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To my parents

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1. Introduction

With its extraordinary picturesque landscape and a nostalgic immigrant culture, Ireland has been considered the ideal location for producing movies. Beyond the romantic landscape, Ireland's mythologised history proved to be an enduring market for American production companies. As Mulkerns points out, the problem with the Irish-American tradition had been that Ireland had become idealised up to the point "that 'Hollywood Irish' became a genre of its own, displaying a mostly romantic, revisionist view of Ireland's past, with the little relation to the identity or reality of Irish people in the twentieth century" (50). Feisty red-haired colleens, romanticised freedom fighters or priests as the spiritual leaders of the rural town became stereotypical characters in repetitive plots. The most prominent example of a Hollywood Irish production is John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952) with John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara in the leading roles. The story about an American boxer returning to his Irish hometown has dominated cinematic representations of Ireland for the last decades both as a reference point for imitation and for deconstructing counter depictions. Apart from *The Quiet Man*, Robert Flaherty's *The Man of Aran* (1934) has vastly influenced Ireland's cinematic representation. The fictional documentary depicts the grand myth of the struggle between man and his hostile environment. Whereas some critics consider Flaherty's movie a masterpiece carrying the essence of ancient Irish life, others criticise it because of the romanticised notion of an outdated Irish life and its identity. McLoone goes even so far in arguing that neither *The Quiet Man* nor *The Man of Aran* are actually about the Irish themselves as the focus is on an Irish-American illusion and romantic primitivism rather than on contemporary Irish culture (*Film 4*).

Due to financial shortcomings, there had been no real indigenous Irish cinema to counterbalance those representations up until the 1970s. Ireland spent the first half of the twentieth century as an inward-looking, rural and repressive society which found itself on the periphery of an economically blossoming Europe. Up until the 1960s, it was characterised by the dominant tie between state and church originating from post-independent Ireland. The strong influence of the Catholic Church had an impact on both moral and political issues which, as a result, inflicted limitations on the social and cultural life also. When the protectionist approach was replaced by an

open market which opted for inward investment, Ireland underwent a rapid change of modernisation and revitalisation. Additionally, its population saw a transformation from a rural and repressive society to a modern and urban one within the last decades. Just as numerous other sectors within the Irish cultural life profited from the country's modernisation process, Irish cinema underwent a distinct revitalisation as well.

The first wave of an indigenous film industry emerged in the 1970s and 1980s thanks to a small group of filmmakers. They rejected the old trope of the re-affirmation of Irishness and, hence, deconstructed stereotypical representations that had been used up to this point. Encouraged by the country's on-going process of modernisation and globalisation, they desired to break with the old trope asserting a national identity. The new generation of filmmakers

sought to establish a new Irish cinematic idiom, to break with the dominant and exogenous tradition of romanticism and to look at Ireland from the inside out, rather than vice versa. This they achieved by positioning themselves within an international moment of avant-garde, experimental and low-budget filmmaking practices" (Barton 85).

As there was no real financial backing by the Irish state, many filmmakers sought financial support by foreign production companies, such as The British Film Institute, or Channel 4 Television. Despite their notable success, Irish films have so far not been as successful at the local box office as their American or British counterparts. Critics argue that international funding has led to a cinema of compromise which aims at the international market, yet tends to omit the national audience. Film theorist Martin McLoone goes so far as to claim that these foreign productions promote outdated and revised representations of Ireland:

The danger is that, to attract financial support, such films [co-productions] propose a view of Ireland that is already familiar to international funders and with funders in turn believe audiences are likely to recognize and identify with. Ultimately, they offer conservative images of Ireland that do not challenge existing cinematic traditions (*Film* 114-115).

Crucial to the success of indigenous Irish film was the formation of the Irish Film Board in 1980. The board was disestablished in 1987 for financial reasons, yet when lobbyists missed out on the international success of films, such as *My Left Foot* (1989) or *The Commitments* (1991), which were funded externally, they pushed for its reestablishment. Eventually, the Irish Film Board was reconstituted in 1993 by then Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, Michael D. Higgins, who is Ireland's

current President (inaugurated 11 November 2011). In a speech in the Dáil, Higgins gave reasons for his motivation to reopen the board:

The whole reasoning behind my decision to develop the industry by means of a two-pronged approach – namely, the reactivation of the Irish Film Board and my proposals in relation to independent television production contained in the Broadcasting Authority (Amendment) Bill, 1993 – is precisely to exploit the technical facilities available in Ireland at present and the imaginative and creative skills which exist in that industry which have been underemployed (Office of the Houses the Oireachtas).

The board is a national development agency which aims to invest in “talent, creativity and enterprise. The agency supports and promotes the Irish film industry and the use of Ireland as a location for international production” (Irish Film Board *About Bord Scannán na hÉireann*). All movies chosen for this discussion were either productions or co-productions of the Irish Film Board.

Another milestone for the success and evolution of the Irish film industry was the tax relief for film investment, then known as Section 35, which was established in 1987 and broadened in 1993. It has since been renamed as Section 481. In 1987, the scheme allowed “companies to claim tax relief on sums up to £IR 100.000 invested in qualifying films” (Barton 106). With the scheme overhauled and with sums increased in 1993, Section 481 was amended in the Taxes Consolidation Act in 1997. Its main aim is to promote the Irish film industry by encouraging investment. In 2008, the Irish government introduced new measures to strengthen the tax incentive even further:

This has dramatically improved Ireland’s competitive position as a location for international film & TV production. The new improvements mean ceiling on qualifying expenditure for any one film is increased from € 35 million to €50 million. [...] Projects may derive a benefit of up to 28% of their eligible Irish expenditure (Irish Film Board *Financing*).

The scheme aimed at establishing an indigenous film industry on the one side and at encouraging foreign productions to shoot in Ireland on the other side. The policy attracted many international productions, such as *Braveheart* (1995), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) or *P.S. I Love You* (2007), to shoot in Ireland. In turn, foreign productions enable the Irish film industry to profit from benefits such as training and skills acquirement. Moreover, the scheme is based on the anticipated secondary investment in the economy, with the film business as a growing employment sector as well as for promoting Ireland as a tourist location.

The Irish film industry had great successes, showcasing fascinating talent and strengthening its influence both nationally and internationally. According to the Irish Film Board, the sector of audio-visual productions in Ireland “is estimated to be worth €500 million and employs over 6,000 individuals with over 560 small and medium enterprises operating in the sector and this is before the added value that the industry can bring to the tourist industry” (Irish Film Board *About Irish Film Industry*).

Ever since Ireland’s struggle for independence at the beginning of the twentieth century, when culture was one of the main conduits for nationalism, culture has tried to define its distinct national identity. Barton argues that the constant attempt to reaffirm the Irish identity, however, has led to “the apparent obsession with ‘explaining ourselves to others’” (9). Similarly, the indigenous Irish cinema, too, has struggled to find its own place within the Irish culture, which has been dominated by literature. Whereas the rank of literary texts such as novels and poems were generally considered as leading signifiers of the Irish national identity, cinema was regarded as a proletarian cultural form up until the middle of the twentieth century. Fiction film, however, has emerged as a significant conveyer of identity within the last decades. Gonzàlez rightly claims that film “can be considered one of the main ‘cultural proxies’ or conduits by which communities define themselves and their surroundings, and communicate them across the globe” (ix). As a leading Irish film theorist, Ruth Barton suggests that cinema should not be viewed as “just another way of reflecting on the national culture but as a medium in itself that has established its own traditions” (10).

Endeavouring to define both Irishness and the Irish national cinema in an academic manner is a daunting and almost impossible task, especially as the nation to be under consideration has tried to define itself for most of the twentieth century. Attempting to touch on the difficult task of identifying Irish national cinema, I have exerted my right as an individual to define it as it occurs to me. The choice of films has been determined by the wish to illustrate certain points about Irish cinema. Movies from both commercial as well as independent filmmakers were selected in order to illustrate Ireland’s multifaceted film business. I am of the opinion that the movies discussed not only mirror Ireland’s modern and vibrant culture, but can also be regarded as a transmitter of Irishness itself. In addition to textual analysis, the focus lies on a contextualised reading of films, i.e. as viewed of against the background of political, economic and social developments.

2. Summaries of the Movies Discussed

2.1. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

Ken Loach's story starts in 1920, in the midst of the Anglo-Irish War of Independence. Set in the West of Ireland, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* is about two brothers who have different points of view concerning their nation's struggle for independence.

While his brother Terry (Padraic Delaney) leads the local flying column fighting against British occupation, pacifist Damien O'Donovan (Cillian Murphy) wants to leave Ireland for London to become a doctor. While his family and friends denounce him as a coward, Damien considers their side in the war as hopeless. Shortly before his departure, however, Damien witnesses two brutal attacks on Irish civilians by the Black and Tans. After having played the traditional game of Hurling with his friends, the brutal British soldiers attack them due to the official ban of public meetings which were considered as rebellious actions. At the farmstead of Sinéad's (Orla Fitzgerald) family, Damien experiences the Black and Tan's violent dealing first-hand when he, his family and friends are met with great hostility and violence by the British soldiers. When his friend Michael (Laurence Barry) refuses to give his name in English insisting on his Irish roots, the young man is brutally murdered. When Damien is later about to board the train to London, he witnesses another brutal attack of the Black and Tans on railway employees when the driver Dan (Liam Cunningham) refuses to take soldiers and their armour on board. As he is looking after an injured man, Damien misses his train to England.

Enraged by these events, Damien decides to stay in Ireland and join the IRA. Alongside his brother, he fights in a flying column against the occupying British and for his country's freedom. He is now in the middle of a war he has always been trying not to get into. When one member of the flying column, Chris Reilly, is blackmailed by the British landlord Hamilton and reveals their hiding place, Damien and the other rebels are arrested. At prison, the Black and Tans showcase their gruelling torture methods on Teddy to gain valuable information. After their release, the rebels agree to kill the traitor around them, Chris Reilly. Killing Chris, whom he has known since he was a little boy, is a turning point for Damien. He wonders whether the Ireland he is

fighting for is actually worth being fought for when it demands to make sacrifices of this magnitude. After their ambush on a group of Black and Tans, the rebels' violence is met with a reprisal attack. They have to watch how Sinéad, her mother and grandmother are brutally attacked while their homestead, the movie's symbol of home, is destroyed. Shortly after the vicious raid, the rebels learn that a treaty, signalling an end of the war, was signed. The whole country erupts in celebrations, revelling in hope and carefreeness. Only now, Damien and Sinéad have time to cater for their blossoming love for one another.

During a cinema reel, however, the protagonists are informed that the Treaty is a compromise establishing an Irish Free State yet dividing the country. Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom, and the Irish Free State has to swear allegiance to the British king. The signing of the Treaty in 1921 divided not only the country's Republican movement but also the two brothers. While Teddy is in favour of the new form of government, insisting that they should seize its opportunity for peace, Damien continues to fight during the Irish Civil War for an entirely independent Ireland. In the eyes of the anti-treatyites, the ones in favour of the treaty are seen as traitors who now cooperate with the British. During an ambush by the anti-treatyites on their former allies, Dan is killed and Damien is taken prisoner. In his prison cell, Teddy undertakes a final attempt to make Damien tell him where the rebels have hidden their weapons. Teddy is desperate for the killing to stop and appeals to Damien to accept the new freedom that they have gained. He wants to engage in resistance in order to achieve ultimate freedom once the nation will be strong enough. His brother, however, argues that Teddy is wrapped in the Union Jack, the butcher's apron, and will not sell out to the British. Under tears, Teddy gives the order to shoot his brother. In his last letter to Sinéad, Damien writes that he cannot get out of a war which he tried not to get into initially.

2.2. *The Butcher Boy*

When his family falls apart and his mind becomes more and more demented, Francie blames his neighbour Mrs Nugent. His unhealthy obsession with her ends in a bitter catastrophe for his rural hometown.

Francie Brady (Eamonn Owens) grows up in a rural Irish town called Clones. With the breakdown of his own family, Francie's childhood is centred on his friendship with Joe (Alan Boyle), his partner in crime. His mother, Annie (Aisling O'Sullivan), is manic-depressive and looks at her life as one big failure. When Francie comes home one day to find his mother preparing her suicide, she is taken to a mental institution. His father, Bennie (Stephen Rea), is a rundown musician and alcoholic who has little time for his family. When Francie and Joe steal apples from the neighbour's garden and, on top of that, bully her son Phillip (Andrew Fullerton), Mrs Nugent (Fiona Shaw) decides to pay a visit to Francie's parents. She blames Annie and Bennie Brady for their son's unacceptable behaviour, denouncing them as "nothing better than pigs". Francie becomes somehow obsessed with Mrs Nugent's expletive and focuses all his frustration and aggressions on his neighbour. The Nugent family, who has just returned home from England and adhere to traditional morals, is quite the opposite of Francie's family which is close to falling apart. Even though Francie idealises his parent's marriage due to the grand stories he has heard about their honeymoon in Bundoran, the reality is quite contrary. The boy grows up in a dysfunctional family characterised by constant fights between the alcoholic father and the manic-depressive mother. During another violent dispute between his parents, Francie runs away to Dublin. When he returns home because he misses his mother so much, he learns that Annie has committed suicide, which Bennie blames him for. Francie's feelings of guilt are turned into aggression, which he vents on Phillip and his mother, Mrs Nugent. Joe feels more and more alienated from his former best friend. After Francie breaks into Mrs Nugent's house and causes havoc there, he is sent to a reform school governed by the Catholic Church.

Determined to get the "Francie-not-a-bad-bastard-anymore-diploma", he becomes an altar boy. Following Father O'Sullivan's (Milo O'Shea) sermon about Virgin Mary appearing three small children to deliver a special message, Francie has his first vision of Our Lady (Sinéad O'Connor). Functioning as a type of substitute mother, Virgin Mary appears repeatedly and offers Francie her, sometimes doubtful, support. In the reform school, he is exposed to sexual abuse by Father O'Sullivan. When the priest asks the boy to tell him about the worst thing he has ever done, something so bad he would not even have told his mother, Francie loses his temper and attacks the cleric. The mentioning of his mother in combination with guilt triggers the outburst of violence due to his remorse about her suicide. In order to obscure

Father O'Sullivan's sexual advances, Francie is allowed to leave the reform school immediately.

Back home in Clones, Francie becomes more and more isolated from society and, most importantly, from Joe. He now focuses on domestic life and living with his alcoholic father, whose health is worsening dramatically. Eventually, Francie lives with his dead father, shielding him from possible intruders like the worried doctor. The boy is well aware that he will be all alone if they take his dead father away from him. After it is discovered that Francie has lived with the body of his father, he is committed to a mental institution. In a drug-induced dream, the rural environment of Clones is demolished by an atomic bomb.

Having managed to escape from the mental hospital, Francie travels to Bundoran where his parents have spent their honeymoon. Having always idealised his parent's marriage and their time in Bundoran, Francie is told the unpleasant truth. Already then Annie and Bennie's marriage was marked by bitter rows and alcoholism. Distraught, Francie bids his final attempt to win Joe's friendship back. He breaks into the summer camp where Joe is staying to make him come home with him. Joe, however, denounces his former best friend, resulting in Francie returning to Clones alone. There, he is wreaking revenge on Mrs Nugent, who he blames for all of his misfortunes. While the people of Clones are awaiting a special message from Our Lady, Francie breaks into Mrs Nugent's house and kills her violently. Francie is committed to another mental institution where he spends 30 years of his life. On the day he is discharged from the hospital, he has another final vision of Mary. Being told not to worry about the past but focusing on the beautiful things in life, Francie Brady sets out into his new life.

2.3. *Adam and Paul*

Adam and Paul, two hopeless heroin junkies, wander through Dublin's streets in search of their next fix their bodies are aching for desperately. The film follows the two protagonists during their adventurous day which is entirely devoted to the business of stealing money and obtaining drugs.

Adam (Mark O'Halloran) and Paul (Tom Murphy) awake on a mattress in the middle of a deserted field on the outskirts of Dublin. The two men have no recollection

of where they are or how they got there. To add to the comical essence, one of them is even glued to the mattress. As their bodies are in need for heroin, they decide to go to town to find some. When they pass the notoriously drug-infected Ballymun council flats, Adam and Paul ask two young boys whether they would know of any drug dealers around there. The boys send them to an alleged pusher, Martin, living in one of the Ballymun flats. Worried about the alarmed neighbours, Martin, however, sends them away. The two junkies make their way into Dublin's city centre where they try to get their hands on money. An attempt to rob a passing car fails as Paul hurts his hand and, on top of that, is hit by a passing moped.

At Saint Stephen's Green Park, they run into a group of friends, yet they are met with hostility. Their friends inform Adam and Paul that it was Matthew's Month's Mind today. Matthew used to be a close friend of Adam and Paul who, most likely, died of a drug overdose. The two men, however, are too absorbed in their own cravings for drugs; therefore, they seem to have difficulties to bond with their former friends or to even remember that Matthew has passed away. One friend, Georgie (Gary Egan), slips out that family and friends will meet that evening in a pub to remember Matthew. With the rest of the gang, especially Wayne (Paul Roe), being not impressed with inviting Adam and Paul to this gathering, the isolation of the two junkies becomes obvious.

As Adam and Paul wander through the streets of Dublin looking for drugs, they have another hostile encounter with a homeless man in a sleeping bag. Asked who they are looking for, the homeless guy assumes that they are in search of a gangster called "Clank". Little does he know that this misunderstanding will have grave consequences for Adam and Paul later on in the day. As all their attempts to either steal purses in cafés or food from grocery shops fail, Adam and Paul have a rest at a bench. Next to them sits a Bulgarian immigrant (Ion Caramitru) who they have an amusing yet enraged discussion with. Especially Adam meets the Bulgarian with ignorant and xenophobic slurs. After giving them a heated lecture on life and its purpose, the Bulgarian storms off.

Next stop for the two junkies on their adventurous day is Janine's apartment. Janine (Louise Lewis) is a friend of theirs who used to be a heroin junkie as well but has started a new life without drugs. Even though Janine is not home, Adam and Paul enter the unlocked apartment. About to steal a television set to finance their addiction, their plan is stopped by a baby's screaming from the next room. The two

men enter the nursery and take the baby out of its crib. As Adam and Paul are caressing the baby, Janine is seen in the doorway watching them. A following dream sequence alludes that Janine has been intimate with both men as it is shown how Adam, Paul and Janine are holding the baby, stroking and kissing one another. Janine informs them that she has kicked the habit and is living a clean and normal life now. She too invites them to join Matthew's family and friends at the local pub tonight to remember their friend. As Adam and Paul leave, Janine tells her baby to say goodbye to its two daddies.

Still in search for money and drugs, the two junkies start another attempt to rob somebody. This time, they go after a helpless young man who suffers from Down syndrome. Their pathetic attempt fails too, however, as the young man only carries his bus money with him. While wandering the nightly streets of Dublin, they are met by a thuggish Clank (Gerry Moore). Rumours have made it around Dublin that Adam and Paul are looking for him because he allegedly owes them money. Demanding reparation, Clank forces the two men to stand guard while he and his partner are vandalising the shop of a petrol station. Adam and Paul, however, are not even able to fulfil this task properly, resulting in Clank and his partner being arrested by the guards. After wrecking Clank's stolen car, Paul laments over the fact why they cannot ever be lucky for once. At that moment, two thugs carrying a stolen TV-set appear. The dubious men ask Adam and Paul to guard the set until the concealer, who they were supposed to meet here, turns up. Adam and Paul, however, use the chance and take the TV-set with them to carry it to another dealer of stolen goods, Kitzer (David Herlihy). Kitzer agrees to sell the TV for them and takes them to the same housing estate in Ballymun where the two junkies started out earlier in the day. The supposed buyer Gringo (Eamonn Hunt), however, does not want to have anything to do with the TV set nor the three men, and a violent fight between him and Kitzer erupts.

As Adam and Paul leave the location, they witness how alarmed neighbours are storming into the flat of Martin – the same dealer they were trying to get drugs from earlier. Attempting to disguise his dubious employment, Martin throws all sorts of his belongings out of the window. With more luck than judgement, Paul's wish to be lucky for once is finally fulfilled as two bags of heroin land right in front of the junkies. Having injected the much desired drug into their bodies, Adam and Paul stumble through Dublin's streets once again. This time, however, their wandering is

filled with a sense of bliss and timelessness as their minds seem to be somewhere else. At some point, they find themselves right in front of the pub in which the gathering for Matthew's Month's Mind is taking place. Inside, they are met with both hostility and care by Matthew's family due to their drug-induced state. After an alarmed Wayne, Janine's brother, sends the two men away because their presence is upsetting people, Adam and Paul return to Dublin's backstreets. The next morning, Paul awakes on a beach next to Adam. When all his attempts to wake Adam fail, Paul realises that his friend is dead. Clearly upset, Paul continues to sit next to Adam's body for some time. He eventually gets up and makes his way back into town. Soon Paul returns to Adam's dead body and takes the remaining heroin out of his pockets.

2.4. Garage

Taking care of a rundown garage in a small town in the mid-west of Ireland, Josie's life seems lonely and dull. Despite being regarded as an idiot by others and being unhappily in love with Carmel, the local shop girl, Josie is oddly happy with his life and takes a lot of pride in his work. When he befriends the teenager David, who joins him to work at the petrol station for the summer, Josie finally connects socially. One thoughtless moment, however, endangers Josie's quiet life altogether.

Josie (Pat Shortt) lives in a small rural Irish town and works at a petrol station run by his former classmate Mr Gallagher (John Keogh). Josie is fully dedicated to his job and considers the rundown garage as his home. A day in Josie's life consists of little menial work, underwhelming meals alone and a few pints every now and then in the local pub. He often goes to see and feeds a horse living in a nearby paddock. Josie, however, seems perfectly happy with his routine and banal existence. As his social skills are not that well-developed or sensitive, conversations appear unnatural and forced at times. Additionally, simple tasks, such as making tea or placing the oil rack outside of the station, prove to be highly complicated matters demanding a lot of thinking.

