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Narrating Crises of Trust in Post-Celtic Tiger Fiction

This article argues that post-Celtic Tiger fiction reflects the current crisis of trust and offers a perfect laboratory for the intersubjective negotiation of social practices of trust. Drawing on received and recent philosophical discussions of trust, the article first introduces the main parameters of this social phenomenon. Based on a corpus of about a dozen austerity novels, but with Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* (2012) as the main reference text, it then proceeds to establish (1) the general relevance of matters of trust for post-Celtic Tiger Fiction, and (2) the defining features of the narrative representation of social structures and performances of trust. Finally, in order to take into account not only trust-related issues and structures recurring in contemporary Irish austerity fiction, but to also point up pronounced differences in narrative form and ideological orientation among individual post-Tiger novels, it complements the reading of *The Spinning Heart* with an analysis of the narrative dynamics of 'doing trust' in Anne Enright's *The Forgotten Waltz* (2011).

1. Introduction

At the beginning of Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* (2012) – one of the canonical texts of post-Celtic Tiger fiction[1] – the employees of a construction company that gave jobs to most men in their small town realise that their employer, Pokey Burke, has not only gone bankrupt and fled the country but had never fulfilled his basic social obligations. Never having been registered with their Social Welfare Local Office – and thus not entitled to either unemployment benefit or a pension – the men suddenly find themselves in an utterly precarious situation. "What reason would I have had not to trust Pokey Burke?" (Ryan 2012, 10), the main character, Bobby Mahon, asks himself, and goes on to describe the reaction of his co-worker Mickey: "There were tears in his yellow eyes. He was after being shafted. Robbed." (10–11) Right from the outset, Ryan's novel demonstrates that the financial crash in general, and the local employer's flight in particular, have led to the destruction of traditional structures of trust.

Philosophers have emphasised that trust is an essential element of a person's identity. Bobby, Mickey and their colleagues are truly devastated. The betrayal of trust engenders pain and anger towards the betrayer. As Annette Baier (1986, 235) explains: "The trusting can be betrayed, or at least let down, and not just disappointed." The betrayal of trust also leads to self-doubt. "What we risk while trusting is the loss of valuable things that we entrust to others, including our self-respect […], which can be shattered by the betrayal of our trust." (McLeod 2021, n.p.) Pokey's father ponders, "I think of Pokey and I feel disgust, with him and with myself." (Ryan 2012, 22) Philosophers agree that trust differs from reliance in so far as we are disappointed when somebody or something proves unreliable,

whereas we feel betrayed when somebody turns out to have been untrustworthy. As Martin Hartmann (2020, 105) explains:

> Trust can be betrayed, and that betrayal can affect us deeply. The truster is particularly vulnerable because the betrayal of trust has much more to do with *him* than the disruption of a reliable way of acting. The trustee has betrayed him and did not just change a reliable habit.[2]

Significantly, the opening pages of *The Spinning Heart* emphasise that Pokey's workers had trusted their employer, despite the fact that they never liked him much. "[W]hat [Mickey] could not get over", was that he had been betrayed "not even by a man, but by a little prick." (Ryan 2012, 11) The novel thus highlights the question as to "when trust is warranted," which means "justified or well-grounded" because it is "rational[3] (e.g., it is based on good evidence) or […] it successfully targets a trustworthy person." (McLeod 2021, n.p.)

Based on the observation that matters of trust are core issues not only in *The Spinning Heart* but in most novels that deal with the financial crisis and its aftermath, I seek to demonstrate here that narrative fiction offers a perfect laboratory for the intersubjective negotiation of practices of trust in our crisis-ridden society. Drawing on a corpus of about a dozen austerity novels – Dermot Bolger's *Tanglewood* (2015), Peter Cunningham's *Capital Sins* (2010), Anne Enright's *The Green Road* (2015), Tana French's *Broken Harbour* (2012), Caoilinn Hughes's *Orchid and the Wasp* (2018) and *The Wild Laughter* (2020), Claire Kilroy's *The Devil I Know* (2012), Mike McCormack's *Solar Bones* (2016), Paul Murray's *The Mark and the Void* (2015), and Kevin Power's *Bad Day in Blackrock* (2008) – but using *The Spinning Heart* as my main example, I aim to establish some general contexts and defining features of the narrative representation of structures of trust in contemporary austerity fiction. In a concluding section, a closer look at the narrative dynamics of 'doing trust' in Anne Enright's *The Forgotten Waltz* (2011) will complement the in-depth reading of Ryan's *The Spinning Heart*. By taking into account pronounced differences in narrative form and ideological orientation between Ryan's and Enright's novels, I hope to provide a differentiated perspective on how trust is imagined and reimagined in post-Celtic Tiger fiction.

2. Austerity Fiction: Post-Risk Society and the Crisis of Trust

In their much-quoted introduction to *From Prosperity to Austerity: A Socio-Cultural Critique of the Celtic Tiger and its Aftermath* (2014), Eamon Maher and Eugene O'Brien suggest that "to achieve some understanding of what happened in Ireland during this period" – i.e. the period from the sudden transformation of Ireland into a booming economy and socially liberalised nation from the early 1990s onward to the 2008 financial crash and ensuing austerity – it is important to acknowledge "that all facets of the crisis have to do with aspects of language, structure and ideology" (12). Drawing on Fredric Jameson's concept of 'the political unconscious,' they posit that "the realms of language, fiction, drama, film

and public culture provide a supplement to the economic aspects of society, as they both contribute to, and are largely constituted by, the economic paradigm." (13) Taking their cue from Maher and O'Brien, many critics have analysed and interpreted fictional representations of the "language, structure and ideology" of crisis-ridden (post-)Tiger Ireland, offering valuable insights into the narrative representation of the social and economic crises triggered in the late twentieth century by the Celtic Tiger economy,[4] which was accompanied by a social and sexual liberalisation hitherto inconceivable in Catholic Ireland.[5]

Of major relevance for my discussion here is Mary McGlynn's analysis of Colum McCann's *TransAtlantic* and Sebastian Barry's *On Canaan's Side* in her article "Things Unexploded: The Calculus and Aesthetics of Risk in Two Post-Boom Irish Novels" (2018). McGlynn convincingly shows that with their U.S. setting Barry's and McCann's novels contribute to establishing the dominant political and cultural assumption of the Tiger years that Ireland can be "identif[ied] as an outpost of American values at the physical and political margin of European ideas" (Fintan O'Toole 2010, 171; also quoted in McGlynn 2018, 184). The representation of hard-working Irish immigrants and the "nonwhite" in the U.S. settings of *TransAtlantic* and *On Canaan's Side* suggests that Ireland should even more fully "embrace […] the [American] notion of meritocratic upward mobility" as "an alternative to Irish materialism" (McGlynn 2018, 185). At the same time, the novels (to different degrees) also lay bare structures of enduring inequality, thus presenting an ambivalent stance towards neo-liberal ideologies. In her analysis of how McCann and Barry view crises "through the lens of the individual," which "complicates discussion of structural problems and solutions," McGlynn fruitfully draws on Ulrich Beck's concepts of 'risk society' and a "reflexive modernity, in which individual choice in identification replaces class solidarity" (188). Accordingly, her reading of McCann's *TransAtlantic* "traces the importance of intersectionality in the effects of risky behaviors," by pointing out that "white men of higher income" are in a position to "manufacture" and thus better control "their own risk" than other members of society (189).

