

Panel 1: Bilingual Behan

A linguistic rebellion: multilingualism and heteroglossia in Brendan Behan's work

The paper addresses the question of linguistic diversity in Behan's work, especially in relation to his experience of coercive confinement. As its starting point, it takes the comparison with the work of the Irish-language writer Máirtín Ó Cadhain, whom Behan met in the Curragh internment camp and who became an important influence on his writing. Ó Cadhain arguably translated his prison experience into encyclopaedic fiction which weaves together multiple languages and forms of language. Behan followed in Ó Cadhain's footsteps, initially creating a small, but sophisticated corpus of poetry which draws on various genres and forms of Irish, but occasionally uses English and French as well. Although he initially planned to write his prison memoirs in Irish, receiving even some funding for this purpose, they eventually materialized in English as *Borstal Boy*. While the wish to reach a wider audience and the distrust of government policies towards Irish might have played a role in this decision, an equally plausible explanation is Behan's need to portray the linguistic diversity that he encountered while incarcerated in England. This did not entail a farewell to Irish, though – the language remained an important thread in the plurilingual tapestry of his mature prose and drama. The intermingling of languages often carries an anti-authoritarian message in Behan's work, as the paper endeavours to illustrate using examples from *Borstal Boy* and *The Quare Fellow*.

Radvan Markus is senior lecturer in the Irish language and literature at Charles University, Prague. He is the author of *Echoes of the Rebellion: The Year 1798 in Twentieth-Century Irish Fiction and Drama* (Peter Lang, 2015). He has published numerous articles and essays on various aspects of Irish-language prose and drama of the 20th century, as well as on Czech-Irish cultural relations. His new monograph on Máirtín Ó Cadhain, *Carnabhal na Marbh: Cré na Cille agus Litríocht an Domhain* is going to be published by Leabhar Breac this year. Markus's Czech translation of Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* (2017) received the prestigious Magnesia Litera award, his other translations from Irish include Ó Cadhain's 'An Eochair' (2021) and the novel *L'Attaque* by Eoghan Ó Tuairisc (2007).

When Behan met Irish?

Brendan Behan figures prominently, along with Flann O'Brien and Liam O'Flaherty, as major bilingual writers in mid-century Ireland. While O'Brien and O'Flaherty grew up in Irish-speaking households, Behan is a product in an English-speaking environment. Typical accounts

connect Behan's earliest Irish-language experiences with his 1941 deportation back to Ireland when, on returning to Dublin, he was greeted in Irish by customs officer while the special branch detectives remained silent. Shortly afterwards in 1942, he began a prison sentence - served at Mountjoy Prison, Arbour Hill and finally the Curragh - where "he learned Irish from native-speaker Republicans and read voraciously." He subsequently wrote numerous texts in Irish to critical acclaim as a result of his prison education. Known primarily for his theatre and to a lesser extent his poetry in Irish, it is not surprising the criticism and scholarship to date has focused almost exclusively on *An Giall/The Hostage* and his poetry. This paper has two connected aims. Firstly, drawing on a variety of sources such as *The Irish Press*, Kavanagh's *Weekly* and *Envoy*, it attempts to plot Behan's exposure to and interaction with the Irish language prior to his imprisonment; and secondly it attempts to set Behan in the context of mid-century Irish-language literary and linguistic politics and sketch the network of Irish-language speakers and writers that formed his sphere of influence.

Brian Ó Conchubhair is an Associate Professor of Irish Language and Literature at the University of Notre Dame and a fellow of the Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies and the Kellogg Institute for International Studies. He has served as Director of the Center for the Study of Languages & Cultures (2013-2020); Executive Director of the IRISH Seminar (2011-2013), and President of the American Conference for Irish Studies (2015-2017). *An Saol Bocht*, his full-length biography of Flann O'Brien/Myles na Gopaleen will appear in 2023. Recent publications include: *Gearrscéalta Ár Linne* (2006, 2010, 2013); *WHY IRISH? Irish Language and Literature in Academia* (2008); *Twisted Truths* (2011); *Darkness: Liam O'Flaherty's Tragedy* (2013); *Lost in Connemara: Stories from the Irish* (2014); *Rogha Scéalta le Pádraic Breathnach 1974-2014* (2014) and (with Jefferson Holdridge) *After Ireland: Essays on Contemporary Irish Poetry* (Wake Forest University Press, 2017); *My American Journey: Douglas Hyde* (2019); and *Cathair na Gaillimhe: Díolaim Cathrach* (2020).

