

國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士論文

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安芮特《被遺忘的華爾滋》中的夏朵內及感性生活

Chardonnay and the Sensual Life in Anne Enright's

*The Forgotten Waltz*

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CHARDONNAY AND THE SENSUAL LIFE IN ANNE ENRIGHT'S

*THE FORGOTTEN WALTZ*

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To my parents

獻給我的父母





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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班

碩士論文提要

論文名稱：安芮特《被遺忘的華爾滋》中的夏朵內及感性生活

指導教授：陳音頤教授

研究生：黃乙宸

論文提要內容：

安芮特以書寫愛、性、家庭以及女性主題聞名。而在《被遺忘的華爾滋》中，安芮特透過對吉娜與她的情人賽昂的浪漫關係反映對愛爾蘭社會在凱爾特之虎時期的關懷。

本論文分成兩個部份，旨在探討夏朵內在《被遺忘的華爾滋》中所代表的兩種不同意義。在第一部份中，我認為夏朵內代表了在凱爾特之虎所帶領的經濟繁榮之下人們追求新的美好的生活。在第二部份中，筆者著重於探討夏朵內不僅內代表女主角的身體慾望，也代表了物質跟心理層面的連結。本論文旨在使用物質文化的角度討論女主角愛上喝夏朵內的原因和女主角的精神層面息息相關。安芮特也打破了物質文化理論中物質與精神層面的二元對立。

關鍵字：安芮特、《被遺忘的華爾滋》、夏朵內、女性、女性身體慾望



## Abstract

Anne Enright is known for her writings on the themes of love, sex, family, and women's experiences. In *The Forgotten Waltz*, Anne Enright shows her concerns on the Irish big social event—the Celtic Tiger—reflected in the romantic relationship between our protagonist, Gina, and her lover, Sean Vallely.

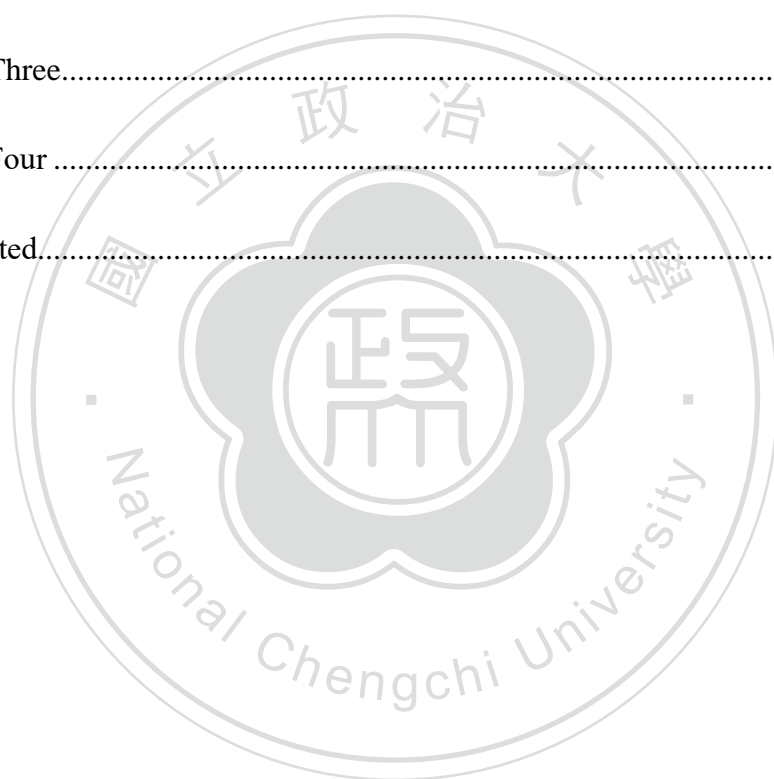
This thesis is divided into two parts, and I intend to explore the different two meanings which Chardonnay represents in *The Forgotten Waltz*. In the first part, I argue Chardonnay symbolizes the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie and their pursuit of the good life that stands for the material prosperity available as a result of the Celtic Tiger years. In the second part, Chardonnay is not only represented as Gina's female bodily desire, but also interconnected with her mental activities. This thesis aims to utilize material culture approach to argue that the reason for Gina's addiction to Chardonnay is related to her spiritual feelings. From this point, Enright has broken the traditional duality of material and the spiritual.

Keywords: Anne Enright, *The Forgotten Waltz*, Chardonnay, woman, female bodily desire



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## Chapter One

As an award-winning writer, Anne Enright is undoubtedly one of the most eminent contemporary Irish writers. Briefly listing out her books, we can start with *The Portable Virgin* (1991), which won the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature in 1991. *The Wig My Father Wore* (1995) was shortlisted for the 1995 Irish Times/Aer Lingus Irish Literature Prize. *What Are You Like?* (2000) was the winner of the 2001 Encore Award and shortlisted for the 2000 Whitbread Novel Award. *The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch* (2002) was followed by *Making Babies: Stumbling into Motherhood* (2004). *The Gathering* (2007) won the 2007 Man Booker Prize for Fiction. Then, *Taking Pictures* (2008) and *Yesterday's Weather* (2008) were published in 2008. Afterwards, *The Forgotten Waltz* (2011) was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction and won the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction in 2012. *The Green Road* (2015) won the Irish Novel of the Year in 2015 and was shortlisted for the Baileys Prize for Fiction in 2016. Her most recent novel is *Actress* (2020), longlisted for the 2020 Women's Prize for Fiction.

According to the critic Karen Virag, Enright is an outstanding member of a new generation of Irish writers in the long history of Irish literature:

How else to explain the extraordinarily rich literary tradition of tiny Ireland, with its population of just over six million and its teetering stack of four Nobel Prizes in literature (won by Shaw, Yeats, Beckett and Heaney). Not to mention its slew of other stellar writers, from Sean O'Casey to James Joyce

to William Trevor. And the talent isn't restricted to males. Ireland has produced many fine female authors, such as Edna O'Brien, Elizabeth Bowen, Maeve Binchy and Anne Enright. (1)

Anne Enright, according to the quotation above, is one of the most innovative and exciting Irish writers. Enright was born and raised in Dublin, and she has spent time in London and Vancouver. She worked as a television producer and director for years before starting to write full-time in 1993. Her life has changed dramatically since she won the 2007 Man Booker Prize for *The Gathering*. Her work is noted for her original style which, though appearing to be “edgy,” is poetic at the same time. As Wymard says, “[h]er narrative is so insightful in terms of its perspective of a young Irish person at this time in their history. She questions so much about the Irish past, and she's very much starting a new tradition in Irish literature” (qtd. in Behe 2). The themes in Enright's novels are addressed in complexity and her writing is regarded as a dedication to exploring Irish family life. Along with the topic of family, Anne Enright is interested in describing familial relationships, love, and sex with a brutal honesty and a wicked subtle sense of humor. The novel I want to discuss in this thesis is *The Forgotten Waltz*, published in 2011. Besides Enright's characteristic discussion of love and family, *The Forgotten Waltz* particularly focuses on women's physical desire with a nonchalant depiction of a variety of sensual experiences, including their desires for food, drinks, and their sexual pleasure. Therefore, in this thesis, I choose Chardonnay, the particular kind of French wine that our protagonist, Gina Moynihan falls madly in love with, as a key trope and symbol of women's sensual pleasures in this novel.

Irish drinking culture has a long history. According to Mats Ramstedt and Anne Hope's “Irish Drinking Culture,” “beer is the most popular beverage in Ireland and



represents almost 75 per cent” of people’s beverage choice. On the other hand, “spirits and wine are 16 and 10 per cent respectively” in an average of alcohol consumption (3). Mats Ramstedt and Anne Hope also reveal a more detailed analysis of gender differences in Irish drinking culture. “[M]en drink about three times as much alcohol as women,” and also beer is more common among men (4). 23 percent of female drinking consists of wine but only 6 per cent of male consumption (4). In Enright’s *The Forgotten Waltz*, Gina is often described as drinking Chardonnay. This has several meanings. It means a link with the prosperous, consumerist and globalized lifestyle enjoyed by Irish people as a result of the Celtic Tiger boom. It also means Gina’s embrace of her sensual desires and pleasures as a modern woman is different from the traditional image of Irish femininity.

### **Summary of *The Forgotten Waltz***

*The Forgotten Waltz* was published in 2011. It is, in summary, a book about adultery. *The Forgotten Waltz* is set in Terenure, Dublin, and is narrated by a thirty-something female protagonist, Gina Moynihan, about how she met the love of her life, Sean Vallely, in one of the parties Gina participates after her return from her vacation in Australia during Celtic Tiger years, even though they both were married to other people at that time. The novel opens at a scene when the lovers are kissing in an upstairs room at New Year Eve party in Sean’s house and Sean’s daughter, Evie, walks in on them. Throughout the novel, the present is alternated with Gina’s reminiscences of the affair from its very beginning, including the bittersweet of long waits for Sean’s texts, and many lustful rendezvous in hotel rooms. When the affair is discovered later in the novel, Sean leaves his wife, Aileen for Gina. Thus, Sean and his daughter, Evie, move into Gina’s house (Gina’s mother’s residence before she

passes away) and become a small family. Gina, thus, starts to learn to take care of them. However, when she wants to remain a romantic relationship with Sean, she realizes that Sean may have not truly loved her. Sean loves only himself and his daughter, Evie. Before Gina met Sean, she was married to Conor, but she could not stand the ordinariness in their marriage. Thus, after they move to Gina's house, although Gina does not like Evie, she still tries to be friends with her and takes care of her and, eventually learns to love Evie like her own daughter. Gina says it is the price "[she] had to pay for love" (207). In the end, Gina realizes that she still has to settle again into a normal relationship like the one she had with Conor. Now she has to get accustomed to a life not as a gamer in love games, but is, instead, free of seeking pleasure from an affair and learns to be a stepmother.