Building on readings like McGlynn's, I assume with Martin Hartmann that we no longer live in the risk society that Ulrich Beck influentially described in 1986 in *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, but in a post-risk society which is best conceptualised as a "*Vertrauensbedarfsgesellschaft,*" a 'society in need of trust':

> If risks, in contrast to trust, can be calculated, then the rise of trust could have something to do with the end of calculability and the growth of genuine insecurity, and that means with the end of the risk society. One could say that trust begins where calculation ends; but trust is the category of the post-risk society […]. A popular perspective would now say: the trust society […]. The society in need of trust would probably be better, but that doesn't exactly sound attractive. (Hartmann 2020, 70)[6]

At a time when a series of crises – the economic crisis, the climate crisis, the crisis of the Catholic Church, and the erosion of traditional family values – enhance each other and a new sense of fundamental insecurity rules, trust must replace calculation, even though it is increasingly difficult to be trustful. Unlike risk, trust is not simply based on the reflective individual's rational assessment

of the world, but must operate with a certain dose of naiveté, and rests even more fundamentally than risk calculation on the behaviour of others (71). A radically unfathomable phenomenon, trust has become more significant, and in many cases it is the only factor that can help reduce insecurity and thus allow individuals to navigate a crisis-ridden world. At the same time, in such a world trust is itself in crisis. As Hartmann's concept of the 'society in need of trust' emphasises, our crisis-ridden society can be most profoundly defined by a crisis of trust that might be regarded as a consequence of all the other crises. "We are no longer sure of the trust on which we seem to be increasingly dependent." (71)[7]

3. Narrating Social Structures of Trust in *The Spinning Heart*

Social trust rests on established community traditions which regulate the ways in which the members of a community interact with each other. One could also say that the performance of trust is context-bound. "Attitudes of trust are always embedded in a system of other values and attitudes, which in turn are realised or not realised within the framework of concrete relationships." (Hartmann 2020, 82)[8]

This is reflected in *The Spinning Heart* when Bobby Mahon notices that his trust was not warranted[9] and raises the question: "What reason would I have ever had not to trust Pokey Burke?" (Ryan 2012, 10) Bobby feels that "I should have known something was up the day last year when Mickey Briars came in asking about his pension." (10) Effective trust, however, operates in realms that are not or only very tenuously connected to cognitive knowledge. Bobby ponders that "He [Pokey] was young when I started working for him – three years younger than me – but the whole parish had worked for his ould fella and no one ever had a bad word to say much beyond the usual sniping." (10) He senses that trust rests to a considerable extent on established social structures. Trust in Pokey seemed to be warranted, firstly, because he represents a family business with a long history as the most important employer in town and, secondly, because of his economic success (seemingly warranted by financial institutions): "What matter what kind of a man he was, once the bank kept giving him money to build more and more." (13) With Pokey's betrayal of trust when the company goes bankrupt, such established structures of trust are eroded.

The narrative macrostructure of *The Spinning Heart* allows Ryan to imagine a complex social structure that consists of various relationships of trust and mistrust. In this 'composite novel'[10] Bobby Mahon's homodiegetic narration is just the first of twenty-one monologues by twenty-one different community members who all reflect on their current situation, which is characterised by the town's financial depression. As Mianowski (2016, 63) summarises, "the twenty-one chapters […] offer a panel of all the possible types of relationship, economic and societal situations that might be encountered" in such a setting. Most of

these relationships – which range "from hatred for one's father (Bobby and Denis), difficulties to love one's children (Josie) […], overprotection (Réaltin, Milicent, Trevor, Timmy), [to] sexual abuse (Jason)" (63) – contribute to the general impression of the disintegration of structures of trust. With the individual storytellers only ever presenting vignettes of their current situation without seeing any larger picture, Ryan's novel resembles a narrative version of a jig-saw puzzle which invites its readers to trace the erosion and tentative rebuilding of trust at a point when several crises reach a climax.

4. Trust as Performative: Doing and Communicating Trust in Post-Celtic Tiger Fiction

The Spinning Heart not only reflects social structures of trust but also showcases how trust manifests itself in social practices. Trust is a rather elusive affective phenomenon not only at times of crisis when structures of trust become relevant precisely because they prove inoperative, but also by definition. Critics across the disciplines agree that trust can never be entirely rational, nor does it lend itself to discursive rationalisation. "If intact, trust is thoughtless," Hartmann (2020, 15) contends.[11] It is affect-based rather than subject to cognitive control.[12] In his book on trust Niklas Luhmann (1979, 28–29) writes:

> The persons and social arrangements in which one puts trust become *symbol complexes* […] The way in which symbolic controls operate […] tends characteristically to be unquestioned and indeterminate. It proceeds for the most part by inferences which remain uncommunicated and which therefore do not even need to be defined or properly justified. This is why a very precise articulation of reasons and views is not in keeping with either the demonstration of trust or the withdrawal of trust. […] it can quite easily even become a disrupting factor or may, even more, arouse distrust. (emphasis in original)

Where Luhmann talks of "*symbol complexes*," Hartmann (2020, 81) stresses the fundamentally performative nature of trust. Trust is enacted rather than talked about: "We must bring trust and trustworthiness […] into being through our practices."[13]

While for Hartmann trust is mediated through social enactment and for Luhmann through secondary semiotic systems, they both agree that its communication relies on complex sign systems, both for those who want to establish a trustful relationship and on a descriptive meta-level. Thus, it stands to reason that – as a fundamentally performative phenomenon that relies on arranging persons and situations as symbol complexes – trust is best articulated in stories. "Narratives are much better suited than statistics [or dialogues and conversations] to understand trust in its whole complexity." (95)[14] Narrative fiction in particular offers an effective laboratory for the intersubjective negotiation of practices of trust in a crisis-ridden post-risk society.

In Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* the communication of trust through social practices and stories rather than discursively is hinted at in a passage with meta-

fictional and meta-performative implications: At the end of his narrative, Bobby relates how he and his wife Triona negotiate their trustful relationship through the common experience of watching plays. Generally, Bobby has great difficulties expressing himself: "I wish to God I could talk to her the way she wants me to, besides forever making her guess what I'm thinking. Why can't I find the words?" (Ryan 2012, 15) Fortunately, however, Bobby and Triona sometimes go to the theatre together. Bobby remembers a night when he was so overwhelmed by a performance that on the way home his affective reaction to the play turned into a physical demonstration of his deep desire to express his feelings of love and trust to Triona.

> The play was about a man and wife; they just sat on the stage on either side of a table facing the audience, talking about each other […]. For a finish, they were both old and their lives were near spent, and at the very last, your man turned around and admitted he thought the world of her; he'd always loved her. He put his hand on her cheek and looked at her and cried. Christ, your man was some actor. On the way home in the car, tears spilled down my face. Triona just said oh love, oh love. (20)

Ryan's novel opens with Bobby's monologue and ends with Triona's. The married couple's reflections thus frame the nineteen other monologues. This frame narratively unfolds matters of trust rather than "precise[ly] articulat[e]" (Luhmann 1979, 29) them in the characters' conversations or the narrator-protagonists' monologues. *The Spinning Heart* thus presents a marital structure of trust that – unlike so many other structures of trust in this novel – proves intact, even though (quite in line with Luhmann's and Hartmann's theory) matters of trust are never discursively negotiated between Bobby and Triona. At the end of the book, the reader learns that, unlike most of the other characters, Triona never believed that her husband Bobby killed his father; nor did she ever pay much heed to the rumours that he had a sexual relationship with another woman whose home he was improving with some of his former co-workers. Triona had always believed that her trust in Bobby was well placed: "I knew he wouldn't betray me in a million years." (Ryan 2012, 148)

But the novel does more than simply *posit* that Triona trusts her husband. Providing a counterpoint as well as an implicit answer to Bobby's first monologue, the reader learns of yet another way in which this married couple communicate their feelings. Bobby talks to Triona between sleep and waking, telling her everything about himself and his emotional crises, "in that kind of dozing where you're not fully unconscious but still able to dream." (149) Not only do they thus engage in a semi-cognitive way of speaking; interestingly, Triona also assumes that Bobby is probably "forcing himself to do it [express himself] just for my benefit" (149), an effort that she regards as unnecessary but still appreciates because it demonstrates Bobby's goodwill towards her. And indeed, ever since the beginning of their relationship Bobby trusts that Triona understands what he thinks and feels without him having to talk about his feelings (19). Still, he tries to do so because he believes that Triona would rather not just "guess what I'm thinking" (15). It can be inferred, then, that Bobby and Triona do trust successfully, because their relationship involves "a form of [mutual]

benevolence" (Hartmann 2020, 109), which manifests itself in their special ways of communicating with each other. As Hartmann writes, taking sides in a philosophical controversy about the relevance for definitions of trust of the trustee's goodwill towards the truster[15]: "In order for us to really be able to speak of trust, there must be something more than the willingness not to hurt our [the trusters'] interests out of self-interest, there must be a form of goodwill." (109)[16]

In short, while it is impossible for the characters Bobby and Triona to ever ascertain with absolute certainty that their trust in each other is warranted, the reader learns that their relationship is indeed trustful. Moreover, while Bobby and Triona trust more or less intuitively and never discursively rationalise their relationship, the reader of Ryan's novel gains an insight into these two fictional characters' successful performance of private trust because it manifests itself in and across their narratives.

5. Character Constellations in *The Spinning Heart* and the Narrative Unfolding of Particularised and Generalised Structures of Trust

Political scientist Eric M. Uslaner (2018, 4) categorises private trust of this kind as a form of particularised trust which "is faith *only* in people like yourself. […] Particularized trust is based upon ties to one's own in-group." Central to the depiction of a well-functioning trustful relationship in *The Spinning Heart*, a married couple is in these terms an in-group of the smallest possible size, consisting of only two individuals. Drawing on Uslaner's distinction between particularised, generalised, and political trust, one could argue that Ryan's composite novel depicts a town community hit by various crises, which turn it from a community sustained by particularised trust into a community where each individual feels they must fend largely for themselves. The bankruptcy of Pokey's building company (which metonymically stands for the national and, indeed, global financial crisis) represents a particularly shocking betrayal of trust and one that hits the community as such, but for many characters this is only the last betrayal of trust in a series of many more private ones. To give just three examples: Bobby grew up in a family where the bleak marriage of his parents and his father's violence never created an atmosphere of trust. Jason reflects: "My head is all over the place since I was small on account of I was fiddled with by a fat nonce down the road from our old house inside in town." This man had gained the boy's trust by "put[ting] on videos of all the films my auld fella never took me to see." (Ryan 2012, 77) Lily, the aged prostitute, has lived on the margins of this community as a *persona non grata* without any social ties for years. "Men never call here any more. My children never call to me, even. They're pure solid ashamed of me, after all I done for them." (30)

Even before the crash and Pokey's escape, then, there is a severe lack of 'generalised trust,' the kind of trust which in Uslaner's theory describes a certain

perspective on life in general ("A trusts") rather than a "three-way relationship: A trusts B to do X" (Uslaner 2018, 6). "Generalized trust rests upon a psychological foundation of optimism and control: The future looks bright and I can help make it better," (4) whereas most characters in *The Spinning Heart* are distinctly pessimistic or even suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (like Jason; Ryan 2012, 78), or depression (like Seanie; 94–95), or are potentially schizophrenic (like Trevor; 66). Like Uslaner's "particularized trusters," they "view the outside world as a threatening place, over which they have little control […]; they often have difficult times establishing personal relationships." (Uslaner 2002, 31)

The way the town community thinks about strangers also clearly characterises the members of this community as particularised rather than generalised trusters. What is most important about generalised trust, according to Uslaner, is that it extends to strangers. "Generalized trusters have faith in a wide range of strangers. […They] *presume* that most people they meet share their values" (28), expect others' goodwill, and are therefore generally trustful. Most members of the town community in *The Spinning Heart*, however, do not welcome strangers into their society. Réaltin, a single mother who only recently moved into town and is stranded in one of the ghost estates, that were built during the property boom but remain unfinished after the bust, has not integrated into the local community. "Everyone thought that girl was a blow-in," Jim remembers (Ryan 2012, 134). Mags (an outsider herself) reflects more sympathetically: "*Blow-in*. That phrase is used so derisively. As if to say it's a failing to not have been born and bred here, to have settled in a place outside of the place of your birth." (127) Vasya, the immigrant from Khakassia, hardly speaks any English but he does understand that he must not trust Pokey, who only puts on a friendly face to exploit his labour (41). He also realises quickly that the wife of a colleague, who invited him to a family excursion to the seaside, "scolded [her husband] for bringing [him]" (35).