Panel 2: Brendan Behan in Other Media

Brendan Behan Sings Irish Folk Songs and Ballads

Brendan Behan was never reluctant to burst into song and entertain his captive audience, often in a pub. Although most well-known for his plays and prose, he also recorded a number of songs, some of his own composition and others either traditional or written by contemporaries. His most well-known recording *Brendan Behan Sings Irish Folk Songs and Ballads* remarkably

captures not only his voice, but his wit and distinct joie de vivre. The collection from 1960 includes not only the songs themselves (with Behan still in fine singing form), but also his introductions and wry comments on a range of subjects. The present paper will look at the circumstances behind the recording, the actual songs included on the recording and its cultural impact.

David Livingstone is an American citizen living and working in the Czech Republic for the last thirty years. He teaches Shakespeare, Modernism, Czech culture, children's literature and American folk music at Palacký University, Olomouc. He recently published a book, *In Our Own Image: Fictional Representations of William Shakespeare*, which looks at the wealth of novels, plays, short stories, films, television series and even comics focused on Shakespeare as a character. He has also presented and published a number of papers on American folk music.

Memory of Brendan Behan in 20th and 21st Century Popular Music

Known for mostly his plays and autobiographical fiction, Brendan Behan was also an accomplished musician, famously including his song "The Auld Triangle," in the play *The Quare Fellow*. Having written several songs and ballads and performing them himself during his life while having the charisma and charm to draw in an audience, it is understandable that Behan himself became a topic of different songs and lyrics after his death ranging from primary focus to smaller offhanded mentions. The paper proposes to explore some of the more popular mentions of the persona of Brendan Behan in songs focusing primarily on two styles that appear to engage with the character the most – punk and folk.

The paper will discuss what kind of image Behan has in these songs addressing the often-derogatory portrayal as a drunk man to ascertain whether Behan's portrayal is simply of a boisterous alcoholic, or whether the two styles of music and their general topic engagement provide a more nuanced view of the author and his legacy. The paper will include the discussion of lyrics (and where possible of live performances) of more well-known depictions such as The Pogues' "Streams of Whiskey" or Damien Dempsey's "Jar Song," as well as the lesser-known engagements such as are songs by Sex Pistols or Dexys Midnight Runners to examine how Brendan Behan remains memorialized in popular music.

Marie Gemrichová is a PhD student at the Centre for Irish Studies at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Charles University in Prague. She studied both her BA and MA at the department and during her MA program also spent an academic year at Trinity

College Dublin as part of the Erasmus+ program. Her MA thesis discussed the novels of Dermot Healy. Her PhD research focuses on the topic of personal and communal memory in post-agreement Northern Irish novel and focuses both on memory as a narrative and the application of memory from cognitive psychology. She has presented papers at different international conferences. Currently she is an editor of *The Protagonist*, a student academic journal, and the PhD representative in EFACIS.

No Author Worse Served: Brendan Behan's Book Covers in the UK

There is a book about Samuel Beckett's collaboration with the American theatre director Alan Schneider titled *No Author Better Served*. I am going to prove the opposite by showing covers of books written by Brendan Behan. British book buyers doubtless know well the visage of the figurehead on books authored by Brendan Behan: the author at his worst, not best. A singular phenomenon, food for thought. You can't judge a book by its cover? Thank God for that!

