

Call for Papers

Acting Out:

The IV International Flann O'Brien Conference

Salzburg University, 17–21 July 2017



Keynote Speakers



Anne Fogarty
(University College Dublin)



S. E. Gontarski
(Florida State University)



Maebh Long
(University of the South Pacific)

Guest Writers & Performers

(more to be announced...)



Arthur Riordan
Improbable Frequency
Slattery's Sago Saga
The Train



Liverpool-Irish Literary Theatre
The Dead Spit of Kelly by Myles na Gopaleen
The Glittering Gate by Lord Dunsany
Thirst by Myles na Gopaleen



Kurt Palm
Director of Flann O'Brien
Film Adaptation
In Schwimmen-Zwei-Vögel

The International Flann O'Brien Society is proud to announce *Acting Out: The IV International Flann O'Brien Conference*, an international conference on the theme of performance, theatricality, and illusion in Flann O'Brien's writing, hosted by the Department of English Studies at **Salzburg University**, **17-21 July 2017**.

In recent years O'Brien's writing has been foregrounded as an integral site for testing the rise of new modernist studies, as it troubles critical commonplaces about modernism itself by virtue of its ephemerality and parochial energies. Recent publications of out-of-print English and Irish-language columns, short stories, non-fiction, dramatic works for the stage, and teleplays for *Raidió Teilifís Éireann* have not only made O'Brien's broader canon accessible to a new generation of scholars, but have also highlighted its importance to an understanding of modernism which 'has grown more capacious, turning its attention to previously neglected forms' (Rónán McDonald and Julian Murphet).

Germane to these critical projects is the recurring concern with performance, theatricality, and illusion in O'Brien's prose, columns, plays, correspondence, and TV scripts. In establishing his (highly ironised) aesthetic manifesto in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, the student narrator notes that 'the novel was inferior to the play inasmuch as it lacked the outward accidents of illusion, frequently inducing the reader to be outwitted in a shabby fashion and caused to experience a real concern for the fortunes of illusory characters.' If, as Richard Schechner claims, 'performances mark identities, bend time, reshape and adorn the body, and tell stories', then few writers better demonstrate this shaping influence and potential of the performative and the fake.

This dynamic of O'Brien's work has become all the more visible with the marked rise of creative adaptations of his writing for the stage and beyond. Building on the precedent of pioneering O'Brien performers such as Jimmy O'Dea, David Kelly, and Eamon Morrissey, recent years have seen numerous creative engagements with O'Brien's work for the **stage** (Blue Raincoat's adaptations of O'Brien's major novels, Arthur Riordan's *Improbable Frequency* and *Slattery's Sago Saga*, Ergo Phizmiz's electronic-1920s-Vaudeville adaptation of *The Third Policeman*, Stephen Rea's musical dramatic reading of same), **film** (Kurt Palm's *In Schwimmen-Zwei-Vögel*, Park Films' *John Duffy's Brother* and *The Martyr's Crown*) and the **visual arts** (Ralph Steadman's Flann illustrations, John McCloskey's graphic novel of *An Béal Bocht*, Micheál Ó Nualláin's paintings, David O'Kane's stunning O'Brien artworks). As well as demonstrating the significant weight O'Brien's writing continues to carry in the present cultural moment, these adaptations emphasise its sustained creative dimensions and dramatic energies.

With these issues in mind, the conference aims to address the contours and concealments of performance in Flann O'Brien's work as it relates to issues of identity, genre, pseudonymity, adaptation, and creative reception. Salzburg is the home of numerous internationally renowned and prestigious theatrical institutions

and events, providing the perfect setting to this symposium, which will take place at the outset of the 2017 Salzburger Festspiele (Salzburg Music and Drama Festival).

The organisers invite proposals on any aspect of O’Nolan’s writing, but are especially interested in papers that explore questions of performance, theatricality, and illusion in O’Brien’s prose, columns, plays, correspondence, and TV scripts, including, but not limited to:

- *Becoming Other*: Masks, Pseudonyms, Role-Playing in O’Brien
- *(Mis)Leading Men*: Gender Performativity in O’Brien
- *Props/Performing Objects*: The life of objects / Object as metaphor
- *The outward accidents of illusion*: Sartorial style, costumes, outfits & uniforms in O’Brien
- *Transmedialisation*: Music, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Illustration, Animation, Film
- *Come to your Senses*: Sight, Sound, Smell, Touch, Taste in O’Brien
- *Comic & Tragic Passions*: O’Brien & Genre
- *Puppets and Puppet-Masters*: Agency, Post-Humanism; Author vs. The Authored
- *Creativity*: Playing by ear vs. learning by heart
- *Culture’s Scripts*: Secular and Sacred Rituals
- *Dumb play*: Playing dumb
- O’Brien and the Theatre in Irish, European, & Modernist contexts (The Abbey, The Čapeks, Pirandello, Lord Dunsany, modernist anti-theatricality, William Sayoran, etc.)
- Creative Receptions / Adaptations of O’Brien’s work

Abstracts and Submissions

If you would like to propose a paper (not exceeding 20 minutes), or panel (maximum 3 speakers) please submit your title and an abstract of 250 words accompanied by a short biographical sketch to flannsalzburg2017@gmail.com or paul.fagan@sbg.ac.at by **1 February 2017**.

Given the conference’s theme, the organisers also welcome alternative forms of presentation and dialogue, such as roundtables, workshops, debate motions (and debaters), performances, creative responses to Flann O’Brien’s writing, etc.

Organising Committee

Sabine Coelsch-Foisner (Salzburg University)

Paul Fagan (Salzburg University/University of Vienna)

Dieter Fuchs (University of Vienna)

Ruben Borg (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)