

PINK PAPER AND THE COMPOSITION OF FLANN O'BRIEN'S
AT SWIM-TWO-BIRDS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of English

by
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B.A., Louisiana State University, 2000
December 2002

“Tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d’un autre texte.” — Julia Kristeva

“I proffered a wad of my precise transcript, bent in double, pink-tinted.” — *AS2B*

TS1

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee: Anne Coldiron, who got this whole thing started by making bibliography seem exciting, then loaned me her prodigious enthusiasm whenever I needed it; Lisi Oliver, with her quick sense of humor and mastery of all things ancient and Irish; Malcolm Richardson, who stepped in on very short notice and saved me from a self-inflicted scheduling disaster; and finally James Olney, who directed my research and assured me many times, in his gentle way, that my project was not as boring as it so often seemed.

I need to thank a small army of librarians. Cathy Henderson and Tara Wenger at UT Austin helped me to find the manuscript, then photocopied it for me. Katharine Salzmann at Southern Illinois University, Monica Cullinan at University College Dublin, and David Horn at Boston College were all very generous in searching through their archival materials to answer my often trivial questions.

I would like to thank my family for feigning interest at strategic moments, especially Sarah Uzelac, who even married me, against all odds, halfway through the project, and who probably would rather not be associated with it any further. Donna Uzelac and Jim Catano were instrumental in making me less lazy.

I would like to thank Daniel C. Maher, Trustee and Executor of the Estate of the late Evelyn O’Nolan, for permission to quote from O’Brien’s manuscripts.

Finally, I would like to offer sincere apologies to all the graduate students in LSU’s English Department, especially to the members of Anne Coldiron’s Research and Bibliography course in the Fall of 2000, for speaking at such annoying length about Flann and his pink paper. I hope they will forgive me.

PREFACE

Among the regular features of Myles na Gopaleen's (née Brian O'Nolan, aka Flann O'Brien) "Cruiskeen Lawn" column was a catalogue of the various bores lurking around Dublin. In this forum, O'Brien exposed such dreadful figures as The Man Who Never Gives Pennies To Beggars, The Man Who Does His Own Carpentry And Talks About It, and The Man Who Spoke Irish At A Time When It Was Neither Profitable Nor Popular. One bore in particular, however, seemed to frustrate the columnist:

Have you met The Man Who Has Read It In Manuscript? Let me explain.

You are a literary man, you never go out, all you ask is to be left alone with your beloved books. But the Man calls. A desultory conversation starts. The Man is peering and poking about your private apartments. You are interested in a book you read recently, would like to get other people's opinion on it, innocently enough, you ask:

'By the way, have you read *Victorian Doctor*?'

'Never heard of it,' the blight says.

'Most interesting book,' you say. 'All about Oscar Wilde's father, gives a very good picture of Dublin life in those days ...'

'Oh, *that*?' the bore says, his back turned in a very casual way as he interferes with some personal documents on your desk. 'Ah, yes, I read that. Actually he meant to give the book another name, I hadn't heard it was published under that title. I read it in manuscript as a matter of fact.'

Thus you are vouchsafed a glimpse of the anonymous adviser, critic, confessor and daddy christmas of literary men.

'Ever read *Warren Peace* by T. Allstoy?' you inquire.

'Ah, yes, I read that thing in the manuscript years ago. Is it published yet?'
See? Grrrrhhhhh! (294)

It is with some shame, then, that I admit to having become, in the past year and a half, this very bore. In that time, I have rifled busily through O'Brien's papers, mainly the manuscripts of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, but also some of his letters, newspaper clippings, and various other scraps I could find. I even tracked down his typewriter.¹ I find myself

¹ The typewriter, an Underwood, is held, along with various manuscripts of the author and a painting of him made surreptitiously while he was smoking, in the Burns library at Boston College. David Horn, a research librarian there, was kind enough to carry out a number of typewriter-related chores for me:

growing more boring by the minute: in casual conversations I often catch myself haranguing indifferent listeners with, say, a list of the alternate titles O'Brien considered for his novel — *Sweeny in the Trees*, *Sweetscented Manuscripts*, *Truth is an Odd Number* — or with a thumbnail sketch of the way his manuscript's pagination changed in revision. Through this long and lonely period of textual voyeurism, I have even come to feel a deep kinship with the author — one that, alas, he probably would not have returned. I have become The Man Who Has Read It In Manuscript, the self-proclaimed “daddy christmas” of Flann O'Brien.

But that is one of the ambivalent pleasures of O'Brien scholarship: dedicating months of study to the work of a man who would have mocked you mercilessly for doing so. He declared his own master's thesis a joke countless times — this, in fact, may have been part of the reason his committee rejected it. Throughout his career, O'Brien showed nothing but impatience for the ceaseless probing of academics; in *The Third Policeman*, for instance, he devotes nearly two pages to a footnote lampooning textual scholars:

The reader will be familiar with the storms which have raged over the most tantalising of the holograph survivals. The ‘Codex’ (first so-called by Bassett in his monumental *De Selby Compendium*) is a collection of some two thousand sheets of foolscap closely hand-written on both sides. The signal distinction of the manuscript is that not one word of the writing is legible. Attempts made by different commentators to decipher certain passages which look less formidable than others have been characterised by fantastic divergencies, not in the meaning of the passages (of which there is no question) but in the brand of nonsense which is evolved. One passage, described by Bassett as being ‘a penetrating treatise on old age’ is referred to by Henderson (biographer of Bassett) as ‘a not unbeautiful description of lambing operations on an unspecified farm’. Such disagreement, it must be confessed, does little to enhance the reputation of either writer.” (145)

describing the machine via e-mail, and then searching for its serial number, then typing out a page of characters and faxing it to me.

In a memoir, O'Brien's brother Ciarán wonders "what Brian would say if he returned and saw that students in America and Europe were writing theses on his work" (106). I suspect he would turn to us and offer the same response as Brinsley, in *AS2B*, after the Narrator speaks at length about his aesthetic theory — "That is all my bum."

And yet the academic probing continues. I have taken inspiration from the textual scholar D.C. Greetham, who writes that textual scholarship is "the historical investigation of texts as both artifactual objects and conceptual entities, and the reconstruction of those stages in the transmission that have not survived" (ix-x). Textual scholarship, Greetham goes on to say, builds "essentially a *narrative* argument (a story — a history — with discoverable elements in their proper sequence)" (2). I have tried, in my work, to reconstruct a textual story that I believe is eminently worth telling: the history of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, as told by the surviving manuscript evidence. And I have decided to do it in spite of the disdain it would have inspired in O'Brien.

A major influence on my project has been the landmark edition of *Billy Budd* edited by Harrison Hayford and Merton Sealts, which includes a detailed discussion of the growth of Melville's novella through over ten subtle "stages" of composition, as well as providing a "genetic text," or transcription of the manuscript. There is one major difference between our projects, however (and here I silently omit countless differences in quality, scale, professionalism, etc.). Hayford and Sealts's scholarship is *predictive*. They follow a long, basically continuous trail of evidence that begins with Melville's earliest notes and ends with the revisions he made just before his death; taken together, all of this evidence points forward to a hypothetical finished draft. The scholars' work,

then, is to unriddle Melville's final intentions and guess at the shape of that finished work.

All of my evidence, however, points in the other direction. Our knowledge of *AS2B* does not end with the two surviving typescripts; we *have* the finished novel, published with O'Brien's infinite care and full consent. Our problem is at the other end: the evidence trail does not begin with the earliest notes, and it is certainly not continuous. It leaps from a college essay called "Scenes from a Novel," an early, simplistic sketch of *AS2B*'s basic premise, directly into the first surviving typescript, which already looks suspiciously close to the published book. Our task, then, is, based on the early remnants left in TS1, to unriddle all the work that came in between. We *know* O'Brien's final intentions; what we don't know, and what seems very interesting, are his first intentions. That's the shape we're guessing at, and the shape I've tried to sketch in this thesis.

One more note: all quotations from the *At Swim-Two-Birds* manuscripts come from my transcription, which employs a homemade batch of simplistic symbols, two of which will be vital in reading the thesis. 1) Text contained within a pair of double slashes (// //) has been crossed out in the manuscript. 2) Text contained with brackets ([]) has been added to the manuscript by hand. For instance, I transcribe the first sentence of the earlier *AS2B* typescript as follows: "A book may have three openings[beginnings], I //contend//[think], widely dissimilar and interrelated only in the prescien//t//[ce] //brain// of the author, a plurality of openings making the more for diversion and good humour; likewise a book may have twenty-seven endings." The words "contend" and "brain" have been crossed out, while "beginnings" and "think" have been added by hand; the "t" in "prescient" has been replaced with a "ce" to make the word "prescience."

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an analysis of the two surviving typescripts of Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*. After a brief overview both typescripts, the thesis focuses on the earlier of the two, especially its use of pink paper, and suggests (based on subject matter, pagination, and stylistic patterns) that the pink pages were written before the typescript's white pages, and therefore that they represent O'Brien's earliest conception of the novel.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* is a novel peculiarly concerned with its own formation. The physicality of text plays such a major role in the novel that one could argue that its characters' manuscripts — passed from hand to hand, read aloud at pubs, critiqued over billiards — are ultimately more important than the characters themselves, whose lives are visibly bounded by the paper on which they exist. The narrator of *AS2B* is an unpublished amateur, working (as he constantly reminds us) on “spare-time literary activities” — he produces not finished and printed books with pages sewn immovably between covers, but *manuscripts*, or “papers,” as he often calls them. He spends much of his time collating these papers, reorganizing them, and rereading them with distaste. His fictional creations, too, are amateur writers engaged in all the stages of composition: drafting, revising, collating, destroying. In the course of the novel, manuscript pages are borrowed, misplaced, and burned, actions that profoundly influence the narrative arc: the burning of Trellis's manuscript pages, in fact, serves as a sort of climax.¹ The narrator interrupts his text frequently to discuss textual issues: e.g., “an inexplicable chasm” in his manuscript's pagination (84). This centrality of manuscripts in *AS2B* makes the *actual* manuscript history of the novel especially fascinating.

Unfortunately, manuscript evidence is tantalizingly scarce. Though O'Brien worked on ever-changing drafts of his novel for nearly five years, only two typescripts have survived; both belong to the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the

¹ David Cohen suggests that the manuscript-burning is the novel's denouement, reserving the status of climax for the narrator's “reconciliation” with his uncle (223). If I were more contentious, I would argue that the two events are *both* climaxes, that they are in fact mirror images of each other spanning two of the novel's frames. In this context, however, the argument is a mere quibble: the vital point is that the physical treatment of the narrator's manuscript dictates the novel's largest structural patterns.

University of Texas in Austin. My study focuses on the first typescript (TS1)², a 302-page amalgam of at least two previous typescripts, which is typed on both pink and white paper. Nearly every page of TS1 contains autograph revisions and additions, ranging from character name changes (e.g., “John Casey” is changed to “Jem Casey”) to minor self-censorship (the word “bloody” is consistently excised). Over twenty pages of TS1 are entirely handwritten.

The second typescript (TS2) is the final draft of *AS2B*, a carbon copy of the one submitted by O’Brien to his publisher in 1938. It contains autograph revisions (mainly censorship-related concessions to the publisher) on 23 pages, but otherwise it is identical to the published novel. On the cover of the folder that contains TS2, O’Brien has attached a typed note, signed in his hand, stating that TS2 is the only surviving draft of the novel, an assertion made immediately ridiculous by the existence, in the same box, of TS1.

Beginning with its existence, then, TS1 is a surprising document. And the surprises do not stop there. The ending, which O’Brien added in longhand, is completely different from the one finally published; the Pooka MacPhellimey is referred to originally only as “the Devil,” while his counterpart, the Good Fairy, is originally called “the Angel” — an opposition that adds a Christian element conspicuously absent from the published novel; characters who never meet in the published novel get together to chat in TS1; doodles and notes — even math problems — populate the margins. In one deleted scene, Finn MacCool rides a tramcar through Dublin.

Beyond all of these striking details, however — all of which I’ll return to later in the thesis — TS1 holds a more intriguing surprise, one that might tell us much more

² Though it was tempting to adopt Thomas Shea’s notation of “MS1” and “MS2” in referring to the typescripts, I rejected it based on the fact that the surviving scripts are not, in fact, handwritten, but typed.

about the genesis of the novel. On first glance, this surprise has nothing to do with content. If you look at TS1 in profile (that is, at its page edges), you'll notice that it's banded with colors: the text alternates irregularly between sections of ordinary white paper and sections of an intensely Pepto-Bismol-colored pink paper. The pink pages seem at first to have invaded the more traditional white pages, but in fact the reverse is closer to the truth: of TS1's 302 total pages, 187 are pink, and 115 are white — a pink-to-white ratio of approximately 3:2. The pink pages come in eight sections, the longest of which is 54 pages, the shortest two pages.

When we begin to look at the *content* of the differently colored texts, the logic of the pink pages becomes clear, or at least clearer.³ The published version of *AS2B* proceeds, structurally, by alternating between two basic fictional levels: on the first level, which consists of the Biographical Reminiscences, the Narrator recounts episodes of his life as a student writing a novel, drinking with his friends, quarreling with his uncle, etc; on the second level, we read excerpts from the Narrator's novel about Trellis, Orlick, Finn MacCool, etc. — his entire cast of mismatched characters. It turns out that, in TS1, each section of pink paper corresponds roughly to an excerpt from the *AS2B* Narrator's novel — that is, the pink material all comes from the book's second level. TS1's first pink section, for instance, contains the novel's parodic introduction to Finn; the eighth section contains Trellis's court trial. The white sections, on the other hand, correspond almost exclusively to the Narrator's Biographical Reminiscences: his drinking sessions, his meetings with Brinsley, the feuds with his uncle, etc.

Typescript, therefore, seemed the more accurate term.

³ Bibliographic evidence, I have learned, is never quite as straightforward as a potential thesis writer would hope.

TS1, then, provides an immediately striking visual scheme of organization: the novel's two different levels exist on different colors of paper. By studying the two differently colored level in TS1 — their pagination, revision patterns, subject matter, and especially how they fit together — we begin to see how O'Brien composed and assembled the different "layers" or "frames" of this multi-layered, multi-framed novel.

It becomes clear very quickly, on studying the typescript, that the pink pages were written before the white. Lots of evidence indicates this. The pink pages seem to have originally been paginated continuously, in red ink; these original numbers have been crossed out and replaced with black numbers in TS1 so the pink sections will flow continuously with their new white neighbors. Many of the pink sections begin and end in mid-sentence, indicating that they have been excerpted from a longer draft. So it looks as if there was a long draft, typed completely on pink paper, from which O'Brien mined the pink material (or at least the earlier pink material) that survives in TS1.

