for realist handlings of Irish social and historical subjects, as Kiely's three novels at the time of writing – *Land Without Stars* (1946), *Call for a Miracle* (1948), and *In a Harbour Green* (1949) – offer state-of-the-nation portraits of Omagh and Dublin in wartime. Kiely is better remembered today for his literary

[56] *CL* (20 February 1946): 2. Myles also makes reference to Macken in *CL* (3 November 1948): 4; and *CL* (20 February 1952): 6.

[57] Michael Paye, 'Ireland of the Exclusions: Walter Macken's *Rain on the Wind* and the Peripheralisation of the Irish Fisheries,' *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 22, no. 2 (2018): 148.

[58] See Nicholas Allen, 'At Swim O'Brien: Water, Structure, and Aesthetics,' in *Flann O'Brien and the Nonhuman*, ed. Ebury, Fagan, and Greaney, 25–40.

[59] O'Nolan and Kiely were distant relatives, as O'Nolan's uncle, George Gormley was the second cousin of Kiely's uncle, Peter Gormley. See Franck Kersnowski, 'Benedict Kiely – b. 1919,' *Journal of the Short Story in English* 41 (Autumn 2003): http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/315.

criticism, and Myles makes a point to recommend his *Modern Irish Fiction: A Critique* (1950) 'as a detailed and penetrating conspectus of the subject.' In this study of over fifty Irish writers working since independence, Kiely situates *At Swim-Two-Birds* in an Irish literary tradition that 'blends [...] the strange and the real,' which he traces back to eighth- and ninth-century Irish 'stories of wonders and mesmerism and life moving in several worlds – or on several planes – at the same time.'[60] However, Kiely also explores the novel's resonances with the mingling of 'the real and fanciful' one finds in Italian grotesque theatre, which places O'Nolan's work within the 'cross-breeding,' 'not wholly Irish' aesthetic that he endorses in 'Cultural Affairs.'[61] Kiely went further in this more fantastical direction in his own writing with *The Cards of the Gambler* (1953), and if *At Swim-Two-Birds* was an influence in this regard, the exchange between the authors came full circle when Kiely edited and wrote the introduction to the 1976 *Cruiskeen Lawn* anthology *The Various Lives of Keats and Chapman and The Brother*. As with Macken, Myles's direct praise of Kiely's fiction and criticism here, and his apparent influence on the development of Kiely's own work, suggest avenues for future comparative readings.

Turning to the theatre, Myles observes that Irish 'drama, high and low, received an enormous stimulus during the war through the disappearance of cross-channel touring companies.' This claim intrigues as an apparent contradiction to the supplement's objectives, in so far as Myles anchors the growth of contemporary Irish theatre to the 'stimulus' created by a *lack* of competitive pressure from the UK during the Second World War.[62] Myles credits Hilton Edwards and Micheál mac Liammóir with 'pioneer[ing] the serious and "modern" theatre when they opened the Dublin Gate Theatre over 25 years ago with *Peer Gynt.*' For Myles, 'modern' theatre emerges from the encounter of Irish cultural institutions with international writing and thought, here in the Gate's staging of the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen's work. Tracing the development of post-war Irish theatre, he writes that Ireland now

> abounds in travelling 'fit-up' companies, and great is the number of competitive amateur drama festivals, side by side with the older and still vigorous musical festivals. In Dublin it has become almost a fashion to convert cellars and coach-houses into 'little theatres,' with no end to the variety of the fare presented.

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[60] Benedict Kiely, *Modern Irish Fiction: A Critique* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1950), 69–70, 74–7.

[61] Kiely, *Modern Irish Fiction*, 92.

[62] O'Nolan's own turn to writing for the Gate and Abbey from 1942–44 occurred in a wartime context in which 'more plays were presented annually in Dublin than ever before.' Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A History of Ireland During the Second World War* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), 305.

Myles echoes Hogan in his positive evaluation of the entrepreneurial spirit of the little theatres, but without the former's emphasis on the need for a 'mixed' cultural economy that combines that innovative spirit with the traditional craft of established theatres such as the Abbey. This distinction is subtly revealing given that, as we shall see, Myles ends his contribution to *The Statist* with a call for a more radical rebirth of Irish culture without calculations based on its traditions and history.

