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GAMES WITH NAMES:
FLANN O'BRIEN'S *THE THIRD POLICEMAN*

A name can just name a particular,
or if it does not, it is not
a name at all, it is a noise.

Bertrand Russell

“What’s in a name?” Juliet asks, bending down the balcony where the name-forsaken Romeo ponders upon the same question until he forgets himself (“I know not how to tell thee who I am”) and is even prepared to shred himself to pieces – if he were nothing but a written word.¹ Sadly, for Juliet and the rest of the plot, he forgets himself a second time, paradoxically by remembering who he is. He stabs Tybalt to death, thus launching the sequence of events that lead to the tragedy. Likewise, King Richard III William Shakespeare’s, in a brief and melancholy moment of remorse, loses his name and his identity, but when he remembers it fondly (“Richard loves Richard, that is, I [am] I”²) the decisive battle for the country can begin – in which he meets his own death. Leaping forward in literary history, we hear Lewis Carroll’s Alice, *Behind the Looking Glass*, forgetting her name in the woods, but luckily she recalls it without an imminent tragedy jeopardizing the state of country: “Alice – Alice – I won’t forget it again.”³

Names are important: They help to define one’s own identity, and they locate a personality within a social, even cultural frame – names function as passports. They transport a lot of (semantic) extra-information about the respective bearer: especially in what E.M. Forster referred to, in literature, as stock characters. Still, real names do not work in the same way as some literary characters would have it. In Oscar Wilde’s comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* we hear Gwendolen dreaming of her ideal husband: “my ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest.

¹ *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Gen. Eds. G. Blakemore Evans / J.J.M. Tobin. Boston/New York, Houghton Mifflin Company 1997², Act II.ii.43 and II.ii.57.

² *Richard III*, “Riverside Shakespeare”, Act V.iii,183.

³ Cf. *The Annotated Alice: The Definite Edition – Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*. Introduction and Notes by M. GARDNER. New York/London, W.W. Norton 2000⁴, pp. 177f.

There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. [...] It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.”⁴ Fortunately for Gwendolen’s lover Jack, his real name turns out to be Ernest – here not only a name is forgotten, but indeed the name-bearer was forgotten and lost in Victoria Station long ago. Gwendolen’s absolute attribution of emotive qualities to a person implies the attempt to <con-sign> the referent to his name and, *vice versa*, to <de-sign> the usual (arbitrary) signifier/signified relation with a set of normative characteristics: “confidence”, “divin[ity]”, “music”, “vibrations”.⁵

Consider, finally, two other dialogue fragments, this time from a poem by Seamus Heaney. In the first section of “Singing School” (*North*, 1976), Heaney illustrates this sinister significance of names in two childhood reminiscences, one with a sardonic Catholic teacher (“‘What’s your name, Heaney?’/ ‘Heaney, Father.’/ ‘Fair/ Enough.”⁶), the other with a Protestant girl who, until then but never ever after, had dated young Seamus in “the kissing seat of an Austin 16”. After the rendez-vous and “heading back for home” with the girl, Seamus is stopped by policemen. Upon the demand: “What’s your name, driver” and his answer there follows, not in direct speech as before, but (as it were) in free indirect discourse, the nameless girl’s shout of horror and disgust, typographically rendered into a quasi-Joycean epiphany by its italic font: “*Seamus?*”⁷ In “Whatever You Say Say Nothing” of the same collection, Heaney writes “[t]hat Norman, Ken and Sidney signaled Prod/ And Seamus (call me Sean) was sure-fire Pape”. As in Shakespeare’s opposition of Capulets and Montagues, Protestants and Roman Catholics in Heaney’s Ireland are, pragmatically speaking, antonyms – the members of the one clan cannot go, cannot tolerate, cannot co-exist with, any of the other. Heaney makes the reader realize that names actually designate a number of sensitive features of the person’s background – in his case, the religious denomination, including the effects on education and social conduct, in a country where this is part of the political agenda, past and present: “O land of password [...]”, Heaney sighs, “Where tongues lie coiled”.⁸

⁴ *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in *The Works of Oscar Wilde*. Edition de Luxe, vol. IX. Boston/New York, C.T. Brainerd Publishing Co. 1909, pp. 191-3.

⁵ This qualification implies that in earlier ages names were assigned a (now usually fossilized) descriptive value, informing about the character of its bearer, and/or his occupation, or his geographical/ethnic origins, to mention but a few categories: Cf. P. HANKS et al., *The Oxford Names Companion*. Oxford, Oxford University Press 2002, pp. 3-8.

⁶ *Singing School: The Ministry of Fear*, in S. HEANEY, *Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996*. London: Faber & Faber 1998, p. 135.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁸ *Whatever You Say Say Nothing*, in HEANEY, *Opened Ground*, loc. cit., p. 132.

This very brief survey of drama, poetry and prose fiction shows that the use of names adds up to a literary *topos*. Nicolaisen justly points out that “not just competent but felicitous naming is an essential ingredient of successful [sic] literary craftsmanship”,⁹ and literary onomastics has become a research field of its own. Names designate the respective figures in various ways, make them identifiable, and sometimes (in ‘telling names’) they work even on the semiotic level of the discourse, serving as items alluding to, or (as the case may be) subverting, the tragical and comical effects of a character, plot, or text. Generally, as any other rhetorical, stylistic, discursive device, their “grammar”, i.e. the way they are structurally designed and employed, can even allow a serio-ludic way, as in such modernist pieces as Samuel Beckett’s *The Nameless*.

The following argument examines the works and names of Brian O’Nolan (1911-1966), a.k.a. Flann O’Brien, a.k.a. Myles na-gCopaleen. A first section elucidates O’Nolan’s two most important pen-names mentioned above, whilst the second will demonstrate just how carefully, and in what linguistic registers, Flann O’Brien employed the many proper names occurring in *The Third Policeman* (composed 1930/40, published posthumously 1967).¹⁰ Exclusively focusing on the personal names in this novel, the present analysis can only intimate the subtle range of onomastic, as well as onomasiological details in all of O’Nolan’s oeuvre, ranging from his novels and plays to film-scripts and, of course, his hack-pieces as journalist-celebrity.¹¹

1. Brian O’Nolan: “Myles na Gopaleen” and “Flann O’Brien”

Brian O’Nolan seems indeed to have been obsessed with names, as even a first glance at his own name suggests. The spellings of his actual name give three versions: the anglicized surname coincides with the Irish

⁹ W.F.H. NICOLAISEN, *Names in English Literature*, in *Namenforschung/Name Studies/Les nom propres: Ein internationales Handbuch zur Onomastik/An International Handbook of Onomastics/Manuel international d’onomastique*. Eds. E. Eichler et. al. Berlin/New York, Walter de Gruyter 1995, pp. 560-8, here p. 561.