This composition scenario (pink before white) is further supported by O'Brien's biography. In August 1934, O'Brien turned in his UCD Master's thesis — a study of Irish nature poetry that, by all accounts, was pretty bad: Cronin describes it as "merely an anthology of Irish poems with a somewhat obvious critical commentary" (66); Costello calls it "a sentimental appreciation without critical acumen" (51). Evidently, O'Brien's thesis advisers shared this assessment, and they rejected it. This shocked O'Brien, of course, the legend of whose brilliance was widespread and partly self-generated. Seeking a way to salvage his reputation in the face of conspicuous failure, O'Brien bragged to friends that he would simply retype the thesis on pink paper and resubmit it, unchanged.

In reality, he reworked the paper considerably, spending the rest of the year on it.⁴ He did, however, type the revised thesis on pink paper.⁵ As he reworked his thesis, he also began to seriously plan and draft the prototype of *AS2B*, a novel he had only toyed with before.

“In fact,” writes Costello, “he was writing *At Swim-Two-Birds* on the same pink paper as his thesis, and inevitably bits of the thesis made their way into the book” (60). Much of O’Brien’s thesis dealt with Irish myth, especially the tales of Finn and Sweeny — characters who, through parody and exact translation, would come to dominate the early pink pages and play large, even central, roles in the published novel. In addition to retyping his thesis and drafting *AS2B* in 1934, O’Brien had begun to publish and write his own humorous magazine, *Blather*, a vehicle for his satire and parody. The pink pages in TS1 stand as a record of the extent to which these three textual projects — one scholarly, one fictional, the other satirical — intermingled in O’Brien’s mind. His parodic temperament, which had been with him since earliest childhood (he wrote comic essays in the style of his schoolteachers), was heightened by the constant engagement with *Blather*; this probably led him to look at the literature of his thesis with an eye toward parody. The novel, in turn, was the perfect setting in which to display that product. Given the intertextual nature of the *AS2B*, it is no surprise that O’Brien would plug a section of

⁴ For a discussion of O’Brien’s thesis revisions, see Cronin, pp. 65-7, and Costello, pp. 51-2.

⁵ At least according to Cronin and Costello. Monica Cullinan, a UCD librarian, says there is no trace of pink paper in the copy of O’Brien’s thesis in the UCD collection. “The copy we have,” Cullinan wrote in an e-mail to me, “dated August 1934, is not on pink paper, but very bad quality off white-yellowish paper!” This thesis, based on the date, must be the first version, the one that was rejected. If the pink revision survives, it’s not in any of the major O’Brien collections. Incidentally, Cullinan also told me that the first 24 pages of O’Brien’s 1934 thesis are typed in purple ink, which adds another layer to his strange obsession with color and the physicality of texts.

his parody of, say, Finn MacCool into his developing novel. In TS1, that section would be on pink paper.

This history suggests a strange sequence: that O'Brien wrote the *second* level of *AS2B* — that is, the Narrator's novel — before he wrote the first level describing the Narrator himself. My purpose here is to demonstrate the ways in which O'Brien took what began as a radically different and much less complicated novel, essentially a brilliant collection of set pieces, and made it into what we know today as *AS2B*. As we look through TS1, we will find that O'Brien first wrote a prototype of the book, a collection of narratives about Finn, Trellis, Orlick, the Pooka and the Good Fairy, Shanahan, Lamont and Furriskey, etc. It was basically an elaborate version of "Scenes From a Novel," an essay he had published the year before in *Comhthrom Feine*, the University College Dublin student magazine. O'Brien wrote his prototype of the novel on pink paper; only then did he invent the Narrator, a fictional extension of himself, to whom to transfer authorship of the pink prototype. In this way, as we will see, the novel, in a sense, doubled itself: O'Brien held a mirror up to his writing process, and the reflection became a part of the novel itself. The original writing was pink, its mirror image was white. After writing the narrator's sections on white paper, he had to go through all the banal and incredibly important complications of fitting the two parts (pink and white) together: changing the beginnings and endings of pages, altering page numbers, inserting stylistic devices to link the sections, turning what was by then a vast collection of disassembled parts into a working novel. So, for example, when we read "excerpts" from the Narrator's novel in the published *AS2B*, we are actually reading excerpts, often word-for-word, from Flann O'Brien's original novel, the pink prototype

of *AS2B*. It is this nuts-and-bolts tinkering, this frustratingly dull and highly creative part of the writing process, that I hope to dramatize, as far as possible, in this discussion.

My favorite moments in TS1 are those in which the Narrator refers to his novel — the pink one O’Brien had originally written himself — as pink. He does so four times. In the middle of a conversation with Brinsley, for instance, he describes his hand resting on the “pink sheaf” of his typescript in his pocket (7). Later he lets Brinsley borrow a section of his typescript about Finn MacCool: “I proffered a wad of my precise transcript,” he says, “bent in double, pink-tinted” (9). Brinsley returns to him later, carrying his “pink typescript” (28), and the narrator says, “I am going to make money with that pink script” (29). All of these references to the pink pages are omitted, of course, from the published novel; I believe they provide an essential clue to how *AS2B* was written.

The Critics

Three critics have studied the Austin typescripts, but none of them has discussed the significance of the pink pages. In *No Laughing Matter*, Anthony Cronin’s biography of O’Brien, Cronin notes several revisions between TS1 and TS2, but only in passing, discussing the minor deletions of obscenities and sexual innuendoes O’Brien’s publishers requested. Cronin’s discussion is framed biographically: he shows the revisions as examples of O’Brien’s artistic growth, noting that the revisions show “an immense advance in sophistication of technique, particularly in tone of voice. The narrator’s tone of cold and passionless irony, for example, was emphasized” (87). Cronin also quotes briefly from TS1’s alternate ending.

More dedicated to the typescripts is Thomas Shea, who devotes a chapter of his book, *Flann O'Brien's Exorbitant Novels*, to the unpublished texts. Shea ignores larger issues of structure, focusing on “questions of style and the semantic tensions which animate *At Swim-Two-Birds*,” watching O’Brien “actively engaged in exploring how words might operate, and delightfully involved in negotiating with the problematics of various fields of arrangement” (50).

The third, and most thorough, study of the typescripts is David Cohen’s “An Atomy of the Novel.” Cohen discusses the alternate TS1 ending in some detail, but ultimately he sees the typescripts as inconclusive and turns away from them to argue that “the text of *At Swim-Two-Birds* presents itself as the record of its own growth, explicitly providing its background literature, biographical detail, and the aesthetic theories upon which it is based” (210). With this, Cohen abandons the typescripts entirely, giving instead an exceptionally perceptive reading of the published text. And while I agree with him that “the novel is an anatomy of itself, and stands as the record of its own composition,” I think TS1 tells us more about that composition than he recognizes.

Composition Dates

The composition history of *AS2B* is, unfortunately, awash in mystery, and though the aim of this thesis is to dispel some of it, a few problems have been particularly stubborn. One such problem has been the composition dates of the different materials that make up TS1. Shea writes that “the manuscript was most likely composed between 1934 and 1937” (169). Cohen adds, “It is not known what draft of the novel is represented by the first typescript,” speculating only that “a few pages of notebook paper at the front of

the first typescript . . . point to a possible earlier notebook manuscript” (209). Costello writes that “the book was more or less complete in 1935” (61). Shea’s three-year window (1934-37) seems unnecessarily large: in fact, we have a good idea of O’Brien’s activities in the years he was composing *AS2B*. Though we can’t fix a date, several facts found in TS1 suggest that parts of it were written later than 1934, and perhaps significantly altered as late as 1938.

The issue is problematic. One piece of evidence suggesting that TS1 came relatively late in the composition of *AS2B* is the nature of the autograph revisions O’Brien made to it. As Cohen notes, “There seem to be remarkably few changes in word choice or sentence structure. Most of the revisions performed on this typescript . . . are on the larger, structural level.” In fact, the line-by-line text of TS1 is quite close to that of the published novel — certainly much closer than we could expect an early draft to be.

Part of the problem here is that we know very little about O’Brien’s writing habits, and what we do know is hardly trustworthy. Cohen bemoans the fact that “Because so little manuscript material exists for *At Swim-Two-Birds* (or indeed for any of O’Brien’s work), we cannot accurately trace the growth of the novel as easily as we can the development of a novel like Joyce’s *Ulysses*, which comes flanked with notebooks, manuscripts, early serial publications, and galley and page proofs.”⁶ O’Brien never bequeathed us the luxury of a *Paris Review* interview — in fact, the scarce interviews he did grant were tainted with intentional lies planted to amuse himself and his friends. “He

⁶ Our dearth of knowledge about O’Brien’s composition habits may be compared to our almost embarrassing knowledge of a figure such as Victor Hugo, who, one biographer tells us, “wrote, standing, at a small, flat-topped desk, in front of a mirror on which he, himself, had painted a flower with strange petals. . . . On occasion lines came to him in his sleep. Half awake, he jotted them down, and the next morning garnered the nocturnal crop. He rose at dawn, roused by the gunshot from the nearby fort; worked until eleven, in the full blaze of the sun, poured icy water over himself, and rubbed his body with a horsehair glove” (Maurois 331).

greatly enjoyed creating legendary adventures for himself,” remembers Niall Sheridan (35), and he did it on the record as often as possible. Most notoriously, O’Brien sneaked several considerable fibs past the fact-checkers at *Time* magazine: that he had defeated the World Champion of chess Alekhine, for example, and that, on a trip to Germany, he “met and married 18-year-old Clara Ungerland, blonde, violin-playing daughter of a Cologne basket weaver. She died a month later. O’Nolan returned to Eire, and never mentions her” (92).⁷ So the slight nugget of compositional information included in the *Time* feature may be taken with a grain of salt: “He writes so easily that he grows bored with it.” It stands to reason that, if O’Brien wrote so easily, he would have finished *AS2B* in a period considerably shorter than the nearly five years it seemed to take.⁸

A second, and somewhat more problematic, piece of evidence in dating the composition of TS1 is Niall Sheridan’s role in the developing novel. Sheridan was one of O’Brien’s closest friends at UCD; he read drafts of the novel throughout its composition and claims convincingly to have been the model for the character Brinsley. His most active role in the book, however, may have been as an informal editor:

When I got through the final draft of the book (there must have been over 800 pages of typescript), I told him it was too long. He 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 (47).

O’Brien, tired after four years of composition, asked Sheridan to edit the book for him.

His friend obliged: “I took out about one-fifth of the text before the book went to

Longmans” (47). For critics hoping to trace the genesis and evolution of *AS2B*, it is

⁷ Sheridan says the chess talent was largely feigned, and recalls Flann “spitting with fury when a red-haired student from the wilds of Co. Cavan unhorsed him with a home-made variation of the Ruy Lopez gambit” (38). Cronin disproves the Germany story persuasively (67-9).

⁸ The *Time* article is suspect on points of artistic interpretation as well, claiming that “*At Swim Two Birds* (sic), O’Nolan’s first novel in English, is never concluded, just stops abruptly.” Given the abrupt overhaul of narrative tone on the novel’s ending, this reading is almost impossible.

disheartening to note that the monstrous 800-page draft Sheridan refers to as “final” must have come earlier than TS1, the earliest draft surviving today. So what looks to us to be a relatively early draft seems, in Sheridan’s scheme, to have come near the tail end of the book’s composition. Both TS1 (302 pages) and TS2 (340 pages) are less than half the length of the “final” draft Sheridan writes of, so obviously the copious Finn send-up Sheridan mentions had been excised already. If Cronin is correct in placing the date of Sheridan’s excision to 1938, and if Sheridan remembers correctly, then TS1 was at the very least *severely altered* as late as 1938.

Sheridan’s memory, however, is suspect based on the math alone. If the “final” draft O’Brien gave him was 800 pages or more, Sheridan’s 20% excision would have cut it down to somewhere in the neighborhood of 640 pages. TS2 is 302 pages long, including the nine holograph pages added at the end of the typescript. Where did the 340 pages go? Something is not right here. A memory lapse seems most likely, as Sheridan’s essay was published 35 years after the incident.

Further dating evidence comes from O’Brien’s other writing of the period, especially an essay he wrote for the college magazine *Comhthrom Féinne* in May 1934. The piece, entitled “Scenes in a Novel,” is a clear predecessor of *AS2B*, but could hardly have been contemporary with it. “Scenes” sketches the idea of a character-revolt against an author, but with one important difference from the novel it eventually became: the essay’s “I” is Brother Barnabas, the author being threatened by his characters. Translated into the world of *AS2B*, this would be like Trellis narrating the entire novel; in the world of TS1, it would have been entirely pink. Difference of style also suggests a significant gap between the composition of the “Scenes” and the novel: the essay is breezy and

offhand, while the prose of *AS2B*, as Cronin notes, is consistently revised to emphasize “passionless irony” in place of silliness. Sheridan’s 1935 comment in the college magazine *Comhthrom Féinne* testifies to the fact that O’Brien was still drafting the novel that year: he wrote that O’Brien was “engaged on a novel so ingeniously constructed that the plot is keeping him well in hand” (Cronin 82).

Whatever its exact date of composition, then, TS1 was clearly written well after the earliest stages of composition. It is safe to say it dates from later than 1934 and, if Cronin and Sheridan can be trusted, may even have been typed in 1938. I dwell on this because the stage of the draft dictates, in some sense, what the critics may do with it, and what its revisions or additions might tell us. If it dates from 1938, TS1 would represent not an “early manuscript,” as Shea claims, but a novel that had been in progress for five years. This is a certainly a different story than a first draft. In fact, TS1 seems a relatively polished text in the last stages of revision — as Cohen writes, most of the revisions are on the “larger, structural level.” We should be looking, then, at these large, structural changes.

CHAPTER 2: PINK SECTIONS 1-4

Though they're interrupted by white sections of various lengths, the first four pink sections of TS1 seem to function clearly as a unit. They were originally paginated in red ink and seem to have formed a complete, continuously paginated, and self-sufficient narrative. In TS1, unfortunately, most of this pink narrative is missing, and the gaps have been filled by newer white pages dealing with much different material. The pink draft was originally 119 pages long — of these, just over half (68) survive in TS1. This chapter will deal with those 68 pages, which have been split into four sections: 3-15 (Pink Section 1: Finn), 27-8 (PS2: aestho-autogamy), 44-5 and 47-60 (PS3: cowboys), and 83-119 (PS4: Mad Sweeny). We must guess, based on the surviving pink material, what those missing 51 pages contained. What is left of the pink narrative forms a strange story, though not unrecognizable in light of the published novel: it begins with the mythical Finn, passes through the very modern Furriskey and Shanahan, and ends with Mad Sweeny. Each of these four sections (and the first three especially) shows significant differences from the published novel and, since they represent the oldest sections of TS1 (and therefore the novel's oldest surviving manuscript evidence), we must pay special attention: they provide a glimpse of O'Brien's earliest notions of *AS2B*.

