



# **John Banville (Visions and Revisions: Irish Writers in Their Time)**

*John Kenny*

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John Banville is an accessible yet detailed study that brings to the surface many of the hidden depths of one of the major writers of contemporary Irish and world fiction. It mediates between two existing kinds of critical work on Banville: novel-by-novel introductions, and specialised academic analyses. While it approaches some of Banville's works individually, its discussions are arranged thematically, thus demonstrating the overall patterns in his oeuvre and in his literary thinking. With a close eye on chronology, the book begins by establishing the intellectual and cultural contexts of the oeuvre and its reception, then provides readings of Banville's Irish themes, his crucial theories of the Imagination, his thematic preoccupation with morality and immorality, his idiosyncratic devotion to a self-reflexive art. Work of all Banville's periods is covered, from his first book, *Long Lankin* (1970) to his Man-Booker winning novel, *The Sea* (2005), and his recent popular fiction written under a pseudonym. Rather than incorporating the frameworks of the existing Banville criticism, one of this book's major benefits is that it allows the author to speak for himself at all stages by referring to all his principal statements on his art and worldview. The discussions here are all attentive to those who may be in the early stages of familiarity with Banville, so that the general application of ideas and arguments can be understood without firsthand or detailed knowledge of the works under discussion. Those who are well acquainted with the Banville oeuvre will also find new aspects of emphasis and suggestion. A number of important items from Banville's career as a literary essayist and reviewer are used in the chapters, and the book is thus a good starting point for readers wishing to further develop their interest.

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