¹⁰ Generally focusing on the ludic aspects in O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds*, cf. K. BOHMAN-KALAJA, *Reading Games: An Aesthetics of Play in Flann O’Brien, Samuel Beckett & George Perec*. sine loco, Dalkey Archive Press 2007, pp. 49-103.

¹¹ J. BROOKER, *Mind that Crowd: Flann O’Brien’s Authors*, in K. Hadjafxendi, P. Mackay, eds., *Authorship in Context: From the Theoretical to the Material*, London, Macmillan 2007, pp. 91-110, refers to the various masks O’Nolan uses. However, he focuses exclusively on the author-personae and a few of the characters in his works, but does not address the larger onomastic implications of these texts.

Ó Nualláin, alternatively Ua Nualláin – the respective prefix originally signifying “grandson”, although the modern use of either prefix signifies “any male descendant”.¹² After his studies at Dublin University College (UCD) from which he graduated as M.A. in 1934, O’Nolan was employed as a civil servant in Dublin from 1935-1953. Eventually he became secretary to T. Sean O’Kelly of the government party Fianna Fáil and thus arrived in the highest circles of power in the Irish Free State, which in 1939 became the independent Republic of Ireland under President Douglas Hyde and Prime Minister Éamon de Valera. Civil servants, however, were disallowed to publish under their own names, for which reason O’Nolan had to sign most his novels with a pseudonym. This masquerade was not new to him, who had already gained lots of practice in hiding as a student of the UCD. Only one publication survives, signed with his real name: it was his Gaelic translation of Brinsley MacNamara’s play *Margaret Gillan*, published in the year of his job-cancellation.¹³

His novels *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1935), *The Third Policeman* (1939/40, publ. 1967), *The Hard Life* (1961) and *The Dalkey Archive* (1964) are all signed by Flann O’Brien, except the one narrative composed in Gaelic, *An Béal Bocht* (1941, translated into English only in 1973 as *The Poor Mouth*). This, according to the judgment of Orvell and Powell, is a literary parody imitating a short-lived literary fashion of fictional autobiographies set on the Blasket Islands, ridiculing in particular the superficial enthusiasm for a Gaelic revival.¹⁴ O’Nolan published it under the journalistic

¹² Cf. Rev. P. Woulffe, *Sloinnte Gaedhal is Gall: Irish Names and Surnames*. Collected and edited with explanatory and historical notes. Dublin, M.H.Gill & Son 1923, p. 15. In contrast to the original meaning of the prefix, “Mac” and “Fitz” (the latter being a derivant from French ‘fils’ and Latin ‘filius’) denote “son”, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 15 and 17. Equivalent female prefixes are “ni” (“daughter”) and “nic” (“granddaughter”), cf. *ibid.* 27f. Woulffe has remained the onomastic standard-reference from the early 20th century, as is confirmed by D. MACGIOLLA EASPAIG. *Name Studies in Ireland*, in *Namenforschung/Name Studies/Les nom propres*, eds. Eichler et al., pp. 27-31. I would not rule out the possibility of this dictionary as a source for O’Nolan, although there is no valuable hint which would back such an assumption.

¹³ Cf. the review article by G. O’BRIEN, “Flann O’Brien: A Critical Introduction” by Anne Clissmann. *Gill and Macmillan (Dublin)*, “Cambridge Quarterly”, 7 (1976-1977), pp. 85-92, p. 87. Cf. also P. COSTELLO; P.v.d.KAMP, *Flann O’Brien: An Illustrated Biography*. London, Bloomsbury 1987, p. 63. – O’Nolan gives his real name to a play which was published in Dublin under the *nom-de-plume* of John Joseph Weldon (1890-1963), registrar at the National Gallery of Ireland between 1925 and 1960. The NGI again has a special status within the civil service and does not fall under the regulations of publishing. – I am grateful to L. BENSON of the National Gallery of Ireland for giving me the details of MacNamara’s time as registrar, and providing me with further details.

¹⁴ M. ORVELL, D. POWELL, *Myles na Gopaleen: Mystic, Horse Doctor, Hackney Journalist and Ideological Catalyst*, “Éire-Ireland”, 10 (1975), pp. 44-72, here p. 61. Whether, as the two authors suggest, the text is indeed “a repository of Myles’ attitudes toward the Irish” (*ibid.*) remains to be

persona which started writing in Gaelic and eventually switched into English. During his own life-time, it became a lot more popular than that of his novelistic writings: Myles na gCopaleen (“Myles of the little horses”).¹⁵ Such was his usual pen-name in a highly popular column of *The Irish Times*, “Cruiskeen Lawn” (1940 and 1966), the anglicized spelling of “crúiscin lán” (“little full jug”). The Myles-persona itself disperses into a “positive myriad of pseudonyms”,¹⁶ a “plethora of pen-names”,¹⁷ which would be too numerous to recount here. Brooker’s conclusion is that O’Nolan “cannot be fitted into a doctrine of modernist impersonality because he has too much personality: or rather too many personalities”.¹⁸ In its multiplication and proliferation the Myles-persona is comparable to the voices O’Nolan had invented for the UCD students’ magazine *Comhthrom Féinne* (“Fair Play”), some of which had been taken from *Thom’s Irish Almanac and Official Directory*, the business and residential listing for the various counties in the Republic of Ireland.

The Myles-persona has its own literary pedigree, and before they trace it to its 19th-century origins,¹⁹ Orvell and Powell speculate on the choice

confirmed. As it is, O’Nolan’s brother Ciarán sheds some biographical doubt on such an impression when he claims that Brian “had been reading or re-reading [Tomás Ó Criomhthain’s] *An t-Oileánach* at the time [he was writing *An Béal Bocht*] and this was a book which he very much admired, so *An Béal Bocht* has its roots in exuberance, not malice” (C. O’NOLAN, *The Early Years Brian O’Nolan / Flann O’Brien / Myles na gCopaleen*. Transl. from the Irish R. Ní Nualláin, ed. N. O’Nolan. Dublin, The Lilliput Press 1998, p. 107). Cf. also COSTELLO/KEMP, *Flann O’Brien*, loc. cit., p. 77: “What O’Nolan was satirizing was not O Crohan [i.e., Ó Criomhthain] or Peig Sayers or any other Blasket writer. His targets were the manipulators of language, those who had drained it of purpose, who had emasculated a strong, rich tradition, casting over the earthiness of Irish life the pall of Victorian respectability.”