Pink Section One

In a 1967 review, John Wain admired the elegance with which O'Brien integrates myth into *AS2B*. "We do not hear the click of scissors and the swish of the paste-brush," Wain wrote (78). I would echo this praise, but only when applied to the published novel. In TS1, the noise of the click and swish is almost deafening.

The commotion is probably loudest in TS1's first pink section. It introduces the reader to the epic hero Finn MacCool, who has been imported by Trellis into modern Dublin and hired as a character in his novel. The 12-page pink sequence occurs on TS1 pages 11-23 — it was originally numbered, however, in red ink, pp. 3-15. This would place it at the very beginning of the pink draft, which means that, from the very start, the pink draft differed drastically from the published novel: while the former begins immediately with Finn, the latter begins with seven pages about the Narrator (*AS2B* 9-16).¹ When O'Brien figured out that he wanted to start his novel with the Narrator instead of with Finn (and exactly *when* he figured this out I'll discuss in Chapter 3), he implanted what he needed from this section into his developing typescript. To make everything consistent, he scribbled out the original red page numbers and retyped them in black ink.

The first pink page (red ink 3, black ink 11) begins in mid-sentence: “the pig-grunting in Magh Eithne, the bellowing of the stag of Ceara, the whinging of the fauns in Doire-an-Ois.” This sentence clearly continues an exaggerated Fenian catalogue that began on pink page 2, which O'Brien left out of TS1. In order to make this first pink page follow white page 11, O'Brien struck out its initial “the,” replacing it in autograph with “I incline to like” — it became “I incline to like pig-grunting in Magh Eithne, the bellowing of the stag of Ceara, the whinging of the fauns in Doire-an-Ois.”

Though it's interesting to think about the ingenuity with which O'Brien integrated this pink fragment with his newer white text, it's even more interesting to consider what that fragment suggests about the ancestral pink draft from which it was taken. When the

¹ I have to admit that, since we don't see pages 1 or 2 of the pink narrative, they could theoretically have contained material about the Narrator. If this is so, however, then the Narrator's section would have ended on pink page 2, which would have been less than a fifth of what he gets in the published novel. So while it's theoretically possible that the pink draft began with the Narrator, it seems unlikely.

Narrator asks Brinsley to read “a wad of my precise transcript, bent in double, pink-tinted,” he warns his friend (and, by extension, the reader) about what he is going to read: “It’s about the legendary Finn,” he says. “He’s a suitable man for the role in my story. Therefore he gets the job. That stuff is all irrelevant — it’s just for atmosphere” (TS1 9). When the pink-page excerpt itself is introduced into the text two pages later, the Narrator provides a similar disclaimer, stressing the section’s tangential connection to the rest of the book: “_Contents of typescript in care of Brinsley being a humorous incursion into ancient mythology irrelevant for purposes of story but valuable for purpose of background and atmosphere_” (TS1 10). By the next available typescript, however, and in the published novel, this has been altered to depict Finn’s place in the text more accurately: “*Extract from my typescript descriptive of Finn Mac Cool and his people, being humorous or quasi-humorous incursion into ancient mythology*” (16). The qualifying phrase “or quasi-humorous” tempers the suggestion of pure parody; the deletion of the word “irrelevant,” which is used twice in TS1, suggests O’Brien’s dawning awareness of the centrality of the Finn sections in the novel. Through revision, then, Finn’s introductory section gradually becomes a kind of naturalized citizen in the world of *AS2B* — a big step that changes an alien, self-enclosed, and “irrelevant” unit intruding on the novel merely to provide “atmosphere” into one of the novel’s deeply meaningful fragments.

In *Four Irish Legendary Figures in At Swim-Two-Birds*, Eva Wäppling discusses O’Brien’s treatment of Finn MacCool. She places O’Brien inside the twofold tradition of Fenian storytellers: those who see Finn as comic, and those who see him as heroic. Wäppling sees O’Brien as using both sides of this tradition, the heroic and the comic, and

she recognizes a clear division between his use of Finn early in the novel (comic) and late (heroic): “At the beginning of *At Swim* he is a burlesque giant but . . . he soon changes into the old war hero and prophet, whose reminiscences are used by O’Brien to balance the more farcical intrusions by Finn’s fellow characters” (27). For us, the important notion is this division between the early and late use of Finn in *AS2B*. Wäppling shows, in fact, that *AS2B*’s introductory Finn passage — that is, Pink Section 1 — is the *only* place in the novel in which Finn is purely parodied; its treatment of the myth is therefore essentially different from that of the rest of the novel.² “The Finn figure used by O’Brien is the old hero from literary tradition,” Wäppling writes, “and after the parodic start it is the traditional noncomic Finn who is brought in to tell the tale of Suibhne” (100). This supports the hypothesis that the pink Finn section was composed before the rest of the novel, with essentially different goals, and that it was later imported into a novel whose plan had changed significantly. According to Wäppling (who clearly prefers the non-comic image of Finn), “O’Brien is in fact abusing the hero Finn at the beginning of *At Swim*” (49).

There are more clues within the first pink section about what O’Brien’s early pink draft looked like. In the published version of Finn’s section, O’Brien concentrates on myth: we see Finn and his tribe, but none of the other characters in the Narrator’s novel (e.g., Trellis, Furriskey, the Pooka). The division is precise; the section is completely free of references to the rest of the novel. In TS1, however, what is remarkable is not PS1’s

² Other critics, overwhelmed by the early parody, fail to appreciate how drastically the Finn-tone shifts in the rest of the novel. Clissman, for example, maintains that “Finn in *At Swim* is primarily the comic giant of folklore. His presentation is a parody of the solemn and joyless or excessively romantic translations of the Ossianic tales which began to proliferate in the 1890s” (122). On the other hand, J.C.C. Mays says that Finn’s introductory section “stands as prologue” to the book, and that “Finn is the least satirized of the three narrators of the three stories” in *AS2B* (88). He seems to disregard what others recognize as clear parody in Finn’s opening section.

independence, but rather the degree to which it commingles with the rest of the novel. The published version's independence is instructive: it shows the direction in which O'Brien wanted to move the text, and the original choices he left behind as he did so.

PS1 shows a mingling of frames that would make little sense in the carefully regulated world of the published novel. In the published version of the Finn section, the colon after the introductory meta-tag³ leads us immediately into the mythical Finn material; the Narrator does not reappear until the beginning of his Biographical Reminiscence at the end of the section. In TS1, however, the division is not so neat: after the meta-tag, the Narrator steps back into the text:

Contents of typescript in care of Brinsley being a humorous incursion into ancient mythology irrelevant for purpose//s// of story but valuable for purpose of background and atmosphere.

-Of the musics you have ever got, asked Conan, which have you found the sweetest?

As I entered my uncle's house I saw a tramcar bob its brass-lamped rump at the hump of the canal-bridge.

-I will relate, said Finn. When the seven companies of //the Fiana//[my warriors] ... (10)

TS1's Finn section, then, begins just as it does in the published novel, with Conan's question — but in TS1 the Narrator steps back into the text for a moment, interrupting Finn's narrative to tell us about the tramcar. This kind of interruption, in which the two "levels" of the book overlap without clear narrative cues, never occurs in the published novel. It is a small detail, but one that shows an important difference in artistic control.

³ "Meta-tag," I realize, is an awkward term; I invented it because it seemed the best way to describe one of *AS2B*'s stylistic hallmarks: the italicized phrase, ending with a colon or a period, that introduces and concludes so many sections — e.g., "*Examples of three separate openings—the first:*" and "*Conclusion of the foregoing.*" Meta-tags are also used to isolate certain lines of text for emphasis — e.g., "*Quality of rasher in use in household: Inferior, one and two the pound*" or "*Description of my friend: Thin, dark-haired, hesitant; an intellectual Meath-man; given to close-knit epigrammatic talk; weak-chested, pale.*"

The most striking incongruity in TS1's first pink section is the completely anomalous presence of Trellis. In the middle of Finn's long, parodic speech about the trials of his warriors ("For forty days he must walk through Erin and eat ten men's eating of venison and boar-meat for every day, and if he once foul Erin he is not taken but is cut with flints"), Trellis interjects a curious moral riddle:

Unless he accomplishes these feats, he is not wanted of Finn. But if he do them all and be skillful, he is of Finn's people.

—Supposing, said Trellis with a long chuckle, that a streetwalker makes £20,000 from her trade, saves it up over a period of 50 years, repents in her old age and builds a church with the money? Is it a church within the meaning of the act or what is it? Is it a brothel? Tainted money, I mean. Is it tainted subjectively or is it only unclean to those who know the commodity that was traded for it?

—What advantages are to Finn's people? Said Liagan Luaimneach O Luachair Dheaghaidh. (TS1 18)

Trellis interrupts Finn again four pages later, this time in the middle of Finn's bragging:

Who but Finn could burst God with the power of a breath whistled from his tooth-gap without a ceasing or a stop from the low murmuring of melodious poetry at the same time? Who but Finn?

—Where is the man, said Trellis horizontally, that is going to tell me that good can exist side by side with good? Good and evil are complementary terms. You cannot have one without the other. Each gets its force by reason of the other and would be meaningless without the other. There was no good in the Garden till the serpent came, only negation and bathos. Therefore the devil created good.

—Good for telling, said Conan.

—Who is it? said Finn. (TS1 22)

Both of these interruptions are excised from TS1 — in each case, the Finn material is left intact, while the Trellis interjection is crossed out with a diagonal line. No hint of it survives in the published novel.

This arrangement is doubly odd because, in the published novel, Trellis hardly speaks at all; he certainly never speaks to Finn. In the published novel, in fact, Trellis speaks in only three contexts: to Furriskey, as an ominous "supernatural cloud or aura" (68); to the Pooka and the court at his trial (57-9); and to his servant Teresa near the end

of the book, after she saves him by burning his manuscript (313). None of his published speech ever matches the tone of these pink-page statements, which seem more in line with the pseudo-learned “sapient colloquy” we see in Orlick’s manuscript later in the book.

Another curious feature of Trellis’s pink-page interruptions is that the Fenian characters ignore him completely; it’s as if he weren’t there. When Conan remarks “Good for telling,” he is referring not to Trellis’s speech but to Finn’s; when Finn asks “Who is it?” he’s asking about Conan. It’s hard to see how this one-sided exchange is supposed to function in the text: is Trellis present in the room with Finn and company? Or are Trellis and Finn in the same room while Finn is imagining a conversation with his warriors (as we see in a later pink section)? Or is Trellis, perhaps, making comments to *himself* as he writes the Finn narrative, so that his self-directed musings show up in the midst of Fenian conversation? The signals are ambiguous, and O’Brien — at least in the pink pages that survive — never resolves the ambiguity in one direction or the other (as he does with a similar ambiguity in Pink Section 4). I can offer no final solution, just point it out as strange and significantly different from the arrangement O’Brien settled on for publication. What I find interesting is that, in a draft so stylistically polished — indeed, in many places it is identical to the published novel — this kind of artistic ambiguity is allowed to survive.

There is another, perhaps stranger passage in PS1 that O’Brien eliminated in revision. In it, Finn tells one of his mythical tales, a story about the challenge of Caol-an-Iarainn, son to the king of Thesally, to his warriors. What is most significant about this

telling, though, is that, rather than speaking from memory as he normally does, this time Finn reads the story out of a book. Here is my transcription of the unpublished passage:

-O then, said Conan, the story of the Churl in the Puce Great-coat.

-Evil story for telling, that, said Finn, and though itself I can make it, it is surely true that I will not recount it[.] //nor spread the black word of it for now.//

But taking his brown hand with seize to it the seize of a deer's flank from the hiding of his hair in which it was, he pushed it to the inside seat of his rope-woven drawers, //nor did he desist from a pushing and a contending of fingers till he had// [and] extracted the small slim leaf-thick sea-blue book from the drapery of his drawers and from the darkness of his slack and from the recesses of his fork-cloth. And a stopping or a halting he did not do till he had read a mouthful of melodious Irish from its generous page. And he said these bookwords.

[Extract from book read by Finn:] *red ink* It was then that Finn mac Cumhaill, high king to the Fian, spoke to this deed-doughty warrior, and spoke to these presents: From what quarter have you come to approach us, so, or who is yourself of the noble or ignoble bloods of the world?

-I am Caol-an-Iarainn, son to the king of Thesally, he said, and of all of the world that I have travelled, I did not leave an insula, an isle or an island since I quitted my home that I did not put under the tribute of my sword and under the heavy-strength of my hand to this now here. And it is my wish to have the high-rent and the high-rule of this kingdom likewise, or to put a red slaughter on persons and people and to make a thinning-down of Fianians and Fighters of the Fian and of the seven sovereignties of the Gnath-Fian; and that is my quest to this realm for this time.

-But then for surely, said cursing Bald Conan, it is an evil quest that you come on, and to the last extremity of your life that quest will you not finish for you; and we have never heard (nor have we seen) a man come with high-deed the like of that to Erin that there was not found for him a man of his own //e//quality.

-Small meanings to me in these words of yours, said Caol-an-Iarainn, and if there were as many of the Fian as have died in addition to those of them that live, I would play the sorrow of death and small-life on the lot of them in one single day. But simpler business than that will I accomplish. If there be found among you one warrior who will take top from me in running, combat or wrestling, nothing further of damage will I do to ye, but me to return without delay to my own country.

-Well then, said Finn, which one of these doughty accomplishments would you view for choice the first?

-If you get for me, said Caol-an-Iarainn, one warrior who will best me at racing, there will be nothing further of contention in it but me to return home without nervous annoyance to put on you or on anyone else further.

-But then, said Finn, the racing-gilly that is to us, that is Kilty mac Ronaun, he is not in the house in the present time, that he might try his swiftness against you; and since he is not, hero, it is right for you to make compact of dwelling in the company of Fianians and to have treaty and truck together till I go

to seek Kilty at Tara of the kings; and if I do not find him there, I will find him surely in Ceis Corainn of the Fian, and I will bring him thither without delay-----
[end of red ink]

-That, said Finn, laying the sea-blue book in anger against his //hempen// knee, is a bleeding shame//, and the men of Erin with sea-blue books that tell not truth loin-swaddled about their forks and hidden in their dark seats – evil destiny! Where is the man who has heard honey-words from Finn before churlish stranger or why should Finn have need of Kilty for running-feats, Finn with legs to him swifter than the old stage of the Flood//, Finn that is wind-quick, Finn that is a better man than God? (TS1 19-21)

There are several fascinating elements in this passage. First, it is worthwhile to compare Finn’s “small slim leaf-thick sea-blue book” to Trellis’s obsession with green books, and to O’Brien’s own pink manuscript, and even to his use of red ink in the passage⁴ — all of these are manifestations of O’Brien’s obsession with (and penchant for manipulating) the physicality of texts.⁵

Second, the joke of the passage is that Finn is reading from the sea-blue book a legend about *himself* and finding fault with his portrayal. This raises a host of logistical questions. How could the mythic Finn, whose adventures are set in the 3rd century, have access to a book of Fenian legends, most of which were written in the 12th century? Has he been displaced, already, to modern Dublin, where books about him would presumably be available? But if so, what are his warriors (Conan, Liagan Luaimneach O Luachair Dheaghaidh) doing there too, when Trellis hasn’t hired them — when they, presumably,

⁴ The use of red ink in quoting long passages may have been a typographical convention. The New York Public Library’s 2002 summer exhibit of manuscripts, for instance, contains a typescript of a book review in which Robert Graves types long quotes from the book under review in red ink, and his own comments in black. Even if that was common, however, this is the only place it shows up in TS1.

