

Inversion & Complementarity in 'Two in One'

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Brian O’Nolan’s short story ‘Two in One,’ like his best work, is very funny, very grotesque, and very disturbing.¹ Further and despite its brevity, this story suggests an impressive range of plausible meanings. The narrator introduces ‘Two in One’ as a ‘strange’ tale that is ‘perhaps unbelievable,’ though there is really no *perhaps* about it, and thus the story invites multiple ‘parabolic’ readings as O’Nolan provokes his readers to naturalise an increasingly extravagant and incredible text through interpretation.² ‘Two in One’ is a multivalent parable, sustaining several interrelated layers of meaning – biographical, political, aesthetic, and cultural, among other possibilities – each of which shares in the common element of an intense ambivalence, as implied in the story’s title. The last of these, a cultural parable that reflects O’Nolan’s position as an Irish writer at mid-century, is most important, for it opens his work to discussion in post-colonial terms, an underexplored dimension of his fiction. Ultimately, ‘Two in One’ expresses the combination of strongly antithetical viewpoints that operates in works of ‘cultural transfer,’ or in keeping with O’Nolan’s own fondness for the grotesque, I prefer the more visceral term cultural *cannibalism*. Both the cannibal of tradition and Brian O’Nolan, it turns out, are deeply ambivalent about their forms of consumption.

Like *The Third Policeman*, O’Nolan’s ‘Two in One’ begins as a straightforward realistic narrative in a first-person voice, developing a situation that leads the narrator to commit a murder, but quickly thereafter moves into the fantastic. The narrator of ‘Two in One’ gives us his name in the manner of an alias – ‘Let us say my name is Murphy’ – leaving us marginally more informed than we are about the nameless narrator of *The Third Policeman* but similarly aware of the uncertainty of his identity, an identity that is fully indeterminate by the end of the tale.³ (As readers of Joyce’s *Ulysses* will remember, an Irishman named Murphy might as well be anonymous.) In the story’s opening, Murphy informs the reader that he is a taxidermist, an assistant to an ill-tempered employer – his future murder victim – a man with an equally anonymous Irish name: ‘we shall call [him] Kelly.’⁴ Murphy’s detailed explanation of the contemporary procedures of taxidermy and his later ‘disquisition’ on the variety of feline breeds, reinforced by plausible historical references to ‘stuffed gorillas having

been in Carthage' and to 'the Austrian prince, Siegmund Herberstein' (1486–1566), who 'had stuffed bison in the great hall of his castle in the 16th century,' enhance the mimetic mode of the story's opening.⁵ Things begin to change, however, when Murphy, arguing with his insufferable boss about cat breeds, strikes down and kills him with a taxidermy tool, a blunt object like the spade the nameless narrator of *The Third Policeman* uses to kill Phillip Mathers in a plot to steal his cash box. Murphy's murder is not similarly motivated. It is a spontaneous crime of passion, a pure act of vengeance, although Murphy comically understates the matter: 'I rained blow after blow on him. Then I threw the tool away. I was upset.'⁶ After he calms down, his story becomes increasingly bizarre. Fearing discovery, Murphy decides to treat Kelly's corpse 'the same as any other dead creature that found its way into the workshop,' flaying off his skin and casting the remains, in order to produce a Kelly-simulacrum to place in the shop 'on view asleep on a chair.'⁷ Realising the hazards of this ruse, Murphy has a new 'illumination' that comes upon him 'like a thunderbolt. *I would don his skin and, when the need arose, BECOME Kelly!* His clothes fitted me. So would his skin.'⁸ A kind of transvestite and what we might call a 'trans-dermist' as well, Murphy dons both costumes and passes: 'having 'dressed,' so to speak, I went for a walk, receiving salutes from [...] people who had known Kelly.'⁹ Confident in having 'committed the perfect crime,' Murphy even moves into the murdered man's lodgings – 'I slept that night in Kelly's bed' – but unfortunately he fails to realise that by doing so, the warmth of the bed, acting on the chemicals used in preparing the skin, fuses Kelly's epidermis to his own: 'My Kelliness, so to speak, was permanent.'¹⁰ In sum, after Murphy's absence is noted, the new 'Kelly' is arrested and condemned to death for the murder of Murphy, for the murder, that is, of himself. The final collapse of identities in 'Two in One' occurs in the story's last sentences when Murphy, in all his Kelliness, finds consolation in his being remembered 'as the victim of this murderous monster, Kelly,' in all his Murphyness: 'He *was* a murderer, anyway.'¹¹

