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## ICarbs, Volume 2, Issue 1

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# ICarbs

VOL. II, NO. 1

WINTER-SPRING, 1975

General Grant & Mark Twain / *John Y. Simon*

Ben L. Reitman, M.D. / *Paul E. Kuhl*

Brian O'Nolan / *Miles Orvell*

Brendan Behan / *Corey Phelps*

James Stephens & James Joyce / *Alan M. Cohn*

James Joyce Collections at Morris Library / *Steven P. Lund & Alan  
M. Cohn*



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The photograph on the cover is by an unidentified cameraman, but it is of Brendan Behan on Easter Sunday, 1939, at the annual Republican march to Glasnevin cemetery in Dublin. This was some eight months before Behan's arrest in Liverpool, and exactly three years before he was arrested and imprisoned for shooting at policemen during the 1942 Easter march.

With Behan in the photo are Charlie Joe Gorman and Paddy Kelly, with Joe Dunne in the background. All were friends of Behan and staunch Republicans who experienced imprisonment, too. The three still live in their native Dublin.

*ICarbS* thanks Mrs. Beatrice Behan for her kind permission to quote from her husband's manuscripts. And, likewise, Mrs. Evelyn O'Nolan for permission to quote from her husband's letters. Professor Orvell's article on Brian O'Nolan was helped along by a research grant from Temple University.

We also acknowledge the permission to print the Samuel Clemens letter to Julia Dent Grant given by Thomas G. Chamberlain, trustee for the Clemens estate, and the Macmillan Company's permission to print the manuscript James Stephens poems which appear in print in their edition of Stephens' *Collected Poems*, copyright 1954.

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Editors: David V. Koch, Alan M. Cohn, Denneth W. Duckett

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## General Grant and Mark Twain

*John Y. Simon*

In July, 1861, Colonel Ulysses S. Grant led an untried regiment of Illinois Volunteers to the camp of a notorious rebel leader, Thomas Harris, at Florida in northeastern Missouri. As he came nearer to Florida he became increasingly apprehensive: since his rank in the U.S. Army had never been higher than captain, he had never led more than a handful of troops; his only experience in battle dated from the Mexican War; he had no real idea of the strength of Harris's force. When he reached Florida he found that Harris had gone. "It occurred to me at once that Harris had been as much afraid of me as I had been of him," Grant later recalled, and he learned a lesson in Florida which he would remember through the rest of the war.<sup>1</sup>

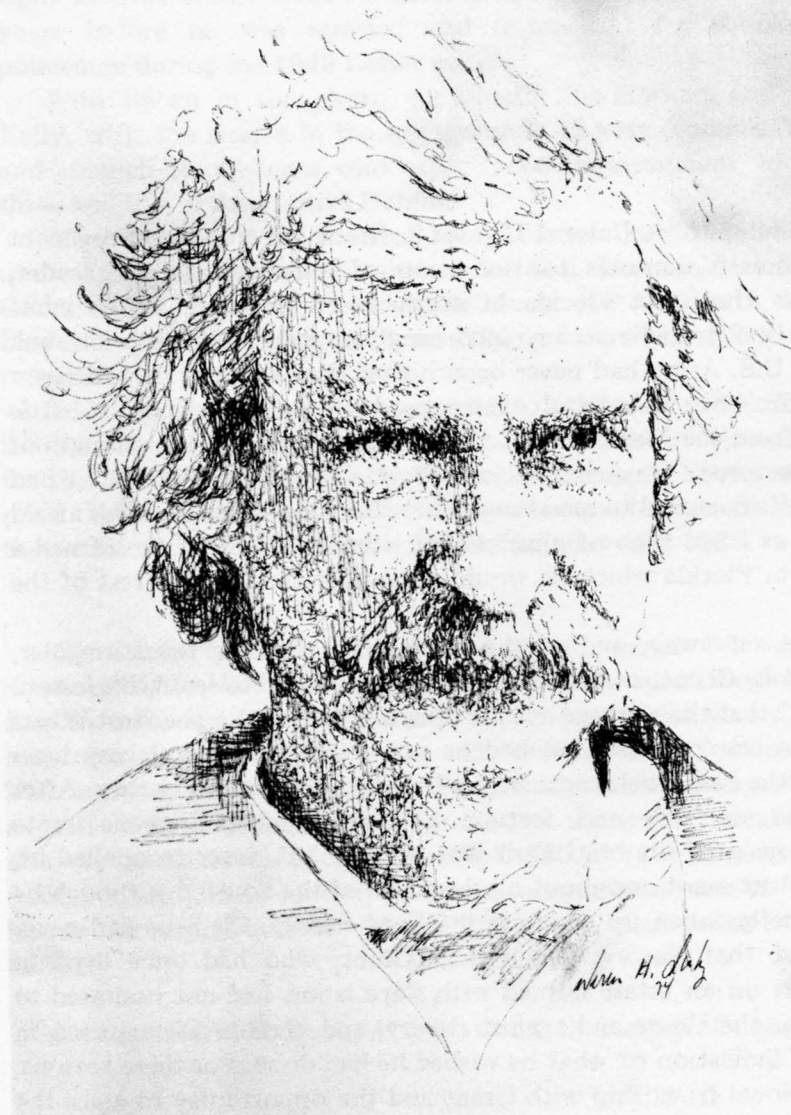
Not far away, and at the same time, a young rebel irregular, Samuel L. Clemens of the Marion Rangers, failed to learn this lesson, decided that the war was not for him, and set out for the West. Years later he would boast that had he not deserted he might have been one of the first rebels captured by Grant on his road to victory. After he rose to fame and fortune as Mark Twain, Clemens wrote humorously of his brief Civil War service, but never reconciled his ambivalent emotions about his desertion of the South.<sup>2</sup> Although he had briefly taken up arms for the Confederacy, Clemens had never doubted that slavery was wrong; Grant, who had once lived in Missouri on an estate farmed with slave labor, had not hesitated to fight for the Union and against slavery, and perhaps Clemens saw in this an indication of what he wished he had done. For these reasons, his personal friendship with Grant and the opportunity to assist the general in his last battle became a major source of pride to Clemens.

Few contemporaries knew anything about one aspect of Grant's life which made him most receptive to Clemens's friendship. At the



age of seventeen, Grant had been sent to the U.S. Military Academy by his father, who knew no other way to provide free further education for his son. Disliking military life, young Grant was consoled by the discovery that West Point had the first decent library he had ever encountered. After cursory attention to his studies, he buried himself in novels—"not those of a trashy sort," he reported<sup>3</sup>—and devoured the works of such writers as Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Sir Walter Scott. As a young officer on garrison duty, Grant found additional time for literary interests. At an isolated post in Louisiana, the young officers planned a production of *Othello* for which both James Longstreet, the future Confederate general, and Grant, still boyish and unbearded, studied the part of Desdemona. After Grant married Julia Dent, whose crossed eyes made reading difficult, he would read aloud to her. Eventually four children joined the family circle to hear him read, and the eldest son remembered his father's special fondness for the novels of Charles Dickens.

Grant and Clemens did not meet until after the Civil War. Once Clemens called at the White House prepared to show a little modest embarrassment at the honor of meeting Grant, but changed his mind after discovering that "*the General was fearfully embarrassed himself.*"<sup>4</sup> The two had no real opportunity for acquaintance until after Grant had left the White House, toured the world for two years, discovered that he would not be elected to a third term, and settled down to a comfortable retirement in New York. The most celebrated after-dinner speaker of the day and the most distinguished ceremonial guest met at several banquets, and Clemens learned that the Grants treasured his friendship. Once Mrs. Grant, who had met most of the great rulers of the world, crowed with pleasure because her parlor contained two great authors, Mark Twain and Lew Wallace. (Grant once stayed up all night to finish *Ben Hur*.) When the novelist William Dean Howells learned that his father might be removed from the consulate in Toronto by President Arthur, he appealed to Clemens, who took him to visit Grant. Howells was surprised that Grant did most of the talking while the usually effervescent Clemens listened with silent respect, was amazed that Grant chose to talk about literature, and was thrilled when invited to share a simple lunch which "was like sitting down to baked beans and coffee with Julius Caesar, or Alexander, or some other great Plutarchan



Hartford, Feb. 3/86.

Dear Mrs. Grant:

I expected to report to you in person, but failed of the chance. So I told Webster to tell you that I visited the houses of General & Colonel Sheridan, but both were gone to Philadelphia; so I then went to General Logan's, where I learned that the Trophies are all right: They are boxed, sealed, & under lock & key in the Treasury & in the

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distinct custody of the Secretary of the Treasury there to remain in perfect safety until Congress shall determine their permanent disposition.

An able critic told me the other day that the Memoirs are so noble a literary masterpiece that they will long outlast any other monument that can be erected to the memory of General Grant.

Professor Wayland.



captain." <sup>5</sup>

The great captain was no financial genius, as he discovered in 1884 when the collapse of the firm of Grant and Ward due to the swindling of Ferdinand Ward left the entire Grant family impoverished. At nearly the same time, Grant began to feel pain in his throat, later diagnosed as an incurable cancer. He grimly took pen in hand, determined to write articles on his battles for money which his family would need after his death. After writing the first articles for *Century Magazine*, Grant found the work so congenial that he began to plan book-length memoirs. The Century Company, book publishers as well, decided to offer a contract, but one evening Clemens overheard a member of the firm speak of his plans. Clemens was also a publisher, having organized the firm of Charles L. Webster & Company, in which his nephew furnished the firm name and business management while Clemens supplied the capital, financial and intellectual. The next day he hurried to Grant with a generous publishing offer, which was accepted after hesitation based on concern that the terms were *too* generous.

Clemens realized that Grant was no professional writer, but a man acquainted with books, precise in speech, and experienced in clear expression through his public career. More importantly, he knew Grant as a man of great integrity who would produce a book which would reflect his character. Only the health of the author gave concern to the publisher. Although Grant was a dying man when he signed the contract, he was determined to finish his work. Amazing his doctors, he clung to life until the manuscript was completed.

For the final five months of his life, Grant was deeply involved with Clemens in the myriad details of publishing. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was just off the press, but Clemens was more interested in Grant's book; he encouraged the author, personally corrected grammar and punctuation on the proofs, and helped to make arrangements for illustrations. In addition, Clemens undertook an enormous expansion of his publishing firm to meet the anticipated mass sales, arranged to have the book sold only by house-to-house canvassers in order to reach potential customers never seen inside bookstores, and waged a campaign against detractors who claimed that Grant could not write his own book and pirates who planned to cash in if he did. Grant died before the publication of the first of the two volumes of the *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, but

3  
 dean of the Law faculty  
 of Yale, was here a min-  
 ute ago, & so his words  
 about the book are  
 fresh in my memory.  
 He said: "It is great &  
 fine literature, & deeply  
 fascinating; I read it  
 aloud to my wife, & we  
 were like children with  
 candy — saving it up,  
 & economising it, &  
 making it last as long  
 as possible, & full of regret  
 when it was all gone." Pity  
 the General did not live to hear  
 some of these things. Truly  
 S. Clemens



had accomplished all he could. As an enormous commercial success, the *Memoirs* brought at least \$450,000 to his family. Moreover, they brought Americans North and South to a renewed admiration for the character and achievements of Grant. And as a man of letters, Clemens was especially pleased that they won the praise of discriminating critics as literature. For the rest of his life Clemens proudly remembered his role in the production of the book of "the simple soldier who, all untaught of the silken phrase-makers, linked words together with an art surpassing the art of the schools, and put into them a something which will still bring to American ears, as long as America shall last, the roll of his vanished drums and the tread of his marching hosts."<sup>6</sup>

Clemens's pride in Grant as a writer is also reflected in a letter he wrote to Julia Grant some six months after her husband's death. Clemens reported on the status of her husband's trophies, mementoes, and ceremonial gifts. Having borrowed \$150,000 from William H. Vanderbilt shortly before his financial collapse, Grant settled this debt with his farm near St. Louis and all his objects of value. After Grant declined Vanderbilt's offer to return the trophies, Vanderbilt donated them to the United States, and they were eventually placed in the Smithsonian Institution. Clemens concluded by quoting praise of the *Memoirs* by Francis Wayland, former lieutenant governor of Connecticut, and dean of the Yale Law School for thirty years. The previously unpublished letter is part of the Grant Family Papers in Morris Library, Southern Illinois University.

#### NOTES

1. *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1885-86), I, 250.
2. John Gerber, "Mark Twain's 'Private Campaign,'" *Civil War History*, 1 (March 1955), 37-60
3. Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 39.
4. Dixon Wecter, ed., *The Love Letters of Mark Twain* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 154.
5. William Dean Howells, *My Mark Twain*, ed. by Marilyn Austin Baldwin (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1967), p. 61.
6. John Y. Simon, ed., *General Grant by Matthew Arnold with a Rejoinder by Mark Twain* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966), p. 57.

## Ben L. Reitman, M.D. Portrait of a Pseudo-Anarchist

Paul E. Kuhl

In the twilight of his life Ben Reitman feared that he would never realize his ambition of seeing his life story in print. For thirty-five years, off and on, he had been working on an autobiography and after just a few months of consideration, Lippincott rejected his drafts. To an old, trusted comrade, Reitman pled his case: "Without boasting, I think I am justified in saying that no one can write about anarchism . . . without devoting some space to my activities. I've been a vital part of . . . [anarchism] for the last 50 years . . . I think I have some justification for submitting a manuscript to a publisher."<sup>1</sup> The frustrated Reitman had overstated his role in the American anarchist movement. Although he served as Emma Goldman's janitor, business manager, comrade, and lover from 1908 to 1917, his brand of anarchism was a dwarfed mutation of that of the "Red Queen of Anarchism."

