

# Brian Ó Nualláin/O’Nolan

## Scholarly Background & Foreground\*

**Breandán Ó Conaire**

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*‘Ní fhéadaim cuimhneamh ar aon scríbhneoir mór anois a bhféadfá fear léannta a thabhairt air’*

(I cannot think of any major writer at present who could be called a man of learning).

– Seán Ó Ríordáin<sup>1</sup>

*‘Brian Ó Nualláin, afterwards alias Myles na gCopaleen, alias Flann O’Brien, and, as it turned out, the most gifted bilingual genius of half a century’*

– Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, Irish President (1974–76)<sup>2</sup>

### Family Background

From his early years, Brian O’Nolan lived in a family environment in which education, literature, the Irish language, culture, and learning held significant importance. This *milieu* was reflected in the skills, talents, and accomplishments of members of the extended family.

His paternal grandfather Daniel Nolan from Munster was a national teacher and taught music at the Model School in Omagh, Co. Tyrone. He was an excellent singer and an accomplished violinist. He had a special fondness for theatre and opera, performances of which he frequently attended with his young wife. A special concert was organised in his honour in Omagh prior to his transfer to Belfast in the early 1880s. In July 1867 Daniel married Jane Mellon<sup>3</sup> a former pupil at the Omagh school and fourth daughter of James Mellon, a strong farmer from Eskeradooey in Co. Tyrone. The marriage took place at Knockmoyle Catholic Church in Cappagh parish where Jane was born. The parish priest, Rev. Charles McCauley, was the celebrant.

In the national census entries for 1901 and for 1911, when Jane, also known as ‘Sinéad,’ lived with the O’Nolan family in Strabane, her competence in both Irish and English was recorded. Four of their eight children—Máire, Eibhlís, Caitlín (a teacher), and Pádraig—succumbed to the ravages of tuberculosis and diabetes at a relatively young age. Pádraig, who died in December 1908, displayed a keen interest in Irish, was

a member of the local branch of Conradh na Gaeilge/Gaelic League and of the local hurling club, and regularly participated at *feiseanna*, performing recitations. Of the other siblings, all achieved high status in their respective careers.

Gearóid (1874–1942), B.A., M.A., B.D., D. Litt, was an eminent scholar, linguist, teacher, grammarian, author, editor, translator, and autobiographer. As a youngster, he often accompanied his father in visits to the theatre.<sup>4</sup> Following his education at Coill an Chlochair/Killyclogher, Co. Tyrone, at the Christian Brothers' School and at St Malachy's College (as a boarder) in Belfast, he became a scholarship student at the Royal University. Ordained to the priesthood in 1899, he taught at St Mary's Training College and St Malachy's, covering philosophy, Latin, Greek, Irish, English, and mathematics. In 1909 and 1910 he studied Old Irish under the renowned Celtic scholar Rudolf Thurneysen in Freiburg im Breisgau in south-western Germany<sup>5</sup> and was appointed Professor of Irish at St Patrick's College, Maynooth (1909–40), where he taught Old and Modern Irish, Latin, Welsh, and Scots Gaelic.<sup>6</sup>

Fergus, M.A., author and playwright, like Gearóid, was a graduate of the Royal University, specialising in Greek and Latin, which he subsequently taught (through Irish) at Patrick Pearse's school, St Enda's College in Rathfarnham. He had also been a member of the teaching staff at the Cistercian College in Roscrea in Co. Tipperary. After the 1916 insurrection and the death of Patrick and Willie Pearse, he entered the Civil Service and became a respected official in the Land Commission, retiring in 1944. His literary works included a comedy for the Abbey Theatre, *A Royal Alliance* (September 1920)—F. J. McCormick, Barry Fitzgerald, and 'Rip (the tinker's ass)' were featured in the original cast list—, a collection of stories in tandem with Gearóid, *Sean agus Nua/Intrusions* (1923), and a Latin Grammar, *Laidean tre Ghaedhilg: cuimre gramadaigh* (1941).

Peter became a member of the Carmelite Order at the age of 17. Educated, like his brothers, at St Malachy's College, he was ordained in 1902, taught Greek and Latin at the Carmelite Seminary in Dominick Street in Dublin and in 1909 was appointed Prior of Terenure College. From 1914, he spent a period at the Carmelite Priory in New York, returning to the priorate of the community's house in Moate, Co. Westmeath. He was described in an obituary notice (1948) as 'the last surviving member of a distinguished family,' an 'outstanding preacher, [...] a noted classical scholar and a very sound moral theologian.'<sup>7</sup> He spent his later years at the Order's premises in Whitefriar Street, Dublin.

Micheál (1875–1937), the eldest brother and Brian's father, also attended the National School at Coill an Chlochair and following the family's move to Belfast (1882) was enrolled, as a day pupil, at St Malachy's. Following his degree course at Queen's University (B.A. in Classics), he was appointed to the Customs and Excise branch of

the Civil Service (1897). His peripatetic career took him to many locations in Ireland—along with stints in Glasgow and Swansea—while bringing him several promotions and eventually a prestigious appointment to the Board of the Revenue Commissioners (1925). However, much of his life was devoted to his other interests outside of his work. He was immersed in the Irish language movement, as a teacher, organiser, promoter and advocate, pro-actively supporting the projects and programmes of Conradh na Gaeilge. In 1906, he married Agnes Gormley<sup>8</sup> in a ceremony in which Irish had a prominent place. Irish was the language of the home. The 1911 census data records that all members of the family, including Agnes, were bilingual. Micheál cultivated a close relationship with Coláiste Uladh<sup>9</sup> and the Donegal Gaeltacht, encouraging his children to develop a similar attachment. In a series of articles published in the Irish-language paper *Inniu* (December 1969–January 1971) and issued in book form in 1973 (*Óige an Dearthár .i. Myles na gCopaleen*), Brian's elder brother Ciarán refers to visits by the boys and their friends to the Gaeltacht. In particular, he details a cycling and camping trip in the later 1920s, from Dublin to Gort an Choirce/Gortahork, Co. Donegal, undertaken by himself, Brian, and three comrades. An idealised romanticism imbued his younger self:

*An uair sin nuair a bhínnse ag teacht ar chríocha na Gaeltachta d'éiríodh mo chroí agus bhínn ag féachaint timpeall go grinnshúileach ag iarraidh a chinntiú an sa Ghaeltacht a bhí mé go fóill, ionann agus gur chóir go mbeadh na mná níos áille, na fir níos fearúla, tithe níos gleoite, úlla níos deirge agus bánta níos glaise sa tír sin ná in aon áit eile [...]. Chuamar caol díreach suas cnoc na Bealtaine go dtí teach mhuintir Ghallchóir mar a stopaimis bunús an ama.<sup>10</sup>*

Their father Micheál was also committed to promoting the games of the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.), frequently officiating at matches—both football and hurling—throughout Ulster. He was elected President of the Ulster Council of the G.A.A. in April 1904. His other significant personal interests included drama, music, literature, chess, gardening, and creative writing, enthusiasms which were passed on to many of his children. In his 1950 autobiography *Beatha Duine a Thoil*, Fr Gearóid recalled his brother's skill as an excellent storyteller.<sup>11</sup> Most family siblings shared in the interests of their father, although Brian, while not lacking in familial loyalty, later developed trenchant attitudes towards some of the institutions and movements he espoused. These attitudes are best exemplified in his *Cruiskeen Lawn* column and in *An Béal Bocht*.