When Mr Gallagher comes to the petrol station and informs him that the garage will be open longer and, thus, will get an assistant to cope with the additional work, Josie is happy to oblige to his boss' plans. Mr Gallagher has asked his

girlfriend's son David (Conor Ryan) to help at the garage a few days a week. David himself, however, is not necessarily excited about his job with the village idiot. Josie, on the other hand, is content to share somebody's company other than the guys' in the pub who like to make fun of him. One day after work, Josie asks David whether he would like to sit out in the back and have a can of beer. At first reluctant, David decides to stay, and the two men begin to hang out with each other more often. Josie is invited to join David and the other teenagers down at the railway tracks where they drink cans and socialise. Soon Josie is accepted within David's clique and for the first time experiences companionship without being considered as minor. Josie's role in the local community is somehow arbitrary. Appreciated by some of the men, others treat Josie as the local idiot. Breffni (Don Wycherley), for instance, ridicules him in the pub by outlining Mr Gallagher's true intentions with the garage and its attendant. According to Breffni, Mr Gallagher's plan was to hire an idiot to look after the petrol station without investing any money in it. Then, when the time is right, Josie's boss would sell it for a generous price to build apartments on his property. Oblivious to these allegations, Josie ignores Breffni.

Josie is in love with Carmel (Anne-Marie Duff), the shop girl. He acts overly nervous in the presence of the young woman, resulting in numerous awkward situations. Josie's hopes of a romantic liaison with Carmel are dampened unmistakably one evening in the pub. Even though Josie did not intend any harm, a drunken Carmel feels uncomfortable while dancing with him and, consequently, pushes him away from her. Wondering what he could have done wrong, a depressed Josie finds comfort in alcohol and his friend David. The teenager finds himself in a similar situation after having been abandoned by his best friend Declan (Tommy Fitzgerald) because of a girl. The two men appear to bond with each other more and keep each other company during this hard time. When Carmel reinforces her disinterest in Josie, he tries to dismiss the incident in the pub as beside the point. However, he cannot hide his disappointment about Carmel's rejection and falls very quiet. In this downhearted state of mind, a drunken Josie decides to impress his young friend David by showing him a pornographic movie. However, the screening of the questionable film makes the teenager feel uncomfortable and he leaves immediately. Realising that he has put David in an awkward position, the incident puts another damper on Josie's already sorrowful life. Later in the pub, Breffni starts an argument over cigarettes with Josie. For the first time, Josie stands up for himself

and does not let himself be treated as the village idiot anymore. He bids defiance to his superior mate and even engages in a small physical fight with him.

Back from his walk at the garage, police guards are already waiting for him to take him to the station. Josie does not seem to grasp the gravity of the situation at first and is happy to comply with the police. While questioned by the friendly guard, Josie cannot comprehend that a complaint was made about him. David's mother has found out that Josie has supplied him with alcohol and shown him inappropriate material. Approached upon the subject of the indecent videotape, Josie dismisses it as "only messing" and "a bit of craic". The police guard, too, does not regard Josie as a serial sex offender or that he meant any harm, but he has to pursue every complaint. Nonetheless, the interrogation can be considered to rather be a cautioning piece of advice or verbal warning. Josie's mild treatment by the police is reminiscent of a lecture to a child who is unaware that its actions could have been misinterpreted. When Josie announces that he wants to write a letter to David and his mother to apologise, however, the guard orders him to stay away from them to not make things any worse. Worried about people gossiping and branding him as something he is not, Josie asks whether people will find out. When the police guard answers "Don't know, Josie. Small town", his fears are affirmed indirectly.

When Mr Gallagher pays Josie a visit at the garage later, it is indicated that Josie is going to lose his job. Even though it is never mentioned, it would be the anticipated consequence following the latest events. Josie's situation is even more precarious as his boss is going out with David's mother. A restless Josie cannot sleep and, thus, gets up to wander through the green forest. At the bank of the river, he stops for a rest while the sun is shining on an almost cloud-free sky. It is the nicest day in the entire movie, and the display of a tranquil landscape is quite the opposite of both what it is has been represented as and is capable of. One expects that Josie is about to go for a swim if it was not for the clothes he is still wearing. Therefore, the suggestion is made that Josie commits suicide by drowning himself. In the final scene, Josie's befriended horse walks along the railway tracks. The natural assumption is that Josie must have freed the horse from its lead and its fenced paddock. Just as Josie has somehow freed himself of guilt and the town's bigotry, the horse, too, is now outside of its physical prison.

3. Reception

3.1. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

Ken Loach's most notable achievement with *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* was his triumph at the 59th Cannes Film Festival in 2006. Highly praised by the jury, Loach received the prestigious Palme d'Or prize for his historical film. Accepting the award, the director said that the film is "a very little step in confronting imperialism" (Kilroy). At the Irish Film and Television Awards 2007, Loach did not only win the jury prize for Best Film but was also granted the Audience Award for Best Film. Moreover, Liam Cunningham was remunerated for his efforts in portraying Dan with the IFTA award for Best Supporting Actor. Barry Ackroyd, who had been working for years with Loach, was rewarded with the European Film Award for Best Cinematographer. Despite being nominated for numerous British film awards, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* could not gain any prizes in the UK. Unfortunately, Loach's production was not regarded for an Academy Awards nomination either.

Nevertheless, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* has so far been Loach's highest grossing movie ever in Great Britain, despite the British audience often reacting allergic to movies dealing with anything Irish. Within the first ten days after its release, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* earned \$2.1 million. It is important to note, however, that 68% out of that figure were earned in the Republic of Ireland. In his review on the movie, English film expert Adam Dawtrey explains that in some box office statistics the Irish republic is "submerged within the much larger UK as a single box office territory" (Dawtrey *Wind* 8). To illustrate *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*'s success, Ireland's usual share of the UK gross is around the 15 per cent mark. A statistic released by The Irish Film & Television Network shows that Loach's production was the third-most successful film in Ireland in 2006, collecting €3,701,417. More successful were only *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (€3,915,525) and the James Bond instalment *Casino Royale* (€3,793,239) (see Irish Film & Television Network *ROI Top Ten Films 2006*). Finally, this critical approval mirrored itself in the audience opinion polls and attendance figures in Ireland. Loach's drama united the Irish army of film fans, making it the highest grossing independent Irish-made movie until 2008, when it was beaten by Martin McDonagh's brilliant crime comedy *In Bruges*. After that, *The Guard*, directed by his brother John

Michael McDonagh, became Ireland's highest grossing independent film in 2011. In addition to that notable box office success in Ireland and the UK, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* continued its triumph in other European countries. France has always been Loach's biggest market and appreciator, alongside Spain and Italy. Encouraged by its recent Palme d'Or win, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* was shown in staggering 120 French cinemas on its opening weekend. By way of comparison, in Ireland and the UK, Loach's movie debuted in "only" 105 cinemas (see Gant 8). The United States, however, has never been a major territory for the director. Despite its strong bond and historic link with Ireland, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* performed not as well as expected in the United States. Critics explained the movie's ill success due to its complicated historical plot and Loach's realistic or "anti-Hollywood" kind of style. Grossing just \$135,554 on its opening weekend, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* took only the 36th place in the box office ranking. From the movie's worldwide gross of \$22,899,908, only 8% arise from U.S. cinemas, leaving 92% of its profit to foreign cinemas.

The movie was harshly scrutinised by British movie critics and even politicians. Both conservative broadsheets as well as the yellow press denounced Loach as a denigrator demonising Brits, yet glorifying the Irish. A columnist of *The Times* famously compared Loach to Nazi-propaganda filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl. Ruth Dudley Edwards, an Irish journalist, asked in the headline of her *Daily Mail* review, "Why does Ken Loach loathe his country so much?" (*Daily Mail Online*). *The Sun* labelled the movie as the "most pro-IRA film ever" (qtd. in Jeffries). And Simon Heffer eviscerated the movie without even watching it: "Loach hates this country, yet leeches off it, using public funds to make his repulsive films. And no, I haven't seen it, any more than I need to read *Mein Kampf* to know what a louse Hitler was" (qtd. in Monbiot *Occupations*).

Gary Crowdus' academic analysis for the American *Cineaste* magazine aims at pointing out the movie's shortcomings in a more explanatory fashion. With other critics having uttered similar opinions, Crowdus' review shall be examined in more detail. Keeping in mind that Loach is an advocated social realist himself, Crowdus critically remarks how the movie omits some politicians altogether but lionises, probably like-minded, others:

In Loach's film, Michael Collins is only glimpsed in a newsreel. Arthur Griffith is nowhere to be seen. Eamon de Valera's name isn't even mentioned. But James Connolly, Ireland's leading socialist organizer and

theoretician, executed some four years earlier for his role in the 1916 Easter Rising, plays a prominent if unseen role through the expression of his revolutionary ideas by two of the film's main protagonists (55).

He disagrees with other reviews that claim Loach creates a one-sided account of violence perpetrated only by the British soldiers. The commendable representation of both sides of the conflict, however, is destroyed by the overindulgence in dramatic stereotypes and a characterisation which is too one-dimensional. He claims that "[f]raming the narrative through the quarrel between two brothers (...) has become such a predictable and well-worn device of virtually all civil-war stories that it's surprising Loach and Lavery didn't deliberately avoid it" (55). Furthermore, the critic labels the representation of the British malevolence "excessive, unbelievable, and dramatically 'over the top'". Crowdus claims that this one-sided account of the British troops is caused by Lavery's screenplay which lacks sufficient historical context. Director and scriptwriter have been criticised for romanticising the brave Irish freedom fighters compared to the British soldiers who are characterised as unscrupulous killers. Especially the film's famous opening scene was under high scrutiny by Loach's critics. The scene shows Damien and his friends playing the traditional Gaelic sport of Hurling in the middle of Ireland's lush green fields. Afterwards, they go and see Sinéad's family's farmstead. The little cottage symbolises the traditional Irish home giving shelter to Damien and the other rebels. It does not take long until the idyll is destroyed by the Black and Tans turmoil. They impetuously enter the scene, characterised by excessive noise and violence. As public meetings of any kind, including team sports, were banned during the time depicted, the Black and Tans demand names and addresses of Damien and his friends. When Michael refuses to give his name in English, the British soldiers brutally kill him. In an interview with the *British Telegraph*, Loach retorts the criticism to this scene with historical facts:

How is this romantic? We couldn't change the landscape. I'd defend that scene. Hurling was 'their game', so it was banned. (...) The reality is, the British punished people gathering, insisting Irish people spoke English, and raided anywhere they thought republicans or nationalists would shelter (Gritten).

Crowdus, however, denounces Loach for neglecting important historical facts, making it impossible for the audience to understand the Black and Tans' behaviour. The Black and Tans and an ex-officer's corps known as the Auxiliaries were

reinforced after 1916 to replace diminishing ranks of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). Their name derives from a shortage of proper uniforms, forcing them to wear dark green tunics from the Irish police and khaki pants from the British army. They were more or less an undisciplined force that was granted a “shoot-to-kill” policy. Most of them were demobilised soldiers who had battled hard in the First World War, experiencing horrors such as trench warfare at the Battle of Somme. Known for their atrocious methods and anti-Irish prejudices, the British troops engaged in a nationwide rampage of destruction and looting. Their misdeeds, however, were shielded by a law which ruled that anyone who would kill an Irishman would not be prosecuted. While a large part of the British condemned their army’s policy in Ireland, the Black and Tans themselves lacked empathy and understanding. They considered any civilian who did not shy away from violence towards women and children as a legitimate target. Crowdus claims, however, that the deployment of a force like the Tans, who were explicitly chosen to terrorise the Irish, “reveals more about the British government than the individual soldiers” (56). In Loach’s production, a sergeant even addresses the Black and Tans’ dilemma and their traumatising in the First World War, stating that they have reached a state in which he cannot cope anymore: “What do you fucking expect? These men fought at the Somme! In filthy trenches, up to their necks in vomit, while their friends got blown up before their eyes!” Crowdus, however, suggests that this relevant information is not conveyed believably enough due to the performance of nonprofessional actors. Most of the cast of British roles are, in fact, former army officers from Great Britain and Germany. The critic, therefore, argues that

[t]his lack of broader social context, and a failure to dramatically develop or individuate any of the British characters, makes it difficult for viewers to regard to them, no matter how closely their behaviour hews to the historical record, as anything more than one-dimensional, melodramatic stereotypes (56).

Crowdus goes even so far as to label the scene of the second raid of the farmstead, during which Sinead is assaulted by three British soldiers, as an overdramatic cartoon.

The warfare of the IRA rebels, by contrast, appears to be justified, and the audience can relate to the rebels’ actions. Damien, for instance, seems to be only engaging in violence and the war due to external factors. As he is about to board the train and leave for England, he witnesses the soldiers’ violence towards personnel

who refuse to take soldiers and arms on board. The scene portrays the resistance of organised labourers and trade unions which were crucial to the Republican campaign. Damien misses his train as he looks after an injured man. The immediate cut to Damien swearing on the IRA's oath implies that the events at the train station motivated the protagonist's sudden change of mind and commitment to the IRA. Later on in the story, Damien sees an underfed child who is half-starved. He considers this experience as a form of justification for engaging in a war he always tried not to get into. Again, it suggests that Damien only participates in the war due to external reasons.

Another key scene of Loach's representation of war and its effects is the flying column's ambush on British soldiers. The scene shows the Irish rebels engaging in brutal violence as their British counterparts have done in previous scenes. This time, however, Loach represents the IRA's warfare as a necessity to achieve their ultimate goal of independence. After the bloody ambush on British troops, the Irish rebels are clearly taken aback by the carnage in which they have just participated. Nevertheless, even when a member of the flying column is killed at the ambush, the rebels do not have time to mourn their friend. The column's leader, Finbar, lines them up to reassert their statuses as soldiers who have to continue fighting. He reminds them on their mission against the Brits who have come over to make the Irish crawl and wipe them out. He further asserts that the killing will be seen as a message of the Irish not accepting British power:

Filthy business ... not for the fain-hearted. [Pointing at the dead bodies]
Everyone a mercenary ... bought and paid for ... sent here to spill Irish
blood and wipe us out. Today we have sent a message to the British
Cabinet that will echo around the world ... we will match their viciousness
with our own! [...] I'm proud of you all (Lavery 101).

Finally, Crowds criticises the movie's concluding scenes lacking a balanced representation of the main protagonists. Additionally, he accuses Loach of using the film's melodramatic ending to convey his own personal message. Teddy, on the one hand, is characterised as a soulless and submissive bureaucrat of the Irish Free State. Damien, on the other hand, refuses to compromise his rebellious beliefs and is depicted as the romantic hero facing death. The concluding scene, therefore, painfully highlights "that with *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, Loach has not so much illuminated Irish history as he has used it for its own purposes" (Crowds 57).

In an interview with the same magazine, *Cineaste*, Loach and Lavery retorted to the criticism concerning their portrayal of IRA rebels and British soldiers. Responding to the suggestion that his account is politically imbalanced, Loach made clear that he was telling a story from one specific group's view: "The story is of a group in a Flying Column, how they fought for independence, how they won partial independence, and the legacy of what happened after the treaty. Every point of view is written within that" (Archibald 26). Similarly, Lavery countered allegations of not explaining the Black and Tans' background and behaviour sufficiently that it was not the story he was after. In the interview, he stated: "I would have enjoyed writing this story from the point of view of a young Tan. Let's not forget they were mostly demobbed soldiers, brutalised in the First World War and then left to rot unemployed in cities like Glasgow and Birmingham. But it's another film" (Archibald 26). Loach and Lavery worked closely together with historical advisor Dr Donal O'Drisceoil of University College Cork in order to depict a comprehensive and authentic version of Irish history. As a highly regarded historian, O'Drisceoil defended the movie's historical accuracy in an interview with the *Irish Independent*: "Ask anyone in the local area if the film is fantasy and those that can remember will tell you just how brutal a time it was" (Irish Independent).

Not all reviews on Loach's production, however, were as devastating as those from the British press or Crowdus' analysis. A.O. Scott from the *New York Times* praised *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* for shedding light on brutality and desperation suffered on both sides. She argued, despite being brutal in its depiction of British acts of violence, that the film "does not flinch from showing the harsh, sometimes heartless tactics of the Irish Republican Army flying columns" (Scott). Furthermore, she highlighted the director's efforts of bringing history back to the here and now:

Radical though he is, Mr Loach is hardly a romantic, and the deep humanism that informs his best work – a category in which "The Wind that Shakes the Barley" surely belongs – is insulated from sentimentality by the sense that history is a long, bruising fight, a chronicle of compromise and defeat as well as of tentative triumph and provisional hope. (...) But the history presented in "The Wind that Shakes the Barley" hardly feels like a closed book or a museum display. It is as alive and troubling as anything on the evening news, though far more thoughtful and beautiful (Scott).

Justine McCarthy from the *Irish Independent* defiantly vindicated Loach's movie, praising it for finally lifting the lid on a pain that had been tabooed for a long time:

Unlike many countries experiencing the aftermath of modern wars, Ireland never had a truth commission or a forum for conflict resolution. We compensated with poetry and storytelling and ballads about old women and green fields. (...) That is why the ignorant Hisbernophobic denunciation by the English press of Ken Loach's transfixing film, "The Wind that Shakes the Barley", must not go unchallenged. (...) All the suppressed old stories and emotions flooded back and I remembered that we descendants of nationalists, too, have a right to express our anger (McCarthy).

Finally, *The Guardian's* movie critic George Monbiot admitted that *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* does have its flaws; however, he gave Loach and Lavery cover by claiming that some critics' pillory was unjustified. In his review, Monbiot suggested that the movie was only scrutinised because Loach chose to tell the other side of the occupation story:

There is no question that the IRA also killed ruthlessly – not just police and soldiers but also people they deemed to be informers and collaborators. But Loach shows this too. [...] The press hates him because he admits that the people who committed these acts were not evil automata, but human beings capable of grief, anger, love and pity. So too, of course, were the British forces, whose humanity is always emphasised by the newspapers. Ken's crime is to have told the other side of the story (Monbiot *Occupations*).

3.2. *The Butcher Boy*

Asked during an interview with the Irish Film and Television Network, Neil Jordan himself was not entirely sure how critics and audience would think about his film version of *The Butcher Boy*: "I really don't know how people are going to react to this film. I haven't got a clue. Anyone who's seen it has been tremendously excited by it. They get either so blown away by it they can't talk, or else they talk too much. It seems to affect people very profoundly" (IFTN *The Provocative Son*). In fact, the film received mostly positive feedback and acclaiming reviews. At its premiere at the Galway Film Festival in 1997, Irish cinema analyst and writer Ted Sheehy claimed that "the film deserves prizes galore certainly, but most of all, it deserves large audiences" (qtd in Rosa Gonzalez, article, in *Culture and Power: Challenging Discourses*). Among numerous other festivals, Jordan's work was shown at the Berlin International Film Festival *Berlinale* in 1998, which proved to be a great success for the production. Neil Jordan received the Silver Bear for Best Director, and Eamonn

Owens was honoured with a Special Mention for the astonishing performance in his first-ever role. In addition to that, Owens won the award for Best Actor at the San Diego International Film Festival. Moreover, Elliot Goldenthal was remunerated for best music at the Los Angeles Film Critics Association Award, and Adrian Bibble received the European Film Award for Best Cinematography.

Despite the respectable success at numerous international film festivals and award ceremonies, *The Butcher Boy* failed to be nominated for the Academy Awards. The critical acclaim of the movie, however, did not reflect on the box office result. Despite being a great success in Ireland, being in ninth place in the 1998 ranking with a gross box office figure of €1,443,669, *The Butcher Boy* did not perform as well internationally. At its opening weekend in the United Kingdom, the movie was shown in 69 cinemas grossing £288,594, in the United States it was only 19 cinemas which made \$135,606 (see IMDB). An explanation for this lukewarm reception on the international stage might be that the movie's release coincided with various tragic acts of murder or schoolyard violence performed by children. In 1993, Britain was shocked by the killing of James Bulger. The toddler was abducted, tortured and murdered by two eleven-year-old boys. When the two offenders, Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, were found guilty in 1993, they became the youngest convicted murderers of the twentieth century. In her movie review, O'Sullivan states that "[f]ive years after the event, Britain still has not recovered from [it]" (10-13). Even though O'Sullivan could not have known about *The Butcher Boy's* relatively poor UK performance yet, she expresses her worries about the murder's possible aftermaths: "We still don't know how to respond to such a crime. (...) Such uncertainty makes a nation jumpy – and film-makers can suffer the consequences" (10-13).

The movie's U.S. release, however, coincided with an even more recent tragedy. *The Butcher Boy* opened on April 3rd, 1998, which turned out to be only ten days after a fatal shooting at a school near Jonesboro, Arkansas. That day, thirteen-year-old Mitchel Scott Johnson and eleven-year-old Andrew Douglas Golden set off the fire alarm in their former middle school. When the children and teachers ran out of the building, the two boys opened fire, killing four young girls and a teacher. After such a recent and incomprehensible tragedy, the American audience was just not ready for Jordan's dark comedy of rage and madness. The production companies agreed on a limited release in the United States. *The Butcher Boy*, hence, was only

shown in a handful art houses at its opening weekend. Additionally, it was not until 2007 that the DVD was released in North America.

Despite the understandable limitations, Jordan's movie did manage to make positive headlines nevertheless. In her report on the movie's box office start, Monica Roman mentions the film's small but notable success: "Jordan's Irish drama feeds crowds: Warner Bros.' 'The Butcher Boy' carved out its position on top of the exclusives roster during its first weekend" (Roman). Unsettled by the latest events in Jonesboro, a few film critics could not connect with Jordan's protagonist and his childish viciousness and startling violence. Watching the final scenes of the movie when Francie lives out his murderous fantasies, American movie analyst Robert Ebert could not help but think about the tragic events of Jonesboro: "We want to believe that violent kids have undergone emotional torments like Francie Brady, the young hero of 'The Butcher Boy'. If they haven't, then the abyss is closer than we think" (Ebert). Despite acknowledging Jordan's skills as a passionate and strong director, Ebert expresses his inability to bond emotionally with Francie, presumably due to the alleged similarities to the Jonesboro shooting. He states: "[T]he movie held me outside; I didn't connect in the way I wanted to, and by the end I was out of sympathy with the material" (Ebert).