Several features in the opening of 'Two in One,' while ostensibly placing its readers in the realm of conventional narrative realism, simultaneously position these readers to naturalise its subsequent turn to the incredible and interpret Murphy's actions as figurative, as either metaphoric or metonymic substitutions – or both – for a more plausible narrative. The most immediate illustration of this is the story's title that introduces the theme of ambivalence – the conjoining of two antithetical principles – which Murphy's 'embodiment' of his antagonist Kelly enacts on a preposterously literal level, begging figurative reading. Murphy's professionally detailed introduction to taxidermy procedures, while giving his account a kind of documentary reality, further prepares the readers to recognise the patterns of inversion and complementarity – the negative and positive poles of the ambivalent relation – that

will thematically naturalise the fantastic event that follows. The oddly pedantic Murphy explains that, despite popular assumptions, taxidermy does *not* involve 'stuffing' an animal.¹² Rather, the taxidermist carefully removes the skin of the animal and 'encase[s] the skinless body in plaster of Paris.'¹³ He then bisects the plaster after it hardens to create 'two complementary moulds from which you can make a casting of the animal's body.'¹⁴ Thus O'Nolan prepares his readers to anticipate meaning in 'Two in One' to inhere within the illusory exterior of the fantasy that follows and for such meaning to be produced by the dual yet antithetical processes of difference and similarity, negative inversion (metaphor) and complementarity (metonymy).¹⁵ The version (cast) that gives form to the exterior (skin) has been shaped by its inversion (mould); this negative (mould) that will produce the positive (cast) is itself created by the joining of complementary parts by the taxidermist, a kind of 'artist.'¹⁶ The task of the readers of 'Two in One,' then, is to employ the same tactics of inversion and complementarity, now as the reciprocal logical processes informing the rhetorical devices of metaphor and metonymy, to discern the meaning the artist has embodied within the illusory and fantastic exterior of the narrative. Murphy's remark that 'there are several substances [...] from which such castings can be made' to give shape to the mounted 'skin,' to continue the parallel between taxidermy and art, explicitly invites the readers to pursue the possibility of similarly multiple constructions of the meaning that may *in-form* O'Nolan's parable.¹⁷

An initial approach to 'Two in One' as a parable based on the principle of inversion would read this story of homicide as a covert narrative of homoerotic desire. Murphy's act of murder, after all, oddly coexists with its clear opposite: a grotesque literalisation of the idea of 'male bonding,' *avant le terme*.¹⁸ Maintaining *two* such contradictory positions as hate and love *in one* attitude is, after all, the initial definition of ambivalence.¹⁹ This male relationship in 'Two in One,' moreover, contributes to the patterns of homosexual ambivalence seen throughout O'Nolan's major fiction that I have discussed elsewhere.²⁰ A number of innuendoes in 'Two in One' suggest that Murphy's violence stems from its negative inversion: sexual attraction. Murphy's intense hatred for Kelly coexists with his realised desires to *enter* his body and to sleep in his bed, much as O'Nolan's motifs of homophobia in his works coexist with his preoccupation with the homoerotic, rendered deeply ambivalent by the socially and religiously enforced inhibitions of mid-twentieth-century Catholic Ireland.