This tradition of higher education and impressive career paths was replicated in the lives of the O'Nolan siblings as their CVs featured academic degrees and careers in medicine, teaching, art, business management, university lecturing as well religious

pursuits. A significant factor in their younger years was the close relationship with members of their mother Agnes Gormley's lively and talented family where skills and involvement in drama, journalism, photography, and music were prominent.

Micheál was an avid reader and accumulated a sizeable collection of books—*'leathan éagsúil ina réim'* (broad and diverse in range)<sup>12</sup>—to which the children had access. Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, and Robert Louis Stevenson were among his favourite authors. While living in Tullamore, Co. Offaly (1920–23), they also had borrowing rights in the local Convent library, where novels by popular authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle, Rafael Sabatini, Henry de Vere Stacpoole, and George Birmingham were readily available. Intermittent home schooling by Micheál and local tutors was also a feature of family life prior to enrolment at national school (1923). In the cases of Ciarán, Gearóid, and Brian, this phase of formal education began at the Christian Brothers School at Synge Street in Dublin when Brian was twelve years of age. Ciarán, who later became a dedicated journalist, co-founder of the Irish language newspaper *Inniu*, editor and author, recalled that he never remembered a time when his father was not buying books, recollecting that he himself read *'gach rud sa teach'* (everything in the house)<sup>13</sup>—an experience which encouraged him to try his hand at creative writing—and adding that Brian was probably following a similar path.

A random sample from among the eclectic collection on Micheál's shelves might include works by Irish authors Douglas Hyde, Daniel Corkery, James Clarence Mangan, Samuel Ferguson, James Stephens, Edward A. D'Alton (*History of Ireland*, six volumes), and others, while English and American popular and iconic writers were represented by such as William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, Daniel Defoe, H. G. Wells, William Hazlitt, John Dryden, Arnold Bennett, George Eliot, George Meredith, Charles Darwin, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Ambrose Bierce.

Greek and Latin texts also had their place and a limited assortment of books in Irish. These latter included Hyde's *Amhráin Ghrá Chúige Chonnacht*; Peadar Ó Laoghaire's *Séadna*, *Niamh*, and *An Craos-Deamhan*; Séamus Ua Creag's *Iasgaireacht Shéamuis Bhig*; the poems of Dáibhí Ó Bruadair (17<sup>th</sup> century), Piaras Mac Gearailt (18<sup>th</sup> century), and Séafraidh Mac Donncha an Ghleanna (17<sup>th</sup> century). Also in the mix were a gathering of ancient stories and folk tales, including *Brisleach Mhór Mhaighe Muirtheimhne*, edited by Seosamh Ó Laoide (Lloyd), and well-known narratives from the Fianna cycle, *Eachtra Lomnochtáin*, *Teacht agus Imeacht an Ghiolla Dheacair*, and *Tóraíocht Dhiarmada agus Gráinne*. Brian used material from several of these latter texts in his later published works, *At Swim-Two-Birds* in particular. Sharp critical commentary on Peadar Ó Laoghaire and other contemporary Irish language authors was a prominent early feature of his *Cruiskeen Lawn* column.<sup>14</sup>

In his later writings, Brian O'Nolan exhibited a distinct partiality towards the language, sophistication ('*soifisticéisin*'), and artistry of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century authors and texts, impressed by their mastery of language, style and narrative, and their expertise in ridicule, satire, and comedy. In this regard, he voices explicit approbation of poets Aonghus na nAor Ó Dálaigh (16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>15</sup> and Dáibhí Ó Bruadair (17<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>16</sup> and prose texts 'Aisling Meic Conglinne' (12<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>17</sup> 'Stair Éamuinn Uí Chléire' (18<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>18</sup> 'Eachtra na gCuradh' (17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>19</sup> 'Ceithearnach Uí Dhomhnaill' (16<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>20</sup> the stories collected in *Silva Gadelica*,<sup>21</sup> a letter from Aodh Ó Néill, Earl of Tyrone to Sir John McCoughleyn (6 February 1600),<sup>22</sup> and Bedell's Irish Bible (17<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>23</sup> In his accompanying remarks on these texts, he targets the inadequacies he identifies in the work of contemporary Irish writers<sup>24</sup> and reveals the literary values he espouses and the types of vigorous, creative, clever and modern innovative writing 'urban,' 'elegant,' 'steely,' 'European,' 'artistic' — which he champions.<sup>25</sup>

### Schooling & University Education

The four years spent at Synge Street were a robust eye-opener for the brothers, parachuted down among the ebullient city boys. Ciarán compared the experience to someone being thrown into a fire or dumped into freezing water.<sup>26</sup> The discipline imposed by the teachers and the intense teaching regime were a completely new experience. Homework was substantial and the array of subjects '*a dingeadh isteach inár gcloigeann*' (that were packed/rammed into our heads)<sup>27</sup> was impressive. Some of Brian's more negative memories from these years are reflected in *The Hard Life*<sup>28</sup> and in his *Irish Times* columns, although in a piece celebrating the 'majestic' autobiography of Tomás Ó Criomhthain (*An tOileánach*), he would grudgingly confess (as Myles na gCopaleen) that he could 'read contemporary literature in five languages, thanks to the Christian Brothers and an odd hiding now and again.'<sup>29</sup> Ciarán's recollections were more positive and he held the tutelage they received in high regard.<sup>30</sup>

In 1927, the boys transferred to Blackrock in south Co. Dublin where they enrolled in the local secondary level College, established by the Holy Ghost Fathers in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Brian had achieved honours in the national Intermediate Certificate examination and now attained similar results in his Leaving/Matriculation Certificate in 1929. Latin, history, Irish, and English were the principal subjects taken in both exams. In addition, maths, geography, and science were studied for the Intermediate Certificate, and physics for the Leaving Certificate. Along with their schoolwork, visits to concerts and plays in the company of their father were a regular feature of their lives in the capital.<sup>31</sup>

Brian O'Nolan's subsequent enrolment in University College Dublin, Earlsfort Terrace, in October 1929 commenced a pivotal period in his literary career. Emerging from the cocoon of the family years he was now confronted by a plethora of new voices, a refreshed social and intellectual environment and a world of alternative experiences. It was here he encountered and enthusiastically joined up with the College 'intellectual mafia,'<sup>32</sup> a group of lively, talented and like-minded students with a passionate interest in creative writing, modern literature, and the Arts. Drama, poetry, creative prose, contemporary politics, literary theory, and literary criticism were topics central to the discussions among his confrères, who themselves were practitioners of the Arts: Donagh MacDonagh, Brian Coffey (son of the University President Denis Coffey), Denis Devlin, Niall Montgomery, Charles Donnelly, Niall Sheridan, Roger McHugh, and Cyril Cusack among others. In this stimulating environment, he encountered and began to absorb new ideas, innovative literary concepts, and the potential of exciting new horizons emanating from artistic, cultural, and intellectual movements on the European mainland.<sup>33</sup> In terms of literature, authors such as Franz Kafka, Søren Kierkegaard, and French, Russian and American writers were eagerly sought out and analysed by the student literati.