⁵ Physicality jokes, developed with absurd specificity, litter O’Brien’s oeuvre. “I beg to announce respectfully my coming volume of verse entitled ‘Scorn for Taurus,’” writes Myles na Gopaleen in his “Cruiskeen Lawn” column. “We have decided to do it in eight point Caslon on turkey-shutter paper with covers in purple corduroy. But look out for the catch. When the type has been set up, it will be instantly destroyed and NO COPY WHATEVER WILL BE PRINTED” (*Myles* 228). Or: “Poem in five spenderian stanzas. By Myles na gCopaleen, M.R.I.A. Limited edition of 90,000 copies (of which this is Number 64,284) printed on hand-scuffed antique barley-grained vellum” (*Myles* 265).

are stuck in their own era? It could be that Finn is simply imagining the entire conversation, though if this is so, it is unclear.

Finn's reading aloud is signified by red ink, which begins where his reading begins and ends where it ends. The red ink, in fact, is originally the only thing that distinguishes this passage. In revision, O'Brien adds a meta-tag, presumably for two reasons: one, to make the division clear without the use of colored ink, since in publication it would have to be all black; and two, to make the section fit, stylistically, with the rest of the developing novel, in which the Narrator freely scatters meta-tags wherever he pleases.

The passage about Finn's sea-blue book clearly ties into one of *AS2B*'s obsessions: the gulf between reality and literature. Finn, a mythical figure, complains about his unrealistic portrayal in literature. This begs the question: What kind of reality does a mythical figure have? Does the real Finn exist in the oral tales, which are inevitably corrupted when written down? It seems a little like the Superman of the original comic books bemoaning his portrayal in film.

In the published novel, this passage is condensed; instead of reading aloud from his sea-blue book, Finn gives a brief and angry summary of the story:

Evil story for telling, that, said Finn, and though itself I can make it, it is surely true that I will not recount it. It is a crooked and dishonourable story that tells how Finn spoke honey-words and peace-words to a stranger who came seeking the high-rule and the high-rent of this kingdom and saying that he would play the sorrow of death and small-life on the lot of us in one single day if his wish was not given. Surely I have never heard (nor have I seen a man come with high-deed the like of that to Erin that there was not found for him a man of his own equality). Who has heard honey-talk from Finn before strangers, Finn that is wind-quick, Finn that is a better man than God? (*AS2B* 23-4)

By condensing Finn's speech and making it memory- instead of book-based, O'Brien places less emphasis on the section's original metafictional and teleological issues. This published version stresses myth over meta; in TS1 the two function at almost equal strength.

Pink Section Two

In PS2, O'Brien introduces the reader to the strange process of aestho-autogamy. At two pages, it is the shortest pink section in TS1. Nevertheless, it contains several telling revisions.

To set the stage for a discussion of the second pink section, we must first discuss the white pages leading up to it (TS1 36-9), which in this case seem to be doing more of the pink pages' job than is usual in TS1 — that is, the white pages here deal not just with the Narrator, but with his novel as well, which is material traditionally relegated to the pink pages. I suspect that the white pages, in this case, approximate, or reproduce, some missing pink pages. These three white pages contain an extended conversation between Trellis and Finn — a conversation of which only a short excerpt is published, and in a different context. As in Pink Section 1, Trellis's appearance here goes far beyond his function in the published novel:

When he reached his bedroom, he found (as he expected) that Finn was sitting there on a chair gazing sadly at his sandals of thick skin. Fearing that his bed might cool, Trellis inserted his body delicately between its fine sheets and lay there panting slightly from the stair-climb and arranging his thoughts into paragraphs before committing them to speech.

But the old man spoke before him.

-What is to become of Finn, he said (for his retrieval from the past was unexpected to him), stag-dun wheat-gold corn-yellow Finn, Finn that could spend a Lammas morning with girdled girls at far-from-simple chess-play?

Trellis arranged the parterres of his ruined complexion into the pattern of a smile.

-Listen, he said. Anybody who gives himself up to several centuries of introspective idleness and futile regrets about the past, well, he does himself no good, you know. He does himself a lot of harm. Good hard work, that's what you want. I can offer you a job.

-What is the jack? asked Finn, a fire in his old weary eye.

-Eighteen shillings a week with house, light, fuel and free tobacco.

But Finn's reply was an inarticulate ejaculation in the Irish tongue. (TS1 36-37)

O'Brien's decision to exclude this conversation is, I think, important in the novel's growth and vital to its eventual success. Most critics agree that O'Brien's later novels (*The Third Policeman*, *The Hard Life*, and *The Dalkey Archive*) are marred by their heavy reliance on a few (often unfunny) jokes. His last novel, for instance, *The Dalkey Archive*, makes much of the premise that James Joyce is not dead after all, but is merely hiding out in a rural Irish village writing pamphlets for the Catholic church. *AS2B* is rife with such absurd premises, but it tends to downplay its fundamental jokes in a way the later novels do not. The fact that Finn Mac Cool, a 4th century mythical figure, is hired by a modern author to consort with 20th century Dubliners is only mildly funny on its own and could easily have died through overexposure. O'Brien, however, never allows explicit discussion of this premise to leak into the published text, though it exists here in TS1. He simply presents the situation fictionally.

In the next paragraph, Trellis explains to Finn the book he plans to write. This is the only part of the conversation that is published, though O'Brien adds a meta-tag to give it a partial anonymity as follows:

Extract from Manuscript where Trellis is explaining to an unnamed listener the character of his projected labour: ... It appeared to him that a great and daring book—a green book—was the crying need of the hour—a book that would show the terrible cancer of sin in its true light and act as a clarion-call to torn humanity. Continuing, he said that all children were born clean and innocent.

(It was not by chance that he avoided the doctrine of original sin and the theological profundities which its consideration would entail.) They grew up to be polluted by their foul environment and transformed—was not the word a feeble one!—into bawds and criminals and harpies. Evil, it seemed to him, was the most contagious of all known diseases. Put a thief among honest men and they will eventually relieve him of his watch. In his book he would present two examples of humanity—a man of great depravity and a woman of unprecedented virtue. They meet. The woman is corrupted, eventually ravished and done to death in a back lane. Presented in its own *milieu*, in the timeless conflict of grime and beauty, gold and black, sin and grace, the tale would be a moving and a salutary one. *Mens sano in corpore sano*. What a keen discernment had the old philosopher! How well he knew that the beetle was of the dunghill, the butterfly of the flower! Conclusion of extract. (*AS2B* 48-9)

By changing Finn to an “unnamed listener,” O’Brien avoids the awkward and uncharacteristic conversation between two characters who never explicitly meet in the published novel, while retaining the content of their discussion.

This three-page conversation between Trellis and Finn leads into the pink section itself, a two-page segment describing aestho-autogamy. The most striking detail in these two pages is that O’Brien had originally called the process not “aestho-autogamy,” as he does in the published novel, but “the immaculate conception”: “The birth of a son in the Red Swan Hotel is a fitting tribute to the zeal and perseverance of Mr Dermot Trellis, who has won international reputation in connexion with his research into the theory of //the immaculate conception//[aestho-autogamy].” (41) This would have been a shocking blasphemy in Virgin-venerating Ireland⁶ and O’Brien was wise to omit it, especially in light of the notorious Censorship of Publications Act of 1929.⁷ The phrase “immaculate conception” occurs four times on page 41, and it is replaced each time with a more neutral term. “Aestho-autogamy” is a perfect solution: it blends art (“aestho”) with

⁶ Approximately ten years before this pink section was written, a staggering 92.6 percent of Ireland’s population claimed Catholicism in the 1926 Census; five years after that, over one million Irish gathered in Dublin’s Phoenix Park to hear a message broadcast by the pope. As Terence Brown writes, “For a moment Dublin must have seemed the centre of Christendom” (30, 39).

science (“autogamy”), lending an air of pseudo-learnedness that matches the rest of the book’s tone while avoiding potential religious offense.

Other than the above change in terminology, however, these two pages are largely unrevised. An unpublished passage at the beginning of the section again shows O’Brien’s priorities in revision — the things he wanted to stress and those he wanted to eliminate.

The passage comes at the beginning of the pink section, in a description of Furriskey:

//The first thing he did on arrival was to ask for a cigarette, which he inhaled with obvious satisfaction. He protested waggishly when slapped on the buttocks by the pretty nurse, a precaution that is always taken to insure that the new-born shall learn to use his voice at the earliest possible moment. Interviewed by our reporter, he stated that he had found the first five months the hardest; he did not intend to issue any statement at the moment and had no immediate plans.// (41)

All of this has been crossed out with a diagonal line, and it disappears before publication.

I would classify this as mild self-censorship — O’Brien deletes the sexual suggestion (however tame it might seem to us today) of the nurse’s slap on the buttocks; meanwhile, he extends the sentence before it: “His voice is light and pleasant, he is a heavy smoker and apparently not a virgin [though it is admittedly difficult to establish this attribute with certainty in the male]” (41).

O’Brien’s revisions on page 41 may be summarized as follows: the removal of potentially offensive religious (“immaculate conception”) and sexual (“slapped on the buttocks by a pretty nurse”) references, plus the addition of intellectual subtlety to the one sexual joke that remains (“apparently not a virgin, though it is admittedly difficult to establish this attribute with any certainty in the male”). He consistently moved TS1 in this direction: implicit over explicit, subtlety over crudity.

⁷ According to Brown, between 1930 and 1939 — the year *AS2B* was published — approximately 1200 books and 140 periodicals were banned by the censors (149).

These two pages, like all the pages in Pink Sections 1-4, were originally numbered in red ink, 27-8. I have assumed, based on this and a few other factors, that they belonged originally to the early pink draft that represents O'Brien's earliest surviving attempt at *AS2B*. The question naturally arises here, though: how confidently can we infer this continuity between TS1's pink sections — both those numbered in red ink (PS 1-4) and the others (5-8)? Take, for instance, the first two pink sections, which I have just discussed: is it plausible, as I have claimed, that O'Brien initially wrote a self-sufficient draft that began with Finn and, 12 pages later, moved to Trellis and aestho-autogamy — without any trace of the Narrator to link the sections? The Narrator is, after all, the figure that holds the highly disparate texts that make up *AS2B* together. How could a draft excluding him have functioned at all? The real question is: what once occupied the gaps between the pink sections — the twelve pages, for instance, between the end of PS1 and the start of PS2? Can we imagine any content other than the Narrator that would make a Finn parody run smoothly into a discussion of Trellis and Furriskey?

There are, as I see it, two answers to this, two alternate scenarios that explain the evidence. One is that the pink draft was really just a previous draft of the *entire* novel, and that as such it included *everything*, including the Narrator. If this is the case, then any material about the Narrator has been excised, revised, and completely retyped on white paper for TS1. This argument seems like a stretch, mainly because we don't see any mention of the Narrator on any of the surviving pink pages; judging by the way O'Brien recycles pink material in TS1, it's hard to believe that, if long sections about the Narrator had originally been written on pink paper, O'Brien wouldn't have mined them as well for this next version of his novel. Also, there are no handwritten pink pages in TS1: the white

sections are still being written and extended in holograph, but the pink pages exist already as closed, finished, typed units from which to sample.

If the pink draft did contain material from the novel's first level (that is, discussion of the Narrator, his uncle, etc.), it must have been much different from what it eventually became. We know, for instance, that page 2 of the pink draft contained Finn material, which doesn't leave much time for the Narrator to get the book started. If the pink draft represents a remnant of the original version of the novel, with the red page numbers indicating the pagination in that draft, then that novel must have been very different: it would have begun almost immediately (on page 2) with Finn, leaving hardly any room for the Narrator to start it off. But maybe the Narrator's sections were much shorter originally — and then O'Brien decided to incorporate biographical material as it happened (his discussions with Brinsley, the racing letter, the translation), which made the Narrator's frame explode in size, forcing O'Brien to retype and expand those sections, which he did on white paper.

That's one solution — one that (since it contradicts my claims about the novel's composition) I'd like to discount. The second, and more likely solution, I think, is that the pink sections that survive in TS1 were originally linked by even *more* pink sections containing *more* anomalous, second-level material: Trellis talking to his characters, other characters meeting to have lengthy, unpublished conversations. So the pink draft was a long, continuous story about the characters in the Narrator's novel (though, when they were written, there was no "narrator" to speak of); for TS1, O'Brien simply pulled excerpts from this pink ancestor and invented a narrator to link them. The revisions within TS1 support this scenario: we see O'Brien trimming the pink excerpts: cutting

excess material off of both ends, eliminating character interactions inconsistent with the rest of the published novel, etc.

Some of the strongest evidence for this second scenario comes, in fact, in Pink Section 3, which gives us a further look at how an entirely pink draft may have functioned.

Pink Section Three

The third pink section in TS1 deals with the gunbattle between cowboys in Dublin's Ringsend district. In the published version of this section, Shanahan reminisces about when he used to work for Tracey and a big shootout he had with the villain Red Kiersay; his story is interrupted by excerpts from the press and, in parentheses, the brief comments of his audience. As published, the section begins and ends neatly with his story.

The pink-page version of this section, however, is one of the most heavily revised and convoluted sections of TS1: 17 pink pages rearranged and pared down to become 10 pages of published text. The original pink version of the section was not so neatly contained as in the published novel — there is excess, unpublished material before, after, and throughout Shanahan's story.