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on January 1, 1879, Reitman was the second child of Jewish parents. Mrs. Reitman moved her two sons to Chicago in 1883 after the father deserted the family. The boys grew up in an Irish-Negro slum that formed the core of Chicago's red light district, and from the time he was six, Reitman did odd jobs in the community to help the impoverished family survive. He attended public schools only two years, and he never had "religious training, parental supervision, or respect for law and order."<sup>2</sup> At age twelve he hopped aboard an outward bound freight train and began his career as a hobo. By the time he was twenty, he had tramped across all forty-eight states in the union, had seen the insides of at least fifty jails, and had been to Europe, Africa, and India.<sup>3</sup> He was very fond of his mother, and he frequently returned to Chicago and worked temporarily to help her along. While working as a janitor in Chicago's Polytechnical Clinic in 1897, he demon-

strated a talent for pathology and bacteriology. Two years later, one of the doctors convinced Reitman to attend medical school. In 1904 Reitman passed the state board examinations and began private practice in Chicago.<sup>4</sup>

In 1905 his wanderlust got the best of him, and he returned briefly to his hobo habits. The next year he came back to Chicago to devote his energies to the thousands of social outcasts in the city. He established a hobo college modeled after one he had seen in St. Louis, and he used his influence as a doctor to mediate for tramps who ran afoul of the law. Twice in 1907 he organized massive unemployment parades, and he persuaded underworld figures to treat Chicago's hobos to a gourmet banquet in one of the city's plush hotels.<sup>5</sup> He took his sobriquet "King of the Hobos" seriously, and just before he met Emma Goldman, he was planning to handpick 3000 of the finest hobos, assault Belgrade, and establish himself as King of Serbia.<sup>6</sup>

When Emma Goldman came to Chicago in March 1908, the police prevented her from speaking in any of the public halls. As the handmaiden of Alexander Berkman's assassination attempt on steel magnate Henry Clay Frick in 1892 and a defender of Leon Czolgosz, assassin of President McKinley, Goldman was the most notorious anarchist in America.<sup>7</sup> Reitman knew very little about the Russian-Jewish woman who edited the radical journal *Mother Earth*, but he had an emotional commitment to the principle of free speech.<sup>8</sup> When he heard of her plight, he offered a vacant store occupied by some of his hobos as a speaking hall. The two fell in love, and Ben joined Emma on her western speaking tour. Indignant that he should sully his reputation by associating with anarchists, the hobos stripped Reitman of his title and cancelled the Serbian invasion.<sup>9</sup>

They were a striking pair. Emma was thirty-eight years old, "about five feet tall, and weighed about 140 pounds. She had a powerful face, beautiful strong, clear blue eyes, a nose that was not Jewish, and a strong, firm jaw. She was somewhat nearsighted and wore heavy glasses. Her hair was blond and silken and she wore it in a simple knot on the back of her head."<sup>10</sup> Twenty-eight year old Reitman was just over six feet tall, wore a big floppy cowboy hat, a red bandana, loose-fitting, rumpled clothes, and carried a big cane. He had a "finely shaped head," curly black hair, a bushy moustache, large brown eyes, "beautiful teeth," full, passionate lips, and a

swarthy complexion. What struck Emma most at that first meeting were his hands. "I could not take my eyes off his hands. A strange charm seemed to emanate from them."<sup>11</sup>

On the first tour with Emma, Reitman did odd jobs for "the Cause." He sold anarchist literature, publicized meetings, collected admission fees, and used his credentials as M.D. to mollify hostile local officials. In 1909, he became her business manager. He helped map her annual tours and preceded her to the speaking sites. There he secured lodging, bought newspaper space, prepared a full advertising campaign, rented halls, reassured the police that Emma was harmless, and contacted local chapters of the Industrial Workers of the World and the Free Speech League, just in case there should be trouble. Emma credited Reitman with boosting attendance and revenues for her tours.<sup>12</sup>

Reitman was politically naive. Before meeting Emma his only acquaintance with political problems had been chance participations in the Pullman Strike and Coxey's Army.<sup>13</sup> His dedication to the unemployed had arisen out of personal identification with the hobos and had been divorced from political considerations. Goldman knew that the *Mother Earth* group of Russian anarchists and the hobos had bad feelings about one another. To make her special hobo acceptable to her comrades, Emma launched a crash program to erase Reitman's passive acceptance of the capitalist system and to reshape his values with anarchist principles. Between speaking engagements Emma read aloud to Reitman, made him read books, and tested him on their contents. When they arrived in New York City, Emma turned her five-room flat at 210 East 13th Street into an anarchy school. Since her hobo was not well received, especially by Emma's former paramour Berkman, she took Reitman to a three-acre farm four miles from Sing Sing. There she put him on a rigid reading schedule.<sup>14</sup>

Her influence on him was permanent:

Much that I know about the world and life I learned from Emma or at her guidance. The significance of history, the meaning of literature and the beauty of art all came to me while I nestled securely under the tutelage of Emma. She gave me the abundant life. She picked me up an intellectual ragamuffin and a bankrupt social reformer, and to use her own terms, she made me a 'play boy of the western world,' intellectually and socially solvent.<sup>15</sup>



Emma's idealistic, purely democratic society never became an integral part of Reitman's thinking, but he readily accepted the concepts of mutual cooperation and direct action. In anarchist parlance, direct action meant defiance of all legal, social, and economic restrictions on individual behavior. The individual discovery of the abstract truths of oppression had to be followed by appropriate action.<sup>16</sup> On Emma's speaking tours the right most frequently restricted was the same one that brought them together—free speech. As manager, Reitman shared with Emma the ridicule, physical abuse, humiliations, and jailings that most communities extended to anarchists. Reitman made few speeches, but his role as manager gave him the satisfaction of being in the thick of the fight to reorder society.

Despite the scholarly nature of his induction into anarchism, Reitman remained basically anti-intellectual. He was so convinced that action was righteous and necessary that he chided those who did not move swiftly enough. When Theodore Schroeder, Secretary of the Free Speech League, was unable to defend Reitman when arrested for distributing birth control information, Reitman lectured him from behind bars: "I am not satisfied to have the Attorney for the Free Speech League desert men and women when they are in danger or in need. The struggle for freedom is real[;] it is not an academic discussion."<sup>17</sup>

When Schroeder explained that he needed over a hundred lawyers and a \$100,000 budget to defend free speech everywhere, Reitman told him to get busy.<sup>18</sup> In a subsequent letter he went further and chastised Schroeder for taking an intellectual approach to the struggle. Research and writing were fine and proper, said Reitman, but:

Like many professors you will get excited about *anything* but *life*. . . . I deny no man the right to make a Freudian advocate or fool out of himself. . . [but] what are you . . . going to do for those who's fight for liberty and humanity land them in jail[?] . . . I want you to tell me—not *why* but how we can teach Judges that it is Antisocial to send . . . [radicals] to jail . . . I live in *life* you live in books. I am in the ring fighting you are in the Grand Stand observing . . . my *future*, my *freedom* depends upon how quickly we can teach the *powers* that be that they *must* not interfere with our desire to do away [with] tyranny poverty and Government.<sup>19</sup>

Reitman fully endorsed and applied the anarchist principle of

direct assault against social injustice, but he misapplied the anarchist stand on violence. Reitman's confusion was a common error, for the anarchists took an ambivalent stance on violence. Anarchism forbade violence, but anarchists frequently were violent characters in word and deed. In the anarchist lexicon, the *Attentat* was a revolutionary act of political violence committed by an individual as a counterblow against a violent, antisocial political system. In all cases, anarchists insisted, bombings and assassinations had their "vital origins" in society, and the *Attentäters* deserved special consideration. *Attentäters* always were individuals, never conspirators. They were supersensitive to the social evils that surrounded them. They acted without thoughts of personal malice toward their victims, gain for themselves, or advancement of political organizations. Their acts were heroic deeds for the betterment of mankind, and thus they should be treated with understanding and compassion, not with crude forms of social revenge.<sup>20</sup>

Goldman, Berkman, and the other anarchists of the *Mother Earth* group had outgrown their belief that violence was needed to abolish property, religion, and government. By 1908 they had concluded that violent gains by anarchists were more than offset by government retaliation. During the ten years Reitman stayed with the *Mother Earth* crowd, he never heard any of them advocate violence or encourage others to act violently. In fact Reitman credited them with preventing a great deal of violence.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, the zealous convert was twenty years behind. By his own admission Reitman was "the most loud mouthed and most violent of all the anarchists in the movement."<sup>22</sup> From the platform he frequently advocated assassination and sabotage. Although he was never convicted for advocating mayhem, English workmen mobbed him in Hyde Park when he urged them to hang every member of both houses of Parliament and the royal family.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding violence, Reitman did a couple of interesting turnabouts. When the United States entered World War I, he still held his views on violence, but he followed Emma's lead and became a rabid pacifist. Soon after the war ended, he accepted the anarchist proscription of violence, but he had become a passive militant. Emma's deportation to Russia for opposition to conscription possibly affected the former stance, and his older brother's induction into the U.S. Army convinced Ben that he belonged with his



countrymen, regardless of his personal views. Apparently the anarchists' internationalist spirit failed to make a lasting impression on him.<sup>24</sup>

While Reitman gradually changed his views on individual violence to resemble Emma's, he never fully accepted her belief in free love. According to the anarchists, marriage benefitted the church and the state and helped no one, whereas sex was a sacred matter between individuals. A man and a woman should enjoy sex together because they felt love for each other. There should be no obstacles before them, no sanctions for sexual relations.<sup>25</sup> Essentially the free love concept was a woman's protest against man's tyranny in the bedroom. A woman free-lover slept only with a man she loved, wanted, and respected; and free love men recognized and accepted those terms.<sup>26</sup>

Both Emma and Ben were divorcees when they met. Emma quickly divorced her husband when she realized he was hopelessly impotent.<sup>27</sup> Reitman stayed with his wife long enough to get her pregnant, then abandoned her in Prague on their honeymoon. His daughter was born in Leipzig, and the mother later was committed to an insane asylum in Hamburg. Reitman came to Hamburg in 1902, took his daughter to England, and returned alone to America where he divorced his distraught wife in 1905.<sup>28</sup>

Emma never remarried. Reitman married twice after living with Goldman. Although Emma believed that an individual was not restricted to loving one person, she lived "a strictly monogamic life" with Reitman. He said of her, "Whatever may have been her relations before or after this period no wife could have been more virtuous, faithful, devoted and honest in her sex."<sup>29</sup>

Reitman took his second wife, Anna Martindale, sometime in 1916 or 1917. In his autobiography, prepared for publication sometime in the 1920's, he claimed that she was the only woman he ever wanted to marry.<sup>30</sup> But in another autobiography written in 1942 he said, "I never wanted to marry any one. I was a spontaneous free lover. I always opposed marriage." After Anna's death in 1930, he married Rose Siegel, but they separated and never divorced. In 1932 while married to Rose, he was living with another woman, having a steady affair with his secretary, and starting his third family with the daughter of a Texas millionaire.<sup>31</sup>

Although Reitman maintained a frivolous attitude toward sex, he had more substantial ideas about love. Like Emma he craved intellectual stimulation as well as physical satisfaction. Emma found the perfect combination of devotion to "the Cause" and tenderness in Ben,<sup>32</sup> but Reitman never succeeded. He wanted children and social acceptability from the right woman. His first and third marriages were disastrous. His second wife came closest to the ideal. But though she bore him a son, she failed as a housewife. To Emma, "the Cause" was more important than procreation. In the early 1890's she suppressed her instinct for motherhood and refused to have surgery on her inverted uterus.<sup>33</sup> The last woman Reitman lived with, Medina Oliver, was too conservative for the old anarchist, but she gave him three daughters and serenity in his last years.<sup>34</sup>

In their all-out attempt to restructure society, anarchists aimed their bitterest attacks against religion. From the platform and the pages of *Mother Earth*, Goldman pummeled religion in general and Christianity in particular as the most exploitative institution in society. Emma believed that religion was man's greatest stumbling block to progress. Religion, she charged, ignored the sufferings of the masses and aided the rich. Only atheism could break the bonds that turned the masses into impoverished wage slaves chained to the state.<sup>35</sup>

Reitman, too, had turned his back on his Jewish heritage, but he took a different attitude toward religion. In his own way he was a devout Christian. "Oh yes!" declared Reitman one month before his death, "I'm saved, I am; I know I am; I don't give a damn 'cause I'm saved I am. I found Jesus in the Bowery Mission! He washed me white as snow—dirty, dirty job for Jesus.—I'm saved I am; I know I am."<sup>36</sup> As a child Reitman had been impressed with the Baptist missionaries in the Chicago slums. When tramping through New York City in 1896, he accepted Jesus as his master. Thereafter he always carried a Bible, and he attended Sunday School at every opportunity. If he could not find a Sunday School, he led one for the outcasts.<sup>37</sup>

Reitman declared that Jesus dominated his life and that anarchism only expanded his faith. His religiosity irritated the anarchists. When Emma delivered "The Failure of Christianity" at anarchist meetings, Ben preceded her with a prayer. The anarchists especially disliked him for teaching Bible lessons in the *Mother Earth* offices on Sunday mornings.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps his most serious offense was at the funeral of anarchist martyr Joseph Mikolasek in 1912. San Diego policemen had killed the young Russian in a riot protesting city ordinances which restricted free speech. Authorities sent the body to Emma Goldman in Los Angeles. To dramatize the young hero's death and to publicize the events in San Diego, the anarchists turned the funeral into a political rally. Reitman arranged to have the funeral music played by a "queer looking fellow" with long hair, whiskers, bare feet, a five dollar palm beach suit, a "Jesus Saves" sign, and a violin. To the surprise of the crowd the man began stomping his feet and fiddling a lively jig just before Emma began her funeral oration. Some enraged Wobblies carried the fiddler outside, and Emma began her speech with strains of "Turkey in the Straw" in the background.<sup>39</sup>

Reitman recognized that his sexual behavior was incongruous with his Christian beliefs. He understood his activities as manifestations of the "baseness of being a man." Regarding his sex life and Christianity he wrote, "No I have not reached perfection, nor near it, but I can say . . . 'I've tried; Christ how I've tried, and how I've wanted to be honest and . . . an example to the world.' The struggle for individual perfection is probably more difficult than the effort to obtain social perfection. . . ." <sup>40</sup>

Boiled down to its essentials, anarchism was an all-out assault on property, religion, and government, and only on the issue of property could Reitman be considered an anarchist. Even though he considered himself an anarchist until his death, he left the active movement because he wanted the amenities of life that were anathema to other anarchists. In 1917 he went to Chicago with his new wife seeking a home, children, and a steady practice. His ambitions were to teach in a medical college, to be a reformer to the outcasts, and to be an active worker in a church. With the exception of the teaching post, he fulfilled his goals.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike the anarchists, Reitman made his peace with government. After leaving the active movement, his first job was as a smallpox inoculator for the Board of Health in Chicago's Negro slums. He was identified with public health projects for the rest of his life, especially anti-venereal disease campaigns.<sup>42</sup> Although he thought Roosevelt catered to capitalist interests, he favored the New Deal's make-work projects.<sup>43</sup> After Emma Goldman left Russia and severely denounced the Stalin regime, Reitman defended the

communist system as being superior to anything capitalism had ever offered.<sup>44</sup> As Reitman viewed the world, problems had to be solved through governments, not without them.

Nor did he share Emma's ideals about the ability of humans to cooperate peacefully. In fact the basic distinction between Reitman's zeal for social reform and Emma's anarchism was in the way they regarded people. Emma was forever talking about "being one with the people,"<sup>45</sup> but in actuality she was very selective about whom she accepted as "people." Goldman despised reporters and refused to have anything to do with them. She regarded policemen and all other authorities as demons and was horrified that Reitman was at ease with the "bulls," even to the macabre extent of swapping jokes with some who had been involved in the Haymarket Affair.<sup>46</sup> And, of course, capitalists and church goers deserved only contempt from her.

In her autobiography Goldman gave a revealing glimpse of this attitude in recounting her brief career as a prostitute. She had turned streetwalker to raise money for Berkman's trip to Homestead, Pennsylvania, but she gave up because she failed to arouse the prurient interests in anyone. The only man who paid any attention to her was a wealthy, elderly man who bought her a cup of coffee, gave her ten dollars because he pitied her, and told her that she might as well forget trying to make any money out of prostitution. For a brief moment Emma was tempted to regard capitalists as people capable of feelings, but she corrected herself and did not slip again.<sup>47</sup> Essentially what Goldman meant by "people" was the working class. Her speeches, her tours, and her journal *Mother Earth* were directed almost entirely against labor strife and government intervention on behalf of management. She devoted very little space to social problems, and she loathed the people Reitman felt the most compassion for.