## **Methodology**

Enright once responded in an interview to the stereotypical question that male writers should write about something "big" (like social/ political events), while a woman writer should be writing something "small" (unimportant home life):

I get the impression that there are male authors whose wives are bringing them tea while they write about strangling prostitutes. There's a self-aggrandizement in that. Male literature is often about large events that never happen. Most men end up rearing kids and growing old, just like women. I thought that it was hugely interesting that the moment had arrived where Jonathan Franzen could write about family if you think about it, men have almost been barred from writing about ordinary lives for the last 30 years, but if you look at the men in Dickens or Trollope, all the male characters are family men. There are very few family in modern male literature, so I think

it's brilliant that male writers are now allowed to be important and write about family at the same time. (Lane 21)

Family life is, therefore, an important topic for novels. In this novel, Anne Enright does not just write about home life. Instead, she cleverly uses the subject of the foolish woman who is in love to portray a broader picture of the historical period—the Celtic Tiger and its collapse in 2008—to prove that such emotional/home themes can reflect and comment on the big social event in Irish society.

In the novel, it is intriguing that some images of drinks constantly appear such as beer and wine. Caitriona Moloney points out that most critics agree that her work is “postmodern and deconstructionist while utilizing a cinematic style suggestive of both the celluloid quality and pace of contemporary life” (88). Although Moloney does not add much here, in another interview she says,

Enright conflates the genre of journalism, history, film, and fiction to problematize our record and memories of the past. Her short story “Historical Letters” addresses an absent lover who was in Dublin in 1914, New Orleans in 1926, the Spanish Civil War in 1935, Moscow in 1937, and Berlin in 1989. Enright uses newspapers to intersperse bits of journalistic information into the plot of her novels *The Wig My Father Wore* to portray history—fragmented and deconstructed—and similar to the present. In this novel she also uses film techniques of fast cutting and rewind to intersperse three plots. The novel's style resembles the remote channel-surfing behavior that television watchers are familiar with, again suggesting that television's influence is more total and structural than what is communicated by the content of individual shows. (Moloney 52)

The style of *The Forgotten Waltz* is intriguing. In the novel, people are imbibing

different kinds of beverages in different circumstances. Chardonnay is the particular kind of white wine that Gina likes. Furthermore, Chardonnay, as a key image in this novel, keeps coming up at critical circumstances, bookmarking the apexes (or turning points) of the social-economic background which overlaps with Gina's life. Gina had picked up Chardonnay because of the chance of going on a vacation to Australia with Conor at the beginning of the novel. Her experience implies that people like Gina who work in the technology industry could get rid of local confines and poverty in Ireland, but take the advantage of economic prosperity and globalization during the Celtic Tiger years and enjoy global tourism, symbolizing an image of a good life. Gina is not depicted as a thin character in the novel, and she has a good appetite for food.

Therefore, the image of Chardonnay represents two different aspects. Primarily, Chardonnay is a kind of wine which is said to originate in the Burgundy wine region of eastern France but now is grown in many world's wine regions (Bowers et al. 1562). I argue that Chardonnay symbolizes the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie and their pursuit of the good life and pleasures, a life style that stands for the material prosperity available to an increasing number of the Irish public as a result of the Celtic Tiger years. The protagonist, Gina, is mad into Chardonnay when she travels back from Australia and picks up the enjoyment of the French wine. The reason why she prefers drinking Chardonnay can be linked to the economic boom and bust, and the trends of globalization in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger years. Secondly, in my opinion, Enright employs Chardonnay not only as a representation of female bodily desire but an interconnection with an emotional sense of happiness. Enright not only breaks the traditional stereotypical binary of what a male or female writer should write about but also the duality of the material and the spiritual. For Gina, drinking Chardonnay is not only because she loves the taste of the wine, but is more related to

her spiritual feelings. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to discuss the key image of Chardonnay and how it reflects Irish society and articulates Gina's female selfhood.

To try to sort out the relationship between the protagonist's ups and downs in the novel and the Irish society, this thesis utilizes the material culture approach. Prown states that in traditional studies of material objects, "the existence of a man-made object is concrete evidence of the presence of a human intelligence operating at the time of fabrication" (1). The term *material culture* is self-contradictory, for *material* is a word of the base and the pragmatic, and the word *culture* associates with lofty, intellectual abstract things (Prown 2). The purpose is to attain the spiritual ends via the concrete ends. Thus, in traditional studies, we are convinced that a person is prioritized in his/her relationship with material culture and he/she is superior to material and physical things (Prown 2). Yet, a new development of material culture studies has enhanced the role of the material, for their relationships with people are interconnected and reciprocally constructed. Grassby states that "life styles are not subjective or utilitarian but culturally determined" (597). Grassby further explains, for example, that the choice and preparation of food is not a matter of individual taste and smell, but is more of mental activity than a physical one; "Culture gives meaning and thereby economic value to new goods; fashion establishes tastes and directs individual desires and creativity" (597). In other words, there is no pre-existing subject that exists before his/her interacting with the material object. Objects are both practical and symbolic, indicating the changing hierarchies of value. That is to say, the object is no longer regarded as passive. Starting from this point, this thesis intends to examine Chardonnay as an object that helps to construct and enable Gina Moynihan's personality and her self-expression.

## Literature Review

Because *The Forgotten Waltz* is a relatively new novel, there has not been a large number of criticism on the novel. The following literature survey is organized in this way. The first section is about Enright's concern about Irish society, especially in the Celtic Tiger time. The second section is Enright's position as an Irish Female writer in the Irish literary history. The third section is the discussion of the themes of family and womanhood.

**Enright and Her Concerns about Irish Society (Celtic Tiger).** In the article, "Everyone Wants a Bit of Me": Historicizing Motherhood in Anne Enright's *The Gathering*," Laura Sydora, states that Enright has "emerge[d] as one of the foremost literary voices of Irish culture" by using her "candid portrayals of female sexuality, maternity, and abuse counter an extensive national history of patriarchal hegemony" (239). Moreover, according to Sydora, *The Gathering* aims to investigate and recover what has been silenced in Ireland via tracing the protagonist, Veronica Hegarty, and women in her family especially from the period of post-Independence to the Celtic Tiger (239). It is necessary to place the situation of Ireland during the Celtic Tiger period. The atmosphere of the Celtic Tiger boom is captured in Enright's description of the family members' behavior on Christmas Eve when they ran with the crowd, buying things without looking, and wasting money on needless things (Estévez-Saá 51).

Laura Sydora also states in "Everyone Wants a Bit of Me": *Historicizing Motherhood in Anne Enright's 'The Gathering'* that the economic boom in the 1990s leads the way for Ireland to a more liberal and modern state where they could put the old nationalist concern behind and speaks to a latent concern beneath a prospering

economy and its social atmosphere (239). Sydora also states that Enright's employment of the product names are shreds of evidence of Ireland's "emergence into the global market" (240). In the article, it describes Ireland during the Celtic Tiger as having "suddenly blossomed into a newly evolved state, forfeiting the ideology of the past in order to successively transition into modernity," contradicting Ireland's traumatic past (Sydora 240). In "All Fur Coat and No Knickers" review, Valerie Miner argues that Gina in *The Forgotten Waltz* has already been placed in the clear context of Celtic Tiger's thriving and shrinking (24). Everyone in *The Forgotten Waltz* celebrates their new real estate, but afterward faces the downturn (Miner 24). "People didn't yet know that they weren't really happy at all. It took a while to realize that it wasn't real;" the Celtic Tiger was "bordering on fantasy and on group belief," as Enright states in McGillis' article, "Enright maps Ireland's vast landscape".

**History and Women Writers.** The protagonists of Enright's novels are instruments for Enright's concerns. As Ian McGillis comments,

... Enright hit on her mature voice with *The Gathering*, a novel that reckoned with Ireland's dark history of institutional abuse, and one whose conflicted heroine, Veronica, could not be in any greater contrast with Gina, the forthright adulterer of *The Forgotten Waltz*.

In "A Map of Thing Known and Lost in Enright's *The Green Road*", Margarita Estévez-Saá mentions that critics like Patricia Coughlan and Susan Cahill have argued that "the current criticism tends to obviate Irish women writers' engagement with social changes in contemporary Ireland" (46). Women writers' concerns and dissections of the changes taking place in Ireland are often ignored (Estévez-Saá 46). Estévez-Saá reminds us that most Irish writers are denounced for their "penchant of

the past.” Thus, the contribution of the Irish women writers, like the one who wrote *The Green Road* appears to be rare since Estévez-Saá argues that Enright’s recent work, *The Green Road*, is a work that not only distances those scholars who have denounced the Irish writers’ “penchant for the past,” but is also an example of women writer’s great contribution of writing on the present circumstances of the island (46). In *The Green Road*, Enright portrays the life of Madigan family—four children and their mother Rosaleen Madigan—and their experience of emigration and particular happiness from the 1980s to 2005. The lives of the members in Madigan’s family are employed by Enright to reflect the history; thus, Enright can move Ireland from local confines into a global context by covering “global issues such as diseases and illness (cancer, AIDS, malaria), and to explore transcultural exchanges in Ireland” (47). In *The Green Road* (2015), the protagonist, Rosaleen, vindicates the need to refer to the past in the recent history of Ireland to discover the shortcomings of its present, as the only way of projecting a better future (Estévez-Saá 310).