In addition to the narrator's transvestism – occluded by the fact that it is not in fact cross-gender dressing – and his ghoulish inhabitation of his employer's own skin, both of which expose his homoerotic impulses, Murphy describes the causes of Kelly's 'bitterness' and 'resentment' towards him in a manner that suggests an inversion of the actual circumstances, implying that Murphy is the one who nurses an antagonism

based in sexual jealousy.²¹ Kelly's 'boundless' resentment, according to Murphy, arose from his conviction that his assistant had joined the same club he attends in order to spy on him: 'He thought I was watching him, and taking note of the attentions he paid the lady members.'²² Murphy does not share his boss's sexual interests, and when visiting the club in Kelly's skin, he shrinks away 'hot and embarrassed' from 'a garrulous lady' – perhaps one of Kelly's past conquests – who 'began talking to [him]' in the club bar.²³ Such patterns of inversion in 'Two in One' – violence as desire, homicide as male bonding, or Kelly's hostility as likely Murphy's jealousy – ultimately shape the narrative into a tale of sexual *inversion*: the early twentieth-century term for homosexuality.

Although it is alluring to see the psychosexual subtext in the story as a reflection of O'Nolan's ambivalence toward and anxieties about homosexuality, the utterly incredible element of 'Two in One,' the extraordinary incorporation of Murphy by Kelly('s skin), or to put it better, Murphy's extraordinary decision to assume Kelly's exterior as a kind of envelope (ex-corporation?) that results in the loss or blurring of his identity in the denouement, also invites a variety of political, aesthetic, and cultural readings.

A political reading of 'Two in One' is relatively straightforward since it largely complements rather than inverts the principal relationships and actions of the story. Murphy's position as subordinate to Kelly, 'a swinish, overbearing mean boss, a bully, a sadist,' re-enacts the historical oppression of the Celtic Irish by English or Anglo-Irish authority, transposed to mid-century.²⁴ The anonymously Irish names Murphy assigns both to himself and to his employer and the date of the story's publication, in 1954 and well after the establishment of the Free State, might seem to weaken such an interpretation, yet in the 1950s Ireland remained subject to English cultural hegemony, and the relative economic ascendancy of Anglo-Irish employers remained as well. To see Kelly as Anglo-Irish, then, in contrast to the plausibly Celtic Murphy simply adds another dimension of contrariety within apparent complementarity. Typically for the mid-century 'writer whose fiction is most dependent for its effects on previous Irish literary tradition,' O'Nolan's 'Two in One' mimics earlier tales of the economically oppressed – one thinks of Joyce's story 'Counterparts,' which similarly invokes complementarity in its title – and likewise incorporates the common political theme of 'passing' as one of the privileged class in Irish culture, with an ironic inversion.²⁵ O'Nolan ostensibly reverses the recurrent motif of the West Briton, the Irishman who has *internalised* the values of the English hegemony, by representing the empowered Kelly, in a fashion, internalising Murphy. Or should we describe this freakish bonding as a complementary metonymy for West Britonism because the Celtic Murphy, in a sense, externalises the Anglo Kelly? Internal and external become complexly intermixed and indeterminate, much as does the narrator's identity in the story's

conclusion. The fact that Murphy can never truly 'embody' Kelly, then, enacts the purported loss of identity suffered by the Anglicised Irish who, forsaking their national culture, could never become fully British.²⁶

While such a parabolic interpretation seems plausible, it is equally possible to read 'Two in One' as a complement to more immediate political themes at mid-century. As a macabre literalisation of contemporary fears of Communist infiltration in the West, Murphy's bizarre inhabitation of Kelly's skin anticipates by two years the notorious Red Scare film *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), yet we should remember that this film was itself influenced by over ten years of various documentary and fictional exposés of covert infiltration by the agents of Comintern, including Herbert Philbrick's influential bestseller of 1952, *I Led 3 Lives*. (Radio and television series and a feature film based on Philbrick's exploits were very popular in the USA [1952–4].²⁷) By inverting such fears into a grotesque comedy of literal infiltration, O'Nolan both exploits and ridicules this anxiety, much as Murphy embodies and 'mocks' Kelly, in both senses of the term.