'the wolf was at the door': Myles on the Economic Plight of the Irish Artist

In the article's third and final section, Myles turns most directly and most in earnest to the intersection of the supplement's broader topic of 'The Economy of Ireland' with his own focus on 'Cultural Affairs.' He admits that it 'is difficult to guage [*sic*] to what extent the economic facts of life dictate the trend and quality of art,' but acknowledges the financial unsustainability of an independent creative career in mid-century Ireland. 'The only author in all Ireland who lives by the pen alone,' Myles writes, is Seán O'Faolain, and the only artist who can 'live by the brush alone in the sense of doing what he fancies with it' is Jack B. Yeats. He observes that all other Irish creatives 'have jobs or pensions or some external source of income,' and indeed many of O'Nolan's contemporaries, such as Denis Devlin and Mervyn Wall, supplemented their literary activities with a job in the Irish civil service, as he did. Myles reflects that 'very gifted artists, perforce, must keep on turning out' commissioned work, although 'they give evidence now and again of what they could do if steady money wasn't so necessary.' Under these conditions, a writer 'who has a full-time job and who still contrives to produce a novel or a play now and again is doing something heroic and excruciating, yet to do so with reasonable success seems his only road to liberation and the leisure requisite for first class work.' Myles shares, anecdotally, that one such contemporary had told him 'that the wolf was at the door, and that this was a very bad sign. "He wants to gets out," he added.' This last line evidently captured O'Nolan's imagination and resonated with his own circumstances (or was a veiled reference to his own circumstances), as he recycled it twelve years later in a letter informing his publisher Timothy O'Keeffe that progress on his unfinished novel *Slattery's Sago Saga* had 'been unduly discommoded with journalism and TV work necessary to keep the wolf from the door (he wants to get OUT).'[63]

Developing his position that economic independence is necessary for producing good art, Myles uses his platform in *The Statist* to call for meaningful investments in Irish culture. However, he departs from the supplement's implicit goals – and appeals

[63] Brian O'Nolan to Timothy O'Keeffe, 10 December 1965, in O'Brien, *Collected Letters*, 548.

to Lemass's insistence that 'a further extension of State activities in the [creative] industrial field may be necessary if all possibilities are to be exploited'[64] – by advocating not for foreign investment, but for further Irish government subsidies of the arts. In this regard, it seems that his intended readership is not so much the journal's British subscribers, but rather his co-contributors in the Fianna Fáil government. One consequence of the absence of such state support, Myles observes, has been 'the disappearance of the man of letters from public life':

> One thinks of Shaw, no parliamentarian but very much a public man, [Oliver St. John] Gogarty, and Sir Osmunde [*sic*] Esmond. Even W.B. Yeats was a senator. The Taoiseach, on the formation of a new Parliament, is empowered to nominate eleven members. An excellent provision if wisely used, but the persons usually so nominated are nonentities.[65]

However, Myles does commend the 'beginnings of a small effort to help in all such sad situations' by the 1948–51 inter-party government under John A. Costello (Fine Gael), which 'initiated the setting up of an Arts Council, for whose use money is voted annually by Parliament.' Calculating the value of the budget assigned to such matters, Myles reflects:

> This year's subvention is £20,000, and grants have been made in the interest of drama, music, sculpture, exhibitions, and the like. The money so far mostly goes on assisting existing drama groups to keep afloat, perhaps paying an orchestra the cost of making a trip from A to B, making a grant towards the P.E.N. Club convention, but not much concerned with the parturitive needs of art itself: and, of course, the money is quite inadequate for even the purposes to which it is being put. Still, the statutory highway for advancement is now there, and may yet be valuable.

His reference to state financial support as necessary to the 'parturitive needs of art' – from 'parturition,' meaning the act of giving birth – suggests that what is needed is not only a subsistence for culture to survive but the material and economic infrastructure for it to be born, or reborn in some altogether new form.

In the present note, I have presented Myles as something of a conservative figure. He appears here as a literary experimentalist and satirist whose writing, despite its heterodox reputation, could fit easily into an economic magazine (and essentially a

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[64] Lemass, 'Introduction,' 1.

