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## John Garvin and Brian O'Nolan in Civil Service: Bureaucratic, Joycean Modernism

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This article examines the intellectual exchange and literary collaboration between John Garvin and Brian O'Nolan, exploring the dynamics of their relationship on three different levels. Professionally, Garvin was O'Nolan's superior when O'Nolan joined the Irish Civil Service in 1935, and he remained an influential senior figure in their department until O'Nolan left in 1953. On a literary level, Garvin read an early draft of the *At Swim-Two-Birds* manuscript and provided its epigraph (sourced from Euripides's *Heracles*), receiving editorial input from O'Nolan on his published writing on James Joyce in return. Socially, Garvin and O'Nolan belonged to an intellectual circle (including R. M. Smyllie, Alec Newman, Donagh MacDonagh, and Niall Montgomery) which brought together journalists, writers, and other Dublin professionals in the Palace Bar. This article argues for the significance of these collaborations by using first-hand accounts, letters, journalism, and critical work, including Garvin's 1976 book, *James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom and the Irish Dimension*. In doing so, the article reconstructs a dialogue that took place between bureaucratic methods of state administration and the aesthetic strategies of modernism, with Joyce at its centre, an exchange that shaped O'Nolan's poetics and exerted influence over his circle.

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This article demonstrates that John Garvin (1904–86) and Brian O’Nolan (1911–66) shared the same intellectual coterie and examines their collaboration on three levels. Professionally, Garvin was O’Nolan’s superior when O’Nolan joined the Irish Civil Service in 1935, and he remained an influential senior figure in their department until O’Nolan left in 1953. On a literary level, Garvin read an early draft of the manuscript for *At Swim-Two-Birds* and provided its epigraph (sourced from Euripides’s *Heracles*), receiving editorial input from O’Nolan on his critical work in return. Socially, Garvin and O’Nolan belonged to an intellectual circle (including R. M. Smyllie, Alec Newman, Donagh MacDonagh, and Niall Montgomery) which brought together journalists, writers, and other Dublin professionals in the Palace Bar. In these three sections, the article argues for the significance of these collaborations by excavating first-hand accounts, letters, journalism, and critical work such as Garvin’s book, *James Joyce’s Disunited Kingdom and the Irish Dimension* (1976). This archival retrieval reveals a dialogue that took place between bureaucratic methods of state administration and the aesthetic strategies of modernism, with Joyce at its centre, an exchange that shaped O’Nolan’s poetics and exerted influence over his circle.

### John Garvin and his personal connection to Brian O’Nolan

Garvin was born in Sligo in 1904 and was less than seven years older than O’Nolan. Their early lives followed a similar course, although Garvin’s was marked by a clear passion and aptitude for public administration which led to the flowering of his career for decades after O’Nolan had been compelled to resign from the civil service. Garvin was educated at University College Galway and University College Dublin. He graduated in arts and commerce at the former and in law at the latter before being called to the bar.<sup>1</sup> In 1925, at the age of twenty-one, he entered the Irish Civil Service in the Department of Local Government, where O’Nolan also served from 1935–53. Garvin began as Administrative Officer, was promoted to Assistant Principal Officer in 1935, and to Principal Officer in 1937, the same year he was married.<sup>2</sup> In 1938, he was made Secretary of the Local Government Tribunal. He became Assistant Secretary in 1947; on 10 March that same year, Myles na gCopaleen declared himself ‘Assistant Secretary of the World’ in *Cruiskeen Lawn*.<sup>3</sup> Garvin was secretary from 1948–66 and retired in October of that year, only six months after O’Nolan died. He was appointed as Dublin City Commissioner in 1969, but prior to that he had been manager of Wicklow.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Garvin’s degrees are listed in the obituary published in the *Irish Press* (11 February 1986): 4.

<sup>2</sup> Garvin’s obituary outlines his various roles within the civil service by year. See ‘Death of Dr John Garvin,’ *The Irish Times* (10 February 1986): 7. Garvin’s early accomplishments are recorded in ‘New Assistant Secretary, L.G.D.,’ *Irish Press* (15 January 1947): 7.

<sup>3</sup> Myles na gCopaleen, *Cruiskeen Lawn*, *The Irish Times* (10 March 1947): 4.

<sup>4</sup> See the announcement of John Garvin becoming manager of Wicklow in the *Irish Press* (9 October 1945): 2.

He was also chairman of the Library Council and deputy chairman of the Higher Education Authority.

The title of Doctor of Literature (much coveted by O'Nolan) was conferred on Garvin by the National University of Ireland in 1972, and he turned his later years over to Joyce. He gave a lecture in Dublin entitled 'Joyce and The Church' on 5 December 1975, and another, 'Argonaut to Katharica,' on 4 November 1976.<sup>5</sup> A biographical note included in the contributor section of a special 1974 edition of the *James Joyce Quarterly* documents Garvin's frequent use of the pseudonym 'Andrew Cass.'<sup>6</sup> Garvin's choice of pseudonym is puzzling. His son, Tom Garvin, has claimed the name is a 'scrambled version of Cassandra, the Trojan prophetess who was doomed to predict everything correctly but never to be believed.'<sup>7</sup> Thus the pseudonym exemplifies Garvin's habit of making classical allusions and puns, a practice he weaves into his own account of his collaboration with O'Nolan on *At Swim-Two-Birds* discussed below.

John McCourt is one of the few critics who has discussed Garvin's interventions into Joyce scholarship as 'Andrew Cass.'<sup>8</sup> McCourt also notes Garvin's connection to O'Nolan's 'intimate circle of Dublin friends, all of whom had axes to grind with Joyce' and credits Garvin as 'the first Irishman to pen a book of Joyce criticism.'<sup>9</sup> Garvin was close to *The Irish Times* editor R. M. Smyllie (1893–1954), and he knew and collaborated with Alec Newman (1905–72), who was assistant editor of *The Irish Times* 1934–54, and editor 1954–61; he also worked with Donagh Mac Donagh (1912–68) and Niall Montgomery (1915–87). Through his friendship with Smyllie, Garvin was well connected to *The Irish Times*, where he published articles on Joyce (and *Finnegans Wake* in particular) as 'Andrew Cass' and 'Marcus MacEnergy' throughout the 1940s, while he and O'Nolan worked together in the civil service. In early 1947, Smyllie called Garvin his 'friend' and

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<sup>5</sup> See the notice for 'Joyce and the Church,' published in the *Irish Independent* (4 December 1975); for 'Argonaut to Katharica,' see the *Irish Press* (4 November 1976): 8.