¹⁵ The reason for the considerably belated popularity of the Flann O’Brien-persona is easily explained: it only gained fame following the publication of *A Hard Life* (1961) and the subsequent re-issue of *At-Swim-Two-Birds* with an American publisher. It was in the early poststructuralist environment of the 1960s that especially O’Brien’s first novel had a significant impact on the academic community. Although the first edition of O’Brien’s debut had been no failure and was sold out fairly early on, O’Brien never cared much about it after his second novel-project, *The Third Policeman*, had been turned down by Longmans early in the 1940s. On the early reception of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, cf. A. CRONIN, *Squalid Exegesis*, in *Conjuring Complexities: Essays on Flann O’Brien*, eds. A. Clune and T. Hurson. Belfast, Institute of Irish Studies – The Queens University of Belfast 1997, pp. 37-45.

¹⁶ A. CLISSMANN, *Flann O’Brien: A Critical Introduction*. Dublin/New York, Gill and Macmillan/Barnes & Noble 1975, p. 20.

¹⁷ R. IMHOF, *Alive-Alive O!: Flann O’Brien’s “At Swim-Two-Birds”*, Dublin, Wolfhound 1985, p. 8.

¹⁸ BROOKER, *Mind that Crowd*, loc. cit., p. 110.

¹⁹ Borrowed from 19th century playwright Dion Boucicault’s *The Colleen Bawn* (1860) which presents a rogue named Myles-na-Coppaleen, it originates in a figure in Gerald Griffin’s novel *The Collegians* (1829). Chapter 2 of this novel introduces the rustic horse-seller Myles Murphy, “a good-natured farmer from Killarney”, and chapter 9 reveals his nick-name “Myles-na-Cop-

of the name “Myles” and conclude that it refers back to the genealogical myths in medieval Irish historiography: “the Milesians, followers of Milesius, landed in Ireland from Spain and are traditionally regarded as the ancestors of the present Gaels”.²⁰ His story was written down in the 11th century *Lebor Gabála Eirenn* (*The Book of Invasions*). According to this book, “Míl Espáine” drove away the previous rulers of Ireland, the mythical Tuatha Dé Danann,²¹ thus completing what was called by Rudolf Thurneysen at the beginning of the 20th century the Mythological Cycle (i.e., the succession of mythical rulerships by a variety of human and superhuman forces). The name of this legendary conqueror and founder of the present nation is actually a generic one and means, in Latin, *miles hispaniae*, i.e., the soldier from Spain – his belligerent attitude a fitting equivalent for the Mylesian polemics against almost anything at all in the *Irish Times*.

As for the novelist’s persona, it was John Garvin, O’Nolan’s senior colleague at work in the Department of Local Government, who suggested that the name Flann O’Brien was an invention, derived “from the hero of an old ballad, Brian O’Lynn, in Irish, Brian O’Fhloinn, which he [O’Nolan] turned backways, taking the nominative of O Floinn, Flann, as a personal name which, indeed, it was – one thousand years previously.”²² Indeed, the O’Brien-persona has its historical double focus: not only does it refer to the name of the 18th century comic ballad-hero, it also evokes an association of Flann O’Brien with Brian Boru, the historical High King of the 11th century, during whose reign (1002-1014 BC) the modern patronymic name-system became incidentally dominant in Ireland, al-

pullen”. In O’Nolan’s hands, the unhappy lover of the original text changes into an aggregate of boaster, clown, mock-linguist, mock-critic, mock-scientist, fake-politician, taking recourse to the stylistic means of hyperbole, flamboyance, irony, sarcasm and sheer nonsense. Throughout his career, Myles ‘attracts’ a host of by-names, professions, titles and signatures ‘moleculfying’ this name: “Baron, The Grace, His Satanic Highness, The Sage of Satanry, The Irish Disraeli, The Man in the Hat [...], The Gaelic Demosthenes, The President of the Republic of Letters” (ORVELL, POWELL, *Myles na Gopaleen*, cit. p. 53). – The text of Griffin’s murder mystery has been electronically edited and published by M. Sundermeier, 2000. URL <http://mockingbird.creighton.edu/english/micsun/IrishResources/collegians/collcont.htm> (access date April 1, 2009).

²⁰ ORVELL, POWELL, *Myles na Gopaleen*, cit., p. 52.

²¹ Sometimes the appellation “Tuatha De Danann” is translated as a “tribe of Danu”, Danu being a Celtic goddess, or alternatively as “tribe of gods”.

²² J. GARVIN, *Sweetscented Manuscripts*, in *Myles: Portraits of Brian O’Nolan*, ed. T. O’Keefe. London, Martin Brian & O’Keefe 1973, pp. 54-62, here p. 60. – G. Huntingdon, ed., *Sam Henry’s “Songs of the People”* Athens, GA, University of Georgia Press 1990, refers to Sam Henry’s Collection in which this ballad is included. Henry introduced the text of this ballad in a column of *The Northern Constitution*, a newspaper circulating in County Derry (issue Feb 11, 1933). Cf. also URL http://www.chivalry.com/cantaria/lyrics/brian_olynn.html (access date April 1, 2009).

though its beginnings reach further back in history and was not completed by then.²³ Apart from this, the name O'Brien is "now one of the most common surnames in Ireland",²⁴ as Rev. Patrick Woulffe points out in his popular reference work on Irish names.

This means that O'Nolan's two most important literary personae share a common denominator. They both back to the times when a past of the Irish nation was (re-) invented by Christian monks who wrote down the current genealogies of the mythic origins in such texts. O'Nolan inscribes, it seems, his masks along the lines of the so-called 'nativist tradition' among Irish historiographers, which takes the mythological representation of the Irish past in their substance at face value (allowing a certain amount of 'artistic freedom', but never doubting the historical substance of these stories). Designing them as megalomaniac, exuberant and ever unpredictable, often mock-heroic nerds, O'Nolan clearly expresses his scepticism of views which consider such mythological figures as historical characters with a *fundamentum in re*. Thus, his personae swing between the pompous extremes of claiming to represent king and everyman at once (Flann O'Brien), just as they bombastically indicate an age-old ancestry and ever-presence (Myles).

2. *The Third Policeman*²⁵

So far, mostly O'Nolan's author/character masks have received critical attention; what has been disregarded as yet is the fact that there are numerous examples in which the "uncertain pattern of difference and sameness", indeed the "openness to contingency"²⁶ is also reflected in the works, most particularly, as I suggest, in *The Third Policeman*. Turning to the use of names in this novel, we are confronted with a number of oddities and difficulties.

A very brief introductory sketch will suffice as a plot-outline: An obscure scientist's, de Selby's, theories have excited the interest of the first-person narrative medium, who is literally 'dying' for the aim to edit de Selby's works. In need of money to finance his project this medium is talked into killing old Phillip Mathers by one John Divney, who after the crime

²³ Woulffe, *Sloinnte Gaedhal is Gall*, pp. xv and xviii.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, s.v. "Ó Briain", loc. cit. p. 443.