The accelerated disintegration of the town's community structure of trust after the financial crash is narratively represented via the changing perspective that the narrator-protagonists have on Bobby, the one character who figures in almost all twenty-one monologues. Established in the early monologues as the widely admired hero in town, the star of the local hurling team in his youth, Pokey's erstwhile trustworthy foreman strives to remain an integrative force even after the collapse: "Bobby was always fair sound to me. He's the only one never slagged me," the outsider Timmy remembers, for example (51). Brian, the young intellectual, admits: "He's not the brightest star in the firmament, but he's a proper man. […] I wanted to be Bobby Mahon. I still do, imagine." (61) Mianowski (2016, 71) demonstrates, however, that "[t]he adoration of which he [seems] to be the object in the first chapters is gradually questioned." Trevor fantasises about rescuing Réaltin, constructing a story that turns Bobby, as his putative rival, into "the monster" (Ryan 2012, 67); and Jason relates that he saw Bobby at the crime scene beside the murdered corpse of Frank, Bobby's own father. Mianowski (2016, 73) convincingly claims that "the reader's own mind

starts having doubts about Bobby the selfless hero" when Hilary – in a monologue that addresses a "collective 'you'" which seeks to include the reader – takes the gossip for truth and spreads as an actual fact that "he's only after *killing* his own *father*." (Ryan 2012, 83) The trustworthiness of the main character, who is a central figure in many of the routine social practices that organise the daily life of this town community, is thus fundamentally undermined for the reader, too, – before it is re-established towards the end of the book by Jim Gildea, the policeman, and by Triona.

6. Setting and Plotting Performative Structures of Trust at the Intersection of the Private and the Institutional

The failing of the building company at the beginning of *The Spinning Heart*, and the humiliation and shame Pokey's employees experience when they go to claim unemployment benefits at their Social Welfare Branch Office[17] clearly address the question not only who you can trust but also whether (and under what circumstances) you can trust 'the economy' or the social welfare service. Does it make sense, then, to talk about trust in institutions? In his discussion of this controversial question, Hartmann (2020, 124–139) holds that institutions are characterised by complex systems of practice that are mostly rule-bound. What is at stake when we talk about institutions, therefore, is their reliability rather than trustworthiness (129). Rules and regulations, however, "dictate a certain behaviour but do not determine it. […] In a way, it therefore looks like trust is coming back into play here, after all. We simply have to trust, one could say, that the employees of an institution abide by the generally known rules and norms." (131)[18]

Post-Celtic Tiger fiction clearly sets out to negotiate practices not only of personal but also of institutional trust. Narrative fiction mostly focuses on the relationship between the individual and society, integrating the personal and the political; social-realist novels such as *The Spinning Heart* – and many other post-Celtic Tiger novels – do so by definition. While they often establish individual characters as representatives of institutions, there are other narrative means of integrating the private and the institutional. In fact, storytelling in general, and narrative fiction in particular, arguably help to reflect and negotiate the complex entanglements of private and institutional practices of trust in particularly subtle ways.

Many post-Celtic Tiger novels achieve the effect of interrelating generalised, particularised and institutional trust by juxtaposing a private and an institutional setting. In Tana French's police procedural *Broken Harbour*, for example, the reliability of the rule-bound practices of the fictional Dublin murder squad are tested when detective Mick Kennedy embarks on solving the brutal murder of an upwardly mobile middle-class family that found itself stranded in a ghost estate after the financial crash. Anne Enright's *The Forgotten Waltz* squarely situates

the story of an extramarital affair in the context of the property boom and bust, demonstrating how social structures of trust that have a personal and a socio-cultural dimension are built, demolished, and rebuilt in old and new, luxurious, mobile and unsellable family homes, hotel rooms and office spaces (Mianowski 2016, 45–59). Caoilinn Hughes's *The Wild Laughter* is set mainly on a small family farm which goes bankrupt because of the *pater familias*' naïve investment in a dodgy international business venture. The larger socio-political relevance of the main protagonist's experiences, the youngest son who strives to save the farm, become unmistakably clear in the novel's final scenes that are set in a court room and dismantle the juridical system as an institution which is as unreliable as the protagonist's family. Similarly, Claire Kilroy's *The Devil I Know*[19] is set in a courtroom, where Tristram St Lawrence, the first-person narrator-protagonist, appears in front of the judge and jury as a central player in a corrupt property investment scheme funnelling international money through the shell-company "Castle Holdings," which Tristram had set up in his ancient family mansion. The constellation of settings here integrates the trial of the untrustworthy last son of an Anglo-Irish big house family with an indictment of the failure of various institutions – the government, the global economy, the banking system, and the law – to either prevent or (later) punish those who betray their established practices of trust. Interrelating matters of particularised, generalised and institutional trust, French's, Enright's, Kilroy's and Hughes's novels thus use narrative settings not only to symbolise the private and social fallout of the financial crisis but also to depict a Hartmannian society in need of trust.

Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* features the prototypical *locus* of austerity fiction, the ghost estate, but negotiates the integration of institutional and private matters of trust through plot rather than setting. To represent the performance of trust in a society in need of trust it creatively plays with conventions of plot, however. Certainly, Donal Ryan's composite novel is not driven by its plot dynamics: indeed, the narrative structure assigns a rather limited agency to the twenty-one monologising individual characters. As Asier Altuna-García de Salazar (2019, 98) has also emphasised, they think and monologise rather than act;[20] and the contemplations of their past and present experiences of familial, social and economic crises seem to further paralyse most of them. Stuck in the moment, they are unable to see a way forward. Still, the unfolding of three fragmented plot lines – a murder plot, a kidnapping plot, and the plot of Bobby's alleged marital infidelity – which the novel's readers must assemble by picking up hints distributed across the twenty-one monologues, vitally contributes to negotiating matters of trust.