**Family and Womanhood.** The theme of the family and women appear to be common in Enright’s works. It is used to “illustrate the complexity of the most varied human relationships that include marriage, widowhood, motherhood, sexuality, and ageing;” moreover, it is an approach for Enright “to fictionalise Irish history and to contextualise Ireland in the contemporary global scene” to provide a reflection for the local confines in Ireland (Estévez-Saá 47-48). In *Making Sense of/through the Family in Anne Enright’s ‘The Gathering’*,” Shan-Yun Huang mentions that the intensifying energy is invested in the family after Ireland achieved independence and the new “Irish Free State” penchant to promote its family by strictly regulating women in the domestic sphere, and keeping them from the public sphere (60). In chapter three of



Heather Ingman's *Ageing in Irish Writing: Stranger to Themselves*, she points out that ageing is a central topic of Enright's recent novels, *The Green Road*, to provide a portrayal of ageing. In *The Green Road*, Rosaleen as the ageing protagonist and matriarch reflects the marginalization of older women who live under "the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, political and Catholic ideologies combined to restrict women's lives to the home" (Ingman 79). In the chapter, Ingman uses Eamon de Valera's Constitution founded on the family unit to explain that the "natural place of all women is in-home and women's foremost womanhood are being mothers:

In particular the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall therefore endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home. (qtd. in Ingman 79)

Rosaleen, as a microcosm of the aged women in Ireland, can only exercise her power via oblique ways such as manipulation and emotional blackmailing (Ingman 80). Being regarded as Reifungsromane (novels that portray old age as a time of change or growth), *The Green Road* illuminates the power that Rosaleen still has when her children live in her own property during the Celtic Tiger period (78). Female identity is often silent and idealistic. Their roles are confined in the Irish national patriarchal past. Ingman and Sydora have both mentioned that Enright's novels are the narrative of Irish women's devaluation within the narrative of history. Although woman protagonists are often marginalized and oppressed, yet in *The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch*, it offers an examination of women's connection with nature and culture from an ecofeminist and postcolonial angle, illustrating the importance to note the patriarchal

notions of femininity and nature (Gruss 323). It is stated that *The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch* reflects the question of postcolonial identity, focusing on the subversive power of a postcolonial “Other” and thus the deconstruction of notions pertaining to the Eurocentric pattern of patriarchal gender identities (Gruss 327). Eliza Lynch, an Irish woman who is a prostitute in Paris but afterward moves to Paraguay, is marginalized by bourgeois Europe and has to use her sexuality to gain her power (Gruss 328-29).

As Plumwood says,

essentialist ecofeminists who embrace women’s alleged ‘natural’ virtues tend to attribute to women a range of different but related virtues, those of empathy, nurturance, co-operativeness and connectedness to other and to nature, and usually find the basis for these also in women’s reproductive capacity.” (qtd. in Gruss 329)

Although Eliza Lynch is not an “angel in the ecosystem,” she is “neither moral nor immoral, neither Culture nor Nature, neither victim nor perpetrator;” she pendulums in the binary poles (Gruss 329).

Since the previous critics have not addressed material culture theory for Enright’s works, I would like to use material culture theory as the methodology in my dissertation in order to incorporate the social and material into the text.

## **Chapter Organization**

This thesis illustrates how material culture can help us to understand the boom and bust in Irish society during the Celtic Tiger, and also Enright’s breakthrough of a traditional binary position of material culture and an individual. I organize this thesis into four chapters as follows.

The first chapter is the introduction. It will address the prominence of Anne

Enright and centers on the introduction of *The Forgotten Waltz*. *The Forgotten Waltz* is a relatively new publication. Therefore, chapter one consists of five parts, namely a brief list of Enright's novels, a plot summary of *The Forgotten Waltz* followed by the thesis argument of this dissertation, literature review, and methodology and chapter organization.

Then, chapter two provides an overview of the social background. In *The Forgotten Waltz* Chardonnay embodies the lifestyle of *bon vivant*, representing a devotion to the sensuous and luxurious way of living, epitomizing the rapid globalization and economic growth in Ireland during the time of the Celtic Tiger. The action of consuming Chardonnay reflects Ireland's jump from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the richest in only a few years. Many multinational investors poured in Ireland in the late 1990s. The direct investment of high-tech companies offered long term growth potential. Besides, Ireland's membership in the European Union provides export advantages and leads to the increasing price of Irish real estate. People in Ireland enjoyed economic growth and globalization in these boom years, especially our protagonist, Gina. Working in a technology-related company, Gina takes advantage of the boom years and enjoys the opportunities of traveling and going on business trips. She loves, and she needs to drink Chardonnay, the fancy wine, in celebration parties. Gina is deeply set in the context of the boom years, distancing our impression of people's life styles in an enclosed country. She represents a new lifestyle during the economic growth in Celtic Tiger years. Drinking Chardonnay becomes the representation of a good new life of material prosperity and pleasure.

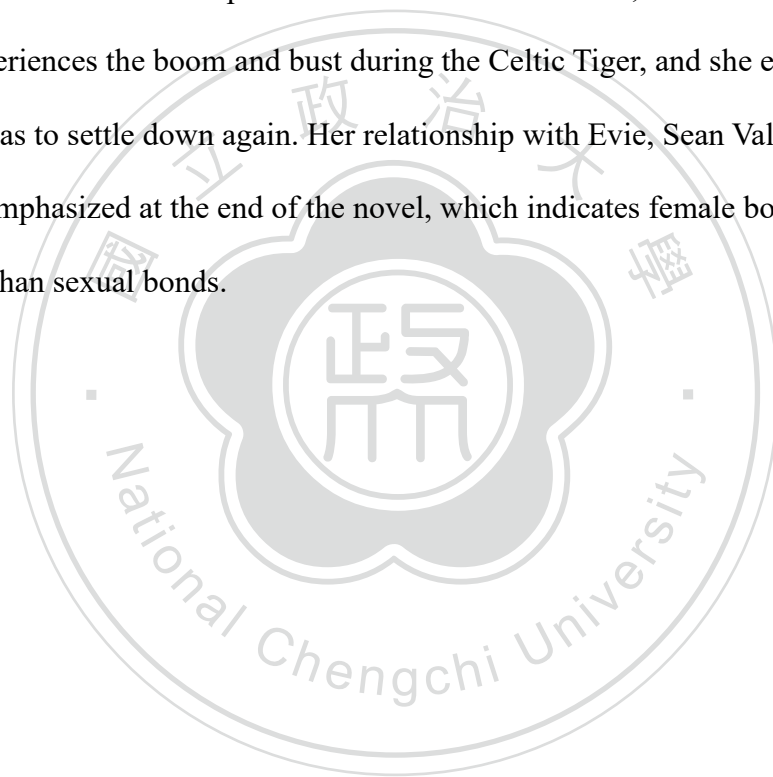
In the previous chapter, I explore the meaning of Chardonnay from a historical-cultural aspect. In Chapter three I will further point out another aspect regarding

Chardonnay as a representation of female bodily desire. In the novel, the women in the Moynihan family live under the fictionalized Irish history. Gina Moynihan's reminiscence of her life since she met Sean Vallely overlaps with the first boom in Celtic Tiger. Gina, from the beginning of the novel, is presented as a woman who cannot resist her desire for food and who loves drinking wine and is madly into drinking Chardonnay. Her affair with Sean Vallely vindicates her bodily desire, and her desire for food, for drinks, and sexual pleasure motivates her seemingly unbridled lifestyle. Aligned with the previous explanation of Chardonnay as a pursuit of the good life, Chardonnay as meanings of bodily desire and sexual pleasure are elaborated in this chapter. Gina's love of Chardonnay is not because of its smell and taste, but the action of drinking Chardonnay is more like a mental activity—it directs Gina's desire and establishes Gina's taste. From this point, Enright's careful arrangement of images—Chardonnay, food, and bodily desire collides with and eliminates the traditional binary opposition of material subject and spiritual feelings.

Chardonnay symbolizes emancipation of female desire in this novel, Enright also suggests that over consumption of Chardonnay may also lead to addiction. Chardonnay is part of mass and modern consumption culture in contemporary Ireland as a part of the good life that Ireland embraces in the Celtic Tiger years. But a contradictory nature of modern mass consumption culture is its danger of overconsumption. In the case of Gina, she ultimately realizes that Chardonnay and sensual pleasure is not enough; her decision to choose responsibility and female bond with Evie is a symbol of her growing maturity.

Last but not the least, chapter four will be the conclusion of my thesis. This thesis proves that the image of Chardonnay is a representation of people's pursuit of a sensuous way of living in a globalized Irish society during the Celtic Tiger. Gina's

drive of bodily desire helps to elevate its meaning into the emotional level. The first key circumstance when Gina drinks Chardonnay is after her travel. She is enjoying the good life. However, the next time when she recollects the good old times, everything is no longer the same to her. She has lost her job, has left Conor for Sean, her mother has passed away and the Celtic Tiger is experiencing its recession years. The love bubbles busts after Sean and his daughter move into her house. When the next time she drinks Chardonnay, there is a sense of melancholy, for Gina tries to imbibe her unease and compromise with herself. Therefore, at the end of the novel, Gina experiences the boom and bust during the Celtic Tiger, and she ends up realizing that she has to settle down again. Her relationship with Evie, Sean Vallely's daughter, is more emphasized at the end of the novel, which indicates female bonds can be stronger than sexual bonds.