²⁵ F. O'BRIEN, *The Third Policeman*. London, Flamingo 1993. Page-references given in the text.

²⁶ BROOKER, *Mind that Crowd*, loc.cit., p. 93.

runs away with the loot and never shares the money with his companion. Eventually, when he pretends to do so, he guides the narrative medium to Mather's deserted home, and next thing it sees after touching the supposed cash-box is Mathers sitting in his armchair. After a while the narrative medium leaves the house and meets a number of rather strange figures, getting involved in a number of rather weird situations – most significantly the policemen in their peculiar station, which has features of interrogation room, bicycle repair-shop and a scientific laboratory. The narrative medium is taken prisoner, but allowed to move around freely, and by the end of the story, returns home. There it meets Divney again, who in turn appears to face his own death. Directly addressing the narrative medium, Divney confesses that he had killed it with a booby-trap bomb. It is only at this very late point that the medium (together with the suspecting reader) realizes that it had been dead throughout its own narrative.²⁷

In the sections that follow I shall proceed along two lines: Based on the observation that (proper) names in *The Third Policeman* are discussed on two levels, the following functional discussion will separate the representational level from the discursive. On the first of these levels, it will be possible to analyze the morphology and etymology of many of the names occurring in the text (onomastics, § 2a); on the other, one may get the impression that O'Brien involves his reader in both a language-philosophical and name-theoretical game about signification (onomasiology, § 2b). My thesis is that O'Brien sets various naming theories strategies at play, and that he alludes to actual critical questions discussed in the analytical philosophy of Bertrand Russell: (in what way) does, or does not, a "name" (as a lexical icon) denote, or refer to, an object in the world of phenomena? Or, is a name merely a term within the mental system of the speaker's language, thus being nothing but a closed circuit of semantic relations within this system? Russell's *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, a series of eight lectures read in the winter of 1917-18, published in *The Monist* (1918), prove as a particularly rewarding 'con>-text or intertext, insofar as it covers some of the topics discussed in *The Third Policeman*, such as aspects of an "atomic theory",²⁸ questions of existence in general and "negative facts"

²⁷ Although the plot seems to play in a rather male world, and although the narrative medium calls his soul's voice "Joe", there is no absolute certainty about the medium's sex and gender, considering the philosophical tradition of an androgynous ur-state of humans, as related in Plato's *Symposium*. In the following, however, I shall refer to the narrator as a male entity, although this definition has recently been (if rather weakly) questioned. See A. BOBOTIS, *Queering Knowledge in Flann O'Brien's "The Third Policeman"*, "Irish University Review", 32 (2002), pp. 242-258.

²⁸ Russell distinguishes the "atom of logical analysis" from the "atom of physical analysis", referring to the "particulars" – such things as little patches of colour or sounds, momentary

in particular,²⁹ the scepticism of (and fictional potential in) seriality,³⁰ and, last but not least, the absence of meaning in proper names.³¹ Quite early in his series, in lecture II, Russell points out: “the point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it”.³² This formula might, in tone and style, have been set by O'Brien himself, casting a shade of self-irony on the ideas suggested in Russell's theory.

What analytical profit do we gain by correlating Russell's popular-philosophical project to O'Brien's tale? First, it is possible to derive some explanations on O'Brien's naming strategies in the text, along with their functions in some of the most enigmatic passages (such as those which I refer to as identity games); second, it provides another possible cultural intertext which O'Brien included in his novel: There seems in fact a good probability that he tapped on a number of Russell's philosophical concepts and images – Russell thus turning out as another obscured candidate in the class of those tacitly implied in O'Brien's own reference to the divulging of modern scientific ideas. He uses this material and takes many of the popular images of the New Physics one step ahead, thus reducing them *ad absurdum*. In so doing, he ridicules not only secondary authorities, but does not even shy away from first-rank scientists, as can be seen in a letter to his American friend and colleague William Saroyan: “You may remember Dunne's two books, *An Experiment with Time* and *The Serial Universe*, also views of Einstein and others” (emphasis JM).³³

There is no reason to assume that O'Brien, MA graduate and dreaming of an academic career as university lecturer, would not read extensively the popularizations of modern philosophers' theories, especially if their titles refer so bluntly to the modern physics as Russell's logical atomism does. In-

things” (B. RUSSELL, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*. Ed. with Introduction, by D. Pears. La Salle, ILL, Open Court 1985, p. 37); the similar particulars as discussed in various situations of *The Third Policeman*, most importantly in the colour of winds in the narrator's encounter with Old Mathers, in Plucks very own atomic theory, in the miraculous sound-heat-converters in Mac-Cruiskeen mechanical cabinet, and in the spontaneous but non-persistent creations of matter in the subterranean realm of “Eternity”.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁰ E.g., “I believe that series and classes are of the nature of logical fictions”, *ibid.*, 51.

³¹ E.g., “The names that we commonly use, like ‘Socrates’, are really abbreviations for descriptions [...]”, *ibid.*, 62.

³² *Ibid.*, 53.

³³ An obvious case in point is the narrator's equivocal mortality status comparable to that of Schrödinger's Cat, or the atomic theory illustrating and ridiculing the wave-particle dualism of quantum mechanics. There is an abundance of images which may be identified as allusions to popularized notions of relativity, quantum mechanics, and non-linear mathematics.

deed, a few years after writing *The Third Policeman*, it is in *Cruiskeen Lawn*, 10th April, 1942, that we find an explicit quip against the Dublin Institute for Advanced Study (founded in 1939, the year in which O'Brien composed *TP*). Here, Myles attacks the heads of the (then) two schools, The School of Theoretical Physics and the School of Celtic Studies:

Talking of this notorious Institute [...], a friend has drawn my attention to Professor O'Rahilly's recent address on "Paladius and Patrick". I understand also that Professor Schroedinger has been proving lately that you cannot establish a first cause. The first fruit of this Institute, therefore, has been an effort to show that there are two Saint Patricks and no God. The propagation of heresy and unbelief has nothing to do with polite learning, and unless we are careful this Institute of ours will make us the laughing stock of the world.³⁴

