

[News \(http://www.scotsman.com/news\)](http://www.scotsman.com/news) [Sport \(http://www.scotsman.com/sport\)](http://www.scotsman.com/sport) [Business \(http://www.scotsman.com/business\)](http://www.scotsman.com/business)

[What's On \(http://www.scotsman.com/what-s-on\)](http://www.scotsman.com/what-s-on) [Lifestyle \(http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle\)](http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle) [Jobs \(http://www.scotsman.com/jobs\)](http://www.scotsman.com/jobs)

[Directory \(http://www.scotsman.com/findit\)](http://www.scotsman.com/findit) [Motors \(http://www.scotsman.com/motors\)](http://www.scotsman.com/motors) [Property \(http://www.scotsman.com/property\)](http://www.scotsman.com/property)

[Deals \(http://www.dealmonster.co.uk/deal/edinburgh/\)](http://www.dealmonster.co.uk/deal/edinburgh/) [More](#)



[\(http://www.scotsman.com/\)](http://www.scotsman.com/)

Theatre review: The Poor Mouth, Edinburgh

by JOYCE MCMILLAN

TO PUT on a poor mouth is to adopt a mood of self-pity; to recount one's sufferings with relish, in the hope of inviting sympathy.

Traverse

And there can never have been a more lethally comic and yet fundamentally tragic account of the role of suffering in shaping a collective national consciousness than the one achieved by the great Irish surrealist Flann O'Brien (aka Myles Na Gopaleen) in this third in his trilogy of absurdist novels, now transformed into a powerful 90 minutes of narrative theatre by Blue Raincoat of Sligo, who have already brought their brilliant versions of the two earlier novels to Scotland.

Set in a mythical west-of-Ireland village called Corcadoragha, *The Poor Mouth* tells the story of its first-person narrator, one Bonaparte O'Coonassa, born into a typically rain-drenched and poverty-stricken household. At first – as our hero makes his way through childhood and adolescence – the story seems like a satire both on the desperate poverty of the Irish-speaking people of rural Ireland, and on their obsessive attempts to turn their threatened language into a political movement. And in Sandra O'Malley's fine and rich-voiced central performance as the hero, the comedy comes across with superb force, dancing in every twist and turn of O'Brien's wise and stately language, which jars so brilliantly against the sheer squalor of the lives described.

Later, though, tragedy sets in with a vengeance; and by the end of the show, Jamie Vartan's heath-coloured wooden slope of a set, dotted with tiny white cottages, seems almost like an elegy for a culture on the edge of extinction. Joe Hunt's music and soundscape are equally powerful, and director Niall Henry and his five-strong company achieve a beautifully shaped piece of theatrical storytelling, all the more moving for its tireless wit, and its sharp critical distance from the fading world it satirises and describes.

[Find out what's on in Scotland](#)

[WOW247, your local entertainment guide.](#)

[Find a Motor in Scotland](#)

[Search over 160,000 used cars nationwide.](#)

[Monster deals in Scotland](#)

[Save money with our exclusive offers.](#)

<http://ox-d.johnstonpress.co.uk/w/1.0/rc?ai=5b35398c-46b1-07ac-91b2->

<http://ox-d.johnstonpress.co.uk/w/1.0/rc?ai=5b35398c-46b1-07ac-91b2->

<http://ox-d.johnstonpress.co.uk/w/1.0/rc?ai=5b35398c-46b1-07ac-91b2->