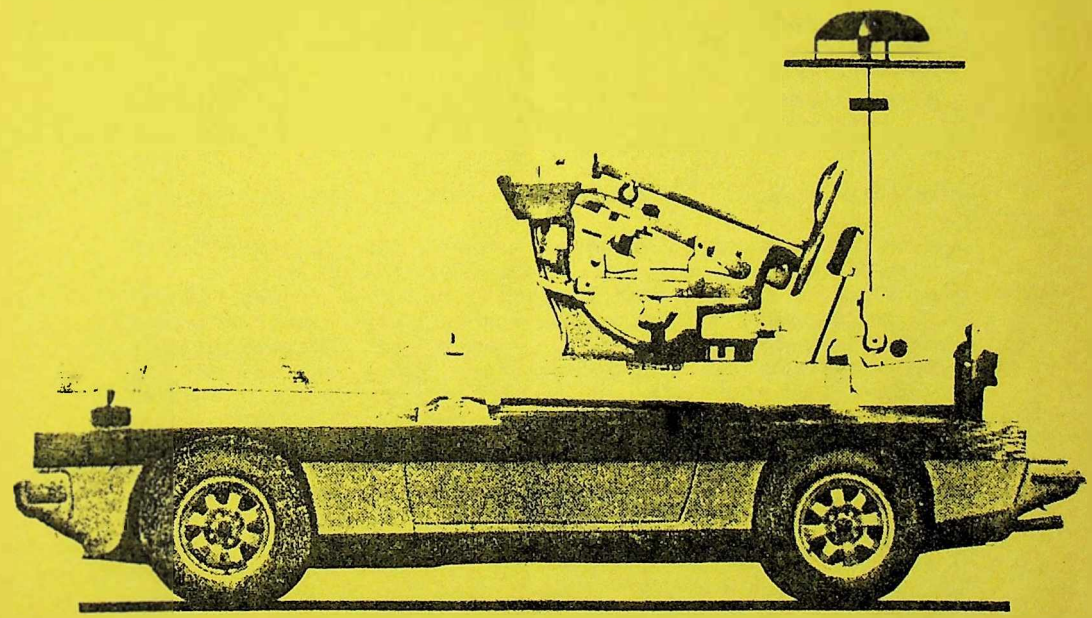
THE TIMES BICYCLE PUMP SUPPLEMENT

A Journal of Inflationary Tendencies

181 Keats and Chapman : Terry Carr : 182 Selwyn Froggitt : Crafty Colonials: 184 Parts of Europe : Ron Graham : 185 A man on our lawn : 186 Don Dunstan: Matthew Flinders : 187 Keats and Chapman again : Benedict Kiely : Brian O'Nolan: 189 Four books by Myles na Gopaleen

NUMBER TWELVE FEBRUARY 1979



PARERGON PAPERS

Registered for posting as a publication - category B

ISSN 0155 0713

KEATS AND CHAPMAN once got tired of standing-by for cheap air fares and stowed away on a tramp steamer, which, it turned out, wasn't going where they wanted to go anyway. Two days out they were discovered and offered the choice of working their passage or leaving the ship instantly. Some days later, while they were scrubbing the decks, Keats (who was in a foul mood) snarled at Chapman, 'Where's the bloody soap?' Chapman said, quite cheerfully, 'By jove, it does, doesn't it!' Keats said a rude nautical word and threw his bucket at him.

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

PARERGON PAPERS are published in what he laughingly calls his spare time by John Bangsund PO Box 230 Kew Victoria 3101 Australia. They may be had in exchange for your own publication, by joining ANZAPA or FAPA, by writing interesting letters to the editor, or by donating a substantial sum not exceeding $5 to the Parergon Foundation. Sums below $5 are not regarded as substantial. This is the twelfth issue, nominally dated February 1979. It incorporates parts of the eleventh issue, which was seen only by members of ANZAPA and a few other people because I messed up my first attempt at the cover.