Matthew Sweney is currently employed at the American Center of Palacký University Olomouc, where he taught American and Irish studies for over 20 years. In addition to teaching, he is also an editor (*Ageing Masculinities in Contemporary European and Anglophone Cinema*, Bloomsbury, 2023) and translator from Czech to English, including poetry (Poet Laureate of Prague Sylva Fischerová, *Kostel pro kuřáky/A Church for Smokers*, 2019). He also writes on film (chapter on Czech cinema in the volume *Ageing Masculinities in Contemporary European and Anglophone Cinema*, Routledge, 2023).

Panel 3: Brendan Behan: Man and Myth

'The Most Cooperative of Writers:' Brendan Behan's Collaborations

He was the most cooperative of writers. This emboldened me to attempt improvements to the script which I had not either the time or the courage to attempt before. (NUIG T40, box 1)

So writes Carolyn Swift in an Abbey Theatre programme note for *The Quare Fellow*, explaining how she made multiple rounds of cuts to Behan's play when it arrived at the Pike Theatre. This paper draws on heavily edited typescripts of *The Quare Fellow*, recently obtained by NUI Galway, to contend that we should regard Behan's various collaborations as integral to his oeuvre, from his famously edited plays to his infamous 'talk books' (see Jeffs 1966).

Theatrical collaboration is one of the ‘ecologies of writing’, and ‘some authors really count on their editor/director to help them turn their manuscript from the “far from finished” phase to a stageable state’ (Van Hulle 2022: 107). Behan was one such writer, yet the collaborative aspects of his work have consistently been underplayed or dismissed, thus disregarding collaboration’s central part in the creative process (see Stillinger 1991).

In the typescript edits to *The Quare Fellow*, there is much cut on the grimness of execution and the violence of criminal assault, suggesting a taming of Behan’s writing for public consumption. This paper redoubles John McCourt’s call for a genetic edition of Behan’s texts (2015: 22), which would allow us examine the contours of his collaborative creative process in more detail and thus open up possible new directions in the performance of his work.

James Little is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at the School of English, Drama and Film, University College Dublin, where he researches Ireland’s literatures of coercive confinement at the UCD Humanities Institute. He received his PhDs from Trinity College Dublin and the University of Antwerp and is a member of the Centre for Irish Studies, Prague. His publications include *Samuel Beckett in Confinement: The Politics of Closed Space* (2020), *The Making of Samuel Beckett’s Not I / Pas moi, That Time / Cette fois and Footfalls / Pas* (2021) – for which he edited the online genetic edition (2022; see www.beckettarchive.org) – and the edited collection *Ireland: Interfaces and Dialogues* (2022; with Ondřej Pilný, Radvan Markus and Daniela Theinová). Together with Christina Morin and Cólín Parsons, he recently established the Bloomsbury Academic series Global Perspectives in Irish Literary Studies – interested authors can contact the editors for further information.

Battlefields of the Poor

My father Paddy and his brother Eddie were friends of Brendan Behan. In my current manuscript ‘*Battlefields of the Poor*’ I share new insights into and memories of episodes from his life that he confabulated in his own memoirs ‘*Confessions of an Irish Rebel*.’ In ‘*Confessions*’ Brendan asserts that he was in love with my aunt Maureen and sang to her on her deathbed. My book’s title derives from Brendan’s claim to have ‘shared the same battlefields of the poor’ with Paddy and Eddie. Brendan was first arrested in October 1939 along with Paddy and Eddie. He was released within days. The IRA then ordered him to leave Dublin regarding him as a security risk.

Using my father's and uncles' reminiscences, contemporary newspapers, and military intelligence files I reveal new information on Behan's involvement in Irish republican politics of the late 1930's and early 1940's. I share insights into how Behan and his talent were viewed by his republican contemporaries.

Behan translated Merriman's Gaelic bawdy satiric verse poem: *Cúirt an Mhean Oíche*. This work [now lost] was a testament to Behan's skill as a linguist. The Gaelic scholar Máirtín Ó'Cadhain thought that Behan's translation of *The Midnight Court* was the best he had read. Ó'Cadhain believed that the source of Behan's genius was that he was possessed of brilliant retention and could recall and recycle material from a myriad of sources, whether it be the verse of Gaelic bards, the lingo of old lags or the pub banter of Boer War widows.