American movie critic James Bowman could not connect to Francie and his world either, dismissing *The Butcher Boy* as an unauthentic work altogether. Furthermore, Bowman compared Jordan's film to John Millington Synge's play "Playboy of the Western World" due to plot similarities. The play tells the story of farm boy Christy Mahon, who claims to have killed his father. Instead of condemning the murder, the locals lionise the man. Bowman, therefore, regards Synge's play as a "vicious slander on the Irish people [for suggesting] that it was characteristic of the Irish blarney, at least among the rural folk (...) to lionize a man because he claims to have murdered his father" (Bowman). Its premiere in Dublin in 1907 was tainted by riots due to the controversial plot. Bowman made a comparison between Jordan's movie and Synge's vision, however claims that the movie lacks humour and irony – qualities which Synge's play, by contrast, has to offer. He further criticised that now, instead of riots, Jordan has received "only applause from the fashionable in Ireland". Contrary to those opinions, the critic demanded that Jordan's "celebration of criminal anarchy" should be met with indifference by everybody. Denying the movie any kind of praise, Bowman advised the filmmaker to stop concerning himself with outdated

notions of Ireland but to join the real world. Lisa Alspector from the *Chicago Reader*, too, dismissed *The Butcher Boy* as a “bland shocker that fails miserably as satire, character study, and anything else it might have aspired to”. Additionally, its visuals and soundtrack left Alspector unfazed: “[They] make the filmmakers seem especially proud of having created – for no apparent reason – an atmosphere of grim reality” (Alspector).

Many other critics, however, praised the film as the finest work Neil Jordan had produced so far, claiming that it is “the great movie Stanley Kubrick never got to make” (Clark). In his report of movies shown at the 1998 *Berlinale*, Ron Holloway regarded *The Butcher Boy*, along with Jim Sheridan’s *The Boxer* as an outstanding production. In his laudatory speech on Jordan’s brilliance as a director, he additionally emphasised Eamonn Owens, who convinced the critic with a superb performance (see Holloway 73-77). John Hartl from the *Seattle Times*, too, emphasised Eamonn Owen’s superb portrayal of Francie’s deranged mind. Despite Francie’s grim upbringing, the young actor “keeps it from becoming a depressing case study” (Hartl) but convinces as a confident and consistently energetic actor.

Despite admitting that the movie may severely alienate the audience, Michael Wilmington (*Chicago Tribune*) awarded *The Butcher Boy* “intensity and brilliance that seem maddening, even monstrous”. In his commendatory critique, he further wrote: “This is not a film about childhood to soothe your breast, ease your soul or warm the cockles of your heart. It’s a rough, bold look at childhood at its most overheated and anguished, and it’s as fierce and finally poignant as a glorious blaze and the chilly morning after” (Wilmington).

David Ansen, movie critic for *Newsweek*, stressed Jordan’s extraordinary skills of portraying an uncomfortable story without alienating his audience completely:

This is another high-wire act from the director of “The Crying Game”, and Jordan pulls it off with savage virtuosity. (...) Like the novel, Jordan and McCabe’s screenplay refuses to abandon its gallows humor even after its bloody descent into tragedy. Francie’s manic energy can be exhausting, but Jordan’s too good a filmmaker to lose his grip on the audience (72).

He concludes his review by pointing out the ambivalent adventure the movie has to offer: “‘The Butcher Boy’ takes us on a whirling trip inside an imagination running amok. It’s an uncomfortable yet strangely giddy place to be” (72). In her review, Charlotte O’Sullivan took sides with Francie Brady and blamed his horrendous environment that triggers his descent into madness and, ultimately, turns him into a

killer. She went even so far as to claim that, unlike to Pat McCabe's original, in Jordan's world it "deserves everything it gets" (10-13).

Leslie Dick expressed a similar viewpoint by emphasising Jordan's brilliance as the audience becomes complicit with a murderer. The viewers were on Francie's side because they saw the circumstances of his upbringing and how his warped world made sense to him. She further explained her initial surprise about the film: "[W]hat looks at the first to be an Irish art movie (...) jerkily transmutes into something else entirely, something not nearly so easy to categorise: a great film" (44). Furthermore, the critic argued that the film's success was based on the unique screenplay which was co-written by Pat McCabe and Neil Jordan:

This movie works because the script is careful, detailed and rock solid. It is structured entirely around a voice-over, so we both watch Francie and listen to his self-dramatisation, transforming each event, pushing it over the border into play. The momentum, the beautiful sudden rhythm of the film, is partly a function of the cinematography, so sure of itself, the relentless music, the simple magic realism of Francie's hallucinations. But it's also an effect of the torrent of words that make up Francie's inner world (44).

The movie's cinematography under the command of Adrian Biddle, as mentioned above, was rewarded the European Film Award for Best Cinematography in 1998.

Finally, Janet Maslin described in her *New York Times* review Jordan's brilliance in terms of pushing his audience to its boundaries. She argued that Jordan's films "at their best (*Mona Lisa*, *The Crying Game*, *Interview With the Vampire*) are perversely comfortable on such difficult terrain, contemplating the hidden extremes of human nature" (Maslin).

3.3. *Adam and Paul*

At its first weekend of release, *Adam and Paul* sensationally took second place at the Irish box office, behind Ben Stiller's *Dodgeball*. The movie's success even made international headlines. The American film magazine *Variety*, for instance, wrote that Abrahamson's "pic cost just £400.00 (\$500.000) but grossed \$700,000-plus in Ireland, making it the first movie backed by the Irish Film Board to earn more than its own budget at the local box office" (Dawtre 11). Despite its huge success and being crowned as the most successful independent Irish film in 2004, *Adam and Paul* did

not make it into the top ten movies at the Irish box office that year. In 2004, mainly British and U.S. productions were the most favoured cinema choices of the Irish audience. The top three movies were headed by *Shrek 2* (€5.3m), followed by *Harry Potter & the Prisoner of Azkaban* (€3.1m) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (€3.1m) (see ITFN ROI Top 10 Films 2004). Nevertheless, *Adam and Paul* was a critical and commercial success which greatly changed the Irish independent film scene.

The movie continued its triumph when it was rewarded with the Audience Award for Best Feature at the Galway Film Fleadh in 2004. That same year, Abrahamson was named Best Film Director for his debut film at the Irish Film and Television Awards. Furthermore, *Adam and Paul* was selected for various prestigious international film festivals, such as in Berlin, Toronto or Sofia. At the *Berlinale* in 2004, for instance, Abrahamson's production was screened to an enthusiastic audience at the festival's Panorama art house showcase. The Panorama programme shows a selection of films of both renowned and debutant directors who provide a new direction in independent cinema. Additionally, Mark O'Halloran was selected as the 2005 Irish Shooting Star at the Berlin International Film Festival. The shooting star programme aims at introducing and promoting Europe's most talented actors and actresses during special events held during the festival. His brilliant story was also named the winner at the Evening Standard British Film Award in the Best Screenplay category in 2004. Mark O'Halloran came up with the idea for the script while living as an unemployed actor on North Dublin's scruffy Parnell Square. Having become mesmerised by the drug addicts passing the square, O'Halloran started writing the script for *Adam and Paul*. With the movie being set in modern Dublin with its distinct identity, it is inevitably an Irish film. Nevertheless, Abrahamson believes that it follows European traditions of presenting a tragic scenario told in a humorous fashion. Hoping that his film would be accessible to the Irish as well as international audiences, Abrahamson was eager to show an authentic picture of his native country, yet ignored stereotypes altogether. Indeed, the movie's international success shows that Abrahamson and his team have found the right balance.

The movie continued its international success at the Gijón International Film Festival in 2005 where, sensationally, both Mark O'Halloran and Tom Murphy were awarded for their brilliant performances in the category Best Actor. Furthermore, Abrahamson was rewarded with the FIPRESCI (international critics) Prize and the

Grand Prix Jury Prize at the International Film Festival in Sofia in 2005. In the festival's nine years of running, it was the first time ever that one film gained both awards.

Just as fans and festival juries were in awe of Abrahamson's production, so were numerous critics. The renowned Irish Film Institute, for instance, wrote in its acclaimed review of the movie that

Adam and Paul is a unique hybrid of European influences and Dublin sensibilities shot through with an absurdist and often comic vision in the service of a deeply sensitive portrait of drug addiction. Central to its success is the assured consistency of its tone, but all of its elements – script, music, camerawork, use of locations and the utterly convincing central performances of O'Halloran and the late, wonderful Tom Murphy – make it not only an astonishing debut, but a film to view and review (Irish Film Board *Adam and Paul*).

The *Guardian*'s Peter Bradshaw labelled *Adam and Paul* an “uncompromising black comedy” which satisfies due to an “impressive conviction”. In his review, he further praised the movie's skilful borrowing from other cultural texts as well as its authentic representation of drug abuse: “There are some nods to Beckett and Laurel and Hardy, but these influences are worn lightly and intelligently, and the movie never glamorises drugs or tries to make its comedy on the subject dishonestly flippant” (Bradshaw). The BBC's film critic Jamie Russell, by contrast, considered the parallel between *Adam and Paul* and Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* as far-fetched and clumsy. In her downgrading review, she commented on the movie's shortcoming as the following:

Focussing on the aimless inertia of the junkie life as its heroes try and score a fix, its grim vision of inner city deprivation is unlikely to boost Dublin's tourist trade. (...) Stumbling around the city in a drugged-out haze that's slowly turning to desperate need, Adam and Paul reinvent slapstick into a withdrawal symptom comedy of errors. It's an awkward blend of styles with arty pretentious, as the reference to the meandering tramps of Samuel Beckett's existential play *Waiting For Godot* makes plain (Russell).

Lee Marshall praised O'Halloran skills as a writer, at the same time, however, he worried that the movie's stylised yet distinct Irish identity due to language and location could alienate international audiences, wondering whether “its sense of the tragic absurdity of life is just too Irish for abroad”. In his review for the British multimedia film magazine *Screen International*, Marshall further wrote: “[I]t's a risky exercise, and the moment audiences let the dialogue, or the duo's aimless progress

through Dublin, irritate rather than amuse and the whole thing drifts away like smoke from a crack spoon” (Marshall). Tim Robey, however, predicted *Adam and Paul* an international success in his review, claiming that it was one of the best movies ever made in Ireland and the UK:

Adam & Paul is an Irish film to make most English ones look like quaint rot. A day in the life of two homeless Dublin heroin addicts (...) – it’s the strongest, funniest, most despairing drug-themed movie from these isles since Danny Boyle’s *Trainspotting*. (...) The film is bleak but beautiful (...) and, when the pair finally score, it fully honours the bliss of their release, a rapt moment of epiphany that’s almost blinding (Robey).

In a review for the renowned film magazine *Sight & Sound*, Kevin Maher applauded the movie for its unique cinema experience due to debutant director Abrahamson’s unfussy direction, great script and brilliant actors. Furthermore, he claimed that

[a]ll this, combined with a perversely harsh grim-grey November-afternoon colour palette from cinematographer James Mather, makes *Adam & Paul*, for once, a genuine example of uncompromising film-making, and one of the most arresting movies to emerge from the Irish film industry in more than a decade (42).

Overwhelmed by the movie’s generally positive resonance, director Abrahamson said in an interview with the Irish Film & Television Network:

I am really heartened by the fact that people from all different backgrounds, different tastes in film and different expectations of what films are supposed to do can find things in *Adam and Paul*. It seems to have a very general, very broad resonance with people. There are definitely people who don’t like it but it seems to have hit the right chord with most (IFTN *Lenny and Jonny* on “*Adam & Paul*”).

Moira Horgan, Head of Marketing of the Irish Film Board, was involved in the project from the very start. The Irish Film Board granted Abrahamson and his team an ever so vital investment for the production to even start. In an interview, Horgan proudly stated that “[f]or a small Irish film to get such amazing reviews from the UK critics is a testament of everybody involved with *Adam & Paul*” (Irish Film Board *ADAM & PAUL*).

Especially Tom Murphy’s performance was hailed by critics and colleagues alike. Murphy was a dear friend of O’Halloran, who wrote the part of Paul especially for him. Tragically, Murphy was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma in 2007 and died very soon after. Asked about his friend’s acting in *Adam and Paul*, O’Halloran acknowledged it as the performance of his lifetime:

I think it's easily the greatest, the most perfect, the most beautiful performance in an Irish film I can think of. It's class. I absolutely hate method actors and what they do, the way they ruin films by the size of their own ego but he didn't even have an ego, he was just ... he was just the part. Very simple. Very beautiful (Stanley).

Numerous critics responded similarly to Murphy's brilliant personification of the figure of Paul, who was repulsive and adorable at the same time. Tim Robey wrote in his *The Telegraph*-review that it was "Murphy's face – slow, vulnerable, painfully lovable – which really gets to you: this has got to be one of the performances of the year" (Robey).

The success of Abrahamson and O'Halloran's small project *Adam and Paul*, however, did not stop in 2004 or 2005. What started as a small debut project became a wonderful story of success that has changed Ireland's independent movie scene vigorously. In 2009, the Dublin Film Critics Circle named *Adam and Paul*, together with Steve McQueen's *Hunger*, as tied Best Irish Films of the Decade. Abrahamson's follow-up independent movie *Garage* (2007) came second, while John Carney's *Once* (2006) was awarded third place.

3.3. *Garage*

In 2007, *Garage* was the highest grossing Irish film, earning more than €350,000 at the local box office. Despite its critical acclaim and notable success at the box office, *Garage* was not among the top ten films of 2007 in its native country. Once again, Irish films were mainly beaten by Hollywood productions. The most successful movie of 2007 in Ireland was *The Simpsons Movie* (€5.4m), followed by *Shrek The Third* (€4.5m) and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (€3.5m) (see IFTN ROI Box Office Chart 2007).

Abrahamson received his most notable distinction for his work in May 2007 when *Garage* was selected for the prestigious independent programme Director's Fortnight, which was part of the 60th Cannes Film Festival. The Artistic Director of the programme, Olivier Père, raved about the Irish film and rightly predicted its international success. In an interview with the Irish Film Board he said: "Garage is such a wonderful movie. It is beautifully made and very moving with an amazing performance from Pat Shortt who will be the great discovery of the international

audience at the Fortnight this year” (Irish Film Board *Director’s Fortnight*). Following a positive response at its screening, *Garage* was sensationally awarded the CICAIE Art and Essai Cinema Prize. The CICAIE is the International Confederation of Arthouse Cinemas, whose jury consists of its member. Abrahamson’s movie was the second ever Irish production after Loach’s *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* to be successful in Cannes. Only a year later, Ireland’s strong film scene was recognised in Cannes for the third time when Steve McQueen’s Irish-British co-production *Hunger* won the Camera d’Or Prize for Best Feature. Russell Edwards, a critic for the American entertainment magazine *Variety*, however, gave a withering verdict after the movie’s screening at the Cannes Film Festival. The critic dismissed Abrahamson’s production as bland and predicted that it would be unappealing to international audiences. In his review, he wrote:

Strained humor gives way to maudlin melodrama in dull Irish pic ‘Garage’. With heavy-handed poignancy and clearly indicated symbolism, this retread of a threadbare concept depicts the village life of a slightly brain-damaged man. Public and private Irish coin should insure domestic interest, but on international scene (...) this mawkish vehicle will quickly run out of gas (Edwards).

Despite Edwards’ concern, *Garage* boldly continued its remarkable success on the international stage. Even though the movie was distributed in various European countries, such as the UK, France or Portugal, its main focus was to be shown at film festivals, usually for small-budget productions. *Garage* was chosen to be showcased at numerous prestigious international film festivals, such as in San Francisco, Toronto or at the British Film Institute, London Film Festival. At the 2007 Turin Film Festival, it was declared the winner in the Best Feature Film category. In November 2007, *Garage* gained three prizes at three different festivals at the same weekend. Not only was Abrahamson’s production named the winner of the Jury Award at Festival de Chatenay-Malabry but it was also successful at Cinessone Festival where it gained the Grand Prix Award. Additionally, that same weekend, Pat Shortt received the Best Actor Award at the Monte Carlo Film Festival. Moreover, Shortt jointly won the Best Actor category at the Evening Standard British Film Awards together with Michael Sheen, who was recognised for his performance in *Frost/Nixon* (2008). That year, even four Irish movies were shortlisted for the prestigious awards, highlighting Ireland’s blossoming film scene. Along with *Garage*, the acclaimed productions *Hunger*, *In Bruges* and *The Escapist* were nominated in various categories.

At the 2008 Irish Film and Television Awards, *Garage* emerged as one of the top winners of the night. Abrahamson's film picked up four main awards after having been nominated in eleven categories. Most importantly, *Garage* was named the winner in the category Best Film. Furthermore, Lenny Abrahamson was awarded Best Director, while Mark O'Halloran received the award for Best Film Script. Additionally, Pat Shortts's brilliant performance was honoured with the award for Best Actor in a Lead Role. The IFTA 2008 was especially a momentous night for writer/director duo O'Halloran and Abrahamson. Not only were they rewarded for their successful movie but for their acclaimed RTÉ drama series *Prosperity* as well. The pair also scooped the top awards in the Best Television Script and Best Television Director categories.

Garage received mostly favourable reviews regarding its authentic representation as well as its familiarity with the main character. Sukhdev Sandhu, writing for the *Daily Telegraph*, for instance, suggested that Abrahamson's production was

a magnificent film about a man we all know. Sweet, courteous, middle-aged, a bachelor. The kind of man who lives in bedsits or in his deceased parent's home. The kind of man teenagers rag. (...) Shortt gives a performance that is brave, true, unsentimental, free of pathos (Sandhu).

Same as with *Adam and Paul*, writer O'Halloran wanted to tell a story by saying less. Sandhu acknowledges the writer's brilliance, crafting a screenplay which "has sparse delicacy that can evoke mountains of emotion in the gaps between sentences" (Sandhu). Not everybody, however, took a liking to O'Halloran's minimalistic approach. Harry Guerin from RTÉ, for instance, criticised the screenwriter for not exploiting some characters' potential. Instead of focusing on the movie's leitmotif, which is stripping it down to the basics, O'Halloran should have granted more insight into other characters and their backgrounds. Guerin argued that the script had only one failing, which was that

more work needed to be done on the supporting characters – while less can be more on film, it's not always the case. Duff's character, like Wycherly's, had more potential than what has ended up on screen, and having featured both in some very memorable scenes, it's frustrating that they just disappear from the film as it draws to a close (Guerin).

The protagonist's depth as well as Shortt's wonderful performance were celebrated by most critics. *Timeout Magazine* emphasised the astonishing insight Abrahamson

offered by his leading character. Furthermore, it praises that instead of focusing on his stigmatisation by his fellow town people, the audience received a one of a kind glimpse of Josie's kind soul. In his review, Wally Hammond suggested that

Abrahamson and O'Halloran apply implicit criticism of injurious small town bigotry, but they content themselves in mapping out Josie's life in plain view, avoiding reductionism, didacticism – or condescension of their own – by giving full attention to the scope of richness of Josie's own experience, notably his appreciation of beauty, the solace he takes in a horse, and the balm he offers a grieving man (Hammond).

Peter Bradshaw criticised *Garage* in his *The Guardian* review for being an overfamiliar tale with an ending too inevitably tragic for his taste. The critic would have urged Abrahamson to imagine a less expected fate for Josie. Nevertheless, he wrote that "Garage is superbly paced and controlled, and Abrahamson creates something visually stunning with landscapes that (...) are beautiful yet daunting". Despite his point of criticism concerning the movie's predictability, Bradshaw also remarked on the lead actors brilliance by claiming that *Garage* "is a gem of a film nonetheless, and Shortt's performance is outstanding" (Bradshaw *Garage*).

Jennie Kermode from the Scottish Film online platform *Eye For Film* acknowledged the movie's message; however, she considered *Garage*'s slow pace as troublesome. In her review, she wrote that despite it being "[s]mart and brilliantly scripted with a solid central performance, *Garage* is nevertheless a difficult film to watch. It drags in places, and, though viewers will sympathise with Josie, they might also share the locals' desire to avoid staying long in his company". Even though Kermode feared that the movie would not attract large audiences, she praised *Garage* as "an important piece of work, recording aspects of human experience which are generally ignored" (Kermode). Contrary to Kermode's opinion, *Hotpress*' Tara Brady applauded movie's unique tempo in her film analysis. Additionally to *Garage*'s slow pace, Brady pointed out the movie's picturesque symbolism which contributes to special film experience. In her review, the critic described Abrahamson and O'Halloran's new film as

unhurried, starkly composed and quietly devastating. Shots of discontinued railway track give way to shots of barely used petrol pumps. Even the low electrical hum that passes for noise pollution in rural Ireland is scarcely discernible. In *Garage* nothingness takes more than a supporting role. (...) [T]he low-key naturalism is played to tragicomic effect. This rural Ireland is as brutal as the aesthetic (Brady).

Finally, film critic Nigel Andrews outlined *Garage*'s unique essence based on a superb script and its tasteful interpretation by Abrahamson and Shortt in his review for *The Financial Times*:

This irresistible low-budget tragicomedy from Ireland must have been by rubbing two Euros together and waiting for a spark. It takes two minutes to come. Then the warmth rises from the forlorn out-of-town garage where podgy, smiling, gauche Josie (Pat Shortt) potters about as caretaker. (...) Pat Short lives the role of Josie as if it is living him. Every sparse line of the dialogue is delivered less as spontaneous conversation, more as formal notice of parley in a life that is a daily battle with social trepidation. Screenwriter Mark O'Halloran and director Lenny Abrahamson, who made *Adam and Paul*, may be the best thing that has happened to Irish cinema (Andrews).

The Dublin Film Critics honoured *Garage* as the Best Irish Film of 2007. John Carney's *Once* was named second best, followed by Tom Collin's drama *Kings*. The same association, consisting of professional film critics, rewarded Abrahamson's second ever professional film as Second Best Film of the Decade in 2009.

4. Issues of Irish Identity

4.1. Religion

The old hegemony of Catholicism and nationalism derives from the 19th century, a time when religion was the most important signifier to stimulate nationalist movements against Protestant England. Catholicism was strongly intertwined with nationalism and its sense of communal Irish identity. As Penet points out, throughout the 19th century, the "alliance between the Catholic Church on the one hand, and nationalism and popular forces on the other hand, grew even stronger and it eventually gave birth to a triangular structure of power – Church, State and Nation – which was to dominate most of the 20th century" (144).

Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, for instance, reflects the dualism between nationalist forces and the Catholic Church accurately. The Irish Free State took the Catholic faith as its main ideology and despite state and church formally being separate, there was no clear distinction between the secular and the sacred. Church and state were in an interrelation with one another to secure stability for both.