<sup>6</sup> The biographical note also states that Garvin 'was Secretary to the Department of Local Government in Ireland from 1948 to 1966. He has been Chairman of the National Library Council, Vice Chairman of the Higher Education Authority, and Dublin City Commissioner (1969–73), running the city in place of the City Council, which had been removed by the Minister for Local Government. Mr Garvin is preparing a book on Joyce.' See *James Joyce Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1974): back matter. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25487142>.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas 'John' Garvin was the father of UCD professor and historian Tom Christopher Garvin (born 1944). Tom Garvin discusses his father's pseudonym in a letter to *The Irish Times* on 10 February 2018. The authors of this article have reached out to Tom Garvin for access to John Garvin's literary papers.

<sup>8</sup> John McCourt, 'Myles na gCopaleen: A Portrait of the Artist as a Joyce Scholar,' in *Flann O'Brien: Contesting Legacies*, eds. Ruben Borg, Paul Fagan, and Werner Huber (Cork: Cork University Press, 2014), 114–5. See also McCourt's account of Garvin's contribution to Joyce scholarship in *Consuming Joyce: 100 years of Ulysses in Ireland* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 98–100, 109, 124, 136, 143, 150, 165–6, 180.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

a brilliant civil servant, possibly, indeed, the ablest of the younger men in the public pay. But he is something more than that, I am now in a position to reveal [...], he is one of the greatest living authorities (I suppose there are some dead ones) on the works of that incomparable, and incomparably abstruse genius, James Joyce. I am informed that he has solved the riddle of *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>10</sup>

A few months later, Smyllie’s ‘Irishman’s Diary’ column on 24 May 1947 credits ‘Andrew Cass’s intimate study of *Finnegans Wake*’ with reigniting his interest in Joyce’s final book.<sup>11</sup>

Critical accounts of Garvin’s relationship with O’Nolan began early owing to the publication of Garvin’s memorial essay about O’Nolan, ‘Sweetscented Manuscripts,’ in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O’Nolan* (1973). Anthony Cronin drew on this essay for his biography of O’Nolan, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O’Brien* (1989). Cronin also read Garvin’s official notes in O’Nolan’s civil service file in the Records of the Department of Local Government and Public Health.<sup>12</sup> Keith Hopper has noted (also focussing on Garvin’s essay in *Myles*) that Garvin was an authority on Dion Boucicault’s melodrama *The Colleen Bawn* (1860). Hopper observes that O’Nolan’s two most popular pseudonyms derive from Boucicault’s ‘Brian O’Lynn’ (‘in Irish, Brian Ó Fhloinn’) and ‘Myles na Coppaleen.’<sup>13</sup> The former claim was first put forward by Garvin in his essay ‘Sweetscented Manuscripts.’<sup>14</sup> Nothing else has been published on O’Nolan and Garvin’s relationship since, and the basic facts that these initial accounts relay have not been sufficiently interrogated. For example, we know that Garvin’s friendship with Smyllie began early enough for Garvin to offer O’Nolan a connection to *The Irish Times* prior to the beginning of *Cruiskeen Lawn*. The Palace Bar scene, depicted by Garvin in his account of the *At Swim-Two-Birds* epigraph, is where Smyllie socialised with his circle. Smyllie’s friendship with Garvin afforded O’Nolan a link to Smyllie that has not been previously considered. For instance, Niall Sheridan attributes the column’s genesis

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<sup>10</sup> Smyllie’s article praising Garvin was originally published under his pseudonym ‘Nichevo’ in *The Irish Times* on 18 January 1947. It was reprinted several days later in the *Sligo Champion* on 1 February 1947, and the editor of the *Champion* attributed authorship directly to Smyllie.

<sup>11</sup> This article is of great interest to Joyceans because Smyllie also notes that Joyce wrote to compliment *The Irish Times* on publishing Brinsley McNamara’s review of *Finnegans Wake*. See ‘An Irishman’s Diary,’ *The Irish Times* (24 May 1947): 7.

<sup>12</sup> See Anthony Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O’Brien* (London: Paladin, 1990), 85, 94, 98–100, 274 n46.

<sup>13</sup> Keith Hopper, *Flann O’Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist*, 2nd ed. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 25. Writing as ‘Marcus MacEnergy,’ Garvin published in *Donegal Historical Journal* on the setting of *The Colleen Bawn*. J. C. T. MacDonagh refers to MacEnergy’s essay in his article ‘Willie Reilly and his Colleen Bawn,’ *Donegal Democrat* (6 April 1951): 8.

<sup>14</sup> John Garvin, ‘Sweetscented Manuscripts,’ in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O’Nolan (Flann O’Brien/Myles na gCopaleen)*, ed. Timothy O’Keeffe (London: Martin Brian & O’Keeffe, 1973), 60.

to Smyllie's desire to control the pseudonymous letters O'Nolan was writing for *The Irish Times*. Sheridan also claims to have 'introduced [O'Nolan] to Bertie Smyllie,' but so might have Garvin.<sup>15</sup> Greater emphasis needs to be placed on thinking about these writers as a circle of collaborators.

Cronin describes O'Nolan's recurring criticism of Garvin in *Cruiskeen Lawn* in the years after his retirement from the civil service: 'from now on his old mentor and protector, John Garvin, was to be the subject of many thinly disguised references in print to Roscommon peasants who had set themselves up as authorities on "Jems Jyce" [sic].'<sup>16</sup> However, O'Nolan engaged Garvin in similar ways in the column during the years they worked together. For instance, when Smyllie recognised Garvin's promotion to 'Assistant Secretary of one of the Departments under the capacious wing of Mr Seán MacEntee,'<sup>17</sup> Myles implicitly responds to Smyllie's plaudits for Garvin as both civil servant and Joycean in a letter announcing his return to the column on 3 March 1947. Myles's 'portrait' of the Secretary Bird from the 7 March 1947 *Cruiskeen Lawn* develops Smyllie's image of Garvin, under the 'capacious wing' of MacEntee, into a full-fledged parody:

#### A Portrait

I take the following from the London Paper, *Leader*:

'THE Secretary Bird is in a class by himself. [...] At the back of his head hangs a bunch of feathers which he can raise at will and when he does so they look like a lot of quill pens stuck behind his ear. Hence his name.