None of these three plots establishes a link between the financial, social, and familial crises as transparent and straightforward as that in Kilroy's *The Devil I Know* or Hughes's *The Wild Laughter*, novels which have their main characters' actions tried in court, or in French's police procedural *Broken Harbour*. Still, all three plot lines in *The Spinning Heart* substantially contribute to discussing personal and institutional practices of trust in a context of multiple crises. Drawing on Eóin Flannery, I suggest that Ryan's narrative construction of plot

successfully "interrogat[es] both the materialities and the affects of finance capitalism" precisely because it does not uncreatively "engage with the Celtic Tiger through overdetermined and overfamiliar plotlines," which ultimately only ever reduplicate neoliberal structures of feeling (Flannery 2022, 77).[21]

Of major relevance to the novel's representation of institutional trust is the kidnapping plot that dominates its "two central chapters" (Mianowski 2016, 72), as it demonstrates that the local police are well able to deal with a case of child abduction. Significantly, it is the combination of police procedures and the reliability of the local policeman, Jim Gildea, that leads to the discovery of Réaltin's little boy Dylan in the flat of the psychotic Montessori teacher Trevor. More precisely, the boy is found because, against his personal wishes, Jim must "stay put in the village" to provide it with "an operational hub" (Ryan 2012, 134). Also, he gets the decisive hint after a routine (and seemingly pointless) search of the area, during which Timmy (a local who suffers from a mild form of intellectual disability) witnesses and tells Jim how Lloyd, Trevor's partner in crime, makes a suspect phone call. Skilfully reading the social performances of the townspeople, Jim trusts Timmy and realises that he "isn't half as thick as people make out" (137), while he mistrusts Lloyd, "that twitchy prick and [Trevor,] the Montessori teacher[, who] are kind of, I don't even know how to put it – the *same* […] *type* of a fella, kind of brainy and a bit odd" (136). As Triona, appreciating the local policeman's trustworthiness, summarily puts it: "It was […] Jim who found the child. […] He couldn't put his finger on it; he just had a feeling." (155) Still, the construction of the kidnapping plot suggests, in fact, that the case is solved by a combination of institutionalised routine procedures and Jim's personal engagement.

The analysis of Bobby's and Triona's communicative practice of trust has already gone a long way towards demonstrating how the plot of Bobby's potential marital infidelity contributes to negotiating matters of trust. However, it is worth taking a closer look at the development of the action here. Bobby's getting into dire straits is narratively represented in this plot line as a direct consequence of his attempt to establish a new daily routine and give some sense to his and his ex-co-workers lives by doing odd jobs – in this instance on Réaltin's half-finished house on the ghost estate. This scheme, however, effects a general erosion of his trustworthiness, as Réaltin falls in love with him, the town gossips about their alleged affair, and Bobby is even suspected of having abducted Dylan. At times of crisis, the communal structures of trust are so severely damaged, this plot line suggests, that even the most trustworthy pillar of the community loses his power to rebuild community structures.

The cautious happy ending of *The Spinning Heart*, which reveals that Triona had always trusted her husband, culminates in her "What matters only love?" (155). These final words of the novel lead dangerously close to turning the narrative into a trite story showcasing the power of marital love to overcome all difficulties, including a fundamental crisis of trust (Haekel 2020, 27). Undoubtedly Ryan anchors the most significant successful practices of trust in the interaction of two individuals who are lucky enough to find solace in their

heterosexual relationship. Still, I would argue that *The Spinning Heart* does not unambiguously support a neo-liberal ideology of romance that eventually deflects all larger societal problems by sugar-coating them with a romantic hue. First, "What matters only love?" is a – strangely phrased – question that is not (necessarily?) rhetorical but whose odd grammaticality is likely to initiate further reflection on all the issues negotiated in the twenty-one monologues that remain untouched by the lovers' trust and therefore remain unresolved.

Third, and conclusively, the murder plot serves to prevent any notions of a nostalgic longing for pre-Tiger structures of trust.[22] This plot again involves Bobby – wrongly accused of having murdered his father, Frank; and Denis, the murderer, a broke and desperate sub-contractor of Pokey's, who frantically follows Bobby, assuming that as Pokey's ex-foreman he knows the whereabouts of his debtor. Denis ends up murdering Frank, whom he only wanted to frighten but actually kills when "[h]is laugh reminded [him] of [his] own father" (Ryan 2012, 124). Paternal violence and neglect are, in fact, a central topic in *The Spinning Heart*: the novel is peopled by characters who suffer from the consequences of their fathers' physical or psychological cruelty.[23] By constructing an encompassing history of paternal violence across the monologues that make up *The Spinning Heart*, Ryan imagines a town community whose social practices and affective structures are still firmly anchored in a patriarchal system – despite all the wide-ranging recent legal and societal steps taken towards social and sexual liberation.[24] Frank's murder can be read in this sense as allegorically dismissing the patriarchal tradition for good. In Ryan's austerity narrative, the two sons who are involved in the murder plot contemplate parricide repeatedly without actually committing it. Bobby has so often fantasised about killing his father that he remains unsure whether he has or has not murdered Frank when Jim Gildea finds him next to the dead body with the murder weapon in his hand. Denis thinks he is killing his own father while murdering Bobby's. In the end, the patriarch is dead without the sons being hopelessly entangled within a violent patriarchal regime that is routinely reinvigorated rather than ended through acts of parricide. In the context of this murder-plot, which Triona's monologue clearly establishes (150–151), the final words of the novel, "What matters only love?" can be seen as reflecting a society in need of trust which must continue to search for new ways of negotiating trust, rather than simply promoting a neo-liberal romantic escape route.

7. Narrating Practices of Trust in Anne Enright's *The Forgotten Waltz*

Anne Enright's *The Forgotten Waltz* lends itself particularly well to a comparison with *The Spinning Heart* as it also revolves around questions of heterosexual love and concepts of parenthood. The narrative design of Enright's novel is markedly different from Ryan's, however, as it interrelates the financial crisis far more

thoroughly with the crisis of the institution of marriage in the main protagonist's homodiegetic narrative. As Sarah Townsend (2020, 246–247) aptly comments:

> The plot syncopates the progression of an extramarital affair to the Celtic Tiger, the period of rapid economic growth in Ireland that began in the early 1990s and ended with the global financial crisis of 2008. Through the sequencing of the timeline – the lovers [Gina and Seán] meet in 2002 amid prosperity, become involved several years later at the peak of the boom, and leave their respective marriages right as the downturn begins – *The Forgotten Waltz* limns the bewildering inextricability of private life and economic milieu.

While it is certainly correct that, at times, the first-person narrator, Gina, tends to "summon formulaic clichés from romance […] in the hope of organising [her] precarious domestic, financial, and professional li[fe] into a recognisable narrative arc[]" (248), it is just as important to stress that – even more obviously than is the case in the marital fidelity plot of *The Spinning Heart* – Enright does not enlist any of the conventions of the romance genre for her own novel. Significantly, Gina's initial attempts to understand her desire for Seán by fitting it into the template of a romance fail. Rather than a romance, *The Forgotten Waltz* is a twenty-first-century version of a 'novel of manners,' which reflects and renegotiates practices of trust in times of crisis.

