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**Bard of Modern Ireland: Perspectives on Voice and
Mask within the Poetry of Brendan Kennelly**

**La voix et ses masques: approches de la poésie de
Brendan Kennelly dans le cadre de la tradition
bardique irlandaise**

VOLUME II / II

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MASKS

Brendan Kennelly in common with bards of all periods is a performing poet and as such he has constructed himself as a public character. However, a close study of his poems allows the reader to perceive a different version of the poet than his public image suggests. Just like one event can have many versions, the poet with one body can wear many masks that can be conflicting and contradictory. This could be the reason why Brendan Kennelly worked on creating a multifaceted version of Cromwell in his long poem and, to an even greater extent, of Judas in *The Book of Judas*. If it is not clear how Cromwell could be both a savage murderer and a loving father, it is not clear either how Kennelly, the performing poet and Kennelly the writing poet can be reconciled in his work. As demonstrated in relation to the mythical approach to time, the idea of one true, fixed historical event clashes with the multiple versions of the living myth. One is actually many. When it comes to Kennelly's poetry, although readers and listeners naturally assume that there is only one name from which the book originates, on second thoughts it has to be considered that the name of Cromwell, Judas and The Man Made of Rain are also on the cover. And when reading the books, not one but many voices can be heard. As testified by titles such as *The Voices*, *A Time for Voices*, and his upcoming book *Reservoir Voices*, the question of voices seems to be a crucial preoccupation for Kennelly and when examined in relation to masks it intimates a promise of surprising creativity.

I Masks and Voices

1) Becoming the Voices: Evolution of Brendan Kennelly's Approach to Voices

The question of masks and voices caught Brendan Kennelly's attention very early in his poet's career. Sedlmayr speaks of "Kennelly's *poetology of voices*" that grants "weight and authority not to a single voice exclusively ... but makes heard a chorus of multiple and often decidedly dissonant voices."¹⁰¹³ Through his postgraduate studies Kennelly became familiar with the way Irish bards lent their voices to objects, and how in their poems, objects and creatures usually voiceless became articulate such as the stag in "My Story," a poem that was translated by Brendan Kennelly from ancient Irish poetry: "Here's my story; the stag cries, / Winter snarls as summer dies."¹⁰¹⁴ Besides Irish bardic poetry, Brendan Kennelly's study of Yeats's Cúchulainn plays made him aware how the mask in primitive forms of theatre and in the Japanese Noh Drama in particular, could be used as an instrument to open spiritual doors in the self, a quality that Brendan Kennelly was to develop in his own poetry.¹⁰¹⁵ As a young man Brendan Kennelly did not only compose poems but also plays¹⁰¹⁶ so that the matter of voices was from the earliest stage of his career of foremost importance to him.

Ake Persson¹⁰¹⁷ sees in *The Voices* (1973) Brendan Kennelly's first attempt at mentally entering objects to which he grants a voice. However, the technique was already used by the poet in *Good Souls to Survive*¹⁰¹⁸ (1967) and in *Bread* (1971). Persson writes that the method "was due to the poet feeling desperately out of tune with life" and that it was used "in order to avoid total disintegration of the self." It is yet to be pointed out that at the time *Bread* was written (in the early Seventies), Brendan Kennelly was a young

¹⁰¹³ Gerold Sedlmayr, *Brendan Kennelly's Literary Works*, 12.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Love of Ireland*, 15.

¹⁰¹⁵ *JII*, 166.

¹⁰¹⁶ At the age of eighteen, he wrote a play called *The Bitter and the Brave*, cf. Interview with Kelly Younger, "Dionysus in Dublin: Brendan Kennelly's Greek Trilogy" <http://www.ucd.ie/irthrm/kyounger.htm>, 29 April 1997.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ake Persson, *Betraying the Age*, 70.

¹⁰¹⁸ Cf. "Hunchback," "A Mad Woman" and "The Tree's Voice."

married man, happy in his marriage and proud father of a young baby. One also notes that the poet was at highest risk of “total self-disintegration” as Persson describes it, in the mid 1980s. This difficult time which corresponded to a decisive turn in his career gave birth to *Cromwell* and *Antigone*, works in which multiple voices and “speaking objects” are not as frequent as for instance in *The Singing Tree* (1997) or in *Poetry My Arse* (1995). From the late Sixties onward critics called attention to the plurivocity of Kennelly’s verse.¹⁰¹⁹ In his doctoral thesis, Erwin Otto sees the technique as unique among Irish contemporary poets.¹⁰²⁰ Indeed, with poems such as “Hunchback,”¹⁰²¹ “The Tree’s Voice”¹⁰²² and “Bread”¹⁰²³ Brendan Kennelly used internal focalisation, that led to poems which, due to the technique, are reminiscent of the earliest type of bardic poetry. In a long interview in 1976, Gus Martin perceptively interrogates Brendan Kennelly on voices in his poetry and points at *Salvation, the Stranger*, (1972) and *The Voices* (1973) as collections where voices are given particular attention.

Although he was still at a very early stage of his poetic development, Brendan Kennelly’s answer enunciates a poetics to which he has remained faithful ever since:

Gus Martin: Do you think yourself into the loaf of bread or could you even say how...

Brendan Kennelly: You have to be aware, try to be aware as much as possible of everything around you, to express the essential life, you might almost go back to the ballad ... you have to think a lot about yourself. And

¹⁰¹⁹ Among numerous articles cf. Scán Lucy, “A Changing focus in poetry, from Ireland to Russia,” *The Irish Independent*, 7 January 1967, 10.

Frances Gwynn, “The Poetry of Brendan Kennelly: Some Aspects.” Paper submitted for IASAIL Conference, Cork, August 1973. Typescript. 18 Un-numbered pages.

¹⁰²⁰ “Die so geartete neuere Lyrik Kennellys unterscheidet sich hierin von der jedes anderen maßgeblichen irischen Dichters. Die Suche nach der eigenen Identität, ursprünglich in überweiegend historischen Bereichen – diese Dichtung dominiert noch immer die Werke der meisten zeitgenössischen irish-englischen Lyriker – spielt für Kennelly nicht mehr die einzig entscheidende Rolle.” Erwin Otto, *Das lyrische Werk Brendan Kennellys. Eine Beschreibung der Gedichte auf dem Hintergrund des Dichtungsverständnisses und der spezifisch irischen Erfahrungen des Autors sowie der Tradition irisch-englischer Dichtung*. Dissertation/ Universität Giessen. Lang Frankfurt a. M. 1976, 272.

¹⁰²¹ FS, 361.

¹⁰²² *Ibid.*, 434.

¹⁰²³ *Ibid.*, 429.

the temptation is to hoist yourself on the audience. My desire would be self-knowledge but celebration of otherness.¹⁰²⁴

One notes that “the voices” of the voiceless (animate and inanimate, people and things) were then something that interested the poet from a creative perspective. This approach was part of a method and, according to Kennelly’s account, a distance remained between himself and the object speaking in the poem; at the time he did not then publicly say that objects spoke to him. However, Brendan Kennelly was trying to get as close as possible to his focaliser in order, if possible at all, to hear inside himself the voice he was trying to reach. To him the aesthetic approach also had to be an ontological experience and his progress towards voices led him from method to actual experience.

Schizophrenia was not mentioned at the time, but Brendan Kennelly’s interest in “the mad” certainly shows an awareness of this disposition of the mind when voices are heard in the head as both a fruitful source of poetic inspiration and as an authentic threat to sanity. As always with Brendan Kennelly this interest was not limited to the theoretical realm but had to belong to the field of experience. This means that he befriended those who generally inspired fear and discomfort. Thus Ann Ahern, Brendan Kennelly’s former landlady in Dublin recalls¹⁰²⁵ how when he was still in his twenties the young poet talked and listened to Red Biddy¹⁰²⁶ and was certainly one of the rare persons to have dared enter her house. Ann Ahern also relates how in the Sixties he would come home late because he had been helping “Pissy Lizzy” push her handcart up Dame Street. He would often come home without socks because he had given them to her, whose feet were cold. This anecdote, among many, shows that the poet’s attention to the outcast goes far beyond mere

¹⁰²⁴ *Writer in Profile*, RTE Television, 17 October 1976.

¹⁰²⁵ *Lifelines*, RTE Television, 28 January 1996.

¹⁰²⁶ Red Biddy also appears in “Mad Boy’s Song,” in Brendan Kennelly, *Let Fall No Burning Leaf*, (Dublin: New Square Publication, 1963), 17 and in “Four Portraits,” in Brendan Kennelly and Rudi Holzapfel, *The Dark About Our Loves*, (Dublin: John Augustine and Co.), 7-8. Gerold Sedlmayr, *Brendan Kennelly’s Literary Works*, 352.

romanticization. In this respect Sedlmayr's claim¹⁰²⁷ that Kennelly is using the marginals and those suffering to his own profit should be tempered. If Sedlmayr's criticism is accepted, it also applies to any charitable figure. Such a perspective denies the idea of generosity and shows a very dark conception of humanity. Kennelly's philanthropic attitude towards the indigent has not been restricted to his writing but has been a truly lived experience. It does not find its source in a romantic view of himself, but in an early age observation of his mother, Bridget Ahern-Kennelly, who was herself a nurse. For years there was no doctor in the parish of Ballylongford and she received sick people, examined them and looked after them. She was a model of compassion and hard-work, a direction that was followed by her poet son.

In *My Dark Fathers* (1964) several poems such as "Johnny Gobless" pay tribute to the mad and in "The Fool's Rod,"¹⁰²⁸ just as bards named their chief and their people, Brendan Kennelly names the mad of Dublin:

I name the names of Dublin's mad;
Red Biddy, laughing at the doom
that calls through the laneways of the Coombe;
Johnny Gobless, whose heavy tread
is total gluttony for God;
Mad Meg in whose dishevelled hair
the Holy Spirit set a star,
and who, 'tis said, at one time had
such surpassing beauty, all men
who witnessed it were there and then
changed inwardly; Nostromo, tall
and bearded, maddest of them all;
the only mad you'd ever find
who'd spit at rain or clout the wind;
old Zozimus, whose gamey life
became an act of faith in strife;
the Flop, a gentleman from hell,
a defiant rose in his lapel;

¹⁰²⁷ "[some of Kennelly's poems] nurture the suspicion that the poor and mad are not really the focus of attention themselves, but that they instead only function as instruments (ab)used by the poet to express *himself* and to emphasise *his* extraordinary status rather than theirs." Gerold Sedlmayr, *Brendan Kennelly's Literary Works*, 117.

¹⁰²⁸ FS, 355-357.

Mad Peggie lifting up her skirts

...

Bang-Bang, who aims the loaded gun
of his defiance at everyone;
and all the nameless ones who talk
to beckoning angels as they walk
the streets with frantic mouths that could
express the marvellous folly of God.

One notes here the strong and obvious rhythm of ballads and the similarity with a sport ballad recited during a television interview is striking:

We'll honour in song and in story,
The names of those players so brave,
Whose valour brought credit and glory,
To a county of mountain and wave.

Forget not the boys of the rangers,
Whose team it was sturdy and tried,
For the laurels they won amid' dangers
They brought to the sweet Shannon side.

I'll number them now in my rhyming,
True heroes we'll cherish them all,
Macallistrem Cool twixt the uprights
With Walsh 'neath the fall of the ball.

Fort Shannon sent Sugrue and Egan,
With Winston and Lynch in the van,
Mick Elligott swept all before him,
With Black Dowling a rock of a man.

In the 1980s the poet sank deeper and deeper into alcoholism. He reached the bottom in 1986 when he daily drank up to two or three bottles of whiskey, and experienced visual and auditory hallucinations. During the months that preceded treatment, he seemed to have been in a perpetual state of stupefaction, lost in a maze where he could no longer distinguish reality from visions.¹⁰²⁹ These hallucinations cast a new light on the poet's perspective and it is during that time of turmoil, in the late Seventies, that Brendan Kennelly read a poem by Fernando Pessoa that was decisive for him on the question of

¹⁰²⁹ Personal communication with Professor Joris Duytschaever, May 2006.

voices. From this time on, it is striking that Kennelly's discourse on the matter changed. The distance formerly observed between the poet's self and the voices seems to have dwindled if not disappeared. I would argue that Kennelly recognized in Pessoa's description of his own relation to the voices, an experience with which he had himself become familiar: "in coming to term with [the question of being], or at least to come to terms with it, an idea came to me from the depths of alcoholism, where I heard voices."¹⁰³⁰

After Brendan Kennelly wrote in 1996 *The Man Made Of Rain*, based on a visual hallucination that can be compared to the inspirational experiences of early Irish bards that was induced by anaesthetics, he composed in 1997 *The Singing Tree*, a short collection in which he returns to the bardic technique of identification with objects and in which the first person of each poem is the voice of an inanimate object: a tree, Latin, loneliness, a wall, the tide, a bullet, a pillow... In the preface he explains how for him poetry is an extension of the self:

As regards poetry, egotism is both a cage and a freedom-way. Sometimes, to achieve freedom, it is necessary to slip out of the cage of the self into something else, occupying another person, state, feeling, objective phenomenon of one kind or another. Use the "I," the self-label, to let the voice of the external other utter itself. Surrender and collaborate;

The Singing Tree, with the technique of identification, resembles some of the poems in *The Voices* and *My Dark Fathers*, one significant difference is nonetheless that allusions are made not simply to the object that serves as a poetic focaliser but more generally to "voices" heard by the poet such as in "Pillow"¹⁰³¹ :

Because your mind is always muttering
to itself in a way that calls me
it's not just interested in itself

but in voices that respond to muttering.

¹⁰³⁰ Elizabeth Zoppi, "The Road for Home," *The Word*, May 2004, 10.

¹⁰³¹ ST, 24.

where do they come from? Why
are they huddled there waiting

Voices become a subject more and more frequently referred to from the 1980s, in Brendan Kennelly's writing, performances and interviews. Over the past few years, he would often invite his audience to listen to the voices of objects around them: "When you turn on the tap at night voices in the water tell you things."¹⁰³² In parallel with more frequent references to voices in his poetic discourse, one notes the growing vocal coherence of his characters such as Ozzie in *The Book of Judas*, women in *Poetry My Arse*, the author of the letters in *The Book of Judas* and others. Not surprisingly this time of Brendan Kennelly's career, when his poetic writing becomes more and more dramatic with *Cromwell*, *The Book of Judas*, and *Poetry My Arse*, also sees the composition of three successful plays: *Antigone*, *Medea*, and *The Trojan Women*.

2) The Shadow of Schizophrenia: Links to Primitive Orality

In his fascinating study *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*¹⁰³³ Julian Jaynes traces the evolution of the human mind and uses early literary works such as the *Iliad* as documents testifying to this evolution. This means for instance that the gods in Homeric texts are not considered as poetic inventions but interpreted literally as actual psychological phenomena. Examining the *Iliad*, Julian Jaynes¹⁰³⁴ notes that there is no consciousness in the *Iliad* but that mental processes are systematically represented as concrete entities: "a dying warrior bleeds out his psyche onto the ground..."¹⁰³⁵ He also remarks that Iliadic men have no decision making power but that

¹⁰³² Sandrine Brisset, personal notes from reading by Brendan Kennelly, Trinity Hall, Dublin, 23 April 2007.

¹⁰³³ Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (London: Allen Lane, 1979).

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰³⁵ *Ibid.*

this function is always taken charge of by the gods.¹⁰³⁶ This state of mind, that Jaynes calls the “bicameral mind,” was not restricted to men at the time of the *Iliad* but is observable down to the end of the second millennium BC.¹⁰³⁷ According to Jaynes, the gods were auditory hallucinations from the right lobe in the brain, that took over people’s minds any time a decision had to be made, any time choices and actions were requested. Julian Jaynes considers Schizophrenia as a residue from the bicameral mind. “The beginnings of action are not conscious plans, reasons, and motives: they are in the actions and speeches of gods.”¹⁰³⁸ The oldest poem in Irish that has survived to our time, “The Song of Amergin,”¹⁰³⁹ would have been recited approximately in 1530 BC, that is in the middle of the second millennium BC, when the Milesians invaded Ireland. The poem was then orally transmitted until the text was written down. This poem like others among the oldest bardic pieces has a narrative voice identifying with natural elements; another way to put it would be to say that natural elements speak to the bard. Following Jaynes, I would argue that it cannot be denied with any certainty that the earliest bards heard voices in a way comparable to the bicameral mind and that this mode of hearing voices relates to the question of voices and orality in the poetry of Brendan Kennelly. Quoting a patient who hears voices Jaynes writes “they [the voices] assume the nature of all those objects through which they speak -- whether they speak out of walls, or from ventilators, or in the woods and fields.”¹⁰⁴⁰ Despite being a poet living in Modern Ireland, his relation to voices directly connects Kennelly to early Irish bards.

Brendan Kennelly comes from a region of Ireland where schizophrenia was very common and even if the matter of hearing voices was not openly talked about the poet would have been aware of the question very early. Although he never uttered the

¹⁰³⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰³⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰³⁹ Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, 205.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

correlation between schizophrenic voices and bardic voices, he seems to have instinctively perceived the powerful aesthetic potential it constitutes. In that respect his doctoral studies of the epic reinforced his position so that his later work and especially his own epics bear numerous similarities to texts born out of bicameral and schizophrenic minds. "The voices in schizophrenia take any and every relationship to the individual. They converse, threaten, curse, criticize, consult, often in short sentences."¹⁰⁴¹ In a way that is reminiscent of this type of dialogue, Acc de Horner in *Poetry My Arse* often enters in dialogue with objects that could be voicing a part of himself and that in "The final crime"¹⁰⁴² certainly express a temptation that has been that of Brendan Kennelly himself:

Give it up, the clock said, give it up now.
No more poetry.

What'll I do instead?

Here's a hammer, the clock said,
take it in your hand,
look around, choose a head.

Brendan Kennelly's temptation to give up poetry was noted as early as 1975 by the French critic Patrick Raffroidi, one of the rare specialists who called attention to the ambient begrudgery in some Irish literary circles:

I wish that he does not put into practice the threat in the last line of his last poem:

"I walk the other side of the street
Even if, for him, the surrounding atmosphere of confusion is aggravated by his legitimate resentment for coming under the more and more sustained fire of certain groups of critics."¹⁰⁴³

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁰⁴² PMA, 235.

¹⁰⁴³ Trans. mine. « Je souhaite, quant à moi, qu'il ne mette pas en pratique la menace du dernier vers de son dernier poème :

I walk the other side of the street

Même si, chez lui, s'ajoute à la confusion ambiante la légitime amertume d'essuyer le feu de plus en plus nourri de certains groupes critiques. » Patrick Raffroidi, *Etudes Irlandaises* 4, November 1975, 217-221.

Whether they be only alluded to or whether they actually speak, in *Poetry My Arse* the voices are a constant presence. In “Another voice” the tonality of the concluding triplet recalls that of the clock in “The final crime”¹⁰⁴⁴:

Then another voice shoots up through
all the voices, urging calmly coldly:
“write it down, you snivelling bastard, write it down !”

Ace’s mind is recurrently the scene where a cacophony of voices is heard:

I swear I’ll not go mad
Till the voices fascist my head.¹⁰⁴⁵

A decade later in *Now* (2006), the voices are still represented in a similar way:

Now, again, he sits in the dark for hours
until the voices come, laughing, challenging,
daring him with ‘Listen! Listen! Write us down.’¹⁰⁴⁶

These lines echo the more violent: “in the atrocious pceace of midnight when / accusing ghosts dionysiac his nut.”¹⁰⁴⁷ Brendan Kennelly calls that state when the mind is bombarded by a multitude of voices “Blitzophrenia,” a coinage composed of “blitz” that refers to an intense and relentless attack and “zophrenia” that echoes “schizophrenia.” Most interestingly the authority of the voices exerted on Kennelly: “write it down, you snivelling bastard, write it down!”¹⁰⁴⁸ (1995), is evoked with similar words when he writes of the hallucination that took the form of a man made of rain in 1996:

Then I had this vision during it [the time in hospital]. I saw a man made of rain. I came out of hospital, and he was still with me! And I wasn’t going to do anything about it, you know, and he said: “Come on! Come on, now!

¹⁰⁴⁴ PMA, 235.

¹⁰⁴⁵ PMA, 160.

¹⁰⁴⁶ N, 21.

¹⁰⁴⁷ PMA, 264.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Write it! Write me down!" Walking around the street and I'd hear that! And I did! I sat down one morning and I did "pew!"¹⁰⁴⁹

The fact that the hallucination returned after the poet had recovered suggests that it was not merely related to anaesthetic drugs. It is also striking that the hallucinated character addressed the poet in short sentences and that the words used in these injunctions are extremely close to earlier representations of the voices in Kennelly's poetry.

In the turmoil of cacophonous voices the danger is yet to lose one's voice or oneself. The question is pondered upon in "The Authentic Voice of Judas"¹⁰⁵⁰:

At certain moments, silence is a sin.
I followed this voice down a starved laneway
And cornered it behind a large plastic bin.
"Are you my voice?" I asked, "My own voice? My very own?"

Along with the hyper polarization already underlined in Kennelly's verse, the pair object-subject is granted a special treatment. Unlike other contraries, the two opposite poles subject and object (what is here called an object can be either animate or inanimate) are very often fused rather than separated. The reader thus often comes across statements such as "the mountain is judging me tonight"¹⁰⁵¹ and numerous instances (in *The Singing Tree* in particular) when the poet identifies with the object for example through internal focalisation. This confusion subject-object is particularly obvious when it comes to the topic of words and poetry. In "Real cool"¹⁰⁵² the poem is granted a voice and asserts its independence from its creator. In "Poems are cheeky bastards" this independence is asserted against the control of the narrative voice:

¹⁰⁴⁹ Gerold Seldmayr, "Brendan Kennelly, Interview with Gerold Sedlmayr, Passau," *Anglistik, Mitteilungen des Deutschen Anglistenverbandes*, 13: 2, 2002, 16.

¹⁰⁵⁰ BOJ, 77.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁰⁵² PMA, , 215.

Poems are cheeky bastards,
they tickle my heart and head,
they break all the rules and line by their own¹⁰⁵³

The fusion between object and subject might be more than a poetic device. In his prose as well as in interviews Brendan Kennelly advocates reading a poem “until the poem reads you” and similarly claims that “poems write him” and that “words are using you.” When trying to explain his composing process he says: “I just do what I’m compelled to do. And what the words force me to do. When you’re writing, you follow words ... the poem has a life and an identity independent of the poet.”¹⁰⁵⁴ Kennelly also asserts¹⁰⁵⁵ his belief that words live in the air between people and that the poet’s task is to let them come to him.

The identification process is interestingly evoked in “Measure”¹⁰⁵⁶ that comes after “Note”¹⁰⁵⁷ in which the poet acknowledges various sources for his research on Cromwell. “Measure” is written in the voice of Buffún: “It was just that like certain of my friends, I, Buffún, could not endure the emptiness.” At this stage of the poem, even if the character’s name is mentioned, it is yet uncertain for the reader discovering the book whether this is the voice of Brendan Kennelly (who had moved into a room in Trinity College in 1980 and where, as suggested by “Note,” he immersed himself into the life of Cromwell or “the butcher” as he was also called in Kennelly’s village), or the voice of Buffún: “I invited the butcher into my room and began a dialogue with him.” Then, through “Measures,” like in an oral story, the voice of Cromwell progressively arises in the text, takes over and seems to address both Brendan Kennelly and the reader: “I am the guest of your imagination, therefore have the grace to hear me out; I am not altogether responsible for the fact that you were reared to hate and fear my name...” Rather than speaking about Cromwell or

¹⁰⁵³ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Zynob Ibnou Cheikh, “Interview with Zynob Ibnou Cheikh,” Dublin, 2003, 2.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Brendan Kennelly, reading in Trinity Hall, Dublin, 23 April 2007.

¹⁰⁵⁶ C, 15.

¹⁰⁵⁷ C, preface.

about Buffún, Brendan Kennelly speaks *as* Cromwell and *as* any character of his imagination. This technique – that becomes even more apparent when one listens to recordings of Brendan Kennelly reciting his poems – seems to correspond to what has been described by Ong, Buchan and Finnegan among others, as particular to the oral or the poetic Homeric mind that was denounced by Plato:

[Plato] asks of men ... that they should think about what they say, instead of just saying it. And they should separate themselves from it instead of identifying with it; they themselves should become the “subject” who stands out from the “object” and reconsiders it and analyses it and evaluates it, instead of just “imitating” it.¹⁰⁵⁸

In other words subjectivity and feelings should be dealt away with to the profit of objectivity. The speaker should keep distance from what he is talking about and disengage himself. About *The Mwindo Epic*¹⁰⁵⁹ Ong notes¹⁰⁶⁰ how tightly bound narrator, audience and character are, so that the performer has the hero directly address the scribe. The listeners identify with the performer who himself identifies with the hero. This identification leads to occasional shifts in the first person. Although *Poetry My Arse* is a written work, comparable situations often happen and are all the more interesting when Brendan Kennelly turns himself into a character, like Woody Allen in his own films, or when – as himself the poet – he refers to the technique of identification:

Home and away

Ace is living me today.
He's at home now, I've slipped away.
Who is saying whatever there's to say?
Who dares shape the curses? Who dares pray?¹⁰⁶¹

¹⁰⁵⁸ David Buchan, 192.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Daniel Biebuyck, and K. Mateene, *The Mwindo Epic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 37, quoted in Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 46.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 46.

¹⁰⁶¹ PMA 146.

