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| **John Banville**  ***The Book of Evidence***  (1989) | **Irish Cultural Center /**  **McClelland Library**  **Book Discussions**  **Saturday, February 27, 2021**  **10:30 AM – 12:30 PM**  **ZOOM** |

**Discussion Guide**

Note: In addition to literature, science and the arts are important to Banville. Four early novels focus on science (*Dr. Copernicus*, *Kepler*, *The Newton Letter*, and *Mefisto*). *The Book of Evidence* is the first of four novels to incorporate fine art. The next two (*Ghosts* and *Athena*) appear to be a continuation of Frederick Montgomery’s story. The fourth, *The Untouchable*, seems a fictionalized version of famous double agents in Britain.

► Banville’s fiction is often discussed as “metafiction” because he deliberately focuses attention on the creation of the fiction (\*definition below). Discuss the importance of fine and decorative arts in *The Book of Evidence*. Why might a “metafictionist” incorporate art as a subject? What allusions to other literary works did you notice?

► Focus your attention on the narrator of this jailhouse confession. What is his background? What motivation does he give for the crime? What “values” or beliefs does he espouse? How much self awareness does he have? As a reader, how do you react to Freddie?

► Banville’s novel won the 1989 Guinness Peat Aviation Award and was short-listed for the Booker Prize. What aspects of *The Book of Evidence* would you praise? Criticize? You might want to note some specific examples for praise and/or criticism to share with the group.

► Banville is often associated with the European traditions in literature, but can you make a case for him as an Irish writer?

►► Poetry by Eavan Boland (see link): **(Willing readers are invited to volunteer at info@azirish.org)**

“From the Irish of Pangur Ban” (*The War Horse*, 1975)

“Code” (*Against Love Poetry*, 2001)

**\*Metafiction**  . . . . is self-conscious about language, literary form, and story-telling, and works of metafiction directly or indirectly draw attention to their status as artifacts. Metafiction is frequently used as a form of parody or a tool to undermine literary conventions and explore the relationship between literature and reality, life, and art.” **(from Wikipedia)**

**►►► Looking Ahead: Our March 27 selection is *Say Nothing* by Patrick R. Keefe (nonfiction 2019). Eavan Boland’s “Mise Eire” will be our poem.**