Such political readings, merely sketched here, surely invite further discussion; suffice it to say that they illustrate the multivalent nature of O'Nolan's parabolic technique, or in terms of taxidermy, the 'several substances' from which 'castings can be made' to give shape to the final product.²⁸ They are also related to the intertwined aesthetic and cultural resonances of 'Two in One,' both of which spring from Murphy's assertion in the story's opening that the taxidermist is an 'artist' and, again, from his bizarre assumption of another's skin.²⁹ Murphy's ambivalence toward the mask he has adopted – *via* Kelly's skin – strongly parallels two important features of Brian O'Nolan the artist, the Irish writer at mid-century: his ambivalent relationships with the English language and toward his practice of incorporating the works of others, including his earlier self, in crafting his writings. In both regards, O'Nolan fits the profile of the literary cannibal. These readings pursue both the metonymic (complementarity) and the metaphoric (inversion) axes of interpretation.

Murphy's decision to don the skin of Kelly is a wonderfully precise metonymy for O'Nolan's situation as a native speaker of Gaelic who inhabits the English language for majority of his writing career. In their *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin describe the language strategies of postcolonial texts in terms of acts of 'abrogation' and of 'appropriation' that eerily parallel Murphy's attack on and subsequent inhabitation of Kelly:

The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that postcolonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonised place. There are two

distinct processes by which it does this. The first, the abrogation or denial of the privilege of 'English' involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication. The second, the appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege.³⁰

O'Nolan subverts the control of the English language by England with explicit claims that their language has been wasted by/on the English and that, captured by the Irish and inflected by its contact with Gaelic 'moulds of thought, its precision, elegance and capacity for the subtler literary nuances,' the English language as 'appropriated' in Ireland is superior to that of the metropolitan centre:

in a subtle way Irish persists very vigorously in English [...] and it is worth remembering that if Irish were to die completely, the standard of English here, both in the spoken and written word, would sink to a level probably as low as that obtaining in England and it would stop there only because it could go no lower.³¹

Correspondingly, O'Nolan reconstitutes the discourse of British English by regularly inflecting his characters' speech and his 'own' voice in the journalism with Irish accents and idioms – 'remoulding' English to new usages – and transposes the centre of authority 'over the means of communication' to his column in *The Irish Times* where he inveighs against various abuses of the language and especially against the proliferation of 'fossilised' diction, most clearly in the series of columns he devotes to 'The Myles na gCopaleen Catechism of Cliché.'³²

O'Nolan's keen awareness of the possibilities for the use and abuse of the English language and of the traces of Gaelic that inhabit Irish idiom reflects what Mikhail Bakhtin has described as the 'Linguistic consciousness' that emerges under conditions of polyglossia. Possessing knowledge of more than one language, a 'creating artist' such as O'Nolan, a native-speaker of Irish, fluent in English and at least competent in Latin and German, looks 'at language from the outside, with another's eyes, from the point of view of a potentially different language and style. [...] The creating consciousness stands, as it were, on the boundary line between languages and styles.'³³ By so objectifying language, by incorporating the tongue while maintaining one's distance and resisting full assimilation, the artist replicates the cannibal who ambivalently both desires to absorb the strength of the Other and, to preserve his own identity, loathes the body he consumes in order to 'ensure that the foreign does not become one's own.'³⁴ Most importantly, this linguistic consciousness positions the