This critique of an institution, along with the research it represents, displays O'Nolan's generally sceptical attitude to the attempts at explaining the contingent world and its phenomena on a fundamental level. From this viewpoint it is no wonder that he should have eyed suspiciously current language-philosophical theories such as Russell's rather popularizing combination of (physical) atomism and its linguistic exploit. The following considerations are meant to open the discussion beyond that of O'Brien's critique of Cartesian philosophy.³⁵

a) *Representing Names: An Onomastic Analysis of The Third Policeman*

As a starting point in a descriptive analysis of the names it may be said that the most important of these figures can be classified according to a variety of ontological levels: At the beginning we are told how Divney and the narrator kill old Phillip Mathers. After entering (or rather being blown) into the otherworld, the narrator meets a number of people populating this "parish" with its strange physical and juridical laws, such as Martin Finnuccane, Sergeant Pluck, Policeman MacCruiskeen, Inspector O'Corky, and Michael Gilhaney. He meets even one Policeman Fox, who is said to be mad and who is clad in a police-uniform but whose face looks exactly like that of Old Mathers (who then would appear in three presences: as a live man, as a dead man, and as a look-a-like policeman). Apart from these, there are embedded narratives of a number of people who only appear in these tales and whose ontological statuses are therefore as

³⁴ Qtd. from COSTELLO/KAMP, *Flann O'Brien*, loc. cit., 94. On *The Third Policeman* as institutional satire, cf. J. MEYER, *Allegorien des Wissens: Flann O'Briens "The Third Policeman" und Friedrich Dürrenmatts "Durcheinandertal" als ironische Kosmographien*. Tübingen, Stauffenburg 2001.

³⁵ Cf. M.K. BOOKER, *The Bicycle and Descartes: Epistemology in the Fiction of Beckett and O'Brien*, in "Eire-Ireland", 27 (1991), pp. 76-94.

doubtful as that of Countess Schnapper and Harold Barge who are mentioned in passing in some of the footnotes discussing the life and ideas of the obscure scientist and *virtuoso* de Selby. Finally, there are various lists of names which are generated in attempts to ascribe the narrator a name and identity – the first of them created by himself in a moment of ludicrous exuberance, serving as nothing but an aimless playing around. The second, more serious and existentially challenging scene shows Sergeant Pluck cross-checking all the names he can think of in the futile hope to establish the narrator's identity which would make him a lawful entity (which, without a name, he is not). As can be seen by this rough sketch, the text mentions an abundance of 'pure names' (i.e., names without any obvious physical referent in the text), which are therefore easily classifiable, with Russell, as non-referential, "meaningless noise".³⁶

One of key issues on the (reader's) plot-level, as well as on the narrator's, is the anonymity of the latter: This namelessness dominates many of the subject-matters in the encounters with other characters. In the world of this novel, names do not only provide identity but also appear, for some figures, to affirm one's existence. Quite early in the plot, this narrator realizes that he has forgotten his name. In chapter 2, facing his dead victim he cannot answer to Old Mather's inquiry: "I was surprised at this question. It had no bearing on my own conversation but I did not notice its irrelevance because I was shocked to realize that, simply as it was, I could not answer it. I did not know my name, did not remember who I was." (32)

Strictly speaking, the narrator does not even *lose* any name – he *lacks* one, although this seems to be the case only on the textual level, on which he appears as an anonymous entity from the very beginning to the end, whereas on the ontological level of the fiction the name seems to be no problem. All through chapter 1 of the book, the narrator feels in full possession of a name-*cum*-identity, but neither does he nor anyone else in the text reveal this (probably dithematic) name. Still, there seems to be more than an unresolvable information gap between the narrator's point of view and that of the recipient, insofar as his identificatory deficiency is finally raised from the subjective level to an objective one when he concludes the passage previously quoted: "I had no name" (32).

Eventually, the narrative medium dissociates into what appears to be a (male) "soul" and a nameless "body", which feels "intensely every fragment of my equal humanity. The life that was bubbling at the end of my fingers was real and nearly painful in intensity and so was the beauty of my warm face and the loose humanity of my limbs and the racy health of

³⁶ RUSSELL, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, loc. cit., 47.

my red rich blood” (106). This opens the question about both the ontological as well as the onomasiological status of the soul. After all, it is the narrator who, merely “[f]or convenience”, labels this strange voice “from deep inside me, from my soul” (26). This act of labelling something/someone else neither precludes nor necessitates the possibility that the first name of the narrator should have been indeed “Joe”: the narrator and his arguable soul are obviously different, if interdependent and interactive entities (if the one allows introspection, the other does not, thus forming an objective ‘other’, even though it comes from within the medium).

Only by being named, it seems, can an individual become the subject of meaningful as well as lawful discourse. Yet here the narrator seems to disprove the theory: He remains an anonymous, and to drive his point home he lists a number of wholly arbitrary, if possibly authentic names (mixing Gaelic with English ones, and including those of German and Italian origin, cf. p. 43), but he does not adopt any of these. Virtually he remains an “Everyman”: His refraining from such an act of self-identification, or rather onomastic self-assumption, implies that he prefers to remain a potential of possible identities, despite the assistance of his ‘counterpart’ Joe who invents equally arbitrary (imaginary) biographies, paradigmatically attached to two of the names: “Signor Beniamino Bari [...] the eminent tenor” whose beautiful voice excites the crowds (Bari, being Joe’s obvious favourite, attracts in the course of the novel a number of attributes, cf. pp. 59, 105), or “Dr Solway Garr”, the star physician who recovers ‘the’ fainted duchess in an opera box, magnanimously denying any gratification afterwards (cf. p. 43-4).³⁷ In order to render these names meaningful, they need to be attributed “connotative” extra-information which ‘give life’ to the pure names. They technically demonstrate how the denotative value of signs can be turned into a connotative function, supplying (in the case of Signor Bari) a fake-biography in mock-heroic style and dime-novelistic idiom, showing also how fictional characters may be generated: Basically, a name is attached to the idea of an imagined character, which then has to be equipped with likewise fictitious “attributes” (such as a biography, or physical features) in order to gain, semantically, in referentiality and, cognitively, in credibility.³⁸

³⁷ On the aspect of meta-narrative self-consciousness in the figures in the novel, cf. K. HOPPER, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist*. Cork, Cork University Press 1995, 108-155.

³⁸ Note that some critics, “for convenience”, have felt more at ease referring to the narrator by attributing him a name-surrogate, “Noman”, in order to evade the denotative deficiency in this main character of the novel. Cf., e.g., W. D. POWELL, *The English Writings of Flann O’Brien*, unpublished dissertation Carbondale, Southern Illinois University 1970, p. 160; HOPPER, *A Portrait*, cit. pp. 43 and 121; MEYER, *Allegorien des Wissens*, loc. cit., p. 21.