## Chapter Two: Chardonnay As Good Life

To elaborate on how Gina pursues the good life in *The Forgotten Waltz*, it is inevitable to mention the backdrop of the Celtic Tiger years. Although the historical background is fictionalized, Enright still captures the boom years of the roaring tiger and its dying days. In this chapter, a retrospect of the transformation of Ireland from its low economic performance to Celtic Tiger as a result of multinational investments and globalization is provided. During the boom years, Gina's desire for drinking Chardonnay symbolizes her pursuit of good life and pleasure. In this chapter, I argue that Chardonnay symbolizes the lifestyle of the bourgeoisie and their pursuit of the good life and pleasures, a lifestyle that stands for the material prosperity available to an increasing number of the Irish public as a result of the Celtic Tiger years.

### The Celtic Tiger's Boom and Bust

Since its independence in 1922, Ireland has transformed from one of the poorest countries in Europe to a successful example of market-led globalization and economic growth in the 1980s. Before its independence, there was not much impressive economic performance in Ireland to tell. According to Battel, "it is hardly accurate to speak of an 'Irish' economy, pollarded as it was by centuries of colonialism" (94). As a British colony, Ireland's exports and imports primarily went to and came from the United Kingdom (Battel 94). Large-scale industrialization appeared to be absent in

Ireland and was never a feature of its economy. However, small-scale industries such as weaving also declined (Battel 94-95). According to Kennedy et al, such as shipbuilding in Belfast and brewing in Dublin were notable exceptions of the decline (9). The newly established state still gave a weak economic performance under the protectionist policy of considering “industry as equal in importance to agriculture;” however, it failed with its restricted home market and lack of natural resources; moreover, Ireland’s policy of high imposed import tariffs was responsible for a competitive position of the country with the United Kingdom (Battel 96). The Republic of Ireland was a poor, unappealing rustic country with high unemployment rates and a low standard of living.

However, according to Battel, Ireland’s success should have come when it started its plan of being a modern country with an open economy in the 1950s by offering the public access to education, and laying the “foundations of the present economic success: a highly educated population” (98). Unfortunately, two major troubles caused damage to Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s. The first one was Ireland’s expenditure on the Catholic civil rights movement, and the second one was oil crises, along with the global economic recession. Ireland ended up with increased borrowing, and 20 percent of inflation (Battel 99). Ireland’s economy fell far behind Britain (Peet 2).

Then, in the 1980s, Ireland’s economic change came about rapidly. It experienced rapid growth due to foreign investment, especially in high-tech related industries. The old image of Ireland was revised. “That transformation has made the Irish republic, with just over 4m people, a place of great interest around the globe” (Peet 1). This economic miracle was “a combination of different factors and different times” (Peet 2). Ferriter states that the boom is attributed to a “political appetite of



change,” along with “the granting of increased EU aid,” the growing participation by the workforce, including women; moreover, many multinationals to “locate and invest in Ireland” (674). As Peet states,

Charles Haughey’s Fianna Fail government, crucially supported by the opposition Fine Gael, started to cut spending, taxes and borrowing. Falling interest rates helped to stimulate the economy, and so did a currency devaluation in 1993. The launch of the euro in 1999 gave Ireland, a founder member, the benefit of lower—perhaps unduly low—interest rates. (2)

Moreover, Ireland benefited from more open access by its entry into the European single market, which is more important than EU money (Peet 3). Also, more people worked in Ireland. Employment was raised 47 percent between 1986 and 2000 (Ferriter 674). The participation of the women workforce was higher than the average of the international standards (Peet 4). “Ireland has become a significant platform for U.S. high-tech companies competing in the European market” (Murphy 4). In 1989, “Intel, the leading manufacturer in the world of the microprocessor, the key component in personal computers, announced that they had chosen Ireland as the location for their new processor fabrication plant.” “The Celtic Tiger had arrived,” as Battel says (102). Now Ireland which had once been backward and traditional has become modern and globalized. Women’s position in Irish society also has changed during the economic prosperity. The Irish women “grew up expecting and demanding a life outside the home, wanting to be more than wives and mothers” (Kennedy 96). The Celtic Tiger delivers a chance for women to participate in the workforce. According to Kennedy, the overall level of female participation in the workforce “had risen from thirty-nine per cent in 1994 to over fifty per cent in 2002, equalling the EU average” (96).

Ireland's sudden economic boom is said not to be repeatable because the Irish miracle was attributed to the great foreign investment, and the use of that input (Peet 4). Ireland has the advantage to stay ahead among the EU members, but still faces problems like the state of some public services and "a dangerous obsession with property" (Peet 4). The boom materialized so quickly that Ireland suffered from high inflation and high property prices (especially in the Dublin area). When the euro was launched in 1999, the "short-term interest rates were cut sharply" (Peet 4). The low interest and speculative behavior may have added to cause a property bubble. Then, in the global financial crisis of 2008, Ireland experienced the burst of the property bubble and the Celtic Tiger died.

### ***The Forgotten Waltz***

This background of Irish society is vividly captured in *The Forgotten Waltz*. Everything seems possible during the Celtic Tiger years, and desires seemed to be no longer restrained. In the first part of the book, Gina enjoys her life during the last years of the Celtic Tiger boom. She buys a house with Conor, participates in people's parties, drinks in the parties, and has sex. Life seems great in these fancy activities, at least before the Celtic Tiger boom years end. Gina's family and friends are also indulging in the atmosphere of having fun, thinking they are having a good life, buying second houses, and selling for fortunes while foreign investments are pouring into Ireland. Gina's affair with Sean also happens in the first volume of the novel, when Gina sees Sean at her sister's party, just when Ireland is undergoing a booze-fueled materialistic time. As Ferriter states, "between 1989 and 1999 there was a 41 per cent increase in alcohol consumption in Ireland, whereas in ten other European countries it dropped;" moreover, according to Ferriter,

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, alcohol was an industry worth £5 billion annually [in Ireland], and alcohol accounted for 13 per cent of the average household expenditure, with alcoholism now as likely to affect women as men. (668)

With the ascending need for alcohol in all households, Gina's yearning for drinking wines mirrors the Celtic Tiger Boom, the mass consumption and globalized background. She seizes chances to take a sip in every celebrating occasion. For example, when she attends her sister's housewarming party, her sister remembers that she is her guest at that party and offers her some Chardonnay (Enright 6). Gina replies delightedly, "Yes, I'd love some, thanks," and states, "there I was, just back from three weeks in Australia and mad—just mad—into Chardonnay" (Enright 6).

Chardonnay, as a key trope in this novel, appears at critical circumstances. The story of Chardonnay provides the novel with a bigger landscape and subtext. Chardonnay is a kind of wine originated in Burgundy and Champagne regions but is now planted worldwide and it has been highly regarded for centuries (Bowers et al. 1562). It is a symbol of globalization and the thriving economy in Ireland because, as previously mentioned, Ireland's transformation has been facilitated by globalization and its close economic relationship with the United States and the European Union. Although Chardonnay originates from Burgundy, unlike other Old World wines, Chardonnay finds its way to "the New World in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when California was awakening to the possibilities of its own wine industry" (Sweet 20). New world wines refer to the wines that come from countries that used to be colonies, and are in hotter climates, which generally causes wines to have bolder fruit flavors; unlike the Old World wines' prevailing consideration of its origin branding. Then, Chardonnay has a multi-regional characteristic, for its flavor varies since the widespread popularity of

its international varietal. According to Nancy Sweet, Chardonnay has amazing adaptability in “multiple climates, soils, and winemaking styles;” thus, it reflects various fruit aromas and flavors from the winemaker as much as from the region (21). That is to say, New World wine embodies the winemakers’ entrepreneurial spirit that would be expected from the offspring of immigrants that struggle for a new and better life. The New World region’s winemaking is experimental, emphasizing new changes in the modern world instead of making it in the same, old, and traditional way. This noble Chardonnay grape of Burgundy experimented with its variety in the 1960s and increased planting by the wine industry after the blind wine tasting in 1976. Everything changed for Chardonnay since then. Despite Chardonnay’s reputation in France, the “unassuming siblings of the ancient French Chardonnay caused a shock wave in the wine world when a California Chardonnay, Chateau Montelena 1973, bested some of France’s most prestigious whites in a low key blind tasting in a Paris Hotel” (Sweet 21). Chardonnay, thus, becomes a new star in the wine world, not only because it takes the advantage of the modern technology in the old, historical-based wine-making process, but also because it characterizes the spirit of pursuit for a new good life.

Chardonnay’s globalized characteristic makes it a fitting choice for the many scenes of celebration and having fun in the novel when a lot of drinks are introduced; for example, Gina says that “[w]e worked like crazy and partied when we could” (Enright 18). The drinks, not only Chardonnay but also plenty of other kinds are associated with the Celtic Tiger Boom vibes. For instance, the first time when Gina mentions her love for Chardonnay is in her sister’s housewarming party in Enniskerry. The party radiates a festive, happy, and clamorous atmosphere. Like what Gina sees in Shay and Fiona’s party, “[t]hey have new neighbors in, and old pals, and me, with a

few cases of wine and barbecue” (Enright 6). Gina’s brother-in-law, Shay, in that party, wears an apron and is “cracking cans of beer, high in the air, with his free hand” (Enright 6). Shay’s comicality of gestures illustrates the unbridled and reckless atmosphere during the boom of Celtic Tiger years. The atmosphere is kind of overwhelming that they must have been drunk a bit because there is another mentioning that Shay is also “lifting an arm to crack a beer,” and Gina’s sister, Fiona has her “cheeks a hectic pink, her eyes suddenly wet from the sheer la-la-lah of pouring wine and laughing gaily and being a beautiful mother forward slash hostess in her beautiful new house” (Enright 8). Everything that happens in this volume is a representation of people’s anticipations of a better new life, an attitude to be a *bon vivant* no matter what they do.