In the *Iliad* the gods intervene when the hero has to take action. Jaynes suggests that “the god-hero relationship was – by being its progenitor – similar to the referent of the ego-superego relationship of Freud.”¹⁰⁶² This similarity also seems to apply in relation to Ace and Kanooc whose similarity with Cúchulainn has been indicated. It has also been shown that the closeness of the two characters made it uncertain whether they were actually distinct at all or whether they were two sides of one and same character. However if Ace is something of a caricature, unlike for the Greek gods of the *Iliad*, it cannot be said that Ace does not have a mind. He is indeed often shown thinking, wondering, hesitating, and questioning things which limits the resemblance between Ace and bicameral minded characters. Ace hears voices at times, but this trace of schizophrenia is only part of his psychological life.

In the *The Book of Judas* the schizophrenic process takes a different form. Voices are not a multiplicity concentrated in one’s head but one voice, Judas’ voice, which is disseminated in many characters. This is an occasion for internal dialogues through which the reader perceives the ubiquity of Judas’ voice. The latter is essentially represented by the narrative voice that speaks in the first person in the book. In “Thirty Pieces of Silver,” the voice of Judas speaks through money and often sounds like the voice of temptation: “Nancy Wright, though shy, begins to feel me. / Steal me, Nancy, steal me!”¹⁰⁶³ One notes that, as is generally the case in Kennelly’s work, this inner voice that could also order, question, warn or threaten, speaks in very short sentences, a characteristic also observed by Jaynes in schizophrenic patients. At the core of *The Book of Judas*, the section “Yóu” is possibly one of the most disturbing in the book. This second person pronoun remains vague enough and shifts back and forth from Judas, to God, to an indefinite persona that encompasses the reader and forces their involvement in questioning the nature and identity

¹⁰⁶² Julian Jaynes, 74.

¹⁰⁶³ BOJ, 180.

of Judas. While in the previous sections Judas spoke in the first person, in “Carlotta,”¹⁰⁶⁴ the first poem in the “You” section, Carlotta speaks, addresses Judas and indirectly the reader, who through this linguistic device is compelled to be at the closest with his arch-enemy. In a context where the Northern question was still extremely sensitive and when the option of a violent Nationalist response was still a frequent temptation, the following lines feel most provocative and fiercely engaged against nationalist violence:

If you, most treacherously accomplished blighter,
Should in a sudden patriotic burst
Become a freedom fighter
Whose attitude to blood is like a guinness thirst ...¹⁰⁶⁵

In February 1984, Brendan Kennelly asserted on *The Late Late Show* his belief that because man was made in the image of God, man can contemplate in himself the part of him that is divine. The second poem in the section “You” takes a further step to unsettle the reader and obliges them to follow Brendan Kennelly into his poetic investigation of the ultimate other, that is Judas. “If I, if You” plays with the pronouns, that in this case form opposite poles: Judas, and God, I and the other, and interchanges them so as to make them as close as possible. The first half of the poem is composed of questions from Judas, the second of questions from Jesus, yet no punctuation, only the content of the lines indicates a shift that is confirmed by the final couplet. The latter cannot be yet attributed to one more than to the other as the pronoun “we” puts an end to the antagonism of the pronouns, and marks the beginning of their fusion: “If we swapped questions, o my brother, / Would we know why we betrayed each other?”¹⁰⁶⁶

It is also Brendan Kennelly’s interest in schizophrenic conditions and their creative potential that links some of the poets for whom Brendan Kennelly feels a great admiration.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Among these are William Blake and John Milton. The latter's name in particular is very often quoted in Brendan Kennelly's poetry. Writing about the devil Brendan Kennelly says: "Milton is his favourite poet, he thinks the Bible is crap,"¹⁰⁶⁷ As often with Brendan Kennelly, the line backlashes at the reader. Milton made the devil the hero of *Paradise Lost* and Kennelly writes about the devil: "Milton is his favourite poet." A logical sequence to this line would state about Judas, "Kennelly is his favourite poet." Julian Jaynes emphasises¹⁰⁶⁸ how both Blake and Milton have experienced auditory hallucinations. In *Paradise Lost*¹⁰⁶⁹ Milton mentions his "Celestial Patroness, who ... unimplor'd ... dictates to me my unpremeditated Verse." Blake also went through periods of hallucinations, both auditory and visual, that he used as primary material for his paintings and engravings, and also for his poems. Kennelly had knowledge of this, which led him to pay homage to Blake in a poem where he honours one of Dublin's "characters."

In "Johnny Gobless," he draws a portrait of a schizophrenic Dubliner who felt he was in direct communication with God. Brendan Kennelly compares him with William Blake:

I think of lonely William Blake
 Who did a world make, re-make,
 Who hounded truth until it cried
 And laid his head against his side,
 Whose discontent was made and given
 By the amazing hand of heaven,
 Whose deep divine unhappiness
 Could only bless, could only bless¹⁰⁷⁰

These powerful experiences where the shadow of schizophrenia looms led the poets to elaborate what Joseph Campbell called "creative mythology."¹⁰⁷¹ These artists give

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Julian Jaynes, 375.

¹⁰⁶⁹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 9: 21-24.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Brendan Kennelly, *Collection One: Getting up Early* (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1966), 31.

¹⁰⁷¹ Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology*, vol. 4 (London: Souvenir Press, 1974), 4.

aesthetic shape to a powerful and outlandish experience and consequently their “communication will have the value and force of living myth¹⁰⁷² – for those that is to say, who receive and respond to it themselves, with recognition, uncoerced.”¹⁰⁷³

Brendan Kennelly was among these for he recognized in the works of Blake, and Milton something with which he was already familiar. The process of recognition that led Kennelly to work on the question of poetic identification with objects and reflect on how he could give them a voice, is commented upon in relation to “Bread” during his long interview with Gus Martin,¹⁰⁷⁴ but at this early stage of his career, the event of “hearing voices” is not yet phrased as explicitly near to schizophrenia as it is later.

Paradise Lost had a decisive impact on Kennelly’s poetics and in particular on the way he decided through Cromwell and Judas to grant a voice to a mythic figure that history had condemned to silence. Milton turned Satan into a beautiful fallen angel with a magnetic power that calls for our pity, a complex character with whom we can sympathize and identify. However, Brendan Kennelly’s treatment of Judas is further complicated in so far as he is not *one* character but a ubiquitous voice that obliges the reader to turn not just towards identification but to self introspection. The poet compels his reader and his listener to launch into the difficult process that he himself has gone through, the mental adventure of becoming the ultimate other, the figure against which the ego builds itself.

3) Pessoa

Brendan Kennelly’s reading of Fernando Pessoa’s works marked a crucial turning point in his career. He discovered the Portuguese poet in the late Seventies. His marriage was falling apart and like Pessoa, who died of a sudden hepatitis, Brendan Kennelly had become a heavy drinker. It is probable that he recognized something of himself in Pessoa’s

¹⁰⁷² I have chosen to distinguish myth and mythology, Campbell does not draw this distinction.

¹⁰⁷³ Joseph Campbell, 4.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Writer in Profile*, RTE Television, 17 October 1976.

aesthetic experience. Julian Jaynes explains how people who hear voices very often have imaginary companions in childhood. Fernando Pessoa was such a child and as an adult he remembers his dialogues with his imaginary friends whom he saw and heard and to whom he gave names.¹⁰⁷⁵ What is exceptional about Fernando Pessoa is the way his sense of a divided self was taken to the extreme under the “heteronym” writers: Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Alvaro de Campos. These cannot be called pseudonyms as they are the creation of one poet, Fernando Pessoa, but are yet three distinct poets whose works greatly differ in form. Of Alberto Caeiro, Pessoa says: “My master had appeared in me.”¹⁰⁷⁶ The poet described under his own name the creative process that gave birth to his three poets. The description is rather unsettling. Directly after writing the thirty odd poems of Caeiro’s he came back to Pessoa in a strange dance between personae:

I immediately seized another sheet of paper
and wrote, also straight off, the six poems
that make up Fernando Pessoa’s “Chuva
Obliqua.” Immediately and completely...
It was the return of Fernando Pessoa Alberto
Caeiro to Fernando Pessoa himself alone. Or
better, it was the reaction of Fernando
Pessoa against his own non-existence as
Alberto Caeiro.¹⁰⁷⁷

The two other personae shortly followed:

I jerked the latent Ricardo Reis out of his false paganism, discovered his name, and adjusted him to himself, because at this stage I already *saw* him. And suddenly, in a derivation opposed to that of Ricardo Reis, there arose in me impetuously a new individual. At one go, and on the typewriter, without interruption or correction, there arose the “Triumphal Ode” of Alvaro de Campos – the ode along with this name and the man along the name he has ... I fitted it all into moulds of reality. I graded their influences, recognized their friendship, heard, inside me, their discussions and divergences of criteria, and in all this it seemed to me that I, the creator of it all, was the

¹⁰⁷⁵ Fernando Pessoa, *Selected Poems, Fernando Pessoa*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 15.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

least thing there. It is as if it all happened independently of me. And it is as if it still happens like that...¹⁰⁷⁸

All this took place at a time when the poet was going through intense psychological pressure that aggravated his manic depressive nature, with which Brendan Kennelly was bound to associate in the late 1970s and later on. What is remarkable in both Pessoa and Kennelly is the passivity of the poet when the personae's voices are heard. They seem to be invited in and then to take over. Thus Pessoa called Alberto Caeiro "his master" and Kennelly says about Cromwell, "The butcher walked out the door of my emptiness, straight into me."¹⁰⁷⁹ One major difference between Kennelly and Pessoa's attitudes towards their personae might be the way in which with Pessoa, the persona comes up as totally unexpected whereas more control seems involved with Kennelly. Thus Pessoa explains his heteronymic mode of composition as follows:

How do I write in the names of these three? Caeiro, through sheer and unexpected inspiration, without knowing or even suspecting that I'm going to write in his name. Ricardo Reis, after an abstract meditation that suddenly takes concrete shape in an ode. Camos, when I feel a sudden impulse to write and don't know what.¹⁰⁸⁰

As opposed to this, on the one hand *Cromwell* was preceded by a couple of years of research, yet on the other hand actual composition of individual poems could take place anywhere, including in pubs.¹⁰⁸¹ Beyond the originality of having poems of a specific form written under heteronyms, Pessoa pointed out the most interesting dramatic effect created by the confrontation and interaction of the three voices: "The works of these three poets form, as I've said a dramatic ensemble, and the intellectual interaction of their personalities

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁷⁹ C, 15.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Fernando Pessoa, *Fernando Pessoa, A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe, Selected Poems*, ed. and trans. Richard Zenith (London, New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 5.

¹⁰⁸¹ In communication with Brendan Kennelly 2006.

as well as their actual personal relationships have been duly studied.”¹⁰⁸² This interaction is made even more fertile in Brendan Kennelly’s work as poems by each voice are not grouped but alternate with poems by other voices so that the dialogue between personae is made more explicit. One character addresses another and comments upon his action in a way that is comparable to a chorus. Marianne McDonald underlines how in his plays, Kennelly actually shifts much of the choruses’ comments to individual characters.¹⁰⁸³

As he studied the enigma of hypnosis, Julian Jaynes relates it to the bicameral mind in so far as the voice of the hypnotizer exerts over the hypnotized a power comparable to that of voices from the right lobe in the brain. Most interestingly Philippe Hottier describes a similar state induced by masks during shamanic practices.¹⁰⁸⁴ These are called “transformations” because the actor “becomes” the character whose mask he is wearing. It seems the transformation is more than imagined and consciously controlled. The actor discovers in himself capacities, movements and resources that neither himself nor others suspected him to possess. Entering a character is like going through a regressive journey that brings out primitive impulses:

When you experience this strange process (and you experience it with a curious pleasure although pain is involved, it is enjoyable), you reverse and you find again what you are not too used to disclose: pee, pooh, food, lust. Because it is through the reunion of body and substance that the actor encounters the spiritual summits (the mystery of life!).¹⁰⁸⁵

¹⁰⁸² Fernando Pessoa, *Fernando Pessoa, A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe*, 4.

¹⁰⁸³ Marianne McDonald, “Rebel Women: Brendan Kennelly’s Versions of Irish Tragedy,” *New Hibernia Review* 9.3 (2005), 123-136, 126.

¹⁰⁸⁴ « La Structure du masque agit sur le corps et le mental du comédien » Philippe Hottier, in *Le Masque : du rite au Théâtre*, ed. Odette Aslam and Denis Bablet (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1985), 235-241, 237.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Trans. Mine, *Le Masque, du rite au théâtre*, 237.

« Lorsqu'on se plie à cette chose bizarre (et l'on s'y plie avec un curieux plaisir bien qu'on en souffre, on aime cela), on fait une marche arrière et l'on retrouve ce qu'on n' a pas trop l'habitude d'exhiber: pipi, caca, manger, désir. Car c'est dans les retrouvailles avec le corps et la matière que le comédien rencontre les sommets de l'esprit (mystère de la vie!). »

It is remarkable that the mask of a character can bring out primitive moves – most of them largely represented in the epics – such as scatological language and attitudes, violence, bellicosity etc. all many aspects of the self that civilisation teaches us to tone down. Julian Jaynes mentions certain conditions that are essentially linguistic phenomena such as negatory possession and Gilles de la Tourette syndrome, also known as “foul-mouth disease” in which, due to a particular condition of the right cerebral lobe, the patient suddenly unleashes streams of such primitive talk that is felt by the patient and those belonging to his social group as shockingly obscene: “this ... develops into an uncontrollable emission of ripe obscenities, grunts, barks, or profanities in the middle of otherwise normal conversation, as well as various facial tics, sticking out the tongue, etc.”¹⁰⁸⁶ Especially about negatory possession, Jaynes writes: “Almost always, there is a loss of consciousness as the person seems the opposite of his or her usual self.”¹⁰⁸⁷ Although these types of conditions do not involve the use of a mask, the effect is close to that described by Philippe Hottier: “[The mask] calls forth in us areas commonly ignored, for instance the mask of Pantalon, among others, reveals our perversities.”¹⁰⁸⁸

Brendan Kennelly sees his poetry as the place where these “areas commonly ignored” should be explored and expressed. And it is the sort of experience through the use of ritual or theatrical masks described by Hottier that Brendan Kennelly aims at through his use of literary masks. From this follows a poetry that can often be felt as obscene and ruthless. Persson writes: “The openness with which this sexual banter is conducted may conventionally be found more in popular soft-porn than in love poetry.”¹⁰⁸⁹ “Nourishment” offers a striking illustration: “She lifted her head, Ace heard her say, / Well, that’s my

¹⁰⁸⁶ Julian Jaynes, 351.

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Trans. mine. « [Le masque] fait appel en nous à des zones ordinairement ignorées, par exemple le masque de Pantalon, entre autres, révèle nos perversités. ». *Le Masque, du rite au théâtre*, 237.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Åke Persson, *Betraying the Age*, 167.

protein for today.”¹⁰⁹⁰ Given Kennelly’s exploratory approach, this type of language surprisingly contrasts with Brendan Kennelly’s mildness and affability as he appears on television or during other performances and how his friends and relatives have known him since he stopped drinking. His daughter’s reaction to his poetry perfectly illustrates how the contrast can be acutely felt. On *Lifelines*,¹⁰⁹¹ when asked whether she reads her father’s poetry, she replied that she did not and explained: “I’d find it too disturbing. He’s my lovely dad, he doesn’t write that stuff.” However it seems that other people who have known him from a different context and who are more familiar with his poetry, perceive in a different way the link between violence in written words and the poet’s personality. When describing Brendan Kennelly one of them speaks about

a sense of rage [that] is never too far from the surface; a masculine pain. Violence. Something nasty is always at risk of pouring out. This “leakage” of wounds and wounding is ever present in his most recent collection, *Poetry My Arse* (1995), in which the themes of violence and hatred are all-pervasive.¹⁰⁹²

One also notes that this type of “rude” poetry is restricted to the written sphere and is rarely performed in public by the poet. In the same television programme¹⁰⁹³ referred above Brendan Kennelly was celebrated for his generosity and his human qualities. The only member of the public to call attention to the dark side of Brendan Kennelly’s poetry was Ake Persson who wrote his doctoral thesis on the works of the poet. The contrast between the bright side of Kennelly and his dark side that is reserved for his poetry, was yet not so striking at the time when Brendan Kennelly still suffered from alcoholism. When inebriated he was described as “dark,” “rude,” “repulsive” and occasionally cruel, as if alcohol had on him an effect comparable to that of a mask liberating the sinister forces at

¹⁰⁹⁰ PMA, 328.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Lifelines*, RTE Television, 28 January 1996.

¹⁰⁹² Harry Ferguson, “‘Iron Brendan’: Brendan Kennelly and Images of Masculinity, Wounding and Healing,” in *This Fellow*, 32.

¹⁰⁹³ *Lifelines*, RTE Television, 28 January 1996.

work in his mind. This type of metamorphosis occasioned by alcohol is recurrently referred to by Kennelly from one book of poems to the next as in *Now*:

She puts her question, "Is it true that when
sober (as now) you are a likeable man,
and when drunk, a monstrous phenomenon?"¹⁰⁹⁴

Kennelly also explains that more than once he was told "You're the only man who's worse sober than drunk."¹⁰⁹⁵ The extent of the transformation is also confirmed by Kennelly himself who after he stopped drinking frequently apologized for hurting people.¹⁰⁹⁶ It is a similar dark impulse that Antonin Artaud describes as the essence of theatre: "Essential theatre ... is revelation, the surfacing, the outward impulse of an inclination to potential cruelty through which all the perverse possibilities are being focused on one individual or on a people."¹⁰⁹⁷

4) Yeats's and Kennelly's Masks

I.4.1 The Noh

In the 1960s, through his studies of Yeats's play *At the Hawk's Well*, Brendan Kennelly became aware of the Noh. At the time his doctoral research led him then to read "*Noh*" or *Accomplishment: a study of the classical stage of Japan* by Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound. Beyond the stage characteristics of the Noh, the exploratory scope offered by the mask in this type of theatre echoed Yeats's preoccupations with the investigation of the self. As shown in "The Heroic ideal in Yeats's Cuchulain Plays,"¹⁰⁹⁸ Brendan Kennelly

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Now*, 18.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *The Late Late Show*, RTE Television, 30 May 2003.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Rivers of Words*, RTE Television, North Kerry Writers, 1st June 1994.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Trans. mine : « Le théâtre essentiel est ... révélation, la mise en avant, la poussée vers l'extérieur d'un fond de cruauté latente par lequel se localisent sur un individu ou sur un peuple toutes les possibilités perverses de l'esprit. », *Le Théâtre et son double* (Paris: NRF, Gallimard, 1964), 44.

¹⁰⁹⁸ JIJ, 166.

perceived how the actor wearing a mask in the Noh, could achieve the type of fusion with his character that Yeats had been looking for through magic:

Masks have something else to offer performers in this mode, besides their concreteness and ability to represent epistemologies other than the everyday. They can be constructed to play further with the confusion of identities – conforming to the face in more or less human contours, but revealing something of the actor’s face behind the mask.¹⁰⁹⁹

Two modes should be distinguished here: the *visitation* and the *demonstration*. In the former, the dramatic “illusion”¹¹⁰⁰ becomes the reality. The actor reaches a trance, and becomes the character. In this situation awareness of acting is lost: “visitation is characterized by a loss of the sense of “me” and an engulfment of the self by an entity that is considered ‘not me’ – with an attendant loss of conscious control and a scanty memory of what took place while performing.”¹¹⁰¹ In demonstration the actor plays with the duality between the mask and himself. His acting shows the mask and plays with its otherness. The performer’s identity is maintained and demonstrated as contrasting with the mask that is used as a foil. These two modes complicate and enrich the actor’s playing in the Noh but also in the performance of a story-teller (and most certainly that of Irish bards) and the work of a writer who uses literary masks. They open two different roads between the self and otherness.

1.4.2 Yeats

For W.B. Yeats the mask is a contrasting instrument used in order to reveal the self. Wearing a mask is a discipline, self-awareness is never abandoned. In that approach he follows the demonstration mode. “If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are, and try to assume that second self, we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Masked Performance*, 28.

¹¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

though we may accept one from others.”¹¹⁰² As explained by Brendan Kennelly¹¹⁰³ this handling of the mask is an exercise that allowed the poet to know and understand better the functioning of his own mind. This discipline is however inward looking and does not allow for the intrusion of anything external. Yeats uses the binary contrast of the theatrical demonstration mode and, to achieve the greatest contrast that will lead to greater self-knowledge, he turns to a mask that is an “anti-self”: “the other self, the anti-self or the antithetical self, as one may choose to name it, comes but to those who are no longer deceived, whose passion is reality.”¹¹⁰⁴ Perception of the self’s subtleties will be born out of the struggle between the self and the anti-self, that is from an internal agonistic confrontation. The mask is thus opposed to the mirror: “Saint Francis and Caesar Borgia made themselves overmastering, creative persons by turning from the mirror to meditation upon a mask.”¹¹⁰⁵

Yeats’s purpose was to dive into “the abyss of the self” but as he always remained self-conscious, full identification with the mask was difficult for him. However, magic and mysticism provided him with the occasion to observe the phenomenon of visitation, as some of the members in his occult circle experienced visions and went into a trance when they were visited by spirits. This type of experience is possibly the closest one can reach to otherness. As his friend A.E. (George Russell) could easily enter in contact with spirits, he played for Yeats the role of an intermediary with the otherworld: “He urged Russell, who saw visions daily, to question the spirits and obtain from them confirmation of their belief and arguments.”¹¹⁰⁶ Occultism supplied Yeats with methods and theories with which he could intensify his inner adventure. His belief in the Daimon participates of the

¹¹⁰² W.B. Yeats, “Per Amica Silentia Lunae,” *Mythologies* (NY: Touchstone, 1989), 334.

¹¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 331.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 334.

¹¹⁰⁶ Richard Ellman, *Yeats. the Man and the Masks* (NY: Norton and Company, 1999), 33.

dualism between self and anti-self: “the Daimon comes not as like to like but seeking its own opposite, for man and Daimon feed the hunger in one another’s hearts.”¹¹⁰⁷

5) Kennelly

Brendan Kennelly’s approach to masks largely differs from Yeats’s because for him knowledge of the self is a condition, a necessary and preliminary stage towards knowledge of the other: “unless we give up all the chains of egotism and release ourselves imaginatively into something else, I don’t think we’ll discover our full potential as people.”¹¹⁰⁸ This means that Kennelly aims not at a concentration upon the self but on the contrary at enlarging the self, at losing self-awareness to welcome otherness. To put it differently, through the mask Brendan Kennelly targets “visitation” or full identification when the body lends itself to an entity that is “not me.” This involves becoming nothing, nobody, a blank space where otherness can enter. This blank space can only be attained through self-knowledge that is essentially achieved via self-criticism. In Kennelly’s work this would take the form of a persona that is a caricatural self-representation. The self is not totally evacuated or ignored, it is also present but most of the time from a critical angle, hence personae conceived as self-caricature. For instance the poet discloses his own proximity to Buffún: “He’s a bit of myself of course. He’s the bit of myself that feels stupefied by the complexity of reality, by the very contemplation of history.”¹¹⁰⁹ Two years after *The Book of Judas* was released and when he was composing *Poetry My Arse*, Kennelly wrote a significant paragraph about his approach to the self and in particular to self-caricature. The passage also reveals that the poems written at the time did not only make room for private confidence but also for confession involving “self-laceration”:

¹¹⁰⁷ *Mythologies*, 335.

¹¹⁰⁸ Jenny Lee, “New Beginnings...” *Irish News*, 30 October 2004, 24.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Writer in Profile*, RTE Television, 26 May 1993.

Poetry is the best, perhaps in the end, the only real form of criticism because it puts the self on the line. The main thing is to give this self (O Jesus where's my pension?) a merciless thumping so that the poem will at least have the validity of enlightened self-laceration. No criticism is valid that isn't rooted in self-criticism. No poetry is likely to be of living interest to discriminating readers that doesn't take the micky out of the poet's own vanity, arrogance and priceless self-deception. We should declare war on ourselves. That's when the fun starts. That's when the poem laughs in delight at the violence it does to itself. I want to write a poetry that is capable of containing, among other things, this kind of self-critical laughter.¹¹¹⁰

"Confessional" poetry would then be acceptable to Kennelly only through the indirect approach of a caricatural persona.

Once the self has been delt with through this device, otherness becomes accessible. It is striking that *Cromwell* opens on the following sentence: "The butcher walked out the door of my emptiness, straight into me."¹¹¹¹ The haunting question of becoming nobody, surfaces regularly in Brendan Kennelly's work and in particular in *Poetry My Arse* where "nobody" becomes a character:

"if you let nobody into your heart
you'll cease to be afraid of nothing
like people who are somebody"¹¹¹²

Given his position towards voices, Brendan Kennelly unsurprisingly found the perfect echo to his poetic aspiration in an essay called "Everything and Nothing"¹¹¹³ (Kennelly's personal papers contain several copies of the essay). Unlike Yeats who cultivated duality, Brendan Kennelly's masks move toward multiplicity, as illustrated by "A Host of Ghosts":

I am slipping into the pit of my own voice,
Snares and traps in plenty there.
If I ponder on shadows in the grass

¹¹¹⁰ Brendan Kennelly, no title, *Krino*, Winter 1993, 28-29, 29.

¹¹¹¹ C, 15.

¹¹¹² PMA, 196.