Snakes of all kinds, from small, harmless ones to dangerous cobras, fall prey to the Secretary Bird. His method of attack is to spring at the snakes and give them vicious kicks with one of his long, strong legs. He then jumps back to a safe distance

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<sup>15</sup> Niall Sheridan, 'Brian, Flann, and Myles (The Springtime of Genius),' in O'Keeffe (ed.), *Myles*, 50. In Bowman's RTÉ documentary for the Brian O'Nolan centenary, Sheridan claimed to have introduced O'Nolan to Smyllie following the letter controversy. On 16 January 1939, Sheridan sent cuttings from the 'controversy with O'Faolain and O'Connor' to Niall Montgomery in a letter mentioning Smyllie and noted that *At Swim-Two-Birds* would 'be out next month.' Flann O'Brien, *The Collected Letters of Flann O'Brien*, ed. Maebh Long (Victoria, TX: Dalkey Archive Press, 2018), 35. See also Niall Sheridan in 'Flann O'Brien,' *Bowman*, Radio RTÉ (Dublin: 9 October 2011), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84vISoG\\_dsU&t=17s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84vISoG_dsU&t=17s). Garvin records how he and O'Nolan met Smyllie and Newman when they were celebrating the publication of *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Smyllie may have again paid attention to O'Nolan after the letters to *The Irish Times* controversy with Patrick Kavanagh in late-July and August of 1940, but by that point O'Nolan and Smyllie knew one another well. The first *Cruiskeen Lawn* column did not appear until An Broc's 'From a Correspondent,' *Cruiskeen Lawn*, *The Irish Times* (4 October 1940): 4. See also Joseph LaBine, "'the words I taught to him": Interfusional Language Play and Brian O'Nolan's "Revenge on the English"; *The Parish Review: Journal of Flann O'Brien Studies* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 46–48. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.16995/pr.3209>.

<sup>16</sup> Cronin, *No Laughing Matter*, 209.

<sup>17</sup> 'An Irishman's Diary,' *The Irish Times* (18 January 1947): 7.

himself, and after a moment repeats the attack. [...] As soon as the victim is no longer dangerous, the bird eats it [...] then wanders off to some quiet spot where he stands with hunched shoulders, dreamily digesting, often for hours on end.’

Why does that bring the Higher Civil Servant to *everybody’s* mind?<sup>18</sup>

Garvin is the ‘Higher Civil Servant’ targeted in this parody. O’Nolan’s ‘portrait’ of the Secretary Bird satirises the management style of senior civil servants who were able to attack subordinates and then retreat to a safe distance, but his own attack on Garvin is also made from a safe distance, veiled by the reference to senior civil servants in general.

The attacks on Garvin seem to have continued, even if the evidence for them is now lost. Jack White, who was *The Irish Times* Features Editor for much of the period of *Cruiskeen Lawn*, mentions that from 1952 onwards, Garvin, along with MacEntee, was a frequent target of columns submitted to *The Irish Times* which were rejected because they made direct attacks on government officials.<sup>19</sup> The ties of professional respect, mentorship, and rivalry linking Smyllie, Garvin, and O’Nolan are the backdrop to the literary collaboration between Garvin and O’Nolan on the manuscript of *At Swim-Two-Birds*: bureaucratic and literary authority seamlessly overlapped in the informal conversations that surrounded the publication of government memos and a daily newspaper.

### Garvin and O’Nolan’s Literary Collaboration: The Proffered Epigraph

Garvin and O’Nolan’s literary collaboration begins with *At Swim-Two-Birds*. From his own account, we know that Garvin read a manuscript copy of *At Swim-Two-Birds* in 1939 and furnished O’Nolan with a Greek quotation from *The Hercules Furens* of Euripides for its epigraph: ‘ἐξίσταται γὰρ πάντ’ ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων δίχα.’<sup>20</sup> The English translation given by Garvin is ‘for all things go out and give place to one another.’<sup>21</sup> A more concise translation would be: ‘all things obtain from others in turn.’<sup>22</sup> In the minds of early commentators on the novel, translating the epigraph – which is initially obscure to any reader without knowledge of Classical Greek – is essential to interpreting the novel’s method. The interpretations are as various as the translations, on which they obviously depend. J. C. C. Mays, who translates the epigraph as ‘all things fleet and yield each other place,’ argues that the epigraph stands for the ‘effect of the novel as a whole’ – in

<sup>18</sup> Myles na Gopaleen, *Cruiskeen Lawn*, *The Irish Times* (3 March 1947): 5.

<sup>19</sup> Jack White, ‘Myles, Flann, and Brian,’ in O’Keeffe (ed.), *Myles*, 73.

<sup>20</sup> Flann O’Brien, *The Complete Novels: At Swim-Two-Birds, The Third Policeman, The Poor Mouth, The Hard Life, The Dalkey Archive*, introd. Keith Donohue (London: Everyman, 2007), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Garvin, ‘Sweetscented Manuscripts,’ 58.