Moreover, the Catholic Church was granted a say in the health and education sector. In *The Butcher Boy*, Francie Brady is sent to various educational institutions run by the Catholic Church. Director Neil Jordan critically displays the church's failure in the education system due to horrific methods of discipline. Moreover, in the figure of Francie's depressed mother Annie, the Church's emaciated demands of women are highlighted. As Tom Inglis points out, both the Irish state and its society demanded of the people to be devote Catholics in order to gain success and prestige: "In other words, being a good Catholic helped get contracts and jobs, be elected, be educated, be well-known and liked" (qtd. in Penet 145). Anti-liberal views promoting the spiritual over the material dominated Irish society up until the 1960s.

The status of Catholics in Ireland, however, has experienced a significant downfall during the past few decades. In a country that once was renowned for its devout catholic faith, a growing secularisation has recently been noticeable. Ireland experienced economic and social change in the 1960s. With the invention and distribution of television, questioning attitudes and secular values grew. By the 1970s, Ireland had also integrated into modern Europe politically and culturally, most notably due to becoming a member of the European Union in 1973 and eventually paving the way for the Celtic Tiger at the turn of the century. Figures of attendance at mass have dropped considerably in the last decades, while family life seems to have been replaced by economic success and consumerism. Whereas in 1975, 89.1 per cent of the Irish attended a church service at least once a week, in a 2006 survey conducted by RTE, it was only 48 per cent any more. Even though these figures mirror developments that are taking place all over Europe (with the exception of Malta and Poland), the shift of religious attitudes has got a special significance in Ireland due to its extraordinary alliance between religion, state and society. Since the early 1990s, shocking revelations about paedophilia and admitted child abuse have shattered the reputation of the Catholic Church in Ireland. This development has also been reflected in numerous recent movies which have not shied commenting on rather uncomfortable events, such as child abuse. While a critical and angry discussion of this state of affairs would have been almost impossible only a few decades ago, modern Irish movies do address these crimes which have become a national trauma. These films authentically deal with this dark chapter of the Irish Catholic Church which, sadly, has been a common element in the

Church's domination of education and institutional care in Ireland for most of the twentieth century. (...) [Moreover,] the films have depicted the stultifying and oppressive impact on people's lives in Ireland of an authoritarian institution that saw no distinction between Church and State and exercised its authority with a dogmatic and rigid discipline (McLoone *Culture* 111).

4.1.1. *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*

The time period depicted in *The Wind That Shakes the Barley's* does not define itself in religious but political terms and thus differs from later events which occurred in Northern Ireland. Numerous representatives of the Catholic Church, however, in fact voiced their disapproval of British oppression and argued in support of resistance. In 1918, for instance, Catholic Bishops, who were meeting at Maynooth Seminary issued a statement on conscription: "We consider that conscription forced in this way upon Ireland is an oppressive and inhuman law which the Irish people have a right to resist by every means that are consonant with the law of God" (Coogan 88). With its support of nationalist movements, the Catholic Church experienced a rise in popularity and secured itself a voice in political and social concerns for the future. The rising oppositional developments of the 19th century resulted in an even stronger and more powerful hegemony between the Catholic Church and nationalism.

Even though the war was not fought for sectarian reasons, religion played an important role in the struggle for independence and in the lives of the Irish, and this is also imbedded in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*. The scene of a priest paying the rebels a visit and granting them absolution the night before the Volunteers' ambush on the next day exemplifies this suggestion. After the priest's blessing, Loach immediately cuts to the flying column when the men are about to launch the ambush. The sudden cut signals a connection between religion and war and, moreover, creates the impression that the war is backed by the Catholic Church.

In another key scene of *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, the church's omnipresent influence is emphasised. The Catholic Church had a significant role in the Irish Free State and, thus, argued for the Treaty in order to keep the power relations as they were. Therefore, the local priest condemns the ongoing violence after the passing of the Treaty and appeals for peace. While he urges his followers to seize the opportunity for prosperity, anti-treatyists vent their displeasure. The

overpowering status of the Catholic Church becomes visible when the priest demands of the people to be quiet and even threatens them with excommunication. Damien bids defiance to the priest's call for peace: "You can't have a fair election when the most powerful country in the world threatens war! Not the will of the people ... but the fear of the people!" (Lavery 133). As a consequence, Damien is asked to leave church and numerous anti-treatyists follow him.

Another link between religion and warfare is achieved by the Saint Christopher's medal given to Damien by Sinéad. Saint Christopher is a saint venerated by the Roman Catholic Church and is listed as a martyr killed due to his religious beliefs in the third century. The medal belonged to Micheail, who dramatically died a martyr's death also. The young man was brutally killed by the British Black and Tans because of his act of defiance of not stating his name in English but Irish. Both men heroically died for what they believed in and, thus, a parallel between a holy saint and an Irish rebel is drawn.

A further sectarian connection to the War of Independence is established by the character of landlord Hamilton. He is an Anglo-Irish merchant and represents the class that ruled Ireland at that time. Their power originates from the time of the Penal Laws, which were passed in 1691 in order to thwart constant threat to British rule. While the Catholic majority was entirely deprived of political power, British settlers were favoured. Consequently, the ruling class consisted mostly of Protestants, whereas 75% of the population found themselves underprivileged when it came to suffrage, freehold or unemployment. Conversion to Protestantism was the only option to escape this overarching form of discrimination. The Penal Laws influenced and worsened the division of the two confessional communities sustainably:

Gegen Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts standen sich damit in Irland zwei Nationen gegenüber, die ihre jeweilige Identität aus einer Mischung von ethnischer Zugehörigkeit und religiöser Orientierung gewinnen. ‚Katholizismus‘ und ‚Protestantismus‘ wurden dabei zu umfassenden kulturellen, ethnischen und politischen Identifizierungsangeboten, die die politischen Konfliktlagen bis in die Gegenwart hinein mitbestimmen. Die Penal Laws gebaren das moderne Irland, gar nicht so sehr durch ihren materiellen Gehalt, sondern vielmehr in ihrer Symbolik der Ausschließung (Noetzel 22).

With the character of Lord Hamilton and the class he represents, the conflict gains a religious dimension. The merchants' unpopularity results from their confidence in thinking they would be right to rule the country. Hamilton, too, shows lack of empathy

and denounces Ireland as a “priest-infected backwater”. Standing in stark opposition to the simple and degenerated Irish cottages, Hamilton’s mansion captures the defiance and arrogance of his class.

4.1.2. *The Butcher Boy*

Neil Jordan satirically displays the relationship between religion and society during the 1960s in *The Butcher Boy*. The director critically outlines the impact of religion on its community as well as what the Catholic Church expected from them. Until the mid-1960s, the Catholic Church was actively involved in social polar questions, such as education and family matters. Members of the religious community were expected to be good and devout Catholics to gain success and prestige. Especially women were required to live up to an idealised standard of a good Catholic mother to secure the most important institution, that of the family. In *The Butcher Boy*, Jordan deconstructs the Catholic Church and its institutions and symbols in order to highlight its suffocating influence on society.

Religion’s impact and its omnipresence become noticeable within the very first minutes of *The Butcher Boy*. Francie and his best friend Joe steal apples from the Nugent family’s garden. The scene clearly draws parallels to the biblical events in the Garden of Eden. Francie Brady, however, does not need a snake to be persuaded to steal the apples – he takes them of his own accord. His malice becomes even more highlighted as the events of this scene take place against the background of a towering church.

The most prominent signifier of Catholicism’s ubiquity to the Irish people, however, is the character of Mary. Instead of Jesus, the Saviour, it is his mother who is the central religious figure in the movie. A figure that combines “motherhood and chastity, exalting women in so far as they avoid the arrows of desire” (C. McCabe 67) has been a central figure in post-Protestant Ireland. Another reason for her popularity among Irish Catholics is her historical and political value. The Virgin Mary is also “an important symbol of the theological difference between Irish Catholics and English Protestants, and thus has always functioned as a figure for nationalism” (Cullingford 208). Moreover, she stands for the desexualised mother who has been considered as the prime role-model for Irish women. All the virtues Mary stands for is what Annie

Brady is not able to cope with nor to live up to. Annie Brady is “a walking, trembling reminder of the damage that a national cult of stoic maternal sacrifice can do to women” (McLoone *Film* 137). Annie’s self-inflicted death is a result of her inability to conform to the idealised picture that is expected from her. She considers herself a failure as a wife, mother and housewife: Her unhappy marriage is filled with frustration and mutual incriminations, her disobedient son causes her great sorrow, and her house is a mess most of the time. By contrast, Mrs Nugent does fulfil all these noble expectations, such as keeping a perfect household.



Fig.1 Sinéad O'Connor as the Virgin Mary in *The Butcher Boy*

The casting of Sinéad O'Connor for the role of the Virgin Mary was highly controversial and also a stroke of genius at the same time. She, too, had been expelled from school and sent to reform school in her childhood. Moreover, she has always been very outspoken and critical towards Catholicism throughout her career. Having been a victim herself, O'Connor is probably Ireland's most visible crusader against child abuse. Colin McCabe even goes so far as to suggest O'Connor has

embodied an attitude to sexuality and religion which spelt death to the masculine theocracy which had held sway of Ireland since the middle of the nineteenth century and which had used its grip on the institutions of the independent state to abuse generations of children (67).

The casting of a well-known opponent of the church to personify one of the most idealised figures of Catholicism is symbolically and politically appropriate for Jordan's critical reflection on Ireland and religion.

Additionally, O'Connor's colloquial language and thick Dublin accent contribute to the deconstruction of the Holy Mother further. She and Francie engage in mostly mundane conversations, resulting in an ordinary and friendly representation rather than a sublime one. Instead of a distant image of a role model, Jordan creates "an image of her as guardian of the dispossessed rather than a contradictory identity (*virgin* mother) that women should spend their lives trying to imitate" (McLoone *Film* 249). Jordan's version of Our Lady does not shy expletives either. When the woeful Francie tells her about his worries about Joe, she counters with the phrase, "Ah, for fuck's sake, Francie". Moreover, the fact that the visions of her may only be due to Francie's deranged mind result in a deconstructed image of a figure that has always had an unquestionable place in Irish society. In the Brady home, for instance, there hangs a kitschy and garish portrait of Mary showing her Immaculate Heart. This representation is traditionally linked to Our Lady of Fatima, who "was particularly concerned about the spread of communism, and demanded that Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart" (Cullingford 196). Father Tiddly's sermon about Mary appearing to the three little peasant children is a specific reference to certain events in Portugal in 1917. Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to three chosen children bringing a special message. She allegedly warned them against the Russian revolution and impending wars in the near future. Virgin Mary prophesying to little children has been a consoling myth and "a significant feature of Catholicism in the last century" (C. McCabe 67). Therefore, Jordan's choice of representing the figure Mary in the same way as Our Lady of Fatima is appropriate as his movie critically mocks the influence of the Russian nuclear threat and resulting paranoia.



Fig.2 The Virgin Mary as a symbol of kitsch (*The Butcher Boy*)

O'Connor's character, however, is presented as somewhat ambivalent. She is not reliable in supplying information and in giving advice to the young protagonist. Not only does Francie rarely receive accurate information from her, her words of advice backfire most of the time. The Virgin Mary mentioning Phillip and the goldfish again in the last scene might even be perceived as malicious. After having spent most of his lifetime in a mental institution in order to abandon his inner demons, the Virgin Mary raises the topic which has triggered so many excruciating events in the past for Francie.

In Jordan's movie, different institutions which aim at reforming or healing miserably fail in their mission. While the mental home, or "garage" as Francie calls it, breaks Annie Brady, Bennie also experiences a traumatic childhood in a reform school. Most notably, however, Jordan's critical views are expressed in the failure of religious educational institutions which Francie is sent to. Those industrial schools were "the result of a system that saw the social provisions of the Victorian British state entirely delivered into the hands of the Catholic Church" (C. McCabe 22). The ultimate parody of the Irish education system can be found in the scene in which Francie creates havoc in Mrs Nugent's house, thinking he is in a pig's school. In one of those educational institutions run by the church, Francie is exposed to sexual abuse by a priest. The delicate subject, which is deeply imbedded in the modern national trauma, shall be discussed in another chapter.

4.1.3. Abrahamson's *Adam and Paul* and *Garage*

Adam and Paul and *Garage*, both depicting contemporary Ireland, show an Irish society that is less attached and ruled by religion. Set during the economic boom in the mid- and late-2000s, Abrahamson's protagonists mirror the shift from a once renowned devout Catholic country to a secular society driven by consumerism. Between the 1960s and 1980s, Ireland's society was exposed to more liberal and secular influences. Among them was the application for EEC membership in 1961 as well as the second Vatican council of 1962, which encouraged an adaption of Catholicism to the modern world. The decree acknowledged the notion of pluralism and, thus, "put an end to the traditional conception of the supreme rights of truth and it put new emphasis on the rights of the individuals [...]" (Penet 146). Liam Ryan, who entitles the island after the council "the second Ireland", claims that these recent developments "brought economic as well as psychological transformation to the country by providing a solid economic base" (qtd. in Penet 147). By integrating the Irish economy with that of Europe in 1975 and, ultimately, the rest of the world, materialistic values and the standard of living changed within the society. Another major challenge to catholic spiritual values was the emergence of RTÉ as the national television broadcaster in 1962 by slowly replacing the institution of church as an authority of education. Inglis describes TV's influence on Irish society as follows:

TV brought the sophisticated glossy image of urban life into the heartland of rural Ireland. It provided a constant reminder of what most Irish people were not. The demand for a modern Western lifestyle did not lag far behind the advent of television. Indeed television played a crucial role in developing and maintaining consumer demand, and this stimulated increased production. Television, then, was an important factor in the second stage of Irish modernisation which brought an end to the dominance of rural life centred on small-scale agricultural production, and its replacement by industry, urbanity and individuality, all of which added to the decline of power of the Catholic Church (qtd. in Penet 147).

The 1980s and 1990s saw additional liberal reforms which undermined the Church's say on social and political matters further, such as the debate about divorce.

Observers argue that all these developments, which go back to the 1960s, paved the way for the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s. As a consequence, Irish society's secularisation was enhanced further. Through the integration of Ireland's economy

with those of the rest of the world, combined with a more liberal outlook, Irish society changed in various values and priorities:

The materialistic mentality of the Irish proliferated as material conditions in Ireland dramatically improved in the 1960s. Even though Irish economic performance stagnated in the 1970s and 1980s, values and attitudes continued to change. By the 1980s the Irish had become the most materialistic nation in surveys taken of member states in the European Union. The surge in economic growth that has occurred since 1993 as part of the Celtic Tiger phenomenon has added new momentum to social change in Ireland (White 2002).

These days, it is no longer necessary to be regarded as a devout and practising Catholic to gain social prestige but rather what job you have, where you live and what car you have. Due to the de-institutionalisation of the Catholic Church, its community fell apart. Ireland's new society, it could be argued, is the community that belongs to the Celtic Tiger, providing a new kind of stability. With the media questioning the Catholic Church's primacy in addition to the culture of the time triggered by and correlating with the economic boom, modern Ireland has turned into a real Tiger society. Furthermore, the Irish Catholic Church experienced a massive breach of trust when

its own hypocrisies were exposed. In 1994, when Father Brendan Smyth was arrested for paedophilia, it turned out his immediate church supervisor and several bishops had been aware of his abuse of children for decades and had shuttled him from parish rather than alert the authorities. Revelations of behaviour that was so fundamentally at odds with the teachings of the faith eroded the authority of the institutional church (Lynch 100).

A Eurobarometer survey claims that whereas in 1975, 89.1 per cent of the Irish attended a church service at least once a week, in 1999, it was only around 64 per cent (qtd. in M. O'Connell 61ff). In a 2006 survey conducted by RTÉ, the percentage of those who attend mass at least once a week dropped to 48 per cent (see CatholicCulture.org). In 2011, the archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, warned that only "18 per cent of the Catholic population in the archdiocese of Dublin now attend Mass on Sundays, which was lower than any diocese in other parts of the country that had an older age profile" (J. Smyth).

Religion is basically absent in the lives of the characters in Abrahamson's movies *Adam and Paul* and *Garage*, which are set in Celtic Tiger Ireland. In *Adam and Paul*, there is only one event which reveals a religious reference: Matthew's

Month's Mind. Typically an Irish tradition, a Month's Mind is a requiem mass celebrated a month after the deceased passed away. In memory of the deceased, family and friends attend mass and possibly have a meal together or share drinks afterwards. Due to the hostile reactions of their acquaintances at Stephen's Green, one is left with the assumption that they hold Adam and Paul partly accountable for their mutual friend Matthew's death. Even though it is never mentioned, it appears that Matthew was a heroin addict, too, and used to go on drug binges with Adam and Paul. The two protagonists, however, fail to show sympathy by talking about not being able to remember their friend's death owing to their excessive drug consumption. As Gillespie argues, even though Adam and Paul "barely acknowledge or even react to what transpires [,] [i]t is not callousness, but a drug-induced solipsism that governs their behaviour. They simply cannot comprehend anything beyond their cravings" (49). Matthew's Month's Mind is mentioned numerous times throughout the movie and, rather surprisingly, Adam and Paul manage to join family and friends later in the pub "The Coal Bunker". The same observation can be made in *Garage*. Despite being set on rural grounds where the Catholic faith as well as its active practise was usually more popular than in the cities, *Garage's* main characters are no devout Christians either. David wearing a T-Shirt with the picture of Jesus Christ is most likely meant in an ironical way. The teenager is the representative of the modern country dweller with rebellious attitudes toward a ruling establishment such as the Catholic Church.

Even though the Irish Catholic Church has not lost all of its power, its influence on society has become significantly weakened over the past decades. Irish people now hold more liberal and secular views, combined with a sense of identity more open to others, may it be foreign economic ties or cultural influences. On the other side, however, with religion's downgrading, it has become harder for devout Irish Catholics to "live out their faith in an institutionalised manner" (Penet 149). The current re-definition of the status of the Irish Catholic Church, however, does not mean it is disappearing all together. Despite loosening its institutional power on traditional strongholds, such as the health or educational system, connections between the church and the individual remain strong. With a majority of the Irish population still considering themselves Catholics, it appears that they prefer a more private than a communal setting of expressing their faith. With its omnipotence

shrunk these days, “the Irish no longer expect the Catholic institution to influence Irish society and politics and, as a result, to define Irish identity for them” (Penet 150).

4.2. The Representation of Landscape and its Deconstruction

Ireland’s special relationship between land and identity has thoroughly been depicted both in Irish writing and filmmaking. Luke Gibbons goes even so far in claiming that, in fact, too much emphasis was put on the cinematic representation of landscape. He argues that “landscape has tended to play a leading role in Irish cinema, often upstaging both the main characters and narrative themes in the construction of Ireland on the screen” (qtd. in Meaney 237). Romantic images of rural life have dominated cinematic portrayals of Ireland, which were mainly American productions. The earlier cinematic treatment of land and rural life focused on a masculine landscape of windswept hills near dangerous cliffs and a wild sea. Furthermore, the grinding labour of what it takes to till a field, for instance, was emphasised. Flaherty’s *Man of Aran* (1934), Ford’s *The Quiet Man* (1952) as well as Sheridan’s *The Field* (1990) portray male protagonists who are either trying to tame the rough Irish landscape or have a special connection to it. Ireland’s iconic portrayal of land is that of the West of the island in the 19th century, when the nation was “struggling into being from economic, political and cultural domination” (McLoone *Culture* 83). Full of political and ideological significance, landscape has always been a profound theme in the nationalist self-image. Recent productions portraying modern Ireland, however, writers and directors have moved towards a re-imagination of traditional representations of landscapes. Representations of both the countryside and the urban space are now questioning archetypical notions of the Irish landscape.

4.2.1. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

Landscape as well as possession of land is deeply imbedded in the national Irish psyche. Just like religion, the concept of land and landownership was firmly linked to nationalism, which is the leitmotif in Loach’s masterpiece *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*. During King James’ I reign, the plantation of Ulster was ordered in 1609,

resulting in a new colonial population and the dispossession of domestic families. Irish farmers now had to work for the new owners or were forced to settle with smaller, less profitable land compared to their earlier possessions. Cromwell's invasion of the island in the 1640s and the following confiscations and resettlements worsened the living conditions for the Irish land owners from all social classes. The native Irish were forcibly evicted and had to move to the less fertile land in the West ("To Hell or Connaught"). Due to these developments, "only 14 per cent of the land remained in Irish Catholic ownership by 1703" (McLoone *Culture* 84). When the Penal Laws were passed in the 18th century to secure ultimate power to the Protestant rule, the ultimate shift of Catholic to Protestant land ownership took place. Among numerous other discriminating laws, one act of 1704 ruled out Catholics to own land and, thus, suggesting economic ruin to non-Protestant families. The act dictated that

no Catholic could purchase any interest in land other than a lease of thirty-one years or under. No Catholic could acquire land from a Protestant by marriage or inheritance. A Catholic could not dispose of his estate by will; it was automatically divisible on his death among all his sons. However, if the eldest son became a member of the established church he would receive the whole estate (Edwards 177).

When Ireland was suffering from a potato blight in 1845, it had disastrous consequences for Ireland as its peasantry was wholly dependent on the potato crop. The resulting Great Famine of 1845-50 entailed disastrous aftermaths. The famine also brought more misery to the issue of landownership as it was:

Many lost their footing on the land because, as the Famine raged, the landlords responded by evicting their starving peasants, throwing them out onto the roads to die and or to perish in disease-ridden, over-crowded cities (McLoone *Culture* 84).

Over a million people died from starvation or diseases, whereas as many fled the devastation by emigrating, resulting in a decline of population by 20 per cent. Unjust laws, iniquitous land distributions and the bitter legacy of the latest potato crop incited an intensified sense of opposition. Nationalists called for economic and political home-rule based on one sole principle, which was land. As McLoone argues,

[p]ost-Famine Irish nationalism, therefore, was built on a fundamental principle – the land of Ireland for the people of Ireland – and the struggle over land became the key element in the growth and spread of a nationalist consciousness from the 1850s on. The bitter legacy of the Famine influenced the nature of this nationalism, imbuing it with a certain degree of anti-British feeling [...] (*Culture* 84).