¹¹¹³ Jorge Luis Borges, "Everything and Nothing," *Labyrinths. Selected Stories and Other Writings*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1970), 284-285.

I will find Oliver, Mum, The Belly, Ed
Spenser down in Cork, the giant, He, a host of ghosts¹¹¹⁴

Thus there is no contrary couple such as Michael Robartes and Owen Aherm in Kennelly's poetry; instead we encounter numerous characters whose voices show variable degrees of individuation. Cromwell and Judas are the nearest one would get if one was to look into Brendan Kennelly's poems for an anti-self figure of a Yeatsian type. These characters are not anti-self to Brendan Kennelly, because they are not defined according to the poet's self. Cromwell in particular possesses an historical identity of his own, independent from the poet. The opposition between Cromwell, Judas but also Black and Tans and the poet lies in the following explanation, Brendan Kennelly says: "I was reared to hate them."¹¹¹⁵ Cromwell and Judas are not anti-selves, they are enemies, others, connected to the poet through the hatred he was taught to feel for them. An equivalent of this relationship between the poet and his personae lies in the relationship – this time real, not imagined – between Brendan Kennelly and Will Flinn. The encounter and the friendship which ensued were a preamble to the poet's development. Brendan Kennelly met Will Flinn in London in the early Sixties. He then worked as a bus conductor with him. Will Flinn, who was an older man, had been a Black and Tan during the Civil War. In Kerry the Black and Tans had been a source of great terror, but despite this the poet discovered in Will Flinn, who was potentially his hereditary enemy, a genial man with whom he got on well. This life experience planted the seeds for literary development that later took the form of *Cromwell* and of *The Book of Judas*. For Brendan Kennelly like for W.B. Yeats, poetry was "An experiment in Living." Through this exploration Brendan Kennelly developed a multiplicity of poetic voices like an actor would but also any poet who performs and in particular – one suspects – any Irish bard.

¹¹¹⁴ FS, 31.

¹¹¹⁵ *Writer in Profile*, RTE Television, 26 May 1993.

6) A Linguistic Approach: "Hearing Voices in the Poetry of Brendan Kennelly"

As previously seen, the criteria for calling a poem oral can be numerous. Objective metrics provide a further interesting instrument to assess orality in a text.¹¹¹⁶ The fact that all the oral messages contained in a text originate from one writer only, raises the question of the authenticity of the voices. Are these truly distinct and individuated or do they bear indelible and objectively identifiable marks showing that they have been born from one single author? On the one hand these voices belong to the author in so far as he is known to have written them, but on the other hand, they are objectively his own if the text independently demonstrates objective signs that it originates from a single source. For instance, the characters' voices in Yeats' play, *The Land of Heart's Desire* are more readily identifiable as being part of that play than Eugene O'Neill's characters in *The Hairy Ape* are in relation to their play.¹¹¹⁷ In terms of psychological archetype such a question becomes relevant when one considers that Brendan Kennelly has repeatedly claimed to be "hearing voices."¹¹¹⁸ However, even in split personality disorder, as it is diagnosed according to the DHS-IV manual, the individual affected has just one brain and one tongue, and the diverse voices are channelled through one same composite conduit. Similarly in a different area, ballistic experts in forensic investigations examine the impact of the channel on the bullet and the impact of the bullet on the target. In theory, the poet's bullet, that is his texts, can be subject to comparable analysis. The comparison is all the more relevant as the poet occasionally writes and speaks in a way that makes the poem

¹¹¹⁶ Biber, D., *Variation Across Speech and Writing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Sampson, G., *Empirical Linguistics* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

Douglas Biber, S. Conrad and R. Reppen, *Corpus Linguistics: Investigating Language Structure and Use* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹¹¹⁷ Myriam Mencke, *Experiments to Validate Scientifically Reliable Author Identification Techniques* Mphil in Linguistics (Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College, University of Dublin), 2004.

¹¹¹⁸ Sandrine Brisset, personal notes from reading by Brendan Kennelly, Trinity College Dublin, 23 April 2007.

stand for the poet.¹¹¹⁹ The type of analysis involved here is suggested by research in forensic linguistics for the task of authorship attribution¹¹²⁰ and aims at providing further evidence that Brendan Kennelly most possibly does hear voices which validates the use of Julian Jaynes' perspective in order to better understand Kennelly's aesthetics and its relation to early Irish bardism.

Following the proof by absurdity method, this section hypothesizes a version of Brendan Kennelly which is not taken to correspond to reality. Every reason suggests that this version does not correspond to reality, but it nonetheless provides a coherent reading of the selection of poems examined here. In order to distinguish Brendan Kennelly from the hypothetical author, which has been posited it is here supposed that this version of the author is another poet, K, and that like Borges' character in "Pierre Menard, Author of the Don Quixote"¹¹²¹ who has managed to write the *Don Quixote*, K has written all of Kennelly's poems separately himself, without committing any act of plagiarism. The poet K does have a split personality and does hear voices. Some of these are localized voices, local to specific poems, and some are voices that provide one-off commentary. Some of the women and children are in this category. Some are located in dialect regions or regions of time – Ozzie in the *Book of Judas* or Buffún in *Cromwell* – and are craftily contrived. Others are persistent recurrent voices such as Ace or Jancy-Mary. Others are simply the names of places, personified places such as the street names around the Liberties or Smithfield in Dublin.

¹¹¹⁹ "Poems are Cheeky Bastards," PMA, 147.

¹¹²⁰ C. Chaski, "Who Wrote It? Steps toward a Science of Authorship Identification," *National Institute of Justice Journal* 233, 1997, 15-22.

Id., "Linguistic Authentication and Reliability," in *Proceedings of National Conference on Science and the Law*, 1999, 97-148.

Id., "Empirical Evaluations of Language-based Author Identification Techniques," *Forensic Linguistics* 8 (1), 2001, 1-65.

¹¹²¹ Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Don Quixote," *Labyrinths, Selected Stories and Other writings*, 62-71.

This reading of K is based on subjective coherence. It relies essentially on close readings of the text as a whole. In this reading the claim of coherence is supported by two forms of reality cross-checking. First external judgement of identity among voices is established by examining the rate of coherence of each voice and by comparing one voice to other voices. Secondly blind evaluation techniques are applied following the corpus linguistics literature (e.g. Biber). The outcome is a success. Some support is found confirming that the characters of the K corpus are individuated voices. These actually are identifiable voices in the corpus and, unlike the voices of Shakespeare's characters, they can be reliably distinguished from each other.¹¹²² This validates the claim that K has a split personality. By extension it supports the argument that Kennelly does hear voices and that his poetry demonstrates uncommon creativity.

I.6.1 Material and Methods

The text used in this analysis has been selected from four collections of poetry written by K: *Cromwell*, *The Book of Judas*, *Moloney up and at It* and *Poetry My Arse*. This analysis does not take into account the totality of these volumes but only the poems mentioned in Appendix. Villacañas¹¹²³ underlines about Kennelly, K's counterpart, that his "mastery of different registers and discourses enables him speak from the mind of Oliver Cromwell, to inhabit him ..." The following poem from *Cromwell* provides an example of Cromwell's voice.

In Oliver's Army

No man shall depart a mile out of the Army, upon pain of death
No man shall draw his sword without order, upon pain of death

¹¹²² This claim is made on the basis of very recent, but correspondingly unrefereed and unpublished experiments by Dr Carl Vogel, in collaboration with Myriam Mencke, on the text of *Hamlet*.

¹¹²³ B.Villacañas, "Brendan Kennelly's *Cromwell*: Black Comedy as Exorcism," *Estudios Ingeles de la Universidad Complutense* 18, 2003, 137-57.

No man shall hurt a man bringing food, upon pain of death
A sentinel asleep or drunk or forsaking his place shall die without mercy
No man shall give a false Alarum, upon pain of death
He that makes known the Watchword without Order shall die for it
If a Pike-man throw away his pike, he shall die for that
No man shall abandon his colours, upon pain of death
None shall kill an Enemy who yields and throws down his Arms
Rape, Ravishments, Unnatural Abuses shall meet with death
Let God be served, Religion be frequented
Let sellers of meat avoid the unsound, the unwholesome
Let Heaven be praised with sermon and prayer
Let all faults be punished by the Laws of War.

This is to be contrasted with the voice of Ozzie in the *Book of Judas*, “prades” [sic]:

prades

ozzie is stonemad about prades
so he say kummon ta Belfast
for the 12th an we see de Orangemen
beatin de shit outa de drums
beltin em as if dey was katliks heads

so we set out from Dublin
an landed in Belfast for de fun
it was brill
dere was colour an music an everyone
was havin a go at sumtin i dunno

what but ill never forget ozzie in
de middul of all de excitement
pickin pockets right left and centre

on de train back to Dublin he was laffin his head
off, dere shud be more fukken prades he said

Between these extremes, other voices with personalities of their own are also evident, for instance Janey-Mary, and a child. Perception of these voices is evident to some readers but sometimes contentiously.

The next paragraph describes methods from text classification tasks corpus linguistics as were applied to these texts in order to objectively analyze voice within the body of poetry considered. Here the selection of poems is pointed out with how the

materials are structured. A set of electronic files labelled by source and by a personal opinion on voice, was constructed. In some case, a voice runs through a number of poems, in other cases a poem is split into two voices.

Voice	Book
ACE	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>
AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS	<i>The Book of Judas</i>
BUFFUN	<i>Cromwell</i>
CHILD	<i>The Book of Judas</i>
CHILD	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>
CHILD	<i>Cromwell</i>
CROMWELL	<i>Cromwell</i>
JANEY-MARY	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>
MISTAKE	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>
MOLONEY	<i>Moloney up and at It</i>
NARRATOR 1	<i>The Book of Judas</i>
NARRATOR 2	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>
OZZIE	<i>The Book of Judas</i>
WOMAN	<i>Moloney up and at It</i>

Table 1. Voices and Books

Table 1 indicates the voices analyzed and how they run through books of poetry. Tables in Appendix A show the selection of files constructed from each book in order that each file be homogeneous with respect to a perceived voice. The name of a voice has been formatted in small capital letters (e.g. OZZIE). Two distinct narrators are evident; however, the voice of the CHILD runs through three books. The poem “She’s there”¹¹²⁴ is split into two files. One part of the poem provides the voice of the NARRATOR, a voice which is evident in other poems by K, and is comparable to the CHORUS.¹¹²⁵

My soul is her lower lip but only for
A moment, then it’s the story she becomes

¹¹²⁴ BOJ, 146.

¹¹²⁵ By comparison Marianne McDonald notes that in *Antigone* the role of the Chorus is displaced to individual characters.

Before my eyes in the coughing street where
I am trying to remember her name.

While another part of the same poem offers the voice of the CHILD.

“Ginnic, Ginnie Green, sir. I takes this blanket, yes,
An’ I makes through the streets, I’m a beggar,
I looks right into the tourists’ eyes
An’ I takes what I can for me sisters an’ brothers.

An’ why am I tellin’ you this? Once, a bad day
You gave me bread, gave me white bread,
That’s why I’m talkin’ like this.”

In some places, as in “She’s there,” a change of voice is explicitly signalled with quotation marks. But this is not always the case.

A total of 95 files were thus constructed. The files ranged in length from one line to 194 lines, (interestingly enough, both of these, were in the voice of CROMWELL), with an average of 25.4 lines. In many cases, the files coincide with entire poems.

I.6.2 Method

The first method has been described above. Poems were individually classified. The second method is to determine whether techniques in authorship attribution, from forensic linguistics and from the text classification literature discriminate the voices comparably.¹¹²⁶ The approach considers all pairwise comparisons of the files and ranks them in similarity according to their characterization: as similar to the rest of the book it appears in (Poems and Books) as similar to individual files (Poems and Voices), or as similar to individual files (Poems and Poems). The exact techniques used here have been applied to a number of different sorts of categorization tasks involving correlations with

¹¹²⁶ Carl Vogel, “N-gram Distributions in Texts as Proxy for Textual Fingerprints,” in A. Esposito, E. Keller, M. Marinaro and M. Bratanic eds. *The Fundamentals of Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication and the Biometrical Issue*, IOS Press, 2007.

subjective and objective categories¹¹²⁷. The core of the method used here for judging similarity is based on objective criteria. Both distributions of words and distributions of individual letters are considered. Given sometimes unique orthography (witness “fukken” and “laffin” above), it is clear that a word-based analysis will fairly uniquely identify a voice. Thus, the problem is made more interesting by examining letter distributions as has been argued in forensic linguistics.¹¹²⁸ One notes that normally word choice determines spelling, and in general people do not impose conscious control over their spelling. Thus, if the files cluster by voice under an analysis of letter distributions, then the result is stronger than if it is obtained because of particular words. While the analyses have been performed both at the word and at the letter level, here the report bears specifically on the letter distribution analysis; yet the two analyses largely coincide.

The exact method is to compare two files on the basis of the frequencies of occurrences of letters in each, using a chi-square analysis for each letter (which thus relativizes the frequencies to file sizes), calculating the sum of the chi-square values for each comparison, and essentially dividing by the total number of comparisons.¹¹²⁹ Chi-square testing is typically done to prove that two frequency distributions are significantly different. When the value for any one comparison is large enough, it exceeds a threshold that is generally accepted for establishing the level of statistical significance. However, we

¹¹²⁷ S. Van Gijssel and C. Vogel, *Inducing a Clinc from Corpora of Political Manifestos*, in Markus Aleksy *et al.*, ed., *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Information and Communication Technologies*, 2003, 304-310.

C. O'Brien, C. Vogel, “Spam Filters: Bayes vs. Chi-squared; Letters vs. Words,” in Markus Aleksy *et al.*, ed., *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Information and Communication Technologies*, 2003, 298-303.

Mencke, 2004.

J. Medori, *Experiments Testing the Reliability and Validity of Author Identification Methods*, Master's thesis, Computational Linguistics Group, Trinity College Dublin. Computational Linguistics Group, 2005.

L. Hogan, *A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of American, British and Irish Political Speeches*, Master's thesis, Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College, University of Dublin, 2005.

¹¹²⁸ C. Chaski, “Linguistic Authentication and Reliability,” in *Proceedings of National Conference on Science and the Law*, 1999, 97-148.

¹¹²⁹ A. Kilgarriff, “Comparing Corpora,” *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 6 .1, 2001, 97-133.

are interested in similarity, so the smaller the chi-square value, the smaller the difference. This cumulative chi-square value is our index of the difference between two files that we can then use in a Mann-Whitney analysis which evaluates the significance of rank-ordering according to similarity between two categories. Thus, the variation in the experiments reported is in terms of the categories assigned: by books, by voice, by (part of) poem.

The analysis generates reams of output from which results are extracted and interpreted. Only similarity rankings that achieve significance are reported, and the extracted tables of only the comparison involving four categories is included here as an appendix (B). The remainder of the results are simply stated and discussed.

1.6.2.1 Poems and Books

The relevant question is which book each poem from each book is most alike. It is easy to imagine that it should always be most like its own book, but this is not the case. This analysis involved four categories, one for each of the books considered. The files drawn from *Moloney up and at It* were *a priori* classified either as of the voice of the Woman or of Moloney in their file names (see Table 7 in Appendix B). The results show that only one of the files was classified as more like the rest of the files comprising *Moloney up and at It* than the other poems. In the main, both voices are like those of *Poetry My Arse*. The files of *Cromwell* (Table 8)¹¹³⁰ are mainly like the poems of that book, but some are actually more like those of *Poetry My Arse*. The files of *The Book of Judas* (Table 9)¹¹³¹ are most similar to their own book, but many are also attributable to *Poetry My Arse* and *Cromwell*. Finally, files of *Poetry My Arse* split in assignment to *Poetry My Arse* itself, *Cromwell* and

¹¹³⁰ Cf. appendix.

¹¹³¹ *Id.*

Moloney up and at It (Tables 10 and 11).¹¹³² What these results indicate strongly is that the books are not individually homogeneous. Poems in some of the books are more like poems in others of the books than they are like the rest of the poems in their own book.

1.6.2.2 Poems and Voices

One examines here which subjectively constructed voice each file from each such voice is most alike. To structure the discussion, the analysis proceeds via the books that the files are derived from. Cases where no statistical significance was obtained are not mentioned. Because of the subjective construction of voice as a category, it is natural to expect noise, and indeed we find it. However, we also find clear signals.

The single file representing the NARRATOR 1 of *The Book of Judas* is most like the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS poems of the same volume, but also quite similar to MOLONEY and CROMWELL. All manifest a mature formal register. OZZIE is overwhelmingly self-similar, and less-so alike NARRATOR 2. Similarly, the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS is also a dominating voice – self-similar for each file comprising the voice, but with additional matches to NARRATOR 2.

The WOMAN of *Moloney up and at It* is equally like JANEY-MARY of *Poetry My Arse* and herself at the highest levels of significance. There is also similarity to both ACE and the NARRATOR 2 of *Poetry My Arse*. Despite being an eponymous character, files associated with MOLONEY are actually scattered in similarity.

From *Poetry My Arse*, the NARRATOR 2 is most significantly matched to himself, and also to: the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS, CROMWELL, and ACE. Files of ACE match JANEY-MARY and ACE equally, also NARRATOR 2, and the WOMAN. The MISTAKE is matched with the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS (*The Book of Judas*) most strongly, and also the

¹¹³² *Id.*

CHILD, NARRATOR 2 and MOLONEY. The CHILD is another scattered voice, matching NARRATOR 2, BUFFÚN, ACE, JANEY-MARY, the WOMAN, the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS and MOLONEY. In turn, files of JANEY-MARY match her own most closely, followed by ACE, NARRATOR 2 (both of the same book), the WOMAN and MOLONEY of *Moloney up and at It*, and the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS.

Analyzing *Cromwell*, files of BUFFÚN match most strongly and most frequently with NARRATOR 2 and also with the CHILD, the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS, the MISTAKE and CROMWELL, matching BUFFÚN's own files only twice. Recall that CROMWELL and BUFFÚN are from the same book. As for CROMWELL, those files also match with most significance and frequency with NARRATOR 2. Some files of this voice also match the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS, BUFFÚN, CROMWELL himself, and JANEY-MARY. Similarity between parts of *Cromwell* and the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS is to be expected from the fact that the associated poems were composed contemporaneously.¹¹³³

¹¹³³ In communication with Brendan Kennelly September 2006.

Table 2 summarizes the results.

Voice	Book	Match
ACE	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>	equivocal
AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS	<i>The Book of Judas</i>	univocal
BUFFUN	<i>Cromwell</i>	equivocal
CHILD	<i>The Book of Judas</i>	equivocal
CHILD	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>	equivocal
CHILD	<i>Cromwell</i>	equivocal
CROMWELL	<i>Cromwell</i>	narrators
JANEY-MARY	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>	women
MISTAKE	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>	equivocal
MOLONEY	<i>Moloney up and at It</i>	equivocal
NARRATOR 1	<i>The Book of Judas</i>	narrators
NARRATOR 2	<i>Poetry My Arse</i>	narrators
OZZIE	<i>The Book of Judas</i>	univocal
WOMAN	<i>Moloney up and at It</i>	women

Table 2. Results: Voices and Books

It is evident that *a priori* individuation of voices does not cluster the files uniformly. The AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS and OZZIE are the strongest voices. Other strong voices appear to cluster in types: the narrators, and the women cluster together.

Under this analysis, one is asking to what other file is an individual file most similar to. This is different from the preceding analysis in that there the analysis compares a file as a good fit within some voice as opposed to the complement category of all possible voices. This takes into account all of the files within a voice category in making the estimation. The alternative outlined here identifies the most similar individual file and considers how often the two files are within the same *a priori* classification of voice (of

course this is not possible for those voices constituted by exactly one file, but it is still interesting to note what files those are most similar to).

Persistently, individual files that we classified as OZZIE are most like other files in the OZZIE category. While ACE, BUFFÚN, JANEY-MARY and NARRATOR 2 have files that are absolutely similar to more than one other file of their voice, they also find close similarity to a range of other voices. The remaining voices are such that one of its own is never actually most similar to it.

1.6.2.3 Poems and Poems

Under this analysis, one is asking what other file is an individual file most similar to. This is different from the preceding analysis in that there the analysis compares a file as a good fit within some voice as opposed to the complement category of all possible voices. This takes into account all of the files within a voice category in making the estimation. The alternative outlined here identifies the most similar individual file and considers how often the two files are within the same *a priori* classification of voice (of course this is not possible for those voices constituted by exactly one file, but it is still interesting to note what files those are most similar to)

1.6.3 Discussion

While it is possible (and possibly preferable) to engage in direct textual analysis in order to analyze similarity of poems in terms of voices that emerge from them, this analysis has shown that it is possible to meaningfully apply less subjective techniques from corpus linguistics to the task as well. Because the metrics are objective, their reliability is guaranteed. Anyone who divides the poems into files as was done here and who applies the same statistically driven reasoning will reach exactly the same conclusions. These

similarity measures cluster the files with thematic (or in some cases, historical) coherence which further establishes their validity. The results reported have been just of the letter unigram analyses, because letter unigram distributions tend to give sharpest discriminations, however comparable results emerge when longer strings of letters are considered, such as letter bigrams, and when the tokens counted are individual words instead of letters. The truly interesting results emerge when one considers the results from alternative characterization – poems clustering with their books, the externally classified voices or individual poems, as has been explored above. What remains to be done is to carry out the study with respect to the entire corpus of K's poetry.

It is in the context of the full analysis that one can determine whether there is an intervening effect of the fact that initially the 76 poems have been selected on the basis of subjective reading. The statistical analysis used here clusters poems into categories that show correlation with the subjective readings. It is a slightly different question to consider whether the same groups will emerge when there is no initial subjective selection. Works that cluster together here may well fall into different groups when the full set of poems is analyzed. In that situation, voice, as addressed here may well not be the dominating feature that separates the texts, and reflection would be necessary to assess the best interpretation of the clustered poems. On the other hand, the larger set of poems may also cluster by voice. Nonetheless, when a substantial number of poems is chosen on the basis of a reading of voice, the corpus based techniques demonstrate substantial agreement with that reading. The value of this kind of study in computational stylistics is interactive. On the one hand, it provides constructed validity to stylistics – objective support for subjective readings and can lead, via objective means, to the discovery of clusters of similarity that require subjective interpretation. On the other hand, it provides to corpus linguistics

evidence that methods which cluster tests on the basis of even orthographic distributions, and thus have little face validity, actually do deliver judgements of similarity that merit interpretation.

What emerges from this clinical analysis of K is that his poetry is not produced in homogeneous collections or even univocal poems. Clear, distinct, personalities are evident either by name or archetype: OZZIE and the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS are clearly audible within the analysis by voice; OZZIE is the strongest voice across analyses, and the WOMEN, the NARRATORS (blending in CROMWELL and the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS) are also clearly heard. That K does not produce poems with homogeneous form is suggestive of schizophrenia, and forcefully suggests that his counterpart, Kennelly, composes poetry with a very tight control over characterization of voices but also provides objective proof that following Julian Jaynes' theory on the breakdown of the bicameral mind is relevant to studying Kennelly's poetry. Furthermore this analysis confirms the affiliation between Brendan Kennelly and early Irish bards whose minds were most possibly still at a bicameral stage.

II Creating the Myth of Brendan Kennelly: Between Jesting and Earnest

1) Mediatic Man and Jester

II.1.1 The People's Poet: Ultra-Presence in the Media, Brendan Kennelly as a Brand

It is very likely that Brendan Kennelly's use of masks and awareness of the poetic potential of voices sprung from performing poetry, with the subsequent result that he became a public figure. He made his first television appearance on RTE in 1971 and from that time until now he has appeared in no less than 43 television programmes on RTE and even more numerous radio programmes. As he walks through the streets of Dublin he talks to people

and people talk to him, thus often providing the poet with material: stories or witty comments that he gathers¹¹³⁴ as Joyce did and later uses in his poetry and / or in his poetry performances. The fact that Kennelly publicly admitted at readings, in newspaper interviews and on television that he used what people said to him and turned their words into poems worked as a direct invite for confessions, extraordinary talks, witty remarks etc.

Parnassus

She took Patrick Kavanagh's poems to bed.
"Great company, lover and friend," she said.¹¹³⁵

The poet explains "This woman told me that Kavanagh was her favourite to take to bed – his poems, I mean. He was her friend, her lover; he was spiritual company."¹¹³⁶ Such a piece is not remarkable in relation to Patrick Kavanagh himself, but it interestingly discloses how Kennelly sees the relationship of certain female poetry readers to poets. In other word, poetry becomes an object to fuel sexual fantasy projected onto the poet. The fact that this particular poem was selected and commented upon in the best selling Sunday paper in Ireland can even be perceived as a sign that Kennelly himself is encouraging a similar attitude towards his own poetry.

Contact with his audience or potential audience was established at different levels: oral communication in random encounters, written communication through letters, one way communication by radio and television. This projected an image of Brendan Kennelly to which viewers and listeners responded by letters but also directly when they actually met the poet, and image which was cultivated by the poet who made himself largely available. Modern media helped in creating a sense of intimacy between the poet and his audience that resulted in Brendan Kennelly becoming for many a sort of "poetry

¹¹³⁴ Cf. notebooks in Brendan Kennelly's personal papers.

¹¹³⁵ G. 19.