Such name-theoretical considerations may even refer back to John Stuart Mill's assumption that names only denote, but cannot connote, and therefore bear no sense: According to Mill, who uses the example of a dog called Caesar in his *System of Logic*, "names are simply marks used to enable those individuals to be made subjects of discourse".³⁹ In order to become meaningful, the list (or "class") of names must be attached various pieces of extra-information to each individual, such as a 'biography', in order to acquire a certain sense. Indeed, it does not make much sense to discuss the name "Kurt Freund" (p. 43) beyond its probable national origin, because there is no further reference to it in the whole text of the novel – in contrast to Signor Bari whose name develops a certain complexity by Joe's interferences, and although it is not correlated to the main-plot one may even say that it forms its own sub-plot, which is on a similar (although by far not as extensive) functional level as the deflections from the plot in the de Selby footnote apparatus.⁴⁰

In an attempt to systematize the many names in the novel and their (non-)referents, a matrix (cf. the appendix) may help to distinguish a class of "agents" from three classes of "passive" entities: The former participate in dialogue and/or plot; whereas the latter are mere object of narratives. The category of "referents" denotes their physical manifestation as physical, dialogic (i.e., their being referred to in a dialogue, or in oral tale-within), or a mere textual presence (as de Selby and the names found in the context of his life and theories⁴¹). Together with his equally anonymous parents to whom the narrator refers at the very beginning he forms a class of nameless entities, referred to as "anonymics" in the matrix. The majority of names mentioned in the text can be recognized as traditional names, or at least the realistic representation of "onymic" signifiers: they are individualizing appellations of the respective figure with its supposed (relative to the fictional ontology) physical presence. Their names show regular, complete and thus realistic features, consisting of first name followed by a surname: John Divney, Phillip Mathers and Michael Gilhaney belong to this class of named figures. Within the fictional ontology, these dithematic names refer to persons which appear physically before the narrator. There are those active figures in whose names a Christian name is replaced by an

³⁹ J. S. MILL, *A System of Logic, Rationative and Inductive*. New York, Harper & Brothers 1882⁸, p. 36.

⁴⁰ de Selby in *The Third Policeman*, unlike De [sic!] Selby in *The Dalkey Archives*, is a purely textual formation within the narrative, with no physical manifestation on plot-level.

⁴¹ Again, these names share the various grades of completeness by which also the agents are distinguished – Harold Barge (complete), Countess Schnapper (title plus surname), de Selby and the host of supposed critics, biographers and such like who are mentioned by surname only.

occupational description, or rather the rank within this occupation: the four police officers, Policeman MacCruiskeen, Policeman Fox, Sergeant Pluck and Inspector O’Corky.⁴² Furthermore, there is Joe, the narrator’s soul – labelled with just a first name (one with a high distribution in Anglophone cultures, at that), this soul is similarly deficient in identification as the anonymous narrator himself. Moreover, there are the name-lists which have no referent in the text but stand, as it were, isolated in the ontological order as well as in their semantic environment: They have no share whatsoever in the development of action, belonging to either an embedded story or to one of the identity-games within the text.

Many of the names in the text are mentioned in the language game of futile identity-attribution between Sergeant Pluck and the narrator, and most of them can be found in Reverend Patrick Woulffe’s register of Irish names, already quoted above, and refer to existing family names of age-old tradition. The more tangible passive entities are again to be distinguished according to their positive or negative dithematic completeness: The narrator’s anonymous parents are mentioned in the first pages of the text and never ever after; Andy Gara (complete) is mentioned towards the end of the plot when Sergeant Pluck relates the mysterious tale of the balloonist Quigley (incomplete). All of these names are mentioned in contexts that, pragmatically, allow assuming their ontological existence, depending on the respective speaker’s credibility: in an autobiography, in eye-witness reports about Gilhaney’s estranged physical nature as bicyclic humanoid (O’Feersa, Figgerson, MacDadd, “the postman”), and in the mystery-tale about Quigley. According to Woulffe’s register, Michael Gilhaney, whose original form would have been “Mac Giolla Cainnis”, and is identical with “MacIlhaney, Gilheaney, &c.; a var[iant] of Mac Giolla Coinnis” which registers a number of other variants and concludes with the etymology and the distribution: “‘son of Giolla Coinnis’ (servant of St. Canice, or Kenny). This surname, in the 16th century, was found in

⁴² One might even question the referential status of Phillip Mathers and Policeman Fox, for it seems as though the latter appeared in fact as double of the former – at least in his facial features. The descriptions of the two are so distinct, however, that their names do not refer to one and the same presence. Mathers’ name, therefore, serves as a “description” of two entities (or, for that matter, none). Gottlob Frege, *Über Sinn und Bedeutung*, separated the terms sense and meaning and demonstrated their distinction in the occurrence of referential opacity. What is meant by this is that two names may refer to one object, his illustrating example being the co-referentiality of “morning star” and “evening star” for the same celestial object (the planet Venus). In the case of Policeman Fox who appears with the face of Phillip Mathers, O’Brien’s narrator cannot decide (nor can his reader), whether this phenomenon is true (Fox and Mathers are identical) or false (Fox and Mathers may look the same, but are distinct entities).

Roscommon, Leitrim, Donegal and Down".⁴³ Thus, Woulffe not only traces the ancient roots of modern family names and their variants, identifying their (mythical) ancestry, but also informs about their relative distribution and occurrence in Ireland.

Indeed, the second name-list (pp. 103ff.) represents metonymically, as it were, the whole of the Irish nation, which is what Sergeant Pluck may mean when he somewhat desperately exclaims, towards the end of the game: "There are very few more names that you could have" (p. 104). Some of the names refer to whole clans ("the Quigleys, the Moynihans, the Hounimen, Hardimen, the Merrimen, the O'Roartys, etc.), whilst other names are those of individuals: The social status of the narrator is not only identified by his name, but also by his family. Despite (or possibly even because) their 'authenticity', these names do not bear any information for a further understanding of the novel in the same sense as the textual strategy of 'telling names' would. Only a small minority of the list-entries refers (ironically) to an English origin: e.g., Pluck's "Lord Brat", the narrator's own suggestion of not being "Jenkins", or Joe's "J. Courtney Wain". There are a few names which may even be faintly reminiscent of (corrupted) literary characters, such as "Rosencranz O'Dowd" (Shakespeare's *Hamlet*?), "Spens" (Edmund Spenser?, "The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens"?), "Joseph Poe" (a reverence to Edgar Allan Poe's Irish ancestry?) and the auto/author-referential "Nolan", all of them showing, in their defamiliarizing combination of first name and surname their fictionalised ontological status.

In sum, these comprehensive name-lists can be classified as an evocative, yet non-referential textual strategy. They largely provide (in the absence of place-names) a particularly native Irish *spiritus loci*, and they illustrate – incidentally or not – O'Brien's interpretation of Russell's point that names bear no meaning (unlike nouns), but can take the quality of mere "noise", anticipating Shannon/Weaver's later interpretation of "white noise" as unfiltered information.⁴⁴ At the same time, qua evocation, they are a metafictional device which triggers the reader's instinctive desire to make sense of the words in the text he reads.