<sup>22</sup> U. S. Dhuga worked through a translation of the classical Greek and discussed *At Swim-Two-Birds* during a phone call (and in personal communication) with the authors of the present article in September 2020.

so far as it employs a method of counterpoint 'such that any connection between the parts of the book frustrates another at the same time' – and that the 'real subject of the book is vigorous ingenuity, wildness, and sweetness,' that is, aesthetics.<sup>23</sup> Stephen Knight, who translates it as 'all things stand apart from each other,' sees the epigraph as justification for reading the novel as embodying an intentionally democratic and postmodernist relativity and 'satire of fact': 'things stand apart, cannot be subjugated to a system of order and are therefore of equal value.'<sup>24</sup> Ninian Mellamphy also discovers in the epigraph 'one clear fingerprint of the real artist on the surface of the artifact he has given us' and translates it as 'All things are separated from each other.' For Mellamphy, the book 'is really a disguised cry, a light-hearted treatment of the stuff of tragedy.'<sup>25</sup> Roy L. Hunt notes the connection to Euripides's *Heracles* and translates the epigraph as 'all things naturally draw apart,' arguing for a 'close comparison to Kierkegaard's contention [in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*] that "existence separates, and holds the various moments of existence discretely apart".'<sup>26</sup> If we accept that the epigraph is to be seen as a key which represents the 'effect of the novel as a whole,' which unlocks the 'real subject' of the book, or the 'one clear fingerprint of the artist,' then its attribution to Garvin is a fact of overlooked importance. Garvin's suggestion of this epigraph takes on an editorial significance, a sign of literary cooperation.

In 'Sweetscented Manuscripts,' Garvin explains that the epigraph is an excerpt from a Euripides play, in which Hercules (Heracles) questions the existence of his father, Zeus, and murders his own children in a fit of madness. The line is uttered as part of a speech made by Amphitryon, Heracles's earthly father, to his wife Megara as they await Heracles's return from the underworld, trying to shelter at the altar to Zeus from the usurping king Lycus who wants to kill them. The play is an anti-epic. It inverts the normal chronology of the Heracles story to present Heracles murdering his wife and three sons in a fit of madness *after* his labours have been completed, rather than, as in the previous tradition, presenting the labours as atonement for this crime. This conflict between gods and mortals finds an analogue in the various levels of meta-narrative in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Garvin writes that he provided the epigraph to O'Nolan upon his request and chose the specific Greek phrase 'in consideration of the corresponding

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<sup>23</sup> J. C. C. Mays, 'Brian O'Nolan: Literalist of the Imagination,' in O'Keeffe (ed.), *Myles*, 87.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Knight, 'Forms of Gloom: The Novels of Flann O'Brien,' in *Alive-Alive O! Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds*, ed. Rüdiger Imhof (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985), 99–100. Originally published in *Cunning Exiles: Studies of Modern Prose Writers*, eds. Don Anderson and Stephen Knight (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1974), 105–20.

<sup>25</sup> Ninian Mellamphy, 'Aestho-Autogamy and the Anarchy of Imagination: Flann O'Brien's Theory of Fiction in *At Swim-Two-Birds*,' in Imhof (ed.), *Alive-Alive O!*, 153. Originally published in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 4, no. 1 (June 1978): 8–25.

<sup>26</sup> Roy L. Hunt, 'Hell Goes Round and Round: Flann O'Brien,' *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 14, no. 2 (January 1989): 62.

agony of the frenzied Sweeny [to that of Heracles] and the verse itself [...] in relation to the rapid succession of characters and plots right through the novel.’<sup>27</sup> By providing a Greek epigraph that abstracts the frenzy in *Buile Shuibhne* and reveals a parallel between Sweeny and Heracles, Garvin Hellenises *At Swim–Two–Birds*. This framing points the critical position of the novel toward European culture from a standpoint rooted in Irish cultural history, an aesthetic move that would have come naturally to Garvin as a critic steeped in the Homeric allusions of Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

Euripides’s *Heracles* also has a significant analogue in the student narrator’s desire to have his characters murder their literary relations in *At Swim–Two–Birds*. Garvin fails to explain this aspect of the Euripides comparison in his memoir when he recollects a conversation that he had with O’Nolan and Alec Newman:<sup>28</sup>

Newman, who was Trinity scholar in classics, enquired where [O’Nolan] got the Greek quotation [...]: ‘I mean to say it’s unusual, you know, finding a classical quotation used as an epigraph with no indication of its source.’ ‘There’s the source, so far as I’m concerned,’ Brian said, indicating me. ‘Don’t heed him,’ I said, ‘he got it from his friends Timothy Danaos and Dona Ferentes, the two Greek characters in his book.’ ‘But seriously, John,’ Alec said, ‘why make a mystery of the thing? A thing, you know, that should be on record.’<sup>29</sup>

In his reply to Newman, Garvin subtly refers to the names of Trellis’s mute lawyers, ‘Timothy Danaos and Dona Ferentes’ from the court scene in *At Swim–Two–Birds*, an allusion which is itself a Trojan horse that hides its own significance.<sup>30</sup> Garvin’s answer is characteristically cryptic and echoes O’Nolan’s pun on ‘*timeō Danaōs et dōna ferentīs*,’ a Latin phrase from the *Aeneid*, translated in English as ‘I fear the Danaans [Greeks] – especially when gifts they bear,’ or ‘even when they bear gifts.’<sup>31</sup> Like Trellis’s lawyers, who are unable to speak, Garvin remains silent about his editorial involvement in *At–Swim–Two–Birds* beyond suggesting the epigraph. Newman’s modified Greco–Latin version of the epigraph, ‘*Existati– –Exeunt omnes*,’ i.e., all characters go out, plays on the

<sup>27</sup> Garvin, ‘Sweetscented Manuscripts,’ 58.

<sup>28</sup> According to Patrick Long, Newman studied classics at Trinity College Dublin (TCD), ‘graduating in 1927. He was first classical scholar of his year in 1924, and among his extracurricular interests he edited TCD Magazine. On graduating, Newman taught classics at the High School, Harcourt St. He wrote articles for *The Irish Times* and disliked teaching so much that he moved to the newspaper in 1930.’ See Patrick Long, ‘Newman, William Alexander (“Alec”);’ *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, October 2009, available at: <https://www.dib.ie/biography/newman-william-alexander-alec-a6180>.

<sup>29</sup> Garvin, ‘Sweetscented Manuscripts,’ 58.

<sup>30</sup> O’Brien, *The Complete Novels*, 194.