Reitman loved humanity and he loved life with a vigor that far outstripped the Russian sobriety of the *Mother Earth* crowd. As Reitman viewed the situation, if any group of people had been ground up and cast aside by the capitalist system, it was the outcasts: the whores, pimps, beggars, hobos, tramps, and habitual thieves. For Goldman these were non-people because they lay outside her conception of the proletariat. While practicing medicine in Chicago, Reitman concentrated his efforts on the outcasts. He taught regularly



at the hobo college and participated actively in the radical open forum. As private physician and public servant, he treated thousands of whores, pimps, and unemployed. He always maintained that government should use its power to make room in society for the disinherited. He published two books about outcasts, and he wanted to be remembered more as an opponent of poverty than as Emma Goldman's manager.<sup>48</sup>

In itself Reitman's career was not dramatically important. His experiences provided interesting glimpses into the anarchist movement. But as an anarchist he fell far short of the prototype. Probably none of the other anarchists could say with Reitman, "I am a pacifist, an anarchist, a Christian and a happy father. I ain't mad at anybody and I love the way things are done."<sup>49</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Ben L. Reitman to Theodore Schroeder, Chicago, Illinois, 30 March 1940. Theodore Schroeder Papers. Morris Library, Southern Illinois Univ. at Carbondale. Hereafter referred to as the Schroeder Papers.
2. Reitman to Schroeder, Chicago, 1 August 1942. Schroeder Papers.
3. Reitman to Schroeder, Chicago, 11 August 1942. Schroeder Papers.
4. Reitman to Schroeder, Chicago, 24 October 1942. Schroeder Papers.
5. Reitman to Schroeder, Chicago, 1 August 1942. Schroeder Papers.
6. Richard Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise: A Biography of Emma Goldman* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 124.
7. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (1934; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1970), pp. 413-17.
8. Reitman to Schroeder, Queens County Jail, Long Island, New York, 2 [3] May [1916]. Schroeder Papers.
9. Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise*, p. 124.
10. Ben L. Reitman, unpublished autobiography entitled *Following the Monkey* (n.d.), p. 216, Ben L. Reitman Papers, Univ. of Illinois at Chicago Circle Campus. Hereafter cited respectively as *Following the Monkey*, and the *Reitman Papers*.
11. Description a composite from Goldman, *Living My Life*, pp. 415-16 and photographs in *Reitman Papers*.
12. Goldman, *Living My Life*, p. 434.
13. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, p. 52 and Reitman to Schroeder, Chicago, 19 August 1941, Schroeder Papers.

14. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, pp. 230, 251, 257-58.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
16. Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For," *Red Emma Speaks: Selected Writings and Speeches by Emma Goldman*, comp. and ed. Alix Kates Shulman. (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 61-62.
17. Reitman to Schroeder, Long Island, 22 May 1916. Schroeder Papers.
18. Reitman to Schroeder, Long Island, 2 May [1916?]. Schroeder Papers.
19. Reitman to Schroeder, Long Island, 14 June 1916. Schroeder Papers. The underlining, spelling, and punctuation are Reitman's.
20. Goldman, "The Psychology of Political Violence," in Shulman, ed., *Red Emma Speaks*, pp. 210-15.
21. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, p. 301.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 309.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 310.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 358.
25. Goldman, "Marriage and Love," in Shulman, ed., *Red Emma Speaks*, pp. 158-67.
26. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, p. 277.
27. Goldman, *Living My Life*, pp. 20, 23.
28. Reitman to Schroeder, Houston, Texas, 26 August 1942. Schroeder Papers.
29. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, p. 252.
30. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, pp. 361-62.
31. Reitman to Schroeder, Houston, 26 August 1942. Schroeder Papers.
32. Goldman, *Living My Life*, pp. 43-44.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-62.
34. Reitman to Schroeder, Chicago, 26 August 1942. Schroeder Papers.
35. Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For" and "The Failure of Christianity," in Shulman, ed., *Red Emma Speaks*, pp. 52 and 186-194.
36. Reitman to Schroeder, Chicago, 24 October 1942. Schroeder Papers.
37. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, pp. 39-40, 49.
38. Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise*, p. 125.
39. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, pp. 278-79.
40. Reitman to Jack [?], Chicago, 15 July 1935, copy in Schroeder Papers.
41. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, p. 364.



Ben L. Reitman, M.D.

42. Ibid., pp. 369-75.
43. Reitman to Schroeder, Chicago, 20 May 1940. Schroeder Papers.
44. Reitman to Goldman, Chicago, 5 July 1935, copy in Schroeder Papers.
45. For example, Goldman, "The Individual, Society, and the State," in Shulman, ed., *Red Emma Speaks*, p. 94.
46. Goldman, *Living My Life*, pp. 420-21.
47. Ibid., pp. 91-94.
48. Reitman, *Following the Monkey*, p. 44. Reitman's books were *The Second Oldest Profession: A Study of the Prostitute's Business Manager* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1931) and *Sister of the Road: The Autobiography of Box-Car Bertha as Told to Dr. Ben L. Reitman* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1941).
49. Reitman to Schroeder, Chicago, 1 August 1942. Schroeder Papers.

## Brian O'Nolan The Privacy of His Mind

*Having placed in my mouth sufficient bread for three minutes' chewing, I withdrew my powers of sensual perception and retired into the privacy of my mind, my eyes and face assuming a vacant and preoccupied expression. I reflected on the subject of my spare-time literary activities.*  
— the opening of *At Swim-Two-Birds*

Miles Orvell

Brian O'Nolan (1911-1966) offers the curious example of a writer who has two fairly distinct reputations—one in Ireland, and one outside. In his own country he was known primarily as "Myles na Gopaleen," a self-confessed polymath whose witty and bitterly cynical column for the leading Dublin newspaper, *The Irish Times*, was required daily reading for thousands of Irishmen for more than twenty-five years and, after his death, continues to be reprinted. Outside of Ireland, O'Nolan was known to a small but devoted group of readers as Flann O'Brien, whose first book, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939), has become recognized as one of the masterpieces of twentieth century comic literature. A second novel, *The Third Policeman*, which was written immediately after the first, waited until after O'Nolan's death for publication; but two other novels had been published in his later years, *The Hard Life* (1961) and *The Dalkey Archive* (1964). Though neither has the strength of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, each bears the peculiar markings of O'Nolan's comic imagination and must be valued accordingly.

O'Nolan's use of pseudonyms was not unusual for an Irish writer (he said once about writers who use their own names, "Is this necessary? Is it *safe* in this country? By Gob I doubt it"<sup>1</sup>) but such masks undoubtedly suited his temperament as well. His writings are

*The Irish Times*

DUBLIN, NOVEMBER 31, 1942. NO. 123456789.

PRICE 3D.

# MYLES NA GOPALEEN CROWNED KING OF IRELAND

**HISTORIC SCENE AT TARA**  
**STIRRING MESSAGE TO NATION**

THE ancient glories of Erin were revived yesterday when Mr. Myles na gCopaleen, the famous scholar, wit and authority on patent cattle drenches, was crowned King of all Ireland on historic Tara's Hill. A day of brilliant pageantry culminated in the solemn coronation ceremonies, which were conducted throughout in middle Irish. The sea-divided Gael was in evidence on all sides, eighteen special trains being run from Liverpool.

**MONARCH CROWNED IN POPLIN KILTS**

**DAIL DISSOLVED BY**  
**ROYAL DECREE**

**NEW MONARCH'S SWIFT STROKE**

DAIL Eireann was dramatically dissolved by Royal Decree five minutes after His Majesty had received the crown. "I will fix your men's hash," he was heard to say as he took the jewelled pen to sign the document.

SEVERAL KINGS PRESENT

DISTINGUISED ROYAL HONOURS LIST ISSUED

SPEAKING OF ENGLISH PROHIBITED

NEW ORDER

Fake Irish Times mock-up proclaiming Myles King of Ireland. November, 1942.

pervaded by irony, the voice taking on any number of accents, and even his confessed preoccupation with the undisguised forces of the unconscious was, if it is possible, a self-conscious preoccupation, detached and comic. But there was this additional reason for O’Nolan’s use of pen names—the fact that from 1935 until 1953 he was a member of the government, serving as Private Secretary to several Ministers in the Department of Local Government, and eventually rising to Principal Officer of the Planning Section. The pseudonym thus not only freed the writer’s imagination, but freed the civil servant from the censure of those who feel that a public calling requires an orthodox mind. (Freed him for a while at least: his retirement was only in part voluntary.)

And yet there were curious relationships between the various persons inhabiting “Brian O’Nolan.” His frequent pseudonymous letters to the editor of *The Irish Times* (this was a favorite genre) revealed a fractured self referring caustically to other selves’ letters.<sup>2</sup> O’Nolan’s own personal letters, however, were always signed with his given name—unlike Samuel Clemens, for example, who occasionally signed his “Mark.” “Myles na Gopaleen,” the author of the *Irish Times* column, “Cruiskeen Lawn,” would refer to himself as the author of Flann O’Brien’s novels—and also as a person with many of Brian O’Nolan’s experiences. It was as if O’Nolan knew who *he* was, but Myles could be anyone. Finally, though, it didn’t matter whether O’Nolan could—if he could—keep these identities separate: like Sterne, who became known by the name of his fictional Tristram, O’Nolan became known locally as “Myles.”

If all of this is confusing, O’Nolan—who fashioned confusion as rigorously as he fashioned order—would doubtless have been cheered. To the student of his works, the elusive character of the man holding this wallet of identity cards becomes intriguing. And to the reader of his letters in the Morris Library what is particularly fascinating, because otherwise un glimpsed, is the author’s own view of himself and his audience. Two related questions are of especial interest—O’Nolan’s dramatically changing attitude toward the remarkable *At Swim-Two-Birds*, and his conception of authorship generally. Both seem inevitable concerns, given one of the main subjects of *At Swim-Two-Birds* itself, which is the writing of fiction.

*At Swim-Two-Birds* is about a student who is writing a novel about a novelist, Trellis. The student shows certain passages to his



friends and records their comments about them. Contained within the first-person narration by the student-narrator, then, is the story of Trellis and his novel, in which the latter's created characters become rebellious and eventually seize control of the creative process, writing their despotic author into scenes of excruciating punishment as a way of taking revenge.<sup>3</sup> The novel as a whole—that is, *At Swim-Two-Birds*—thus plays upon the confusion of narrative levels and styles, and one of the changes O'Nolan made in the ending was to suggest only faintly what had been in the original conclusion too plain and simple—that Trellis was mad. “I have scrapped the inferior ‘Mail from M. Byrne’ as the final ending,” O'Nolan wrote to his agents in 1938, “and substituted a passage which typifies, I think, the erudite irresponsibility of the whole book.”<sup>4</sup>

One of the devices O'Nolan uses to enhance the disruptive effect of reading *At Swim* is to interrupt the narrative with self-conscious reflections on it, as occurs, for example, during the conversation between the narrator and Brinsley, his friend, following the former's debauch of a previous night, which Brinsley finds amusing:

Under the cover of the bed-clothes I poked idly with a pencil at my navel. Brinsley was at the window giving chuckles out.

*Nature of chuckles:* Quiet, private, averted.

What are you laughing at? I said.

You and your book and your porter, he answered.

On other occasions, the transitions from one kind of material to another (the book is nothing if not heterogeneous) are marked by similarly italicized headings, such as “*Biographical reminiscence, part the fifth*,” or “*Relevant extract from the Press*.” What O'Nolan's papers make clear is how deliberately such effects were arrived at, so as to balance the reader's confusion with the minimum required clarity. O'Nolan's original notion—as set forth in a letter to his publisher, Longmans, of 6 January 1939—was to print the headings in a distinctive typeface, italic or boldface, so they would stand out more on the page: “These sub-titles are intended to be breathing-spaces and interruptions and in their present form [as first set up] they are too unobtrusively presented to serve as such.” An editor at Longmans, T. F. Burns, wrote O'Nolan on the thirtieth to inquire if the line spaces the printer had put in made the interpolations stand

out more clearly, and the author responded on 6 February that—failing his own recommended boldface—the spacing was an admirable idea, and that he was returning the proof with some of the spacings corrected. O'Nolan's care in all this indicates the deliberate calculation of the final design: “Where the interpolation is concluded by the words ‘conclusion of foregoing’ I do not think a space is called for and I have omitted a space in one or two other places where I think its insertion would impair the *deliberately amorphous telescopic style of the passage*” (my italics).

*At Swim-Two-Birds* as we now read it is, according to O'Nolan's friend, Niall Sheridan, about four-fifths of the original, and apparently Sheridan himself performed the excisions. A sizable portion of the book even now consists of marvelous parodies of the ancient Irish tales of Finn Mac Cool, and of an abridged but fairly close translation of the Irish romance, *The Frenzy of Sweeny*—the various narrative threads woven together like a cubist tapestry—but one can appreciate Sheridan's sense of the manuscript's original proportions: O'Nolan “had got such fun out of sending-up the Fenian cycle that he over-indulged himself and the weight of this material seriously unbalanced the latter half of the book.”<sup>5</sup> If credit for the end result must thus be shared, who better to share it than the man who served as model for Brinsley, the student-narrator's confidant in the novel itself?

O'Nolan's initial inquiry, in his effort to find a publisher for his work, was to the authors' agents, A. M. Heath & Company, and his description of the book, the first on record, is suitably cautious: “It is called ‘At Swim-two-birds’ and is a very queer affair, unbearably queer, perhaps” (to C. H. Brooks, 31 January 1938). The queerness starts, of course, on the first page, when the narrator announces, after withdrawing into the privacy of his mind, that “A good book may have three openings entirely dissimilar and inter-related only in the prescience of the author, or for that matter one hundred times as many endings.” The reader is clearly sailing through dangerous straits here and not sitting in the comfortable fireside chair in which the more traditional novel is read. And yet it is not altogether a novel experience, either: *Tristram Shandy*, in the English tradition, had played with the conventions of fiction in a like manner, and O'Nolan, who was an accomplished student and writer of Gaelic,



IRISH NATIONAL INSURANCE CO., LTD.			
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17 THURSDAY	18 FRIDAY	19 SATURDAY	20 SUN.
<p>James Joyce is a most unsatisfactory man to try to write about, as he was himself <sup>unreluctant</sup> to talk to, for a queer ineffable masked personality has largely eluded <sup>those</sup> who have written books about him and his work. Many of their conclusions and interpretations seem to this writer quite wrong, and some just stupid, like the disclosure that <i>Sinn Baeidulus</i> "always wore a monocle in one eye". Notwithstanding the candour of the <i>Portrait of the Artist</i>, truly one of the great autobiographies in English, there is plenty of evidence that it was Joyce's policy to delude and mislead his admirers and exegetists as to his real intentions and beliefs. His readiness to parade obscenity and blasphemy is commonly</p>			
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doubtless would have been familiar with the twelfth century Irish satire, *The Vision of Mac Conglinne*, which begins with a similarly parodic, self-conscious opening—"The four things to be asked of every composition must be asked of this composition: the place, the person, the time, and the cause of invention"—and develops into a wildly extravagant satire on gluttony, hagiography, and much else.

Yet O'Nolan's early comments on *At Swim-Two-Birds* reveal an author self-conscious about his Irish inheritance, and one wonders whether his agent, reading O'Nolan's first inquiry to him, could detect the lurking sarcasm in the author's tone: "For all its many defects, I feel it has the time-honored ingredients that make the work of writers from this beautiful little island so acceptable" (31 January 1938). In fact, *At Swim* could only have been written by an Irishman; but in a later letter, to the English novelist Ethel Mannin, O'Nolan's attitude toward *At Swim-Two-Birds*'s Irish qualities—and toward his presumed English audience—becomes much clearer: "It is . . . by way of being a sneer at all the slush which has been unloaded from this country on the credulous English" (14 July 1939). Against the sentimentalizing of the Celtic past, then, O'Nolan is affirming his own robust, wildly comic repossession of it. But if he sounds defensive in his letter to Mannin, it is because the English writer had indeed put him on the defensive by responding to O'Nolan's gift of a complimentary copy with the frank avowal that she couldn't read it, any more than she could read James Joyce. The comparison with his countryman would plague O'Nolan for the rest of his days, and he carefully answers Mannin by disparaging conventional realistic fiction—"it is not a pale-faced sincere attempt to hold the mirror up"—and by dissociating himself from Joyce. What is most interesting, however, is the tone of bantering magniloquence (anticipating the later mask of Myles na Gopaleen) that O'Nolan assumes in characterizing *At Swim*: "It is a pity you did not like my beautiful book. As a genius, I do not expect to be readily understood but you may be surprised to know that my book is a definite milestone in literature, completely revolutionises the English novel and puts the shallow pedestrian English writers in their place. Of course I know you are prejudiced against me on account of the I.R.A. bombings."