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

14 February There was a fanzine in the mail today from John Rowley, *Turn Left at Thursday* 1, in the course of which he mentions getting a fanzine in the mail from Mike and Pat Meara over beyond in Spondon, Derby. There was a time when I used to get fanzines from Mike and Pat Meara, and a whole host of other people all over the known globe, but these days I — well, John Rowley sends me his stuff, and it's very kind of him. All afternoon I caught myself thinking 'I must pub an ish!' or something to that effect. More important, I must get round to distributing the issues I publish. I mean, Terry Carr asked me in this very room a few weeks ago whether I was still publishing fanzines. Naturally that spurred me to dig up a set of Parergon Papers for him, and some other things, dating back to 1971, that he'd never seen, and I checked his card in my addressing system while I was about it. 'You've, um, moved from New York, Terry, haven't you?' I said. 'You're a fakefan, Bangsund,' Terry Carr said. Terry said that a fair bit to me while he was here. Full of fun, he is, in a quiet sort of way. I like him. I must admit that I was predisposed to liking Terry Carr, for two reasons. Many years ago John Bush of Gollancz told me that I looked like Terry Carr. What a fine sort of chap he must be! I thought. He doesn't look like me at all, as it happens, but never mind. And Terry is one of the most delightful writers in fandom, author, or at least recorder, of the immortal sentence 'Ah'm Efemandee Busby, and this is mah child bride Elinor.' (I quote from memory. The line was spoken by Burbee during the making of a fan western movie. An appreciation of such things, I like to think, is the mark of the trufan. Maybe Terry started calling me a fakefan because I asked him to explain it to me.)

SELWYN FROGGITT, concert secretary of the Scarsdale Working Men's Club & Institute and all-round genial idiot, came bumbling onto our TV screens about this time last year, and I loved him. It's a cruel thing to say about Bill Maynard, the very accomplished actor who plays Selwyn, but he looks for all the world like Doug Anthony's smarter older brother. Sometimes when the Deputy Prime Minister and Parliamentary Leader of the National Country Party, Member for Richmond (NSW) and Minister for Trade and Resources, the Right Honourable John Douglas Anthony, P.C., appears on telly, much to Sally's annoyance, but I can't help it, I give him the old double thumbs-up and cry *Magic!* with a Yorkshire accent.

Selwyn is a tallish, fattish, baldish, smiling chap with a heart of gold and a head of, I dunno, maybe putty, but he has ideas, oh yes, he's full of 'em. Since he has some pretensions to culture — loves Beethoven, he says, reads the Times Lit Supp and is interested in archaeology — his ideas tend to be a bit on the ambitious side, like inviting Andre Previn or Elvis Presley to perform at the club's bingo night. Selwyn is such a large comic figure that he needs no less than seven almost-straight characters to support him: his mother, his brother Maurice, Maurice's girlfriend Vera, the barman at the club and the club's other three committee members, who are mean-minded, pompous, self-important (but quite likable) bastards.

One night the three con Selwyn into believing that he is going to be the guest on *This Is Your Life*. Every comedy series you can think of has used this weary plot idea, sure, but you've never seen it done like this, believe me. Selwyn falls for it completely, not so much because he is vain (he is a bit) but because he thinks it just and probable. When he wavers a bit they remind him that the show often has quite ordinary people as guests — sometimes the only thing they're notable for is that they play a musical instrument. Selwyn admits that he doesn't even play a musical instrument, but he can get a bit of a tune out of a bicycle pump. That's it then, says one of them, They probably saw a note about you in the Times Bicycle Pump Supplement! (So now you know about the cover. That, I thought, is a publication that should not go unpublished.) The evening wears on. Selwyn's mum sends a message that he can't be on *This Is Your Life* because she's watching it, and it's the Archbishop of Canterbury. Wonder what instrument he plays, says Selwyn. Magic!

Yorkshire Television comes up with some first-class series from time to time. *Oh No, It's Selwyn Froggitt!* is one of the best of them. Other series I have enjoyed during the last year or so, to give you some idea of my weird taste, are *The Glittering Prizes*, *The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin*, *All Creatures Great and Small* and the much under-rated New Zealand historical series *The Governor*. I am apparently alone in disliking *I Claudius*.

CRAFTY COLONIALS Sir Roderick Carnegie requested the pleasure of my company at the official opening of the Colonial Crafts of Victoria exhibition at the National Gallery, and Sally's of course, and later at a reception in the Great Hall (Music by the Wedderburn Old Timers, Colonial Refreshments, You are Invited to wear Colonial Dress), but we had to disappoint old Rod on account

of a prior engagement and not being sure we had the keys to our colonial dress. As it turned out there was nothing in the paper the morning after about it, not even a photo, so it's probably just as well we couldn't go. Nothing worse than standing there in the Great Hall of the National Gallery of Victoria, sweltering in your sack-cloth and leg-irons, and not a reporter or photographer in sight. And we managed rather better than colonial refreshments at the Lotus Inn, where we dined with Robin Johnson, Robin Johnson's parents and some of Robin Johnson's friends. The Chinese do rather well for themselves, don't they? If that's the sort of food they eat (didn't go much for the crab claws, but the other dozen or so courses were fine), you can't believe everything you read about China, can you? Anyway, as I was saying, flash sports cars.