Gina and Conor’s purchase of the house is another good example. The first part of the novel describes the parties in a row. After Fiona’s party, there is the wedding party of Gina and her old true love, Conor, and their own small housewarming party. They choose a house that costs higher than their budget. They need the money and live in a small house, but they decide to “take out a couple of car loans and get married on the money instead” (Enright 15). When Gina buys a three-hundred-grand worth townhouse and moves in with Conor in Clonskeagh, she celebrates with a bottle of “one-hundred-and twenty euros worth” Krug (Enright 14). “Krug, no less,” “[i]t was nice” (Enright 14). There are lots of people coming to celebrate. Like the party in Fiona’s, this one is festive but more boisterous. As Gina describes,

About seven hundred of Conor’s cousins came up from Youghal. I’d never seen anything like it: the way they stood their rounds of drink, fixed their little hats in the mirrors, and checked the weight of the hotel cutlery when they picked it up to eat. They treated the day like a professional

engagement, and danced until three. Conor said it might as well be your funeral; he said they hunt in packs. And my mother—who had, it turned out, ‘always been saving for this day’—led a seasoned troupe of the Dublin middle classes, many of them old, all of them entirely happy, as they chatted and sat and sipped their peculiar drinks, Campari, whiskey and red, Harvey’s Bristol Cream. We were just the excuse. We knew it, as we went upstairs to change out of our duds and ride each other rotten against the back of the bedroom door. We were beside the point. Free. (Enright 15-16)

It is apparent that the Celtic Tiger boom years bring an affluent amount of alcohol, and the atmosphere of celebrating keeps going on, constructed by Gina’s description of the scene. In every festive occasion, it forms a picture of a thriving and happy future, and the most important, it reflects the changing values of people in Ireland, for they are trying to get rid of the past, thinking only of the present and embracing the desire in the upcoming prosperous, cosmopolitan future by getting drunk, and most importantly, by seizing the day to have fun. In Sean’s housewarming party, Sean swings past Gina with a bottle of white wine, and when finding that Gina has not been drunk in the party, he shouts, “[w]ell, why the hell not?” and “slopped some more” into Gina’s glasses (Enright 89).

If it has not been for the Celtic Tiger boom years, they, the friends from Gina’s mother’s side, would not have had the chance to afford such a variety of wines from France to celebrate Gina’s wedding. Conor’s family, whose father owns a pub, also celebrates Christmas with cases of French wine and “bottles of Heidsieck or Rémy Martin” to “[keep] themselves separate from the ordinary drunks” (Enright 70). Moreover, this attitude to swim with the tide to anticipate for the bright future is reflected in the decision by Gina and Conor, who work in technology-related

industries, to buy such an expensive house worth three-hundred-grand, “we woke up back in Clonskeagh one morning; hungover, giddy and unafraid,” nothing seems to be wrong at that time for them (Enright 18). When Gina and Sean are going on a business trip abroad, they also seize the chance to drink while spending time with their colleagues; for instance, they have a “drinking competition” during that Conference trip on Wednesday, and Gina is “polishing off the mini-bar,” it is also in that trip that Gina drinks too much “Alsace Riesling” and sleeps with Sean (Enright 31). The Celtic Tiger boom years are so fascinating, “[t]he next year, the next two years, I was as happy as I have ever been,” as Gina says. People would like to lead a convivial and sensual life. After she later moves to Clonskeagh with Conor, she calls them “the Sauvignon Blanc<sup>1</sup> years” as a memorial of those fresh and evocative times (Enright 18).

These scenes reflect the economic implosion in Ireland. Gina loves drinking during the Celtic Tiger boom years, and she loves watching people drink, judging the way they enjoy their lives with drinks. In *The Forgotten Waltz*, the drinks being held on Gina’s hand matches her uninhibited yearning for pleasure. With the globalization and the second houses the characters have purchased, her sister and her brother-in-law make so much money during the boom years that they even want to buy a house abroad, Fiona said, “Shay, it turned out, was thinking about a proper summer house near Gorey, or they might look on the Continent, probably France” after sunbathing too much and having too much wine as if Ireland is not enough for them (Enright 21). Also, to take Aileen’s house-hunting as an example, as the speaker describes,

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<sup>1</sup> The Sauvignon Blanc is also one of the most popular white wines in the world. It is known for its high level of acidity, and low amount of sugar with great minerality, aromas and taste of herbs. It originates in the Bordeaux region and is believed that the name *Sauvignon* in Sauvignon Blanc is referred to the French word *sauvage* which means *wild*, the grapes grow wildly like weed in the region. However, Sauvignon travels around the world and finds its champion in New Zealand.

she was actually telling me her schedule. She was spelling it out for me: my husband is free every second (or third) Friday, but on Saturday he gets in the car and follows me down to the country where we light a fire, and drink a bottle of red, and look, *from on high*, at the lovely, ever-changing sea.

(Enright 81)

The activity of hunting houses on Friday afternoons is dreamlike for Gina, in a “high” landscape over the “lovely, ever-changing sea” (Enright 81). It is a description of Gina’s ascending yearnings of the good life while listening to Aileen’s life with Sean. This quotation not only hints the bourgeoisie are seeking ideal houses beside the seas in order to make profits in the future during the ascending prosperity of Celtic Tiger years but also implies that Gina’s desire has expanded with the glasses of wines and there is also a hint of Gina’s jealousy of Aileen’s life with Sean. This yearning seems to roll in a never-ending way, like in that party, “everyone with a last drink who was thinking about another drink,” symbolizes Gina’s yearning for a free and wealthy good life, as well as for other people in the party, which seems never-ending (Enright 91)

In my absence, the party has shifted up a gear. You can never catch the moment when it happens, but it always does: that split second when awkwardness flowers into intimacy. This is my favourite time. Those who were drinking had drunk too much, and the ones who were driving had ceased to matter. I got another white one and floated through the room on a beautiful sea of noise... (Enright 72)

With Sean and Aileen’s purchase of the house, we can see that Sean is placed in a luxurious background. He is a manager in Gina’s company and is built up with a feature of optimism. He is, thus, described by Gina as associated with a voluptuous



and sensual life that Gina has longed for years against the ordinary life, Conor has brought to her. Gina's opinion toward Conor after marriage is not positive, "[e]verything was slightly too much, with Conor," and she ends up "not believing a single thing he did; thinking it was all gesture and expostulation, it was all air" (Enright 18). Then, Sean becomes the desired image constructed at the beginning of the novel. The arrangement of Sean and Gina's first encounter forms uniquely, making Gina believe that it is a meant-to-be. It happens at Fiona's housewarming party in Enniskerry and is described romantically so it seems that their love affair is her fate. In that scene, Gina's sense is uncertain and her first sight of Sean, spoken in a romantic tone, "takes place at the beginning of my first exhalation: his body; the figure he makes against the view, made hazy by the smoke of a long-delayed Marlboro Light," and Gina says, as this followed up affair is meant to be, "[h]e is about to turn around, but he does not know this yet" (Enright 9). The scene seems unreal and far-fetched; however, the word *turn* foreshadows Gina's turning point of life.

Gina has married Conor and they have bought a house in Clonskeagh, for they think "it just made sense" to do so, thinking it may be the best way to materialize their love and their marriage, and celebrate it with the expensive Krug (Enright 14). However, at the same time, Gina says she is in love with Sean, but their affair seems unreal, and more like an impulsive bodily pursuit that is embodied in bottles of drinks. Their first sex happens during the conference trip to Montreux. It seems inevitable. There is a lot of "Alsace Riesling involved," and Sean is there to talk about "The Culture of Money" (Enright 32). Gina is so attracted to Sean's glamorous and positive feature, and she ends up recalling their first time in patches, "[w]e went upstairs to have sex. And it seemed like a great idea at the time. I was, besides, so drunk"

(Enright 34). After that, many of Gina and Sean's lustful rendezvous are arranged, by short and instant texts, in splendid hotels. Gina regards her affair with Sean as a game she participates in, "[t]he sex was, around this time, a little too interesting, even for me" (Enright 48). "It was a lot of fun," as Gina says,

The office game was another game for us to play, after the suburban couples game, and before the game of hotel assignations and fabulous, illicit lust, and neither of us thought there might come a moment when all the games would stop. (Enright 52)

By describing their love affair as a game, the criteria of morality turn out to be fluid during the years of globalization. Gina is frenetic about Sean because of the way he interacts with her—in their dates, they order dessert wine and also talk endlessly about wine; and he provides wine at a party and the way he persuades Gina to drink—matches Gina's vision for living a good life.

Gina does not regret falling in love with Sean, and it becomes something she would like to live by, for she has described her desire for Sean as "beautiful" and calls it a "sweetness of [her] want for Sean Vallely" (Enright 55). Their love affair, the erotic sex, or so-called games, and her carnal indulgence mirrors the reckless enjoyment and consumption of the Celtic Tiger boom years.