O'Nolan was especially sensitive to criticism that his work lacked clear meaning ("You'll look a long time for clear meaning in the

Marx Brothers or even Karl Marx") but conceded to Mannin that he was preparing a key to the book that would advise the reader to begin on page 145 and "then start at the beginning when he reaches the end." (It is a part of this little joke that page 145 in fact refers the reader to page 85, where he would find a "summary of what has gone before FOR THE BENEFIT OF NEW READERS.") Nothing O'Nolan subsequently wrote would have the difficulty of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, but it is interesting to see him defending a chapter of *The Dalkey Archive*, twenty-five years later, on the grounds that "a measure of bewilderment is part of the job of literature" (to Cecil Scott of Macmillan, 6 January 1964).

Surely one of the more puzzling facts in O'Nolan's career is the rapidity with which his opinion about *At Swim-Two-Birds* changed, from one of pride and expectation to nearly scorn. A little over two months after his defense of it to Ethel Mannin he was writing to William Saroyan that the failure to secure an American publisher came as no surprise to him. (It was not published in the U.S. until 1951, and then again in 1966.) "There is a great population in America but not enough arty-tarty screwballs to go in for stuff like that in satisfactory numbers. Joyce has the market cornered. I'm forgetting about that book. I've got no figures but I think it must be a flop over here too. I guess it is a bum book anyhow" (25 September 1939). Note the characteristically simultaneous denigration of the work and of the reading public—this despite the excellent reviews it received when first published, and on every subsequent printing. A remark in a letter to Mark Hamilton, of Heath, with reference to a republication of the book in the States on less than enticing financial terms, is typical of the later, consistently negative attitude: "I detest AS2B so much that doing it publicational violence would be a pleasure" (29 November 1965). It is not unusual for authors to lose interest in their earliest works, but the tone of O'Nolan's remarks, even with allowance for the writer's comic hyperbole, suggests a view of himself and his career that is notably unharmonious.

One can only guess at the reason for this denigration of a book that had held a special reputation even during the many years it was out of print. Possibly the high regard in which it was held was itself one of the things that came to irk O'Nolan, for he had written *At*

*Swim* in his mid-twenties and nothing he had since done had received like praise. Moreover, he had come to suspect the book simply on the grounds of its being a tour de force; O'Nolan had been wary of his unorthodox imagination from the beginning, describing *At Swim* to an American agent on 10 July 1939 as "pretentious high-class stuff or a fiesta of bellylaughs, depending on how you look at it"; by 3 July 1965 the matter had apparently long been settled, and O'Nolan contemplated writing a "bibliophobic treatise on [the] progress of that fearsome fake, AS2B" (to O'Keefe).

But possibly too it was the failure of the book to find a wide popular audience that lay behind his own rejection of it, especially in view of Joyce's growing international reputation. It would be a mistake to judge any book by its audience alone, but in considering his first two novels, in a candid letter to William Saroyan, O'Nolan arrived at a not inaccurate sense of his limitations as a writer: "I'm beginning to think that I can't write at all—I mean, write something that will appeal to people everywhere because they're people, the way you do it" (Saint Valentine's Day, 1940). O'Nolan's fiction is indeed short on the character-interest that impels most readers of novels and, it is fair to say, will always have a "select" audience. It was only when O'Nolan learned that the American publication would reap higher profits than expected that he was enough impressed by the book's powers (earning powers, one should say) to vow to his editor, "if I get sufficiently drunk over Christmas I'm going to read that damned book for the first time. Those birds must have some unsuspected stuffing in them" (to O'Keefe, 18 December 1965).

One of the few other occasions in his later life on which O'Nolan was positively enthusiastic about *At Swim-Two-Birds* was when he read the French translation of the work, entitled *Kermesse Irlandaise*, by Henri Morisset (1964). Fascinated by the transmutation, O'Nolan proposed hiring a translator of average talent to re-translate the French back into English, and to publish an edition containing the original English, the French, and the resulting Englished French. It seems an inevitable idea for a book that already has "three openings entirely dissimilar," but nothing ever came of it except O'Nolan's discovery that he had probably gotten the notion from an earlier reading of Joseph Hone's *Life of George Moore*, in which is related a project pondered by Moore, calling for Lady Gregory to translate a French text into English, "and after the



My grasp of what he wrote and meant  
 Was only five or six %,  
 The rest was only words and sound—  
 My reference is to Ezra £.

His verse is noisy as a pub,  
 Or crowded, after-hour ♣  
 It's thin and bitter, like a lager,  
 And stings the mind like thrust off.

His meaning is so cloudy that  
 You never know just what he's @;  
 To try his line of thought to chart  
 Will almost surely break your ♥

It darts about just like a sparrow,  
 Not straight and sure as flight of →  
 Record it on a plaster disc,  
 Is more than you'll be ✱

His endless verses seem to roll on  
 Without a stop or even :  
 You wish he were in straitest jackets,  
 Or locked at least in iron (!).

English had been put into Irish by a native writer, the Irish text would be translated back into English by Lady Gregory.” (O’Nolan’s editor, some time after expressing his own pessimism about the project, came across the passage in the Hone book and sent it to O’Nolan [from O’Keeffe, 26 May 1965].<sup>6</sup>) But O’Nolan thought the joke too good to be dropped and offered to O’Keeffe instead the idea of translating a section of *The Dalkey Archive*—“one where the English would be very treacherous”—into French, and then back into English (3 July 1965). This too, unfortunately, never materialized, and one can only imagine what the double translation of a passage like the following—spoken by Sgt. Fottrell in warning against the dangers of men turning into bicycles according to the inexorable operation of the Mollycule Theory—would have become: “It’s an indigenous catastrophe. When a man lets things go too far, you will not see much because he spends a lot of time leaning with one elbow on walls or standing propped up by one foot at the path. Such a man is a futile phenomenon of great charm and intensity and a very dangerous article.”

That O’Nolan was willing to entertain further “uses” for his writings beyond their original form suggests that he at least did not regard his own works as sacred and untouchable; and elsewhere—especially as Myles—he was wont to ridicule those who took Art too seriously. Partly, this demeaning of art must be seen as a willful pose, for O’Nolan obviously prided himself on his work—words like skill and craft coming more easily to him, however, than beauty. Still, the self-demeaning pose is a consistent one, and it is remarkable how uniformly O’Nolan characterizes himself as an author. Time and again, O’Nolan’s metaphor for authorship involves some gastric reversal: to Ethel Mannin he writes, of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, that “it is supposed to be a lot of belching, thumb-nosing and belly-laughing . . .”(14 July 1939); his inscription to Niall Sheridan, on a copy of *At Swim* begins, “To Mr. Sheridan I unload / This celestial commode—”.<sup>7</sup> To Mark Hamilton of Heath & Company, he writes of *The Hard Life*, “I do think this is a very funny book, though no dog is a judge of his own vomit” (n.d. [December 1960]); a few years later he writes again to Hamilton, “I have sent off to you today separately two copies the absolutely final eructation of *The Dalkey Archive*” (7 February 1964).

These images of catharsis seem too recurrent to be meaningless or accidental, and too casual to be deliberate. What they suggest is that at some basic, almost corporeal level, writing was for O'Nolan a venting of spleen, a self-purgative process. The metaphor reminds us that the Latin etymon for satire, (*lanx*) *satura* means, according to Webster, a plate filled with various fruits, *satura* itself meaning full of food. There were some things, one might say, with which O'Nolan the satirist was . . . fed up. It is a nice distinction (or not so nice), but we may differentiate O'Nolan's auto-cathartic calling from the role Joyce assumed in a 1904 broadside attacking what he regarded as the effete Irish literati: "Thus I relieve their timid arses, / Perform my office of Katharsis" ("The Holy Office").<sup>8</sup>

At the risk of dwelling further on what may seem a strange topic for literary discourse, we might observe at least two regurgitations in O'Nolan's fiction itself, and each time the act carries with it overtones of moral judgment. At the end of *The Hard Life*, the narrator, Finbarr, responds to his brother's suggestion that he consider an incestuous marriage with his half-cousin (it would carry financial rewards) by throwing up everything inside of him "in a tidal surge of vomit." And in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, the narrator and his friend Kelly, after imbibing several stouts, are accosted by a "small man in black" who speaks to them earnestly on the subject of Rousseau. Kelly, who seems to be taking in all the man is saying, "then made a low noise and opened his mouth and covered the small man from shoulder to knee with a coating of unpleasant buff-coloured puke." The man's Rousseauism is thus presumably refuted by this foul and sudden evidence of man's natural urges.

Related to eructation, and even more central to a discussion of O'Nolan's governing tropes, is intoxication. Drinking was critical not only to his imagination, but to his habits as well. Kevin O Nolan, the author's brother, recalls that on one occasion, when Brian and another brother were playing as children, "Brian found a small bottle containing a milky fluid which he promptly drank."<sup>9</sup> His father speedily concocted an emetic for the boy, but O'Nolan's curiosity about liquid refreshment remained firmly ingrained. The care that O'Nolan devotes to recording the narrator's first exposure to alcoholic beverages in *At Swim-Two-Birds* is the same a different novelist might devote to sexual initiation; those who told of their inebriation had, the student-narrator says, "often surprised me with a

recital of their strange adventures. The mind may be impaired by alcohol, I mused, but withal it may be pleasantly impaired." And in later works, such as the Gaelic parody, *The Poor Mouth*, whiskey is a magical substance, akin to the magic liquids of *The Third Policeman* and *The Dalkey Archive*, capable of transforming the world. On a more mundane level, several of the novels and more than a few short stories contain scenes in pubs, and indeed O'Nolan's pub talk is incomparable in its wit and humor. (The story in *Dubliners* he most admired involved an alcoholic—"Counterparts"—while the section of *Ulysses* he most liked took place in Barney Kiernan's pub, featuring the Citizen and his dog.)

Much to the point here is an image O'Nolan arrives at joco-circuitously in an essay called "A Bash in the Tunnel" — an image that seems more a self-description than what it is intended to be, a picture of Joyce as archetypal Irish Artist. Like the man in the joke, the Irish artist is "sitting fully dressed, innerly locked in the toilet of a locked coach where he has no right to be, resentfully drinking somebody else's whiskey, being whisked hither and thither by anonymous shunters, keeping fastidiously the while on the outer face of his door the simple word, ENGAGED."<sup>10</sup> Ostensibly engaged in self-purgation, in fact self-intoxicated, isolated, the image carries with it the inevitable O'Nolan debasement of the artist's functions. But we must not forget that it is also an image of uninhibited excess, of willful crossing of boundaries, of disengagement from the conventions of a rational society. It is a ludicrous image, surely, but it is not without its winning attributes.

O'Nolan's Irish artist is worlds away from Keats's nightingale, but in one respect at least their senses of artistic creation overlap. For all his satire of the latter-day Romantic artist, O'Nolan had an almost Keatsian sense of the easy effluence of genius: he wrote to his agent, "any work of fiction or imagination (as distinct from a book that deals with scientific research, antiquity, history) is necessarily bad if it took more than 6 months to write" (to Mark Hamilton, A. M. Heath & Company, n.d. [after 11 October 1962]). The invocation of a time limit is of course consciously absurd, but the fact is O'Nolan did himself work quickly, with amazing fluidity and invention. Not for him was Adam's curse, which requires of the poet, as Yeats said, that "a line will take us hours maybe." Yet curiously enough, one side of O'Nolan did understand well the calling of an art that was not comic



or satiric, and it is a facet of his career little known. His master's thesis at University College Dublin was on medieval Irish nature poetry, and his translations of *The Frenzy of Sweeny* that find their way into *At Swim-Two-Birds* are pellucid.

If I were to search alone  
the hills of the brown world,  
better would I like my sole hut  
in Glen Bolcain.

Good its water greenish-green  
good its clean strong wind,  
good its cress-green cresses,  
best its branching brooklime.

Or consider another translation from a twelfth century Irish poem which, itself a reflection on the trials of authorship and the quest for fame, was bound to attract O'Nolan. It begins,

My hand has a pain from writing,  
Not steady the sharp tool of my craft,  
Its slender beak spews bright ink —  
A beetle-dark shining draught.<sup>11</sup>

As these translations suggest—and it is no less true of his fiction than of his journalistic writings as Myles na Gopaleen—O'Nolan's conception of himself as a writer, despite his extravagant originality, is bound up with the traditional literature of Ireland.

It is not surprising, then, that O'Nolan's audience has largely been an Irish one, though there are signs now that he is gaining the international reputation he had long sought. From the beginning of his career, in fact, O'Nolan had tried to interest the American market in his work and had already begun, at the time of his death, a novel with an explicitly transatlantic plot, *Slattery's Sago Saga*.<sup>12</sup> Though he would on occasion affirm to prospective publishers that the Irishman and the American were brothers under the skin, for one kind of American he had an exaggerated and undisguised contempt—the Joyce scholar. One suspects that it was not so much the excesses

of exegesis that irked him, however, as his feeling that the adoration of Joyce threw into a shadow Irish stars of lesser magnitude. O'Nolan would doubtless then have been pleased—or else appalled—that his own papers, manuscripts, and letters, have found their way to the heartland of America, where, ironically, they are shelved back to back with the Croessmann Collection of James Joyce. I cannot resist adding as a footnote, however, that the very existence of the O'Nolan collection was for a while in peril. According to several of the author's letters—and it is a story he worked into an article on the evolution of *The Dalkey Archive*<sup>13</sup>—much of this material had been at one time stolen from O'Nolan's house. Stolen, indeed, while the author himself was present. During an extensive recuperation at home from one of the many accidents and illnesses that plagued his last years, O'Nolan was visited by a young man who introduced himself as a friend of several of O'Nolan's friends and would stop by regularly for an evening drink. It happens that the toilet in O'Nolan's house was down a corridor, with a room opposite containing books, papers, files, and manuscripts; the young man was apparently in the habit, on his trips to the bathroom, of relieving O'Nolan of his private papers. The police eventually recovered the lot, on O'Nolan's advice, but “out of consideration for his young wife and child,” the author decided not to press for prosecution of the culprit, which with his inevitable conviction and jailing would have meant ruin for him. (“I hold that this proves I am a charitable man,” O'Nolan wrote on 8 March 1965.) He does not mention among the stolen items the manuscript of *The Third Policeman*, which would be published only after his death and which begins as the story of a naive young man's entering into a scheme to steal an old man's money box so as to finance his researches into the works of the sage, de Selby. That the Sage of Santry—as Myles na Gopaleen styled himself—should have become the victim of a theft himself, and under such circumstances, is something only O'Nolan's Guardian Angel—to whom, incidentally, he dedicated *The Dalkey Archive*—could have arranged. It is all very fitting for a man who made a career of confounding art and life.