¹¹³⁶ Aengus Fanning, "A Glimpse of the Poet," *Sunday Independent*, 15 April 2001, 14-15.

confessor.”¹¹³⁷ In that regard, Harry Ferguson underlines what a dangerous role the poet is endorsing in encouraging and taking confidences:

while he clearly appreciates the sacredness of confessing, I fear that Brendan does not know when to stop; how it has to be made safe to tell and the kind of boundaries that need to be placed around disclosures and supports put in place for the aftermath of the secret being out.¹¹³⁸

Through these various contacts with his audience, often breaking the limits between public and private, Brendan Kennelly constructed the myth of Brendan Kennelly, the public man.

As he came from rural Ireland he was for years considered as a “culchie” by Dubliners for whom the term is used in a patronising fashion.¹¹³⁹ This status of a “culchie” in Dublin and of Catholic country boy in a Protestant University might have had a decisive influence on Brendan Kennelly’s taking steps to become a “popular” poet both in his writing and in his social role. He took on the role of a modern Irish bard and developed what some would deem a “rhetoric” praising people from all social categories for their humanity, which led the papers to call him “the people’s poet.”¹¹⁴⁰ Observing Kennelly’s discourse in interviews oral and written, one notes the recurrent use of the word “people” that contributes to making him popular and inclines some critics to dismiss both the poet and his work as “popular.” It is nonetheless also arguable that by multiplying contacts with his audience Brendan Kennelly has been trying – the same is true of his lectures and seminars – to make himself available to everybody, so that poems (in their oral and written forms) would not just be the privilege of an educated and wealthy group but would become as universal an experience as possible. Brendan Kennelly’s role in society as a poet has

¹¹³⁷ Christina Patterson, “Brendan Kennelly: The Poetry Confessor,” *The Independent*, 04 February 2005, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/brendan-kennelly-the-poetry-confessor-485325.html>, 27 June 2008.

¹¹³⁸ Harry Ferguson, “‘Iron Brendan’: Brendan Kennelly and Images of Masculinity, Wounding and Healing,” in *This Fellow*, 30.

¹¹³⁹ *The Late Late Show*, RTE Television, 23 December 2005.

¹¹⁴⁰ Thomas Myler, “Ireland’s Uncrowned People’s Poet.” *Ireland’s Own*, 08 July 2005, 7-10, 8.

been meticulously and convincingly analysed by Ake Persson who justifies Brendan Kennelly's assertion that: "if you're a poet, you can't be silent,"¹¹⁴¹ a statement much in line with the image of the bard as a chain breaker.

As this approach to poetry does not limit itself to the written word but also largely relies on performances, it consequently grants importance to the body and indeed Brendan Kennelly developed facial expressions and a body language that helps him make contact with the audience. A comparison of his earliest television recordings in the 1970s with later performances (audio-visual interviews) shows how the poet improved his technique. Some of the television programmes, especially with host Gay Byrne, clearly demonstrates in Brendan Kennelly occasional moments of awareness when he became conscious of the power of his body to communicate. This does not mean that his whole posture would constantly be controlled but that the poet is nonetheless playing with his public image. For instance in February 1985, Kennelly's body language clearly expressed playfulness and complicity with Gay Byrne, in a way that never occurred with interviewer Pat Kenny. Ten years later Kennelly commented on how he uses his own physical potential to communicate:

A lot of touches are spontaneous and unconscious. They go with words and they go with rhythm and with emphasis, and they go with "I want to tell you this" and you put your hand there *he puts his hand on his own arm*. And it's all ... You don't know you're doing it. But a woman knows if you mean it or you don't.¹¹⁴²

Some of the qualities that contributed to his success in the media such as his mischievous eyes and maybe most of all his cherubic smile are often referred to in his poems. "I like

¹¹⁴¹ Katie Donovan, "Blaming It All on Judas," *Irish Times*, 19 December 1991, 13.

¹¹⁴² *The Late Late Show*, RTE Television, 23 December 2005.

Smiles”¹¹⁴³ draws a satirical self-portrait of Kennelly and his relationship to his audience. The word “bollocks” can be read as a sign that the poem is a self-portrait as “bollox” returns systematically nearly any time Brendan Kennelly refers to his own reputation in his poems¹¹⁴⁴:

But he’s a bit of a bollocks
Chirping toward damnation
A *machine smile* on his face
Plus a lust for gusty acclaim
No applauding gods can satisfy.¹¹⁴⁵

Along with the wish to become “the people’s poet” goes Brendan Kennelly’s choice to keep his poem very accessible – at least at a primary level – in terms of meaning. In “The Big Words”¹¹⁴⁶ he thus states his suspicion of “long words” that in the poem become a symbol for any obscure word which does not have any readily available meaning to the average reader or listeners and which can be used out of pedantry.

II.1.2 The Ladies’ Man

As shown in a number of interviews, Brendan Kennelly is very much aware of his own myth: “He knows, he says, what pre-conceptions the Kerryman, has about him – broken marriage, alcoholism, Toyota Ad, womaniser, country academic.”¹¹⁴⁷ His relation to women is part of what constitutes the myth. From the late 1980s and in particular in the 1990s the media largely contributed to the poet’s reputation, there is nonetheless little doubt that Kennelly himself initiated and nourished that image long before¹¹⁴⁸ he started

¹¹⁴³ BOJ, 132.

¹¹⁴⁴ Cf. also PMA, 275.

MUAA1, 63.

¹¹⁴⁵ BOJ, 132.

¹¹⁴⁶ FS, 57.

¹¹⁴⁷ Marese McDonagh, “The Bard with Dancing Dimples and a Mischievous Smile,” *Kerryman*, 07 February 1992, 4.

¹¹⁴⁸ Peter and Margaret Lewis, “The Brendan Conquest: 1962 and All That,” in *This Fellow*, 86-87.

capitalising on this aspect of his public image. Among the archetypal features of many Irish poets in particular the Munster poets, is the writers' appreciation of women and earthly pleasures of the flesh. Brendan Kennelly did not publicly depart from this characteristic but on the contrary participated in establishing his own public mask of a man "crazy about women."¹¹⁴⁹ In the media, Brendan Kennelly thus enlarged his own reputation as a ladies' man with headlines such as "Women and me."¹¹⁵⁰ On the page, photos of Susan Curnow, who played Medea in Kennelly's version of the play, suggestively presents her as his partner. A comparable piece appeared in July 1989, "Brendan Kennelly and Women" featuring the couple. In the early nineties the poet made a next to annual contribution to the same newspaper for Valentine's day and photos of the poet in the company of Susan Curnow provided illustration again. This type of article was typically accompanied by photographs of the poet pausing with a charming beguiling air.¹¹⁵¹ The expression on his face shows that he has learnt to make the most of his good looks in front of a camera. One notes that in interviews and contributions aimed at expanding this aspect of the poet's image, Brendan Kennelly proved remarkably open about sexuality and on more than one occasion evoked the loss of his virginity and commented on his sexual life. Referring to his drinking time he said: "I wanted to be orgiastic. There was a period in my life when I could even have advocated free love."¹¹⁵² At a later point in his career, after describing how he used to stage himself in pubs, he explained: "You'd never be short of a woman to sleep with once you're able to make people laugh."¹¹⁵³ It seems that from the early Nineties until 1996 when he underwent major heart surgery, Kennelly shifted the stage of his own self-representation from the pub

¹¹⁴⁹ Paul Durcan, *Crazy About Women* (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 1991).

¹¹⁵⁰ Lorcan Roche, "Women and Me, by Brendan Kennelly," *Irish Independent*, Tuesday 27 September 1988, 6.

¹¹⁵¹ One instance among many: Lorcan Roche, "Women and Me, by Brendan Kennelly," *Irish Independent*, 27 September 1988, 6.

¹¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵³ Marcesc McDonagh, "The Bard with Dancing Dimples and a Mischievous Smile," *Kerryman*, 07 February 1992, 4.

to the media and various fashionable dinner tables. Most interestingly in March 1992, he gave an interview to Patricia Redlich, the agony aunt of the *Sunday Independent*.¹¹⁵⁴ Brendan Kennelly said: "I'm not a Doyler, I'll never be like that great Kerry Casanova! ... I will never overcome my early training. In fact it's not a sex life I have, but sex moments!" And yet another attractive photo of the poet appears and seems designed to belie the written words. What is more, this type of article systematically provided lavish and immoderate praises of women by the poet. In the midst of the rhetoric that accompanied this dimension of Brendan Kennelly's public mask it transpires that behind the exaggerated features of the "woman-lover" lies a more ambiguous and certainly complex relationship to the opposite sex. Thus describing his encounter with the poet at Trinity College Front Gate before an interview, Lorcan Roche writes: "A woman passes him outside the gates of Trinity and he'll ask: "Did you sec those buttocks, those thighs? Did you boy?"¹¹⁵⁵ A similar treatment of a woman's body is shown in his description of Gretta, Goddy O'Girl's wife, in *The Crooked Cross*. The barren woman is merely presented by the narrator as "a fat, huge-thighed slut of a woman, panting and sweating."¹¹⁵⁶

Kennelly's openness on sexual matters in the late Eighties and in the Nineties was certainly subversive at a time when in Ireland such questions were kept behind closed doors. The womanizing part of his mask was not that original as the attribute of an Irish poet, but what was unprecedented was the freedom of expression that Brendan Kennelly asserted in the media and as such, he played a unique role that contributed to breaking taboos in Ireland. A sideline of this "staging" is that Brendan Kennelly became an object of fantasy for many Irish women, a predecessor to current celebrities just as Irish bards had

¹¹⁵⁴ Patricia Redlich, "Beloved Brendan," *Sunday Independent*, 01 March 1992, 4 L.

¹¹⁵⁵ Lorcan Roche, "Women and Me, by Brendan Kennelly," *Irish Independent*, Tuesday 27 September 1988, 6.

¹¹⁵⁶ CC, 63.

been before him, which means that his books sold well among female readers, poetry performances sold out, radio and television time-rating ran high, all which for the poet guaranteed a comfortable income. In July 1994, Kennelly was elected “Mr Sex” by radio listeners for his beautiful and sensuous voice. At a creative level developing this trait of the public mask traced new roads in his poetry. It is striking that when Brendan Kennelly, the public man, increasingly became “the ladies’ man,” his poems (*The Book of Judas* and *Poetry My Arse*) written at the corresponding time illustrate how a dialogue takes place between himself and this aspect of his personality through characters such as Judas, and Ace de Horner. Instances of Brendan Kennelly acting with this facet of his mask are numerous.¹¹⁵⁷ By inflating this dimension of his public mask, Kennelly opened a most interesting space in which he could freely play with notions of himself, his audience and his readers.

II.1.3 The Chief’s Poet?

Another important aspect of Brendan Kennelly’s public mask is his connection with powerful people. His association with men and women of power contributed to giving him the image of a jester,¹¹⁵⁸ that is, a poet subordinated to a powerful figure and devoted to their entertainment. This subordination was typical of court poets like the medieval *baird* and *fili* in particular. It is also worth noting that the *baird* were often called “jesters” as a deprecatory name, calling attention to the fact that they were not as learned as the *fili*. Newspaper archives (through the quantity of articles, over 1538 entries in the Irish Newspapers Archive on line since the 1970s) clearly demonstrate the poet’s enjoyment of such an association. The press often showed Brendan Kennelly in the company of powerful

¹¹⁵⁷ Cf. Brendan Kennelly’s reading of “Skin,” Sandrine Brisset, personal notes from performance by Brendan Kennelly at the book launch of *Familiar Strangers*, Waterstones, Dublin, October 2004 and Interview with Victoria Mary Clarke,

<http://www.victoriamaryclarke.com/articles/Kennelly%20Brendan.html>, March 2008.

¹¹⁵⁸ David Butler, “A Jester of Barbed Jibes,” *Irish Times*, 26 June 2004, 38.

and famous personalities.¹¹⁵⁹ On the front page of the *Irish Independent* in September 1993, he appeared at the side of Mia Farrow. The journalist's claim that a romance had started between the poet and the Hollywood star was not denied. The press often presented Brendan Kennelly attending prestigious social events. Among other instances of fashionable occasions, on Thursday the 20th of September 1990, he participated in the film première of *The Field* at which he was the MC. Tickets for the event cost £100 which secured an audience composed of glitterati and provided for the pomp of the event that was fashioned on the model of a Cannes Festival. As Sinéad O'Connor reached the climax of her career in the 1990s, Brendan Kennelly also associated with her and praised her in highly laudable terms. His admiration for the singer led him to putting his credibility as a critic at risk. In 1993 he unflinchingly defended¹¹⁶⁰ Sinéad O'Connor who, in a page bought in the *Irish Times*, poured out her psychological and emotional troubles. Brendan Kennelly called the piece "a poem" and praised its author regardless of her self-centeredness, which he usually condemns in other poets. Brendan Kennelly went as far as to conclude his article with "Do I like her poem? I love it. I would love to see it included in the Leaving Cert Anthology. I would like to see every youngster in Ireland standing up in a street or a kitchen or a parlour or a disco and saying this poem 'off by heart' as we used to say in days gone by." The discrepancy between the excessive eulogy and the poverty of the piece commented upon, is all the more cruelly exposed as Sinéad O'Connor's text is reproduced on the page where Brendan Kennelly's article appears. In this case Brendan Kennelly's passionate plea cannot be accounted for by his impulsive nature, for in *Journey Into Joy*¹¹⁶¹ he continued treating the singer as a poet of talent. In "Irish Poetry Since Yeats," after commenting on the works of serious poets such as Rita Ann Higgins, Eavan Boland, Paula Meehan, and Katie Donovan, he ends up his paragraph on women poets

¹¹⁵⁹ Gordon Paterson, "Cheery Mia's Night on the Town," *Irish Independent*, 8 September 1993, 1.

¹¹⁶⁰ Brendan Kennelly, "Why We're Lucky to Have Sinéad," *Irish Independent*, Saturday 12 June 1993, 2.

¹¹⁶¹ JII, 65.

with a reference to Sinéad O'Connor's piece from the *Irish Times*. Similar flattery was proffered by the poet when he launched Terry Keane's book *Consuming Passion*,¹¹⁶² which he compared to *Ulysses*.¹¹⁶³

In the papers and in show-business events he also very often associated with Bono who became his friend. Kennelly's relation to Bono is of an interesting nature as we note that the singer's stage performance was clearly influenced by the reading of Brendan Kennelly's *The Book of Judas*. In the early 1990s after *Achtung Baby* was released in November 1991, on stage Bono became "The Fly," using a character and a mask in a manner comparable to Brendan Kennelly's in his poetry. Traces of his friendship with Bono also appear in *Now* where Bono's name is quoted and praised in three poems.

Yet it is Brendan Kennelly's friendship with Taoiseach Charles J. Haughey (1979-1981, March 1982 - December 1982, and 1987-1992) that places him the nearest to the position of Chief's poet. The poet was certainly aware of Haughey using artists for his own prestige as shown when he referred to the time "before Charley gave poets, and other writers and artists, enough to live on, and respected them, and wanted them around him like an *Ard Rí*"¹¹⁶⁴ The image refers to a time when a chief had a court of poets to serve him. C.J. Haughey liked to surround himself with artists among whom was Brendan Kennelly. When he was invited to private dinners the poet provided entertainment and in that respect was called "the bard." By comparing Haughey to an *Ard Rí* Kennelly fully endorses the role of the Chief's poet. As seen in the first chapter of this study, the role of Chief's poet involves flattery and subordination and it could well be that by using this comparison, Kennelly is confessing to having abdicated a part of himself (most possibly

¹¹⁶² Terry Keane, *Consuming Passions* (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1994).

¹¹⁶³ *Id.*, "Conspicuous Consumption," *Sunday Independent, Living*, 27 November 1994, 28L.

¹¹⁶⁴ Funeral of C.J. Haughey, RTE Television, 16 June 2006.

In the Irish mythology "*An Ard Rí*" means a High King of the whole of Ireland.

the part granted a critical voice in his books) to serve his powerful friend. The relationship between the poet and the political magnate proves difficult to understand. Bruce Arnold admits his incapacity to explain it: "Brendan is not elitist. Haughey was elitist in the worst and most vulgar ways imaginable. I failed to see why in the face of this, Brendan was so enamoured of the man."¹¹⁶⁵ Haughey certainly had charisma but he was also a sulphurous and corrupt man with a supersized ego, acting as a monarch and Brendan Kennelly was sufficiently close to his world to be aware of the dark sides to him. In this instance, as often when the poet performed for the upper classes of society, it seems that the mask of the bard as a chain-breaker was dropped. What Charles Haughey did for the Arts by creating Aosdána, and exempting artists from taxation, would hardly suffice to justify the full public support Brendan Kennelly brought to Haughey. In 1988 Kennelly associated with Ray Yeats to create Medea Productions, and stage Brendan Kennelly's version of *Medea*. Before its première the company fell short of £15,000 to £20,000.¹¹⁶⁶ Taoiseach Haughey personally interceded and came to the poet's financial rescue when he launched the play and appealed to Irish businessmen's generosity to offer their patronage to the new theatre company.

In November 1991 Brendan Kennelly joined a large scale Fianna Fail dinner party and stood to recite an impromptu about Charles Haughey:

They say he is a great survivor
and there is some truth in that
They say he outdoes Houdini
and there is some truth in that
But I say he's a genius
and he follows genius's laws
So rise up men and women
and give him your best applause.¹¹⁶⁷

The *Irish Independent* provided another version of the impromptu:

¹¹⁶⁵ Bruce Arnold, "Brendan Kennelly," *The Spire and Other Essays in Modern Irish Culture* (Dublin: The Liffey Press, 2003), 80.

¹¹⁶⁶ Jerome Reilly, "Taoiseach in Role of Organiser," *Irish Independent*, 03 September 1988, 6.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

... What I want to talk about
is the genius of
Charles J. Haughey ...
Charles J. Haughey is the soul of this country
and the soul of his party ...
Rise up every one of yez and give him your best applause.¹¹⁶⁸

As often is the case with oral performance, the text was reported under different forms. The original is most certainly lost. What remains is the immoderate praise that was so excessive that it verged on caricature. Justine Mc Carthy indeed reports that some of the diners expressed embarrassment at a eulogy that could nearly sound double edged: "Dear God, he's making Charlie sound like a fool," cringed a man fragrant with Gucci aftershave and Cuban cigar smoke." One also notes that by underlining Haughey's egocentric affirmation of power with words such as "I say he's a genius / and he follows genius' laws" Brendan Kennelly – who has always affirmed his belief in democracy – highlighted that Haughey had the fibre of an autocrat. In September 1995, Brendan Kennelly returned from Greece especially to attend Charles Haughey's surprise luncheon party for his seventieth birthday. The company was composed of seventy friends and politicians. A couple of months later Haughey launched *Poetry My Arse*.

Kennelly was popular and in his public support of Haughey brought his popularity to the service of the politician. The nature of their relationship yet remains uncertain and gave rise to questions among the public, including among the poet's relatives. His family were Fine Gael supporters and his backing of Haughey might have been felt as treason: "his sister-in-law wrote to him enquiring 'What about the corkscrew?'" and later provided an explanation as she reminded Brendan Kennelly that "his father used to opine that de Valera ... was so crooked that if he swallowed a nail, he'd shit a corkscrew."¹¹⁶⁹

¹¹⁶⁸ Justine McCarthy, "One Big Happy Party," *Irish Independent*, 30 November 1991, 14.

¹¹⁶⁹ Gabriel Fitzmaurice, *Beat the Goatskin*, 120.

As he associated with personalities of fame and power, and provided them with indiscriminating and uncritical praise and support, Brendan Kennelly somehow took on the role of the bard, jester and buffoon in the tradition of court poetry. The role occasionally led him to compose praise poems. However it has to be noted that these occasional pieces are of a limited number and that, as shown by Kennelly's oral eulogy of Charles Haughey, they are most of the time of poor quality and have not been included in his collections of poems.

It should not be ignored that these socially prestigious connections provided the poet with an internal insight into the upper layers of society. Satire and criticism and any kind of representation are indeed of a better quality when the topic has been the subject of a close study. Kennelly's books of poetry show much less tolerance of corrupt politicians and other prestigious companions that the poet met at dinner parties than does his public discourse. In her comments on *The Book of Judas* one feels that poet and journalist, Katie Donovan, perceived that Kennelly targeted Haughey in his written poems as opposed to what he publicly *said* of him: "And in spite of the Judas politicians in the book, Kennelly speaks in favour of Charlie Haughey: 'He's gutsy, he cares about the arts, he's fully alive. Of course, if you're fully alive, you're dangerous'" and she further underlines the poet's ambivalent attitude as she continues, "Kennelly even composed an impromptu verse in praise of Haughey at a recent Fianna Fall dinner."¹⁷⁰

On the whole the most important influence to note for this argument is that these associations with personalities eminent on the public scene contributed to establishing a public myth, a caricatural portrait of Brendan Kennelly which allowed the poet to play

¹⁷⁰ Katie Donovan, "Blaming It All on Judas," *The Irish Times*, 19 December 1991, 13.

with his own image in his collections of poetry and in particular in his epic poems and places him in the tradition of court poets such as the Irish *baird* and *fili*.

II.2.4 Engagement

This role apparently subservient to social elites, and that certainly does not follow Kennelly's claim that it is a poet's duty to be a whistle-blower and that "if you're a poet, you can't be silent,"¹¹⁷¹ did not prevent him from engaging on a number of social issues in a way that few other contemporary Irish poets did at the time. In *Poetry My Arse*, Brendan Kennelly utters a view of poetry at odds with Scamus Heaney whose famous phrase is turned into "whatever you say, say something." Kennelly thus proclaims his faith in the poet's duty to society and refuses cautiousness:

It is my stricken guess
that more men die of caution
than excess.¹¹⁷²

In his view poets should call attention to certain social issues and invite if not compel their listeners and readers to critical considerations upon certain universal but also contemporary realities. In this, Brendan Kennelly's courage has to be pointed out. The attack on Irish society that *Cromwell* was, as a book, was reiterated by Kennelly when he appeared on television. Thus his perspective would not be limited to the written sphere but was extended to the oral sphere, through interviews on television and radio but also through his public readings of the book. On most important social debates that shook Ireland since the 1980s, Brendan Kennelly took a position: divorce, religion, the Celtic Tiger... And in the 1980s when the war was raging in Northern Ireland and the political situation was most

¹¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷² MMOR, 26.

delicate, he openly spoke about his Nationalism,¹¹⁷³ and could prove passionately articulate against imperialism.¹¹⁷⁴ This was obvious on television when he energetically accuses Christian missionaries of imposing their culture onto dispossessed people in distant lands. His attacks on the Church, at a time when the institution was still extremely powerful, on television, radio and interviews for newspapers, also illustrate the poet's engagement with social issues. The poet Paul Durcan also engaged with social and political issues, for instance he appeared on television to support Mary Robinson's campaign for presidency, and publicly read "The Divorce Referendum 1986" before voters went to the polls. The freedom which characterized the way Brendan Kennelly openly spoke about his Catholic faith¹¹⁷⁵ with statements such as, "I am enthralled by the compassion of God and Jesus to people," earned him many a Catholic heart. In the mid-Eighties he had a project of writing an alternative history of Christianity¹¹⁷⁶ which might have been a preliminary stage to *The Book of Judas*. He turned himself into something of a Christ-like figure, hence rumours that he used in "Dublin Truth."¹¹⁷⁷ The role of poet-priest that he endorsed might also be related to a childhood event that led him to be nicknamed "The Bishop":

Another nick-name I had was The Bishop. When we were about four years of age a teacher asked us what we wanted to be ... [I] told him I'd like to be a bishop. And years later when I'd be playing football, you'd hear a voice from the side shouting, "Let The Bishop take the free!"¹¹⁷⁸

Brendan Kennelly was an altar boy at about that age. The poet's interest in religion also appears in his readings: "Brendan Kennelly likes to read theology. And if that doesn't

¹¹⁷³ For a long time, until he met his current publisher, Neil Astley, Brendan Kennelly refused to have his work published by a non-Irish publisher. In communication with Professor Joris Duytschaever, 10 Marsh 2007. However a booklet of his poems was published in 1972 in America when he was in Swarthmore.

¹¹⁷⁴ *The Late Late Show*, RTE Television, 17 November 1984.

¹¹⁷⁵ John Scally, "The Poetic Presence," *Reality*, October 2004, 5-6.

¹¹⁷⁶ In communication with Professor Joris Duytschaever 10 Marsh 2007.

¹¹⁷⁷ PMA, 220.

¹¹⁷⁸ *Evening Herald*, 06 February, 1991, 9.

shake up your pre-conceived notions, he drives it home by revealing that he really enjoys reading the Bible.”¹¹⁷⁹

His public engagement is also visible in his backing of Charles Haughey, including the period when the Taoiseach was suspected of corruption and “betrayed” by some members of his party. In his public support of Haughey he certainly exposed himself and the danger of such an engagement became obvious when Haughey’s corruption was proven, and when his twenty year long affair with Terry Keane was made public. Terry Keane¹¹⁸⁰ in her column “The Keane Edge” more than once refers to dinners in the company of Brendan Kennelly and Haughey. The poet was presented in the Press as somebody close to Charles Haughey which is bound to call up questions on Brendan Kennelly’s position, especially after he insisted in saying about him “there is a kind of reality to Haughey, genuineness, in whatever he has done or whatever he has failed, whatever right or wrong he has done, the man is genuine.”¹¹⁸¹ In another instance of political engagement Brendan Kennelly supported neo-liberal candidate Shane Ross in his campaign to be elected Trinity Senator in 2007. The poet put down his name and photo in the list of Ross’s signatories. Willie Walsh,¹¹⁸² the latter’s proposer describes him as “the only candidate who represents the spirit of entrepreneurship that has been so vital in promoting Ireland’s economic prosperity.”¹¹⁸³ Such support on the poet’s part invites reflection on its compatibility with Kennelly’s denunciation of the Celtic Tiger and the accompanying money-driven mentality. Yet in taking a position in these various instances

¹¹⁷⁹ Marcesc McDonagh, “The Bard with Dancing Dimples and a Mischievous Smile,” *Kerryman*, 07 February 1992, 4.