The new social situation released Brian from the restraints and personal limitations of his previous life, and he eagerly embraced the opportunities which this new independence among committed contemporaries presented. These were what he recalled as his 'magic years.'<sup>34</sup> Communication and comedic skills, innovative literary ideas and concepts were developed in untrammelled literary debates with his academic colleagues; valuable experience garnered in writing, editing, and publishing in college magazines and in the public arena. His articles, book reviews, and stories in the *Irish Press*, *Evening Telegraph*, *Comhthrom Féinne*, *Evening Press*, *Inis Fáil*, *National Student*, *Ireland To-day* and his self-initiated periodical *Blather* (1934–35)<sup>35</sup> drew attention to the arrival of a lively new voice, an articulate and inventive scribe in both Irish and English, whose linguistic exuberance revealed a special talent in domains of humour, caricature, fantasy, mild derision, and satire. His writing and college activities were noticed in the national press,<sup>36</sup> enhancing his image and fuelling his confidence. His college experiences were not solely confined to literary matters: he also indulged in drinking sessions, card-playing, performed with the College Dramatic Society, was elected to the Students' Representative Council and the Céilí committee, appointed Secretary of the Billiards Club, and was a Leader of the annual College 'Rag.'

These activities along with regular formal debating (he became a superb impromptu speaker) and electioneering forays (not always successful) were important dimensions of his newly acquired freedoms. He exercised and developed his mischievous sense of comedy, his expertise in parody, mimicry, and satire. One

notable character he invented in the student publication *Comhthrom Féinne*, Brother Barnabas, 'was not born in Grogans [tavern]. He was born in—well, never mind. He was educated in Synge Street, Blackpits,<sup>37</sup> Blackrock, the Pidgeon House, Guinness's, and the Billiard Room, U.C.D., and is now reading for his degree.'<sup>38</sup> His publications in the 1930s included unique rambunctious comic tales (involving aspects of student life and the pleasures of drink) composed in his own-branded version of medieval Irish.<sup>39</sup>

In later times, his fellow students recalled images and memories of O'Nolan from these years. His close confidant Niall Montgomery, playwright, sculptor, painter, surrealist poet, Joyce and Beckett scholar, translator, and Francophile, who served as President of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland 1976–77, remained a lifelong friend and helped him out with his *Cruiskeen Lawn* column in later years. A former student of the Irish College in Ring, Co. Waterford, Montgomery, like O'Nolan, had a special fondness for 'the older, elegant,' 'classical' Irish language and literature. He penned the following tribute after the death of his friend:

Brian Ó Nualláin was a fantastic and wonderful fellow, and to say *nach mbeidh a leithéid arís ann* is putting it mildly; there never was the like of him, certainly not in U.C.D. in the thirties, where he descended, like a shower of paratroopers, deploying a myriad of pseudonymous personalities in the interests of pure destruction.

As his own personal self—white-faced, oak-hearted and scorpion-tongued—he was the terrifying chairman of the L. and H. [*sic*].<sup>40</sup> He edited the college magazine [...]. Inside, as Brother Barnabas, he wrote, in English and Irish, with greater regard, at all times, for his linguistic needs than for theirs [...].

It's misleading to say that he was a born writer, if craven dedication to trade be implied: rather was he a sorcerer, owner of a cauldron out of which he pulled words, common and uncommon, to clap, like scalding pitch-caps, on the shrinking heads of concepts happy hitherto to be nameless. Most dazzling was his consistent presentation of uncommon ideas as common sense: the delirium on which he imposed order was very real to him—he hypnotised a generation into believing that it was Ireland.<sup>41</sup>

O'Nolan himself affected a special relationship with the experimental writings of James Joyce. The student narrator in *At Swim-Two-Birds* possesses works by Joyce and Aldous Huxley, 'generally recognised,' he remarks, 'as indispensable to all who aspire to an appreciation of the nature of contemporary literature.'<sup>42</sup> In 1935 and 1938, O'Nolan published under the heading '*Extractum O Bhark I bPragrais*' (Extract from Work in Progress) 'part of a great work' he claimed to be engaged on, which, he wrote,

had an 'affinity with the work of another eminent Irish author now resident in the French capital.'<sup>43</sup> This tale, 'Pisa Bec Oc Parnabus,' had similarities with the surrealist *Finnegans Wake* segments, under the heading 'Work in Progress,' which appeared in literary magazines (*The Transatlantic Review* and *transition*) during the 1920s and 1930s. O'Nolan's composition contains references to Shem the Penman and Shaun the Post, characters featured in the *Wake*.<sup>44</sup>

Another contemporary was Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, a former pupil at CBS Synge Street and future President of Ireland. In his inaugural Presidential address in Dublin Castle (December 1974) Ó Dálaigh made reference to a UCD electioneering occasion in 1931 when he was a candidate for the Chair of the prestigious Literary & Historical Society:

My opponent [Dermod Walsh] was a better academic than I ever succeeded in being. We each had our own supporters. I was a little ahead of my opponent in terms of promises. But the decisive factor was going to be a third group, numerous, uninterested in office, much given to heckling and, as I then thought, the life, if not the soul, of the society; and whose much-loved leader was Brian Ó Nualláin, afterwards *alias* Myles na gCopaleen, *alias* Flann O'Brien, and, as it turned out, the most gifted bilingual genius of half a century. This group was known, with undergraduate inelegance and accuracy, as 'the mob.'<sup>45</sup>

O'Nolan's early college courses included Irish, English, German, Latin, and logic. He was awarded the B.A. (Hons.) degree in 1932. With an eye towards future employment, he then commenced and completed, following a sojourn in Germany, a master's degree. His thesis on '*Nadúir-fhilíocht na Gaedhilge*' (Irish Nature Poetry) was submitted in 1934 and following rewrites, revisions, and expansions was accepted in 1935.