artist to see any given language as merely one of several means of communication, rather than as the 'sole and fully adequate tool for realising the word's direct, objectivised meaning.'³⁵ This awareness frees the artist to play with and parody words as counters in the game of communication (so notable in O'Nolan) and fosters the artist's attention as much on 'language itself, [...] the image of language,' as on the meaning communicated.³⁶ And while we cannot know Murphy's language background in 'Two in One,' he clearly shares his creator's linguistic consciousness, repeatedly drawing attention to his uses of language – 'Let us say' and 'we shall call,' 'so to speak' (twice) – and to the image of the word: 'The word [taxidermist] is ugly and inadequate.'³⁷ Like Myles na gCopaleen, Murphy comically exploits the cliché, further alerting readers to the image of the word: 'On this occasion something within me snapped. I was sure I could hear the snap.'³⁸ In effect, we can read Kelly, whom Murphy despises yet desires to inhabit, as both an Anglo-Irishman and now as a metonym for the English language itself, 'done away' with (abrogated) and remoulded by Murphy, whose linguistic consciousness, similar to his creator's, would once more seem to place him in the position of the Celtic Irishman.

As I indicated in my opening, however, one of the most provocative interpretations of 'Two in One' arises from the recognition that Murphy's incorporation by Kelly, or properly speaking, Murphy's 'ex-corporation' of Kelly, respectively establish even more emphatic, complementary and inverted associations with cannibalism. The story's blurring of inside and outside, its disintegration of identity – is Kelly now Murphy or is Murphy Kelly? – and even its confusion of murderer and murdered in its final sentences precisely replicate the complex dialectic of cannibalism in world culture throughout the era of colonialism, where the question becomes 'Who is eating whom?' Observers of the European subjugation of the inhabitants of the New World as early as Bartolomé de Las Casas, in his *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1552), recognised that the Conquistadores had essentially invented the American 'cannibal' – this word inadvertently created by Columbus quickly became a metonym for the purported savages the Europeans encountered – to justify, by false projection (inversion), their own brutality in colonising the Indians, an act of both literal and metaphoric incorporation.³⁹ In effect, colonialism is imaged as *colonic*. Well before the European conquest of the Americas, outsiders had similarly demonised the Celts as cannibals, likely beginning with Strabo's *Geography* (c. 7–18 A.D.). Such characterisations persisted over the centuries of English colonisation and gained in intensity in the sixteenth century when the now Protestant British were able to combine their portrayal of the Irish as savages with the Reformation's attacks on Catholics for practicing a ritual form of cannibalism. And of course, slightly less than two centuries after de Las Casas, Jonathan Swift exploits the same ironic inversion of

the savagery of the Celt in his 'A Modest Proposal,' where he exposes England's rapacious treatment of the purportedly cannibalistic Irish people as itself anthropophagic: 'I could name a country which would be glad to eat up our whole nation.'⁴⁰ Indeed, given the fondness of their writers for anthropophagy, whether in the form of vampirism (cannibalism on a liquid diet) in works like Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* or Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, or the thing itself in, say, Lord Dunsany's 'Two Bottles of Relish,' we might make the case that the Irish have internalised – ironically itself a form of incorporation – those perceptions of their colonisers that justified their subjection.

The model of abrogation and appropriation as the response of the colonised to their linguistic subjugation works equally well to describe their possible response to images that have likewise been imposed upon them, and we can see this in mutations of the cannibal trope that the Irish have by turns internalised, reprojected upon their colonisers (e.g., Swift's satire, or Stoker's Count Dracula as a metonym for the British Empire), and resisted. As Frank Lestringant remarks in perhaps the best study of the subject, cannibalism seems invariably to represent 'something other than itself. It is a moveable sign, a signifier which can cover the most varied signifieds.'⁴¹ We find one of the most intriguing examples of internalisation and resistance, taking the form of resignifying the stereotype of the Irish cannibal, in the figure of James Joyce, the author who clearly exerted the greatest influence on the work of O'Nolan and whose writings, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, are suffused with the idea of cannibalism.⁴² Joyce's resistance to this characterisation of the Irish is both simple and startling: He accepts it, while inverting cannibalism into a creative principle, incorporating it into his aesthetic by imagining both writer and readers as cannibals. To Joyce, the artist cannibalises the literary tradition in his writings, consuming his own kind, including his own earlier works (somatophagy=self-consumption), but primarily incorporating those of his predecessors: 'Dead breaths I living breathe, tread dead dust, devour a ruinous offal from all dead.'⁴³ Yet his work, in turn, does not exist until or unless it is consumed by the reader, sometimes imagined in literal terms, as with the book-eating Shem (bibliophage) in *Finnegans Wake* – 'And trieste, ah trieste ate I my liver [*livore*]' – but more often in the exalted terms of the congregant, consuming the work of art as a kind of Eucharist.⁴⁴ Correspondingly in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus expresses his creator's conception of the artist as a kind of 'priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life.'⁴⁵

