Abstract

This paper attempts to open the relationality between the tale—Flann O’Brien’s *John Duffy’s Brother*—and its telling. It reads the movement, the transference, transformations, that occur throughout the tale: and by doing so teases out not just its rhythms, cadences, form, but also the shifts in thought, its translations, and its slippages. By paying attention to the possibility that the tale is a testimony—one that is fully aware of its status as testimony, as well as the complexities, even impossibilities, of testifying—this paper opens the dossier that language opens itself to the possibility of language—not through referentiality, a correspondence between a notion and something in the world, but as language as such. Thus, language—and by extension, reading, and all attempts to respond with and through language—is an imaginative gesture by nothing is known, and perhaps only what can be know is no thing. Perhaps, all that we can respond to is the movements of language speaking with itself. Hence, each response to language is not just based on, and in, memory (after all, without the repeatability of grammar we would not be able to even begin) but one in which each moment of reading is an event, quite possibly one that is *new* and *strange*. Even to the extent where the moment John Duffy’s brother is “possessed of the strange idea that he was a train,” he *was*.

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