¹¹⁸⁰ Madeleine Keane, “Bard to Verse,” *Sunday Independent*, 01 October 1995, 30.

¹¹⁸¹ Barry Egan, “Love or Hate CJ You’re All Going to Miss Him,” *Irish Independent*, 26 January 1992, 22.

¹¹⁸² “One of Ireland’s boldest entrepreneurs, ... chief executive of Aer Lingus, and who now runs British Airways” in Shane Ross’s campaign pamphlet, Dublin, 2007, 1.

¹¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

Brendan Kennelly put his neck on the line and exposed himself, thus following the battle cry, "Whatever you say, say something."

2) Breaking the Myth of the Poet

II.2.1 Show Business Rather than Literary Business

If constructing the public mask of Brendan Kennelly involved becoming popular, making friends with powerful personalities and putting oneself at risk by speaking out publicly on contentious issues, it also involved breaking the current myth of the contemporary poet in Ireland. Much like medieval bards and Munster poets, Brendan Kennelly publicly presented his art as entertainment.

Nowadays, most modern writers, poets included, place themselves in the hand of literary agents to help them construct a public image that would help in marketing their writing. The choice of an agent is essential as this intermediary between the poet and the public determines career strategy. The agent can for instance advise the poet on how to reach the largest possible audience and conquer the international stage through making contacts with internationally leading universities, being involved in Summer schools, and giving readings for a certain type and size of audience. The agent can also advise writers in choosing what type of media they would be best represented through, and among other things the amount of personal information that would be delivered to the press.¹¹⁸⁴ Contrasting with this strategic approach to a poet's career, Brendan Kennelly does not have a literary agent. Over forty years, one notes that he travelled very little in comparison to other Irish poets of International reputation.¹¹⁸⁵ It should also be noted that a poet's travels

¹¹⁸⁴ For example, Seamus Heaney is one of the rare poets who chose to have most of his correspondence kept in archives in America closed to consultation.

¹¹⁸⁵ He taught in Swarthmore, America, for an academic year in 1971-1972, went to Japan in 1984 and in 1991, he taught in Antwerp in 1986 from April to June 1986, went to Perth in Australia in 1988, to Lithuania and Moscow, he travelled to Greece in 1995. He also went to Holland and spent some time in Italy in Pavia and Milano in 2003, and was in Boston America from September to December 2007.

have a significant influence on the amount of academic attention a poet's work receives. While an international career was available, instead Brendan Kennelly chose the more limited scope of Ireland. His experience in America suggests that the potential for an international career remained largely unexploited. Brendan Kennelly who was for instance offered a chair of poetry in America Swarthmore when he was lecturing there for the academic year 1971-1972, came back to Dublin,¹¹⁸⁶ a place where celebration is generally followed by "assassination."¹¹⁸⁷

Rather than targeting the international market, and following the strategic advice of a literary agent as is more common practice among literary figures of his status, Brendan Kennelly took a popular direction by giving a couple of weekly readings to audiences from the bottom to the top of society. While his peers generally work with literary agencies Brendan Kennelly chose to work in showbusiness, occasionally using the services of business agencies. In so doing he placed his performances in a category where they belonged in bardic times and in particular in the 17th and 18th century, that is, the category of entertainment. Most interestingly, despite his own activities, Kennelly seems very critical of TV for the same reason that Plato has been critical of oral poets: they charm the viewer's faculty into paralysis. The paradox is that Brendan Kennelly has been fully using this characteristic of the Platonic *mimesis* to promote his work and establish himself in the show-business arena. Kennelly became a celebrity and in the public image gained through the media he was associated with showbusiness stars more often than with literary figures. In some respects, during performances (especially in the 1990s) he became a poet-clown¹¹⁸⁸ and the image of the boisterous and laughing poet with a smile on his face,

¹¹⁸⁶ He was offered the chair of poetry in Trinity College Dublin on his return in 1972.

¹¹⁸⁷ Cf. "Voice among the flowers," PMA, 11.

¹¹⁸⁸ Marial Hannon, "Close Encounters of a Fourth Kind," in *This Fellow*, 49.

sometimes humorously grimacing,¹¹⁸⁹ may not have encouraged specialists of literature to take his poetry seriously.

II.2.2 Breaking Down the Modern Image of the Poet Through Himself

In becoming a “poet super star,” Brendan Kennelly, through his own person, attacked the modern image of the poet but also the image that in many respects – and especially in terms of entertainment – restricts the scope of poetry.

A series of factors decided Brendan Kennelly to take an “anti-poet” line, and he reached the climax of this position when he started doing advertisements in 1991. This commercial first caused a good deal of talk, reaction and debate. Kennelly’s detractors, but also some of his admirers, felt that Brendan Kennelly was prostituting himself. This was not merely due to the fact that he was advertising, but also to the way in which he used the sensuality and erotic potential of his voice as he amorously whispered as if to a woman “Toyota...” No doubt a similar impression could be made by the way showbusiness agencies publicize their services on the internet: George Hunter Entertainment, Carol and associate (www.carolandassociate.com). The way Brendan Kennelly made himself available to be hired for private functions and parties, after dinner talks, and private readings also contributed to this impression. The fact that he chose to give readings to wealthy audiences, selected on social or financial criteria for remuneration, can be interpreted as a contradiction of the claim of being the “people’s poet.” Nonetheless it is also true that during these private events Kennelly found the opportunity to “bring poetry” to categories of the population who otherwise may not have attended public performances.

¹¹⁸⁹ Stephen McGrath, “Kennelly Launches New MS Funds Drive,” *Sunday Independent*, Friday 23 June 1995, 8.

3) Caught up in the Game: Was Poetry Betrayed?

II.3.1 A Defence of "Honest" Poetry

In common with the Romantics, Yeats, Kavanagh, Pessoa and many other poets Brendan Kennelly expressed a deep concern for being an honest poet, that his poetry would not be a lie but would on the contrary be truthful. Aiming at honesty and sincerity while dealing with masks both at the level of writing and on the public stage can be something of a challenge and W.B. Yeats faced a similar dilemma. As explained by Richard Ellmann, the matter of sincerity was a complex question that Yeats was struggling with despite his many masks. "Afraid of insincerity, he struggled unsuccessfully to fuse or to separate the several characters by whom he felt himself to be peopled."¹¹⁹⁰ As he comments upon Yeats it seems Brendan Kennelly is also writing about himself in "An Experiment in Living":

He wore mask after mask because he knew in his heart that whoever walks totally naked will always end up crucified by the mob, the public representatives of all our cherished and well protected respectabilities. Hammers and nails have their own style and are at their most impressive and exemplary when penetrating naked flesh.¹¹⁹¹

Creating his own public image both involved for Brendan Kennelly protecting and exposing himself. The mask, whether it be a public or a literary persona does not indeed have to be totally distinct and different from the writer's self as is the case with Bernardo Soares, Pessoa's "semi-heteronym" author for *The Book of Disquiet*. The question of poetry's sincerity and honesty is directly addressed, by Brendan Kennelly in the title of the second part of *The Book of Judas* "Are the poems honest, doctor?" And yet, in this section only one poem, "A Pit of Dead Men,"¹¹⁹² deals with the matter of sincerity in relation to poems. The rest of this second part denounces various mistreatments of children that were too often ignored and were particularly kept under silence in the 1980s-1990s in Ireland.

¹¹⁹⁰ Yeats, *the Man and the Masks*, 4.

¹¹⁹¹ JIJ, 237.

¹¹⁹² BOJ, 32.

“A Pit of Dead Men” concludes with a triple question that somehow feels like a *non sequitur*, jarring with the rest of the poem and thus calling for our attention:

“Are the poems honest, Doctor? Should the young girls tell?”
What good is honesty if home is hell?”¹¹⁹³

In the poem commented upon within the poem, the girl poet’s self was exposed “honestly,” without any restraint, without any “mask”:

The daughters are writing about it, using their heads,
Telling the world of their father’s crimes,
Keeping nothing back, all spilled out ...¹¹⁹⁴

That “all [has been] spilled out” would suggest “honesty” and yet asking the question “Are the poems honest?” encourages the reader to think further that maybe spilling one’s “personal beans” in a poem may not be the “honesty” or the truth of a poem, but the question also applies to this poem “A Pit of Dead Men” and to the whole section in the book that deals with matters generally untold.

A difficult question would then be: what does Brendan Kennelly mean by “honesty” in poetry? He himself might provide a possible clue to the contradictions of his masks when he says “[p]oets may deceive, poetry cannot.”¹¹⁹⁵ When one examines his poems on the subject and reads and listens to Brendan Kennelly’s views on the matter, it appears that for him an “honest poet” would be someone who tries to find in his poems – a line may be drawn between the poet as a poet and the poet as a public figure – an adequate expression of his feelings. The poem should be the verbal form of emotions that coincide with the creative process of poetic composition. “Like Rhythm” castigates poets who

¹¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁵ Brendan Kennelly, preface to *Selected Poems* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969).

appropriate themselves the shape of emotion without actually experiencing that emotion. The two middle stanzas of “Like Rhythm” tell a dark story about a man dumping a fœtus in the sea and concludes about poets:

A poet hears this. He makes a poem. The poem is sad.
He speaks it as if he believed it’s true.
It’s not. If you must speak, say the sea is deep.
The fœtus drifts like rhythm through untroubled sleep.
Yet there are some who hear the voice, and weep.¹¹⁹⁶

The final line is particularly ambiguous. The line preceding it marks a contrast between on the one hand the tragedy of “the fœtus” and the peace and unconcerned “untroubled sleep” of the poet. “Yet” suggests a contrast between this absence of feeling and “some who hear the voice, and weep” that reverts to the fœtus once again. “Some who hear the voice” would then refer to the great Absent of the poem, that is the woman separated from her fœtus and who might hear its voice in her sleep. However, as “speak” is repeated twice in relation to the poet, “the voice” could also be that of the poet. This last line would then point at the credulous audience feeling genuine emotion out of an artistic fake, “smug-with-suffering traitor.” “Adam’s Apple”¹¹⁹⁷ in *Poetry My Arse* describes a comparable situation. A woman tells of her rape to a poet who answers:

“I know that,” he said, “I know that.
I think I’d like to write
a poem about it,
a vivid poem that would be widely read.”¹¹⁹⁸

The poem ends on a dismissal of poetry that might also be Brendan Kennelly’s dismissal of a certain kind of cold and unconcerned poetic writing, a rejection that gave its title to the collection: “‘Poetry my arse,’ she said.”

¹¹⁹⁶ BOJ, 366.

¹¹⁹⁷ PMA, 24.

¹¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Kennelly shows yet little illusion on matching words and feelings and he largely includes himself in his reflection on the subject. Honest poetry is a challenge, a task difficult to achieve, even with genuine good will and deeply felt emotion. He often complains about words' betrayal: "Words play trick for / on any mindless blighter / Be he a slowcoach or a chancer in a hurry"¹¹⁹⁹ and the play on "for you" shows how when you think you might be using words they might also be using you.

This position goes along with Brendan Kennelly's stand against Art for Art's sake and his defence of inspired poetry. Rather than a polished undisturbing form, Brendan Kennelly chooses original and genuine words born out of felt experience, even when words do not fulfil certain formal criteria and Brendan Kennelly thus writes about impulses:

A few limped back from the desert to haunt me
In words no one has ever heard before.
That's why I believe what I think I believe.¹²⁰⁰

This view paradoxically co-exists with the poet's admiration for "honest lies," that is a type of lies told with conviction, imagination and sincerity which is also the sincerity of the story-teller.¹²⁰¹ This is the type of lie vindicated by Oscar Wilde in *The Decay of Lying*,¹²⁰² lies that make life more interesting. Brendan Kennelly regularly pays homage to "honest liars"¹²⁰³ and occasionally indulges himself in this oral creative use of words.¹²⁰⁴

II.3.2 A Denunciation of Materialism

Brendan Kennelly's poetry followed the evolution of Irish society as Ireland entered the realm of economic prosperity, passing within 12 years from poverty to over affluence. The

¹¹⁹⁹ BOJ, 357.

¹²⁰⁰ BOJ, 35.

¹²⁰¹ Cf. subsequent pages.

¹²⁰² Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying* (London: Penguin, 1995).

¹²⁰³ *Writer in Profile*, RTE Radio, May 1993.

¹²⁰⁴ Peter and Margaret Lewis, "The Brendan Conquest: 1962 and All That," in *This Fellow*, 87.

poet's work made money and financial concerns essential themes of his poetry. As the notion of money grew in the Irish psyche, his words vehemently attacked its all-engulfing power. Some of his denunciations are fiercely anti-capitalist and possess socialist overtones as in this instance among many:

Money is what the dead leave to the living
And the living expect from the dead.
Money is family church school our ancient nation
Set in the polluted sea. Money is for takers
Though I understand a few givers
Exist.¹²⁰⁵

The grasp of money on the individual is pointed out through proverbial lines such as "People don't make money: money makes people"¹²⁰⁶ and some years later, as property ownership inflated in the Irish collective mind, he transformed his formula into "People don't own houses: houses own people."¹²⁰⁷

Marianne McDonald also underlines¹²⁰⁸ how Kennelly's play, *Antigone*, written for his daughter in 1984 makes money a much more important theme than Sophocles. Kennelly's father figure Creon says:

Money is the greatest evil men have known
Money destroys cities
Maddens men from their homes;
Twists decent souls till they
Will do any shameful thing.¹²⁰⁹

Such virulent declarations cannot be interpreted in relation to Irish society as in the Eighties Ireland was notoriously poor and yet very far from Celtic Tiger Ireland. Beyond

¹²⁰⁵ BOJ, 175.

¹²⁰⁶ PMA, 247.

¹²⁰⁷ Sandrine Brisset, personal notes from reading by Brendan Kennelly at the book launch of *Now*, Waterstone's bookshop, Dawson St Dublin, October 2006.

¹²⁰⁸ Marianne McDonald, 128.

¹²⁰⁹ Brendan Kennelly, "Antigone," *When Then is Now, Three Greek Tragedies* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe), 22.

the pressure of money making, like Patrick Kavanagh before him, Brendan Kennelly has a go at middle classes with lines such as the following, where in the context of a rich wedding described in a Sunday paper the poet targets “Bourgeois ladies with satisfying thighs.”¹²¹⁰ Such a position is all the more striking and shows how Brendan Kennelly’s ideals go far beyond his own personal interest as this type of poem precisely targets a privileged social category that forms the large majority of the poet’s readership and naturally those commissioning him to attend dinners. Several of his harshest caricatures satirise middle class men, in particular businessmen, doctors and lawyers. Among these the reader encounters the Pinstripe Pig, Silver, false god and others. Some of these portraits are merciless and often obscene, purposely aimed at shocking the morals or political correctness of the middle class:

False god has friends everywhere
 including the medical profession
 Wise doctors attend him with skill and passion.
 They try everything, including magic and quackery.
 Finally, false god’s bowels move and he
 Shits money as though ‘twere going out of fashion.

Relieved, false god leaves a trail of money in his wake.¹²¹¹

One notes that a similar vehemence in relation to that theme appears both in *The Book of Judas* and in *Poetry My Arse*. From the early 1984 onwards every work by Brendan Kennelly includes several poems or lines devoted to money. Even *The Singing Tree*, the shortest collection (only 46 pages) after 1980 has a poem called “Money” where the poet, taking the saying “money talks” literally as in “Thirty Pieces of Silver”¹²¹² grants a voice to money:

You’ve made me your way, your truth and your life,
 the only God you adore.

¹²¹⁰ BOJ, 175.

¹²¹¹ PMA, 249.

¹²¹² BOJ, 179.

I grant, in return, what your heart most desire:
more.¹²¹³

Such a passage very much recalls George Percc's comment about his characters in *Les choses: une histoire des années soixantes*, "L'immensité de leurs désirs les paralysait."¹²¹⁴ Kennelly also underlines the tragic spiral in which so many Irish people find themselves caught in and suffer from endless desire, a forever unsatisfied hunger for material goods and an impossible quest for peace which Percc expresses as follows: "Too often, in what they called luxury, they only enjoyed the money that was behind. They succumbed to the signs of wealth: they loved wealth more than they loved life."¹²¹⁵ As he criticizes the middle classes through the poetic masks of his various personae (Judas, Ace, Martial...), a number of echoes in tone and in specific details are perceptible such as, for instance, in the correspondence between "Little Jewel"¹²¹⁶ and "North Korean light,"¹²¹⁷ in which a similar fear of a stock exchange crash is expressed. Brendan Kennelly also largely draws on his experience at wealthy dinners among the middle class and Irish new rich to criticize a category of the Irish population for whom money and the display of material wealth form the backbone of their life. Thus "Legendary"¹²¹⁸ seems directly inspired by an experience at a dinner party:

People don't make money; money makes people,
thought Ace, observing the fat man
appropriating the guests seated at table
in the white house within reach of the ocean.¹²¹⁹

¹²¹³ ST, 39.

¹²¹⁴ "The immensity of their desires paralysed them," (trans. mine), Georges Percc, *Les choses: une histoire des années soixante* (Paris: Julliard, 1965), 23.

¹²¹⁵ Trans. mine, « Trop souvent, ils n'aimaient, dans ce qu'ils appelaient le luxe, que l'argent qu'il y avait derrière. Ils succombaient aux signes de la richesse : ils aimaient la richesse avant d'aimer la vie. » *Ibid.*, 25.

¹²¹⁶ BOJ, 176.

¹²¹⁷ PMA, 180.

¹²¹⁸ PMA, 247-248.

¹²¹⁹ PMA 247.

“The fat man” becomes the epitome of Irish middle class,¹²²⁰ and Brendan Kennelly concludes the episode by underlying the intellectual poverty and narrow-mindedness of the diners:

Dogma spread and stank like stale beer
Yet they lapped it up. The god rank wine
of himself, at home in his pyramidal mind.¹²²¹

In the context of this dinner among the rich, one notes that the poet-hero has left his aggressive weapon, justice maker Kanooce at home: “It’s just as well Kanooce isn’t here / I believe he’d eat the fat man.” As Brendan Kennelly has highlighted himself, after-dinner poetry differs from poetry that is morally challenging and potentially violent, the poetic weapon is not invited. On his view of the different aspects of poetry Brendan Kennelly explains: “If poetry merely reflected conventional morality, it would exist only in Christmas-bards and after-dinner speeches”¹²²² Another way to put it is to say that he possibly draws a line between his role as a poet who writes poetry and his public role of a poet who performs at private functions. The difference is between the poet as poet and poet as performer.

On a television programme, Kennelly underlined how close he feels to Martial for what they have in common, and remarked: “When he was in Rome like, he was half-starved and he had to flatter people to get food. And then he would accuse people of flattery. And then he would admit, to himself, that he was guilty of what he accused other people of being.”¹²²³ Brendan Kennelly identified in Martial two levels of poetic composition that might also apply to himself: the public level that can compromise with morality out of self-interest and one recognizes here a characteristic of the medieval *fili*, and the level of private composition that has to be fully honest. Further commenting on

¹²²⁰ “The fat man” reappears in N, 41.

¹²²¹ PMA, 248.

¹²²² JII, 42.

¹²²³ *The Late Late Show*, RTE Television, 30 May 2005.

Martial's place in Roman society, Brendan Kennelly continued, "He was always looking for money but he was always getting rid of it."¹²²⁴ He underlined the decisive role of patronage at the time, but also later with "the Medici and people like that. The whole idea of supporting the artist . . . And it's a very good one. He [Martial] was kind of greedy you know." And yet, Kennelly admires Martial's honesty for what he composed privately. It seems the traits that caught Kennelly's attention in Martial are very similar to those admired in Kavanagh. He said about honesty and Patrick Kavanagh: "whatever tendency existed in Kavanagh to arselick was totally banjaxed by his honesty. I think he would have flattered people to get a job or something, but in the end he was too honest. He said poetry was honesty."¹²²⁵

II.3.3 Torn Between Personal Taste and Ideals, and the Demands of Reality / Poet as a Christ-like Figure

As one tries to provide shades of answers to these questions, a further paradox emerges and invites reflection: how could Brendan Kennelly's anti-materialism combine with mercenary performances that suggest a pressing need to make money? His extreme material generosity¹²²⁶ and his lack of interest¹²²⁷ in anything material require no proof. The poet does not possess a house of his own, and lives in free accommodation in Trinity College Dublin,¹²²⁷ which occasionally leads him to express a sense of homelessness: "Why do I feel homeless passing the Happy Home Design Centre?"¹²²⁸ In 2004 in an interview to *The Word*, he confesses that he often feels homeless and that this impression is related to his not having a house¹²²⁹ since his marriage broke up.

¹²²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²²⁵ Aengus Fanning, "A Glimpse of the Poet," *Sunday Independent*, 15 April 2001, 14-15.

¹²²⁶ Lorcan Roche, "What's Wrong with This Picture?" *Irish Independent*, Saturday 01 July 1995, 3.

¹²²⁷ *The Late Late Show*, RTE Television, 23 December 2005.

¹²²⁸ PMA, 272.

¹²²⁹ Elizabeth Zoppi, "The Road for Home," *The Word*, May 2004, 10.

Contrasting with the material simplicity of his life and his college accommodation described by Deirdre Purcell,¹²³⁰ in the *Sunday Tribune*, Kennelly has been a regular on television and radio programs, he's proved very active as a guest at wealthy dinners, public and private readings, various private functions, and did television and radio advertising, for about six years in the 1990s, many sources of income to complete a top wage in the hierarchy of Trinity College Dublin, where he has been a professor until 2005 and remains a Senior Fellow. After trying to provide possible reasons for the poet's involvement with the *Sunday press*, Ake Persson concedes "Admittedly ... it cannot be ignored that his contributions may also be part of earning a living."¹²³¹ The same reason is put forward to make sense of the poet's advertising activities. Yet when trying to understand Kennelly's involvement in that domain, Persson deems this "highly problematic." His remarks on the subject show that the question has been the focus of his attention but that he has not been able to answer it satisfactory.

Brendan Kennelly might himself provide a possible explanation as, in a comment on James Joyce, he widens the literary scope and drifts from his topic in a remark that seems to comment upon his own situation. After celebrating James Joyce's contempt for money, (Brendan Kennelly's detachment from money *per se*, sometimes also verges on contempt) he writes in a book published in 1990¹²³²:

The sad truth is, often, that people do not make money; money makes people. This is terrifying. The question is – how *independent* are we of money? Is the quality of our work dependent (to what extent) on the nature and extent of that *independence*? The usual justification for selling out, gradually to money is family – because family is good.¹²³³

¹²³⁰ Deirdre Purcell, "The Brendan Voyage," *Sunday Tribune*, 03 July 1988, 1.

¹²³¹ Persson, 205.

¹²³² Brendan Kennelly, "Joyce's Humanism," in *James Joyce, The Artist and the Labyrinth, A Critical Re-evaluation*, ed. Augustin Martin (London: Ryan Pub, 1990), 313-332.

¹²³³ JIJ, 222.

Brendan Kennelly's numerous apologies in interviews, in newspapers and television programs when he refers to his drinking days demonstrate a deep sense of guilt and remorse for once hurting people. At the end of 2006 guilt still seems vivid as he confesses: "I made mistakes – a lot of them. You can hurt people's feelings. That's the one that I regret – saying and doing things which have hurt others."¹²³⁴ He also publicly blamed himself for the break-up of his family.¹²³⁵ In a newspaper article¹²³⁶ he explains that he writes to himself letters "in appropriately insulting tone." Guilt is also perceived in statement such as "I wasn't much of a responsible dad."¹²³⁷ His kindness and generosity can be viewed as attempts to achieve redemption.

The poet's taste for provocation contributed to his beginning in the advertising sector, but the decisive prompt might have come from the personal sphere. The Toyota commercial was made in the end of May 1991 and broadcasted on television in June 1991. On the same month his daughter gave birth to a baby girl. The poet provided financial support for them as his daughter was a single mother. This first commercial gave rise to a torrent of articles in the media. In the public eye he was selling himself. He was called a "Super seller,"¹²³⁸ caricatured in drawings and accused of lacking dignity. In July 1991, Kennelly's title to an article in the *Irish Independent* "What drove me to do that"¹²³⁹ seems to promise an explanation as to what led him to the Toyota ad, but the actual reason for the ad is strikingly kept quiet. Despite the success of *The Book of Judas* that was launched in October, 1991 was a difficult year for the poet who took the brunt of his generosity. In December 1991, the turmoil he went through transpires in an article: "I for one am glad to say goodbye to this year of scandals and accusations, private conflicts and public

¹²³⁴ Suzanne Power, "Seventy Years in a Fistful of Sand," *Sunday Tribune*, *Tribune Review*, 08 October 2006, 6.

¹²³⁵ *Writer in Profile*, RTE Radio, May 1993.

¹²³⁶ Sally McKenna, "Germany's Just Desserts," *Irish Independent*, 10 December 1988, 13.