Ever since I was five I have wanted a Lamborghini Espada. That is not a Chinese dish, but (as I was saying) a flash sports car, and I was somewhat ahead of my time, wanting a Lamborghini Espada when I was five. In 1944 even Issigooni hadn't thought of wanting that car. As I grew up my ideals changed, and in 1951, at the Melbourne Motor Show, I saw the car I really wanted — the Alvis TA21. I had one of those for a while, in 1964-65, and I wish I still had it, but it wasn't what you would call a practical sort of car for a young man with little money and less mechanical knowledge. These days I think just about any car would be fine if it was paid off and running well (the Renault is running well and will be all mine in August 1980, lord willing and weather permitting), but I still have a bit of a hankering after an Espada. Or a De Tomaso Pantera. Any of those.

Reading the catalogue of the Colonial Crafts Exhibition, as I did at least three times in the line of duty, I was struck with the way these old crafty colonials *made do*. If they wanted a flash Italian sports car on the farm, say, to milk the chooks or shear the kangaroos, would they sit around moaning about not being able to afford one? Never! They'd get a gum tree, a discarded anvil and a length of post-and-rail hoop iron, and in two shakes of a dingo's tail they'd have knocked up something near enough. I can't tell you how inspired I was, how proud of my colonial heritage and so on, when I read that kind of thing in the book. Yes I can. That was only a figure of speech, a periphrastic circumlocution of a divagatory or roundabout nature, preparing you for what I did next. What I did next was this. Using only an abandoned piano, the chassis of a discarded Porsche 924, a disused coin and a few pieces of bent string, I constructed my own flash Italian sports car. That's it on the cover. Goes like a beauty. One touch on the keyboard (one tickle on the ivories, I would have said, but I couldn't find an abandoned elephant to complete the job) and away it goes, roaring off in all directions at speeds of up to 24 decibels in E-sharp minor and other fancy clefs you've probably never heard of. It's not much to look at, sure, but Sally finds it very handy when she's doing her Chopin.

I lie. I didn't build that whatever-it-is at all. It's just something I took a sneaky photo of over Leigh Edmonds's back fence. And I wasted my time: the CIA and ASIO said they knew all about it already, and wouldn't give me anything for my trouble. They said it was an abandoned prototype Orright Ornithopter, designed for use in

extended long-range oil-damped pianoforte quodlibets, with or without double-loop grapevine-stepover hydropneumatic synthesizing capability, but it didn't work so Edmonds had chucked it out. I'm not at all sure what that gobbledygook means, but there you have it.

And what has all this to do with bicycle pumps? Blessed if I know.

862 1493 Ah, that rings a bell! I answered and a girl said 'Have you got the tail-pipe in for the Mercedes yet?' I had to admit that I hadn't, but before she got mad with me I gave her another number to ring. I get lots of wrong numbers, mainly because this one was previously owned by a firm called Parts Of Europe, and before them by the Country Roads Board. When people ring and ask for Parts Of Europe I am always tempted to say something like 'Yes, which part would you like? We've got a special on Bosnia this week.' Likewise, when people start by saying 'I want a permit' I'm tempted to ask what for, and when they tell me they want to dig up Cotham Road or whatever, to say 'Nah, you don't need a permit for that! I'll just make a note of it, and you go for your life.' So far I haven't done that, but golly it's tempting. One day an elderly-sounding woman said 'Is that Mrs Cooper?' and some demon urged but did not quite persuade me to say 'Of course it is, dearie. I always sound like a baritone when I've been drinking.' Does Mrs Cooper, I wonder, deal in permits or tail-pipes? I'll probably never know.