The section begins, for instance, with two pages (44-5) describing an unpublished encounter between Shanahan and Finn. Shanahan has been hired by Trellis to introduce Finn to his (Finn's) fictional daughter, and in these two pages he takes the old man via tram to her house. The characters have a typically unbalanced conversation, in which Shanahan's modern laconic pleasantries are answered by Finn's half-comprehending epic

catalogues. The sequence has been re-numbered in TS1 (87-8) so that it *follows* Shanahan's cowboy story, though, based on the original pagination, it once preceded the cowboy material. It is also introduced by a newer, half-empty white page that O'Brien added to situate the two-page fragment, the pink beginning of which is obviously missing. In TS1, then, after Shanahan's pink-page cowboy story (72-85), we get white page 86:

Further extract from Manuscript exemplifying one of the many capacities in which Shanahan was employed: Mr Shanahan, attired in a blue nap overcoat furnished with pleats at back, walked along Morehampton Road in company with an old man

Nature of his business: To introduce Finn to his daughter.

-I suppose you are impatient to meet the daughter, said Shanahan, maybe we'd better take a tram?

-I am the old man of the flood, said Finn, I am Carbery Cat-head, I am Goll. Yes, we will take a tram.

-I like you, you know, said Shanahan. I am terrible fond of old men.

-I was liked and well-liked in the yesterday, said Finn.

-I don't doubt it, said Shanahan.

-A man that doubted corn-yellow Finn in the yesterday, said

The page ends there, in mid-sentence and mid-page. Notice that this page shows two hallmarks of TS1's later material — white paper and meta-tags — indicating that it has been added after the original pink composition, in an effort to reorganize the pink material for TS1. This white-page setup leads, after "said," directly into the following unpublished account, on pink paper, of Shanahan guiding Finn through Dublin:

Finn, had the two hams to his body reft by a blue spear and his quarters placed on the hills of age-wise Erin, the one quarter on the hill at Tara, the other on the hill at Galway of the bays.

-Good for telling, said Conan, relate then the feat of the magic thumbsuck

-I cannot make it, said Finn.

-Two threehalfpennies, said Shanahan with a pouch to his coinpicking hand that was filled with gold for bards and for gaunt harpers in a harp-pole at evening. Two cornyellow tickets were punched in the section in which passenger is entitled to travel.

-I hope you'll like the daughter, said Shanahan.

-The head to my begotten daughter, said Finn, is a field of flaxen thistle-seed harrowed and hallowed with manimorn combings, the two gate-ears to the field scoured and blood-blushed with the nibbling of the comb-teeth, a field on the head of my Erin-long daughter with tangled hairstrands reaching to the hollow of Loch Owl in the middle of Erin. Errigal is for one breast, Carauntohill for the other, the snowpallid reeks of Erin. Slieve Luachra and Slieve Gullian is each the semblance of a haunch to her, and the Galtees and the Comeraghs are thighs to the body of Finn's daughter. Her nose is a nose, her mouth a well, her eyes are ox-eyes.

-You're the right old storybook, said Shanahan with his smokesoaked breath, [words like bus in wind] flicking grey ashpowder to Finns knee, you're a walking storybook and that's a sure mark.

The tramcar lurched past a red wall where Bective Rangers ruggered together on a green ball-mead.

-That's the Bective ground, said Shanahan rising. They descended[[^]the two of them], four legs and a stick on the steep stairs.

-Do you see that road up there to the right, said Shanahan, that's your trail. The mansion's name is Aileach. You can't miss it. Go round to the back door – friends of the servant's, you know. Tell them her father wants to see her. It's on your right, the house. You can't miss it.

-Relate, said Conan, the feat of the five spears and the black hog at the hosting of Aileach Uladh.

-I cannot make it, said Finn.

-You'll see it alright, don't you worry, said Shanahan's frown, [surely to God.] you're not blind now, //surely to God.// On your right on the way up. I think I'll be getting back on this tram. Give my love to the daughter will you. Her name is Harkins.

-Surely, said Finn

-Alright now, byebye. Don't lose your way and mind the traffic in the dark. So long.

-He's as blind as a bloody bat, said Shanahan tramboarding quickly, and about as wise, by God.

-Good work, said placid foodsore Trellis. (TS1 87-8)

There are several interesting issues in this passage. One is the relationship between the three characters present: Finn serves as intermediary between Conan, who is imagined, and Shanahan, who is actually present; he daydreams a conversation with Conan while holding an actual conversation with Shanahan. This allows for some verbal play: when Shanahan mentions that the mansion is called Aileach,⁸ it prompts Finn to

⁸ The site of a famous stone fort on a hill, built in western Ulster in the fifth century.

imagine Conan asking for a story about Aileach Uladh; this leap of free-association creates an almost stream-of-consciousness effect, placing the reader within the mind of Finn, something that never happens in the published novel. When Finn responds, “I cannot make it,” then, he makes a double answer: to Shanahan’s directions to the mansion and to Conan’s request for a story.

O’Brien, evidently, wasn’t sure what to do with this passage about Finn and Shanahan riding the tram — he moved it from before the cowboy story to after it, then cut it altogether. But this remnant gives us a clue about what the gaps in the original pink draft probably contained: material that would have been alien to the published novel — characters introducing themselves to each other and completing chores the published novel either summarizes or excludes completely. This is very likely the kind of material that Niall Sheridan cut so extensively. As Sheridan writes, “He had got such fun out of sending up the Fenian cycle that he over-indulged himself.” It is interesting, then, to see this portion of it hanging around in the later stages of composition in TS1.

This section’s oddity does not end with Finn and Shanahan, however. At the very end of pink page 45, Trellis makes another of his anomalous intrusions — these appearances would be quite out of place in the published novel, but they seem commonplace in TS1’s pink pages. After Shanahan abandons Finn on the street and reboards his tram (“-He’s as blind as a bloody bat, said Shanahan tramboarding quickly, and about as wise, by God.”), Trellis steps in with some praise, presumably for Shanahan: “-Good work, said placid foodsore Trellis.” (“Foodsore,” I suspect, is either a pun — a play on “footsore” — or merely a typo.) After this one-line statement, the narrative jumps abruptly to a conversation between Furriskey and Lamont:

-He's as blind as a bloody bat, said Shanahan tramboarding quickly, and about as wise, by God.

-Good work, said placid foodsore Trellis.

[*]

//-Do you know Miss Shiela Lamont? said a questioning man at the corner of the Green and Merrion Row.

-I can't say that I do, said Furriskey, why?

-O nothing. I'm her brother, you know, Percy Lamont. Got tipped off by Shanahan and bagged the job this morning. He told me about yourself. Come up to Grogan's and have a drink.

-Alright, said Furriskey, but let it be only six in case we stay any length. Give me seven stouts and I puke all round me.//

The asterisk after Trellis's statement, which indicates a break or a jump in the narrative, has been inserted by hand. This means that, as the section was originally written, it ran straight through, without any indication of a break — again, an odd, transitionless mishmash of characters who don't belong together. The passage below the asterisk, the conversation between Lamont and Furriskey, has been crossed out with a diagonal line. The pink section, originally, seems to have gone like this: 1) Shanahan meets Finn and takes him on the tram to his daughter's, then 2) takes the tram himself to Grogan's,⁹ where 3) he tells Furriskey and Lamont (who have just met in the street) his old cowboy stories. In the published version, O'Brien has stripped this down to just the cowboy story itself.

This section doesn't end as it does in the published novel, either, with the conclusion of Shanahan's cowboy story. Instead, following that story we get further unpublished commentary from Shanahan, followed by another intrusion from Trellis:

When the lads came out of jail, the fun started again and manys a narrow squeak did Shorty and Slug and myself get into. But Lord save us, Mr Tracey – rest his soul – saw us right in the end, with a wad of notes as thick as a sandwich and a letter of recommendation as strong as be damned for the next man that would like to employ us. Do you know what I mean? If Trellis is as good a

⁹ A pub O'Brien frequented since his days at UCD (Cronin 143).

master, no complaints from me by God. No, Mr Furriskey, //none//. [No complaints from me.] **Conclusion of the foregoing.**

-Do you know anything about ladies' underclothes, Shanahan? said Mr Trellis, peering from the ramparts of his bed-trench with a pimpled perplexity, a sleep-rumpled head raised difficultly from the pillow.

-O not a thing, Mr Trellis, nothing.

The head collapsed with a dull pillowthud.

-I thought you were a bit of a hard man in Mr Tracey's day. Come now, Shanahan, out with it if you know anything. Brassieres, corsets, anything. Give me a brief description of corsets as you (85)

Unfortunately for the student of *AS2B*, this page — along with the pink section to which it belongs — ends here, in mid-sentence. Presumably, pink page 86 continued this discussion of ladies' underclothes. It's impossible to say how long the conversation went on (except that it had to end before Pink Section 4, 23 pages later); we must imagine for ourselves what response Shanahan could possibly have given to Trellis's licentious goading.

As for Shanahan's further comments about Tracey (i.e., that he left his characters with "a wad of notes as thick as a sandwich and a letter of recommendation as strong as be damned for the next man that would like to employ us"), I would guess that O'Brien omits it for the same reason he omits the earlier conversation between Trellis and Finn about the terms of Finn's employment: it foregrounds one of the book's central jokes too explicitly — that characters are *hired* by their authors (with all the accoutrements of employment, such as salary and letters of recommendation), not created.

The meta-tag just before the conversation about ladies' underclothes — "**Conclusion of the foregoing**" — seems at first to suggest that O'Brien had already, on this pink page at least, adopted one of the stylistic hallmarks of his narrator. This would undermine my proposed timeline of composition, which contends that the pink pages came before any definite conception of the narrator and his distinctive meta-tags. In this

case, however, the tag is misleading: it is an anomalous bit of text — the only line on the page in bold type — and has most likely been added sometime after the section was originally typed, probably when the white pages, which use meta-tags so freely, were being composed.

Shanahan's cowboy story is introduced in TS1 just as it is in the published version, with the tag: "Substance of reminiscence by Mr Shanahan, the comments of his hearers being embodied in the text parenthetically; with relevant excerpts from the published press" (71). The early pink version, however, hardly lives up to this description. While the introductory tag promises three elements — Shanahan's reminiscence, the parenthetical comments of his audience, and excerpts from the press — the pink version provides only the first.

Shanahan's story originally lacked any comments from his audience: it was an unbroken recitation. In revision, however, O'Brien inserted the parenthetical "comments of his hearers" by hand — brief exclamations such as "(Well that was a kick for the where-you-know.)" and "(That was very nice, certainly.)". These inserted comments come in two varieties: 1) simple questions that goad the storyteller on and 2) brief affirmations of what has just been said. The result of the comments, while small, is significant in a couple of ways: it breaks up Shanahan's relatively long story, thereby making it more entertaining (entertainment value being one of O'Brien's chief artistic preoccupations), and it introduces a new component of call-and-response audience interaction that ties the section more closely to the rest of the novel, in which every story is interrupted and complicated by its audience. What begins as a monologic story becomes, after revision, polyphonic.

The “excerpts from the public press,” the third item promised in the section’s introductory meta-tag, were present but slightly different in the pink draft. Their content was the same as in the published version, but they originally stood by themselves, without introductory meta-tags. In TS1, for instance, we get:

That was the day of the great O’Callaghan, the day of Baskin, the day of Tracey that brought cowboys to Ringsend. I knew them all, man.

[Relevant Excerpt from the Press] We regret to announce, said the Freeman’s Journal, the passing of Mr William Tracey, the eminent novelist, which occurred yesterday under painful circumstances at his home in Grace Park Road. Early in the afternoon, deceased was knocked down in Weaver’s Square by a tandem bicycle proceeding towards the city. He got up unaided, however, laughed heartily, treated the accident as a joke and made his way home on a tram. When he had smoked //two//[six] afterdinner pipes, he //got up to go to the lavatory//[went to ascend the stairs &] and dropped dead on the //stairs//[landing]. Subsequent examination revealed that the spleen had been ruptured. A man of culture and old-world courtesy, his passing will be regretted by all without distinction of creed or class, and in particular by the world of letters, which he has adorned with distinction for many years. He was the first man in Europe to exhibit twenty-nine lions in a cage at the same time and the only writer to demonstrate that cowpunching could be economically carried on in Ringsend. His best known works were ‘Red Flanagan’s Last Throw’, ‘Flower O’ The Prairy’, and Jake’s Last Ride’. Deceased was 59. [Conclusion of Excerpt.] (TS1 72)

The meta-tags — “Relevant Excerpt from the Press” and “Conclusion of Excerpt” — have been inserted in the revision by hand; they neatly introduce and conclude a section that originally began and ended traditionally. In the original version, all excerpts from the press were presented as quotations from the *Freeman’s Journal*.

These stylistic revisions — the introduction of meta-tags and parenthetical comments — help Shanahan’s cowboy story, which makes up the bulk of TS1’s third pink section, match the rest of the novel more closely. The story’s *content* has also been edited, with excess material being trimmed throughout.

There is a long sequence, for instance, in which Shanahan and Slug Willard are captured by their enemies, tied up, and manage (through judicious use of their spurs) to

escape: “One thing led to another, Flanagan’s lousers came out and crowded round and //be damned but the whole God-damned//[at the heel of the hunt the] three of us found ourselves bound and gagged, hand and foot, and shagged into a dirty filthy stable, thrown on our shots on //a carpet of dung//[the floor]” (80). Earlier in the section, the cowboys are stopped by a policeman for speeding on their horses:

Out jumps a G-man and starts dancing a \\bloody\\ hornpipe in the road in front of us. It was the mercy of Providence that the \\bastard\\[louser] wasn’t made dirt of, the mercy of God and nothing else. The three of us up and \\manned\\[pulled] the reins and ripped the lips out of our rearing nags. Slug got a lump of horse’s froth right on the Joseph snot and I was offa the lurry on the road on the top of my bloody head only for the merciful finger of \\God\\[Providence] on my solemn oath. Up comes My Lord as bold as brass with a stream of the dirtiest profanity ever to pass the lips of man, \\lips that were made to praise God\\ a polisman, mind you, and a paid servant of the people. [^(O they’re all the same. You’re only chance was to sing dumb, of course).] Out comes the little book and another stream of the nice language. Shorty’s finger was making for his six-gun but Lord save us, not outside a church, says I, God’s acre and anointed ground. What’s your name, barks the G-man and says we’re going to hear more about this as sure as God. Ni thuigim Bearla, says I in Irish, the language of the Gael and soon to be put back, please God, in the mouths of the Irish people. What are you saying, man, says the peeler. Is it Gaelic you are trying to come on me? says he. (He didn’t like it, of course?) He didn’t like it and didn’t care who knew it. (TS1 75-6)

The reference to Gaelic here is especially interesting. Though O’Brien was a notorious defender of the Irish language (indeed, it was his first language), *AS2B* is suspiciously quiet on the subject. This mention, then, is a rare occurrence, and he has left it out of the published novel.

O’Brien, it appears, was streamlining Shanahan’s story to focus on just one incident — the shootout with Kiersay’s gang; he was originally carried away, it seems, with the clichés of the Western genre, which he indulged to distracting length.