<sup>31</sup> Virgil, ‘Aeneidos Lib. II,’ in *The Aeneid of Virgil: Books I–VI*, introd. T. E. Page (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1964), 24. The Latin was translated by U. S. Dhuga during a phone call and in correspondence with the authors of the present article in September 2020.



stage direction 'all go out,' and probably refers to Teresa burning the manuscript at the end of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, thus incinerating all trace of the characters who seek revenge on Trellis.<sup>32</sup> As the pages flame out, all characters also 'go out.' Garvin quotes O'Nolan as concluding the same conversation with Newman by admitting that he clarified the ending of the book at Garvin's urging: "'They all go out,'" Brian said, "when the skivvy burns the MS. that sustains their existence. John made me make this explicit – he is a devil for keeping you meticulously bloody accurate".<sup>33</sup> Garvin implies here that the epigraph he supplied lends a classical dramatic structure to the novel: all the characters must explicitly 'go out' to complement the epigraph as a ludic prophecy. According to Garvin's retelling of O'Nolan's account, his editorial requests were implemented with both deference and irreverence, just as O'Nolan must have only gradually responded to Garvin's feedback on his clerical writing, of which Garvin claims: 'it took some time to channel his rich linguistic flow within the bounds of objectivity and exactitude.'<sup>34</sup>

### Bureaucratic and Aesthetic Modernism: Garvin, the Milieu, and Joyce

Garvin's monograph on Joyce was published as *James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom and the Irish Dimension* in 1976, and it mentions collaborating with O'Nolan and the similarity between *Finnegans Wake* and Flann O'Brien's fiction.<sup>35</sup> The book is also a valuable resource for understanding O'Nolan's relationship with Garvin through a peculiar take on Joyce which flows from their roles in the civil service. Although Garvin's obituary in *The Irish Times* described him as 'an acknowledged international authority on James Joyce' (along with Anglo-Irish literature, Irish local history, Irish local government, and Sligo),<sup>36</sup> the influence of his analysis did not extend outside of Ireland. *Disunited Kingdom* was heavily criticised in reviews by academic Joyceans and continues to draw critics' ire.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the monograph can be seen as valuably anticipating a turn

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<sup>32</sup> Garvin, 'Sweetscented Manuscripts,' 58.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Garvin, 'Sweetscented Manuscripts,' 54.

<sup>35</sup> John Garvin, *James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom and the Irish Dimension* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1976), 6–8, 62.

<sup>36</sup> 'Death of Dr John Garvin,' *The Irish Times* (10 February 1986): 7.

<sup>37</sup> See Arnold Goldman, 'Review of "James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom" by John Garvin; "Epic Geography: James Joyce's Ulysses" by Michael Seidel; and "James Joyce: The Citizen and the Artist" by C. H. Peake,' *The Review of English Studies* 30, no. 117 (1979): 108, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/514783>; David Hayman, 'Review of "James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom" by John Garvin; "The Stream of Consciousness and Beyond in Ulysses" by Erwin R. Steinberg; "Epic Geography: James Joyce's Ulysses" by Michael Seidel; "James Joyce and the German Novel, 1922–1933" by Breon Mitchell; and "The Book as World: James Joyce's Ulysses" by Marilyn French,' *Contemporary Literature* 20, no. 1 (1979): 97–99, available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1208212>. Elsewhere, Hayman argues that '[w]hen it comes to *Finnegans Wake*, Garvin pulls all the stops, revealing in the last pages of the book's second half the extent of his critical blindness and the shallowness of his reading.' See David Hayman, 'Review of "James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom"', 98. A positive review was published by an unidentified W. D. O'C, 'Joyce and his Ireland, Review of *James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom and the Irish Dimension* by John Garvin,' *Irish Examiner* (16 December 1976): 11.

towards understanding Joyce as an Irish writer that took place much later in Joycean studies as McCourt acknowledges: ‘Long before it was popular or profitable to do so, [Garvin] cast light on the Irish elements in *Ulysses*.’<sup>38</sup>

*Disunited Kingdom* often points to occasions when *Ulysses* dips into what Garvin describes as Joyce’s ‘fund of Homeric clichés,’ such as the phrase ‘the winebark on the winedark waterway’ in the ‘Cyclops’ episode.<sup>39</sup> This negative association of Joyce with clichés suggests that Garvin may have felt an urge to mirror or subvert the system of Homeric allusion in *Ulysses* by introducing an anti-epic frame of reference to *At Swim-Two-Birds* which complemented his reading of the novel as an inversion of the Joycean method. His account of editing O’Nolan’s writing is an example of a correspondence between bureaucratic efficiency (‘meticulously bloody accurate’) and literary craft, wherein a novel must obey certain internal creative logic.

The dialogue between state administration and the modernism of Joyce, a writer who exiled himself from the Irish state in its formative years, is perhaps the major extant content of the Garvin-O’Nolan relationship within the Palace Bar milieu of aspiring writers in the civil service and journalists for *The Irish Times*. Garvin opens his monograph with a quote from Joyce, in which the author describes himself as ‘quite content to go down to posterity as a scissors and paste man for that seems [...] a harsh but not unjust description.’<sup>40</sup> Garvin was writing on Joyce from the position of a civil servant whose day-to-day role involved its own administrative ‘scissors and paste’ method in countless forms.

Joyce, as is well-known, made Dublin his literary property. Garvin was an administrative manager for Dublin and eventually became city commissioner. In other words, Joyce had the run of Dublin in a literary sense, Garvin and O’Nolan ran it in a literal sense. Their relationship to Dublin is one aspect of the broader set of connections between the project of Joycean modernism and the modernisation of Irish infrastructure explored by Michael Rubenstein in *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial* (2010). Between 1922–40, Rubenstein writes, ‘Joyce published *Ulysses* and the Free State planned, funded, and built the world’s first state-controlled national electrical grid.’<sup>41</sup> Rubenstein includes Flann O’Brien in his reading of the forms of ‘electrification’ that arise in this conjuncture,<sup>42</sup> remarking:

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<sup>38</sup> McCourt, *Consuming Joyce*, 166.

<sup>39</sup> Garvin, *Disunited*, 90.

<sup>40</sup> Letter to George Antheil, 3 January 1931, quoted from *Letters*, I, in Garvin, *Disunited*, front matter. See James Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Stuart Gilbert, vol. 1 (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 297.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Rubenstein, *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 1.

<sup>42</sup> Rubenstein, *Public Works*, 133.