NOTES

1. "Cruiskeen Lawn," *The Irish Times*, 24 October 1953.
2. See the extensive account of O'Nolan's epistolary career in William David Powell, "The English Writings of Flann O'Brien," Ph.D. diss. Southern Illinois University 1971.
3. For a more detailed account of O'Nolan's novels see the present writer's "Entirely Fictitious: The Fiction of Flann O'Brien," *The Journal of Irish Literature* 3 (January 1974); 93-103.
4. O'Nolan to A. M. Heath & Company, 3 October 1938. Subsequent references to letters will be incorporated into the text. All of the letters quoted are in the Brian O'Nolan Papers, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale; I am grateful to the Library for permission to use the collection. I would also like to acknowledge my thanks to Mrs. Evelyn O'Nolan for allowing me to quote from the letters.  
The Morris Library houses the bulk of the O'Nolan papers, letters, and typescripts, with the exception of the manuscript of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, which is owned by the University of Texas.
5. Niall Sheridan, "Brian, Flann and Myles," in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O'Nolan*, ed. Timothy O'Keefe (London: Martin Brian & O'Keefe, 1973), p. 47.
6. Mark Twain, whom O'Nolan read with great admiration, had performed a similar feat of translation when he rendered into improbably literal English a French translation of his "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." There is no indication O'Nolan knew of this piece.
7. Sheridan, in *Myles*, p. 48.
8. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, eds., *The Critical Writings of James Joyce* (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), p. 151.
9. Kevin O Nolan, "The First Furlongs," in *Myles*, p. 18.
10. "A Bash in the Tunnel," *Envoy* 5 (April 1951), 5-11. Reprinted in Flann O'Brien, *Stories and Plays* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1973), p. 206.
11. "A Poem from the Irish," in *Myles*, p. 9.
12. The finished portion is printed in *Stories and Plays*, pp. 21-79.
13. "Can a Saint Hit Back?" *Manchester Guardian*, 19 January 1966.

## Borstal Revisited

Corey Phelps

Brendan Behan is remembered both for his work, the plays *The Quare Fellow* (1954) and *The Hostage* (1958) and his autobiographical novel *Borstal Boy* (1958), and for his frenetic public life (1956-64), chronicled in the daily press and on national television—remembered perhaps more for the vitality of both than the substance of either. He died creatively sometime in 1959-60, cause uncertain, and physically in 1964, of alcohol, diabetes, jaundice and pneumonia—at the age of 41.

Of the ten books that appeared under his name, only with *Borstal Boy* did Behan overtly participate in preparing the manuscript for publication,<sup>1</sup> editing, re-writing, correcting proofs, forcefully imposing himself (though possibly, in the end, not forcefully enough). By the time of publication he had re-written nearly the entire book twice and parts of it three and four times. He had an abiding affection for the plays, but those who knew him said there was a special attachment to *Borstal Boy*, that he considered it his finest achievement.<sup>2</sup>

Three manuscripts in the Special Collections of Morris Library, notes for and extracts from his early work on *Borstal Boy*, offer unique insights into the evolution of the book—and of Brendan Behan as an author. The manuscripts are the first lines and images on a new canvas, a canvas which would be painted over many times on way to completion.

Born into a family pervaded with fervent support of Irish nationalism, Behan was to spend most of his early manhood (16 to 23) incarcerated for politically-related offenses—offenses whose prime motivation, his biographers have pointed out,<sup>3</sup> was probably more a need for personal recognition than pure nationalistic fervor.





and in it Behan gives a rather cursory accounting of the period between his arrest in Liverpool and his removal to Hollesley Bay Borstal. It seems more an attempt to get ideas and remembrances down on paper (where they could later be expanded) than it does a finished piece. As such, "The Courteous Borstal" could represent Behan's preliminary notes for the first half of *Borstal Boy*.

A fellow political prisoner recalls sitting in Behan's cell at this time and watching him work, "furiously, writing page after page, letting them flutter to the floor."<sup>6</sup> (Behan showed some of his work to the other prisoner and asked him to comment, but the other man couldn't decipher the script very well.) "The Courteous Borstal" appears to have been written hastily, the penmanship gradually disintegrating as it tried to keep up with the author's thoughts. It looks as though he stopped in the middle of page eleven, then went back to it later in a more leisurely mood. (This was the only period in which Behan wrote in longhand, subsequently using a typewriter almost exclusively.)

Behan begins the piece with a reflection on his acceptance at Hollesley Bay Borstal—an acceptance by his peers and the administration that, inasmuch as it influenced his attitudes toward Englishmen (allowing him to differentiate between the citizens on the one hand, and their country's Irish policy on the other), was to become a major theme of the book.

If we'd had girls in Hollesley Bay I'd have applied to spend the rest of my life there[.] Nowhere else have I met an almost classless society. Nowhere was I loved so well, or respected so highly. I've my letters home to prove that I thought that at that time, too. I loved Borstal boys and they loved me. (Manuscript page 1.)

This theme, in the book, would more be illustrated than stated outright, and would be balanced by occasional exceptions. By the nature of his crime (attempted terrorist bombing in an England at war) Behan was fortunate to have been treated with civility, let alone loved and respected—as Behan was well aware. That he *was* accepted as an individual (rather than as an extension of what he seemed to represent) allowed him to consider his jailers and fellow inmates in the same light. It was a major contribution to his growth as a young man, which he duly recorded in *Borstal Boy*.

A theme that was not to be expanded in the finished book,

however, was homosexuality in Borstal. "The Courteous Borstal," in fact, contains Behan's clearest and most straight-forward statement on that aspect. Conditions at Hollesley Bay were agreeable,

But the absence of girls made it that much imperfect. Homosexuality (of our sort) is not a substitute for ~~ordinary~~ normal sex. Its a different thing, rather similar to that of which T. E. Lawrence writes in [""] The Seven Pillars." (p. 1)

Further on in the manuscript, Behan distinguishes between the "youth of healthy muscle and slim wrought form" and the "powdered pansy[, ] who feels himself a contradiction of his physical equipment," adding that the latter has every right to be that, or anything else he wants to be.

Our lads saw themselves beautiful and had to do something about it. About ~~two~~ <sup>a</sup> third[~~s~~] of them did. Another third, not so influential or less good looking would have liked to. However[, ] without women it could not be a pattern of life, only a prolonging of adolescence—it was as beautiful as that. (pp. 2-3)

It is a candid statement, made with simplicity, sincerity and innocence. References to this element of Borstal life in the finished book—the incident involving Charlie and Shaggy (p. 279),<sup>7</sup> and the relationship between Shaggy and Leslie—would be treated with sensitivity, but would also be much more guarded and vague. In "The Courteous Borstal," homosexuality is an important and positive experience; in *Borstal Boy* it is of little moment, and the connotation is negative.

The manuscript further provides excellent examples of Behan revising his work, searching for the right words and the best order in which to use them. Defining what he meant by "powdered pansy," he wrote:

~~who feels himself equi wrongly equipped~~  
~~with physical~~ feels himself a contradiction  
of his physical equipment. (p. 2)

The thought process would have been something like this:

who feels himself equi[pped] . . .  
who feels himself wrongly equipped . . .



who feels himself mentally equipped with physical . . .  
 who feels himself a contradiction of his physical equipment.

The general impression, years later, would be that words fell from Brendan Behan simply and without exertion, that he'd only to open his mouth and out poured a *Quare Fellow* or a *Borstal Boy*. To an extent Behan himself encouraged that myth. But it never was true; he worked with the words till he had what he wanted, and it was hard work, creating a finished product that would seem effortless.

Behan touches on a number of additional elements that would later be expanded, either specifically or in kind, in the book: the interview with the Lady Visitor at Feltham; the descriptions of the various Borstal Institutions and the kinds of boys that were selected for each; the friendly "screw" with whom he discussed the wiring of mines, and who provided him extra potatoes. He glosses over his physical and mental pain at Walton Jail, where he was held awaiting trial. He mentions "insulting by brutal behaviour of the Roman Catholic chaplain and the prison doctor," and comments that the warders were worse than swine, but goes into no detail. There is a note in the margin, "a chronicle of torture," but it is crossed through and he lets the matter drop with "That is as much as I want to say of my pre-Borstal captivity." (p. 4) The piece ends with the boys chained together, on their way to Borstal in charabancs. "I'm sure the people on the road took us for holidaymakers, for every conceivable song was sung on the ninety miles from Feltham to Hollesley Bay." (p. 12) It is the kind of juxtaposition—chained prisoners / singing holidaymakers, the human capacity to rise above circumstance—that would make *Borstal Boy* affecting.

In 1960, asked about his prison writing, Behan dismissed it with: "Anything written in jail is rubbish, and that includes *Pilgrim's Progress*."<sup>8</sup> Precious little of his work at Mountjoy and the Curragh Camp has survived, yet "The Courteous Borstal," while not up to the quality or technique of the work he was doing even a few years later, is not rubbish. It hints of talent throughout, and here and there reveals that talent. One has the impression that in 1960 Behan was more concerned with providing a quote for the *New York Times* than with giving an honest appraisal of his work from his jail period.

Completing his last major imprisonment in 1946 (there would later be brief periods in jail for breaking the English deportation

order, and for fighting and drunkenness), Behan wrote more articles and stories, a new one-act play, and a dozen or so poems in Irish in the late 1940's. From 1951 onward he made more and more of his living as a writer: free-lance journalism in Dublin, later a regular column for one of the papers, scripts for Radio Eireann, occasional magazine pieces. *The Quare Fellow* was presented in Dublin (1954) and in London (1956), the latter production allowing him to give up journalism for the most part and concentrate on writing another play and on finishing *Borstal Boy*.

He had envisioned a book on his Borstal days almost from the beginning. In a letter of December 1943, he wrote that his experiences in England "provided me with material for a book on Borstal which I'll get fixed up after the war and with material for numberless short stories."<sup>9</sup> He had already started "a long novel" on the 1939 bombing campaign, "title 'The Green Invader,'"<sup>10</sup> which he would later combine with the Borstal theme.<sup>11</sup> (Behan frequently referred to this book as a novel, though it was later billed as an autobiography. It is a bit of both. What matter if the boy playing St. Joseph in the Nativity play was "in" for non-attendance at school?<sup>12</sup> It made a better story if he'd pushed his crippled brother over a cliff to his death.<sup>13</sup> As Dominic Behan observed of his brother's storytelling, "there was a general truth about Brendan's account of everything—and much more entertaining."<sup>14</sup>)

In the early 1950's extracts from his work would begin to be published—"Bridewell Revisited" in the Paris-based *Points* (1951), a series of six articles in Irish in *Comhar* (1952-53). (These two magazines gave Behan considerable encouragement at the time he was trying to establish himself as a writer. *Comhar* subsidized a stay in Aran to improve his Irish as an advance against a book in that language on his I.R.A. and prison remembrances, but Behan spent more time teaching the Aran men his Dublin idioms than vice versa and the book did not materialize—in Irish.<sup>15</sup>) In 1956 Borstal extracts were serialized in the Irish edition of the *Sunday Dispatch*.

It was a golden time for Behan, writing *Borstal Boy*. He would be at his typewriter by seven in the morning, writing a page or two, perhaps picking up a book or going out for a walk to marshal his thoughts, then returning to his typewriter and more work.<sup>16</sup> Generally he would write till noon, then take the rest of the day for

himself. He was drinking almost nothing and adhering (diabetes had been diagnosed) to a strict diet: a Behan ordered, disciplined, work-oriented—productive.

In the winter of 1956-57 the editorial director of the London publishing firm, Hutchinson, went to Dublin and gave Behan a generous advance on the *Borstal* book; early in June Behan delivered a 300-page typescript, promising a final installment of 100 pages in the near future.<sup>17</sup> In August he went with his wife to Connemara, where he wrote the final chapters, posting them to Hutchinson on September 20.<sup>18</sup>

Behan was painstaking with *Borstal Boy*, re-writing, editing, refusing to part with the manuscript until he was satisfied with it. By the time he had corrected the proofs it was substantially modified from the initial conception.<sup>19</sup> Two typescripts in Morris Library, extracts from his early production on the book, provide unique intelligence on these changes—especially rare in that all but a few pages of his early drafts were destroyed. Beatrice Behan, for example, had entered their cottage in Connemara on the September day her husband typed the last page of his final version to find him tearing manuscript pages in half and burning them in the fireplace, explaining that he was “tidying up” before they returned to Dublin. She recognized the pages as being from an early draft of the book and asked why he was destroying them. “I don’t want people reading my notes when I’m dead,” he answered. She managed to save a few of the pages by grabbing them from him and running away. But very few.<sup>20</sup>

The typescripts were acquired by Morris Library in the late 1960’s amongst the archives of Dublin’s *Envoy* magazine (1949-51). Neither were published in that journal. The poetry editor of *Envoy* was Valentin Iremonger. It was Iremonger (possibly from his knowledge of the typescripts in *Envoy*’s files) who had brought *Borstal Boy* to the attention of Hutchinson’s editorial director, Iain Hamilton. In fact, when Hamilton went to Dublin to meet Behan and read his work, it was specifically on Iremonger’s advice.<sup>21</sup> Hamilton was “so impressed with the thirty-odd pages of typed foolscap that he . . . signed Brendan up on the spot,” for an advance of £350.<sup>22</sup> This raises the fascinating possibility that the thirty pages now in Morris Library are the basis on which Hutchinson purchased *Borstal*

*Boy*—if not the actual pages, then possibly the original typescripts from which later copies were typed.

The longer of the two typescripts (20 pages of text) is titled “Bridewell Revisited.” A note in Behan’s hand on the un-numbered title page reads, “A bit that I am not ashamed of—the title supplied by John Ryan [editor of *Envoy*] for whom my affection is tenacious, invincible and reckless.” (Behan was so fond of the title that he used it again five years later for another extract from his *Borstal* work, concerning the Nativity play, published in *The New Statesman*.<sup>23</sup>)

“Bridewell Revisited” tells the story of Behan’s arrest in Liverpool, his incarceration in Dale Street Bridewell, and his early friendship with the cockney sailor, Charlie. An early version of the first twenty pages of the eventual book, it appeared in the winter 1951-52 number of *Points*, a little magazine published in Paris by Sindbad Vail, an American. The piece was edited for publication, probably by Vail. Most of the passages cut for the magazine were put back in for the book, though usually in a revised form. Behan sent the “Bridewell” typescript to Vail in May 1951, commenting that “Some months ago, I wrote you that I had started a book. I am calling it *Borstal Boy*. Here is a bit of it.”<sup>24</sup> He wrote Vail again in June, referring to the typescript: “You must excuse the terrible typing. It was not my fault. I had to do it myself. No typist in Dublin would look at it.”<sup>25</sup>

A primary difference between the typescript version and the book edition is of tone: the typescript reads as if it were written by a youngster (passionate, awkward, raw-talented) living the events, while the corresponding section of the book contains an edge of maturity, an adult looking back on his youth. Professor Boyle’s point is well taken that the typescript possesses a mood of “immaturity, irresponsibility, and foolish adolescence” which “fits both the truth of Behan’s character and the thematic requirements of his book,” and that the book section “seems somehow short of the mark . . .”<sup>26</sup> The point is not that the final version is spurious or poorly written—it is neither—but rather that the earlier version is in some ways superior.

This change in tone is evidenced, primarily through changes of phrasing and rhythm, in scores of small alterations made throughout the text:



(19)

"What are done with you."

Tommy Woods, Mick May, Jack Nalty, Dinny Coady, Tony Fox. The young, ragged, dead at Albasete, Brunete, Guadarrama, Hama, on University Hill and on the Ebro. Forgive. A scalded heart will say many is the thing.

"You fucking little treacherous Irish bastard. I hope they hang you as high as Nelson."