As Rachael Lynch (2017, 116) has noted, many reviewers and readers consider the heroine, Gina Moynihan, "not very likeable." If one reads *The Forgotten Waltz* as an austerity narrative which represents (post-)Tiger Ireland as a crisis-ridden society in need of trust, it becomes quickly apparent that the widespread lack of sympathy for this character among the novel's readers is due to the fact that (unlike Donal Ryan's main protagonist Bobby and, indeed, most of the other characters in *The Spinning Heart*) Gina is a betrayer of trust rather than somebody who is betrayed. Following her sexual desire (and love? – as Gina's self-narrative keeps insisting), she undermines fundamental structures of trust, cheating on her increasingly self-absorbed[25] but kind husband Connor, keeping secrets from her sister and mother, and disrupting her new partner's family as well as her and Seán's common social circles. The damage done by her betrayal of trust is aptly distilled in the following passage. "'How am I supposed to look at her [Aileen, Seán's wife]?'" Fiona, Gina's sister, asks. "'I can't believe you did this to me.' 'I didn't do it to you,' [Gina] said. 'It is nothing to do with you.' But it turned out," Gina sarcastically comments, "I had done it to everybody. The whole world was disgusted with me and worn out by my behaviour. The entire population of Dublin felt compromised, and they felt it keenly." (Enright 2011, 139)

By following her sexual desire and falling in love with a married man and father, Gina, the "brash Dublin career woman" (Lynch 2017, 119), causes a severe crisis within both her private and professional social circles. Enright's novel of manners thus – somewhat 'mischievously'[26] – discusses the following question: Is a woman's wish to gratify her sexual desire and her falling in love reason enough to justify the breaking-up of her and her lover's marriages – especially when a child is involved? Or, in other words, *The Forgotten Waltz* reflects the social implications and consequences of the still very recent Fifteenth

Amendment of the Constitution Act 1995, which removed the constitutional prohibition to divorce, closely relating this recent transformation of Ireland's family legislation to the boom and bust of the nation's economy. Even more specifically, the novel asks: Are we prepared to take the sexual liberation of women seriously and, if so, what are the consequences for social structures in general and practices of trust in particular?

Gina is not just an object of distrust, however, but also finds it hard to trust her new love, Seán. Once their affair turns into a relationship and Seán moves in with her, she realises that "It was a delicate business, being the Not Wife." (Enright 2011, 156) When, out for dinner, they meet "the Global Tax woman," a previous affair of Seán's, Gina can empathise with Aileen: "No wonder she shrieked and writhed […]. I thought – just in flashes – that I was actually turning into her. I had to trust him, he said." (157) Enright is careful, however, not to simply turn Gina from an object into a subject of distrust, avoiding a simplistic moralistic plotline which would suggest that, eventually, the heroine is justly punished for betraying everybody's trust for the sake of her own foolish desire.

Rather, trust is established as an ambiguous phenomenon. About one of their frequent meetings in hotel rooms in the early days of their affair, Gina relates:

> After we made love – which we always did first, for fear almost, of becoming friends – afterwards, when it was safe, Seán would talk to me about his life and I would be interested, looking at him beside me, dazed by the details. The corner of his mouth, for example, which was the precise location of his charm. This was where it happened; at the point where his lower lip doubled back from the upper, the angle – I had kissed it – where they divided and met. In its slow lift, the charm of a smile you do not trust, and like all the more for that. (98–99)

For Gina, the financially independent, cosmopolitan and emancipated Irish woman, the fascination of her relationship with Seán obviously rests partly on the thrill of taking a risk and never being absolutely sure of the other. The novel thus establishes the Gina of the boom years as a woman who is ready to take risks and is precisely not in need of trust. Or, to couch this in Uslaner's terms, she is such a staunch generalised truster that she feels no existential need to cherish any heterosexual micro-community defined by particularised trust. Such a reading of the affair's beginning goes a long way to explain why Gina can – or at least feels she must – also deal with her doubts about Seán's trustworthiness later in their relationship.

Moreover, Seán's pleading request (quoted earlier) that Gina "had to trust him" is followed by an explanation that makes it difficult to simply regard his words as the empty urging of a notorious cheater – despite the philosopher's warnings that declarations of trust tend to "arouse distrust" (Luhmann 1979, 29):

> I had to trust him, he said. Our second row, this, when I expected him home and he did not arrive till late – I had to trust him because he had given up everything for me. Because Aileen had doubted every word that came out of his mouth. He could not live with that again. […]
> 'You have saved my life,' he said.
> I have saved his life. (Enright 2011, 158)

Ultimately, the novel suggests, nobody can ever know or say whether Gina and Seán 'truly love' (and can therefore absolutely trust) each other, neither the two lovers themselves nor (unlike in *The Spinning Heart*) the reader. Certainly, however, their affair and ensuing relationship leads to a general transformation of social and familial structures and of the performance of trust that these entail. Merely performing the idea of being a couple while they are still just having an affair, for example, opens up the possibility of establishing new practices for living in a heterosexual relationship: "We could move about like this: as though we had a claim on each other, as though we were intimate," Gina explains. "But we were only playing at these things, I knew that too." (111) While this might at first suggest the superficiality of their relationship, it becomes evident later on, when they actually live together, that they can build on these playful performances to renegotiate their individual social practices of being a couple with quite some flexibility. About Seán's expectation that Gina would iron his shirts for example, we read: "[...] if Seán was going to live like a younger man, he would have to change. And he did change." (156) Most significantly, with Seán as her new partner, Gina finds herself in an entirely new role: that of a woman who looks after, feels responsible and develops feelings for her partner's child.

As other critics have noted, "Seán and Gina's affair pales in importance when compared to the relationship that is central to our understanding of Enright's project: the non-normative familial bond between Gina and Evie. […] Gina is not Evie's mother, yet they grow closer in some ways than Evie is to her biological mother." (Lynch 2017, 116; also see Földváry 2014) Lynch's excellent reading of *The Forgotten Waltz* draws on Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman* to show how the novel narratively represents "a new post-Tiger humanity, expressing 'accountability, based on a strong sense of collectivity, relationality, and hence community building […]' (Braidotti [2013, 49])." (Lynch 2017, 127) Building on this interpretation of *The Forgotten Waltz* but approaching the novel through the lens of 'trust,' it becomes obvious that Gina and Seán learn to trust each other through Evie. Seán quite practically has to rely more and more frequently on Gina to pick up Evie after school and look after her during his absences. Gina gains certainty in her own love for him when – after having "face[d] the painful memories of her father and the damage he has wrought [in her life and family]" (128) – she realises that Seán is to Evie the trustworthy father she has always lacked.