O'Nolan's courses in the Irish department significantly enriched his previous acquaintance with and knowledge of the philology, literature, history, and folklore of the language, and his voracious private reading added to his store of accumulated knowledge. Myles na gCopaleen later claimed that he was 'familiar with the whole of Gaelic literature and nomenclature, particularly our poetic corpus.'<sup>46</sup>

College reading lists furnished material for his subsequent career in fiction and journalism. The texts specified for both his bachelor's and master's degrees encompassed both contemporary and historical works, and a range of genres including fiction, biography, folklore, and poetry. Within the B.A. curriculum list were:



*An tOileánach* (Ó Criomhthain); *Séadna* (Ó Laoghaire); *An Grádh agus an Ghruaim* (Mac Grianna); *An Baile Seo'Gainne* (An Seabhac); *Sceulta Mhicil* (Ó hEochadha); *Cóilín Ó Cuanaigh* (Ó Conaire); *Eachtra Múinteora* (Seán Seoighe); *Sgéalaigheacht Chéitinn, Eachtra agus Imtheachta na nIarla* (Ó Cianáin/Walsh); *Oidhe Chlainne Lir agus Oidhe Chlainne Uisnigh* (Ó Ceallaigh); *Buile Shuibhne* (O'Keeffe ITS); *Torolbh Mac Stairn* (Coimín/Ó Neachtain); *Me Guidhir Fhearmanach* (Dinneen); *Pádraigín Haicéad* (Ó Donnchadha); *Tadhg Gaedhlach* (Ó Foghludha); *Dánfhocail* (O'Rahilly); *Duanaire Gaedhilge* (Róis Ní Ógáin); *Laoi Oisín ar Thír na nÓg* (Coimín/Ó Flannghaile).

Additionally, two other categories, '*Ábhair speisialta*' (special topics), were appended:

**1931:** '*Na céad-leabhra Gaedhilge do chuireadh i gcló*' (the first Irish books published);

**1932:** '*Béaloideas agus Sean-aimsireacht*' (folklore/oral tradition and matters relating to olden times).

The bibliography attached to his master's thesis displayed a more challenging research scenario. It included a raft of academic journals covering the ancient literature and language and introducing the work of Irish and Continental Celtic scholars:

*Revue Celtique*; *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* (ZCP); *Irische Texte*; *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*; *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*; *Celtic Review*; *Gleanings from Irish Manuscripts* (Walsh); *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*; and a variety of volumes issued by the *Ossianic Society*, *Irish Archaeological Society* and the *Gaelic Society of Inverness*; *Silva Gadelica* (O'Grady); *Beatha Cholmcille* (Reeves); *Tripartite Life* (Stokes); *Teacht agus Imtheacht an Ghiolla Dheacair* (ed. Lloyd); and several works by the eminent German academic Kuno Meyer, including the *Meyer Miscellany* (Bergin, Marstrander, 1912); *Duanaire Finn* (Mac Neill/Murphy); *Measgra Dánta* (Ó Rathile); *Irish Syllabic Poetry* (Knott); *Leabhar na Laoitheadh* (Ó Ceallaigh); and the poetry of Donncha Mór Ó Dálaigh, Tadhg Mór Ó Huiginn, Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird, Liam Nuinseann, Giollabhríde Mac Conmidhe, Seán Ó Neachtain, Brian Merriman, and Giollabhríde Ó hEodhusa.<sup>47</sup>

Several of these texts invoked or stimulated imaginative ideas, raised potential scenarios, and delivered material contributions—on which he stamped his own brand of parody, mockery, comedy, fantasy, hyperbole, and linguistic playfulness—towards his impending serious entry into the public arena with *At Swim-Two-Birds*, *An Béal*

*Bocht*, and *Cruiskeen Lawn*. In his Reader's review of *At Swim-Two-Birds* for Longmans, Graham Greene identified the 'seriousness of the attempt to present, simultaneously as it were, all the literary traditions of Ireland.'<sup>48</sup>

## Frustrated Scholar

Formal studies at the University completed, a career within the state's Civil Service, in the family tradition, beckoned and was achieved (1935). The *Cruiskeen Lawn* column, launched in October 1940, survived throughout his career in the Service, and beyond. He retired as Principal Officer in February 1953, having served as Private Secretary to several Ministers for Local Government. However, with his master's certificate in his hip pocket, a yen for a position in academia manifested itself and persisted. This ambition was flagged in numerous references in his *Irish Times* column. *Cruiskeen Lawn* was a 'rostrum,' a 'pulpit,' and his fulminations therein were dispensing 'lectures,' 'teachings,' 'educating,' 'exposition,' 'explanation,' 'instruction,' 'guidance,' and suchlike.<sup>49</sup> Then, in the early 1940s, Myles na gCopaleen began targeting staff and management of the academic institutions, the University and the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (established by Taoiseach Éamon de Valera in 1940), with accusations of incompetence, dereliction, and laziness:

*Tá uathbhás airgid á chaitheamh againn gach bliain ar mhaithe le 'árd-léigheann' acht ní fiú mórán an toradh atá faghálta againn go dtí an lá so.*

*Tá ollaimh Gaedhilge againn a steallann uatha cúpla léigheacht i n-agaidh an lae agus síleann gur leor san mar chúiteamh ar na cnódha deasa óir—míle 'sa bhliain, bhféidir—a tharraingeann siad anuas comh réidh...Tá níos mó leisce 'ná léigheann ag a lán des na h-éigsíní Gaedhilge indiu agus is mithid go ndéanfaí an fhírinne do chur i n-iúl dóibh—leis an mbróig, má's riachtanach. Ni cheart go mbeadh aon trócaire ag dul don té nach gcuireann cló éigin fiúntach ós comhair an phobaill gach re bliain ar a laighead agus bhéadh sciúrsáil fá leith tuillte ag aon Árd-ollamh le Gaedhilg a chaitheann a chuid ama ag cur le chéile leabhráin le h-aghaidh na mbunscoil—is cuma liom cé mhéid airgid atá sa chluiche sin.<sup>50</sup>*

A year later his indignation and resentment had increased in its ferocity and bitterness:

*Léighim go bhfuiltear le foclóir mór níos foc[l]amhla ná aon cheann a bhí agam riamh do sholáthar dúinn. Maith an tásca! Beidh an chéad chuid de—an litir A—ar fáil le toil Dé sa bhliain 2040, acht sa mheán-tráth beifear ag baint cána agus cíosa uaim-se agus uait-se le na saoithe seo do chothú agus do bheathú. Beimid ag díol go deo ar earraí do-*

*fheicse. Nuair a bhéas an bith-fhoclóir seo críochnuithé agus ar fáil beidh an Ghaedhilg marbh comh maith linn féin. Acht beidh mála breágh de phrátaí tiomsuithe ag gach saoi dóibh, agus beidh féachaint folláin reamhar ar a gclann.<sup>51</sup>*

