His Tremendous Humanity*

DAVID ASTOR

I admired him because of his tremendous humanity, his detachment. He seemed to me like George Orwell, incapable of prejudice against any class because it was a class. He was just in favour of people. He disliked injustice, no matter where it came from. In *Borstal Boy* the Governor is as much a hero as the Warder in *The Quare Fellow*. There are no conventional good chaps and bad chaps – just human beings. I wrote to him simply because I heard he was in a mess and I thought it was terrible to think of this marvellous man destroying himself.

* Ulick O'Connor, *Brendan Behan* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970) p. 234. Editor's title.

NOTE

David Astor, English journalist who admired Behan and who offered to help him give up alcohol when Behan was in London. On 2 April 1960 Behan signed a note authorising Astor, then Editor of *The Observer*, to supervise his treatment: 'I agree that David Astor should supervise medical treatment for me, and I authorise him to prepare such measures as he sees fit.'

Meet the Quare Fella†

EAMONN ANDREWS. Well, now, the purpose of this is to try and find out what makes Brendan Behan tick. We may be no wiser at the end of it, but at least we're going to try.

BRENDAN BEHAN. I don't imagine that you will be any the wiser at the end of it, but, however, we can try.

EAMONN. Well, how would you describe yourself?

BRENDAN. Well, I would describe myself, Eamonn, in the following way.

† BBC television interview shown on 29 Nov 1960.