O’Brien was especially rigorous in eliminating offensive phrases and sexual references from his cowboy story. The word “bloody” is excised numerous times;

“bastard” is often changed to “louser.” The following sentence is a typical example of O’Brien’s self-censorship: “Go to //the loving God//[hell] but a //bastard//[louser] pulls a gun on us from behind and tells us to get up //to hell to//[on] our feet and //if we don’t play ball, it’s curtains and plenty for the lot of us.//[no delay or monkey-work]” (TS1 78). Cleaned up for publication, this becomes: “Go to hell but a lad pulls a gun on us from behind and tells us to get on our feet and no delay or monkey-work” (*AS2B* 78). As a preemptive concession to the censors, O’Brien inserts prudish statements into his characters’ mouths: when Shanahan mentions “a scutter of dirty filthy language” in TS1, he gets no response from his audience (TS1 82). By publication, however, his audience can’t wait to show their disapproval: Shanahan mentions a “stream of dirty filthy language” and the audience immediately responds, “(Well dirty language is a thing I don’t like. He deserved all he got.)” (*AS2B* 80).

Some of the censored “indecentcies” seem remarkably mild by today’s standards. In TS1, for instance, the Circle N ranch (Red Kiersay’s hangout) is described as having a “spacious lavatory – 5 urinals, 1 w.c. – together with an ingenious apparatus worked by compressed air by which all lavatories can be flushed and all verminous beds fumigated in the space of forty seconds by the mere pressing of a button” (77). The published novel retains the “ingenious apparatus” — O’Brien was, since childhood, a connoisseur of elaborate machines —but it refers to a “spacious dormitory” instead of a lavatory (*AS2B* 77). The references to urinals and water closets are, of course, left out.

Throughout Pink Section 3, O’Brien treats race in an uncharacteristically dangerous way — indeed, he expends much energy in revision eliminating overtly racist material. For instance, Shanahan describes life at Tracey’s ranch:

At night we would gather in the bunkhouse with our porter and all our orders, cigarettes and plenty there on the cheffonier to be taken and no questions asked, schoolmarms and saloongirls and little black //mots//[maids] skivvying [^there] in the galley[.] //and as geney as// you like //for the first man that takes it into his head to play ball know what I mean?//[((That was the place to be now))]" (73).

The last part of the sentence, about “playing ball,” which suggests that the “little black maids” are available for sex, remains unpublished. On the next pink page, Shanahan says, “-I’m no nance and I’m not fussy when it comes to the hard stuff, but damn it all, I draw the line when it comes to carrying off a batch of black niggers and a couple of thousand steers, by God” (75). We might excuse the ugly term “niggers” as a 1930s Irishman’s attempt to mimic the American cowboy’s vernacular, but there are at least two other shocking moments in the sentence: the use of “batch,” a word normally used in describing inanimate objects, to describe the slaves (which suggests that they, too, are primarily objects) and the syntactical equation of “a bunch of black niggers” and “a couple of thousand steers,” as if the people and the animals were of equal value. O’Brien seems to have recognized the danger in these statements, and he softened the sentence for publication: “I’m not what you call fussy when it comes to women but damn it all I draw the line when it comes to carrying off a bunch of black niggers—human beings, mind you—and a couple of thousand steers, by God” (*AS2B* 76). We can be confident that Shanahan’s voice is not O’Brien’s, who is trying to mimic as closely as possible the words of roughshod, stereotypical (and stereotyping) fictional cowboys, peppered with offensive slang and clichés (draw the line, damn it all, by God) that would have been just as offensive (and maybe even moreso) to O’Brien the linguistic policeman (think of his excoriating lists of bland language in Myles’s “Catechism of Cliché”).

Towards the end of Pink Section 3, O'Brien crosses most dangerously into pure racism:

I'm telling you it was a sorrowful three punchers that rode home to Ringsend that night, our bullet-pierced hats on our bowed heads and our empty six-guns dangling at our hips. If it wasn't that our black skivvies were waiting for us as plump and as gamey as be damned when we got the length, we might have shot up Ringsend Saloon or lynched a Sambo offa the arm of a tree or something. (84)

Here race is associated with sexuality and violence so directly that it is impossible to imagine how it could have been fixed in revision; O'Brien had the sense to strike it out.

Throughout the section there are minor revisions of character and place names. Shanahan's adversary, for instance, is originally called "Red Flanagan"; this is revised in each case to read "Red Kiersay." "Tracey" becomes "Tracy." The Dublin place names mentioned by Shanahan also go through numerous quiet metamorphoses: Store Street becomes Lad Lane (TS1 78, 83), Grace Park Road becomes Grace Park Gardens (72), Rutland Square becomes Mountjoy Square (73). It would be interesting to check these names against a map of 1930s Dublin to see if the changes might have some significance.¹⁰

Near the end of Pink Section 3 we get another manifestation of author-as-character that would have violated the tacit rules of the published novel. In this case, at the end of Shanahan's cowboy adventures, Tracey flies in through the window on a cloud: "When we got to our //bloody//[warm] beds at last, here was my bold Mr Tracey coming in the window on a little cloud and praising us up to the ninety-nines for our good day's work and promising lashings and leavings of good porter for the next day. A nice decent man to work for, believe me" (TS1 84). This, too, has been cut from TS1, another victim of O'Brien's desire for subtlety.

Pink Section Four

Coming after the re-organized, tangled text of PS3, Pink Section 4 seems remarkably neat. This is all the more surprising because of its length: at 36 pages, it is more than twice as long as PS3. It contains Finn’s recital of the tale of Mad Sweeny, which is interrupted twice by Shanahan, Lamont, and Furriskey — first when they discuss Jem Casey, self-proclaimed poet of the people, and then when they discuss Sergeant Craddock, the best jumper in Ireland. The section is pink all the way through (i.e., there are no white-page interpolations), and the pages remain in their original order.

This section is especially disheartening for thesis writers, because there is almost nothing to talk about. Most of the significant differences between this draft and the published version occur in Sweeny’s poems, with which O’Brien tinkers constantly. These are his own translations from the 12th century Irish poem *Buile Suibhne*, or *The Frenzy of Sweeny*. He was an idiosyncratic, often ingenious translator,¹¹ and here we see his intralingual priorities in action. Some of the revisions serve to modernize the language of the translations:

O alder, O alder-friend,
Delightful //thy//[your] color,
//thou dost not tear me or prickle// [You don’t tear me or prickle]
//in the gap thou art//[In the gap you are.]

In others, we see O’Brien playing with his options, trying out slightly different translations of lines:

God has given me life here
very bare, very narrow,

¹⁰ Though I should admit, here, that I have not done so.

¹¹ Seamus Heaney, in the introduction to *Sweeney Astray*, his own translation of *Buile Suibhne*, says O’Brien gave Sweeny “a second life, as hilarious as it was melancholy.”

//no music or trance-eyed sleep, // [no woman, no trysting,]
//without womankind, without womantryst. // [no music, no trance-eyed
[no woman, no womantryst.] sleep]

On page 119, O'Brien moves beyond tinkering with phrases and makes two curious marginal notes next to Sweeney's poem. They are not revisions, but probably just notes to those friends who would have read TS1; they point beyond the stanzas at hand to other works of literature:

Glen Bolcain of the twinkle spring it is my rest-place to abide in; when Samhain comes when summer comes it is my rest-place where I abide.		[Cf. Span. verse in Sierra play.]
--	--	--------------------------------------

For my sustenance at night, //all//[the whole] that my hands can glean from the gloom of oak-gloomed oaks- the herbs and the plenteous fruits		[I do not know what flowers are at my feet]
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Unfortunately, I haven't been able to track down the object of the first note. I don't know of (and have not been able to track down) a Spanish verse in a Sierra play — or even, for that matter, what the "Sierra" here refers to: author/protagonist/title of play?

The second note, however, is much easier to track down. It is a paraphrase of a line from Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" (the actual line is "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet"). Having identified the reference, though, I'm not sure what link O'Brien had in mind — there is, of course, the simple connection of birds singing in trees (Sweeney has been cursed to fly through Ireland in the form of a bird), as well as the themes of suffering and melancholia ("My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk"). The important thing here is that O'Brien makes the novel's intertextuality explicit; there are allusions to Keats's odes throughout the novel,

but they are usually passed over quickly. Here he draws an explicit analogy between the two texts.

PS4 also shows O'Brien playing with one of his (and the book's) major preoccupations: the implications, aesthetic and social, of literary form. This manifests itself mainly as a struggle between poetry of all kinds and prose. On page 112, Shanahan recites Jem Casey's working-class anthem, "A Pint of Plain is Your Only Man"; his audience, as we have come to expect in the book, interrupts the recitation, shouting encouragement between the stanzas: e.g., "By God there's a lilt in that" and "There are things in that pome that make for what you call permanence." It is one of the most striking demonstrations (in a book full of them) of art enmeshed with its audience response. In the top right corner of the page, O'Brien has written: "Space the verse and dialogue better," and he has omitted some lines of dialogue, rephrased others — all in his obsession to manage the page's rapid swings in diction and form.

A couple of times in the section, O'Brien takes poetry out of verse form and turns it into prose. Lamont, for instance, decides to counsel the gathering with a bit of fortune-cookie doggerel; he recites this rhyming maxim:

//A wise old owl once lived in a wood,
The more he heard the less he said,
The less he said the more he heard,
Let's emulate that wise old bird.// (114)

O'Brien has added, by hand: "A wise old owl — don't put in verse-formation," and sure enough, the verse is published like the majority of the book's dialogue, as prose. Two pages later, Shanahan shows poetic inspiration of his own, spontaneously reciting a verse that ingeniously synthesizes Casey's "Pint of Plain" with Sweeny's laments:

When stags appear on the mountain high
With flanks the color of bran,
When a badger bold can say good-bye—
A PINT OF PLAIN IS YOUR ONLY MAN!

This, too, is taken out of stanza form and published as prose. On the same page, we see another hint at poetry: when someone suggests drinking wine, the response is, “-What’s wrong with whiskey? inquired Furriskey.” Though the rhyme is not set apart in verse form, it’s impossible to think that O’Brien — with his immense sensitivity to the sound of his prose, as well as his conscious play in this section with poetic form — would have let it slip in accidentally. It, too, is left out of publication. All of these revisions taken together suggest that, by eliminating the other characters’ poetry, O’Brien wanted to isolate the section’s two *real* poets, Casey and Sweeny, if only to emphasize more sharply the contrast between them. In the published version, only their verses remain in true verse form. The rest of the characters, the non-poets, speak, even at their most poetic, in prose.

Near the beginning of the section, O’Brien makes a small but significant revision — one that shows him trying to make his difficult novel less difficult, and that gives us some insight into the anomalous intrusions of characters we have seen in the previous pink sections. During a rambling, mismatched fireside conversation between Shanahan, Furriskey, Lamont, and Finn (in which Finn spouts seeming non sequiturs and falls asleep by the fire while the rest of the company discusses him curiously), Conan jumps into the conversation:

-I don’t doubt it, said Furriskey.
-Relate said [^hidden] Conan, the tale of the Feasting Dun na nGedh.
-At the same time, said Lamont, it’s what you call the form that I’m talking about. I mean to say, whether a yarn is tall or small, I like to hear it well told. I like to meet a man that can take it in hand to tell a story and not make a

balls of it when he's at it. I like to know where I am, //say what you like//[do you know]. Everything has a beginning and an end.

Conan's intrusion here is similar to Trellis's strange intrusion in Pink Section 1: he speaks, but no one (save Finn) responds or seems to know he's there. By adding the word "hidden" in revision, however — not just Conan, but "hidden" Conan — O'Brien erases some (but not all) of the passage's ambiguity: we understand that Conan is somehow present, but at the same time concealed from some of the characters. But hidden how? Behind a chair, or in some less literal way, like in Finn's mind? In the published version, O'Brien clears up the ambiguity by adding one more line. After "hidden Conan" asks Finn for a story, we read: "Finn in his mind was nestling with his people" (*AS2B* 89). This makes it clear that Finn is merely daydreaming, and that Conan is not physically present at all.

Another telling revision in PS4 concerns the novel's notoriously strange title, about which O'Brien remained ambivalent all the way up to (and even after) publication. He wrote letters to his publisher, for example, expressing his dissatisfaction with it ("I do not fancy it much except as a title for a slim book of poems") and suggesting alternatives, the best of which was *Sweeny In the Trees* (*Journal of Irish Literature* 67). *At Swim-Two-Birds* stuck, however. It is a literal translation of "Snamh-dhá-Én," a place by the Shannon River where, in *Buile Suibhne*, Sweeny recites one of his lays. Strangely enough, though, for all of Sweeny's laments included in the novel, this lay is not among them, though O'Brien was surely aware of it. So there is a kind of studied irrelevance to the title, and PS4 further confirms this. Though it contains the first occurrence in the novel of "Snamh-dhá-Én," originally we don't even get a translation, just the Irish name itself. O'Brien finally adds the English version in revision: "he reached the church at

Snamh-dhá-Én [^(or Swim-Two-Birds)] by the Shannon” (TS1 100). This suggests that, at least when this section was originally typed, O’Brien had yet to settle on *AS2B* as the title of the novel. By revision, it looks like he had made the decision. He seems to have regretted it soon after.

PS4 ends in a way unique in TS1; after a lay recited by the saint Moling, the page concludes with six widely spaced dots:

Melodious was the talk of Sweeny,
Long shall I hold his memory,
The King of Heaven I implore
On his tomb and above his grave.

.

The next place we see this series of dots is after a gulf of 18 white pages, at the beginning of Pink Section 5. Their recurrence raises interesting questions about the relationship between the two sections. As a bonus, it also brings us to Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: PINK SECTION 5

Though I've been presenting the pink sections in batches so far, PS5 deserves its own chapter. It is an island, disconnected from its pink neighbors, and a clear turning point in O'Brien's composition of *AS2B*. It is the first pink section to appear without the ancestral red page numbers; in it, the pink and white sections start to work together in a new way. By PS5, it seems, O'Brien had learned more about what kind of novel he was writing and how it would have to work.

Prior to PS5, TS1's pink and white sections work together in a very specific way. Just to recap: the pink sections, which are pieces of a longer and once self-sufficient pink draft, contain excerpts from the Narrator's novel; these pink pages have all been renumbered to function in TS1. The white sections, which are newer and retain their original pagination, deal with the Narrator himself, not his novel.

In PS5, however, this simple relationship changes — and it never quite returns to the way it was. The section tells the story of the Pooka and the Good Fairy's journey to the Red Swan Hotel to witness the birth of Orlick; along the way, they run into Slug Willard, Shorty Andrews, Jem Casey, and Mad Sweeny. The first striking thing about this pink section is that it is not, as the first four were, an excerpt from a larger draft — that is, it begins at the beginning, with the Pooka waking up in his forest home, and it ends at the end, with the Pooka claiming Orlick as his apprentice. This might be a commonplace in the world of traditional storytelling, but in the context of TS1 — in which the pink stories are always truncated, denatured, and deported from their native environment — it is a landmark.

