

**The loss of identity in John Banville's
*The Book of Evidence***

Yana YANKOVA-GEORGIEVA,
South West University "Neofit Rilski", Bulgaria

Email: anq_84@abv.bg

Abstract

The Book of Evidence is the self-confession of the protagonist Freddie Montgomery of the crime he has committed. Freddie, an Irish scientist, has been imprisoned for stealing a painting and murdering a young maid named Josie Bell. When Freddie sees "A Portrait of a Woman with Gloves" for the first time he is inexplicably attracted by the woman on the canvas, hypnotised by her mere presence. The picture has a strange power over him. As he himself says only he can understand "the pathos of her presence" (BE 79), only he "has come upon her in a golden room on a summer eve" (BE 79), and only he is capable of killing for her. While reading Freddie's account of the murder we become witness of his gradual depersonalisation and loss of identity. He hesitates on the verge of reality and the fictional world, of the ordinary and the extraordinary, of art and life. He breaks the link with the ordinary world by murdering Josie Bell who is an intruder for him, the one who stands between him and his woman with gloves. The images of the two women are presented in contrast to one another. The maid is part of the real and yet the ordinary world in which Freddie feels an outsider. The woman with gloves exists in the fictional extraordinary world of art and yet she seems a living creature to Freddie. The picture stands in the centre of the narrative as an example of ekphrasis. In my article, I will analyse how Banville's excessive use of ekphrastic descriptions in the narrative contributes to building a more complete picture of his protagonist and relating it to the loss of self and depersonalisation of character.

Keywords: *ekphrasis, character, art, ordinary world, loss of identity*