¹²³⁷ Interview with Kelly Younger, "Dionysus in Dublin: Brendan Kennelly's Greek Trilogy," <http://www.ucd.ie/irthrm/kyounger.htm>, 29 April 1997.

¹²³⁸ *Irish Independent*, 06 June 1991, 1.

¹²³⁹ Brendan Kennelly, "What Drove Me to Do That Ad," *Irish Independent*, 06 July 1991, 9.

judgement. My hope is that next year there will be less scandal and more work. With that in mind I wish you all a happy and lively Christmas."¹²⁴⁰ Whatever difficulty accompanied this first commercial, it was followed by more. After Toyota Kennelly promoted the bank AIB, Kerry Gold, the *Sunday Independent* and others.

His poetry manifests a mixture of guilt and readiness to expiate and the poet pictures himself as a self-sacrificial figure. *The Man Made of Rain* is Brendan Kennelly's most openly biographical work. Various episodes of the poet's life are reviewed through the experience of an hallucination. In this collection, for the first time, he does not use a persona in the form of a mask, so that the long poem becomes more directly lyrical. In section 11,¹²⁴¹ he expresses the crucifying weight of guilt. Whereas in the rest of the collection he generally uses the first person, in section 11 he splits the narrative voice and reverts to the mask technique. The mask and the "I" of the poet enter into a dialogue. The mask is called "A Dublin gangster, / now retired." One notes here the continuation of the metaphor that dresses the poet as a poet-terrorist and which was previously observed about Ace de Horner, who in *Poetry My Arse* wears an "IRA coat." "A retired gangster" might sound as a puzzling expression that is yet clarified by Brendan Kennelly's interviews in which he commonly refers to the fact that he still is alcoholic, only he has stopped being "active" as such and no longer drinks,¹²⁴² which makes him in his own words a "retired alcoholic."¹²⁴³ The line "now retired" closely associates a preposition that designates the present and a past participle, and is followed by a present participle phrase:

living with a hammer
a mother, her daughter.

¹²⁴⁰ *Id.*, "We Need This Orgy," *Irish Independent*, 14 December 1991, 13.

¹²⁴¹ MMOR, 38.

¹²⁴² Arminta Wallace, "The Brendan Voyage," *Irish Times*, 22 May 2004, 7.

¹²⁴³ Eileen Battersby, "The Brendan Voyage," *Irish Times*, 11 April 1996, 11. The interview with Eileen Battersby took place less than a year before Brendan Kennelly wrote *The Man Made of Rain*.

The hammer is a recurrent symbol of guilt in Kennelly's verse and finds its origin in a childhood incident. In *Now*, a similar image associating guilt and a hammer reappears:

Why is darkness so riddle with guilt?
Why do years become hammers
in the hand of demons?¹²⁴⁴

"A mother, her daughter" might refer to Brendan Kennelly's own daughter and his eldest grand-daughter who is named in the following section of the book: "Meg Murphy is five. Eyes wide. 'I lo-o-ve reading !'"

With guilt gnawing at his heart, because of the time when he was drinking and a fatherly a debatably undue sense of parental responsibility for his adult daughter's problems, the poet evokes a slow crucifixion. with "A hammer, / a mother, / her daughter" as three thorns into his side, a process leading to a slow death as the chest of wood metaphorically turns into a coffin: guilt caused by the mask, the "Dublin gangster" is "hammering nails into my chest / which has of late become a block of wood." Living with guilt means "living with a hammer, / a mother, her daughter" and

as he hammers, he prays
my soul will find eternal rest
in the light of mercy of God.

In March 1993, Brendan Kennelly gave an interview to the *Sunday Independent* about his family role as a grand-father. The article presented him as a proud and happy grand-father. Several photos showed him with his daughter, and his two year old grand-daughter. In the poem the tabloid becomes "a brilliant Sunday paper," a phrase that might be ironical as the narrative voice also clearly underlines that the information given in the paper is incomplete, and specifies how the press is missing the link that would cast light on

¹²⁴⁴ N, 79.

how this gangster
relates
to a hammer
a mother
her daughter.

As the image of crucifixion is pursued, the persona cannot forgive himself, and the poem closes with death, a final image where mercy can be found and the narrative voice wonders:

... how the mercy of God
might make its sweet forgiving way
through a block of wood.

His daughter's testimonies in tabloids and on the internet display a very difficult family context.¹²⁴⁵ This might explain why, despite his own personal detachment from money, Brendan Kennelly had to continuously "sell out" on the public stage.¹²⁴⁶ The recurrence with which he attacks the grasp of money on the mind of modern Irish society and the words he uses to express his feelings might disclose a personal dilemma:

There is a fierce determination to make money and I think money is the large part of our consciousness, all we've got to do is listen to the ads on the radio or television, it's an assault on what remains of consciousness in order to say the most important thing in life is money.¹²⁴⁷

In particular the allusion to advertising is bound to remind the reader that Kennelly distinguished himself in the poetic and academic world, among many illustrious reasons,

¹²⁴⁵ Doodle Kennelly, "Introducing Doodle," *Sunday Independent, Life Magazine*, 30 April 2006, 5.

Id., "Striving to Be a Woman of Virtue," *Sunday Independent, Living*, 08 April 2007, 8.

Id., <http://blog.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=blog.view&friendID=151297011>, 02 December 2007.

¹²⁴⁶ *Id.*, "I Was Cut in Half," *Sunday Independent, Life*, 24 September 2006, 14.

Id., "Green-Eyed Monster Wants Fresh Meat," *Sunday Independent, Living*, 18 February 07, 8.

Id., "How Doodle Kennelly Became a Skinny Bitch," *Sunday Independent, Life Magazine*, 06 May 2007, 20-22.

¹²⁴⁷ Aengus Fanning, "A Man Who Make the Right Mistakes," *Sunday Independent*, 25.

by his much contended participation in this “assault,” as he advertised for various companies. If it is taken as sincere, his passionate condemnation nearly sounds like a confession that he took part in advertising despite himself. Most strikingly, eleven months after this declaration, he appeared again on television, this time promoting the *Sunday Independent*. The level of contradiction here involved provides insight into the necessarily high degree of self-abnegation that can lead a man who despises the world of commercial advertising and who cannot suffer television to sell his name and his image to the small screen. As he comments on the Toyota ad with Katie Donovan, after evoking the happy family image of mothers and their children, the matter of betrayal is alluded to: “I enjoyed getting the few bob [*sic*]. It didn’t amount to 30 pieces of silver, but it wasn’t bad!”¹²⁴⁸ In the creative sphere of poetry writing, money and its pressurizing power became a theme of investigation for the poet, who yet felt the need to interrogate himself: had poetry been betrayed? Had Brendan Kennelly turned into a Judas-poet?

In order to answer these questions one has to distinguish two levels: the level of poetic composition and the level of performance. The very fact that he addresses the question within his written work is the greatest mark of courage and honesty. However, it seems that at the level of performance, Brendan Kennelly wearing the mask of his public figure can follow different rules, that are more relevant to the bardic and oral tradition than to the literary tradition. The dichotomy between these two different routes, that Kennelly yet manages to follow, is most interestingly shaped in the interplay between masks, a game where uneasiness about Brendan Kennelly’s public part is also confided.

¹²⁴⁸ Katie Donovan, “Blaming It All on Judas,” *Irish Times* 19 December 1991, 13.
Marial Hannon, “Close Encounters of a Fourth Kind,” in *This Fellow*, 47.

III Reticent Confidences and Possible Confessions

1) Pointing at the Mask

Using a mask can lead to very close identification of the actor with the character, a process in which the actor forgets about his own identity and gets as close as possible to the character's otherness. However, it is also true of a story-teller,¹²⁴⁹ who can identify with his character or who can expose to his audience the typical features of the character without identifying with the character. "A synthesis of self and other is denied" as the performer remains himself and asserts himself as such. This is the demonstration technique referred to earlier. The contrast between the personality of the performer and that of the persona is sufficiently marked, but this use of the mask can further lead to a humorous dialogue between the two identities. In that case the mask offers possibilities that are particularly interesting as a mode for confidence in a poem since in this situation the poet can also play on the possible ambiguity between the character and himself.

III.1.1 Introduction

As Kennelly became a public figure, following the archetype of bards (in the broad sense), Munster poets and pub characters on the model of Brendan Behan and Patrick Kavanagh, the space between the public and the private self (especially after he stopped drinking) widened, so that the poem, composed in private, could become the scene where the private self mocks the public mask. This is especially striking with the repeated episodes in the *The Book of Judas* when Judas features in a television chat show, and when, more specifically the *Late-Late Show* is mentioned.¹²⁵⁰ Because in such poems public attributes of Brendan Kennelly are referred to, the interaction between the poet and his persona Judas, invites further reflection. "When Kennelly read his first poem about Judas, he read it

¹²⁴⁹ *Masked Performance*, 24.

¹²⁵⁰ BOJ, 315.

to a friend who replied: 'That's you. Why blame Judas for all your Irish hang ups?'"¹²⁵¹ In the poem "The Ultimate Rat," his smile and his way of remaining natural, even in a television studio places the mask in perspective:

... I mused as I flashed that
Winning Judasgrin. Viewers adored my honesty.
My tam-ratings soared high as heaven.

In "Your Little Button"¹²⁵² the poet points at how his public mask, in particular through his television appearances, largely backed-up by the *Sunday Independent* and the Toyota ad, have made him the sexual fantasy of many women, fully protecan as the viewers project their own desires on him:

Press your little button with Olympian skill,
sec me in colour, gape, squint, suss, don't touch,
I'll pop at your bidding,
Be your private priest kneeling to obey
Or your sucking toyboy or your prince pleased to betray
or your very own bomb on its missionary way.

The gap between the persona and the poet suggests, as for performer in the demonstration mode in a theatrical situation, that he wishes here to be seen as distinct from this public image. However, the fact of calling "Judas" his public self indicates a sense of betrayal. Could it be that in the gap between poet and Judas-persona, Brendan Kennelly would be confiding a sense of guilt, some discomfort that this public mask is somehow betraying the poet?

In *Poetry My Arse*, Brendan Kennelly's public facet is rejected, this time through Ace, a caricature of a poet, and in this particular instance, maybe a caricature of Brendan Kennelly:

¹²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵² BOJ, 201.

The unthinkable

“No television! No television !” roared Ace,
“in my Bluebell pad !
Suppose one night I were to see myself?”
- O God!¹²⁵³

Yet at other times, he gently plays with the similarity between his public mask and his poetic character as in “Now and then,”¹²⁵⁴ a poem in which through Ace Brendan Kennelly depicts a game he used to play himself with women and that some readers would recognize¹²⁵⁵:

“May we fuck?” he said to many women he met.
Got Artic looks, slaps on the face, clatters on the head.
Now and then, to his surprise, a not
unbeautiful woman joined him in bed.
“Why?” he whispered. “Insolent pig” she said.

The most obvious trait Kennelly’s reputation shares with some of his characters’ reputation is a “drinking habit” and more specifically a dependency on whiskey. Judas is occasionally shown indulging in the drink, but this is fairly frequent with Kennelly’s persona Ace de Homer. In “Holy Scer”¹²⁵⁶ Ace is awarded a literary prize for his poetry and presents himself intoxicated at the poets’ gathering. Ace’s unruly behaviour and boisterous comments on this occasion recall Brendan Kennelly’s own behaviour during his drinking days. This disorderly attitude earned him the hostility of many critics and of certain writers who seemed to take revenge in reviews. Jack Holland wrote about Kennelly: “When he is not writing ‘under the influence’ (I mean of Eliot), Mr Kennelly strays dangerously near to

¹²⁵³ PMA, 271.

¹²⁵⁴ PMA, 64.

¹²⁵⁵ Peter and Margaret Lewis, “The Brendan Conquest: 1962 and All That,” in *This Fellow*, 86.
Marial Hannon, “Close Encounters of Fourth Kind,” in *This Fellow*, 48.

In communication with Professor Joris Duytschaever, 10 Marsh 2007.

In communication with Seamus Hosey, September 2007.

¹²⁵⁶ PMA, 294-298.

meaninglessness.”¹²⁵⁷ The poet stopped drinking on the 16th of July 1986. Yet twenty years on his reputation still follows him and through Ace de Horner he plays with the “myth of Brendan Kennelly” that is his public mask. In that regard “Pondering the situation”¹²⁵⁸ proves most interesting as in the poem, Ace seems to closely reflect Brendan Kennelly. The contrast is underlined between Ace-present-Brendan Kennelly and the public mask, one being shy and reserved, the other tumultuous and wild. The continuing longing for alcohol is also alluded to and openly expressed by Kennelly in interviews:

Sometimes I get such longing for it. Oh, Jesus. Fierce. About three times a year I actually break out sweating – pouring it. So I have to wash in cold water, and go for a walk. It’s a choice, as a lot of things are. Even though you feel bound and fascinated, you can actually release yourself.¹²⁵⁹

The episode in the poem has seemingly been inspired by a real encounter as Brendan Kennelly, like most public figures is occasionally verbally vilified by strangers trying to settle accounts with this public image and what they imagine of it¹²⁶⁰:

She grew more eloquent, vile and true,
he more timid, swallowing her abuse like beer,
the golden foreign stuff you see in the ads
and want to wallow in, fill your bath with
before venturing forth on a truth-telling expedition of your own,
walking up to a strange woman accompanied by a lad
who can’t cope with your belligerent, drunken myth
as you steal the woman from in front of his face
and hiccup her home
to your honest bed.¹²⁶¹

If there is enjoyment in becoming a public figure, there is also at times a sense of loneliness that emerges from the gap between the public mask and one’s sense of private self. The disturbing effect of fame on one’s sense of identity is an experience that most

¹²⁵⁷ Jack Holland, “A Heap of Broken Images,” *Hibernia*, Friday 24 January 24, 1975, 17

¹²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹²⁵⁹ Arminta Wallace, “The Brendan Voyage,” *Irish Times*, 22 May 2004, 7.

¹²⁶⁰ Cf. among many instances *The Late Late Show*, RTE Television, 30 May 2003, *Ibid.* 23 December 2005.

¹²⁶¹ PMA, 65.

successful performing artists have to go through. To return to Sinéad O'Connor's poem in the *Irish Times*, it might also have been some sympathy for the young singer suffering from the publicity of her status and the recognition of what he himself went through that prompted Bréndan Kennelly to praise her poem in the exaggerated terms already discussed.

III.1.2 Disclosing the Private Self

Brendan Kennelly's "I" is rarely told in the first person and only through the veil of a literary mask does the poet allow confidences. It is difficult to decide if this form of self-expression should be called "lyricism." Feelings are expressed in a very moving way, but rarely in a frontal way and it is precisely because emotion is conveyed through a mask, often in comical situations, that the poems can be so poignant. In this respect Brendan Kennelly's technique is very close to that of an illusionist. He would typically point in one direction, distracting the reader's attention while at the same time, contrasting with the mask of his persona, intimate thoughts and feelings would be revealed. Thus in "Same reason, I'd say, the blackbird sings,"¹²⁶² a long poem that might seem thematically heterogenous Brendan Kennelly expands on a gesture by Ace that might at first sight be deemed ridiculous and insignificant:

He'd stand ther,
perhaps in the middle of O'Connell Street,
clutching his bum as a drowning man
will clutch whatever comes to his assistance.

And yet hiding behind Ace, Brendan Kennelly is telling here how his art / *ars* / *arse* / bum helps him to keep his head out of the water and allows him not to sink in time of distress.

¹²⁶² PMA, 276-277.

Later on in the poem, recalling that poetry provided him with “breathing spaces,” Brendan Kennelly writes how Ace, or rather himself through Ace began

to talk through his arse
revealing his soul
while a wispy tincture of fresh air
rejuvenated his hole.

Playing on sonorities: arse-ars, hole-whole, in these lines Brendan Kennelly discretely refers to his own poetics.

The poet’s soul is unveiled at the very moment when it is dressed in the most grotesque attire. Some readers, like spectators looking at an illusionist, might then be distracted by scatology, scoff and ridicule while Brendan Kennelly’s lyricism takes a rather unexpected, yet very moving, poetic form. In a comparable, if more direct, way through both Judas and Ace, a sense of homelessness is expressed. In “A challenging walk”¹²⁶³ the poet’s loneliness is told through a food brand: “Ace finished his tin of Bachelor Beans,” a statement more openly echoed by Judas as he says: “I mate occasionally but am damnably single.”¹²⁶⁴ “Damnably” calls attention to the nature of that celibacy, which, when related to the poet’s public mask and his reputation as a ladies’ man can only bring the reader to smile. The adverb might also be a possible allusion to the poet’s moral discomfort with his own situation in breach of Irish Catholic laws. As he was brought up in a traditional Irish Catholic fashion, lustful thoughts and sexual activities outside marriage were considered as mortal sins. According to him sex was in fact the only area where immorality applied. Although he clearly tried to distance himself from this restrictive upbringing, interviews suggest that because of this education he remained for long limited in his relation to women.¹²⁶⁵ Speaking about this moral background he unambiguously confides, “I don’t

¹²⁶³ PMA, 256.

¹²⁶⁴ BOJ, 141.

¹²⁶⁵ *Writer in Profile*, RTE Television, May 1993.

think I ever got over that.”¹²⁶⁶ Both Ace and Judas live on their own, the “Bluebell cell” for Ace and “a bedsit” for Judas. Brendan Kennelly repeatedly mentions his personae’s “homes” but rather than “homes” these places are presented as mere stable site where the wandering character can halt for a rest before continuing his stroll through the city. The poet’s sense that he does not really have a home is also expressed through the name of another persona: Professor Tinker in *Now*, also a city walker, a strolling thinker, but his name also evokes deprivation.¹²⁶⁷ In an early collection (1959), Brendan Kennelly celebrates the tinker’s “glory in want.”¹²⁶⁸ The resemblance with the author is strongly suggested by the fact that Tinker like Kennelly is a retired university professor.

Ace’s place, the Bluebell pad, “what passes for a flat”¹²⁶⁹ is referred to many times. It is the departure point of Ace’s walk and the place where he returns. According to the route of Ace’s walks, Bluebell is located near Westmoreland St, and the Liffey and within walking distance of O’Connell St. Judas’ place is called a “sweaty bedsit.”¹²⁷⁰ Both in the case of Ace and of Judas’ homes, Brendan Kennelly’s own place, a flat in Trinity College, a historical place, is recognizable in the characters’ dwellings. Thus in *Poetry My Arse* one reads: He upped from the gutter and walked away / towards Bluebell and history.¹²⁷¹ In “She and the machine” that tells the story of a student, Trinity College is mentioned: “She did a fair old Leaving Cert, / got into Trinity.”¹²⁷² Graffiti from the inside of the institution are integrated in the poem and in the following stanza the narrative voice resembles Brendan Kennelly, the professor in TCD:

¹²⁶⁶ Elizabeth Zoppi, “The Road for Home,” *The Word*, May 2004, 10.

¹²⁶⁷ This is also stressed by Anna Asian Carrera, in her paper “Rapid progress and its side-effects in contemporary Ireland: Brendan Kennelly’s *Now*,” IASIL, University College Dublin, July 2007.

¹²⁶⁸ Brendan Kennelly and Rudi Holzapfel, *Cast a Cold Eye* (Dublin: Dolment Press, 1959), 25-26, in Gerold Sedlmayr, *Brendan Kennelly’s Literary Works*, 351.

¹²⁶⁹ PMA, 71.

¹²⁷⁰ BOJ, 143.

¹²⁷¹ PMA, 100.

¹²⁷² PMA, 135.

I saw it with my own eyes
written on a door
in a loo in the third floor
of the Arts Block.

Only in the end of the poem does the university become Bluebell and more significantly this last part of the piece is in italics, like a song, as if Bluebell was a name for Trinity College in the poetic sphere of *Poetry My Arse*:

*Somewhere in Bluebell
she walks alone
enjoying the air
enjoying the way
the cool September breeze
plays through her hair*

In *The Book of Judas* the temptation of suicide is openly treated in section nine of the book. The myth of Judas is such that the mask of Judas does not really allow us to decide on the degree of revelation between poet and persona on that theme:

In search of a new design I
Considered hanging myself from the door of my bedsit
With melting elegies by a fiddler from Athy.
But I decided this was not right.¹²⁷³

The situation is yet different with Ace de Horner who is a poet and whose biography is necessarily less pre-determined than that of Judas Iscariot or Cromwell for instance. The poems, composed in preparation for *Poetry My Arse* that treated of the appeal of death for Ace most openly, have not been integrated in the final version of the book.¹²⁷⁴ The temptation yet appears here and there between the lines, and in what follows the resemblance with the passage mentioned above is striking. Death is considered in exactly the same place in the character's flat:

¹²⁷³ BOJ, 157

¹²⁷⁴ In communication with Brendan Kennelly, February 2006.

as he cast his eyes on his IRA trenchcoat
unscorched by petrol-bomb, unmarked by bullet,

happy to hang on the wall of the Bluebell pad,

happy to hang like a Kevin Barry lad.¹²⁷⁵

The anaphora “happy to hang” calls for the reader’s attention. These lines assert Ace’s lack of heroism that is underlined by the alliteration “unscorched” and “unmarked” echoed later in the poem by his “*Bluebell Songs*, as yet unwritten source of his fame.” Ace as an anti-hero is contrasted with Kevin Barry, an eighteen year old who was hanged by the British and became a major figure of the Republican cause. As Brendan Kennelly chose to use the name in a generic noun “a Kevin Barry lad,” the expression can also be read as near anagram of “Kerry Bard,” a phrase often applied to Brendan Kennelly in the media.¹²⁷⁶ Since this witty use of words is not unusual with Brendan Kennelly, the possibility of the anagram cannot be dismissed in any certain way, and if accepted, would on the one hand be read as reminder that many a man from Kerry has been “happy to hang.”

III.1.3 Glimpses of Brendan Kennelly in Person: Nearing Auto-Fiction

In his use of personae and masks, the poet occasionally departs from the mask to let the reader see in the interval, glimpses of his private self and intimate thoughts and feelings. However, as his public image becomes more and more established, the gap naturally widened between the public and the private self, while the poet, public or private, would still be referred to by one same name, just as in the theater the actor wearing a mask, would be both the character of the mask and himself, the two sharing one body. As Brendan Kennelly decided to include and play with his own name in his poems, he reaches a further degree, maybe the ultimate degree of complexity in his relation to his persona. “Front

¹²⁷⁵ PMA, 83

¹²⁷⁶ Marese McDonagh, “The Bard with Dancing Dimples and a Mischievous Smile,” *Kerryman*, 07 February 1992, 4.

Gate”¹²⁷⁷ presents one of the most interesting instances of the play with masks. The narrator, the “I” of the poem seems at the closest to Brendan Kennelly and, as “the Front Gate / of Trinity College” and other places associated with the poet are mentioned (in a direct way so that the divide is blurred between the extra and the intra diegetic world), Kennelly plays on the ambiguity between author and narrator. The first three lines set up the context of an extremely funny dramatic situation:

I met Ace de Horner at the Front Gate
of Trinity College. He was looking out
for Kennelly. “Why are you looking for him?”¹²⁷⁸

The ambiguous narrator-author encounters Ace de Horner, a caricature of a poet but also to some extent a caricature of Brendan Kennelly, the public man, who sets up to comment on the author’s public self, that is to draw a caricature of that public image which he calls by the author’s name. The situation is a prismatic dialogue between the various masks Brendan Kennelly uses in *Poetry My Arse*. Most of the lines are attributed to Ace, and yet one hardly recognizes his voice here, as his talk accumulates colourful expressions: “a cute Kerry hoor,” “he’d floor whiskey out of a hole in the road,” “he’d ride a cracked saucer in the thick of a storm...” Only in the end of the piece does Ace seem to linguistically return to himself:

A true poet must follow his own star
though it lures him
into the damned heart of eternity.
I think I’ll walk out to Sandymount strand
and stroll by the buttock-loosening sea.

All the characteristics of Brendan Kennelly – the public man – are here referred to in the most inflated way: the years of alcoholism, his divorce, skirt-chasing, television

¹²⁷⁷ PMA, 274.

¹²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 274-276.

advertising, the exceptional academic career in Trinity College. The dramatic irony of the scene is taken to a humorous extreme:

“I’ll tell you this” said Ace, “he’s a cute Kerry hoor,
he’ll go in a swing door behind you, and before
you know where you are, he’s out in front of you.
He’d get in where the wind would turn back!”¹²⁷⁹

Beyond its dramatic qualities “Front Gate” also shows Brendan Kennelly’s self-detachment and his tendency to self-mockery if not utter self-deprecatory comments when this can lead to amusement. In this poem this type of comment takes place through Ace de Horner but also through the narrative voice as he addresses Ace:

A major poet like you
should have nothing to do
with a venal wretch like Kennelly¹²⁸⁰

“Front Gate” was inspired by a real incident. Brendan Kennelly once came across a man who was looking for him but who mistook him for Gus Martin, Professor at UCD. The man, very much like in the poem, started to energetically criticize Brendan Kennelly, whom he knew from his reputation and from television programmes and interviews in the newspapers, but whom he had never met. Brendan Kennelly later reported the story to Gus Martin, they had a laugh about it and from there on continued to fuel each other’s reputation by circulating invented stories about each other...¹²⁸¹

“In and out”¹²⁸² phrases Brendan Kennelly’s attitude to his personae and underlines the game of identification and dissociation with the masks:

I slip in and out of myself

¹²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹²⁸¹ In communication with Brendan Kennelly, November 2006.

¹²⁸² PMA, 35.