Fergus Whelan M.Phil. TCD, author, and historian, lives in Dublin. His first book *Dissent into Treason* was published by Brandon Books, 2010. He followed with *God Provoking Democrat: The Remarkable Life of Archibald Hamilton Rowan*, New Island in 2015. His third book, *May Tyrants Tremble: The Life of William Drennan*, was published by Irish Academic Press 2020 and was highly acclaimed in several publications including the *Irish Times* and the *Belfast Telegraph*. Fergus is a regular contributor of articles and book reviews to *History Ireland Magazine*.

The Chronotope of the public house in Behan's *Confessions of an Irish Rebel*

The Chronotope as a concept was introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin in his essay "Forms of time and of the Chronotope in the novel" (1975); it describes the relationship between time, space and novel. Place and time bend to the plot of the novel and aid the author in telling his/her story. Some Chronotopes are universal, such as the one of the "high road", where travellers meet on the road (place) and in order to meet, they have to be there at the same time, otherwise the plot could not move forward.

I argue that Brendan Behan, especially in his later novel "Confessions of an Irish Rebel", made his very own Chronotope that fitted his artistic persona: That of the pub. The time that the narrator spends in the pub can be stretched or shortened by him and him alone, making him the only character who can master this mix of time and space that inevitably works in his favour.

This artistic Chronotope of the pub is a stark contrast to what happened to the real-life Behan at times when he had too much to drink, when he had to be picked up and taken home by his wife or his publisher, who followed him on his drunken outings like two babysitters, as Rae

Jeffs recounts in her account of her time working with Behan. Therefore, I argue that Behan crafted this Chronotope in his novel because he needed a counterweight to his at times very bleak, uncomfortable and out-of-control reality.

Sarah Ritt received her MA in English Literature and Cultural Studies in 2018, with a thesis titled „Power, Public Space and the Issue of Murals in Post-Civil War Belfast”, focusing on meaning-making on public walls in the city. Her latest publication is “Wanderings of an Irish Drunkard? Alcohol and Self-Staging in Brendan Behan’s Confessions of an Irish Rebel?” which was part of the *Booze as a Muse* monograph published by Peter Lang in 2021. At the moment, she is working on a PhD exposé that seeks to examine the impact of everyday remembrance via graffiti in Belfast’s working-class districts.

Panel 4: Behan’s Legacy at Home and Abroad

Brendan Behan’s Legacy in France

Irish author, playwright, house painter and rebel Brendan Behan started writing in Paris and as Seamus Heaney, he resumed digging with his pen into the synecdochical and kaleidoscopic pattern of his past. In the Latin Quarter, digging with a pen between the Café de Flore and Les Deux Magots, “The twin cathedral of existentialism” and surrounded by Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Brendan Behan was also haunted by Irish authors, Oscar Wilde who died in Paris, James Joyce who roamed the streets of Paris, and Samuel Beckett who helped him and shared the same French publisher, *Les Editions de Minuit*.

First, we will attempt to demonstrate how Brendan Behan’s writing in Paris to paraphrase Nicholas de Cues (1401-1464), is a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. Because if the circle is narrow and encloses the creativity of the artist, it is also a power of expansion through French translation, a path to enjoy freedom and literary recognition. We will then analyze the psychic confinement of Parisian hotel rooms in Behan's work as a catalyst for creative energy and mythologized rewriting of the past. *Borstal Boy*, started in Paris is the epitome of this rewriting of a traumatic past, because to quote Simone Weil, “Time’s violence rends the soul; by the rent eternity enters” and turns this ordeal into a swan song. Finally, we will ponder over Behan's legacy in France in the archives of the BnF (National Library of France) and on stage from the *Théâtre des Nations* in 1959, the *Odéon Théâtre de France* in 1962, the *Théâtre du rideau vert* in 1978 or the *Théâtre de la Madeleine* in 1983 to the *Théâtre de l’Escabeau* in 2022.