"The fucking Germans won't be long knocking him down, either. And this whole fucking town, they'll leave Liverpool a heap of cinders and you under your fucking Bridewell, you old bastard."

He pushed me into the cell and banged on the door. I stood looking at the plate and mug on the bench.

I thought of Ernst Toller and of the demonstration I marched in when I was twelve, because they would not let him enter Ireland. And I allowed that stupid old swine of a turnkey to rile me into betraying myself. Into applauding Tollers' jailers, the murderers, the killers of his swallows.

I walked up and down the cell for a while, looked at the plate of potatoes and bread, sat down and ate most of it.

In the afternoon I was taken to a room upstairs and photographed. The photographer was a young man with a pin-head and a scrub moustache, dressed in a sports coat and flannel. I couldn't imagine him laughing, except, possibly when reading "Punch".

In the hope of conversation, I asked him the time. He didn't answer and seemed practisedly impregnable in his silence.

"Your head this way. Now, sideways."

Sideways yourself and take a running at yourself. Might put a bit of life into you.

When he finished with me, I was brought

"Bridewell Revisited," page 19, edited and published in 1951.

"How old are you, Paddy?" asked the sergeant.  
 "Sixteen, seventeen in February." (Ts. p. 3)

"I'm sixteen, and I'll be seventeen in February." (*Borstal Boy* p. 4)

"Like that song, Pad?"  
 "Smashing, china."  
 Speak it like a native. English in three days [. ] (Ts. p. 17)

"Smashing, china." I speak it like a native, English, in two days and a bit. (*Borstal Boy* p. 17)

A major change in the same vein is more injurious in its effect on the text. Following his arrest in Liverpool, Behan was taken to C.I.D. headquarters. He refused to answer any questions, but:

I agreed to make a statement, with a view to propaganda, for the Republic. Ultimately, I suppose, for myself. Revolutionary politics are forms of acting. Ghandi ne'er cast a clout, nor Goering ne'er turned a jowl camerawards with more care than I took with that statement.

"My name is Brendan Behan. I came over here to fight for the Irish Worker's and small Farmers republic, for a full and free life for my fellow countrymen, north and south, and for the removal of the baneful influence of British imperialism from Irish affairs. God save Ireland."

The God save Ireland was an extra bit of hypocrisy, intended for the Dublin papers, for the people at home who would be reading them. (Ts. p. 5)

The same incident, in the book, is considerably revised.

I agreed to make a statement, with a view to propaganda for the cause. It would look well at home, too. I often read speeches from the dock, and thought the better of the brave and defiant men that made them so far from friends or dear ones.

[The statement is made virtually unchanged. It is followed by one of the policemen observing that the only farmers in his experience have been "bloody big fellows;" and by Behan commenting on how his statement will be received within the Republican movement.]

The "God Save Ireland" bit made me feel like the Manchester Martyrs, hanged amidst the exulting cheers of fifty thousand fair-play merchants, and crying out with their last breath:

[Song]. (*Borstal Boy* pp. 6-7)

The original is concise, candid and fresh—the revised version, by comparison, clumsy and cluttered. Most dearly regretted of course is the loss of Behan's candor and insight regarding revolutionary politics, the nicely turned comparison of the public relations and

theatrical aspects of his statement, Ghandi's clout, and Goering's jowl. Simply, it is Behan at the top of his form: wise, shocking, funny, terse, and unexpected. The Manchester Martyrs, a bit of a song, and humorous comments on the physical stature of farmers are all well and good, but they blur the moment and make it flabby.

Another cut typescript passage (one of the few to be cut in both the magazine and book versions) raises the possibility of censorship. The Bridewell turnkey has brought Behan dinner ("Three dirty potatoes on an enamel plate, two slices of dry bread and a mug of water"), and takes the opportunity to assault the prisoner verbally. He says the Irish, inside a pub on Saturday night, are good soldiers — but that after a few hours in jail they crack up. "What will you be like after twenty years, Paddy? That's if you're lucky and they don't ang you." The jailer continues that the food is good enough for the prisoner, that it's better than what he got at home, and adds that Behan will be living on less before he gets out.

Behan, in his own mind, invokes the names of Irishmen who died fighting the fascists in Spain, apologizing to them for what he is about to say:

Tommy Woods, Mick May, Jack Nulty, Dinny Coady, Tony Fox. The young, ragged, dead at Albacete, Brunete, Guadalarja [sic], Harama, on University Hill and on the Ebro. Forgive me. A scalded heart will say many is the thing.

The turnkey persists, calling Behan a "treacherous Irish bastard. I ope they ang you as igh as Nelson." But Behan, wounded, takes no more. He spits out that the Germans won't be long in knocking Nelson down, nor the entire town; that they will "leave Liverpool a heap of cinders," and the turnkey buried under the rubble of the Bridewell.

He pushed me into the cell and banged ou[t] the door. I stood looking at the plate and mug on the bench.

I thought of Ernst Toller and of the demonstration I marched in when I was twelve, because they would not let him enter Ireland. And I allowed that stupid old swine of a turnkey to rile me into betraying myself. Into applauding Tollers jailers, the murderers, the killers of his swallows.<sup>27</sup>

I walked up and down the cell for a while[,] looked at the plate of potatoes and bread, sat down and ate most of it. (Ts. pp. 18-19)

It is a fine piece of craftsmanship. Outwardly he gets the best of the jailer, or at least "gives as good as he got." But he is well aware that

he got the *worst* of himself as well, that he denied his beliefs in a fit of temper; and it is because of this knowledge that he paces his cell.

As is the case with most of the altered sections of the book, the corresponding part of *Borstal Boy* (p. 19) is not, of itself, weak; only when compared to the original does it seem flaccid. The turnkey delivers the same meal (except that the potatoes are now half-rotten as well as dirty), and makes basically the same ethnic and national slurs, after which he merely closes the door and leaves. Behan again paces his cell, but this is now motivated by his revulsion at the food and because of the numbing cold weather. The original is perceptive and reveals a great deal about the character and the times in which he lived; the revised version tells us only that he found the ambience and cuisine at Dale Street Bridewell wanting.

How much did censorship, self-imposed or otherwise, have to do with the excising of the bombing remarks? The passage could certainly have proven offensive to English sensibilities in the 1950's. Not only had Liverpool indeed been severely bombed in the war, but for the remarks (no matter how eloquent the accompanying disclaimer) to come from one with I.R.A. affiliations could prove especially repugnant. One element within the Irish Republican movement had been pro-Nazi, more from hatred of Britain than any affection for Germany. Behan was not of this element, having been anti-fascist in his public actions and in his writing since his early teens. (At fifteen he had lied about his age and volunteered to fight on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. But his mother intercepted his acceptance notice, and he did not go to Spain.) Perhaps it was felt that this distinction, especially in light of Behan's connection with the 1939 bombing campaign, would not be made. The passage in the typescript simply is too good—far superior to the corresponding book section—to have been cut for no reason.

Behan wrote that in *Borstal Boy* he had tried "to reproduce the conversations of adolescent prisoners about sex and religion and sometimes about politics and sometimes about crime and sport."<sup>28</sup> Compulsive profanity, an elemental part of the original dialogue, was heavily censored; and the results were damaging.

The profanity is indigenous to the truth both of Behan's characters and their circumstances. Four-letter words occupy nearly every paragraph of the "Bridewell" typescript, but their effect,



because of the way Behan uses them, is not offensive. Any shock value is quickly eliminated through reiteration (“like the barrack-room drone before lights out in which repetition so saps emphasis that the words take on the hypnotic power of a litany”<sup>29</sup>), after which the words become an important element of Behan’s prime strength as a writer: the ability to write dialogue with a pulse and tone that are authentic, and, at the same time, poetic.

Neither *Points* nor Hutchinson would print the original language. Vail balked at it almost immediately, asking Behan to make alterations. But Behan had sent Vail his only copy of the “Bridewell” typescript, and wrote him in June 1951, “I wonder would it be a terrible big thing to ask you to do whatever excising you would think necessary? For the . . . and so forth, could you manage an initial and a dash? It is an extract from a novel. Why shouldn’t it read like that?”<sup>30</sup> (Most of the alterations in the typescript are in a hand other than Behan’s—in light of the foregoing, probably Vail’s.) Hutchinson combined initial-and-dash substitution with deliberate misspelling (“fugh,” “facquing”).

These alterations not only damage the authenticity and rhythm of the dialogue, but their application implies that the original was obscene (otherwise, why change it?)—which was neither Behan’s intention nor, as witnessed by the “Bridewell” typescript, his result. (It is instructive that the word is used as an adjective, an adverb, a noun and a pronoun—but rarely as a verb, and never in the sense of sexual intercourse.) Finally, to call attention to the profanity by dashes and misspellings is to give it undue weight—to make it a Prussian blue slash on a canvas of oranges and browns, when in fact it is an ochre: blending, inconspicuous.

Hutchinson’s decision to censor the language was criticized at the time of the book’s publication by a columnist in *The Spectator* (though acknowledging that Hutchinson allowed Behan greater latitude than he was likely to find elsewhere).<sup>31</sup> Robert Lusty, then chairman of the Hutchinson Publishing Group, responded. Stating that the decision to alter had been made by himself, he agreed that the rhythm of Behan’s dialogue was a major element of his style, and that “the missing word” makes an important contribution to the rhythm. But he argued that “dialogue is for speech and the constant repetition of the word in the cold formality of type detracts from this rhythm and accentuates only its typographical ugliness”;<sup>32</sup> in

other words, that something going to the mind by way of the eye is more emphatic than something going by way of the ear. (The reverse is arguable.) Lusty continued that “the fear that the book might be driven under the counter” also affected his decision, although maintaining that “fear of legal repercussions” was not a consideration.

It is not difficult to appreciate sympathetically their various motivations: Behan, struggling to establish himself, proud of his work, eager to have it published; Vail and Hutchinson eager to avoid controversy, legal or otherwise; all certainly eager to reach the widest possible audience. And yet the fact remains that, to the detriment of the work, the language was censored; and the final irony that a small, expatriate, avant garde, literary magazine and the very big firm, Hutchinson of London, chose to deal with the issue in much the same manner.

The shorter typescript, titled “From ‘Borstal Boy’, a work in progress by Brendan Behan,” is in two parts—the first of which (five pages) concerns Callan, another Irish prisoner at Walton Jail. It apparently was never published until, in revised form, it appeared in the book (see especially pages 130-31).

Set on the eve of the executions of two I.R.A. men (elsewhere in England), the extract tells the story of Callan’s rebellious and noisy defiance of his jailers, and of Behan’s attempts at avoiding involvement.

Two months in Walton Jail have left Behan “very anxious for a truce with the British. I’d have given them another six counties to be left alone” (Part 1: page 1); and he tries to spend a quiet evening in bed, reading a novel, hoping Callan (“a mad Republican,” in jail for stealing an overcoat) will cause no trouble over the executions. But Callan, in the cell beneath Behan’s, does not cooperate:

“Uuuuup the Republic”!

He let a roar out of him would wake Robert Emmet.

“Aaaah you bastaards”!

A roar that would put him back in his box.

“Good oul Hiiiiteler, thats the boy for you bastaaaards”!

“Jesus, they’ll kill us all”, I shivered to myself in bed. (1:2)

Callan calls out Behan’s name, and, torn between his own Republicanism and concern for his physical well-being, Behan goes to





wreckage administering Walton Jail: deliverance from the warders who punish the boys for whispering at exercise, from the prison Governor, "A dying wizened old corpse, maimed by God that Man might mark him, curse him, shun him, except in a prison where the Marquis de Sade is Head Buck Cat." (2:1)

In a bitter stream of anger and hatred, Behan speaks of deliverance from the Chief Warder,

"Good type this Hunt, stern disciplinarian, dont know how wed get on without him[']". Make a splendid—railway detective, labour spy, night-watchman, game-keeper, bank messenger. "Half a crown for your trouble, my man". "Thank you sir, glad to be of service, sir". Black and Tan, Palestine Policeman, clean as a whistle [. . .] faithful employee. "Robert, when you take over, remember Hunt. He's given very loyal service. Particularly good at weeding out undesirable types. Remember him, let not poor Hunty starve". Prison service, good opening for right man, Chief Warder, Chief Bully of the wretched, the broken, the young. (2:2)

It will mean deliverance from the doctor who prescribes mechanical restraint, from the priest who proclaims charity and God's love and sends a boy before the Governor for talking at service, from the parson who makes sexual advances at the boys, from the Principal Officer, who enjoys

. . . the burnings of the sweepings after haircutting—with an appreciative grin—"Can yer ear the nits crackin', Paddy?" [He wasn't as bad as some of the others, but:] He didnt have to be; his pension well earned and his service nearly over. After thirty years of spying, bullying and torturing, he relaxes . . . jests.

"Can yer 'ear the nits crackin, Paddy?"  
Nunc Dimmitus . . . (2:4)

Stylistically this is a Brendan Behan we rarely meet in the later work, but is much evidenced in his other writing from this time—the poems (in the good translations) and short fiction, and the second version of *The Quare Fellow*. When expressing extreme emotion Behan would sometimes use a swelling stream of words—as if, in effect, it had all welled up inside him and burst forth of its own volition, that he could not stop it, that it would run its own course and finish only when it had spent itself. The piece was not included in the book, nor published elsewhere.

The decision to censor the language was not Behan's, but he agreed to it readily (at least with Vail). It is an area of which we

know the decisions and their effects, the people who made them and the motivations involved. The general editing done on the book, however, is much more obscure and difficult to comprehend.

It is not a question of the text being corrupted. Some of the alterations improve the final product (for instance, in the "Bride-well" typescript Charlie, the cockney sailor, had deserted the navy and was arrested for "a desperate random burglary to get civilian clothes." (p. 11) This was in conflict with Charlie's later character development—his pride in being a sailor—and was rightly cut). And, finally, we do not know all the specifics of Behan's participation and cooperation in the final editing of the manuscript.

Certainly Behan was vitally interested in the editing of his material. When Iain Hamilton went to Dublin and bought the rights to the book, Behan had become angry when Hamilton wanted to take the unfinished manuscript back to London. "You'll get no fucking book until I'm finished with it," he told him.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Behan later was reluctant to part even with his 300-page typescript; the publishers had practically to coerce the pages from the author, and next morning he was in their offices, demanding return of his typescript, claiming it wasn't finished. Hamilton suggested that Behan go back to Dublin and finish the book while editing started on the 300 pages. Behan replied that an author was the best judge of his work's suitability for publication, his eyes searching the room for the typescript. But the pages had, as a precaution, been locked in a drawer, and Behan was eventually persuaded to leave without them.<sup>34</sup>

The editing process for *Borstal Boy* was a long one. More than a year passed between receipt of the bulk of the manuscript and Behan's correction of the proofs. We do not know if the balance of the book was altered as extensively as the first 20 pages. Not only did Behan burn his early drafts, but all but a few pages of the manuscript (and only copy) of the final pre-edited version were, at his request, destroyed as well.<sup>35</sup> He was asked about the amount of re-writing that went into his books and plays. "Ah, an ocean of new words . . . but despite what you read, I do it myself, naturally with the help of editors and directors. And what's wrong with that? And where would Tom Wolfe have been without Max Perkins, also James Jones?"<sup>36</sup> While it seems unlikely that Behan would, of his own volition, have cut some of the passages preserved in the typescripts in

Morris Library, there is little doubt that he was satisfied both with the process and with the result.