Another feature that separates PS5 from its pink predecessors is pagination. The section is numbered just once, consistently with, and in the same black ink as, TS1's white sections. There are no corrected red numbers, which suggests that this was not part of the ancestral pink draft from which PS1-4 have been taken. But the basic similarities remain: PS5 is still on pink paper, it still contains material from the Narrator's novel, and it seems to have been written *before* the white sections. What, then, is the relationship between PS5 and the sections that precede it?

Here we should return to the series of six dots that signal the end of PS4. It's a minor detail, to be sure, but significant as a compositional link: these dots recur at only one other place in TS1, the beginning of PS5. Next to these dots, which occur at the top center of the page, O'Brien has pencilled in the number 83. This is interesting because 83 is not the page number; it is clearly numbered 146 in black type at the very top of the page. This pencilled 83 tells us something more interesting, in fact: 83, it turns out, was the original, red page number of what later became page 128, the last page of PS4 — the page that ends with the five dots we find echoed at the beginning of PS5. (The fact that he used the original red page number to orient himself rather than the revised black number shows that PS5 was written *before* the big black repagination, before the red numbers became obsolete.)

So PS5 is clearly linked to PS4, but how? After all, they don't show continuous pagination as the previous pink sections have done. The most logical explanation is that, as O'Brien began typing out PS5, he left the pages completely unnumbered. He had realized, by this point, that he was going to add the Narrator material on white paper — he may even have begun sketching it by now — and it was clear that he'd have to

repaginate the pink sections as he added this new material. So he started to leave his pages unnumbered (or, as we'll see in PS6-8, he came up with temporary numbering systems that could be easily changed to fit with new material). This left a completely unnumbered pink section lying around, however, and, to keep it from floating off into organizational limbo, O'Brien had to leave himself *some* indication of where it fit in the draft. The five dots and the number 83, then, were organizational notes to himself; they said: When you're putting the pieces of this manuscript together, this section should come *after* pink page 83. It was the textual equivalent of "Insert tab A into slot B."

So, for the first time in TS1, a pink section is relatively tidy: it has been planned and written as a continuous narrative all its own, and it survives as such, unabridged and unscrambled. Even so, and perhaps because of that, PS5 has five white-page interpolations — more than any other pink section. Tidy stories, it seems, were not allowed in O'Brien's novel; in this case, he had to introduce some messiness.

Two interpolations are worth exploring in some length. The section is first interrupted by a sequence of five handwritten white pages dealing with Jem Casey; it is not so much an interruption as an amplification of the pink material. It seems to have been added in the early stages of the section's composition, or at the very least before the section was finally numbered because, though the text itself is handwritten, it is numbered in black type in order to match the rest of the section. It is an interesting addition: in the purely pink original version of the story, the travelers stumble upon Casey in a clump of bushes and, in the space of two pages, without much conversation, he has joined the party and the narrative moves on. This new white section, however, beefs up that introductory conversation: the characters discuss what Casey might have

been doing in the bushes and debate the relative merits of different types of poetry. Most importantly, Casey recites a poem, “The Gift of God is a Workin’ Man” — a ballad disturbingly similar to his previous opus, “A Pint of Plain is Your Only Man.” This addition adds not only some funny material, it also rekindles the aesthetic debate (“high” poetry vs. “low” poetry) that had openly raged in PS4:

-Poetry is a thing I am very fond of, said the Angel. I always make a point of following the works of Mr Eliot and Mr Lewis and Mr Devlin. A good poem is a tonic. Was your poem on the subject of flowers, Mr Casey? Wordsworth was a great man for flowers.

-Mr Casey doesn’t go in for that class of stuff, sd. Slug. (TS1 170)

PS5’s second white-page interruption is a nine-page handwritten Biographical Reminiscence about a committee meeting held by the Narrator’s uncle, at which the Narrator is forced to serve as secretary. The pages are numbered by hand, so unlike the first interpolation they were added *after* the section had been paginated with the typewriter — its late insertion suggests that this interpolation is less endemic than the first, less a part of the section of a whole. Further examination bears this out. What is most striking about this Biographical Reminiscence is that it is completely generic. It could have been plugged *anywhere* into the novel: it contains no references to the developing narrative of the book, nothing that would situate it at one point of the plot instead of any other. In the published novel, there are ten Biographical Reminiscences, and each of them is clearly numbered: Biographical Reminiscence part the first, second, third, etc. In TS1, the BRs are numbered as well (though, because of the book’s ever-shifting sections, their numbers often change before publication). The white Biographical Reminiscence added to PS5, however, is labeled simply “Biographical Reminiscence — .” Again, it seems O’Brien had learned his lesson: in writing a complicated novel made

up of myriad shifting parts, it does not pay to number those parts prematurely. By leaving this Biographical Reminiscence unnumbered (it was finally published as the seventh), O'Brien created a moveable piece, something to fill a void at the beginning, middle, or end of the novel. At its location in TS1, it doesn't connect with the surrounding text in any specific way, serving merely as a neutral digression useful for breaking the section up. O'Brien inserted it in a spot in the narrative that seemed to call out for an interruption, a moment of relative suspense in the journey just before the characters reach their final destination, the Red Swan Hotel. PS5 had been written as a story capable of standing on its own, but O'Brien decided to break it up, to interweave it more thoroughly with the rest of the book — a typical adjustment in a novel in which every story must coexist and share its space with other stories.

On the reverse of page 200, the last page of PS5, O'Brien has left some telling notes. Above a horizontal line separating the page into top and bottom halves, two sentences slant towards the page's upper-right corner. The first reads, "He cut his jugular three times and wrote on a photograph goodbye goodbye goodbye." The second reads, "He cut his jugular three times //with a razor as he scrawled//[and scrawled on] a photograph of his wife //with his dying hand// goodbye goodbye goodbye." Readers of the published *AS2B* might recognize these two sentences as sketches of the book's final sentence, which reads: "He went home one evening and drank three cups of tea with three lumps of sugar in each cup, cut his jugular with a razor three times and scrawled with a dying hand on a picture of his wife good-bye, good-bye, good-bye" (*AS2B* 316).¹ On the

¹ At the end of TS1, O'Brien is still tinkering with this sentence: "He went home one evening and drank three cups of tea with three lumps of sugar in each cup, cut his jugular with a razor three times and scrawled [//with a dying hand//] [//as he died//] on a photograph of his wife [^with //a// his dying hand] goodbye goodbye goodbye."

back of page 200, then, O'Brien was thinking ahead to the end of his book, sketching his options for the last sentence.

On the bottom half of the back of page 200, O'Brien has written more notes by hand, including a list of Irish words, most of which are a variation of "An t-oileánach," or "the student." This is a clear reference to *AS2B*'s college-student Narrator, but it is also the title of a contemporary Irish novel O'Brien admired, a novel that served as inspiration for his next published novel, *An Béal Bocht*. Above this list of Irish are the words "Return to bedroom," a phrase that shows up on the facing page of TS1 in the Narrator's daily schedule, which declares, for seven in the evening: "Return to bedroom and rest in darkness" (TS1 201). Above these notes, O'Brien has written:

Items: —
Brinsley points out sameness of three characters, S, L & F
Give list of distinctions."

This is a description, in capsule form, of another upcoming section in TS1, a Biographical Reminiscence (finally published as the ninth), in which Brinsley complains to the Narrator that Shanahan, Lamont, and Furriskey are indistinguishable; the Narrator responds with an absurd list of their many distinctive traits — or, as he says, a "Memorandum of the [^respective] Diacritical Traits or Qualities of Messrs. Furriskey, Lamont, and Shanahan" (220) — in which we learn, for instance, that "Mr Furriskey is of the brachycephalic order, Mr. Shanahan of the prognathic." Again, O'Brien seems to have been sketching his next move on the back of the last page he had written at the time, the final page of PS5.

Though PS5 is ultimately more interesting for structural reasons than for particular revisions of content, at least one revision bears mentioning here. There is a

religious resonance in the early version of this section that is absent from (or at least significantly muted in) the published novel. The Pooka, for instance, a kind of sinister sprite from Irish mythology, is originally called “the Devil”; his counterpart and rival the Good Fairy, another figure from Celtic myth, is originally called “Angel.” So the section originally hinged on a Christian dualism that would have been risky, both politically and artistically: it would have tempted the censors, and it would have given the section a moral gravity that might have distracted the reader from its more fundamental humor. Indeed, O’Brien acknowledges these risks in a letter to his publisher:

“Good Spirit” (which was originally “Angel”) has been changed to “Good Fairy.” I think this change is desirable because “Fairy” corresponds more closely to “Pooka,” removes any suggestion of the mock-religious and establishes the thing on a mythological plane. (*Journal of Irish Literature* 66)

A few smaller revisions also help to take the edge off the section’s original religious bent: “where in the name of God” (TS1 158) becomes “where in the name of goodness,” and “Samaritans” becomes “keepers” (TS1 180). The Angel, at one point, makes a flippant mention of his soul that may (along with his dirty mouth) have led the reader theologically astray: “-Damn kangaroos! said the Angel with a sudden flare of temper, you have the soul pestered out of me with your old talk!” (TS1 175); this sentence never makes it to publication. The section ends with an overwhelmingly religious moment:

The door closed. And for a long time the limping beat of the //Devil’s//[Pooka’s] club could be heard, and //a//[the] low //insistent talking//[hum of his fine talk] as [t]he[y] paced the passage[,] //with his catechumen.//[the Pooka and his Orlick.] (TS1 200)

O’Brien adopts the handwritten revisions for publication, so the image of Orlick as the Devil’s “catechumen” (which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as “A new convert

under instruction before baptism. . . . Sometimes applied to young Christians generally, and especially to those preparing for the rite of confirmation”) does not appear in the published novel. One wonders if such an explicit reference to satanic conversion would have made it past the censors.

From this point on in TS1, the character of the pink sections changes. They seem to have been written as independent units, complete and discrete, numbered in such a way as to admit no confusion, and uninvolved with any longer draft. We may consider PS5, then, the turning point in O’Brien’s use of pink paper in TS1.

CHAPTER 4: PINK SECTIONS 6-8

By now, the shape of TS1 is becoming clear: the first four pink sections form a unit — that is, they seem to have been written simultaneously, with the same aesthetic goals and rules; PS5, with its unrevised pagination, stands disconnected from the previous pink pages, a textual orphan who gossips incessantly about his neighbors. The final three pink sections, PSs 6-8, also form a unit, and in this they echo PSs 1-4. But there is an important difference between the two groups, a difference that helps us to see O'Brien's composition strategies changing as his manuscript progresses. The typescript's final three pink sections form a unit not through actual unity, but through a deliberate and efficient *disunity*.

Again, one of the keys to unriddling all of this is pagination, where the three sections have some striking similarities. Each section has been numbered twice, first in the upper left-hand corner, then in the upper center. The original page numbers (those in the upper left corners) occur in distinct systems, each internally consistent but slightly different from the other sections'. The pages of PS6, for instance, are numbered traditionally, in the Arabic numerals 1-16. PS7, however, is numbered in Roman numerals, i-xl. PS8 returns to Arabic numerals, but to prevent confusion with PS6 O'Brien put them in parenthesis, (1)-(14). These three sections are the only ones in TS1 with this numbering scheme, which suggests that they were written at the same time, as discrete, internally paginated units. Later, when the sections were commingled with the white sections of TS1, O'Brien added the numbers in the top center, which are plain old Arabic numerals in black ink, consistent in every way with the surrounding white sections.

Even after the pink pages were repaginated to match the rest of TS1, the original numbers in the upper left were not crossed out or revised: they were allowed to stand. This suggests that O'Brien never saw them as permanent numbers linking the sections to the larger text, but merely as provisional systems useful for organizing discrete, smaller sections that would have to be renumbered anyway.

In PS5, O'Brien had realized that it is futile to number a pink section prematurely, but his solution to that — leaving the pages completely unnumbered — probably made the section difficult to organize. In PSs 6-8, he discovered a better way: to number the sections in one corner, in a way that will help to organize and distinguish each section without becoming entangled with the overarching pagination of the entire manuscript.

Pink Section Six

PS6 is a set piece containing a long conversation at the Furriskey household, in which Lamont, Shanahan, Furriskey and his wife discuss, in working class Dublinese, such pressing issues as the hierarchy of bodily injury, from boils to broken knees, and the musical merits of the voice as compared to the fiddle and the piano. Though there is wonderful material throughout the section, not much of it is significantly different from the published version. I'll just mention here a few places that seem worth a closer look.

In the characters' long discussion of music, Shanahan complains about the difficulty of some piano music he's heard. His complaint renews the book's old debate between "high" and "low" art — the debate that had been so visible in the opposition between Jem Casey and Mad Sweeny in PS5:

-Some of the stuff I've heard in my time, siad Shanahan, is no joke to play for the man that has two hands. It was stuff of the best make I don't doubt,

classical tack and all the rest of it, but by God it gave me a pain in my handbox. It hurt my head far worse than a pint of whiskey (TS1 206)

This is published as above (though “siad” is corrected). It is interesting to note, as a gauge of O’Brien’s own ambivalence on the subject, that he later used Shanahan’s final line — “It hurt my head far worse than a pint of whiskey” — as an indictment of his own novel in a letter to the then-popular novelist Ethel Mannin (Cronin 94).

Lamont’s response to this complaint remains unpublished. It is a brief defense of difficult art and is interesting in suggesting the other side of O’Brien’s ambivalence:

-But there’s good crack in that when you get in on it, explained Lamont, understand it once and you’ll never have anything else. You have to get used to it, you know, take it easy. You can’t swallow it like a drink. It has to be chewed by the teeth. Look at it like this crust, say.

I suspect that O’Brien deleted this response for two reasons: first, because it was out of character (after all, doesn’t Lamont applaud Jem Casey’s working class ballads just as heartily as his companions?), and second, because the speech might be mistaken for artistic self-congratulation, a position O’Brien was much too critical to adopt for long.

At the end of PS6, we again find O’Brien making some interesting handwritten notes. First he makes a note about the next Biographical Reminiscence: “Hereafter, the similarity of the 3 characters, list of distinctions” (218). This refers to the same Biographical Reminiscence as the note on the reverse of page 200; he is still planning ahead to further sections, trying to organize his growing draft.