With that matter off his chest, he refused to vacate the pulpit until he had turned his chagrin in the direction of the administration and their responsibilities:

*Is fíor gur fiú an sclábháí a phaigh. Díoltar mise as an ráiméis laethiúil seo acht dá olcas é ní féidir a rá nach nach scríobhaim é. An phighin a gheibhim ar fhocal, ní iondhiolta í mara bhfuil an focal sin ar pháipéar agam. Díol na saoithe ar an ordú céadna. Díol iad ar gach line tairbheach a bheir siad dúinn. Díol go maith iad más maith an obair atá á dhéanamh aca. Acht aon ard-mhac nach n-oibrigheann comh dian leis an ghnáth-dhuine sa tsráid, ná díol pighin ruadh leis an mhac sin.<sup>52</sup>*

Astonishingly, he followed this indignant outburst with a totally unexpected—for a person who carefully veiled his private life behind a curtain of pseudonyms—and highly unusual divulgence of a very personal regret and a deeply felt disappointment, lurking behind his fierce denunciations, within his own life's private aspirations. The Mylesian mask slipped and the man behind the *nom de guerre* emerged speaking, with explicit animosity, on his own behalf:

*Lá den tsaol bhí dóchas agam féin go bhfuighinn cuid de na sméara Gaedhilge seo a bhíonn á roinnt ó am go h-am. Suidheachán san ollscoil, cuir i gcás. Stól beag bog i measc na ndámh. Dhá léigheacht sa lá agus míle práta sa bhliain. Acht níl caoi reatha agam ina na rásaí cearta. Ní bhfuighinn post ollscoile níos aoirde ná 'léiththeoir' agus na 'léighththeoirí' bochta a gheibh an tarcuisne, an crádh, an dian-obair agus an droch-pháigh. Agus b'fhéidir nach bhfuighinn fiú an puist sin. Ní meas atá orm i gcearcalaibh an aird-léighinn ar a bhfuil déanta agam leis an fhírinne shalach shearbh do labhairt i dtaobh na n-ollamh maith-faighte agus na saoithe so-chodlata. Ní grádh ná urraim a leigeann siad liom. Ni an deagbhriathar a luadhann siad im leith. Eagla agus formad agus éad buidhe a líonann a gcroidhthe. Ag faire i gcomhnuí a bhíd, ag dúil le faille mo threascairte. Acht ní bhfuighidh siad í. Gheobhaidh siad a mhalairt—lán a gcoiceann féin den íde seo agus gach comh-íde eile, comh minic is bhíonn goile agam-sa chuige. B'fhéidir nach beag sin.<sup>53</sup>*

Obvious displays of erudition surfaced not only in his books but also in many *Cruiskeen Lawn* columns. Fragments of German, French, and Latin appeared, as did Greek and Japanese typeface and musical notation, references to eminent musicians and

writers (Brahms, Beethoven, Schubert, John Ruskin, George Moore, *etc.*), creative texts in the mode of his own antique Irish,<sup>54</sup> extracts from learned journals, parodies of folkloric anecdotes in 'Tales from Corkadorky,' hilarious pseudo-manuscript inventive accounts of the life of the putative poet Dóghruaigeach Ó Maol Blagaide, fine translations ('*transliotaraistriú*') of early Irish verse and 'Cúinne an Áirdléighinn.' Occasionally, he would disparage his own work-role as a columnist ('*ráiméis laethúil*') as though he regarded the exercise as well below his status, qualifications, and capabilities.

Emerging from a succession of rich cultural backgrounds, from family to university and beyond, O'Nolan developed a sharp, witty, and fearless intelligence, a robust self-confidence, a mastery of genres, a fertile, creative, and capricious imagination, and an innate comic sensibility. Given that he had accumulated a diverse range of competences, literary achievements, academic scholarship, liberal erudition, and a familiarity with contemporary artistic movements and literature in several languages, it would have seemed natural for him to aspire to a rewarding career in academia which would satisfy his literary ambitions and intellectual interests. From a keen awareness of his own honed talents, his personal interests and achievements, ambitions and potential, not to mention his financial situation, a natural corollary was the emergence of a sense of entitlement to (public) recognition, respect, preferment, and commensurate remuneration, a conviction frequently and artfully ventilated on his *Cruiskeen Lawn* platform. Whether the rigorous regime of a university setting would satisfactorily accommodate the Mylesian temperament, personality, and lifestyle is open to question.

Although life as a professional scholar was not within his 'determined' destiny, the knowledge and experiences he garnered in his years as a graduate and postgraduate research student provided significant components and inspirational sources for an alternative career as a learned and respected creative writer and as a provocative and polemical journalist. His dedication to literature and learning did not diminish after his student years. His book collection, now held at the Burns Library at Boston College, Massachusetts, contains an array of works by international writers including German, British, French, Russian, American, and Classical authors.<sup>55</sup> Several dictionaries, Greek and Latin textbooks, theological and philosophical texts, reference tomes, 24 volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1951) and six books of *The Casquet of Literature* (19<sup>th</sup> century) are also stacked on the shelves. The collection displays works by Plato, Grecian poets Hesiod and Theognis, a Greek version of the Bible (1765; signed by O'Nolan in 1935), volumes of the *London Journal* and *Duffy's Hibernian Magazine*, works by George Bernard Shaw, Oliver Goldsmith, and James Clarence Mangan, a copy of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and of Joyce's *Ulysses* (volume 1; with O'Nolan's signature 1937), Robert Byrne's [*sic*] *Songs and Poems in Gaelic*, Arthur Koestler's *Insight*

and Outlook, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomena of Man* and *The Future of Man*. A lighter element is revealed by *My Chess Career* by José Raul Capablanca, who was world champion between 1921 and 1927. Playing chess, like playing the violin, was a favourite pastime of O'Nolan's.

Indication of this commitment to literary research is evident in the preparation of his final substantial novel *The Dalkey Archive*. In replying to a query in 1964 from Cecil Scott of the Macmillan publishers in New York, seeking clarification regarding the draft of Chapter 4 dealing with St Augustine, the author responded:

The material presented is dead serious, sound and accurate from the points of view of hagiography, history, theology, and Augustine's own utterances. I believe I have read everything about Augustine published in English, French, German, and Latin, and [...] I believe the chapter is a fair exposition of St Augustine as he appears to the independent mind today. Nobody can be certain whether he was a genuine holy man or a humbug, headcase. In my research I soon found that no reliance whatever was to be placed on the commonly available works of Augustine in translation (mostly by clerics) to English or French: it was the rule to dilute or deliberately mis-translate many of his robust and brave avowals and confessions. Eventually I read practically the whole lot in Latin, which I found very straightforward because Augustine openly modelled himself on Cicero, avoiding any colloquialisms of his time.<sup>56</sup>

In the course of his resolute researches, he consulted a distinguished classical scholar, author, and Regius Professor of Greek at TCD, William Bedell Stanford, also an elected member of Seanad Éireann, and utilised his response in the narrative. He realised, of course, and said so in his reply to Scott,<sup>57</sup> that the scholarly research functioned in the service of the literary project with imagination, narrative, and structural and creative skills taking precedence over the strict requirements of accurate and comprehensive academic investigation.