The spring following publication of "Bridewell Revisited" Behan was working as a free-lance journalist, "to get enough money to finish my novel in peace," anticipating a final draft by Christmas (1952).<sup>37</sup> He wrote Vail in October that he had fifty thousand words on paper.<sup>38</sup> (50,000 words, very roughly, is half the size of the final version; yet Behan showed Hamilton only thirty pages in Dublin. Possibly it was an expression of Behan's confidence in the quality of that "bit that I am not ashamed of," "Bridewell Revisited.") Almost exactly six years after his letter to Vail, *Borstal Boy* was published in Britain. The reviews, for the most part, were highly favorable, and the first printing of 15,000 copies was quickly sold out.<sup>39</sup> The book was banned in the Republic of Ireland (a copy was sent to the Censorship Board by a fellow Dublin author<sup>40</sup>), and in New Zealand and Australia.

It was a time of production, celebrity, achievement, Behan's autumn 1958. *The Hostage*, most popular of his plays, premiered on 14 October; *Borstal Boy* was published a week later, and rehearsals were commencing in New York for *The Quare Fellow* (where it would win an "Obie" award). And now, just when his career blossomed and there was wide spread appreciation of his talent, it all started to spiral downward. But that's another story.

The Irish ban on *Borstal Boy* was eventually lifted, six years after Behan's death; but it was a censored version (omitting the rude lyrics, pages 335-38, and 351) that was allowed into the country.<sup>41</sup> In 1967 the state subsidized Abbey Theatre presented a dramatized version of the book—at the time, the book itself was still banned in Ireland—and it proved one of their most popular successes.

Behan manuscripts are hard to come by. Many that were not destroyed have subsequently been lost. Those in Morris Library form an exceptional resource on the evolution of *Borstal Boy*, and of its author—the sixteen-odd years between "The Courteous Borstal" and *Borstal Boy* being, in essence, the extent of Brendan Behan's creative life.

## NOTES

1. The others were edited by either his publishers or, in the case of his major plays, the theatrical managements or their associates. With some of the books this involved no more than correcting spelling and typing errors, adding translations for the odd phrases in Irish—making minor clarifications. The work required for the tape-recorded books, however, and for the final version of *The Hostage* was considerable.
2. Conversations with Beatrice Behan and others. Dublin, April 1974.
3. I am indebted for many of the biographical details to: Seamus de Burca, *Brendan Behan: A Memoir* (Newark, Delaware: Proscenium Press, 1971); Ted E. Boyle, *Brendan Behan* (New York: Twayne, 1969).
4. Sean Kavanagh, "In Prison," in *The World of Brendan Behan*, ed. Sean McCann (New York: Twayne, 1966), pp. 67-69.
5. Letter from Brendan Behan to Bob Bradshaw, 4 December 1943; located in Fales Library, New York University.
6. De Burca, p. 16.
7. All page numbers for *Borstal Boy* refer to the edition published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1959.
8. Arthur Gelb, "Brendan Behan's Sober Side," *The New York Times*, 18 September 1960, p. 3x.
9. Letter from Behan to Bradshaw.
10. Ibid.
11. See Catherine Rynne, "The Behan We Knew," *The World of Brendan Behan*, pp. 180-81 and 186.
12. Ulick O'Connor, *Brendan* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971), p. 55.
13. The character's name, in the book, is Ken Jones (see especially page 234). In an extract published earlier, in *The New Statesman* (see below), he was called Kenneth Large, and was "in" for "driving a motor car into his father."
14. Dominic Behan, *My Brother Brendan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), p. 117.
15. Rynne, pp. 180-81.
16. Beatrice Behan, *My Life With Brendan* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1973), p. 67.
17. Rae Jeffs, *Brendan Behan: Man and Showman* (Cleveland: World, 1968), pp. 21, 33, and 39.
18. Ibid., p. 41.
19. See Beatrice Behan, pp. 133-34.
20. Ibid., p. 99.
21. Jeffs, p. 22.
22. Ibid.



23. 52 (December 8, 1956), 740.
24. Brendan Behan, "Letters from Ireland," *Points*, no. 15 (Autumn 1952), 71.
25. Ibid.
26. Boyle, p. 103 and p. 105.
27. Reference to Toller's *The Book of Swallows*, poems he wrote while in jail.
28. Jeffs, p. 38.
29. Gerard Fay, "Mr. Behan's Public School" [review of *Borstal Boy*], *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 October 1958, p. 4.
30. "Letters from Ireland," p. 71.
31. "Pharos," "A Spectator's Notebook," 14 November 1958, p. 635.
32. "Borstal Boy" [letter to the editor], *The Spectator*, 21 November 1958, p. 703. Lusty wrote that he was now convinced the alterations, "on a very few difficult occasions," had been a mistake and that a subsequent edition would rectify this. But this would have little effect over all.
33. Beatrice Behan, p. 99.
34. Jeffs, pp. 23-31 and 33-34.
35. Ibid., p. 31.
36. Walter Hackett, "The Behan" [obituary], *The Washington Post*, 22 March 1964, *Show* supplement, p. G-1.
37. "Letters from Ireland," pp. 71-72.
38. Ibid., p. 74.
39. Jeffs, pp. 72-73.
40. Timothy Patrick Coogan, *Ireland Since the Rising* (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 171.
41. Gorgi Books [paperback] (London, 1961). I am not clear if the 1961 printing was censored or not, but the edition on sale in Dublin in the spring of 1974—the second Gorgi reprinting of 1970—certainly was.

## James Joyce and James Stephens The Coincidence of the Second of February

Alan M. Cohn

James Joyce and James Stephens first met in Dublin in 1912 when each was about thirty years old, and they did not hit it off very well.<sup>1</sup> In a postcard of 1909 to his brother Stanislaus, Joyce had sarcastically referred to Stephens as "my rival, the latest Irish genius,"<sup>2</sup> and he stood aloof, at this first meeting, despite Stephens' initial attempts to be sociable. They parted less than close friends.

They met again some fifteen years later in Paris, and Joyce, a much mellowed man in middle-age, now took warm interest (which Stephens reciprocated) in his countryman and erstwhile rival, in part for a most remarkable reason. By 1927 Joyce had grown fearful of the possibility that he would be unable, for one reason or another, to finish *Finnegans Wake* (then going under the temporary title of "Work in Progress"), and had come to the conclusion that the logical successor, if necessary, to complete the book would be none other than Stephens. To most readers, this would have seemed a strange choice, for Stephens was mainly known, rightly or wrongly, as a teller of Celtic Twilight tales of fantasy and whimsy, replete with the leprechauns which he, well under five feet tall and with an outsized head, physically resembled. Joyce had his reasons, however. Here is how Stephens told the story many years later over BBC:

How Joyce had made this discovery, I don't know, but he revealed to me that his name was James and mine was James; that my name was Stephens and the name he had taken for himself in his best book was Stephen; that he and I were born in the same country, in the same city, in the same year, in the same month, on the same day, at the same hour, six o'clock in the morning of the second of February.<sup>3</sup>

This was for Joyce a set of his dearly loved "correspondences" so overwhelming as to make Stephens uniquely qualified to complete the *Wake* if necessity decreed.

Written for Joyce & my birthday: 2<sup>nd</sup> Feby.  
Sarasvati

As bird to nest when moodily  
The storm-cloud murmurs nigh the tree  
Thus let him flee who can to sing  
Here hath he shade and sheltering

As bee to hive when with the sun  
Long honey-fathering is done  
Who can to sing there let him flee  
This is his cell, his company.

As child to mother running where  
Grim thunder shudders on the air,  
Thus let him flee who can to sing  
Here hath he word, and cherishing.

Fly to thy talent, to thy charm,  
Thy nest, thine hive, thy sheltering arm  
Who can to sing here let him flee,  
This is, naught else is, certainty.

James Stephens

Sarasvati is the vedic, I think, goddess of  
Wisdom. Her date is, (again I think) the 2<sup>nd</sup> of  
Feby which is, everywhere in Europe the day on which  
all hibernating creatures rise, but 2 is also St Brigid's  
Day & in ancient Ireland the first day of Spring.

Stephens' actual birth date is, however, a matter of controversy. Oliver St. John Gogarty gives it as 9 February 1880,<sup>4</sup> as does Stephens' biographer Hilary Pyle, citing the Dublin Register of Births.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Richard Finneran shows that Stephens himself had claimed 2 February 1882 as early as January 1913.<sup>6</sup> Though there is a tone of sly mockery in Stephens' BBC account quoted above—very typical of him—there are no real clues to prove whether he honestly believed the date correct or how he came by it. Since he and Joyce had got off on such a bad footing, it seems clear that Stephens did not intentionally choose the date because it was Joyce's anniversary,<sup>7</sup> as some have speculated he did. In reality, given the circumstances of his childhood, Stephens probably had no idea what his exact birthday was, and anyhow he generally chose to leave it a mystery, believing that such factual information was unimportant in relation to his work as an artist.<sup>8</sup> So, in a sense that Joyce could scarcely have imagined, it was indeed a coincidence that he and Stephens shared their birthdays.

But since they did, Stephens felt obliged to mark the occasion with a poem. "Sarasvati" was first published in 1931 in his collection *Strict Joy*<sup>9</sup> and reprinted in *The Joyce Book* of 1933, that collection of homages, mostly settings of the *Pomes Penyeach* by various composers, which Herbert Hughes put together. There Stephens entitles it "Prologue" and adds a headnote: "Written for the Birthday of James Joyce and J. S., February 2 1931."<sup>10</sup>

In a way, "Sarasvati" is an odd poem to write in honor of James Joyce, named as it is after a Buddhist deity. Stephens had come to the study of Eastern religions through Theosophy, that esoteric creed of Mme. Blavatsky's to which A. E. (George Russell) had introduced him. Indeed, from the twenties on, the fruits of this study supplied virtually the only topics for Stephens' few books of verse.<sup>11</sup> Joyce was not enamoured of mysticism, Eastern or Blavatskian; in *Ulysses*, his description of A. E.'s Hermetic Society meeting place as the "Yogibogeybox in Dawson chambers"<sup>12</sup> and his parodies of Sanskrit religious terminology<sup>13</sup> indicate his attitude. But the celebration of the poet's powers is an appropriate theme, and the poem does share a certain lyric quality with Joyce's *Pomes Penyeach* of 1927. If it is called "Prologue" in *The Joyce Book* because it is a prologue to the musical settings which follow, perhaps its retitling is also in deference to Joyce's distrust of esotericism—at least in religions.



I think that Joyce is the only person  
 who ever praised this verse. I think it is  
 the best verse I ever wrote - It comes in  
 a longish poem I wrote on the freedom  
 of Ireland. The poem is called "Minuette  
 on the Freedom of Ireland," and, away in  
 those days I dedicated it to Dr Valera.

Life comes on, with not a word:  
 Love is love, on no demand:  
 Death, unasked, hath him bestowed  
 Lifting all up by the hand:  
 all that fall ~~at~~ He stoops above,  
 lovingly - for He is Love.

James Stephens

Stephens holograph copy of "Minuette," first published in 1922.

The Croessmann Collection of James Joyce in Morris Library owns a copy of "Sarasvati" in Stephens' hand. It was evidently written out not long before Stephens' death in 1950, probably for a dealer or collector,<sup>14</sup> but it has a few points of interest beyond that as a collector's item.<sup>15</sup> Stephens believed the poet's gift was his divinely inspired imagination, but he also believed in his craft, in polishing and reworking his poems.<sup>16</sup> Aside from alterations in line-length and punctuation, there are two substantive variants from the published versions. In line four of the manuscript, "ward" is replaced by "shade"; in line ten, "Grim thunder" substitutes for "The thunder." Both are improvements, the first in adding more alliteration to the line, the second in removing the weak indefinite article. Additionally, the footnote Stephens here appends has not been previously printed.

Another brief holograph manuscript shares the same provenance with the Croessmann "Sarasvati." This is a few lines from a longer work which appears in Stephens' *Collected Poems* under the simple title "Minuette."<sup>17</sup> It was first published in the Dublin newspaper *Poblacht na h-Eireann* on 3 January 1922 with the full title as given in the manuscript and including the dedication to Eamon de Valera.<sup>18</sup> That Joyce "praised this verse" and that Stephens considered it "the best . . . I ever wrote" is apparently here published for the first time.

#### NOTES

1. The fullest account of their relationship is Richard J. Finneran, "James Joyce and James Stephens: The Record of a Friendship, with Unpublished Letters from Joyce to Stephens," *James Joyce Quarterly* 11 (Spring 1974), 279-92. Stephens' own version was a most entertaining BBC broadcast of 8 Oct. 1946, published as "The James Joyce I Knew," *Listener* 36 (24 Oct. 1946), 565; rptd. in his *James, Seumas & Jacques*, ed. Lloyd Frankenberg (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 147-55.
2. *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking Press, 1966), II, 260.
3. *James, Seumas & Jacques*, pp. 149-50.
4. *Dictionary of National Biography 1941-1950* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959).
5. *James Stephens: His Work and an Account of His Life* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 4.

6. "Appendix A: The Date of James Stephens's Birth," in *Letters of James Stephens*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 417.
  7. *Ibid.*, pp. 418-19.
  8. Pyle, p. 3; Finneran, "Appendix A," p. 417.
  9. Joyce returned the compliment the next year (1932) by translating one of Stephens' poems into French, German, Latin, Norwegian and Italian. See Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 668-69.
  10. The poem also appears (without the headnote) in Stephens' *Collected Poems*, 2d ed., rev. and enl. (London: Macmillan, 1954), p. 263, and in *James, Seumas & Jacques*, pp. 150-51.
  11. Pyle, "The Final Philosophy," pp. 122ff.
  12. *Ulysses* (New York: Modern Library, 1961), p. 191.
  13. *Ibid.*, p. 301.
  14. Letter to Dr. H. K. Croessman of 18 Sept. 1952 from Bertram Rota.
  15. As would be expected, Stephens sent a copy of the poem to Joyce on his birthday (*James, Seumas & Jacques*, p. 150). The Poetry Collection in the Lockwood Memorial Library, SUNY at Buffalo, would seem to be the likeliest repository for that copy, but according to Curator K. C. Gay (letter to me dated 2 Dec. 1974), it is not there.
  16. See Pyle, pp. 169-70.
  17. *Collected Poems*, pp. 13-15.
  18. *Letters of James Stephens*, ed. Finneran, p. 275. According to Birgit Bramsbäck (*James Stephens: A Literary and Bibliographical Study*. Upsala Irish Studies, IV (Upsala: A.-B. Lundequistska; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press; etc., 1959), p. 65, item 36-6), there is a clipping of the scarce newspaper appearance in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
- SIU-C also owns numerous holograph and typed manuscripts of various Stephens poems and prose works and a number of his letters (some of which have appeared in the Finneran edition) and letters to him.

## James Joyce Collections at Morris Library

Steven P. Lund & Alan M. Cohn

The James Joyce material acquired by Morris Library in 1958 was responsible for the founding of the Special Collections program at SIU-Carbondale. This collection had been gathered over many years by Dr. Harley K. Croessmann, an optometrist from Du Quoin, Illinois, who died in 1962. Even thus removed from the established trade routes of the literary world, Dr. Croessmann amassed one of the finest Joyce collections still in private hands at the time it was deposited with the library.

The Croessmann Collection falls into three main divisions: the Gorman collection, the Goyert collection, and the other letters manuscripts, and Joyceana which Croessmann brought together piece by piece. A few other more recent acquisitions have further strengthened Joyce resources at Morris Library.