⁴³ WOULFFE, *Sloinnte Gaedhal is Gall*, s.v. *Mac Giolla Cainnis*, loc. cit., 368, and s.v. *Mac Giolla Cannois*, cit. 370. – Cf. *ibid.*, s.v. "Ó Coiglis": "[...] O Cogly, O Cwigley, O Quigly, O Kegly, O'Coigley, O'Quigley, Cogley, Kogley, Quigley, Twigley; 'des[cendant] of Coigleac' (der[ivant] of coigal, a distaff, an untidy person, with unkempt hair); the name of a branch of the Ui Fiachrach who were anciently seated in the barony of Carra, Co. Mayo. In the 16th century, the name was common in Sligo, Donegal, Monaghan, Carlow, Wexford and Waterford."

⁴⁴ C. SHANNON, W. WEAVER, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, Urbana, ILL, University of Illinois Press, 1949.

b) Discoursing on Names: The Third Onomasiologist

Apart from the various implications of the names proper in *The Third Policeman*, there are also figures who may be seen, within our present focus, as representatives of onomasiological theories as they were discussed in the first half of the 20th century. The final survey focuses on the narrative medium (including Joe), Sergeant Pluck and de Selby, each of whom can be located within an onomasiological environment in their display of distinguished attitudes towards names and their semiotic, existential, even biologicistic functions.

1) *The narrative medium*

If the awareness of the narrator's anonymity is foreshadowed in the last sentence of chapter 1, it becomes manifest in the passage of chapter 2 quoted above, and in chapter 3 he assumes the role of an onomasiologist with some knowledge in the linguistics of Russell's logical atomism:

All people have names of one kind or another. Some are arbitrary labels related to the appearance of the person, some represent purely genealogical associations but most of them afford some clue as to the parents of the person named and confer a certain advantage in the execution of legal documents. Even a dog has a name which dissociates him from other dogs and indeed my soul [...] had apparently no difficulty in assuming a name which distinguished him from other people's soul. (42)

This argument is divided into a theoretical consideration (naming) and two examples (Mick the dog and "Joe" the soul). In his 'theory' the narrator points to the axiom of inexplicable attribution of name to person (or, for that matter, any phenomenon), and refers to the morphology of names: The narrator correctly suggests that a name often betrays the national or ethnic origins of its bearer, which is true in the morphology of a number of patronymic systems such as prefixes in the Gaelic (Ó, Mac, Ni, Nic), or suffixes in the Scandinavian names (-son). Whilst the reference to "legal documents" foreshadows the discussions with Sergeant Pluck (see below), the ruminations in the latter part of the quote exemplify the point of arbitrariness in names, and they may guide us back to the very beginning of the story, where indeed the narrator mentions "Mick the sheepdog" (8) in the context of his childhood memories, whilst his parents remain no less anonymous than the narrator himself – his namelessness itself, as it were, being a distinctive, paradoxically individualizing feature which runs in the family; it is, this time linguistically viewed from a Wittgensteinian stance, a ludicrous illustration of onomastic "family similarity". As for "Mick", it seems as though he cannot be referred to without its (explaining) predicate "the sheepdog", since the name "Mick", usually short for "Michael", is essentially anthroponymic.

As for the Cartesian duality of narrator and "Joe" (i.e., body/soul) it seems that they are as arbitrarily correlated as any name-referent – in accordance with Russell's (and other contemporary philosophers') suggestions.⁴⁵ Being referred to as "Joe" for the narrator's sheer convenience, the soul (on the plot-level) has, strictly speaking, *no* name, either. The narrator never addresses "Joe" directly by this name. This renders "Joe" a theoretical point in case – his appellation designates an immaterial entity, but this very name does not correspond to any intersubjective identification: It is an (arbitrary, convenient) label on the level of narrator-reader communication rather than one on the level of the agents of the plot.

2) *Sergeant Pluck*

In his encounter with the policemen, the narrator has to identify himself to Sergeant Pluck. Since this is impossible for him, he is denied his status as an ontological being, with a number of far-reaching consequences: "If you have no name you possess nothing and you do not exist and even your trousers are not on you although they look as if they were from where I am sitting. On the other separate hand you can do what you like and the law cannot touch you." (p. 64) From this paradox the narrator derives, later, the conclusion that if he did not exist he could not have committed the crime he is accused of and for which he is threatened to be hanged, but the Sergeant turns this problem into his own advantage, emphasizing that without a name, "[t]he particular death you [i.e., the narrator] die is not even a death", and concludes: "It is not a lie to say that nothing has happened to you." (p. 105)

Without a name there is no existential value for an object: In Pluck's mechanistic understanding of the workings of names, they do not only denote, or refer to an object, but they actually create one. His theory is an extreme case of nominalism comparable to that of Humpty-Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, who determines the meaning of the terms he invents,⁴⁶ and it is difficult for him to grapple with the obviously counterfactual reality: After all, the narrator stands in all his physicality before him; dressed in trousers, but bereft of any onomastic designa-

⁴⁵ With Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1918) pointed at this arbitrary relation of signifier/signified (cf. 3.322), as had Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Cours de la linguistique générale* (1916). – The arbitrariness in the narrator-Joe relation is demonstrated in Joe's abandoning the narrator before the imminent execution on the scaffold (cf. 167). However, his terminal disappearance does not change anything for the narrator's conduct or self-awareness, although Joe earlier had threatened that without him, the narrator would be dead (cf. 123) – this being obviously a weak menace since the narrator is dead anyway.

⁴⁶ Cf. Joe's realization in pointing out that "Apparently there is no limit [...]. Anything can be said in this place and it will be true and will have to be believed" (p. 88).

tion. In two of the most hilarious scenes in the novel, Pluck tries to sift the narrator's identity, and already stunned by the fact that the latter has not come to inquire about bicycles, he tries to find out the narrator's "pronoun", "cog" and / or "surnoun" – put in actual onomastic terms, his first, i.e. Christian name, cognomen, and surname. All this is in vain, and therefore he inquires compassionately: "No name or no idea of your originality at all?" (p. 58-9) It is inconceivable for the sergeant to realize that someone or something should exist without a name. Much later, he tries again and suggests a whole list of arbitrary names, and infers a possible (personal) appellation and (legal) validification of the narrator. Pluck cannot accept that the names he suggests are denied any descriptive function with respect to the narrator, and that they may thus form a set of 'pure' names without a referent. Eventually he saves his own theory, concluding that the narrator's appearance is in fact the super-imposed, integrated referent of these names, addressing him paradoxically first an "astonishing parade of nullity" (p. 104) and then "a piece of negative nullity" to be "neutralized and rendered void by asphyxiation and the fracture of the spinal string" (p. 105) – both statements assign a physical essence to the narrator's nominal "nullity" and emphasise their simultaneous de/referencing of the narrator.