O'Brien's new office job becomes rather astonishing for its fidelity to the Joycean text [...]. It was precisely at that intersection of taxation, finance, and urban infrastructure that Joyce in *Ulysses* made his plea for a new Irish state. Flann O'Brien stepped into this representational hall of mirrors as the real embodiment of Joyce's fictionalised hope.<sup>43</sup>

Liam Lanigan echoes Rubenstein's claim about civic fictionalisation, arguing that *At Swim-Two-Birds* 'inherits a key aspect of Joyce's rendering of modern Dublin in its aestheticisation of the tensions between older sociocultural forces and the onset of a technological urban modernity.'<sup>44</sup> Garvin was one of the first critics to note that O'Nolan's method is to imagine literary characters as if they were real Dubliners, the inverse of Joyce's procedure of fictionalising notable Dublin personalities in his literature. As Rubenstein suggests, O'Nolan personally lived aspects of the Joycean fiction at the same time as he was inverting its premises in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. The measure of Joyce's influence in the civil service, Rubenstein argues, can be accorded 'to the fact that in just one division, there was one civil servant, Garvin, writing books about James Joyce and another, O'Brien, writing books like James Joyce's.'<sup>45</sup>

The pervasiveness of this aesthetic modernism is matched by Garvin's bureaucratic meticulousness. For instance, Garvin uses his bureaucratic perspective on the history of the city's streets, as they were developing, to make bold claims about Joyce's writing. He argues that 'walking to meet' Nora, Joyce 'could descry the name of the first house in Leinster Street inscribed high up on its redbrick gable in large, white capital letters, FINN'S HOTEL,' and Garvin suggests these sights inspired Joyce to choose the name *Finnegans Wake* for his final novel.<sup>46</sup> Evidently, the city-building HCE of *Finnegans Wake* opens up a path of identification and interpretation of Joyce for Garvin. Quoting Cronin, Rubenstein advances a psychoanalytical theory of the Dublin intellectuals' assiduous Joyceanism as a displacement of painful contradictions at the centre of their identities as children of Ireland's conservative revolution:

The intellectuals' double bind consisted, first, of 'being a beneficiary of a nationalist revolution which you had largely come to despise' while at the same time 'it was unthinkable that you could regret the passing of British rule' and, second, of being 'a passive or active upholder of a faith [Catholicism] which you often found abhorrent either in its beliefs or, at the very least, its public attitudes.' These factors led such

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>44</sup> Liam Lanigan, *James Joyce, Urban Planning, and Irish Modernism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 207.

<sup>45</sup> Rubenstein, *Public Works*, 103.

<sup>46</sup> Garvin, *Disunited*, 19.

intellectuals-cum-bureaucrats into ‘a curious kind of latter-day aestheticism,’ in which ‘you were in an ambiguous, not to say dishonest position, morally, socially and intellectually. You were a conformist among other conformists in terms of the most important social or philosophical questions you could face. But yet you knew about modern art and literature. You had read most of the great moderns and, above all, you had read James Joyce. That was what marked you out as different, the joke you shared against the rabblement of which you were otherwise a part.’<sup>47</sup>

Rubenstein turns to Garvin when he writes that ‘Garvin and O’Brien, like many other civil servants, would have absorbed Joyce’s worldly vision and then found themselves constrained to the provinciality of the state’s conservatism and isolationism, thus engendering their split personality and their multiply lettered lives of civil pseudonymity.’<sup>48</sup> This reading is appealing, although it relies on a certain revisionism of the Irish revolution that had become fashionable by the time Cronin was writing. Nevertheless, Rubenstein is honing in on a central relationship, formative for the literary work of O’Nolan, Garvin, and their circle, between the demands of professional officialism and a form of Joycean protocol. It is enough to imagine, as the evidence suggests, that they understood how the work of state-building resonated (or clashed) with the visions of the Irish polity available in *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*.

A direct illustration of this relationship is the strange case of Garvin’s apparently reluctant argument for the identification of Shaun the Post with de Valera in *Finnegans Wake*. In the introduction to *Disunited Kingdom*, Garvin says this point was strengthened significantly by O’Nolan who, as editor of a special ‘Joyce’ edition of *Envoy* in 1951, ‘interpolated without my [Garvin’s] authority’ the following sentence into the article he published in the special edition as ‘Andrew Cass’: ‘It is indisputable that Shaun is Eamon de Valera.’<sup>49</sup> Garvin says in the introduction to his later book that O’Nolan

apparently considered that I was unnecessarily cautious in my identification which he thought should be pronounced positively and unambiguously. The fact is, of course, that Shaun represents a number of other characters in varying contexts.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Rubenstein, 103, citing Cronin, 53–54.

<sup>48</sup> Rubenstein, 103.

<sup>49</sup> The account of the insertion is in Garvin, *Disunited*, 7. The article Garvin is referring to is Andrew Cass, ‘Child Horrid’s Pilgrimage,’ *Envoy: An Irish Review of Literature and Art* 5, no. 17 (April 1951): 19–30. O’Nolan’s sentence was reprinted in the republished version of Garvin’s article that appeared in *A Bash in The Tunnel* (1970). See Andrew Cass, ‘Child Horrid’s Pilgrimage,’ in *A Bash in The Tunnel: James Joyce by the Irish*, ed. John Ryan (London: Clifton Book, 1970), 177.

<sup>50</sup> Garvin, *Disunited*, 7.

Explaining the failure to correct the unwanted insertion when the article was republished in John Ryan's *A Bash in The Tunnel: James Joyce by the Irish* (1970), Garvin reports that his 'request that the line be omitted [...] was apparently overlooked.'<sup>51</sup> Later in *Disunited Kingdom*, Garvin gives what he would have us believe in his introduction is his own more cautious, cryptic version of the Shaun/de Valera identification:

The artist is doomed to be for ever at variance with his brother, the Irish politician, and so to remain an Irish Exile. When the politician came into his kingdom and could invite his exiled brother to return to Ireland, would he be brought back and crowned with laurel to celebrate his literary triumphs? Not, as we have shown, if his objective was to set the Liffey on fire.<sup>52</sup>