### THE GORMAN COLLECTION

In 1924, Herbert Gorman produced the first book-length study of Joyce, *James Joyce: His First Forty Years*. Even though much of what Gorman presented as biographical material was intuitively culled from Joyce's works, and the book was inevitably filled with errors, Joyce seems nevertheless to have been pleased to be the subject of such a study. In 1925, Gorman asked permission to interview the author and expressed his willingness to revise the book with Joyce's assistance. Joyce consistently denied requests for interviews, but he did arrange a meeting with Gorman in Boulogne on other terms. When the rendezvous failed, Joyce sent Gorman a typed list of corrections and clarifications for the 1924 study, requesting that his own collaboration with Gorman be kept confidential. Once they did meet, Joyce suggested that, rather than a



revision of the earlier edition, Gorman should undertake a new and authorized biography. Gorman was receptive to the idea, and a close relationship quickly developed between the two men that lasted until Joyce's death in 1941.

When Gorman died in 1954, he left manuscripts, letters, and photographs which record the years of his association with Joyce as well as his research on Joyce's life. This material Dr. Croessmann acquired in two installments, the first in 1956, and the remainder, which was subsequently uncovered in Paris, in 1957. It is clear from the Gorman papers that Joyce took an active interest in Gorman's biography and had a hand in every phase of the book's development from the time it was proposed to the last stages before its publication in 1940.

Gorman and his wife received about thirty cards and letters from Joyce over the years. Appended to one of the earliest of these (5 November 1925) are the two typed pages of corrections and suggestions which Joyce had offered Gorman for future editions of the 1924 study. Most of the later letters are cordial and informal, sometimes detailing day-to-day events in the Joyce household. Some refer to Joyce's indefatigable efforts on behalf of tenor John Sullivan, a fellow Irish expatriate. Joyce would sometimes enclose letters he had recently received from others in an effort to provide useful information to his biographer.

Many of the letters to Gorman are published in the third volume of *Joyce's Letters*, edited by Richard Ellmann. Dr. Croessmann had made the Gorman materials available to Ellmann while the latter was doing research for his own biography of Joyce, published in 1959. Thus much Joyce source material used in the original and authorized biography in 1940 was re-sifted into the definitive biography some twenty years later.

Joyce often turned Gorman to other sources, many of which, Gorman complained, were too difficult or expensive to reach. Joyce once suggested, for example, that Gorman go to Dublin. At the time, however, Gorman considered such an excursion too costly and found it necessary instead to correspond with many of the people who had known Joyce. Sometimes information was volunteered without having been requested by Gorman as it became known that the biography was in progress. He occasionally prepared individualized questionnaires. "Alf" Bergan responded to one that sought facts



Tenor John Sullivan, James Joyce, and James Stephens. From the Croessmann Collection.

about Dublin before Joyce's time. Joyce himself was the recipient of some of these questionnaires, which he dutifully completed with the help of his friend Paul Léon, though his answers were at times evasive. Among the others who wrote Gorman with helpful information were Harriet Weaver, T. S. Eliot, Paul Léon, Stuart Gilbert, Arthur Symons, Oliver St. John Gogarty, Stanislaus Joyce, Eugene Jolas, Bennett Cerf, B. W. Huebsch, and C. K. Ogden.

Gorman also asked certain people to furnish copies of letters which they had received from Joyce. Joyce's brother Stanislaus transcribed well over a hundred of these. The majority of them are early, dating between 1903 and 1909, and addressed from Dublin, Trieste, and Rome. The originals of most of the letters are at Cornell University, but some have not been uncovered and are perhaps lost. Claude Sykes and Grant Richards also provided Gorman with transcriptions. Other transcriptions prepared for Gorman are of letters Joyce wrote to his mother, his aunt Josephine Murray, and one of his sisters; also included is a copy of the English draft of the congratulatory letter Joyce sent to Ibsen on the dramatist's birthday.

Gorman was also given copies of some lengthy letters John Quinn wrote to Ezra Pound and to Margaret Anderson concerning the legal case against *The Little Review*, which was prosecuted in 1921 for obscenity because of its serial publication of *Ulysses*. Quinn's letter to Pound makes no attempt to conceal the lawyer's distaste for the editors of *The Little Review*, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap. The sardonic letter to Pound, at once exhaustive and amusing, casts interesting light on the publication history of *Ulysses*.

Another instructive correspondence surrounds the *Ulysses* schema, a version of which is to be found in the collection. The correspondence documents Joyce's determined efforts to prevent the publication of his outline of some of the symbolism and mythic correspondences in *Ulysses*. Joyce gave these schemas in strict confidence only to some of his closest associates. When Bennett Cerf pressured Joyce to allow the schema to be published along with the Random House edition of *Ulysses*, Joyce accused Gorman falsely of violating his trust by providing the schema to the publisher. This resulted in a burst of angry letters between Gorman, Cerf, and Joyce's representative, Paul Léon.<sup>1</sup>

Joyce never wrote an autobiography, but the Gorman collection

contains all the primary materials for a book that perhaps comes closest to being such a volume, the biography *James Joyce* (published, contrary to the copyright notice of 1939, on 15 February 1940). Joyce was especially helpful at the outset of the project, and many of the 300-odd pages of loose notes in Gorman's hand appear to have been dictated or written down shortly after sessions with Joyce. Gorman was also given access to Joyce's early Paris notebooks, excerpts from which appear in the book. Some of Gorman's notebooks contain outlines and early drafts of chapters for the biography. Joyce reviewed the manuscript of the book and provided detailed instructions, corrections, and comments transmitted in Paul Léon's hand. At the beginning of the second chapter, for example, Joyce directs Gorman to remove some paragraphs, noting, "relations with his father are better deleted as completely misleading—you have been misled yourself by the 'Portrait' which is not an autobiography."

The *Ulysses* schema and the typescripts of what appears to be a late draft of Joyce's "From a Banned Writer to a Banned Singer" are two other items worthy of notice. The outstanding difference between the Gorman schema and the more familiar version published in Stuart Gilbert's *James Joyce's Ulysses* is that correspondences between many of the characters and their Homeric counterparts which appear in the former were not included in the latter. It also varies from the schema sent to Carlo Linati and recently used by Richard Ellmann in his *Ulysses on the Liffey*.<sup>2</sup> The partial typescript entitled "Sullivan," which was published in 1932 as "From a Banned Writer to a Banned Singer," contains changes made by Joyce and, at Joyce's direction, by Gorman. There is also an addition of several lines to the fourth paragraph in Joyce's hand.

#### THE GOYERT COLLECTION

A second group of materials in the Croessmann Collection was acquired from Georg Goyert in the 1950's. Goyert was the German translator of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1926), *Dubliners* (1928), *Ulysses* (1927, revised 1930), a portion of "Anna Livia Plurabelle" (1946), and *Stephen Hero* (1958). The Goyert material consists of twenty-six letters, most of which have appeared in the *Letters*, a copy of the "International Protest" against the



pirating of *Ulysses*, and some pages of explanation in Joyce's hand dealing with the "Oxen of the Sun" episode of *Ulysses*.<sup>3</sup> This material is all that survived the fire-bombing of Berlin in 1943, when inscribed books and other items presented to Goyert by Joyce were destroyed.

The gloss for "Oxen of the Sun," pencilled in large, legible handwriting, comments on eleven "doubtful points" in the episode to assist Goyert with his translation. A card from Stuart Gilbert offering his help with the translation also suggests the magnitude of Goyert's labors. The letters and cards from Joyce, which date between 1927 and 1939, include several that deal with translational matters. Joyce, for example, explains difficult words and discusses some titles which have been proposed for the translations. Considering the weak condition of his eyes, Joyce asks Goyert repeatedly to use a typewriter, complaining of his inability to read Goyert's handwriting. In a letter of 31 July 1931, Joyce speaks of a Frankfurt newspaper that has published a piece and erroneously identified it as a translated fragment from *Ulysses*. Joyce asks Goyert to obtain more information to help him repudiate the newspaper's claim. In July of 1929, anxious to see if "Work in Progress" might be rendered into German, Joyce asks Goyert to send the portion of "Anna Livia Plurabelle" which he was in the process of translating. Throughout, the correspondence reflects the respect, trust, and patience so characteristic of Joyce's dealings with his translators.

#### OTHER CROESSMANN ACQUISITIONS

The Croessmann Collection also contains about fifty additional letters which were gathered through Dr. Croessmann's many contacts with Joyce's friends and associates; others were acquired from dealers. The letters and cards from Joyce date between 1909 and 1940 and are written to, among others, his daughter Lucia, his sister Eileen, James Stephens, Arthur Clery, George Roberts, Arthur Power, Elkin Matthews, John Rodker, Jonathan Cape, Fritz Vanderpyl, Lily Bollach, and Ivan Goll.

In addition, the Croessmann Collection includes a variety of manuscripts, musical as well as literary. In 1935, Dr. Croessmann acquired through Sylvia Beach one typescript page from the "Circe" episode of *Ulysses* bearing additions and notations in Joyce's hand.

Croessmann obtained a great deal of the material relating to Stanislaus Joyce's *My Brother's Keeper* (1958), including two complete corrected typescripts, unrevised proofs, and corrected galley proofs. In honor of Croessmann, Charles Feinberg in 1958 presented the proofs of Patricia Hutchins' *James Joyce's Dublin* (1950) to the library. These are corrected by Stanislaus Joyce, who wrote the introduction to the book. Page proofs and corrected galley proofs also exist for the first volume of Joyce's *Letters* (1957), edited by Stuart Gilbert. Other material includes a corrected typescript of *James Joyce and Paul Léon: The Story of a Friendship* (1950) by Léon's widow Lucie Noël, and a heavily corrected holograph of an essay by John Cowper Powys on *Finnegans Wake*, published in 1947 in his collection *Obstinate Cymric*. Through the late Geoffrey Molyneux Palmer's sister in Dublin, Croessmann acquired the holograph manuscript of the first musical setting of *Chamber Music*, which Palmer composed in 1909. Thirty-two of the thirty-six poems in the collection are set to music.<sup>4</sup> Two holograph poems by James Stephens, which are the subject of a separate article in this issue, are also among the Joyceana acquired by Croessmann. Dr. Croessmann added to this material an exhaustive collection of books, articles, newspaper cuttings, radio scripts, programs and publicity notices, and BBC tapes that deal with Joyce.

Croessmann collected the important printings of all of Joyce's works, including such juvenalia as "The Day of the Rabblement" and the scarce broadsides "The Holy Office" and "Gas From a Burner." Among the many editions and translations of Joyce's books, the collection of *Ulysses* is the most complete. Croessmann gathered examples of every significant printing of *Ulysses*, including six copies of the first Shakespeare & Co. edition. Of these, three are inscribed, presentation copies, and one is among the "one of one hundred" printed on handmade Dutch paper, numbered and signed. Croessmann also acquired six volumes from Joyce's personal library. These are signed and dated by Joyce in 1901 and 1902.

Croessmann himself was anxious to prepare a Joyce iconography, and as a result of his efforts Morris Library has a valuable collection of Joyce pictorial matter. The Croessmann Collection owns three oil portraits of Joyce painted by his close friend Frank Budgen and over thirty photographs. Joyce had given Gorman many of the photographs for exclusive use in the biography. More recent acquisitions

include sketches of Joyce by Charles Seliger, Ivan Opfer, and George Orloff, and a bust by Milton Hebal, from the same cast as the full length sculpture of Joyce which stands over the author's grave in Zurich.

Also prominent among the photographs is one Joyce himself sent to the collector. Although Croessmann never knew or attempted to communicate directly with the author, Joyce seems nevertheless to have known of Croessmann. When Samuel Roth was in the process of pirating *Ulysses* in America, Croessmann countered by writing letters of protest to many newspapers in the States. Croessmann's crusade was evidently brought to Joyce's attention, and in 1926, a photograph, signed by Joyce and dated the 29th of October of that year, arrived without cover-letter or comment from Paris.

#### LATER ACCESSIONS

Dr. Croessmann's collection of Joyce letters has been supplemented by more recent acquisitions. Two small groups contain Joyce's correspondence with Alessandro Francini-Bruno and Richard Wallace, some of which are published. Among the cards and letters to Wallace are four limericks which Joyce wrote for his friend. In 1939, Joyce was arranging passage to America for a Czechoslovakian-Jewish emigrant, and another group of letters to Dr. Giuseppe Bertel (not yet published) details this experience. Joyce's efforts, early in the year before the outbreak of war, were on behalf of a young man, Richard Ofner, whose late mother, Charlotte Sauermann, had spoken sympathetically of Joyce to Mrs. Harold McCormick (née Edith Rockefeller), and thus had indirectly brought to Joyce an unexpected income during exceedingly difficult times. Through Dr. Bertel, a former pupil who was then living in London, Joyce attempted to get the financial backing necessary to establish credit and thus allow young Ofner to obtain a visa.

Only a few Joyce letters remain in the collection of the Black Sun Press, whose editors Harry and Caresse Crosby published *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun* in 1929. (Most of the Joyce correspondence had already been disposed of when the Crosby papers came to SIU-C.) The Crosbys invited C. K. Ogden to write the introduction to the *Tales*. Ogden was the director of the Orthological Institute in London and inventor of Basic English, a condensation of

the English language which Joyce regarded as the other extreme to his own method in writing *Finnegans Wake*. Ogden's experiments with language equipped him to write a cogent introduction to this fragment from "Work in Progress," and there are a number of letters from him to the Crosbys regarding his assignment.

Special Collections has also separately acquired a substantial body of Joyce material from Charles Feinberg. Of the approximately 150 items in this collection, 120 letters and cards are from Joyce, written between the years 1915 and 1934. The recipient of most of these, many of which are in the published *Letters*, was James B. Pinker<sup>5</sup> who, through the intermediary efforts of H. G. Wells, became Joyce's literary agent in 1915. Joyce was understandably anxious to receive the help that Pinker could provide; in an early letter, for example, he reports the existence of a pirated American edition of *Dubliners* which had completely escaped his notice. Joyce maintained a scrupulous and friendly, if somewhat impatient, correspondence with the agent throughout their association. The authors of the other letters in the collection include Joyce's wife, Paul Léon, Sylvia Beach, Valéry Larbaud, and Harriet Weaver.

Though a fair amount of the unique Joyce materials in Morris Library has been published or otherwise utilized by Joyce scholars, there remains much to be quarried.

#### NOTES

1. H. K. Croessmann, "Joyce, Gorman, and the Schema of *Ulysses*: An exchange of Letters—Paul L. Léon, Herbert Gorman, Bennett Cerf," in *A James Joyce Miscellany*, ed. Marvin Magalaner (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1959), II, 9-14. The schema is reproduced in facsimile in a foldout between pp. 48-49.

2. See Claude Jacquet, "Les plans de Joyce pour *Ulysse*," in *Ulysses cinquante ans après*, ed. Louis Bonnerot. Etudes anglaises, 53 (Paris: Didier, 1974), 45-82.

3. Alan M. Cohn, ed., "Joyce's Notes on the End of 'Oxen of the Sun,'" *James Joyce Quarterly* 4 (Spring 1967), 194-201.

4. Slocum and Cahoon state that Palmer set only eight of the poems (*A Bibliography of James Joyce: 1882-1941* [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953], p. 163), evidently basing the statement on letters then known to them. Joyce encouraged Palmer to set the rest of the collection, which he obviously was intent on doing.

5. Pinker's letters to Joyce are edited by John Firth in *Studies in Bibliography*, 21(1968), 205-24.



## Contributors

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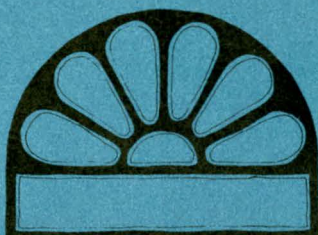
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