16 February The past week or so has been a confused and often sad sort of time. John Foyster rang on Monday and said that Ron Graham had died the previous day. That brought back some tangled memories and feelings. Ron was a great supporter of science fiction and fandom. In the first letter I ever had from him, in 1967, he said he liked Australian Science Fiction Review and wanted to contribute to it, but with money, because that was easier for him than trying to write. I took him up on it, and asked him to lend me the price of a secondhand Roneo — which he did by return mail. I started paying him back, but after a few months he told me to forget the rest. The list of fans (and pros) he helped would read like a who's-who of Australian fandom. I liked Ron, but we never understood each other. I felt I was beginning to understand him during a long conversation we had in Melbourne in 1974, the only conversation of any substance we ever had, but we didn't get any further. We fell out completely over *Vision of Tomorrow* ten years ago, because my idea of good sf was different from his, and different again from Phil Harbottle's idea, and because Phil's remarks about what I was doing (or what he imagined me to be doing) worried Ron and caused him to think that in some way I was undermining the whole project, and finally he asked me to resign (resign what? — neither Ron nor Phil would tell me precisely what my duties were, or even my title), and I declined, and he sacked me. That soured our relationship for some years. He never invited me to see his fabulous library. Maybe he thought I would sneer at it; maybe he thought I wouldn't be interested. He told me his philosophy, or part of it, in '74. Aim higher than you think you should; you'll hit something; then aim too high again. Another part I knew well already: no comfort to the enemy. For a time I was the enemy, or so he had decided, and I had

more than a taste of what Ron meant by 'no comfort'. In 1971 John Campbell died, and I had no hesitation in asking Ron to help me with the publication of *John W. Campbell: an Australian tribute*. It was typical of our relationship that he sent me $200 immediately, that he asked me to write his memories of John Campbell, and that I ignored this impossible request entirely. He was quite pleased with the book, and I was delighted to hear that: I was concerned until then that he might think I was getting at him in some way in what I wrote about him in the introduction, and start discomfiting me again. I was tickled pink at the World Convention in 1975 when I invited Forry Ackerman up to the dais to present the Big Heart award — and he presented it to Ron. I don't know what Ron regarded as the greatest moment in his life, but from where I was sitting it seemed to me that that was it, and I was as happy for him as he was. Our paths didn't cross again after that convention, so my last memory of him is of that great and unexpected occasion when he was honoured, and rightly so, by his peers in fandom.

John Foyster's news didn't have quite the impact on me that it should have had, because a few days earlier Sally and I had witnessed death at closer quarters, and frankly, we still haven't quite got over it. The ambulance men said we would probably be hearing from the police, so that night I wrote an account of what had happened. The following, as far as the asterisks, is what I wrote for the police; the two paragraphs after the asterisks I wrote for myself.

> 8 February. I was typing when my wife arrived home, about 5.40. We talked for a while and ended up arguing a bit about a book I wanted to buy. She left the room and I went on typing. About 6 I moved from the typewriter to the desk, and worked there for three or four minutes. My wife came back and apologized about the book. Then she said 'Do you know there's a man on our lawn?'
>
> Normally I notice every movement in the street, and from the typewriter I am certain I would have noticed a man coming in the gate and lying down on the lawn. From the desk the view is not as direct to the corner of the lawn where he was lying, so I can only think he must have come in between about 6 and 6.05.
>
> My first thought was that he was drunk, my second, when I noticed the handkerchief in his hand, that he had had some kind of stroke or had fainted. I went out and said 'Are you all right, mate?' When I got close to him I saw the foam at his mouth. He did not respond to my voice, nor to my touching his shoulder. I said 'Christ! You're not all right, are you!' I came inside. My wife rang 000 for an ambulance, and I rang Dr Weiss to ask him what we should do. There was a recorded message at the surgery. I wrote down both the emergency numbers given and rang the first of them. Mrs Weiss told me I should turn him on his side and keep his head back. I ran out and did that, feeling stupid that I hadn't earlier. My first reaction had been 'If in doubt, don't move him.' I rolled him on to his left side and tried to feel a pulse at his right wrist. I said to my wife that I thought he had gone, and I was still holding him when the ambulance arrived.

* * * * *

Afterwards I rang Mrs Weiss again to tell her what had happened. She said I should have a stiff drink. I said 'I intend to. But don't tell your husband that — I'm supposed to be off it!'

Sally said she had never seen a dead person before. All the time I was with the man I had been thinking of my father's dying, and feeling the same tenderness and cruel inadequacy I had felt then, fourteen years ago.

Yesterday I was listening to the radio when the 1 o'clock news came on. 'The Premier of South Australia, Mr Don Dunstan' — *is dead!* I thought he was going to say, from the tone of his voice — 'has resigned...' All over Australia people reacted as Sally and I did. We could not have been more shocked and dismayed if he had died. He was one of the most brilliant and capable politicians Australia has ever had, easily one of the most colourful (his opponents said flamboyant) and probably the most popular. In a survey two or three years ago he scored an amazing 82% approval rating, at a time when Malcolm Fraser and Gough Whitlam were lucky to score 30%. The man seemed indestructible. How close he came to destroying himself we learnt last night. He is 52, and burnt out, physically and emotionally exhausted. Readers in Adelaide will understand exactly how Sally and I feel about Don Dunstan; you had to live there to appreciate the man, and we had that privilege.