Virginie Roche-Tiengo is an Associate Professor in Irish Studies at the University d'Artois. Following her Ph.D. at the Sorbonne on *Lost Unity: The Poetics of Myth in the Theatre of the Irish Playwright Brian Friel*, she has published on Irish drama, in particular the work of Brian Friel, Thomas Kilroy, Frank McGuinness, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett. The latest international conference she co-organized in October 2018 was entitled *Crossing Borders: Contemporary Anglophone Theatre in Europe*. The conference aimed to allow academics, translators, publishers, and a wide range of theatre practitioners, to confront their experience with Anglophone theatre throughout Europe. Virginie Roche-Tiengo is currently working on the *Brian Friel Papers* in the National Library of Ireland and in the archives of NUI Galway as part of a new book project. Her research also focuses on law and theatre.

Ondřej Pilný is a Professor of English and American Literature, Director of the Centre for Irish Studies and Chair of the Graduate Studies Board in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Charles University, Prague. He has published widely on subjects ranging from modern and contemporary Irish and Anglophone drama to Irish fiction, cultural memory, and structuralist theory, and has translated into Czech works by J.M. Synge, Flann O'Brien, Samuel Beckett, Brian Friel, Martin McDonagh, Enda Walsh, Mark O'Rowe and others. His recent publications include *Ireland: Interfaces and Dialogues* (ed. with Radvan Markus, Daniela Theinová and James Little, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2022), *Cultural Convergence: The Dublin Gate Theatre, 1928-1960* (ed. with Ruud van den Beuken and Ian R. Walsh; Palgrave, 2021) and a thematic journal issue, "Dialogue, Performance and the Body Politic in Contemporary Theatre", co-edited with Clare Wallace (*Litteraria Pragensia*, 32.63 [2022]). Ondřej is a past Chairperson of IASIL and a former Vice-President of EFACIS.

Hidden Irelands in the Short Fiction of Brendan Behan

Although Brendan Behan is amongst the most well-known Irish writers of the mid-twentieth century, there is barely any research conducted on his oeuvre today. This is because his larger-than-life persona, that of the drinker with a writing problem, has continuously overshadowed his literary output. During his life, Behan's plays and autobiographical novel brought him fame; in his more marginalised short fiction, however, he thematised not only his history with militant nationalism, but also his socialism, class and sexuality, as well as the religious hypocrisy of de Valera's Ireland. Since John Brannigan maintains that "[i]n both its oral and written forms, storytelling functioned in early twentieth-century Ireland to legitimate and ground nationalist

ideologies and identities,”¹ the writing of stories was a way for Behan to express his own notions of identity in the wake of independence. Behan appropriated the form of the short story to discuss issues otherwise disregarded at the time. Using his own experiences, he sought “to impose a city setting, city voices and a city aesthetic on his writings at a time when there was an undoubted supremacy of the rural in Irish writing.”² This paper will entail a study of Behan’s short fiction, examining the ways he constructs varied identities in his narratives through a lens of Irish autobiography.

Nathalie Lamprecht is a PhD candidate at Charles University Prague’s Centre for Irish Studies. Her research focuses on the intersections of gender, space, and identity in recent Irish novels written by and about women. Her MA thesis entitled *Class, Sexuality and Nationalism: Identity Building in the Prose Writings of Brendan Behan* was awarded a Vilém Mathesius Award. She has presented at several international conferences and is co-editor of the student academic journal *The Protagonist*. Recently, she has produced an episode of the EFACIS Irish Itinerary Podcast, in which she talks to documentary maker Alan Gilsean about his film *An Buachaill Gealgháireach* or *The Laughing Boy*, which traces how Brendan Behan’s song of the same name became an anthem for the Greek left.

¹ John Brannigan, *Brendan Behan: Cultural Nationalism and the Revisionist Writer* (Paperback reprint, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014), 60.

² John McCourt, “‘Not exactly patterned in the Same Mould’: Behan’s Joyce,” *Reading Brendan Behan*, ed. John McCourt (Cork: Cork University Press, 2019), 147.