

Death and the Impersonality of Style in John Banville's *The Infinities*

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Abstract: Death is the principal thematic concern throughout Banville's late period. All of his late protagonists must come to accept grief and loss and ultimately confront their own mortality. Considered at face value, this seems to perpetuate the subjectivist concerns of earlier novels, but Banville's concern with mortality is allied to an aesthetic of self-loss and an emphasis on the artwork as an arena for the transmission of energies that are not integral to subjects, an arena where individual subjectivity is placed under erasure. This article focuses on how Banville's use of aesthetic strategies that foreground the impersonal, presubjective forces at play in the artistic encounter relates to the thematic of death in his 2009 novel *The Infinities*. Exploring his interest in the contract between the reader and the text and his use of humour and paradox, it shows how he directs attention away from content towards the literary event and the affective qualities of language. It argues that this marks a departure from earlier concerns with the consciousness of the individual subject towards a broader concept of being that is essentially impersonal and that is integral to the art experience.

Keywords: Mortality, paradox, irony, humour, affect.