Add to what I have written above the fact that in this week Gough Whitlam's book about his sacking on 11 November 1975, *The Truth of the Matter*, was launched and discussed endlessly, reviving bitter memories for me of that time, and that yesterday my sister's divorce went through, and you will see roughly what I meant about the last week or so being a confused and often sad time.

On the bright side: We went out and bought that book I mentioned. For the last two or three years it has been the one book I wanted above all others, and we have it, and I am content. It is Matthew Flinders' *A Voyage to Terra Australis; undertaken for the purpose of completing the discovery of that vast country, and prosecuted in the years 1801, 1802, and 1803, in His Majesty's Ship the Investigator, and subsequently in the armed vessel Porpoise and Cumberland schooner. With an account of the shipwreck of the Porpoise, arrival of the Cumberland at Mauritius, and imprisonment of the commander during six years and a half in that island.* In two massive volumes, with an atlas — and I hasten to assure John Foyster and other informed readers that I have not traded the Renault and half our possessions on the original edition of 1814. This is merely the Libraries Board of South Australia facsimile edition of 1966, and it cost only slightly more than a fortnight's rent. I will probably have a little difficulty explaining this to my Macedonian landlord, but I'll think of something.

The other major acquisition of recent months is *Westall's Drawings*, a wickedly extravagant volume that complements Flinders. It literally towers over every other book we have: it measures 19 by 13½ inches, and makes even the Flinders volumes beside it look diminutive. An interest in Australian history can become a dangerously expensive hobby, but I've heard of people spending much more on science fiction.

I wrote this story a couple of months ago. When I ran short of material for the February issue of my other fanzine, *The Society of Editors Newsletter*, I decided it was time to expose its readers to Keats and Chapman anyway, and bunged it in. So far no-one has called for my resignation, but to protect myself I have called for more contributions. The people who read the newsletter provide me with a living, and I can't have them thinking I'm slightly odd.

KEATS AND CHAPMAN once went on holiday in Italy with a bohemian singer named Michael Balfe. In Milan they met another acquaintance, the famous campanologist Sir Nigel Batt, and the four spent many happy hours together in the sunny villages and vineyards of the north. Batt was investigating the local bells and belles (there was more than one string to this beau); Balfe was indulging an interest of his youth, looking at fortifications, earthworks, gun emplacements and the like; Chapman was doing a bit of research for some footnotes he was writing about the Roman Census in Imperial Times; and Keats was just mooning about as usual, jotting down the odd rhyme, making the odd delicious moan upon the midnight hour (this was when he drafted his celebrated 'Lasagna Recollected in Tranquillity', you may recall) and that sort of thing.

At a pub in Cremona they fell in with Louis Bettson, an earnest drinker and gifted conversationalist of uncertain origin, who kept them amused with his witty tales of art, life and Italian politics for as long as they cared to ply him with grog. One drowsy afternoon Keats found himself alone, *alone, all, all alone* — and was about to jot that down until he remembered he had read it somewhere — and he began to wonder where his companions were. Sir Nigel is probably up a bell-tower somewhere, he thought, and Balfe will be looking at some boring old gun emplacements, and Chapman will be wearing his brain down to the knuckle deciphering old Roman statistics. Keats sighed, and wondered all over again what he wanted to be when he grew up.

Just then, Chapman stumbled into the room. He had obviously been drinking, and there was an odd gleam in his eyes. 'What have you been up to!' exclaimed Keats, 'And where is everybody?' Chapman paused for a moment, then said, all in one breath, 'Bettson the bar-fly says Batt's in the belfry and Balfe's in the battery!' 'Good heavens, man!' cried Keats, 'Have you taken leave of your census?' Chapman tripped over a pot of basil and lay on the floor, giggling his head off.

BENEDICT KIELY, in his introduction to *The Various Lives of Keats and Chapman, and The Brother* (Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1976: A$15.00), sums up the whole Keats and Chapman business in his first sentence: 'It is a game.' The fun of it, he says, after you've read Myles's stories and studied the method, 'is in trying to do it yourself, in drawing out the tale, accumulating the fantasy to the point of sadism, then in crashing home with the flat desolating pun'.