Cultural nationalism was focused on the emphasis of rural life and its anti-industrial traditions to differentiate themselves from the colonial oppressor who was in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. In comparison to more powerful countries in Europe or the USA, Ireland's economy was relatively underdeveloped at the beginning of the twentieth century with the majority working in the agricultural sector. Irish culture, therefore, was based on its rural economy and lifestyle and meant an "almost total elision of the Irish city from nationalist culture" (McLoone *Film* 19). The portrayal of land and rural life during that time became one of the key elements to display cultural nationalism and its imaginings. These profound representations focused mainly on landscapes from the West of Ireland, which was also the furthest away from the hostile neighbour. The West of the small island stood for tradition and harsh beauty and, thus, symbolised the essence of Irishness. Furthermore, Gaelic traditions, such as the Gaelic language or the game Hurling, were taken up again to reinforce Ireland's dissociation from Britain.

The Wind That Shakes the Barley is set in the early 1920s, in the midst of the Anglo-Irish War of Independence and the cultural revival of the Celtic lifestyle. Loach's film portrays historical events in the middle of the archetypical landscape of the West of Ireland. The movie's depiction of Mother Nature is just as a nationalist artist would have painted a landscape during the Celtic Revival. Furthermore, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* deals with aftermaths of famine and land dispossession and, thus, mirrors watershed-events of Irish mentality.

The Irish landscape, especially the countryside, plays an important role in Loach's depiction of the flying column's warfare. Even though there were nationalist forces in the capital as well, most prominently under Michael Collin's commando, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley's* setting is vital to understand the nationalist developments during that time. The Volunteers' knowledge of the rural regions around Cork gives them an advantage over their British enemies. Furthermore, in numerous scenes it seems as though the romantic green idyll is disturbed by the oppressing troops. One could argue that the fight for the Irish nation and its independence becomes visualised through the use of landscape.



Fig.3 Characters are playing a game of Hurling in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

In the opening scene, for instance, Damien, Teddy and their friends are playing a game of Hurling, a Gaelic sport that is closely associated with the Irish Renaissance and identity. Engaging in team sports was banned due to the law that forbade gatherings of groups. Playing it, therefore, was considered as an act of defiance and a signal of nationalism to the British. The group of men is playing the traditional sport in a peaceful scenery dominated by lush green colours with traditional Irish music in the background. However, the idyll will soon be disturbed by the violence of the infamous Black and Tans. The destruction of the small cottage which serves as a key location in the movie becomes the emblem of the deliberate and almost barbarian violence of British soldiers: “It is a scenario that taps into the very heart of Irish nationalist discourse and Loach’s radical anti-imperialist message is here inscribed into the very landscape that he recreates” (Horgan 88). In *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, both landscape and cottage symbolise political and ideological developments of that specific time. The beauty of Loach’s landscape, therefore, mirrors a national tradition and trauma of land and land dispossession as a political category.

4.2.2. *The Butcher Boy*

Neil Jordan’s movie *The Butcher Boy* deconstructs numerous idealised conceptions of Irish identity. Stereotypical representations, like those of characters or the Irish

landscape, are played with or even subverted. These ambiguities of the Irish national psyche are addressed in *The Butcher Boy* in various ways.

A striking fantasy scene that decomposes the stereotypical representation of Irish landscape is shown when Francie is found by the police after having lived with his dead father for a while. During a sedatives-induced dream, Francie wakes up on top of a mountain in the middle of lush green grass, surrounded by white snowflakes. To his astonishment, Joe appears next to him, with a large blue lake situated below them. The happenings are set against a panoramic view of a beautiful Irish landscape of land and water. The picturesque scenery is soaked in green and blue colours creating a harmonious and calm atmosphere. Moments after Francie has asked his friend whether it is actually their lake behind him, an atomic bomb appears to explode in the middle of the peaceful lake. As a gigantic mushroom cloud is rising upon the lake, its dark colours create a dangerous and frightening picture. Soon, the green fields will be covered with grey ash and dust, conveying a feeling of approaching death. Infected with the general paranoia on the Cold War, Francie immediately blames the Russians for the attack: "Oh no, the Communists!" The scene was shot in the well-known valley of Glendalough in Co. Wicklow, which is an important beauty spot for Ireland's tourist economy. Glendalough's landscape symbolises the stereotypical and romanticised image of Ireland, which has dominated cinematic representation for decades. With the eruption of the atomic bomb, Ireland's natural beauty is blown away and leaves its lush landscape behind in devastation. Jordan deconstructs this famous typical representation of Irish landscape and belies the audience's expectations.



Fig.4 An atomic bomb destroys the picturesque landscape in *The Butcher Boy*

Jordan creates a very similar feeling in the following dream sequence in which the two boys wander through their hometown Clones in the aftermath of the nuclear catastrophe. They are surrounded by burnt down houses and cars, scattered with dead bodies, symbolised by pigs. Francie and Joe seem to be the only ones left “in this universe on this bitter, bitter day for this lovely town when the world had ended.” The voice-over’s apocalyptic comment that “this old town has had it” can be seen as a substitute for Ireland itself. Only then a man on a horse appears who looks like an insect but is dressed like a priest. “Oh Frances”, he says in Father Tiddley’s voice, “you have unlocked something very precious.”



Fig. 5 Francie (Eamonn Owens) and Joe (Alan Boyle) walking through the destroyed town (*The Butcher Boy*)

These bizarre images violently deconstruct the audience's notion and expectation concerning rural Irish life. McCabe's and Jordan's visions of exploding landscapes and its population being replaced by mutant humans can be seen as a metaphor for Ireland and its changing society. Moreover, with the mutant speaking with the voice of the same priest who has sexually harassed Francie, the Church's dark past is critically highlighted once again. As McLoone points out that the scene portrays

a complex exploration of a changing society in which old certainties of religion and family are blown away and anxiety and doubt replace them. The explosion and the abused child become metaphors for Ireland itself, traumatized by its colonial past and its religious/nationalist present and considerably shaken up by the cataclysmic influences of contemporary culture (*Culture* 91).

In the scenes discussed, lush green fields, which Ireland is known for, are destroyed and substituted by a horrifying landscape making future living impossible. Following his pattern of deconstructing traditional ideas in his works, Jordan's bizarre and apocalyptic representation mocks stereotypical notions of Irish landscape, producing one of "the most subversive representations of Ireland that the cinema has yet produced" (McLoone *Film* 214).

4.2.3. *Adam and Paul*

Abrahamson's masterpiece *Adam and Paul* is set in the Irish capital in the midst of the era of the Celtic Tiger. Most movies produced during the economic boom focused on a celebration of the urban lifestyle, sexual freedom and an open youth culture. Critics attribute productions such as *About Adam* (2000) or *Goldfish Memory* (2003) that they portray a sense of Irish identity, and yet "they epitomise a kind of transglobal 'cool'" (McLoone *Culture* 46). Viewers of *Adam and Paul* might be surprised with the representation of the urban space as Dublin's two contrasting faces are shown. On the one hand, Abrahamson presents a modern business capital with a financial district full of shiny glass constructions and buzzing shopping districts. On the other hand, however, Dublin is portrayed as a run-down city full of litter and danger hiding behind each corner. At first glance, the plot and characters feature universality and, thus, the story could have been set in any city other than Dublin. The story of Adam and Paul's adventurous day would be equally convincing if it was set in a city such as London, New York or Vienna. Even though the story of Adam and Paul and their drug addiction is a universal one, the film makes numerous local references and conveys a distinct Dublin identity. Dublin's working class ethos as well as numerous typical Irish traditions, such as the traditional mourning of their friend Matthew's death, make this movie distinguishably Irish. Its particular Dublin identity, however, derives from the characters' use of language which "insinuates a dialect unique to blue-collar Dublin [...] and [...] introduces a series of characters unquestionably molded by the city" (Gillespie 47).

To the viewer, Dublin is presented through the views and journeys of the protagonists. One might even be able to sketch a personal cartography of the Irish capital based on their adventurous walkabout. Grela underlines that through those modern *flâneurs*, we

rediscover the city by unveiling the social meanings embedded in its walls, buildings and roads. Dublin is no longer presented as an idyllic space of a vivid social life and style, but rather becomes a subjectified conglomerate of fragmented spatialities that consumes its inhabitants and reduces them to an utterly empty existence (Grela 77).

Instead of a polished and trendy capital with its hip shops and bars, Dublin is presented as a run-down and dirty space. In contrast to Hollywood and British productions, such as *The Commitments* (1991), which showed Dublin's deprivation

and its working-class citizens in a romanticised manner, *Adam and Paul*'s portrayal of the Irish capital remains bleak and grey. At the same time, however, the protagonists still show a great sense of pride in "a city that clearly has not served them well" (D. O'Connell 98). Dublin itself appears quite ambiguous, too. On the one hand, Abrahamson presents the city as a puzzling maze lacking orientation or identification due to its anonymous commercial areas ruled by skyscrapers, steel and glass. Thus, one could argue that

this film evokes the alienation fragmented space of modernity, eschewing the romanticized portrayal of Dublin city. Yet in a contradictory parallel narrative the film suggests the 'village' approach of Joyce's Dublin, re-imagined and romantically invoked in many recent films as a city modern yet friendly (D. O'Connell 98).

With Adam and Paul wandering through dark backstreets and poverty-stricken suburbs, possible danger seems to be ubiquitous for the two protagonists. With the two junkies stumbling from adventure to adventure, it becomes more and more obvious that the urban space shows Adam and Paul as inapt agents, "whose destiny must always be conditioned by the ultimate willpower of the city" (Grela 69).



Fig. 6 *Adam and Paul's opening scene*

The gloomy portrayal of the Irish capital is already established in the very first moments of the movie. As they wake up in what seems to be the middle of nowhere, they rightly ask themselves, "Where the fuck are we?" They find themselves in a vacant lot in Finglas at Dublin's north side, and to add to the absurd essence of the

movie, one of them is even glued to an abandoned mattress. The two junkies make their way to the near-by Ballymun flat estate at the outskirts of north Dublin.



Fig. 7 Adam (Mark O'Halloran) and Paul (Tom Murphy) at the Ballymun Flats (*Adam and Paul*)

The notorious flats were built in the 1960s to accommodate the rising population in the capital. The estate has been known for its social problems such as poverty, crime and drug abuse. Despite a few scenes being located in the southern inner city, the majority of the movie is set at Dublin's north side. Dublin's area north of the river Liffey is usually represented as the city's rougher side, associated with working class values, poor housing and various other social problems. Dublin's south side, on the other hand, is considered to be inhabited by a more affluent population and provides a generally higher standard of living. Even though critics argue that the notorious divide between north and south Dublin is outdated, the two protagonists, who represent the working or even lower class, seem to be at home in the streets of the north side. According to Gillespie, featuring the geography of lower-income Dublin neighbourhoods is a characteristic of the working class genre and "remains in sharp contrast to the predilection of middle-class films for highlighting tourist landmarks" (109-110). In one of the few scenes in which the main characters wander through the city's southern districts, it almost seems as if Adam and Paul do not fit into the neat picture of commercialised modern Dublin. When the two junkies meet a few of their friends in the clean and spotless boundaries within the world-famous St Stephen's Green Park, two worlds of affluence and decay collide. Situated right in the heart of

Dublin's southern inner city, Stephen's Green is a popular site for Dubliners and tourists alike. The harmonious picture of the artificial and structured green oasis, therefore, is somehow disturbed when the two scruffy junkies enter the scene.



Fig. 8 Adam (Mark O'Halloran) and Paul (Tom Murphy) meeting friends at Saint Stephen's Green (*Adam and Paul*)

When the two homeless junkies wander through Dublin's modern financial district later on in the movie, an additional ambiguous picture of both affluence and decay is created. The worlds of the underclass and the newly rich working class, therefore, seem to collide with one another. Adam and Paul, therefore, serve as two alienated characters inhabiting a city with a globalised and wealthy image whose residents would like to ignore people like them. Abrahamson's ambiguous portrayal of the Irish capital, therefore, continues, on one side, as the 'new' Dublin with its affluent shopping and business areas dominated by glass and steel. On the other side, however, Dublin cannot shake off its 'old' characteristics either. The city's not so pretty side is shown in scenes highlighting Dublin's crime and drug problem hidden in dirty cobble-stoned alleys as well as in housing estates dominated by social problems. As Grela argues,

[t]he city seems to work not so much as a centring ground for dispersed subjectivities, but rather as a dispersing spatiality for decentred identities. Dublin rewrites its role rather disparately to its image as a modern, progress-centred project of metropolis. It is now depicted as an inorganic body containing multiple identities and cultures, a sort of violent discourse that impregnates its inhabitants with an odour of multiculturalism and cultural globalism. Nationalist Ireland travels from a space of endless

recurrence towards a self-identification as plural, aporetic, and globalised imaginary spatiality (Grela 68).

Abrahamson's ambiguous portrayal of Dublin in terms of the old vs. the new urban space, therefore, can also be applied to its inhabitants. On the one hand, the city functions as a place of Irishness with a distinct Dublin identity. There is a strong relationship between Adam and Paul and their urban identities. On the other hand, Dublin is represented as a place of cultural multiplicity. The collision of those two worlds mirror Abrahamson's vision of the Irish capital as the real Dublin as it appears not to have adjusted to its new posh and multicultural image of a trendy economic capital yet.

4.2.4. *Garage*

Abrahamson's movie *Garage* does in a way follow the old-fashioned tradition of portraying the Irish landscape, but with a modern twist. Traditional representations of Irish landscape have either been in a romanticised fashion, such as in *The Quiet Man* (John Ford, 1952), or in a harsh and threatening way, such as in *The Field* (Jim Sheridan, 1990). Most of these films, however, were American or English productions which dominated the cinematic representation of Ireland due to cheap production costs and financial backing. As Kettelman points out, most of these movies depicted

an Ireland that is mythologized as the land of rain and windswept emerald-green hills, usually near jagged cliffs surrounded by crashing waves of the wild (almost savage) sea. Despite its beauty the landscape is habitually shown to be untameable, harsh, and rural [...]. Moreover, [...] [these productions] focus on the rural, to the extent that it fixates Ireland as a slow-moving almost timeless place, negating the presence of urbanization, modern technology, and industrialism. Landscape, [...] is postulated as a reflection on the characteristics of the people, who by implication are unruly, hostile, treacherous, wild, and somehow primitive (153).

In Abrahamson's Irish production *Garage*, the portrayal of landscape plays a major role in his character's life, too. He is not, however, dependent nor contained by it. There is a strong bond between Josie and nature, such as the connection with water of his friendship with a horse implies. Josie's calmness while surrounded by nature, serves to highlight his alienation from society. While he seems to be part of the

natural world, Josie's social context is characterised by clumsiness and uncomfortable silences.

Even though Mother Nature is not presented as brutal or untameable, Abrahamson portrays her as mysterious and dangerous. Just as *Adam and Paul* is destined to be set in an urban space, *Garage* only works on rural grounds. Commenting that the Irish countryside has so far been represented wrongly in most foreign cinematic productions, O'Halloran argues:

It was usually an American or an Englishman moving into the town, falling in love with a beautiful girl, and there was a village idiot. There are about fifteen films you could pick that would have that in it. And I think that what we were interested in was taking that village idiot and making him the centre of the film, and make an incredibly serious film about a ridiculous person (Crosson 136-137).

Instead of resorting to visual stereotypes and motifs of rural Ireland, Abrahamson followed his "determination to be specific, honest, and real" (Huber 139). The omnipresence of nature and its powerful impact on people's lives is highlighted throughout Abrahamson's film. Additionally, the representation of landscape serves as a substitution for portraying the protagonist's moods and, and mostly glum, feelings.

The movie's gloomy tone is immediately presented in the first moments of the narration. In *Garage*'s typical long shots, a grim landscape dominated by rather dark and atmospheric colours such as black, grey and green is shown. A train is disappearing into the distance, surrounded by fallow fields and woods. Intimidating grey clouds are lingering above all events. Moreover, the usage of melancholic music adds to the special atmosphere of the movie. Only then a bulky male figure enters the scene from the right-hand side teetering through the muddy fields. His funny and unique walking style already hints at the protagonist's special character.



Fig. 9 Josie (Pat Shortt) walking through *Garage*'s typically gloomy landscape

In order to emphasise Mother Nature's prodigious force as an omnipresent leitmotif and her powerful impact on people's lives, Abrahamson used a special technical device. The usage of this distinct colour filter results in the green colour appearing more prominent than other colours. As Josie is walking through the woods, he is surrounded by countless trees, bushes and grass. Only his dark clothes stand out against this green-dominated picture. Even when he is walking through town, green patches of grass or trees seem to be following him everywhere he goes. Due to the filter, frames of grey streets and plain house fronts are somehow disturbed by radiant green patches of grass.



Fig. 10 Josie (Pat Shortt) in an environment dominated by green (Garage)

In a later scene, Josie is walking on a street from the right-hand side of the picture to the left one with the camera following him with a pan. Arriving at the left corner of the picture, however, he goes back to take a turn into an alley ranked by thick bushes and trees. A somehow dangerous atmosphere is created, and it seems as if the dark green maze absorbs the protagonist. Furthermore, it seems as though Josie is lured into the woods and cannot resist or live without Mother Nature.

In order to convey a very realistic atmosphere and true portrayal of nature, Abrahamson used very few sources of artificial light. When Josie and David are wandering along the nearby lake, they start a bonfire. The fire functions as the only source of light and only then silhouettes can be perceived more clearly. When the drunken David dozes off, Josie covers him with his jacket despite freezing himself and minds his friend throughout the night. As the sun rises over the peaceful lake the next morning, nature's tranquillity and sheer beauty are re-emphasised. For the first time in the movie, the sky is shown without any grey and intimidating clouds.

The axis between water and death is drawn for the first time when Josie runs into one of his friends who is about to drown unwanted puppies in the nearby river. Despite Josie not being fully able to hide his sad face about the killing of the puppies, he and his friend engage in a mundane conversation straight after the incident as if nothing just happened. This comical effect, however, does not belittle the omnipresent parallel between nature and death. In the aftermaths of the videotape

incident, Josie is abandoned by his teenage friends and is on his own again. The scenic pictures, which are mostly dominated by dark colours, reflect the protagonist's dismal situation. Not only his dark, claustrophobic home appears uninviting, nature too looks grim and threatening when Josie is walking through the forest. While thick black clouds are lurking over him, Josie passes abandoned fields and the wooden hut next to the rail tracks where he and his friends used to hang out not so long ago. The protagonist's mood is not solely embodied by pictures of the environment but also by the atmospheric usage of music.

When Mr Gallagher pays Josie a visit at the garage, it appears as though Josie is going to lose his job. Even though it is never mentioned, it would be the anticipated consequence following the latest events. Josie's situation is even more precarious as his boss is going out with David's mother. A downbeat and restless Josie cannot sleep and, thus, gets up to wander through the green forest. At the bank of the river, he stops for a rest while the sun is shining on an almost cloud-free sky. It is the nicest day during the movie's timespan, and the display of a tranquil landscape is quite the opposite of what it has been represented as so far. Dióg O'Connell describes this juxtaposition as the following:

The beauty is evoked but in an understated way, with a visual style more aligned to European cinema than mainstream Hollywood, evoking a painterly quality. Josie, like Adam and Paul, is surrounded by beauty, but equally by desolation (D. O'Connell 99).

One expects that Josie is about to go for a swim, but he has no proper swimsuit. Therefore, it seems as though Josie commits suicide by drowning himself. This impression is encouraged by the fact that the river is death-afflicted already, as it is the same river where the puppies were drowned before. The peaceful picture of the landscape earlier, therefore, is voided by drawing a parallel between nature and death. As Dióg O'Connell puts it,

the tranquillity of the lake contrasts with the brutality of the act of suicide. The bleak, non-descript landscape is consistent with the absence of expression by Josie, his inability to articulate his feelings and emotions coming to head after he has had a visit from the police (D. O'Connell 110).



Fig.11 An allusion to Josie (Pat Shortt) committing suicide (*Garage*)

Mother Nature immediately reflects the dramatic events when dark clouds cover the sky and howling gusts are audible. Fallow fields and trees shaking in the wind contribute to the already dismal atmosphere. Traditional notions of representing Irish landscape as a threatening and uncontrollable force serve as a leitmotif in Abrahamson's movie. Atmospheric pictures of the landscape such as of the sky, fields and lakes mirror Josie's feelings and, thus, can be considered as a leading part in the movie.

4.3. The Traditional Irish Family and its Modern Representation

The institution of the family had an exceptionally high status, historically in Ireland. The special role of the family has been recognised as "an important symbol of collective identity, unity and security" (O'Connor qtd. in Millar 31). Byrne goes even so far as to argue that the Irish story of family is

one of the "great stories" inextricably bound up with the construction of national identity ... in familist societies, such as Ireland, womanhood has been historically attained and recognised through heterosexual attachment, marriage and reproduction (443).

Historically, the institution of family has been defined by another one, by that of the Irish Catholic Church. The relationship between family as being part of a national

identity and the Catholic state is outlined in the 1937 constitution. The Irish family, therefore, is not only a private entity but also a construct of the state (Muldowney 403). The constitution, which was signed by Eamon de Valera as head of the Fianna Fáil government, awarded the Catholic Church special recognition and defined marriage and families with mothers as the key figures. It identifies the nuclear family as the basic unit in society and guarantees its protection. Furthermore, the constitution defines a particular role for women within the family at home:

[T]hat 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 labor to the neglect of their duties in the home (Bunreacht na hÉireann 2003 [1937]: Article 41.2 qtd. in Millar 31).

While women's roles in the family and society are prescribed in the constitution, there is no direct characterisation of men. By describing how the institution of family should look like, the state intervenes directly in the sphere of a private family. Canavan claims that through the constitution "and the wider relationship within which it was set provide the context for high rates of marital fertility; bans on divorce, contraception, and abortion; and the ban on married women working for the State, instigated in 1933" (19).

The common view in Ireland up until the 1960s was that a healthy family consists of a wife and mother as its central figure and procreation being her essential contribution to the family. Assigned to fulfil their roles in the home, Irish women were even banned from jury service until 1975. This provision was justified with the reason "that a woman would not be available for her work in the home if the state were to call her for jury service [...]" (Muldowney 404). In recent decades, however, multicausal developments have altered traditional family structures in Ireland. The loosened relationship between the state and the Catholic Church, the introduction of contraceptives and legal separation as well as economic factors have contributed to major changes in family matters in modern Irish society.