Ace slips in and out of himself
till he is me
and I am he.

In this poem, because the poet is commenting on his technique of composition the “I” becomes most ambiguous. Unlike in the majority of poems in *Poetry My Arse*, attention is called to the narrative voice and not to the character. These lines, because they are dealing with poetics, sound like a confidence of the writer to the reader and work as a reminder that Ace is a mask, a character created by the poet who expresses the desire not to be confused with his creature.

In a comparable way “Dramatis Personae”¹²⁸³ points at three different masks of Brendan Kennelly:

The mad father battles the sea.
The old bachelor wipes his arse with fist of grass.

Ace steps out of me
to test the street of broken glass.

“The mad father” refers to Brendan Kennelly as a sort of Cúchulainn maybe when in 1986 the sea separated him from his daughter who had left Ireland for America with her mother, and “the old bachelor” is a compilation of Ace, Patrick in “the Great Hunger,” but also of Brendan Kennelly. The line, “The mad father battles the sea,” also recalls one of the final scenes of *The Field* by John B. Keane, as the Bull (not pitbull !) McCabe struggles against the ocean. These masks are like facets of a complex prism. In calling these “Dramatis Personae,” which is also the title of a chapter in W.B. Yeats *Autobiographies*, Brendan Kennelly discretely points at how these personae are both distinct and very close to himself.

¹²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 156.

Very early in his career Brendan Kennelly began to investigate the poetic and dramatic potential of blurring the boundary between the inner world of literary creation and the outside world of reality. Thus as early a poem as “Moloney Enters into a Dialogue Concerning the Listowel Water Supply”¹²⁸⁴ fuses the real world and that of poetry by including the names of successful North-Kerry writers, also friends of Brendan Kennelly:

No wonder MacMahon, for all his sins,
Will riddle you a story that spins.
And John B. Keane, when the water is right,
Is able to write a play a night.

No doubt through these lines Kennelly found great amusement, not just because they celebrated the literary fertility of the place, but also because, at a time when the divide between Dubliners and Culchies was still a sensitive matter, the poet who had moved to Dublin, was merrily aware that such celebration would be felt by some of the readers as intolerable provocation. Brendan Kennelly does not yet limit himself to this but goes on to comment for the first time upon his own reputation and uses his own name as a poetic device:

Sure even that fat little bollox
Out in Ballylongford, Kennelly,
Is half-able to write
With a drop o’Listowel water in his belly
Not mind you, that he’d ever produce
Anything as original as this.
The poor bastard is too serious,
When he’s not foolish he’s delirious.¹²⁸⁵

The passage demonstrates an early awareness of the aesthetic potential offered by the use of literary masks and Brendan Kennelly will later on develop and enrich the technique to its maximal power. It also demonstrates a sharp interest in oneself as a public figure and in

¹²⁸⁴ MUAAl, 61-64.

¹²⁸⁵ MUAAl, 63.

the dramatic possibilities offered by the public mask born out of performing poetry to an audience. It is also interesting to note how at the stage when these lines were written, the myth of Brendan Kennelly was budding but yet not fully developed as further events (divorce, alcoholism, heart-operation...) later came to complete the public portrait. Thus, in comparison, a piece such as "Front Gate" offered a more detailed, more fully shaped and consequently more entertaining picture of Brendan Kennelly as a public figure.

2) Multiple Variations on Autobiographical Episodes

III.2.1 The Indirect Approach

Taking on the role of Ireland's bard, along with Oscar Wilde and W.B. Yeats, Brendan Kennelly refuses openly confidential poetry. The direct expression of the self is rejected, Kennelly argues that "the place for confession is the confession box"¹²⁸⁶ and feels that a poem is not the appropriate place to pour out one's neuroses:

The trouble is when you come to talk of yourself, it can so often sound like confessionalism or like a psychiatrist's couch. So the challenge therefore is to find a style of connection that will enable you to say things about yourself, personal concerns that will relate to everybody. And I ... I think this is very difficult. I dislike confessionalism, the place for confessionalism is confession. It's not poetry. I don't like, say, poetry that throws itself at an audience. I would like a certain reticence, a certain indirectness, and yet a vividness.¹²⁸⁷

He consequently takes side with a poetry of reserve where private feelings and events drawn from the poet's life are not excluded but are discretely revealed through "The Trembling of the Veil." In the poetic like on the football field Brendan Kennelly chose to be a winger. As he comments on W.B. Yeats's poetry, Kennelly's attention is captured by a trait that he shares in his own poetry:

¹²⁸⁶ *Writer in Profile*, RTE Television, 17 October 1976.

¹²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Yeats, mostly, achieved directness by being indirect. His candour comes to us through masks. He is, nonetheless, in the terms I'm trying to describe, a *candid* poet. But Yeats's candour has, as it were, to be gathered from all the sources, the voices, the personae, the masks.¹²⁸⁸

For Brendan Kennelly as for Yeats, in his verse the poet never takes the direct approach, "there is always a phantasmagoria" that makes the poetry more complex but also more interesting than plain confessional verse, although even in confessional writing there is often a persona. Brendan Kennelly considers it is a matter of respect not to inflict on the reader one's personal neuroses: "I don't think [poetry] should bother with the recording of neurosis. I really can understand why modern poetry has really failed to attract people because who wants to hear about your neurosis? Who wants to hear about your inhibitions?"¹²⁸⁹ And yet, this does not mean that the poet banishes out of his verse anything that is personal, on the contrary: "A poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work out of its tragedy, whatever it be, lost love, or mere loneliness; he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria."¹²⁹⁰ A comparable approach is defended by Oscar Wilde for whom the writer should not try to write as his own self: "the objective form is the most subjective in matter. Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth."¹²⁹¹ In agreement with such statements Brendan Kennelly rarely writes in the first person but favours "a set of *dramatis personae*, a machinery of *oratio obliqua*, a set of voices mouthing acceptable contradictions, a chorus of complexity."¹²⁹² This also means in his case that many of his poems have been inspired by autobiographical events, but also that one given event, if it constituted a particularly crucial turn in the poet's life, can at

¹²⁸⁸ JJJ, 224.

¹²⁸⁹ Gay Byrne, Gay, "Brendan Kennelly on the Late Late," in Persson ed., 1996, 14-20, 16.

¹²⁹⁰ W.B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (London: the Macmillan Company, 1961), 509.

¹²⁹¹ Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying," *Oscar Wilde, The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2000), 282.

¹²⁹² JJJ, 224.

different times in the poet's career, be the occasion for different poems of varied forms but whose factual core is yet identical.

III.2.2 Mocking Lyricists

An important consequence of Brendan Kennelly's favouring the indirect approach, lies in the way he ridicules what in *Poetry My Arse* he calls "wounded lyricists,"¹²⁹³ writers "in obvious pain, deeply aesthetic pain."¹²⁹⁴ He shows little mercy towards those who take the pen to indulge in laments and spill the "ins" and "outs" of an inflated ego. Illustrating the proximity between some confidential texts and certain pages in popular newspapers, with "Agony Aunt"¹²⁹⁵ Kennelly makes a poem of a poet (Acc)'s confidences to "his favourite Agony Aunt."¹²⁹⁶ As opposed to the indirect approach favoured by Brendan Kennelly but that some, Patrick Kavanagh for instance,¹²⁹⁷ would deem dishonesty, Acc discloses the anxiety and psychological torment behind his verse:

He explained how these words mucked him awake all night,
he wanted to be honest, all honest, he'd lied
long enough, lies worked, but now he'd prefer shite
in his mouth to lies in his heart.¹²⁹⁸

With free indirect speech, Brendan Kennelly distances and places in perspective a whining type of confidential writing. The distance works as a witty double take. On the one hand, it invites critical consideration of a type of writing whose best place is in the tabloids, but on the other hand it can allow Brendan Kennelly to disclose some private events and feelings that are so distanced from himself through the artistic medium – via Acc and reported

¹²⁹³ PMA, 275.

¹²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹²⁹⁶ The irony is of course that in 1992 Brendan Kennelly gave an interview to Patricia Redlich, the agony aunt of the *Sunday Independent*, cf. Patricia Redlich, "Beloved Brendan," *Sunday Independent*, 01 March 1992, 4 L.

¹²⁹⁷ In that regard the contrast between Yeats and Kavanagh is underlined by Brendan Kennelly in *JJJ*, 224.

¹²⁹⁸ PMA, 234.

speech – that they bear little resemblance to tabloid letters and confidential writing. What is being indirectly confided is thus objectified while it remains most subjective and intimate, and consequently verifies Oscar Wilde’s statement that man is most himself when he does not talk in his own name, as “the objective form is the most subjective in matter.”

III.2.3 The Hammer

In Kennelly’s poetry, certain subjective and personal matters can be traced through the way they frequently feature in the form of obsessive figures. In that respect some of his poetic work combines multiple variations of autobiographical episodes. The hammer is one of these motives, which initially refers to a childhood event but that developed into a poetic crystallisation of guilt. When Brendan Kennelly was about nine his older brother persistently teased him for being in love with a little girl from the parish. He promptly responded by throwing a hammer at his brother.¹²⁹⁹ The weapon missed the target by a few inches, but guilt remained in its wake. The story is briefly related in “A bright man.”¹³⁰⁰ What is unusual is the way the episode is told in the first person. The narrative is very factual, no feeling is directly mentioned but the distance that has just been referred to, is here significantly reduced since only the quotation marks indicate that the narrator does not assume the direct speech:

“I would sit here forever
thinking of the day I nearly killed my brother.
He mocked me. When he repeated
these words, I threw a hammer at his head
and missed, barely. My brother said
‘O Christ !’
My brother is a bright man.
He never mocked me again.”

¹²⁹⁹ In communication with Brendan Kennelly, July 2007.

¹³⁰⁰ PMA, 115.

Echoes of this episode are perceptible in “The Final Crime,”¹³⁰¹ “The Wizened Boy”¹³⁰² and in *Now*, where the vividness of that memory is once again conjured up:

How is it that moments from fifty years ago
are more living now than they were then ?
The hammer missed his brother’s head. Amen.¹³⁰³

Further on in *Now*, the expression of guilt is directly associated with the symbol of the hammer:

Why is darkness so riddled with guilt ?
Why do years become hammers
in the hand of demons ?¹³⁰⁴

Another recurring autobiographical scene is the beating by the schoolmaster of Murty Galvin, a friend of Brendan Kennelly when he was a child. The scene is told in “Catechism class,” but also in *The Book of Judas* in “Murty’s Burning Hands”¹³⁰⁵:

When the question got no answer
Murty was beaten by the teacher.
“Take me to the fountain,” Murty said.
I pumped the water over Murty’s burning hands.
He dried his hands on his jumper.

Echoes of such scenes return in *The Man Made of Rain* page 72 and in *Now*, first page 23 and then page 26:

He sees a seven-year-old friend
crying, hands bruised, in the corner of the playground:
‘I’d love never to read a line again!’¹³⁰⁶

¹³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹³⁰² BOJ, 70.

¹³⁰³ N, 75.

¹³⁰⁴ N, 79.

¹³⁰⁵ BOJ, 46.

¹³⁰⁶ N, 26.

Various biographical episodes reappear in different shapes, different contexts, all through his career. These recurrences can be deemed “confidence” or “confession” but unlike “confessional confessions” they are indirect. The poet rarely calls attention unto himself, his feelings, reasons for his actions and their consequences. Each episode is taken as a subject matter that is reworked as raw material for poetry and only the recurrence of each motif indicates that these autobiographical episodes bear a particular importance in the poet’s life and consequently in his work. Brendan Kennelly has recurrently¹³⁰⁷ asserted that for him writing opens a space where he frees himself from moral constraints. This means that in his poetry he can blame, mock, satirise himself and others, evoke immoral deeds with or without any guilt associated... His poetry is the place where his “kind of self-critical laughter”¹³⁰⁸ resonates which might take an ambiguous turn for the question arises as to whom is exactly laughing at whom. The poet might be laughing at himself, but when it comes to a recurring question such as betrayal, could it be that he is also laughing at the aware or unaware betrayed, enjoying the dangerous thrill of being found out? Given Brendan Kennelly’s approach to satire, when only the victim or people close to that person would recognize who is being targeted, there is little reason not to believe that for him poetry can also become a medium where confessional revelations are being made, and for that reason his poetry is bound to be “honest,” even if brutally so.

III.2.4 An Exception: *The Man Made of Rain*

Autobiographical events are most of the time very discreet in their relation to the poet and are generally interspersed within the more general frame of a poetic fiction, or longer poems,¹³⁰⁹ and private feelings are obliquely alluded to, leaving very little space for what is

¹³⁰⁷ JJJ, 42.

Writer in Profile, RTE Television, 26 May 1993.

¹³⁰⁸ Brendan Kennelly, no title, *Krino*, Winter 1993, 28-29, 28.

¹³⁰⁹ C, PMA, BOJ, N.

generally understood as lyricism. *The Man Made of Rain* is an exception. In the collection there is no mask in the form of a character. The book singles itself out of Brendan Kennelly's work for the gravity of its tone. The poet here attempts to give a poetic account of an hallucination he had, after general anaesthetic as he was undergoing heart-surgery. In this visionary experience, the poet goes back through different essential stages of his life and for the first time he uses a more openly confidential first person pronoun and seems to don some of his masks. "Major operations on the body / operate on the mind" and it is indeed a very different poetic mind that the reader encounters in *The Man Made of Rain*. Brendan Kennelly here largely gives up some of his personae that usually take the form of a character and possibly because he rejects open confidences he tries to poetically go naked in a new and until then estranged style. Details of what the operations had done to his body are provided so that through the poem the scars of his mind and the scars of his body are linguistically made public in a very matter of fact and conversational way: "Colours of the left leg, cut from ankle to groin / or groin to ankle if you prefer, I like / ankle to groin for reasons I'll not go into here." Occasionally a mask resurrects, in particular the mask of Brendan Kennelly as a former drinker, that is also the mask of guilt that in section 11 is called "a Dublin gangster." This might be a sign that unlike other feelings openly expressed in *The Man Made of Rain*, such as fear, terror, and pain, something about guilt requires that a mask be retained.

Ironically Brendan Kennelly joins the group of those he called "wounded lyricists." In this context where some barriers have been lifted maybe because death has been approached so near, the poet chose to reveal that as a child he has been the victim of sexual abuse. This most sensitive event is made public, yet with a lot of modesty and without any self-indulgence. The episode is related in a paratactic style, concentrated in factual data:

Paddy Brolley traps me between his legs.

He's eighty years of age, I'm eight,
he's laughing, his knecs bang me,
manipulating,
coddin' is what he'll call it
if I start screaming¹³¹⁰

The second line here quoted directly contradicts the second stanza of the section that says "Up on the ditch he set me / when I was nine stuck his hand up my trousers."¹³¹¹ Was the scene repeated, or does memory recoil when the past resurfaces?

III.2.4 Conflict with the Myth of Brendan Kennelly

This sudden burst of confidences disclosed in *The Man Made of Rain* was paralleled by the television appearance when he was interviewed in May 1997 on *The Late Late Show*. Brendan Kennelly then spoke for several minutes in the first person, explained to a large audience the different steps that preceded and followed the heart-operation. These public confidences are made in a merry mood. The poet radiates with the happiness of his return to life and health. On that night on TV the myth of Brendan Kennelly dominated over the usual restraint of the poet in his written work. However, what is most interesting is that, despite the rare degree of publicity for a poet -- but not for a bard -- and the public attention given to Brendan Kennelly, one also notes that the amount of information revealed by the media is actually very limited. For instance, despite the poet's own revelations in his work on the subject of child-abuse it seems that journalists and television presentators were always very cautious and avoided the sensitive subject or maybe Brendan Kennelly did not wish to have this associated with his public mask. Similarly the poet's love life was kept out of the media. Public evasion of anything that could have turned the poet into a tragic or more fully fledged figure, contributed to maintain the victorious image of the heroic poet who had beaten the drink and had survived a major heart operation. It is very likely that

¹³¹⁰ MMOR, 63.

¹³¹¹ *Ibid.*

further biographical enquiry will reveal the extent to which Brendan Kennelly's public image was a caricature.

3) A Tragic Clown

III.3.1 A Self-Deprecating Image

Although when dealing with Brendan Kennelly's public mask this study had to rely essentially on what appeared in the media, the mask obviously has extensions in the way the poet appears in the street or at performances to any person who does not belong to the poet's close circle. Between the different spheres, (public, private, written poetry, oral performance) as this work has tried to show, the poet played with the different masks in a complex way that was prompted by performances and the role of the bard. The interplay with masks yet possesses its human limits and at the moment when the game stops and the mask is abandoned, tragedy and comedy intermingle. Awareness of the tragi-comic situation Brendan Kennelly puts himself in, is shown through the narrator's comments on some of Kennelly's personae. Most of his heroes: Buíúín, Judas,¹³¹² Ace, Tinker are at some stage or other represented as clowns torn between the smile of their public masks and the tormented souls that make them vulnerable creatures. The narrator shows no mercy when he takes that critical line to describe Brendan Kennelly's persona:

How do we place him ? How do we place
this grinning Ace with the idiot smile
cavorting all over his travesty face
as he forges his own *de Horner* style¹³¹³

In "Ace staged himself,"¹³¹⁴ the character is clearly called a "tragic clown." Since Ace is a poet performer and thus an entertainer that is drawn towards a caricature, it is not so

¹³¹² BOJ, 254, 256, 103.

¹³¹³ PMA, 282. Cf. also PMA, 291, 213, 101.

¹³¹⁴ PMA, 101

surprising that Brendan Kennelly would choose to make of him something of a clown. The remark also applies to Buffún but also to Professor Tinker:

Now he turns youth and age upside down
a rheumatic infant
turns to a howling clown.¹³¹⁵

The fact that nearly every single one of Brendan Kennelly's main personae would be at some stage or other treated as a tragic clown demands further attention. Through these representations the poet also points at similarities between his personae and himself, an ageing body for Tinker, the performing activities of Ace and Buffún, but also their anxiety before and at the time of stepping up on stage:

Look at him on stage, knees
wobbly, eyes older than the pyramids,
voice without an age¹³¹⁶

Through these criticisms Brendan Kennelly adopts the point of view of his enemies:

"I cherish my enemies," Tinker said.
"Their views of me are nearer the truth
than how I see myself."¹³¹⁷

But he also recklessly launches into self-derision and becomes a figure comparable to that described in his favourite song¹³¹⁸ "Send in the clowns." Because past a certain limit a clown becomes the only adequate witness to tragic disaster, these comments on the poet as a tragic clown very well apply to the figure of Brendan Kennelly who at the time when he was still drinking had become a pub character.¹³¹⁹ The public house was then his stage but

¹³¹⁵ N, 29.

¹³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³¹⁷ Now, 50.

¹³¹⁸ Personal notes from Brendan Kennelly's lectures in 2003.

¹³¹⁹ Marese McDonagh, "The Bard with Dancing Dimples and a Mischievous Smile," *Kerryman*, 07 February 1992, 4.

outside this “theatre” he would also often be playing self-mockingly with his own distress and the desperate situation it led him to. In many respects Brendan Kennelly “staged himself.” Professor Joris Duytschaever remembers how in 1986 in Antwerp, he found the poet lying on the bench of a bus shelter in the fashion of a Beckett tramp. He initially thought he was waking him up but soon realised that the poet had been acting out, enjoying his own histrionics.¹³²⁰

In his public role Brendan Kennelly was aware that he could become something of a clown and yet, maybe out of amusement, self-derision, or financial pressure, even as he aged he did not abandon the game and accepted the risk of making the public mask look ridiculous. This proved especially remarkable when he appeared in a television commercial for the *Sunday Independent* in December 2004. The purpose of the ad was to invite consumers to buy the papers because the issue included a CD with Brendan Kennelly reading Christmas stories and poems. On the CD jacket and on the TV ad, he sat near a fireplace and a Christmas tree. The poet was trying through this to revive the *Senachai* from the story-telling tradition at a time when visual power has become next to almighty in the media. The beautiful audio quality of the recording that did justice to Kennelly’s talent in using his voice, did not suffice to make up for the visual impression the poet made. The clash between the old oral tradition and modern Ireland proved most disastrously kitsch as the poet’s image ended up like a mock Santa delivered with the Sunday paper in transparent plastic packaging. Afterward, his interview with Victoria Mary Clarke in December 2004 shows a certain reluctance at talking of the project and only the audio recording is alluded to, while the visual side of the CD, including the television ad, is kept silent.

¹³²⁰ In communication with Professor Joris Duytschaever, May 2007.

Echoes of this self-consciousness appear at a different level when Brendan Kennelly more directly comments upon himself and applies to his own name within the poems the type of disapproving words that “his enemies” would use in relation to him.

I, Judas Iscariot, am assuming special powers
to take over the authorship of this Book
from my collaborator, Brendan Kennelly, who is a sick man¹³²¹

While the rest of the poem clarifies “sick” with “convalescing” and “unwell,” the expression “a sick man” remains unflattering. A comparison of the three comments made by characters in *Moloney up and at It*,¹³²² *The Book of Judas*,¹³²³ and *Poetry My Arse*¹³²⁴ shows in the three occasions that Brendan Kennelly is acutely aware of some rumours carried around about him. Although the first layer of self-representation would be a clownish portrait, imperfections in the clown introduce a primary level of tragedy that is doubly buttressed: first by Brendan Kennelly clearly signifying his awareness of this representation, and secondly by the fact that he persists in the same direction, sticking to the public mask and thus choosing to become to some extent a caricature of himself.¹³²⁵

III.3.2 A Steady Mask

Kennelly’s reputation as a merry man full of humour was such that it systematically raised expectations in the audience who wanted to see and listen to him for laughter and entertainment. The more tragic side of Kennelly yet appeared in a German magazine¹³²⁶ in which photos, front page included, of the poet looking extremely sad were published. The interview took place about a week before he underwent a difficult heart operation that

¹³²¹ BOJ, 323-324.

¹³²² MUAAl, 63.

¹³²³ BOJ, 63.

¹³²⁴ PMA, 274-276.

¹³²⁵ *The Man and the Masks*, 2.

could have proved fatal. Intense anxiety can be read in his face, but even if it has been evoked, this side of the poet's personality has yet never been shown in the Irish press.

Most strikingly in May 2003 his irritation at having to perform transpires on the stage of *The Late Late Show*. Half way through the interview, he brilliantly recites at good speed a lengthy passage by Sean O'Casey, describing Dublin and her contradictions. In the end he laughs and looks cheerful, while the audience is clapping. Pat Kenny briefly looks down at his notes, Brendan Kennelly notices, his facial expression remains light-hearted but after a second glance at Pat Kenny's papers, he looks up at him and says "Leave me alone." The sound of his voice is half-covered by the clapping. The poet's words sharply contrast with the genial expression of his face. The sequence is extremely rapid and only a keen observer would notice what is happening. On the same show it is later confirmed that Kennelly is not enjoying being on stage. Pat Kenny has understood and discretely reminds him that he has to stay: "Brendan, I can't let you go tonight ..." to which Kennelly smilingly replies "why so?" A couple of minutes on, homage is paid to John B. Keane and Brendan Kennelly reads "A Real Presence." The audience is clapping, Pat Kenny thanks him, shakes his hand, Kennelly makes to leave but the presenter insists "Stay here, stay here ..." and puts his left hands on Brendan Kennelly's arm to keep him seated. The poet looks troubled, the audience claps, he thanks them with one hand but his face still looks upset. He bites his lips, no longer hiding his emotion to which the camera responds by shifting to Pat Kenny who starts speaking, briefly glances sideways at Brendan Kennelly and lifts his left hand to his mouth in a movement that betrays his concern. He has perceived that his guest is not only irritated, but that most of all he is no longer putting on the merry face of the public mask.

¹³²⁶ Gudrun Boch, "Brendan Kennelly," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Magazine*, 04 October 1996, 12-18. *Ibid.* 1.

At Christmas 2004, Brendan Kennelly confesses in an interview¹³²⁷ that he hates having his picture taken. A year later, on the *Late Late Show* of December 2005, he appears tired and sad and offers a contrasting image to that which the audience was generally used to. The program presents an instance of how the poet's sad comments¹³²⁸ on his family life can be greeted by the public's laughter at a time when shades of a more tragic reality are being disclosed. These various instances suggest that, although Brendan Kennelly has proved very active in the media, it does not necessarily follow that he is fully enjoying wearing the public mask. Beyond the question of financial motivation, if there has been any pleasure in media activities, possibly in the Nineties, it seems to have vanished in the next decade.

A consequence of the public mask, the poet finds himself in a similar position to that of an actor wearing a mask: he is several in one but because he is not physically wearing a mask, the audience expects to meet the figure that they have previously encountered on stage, on television, in the news-papers or in the street. In that respect his meeting with a journalist who never interviewed him before was telling. Brendan Kennelly presented her with all the colours of his public mask: the ladies man, the confessor etc.¹³²⁹ Similarly in the situation of a public reading, for instance, unlike in a book, the protective device of a literary mask that can take the form of a character does not exist and the only mask the poet can use over the duration of the performance is the public mask. Nonetheless the very existence of this public mask offers an opportunity for interplay between the public mask and the man behind it. If such interaction takes place, the poet then performs: for strangers, for familiar listeners who might perceive what in the performance possesses

¹³²⁷ <http://www.victoriamaryclark.com/articles/Kennelly%20Brendan.html>, 05 November 2007.

