

'Which isn't good for my writing', he said as we walked through a scything Irish Sea wind. 'I work better when I'm skint. Then I shall make an onslaught on London with *The Hostage*.'

He stopped and grabbed my arm. 'There you are,' the ex-house-painter said, 'didn't I tell you I was a proletarian writer? Dublin will never forget my work.'

There on the wall of an hotel were tall black letters, the output of an earlier period. *No Parking* they said.

#### NOTE

Kenneth Allsop, English writer and BBC commentator.

## Half Angel, Half Beast\*

JOHN MONTAGUE

'For myself as well as Madeline,' Montague recalls, 'these few years were a joy, despite the occasional awkwardness of dealing with Brendan. I was very fond of him. He seemed to me half angel, half beast. On the one hand a very handsome little man with delicate feet and hands and a quick intuitive mind: on the other, a beast, with a crooked mouth that spat poison at people. Never at me, however, though I had to put manners on him several times. I think he always respected people who stood up to him.'

'He was at the height of his powers in 1957, a formidable little bull crackling with energy and affection for the world.'

#### NOTE

John Montague (1929– ), the Irish poet, lived a few doors down from the Behans in Herbert Street at this time. He remembers Brendan as 'nearly happy and working at his best'. Brendan used to drop in to Montague's flat nearly every day to talk French to Madeline, his wife, who was from Paris.

\* Ulick O'Connor, *Brendan Behan* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970) pp. 190–1. Editor's title.