4.3.1. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

In Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barely*, the focus is on the relationship between two brothers who end up on different sides during the Irish Civil War. The

protagonists Damien and Teddy are two brothers from a middle class rural family. As young boys, they were “fierce close” to each other. While at present, they do not seem very dear to one another, there is a natural deep bond between them. Even as the split between the two brothers due to their ideological differences has reached its climax, Damien comments on his everlasting admiration of his elder brother saying, “I could never match him.” Loach highlights the dilemma of the Irish Civil War through the relationship of the two brothers Damien and Teddy. The bond between the brothers is in danger of collapsing under the distress of political events. The conflict gets even more intensified, when pro-treaty Teddy opposes to his surrogate family. As war threatens the unity between the two brothers and that of the Irish nation, their idealistic ideas seem to be stronger than blood.



Fig.12 The brothers Damien (Cillian Murphy) and Teddy (Padraic Delaney) in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

Even though no clear information is given about their parents, their passing could stand in connection to the imperial conflict or the aftermaths of the Great Irish Famine. Sinéad, whom Damien is having a romance with, and her family serve as the surrogate family for the two brothers. Sinéad's family consists of three generations of strong women who play an active part in the Irish resistance. Peggy, the grandmother, Bernadette, her mother, and Sinéad give the rebels shelter when they hide from the brutal Black and Tans. Due to its female inhabitants, the cottage is gendered. As numerous scenes take place at the farmhouse, it becomes a familiar and intimate key location. Their cottage becomes the emblem of family virtues and of a home. Despite Damien and Teddy not living in Peggy's cottage, the audience soon

considers it as their home base. Here, they find shelter when they need to hide from the British soldiers, they are given warm food and new clothes as well as looked after when wounded.



Fig. 13 The farmstead: *The Wind that Shakes the Barley's* symbol of home

During the course of action, the cottage is raided and attacked three times. The house becomes a setting of violent invasion due to various British atrocities. Applying the prevalent image in Irish cinema of Ireland as a suffering female, the small cottage can be considered as a representative of Ireland that falls victim to a male imperial power. Due to their engagement in the rebellious movement, Sinéad and her family are left vulnerable to reprisal attacks from the British soldiers. During a violent raid of their cottage, the three women are brutally victimised by the Black and Tans. As Villar-Aráiz points out, their aggressions are especially directed against Sinéad, and compares her ordeal to that of Ireland:

The scene is loaded with sexual connotations, not only in terms of the position of Sinéad's body (her legs are widely open as she sits on an old milking stool), but also in the attitude displayed by the British officers, who intersperse cheers and laughter with denigrating insults such as "Fenian whore". Sinéad's desperate screams while she is having her hair cut indirectly evoke the laments of the violated and abused figure of Mother Ireland (195).

The colonial allegory of the Irish female body becoming victim of the male British intruder is, thus, emphasised again.



Fig.14 Black and Tan's brutal attack on Sinéad (Orla Fitzgerald) in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

The character of Peggy, too, is a representative of a national trauma deeply imbedded in the Irish psyche. Despite playing a more prominent part in Laverty's screenplay, she offers a human face for the trauma of both the Famine and land dispossession. In the foreword of his screenplay, Laverty points out that Peggy was, in fact, the first character that started growing in his mind:

I imagined someone like Peggy as a child, experiencing eviction during the Famine, and then again in her thirties during the agricultural depression of the 1870s, perhaps with children. The Famine had such a catastrophic effect, and was in many ways the product of Ireland being a colony – even as the Irish starved the British continued to export food. Peggy has lived through so many injustice and pain she is a rebel in her marrow. She is absolutely opposed to British rule and under no circumstances will she allow herself to be evicted a third time (12).

Indeed, Peggy never seems intimidated by the Black and Tans during their first raid which leads to Michael's brutal killing. She does, in fact, bid defiance to the British forces by continuing to talk in Irish and ignoring their order to remain outside of her house. Additionally, Peggy is the archetypical Irish mother who takes care of the rebels after their fights and supplies them with food and shelter.



Fig.15 Peggy (Mary O'Riordan) and Damien (Cillian Murphy) in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

Peggy and Sinéad, two strong women, openly show their desire for a free Ireland and take great risks in hiding rebels like Damien and Teddy in their houses. Their actions were equally punishable as those of the male guerrilla fighters. Loach's depiction of them highlights women and the pivotal role they played during the struggle for Irish independence:

Volunteers were unemployed and depended for food, shelter and clothing on the local population, and it was remarkable how this support held up right through the war, despite the pressure of incessant raids by the military and the activities of the inevitable informers. It was this spirit more than the IRA's armaments, or even the tactics of guerrilla warfare, which brought the IRA whatever success it achieved. Neither Collins nor the Volunteers would have survived without the country-wide network of women supporters who acted as intelligence agents, couriers, secretaries, providers of meals, shelter and nursing services. One must take note of the Trojan work done by women who never talked and were known only to a relatively small circle (Coogan 97).

The Wind that Shakes the Barley offers a new perspective of the struggle for independence by including the significant part women played in the Irish resistance. Most of the messengers, for instance, are women but also young children. They are part of Cumann na mBan, the active Sinn Féin group led by women. In the pub scene in which the Black and Tans try to intimidate Damien and his men, for instance, it is Sinéad, who supplies the rebels with weapons immediately afterwards. Again, a woman serves as a vital messenger enabling the Volunteers to counter-attack with a

reprisal. Furthermore, women often worked as secretaries within British establishments in order to supply their allies with important information and contributed vastly to the IRA's highly successful intelligence network. Women are also depicted as being involved in republican courts working as judges or other court personnel. In the court scene in which Teddy tries to undermine the female judge's decision about the profiteering merchant, the women adhere to the court's decision. Loach's depiction of women and their "usurping of their decision also hints at the postrevolutionary diminution of women's public role in Irish life" (Ó Drisceoil 8).

4.3.2. *The Butcher Boy*

In *Butcher Boy*, Jordan discusses the 'miserable Irish childhood' of a demented child growing up in a dysfunctional family. Francie Brady grows up in a shattered family with both of his parents generally being absent or incapable of being a proper guardian. Francie's archenemy, Mrs Nugent, and her family stand in stark opposition to his own family. They are everything the Brady family is not and own everything the Brady family does not possess. While Mrs Nugent personifies the figure of the idealised mother and housewife promoted by the Catholic Church, Francie's mother fails to do so herself. The young boy, thus, directs his frustrations and anger at them, terrorizing and, ultimately, killing Mrs Nugent.

Francie's mother, Annie, is a manic-depressive who spends most of her life in mental homes. She does not fit into the general role women are expected to play. Francie's soft and vulnerable nature is shown when he comes home and prevents his mother from trying to commit suicide. Her mental illness only becomes visible for the first time in this particular scene.



Fig.16 Annie Brady (Aisling O'Sullivan) attempting to commit suicide (*The Butcher Boy*)

After this incident, Francie's mother is taken to a mental hospital which he refers to as a "garage". Francie's comparison of his mother being a broken car that needs a few repairs might be the plausible explanation for a child of his age. For Annie, the only way out of this constricting pattern is to commit suicide. Mother figures serve as a recurring motif throughout the filmic text. Whenever Francie is around his mother Annie, his childlike and vulnerable side becomes noticeable. After running away to Dublin, his desire to see his mother makes him return to his hometown. He even brings her back a kitschy gift of a traditional Irish cottage with a woman sitting in front of the little house weaving. The souvenir fittingly bears the words 'A Mother's Love's A Blessing'. Later in the narrative, Francie has a vision of the Virgin Mary sitting in front of the cottage chatting to him. One could argue that Our Lady's transformation from a surreal vision into Francie's substitute mother seems completed at this stage.

Francie's father Bennie, too, is mentally absent from his duties as a parent. Due to his alcoholism, he neglects his child, not supplying it with love or necessities. In his childish nature, Francie cannot fully grasp his father's disease and equates him with the winner of some kind of competition: "He sure could drink. He was the best drinker in town." Bennie Brady fails as a father due to his alcoholism and careless attitude to life in general. Despite him having been "a great man, they say, that he could have been someone", Bennie's career as a musician has never taken off. The causes for his inebriety might lie in his own upbringing in educational institutions run by the church. Bennie's childhood in reform schools and homes is only commented

on briefly without significant detail. His problems result in him being an irresponsible parent who is either asleep or in the pub instead of supplying food or necessities for his family. Bennie's inability to be a good and caring father to his son becomes visible in the scene in which he comes to see Francie at the reform school. He tells his child that he has loved his mum very dearly and that she was the best thing that ever happened to him. Francie, however, staring stoically into space, just recites his father's words from an earlier scene. Back then, Bennie and Annie were engaged in a bitter fight, when Bennie shouted at her that he would have been better off never having laid eyes on her. Even when Bennie tries to console his son and tells him that he loves him, the audience is informed by the voice-over that those three words have been very hard for him to say, so hard that Francie could almost not hear him. Their father-son-relationship has been so severely shattered due to alcoholism and mutual recriminations, it seems as if there is no love left between them anymore.



Fig.17 Rocky father-son-relationship between Francie (Eammon Owens) and Bennie (Stephen Rea) in *The Butcher Boy*

Francie, however, clings on to an idealised picture of his parents' marriage throughout his childhood. This romanticised notion can be seen in the scene which shows the events during the festivities for Uncle Alo's homecoming. Family and friends are singing the folk ballad "Beautiful Bundoran". Francie is told the story of his parent's honeymoon in Bundoran, a small town on the northwest coast. Henceforth, Francie links with Bundoran a time when his parents were in love and happy with each other, and derives comfort in their stories. Similarly to Mrs Nugent's epithet of calling his family "pigs", Francie somehow becomes obsessed with Bundoran and its

triggered emotions. Jordan creates a contradicting juxtaposition of the idealised memories and the sad reality in the scene after everybody has left Alo's party. The parents engage in a bitter argument, escalating into physical violence by Bennie hitting his wife. The camera then zooms in on a black and white picture situated behind them on the mantelpiece, showing the, supposedly, happy newlyweds in Bundoran. The memories and stories about Bundoran represent a rare instance of positive experiences of the Brady family. Having spent their honeymoon there, Francie's parents remember Bundoran as a place of happiness in their shared life. When Francie heads to this town in search of his parent's halcyon days, he learns that the story of their honeymoon is another idealised tale. The owner of the guest house the Bradys once stayed in recalls Benny's alcoholism and infidelities and their resulting rows. The landlady goes even as far as Mrs Nugent earlier in the story, labelling Francie's dad as "nothing better than a pig".

His parents' constant fighting results in Francie running away from home and spending a few days in the Irish capital. Having had a few adventures in Dublin, Francie acknowledges the sole downside of running away from home, which is that he cannot bring his mother with him. In an antiques shop, he becomes mesmerised by a little statue of an Irish cottage saying, "A Mother's Love is a Blessing". As a symbol of home and an idyllic world, Francie buys the statue for his mother and returns home to Clones.

Trying to console Francie because of his mother's death, Father Dom tells him that the Blessed Virgin Mary will look after him from now on. He cannot know, however, that Francie soon will have visions of her. Nevertheless, the Virgin Mary does become Francie's substitutional mother. The Virgin Mary taking over the motherly figure in Francie's life becomes most apparent in his visions of Our Lady sitting in front of the statue of the Irish cottage. Francie bought this statue, saying "A Mother's Love is a Blessing", for his mother shortly before her suicide. Our Lady is sitting in front of the emblem of the traditional home, playing the harp and giving the young boy advice as a mother would do. The *mise-en-scène* of a motherly figure playing the harp in front of a cottage includes three symbols which are deeply linked to Ireland and its culture, most importantly that of family. As it is only part of Francie's imaginative world and due to the controversial casting of Sinéad O'Connor, an outspoken critic of the Catholic Church, the institution of family and its traditional values are deconstructed once again.



Fig.18 The Virgin Mary (Sinéad O'Connor) as a substitute mother in *The Butcher Boy*

Francie's upbringing in a dysfunctional family like this can be understood as a metaphor for the sickness of the dysfunctional Irish state itself. As McLoone points out, *The Butcher Boy* features a "kind of national allegory that radically critiques not only the violent colonization of Ireland, but also the brutality of the postcolonial state which broadcast an impossible Catholic and idealised image of the nation, an image that contrasted sharply with the abject conditions of many of its citizens" (McLoone *Film* 236). It is this idealised yet impossible image which broke Annie Brady due to her inability to meet the expectations of being a perfect mother and housewife.

4.3.3. *Adam and Paul*

Whereas *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* and *The Butcher Boy* focus on the display and deconstruction of traditional family structures governed by the Catholic Church, Abrahamson's *Adam and Paul* illustrates changes within Irish family life in the midst of the Celtic Tiger years. In recent decades, as stated above, multicausal developments have altered traditional family structures in Ireland. Numerous studies of family life in Ireland have aimed at analysing factors and their underpinning causes which have led to this major social change. One major cause of the changing Irish family life has been the loosened relationship between the state and the Catholic Church. The separation process was a gradual development and became most

visible in 1972 when the special place in the constitution of the Catholic Church was removed. As Canavan argues, however, despite “the shifting relationship between Church and State reflect[ing] a greater openness to State intervention in families [...], sexual morality and reproductive rights were to remain arenas of conflict between the State and the Catholic Church [...]” (19).

Other factors such as the relatively late introduction of contraceptives in 1979, which first was only sanctioned for cycle regulation, and the drop of the fertility rate have brought even more change to Irish society in recent decades. A further major social development was the introduction of legal separation (i.e. divorce) in 1996. Due to a strong desire from at least one part of the Irish population, the public outcry for the introduction of divorce became stronger in the 1980s. Just as contraception, divorce was banned constitutionally, which meant that a referendum was needed. Despite its defeat in 1986, it became clear that the ongoing rise of marital breakdowns needed legislative actions. In 1989, the Family Law Reform Act was passed, and “[d]ivorce legislation was eventually enacted in Ireland in 1996, following a constitutional referendum the previous year” (Canavan 15). Since 1996 the proportion of Irish people who were divorced has risen significantly from 0.4% (9,787) to 2.4% (87,770) in 2011 (see CSO *Census 2011* 7).

Another notable change in family matters was the increase of births out of wedlock. Whereas in 1960 1.6% of all births were non-marital births, in 2010, it was 33.6% (see Eurostat *Marriage*). Even though Ireland’s figure for 2005 is below the EU average of 35%, the transition of a former devout Catholic country with traditional view is worth noticing. In the 2011 census, the increase of cohabiting families and single parents amounts to a third of all family units with children. Much higher than the EU average of 11.6%, the rise of single-parents, representing 23.2% of all family units in 2011 (see Sheehan), the structure of modern families resembles little what they looked like 50 years ago when the main reason for single-parenting was widowhood.

Next to legal developments and natural changes of traditional family structures, another major factor that has helped transform the nuclear Irish family is Ireland’s economy. When the economic growth started in the 1990s, the employment market saw a significant increase of women engaging in paid work. By doing so, they contributed to the economic boom of the Celtic Tiger even more: “Whereas in 1971 only 7.5% of married women were in paid employment, this had risen to 48.8% in

2004, with the proportion of all women in employment standing at 56%" (Rush qtd. in Millar 32ff).

Adam and Paul lacks traditional family structures altogether, and no information is given about the protagonists' family backgrounds. A possibility could be that both Adam and Paul have been abandoned due to their drug addiction and unsound lifestyle. The two junkies serve as a substitute family for one another with Adam giving the impression of taking over the role of the big brother taking care of Paul. The events of the last scene, however, illustrate that the unscrupulousness they have acquired during their addiction does not even stop at one's surrogate brother.



Fig.19 Adam (Mark O'Halloran) and Paul (Tom Murphy) holding Janine's (Louise Lewis) baby in *Adam and Paul*

The scene taking place in their friends Janine's apartment shows Abrahamson's deconstruction of the institution of family. Furthermore, it mirrors modern society and the significant rise of single-parent families in Ireland. While trying to steal equipment from Janine's flat, the crying of a baby interrupts their foray. Adam and Paul discover the little baby in another room and take it out of its crib, cuddling it like doting fathers. The emotional bonding is interrupted by Janine appearing in the bedroom doorway. The action now turns into a soft-focused and tranquil atmosphere in which Adam, Paul and Janine hold the baby and each other tight, stroking one another. The ardency between the three characters and the display of affection between them implies that Janine might have been the lover of both men at one time. This indication is emphasised later, when Janine tells her child to say bye-bye to both of her

“daddies” when Adam and Paul leave her apartment block. Instead of a traditional family consisting of a married father and mother with their child, Abrahamson presents an unmarried mother with two possible fathers. The intimacy of the nursery scene, however, is shattered by a cut that suggests that the previous moments were only imaginary. Not only does the analysed scene play with the traditional view on family, it also displays the characters’ wish and need for security and emotional attachment. Both values have been devastated or neglected due to their drug addiction. Dióg O’Connell argues that this short scene “allows for the audience to become involved in the emotional life of the characters without having held specific emotions themselves” (107).

4.3.4. *Garage*

Garage’s protagonist Josie has got no family on his own due to his inability to have proper relationships with other people. Because of his constant nervousness and lack of understanding social codes, it is hard for him to find friends and love. Only talking to the shop girl Carmel for a few moments, it becomes clear that Josie is attracted to the young woman. The conversation revolves around holidays and leaving town for a while. When Josie mentions what Carmel would look like in her bikini, it seems as though he honestly does not realise the inappropriateness of his comment. He somehow lacks social intelligence and tactfulness. A similarly awkward situation follows when Carmel comments on his spare shopping and teases him, “Are you having a party, Josie?” Josie, however, does not get the pun and, thus, his less marked social ability is emphasised once again. His hopes of a romantic liaison with Carmel are dampened unambiguously during a drunken evening in the pub. Even though Josie did not intend any harm, a drunken Carmel feels uncomfortable while dancing with him and, consequently, pushes him away from her. Wondering what he could have done wrong, a depressed Josie seeks comfort in alcohol and his friend David. The teenager finds himself in a similar situation after having been abandoned by his best friend Declan because of a girl. The two men appear to bond with each other more and bear each other company during this hard time. When Carmel reinforces her disinterest in Josie, he tries to dismiss the incident in the pub as beside the point, yet he cannot hide his disappointment about Carmel’s rejection.



Fig.20 Carmel (Anne-Marie Duff) and Josie (Pat Shortt) in the pub (*Garage*)

As Dióg O'Connell suggests, the characterisation of *Garage*'s protagonist happens through actions rather than by what they say:

It is through Josie's idle chit-chat that we get to know him within the context of his community, through the range of inanities he constantly utters as he encounters people in his day-to-day-life. [...] The banality of his actions is reflected in his idle conversations with himself and others, the dialogue directly mirrored in tone and mood through the action on screen. Although he doesn't say much, these banal encounters link him to the outside world. Although alone, he is not marginalised. Josie inhabits almost every frame in the film, either by himself or with others in the community. What the sparse dialogue, long silences, and daily toil suggest is that Josie, while clearly different in many ways, when viewed up close, is no more detached, isolated, or marginalised than the other characters he encounters (122-123).

Even though these conversations often appear to be insignificant, many of them, however, reveal a deeper meaning. When Josie bumps into his friend Mr Skerrit, he commands Josie to get into his car as he has been looking for him already. In the movie's tradition of displaying strange yet humorous dialogues, Mr Skerrit says, "I'm heading out to the lake ... we can have a chat, hop in ... have to put the blankets on the back seat, the dogs are shedding." The two men take a walk alongside the lake and eventually sit down on a bench with a scenic landscape around them. The frontal two-shot of the two men sitting on the bench suggests concentration and intimacy. Talking about fishing for pike and eel, the accepted inanity of their conversation

continues due to its meaningless and circular essence. At an unlikely turn, however, Mr Skerrit breaks down and starts crying for no apparent reasons. Incapable of showing compassion, Josie continues his chit-chat about the fishing potential of the lake. Despite Mr Skerrit crying next to him, Josie does not realise what his previous comments might have triggered and just says, "You're looking well anyway."

That Josie's social skills are not well developed is shown in another scene in which he meets his employer, Mr Gallagher, at the garage. Their conversation seems unnatural and forced while Josie's constant arbitrary apologising does not help the situation. He does not seem to grasp certain codes of social interaction, such as being quiet while the conversation partner is on the phone to somebody else. Language or communication at times appears to have lost its function. The characters engage in mundane conversations while not saying much. Just as in Adam and Paul, "the pace of life is slow, not much goes on, the characters passively existing almost as extras or bystanders in their own lives" (D. O'Connell 99). Abrahamson justifies this reoccurring technique as simply being "interested in very ordinary characters in situations in which, although there are huge things going on, those things are going on in a microcosm. You need to look at them through a microscope to see what's happening" (Crosson 133).

4.4. Us vs. the Other: Representation of Resistance, Nationalism and Racism

The formation of the Irish national culture has long been struggling to become independent from the influence of the British Empire. After having been under British domination for around 700 years, opposing forces became stronger in the late 19th century. They eventually led to the Easter Rising of 1916, the War of Independence (1919-1921) and, consequently, the Irish Civil War (1922-1923). During this period, culture was the main conduit for expressing Irish nationalism and identity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the cultural dimension of Irish nationalism was primarily found in the terrain of Irish literature. Throughout the years, however, Irish cinema established its own traditions of representation in constructing an Irish national identity. Numerous social and economic changes in the second half of the

twentieth century as well as the newly found wealth of the so-called “Celtic Tiger” beginning in the 1990s turned Ireland into a country of ethnic diversification. Irish people now did not have to leave their homeland anymore for economic reasons, but it was Ireland itself, which attracted immigrants to work in an economy in which everything seemed to be possible. Since 2002, there has been an increase of the population by 8.1% in Ireland due to inward immigration. Even though the number of Irish productions per year is relatively small, numerous filmmakers have included the portrayal of immigrant communities and other immigrant themes in their movies in recent years and have, hence, given rise to a new direction of Irish film studies. The most prominent example of such a production would be John Carney’s *Once* (2006), a film which focuses on the musical and romantic relationship between a Dublin busker and a Czech immigrant. Not all modern films including immigrant themes, however, illustrate them in such a positive light as Carney’s romance does. One of the underbelly effects of the Celtic Tiger is that not all Irish people are welcoming foreign newcomers. Numerous recent productions include a realistic approach to this social problem by shedding light on the issues of racism and social inclusion. Recalling Agnes Kakasi’s idea of the camera serving as a weapon, it can be argued that “film as a text can be scrutinised to map the prevailing ideology and discursive practices Ireland has employed in its ‘governance of difference’” (37).