[65] na Gopaleen, 'Cultural Affairs,' 99. All subsequent references are to this page.

government pamphlet) that endorses liberal policies which introduce private-sector interests into the social contract between citizens and government while sidelining necessary social reforms. I think that Myles's contribution to 'The Economy of Ireland' bears out this position while understanding that this is a partial and oblique view of a writer whose work is much more interesting and complex than this particular dimension of his output can do credit. As if to insist upon this point, the closing paragraph of 'Cultural Affairs' discards conservatism, broadly, in its endorsement of an attitude towards the future that is modernist in its vision of a radical break from history:

> But perhaps it is better, in the present time of remarkable unincident, to look forward rather than back and hope for some convulsion quite new. It is a far cry from Tom Moore composing his lyrics in a rose garden, to the somewhat faecal reveries of James Joyce. The world and its contents *must* change, and we can't complain. We can only hope that the significant change will, when it comes, be interesting. Other Toms, other Moores.[66]

Myles evidently admires writers such as Macken and Kiely who depict Irish experiences and social realities without recourse to the clichés and stereotypes of the previous generation. Yet, if his praise for these writers is qualified, the final paragraph reveals that this is because they do not constitute the 'convulsion quite new' that he feels is required, and which he calls for state investment to make possible.

Conclusion

As this newly discovered article demonstrates, O'Nolan is an important figure for understanding the intersection of, and tensions between, literature, economics, and politics in the Ireland in which he wrote and which he documented. In this context, 'Cultural Affairs' may be relevant for researchers working on O'Nolan's engagements with economic theories, or on his senior role within the Irish civil service and administrative state. Indeed, as a 'Myles na Gopaleen' piece written for a government-sanctioned economic supplement, 'Cultural Affairs' offers us an unusually direct intersection of two facets of the author's normally compartmented personae: Myles the columnist and O'Nolan the civil servant. The position he develops here, that Ireland should become more open to foreign cultural influence but provide meaningful state investment in the arts, signals a shift from the wartime *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns, which often combined 'scorn for fake, insular Irishness' with an 'an equally insecure faith in all things modern and European' and expressed serious misgivings about granting

[66] Myles puns here on the French expression '*autres temps, autres moeurs*,' meaning 'other times, other mores,' or 'customs.'

the state too high a 'degree of interference in the individual's life.'[67] In this regard, 'Cultural Affairs' suggests that a larger scale mapping of the relationship between O'Nolan's changing conceptualisations of Irish culture and shifting attitudes towards economic policy would be of value to the field.

The article is also notable for mixing the ironic tone of *Cruiskeen Lawn* with apparently sincere evaluations of O'Nolan's contemporaries, from his regular targets to less familiar subjects. Here, we learn a little more about what O'Nolan valued in his contemporaries at this juncture in his career in ways that the ironic tone of *Cruiskeen Lawn* does not always allow for. These insights include his perhaps surprising praise for architects and fashion designers who blend Irish and international aesthetics and, as such, present a more cosmopolitan and modern Ireland to international audiences than the Revivalists had done. But we also learn about his admiration for two realist and socially historical novelists, in Macken and Kiely, who depict Ireland for an Irish readership without recourse to the Celtic or Stage Irish 'green hue' that, in Myles's evaluation, labels such works as being *made for export*. As such, the discovery of this article may be relevant to critics interested in his modulation of tone for different platforms and readerships or to researchers working to better situate O'Nolan amongst his contemporaries.

I discovered 'Cultural Affairs' not through the usual sources or archives that we associate with O'Nolan, but by researching a different contributor to the *Statist* supplement: H.L. Morrow. Beyond the insights that the article itself offers us about O'Nolan's thinking on Irish economics and culture at this specific juncture in his career, this archival find suggests that another benefit of situating O'Nolan among his contemporaries is the potential to discover previously unknown works by the author. As O'Nolan wrote many casual pieces for different publications under various pseudonyms, these kinds of discoveries continue to be made. The 'Notes' section of the present journal offers an invaluable platform for sharing these findings with the community.

[67] Taaffe, *Ireland Through the Looking Glass*, 150, 152.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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