During the Celtic Tiger boom years, people embrace the intoxicating atmosphere and the indulgent, consumeristic life. In the first two volumes of the novel, before Sean and his daughter move in Gina's mother's house, Enright depicts Gina as a woman who has repelled the ideal image of a traditional "state-sanctioned" woman, who is expected to "contribute to the common good solely in their domestic capacity" as mothers (Huang 62). In Enright's writing, Gina has disengaged herself from such a stereotype, following a new image of a woman who embraces her desire towards

foods, drinks, and sexual pleasure. She wavers from the image of traditional wives in the first volume of the novel and finds it “unbearable” and uncontrollable, not only for their mood but also for the bodies, which are both oscillating in extremes (Enright 111). First, Gina finds pregnancy unbearable through interacting with a pregnant drunk wife, and she even spitefully makes up her name: “I don’t know what she was like most of the time—Dahlia, or Delia, or Delilah—but at thirty-eight weeks’ pregnant, she was as slow and hysterical as a turnip in a nervous breakdown;” she also asks Gina the reason why her husband is talking to the woman she does not know (Enright 83). Second, Gina’s mother, although Gina says she is such a beauty, says that her “pleasures [are] too deep” and that her mother needs to “manage them constantly” to keep herself from “fright” and “fine” (Enright 39). Then, as to Aileen, Sean’s wife, Evie’s mother, she is described by Gina to be “dull when dresses, so elegant and boyish in the nip” (Enright 26). Yet, Gina finds that Aileen’s thinness was not fitness, “it was just busy” when Gina sees her taking care of Evie. Gina also observes that “how [Aileen] might walk at speed, but she took no pleasure in it” (Enright 27). Other than that, Gina thinks that Fiona’s pregnancy feels “so wrong” in shape with her sister’s small pelvis, thinking maybe Gina herself could be a mother as well since she has outgrown her sister since eleven (Enright 115). For Conor, Gina thinks that he is “fucking [her] entire life,” after realizing her marriage with him could be a dead-end to her if she is going to be a mother, she will be confined to domestic life (Enright 48). For instance, as they spend their Christmas with Conor’s family, she complains about his “regression,” for Conor likes to be a boy again at home, and “leav[es] the kitchen work to the women,” “it never cease[s] to astonish me,” as Gina says (Enright 71). It is like she has no power over those established images of women who are mothers or mothers-to-be. The mothers are, in Gina’s point of view, meeting

their foremost in life, the end of the game.

Regarding her hesitation of marrying Conor back then, it is at the time when money is not a problem and her contraception prevents her from the “yoke” (Enright 16). Thus, at Conor’s childhood home, Gina tries to claim Conor back in bed so she will feel more like a player in life. Drinking is a way for Gina to stay in the game, “before the drinking got too humorless and steady,” to illustrate her sexuality (Enright 71). Sex also seems not enjoyable with Conor. For Gina, getting pregnant is something that “not about [her],” even they “have a lot of sex,” and from this point, Gina thinks that Conor is destroying her between the bedsheets (Enright 145). On the contrary, Sean seems to provide a guarantee to her ideal life, because he “likes to use a johnny *anyway*” (Enright 147). For Gina, being a mother, or a mother-to-be is a representation of insulating to lead a good life, potential confinement for her constant obsession of pleasure.

Gina’s thought of not being a mother relies on the best years of the Celtic tiger, meaning being free and unbridled is her way of life until Joan, her mother’s death. The narrative in the novel after Joan’s death also declares the death of the Celtic Tiger. And this arrangement fails the previous attempt, as mentioned, that Gina’s sex life is a form of desire to live a cosmopolitan future life because Celtic Tiger is facing its recession.

2007 was the year when Joan dies, echoing the year when Celtic Tiger comes to its end when the real estate bubble burst. The housing is one of the significant factors for the outstanding growth of the Celtic Tiger Boom. With Irish people’s obsession with property, in the first part of the novel, it is a succession of house warming parties since people are making investments in their second houses. Ireland’s low-interest rates and residential mortgage expansion stimulated the trend of buying houses. Not

to mention that foreign investments are pouring in Ireland to solve the problem of unemployment and that people are willing to take part in the financial market liberalization. People are buying houses to let, according to Malzubris, it is because of the behavior of speculation on house price so the price of the houses is overvalued (5). Facing the Global Recession, Ireland becomes the first martyr due to its policy of mortgage expansion. Before the Irish government finds out a way to balance the market, people in Ireland can do nothing but to accept reality.

In the parallel storyline, May 2007 is the year when Gina finds out that her mother is not as healthy as Gina thought before. Before knowing her mother is dying, Gina is still having a bit of drinking time on that Saturday, “I might easily have had a few glasses of wine. I was, in fact, sober—I must have been on diet—and for this I was grateful” (Enright 114). Gina’s behavior either of drinking or being drunk is a representation of good life; however, this time the death of her mother leads to her reduction of alcohol consumption. At the same time, Gina also realizes that she has more emotional attachment toward her love, Sean. However, when their love affair is discovered by Fiona, and she moves out from Clonskeagh, she realizes that their love is not materialized anymore, along with her dream of living a good life. She tries to sell her mother’s house but the market has not been interested in it, and she ended up moving in Joan’s old residence,

The house in Terenure had been on the market four months already, and a flood of people had been through the place, opening cupboards, pulling up the corners of carpets, sniffing the air. (Enright 181)

Moving into her mother’s old residence represents Gina’s growth of being a hostess of her mother’s house and a realization that she cannot afford Clonskeagh since the economic recession. Yet, the moments of knowing that the house has been mocking

for its selling price on the market reveals the follies she did during the boom years, including her purchase of an overbudget house and her blindness of loving Sean. She realizes that what she has expected for years fails her. For the days staying at her mother's residence, she waits for Sean's sudden show-ups and wishes he will move in to live with her. However, what he can do is secretly offering her "a bunch of roses and a slender half bottle of Canadian ice-wine," which moves Gina in that lonely Christmas. "I ended up drinking the lot of it, following the last sweet drops with a skull-splitting dose of whiskey," as Gina says (Enright 182). Wine becomes an image of a tinge of warmth that Sean can offer during that Christmas. Although at the end of volume II, Gina does not drink wine anymore, she still feels grateful for Sean's offer to let her have a moment of warmth. She knows that her affair, what once she thought was her *turning-point* of life, was not right. After that glass of whiskey, she says, "[n]one of it was right—the perfect drink doesn't exist, but it is never, somehow, the one you have in your hand" (Enright 182).

On that lonely Christmas day, Gina becomes more grateful for her sister, Fiona, and even more grateful for Evie, Sean's daughter after they eventually move in. Gina learns to take care of her as attentive as Aileen did back then, "if it had not been for Evie, we would not be here" (Enright 212). With the recession of the global economy and the Irish economy also shrinks into a localized state. Gina's life seems more gathered up when she is epitomized that Sean may have been having an affair with other girls. Ever since Evie moves in, although they open up the closed doors at home, Gina does not feel that confined but feels more satisfied with what she does to take care of Evie and be fearful of Evie's old health problem might cause any trouble. Evie is Gina's savior, for she becomes more like an adult in her childhood home. Evie makes Gina think of her childhood, but Evie, as a teenager, is a symbol for future

Ireland now. Not wanting Evie to feel confined at home, Gina's tries to treat her nicely, picking her up after school and take her shopping. Gina still thinks of taking Evie to a drink as a good idea, "I feel like taking her drinking. I feel like telling her to get out now, while the going is good. Not bother growing up," but she does not do it (Enright 220). Evie's moving in represents Gina's anticipation of the future and the present. When reminiscing the past, she does not regret, "we weren't wrong to hope, myself and Conor, back in our Australian days. And I am not wrong to hope, now: to hold on to Sean, and love him, and to try to love his daughter" (Enright 220). Yet, Gina herself has realized that this good life which Chardonnay represents, although not false, is somehow insufficient. Moreover, Gina also realizes that establishing female bond with Evie and taking the responsibility in her life is more important. So, Gina, at the last part of the novel, tries to be a stepmother and tries to get along with Evie. Their times at the makeup shops and their talks at the coffee shop offer Gina another source of happiness different from sexual pleasure. Gina's life becomes more solid because of the child, Evie. For Gina, her sexual bond with Sean is not as important as her bond with Evie at the end of the novel. With Evie as companion, the girls' bond is where the forgotten waltz is found.





### Chapter Three: Female Bodily Desire

In the previous chapter, I have discussed Chardonnay with its subtextual meaning of providing *The Forgotten Waltz* with a broader landscape of globalization and economic success in Ireland. During the Celtic Tiger years, people's impression of Ireland has been utterly transformed, which means that Ireland has turned over a new leaf to a more urban and cosmopolitan place, and has got rid of its image as one of the poorest countries in Europe. Everything seems surreal and magical because the Celtic Tiger years mark a dramatic and unexpected transformation in Ireland's fortunes. Such openness to the world allows people who live in Ireland to have a chance to take advantage of an increasingly flamboyant lifestyle and to pay less attention to the past.

However, Battel suggests that Ireland's transition to success is not flawless because "Irish society had recently been portrayed, abroad as well as at home, as harsh, uncaring, violent, selfish, lacking in moral values" (104). Enright has also touched upon this while portraying Gina's love affair with Sean Valley in *The Forgotten Waltz*. In this novel, along with her consistent concern for society, Enright also portrays her concern for women, whose voice is usually silenced, through Gina's feelings towards her own body and other people's bodies. In this way, Enright casts out an imagined scenario of how people deal with the growth and downturn of the Celtic Tiger years, how they have desired of the fruitful outcome of this economic

growth, and how there are hidden worries under this development. Enright, thus, applies Gina's life story and her bodily desire, including her love for food, her love for drinks (especially Chardonnay), and her sexual pleasure, to investigate people's reaction by enhancing the role of women and their increasing importance in the public space against the social background of globalization. Then, the love story of Gina will constitute a glimpse of Enright's view of female desire.