Although we have only Garvin's account, the apparent disagreement between Garvin and O'Nolan on the strength with which Shaun the Post should be identified with de Valera indicates that they shared the basic thesis and hence suggests that O'Nolan collaborated with Garvin – unhappily, perhaps, in the case of the unwanted insertion – on a political interpretation of Joyce. In turn, Garvin absorbed O'Nolan's literary method of representing life imitating art, which constitutes an inversion of the Joycean method. Garvin writes:

What exercised Nolan's mind in my account of Best was that, by importing real persons into *Ulysses*, Joyce made them 'legendary and fictional,' a metabolism to which their living prototypes objected, whereas he, as Flann O'Brien, in his *At Swim-Two-Birds*, had adopted a directly contrary technique: legendary and fictional characters were there recruited from Irish myth and legend and from the stock personnel of cheap fiction and, coming alive in their fictional author's 'creation,' rebelled against him on the grounds of the unsavoury roles assigned to them in his story and the unsatisfactory conditions of their employment in the real life of modern Dublin.<sup>53</sup>

Garvin pinpoints the way that *At Swim-Two-Birds* reverses Joyce's use of life-writing. This 'comic spirit' in *At Swim-Two-Birds* evidently won over Joyce, as his letters to Sheridan and others about the novel attest.<sup>54</sup> Garvin, however, mobilises this aspect of *At Swim-Two-Birds* as a way of interpreting Joyce:

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>54</sup> Sheridan credits Joyce with coining the phrase 'comic spirit' in a letter to Timothy O'Keefe about *At Swim-Two-Birds* dated 4 March 1960; Sheridan discusses Joyce's admiration for *At Swim-Two-Birds*, 'Livre très aimé de Joyce,' which Joyce attempted to introduce to 'French literary circles.' O'Brien, *Letters*, 244–5. Joyce's other letters confirm this. In a

Thus Bloom is created at the age of thirty-eight and he and Stephen are rigged out to carry their own personalities through the epic events of one day as well as the symbolic *personae* of their counterparts in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus and Telemachus.<sup>55</sup>

One can compare Garvin’s reading that Bloom is created ‘at the age of thirty-eight’ to the parodic announcement of the ‘birth’ of John Furriskey in *At Swim-Two-Birds* as a fully grown man who, as it happens, exemplifies his creator Dermot Trellis’s literalisation of William Tracy’s proposal that ‘issue could be born already matured, teathed, reared, educated, and ready to essay those competitive plums which make the Civil Service and the Banks so attractive to the younger breadwinners of today.’<sup>56</sup> Through his in-depth knowledge of Joyce as a comparative context, Garvin is attuned to how O’Nolan literalises literature, making life out of art, rather than art out of life.<sup>57</sup>

There is also material which suggests that Garvin is the source of the strange conceit of Joyce as a reclusive Jesuit in *The Dalkey Archive*. Garvin notes:

the only ‘joke’ which I had ever tried to perpetrate on the Joyce canon was a rejection of the findings in *The Quest for Corvo* on the ground that ‘Corvo’ was really James Joyce endeavouring to externalise the hidden part of his ego (his ambition to be a priest and to rise to eminence in the Church). My effort was defeated when Alec Newman, then editor of *The Irish Times*, telephoned me and asked me was I serious. I was obliged to admit that I was not. The idea was later developed in Flann O’Brien’s *The Dalkey Archive*, where Joyce is depicted with the ambition to become rector of Clongowes Wood College.<sup>58</sup>

It is ironic that Newman phoned Garvin to verify these details, given that when *The Irish Times* ran the notice for Joyce’s novel in 1939, they called it ‘Finnegan’s Wake’ and attributed it to Sean O’Casey.<sup>59</sup> But Garvin’s suggestion that O’Nolan’s circle of friends shared deprecating jokes about Joyce which humanised him and made him more relatable as a literary peer helps to explain the significance of Garvin choosing to place

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postcard dated ‘9 April? 1940,’ Joyce, trying to track down his copy of the novel, asks Nino Frank, ‘By the bye, did I ever lend you *At Swim-Two-Birds* by F. O’Brien? I am only asking, not accusing you’ (Ellmann’s translation). See James Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce*, vol. 3 (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 475. Sheridan’s claims about Joyce’s campaign on behalf of *At Swim-Two-Birds* are also substantiated by an unpublished letter from Joyce to Niall Sheridan. See ‘Joyce to Niall Sheridan’ [1940], manuscript letter, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.

<sup>55</sup> Garvin, *Disunited*, 23.

<sup>56</sup> O’Brien, *The Complete Novels*, 36, 37.

<sup>57</sup> See J. C. C. Mays, ‘Brian O’Nolan and Joyce on Art and on Life,’ *James Joyce Quarterly* 11, no. 3, (Spring, 1974): 238–56. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25487137>.

<sup>58</sup> Garvin, *Disunited*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Publications Received,’ *The Irish Times* (6 May 1939): 7.

a self-deprecating remark that Joyce made about himself – that he would be ‘quite content to go down in history as a scissors and paste man’ – in a prominent position on the flyleaf of *Disunited Kingdom*.<sup>60</sup> The version of Joyce that Garvin and O’Nolan shared could be read and communicated through jokes as well as critical analysis. This approach reflected the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake*, who chose to present himself through self-deprecating humour as Shaun the Post’s plagiarising literary counterpart Shem the Penman.

As McCourt has noted, there seems to be a lot of co-thinking in the circle about *Finnegans Wake*. Garvin mentions specific collaborations with O’Nolan in two articles.<sup>61</sup> Garvin (as ‘Andrew Cass’) also collaborated with Niall Montgomery. Together they interviewed C. P. Curran about Joyce on Seamus Kelly’s Programme on Radió Éireann at 8pm on 12 June 1954.<sup>62</sup> In the first five years of O’Nolan’s civil service tenure, these discussions were happening in parallel with the finalisation and publication of *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Early critics such as Mays seem attuned to the ways in which *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *Finnegans Wake* function as twin texts: ‘the book that Brian O’Nolan’s Stephen-figure is writing centres on the dreams of a publican, a “night-logic” world which obeys its own laws and appears to be liberated from customary physical restraints, all its characters merging into one another around a small core of fixed types.’<sup>63</sup> This comparison is made less often now: we are more likely to read O’Nolan as writing against Joyce, squirming in the shadow of *Ulysses* and dismissing *Finnegans Wake* altogether. Earlier critics such as Mays seem to have a better awareness of the fact that O’Nolan belonged to the social circle of Joyce’s key defenders and his earliest Irish critics, such as Garvin. The Wakean imprint on *At Swim-Two-Birds* is a manifestation of an intensive interest in Joyce amongst the civil servants of the emerging Irish state, entwining a Joycean and bureaucratic modernism in their responses to his work.