Although it is doubtful that O'Nolan ever ate his copies of *Dubliners*, *A Portrait*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*, there is no question that he consumed them and was consumed by them in manners that suggest the reciprocal positions of Kelly and Murphy in 'Two in One.'⁴⁶ Nor is there any doubt that he maintained the ambivalence

of the cannibal toward Joyce, a writer whom he saw as both model and adversary. Occasional references to the man appear throughout O'Nolan's writings, culminating with Joyce's appearance – unflatteringly – as a minor character in his final novel, *The Dalkey Archive*. And the story has often been told of O'Nolan's initial pleasure in being associated with Joyce, especially by the early readers of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, which turned increasingly to resentment since the comparison tended to minimise his achievements.⁴⁷ Yet among the numerous connections to Joyce in O'Nolan's fiction – from his comic literalisation of Stephen Dedalus's conception of the androgynous artist in *Ulysses* in Dermot Trellis's theory of 'aestho-autogamy' to his echoes of various other works, particularly in *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Hard Life*, that resemble the recall of 'Counterparts' in 'Two in One' mentioned above –, arguably his most important incorporation of his predecessor into his work is his consumption of Joyce's aesthetic of cannibalisation.⁴⁸ As the unnamed narrator of O'Brien's first novel explains, 'The entire *corpus* of existing literature should be regarded as a limbo from which discerning authors could draw their characters as required, creating only when they failed to find a suitable existing puppet. The modern novel should be largely a work of reference.'⁴⁹ Hardier souls than I can no doubt discover the various 'corpses' from which O'Nolan has plucked details about Carthage, Siegmund Herberstein, cats, and of course the methods of taxidermy for 'Two in One' – and some readers will surely recognise elements of Edgar Allan Poe in his portrait of the imperfect perpetrator of the 'perfect crime'⁵⁰ – yet, again like Joyce, O'Nolan could be said to cannibalise himself in this story.

The most conspicuous illustration of O'Nolan's somatophagy is his well-known cannibalisation of his then-unpublished second novel *The Third Policeman* for his final major work of fiction, *The Dalkey Archive*. While the figure of de Selby reappears with a capital improvement in the later book as De Selby, O'Nolan also *plucks* the character of Sergeant Pluck from *The Third Policeman*, chiefly to give him, in the form of Sergeant Fottrell, another opportunity to present his peculiar theory of atomic (now molecular) exchange, which turns out to be an intriguingly self-reflexive version of the cultural transfer process. Sergeant Pluck/Fottrell in both books is obsessed by the danger to personal integrity that results from the riding of bicycles, a danger he attributes to the exchange of molecules that occurs between the rider and the vehicle. Pluck explains what he means: 'If you hit a rock hard enough and often enough with an iron hammer, some mollycules of the rock will go into the hammer and contrariwise likewise.' Logically, to Pluck, the same thing happens to people who ride bicycles:

The gross and net result of it is that people who spend most of their natural lives riding iron bicycles over the rocky roadsteads of the parish get their

personalities mixed up with the personalities of their bicycles as a result of the interchanging the mollycules of each of them, and you would be surprised at the number of people in country parts who are nearly half people and half bicycles. [...] And you would be unutterably flabbergasted if you knew the number of stout bicycles that partake serenely of humanity.⁵¹