I have been writing apocryphal anecdotes of Keats and Chapman for eight or nine years now — I started not long after I recovered from

my first reading of *The Best of Myles*, the most hilariously funny book I know — but until I found a copy of *The Various Lives &c* and read Kiely's piece it never occurred to me that other people would be silly enough to drive themselves to distraction trying to imitate the inimitable Myles's K&C stories. But of course they have done that. Kiely quotes a couple of them, and they're awful. They are not more awful than mine, and they are not more awful than a lot of Myles's, but to match the best work of the inventor of this odd genre is something one might hope to achieve once in a lifetime, with a lot of luck, so I am not surprised that I find all the imitations (my own especially) inadequate.

I must digress a little. Of course I know that other people have tried to write K&C stories. When I published my little piece about Brian O'Nolan/Flann O'Brien/Myles na Gopaleen in Scythrop 22, back in 1971, I urged readers to do just that — and I have since published stories by Robert Bloch, Archie Mercer, John Julian, Jack Wodhams, George Turner and Elisabeth LeGuin (and others? — they're the people I recall offhand). But they were responding to my stories, not to Myles's. Jack's story in particular (vintage Wodhams, and delightful) was a long long way from the source.

Kiely (a novelist well worth your acquaintance, by the way) says that generally the Keats and Chapman story starts with a pun rather than a story, 'but then that's a matter of accident, inspiration, individual style'. That is my experience, too. I make lots of puns — perhaps it would be more accurate to say that a lot of puns happen to me — but I don't write many Keats and Chapman stories. Usually the story comes when I have a pun that I can imagine Keats and Chapman being party to. More often than not the pun that occurs to me doesn't suit them at all, and I have to save it up for one of my impromptu displays of wit in conversation (or, if it's too awful even for that, sell it to Phillip Adams). I have my own mental picture of Keats and Chapman, and I think the two men in my head are rather different from O'Nolan's. Mine are somehow gentler, more dignified, than his. His Keats and Chapman quite often are little better than con-men, mixed up in all sorts of shady business, and he treats them accordingly, with little respect and occasionally something approaching cruelty. I tried in the story that started this issue to write a more Mylesian piece, but you can see that I failed. Stowing away on a tramp steamer is the most criminal thing my Keats and Chapman have ever done, and I tried to bring out a blacker side of Keats, but the whole attempt collapsed the moment Chapman spoke. Any old pun at all seems to have been good enough for O'Nolan's Keats and Chapman to perpetrate, but mine are quite finicky. In Parergon Papers 6, you may recall, they advised that they would have no part in a proposed story about the faking of statistics by a prominent evangelist who recently visited Prague and other middle-European cities, on the ground that it would involve them in the fraudulent conversion of Czechs. Myles, I think, wouldn't have hesitated: his Keats and Chapman would have been right there in Prague masquerading as evangelists from the first sentence. To what unfortunate character trait should I attribute my refusal to accept Keats and Chapman for what they are? I grieve for my lost youth and retained innocence.

There are eighty-five Keats and Chapman stories in *The Various Lives of Keats and Chapman*, and if you read them all in one go you'll make yourself sick. I don't know how you can avoid this, unless you have the four Myles collections and a great deal of will-power. Then you could try limiting yourself to three or four pages from each volume each day, preferably at random, and this might give you something like the feeling of having read a brilliant newspaper column — but frankly, I haven't got that sort of self-discipline. Kevin O'Nolan, Benedict Kiely and the publishers would be doing us a great favour if they took the 800-odd pages of Myles from the four books and rearranged the material to form one gigantic column. They are unlikely to do this.

The four books: *The Best of Myles*, published in 1968 by MacGibbon & Kee, subsequently reissued as a Picador paperback. 400 pages. This is the collection to have if you can't afford the lot. There are forty-odd Keats and Chapman stories, but they account for little more than one-twentieth of the book. There are twenty-odd pages in Irish, which you will no doubt find as frustrating as I do. If I have given you the wrong impression of Myles by going on about Keats and Chapman, consider the following. There has been a plague of ventriloquists at the theatre. Originally hired as escorts for stupid playgoers who wish to make intelligent conversation during intervals but don't know how, they have got out of hand entirely and threatening cards like this are commonplace: 'Slip me a pound or I will see that you ask the gentleman beside you where he got the money to pay for his seat. Beware! Do not attempt to call for help! Signed, The Grey Spider.'