Thus, in this chapter, I would like to explore another aspect regarding Chardonnay as a representation of female bodily desire and sexual pleasure, because Gina is represented as a woman who cannot resist her desire for food and wine. Gina also says that she is fat, but the more interesting daughter in her family. Her desire for food, drinks and sexual pleasure motivates her unbridled lifestyle. However, her love of wine and Chardonnay is not because of its smell and taste, but the action of drinking Chardonnay is more of a mental activity that directs Gina's desire and establishes Gina's taste. It is a way for her to express herself. In this sense, Chardonnay as the material object articulates and constructs Gina's selfhood and her mental and physical being.

In the previous chapter, we have discussed the openness in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger years, when the drinks in people's hands displayed the impact of globalization. In this chapter, we should focus on how Chardonnay speaks for women's bodily desire and how it is a way to explain how women contact with the world. For me, Gina fails to do so at the beginning of the novel. Since she just came back from Australia, "jet lag" hits her badly when she was in her sister's housewarming party. Her jet lag makes her come to a state of alienation. When she is at her sister's housewarming party, she is almost a nobody until her sister remembers that she is a guest and offers her some Chardonnay (Enright 6). I use the word *nobody*

because she seems weightless in this circumstance. At the party, she keeps a distance from others and is almost ignored. She only feels happy when receiving the glass of Chardonnay which is “the size of a swimming pool” from her sister (Enright 6). This implies that Gina’s sister, Fiona, provides the desired image of a good and wealthy life for Gina, but Gina’s desire of exploring the world can only be embodied in that glass filled with Chardonnay, oversized. That glass of Chardonnay heralds a new life and new self for Gina. Gina’s desire, at the beginning of the book, is more interior and concealed until she has a drink in her mind, which is not only offered in an exaggerated amount but at the same time, symbolized a fluidity of Gina’s desire. For example, her later reminiscing of her holidays flows overseas to Australia. Describing what she has seen during her trip to Australia, Gina says:

I remember the guys you see along Sydney Harbour-front at lunchtime, and endless line of them; running men, tanned and fit; men you could turn around and follow without knowing that you were following them, the same way you might pick up a goddamn Rice Krispie cake and not know that you were eating it, until you spotted the marshmallow on the top. (Enright 8)

Her happiness is specifically attached to her fascinating experience of having that trip to Australia. In this quote, Enright combines Gina’s bodily desire by describing different bodies of men that she could not help but follow wherever they are heading to. Sexy men and food are equated with each other, and the chocolate Krispie cakes she consumes represents that although Gina’s desire is expanded boundless at the moment but is still connected to the present, representing her bodily desire. But perhaps her desire is hard to be noticed, even by herself. The “chocolate Rice Krispie cakes” is the only thing Gina remembers at the party. Her desire for a good life is not visible for the others and only happens in her. Watching her sister’s life while

drinking and eating, Gina projects her unspeakable desire to Chardonnay and the chocolate Krispie cake at the party and links them to her happy time in Australia, making her think that her sister's life is what she needs at the moment.

Gina's dissatisfaction with her life parallels her perception towards her own body, letting her notice what she lacks in her life, and how ordinary she could be. Gina describes her sister, Fiona, as "a sort of dream" and criticizes her own physical appearance as "[t]he fat one," in comparison to her sister and Sean's wife, Aileen (Enright 28). These perceptions of her own body are elements of the construction of her identity (Krebber 115). Such judgments reveal that Gina certainly does not feel well of her body shape to meet the internalized social norm reflected by the others' gaze, especially Sean, "I felt like the nightmare. It must have been the way he looked at me," as Gina says (Enright 28). During the economic growth, people are prone to attain a good life, which constructs as a fashion too fascinating to resist. And Sean, who is portrayed as the desired image for Gina, is one of the people who already swims with the rising economic tide. His image echoes Gina's happiness of her bodily desire, "being pushed and loved by all that weight of water," responsive to and triggered by the interaction with the outside world (Enright 27). Since women are mostly defined by their body and appearance, a woman who does not engage in her femininity, as Bartky suggests, simply ceases to "exist to the outside world (qtd. in Krebber 117). Sean's evaluation of her body surely influences Gina's perception of herself. Therefore, when she internalizes his judgment, dissatisfaction is her reaction, as she says, "I was caught by the beauty of his eyes, which were larger than a man's eyes should be and more easily hurt" (Enright 29). "Beauty," in my opinion, refers to an un-named and romantic complex that propels Gina's desire, but Gina knows that her body fails to meet social norms. Since the wines are interpreted in the previous

chapter as registering openness and globalization, drinking wine becomes Gina's expression of her desire to be a part of the world of the good life. Gina is always longing for more, revealing the general female desire for reaching the exterior to feel better about herself and create a positive impression for Sean.

Women's limitation of expressing themselves has been lifted by drinking and eating in the novel; at least for Gina, her affair with Sean shows her moral boundaries have become ambiguous. Their affair does not start that sunny afternoon at the seashore, but from their first sex during their conference trip abroad. Their first sex also happens on the trip with a lot of "Alsace Riesling involved," as Gina describes (Enright 31). If we link a person's bodily desire with alcohol, it is presumed that men should have more desire since they are portrayed to participate in more drinking activities. As Gina recalls, "drinking on the last couple of nights, until 4 a.m. Most of them, I might also mention, were men" (Enright 32). However, for Enright, the bodily desire of both men and women does not differ much. To take Sean and Gina's affair as an example, Gina also participates in activities, almost all of which are alcohol-involved. She tells the readers that she had some opportunities to get "wild" with "large amounts of drinking to get through," such as the drinking competition and how she knocked one of the ladies off by drinking the first round, and how she polished off the mini-bar with one of the people from Northern Ireland and Sean (Enright 25). Her bodily desire can be as strong as the opposite sex's. Sex, for Gina, is her appropriation of the self through the body to expand the world.

Chardonnay not only symbolizes the fluidity of Gina's desire but also an element of diversity in Gina's character. First of all, in the previous chapter, I have mentioned about Chardonnay's globalized characteristic. For Gina, loving Chardonnay, along with a chance to taste a variety of foreign wines, reminds her of

her dissatisfaction with the status quo under such festive and prosperous social background. Thus, Chardonnay's characteristic also provides a possibility for readers to understand the richness of female bodily desire which is formed by Gina's self-expression and fantasies. Chardonnay's diverse appeal makes it so popular to a wide range of wine drinkers. Chardonnay is typically described as fat and loaded with richness in flavor, depending on the techniques of the producers, including their creativity and the amount of time they oak the wine to make the flavors swing from tropical fruit flavors to a buttery character. Oak can produce more flavors to the wine, making it more complex and creamier. Gina's characteristic also desires for this diversity and openness. For example, although Gina regards herself as "fat" among the women she knows, she behaves like a more interesting woman to represent a diversity of womanhood (Enright 28). Compared with Gina's enjoyment to play with the water at the seashore, Aileen's thinness gives her a sense of dullness (Enright 26). Gina also learned that such a woman who always fits the social norm could be that unhappy. Aileen's thinness is not fit. Gina learned later, "it was just busy;" even when she walks, "she took no pleasure in it" (Enright 27). The body shape now seems less important than her desire for something more exciting. No matter what particular brand of Chardonnay Gina had tasted in Australia, Chardonnay's diverse and globalized feature allows Gina to have another chance to face and recognize her "beautiful desire" inside (Enright 55). Besides, Chardonnay's surprising flavor also aligns with Gina's desire of seeking excitements.

"[Conor] is my idea of fun," as Gina says in 2002 when she comes back from Australia with him before they are married, for they both enjoy eating and drinking and their sexual pleasure (Enright 11). Yet Gina feels like she is "in a damn box" when describing her marriage (Enright 73). Gina seems regretful of her marriage not

because she does not love Conor, but because their marriage life rests on the “mortgage love” (Enright 15). They are so certain of the future during the economic success in Ireland. Yet, their love, along with the responsibility in women’s assumed role defeats Gina’s happiness in their relationship and blocks Gina’s fluidity of desire.

Conor is accustomed to the formed system in his family so he regresses to be a boy every time he is home and leaves the chores to women. It is not hard to imagine Gina’s tiresome strives when she does not want to be confined in the traditional role of wife. Her drinking, thus, becomes a representation of her struggle when she tries to reclaim Conor in bed before drinking gets “too humourless and steady” (Enright 71).