Fottrell's curious wisdom in *The Dalkey Archive*, repeated almost verbatim from *The Third Policeman*, as a theory of exchange is ultimately about itself. His 'Mollycule Theory' in *The Dalkey Archive* is half a property of this novel, and half a property of *The Third Policeman*.⁵² And while differing in its 'science' if not in its preposterousness, it carries the same import as Murphy's fusion with Kelly in 'Two in One.' The significance of these parallel exchanges of bicycle and body or Kelly and Murphy is that both express the anxiety of the loss of integrity, or the compromise of personal autonomy, that exists as the necessary correlative of such acts of literary cannibalism. Both are metonymies for the tension of assimilation and resistance of cultural transfer theory, the mingled desire and dread of the purported cannibal who ingests the Other, and the deep ambivalence of a Brian O'Nolan who both strikes out at, yet absorbs the molecules of the body he consumes, James Joyce. 'Two in One' begins and ends as the apparent confession of a most disturbing artist.

Notes & references

¹ Flann O'Brien, 'Two in One,' in *The Short Fiction of Flann O'Brien*, eds. Neil Murphy and Keith Hopper (Champaign: Dalkey Archive, 2013), 84–9. O'Nolan originally published 'Two in One' in 1954, under the pseudonym 'Myles na Gopaleen,' in *The Bell* 19, no. 8 (July 1954): 30–4.

² O'Brien, 'Two in One,' 84. See also, Keith Hopper, *Flann O'Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist*, 2nd edn (Cork: Cork University Press, 2009), 193.

³ O'Brien, 'Two in One,' 84.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 84–5. The Schloss Herberstein website makes no mention of these stuffed bison, yet it does note that the estate has maintained a zoo of living animals since the sixteenth century; see <http://herberstein.co.at/tierpark-herberstein/> (accessed 15 February 2015).

⁶ O'Brien, 'Two in One,' 85.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹² *Ibid.*, 84.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Since literary realism already establishes a metonymic relation between a narrative and 'reality,' this movement to a second order metonym of a metonym could also be termed metalepsis (see Hopper, 131). In the following discussion, however, I retain the more familiar term metonymy to name the kind of figurative association that depends for its effect on a contiguous or complementary association between tenor and vehicle, rather than the shock of similarity within difference — including inversion of meaning — that operates in metaphor. Further, although my term 'negative inversion' clearly echoes W. H. Auden's usage in 'Petition' (1930), the word 'negative' here does not merely signify negation, as in Auden's poem, but also designates 'a mould' or 'a reverse impression' of an object (see 'negative, *n.*,' definition 7.b, *OED: Oxford English Dictionary* www.oed.com/view/Entry/125836?rskey=C3FJ8V&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid (accessed 15 February 2015).

¹⁶ O'Brien, 'Two in One,' 84.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ It seems that the phrase male-bonding, popularised by the anthropologist Lionel Tiger, dates from the late 1960s; see Lionel Tiger, *Men in Groups* (New York: Random House, 1969).

¹⁹ See 'ambivalence, *n.*,' *OED* <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6176?redirectedFrom=ambivalence#eid> (accessed 15 February 2015).

²⁰ Thomas Jackson Rice, 'Flann O'Brien: Misogynist or "ould Mary Anne"?' in *Flann O'Brien: Contesting Legacies*, eds. Ruben Borg, Paul Fagan, and Werner Huber (Cork: Cork University Press, 2014), 195–206.

²¹ O'Brien, 'Two in One,' 87.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁵ Edward Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant,' *PMLA* 106, no. 5 (1991): 1128.

²⁶ See George J. Watson, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce, and O'Casey* (London: Croom, 1979), 20.

²⁷ See Herbert Philbrick, *I Led 3 Lives: Citizen, 'Communist,' Counterspy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952).

²⁸ O'Brien, 'Two in One,' 84.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002), 37.

³¹ Flann O'Brien, *The Best of Myles*, ed. Kevin O'Nolan (Champaign: Dalkey Archive, 1999), 282–3.