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<sup>60</sup> Joyce himself wrote to George Antheil: ‘I am quite content to go down to posterity as a scissors and paste man.’ See James Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce*, vol. 1 (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 297.

<sup>61</sup> Garvin describes *Finnegans Wake* as the ‘exploration of the sleeping mind and the Dark Night of the Soul’ (*Disunited*, 23). This is similar to O’Nolan’s 1951 description of *Finnegans Wake* as ‘a treatise on the incommunicable nightmind.’ Brian Nolan, ‘A Bash in the Tunnel,’ in *A Bash in the Tunnel: James Joyce by the Irish*, ed. John Ryan (London: Clifton Books, 1970), 20. Garvin writes: ‘O’Nolan suggested that the 1947 article should have had the sub-title, “The Twelve Puns,” an allusion to The Twelve Pins, the collective name in English for a dozen peaks or bens (Irish *bean*, pl. *beanna*) in the mountain ranges of Connemara, adjoining the district known as Joyce Country’ (*Disunited*, 2–3). See also Marcus MacEnery [Garvin], ‘Joyce Country,’ *The Irish Times* (13 September 1947): n.p. O’Nolan repeatedly used this play on ‘Joyce Country’ in *Cruiskeen Lawn*. David Powell notes many of the Joycean repetitions in ‘An Annotated Bibliography of Myles Na Gopaleen’s (Flann O’Brien’s) “Cruiskeen Lawn” Commentaries on James Joyce,’ *James Joyce Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1971): 50–62.

<sup>62</sup> See ‘Con P. Curran is interviewed about James Joyce by Andrew Cass and Niall Montgomery,’ in the Radió Éireann listing published in the *Irish Examiner* (12 June 1954): 7.

<sup>63</sup> J. C. C. Mays, ‘Literalist of the Imagination,’ 106.

## Conclusion

We have argued in favour of reconnecting Garvin and O’Nolan on the basis that understanding their shared bureaucratic poetics helps us to recover a way of reading O’Nolan’s texts alongside his civil service work which has long been neglected. Their interactions in print also afford us with a better understanding of Garvin’s place within O’Nolan’s circle, which previously had been limited only to their work together and the epigraph Garvin provided.

Garvin certainly had a mercurial knowledge of the Irish Civil Service, and he shared this knowledge with O’Nolan as his mentor. While there is an essential difference between the kinds of writer and civil servant O’Nolan and Garvin were, they were very likely friends. Michael Phelan has noted that Garvin as secretary would have been close to O’Nolan both professionally and personally.<sup>64</sup> But Garvin spent decades writing one book on Joyce, whereas the need to earn money to support his large family inhibited O’Nolan’s creative output, which might have been even more voluminous if his financial difficulties had not existed. In ‘Watcher in the Wings,’ Phelan anticipates an argument made by Cronin that the loss of financial security affected O’Nolan’s writing after his dismissal from the civil service. This belief reveals an important bias—that the civil service was essentially a safe place to be a writer unless you were O’Nolan, an ‘unorthodox’ civil servant who was also ‘a great writer with a readymade market, bursting with ideas and mad to get at them.’<sup>65</sup>

As we have seen, John Garvin’s career as a senior civil servant, writer, and Joycean connects to O’Nolan’s life at several important junctures. Over a period stretching from the completion of O’Nolan’s first novel and beginning of *Cruiskeen Lawn* to the end of his civil service career and beyond, Garvin and O’Nolan collaborated to establish a means of understanding and dealing with Joyce that drew on their administrative involvement in the city that he immortalised. Garvin waited the entirety of his civil service career to publish a poorly received book on Joyce a decade after his retirement, whereas O’Nolan compromised the viability of his career in the civil service to produce some of the most significant post-Joycean writing in the modern period.

<sup>64</sup> See Michael Phelan’s interview in ‘Flann O’Brien,’ *Bowman*, Radio RTÉ (9 October 2011).

<sup>65</sup> Michael Phelan, ‘A Watcher in the Wings: A Lingering Look at Myles na gCopaleen,’ *Administration* 24, no. 1 (1976): 102.



### Appendix: Simple Chronology of John Garvin's Life and Career

**1904:** Born 19 November in Keash, Co. Sligo.

- Graduates with Arts and Commerce BA from University College Galway.
- Obtains law degree from University College Dublin and is called to the bar.

**1925:** Enters Irish Civil Service.

**1928–32:** Works as parliamentary clerk.

**1932:** Made Deputy Head of Loans for the Department of Local Government and Public Health in December.

**1935:** Becomes Assistant Principal Officer.

**1937:** Becomes Principal Officer in June and marries Maureen Daly in University Church, Dublin on 23 June.

**1938:** Serves as Secretary of Local Government Tribunal.

**1940–45:** Sits on Economy Committee and serves as County Manager for Wicklow.

**1947:** Appointed Assistant Secretary in the Department of Local Government in January.

**1949:** Made Local Appointments Commissioner effective 1 January.

**1954:** Co-founds the Dublin James Joyce Society and interviews C. P. Curran (1883–1972) with Niall Montgomery for a Joyce radio programme on 12 June. On 11 September, R. M. Smyllie dies. Garvin attends the funeral with his wife.

**1966:** Brian O'Nolan dies on 1 April. Garvin retires on 1 October after over forty years in the civil service.

**1969–73:** Becomes Chairman of the National Library Council and is appointed Dublin City Commissioner.

**1972:** National University of Ireland confers the title 'Doctor of Literature' on Garvin. He becomes an honorary citizen of Mobile, Alabama USA in September.

**1976:** Gill & MacMillan publish Garvin's study, *James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom and the Irish Dimension*.

**1986:** Dies 9 February at home in Clonskeagh. His remains are interred at Glasnevin.

### Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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