O’Brien also adds a new ending to PS6, one that serves transparently as a transition to the following section. The section had originally ended how it began, with conversation between the four characters. The new ending, however, changes things abruptly:

A loud knocking at the hall-door became audible to the company. Mrs Furriskey moved quickly from the room in response to it.
-That will be Mr Orlick, said Shanahan. (218)

With this move, O'Brien converts a once freestanding set piece into a functioning piece of a larger narrative. Half the action in TS1 is O'Brien's struggle to lend discrete sections the illusion of coherence, to make a novel out of bits and pieces. This may be the root of the "static" quality Anthony Cronin sees as a fundamental characteristic of *AS2B* — and indeed, all of O'Brien's work (135).

Pink Section Seven

PS7 contains my favorite portion of *AS2B*: the extract from Orlick's manuscript, in which Orlick (and then, in secret, Shanahan, Lamont, and Furriskey) describes the sickening (and yet somehow hilarious) array of "physical scourges, torments, and piteous blood-sweats" Trellis undergoes at the hands of the Pooka. Before plunging into the section itself, however, I should mention the white page that precedes it.

The page contains a handwritten note, in which O'Brien provides some clues to the different types of paper in TS1 as well as advice on how to read his disheveled text. In the middle of the page, he has written:

Top copy — Thick (watermarked paper)
Two carbons — Thinner paper.

This identifies the three types of white paper used in the typescript: 1) a thick paper watermarked "SWIFT BROOK," of which only 11 pages are present, all of which are handwritten; 2) a thin paper with relatively dark type, which was probably the top copy of the two carbons mentioned in the note; this paper makes up the majority of the white sections in TS1; and 3) another thin paper, but with type lighter in color than the previous

type; it was probably the second, or lower, carbon copy, and it is relatively scarce in TS1. Unfortunately, the note doesn't mention the pink paper.

Below this note about the different types of paper is a heartbreaking message for the present thesis writer — especially since, by the time I first read it, I had already struggled two-thirds of the way through the typescript compiling elaborate records of all its odd pagination. The message, in large parentheses, reads: “don't attempt to follow original pagination.” Presumably this was addressed to those friends who would have read TS1 and may have been confused by the contradictory page numbers. The farther I get in this project, though, the more I think that O'Brien actually anticipated my thesis work, and that he left me good advice.

Moving past this white-page warning, there are several interesting moments within PS7 itself. Again we see O'Brien toning down the religious emphasis. In the original version of the section, Orlick describes Trellis more than once as a lazy Christ figure: “His hands he rested emptily at his thighs and his legs stretched loose-jointed and heavily to the bed-bottom, one foot crossing the other in the manner of a slothful crucifixion” (226). Each time, the reference is deleted. Later the characters discuss various methods of torture and (after some circuitous and confused conversation) hit on a punishment with a particularly Christian resonance:

-It's really a question of point of view, said Orlick. You can kill a man with a slasher or powder the walls of his stomach with fine glass. The aesthete...
-I think Mr Shanahan is right, Sir, said Lamont.
-The aesthete will favor the crucible.
-By God that's the man! said Furriskey, eye-quick and hand-quick. Crucifixion! By God we'll crucify him! We'll nail him up. Eh, Mr Lamont? We'll nail him to the mast! (232)

Still later, Orlick describes Lamont, Furriskey, and Shanahan as “three Magi or wise men of the East,” a clear reference to Christ’s birth; in revision, O’Brien crosses out “Magi” and replaces it with the more secular “savants” (264).

O’Brien also seems very close, in this section, to figuring out the right format for meta-tags. He adds a half-meta-tag to the end of one paragraph: “Colour of the face of Trellis, not counting the tops of pimples: white.” The format is almost right, but not quite; it lacks two elements essential to a proper meta-tag: italics, and isolation as a separate paragraph. O’Brien eventually fixes both of these problems, but not until revision, when he writes “(New Paragraph)” with an arrow pointing to the sentence, and also draws a line under it to indicate italics. He repeats this exact revision twice more in the section. By watching the evolution of one of the book’s most characteristic stylistic tricks — from traditional description in the early PSs, to half-meta-tags in the later PSs, to full-blown meta-tags set off from the rest of the text in the white sections — we get an idea of the order in which O’Brien composed the book’s different parts. It looks like PS7 was written in some middle period: *before* the white sections (which use the meta-tag format flawlessly, exactly as in the published novel) but *after* the previous pink sections (which don’t use the meta-tag format at all).

“You rat’s anus” — as colorful an expletive as I’ve ever seen — is changed in publication to the more pedestrian “You black bastard” (244).

Midway through the section, O’Brien pulls an interesting typographical stunt. Orlick excuses himself to go to the bathroom and, after Lamont and Shanahan add their own touches to the story of Trellis’s suffering, Furriskey takes over the account:

The //Devil//[Pooka] took a good pull at his pipe. The result of this manoeuvre manoeuvre was magic of a very high order, because the //Devil//[Pooka]

succeeded in changing himself into a wire-haired Airedale terrier, the natural enemy of the rat from the start of time” (252).

At the top of the page, O’Brien has written “NOTE: There is no mistake in line 4” — the fourth line being the one with the awkward construction “manoeuvre manoeuvre.” I think O’Brien meant by this to suggest that Furriskey was having trouble spelling the word. Despite all the trouble he took in writing a note to assure the reader that he had not made the spelling error himself, however, the phrase in question does not even show up in the published novel.

Once again, some notes at the end of the pink section show O’Brien planning ahead in his draft. At the bottom of the last page of PS7, he has written a note — “Biog Reminiscence here ——> following page missing” (266). He later crossed the note out, and I’m not sure what he meant by it — whether the following page of the pink section was *actually* missing (this is entirely possible, since it never appears in TS1), or he simply wanted to add a Biographical Reminiscence explaining that he had lost a page, or a combination of the two. The point is moot, though, because he crosses out the note and doesn’t insert a Biographical Reminiscence.

Instead, he inserts a handwritten white page that he numbers 265A. This page is another of O’Brien’s unsubtle, transparent links between otherwise disparate pink sections. It is a makeshift bridge from the end of PS7 (at which the Pooka listens to Lamont, Shanahan, and Furriskey discourse learnedly about exotic plants and gas meters while Trellis suffers in a nearby tree), to PS8, in which Trellis stands trial for injustice to his characters. The transition is baldly utilitarian. PS7 ends with the following exchange:

The //Devil//[Pooka] made a perfunctory noise and stepped from the shelter of his tree.

-Your morning talk in the shadow of the wood, he said with a fine bow, that has been an incomparable recital. Two plants which you did not mention — the bdellium-tree and the nard, each of which yields an aromatic oleo-resinous medicinal product called balsam which I find invaluable for preserving the freshness of the person. I carry it with me in my tail pocket in a chryselephantine pouncet-box of perfect rotundity.

The three men regarded the Pooka in silence for a while and then conversed for a moment in Latin. Finally Mr Furriskey spoke. (265)

265A makes a transition to the trial as abruptly as possible. Furriskey's response to the

Pooka is a non sequitur:

-Good morning, my man, what can I do for you, he asked. I am a Justice of the Peace. Do you wish to be sworn or make a statement?

-I do not, said the Pooka, but this man with me is a fugitive from justice

-In that case he should be tried and well tried, said Mr Lamont courteously. (265A)

Before Furriskey's courteous offer of legal services, there has been no mention of justice, or even of the injured and half-conscious Trellis bleeding to death in his tree. But

O'Brien needed to unite separate episodes, and he did so as matter-of-factly as possible.

This abrupt transition, then, leads us into the final pink section of TS1.

Pink Section Eight

PS8 is certainly not one of the juiciest pink sections in TS1, but it gains importance by its position as the last. Its smallest details can be unusually telling, because we can infer from them things about the composition of the entire novel, especially the function and the place of the pink sections within that developing text.

An example of a small but telling detail: in a list of Trellis's judges, we see the name "R. //Flanagan//[Kiersay]" (267). This is the same revision we see consistently in Shanahan's cowboy story in PS3: the villain Red Flanagan was originally called Red Kiersay. We already know that PS8 was written after PS3; this tells us that it also must

have been written *before* O’Brien revised Shanahan’s story — otherwise, it seems logical that, having settled on Red Kiersay over Red Flanagan, he would have simply typed the correct version in PS8. Later in the section, O’Brien leaves a similar clue: in a holograph white page describing court testimony from the Good Fairy, the Good Fairy is called the “Good Spirit.” Since he was originally called “Angel” in PS5, this holograph addition must have been written *after* PS5, but *before* the revision of that section in which O’Brien decided on the Good Fairy as a final name. All of this, taken together, means that O’Brien waited until he had written *all* of the pink sections before he revised any of them.

Other revisions fall right in line with those we’ve seen throughout the typescript. O’Brien is rigorous, for instance, in removing overt references to bathrooms. At one point in Trellis’s trial, all the judges take a break simultaneously: “At this point, the entire personnel of the judges arose in a body and filed out behind a curtain in the corner of the hall over which there was a red-lighted sign reading GENTLEMEN” (273). The sentence is sanitized by publication by an omission of the final two words. Two pages later, we get a similar sterilization: the sentence “Mr Justice Sweeney, returning from behind the curtain in the corner of the hall and adjusting his dress as he approached the counter” is deemed too risqué and omitted before publication.

And now we must return one last time to our old friend the meta-tag, which I think is one of the most useful marks of a section’s place in TS1. PS8 has no meta-tags, except for one added by hand in revision. “Symbolism of the foregoing: annoyance” (268). We might therefore conclude that even the final pink section, which contains no

meta-tags, was written before the first white section, which uses meta-tags freely. This supports the timeline of composition I've been insisting on all along: pink before white.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

There is something missing from this thesis: TS1's white pages. Though I have been able to mention a few of the most distinctive white-page moments, in general I have ignored them. This is not to say that the white pages are less worthy of attention than the pink. In fact, they contain numerous and fascinating unpublished passages: a long excerpt from the Narrator's *Conspectus of Arts and Sciences*, for instance, about Trellis's intemperance; conversations between characters extended well beyond their published length — including expanded versions of the intellectual soiree at Michael Byrne's house (in which the Narrator posits “a pedal mechanism which would exercise the legs and abdominal muscles while the patient sleeps”) and of Brinsley's reaction to the Narrator's aesthetic theory (in which Brinsley responds, devastatingly, that “it's the sort of thing that occurs to everybody but nobody bothers to try it out” because “it wouldn't stand the light of day”); a memoir of the Pooka's grandfather, the Crack MacPhellimey; and a completely different ending.

This white-page exclusion was not carelessness on my part, but strategic selectivity. One motive was simple self-preservation: had I expanded this study to include everything of interest in TS1, on every color of paper, my thesis would have taken on dissertation-like proportions. Another concern was thematic: TS1, as a whole, is a fascinating mess, and, as I read it, it tended to distract me constantly. By isolating the pink sections in a separate study, I wanted to get a clearer picture of how they functioned *by themselves*, outside of that mess.

There is certainly more to be done, however. I consider this thesis the first step of what I hope will be an extended study of TS1 in the future. I'd like to be able to study all of it, and especially the white pages, more systematically, and at greater length.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF PINK SECTIONS IN TYPESCRIPT 1

- 1. Introduction of Finn** (Extract from typescript in care of Brinsley, being a humorous incursion into ancient mythology irrelevant for purpose of story but valuable for purpose of background and atmosphere)

TS1 11-23
Published in *AS2B* 16-25
Pink draft 3-15 (red ink)
- 2. Aestho-Autogamy** (Extract from the Press regarding Furriskey's birth)

TS1 41-2
AS2B 55-56
Pink draft 27-8 (red ink)
- 3. Cattle Rustling** (Substance of reminiscence by Mr Shanahan, the comments of his hearers being embodied in the text parenthetically; with relevant excerpts from the public press)

TS1 72-88
AS2B 73-83
Pink draft 47-60, 44-5, 52 (red ink)
- 4. Shanahan, Lamont, Furriskey, & Finn Talk About Mad Sweeny, Jem Casey, & Sgt. Craddock** (Further extract from Manuscript. Oratio Recta.)

TS1 92-128
AS2B 86-128
Pink draft 83-119 (red ink)
- 5. Pooka & Good Fairy Journey (Slug & Shorty, Jem Casey & Sweeny, Ends at Birth of Orlick)** (Further extract from my manuscript, descriptive of the Pooka MacPhellimy, his journey, and other matters)

TS1 146-200
AS2B 145-212
Pink draft 146-200 (black ink)
- 6. Furriskey Household** (Extract from Manuscript, being a description of an evening at the Furriskey household: the direct style)

TS1 203-218
AS2B 215-230
Pink draft 1-16 (black ink, upper left)

7. Orlick's Manuscript (Extract from Manuscript by O. Trellis, Esq., Part I,
Chapter I)

TS1 226-265 (holograph upper center)

AS2B 236-278

Pink draft i-x1 (black ink upper left)

8. Trellis's Trial

TS1 266-279 (holograph upper center)

AS2B 279-295

Pink draft (1)-(14) (black ink upper left)

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF PERMISSION

From [Samuel Kauffman Anderson <ska210@nyu.edu>](mailto:ska210@nyu.edu)
Sent Tuesday, August 6, 2002 2:44 pm
To Danielem@iol.ie
Cc
Bcc
Subject Permission to quote from Flann O'Brien manuscript

Dear Mr. Maher,

Last summer, you very kindly granted me permission to have a photocopy made of the earlier "At Swim-Two-Birds" manuscript held at the University of Texas in Austin. The photocopy was incredibly useful; it enabled me to study the manuscript at home, and therefore to do a much more thorough job than I would have been able to do otherwise.

The result of that study has become my master's thesis, which I recently finished, entitled "Pink Paper in the Composition of Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds." Because the thesis is a study of the manuscript, it contains many quotations, mainly short passages in which O'Brien's original draft differs from the published novel.

I'm writing you once again, then, to ask your permission: this time for permission to quote from the manuscript. I assure you that the quotations are all done in a spirit of scholarship.

I'd very much appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Thanks again for your time. I'd be happy to send you a copy of the thesis if you're interested.

Best regards,
Sam Anderson

From [Daniel C Maher <danielem@iol.ie>](mailto:danielem@iol.ie)
Sent Monday, August 12, 2002 4:24 am
To Ska210@nyu.edu
Cc
Bcc
Subject Flann O'Brien - At Swim Two Birds

Dear Mr. Anderson,

Thank you very much for your e-mail. The Estate has no objection to you making the quotations in your thesis and we would of course be delighted to receive a copy of it in due course.

Best Wishes,
Yours sincerely,
Stephen P. Maher

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VITA

Samuel Kauffman Anderson was born in Eugene, Oregon, on August 16, 1977. He attended Southern Oregon University for three years before transferring to Louisiana State University, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in May of 2000. He plans to receive the degree of Master of Arts in English from LSU in the Fall of 2002, when he will also begin the doctoral program at New York University.