³² *Ibid.*, 227; see also *Ibid.*, 201–27.

³³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 60.

³⁴ Hans Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, 'Kulturtransfer im Epochenumbruch. Fragestellungen, methodische Konzepte, Forschungsperspektiven. Einführung,' in *Kulturtransfer im Epochenumbruch Frankreich Deutschland 1770 bis 1815*, eds. Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *et al.* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1997), 20; translation courtesy of Professor Ewald Mengel.

³⁵ Bakhtin, 61.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁷ O'Brien, 'Two in One,' 84, 87, 84.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

³⁹ See Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. and trans. Nigel Griffin (London: Penguin, 1992). In their discussion of anti-Semitism, Horkheimer and Adorno describe the

process of 'false projection,' a kind of 'counterpart of true mimesis,' in terms that apply equally to the European projection of barbarism upon the New World natives they brutalised: 'Impulses which the subject will not admit as his own even though they are most assuredly so, are attributed to the object – the prospective victim'; see Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1993), 187. For the origin of the neologism 'cannibal' in Columbus, see Frank Lestringant, *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 15–6. While initially used to refer to the human consumption of other humans, for which languages already possessed the ancient and more precise word 'anthropophagy,' cannibalism gradually came to refer to the eating of one's own kind, regardless of one's species. Human cannibalism was already very familiar to Europeans, since it invariably occurred during famines and sieges or in the wake of catastrophe; however, the invaders of the New World pictured the Americans engaging in a more shocking, ritual form of cannibalism as a pure act of vengeance – like Murphy's unmotivated murder of Kelly – rather than as the last resort of those suffering from starvation.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Swift, 'A Modest Proposal,' in *Jonathan Swift*, eds. Angus Ross and David Woolley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 498. Swift's readers were well aware of episodes of survival cannibalism in Ireland in the century leading up to his 'Modest Proposal'; see Lestringant 182, and Claude Rawson, "'Indians" and Irish: Montaigne, Swift, and the Cannibal Question,' *Modern Language Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (1992): 344–54. During the era of the Great Famine, moreover, the British press reports of actual occurrences of anthropophagy in Ireland not only reinforced the characterisation of the Irish cannibal, but probably contributed to the resurgent fascination with cannibalism in later nineteenth-century popular culture that has continued unabated into the present; as we all know, aliens want to eat us. For more background on the connections of cannibalism and colonialism and its myriad reflections in nineteenth and twentieth-century popular culture, see Thomas Jackson Rice, *Cannibal Joyce* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), 1–28.

⁴¹ Lestringant, 73. A short-list of such significations over the past two centuries would include economic systems (capitalism for Marx), diseases ('consumption,' cancer, AIDS, anorexia nervosa), mechanical and electronic repairs (swapping of parts), and even computer technology (viruses).

⁴² See Rice, *Cannibal Joyce*.

⁴³ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Random House, 1984), 42.

⁴⁴ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: Viking, 1959), 301.

⁴⁵ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Text, Criticism, and Notes*, ed. Chester G. Anderson (New York: Viking, 1968), 221.

⁴⁶ It is interesting to note, though probably coincidental, that the names of the actors in this relationship match (in length) exactly – Kelly/Joyce to Murphy/O'Brien – if one omits the apostrophe which, ironically, Myles na gCopaleen never tired of telling others to do when quoting the title of *Finnegans Wake*.

⁴⁷ See Hopper, 23–46.

⁴⁸ Flann O'Brien, *The Complete Novels of Flann O'Brien* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 37.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 21 (emphasis added).

⁵⁰ 'O'Brien, Two in One,' 87; e.g., see Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1843). For a comparative reading of Poe and 'Two in One,' see Paul Fagan, "'I've got you under my skin": "John Duffy's Brother," "Two in One," and the Confessions of Narcissus,' in Borg, Fagan, and Huber (eds), 72–3.

⁵¹ O'Brien, *Complete Novels*, 678.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 677.