Bureaucratic Poetics: Brian O’Nolan and the Irish Civil Service

Virtual Workshop

26–27 November 2020

Organised by
Frida Beckman, Bo G. Ekelund, Jonathan Foster, Elliott Mills, Christophe Premat

Supported by
the research network “Language and Power” at Stockholm University

Introduction: 11.00 – 11.30
Jonathan Foster (Stockholm) and Elliott Mills (Trinity College, Dublin)

Keynote lecture: 11.30 – 12.30
Colbert’s Police Files: The poetics of bureaucratic character in seventeenth-century France
Jonathan Patterson (Oxford)

Panel 1: 13.30 – 14.30 (Chair: Bo G. Ekelund)
Bureaucracy and creativity: preliminary thoughts on Cornelius Castoriadis’ theory of imaginary significations
Christophe Premat (Stockholm)

Shakespeare’s license
Derek Dunne (Cardiff)

Bureaucracy, Clerks and Spectral Realities in David Foster Wallace’s The Pale King
Sixta Quassdorf (St. Gallen)

Panel 2: 15.00 – 16.00 (Chair: Christophe Premat)
Woolf’s Westminster: defamiliarising the state in Mrs. Dalloway
Jonathan Foster (Stockholm)
Bureaucratic Sorceries in The Third Policeman: Anthropological Perspectives on a Counterintuitive Kinship Between Magic and Officialdom
Alexandra Irimia (Western Ontario)

The Art of Bureaucracy: Carter Scholz’s “The Amount to Carry”
Joseph Brooker (Birkbeck)

Concluding remarks: 16.00

Day Two: November 27
Introduction: 11.00 – 11.30
Jonathan Foster and Elliott Mills

Keynote lecture: 11.30 – 12.30
“A distasteful milieu”: Brian O’Nolan and the civil service, 1935–53
Martin Maguire (Trinity College, Dublin)

O’Nolan and official archival material: 12.30 – 13.00
Maebh Long (Waikato), Christian Dupont (Boston), Elliott Mills

Panel 1: 14.00 – 14.45 (Chair: TBC)
Bureaucracy in O’Nolan’s shorter fiction and plays
Bureaucracy Rhetoric in Faustus Kelly
Julieta Abella (Buenos Aires)

“Why can’t I marry Bridie and have a shot at the Civil Service?” – Or, the Bankrupted Antithesis between Civil Service and Writing in Brian O’Nolan’s Short Fiction
Talia Abu (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Panel 2: 15.00 – 15.45 (Chair: TBC)
O’Nolan and his ICS colleagues
In Civil Service: John Garvin, Seán MacEntee, and Brian O’Nolan’s Teach an Chustaim as Intellectual Environment
Tobias Harris (Birkbeck), Joseph LaBine (Ottawa)

“I have in detail kept all those trusts”: Myles na gCopaleen’s Cruiskeen Lawn and Seán MacEnteen
Germán Asencio Peral (Almeria)

Panel 3: 16.00 – 16.45 (Chair: TBC)
Bureaucracy in O’Nolan’s novels
“Splendour and Strong Arm, Vessel of the State”: Irish Civil Service in Flann O’Brien's The Dalkey Archive
Andrew Vincent McFeaters (New Mexico)

Becoming Anomic: O’Brien’s versions of the Irish Civil Service
Maria-Ana Tupan (Alba Iulia)

Panel 4: 17.00 – 18.00 (Chair: TBC)
O’Nolan and state institutions
Miss, Ms Mrs? What’s in a Name? Flann O’Brien and An Gúm
Brian O’Conchubhair (Notre Dame)

Myles’ 1946 Fiasco: Irish National Transport and Its Wartime Crimes in Cruiskeen Lawn
Amy Nejezhchleb (Bellevue)

“F___ the County Council”: Flann O’Brien, Local Government, and the State of Exception
John Conlan (Notre Dame)

Concluding remarks: 18.00