4.4.1. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

Loach’s story starts in 1920, in the midst of the Anglo-Irish War of Independence. While his brother Terry leads the local flying column, pacifist Damien O’Donavan wants to leave Ireland for London to become a doctor. Shortly before his departure, however, Damien witnesses two brutal attacks on Irish civilians by the Black and Tans. In the opening scene, for instance, Damien, Teddy and their friends are playing a game of Hurling, a Gaelic sport that is closely associated with the Irish Renaissance and identity. Engaging in team sports was banned due to the law that forbade gatherings of groups. Playing it, therefore, was considered as an act of defiance and a signal of nationalism to the British. After the game, an idyllic picture of rural Ireland is shown as the young men are walking through the green landscape, accompanied by traditional Irish music. They arrive at the farmstead of Sinéad’s

family, whom Damien wants to bid his farewell to. The harmonious mise-en-scène, however, is soon disturbed by the noise of the approaching Black and Tans. The British soldiers consider this small gathering of friends as a violation of the law that forbidding Irish people to engage in any sort of public meetings. As one of Damien's friends, Michael, refuses to tell the Black and Tans his name in English but in Gaelic, he is brutally murdered in front of his family and friends. Michael is very much aware of what he is doing and the fact that his usage of the Irish language is seen as an act of defiance. The Gaelic language serves as a means to resistance and, as a consequence, he is immediately punished with death.



Fig. 21 Michael (Laurence Barry) refuses to give his name in English (*The Wind that Shakes the Barley*)

Despite his friends urging him to stay in Ireland and fight with them against British oppression, Damien still plans to move to England, stating that their fight is pointless saying, "Do you want to take the most powerful empire with your hurling?" As Damien is about to board the train and leave for England, he witnesses British soldiers' violence towards train personnel who refuse to take soldiers and arms on board. Loach includes, therefore, the resistance of the organised labourers and of the trade union, which were a vital force in the Irish War of Independence. Damien misses his train as he looks after a hurt man. Immediately afterwards, Damien swears on the IRA's oath from 1918 and, thus, shows his allegiance to the elected government, which was, however, ignored by the British government. The immediate cut to Damien's oath implies that the events at the train station motivated the protagonist's sudden change of mind and commitment to the IRA. Later on in the

story, Damien sees a child who is half-starved. He considers this experience as a form of justification for engaging in a war he always tried not to get into. Again, it suggests that Damien only participates in the war due to external reasons. Loach does not withhold his anti-imperialistic view and illustrates that only the deliberate violence of the British occupiers induced the Irish people to engage in a violent war.

Alongside his brother, Damien fights in a so-called flying column against the occupying British. During the Anglo-Irish War, these columns were organised as a result of military courts and increasing arrests and raids. The columns were

mobile active service units that took the war to the British mainly through ambushes in the countryside. British reprisals included the burning and looting of houses, villages, and towns, random shootings of civilians, and assassinations, arrests, or torture of Republican activists. A cycle of violence developed, and the war became increasingly dirty. The assassination of suspected spies and informers increased as the intelligence war intensified (Ó Drisceoil 7).



Fig.22 The Black and Tans' raid of the farmstead in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*

The violence on civilians influenced young Irish men's decision to fight for their independence and go to war. Ordinary farmers, craftsmen or academics, such as Damien, turned into guerrilla fighters to oppose their suppressors. The guerrilla war began in the late summer of 1920 and was most intense in Munster, particularly Cork, the so-called "storm centre" of the revolution. Even though flying columns throughout the country had little power, they still gained notable victories. Resistance was, therefore, a nationwide struggle which the British could no longer ignore. One key scene of Loach's representation of war and its effects shows the flying column's

ambush on British soldiers. The usage of fog and dramatic music emphasise the upcoming danger and horror. After the bloody ambush on British troops, the Irish rebels are clearly taken aback by the carnage which they have just participated in. Nevertheless, even as a member of the flying column is killed at the ambush, the rebels do not have time to mourn their friend. The column's leader, Finbar, lines them up to reassert their statuses as soldiers who have to continue fighting. He reminds them of their mission against the Brits who have come over to make the Irish crawl and wipe them out. He further assures them that the killing will be seen as a message of the Irish not to accept British power:

Filthy business ... not for the fain-hearted. [*Pointing at the dead bodies*] Everyone a mercenary ... bought and paid for ... sent here to spill Irish blood and wipe us out. Today we have sent a message to the British Cabinet that will echo around the world ... we will match their viciousness with our own! [...] I'm proud of you all (Lavery 101).

After truce was declared on 11 June 1921, the protagonists are seen celebrating with traditional Irish music and dancing in front of the Irish flag. The movie now shows its lightest and most positive moments. Damien and Sinéad have got time to cater for their relationship only now. The treaty created an Irish Free State with dominion status to the British Commonwealth:

This created an Irish Free State with dominion status to the British Commonwealth. The Free State consisted of twenty-six counties, the other six having already been established as the Unionist-dominated statelet of Northern Ireland in June 1921, which remained within the United Kingdom. Britain retained control of key Irish ports and members of the Free State parliament would have to swear an oath of fidelity to the British Crown, represented in Ireland by a governor-general, whose powers included the right to veto Free State legislation and to sign off on all appointments, including the cabinet and judiciary (Ó Drisceoil 8).

Loach's characters learn the details of the treaty through a newsreel in the local cinema. Accompanied by dramatic piano music, the audience is notified of the peace treaty. As not everyone in the audience was literate, a male spectator reads the information written on the screen aloud. Initial cheers about the Irish Free State are increasingly replaced by boos when finding out that Ireland will remain part of the British Commonwealth. Loach's meta-cinematic scene portrays the confusion and anger of the Irish people while being notified of their country's new development. Already in this scene, the treaty's aftermath of splitting the audience and the state in two parts becomes visible. The scene is immediately followed by the Volunteers'

discussion on the matter. While some regard the treaty as “a betrayal of 1916”, others insist on the chance of peace. Teddy, who approves of the treaty, is citing his hero’s, Michael Collins’s, words that there will be “immediate and terrible war” otherwise. He is opposed to his brother Damien, who is of the opinion that they have got freedom within their grasp and cannot stop now. Another member of the ‘Irregulars’ comments on the fact that the people’s energy will not be seen again. Therefore, he argues, they should use that energy now to achieve complete freedom. Not seizing the opportunity for complete independence, they argue, is as to spit on the grave of their dead martyrs and betraying their oath of allegiance. The authentic portrayal of this debate parted the whole country. The anti-treatyists called for a social revolution in order to abolish the current class hierarchy and to end Ireland’s poverty. The treaty, they argued, would change the nationality of those in power but would not solve social issues such as poverty, hunger and emigration. The two new opposing positions are reflected by the movie’s central characters. The dilemma Teddy and Damien find themselves in was shared throughout the whole country. Some of those who had fought side by side against the British earlier, had to oppose each other now. The conflict between the “Provisional Government” of the Free State and its Republican opposition resulted in the atrocious Irish Civil War (28 June 1922 to 24 May 1923).

The war’s tragic dimension was that men who used to fight side by side were now opponents. In the eyes of the anti-treatyites, the ones in favour of the treaty were seen as traitors who now cooperated with the British: “The Treatyites took state power with the support of the British state and the Irish establishment, including business leaders, the press, and the churches” (Ó Drisceoil 9). The scene in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* showing Teddy emerging in his Free State uniform upsets his former allies who consider him a traitor. Not only does the uniform have a striking resemblance to those of the Black and Tans, but the army of the Free State was also supported by the British. The scene implies that a repressive power is substituted by another one without any notable social changes. Loach’s depiction of the time after the signing of the Treaty “argues that ultimately the Irish people were betrayed by their own pretty bourgeois leadership, content to take over the roles and functions of the departing British. For Loach, a foreign oppression was replaced by a native one [...]” (McLoone *Culture* 88).

In Damien's prison cell, Teddy takes one last attempt to make his brother tell him where the arms are in order to escape an execution. The scene portrays the brotherly talk in a very intimate frame, which is emphasised by a candle being the only source of light. Contrary to their previous relationship and hierarchical order, Damien is now the stronger character of the two brothers. Finally not being overshadowed by his brother anymore, Damien does not want to give in. Both of the addressed scenes exemplify the tragic dimensions of the period and the conflict's intimate nature that parted friends, families and the whole country.

Loach's protagonist Damien is killed by his own brother Teddy because he refuses to tell him where the rebels have hidden their weapons. Teddy is desperate for the killing to stop and appeals to Damien to accept the new freedom that they have gained. He wants to engage in resistance in order to achieve ultimate freedom once the nation will be strong enough. His brother, however, argues that Teddy is wrapped in the Union Jack, the butcher's apron, and will not sell out to the British. Under tears, Teddy gives the order to shoot his brother. In his last letter to Sinéad, Damien declares that he cannot get out of a war which he has tried not get involved in initially. Damien represents all the people who become affected in a war even if they stand for a good cause. Damien's note and his dramatic death, ordered by his own brother, exemplify the tragic dimension of the conflict and its intimate nature again. The protagonist is killed in a heroic fashion suggesting that he dies as martyr for his beliefs.

War's daunting influence becomes most visible in the protagonists' inner conflicts. Damien's profession as a doctor and his unconditional fight against the British occupiers constitutes his inner dilemma. The dichotomy of being a medic and a guerrilla fighter is exemplified in the scene in which Damien has to shoot Chris Reilly. He describes this inner conflict by stating that he has studied anatomy for years in college and now has to shoot his friend in the head. The men of the flying column decide that they have to kill their young member Chris Reilly because he has betrayed them under pressure from landlord Hamilton. When Damien seems to feel sympathy with his friend, the others remind him that they are in a war and that those problems have to be dealt with. Moreover, they swore an oath which Chris has disregarded. Despite Damien's doubts, he insists on shooting his friend himself. After the fatal shot, Damien runs away from the camera, suggesting that he wants to distance himself from the horrible events. Killing Chris, whom he has known since he

was a little boy, is a turning point for Damien. He wonders whether the Ireland he is fighting for is actually worth it when it demands to make sacrifices of this magnitude.

4.4.2. *The Butcher Boy*

Francie's animosity towards Mrs Nugent becomes more intensified by the fact that she has lived in England for some time. She and her family have just come back to Ireland after having spent time on the former oppressor's soil. For him, the Nugent family personifies the bourgeois bliss. In the novel, Francie points out their bourgeois character through Mr Nugent's unusual language: "You could see by him that he had a high-up job. He had that look in his eye that said I have a high-up job. He was staring off into the distance thinking about all the high-up things he was going to do and all the people he was going to meet. I don't know if he was English but he spoke like it. He said *good afternoon* when everybody else said *hardy weather of she looks like rain*" (P. McCabe 26). Francie comments on Mrs Nugent's allegedly newly required habits despisingly: "Now, the thing about Mrs Nugent is she came back from England with all these airs and graces and walked around like she owned the town. But here is one little pig that is going to teach her different". His declaration of war is followed by a scene in which Francie demands of Mrs Nugent to pay a "pig toll tax" for being allowed to pass on the footpath.

As mentioned above, Mrs Nugent personifies the bourgeois middle class of Ireland, adhering to traditional values. As Mrs Nugent is predominantly dressed in the colour green, one may suggest that she is the representative of the emerald isle and its bleak history. Colin McCabe points out that, as a result, when Francie kills her, "it is not simply Mrs Nooge who is getting the chop but the whole representation of Ireland that the middle classes had arrogated to themselves to the Gaelic revival" (66).

The allegory of Francie "being at war" with the Nugent family as a substitute for Ireland's political struggle with England is intensified by labelling Francie's family as pigs. Francie's war with the Nugent family, especially with Mrs Nugent, begins shortly after he and Joe have stolen Phillip Nugent's comics. Mrs Nugent goes to the Brady's home to complain about Francie's wrongdoings to his mother. Their confrontation ends with Mrs Nugent branding the Brady family as pigs: "Pigs – sure

the whole town knows that!” (P. McCabe 4). Mrs Nugent’s insult of his family haunts Francie throughout the story, culminating in slaughtering his arch enemy just like an animal. The epithet recalls “a long English tradition of cruel anti-Irish caricatures” (Scarlata 234), marking racism, hostility and difference of class. The epitaph “pig” does not seem to be an accidental label. According to Stallybrass and White, the pig is considered as a “hybrid creature characterized as ‘almost but not quite,’ which transgresses the boundaries of human/animal and domestic/wild” (qtd. in Scarlata 245). Francie, too, seems to be in a state of inbetweenness, hovering between a sensible, childish human and a wild maniac. Most importantly, however, the labelling of pigs is deeply imbedded in the Irish national psyche as it was a common derogatory term for the Irish in British colonialist discourse. The connection between the Irish and pigs originates from “the need to portray the colonized as existing on the border between human and animal. The Irish were constructed as almost human but not quite, or ‘almost the same but not white’” (McLoone *Film* 245-246).



Fig.23 The labelling of Mrs Nugent (Fiona Shaw) as a pig in *The Butcher Boy*

The story can be viewed as an indication of the damage that years of abuse can do to a human being and, even more shockingly, to a child. The tale focuses on the development of an abused person becoming the abuser. This dynamic can be applied to Ireland’s struggle for independence against Great Britain and its psychological effects on the oppressed. Postcolonial Ireland dismissed the old oppressing construction of the nation by introducing another suffocating system, the patriarchal family in the Catholic state: “This constricting national image defined ‘Irish’

within the boundaries of orthodox Catholicism and rural, patriarchal traditionalism. The urban, working-class Irish were excluded from conceptions of the nation as were women who did not fit a domestic maternal ideal derived from Mother Ireland and the Virgin Mary. The traditional patriarchal family was enshrined in the constitution of 1937 which stated that women's greatest contribution to the Irish nation was to be made from within the home, [...]" (McLoone *Film* 239-240). Embodying the epithet Mrs Nugents has called him, Francie creates havoc in Mrs Nugent's squeamishly clean house, culminating in him defecating on her floor. As Cullingford suggests, "Mrs. Nugent's good housekeeping represents as a kind of domestic colonialism" (199) which Francie rebels against, fearing that she might want "to take over the whole town." Having been named a pig and being a training employee at the butcher's, eventually slaughtering his arch-enemy, Francie is positioned as both the victim and the victimiser. Personifying this delicate binary opposition can be seen as a metaphor for Ireland's complex past as an oppressed country and its consequent radical nationalism.

4.4.3. The Time of the Celtic Tiger and Racism

Despite Ireland's affluence and prosperity, it has been trying to mask its social problems such as the widening gap between rich and poor as well as growing racism. The latter is broadly defined as attributing negative characteristics to an individual or a group by means of ethnicity or race. Outdated attributions, stereotypes, the media as well as partial representations branding refugees and immigrants responsible for economic and social problems spur racist tendencies even more. Racism is a highly complex topic which needs more analysis than this paper could offer. Nevertheless, the recent development of contemporary Irish society shall be analysed in terms of the Celtic Tiger movement. According to Loyd, racism in modern Ireland is inherently paradoxical: "At the same time as producing unprecedented wealth, it has created poverty and social exclusion. It is largely, although not exclusively, by reference to this paradox that we can attempt to understand the growth of racism in Ireland" (87).

Observers argue that the prevailing representation of Ireland as a multicultural and open society does not comply with the harsh reality of capitalism. As asylum seekers in Ireland are not permitted to enter into employment before the final

acceptance of their application, they constitute the most disempowered group due to lack of education. Suspicious and hostile tendencies towards immigrants in Ireland, thus, may have their origins in state regulation. In consequence of juridical and social reasons, they have limited changes to access Irish society. While the number of asylum claims remained low, there were “three times as many applications for work permits by non-EU nationals (...). In 2001, the majority of the 36,431 permits issued were given to individuals from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Philippines, South Africa and Romania” (Loyd 80). As Loyd points out, the Department of Employment of Industry appears

implicitly to have targeted specific countries for the recruitment of employees [...]. (...) These nation states are generally populated by white Christians, who are, from the state’s point of view, more easily ‘assimilatable’ into Irish society. This systematic racialisation of work permits by the state can be seen in terms of a straight-forward attempt to regulate internal ethnic and religious diversity (80).

The Celtic Tiger saw a juxtaposition of a dual labour market of prestigious, well-paid and unskilled, insecure jobs. While Ireland’s young workforce specialised in finance and computer technology, the market needed employees for so-called unpleasant jobs, such as nurses, cleaners or factory workers. Positions in the informal economy do not require high-skilled employees as they are characterised by low wages and give room for exploitation. Other obstacles, such as the non-use of legal rights as well as linguistic barriers, result in the assumption that economic migrants find themselves with asylum seekers “at the bottom end of the socio-economic ladder, [sharing] similar racialised disadvantages in terms of housing and educational opportunities, experience (...) social exclusion, and are equally targets of informal and institutional racism, discrimination and hostility” (Loyd 82).



Fig.24 Adam's (Mark O'Halloran) and Paul's (Tom Murphy) encounter with the Bulgarian (Ion Caramitru) 1 (Adam and Paul)

Adam's and Paul's encounter with the Bulgarian mirrors those tendencies in Irish society. They immediately label him as an immigrant from Romania, whose people constitute one of the largest numbers of (economic) asylum seekers in Ireland. The man, however, angrily clarifies that he is in fact from Bulgaria. Bulgaria was not a member of the European Union until 2007, which, thus, makes the man a non-EU economic immigrant. When the Bulgarian continuously insists on his rights in a free country such as Ireland, Adam replies resentfully, "Too right a free country. OUR fucking country!"



Fig.25 Adam's (Mark O'Halloran) and Paul's (Tom Murphy) encounter with the Bulgarian (Ion Caramitru) 2 (*Adam and Paul*)

Adam discriminates against the man further by saying that he should go back to “fucking Romania”. The man calls the two junkies ignorant and naive. The fact that Paul is clearly surprised at this reply shows that the two men lack interest in anything else but drugs. When Paul states that it must be such a relief for him to be living in Dublin now, the furious Bulgarian declares that not his home nation but Dublin is the “shithole”. As mentioned above, Adam and Paul show a great sense of patriotism as well as pride in the city of Dublin despite not being treated too well by its inhabitants. They belong to a marginalised group which the newly affluent society would like to forget about. Their hometown, too, has abandoned them with the two scruffy junkies not fitting into the polished financial capital it presents itself these days. The Bulgarian comments on Dublin dismissively, characterising it being full of liars, maniacs, and to add to the comical effect, full of Romanians. O'Halloran argues that Adam's hostility towards the Bulgarian is a result of trying to maintain his position within a hierarchical society:

(...) [T]here's a trope in *Adam & Paul* about people, no matter how low down the ladder they are, trying to find somebody just one rung lower. So, for Adam particularly, their relationship with the kid in the sleeping bag or the Romanian is a way of defining himself as superior (...) (Crosson 135).



Fig.26 The Bulgarian (Ion Caramitru) in *Adam and Paul*

Adam's and Paul's intention to position themselves above the Bulgarian immigrant by asking him what he was doing in their country, however, backfires. The Bulgarian counteracts their racial abuse by asking them the same question: "What am I doing here? What the fuck are you doing here?" Grela suggests that with his question, the Bulgarian is "positioning himself in a marginal space to which he is more entitled than Adam and Paul, because this man belongs to the margins of postmodernity, while Adam and Paul are modern outcasts in a postmodern subaltern spatiality" (Grela 79).

The Celtic Tiger brought about a country having had a long history of emigration connected to hardship and national trauma now facing an unusual situation. Due to the economic growth, Irish people did not have to emigrate out of necessity anymore, but now it was Ireland, which was attracting immigrants from all over the world in hope of work and a better life. Not all Irish people, however, accepted those new immigrants as part of their society. Whereas Irish people, who have, "as a consequence of emigration, formed ethnic communities throughout the world" (Crosson 25), most prominently in the United States, a small yet distinctive part of their native population makes it hard for immigrants to start a new life in Ireland.

4.5. Selected Themes and Motifs

4.5.1. The Art of Storytelling

Another marker for its Irishness is the art of storytelling. Literature serves as a means of preserving the Irish national heritage. *Adam and Paul* shows significant similarity to two masterpieces of Irish literature. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and James Joyce's *Ulysses* are deeply imbedded in Irish culture and its literary canon. Abrahamson deconstructs these two masterpieces of Irish literature and represents the Irish culture of today in his cinematic version. The way *Adam and Paul* is told, however, is completely different to the grand narrations by Joyce and Beckett. As for the first, scriptwriter and director choose to say more by saying less. Their movies are not dialogue-laden narratives by any means, yet they do not fail to convey their messages. Dióg O'Connell argues that O'Halloran's and Abrahamson's main narrative focus is to present internal human emotions even when they appear illusive:

The mundanity of the everyday becomes dramatic as Adam and Paul aimlessly wander the streets of Dublin; while Josie in *Garage* gives the intention demanded of much more complex behaviour to every ordinary everyday action. The presence of these characters in almost every scene of the film allows for a closely-engaged study of their human emotional states through the action, motion and mood depicted, albeit in the absence of an over-reliance of the close-up shot. The camera remains at a distance, filming in long and medium shots, to observe and reveal the character of their situation on a gradual basis (O'Connell 96).

Conversations between Adam and Paul occasionally come across as irrational and unnecessary. Its ultimate conclusion, silence, highlights the incomprehensible universe the two protagonists are living in. Silence, however, does not serve as a marker of irrational speech alone. As dialogues are taken away from the audience, their visual senses are more sensitised.