Some of his best and early work draws heavily from sources acquired within taught courses, personal studies, and readings, and research and literary debates during his university years. *At Swim-Two-Birds* gathered several of its central ingredients from the early literature and from folklore,<sup>58</sup> his own life as a student, personifications of the pretentiously erudite know-all Dublin 'character,' and popular novels/films, all fashioned and cast within a semi-surrealist structure. The core elements of the meticulously crafted anti-romantic *An Béal Bocht*<sup>59</sup> are principally built on publications of contemporary Gaeltacht writers, their depictions of their community, living conditions and customs, the zealous activities and speeches of the

language restoration movement, idealistic portrayals of the Gaeltacht by (urban based) 'romantics,' colonial images of the 'mere Irish,' the stereotypical Irish rainy weather, and the collection and study of folklore.<sup>60</sup>

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### Postscript

In recognition of *The Parish Review's* commemorative gesture towards *An Béal Bocht* in this edition,<sup>61</sup> some examples from that classic text and their sources are appended. These short extracts display elements of comic/grotesque hyperbole, of mockery of contemporary puritanical censorship,<sup>62</sup> and of illusory idealistic depictions of western Irish communities, a parody of the heroic image and stylistic mannerisms of some Donegal writers.<sup>63</sup>

### Editor's introduction

- *De dheascaibh an fhaid atá san scríbhinn dob' éigean roinnt d'fhágaint ar lár. (An tOileánach, Tomás Ó Criomhthain. Editor's introduction. 1929)*
- *Tá an scríbhinn seo go díreach mar fuair mé í ó láimh an údair, acht amháin go bhfuil an mhórchuid fágtha ar lár de dheascaibh easba spáis agus fós de dheascaibh a raibh innti de thráchtas ar neithe nach bhfuil oiriúnach. (An Béal Bocht)*

### Bónapárt's (questionable) birth/parentage

- *Ní raibh mór-shúil chuige liom san am gur bhuaileas chúcha. [...] Ní raibh aon tsúil liom-sa aca an t-am gur bhuaileas chúcha (An tOileánach, 8, 32)*
- *Ní raibh aon choinne ag m'athair liom, óir duine cneasta a bhí ann, agus ní go ró-chruinn a thuig sé cúrsaí an tsaoil. [...] Dúirt na daoine freisin nach raibh aon choinne ag mo mháthair liom [...] agus is fírinneach go raibh sé ráite ós íseal nach le mo mháthair a rugadh mé ach le mnaoi éigin eile. (An Béal Bocht)*

### Bónapárt the anti-hero (fleeing to the hill)

- *Do phreabas im' shuidhe agus nuair do bhí greim caithte agam [...] do thugas m'aghaidh ar an (mbád) (An tOileánach)*
- *D'fhágas an leaba go breá moch an chéad mhaidin eile agus an t-am a raibh blúire phráta caithte agam, thugas aghaidh ar an (gcnoc). (An Béal Bocht)*

### The writing of Séamus Ó Grianna ('Máire')

- *Bhí sé 'na chomhnuidhe leis féin i dteach bheag cheanntoigheadh i n-asgail a' ghleanna. Ní raibh fhios againn féin (agam-sa nó ag Domhnall nó ag an chuid eile de na páistí*

*s'againne) ní raibh fhios againn cad chuige ar tugadh 'An Sagart' air. ('Sagart Éamoinn Sheáin Óig,' in Cith is Dealán, 1934)*

- *Bhíodh sé 'na chomhnuidhe leis féin i dteach beag aol-bhán i n-ascaill a' ghleanna [...]. Cha raibh fhios agam-sa...ná ag Pats ná Micilín s'againne, ná ag Nóra Chatach Nellí Mhóir Pheadair Óig, cad chuige an dtugtaoi an Caiftín mar ainm air. (An Béal Bocht)*

### The school master

- *tuar-cheatha de sheanduine liath a raibh gruaig sceadach air, féasóg sconnribeach, soc confach, agus dreach cointinneach. D'amharc sé lena dhá shúil dhearga. (Caisleáin Óir, 1924)*
- *[...] an máistir. É dubh lom ard; cuma ghéar shearbh ar a ghnúis, na cnámha inti ag preabhadh tríd an gcráiceann buí; gan aon tsláinte aige; cuil feirge ar a éadan i gcónaí chomh seasmhach ann lena ghruaig...a shúile nimhneacha ar foluain ar fud an tí. (An Béal Bocht)*

### The beating

- *[...] anuas leis an mháistir go ceann an tí agus slat saileoige leis ina láimh. Thóg sé an tslat os cionn Shéimí...ag tarraingt na slaite aniar fríd an chloiginn air. Agus tharraing sé an dara leadhb sna cluasa air agus an tríú ceann sa chaoldroim (Caisleáin Óir, 1924)*
- *[...] racht mór feirge ag teacht air agus ag méadú de réir a chéile...tháinig tafann confach ón máistir agus ghlaigh sé aníos orm chuige lena mhéir. Nuair a tháinig mé a fhad leis bhí maide rámha faighte aige ina ghlaic. Bhí fearg tagtha anois ina rabharta air agus bhí greim chun gnótha aige ar an maide lena dhá láimh. Tharraing sé thar a ghualainn é agus thug anuas orm go tréan le fuamán gaoithe, gur bhuail buille tubaisteach sa chloigeann orm. Thiteas i laige ón mbuille sin [...]. Fuaireas mé féin sínte ar leataobh ar an urlár, mo bhríste, mo ghruaig agus mo phearsa uile ar maos ó na slaoda fola a bhí ag stealladh ón scoilteadh a bhí déanta ag an maide ar mo chloigeann [...]. Mar sin de go raibh gach créatúr sa scoil buailte aige. (An Béal Bocht)*

### The writing of Seán Mac Meanman

- *D'fhág Seaghan an píopa [...] ar an bhac [...] rinn sé casachtach, réidhtigh sé a sgeadamán, agus shocruigh sé é féin ins an chathaoir. (Fear Siubhail, 1931)*
- *Réidhtigh sé a sgeadamán, shocruigh sé é féin ins an chathaoir, shín sé a chuid loirgne uaidh, a's thúsai. (Indé agus Indiu, 1929)*
- *Shocraigh sé a cholann go beadaí sa chathaoir, chóirigh sé a thóin faoi go cúramach, chuir sé a dhá spág fá'n ghríosáí, dhearg a phíopa...réitigh sé a sgeadamán agus thosaigh. (An Béal Bocht)*

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## Notes & references

\* This article is an English-language version of 'An scoláireacht laistiar den scéalaíocht' (The Scholarship Behind the Storytelling) which was presented during Éigse Cholm Cille 2014 at the University of Ulster, Magee Campus, Derry, one of a series of lectures delivered under the title *Scoláirí Gaeilge Iarthar Uladh* (Irish Scholars of West Ulster) between 28 February–1 March 2014.