> 'I was standing smoking when a small gentleman said to me: "Excuse me for addressing a stranger, but I cannot help assuring you that it is only with the greatest difficulty that I restrain myself from letting you have a pile-driver in your grilled steak and chips, me bucko!" Instantly he produced a card and handed it to me:
>
> > "So help me, I am a crane-driver from Drogheda, and I have not opened my beak since I came in tonight. Cough twice if you believe me. Signed, Ned the Driver."
>
> I coughed and walked away. Just for fun I said to a lady who was standing near: "Hello, hag! How's yer ould one?" Her reply was the sweet patient smile that might be exchanged between two fellow-sufferers from night starvation. What a world!'

The Various Lives of Keats and Chapman, and The Brother was published in 1976 by Hart-Davis, MacGibbon. I've often wondered what happened to Mr Kee. 160 pages, not exactly crammed with material. As well as the 85 stories there is *The Brother*, a monologue adapted by Eamon Morrissey from Myles's writings about that fabulous character, first staged at the Peacock Theatre, Dublin, in 1974. I would love to see this performed. It's superb. Even the confirmed addict will have hard feelings about paying $15 for this book, especially since many of the stories appear also in *The Best of Myles*, but it's quite indispensable. You can blame the price on the Australian book trade. In England it costs five pounds.

Further Cuttings from Cruiskeen Lawn also appeared in 1976 from H-D,MacG, by then part of Granada Publishing. 190 pages, and good

value even at $15. The first among my favourite pieces in this book is in the section headed Politics. Like Perelman, O'Nolan was a master of the humorous article that starts with a simple juxtaposition of apparently unrelated ideas and progresses quite naturally to the hilarious extremes of absurdity. It looks so easy when you read it, but it's a technique that eludes me. Part of the trick is knowing when to stop, and part is being a comic genius, neither of which I'm any good at. Puns come as easily to me as sonatas came to Scarlatti, but with such articles as these the pun grows to Mozartian stature at the least — and to write a novel like *At Swim-Two-Birds* demands a positively Wagnerian understanding and application of the art. This insensitive introduction of composers into the conversation allows me to stumble into Myles's story, which starts with a reported statement by Yehudi Menuhin about the need for a world government. Two can play at this game, says Myles, and forthwith we are launched into a debate in the Dail on the Estimates for the Department of External Affairs. A dull speech by Mr de Valera provokes some interjections, including a remark by Mr Lehane that Mr MacEntee is 'a notorious Bartok merchant'. There are calls for order. Mr MacEntee denies any interest whatever in Bartok, or in any other atonal practitioner. We take up the story at the point where Mr de Valera mentions that he has a document...

THE TAOISEACH (Mr Costello): The Deputy is no doubt aware that he may not quote a document unless he lays it on the table of the House?

MR DE VALERA: There are certain rules and regulations. There is the question of order and formula.

MR MACBRIDE: Let him read it, whatever it is.

MR DE VALERA: I have here an affidavit which I will lay before the House in due course. It states that at a meeting in Skerries Golf Club in 1935, the Minister put his name to a document asserting that consecutive fifths were admissible in serious music.

MEMBERS: Withdraw!

MR DE VALERA: There are various avenues by which the truth may be approached and while individuals may choose this way or that, if they reach the truth in the end the path of approach is not material. This affidavit is signed by Frank Gallagher and I have no reason to doubt that what it says is true.

MR MACBRIDE: The Deputy need not distress himself. I still see no objection to consecutive fifths.

MR MACENTEE: I suppose the Deputy sees no objection to that Chopin Polonaise in A?

MR MACBRIDE: I must ask for the withdrawal of that remark. I am entitled to be protected by the Chair.

CEANN COMHAIRLE: I did not hear the remark. There are too many interruptions.

MR O.FLANAGAN (producing oboe): Is the Minister aware that these articles are being openly imported by certain non-national entrepreneurs and will he take steps to have this traffic stopped?

MR DE VALERA: I intend to deal with the oboe scandal in due course. I mentioned the threat to those of us who understand and cherish the sanctity of the family as a social unit, the home as that unit's focus, of this projected performance in public of the Beethoven

violin concerto.

MR C.LEHANE: You had sixteen years to ban it. Why didn't you? What about the Haydn quartettes?

MR DE VALERA: There is a certain well-defined method of approach, a means of ascertaining definite facts. I made my attitude to the Haydn quartettes perfectly clear twenty-five years ago. At that time we were concerned to find, in the first place, a means of securing that our people, of whatever walk of life, and without regard to their political allegiances, should have the opportunity, one with the other, of attaining in some measure to the fundamental ideal of—

CEANN COMHAIRLE: Perhaps the Deputy—

MR DE VALERA: I report progress.