When Gina is with Conor, her unwillingness of entering motherhood is obvious because motherhood will make it harder to express herself. If she becomes a mother to Conor’s child, food and drinks will not be enough since, besides drinking, which is also associated with luscious mouthfeel, Gina’s desire is also represented in her pleasure of eating food. Like Gina once tries to escape from the pregnant woman at the party, she brings her a plate filled with foods, “quiche, poached salmon, green salad, potato salad with roasted hazelnuts, a grated celeriac thing; also a few cuts of some bird, with sausage stuffing and some clovey, Christmassy, red cabbage” (Enright 83). Gina is pitiful for the woman who cannot fully release her desire because when eating, the woman’s belly is always in her way. What she can do is “twisted the less pregnant part of herself around to [the plate], leaving the more pregnant part behind” (Enright 84). Gina would not want to put herself into this situation. In Aileen’s case as well, who appears to be a woman who fits the social norm, the way she talks elegantly and irresistibly, all makes Gina feel rebellious. Differing from Gina’s love for Chardonnay, Champagne, the particular drink that Aileen loves, also establishes Aileen’s untouchable and high-positioned status. But after knowing the accident of

her daughter, when Evie falls off from the swing and is diagnosed “as suffering from benign rolandic epilepsy of childhood (BREC),” Aileen loses the competence of her perfect life (Enright 200). She becomes a languished mother who runs around to find a good doctor for Evie. Such suffering makes Aileen fretful and uncertain about the future and has to “rat-[arse]” on Champagne (Enright 192).

Gina’s affair with Sean makes more sense when Gina is seen as a woman who seeks an escape to retrieve her selfhood. But she does that in an indirect way that is not aggressive. For example, once Gina buys Sean a bag of lychees, which she “has never tasted” fresh before, from a local vegetable shop, which sells “Christmas satsumas, green figs, pomegranates” (Enright 67). She describes the appearance of the lychees,

The skin was like bark; so thick you could hear it tear. Under it was the dark white of the fruit; smooth as a boiled egg and more slippery, and in the middle of this grey, scented flesh was a deep red pip, surrounded by its own pink stain. (Enright 67)

This quotation mirrors Gina’s selfhood mentally and physically, as she chooses a fruit relatively unattractive in appearance but contains interesting pulp inside. It is not about the taste of the lychees, but the lychees are regarded as Gina’s self-expression: “what is under the skin, stays under the skin” (Enright 68). She considers her enjoyment of eating and drinking as her expression of her desire. She always has a good appetite and feels a bit sorry for it, but Sean allows her desires to flow despite his dislike of chewing and swallowing. As she describes, “I could eat for Ireland, so I always felt a bit lonely after our lunch dates; not just greedy, but also thwarted or rejected as if the food was all my fault,” and when he finishes his dish, he would “look up at my still-chewing mouth” (Enright 57). When Sean orders dessert wine to



culminate their dates, their affair becomes a little “too interesting” for Gina (Enright 48). It is like opening Gina’s intrinsic desire and it meets the “external approval,” making Gina feels good about it (Krebber 129). Also, Sean’s “restaurant palaver”—“the choice of table, the crack of the napkin, endless discussion about the wine” is only an addition to the fun (Enright 56-7). Such fun is nowhere to be found in her relationship with Conor. Thus, Anne Enright has offered her perception of female bodily desire to parallel Gina’s spiritual feelings and pleasure. The drinks and wines are not used to reflect Gina’s ideal spiritual feelings, but Gina’s self is expressed when using those material objects.

Although Gina’s consumptions of drinks and foods are condensed as a representation of her selfhood, in the second volume of the novel, there is a significant change in Gina which is immediately triggered by her mother’s death. The following quotation is Gina’s reaction on the night when Joan died:

I cracked open a Loire white, and drink it at speed, and I felt two things. The first thing I felt was nothing at all. The other thing I felt was an emotion so fake and slick I wanted rid of it. It was such a lie. (Enright 133)

Facing the downturn of her life, Gina could not possibly gather herself up as she pauses to “apologize to the wine when it slopped out of the glass” (Enright 133). Enright shows Gina’s solitude and sense of prevailing emptiness. Gina reflects on herself and finds her Chardonnay days are no longer enough. Joan’s death is not the only reason for Gina’s change; another layer relates to the economic crisis in 2008 when the Celtic Tiger ended with the bursting of housing bubbles. Those changes in Ireland make Gina’s days of pursuing a good life absurd. These two reasons for Gina’s change interconnect with each other, urging her to confront the sober reality.

Evie symbolizes the rebuilt moral boundaries and Gina’s chance to explore

another meaning of the new world. Although Evie has grown out of seizures and is no longer a child, after Evie moves in with Gina, it becomes Gina's new definition of new life. In this chapter, Gina finds Evie an interesting child not only because she is "always on the mooch," but also because Evie loves to follow the walls with her finger as if she is "testing the edges of her world," which mirrors Gina's behavior back before the collapse of the economic crisis (Enright 208-9). Gina is facing the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger, but her life has become more solid. Compared to her Chardonnay days, everything has slowed down when Evie is around (Enright 214). When Gina takes Evie to a coffee shop and Evie chooses on a cup of hot chocolate, they also have a good conversation, talking about their lives like friends. Evie is now a twelve-year-old girl who has grown out of seizures and her health reflects on Gina's responsibility of sorting out her future.

To sum up, drinks and foods not only establish Gina's selfhood, but also help to construct other characters'. Her obsession with drinking is aligned with her imagination of a good life. Chardonnay and other wine offer Gina fluidity of her imagination and outstretch to the imagined world. Her sexual pleasure—along with her pleasure of drinking and eating foods—is another way for her to establish selfhood. However, Joan's death, which coincides with the failure of the Celtic Tiger, triggers Gina to face a new reality and a new need to change her life. Evie's character enlightens Gina to turn over a new leaf in her pursuit of selfhood and to include responsibility in her life. When Gina goes to the coffee shop with Evie, she pays for Evie's order for the hot chocolate. Hot chocolate not only represents a sense of warmth and love, and a drink suitable for children and teenagers, but also stands for Gina's sense of responsibility to care for others and think about others' needs, not just her own. Gina and Evie's female bond is outside the structure of conventional

patriarchal marriage.





## Chapter Four

Anne Enright's works usually encompass her concerns about Irish society, the themes of family life and women. *The Forgotten Waltz* opens up its concerns of Irish women to a universal level, speculating on women's self-expression and desires.

*The Forgotten Waltz* opens in 2002, the Celtic Tiger Ireland before the economic crash in 2008. Ireland, as a peripheral country in Western Europe, joined the European Union in 1973 and the economy and society have progressed and reached a higher standard of living. This led to social change and the rise of consumer culture. The dramatic economic change opens up a way for Enright to take on the task of making the trivial subject (a foolish woman who is in love) into an important work.

This story, to sum up, is a book about Gina's love affair with Sean. It would be facile to make the economic downturn a metaphor for Gina's love affair. Instead, the setting of the story touches on the universal question of womanhood and desire. In *The Forgotten Waltz*, Enright has depicted people who live in Ireland, enjoy the prosperity of Celtic Tiger Boom, and try to get rid of the past. People, who drink and party a lot, are certain of the present and looking forward to the cosmopolitan future. Gina has taken advantage of the economic boom to have a trip abroad and pick up and continues to drink Chardonnay, which makes her think of the happy visit in Australia.

Chardonnay makes Gina's character culturally specific and Gina becomes a self-involved material girl that the Celtic Tiger has produced. The key trope of Chardonnay hints at the transformation of Ireland from its poor and agricultural image into a more modern and cosmopolitan country. This French wine, which is originated

in Burgundy, represents a New World wine with multiple characteristics. Its regional differences rely on its winemaker's creativity. Chardonnay rises as a new start after a California 1973 Chardonnay defeats the most esteemed French wine in a blind wine tasting in 1976, mirroring Ireland's place as a rising star in peripheral Europe during the Celtic Tiger years.

Although in *The Forgotten Waltz* is Gina's love story, with the action of drinking Chardonnay, and along with other people's consumption of other foreign beverages, it is a story about modernity and globalization in Ireland. On the other hand, the characters' alcohol consumption indicates their pursuit of the good life. The increasing affordability and accessibility of foreign wines is evidence of the economic growth and the changes in people's lifestyle.

However, *The Forgotten Waltz* is not about a rising economic tide that lifts all boats. It is also not merely a love story of a bourgeois woman pursuing riches. Instead, Enright has provided another layer of the meaning of Chardonnay—a representation of female bodily desire and a way of establishing taste. It diversifies the answers to women's social challenges by giving Gina, this bold, clever, sexy, and independent woman a free reign to her self-expression. Drinking Chardonnay is an exhibition of her style, herself, and a presence she can possess. Also, her love for food and sexual pleasure are linked to her mental activity. Her psychology changes are responsive, including the invisible social norm Sean creates. Because of Sean's image of a desirable image for Gina, she feels dissatisfied with her own body. Drinking alcohol becomes a behavior of expressing her desire, and her desire thus given to fluidity. Her character is no longer passive but is actively-recognized. Her love affair becomes her indictment of the dominant norm for women.

Chardonnay also represents disillusionment and melancholy. From the second

volume of the novel, there is a significant change in Gina which is triggered by Joan's death. After Ireland's great property crash in 2008, Joan died, Sean and his daughter move into Joan's old residence. The bubble has vanished and Gina accepts the consequence of her affair with Sean. The cost of adultery is not to be ashamed but in their property sales. What has left after the passion of the affair? Gina is unrepented for her pursuit of love even when she finds it deceitful. Their love coincides with the shrinking of the global economy and turns into a localized scale. *The Forgotten Waltz* thus highlights Gina and Evie's domestic life in the third volume. When Sean moves in, in the old stereotypical concept, although Gina is always a representation of a woman of the new era, she is like stepping into the second marriage, the duplicated loneliness like her first marriage, but is different because of her new bond with Evie. The behavior of not drinking can be interpreted as waking up after the discovery of their affair. In this new chapter of their lives, the family re-arranged. Although the boundaries of the female character reoccur in comparison to the economic boom years, Gina and Evie both step into the future with their newly established selves.





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