<sup>1</sup> Seán Ó Ríordáin, *Anamlón Bliana ó dhialanna an Ríordánaigh*, ed. Tadhg Ó Dúshlaine (Conamara: Cló Iar-Chonnacht, 2014), 91.

<sup>2</sup> President Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, qtd in Risteárd Ó Glaisne, *Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh* (Maynooth: An Sagart, 2001), 322; 'Inauguration Speech of President Ó Dálaigh,' *The Irish Times* (20 December 1974): 10.

<sup>3</sup> An tAthair Gearóid Ó Nualláin, *Beatha Duine a Thoil* (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1950), 9; ('*Cailín ana-dheallrathach ab' eadh í...ní raibh sí ocht mbliadhna déag d'aois nuair a pósadh í*'), *ibid.* 16–7, 37–8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Damien Ó Muirí, 'Gearóid Ó Nualláin—gramadóir nua-aoiseach,' in *Léann na Cléire*, ed. Pádraig Ó Fiannachta (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1986), 202; *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 821; Diarmuid Breathnach and Máire Ní Mhurchú, *Beathaisnéis a Dó* (Dublin: An Clóchomhar, 1990), 129; An tAthair Gearóid Ó Nualláin, *Beatha Duine a Thoil*, 98, chapters 19–20.

<sup>6</sup> Gearóid Ó Nualláin, 46. In his autobiography he also mentions philosophy, Greek, English, and mathematics (46).

<sup>7</sup> *Irish Press* (1 September 1948): 5.

<sup>8</sup> Recorded as 'Shop Assistant (Stationary)' in the 1901 census, fourteen-year-old daughter of John and Teresa Gormley of 18 Barrack Street, Strabane. The 'Irish Language' column is blank.

<sup>9</sup> An Irish language college established in 1906 in the parish of Cloich Cheann Fhaola/Cloghaneely, following the examples of Coláiste na Mumhan (1904) and Coláiste Connacht (1905).

<sup>10</sup> *Inniu*, 4 December 1970; See also Ciarán Ó Nualláin, *Óige an Dearthár .i. Myles na gCopaleen* (BAC: Foilseacháin Náisiúnta Teo., 1973), 78; on the travels up north. See also 73–4, 85–8.

<sup>11</sup> Gearóid Ó Nualláin, 29; Ciarán Ó Nualláin, *Óige an Dearthár*, 13, 10, 54.

<sup>12</sup> Ciarán Ó Nualláin, *Inniu*, 22 May 1970.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Breandán Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge: Lámhleabhar ar Shaothar Gaeilge Bhrian Ó Nualláin* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar, 1986), 85–94.

<sup>15</sup> Myles na gCopaleen, *Cruiskeen Lawn*, *The Irish Times* [hereafter abbreviated as CL], 24 July 1943, 5; see Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 57–8.

<sup>16</sup> See Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 57, 78.

<sup>17</sup> 'A major work of true artistic stature and humour is *Aisling Meic Coinglinne*'; CL, 19 December 1961, 8.

<sup>18</sup> '*Stair Eamuinn Uí Chléire*, by Sean O Neachtain, written about 1715 [...] is in powerful and brilliant Irish and the main part of it is concerned at jeering at people who were trying to learn and speak English. It is very funny, and here and there quite ribald. [...] It is all fascinating.' CL, 7 July 1958, 6.

<sup>19</sup> CL, 27 January 1942, 3; see Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 100.

<sup>20</sup> CL, 10 November 1942, 3; see Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 100.

<sup>21</sup> *Silva Gadelica*, ed. Standish Hayes O'Grady (London: Williams and Norgate, 1892). Myles describes it as '*an leabhar is uaisle a tháinig chugainn le linn aithbheochaint na Gaeilge*' (the most noble book which has come our way during the Irish revival). CL, 9 May 1956, 6. See also Flann O'Brien, 'Standish Hayes O'Grady,' *The Irish Times* (16 October 1940): 3, and Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 99.