3) *de Selby*

The narrator's Russellian reflections on his own namelessness eventually lead him to introduce the linguistic theory propounded by his idol, the polymath and *virtuoso*, de Selby. His name-theory is summed up in a footnote and does, in scope and topic, not quite correspond to the onomasiological and ontological problems raised by the conflicting theories of the narrator and the sergeant:

[de Selby] regards names as the crude onomatopaeic associations with the appearance of the person or object named – thus harsh or rough manifestations being represented by far from pleasant gutturalities and vice versa. This idea he pursued to rather fanciful lengths, drawing up elaborate paradigms of vowels and consonants purporting to correspond to certain indices of human race, colour and temperament and claiming to be ultimately to be in a position to state the physiological 'group' of any person merely from a brief study of the letters of the name after the word had been 'rationalized' to allow for variations of language. (p. 42, n.3)

The de Selbian name-system stands against the narrator's with respect to the nature of signification, insofar as it not only suggests an internal (non-arbitrary) correspondence of name and thing, but also the (aesthetic as well as phonetic and semantic) properties of the name in relation to the sum of the particulars (material as well as immaterial) in its referent. Al-

though there are no explicit language-genetic aspects in de Selby's onomastic theory, it seems to be closely related to such a paradigm assuming the existence of a hypothetical proto-language: de Selby's theory correlates not only semantic properties of words as non-arbitrary, 'natural' links, but even reduces the linguistic class of names to (bio-) genetic indices, revealing a person's properties by its letters in an absurd act of assignation.

Whereas the other two theories, represented by the narrator and by the Sergeant, are clearly constructions based on Russell's logical atomism and elements of early analytical philosophy, de Selby's name theory implies a biologicistic and ultimately racial dimension which, in its interpretative reductionism, is reminiscent of contemporary theories saturated with ideological implications, such as the communist theory propounded by the Georgian linguist Nikolai Marr (incidentally of Scottish, i.e. Gaelic, ancestry). Marr, whose theories were supported by the pre-Stalinist Soviet system and only withdrawn upon Josef Stalin's own linguistic intervention, saw the origins of all human languages in four syllables shared by many languages, and – in the cyclical model of progressive history – expected the existing languages to return to this simplicity in the realization of the communist ideals.⁴⁷

3. *In lieu of a conclusion...*

It has become obvious that O'Nolan/O'Brien uses names in a most ludicrous fashion, although there seems to be a certain preference for the concepts of an arbitrary relation between signifier and signified (suggested by de Saussure and accepted by such theorists as Russell in the *Philosophy of Logical Atomism* and Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus*). This would be in line with his many topical but ironic references to mythological, religious and scientific concepts. On the level of the plot, many of the names he uses do not denote any phenomenon in the novel (although they may be said to refer, at least until denial, to the narrator). On a metafictional level, they may well refer to actual names listed in such directories as Thom's without, however, giving the novel the slightest tinge of a *roman à clef*, insofar as they are 'blind links': they are references without signification.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ I owe this suggestion to a number of perceptive comments by Thomas Daiber, Department of Slavic Studies, University of Giessen. – On Marr, cf. L. L. THOMAS, *The Linguistic Theories of N.J. Marr*. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press 1957.

⁴⁸ The quality of a *roman à clef* in this novel works on a discursive level of epistemology and aims at the institutional satire critical of the ideological instrumentalisation of knowledge, as it

At the end of our argument we may realize that O’Nolan/O’Brien, like in his other novels in which a nameless narrator tells a story about writing a story (*At Swim-Two-Birds*) and in which another narrator is perforce assigned any name whatsoever (“Jams O’Dowell”, in *An Béal Bocht* – the name by which also the narrator’s father and many other people/pupils had been known), *The Third Policeman* abounds with linguistic games on, as well as with names. Against the assumptions of many analytical philosophers of the day, in its “fuzzy logic” it demonstrates that names of ambiguous reference may co-exist along with those “noisy” ones bearing no reference. Therefore, O’Brien invents a whole cosmos of unnamed, or unnameable entities such as the narrator, which put an obvious stamp on their environment within and without the text, although they should not.

was established at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Study, founded in 1940, and cohabitating a School of Celtic Studies with a School of Physics. The search for national and cosmological origins is parodied in the mixture of mythological/religious (Celtic) and natural scientific (cosmological) imagery in the novel. Cf. MEYER, *Allegorien des Wissens*, loc. cit., pp. 30-36. A similar strategy is behind the ludic aspects of such texts as *At Swim-Two-Birds*: cf., most recently, Bohman-Kalaja, *Reading Games*.

Appendix

	Complete di-thematic names: First name plus surname	Half-complete di-thematic names: rank/title plus surname	Incomplete di-thematic names: First name or surname	Anonymics	Pure names ([incomplete] di-thematic, with/out occupational or other titles)
Agent	John Divney, Michael Gilhanev	Sergeant Pluck, Policeman MacCruiskeen, Policeman Fox, Inspector O'Corky	Joe	Narrator	
Passive, with narrative (oral) referent	Andy Gara		O'Feersa, MacDadd, Figgerson, Quigley	Narrator's parents, the postman	
Passive, textual referent	Harold Barge	Countess Schnapper	de Selby Le Fournier, Bassett, Hatchjaw, du Garbandier, Watkins, Kraus, Henderson, Le Clerque, Peachcroft, Goddard		
Passive, without referent					<p>Name-list 1 (43) Hugh Murray. Constantin Petrie. Peter Small. Signor Beniamino Bari. The Honourable Alex O'Brannigan, Bart. Kurt Freund. Mr John P. de Salis, M.A. Dr Solway Garr. Bonaparte Gosworth. Legs O'Hagan.</p> <p>name-list 2, (103f.) Mick Berry. Charlemagne O'Keeffe. Sir Justin Spens. Kimberley. Bernard Fann. Joseph Poe. Nolan. one of the Garvins or the Moynihans. Rosencranz O'Dowd. O'Benson. The Quigleys. The Mulrooneys or the Hounimen. Hardimen, Merrimen. Peter Dundy. Scrutch. Lord Brat. the O'Growneys, the O'Roartys or the Finnehys. Jenkins. Roger MacHugh. Sitric Hogan, Conroy. O'Conroy. Byrne. Signor Bari. J. Courtney Wain.</p>