Read through the lens of 'trust,' then, *The Forgotten Waltz* is neither a novel of development which shows how Gina progresses from a selfish Celtic Tiger adulteress to a mature and responsible woman (as R. Lynch suggests), nor the tragic story of a heroine who after following "the narcissistic satisfaction of [her] desires" eventually finds herself imprisoned in the "boundedness" of a home where, as the 'not-wife' and stepmother, she must take on the "traditionally feminine roles" she set out to avoid, as Mianowski (2016, 57) seems to suggest. Rather *The Forgotten Waltz* is a 'novel of manners' that charts the social crises of the first decade of the twenty-first century and shows how family structures can be rebuilt thanks to a differentiated handling of matters of trust. Specifically, with

Gina the novel constructs a narrator-protagonist who combines the readiness to risk an affair with a man whose charming smile is sexy but untrustworthy with being a trustworthy person in moments and constellations where others depend on her. All this is condensed in the first paragraph of *The Forgotten Waltz*:

> If it hadn't been for the child then none of this might have happened, but the fact that a child was involved made everything that much harder to forgive. Not that there is anything to forgive, of course, but the fact that a child was mixed up in it all made us feel that there was no going back; it mattered. The fact that a child was affected meant we had to face ourselves properly, we had to follow through. (Enright 2011, 1)

The protagonist's main dilemma is encapsulated in the beginning of the second sentence when Gina corrects herself. Still immersed in a patriarchal pre-Celtic Tiger family discourse, she almost judges her affair with Seán in traditional moralistic terms. The story that she sets out to tell narrates her struggle to change the perspective and renegotiate familial structures and practices of trust.

8. Conclusion

As the juxtaposition of Ryan's *The Spinning Heart* and Enright's *The Forgotten Waltz* demonstrates, post-Celtic Tiger fiction imagines worlds that depict Irish society as desperately in need of trust. Ryan and Enright both draw on narrative genre traditions – the composite novel and the novel of manners respectively – that allow them to present wide social panoramas which they can then use to reveal and (re-)negotiate established practices of personal, social and institutional trust. The distinctly unfathomable phenomenon of trust becomes manifest in the narrative structure, at the intersection of the narrative construction of character (constellations), plot, setting and narrative mediation. In both novels, the thematic and ideological exploration of 'doing trust' in austerity Ireland showcases "the primacy of individualism" (e.g., through the choice of autodiegetic narrators) and "the inability to act collectively" (Altuna-Garcá de Salazar 2019, 98), which Fintan O'Toole and other social critics have deplored as hallmarks of the Celtic Tiger and post-Tiger years.

The differences between these novels' narrative negotiations of trust are as enlightening as their common denominators. The series of monologues in Ryan's composite novel focuses predominantly on unveiling a long history of dysfunctional family and social dynamics. In *The Spinning Heart* the individual characters must negotiate trust within established institutional structures (the family, marriage, the local police) which they mostly experience as deficient or insufficient; and the few remaining trustful relationships are shown to be crucially dependent on the extraordinary communicative skills of the individuals concerned. In comparison, Enright envisions a world whose social and economic transformations fundamentally disrupt traditional structures of trust. Depicting its main character's path from her pre-Celtic Tiger childhood, through her marriage and divorce during the Tiger years, and on into her 'post-marital'

relationship in austerity Ireland, *The Forgotten Waltz* demonstrates how each of these phases is characterised by different practices of social trust. While each of these structures of trust has its advantages and disadvantages for members of some social groups, the plot progression seems to indicate a general movement towards increasingly liberating practices of trust and (gender) equality.

In an opinion piece entitled "Ireland's Extraordinary Culture of Mutual Trust Still Exists amid Pandemic," published in January 2021 in *The Irish Times*, Fintan O'Toole remembers how, during the earlier financial crises of 1966 and 1970, which were caused by bank strikes, "that intangible thing, trust, kept an entire economy going," as "the Irish economy functioned, in effect, on IOUs. Publicans and shopkeepers cashed cheques for customers, not knowing when they would be able to lodge them." (2021, n.p.) Asking "can we still draw on a culture of trust?" fifty years later, he seeks to answer the question affirmatively. Avoiding any direct mention of the financial crash of 2008, he focuses on the Irish population's trust in science and in each other, and is fundamentally optimistic that Ireland still has "a culture of trust." Rather than giving hard evidence, he beseeches his fellow countrymen and women to stay trustful:

> [...] if you think of the many and terrible ways in which trust has been abused and betrayed in Ireland over the last two decades, there is something precious in our willingness to keep doing so. It's a huge asset and it must not be squandered. The State has issued a vast IOU, drawn on the bank of public trust: do the right thing and your confidence will be repaid. It really has to be.

I hope to have shown that post-Celtic Tiger fiction offers a perfect laboratory for the intersubjective negotiation of the practices of trust for which Fintan O'Toole so eloquently pleads.

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[1] The terms 'post-Celtic Tiger fiction,' 'austerity fiction,' or 'post-crash fiction' have been used as a shorthand by various critics to refer to the body of work that, since the financial collapse of 2008, has engaged with the social crises in Ireland (see, e.g., Buchanan 2019; Flannery 2022; Haekel 2020; Mianowski 2016). In Kelly's (2020, 195–96) definition, post-crash fiction is "interested in the real effects of the Celtic Tiger economy and its aftermath on the lives, finances, and psyches of Irish citizens."

[2] My translation of: "Vertrauen kann verraten werden, und dieser Verrat kann uns zutiefst treffen. Der Vertrauende ist besonders verletzbar, weil das verratene Vertrauen viel mehr mit ihm zu tun hat als die Unterbrechung eines verlässlichen Verhaltens. Die Empfängerin des Vertrauens hat ihn verraten und nicht einfach nur eine Gewohnheit verändert, auf die man sich verlassen kann."

[3] It should be stressed here that the relationship of trust and rationality is tenuous and the relevance of rational reflection for the social practice of trust is controversially discussed. Recent critics mostly agree that it is impossible to "subject all of it [trust] to rational reflection" (McLeod 2021, n.p.). For a more detailed discussion see the section on "The Epistemology of Trust" in McLeod's handbook article; also see Uslaner's (2002, 17) discussion of the difference between "[s]trategic (or knowledge-based) trust" and "moralistic trust" in the second chapter of *The Moral Foundations of Trust*; and Hartmann's (2011, 257–273) chapter "Die Rationalität des Vertrauens" in *Die Praxis des Vertrauens*.

[4] The term was coined by "the UK economist Kevin Gardiner, an employee of the US investment bank Morgan Stanley […] to liken Ireland's unexpected economic take-off to the successes of the Asian tiger economies." (Maher / O'Brien 2014, 1)

[5] In *Post Celtic Tiger Landscapes in Irish Fiction*, for example, Marie Mianowski (2016, 2) sets out to "show how, through a tightly conceptualized reflection on landscape and its connections with space and place, contemporary fiction can help to understand the deep changes at work in Irish society and catch a glimpse of what writers imagine for the future", while Jason Buchanan (2019) examines the narrative representation of entanglements of the local and the global in Mary Morrissy's *Prosperity Drive* and Mike McCormack's *Solar Bones*. Adam Kelly (2020) analyses austerity fiction writers' interest in "how a culture of accumulating indebtedness has altered the nature of contemporary reality" (196) and demonstrates that "Paul Murray, Anne Enright, Kevin Power, and Claire Kilroy share a commitment to the uncertainty of the real" (198). In *Form, Affect and Debt in Post-Celtic Tiger Irish Fiction: Ireland in Crisis* (2022) Eóin Flannery concentrates on the intersection of economic and literary discourses and offers "a series of analyses much concerned with the intimacies of finance and fictionality" and "the debt-induced experiences of uncanniness that mark contemporary capitalist societies" (2).