I doubt that the inherent comic possibilities of parliamentary debates have ever been more brilliantly exploited. The extract pirated above takes up a little over a page in *Further Cuttings from Cruiskeen Lawn*, which perhaps gives you some idea why I think it's good value.

The Hair of the Dogma was published by Hart-Davis, MacGibbon in 1977, it runs 180-odd pages, it costs $15, and it's a similar lot.

You could do a lot worse than blow $50 on these four books. You could steal them, for example, and develop a conscience you couldn't live with. Brian O'Nolan was a very moral man, and at the heart of his writing is an intolerance for immorality in all its unsuspected forms. Myles's humorous writing, in its wit, invention and profound observation of human behaviour, is unmatched by any other writer I have ever encountered. As I have said in another place, if you don't die laughing you're too good for this world.

To conclude this rambling issue (I simply have to get back to some paying work, and there's a heavy week ahead), here is a list of the other works of Brian O'Nolan — that I know of.

At Swim-Two-Birds	1939; MacGibbon & Kee, 1960; Penguin, 1967	
The Hard Life	MacGibbon & Kee, 1961	All have been in paperback, but I have no details.
The Dalkey Archive	MacGibbon & Kee, 1964	
The Third Policeman	MacGibbon & Kee, 1967	
The Poor Mouth	Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1973	
Stories and Plays	Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1973	

The following I have not seen:

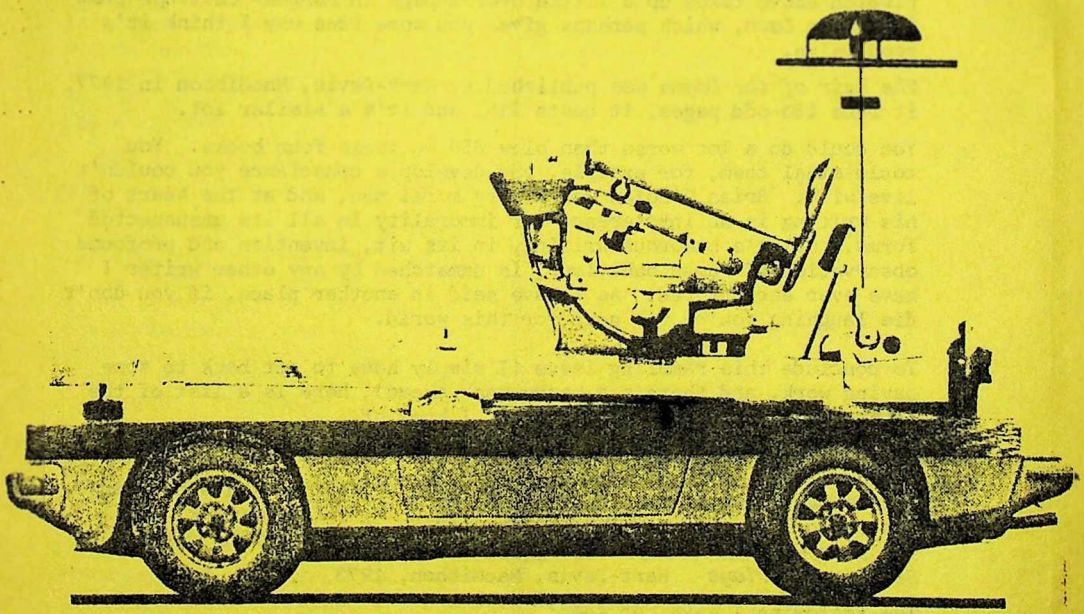
The Viking Portable Flann O'Brien

O'Keeffe (ed): *Myles* Martin, Brian & O'Keeffe, London

Anne Clissman: *Flann O'Brien: a critical introduction to his writings* Gill & Macmillan Ltd, Dublin

I have Jean Weber to thank for alerting me to the existence of the three books published in 1976-77, and my lucky stars for stumbling over *At Swim-Two-Birds* in 1964. Kevin Dillon kindly told me about the books by O'Keeffe and Clissman. John Ryan sent me a copy of Clement Semmler's article about O'Nolan in *Meanjin*, December 1970. Similar kind services by readers will be warmly appreciated by

Yr humble savant, JhB. 18-2-79



PARERGON PAPERS