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- <sup>22</sup> *CL*, 11 September 1941, 3. See also *Tobar fíorghlan Gaedhíle*, ed. Colm Ó Lochlainn (Baile Átha Cliath: Faoi chomhartha na dtrí gcoinneal, 1939), 57, and Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 99–100.
- <sup>23</sup> 'Bedell's work should be required reading for all who either purport to read Irish today or teach it. Its urbanity will be a great shock to them, used as they are to the cultivation of a *patois* pocked with colloquialisms, archaisms, dialect aberrations, and studied provincialisms.' *CL*, 10 June 1955, 6. See also Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 100.
- <sup>24</sup> See Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 85–94.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 65–7.
- <sup>26</sup> *Inniu*, 21 August 1970.
- <sup>27</sup> *Inniu*, 23 October 1970.
- <sup>28</sup> Flann O'Brien, *The Hard Life: An Exegesis of Squalor* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1961), 25, 62, 68.
- <sup>29</sup> *CL*, 3 January 1957, 6.
- <sup>30</sup> *Inniu*, 21 August 1970, 23 October 1970; Ciarán Ó Nualláin, *Óige an Dearthár*, 62–3, 69.
- <sup>31</sup> *Inniu*, 31 July 1970.
- <sup>32</sup> 'a sort of intellectual Mafia, which strongly influenced the cultural and social life of University College.' Niall Sheridan, 'Brian, Flann and Myles (*The Springtime of Genius*),' in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan*, ed. Timothy O'Keefe (London: Martin Brian & O'Keefe, 1973), 35, 40.
- <sup>33</sup> Breandán Ó Conaire, 'At Swim-Two-Birds: Sweeny & Many Others,' in *Buile Suibhne: Perspectives and Reassessments*, ed. John Carey (Irish Texts Society, 2014), 148–63.
- <sup>34</sup> Brian O'Nolan, 'The Last of the Old Physics (1930–1939) II,' in *Centenary History of the Literary and Historical Society of University College Dublin 1855–1955*, ed. James Meehan (Tralee: Kerryman, 1955), 246.
- <sup>35</sup> Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 1–12, 240–6.
- <sup>36</sup> See, for example, *Sunday Independent*, 1 May 1932; *Irish Independent*, 10 December 1932, 6 April 1933, 23 May 1933.
- <sup>37</sup> Blackpitts is an area off Clanbrassil Street Lower in south-west Dublin 8, where victims of the mid-14<sup>th</sup>-century bubonic plague (the 'Black Death') were buried.
- <sup>38</sup> *Comhthrom Féinne* 4, no. 2 (30 April 1932): 241.
- <sup>39</sup> Breandán Ó Conaire, 'Ó Nualláin, na Scéalta "Meán-Ghaeilge" & Sem Seoighe,' *Comhar* 12 (2011): 29–38. See Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 4–9.
- <sup>40</sup> His attempts to attain this position were not successful.
- <sup>41</sup> Niall Montgomery, 'An Aristophanic Sorcerer,' *The Irish Times* (2 April 1966): 7.
- <sup>42</sup> Flann O'Brien, *The Complete Novels* (New York: Everyman's Library, 2007), 7.
- <sup>43</sup> See *Ireland To-Day* 3, no. 2 (February 1938): 94, 138, 165.
- <sup>44</sup> See *CL*, 23 May 1956, 6, where O'Nolan draws parallels between Joyce's *avant-garde* work in English and his own 'revolutionary' efforts in Irish. His deep admiration for the exile Irish writer is expressed, on the occasion of his death, in *CL*, 25 January 1941, 8.
- <sup>45</sup> 'Inauguration Speech,' *The Irish Times* (20 December 1974): 10.
- <sup>46</sup> *CL*, 12 September 1958, 6.
- <sup>47</sup> Breandán Ó Conaire, 'Myles na Gaeilge,' in *Scríobh* 5, ed. Seán Ó Mórdha, (Dublin: An Clóchomhar, 1981), 64–65.
- <sup>48</sup> Graham Greene, 'Reader's Report on *At Swim-Two-Birds* for Longmans Green Ltd.,' reprinted in *Alive Alive O!: Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds*, ed. Rüdiger Imhof (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985), 41.
- <sup>49</sup> Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 55.
- <sup>50</sup> *CL*, 18 March 1941, 6; see Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 69.
- <sup>51</sup> *CL*, 19 March 1942, 2; see Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 69–70.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *CL*, 19 March 1942, 2; see Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 70.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, *CL*, 23 September 1943, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Including, respectively: Friedrich von Schiller, Heinrich Heine, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Immanuel Kant; John Milton, John Keats, Laurence Sterne, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Shakespeare plays; *Horace Walpole and his World* (signed by O'Nolan 17 August 1945), Robert Browning, Lord Byron, John Ruskin, Alfred Tennyson, *The Life of William Blake* (signed by O'Nolan 13 December 1944), John Vanbrugh, Walter Pater, Arthur Conan Doyle, George Orwell, Thomas Hood, Samuel Rogers, George Meredith, Somerset Maugham, Henry Taylor, A.E. Coppard, Robert Graves, Stuart Hampshire (author of *Spinoza*), Neville Braybrooke (author of *The Idler*), John Masefield, Nevill Coghill, Sacheverell Sitwell, Virginia Woolf, Alfred North Whitehead, and Walter Scott; François Villon, Molière, Paul-Marie Verlaine, Émile Zola, Anatole France, Alphonse Daudet, Honoré de Balzac (signed by O'Nolan 10 July 1948), Blaise Pascal, André Maurois, Gustave Flaubert, Pierre de Ronsard, Jean-Baptiste Lacordaire, Alfred de Musset, and Paul de Molènes; Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Nikolai Gogol, and Ivan Turgenev; Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, James Branch Cabell, and William James; Marcus Tullius Cicero, Titus Livy, Julius Caesar, Horace, Euripides, Ovid, Homer, Aristophanes, Lucian, and Cornelius Tacitus.

<sup>56</sup> Brian O'Nolan, 'A Sheaf of Letters,' in 'A Flann O'Brien–Myles na Gopaleen Number,' eds. Robert Hogan and Gordon Henderson, special issue, *The Journal of Irish Literature* 3, no. 1, (January 1974): 85.

<sup>57</sup> 'an inept result could not be defended by saying that hard work preceded it' (*ibid.*).

<sup>58</sup> See Ó Conaire, 'At Swim-Two-Birds: Sweeny & Many Others,' 148–63.

<sup>59</sup> Breandán Ó Conaire, 'An Béal Bocht: an lámhscríbhinn agus an leabhar,' in *Séimhfhear Suairc: Aistí in ómós don Ollamh Breandán Ó Conchúir*, eds. Seán Ó Coileáin, Liam P. Ó Murchú, and Pádraigin Riggs, (An Daingean: An Sagart, 2013), 414–64.

<sup>60</sup> In *Cruiskeen Lawn*, he often aimed his arrows at the so-called 'Institiúit Béaloideas'; for example, in *CL*, 8 February 1941, 8; 13 March 1941, 6; 17 April 1941, 7; 19 July 1941, 8; 28 August 1941, 6; 2 October 1941, 2. See also Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 92. The Folklore of Ireland Society was established in 1927, and in 1935 the government set up the Irish Folklore Commission, whose function was the collection, study, and publication of Irish folklore.

<sup>61</sup> Various analyses of *An Béal Bocht* include, for example, Sarah E. McKibben, 'An Béal Bocht: Mouthing Off at National Identity,' *Éire-Ireland: Journal of Irish Studies* (Spring–Summer 2003): 37–53; Sarah McKibben, 'The Poor Mouth: A Parody of (Post) Colonial Irish Manhood' in *Research in African Literatures*, 34.4, (Winter 2003): 96–114; Monique Gallagher, 'The Poor Mouth: Flann O'Brien and the Gaeltacht' in *Studies* (Autumn 1983): 231–41; Danielle Jacquín, 'Technique et Effets de la Satire dans "An Béal Bocht" ("The Poor Mouth") de Myles na gCopaleen,' *Études Irlandaises* (December 1981): 61–71; Donna I. Wong, 'Following the Law of the Letter: Myles na gCopaleen's *An Béal Bocht*,' *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua* 4.5 (Autumn 2000): 93–106; Breandán Ó Conaire, '"Therapeutic Hilarity" nó Nótaí ar *An Béal Bocht*,' *Comhar* 12 (2011); Breandán Ó Conaire, 'Flann O'Brien, *An Béal Bocht* and Other Irish Matters,' *Irish University Review* 3, no. 2 (Autumn 1973). See also the striking graphic version of the book published by Cló Mhaigh Eo in 2012. Translations of this comical pseudo-autobiographical narrative have appeared in many languages including Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch, Hungarian, Swedish, French, Russian, and Czech. The text has also been adapted for the stage.

<sup>62</sup> See Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge*, 74–5.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 93–4.