[6] My translation of "Wenn aber Risiken kalkuliert werden können, Vertrauen dagegen nicht, dann könnte der Aufstieg des Vertrauens etwas mit dem Ende der Kalkulierbarkeit und dem Anwachsen genuiner Unsicherheit zu tun haben, und das heißt: mit dem Ende der Risikogesellschaft. Wo die Kalkulation aufhört, beginnt das Vertrauen, so könnte man sagen, das Vertrauen aber ist die Kategorie der Postrisikogesellschaft […] Eine populäre Perspektive würde jetzt sagen: die Vertrauensgesellschaft […]. Besser wäre wohl die Vertrauensbedarfsgesellschaft, aber das klingt nicht gerade attraktiv."

[7] My translation of "Wir sind uns des Vertrauens nicht mehr sicher, auf das wir zugleich immer mehr angewiesen zu sein scheinen."

[8] My translation of "Einstellungen des Vertrauens sind immer eingebettet in ein System anderer Werte und Einstellungen, die sich wiederum im Rahmen konkreter Beziehungen verwirklichen oder nicht verwirklichen."

[9] See McLeod (2021, n.p.) whose article on trust in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* "is framed as a response to the general question of when trust is warranted, where 'warranted' is broadly construed to include 'justified,' 'well-grounded' and 'plausible'."

[10] "The composite novel is a literary work composed of shorter texts that – though individually complete and autonomous – are interrelated in a coherent whole according to one or more organizing principles." (Dunn / Morris 1995, 2)

[11] My translation of "Intaktes Vertrauen [ist] gedankenlos."

[12] See Hartmann (2020, 87): "I find it significant that – under real conditions of social action – the question of the rationality or irrationality of trust can never be conceptually decided in advance. Mostly I will only learn whether it was sensible to trust others when it is too late." (My translation of "Entscheidend ist für mich dabei, dass die Frage nach der Rationalität oder der Irrationalität des Vertrauens unter echten Handlungsbedingungen niemals begrifflich vorentschieden werden kann. Wie vernünftig es ist, anderen zu vertrauen, weiß ich meist erst, wenn es zu spät ist.") Also see endnote 3 above.
[13] My translation of "Vertrauen und Vertrauenswürdigkeit […] müssen [wir] […] selbst durch unsere Praktiken ins Leben rufen."
[14] My translation of "Erzählungen eignen sich viel besser als Statistiken, um Vertrauen in seiner ganzen Komplexität zu verstehen."
[15] See section 1.1 "Motive-based Theories" in McLeod's encyclopaedia entry on "Trust" (2021, n.p.) for an introduction to this issue.
[16] My translation of "Damit wir wirklich von Vertrauen reden können, muss also etwas mehr vorhanden sein als die Bereitschaft, unsere Interessen aus Eigeninteresse nicht zu verletzen, es muss eine Form von Wohlwollen vorhanden sein." Also see Baier (1986, 135): "When I trust another, I depend on her good will toward me."
[17] Not finding them in her computer, the young lady behind the counter asks "Did you never look for a P60 from your employer? A what, now? You're some fool, she said with her eyes" (Ryan 2012, 12).
[18] My translation of "Regeln schreiben Verhalten vor, aber sie determinieren es nicht. […] In gewisser Weise sieht es also so aus, als käme hier doch wieder Vertrauen ins Spiel. Wir müssen schlicht darauf vertrauen, so könnte man sagen, dass sich die Mitarbeitenden einer Institution an die allgemein bekannten Regeln und Normen halten."
[19] For a comparative analysis of the construction of masculinity in Kilroy's *The Devil I Know* and Hughes's *The Wild Laughter* see Rennhak (2021).
[20] Based on this observation Salazar (2019, 98) convincingly argues that the narrative structure of *The Spinning Heart* showcases "the inability to act collectively and the primacy of individualism", which Fintan O'Toole and other social critics deplore as the hallmarks of the Celtic Tiger and post-Tiger years.
[21] More generally, Flannery (2022, 76) here counters Seán Kennedy's scathing criticism of *The Spinning Heart* "proposing that […] finance fictions do not always require the transparent historicity, or the overt moral framework demanded by Kennedy[]." In his interpretation Kennedy (2021, 401) holds that "[r]eplacing any analysis of neoliberal capitalism with a Freudian psychodrama of shame and castration, *The Spinning Heart* venerates Irish dysfunction, perpetuates colonial stereotypes of the Irish as savages, and peddles misogynistic tropes of Irish womanhood (angel / whore). All this, rather than confronting the possibility that we allowed political corruption and neoliberal governmentality to bankrupt our country and then rolled over as EU-led austerity decimated the future basis of Irish society."
[22] See Altuna-García de Salazar (2019, 105) who stresses that "Ryan's novel advocates a new rural Ireland that does away with the need of involution and nostalgia, if it means returning to the same old ways Ireland has undergone."
[23] For example, Lloyd's father "fecked off when [he] was a kid" (Ryan 2012, 104); Denis's father "was a horrible bullocks […] who gave Denis an awful time growing up" (101); Josie reacts with cruel insensitivity to his daughter Mag's homosexuality; Bobby's father Frank drank away his whole paternal inheritance, ignoring his wife and son's pain, just to spite his own diseased father.
[24] Kennedy (2021, 394) exasperatedly comments: "What is at stake in Ryan's book then, is not the crisis of Irish capitalism but the crisis of masculinity that it occasioned. […] the extraordinary events of 2007 trigger yet another reckoning with toxic masculinity." On constructions of masculinity in *The Spinning Heart* also see Boller (2022).
[25] As Claire Lynch has argued in *Cyber Ireland: Text, Image, Culture* (2014), the novel suggests that Connor's increasing withdrawal into the virtual reality of video games and the internet points to "the overwhelming role of cyberspace in Gina's deserted 'marriage 2.0'" (131).
[26] "There is an amount of mischief in *The Forgotten Waltz*. I […] [wanted] to tease, a little, the snobbery and sexism that exists in the literary world. […] I was also mischievous, I have to admit, when I wrote the character of Gina." (Enright 2012; also qtd. in Lynch 2017, 115)