¹³²⁸ To Pat Kenny's question on where he was going to spend Christmas day, Brendan Kennelly replied: "God help her I'll go up to the ... (*He pauses to swallow*) daughter. She lives in Blackrock with her husband, Peter Murphy and then with the three little girls, (*his face brightens*) three grand-daughters Meg, and Hannah and Gracc-Mary and I look forward to ... (*He shakes his head*) discovering how irrelevant I am to peoples like these." *The Late Late Show*, RTE Television, 23 December 2005.

¹³²⁹ "'Sit down next to me and I'll hear your confession,' he said, patting the seat," <http://www.victoriamaryclark.com/articles/Kennelly%20Brendan.html>, 05 November 2007.

an element of privacy, and eventually and maybe most of all for the performer himself. In this third type of performance the performer becomes the spectator of an act that only he himself can contemplate and thus experiences one of the loneliest situations that is, loneliness in a public place which is also the loneliness of the clown.

Conclusion

This study shows that by writing in the tradition of Irish bardism, Brendan Kennelly has created a complex interplay between masks and voices. These particularities of Kennelly's work originated in Irish bardism and only make full sense when examined within a cultural context and appropriate time scale, but what Irish bards of any period have in common is the fact that they perform their poetry. For many of them, including those whose names have been forgotten, performance is what has allowed their work to be preserved through oral transmission until the time when it was written down. Brendan Kennelly has singled himself out in the landscape of Irish contemporary poetry because, like other Irish bards, his poetry performances have encountered remarkable success among his Irish audience. However, the fact that he is a literary man and that his poetry is written makes him a different kind of bard, that is, a bard of modern Ireland. Given how the audience for poetry – performed and written – has changed through time, in order for poetry to survive, especially performed poetry, the poet had to adapt his style. What Brendan Kennelly did is that he combined written and oral poetry in an original way and thus created a personal form of verse, a poetic hybrid that does not exclude writing but on the contrary uses the typical qualities of written literature to serve the oral features in his work and vice-versa.

A bard can belong to a poetic group as was long the case for the *fili* until the Gaelic order collapsed at the end of the 17th century. However the figure of the lonely wandering poet, as the *baird* most possibly were, offers an alternative. This situation was also that of certain Munster poets in the 17th and 18th century, the most famous of them being the Kerryman Owen Roe O'Sullivan. Brendan Kennelly chose to follow the latter's model and satirizes poets who in his eyes accept seeing the corruption of their muse by belonging to a group, be it Aosdána or any kind of a group such as the Belfast group. In that regard one has to say that Kennelly showed no fear of being criticized for his views and indeed as a

result of them *Poetry My Arse* was particularly badly received among critics.

Like bards from the earliest to more recent times, Kennelly has used satire in different forms to engage on a number of social issues. One notes that the level of his engagement in his public discourse and in his comments during his poetry performances does not match the level of energy and virulence sometimes achieved in his verse. The crudity, the excess and the savagery of his verse that directly draws upon the Irish epic is a great source of enjoyment for the many readers in Ireland who appreciate the verbal delights of the grotesque. This also means that he often makes use of Irish mythology in a non-obtrusive way that enriches the text without obscuring it by creating a dialogue between modern and ancient Ireland. In Kennelly's verses characters become heroic by dispatching the bodies of their enemies but also in having their own bones, flesh and blood spilled and scattered. Nonetheless, like in the epic tradition, this violence is a source of delight because it is comic and humorous. Death is never taken seriously since it is presented as a temporary state followed by resurrection.

Kennelly's aesthetic distinguishes itself in the way his poetry uses the poetic language of the oral mind and targets its opposite in the analytical mind. In that respect Kennelly has proved extremely coherent and his public discourse explicitly develops what the reader encounters in his verse. His mindset in relation to orality is apparent in the liberal way he appropriates the text of other writers but also in the way he lets his own text be freely disposed of. Kennelly's position with regard to orality goes against the natural development of civilization that typically sees orality dwindle and become rarified in contrast with the growth of science and the analytical mind. Kennelly shows himself as most ambitious in setting himself up as the defender of the oral mind and by attempting to revive orality in Ireland. It is a remarkable phenomenon that in a Western European society a poet should have succeeded in making poetry part of the entertainment industry for such

a long time. However, if not bound for absolute failure, the realisation of his enterprise to revive orality seems at best most uncertain and when one observes the number of his audience and the age of an average listener, one might conclude that the success of poetry performances is seriously on the decline.

The fact that Brendan Kennelly became a successful performer also led him to reconstruct himself as a character by wearing a public mask whose features the public have become familiar with through television, newspapers and radio. However, the poet draws upon his situation as a public figure to enrich his written poetry which becomes the place for a complex interplay between all the different masks and correlated voices that his personality can assume. This phenomenon has given birth to verse in which a multiplicity of voices can be heard which increases its dramatic quality and makes Kennelly's poems easily adaptable for the stage, that is, for performance.

Most interestingly, one notes that the plurivocality of his poetry is not merely a consequence of direct speech and dialogue, but truly arises from voices that are qualitatively distinct. When applying techniques of forensic analysis to Kennelly's text the existence of these voices is confirmed and this suggests that the poet's claim that he hears voices should be granted credibility. The phenomenon is thought to be typical of patients suffering from schizophrenia but also of oral poets at the time of Homer and *a fortiori* of the earliest Irish bards.

This shows that the development of voices in the work of Kennelly is closely related to his idea that poetry should be inspired and not only rely on the poet's technical skill. He thus rejects a materialist form of art such as the *fili*'s verse in Medieval Ireland, but Kennelly also detects and denounces a similar approach to poetry among his contemporary peers. The contrast between poetry resulting from inspiration and poetry solely resulting from craft was the subject of Socrates' teaching for whom the former type

of poetry was the only form of poetry that was acceptable. The fact that Kennelly hears voices and composes poetry as a result of inspiration locates him within the ambit of the pre-Christian Irish bards who also relied on inspiration. However, with regard to being inspired by external voices, Kennelly is not an isolated case and it seems that a comparable situation existed in relation to the poet, Fernando Pessoa. This is why it would be most interesting to pursue this study of poetic voices by carrying out with the work of Fernando Pessoa the method that has been applied here to the poetry of Brendan Kennelly.

Poetry performance and its accompanying success have led Kennelly to become a public character, that is, to construct a public mask that finds extensions in his written poetry. The bards' travels have found a correlate in Kennelly's use of television and radio to publicize his poetry. However, the mosaic of his many masks is far from offering a coherent and homogeneous picture of the poet and his avowed aspirations. Inconsistencies often appear and Kennelly's rejection of the analytical mind and the associated principle of non-contradiction does not provide any satisfying answer as to the reasons for these inconsistencies. In particular, the reader finds difficulty in reconciling his criticism of poets who have accepted the corruption of their muse out of financial interest and Kennelly's own participation in advertising for commercial companies such as Toyota, AIB and Kerry Gold.

These activities can be interpreted as part of Kennelly's protest against a form of poetry that he resents, but they have been too often repeated for this answer to be fully acceptable. On further examination, one discovers that Kennelly is far from being totally comfortable with this aspect of his career, and his poems discretely but persistently allude to a feeling of guilt and a necessity for expiation. Because his poetry always favours the indirect approach, it can become a place where revelation and confession can happen. In other words, as Oscar Wilde explained, the masks of various *personae* provide a protection

that allows his poetry to become an outlet for some truth that otherwise cannot be told. This means that in the gap between masks, a thorough examination of Kennelly's public discourse and of his poetry reveals that the conflicts and contradictions that can be perceived have resulted in the poet tacitly becoming a self-sacrificial figure. Behind the smiling mask, located at the meeting point with other versions of himself, a more complex and more tragic figure can be sensed.

Both at the public level of poetry performances and at the more private level of poetry writing, Kennelly has disrupted the contours of what is generally expected from a poet. By blurring the limit between oral and written poetry, between poet and character, identity and voice, but also between the man and the work, Brendan Kennelly, like W.B. Yeats previous to him, has turned his poetry into "An experiment in Living."¹³³⁰

¹³³⁰ JIJ, 231.

APPENDIX

A. Key to Poems Used and Index of Electronic Files

Our file name	Voice	Poem
BOJ1991Ozzie1	OZZIE	Words
BOJ1991Ozzie10	OZZIE	skool
BOJ1991Ozzie2	OZZIE	sumtimes ozzie
BOJ1991Ozzie3	OZZIE	madmanalive
BOJ1991Ozzie4	OZZIE	no trubbal
BOJ1991Ozzie5	OZZIE	prades
BOJ1991Ozzie6	OZZIE	flushed
BOJ1991Ozzie7	OZZIE	ozzie smiled
BOJ1991Ozzie9	OZZIE	skool
BOJ1991Ozzie8	OZZIE	bang
VoiceofChildren3Narr	NARRATOR 1	She's There
VoiceofChildren3Child	CHILD	She's There
VoiceofChildren4Child	CHILD	A Deeper Tyrant
Authorofletters10Author	AUTHOR	Coming Soon
Authorofletters11Author	AUTHOR	Inadvertent
Authorofletters1Author	AUTHOR	A Former Particular Friend
Authorofletters13Author	AUTHOR	The Common People
Authorofletters2Author	AUTHOR	Beyond Suspicion
Authorofletters3Author	AUTHOR	Worth Watching
Authorofletters4Author	AUTHOR	Mr Watson
Authorofletters5Author	AUTHOR	A Country Gentleman
Authorofletters6Author	AUTHOR	An Incoming Tide
Authorofletters7Author	AUTHOR	The Transaction
Authorofletters8Author	AUTHOR	Let me Survive
Authorofletters9Author	AUTHOR	A Man Named Clarke

Table 3. Texts drawn from *The Book of Judas*

Our file name	Voice	Poem
C1983Buffun10Buffun	BUFFUN	Saskatoon
C1983Buffun1Buffun	BUFFUN	I was there
C1983Buffun2Buffun	BUFFUN	The Curse
C1983Buffun3Buffun	BUFFUN	You Would Have Blessed Me
C1983Buffun4Buffun	BUFFUN	The Crowd
C1983Buffun5Buffun	BUFFUN	The Crowd and the Curse
C1983Buffun6Buffun	BUFFUN	Journey to the Golden Man
C1983Buffun7Buffun	BUFFUN	Beyond the Warning Sign
C1983Buffun8Buffun	BUFFUN	Some Tiny Right
C1983Buffun9Buffun	BUFFUN	Silver
C1983Oliver10Oliver	OLIVER	Oliver to His Daughter
C1983Oliver1Oliver	OLIVER	Oliver to His Brother
C1983Oliver2Oliver	OLIVER	In Dublin
C1983Oliver3Oliver	OLIVER	A Friend of the People
C1983Oliver4Oliver	OLIVER	History
C1983Oliver5Oliver	OLIVER	In Oliver's Army
C1983Oliver6Oliver	OLIVER	Severest Friend
C1983Oliver7Oliver	OLIVER	Oliver to His Army
C1983Oliver8Oliver	OLIVER	Oliver Speaks to His Countrymen
C1983Oliver9Oliver	OLIVER	An Expert Teacher
C1983VoiceofChildren1Child	CHILD	Coal Dust

Table 4. Texts drawn from *Crom*

Our file name	Voice	Poem
MUAAI1982Moloney10Moloney	MOLONEY	Moloney enters into a Dialogue concerning the Listowel water supply
MUAAI1982Moloney10Woman	WOMAN	Moloney enters into a Dialogue concerning the Listowel water supply
MUAAI1982Moloney1Moloney	MOLONEY	Moloney up and at It
MUAAI1982Moloney2Moloney	MOLONEY	Moloney at the Wake
MUAAI1982Moloney3Moloney	MOLONEY	Moloney Meets Miss Immaculata Mullally
MUAAI1982Moloney4Moloney	MOLONEY	Moloney's Revenge
MUAAI1982Moloney5Moloney	MOLONEY	Moloney Recalls the Marriage of the Barrell Muldoon
MUAAI1982Moloney7Moloney	MOLONEY	Moloney Remembers Timmy Thankgod
MUAAI1982Moloney8Moloney	MOLONEY	Moloney and the Dust
MUAAI1982Moloney9Moloney	MOLONEY	Moloney Remembers the Resurrection of Kate Finucane

Table 5. Texts drawn from *Moloney up and at It*

File name	Voice	Poem
PMA1995Ace1Acc	ACE	Ultimate Peace
PMA1995Ace1Narr	NARRATOR 2	Ultimate Peace
PMA1995Ace2Ace	ACE	The only, the only
PMA1995Ace2Narr	NARRATOR 2	The only, the only
PMA1995Ace3Ace	ACE	Conversation with an eggshell
PMA1995Ace3Narr	NARRATOR 2	Conversation with an eggshell
PMA1995Ace4Ace	ACE	Sniff
PMA1995Ace4Narr	NARRATOR 2	Sniff
PMA1995Ace5Ace	ACE	A drop from Ace's Nutbook
PMA1995Ace6Ace	ACE	Whore
PMA1995Ace6JaneyM	JANEY-MARY	Whore
PMA1995Ace7Ace	ACE	Generation Map
PMA1995Ace7Narr	NARRATOR 2	Generation Map
PMA1995JM10JaneyM	JANEY-MARY	Knock
PMA1995JM10Narr	NARRATOR 2	Knock
PMA1995JM2Narr	NARRATOR 2	Question to a rolled-over poet
PMA1995JM2JaneyM	JANEY-MARY	Question to a rolled-over poet
PMA1995JM1JaneyM	JANEY-MARY	Some nights
PMA1995JM3JaneyM	JANEY-MARY	Great lover
PMA1995JM4Ace	ACE	If me granny could see me now (maybe she does)
PMA1995JM4JaneyM	JANEY-MARY	If me granny could see me now (maybe she does)
PMA1995JM6JancyM	JANEY-MARY	Druggie
PMA1995JM6Narr	NARRATOR 2	Druggie
PMA1995JM7Ace	ACE	Facing faces
PMA1995JM7JaneyM	JANEY-MARY	Facing faces
PMA1995JM8Ace	ACE	Don't blame
PMA1995JM8JaneyM	JANEY-MARY	Don't blame
PMA1995JM9JaneyM	JANEY-MARY	whore
PMA1995JM5JancyM	JANEY-MARY	Encouragement
PMA1995JM5Acc	ACE	Encouragement
PMA1995TheMistake1Narr	NARRATOR 2	The Mistake
PMA1995TheMistake1The Mist	THE MISTAKE	The Mistake
PMA1995TheMistake2The Mist	THE MISTAKE	What it must feel like
PMA1995TheMistake3Narr	NARRATOR 2	The heart of the matter
PMA1995TheMistake3The Mist	THE MISTAKE	The heart of the matter
PMA1995VoiceOfChildren5 Child	CHILD	Shy Child

Table 6. Texts drawn from *Poetry My Arse*

B. Representative Output Tables Using Books as Categories

The tables in this section are specific to the discussion of §1 in which the four books are taken as categories, and each poem within each book is considered. The question is which book is the file individuating a voice most similar to. That is the question answered on each row. For example, Table 7 shows the results for *Moloney up and at It*. The first entry in a row is the name of a file corresponding to a voice within the book. The second column indicates the category that this file is most similar to, and the third and fourth columns provide the statistical P -values (from the Mann-Whitney test) associated with the probability of erroneously rejecting the null hypothesis associated with the comparison. The null hypothesis in this case is that the overall rank similarity of this file with respect to the category provided by the poems in the book *Poetry My Arse* is due to random chance. The first row indicates that one can have a great deal of confidence in rejecting the null hypothesis, that one has an estimated chance of less than 0.05% ($P < 0.0005$)¹³³¹ of being wrong in rejecting it to conclude that there is something rather significant about the similarity between the file and the other book. At each row one is considering the file with respect to the category in the second column versus the complement of that category (the overall rank similarity of everything else); thus, a given file can have equally significant similarity to more than one category (as does MUAAI1982Moloney6Woman). As indicated in the main text, this is a striking result in that *Moloney up and at It* does not demonstrate a strong internal identity. Each individual clusters with the other books rather than with its content.

Appealing to Bernoulli schema one can evaluate the homogeneity of the category. This is best understood in terms of testing a coin for whether it is a fair coin. If one flips a coin

¹³³¹ It is standard to take 5%, or $P < 0.05$, as the confidence cut-off point. Clearly, 0.05% ($P < 0.0005$) is within 5%.

20 times, one expects, if it is fair, to have roughly as many instances of heads as tails. However, if one repeats that experiment many times, if one conducts 100 experiments consisting of 20 coin flips each, one shouldn't be surprised if in 3 of the experiments, heads came up 15 out of the 20 tosses in each experiment. However, there is only a 3% chance of this happening. This is related to the significance values and confidence about rejecting the null hypothesis of a random effect as associated with the Mann-Whitney test, discussed above, and with inferential statistics in general. Bernoulli schema applies the same reasoning to n-sided coins (polyhedra). This can be used to assess homogeneity. The coin in use for this research has four sides (a regular tetrahedron): each of the categories is a possible outcome. The number of tosses is determined by the number of files within the category. Thus, with a four sided coin, and the number of files that *Moloney up and at It* is divided into, the chance of precisely one category being most appropriate for all of the files is vanishingly small. This reasoning shows the category of poems provided by *Moloney up and at it* to be extremely homogeneous.

Results			
Filename	Assigned	P Value >	P Value <
MUAAI1982Moloney10Moloney	PMA	0.0	0.0005
MUAAI1982Moloney10Woman	PMA	0.0	0.0005
MUAAI1982Moloney1Moloney	PMA	0.0	0.0005
MUAAI1982Moloney1Woman	PMA	0.0	0.0005
MUAAI1982Moloney2Moloney	PMA	0.025	0.05
MUAAI1982Moloney3Moloney	PMA	0.0	0.0005
MUAAI1982Moloney3Woman	Moloney	0.025	0.05
MUAAI1982Moloney3Woman	PMA	0.0	0.0005
MUAAI1982Moloney4Moloney	PMA	0.0005	0.001
MUAAI1982Moloney5Moloney	PMA	0.0	0.0005
MUAAI1982Moloney6Woman	PMA	0.025	0.05
MUAAI1982Moloney6Woman	Cromwell	0.025	0.05
MUAAI1982Moloney7Moloney	PMA	0.0025	0.005
MUAAI1982Moloney7Woman	PMA	0.0	0.0005
MUAAI1982Moloney8Moloney	PMA	0.0	0.0005
MUAAI1982Moloney9Moloney	PMA	0.0	0.0005

Table 7. Results for *Moloney up and at I*

The poems of *Cromwell* are split between just two categories. The homogeneity with respect to their source is significant ($p < 0.01$). It is interesting that *Poetry My Arse* is the only other possibility; however, it doesn't reach statistical significance. Looking within the voices, it is clear that BUFFÓN is fairly unique to *Cromwell* ($p < 0.01$), but OLIVER is divided in similarity between the two books.

Results			
Filename	Assigned	P Value >	P Value <
C1981Buffun10Buffun	PMA	0.025	0.05
C1981Buffun1Buffun	PMA	0.0025	0.005
C1981Buffun2Buffun	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
C1981Buffun3Buffun	Cromwell	0.005	0.01
C1981Buffun4Buffun	Cromwell	0.0025	0.005
C1981Buffun5Buffun	Cromwell	0.005	0.01
C1981Buffun6Buffun	Cromwell	0.025	0.05
C1981Buffun7Buffun	Cromwell	0.0025	0.005
C1981Buffun8Buffun	Cromwell	0.005	0.01
C1981Oliver10Oliver	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
C1981Oliver1Oliver	Cromwell	0.001	0.0025
C1981Oliver2Oliver	PMA	0.001	0.0025
C1981Oliver3Oliver	PMA	0.0	0.0005
C1981Oliver4Oliver	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
C1981Oliver5Oliver	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
C1981Oliver6Oliver	PMA	0.025	0.05
C1981Oliver6Oliver	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
C1981Oliver7Oliver	PMA	0.1	0.25
C1981Oliver7Oliver	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
C1981Oliver8Oliver	Cromwell	0.0005	0.001
C1981Oliver9Oliver	PMA	0.0	0.0005
C1981VoiceofChildren1Child	Cromwell	0.01	0.025

Table 8. Results for Cromwell

Applying comparable reasoning to the other two books, one notes again (Table 9) that OZZIE is a distinctive voice for *The Book of Judas* ($p < 0.01$) but that the AUTHOR OF THE LETTERS has a voice quality that makes it more similar to the poems of *Cromwell* overall ($p < 0.05$). As an entire category, the poems within *The Book of Judas* are not homogenous, rather they split along voice lines. Exactly the same holds of *Poetry My Arse* (Table 10 and Table 11). *Poetry My Arse* exhibits the least homogeneity as a book, the greatest number of constituent clusters.

Filename	Results		
	Assigned	P Value >	P Value <
BOJ1991Ozzie11	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
BOJ1991Ozzie11	BOJ	0.001	0.0025
BOJ1991Ozzie1	BOJ	0.005	0.01
BOJ1991Ozzie2	BOJ	0.0	0.0005
BOJ1991Ozzie3	BOJ	0.0	0.0005
BOJ1991Ozzie4	BOJ	0.001	0.0025
BOJ1991Ozzie5	Cromwell	0.025	0.05
BOJ1991Ozzie5	BOJ	0.005	0.01
BOJ1991Ozzie6	BOJ	0.001	0.0025
BOJ1991Ozzie7	BOJ	0.001	0.0025
BOJ1991Ozzie8	BOJ	0.01	0.025
BOJ1991Ozzie9	BOJ	0.005	0.01
BOJ1191VoiccofChildren2Child	Cromwell	0.001	0.0025
BOJ1991VoiceofChildren3Child	PMA	0.0	0.0005
BOJ1991VoiccofChildren3Narr	Moloney	0.01	0.025
BOJ1991VoiceofChildren4Child	PMA	0.025	0.05
BOJ1991authorofletters10Author	PMA	0.005	0.01
BOJ1991authorofletters11Author	Cromwell	0.025	0.05
BOJ1991authorofletters13Author	PMA	0.025	0.05
BOJ1991authorofletters13Author	Cromwell	0.025	0.05
BOJ1991authorofletters1Author	Cromwell	0.001	0.0025
BOJ1991authorofletters2Author	PMA	0.005	0.01
BOJ1991authorofletters3Author	PMA	0.0	0.0005
BOJ1991authorofletters4Author	PMA	0.005	0.01
BOJ1991authorofletters4Author	Cromwell	0.025	0.05
BOJ1991authorofletters5Author	Cromwell	0.001	0.0025
BOJ1991authorofletters6Author	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
BOJ1991authorofletters7Author	Cromwell	0.0	0.0005
BOJ1991authorofletters8Author	PMA	0.005	0.01

Table 9. Results for *The Book of Judas*

Results			
Filename	Assigned	P Value >	P Value <
PMA1995Ace1Ace	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995Ace1Narr	PMA	0.0005	0.001
PMA1995Ace2Ace	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
PMA1995Ace2Narr	Cromwell	0.001	0.0025
PMA1995Ace4Acc	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995Ace4Narr	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995Acc5Ace	Cromwell	0.005	0.01
PMA1995Ace6Ace	Moloney	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995Acc6Ace	Cromwell	0.0025	0.005
PMA1995Acc6JaneyM	Moloney	0.005	0.01
PMA1995Ace6JaneyM	PMA	0.001	0.0025
PMA1995Ace7Ace	Moloney	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995Ace7Ace	PMA	0.01	0.025
PMA1995Ace7Narr	PMA	0.005	0.01
PMA1995JaneyMary10JaneyM	PMA	0.0	0.0005

Table 10. Results for *Poetry My Arse*

Results			
Filename	Assigned	P Value >	P Value <
PMA1995JaneyMary10Narr	Moloney	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary10Narr	Cromwell	0.05	0.1
PMA1995JaneyMary1JaneyM	Moloney	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary1JaneyM	PMA	0.05	0.1
PMA1995JaneyMary2JancyM	Moloney	0.05	0.1
PMA1995JaneyMary2JaneyM	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary2Narr	PMA	0.005	0.01
PMA1995JancyMary2Narr	Cromwell	0.1	0.25
PMA1995JaneyMary3JaneyM	Moloney	0.001	0.0025
PMA1995JaneyMary4Ace	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary4JancyM	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary6JancyM	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary6Narr	Cromwell	0.0025	0.005
PMA1995JaneyMary7Acc	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary7JancyM	Moloney	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary7JancyM	PMA	0.01	0.025
PMA1995JaneyMary8Acc	Moloney	0.005	0.01
PMA1995JancyMary8Ace	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary8JaneyM	Moloney	0.01	0.025
PMA1995JaneyMary8JaneyM	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneyMary9JaneyM	Moloney	0.0005	0.001
PMA1995JancyMary9JaneyM	PMA	0.025	0.05
PMA1995JancymMary5Ace	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995JaneymMary5Janey	Moloney	0.025	0.05
PMA1995JaneymMary5Janey	PMA	0.0	0.0005
PMA1995TheMistake1Narr	PMA	0.01	0.025
PMA1995TheMistake1Narr	Cromwell	0.05	0.1
PMA1995TheMistake1TheMistake	Cromwell	0.01	0.025
PMA1995TheMistake2TheMistake	Moloney	0.025	0.05
PMA1995TheMistake3Narr	Cromwell	0.001	0.0025
PMA1995VoiceofChildren5Child	Moloney	0.05	0.1
PMA1995VoiccofChildren5Child	Cromwell	0.025	0.05

Table 11. Results for PMA

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