

Panel 14
Banville and Art

John Banville's Self-Reflexive Legacy in *The Singularities* (2022)

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The Singularities opens with a piercing question that seems to suggest that this might be John Banville's last work of literary fiction: "Yes, he has finished his sentence, but does that mean he has nothing more to say?" (3). Published in 2022, *The Singularities* brings back to life several Banvillean characters from his earlier works, where the fictional universe, once again, is an amalgamation of various fictional locations, all rooted in the county where he was born and raised, Wexford. While his early fiction aligned with the playful and ironic energies of postmodern literature, there has been a shift in Banville's later fiction where the return and recurrence of earlier fictional worlds suggest not only looking back on the past to secure a certain future, but also the desire for these stories to proliferate, for these characters to move beyond the thresholds of their fictional worlds. Here, I discuss the extended Banvillean universe, particularly how the reappearance of Banville's earlier characters gestures at the idea of afterlives, where casting back to the past is perhaps motivated by thinking about the future, which is also intimated by the figure of William Jaybey: a narrative sleight of hand through which Banville blurs the boundaries between fiction and external reality. This paper also considers how one might understand the revenant in the context of Banville's legacy since it presupposes some unknown future. If *The Singularities* stages the afterlives of Banville's characters, might it also be a book where Banville participates in his own legacy-making?

Biography

Adel Cheong currently teaches at Nanyang Technological University. She received her PhD in English Literature from Dublin City University in 2023. Her research, which focuses on the use of innovative narrative techniques in twenty-first-century experimental fiction, can be found in journals such as *Critique* and *Textual Practice*. Her research interests include Irish literature, narrative studies, aesthetics, and affect theory.