Just as characters of the Theatre of the Absurd, Adam and Paul do not follow a traditional character development but are in a state of crisis as the world around them is almost incomprehensible. The two men wander through the streets of Dublin while subjected to any occurrence. They are not in charge of the events or their lives at all but seem to be just struggling through life. They seem to be floating in a universe ruled by chance and coincidences. Just like, for instance, Pinter's characters, Adam and Paul are trapped in an enclosed space, here Dublin, by some

force, namely drugs. Moreover, in absurd plays characters often alienate from the audience. In *Adam and Paul*, too, alienation is achieved by the lack of identification. Throughout the movie, it is never entirely clear which character is Adam and which one is Paul. Other characters address them as Adam and Paul simultaneously, and the pair never calls one another by the name. Gillespie argues that they are blurred identities who “expose the vague general disorientation that plagues the two men throughout the film” (49).

Language seems to have lost its function at times. Even though the characters in *Adam and Paul* make use of naturalistic language, their interactions come across as nonsense. On numerous occasions, it seems as if the characters engage in senseless conversations just for the sake of talking. In the scene in which Adam and Paul encounter a group of friends in St Stephen Green, the characters engage in a prolonged and ridiculous act of greeting each other. Meaningless yet humorous conversations arise. When Paul asks his friend Georgie where he is living these days, Georgie reluctantly states, “Why do you want to know?” In his almost childish fashion, Paul defends himself by saying, “I don’t. I was just asking!” Paul’s honest reply mirrors the movie’s general dealing with language and its purpose. As language has lost its function, more or less hilarious misunderstandings are the consequence. Later, the two protagonists find themselves in an equally comical and circular situation when they and another homeless man in a sleeping bag talk at cross purposes. Both Adam and Paul cannot remember the name of one of their dealers and refer to him as “What’s-his-name”. Due to this lack of information, the homeless guy misunderstands the wanted person for “Clank”, which will turn out as a far-reaching mistake. The prime example, however, of a scene which features a misunderstanding is when Adam and Paul meet the Bulgarian. During their encounter with the Bulgarian migrant, a string of faux pas which are evocative to Laurel’s and Hardy’s slapstick stunts, lead to a comical misunderstanding. When the two junkies ask the Bulgarian hostilely why he has come to Ireland in the first place, he answers that he had to leave Sofia. Adam and Paul, however, take the reference to the Bulgarian capital of Sofia as a clue for a woman. Despite the misery around them, Adam and Paul still show a deep patriotic pride in their hometown, and Paul suggests that it must be such a relief for the Bulgarian to now live in Dublin. Seemingly angered by Paul’s ignorant remark, the migrant asks a deeper question: “What are you doing here? Why the fuck are you here?” The Bulgarian’s closing remark, asking

the two protagonists “Why am I here? Have you ever asked yourself the same thing? Why are YOU here?” shows another similarity to the characteristics of The Theatre of the Absurd. The Bulgarian’s remark plays with the fundamental questions of existential philosophy, the philosophy the Theatre of the Absurd significantly relies on. Not only does this scene touch upon racist attitudes towards the influx of foreign workers during the Celtic Tiger, it also “reveals the limited engagement Adam and Paul have with their society” (D. O’Connell 104).

A further recurring theme used to highlight the circular essence of the movie is the continuous asking one another for cigarettes. Numerous scenes include or end with the question for a cigarette. After Paul is thrown out of the grocery store for shoplifting, his nameless partner in crime asks him whether he has a smoke for him. But Paul only shrugs his shoulders and encounters that he was about to ask the same question. This recurring theme emphasises the protagonists’ helplessness, interdependence yet mutual assistance to one another.

In absurd plays, the characters are generally driven by an outside force that often remains a mystery. In *Adam and Paul*, one could argue that this force is the characters’ mental and physical need for heroin. Moreover, characters of absurd plays sometimes undergo a metamorphosis or a shift into another transcendent world. In Eugène Ionesco’s “Rhinoceros”, for instance, inhabitants of the town the story is set in turn into rhinoceroses. A similar change of consciousness of the two protagonists is depicted in a scene in Abrahamson’s movie. After Adam and Paul have finally found heroin, they wander through Dublin once again. This time, however, it seems as if they are in a state of weightlessness. While high on drugs, the protagonists seem to be in another world without the laws of either physics or reason. Despite their bodies stumbling through the nightly city, their minds appear to be somewhere completely else. The change of music from a comical to a fantastic one adds to the surreal, narcotic atmosphere. They eventually come to a stop, quite fittingly, at the flamboyant James Joyce Bridge, a symbol of the Celtic Tiger and Dublin’s new modern look as a business capital. The bridge was opened on June 16th, the so-called Bloomsday, 2003 and is one of the newest and most modern looking bridges arching over the Liffey. Again, as with the two scruffy protagonists disturbing the neat picture of St Stephen’s Green, their presence deranges this clean Dublin landmark. The scene is intercut with pictures of various forms of litter, such as empty beer cans and banana skins. This technique of cutting could be interpreted as

if Abrahamson wants to draw a parallel between the protagonists and garbage. On the one hand, the scene could be seen as an expression of Adam and Paul being scum themselves. On the other hand, one could argue that due to their drug consumption, they throw away their lives just as one might throw out litter.

As mentioned above, the plot is characterised by repetition and routine. The audience accompanies the two junkies, and for one day, it seems as if the depicted 24 hours could have occurred on any day of their present lives. The fact that the men do not have any idea how they ended up there underscores the sense of randomness dominating their existence. When the two junkies find themselves back at the Ballymun flats to sell a stolen TV set with the help of a concealer, Adam and Paul even comment on the circular events when they notice that they are back where they started. Being back at the flats, however, proves to be rather a case of luck than reason when two bags of heroin land right in front of their feet. Due to their constant need for drugs and actions required to take to get them, gives the impression that the next day could turn out to be exactly the same, living the same day over and over again. Their daily routine is shaped by absence, as in drugs, and social marginalisation. Gillespie points out that “[t]he fact that neither man has any idea how he ended up [at the Ballymun flats in the beginning] simply underscores the sense of randomness dominating their existence” (109). When Paul asks his companion early in the movie, “Do we have a plan?”, Adam answers rather unbelievably, “Yeah, go into town and try to score”. Neither of the protagonists ever seems to have a plan nor a notion of what they are doing, therefore the general nothingness in their lives becomes noticeable early in the movie. Even though no information about their prior lives or the possible reasons for their drug addiction is given, it is obvious that the two junkies have been living like that for an indefinite period and, at least one of them, will continue to do so.

4.5.2. Irish music

Ireland enjoys a special relationship with music which its people take great pride in. The association of Irishness and musicality originates in the second half of the eighteenth century. That time saw the beginning of the nationalist discourse and, as historian Gerry Smyth outlines, that was when “the notion of an inherent Irish

musicality (...) was consolidated. This notion of the Irish as an essentially musical race continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century” (148).

Just as film, Irish music has been displaced by Ireland’s grand literary tradition. Irish studies used to focus on Ireland’s literary riches which have been considered as the main conduit of identity for a long time. Within the last decades, however, there has been an enhanced analysis of music, cinema and other studies. New approaches explore how different disciplines, such as literature and music or music and cinema, interrogate each other. There have been links between music and literature throughout Irish cultural history. James Joyce, for instance, used both literary and musical discourses in his works, such as in his final story in *Dubliners*, called *The Dead*, or in *Ulysses*’ eleventh chapter, “Sirens”.

Along with language, sports and other social practices, music became part of the nationalist movement in the late nineteenth century. The Celtic Revival had a clear vision of what the Irish identity should entail. Together with literature and language, traditional music was considered to convey this identity by articulating the Irish essence in its most authentic form. Music, therefore, had a profound influence on the re-emergence of traditional Irish culture. Ireland’s traditional folklore music was believed “to articulate a very local sense of identity, in other words; even when it was transported (along with the great Irish diaspora) to all corners of the earth, the truth it spoke was a particularly ‘Irish truth’” (G. Smyth 93). During the Revival, people engaged in traditional songs to reconfirm nationalist ideologies as well as to emphasise their recalcitrance of modernity. Furthermore, music enabled Irish people to express their rootedness in a country which had been denied its own identity for centuries.

Traditional Irish folklore music is emotionally loaded. Traditional Irish music is characterised by delicious sadness and national melodies which oscillate between tragedy and celebrations. In both joyous and sorrowful songs, people expressed Celtic melancholy and nostalgia. Often, the songs are about Ireland’s history of dispossession and defeat. Other songs are classified as defiant resistance songs, while others are a comic response to disappointments or tragedies conveying a desperate yet ironic tone.

A classic among the Irish rebellion songs is “The Wind that Shakes the Barley”, written by Robert Dywer Joyce. The title of Loach’s film derives from the

ballad which is also used in the scene of Michael's wake. It is a powerful and tragic song, dealing with the pains of occupied Ireland.

Wind that Shakes the Barley (by Robert Dywer Joyce)¹

I sat within a valley green
I sat me with my true love
My sad heart strove to choose between
The old love and the new love
The old for her, the new that made
Me think on Ireland dearly
While soft the wind blew down the glade
And shook the golden barley

Twas hard the woeful words to frame
To break the ties that bound us
But harder still to bear the weight
Of foreign chains around us
And so I said, "The mountain glen
I'll seek at morning early
And join the brave United Men
While soft winds shake the barley"

While sad I kissed away her tears
My fond arms 'round her flinging
The foeman's shot burst on our ears
From out the wildwood ringing
A bullet pierced my true love's side
In life's young spring so early
And on my breast in blood she died
While soft winds shook the barley

I bore her to some mountain stream
And many's the summer blossom
I placed with branches soft and green
About her gore-stained bosom
I wept and kissed her clay-cold corpse
Then rushed o'er vale and valley
My vengeance on the foe to wreak
While soft winds shook the barley

But blood for blood without remorse
I've taken at Oulart Hollow
And laid my true love's clay-cold corpse
Where I full soon may follow
As 'round her grave I wander drear
Noon, night and morning early
With breaking heart when e'er I hear

¹ Source: <http://www.musicanet.org/robokopp/eire/isatwitv.htm>

The wind that shakes the barley

The ballad tells the story of a young rebel's dilemma who is about to embark and fight for his country's freedom in the 1798 Irish rebellion. However, he cannot decide whether to fight for his new love, Ireland, or to stay with his true love, a woman. Despite his dilemma over his lover, it would be harder for him to see his country suppressed by a foreign power any more. Therefore, he decides to fight for his country and joins the rebels. While fighting in the rebellion, however, his lover is killed by enemy fire. Despite taking vengeance, the young rebel is still tormented by thoughts of his true love. His heart breaks every time when he hears the wind shaking the barley. The ballad is of historical significance as many rebels carried barley oats with them during their attacks. When the rebellion failed in September 1798, the rebels were buried in mass graves. According to legends, locals reported to have seen barley growing out of the graves later. Thus, barley became a symbol of Irish nationalism which signifies the spirit of the Irish that cannot be buried nor destroyed.

The ballad is sung during Michael's wake scene by an elderly lady. The fact that a song, so strongly connoted with disobedience, is sung implies that the other rebels will not stop their fight for freedom despite their friend's tragic death. Moreover, the usage of *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* at Michael's funeral could also emphasise that his family and friends regard his death as that of a martyr.

That traditional Irish music is not connected to melancholia and laments, however, is shown by the scene when Damien and his friends celebrate the end of Ireland's War of Independence. Characters are shown dancing and singing euphorically with traditional folklore music in the background. The scene in the dance hall is one of the few which shows Damien and his friends in their lighter moods. Through the usage of music, Loach emphasises the character's current light-heartedness.

In *The Butcher Boy*, Francie's mother becomes somehow obsessed with the Irish ballad of the same name.

The Butcher Boy (unknown)²

In Dublin town where I did dwell

² Source: <http://www.lyricsnmusic.com/sinead-o-connor/the-butcher-boy-lyrics/2810758>

a butcher boy I loved so well.
He courted me my life away
but now with me he will not stay.

I wish, I wish, but I wish in vain
I wish I was a maid again.
A maid again I ne'er will be
'till apples grow on an ivy tree.

I wish my baby it was born.
And smiling on his daddys knee
and me poor girl to be dead and gone.
Let the long green grass grow over me.

She went upstairs to go to bed
and calling to her mother said
"Bring me a chair 'til I sit down
and a pen and ink 'til I write down."

At every word she dropped a tear
and every line cried "Father dear.
Oh what a foolish girl was I
To be led astray by a butcher boy."

He went upstairs, and the door he broke
and found her hanging from her rope.
He took his knife and cut her down
and in her pocket these words he found:
"Oh, make my grave large, wide and deep
put a marble stone at my head and feet
and in the middle a turtle dove
so the world may know I died of love."

The song is about a woman who was abandoned by the love of her life. Her lover leaves her after getting her pregnant. Heartbroken, the young woman hangs herself. In her suicide note, she asks her father to get her a grave with a dove. It is supposed to show the world that she died of love. There are clear connections between the girl from the song and Annie Brady. Her marriage to Bennie is characterised by hatred, bitterness and violence. Additionally, there is a clear parallel to Annie, who, just as the girl in the song, hung herself. When Irish society began to liberalise during the 1960s, one of the many ways this process was notable for music. Especially the influence of North America's pop culture influenced Ireland's music scene vigorously, as contextualised in Jordan's *The Butcher Boy*.

Abrahamson's usage of music in both of his productions is kept frugal due to his minimalistic approach. Most music in *Adam and Paul* comes from Eastern Europe

to highlight Ireland's multicultural change of the last decade. In the scene in which Adam and Paul stumble into Matthew's Month's Mind celebrations at the pub, however, a traditional Irish ballad is sung. A group of relatives and friends strike up the sad yet optimistic ballad *Black Velvet Band*:

Black Velvet Band (unknown)³

Her eyes they shone like the diamonds
You'd think she was queen of the land
And her hair hung over her shoulder
Tied up with a black velvet band.
In a neat little town they call Belfast
Apprenticed to trade I was bound
And many an hour's sweet happiness
I spent in that neat little town.
Till bad misfortune came o'er me
That caused me to stray from the land
Far away from my friends and relations
To follow the black velvet band.

Well, I was out strolling one evening
Not meaning to go very far
When I met with a pretty young damsel
Who was selling her trade in the bar.
When I watched, she took from a customer
And slipped it right into my hand
Then the Watch came and put me in prison
Bad luck to the black velvet band.

Next morning before judge and jury
For a trial I had to appear
And the judge, he said, "You young fellows...
The case against you is quite clear
And seven long years is your sentence
You're going to Van Dieman's Land
Far away from your friends and relations
To follow the black velvet band."

So come all you jolly young fellows
I'd have you take warning by me
Whenever you're out on the liquor, me lads,
Beware of the pretty colleen.
She'll fill you with whiskey and porter
Until you're not able to stand
And the very next thing that you'll know, me lads,
You're landed in Van Dieman's Land.

³ Source: <http://celtic-lyrics.com/lyrics/55.html>

The song tells the story of a tradesman in Belfast who meets a mysterious young woman. The woman hands him an item which he will be accused of stealing later. The tradesman is charged with theft and transported to Australia, which was the common punishment in Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century. While the usage of the ballad “Black Velvet Band” does not serve a special purpose in *Adam and Paul*, it highlights the continuous social function of music in modern Ireland.

4.5.3. The Irish Wake

A traditional Irish wake is a funeral ceremony during which family and friends of the deceased keep vigil over the dead. The word “wake” means “watching and guarding” and describes the funeral celebration taking place the night before the body is transferred to the church where the burial will take place. Whereas the wake was quite common until the 1970s, it has become an almost unknown tradition in the cities these days with the wake often taking place at funeral homes. The body is usually laid out in the family home where relatives and friends gather to remember the deceased. A wake is a special grieving process which combines both sadness and joy. With food and drink being served, it can be considered as a party which celebrates the life of the deceased at the night before the burial. Additionally to prayers, the attendants engage in songs or recite anecdotes of the deceased’s life. A traditional Irish wake follows certain rules such as the habit is put on the body. Typically, women lay out the body which is washed and shaved, if the deceased is a man, and put it into a coffin. A crucifix is placed on the breast, and rosary beads are put in the hand of the dead. Clocks are stopped at the time of death, and mirrors are either turned around or covered as a mark of respect. After the person has died, the room’s window is opened for the spirit to leave the body. After two hours, all windows are closed to stop the spirit from trying to return to the body. Another traditional practice of a wake is keening, the vocalisation of the loss of a beloved person. Generally, it is only women who engage in keening which is “a form of wailing that is interspersed with endearments, usually Gaelic, addressed to the deceased. [...] Keening is not like any other kind of crying. [...] It’s loud and goes on for a long time. When one keener loses volume, another takes up the cant” (Sweeney). Keening is

most intense if the death is considered as a great loss, for instance that of a child, a parent or that of especially tragic circumstances.

It is important to note that women perform a special symbolic rite during the ceremony of the wake, which derives from the old connection between women and death in Ireland. As mentioned before, it is traditionally women who are experienced in laying out the body to prepare it for the wake. Additionally, it is the women's task to perform the traditional vocalisation of mourning, the keening. Furthermore, it is usually a woman who sits next to the body who must never be left unattended for the duration of the whole wake.

After Michael's brutal killing by the Black and Tans in Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, a wake is held in Peggy's house to remember her grandson. In the scene, a besotted Damien enters the farmstead where family and friends of Michael have gathered already. Damien walks up to the body of his friend and says a prayer for him. The room is quite dark with the only source of light being candles placed next to Michael's body. Moreover, adhering to the rules of a traditional wake, all windows are closed in order to prevent Michael's spirit from coming back into his body. In the background, a female voice sings the traditional Irish ballad "The Wind that Shakes the Barley". The song is sung by an elderly woman sitting together with another female and Peggy next to the body. The three women symbolise the pre-modern notion of women being connected to death in Ireland. Peggy or another one of the two women are meant to sit next to Michael's body throughout the whole wake. In the final moments of the wake scene, Damien walks up to Peggy in order to console her about her grandson's tragic death. On a final note, that a song with a nationalistic connotation as such is sung at his funeral, additionally to the fact that Michael's body is dressed in the IRA uniform, emphasises Michael's death as that of a martyr.

4.5.4. The Irish Diaspora

While Ireland has a population of 6.3 million, 70 million people around the world claim Irish ancestry. In the USA, around 40 million people are considered to have Irish roots. Since the eighteenth century, emigration has been a major factor of Irish life and culture. The migrant stream consisted of resisting groups in search of religious

freedom as well as political rebels who wanted to flee an oppressed country. Predominantly, however, people left poverty-stricken Ireland in search of economic opportunities. The most sought after destinations were North America, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Since the 19th century, however, Britain emerged as the most important attraction for Irish emigrants.

Cohen classifies the Irish diaspora, alongside with the Jewish or African diaspora, as a victim example (see Bronwen 1297). Britain's colonial conquest of the island as well as its religious, political and economic oppression caused masses of Irish citizens to leave their country. Lloyd, on the other hand, dismisses the use of the term "the Irish diaspora" as a ploy to jump on the bandwagon, implying that it has a connotation of victimhood which no longer describes their relationship to the hegemonic centre" (qtd. in Bronwen 1297). According to Lloyd, Irish emigrants are securely included within the white mainstream in Great Britain or North America, unlike, for instance, emigrants from Africa or Asia.

The eighteenth century witnessed the first significant wave of emigration from Ireland. 250,000 Presbyterians and descendants of Scottish emigrants who had settled in Ulster fled Ireland due to economic factors as well as religious oppression by the Anglican Church. At the beginning of the 19th century, emigration to America experienced another influx when another 100,000 people left Ulster and other parts of Ireland, most of whom were Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants. After the Great Famine, emigration increased further, with the majority being Catholic. As Brian Walker points out in his essay,

between 1845 and 1860 the number of Catholics in America trebled from 1.1million to 3.1million and Irish immigration accounted for roughly half the increase (...). Among these new Irish Catholic emigrants, who had sought to escape harsh conditions at home but who continued to experience tough circumstances, although greater opportunities, in the New World, a strong Irish nationalist and Catholic identity developed. During the second half of the nineteenth century we see the building of important Irish Catholic communities in places like New York and Boston (269).

Irish emigration to Great Britain was also very intense within the last two decades due to close proximity and cultural links. During the eighteenth century, Britain's commercial and industrial cities prompted an influx of Irish settlements. By the 1830s, politicians and authorities were concerned about the thousands of Irish citizens arriving at British ports every year. Historian MacRaild described this phase of the Irish diaspora and how it was embedded in the Irish psyche in his essay:

Since the early eighteenth century around eight million people have emigrated from Ireland. Of this number, perhaps five million left in the first seven decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, by the middle of that century, the tradition of leaving Ireland had expanded so significantly that young Irish men and women had one in a three change of emigrating, and by 1890 around 40 per cent of all Irish-born people were living outside their country of birth" (6).

The Great Famine (1845-1850) and its disastrous aftermaths changed the Irish population tremendously. Between 1841 and 1901, the Irish population halved from more than eight million to approximately four due to fatalities and emigration. The Great Famine and its catastrophic ramifications were the causes for Ireland's greatest emigration flow. Two million Irish citizens departed in a little more than a decade. The influx of Irish emigrants in Britain continued even "in the 1860s and 1870s, when agriculture was more buoyant than it had been since 1815 (...). By the latter decade, emigration was so fundamental to Irish life that probably no Irish family was untouched by it" (MacRaild 7).

In *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, protagonist Damien is set to leave for England to become a doctor shortly before the Irish War of Independence. He has been offered work in London in one of the best hospitals in the world. As Ireland, shattered by oppression, economic crisis and rebellious uproar, could not have offered him a prestigious education, Damien decides to emigrate. While Peggy and her family wish him all the best, Teddy and his friends want to convince Damien to stay. "Are there not enough sick people in Ireland?", an uncomprehending Finbar asks. Another friend jokingly remarks on Damien's impending move that he would leave Ireland in order to "lick the king's arse". After Michael's tragic death, however, the rebel's lack of understanding takes a more serious tone. Whilst Damien is of the opinion that Irish resistance would be beyond remedy due to the masses of British soldiers deployed in Ireland, his friends consider him a traitor. A real Irishman, they think, would not leave his country even at difficult times. Implying that Damien's move is cowardly, Sinéad asks, "So we should all buy a one-way ticket to London, is that it, Damien?" Sinéad's remark can be considered as symptomatic for those who stayed in their crisis-stricken homeland. Many of those who stayed at home regarded migrants as traitors who abandoned their native country and their fellow citizens.

After the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 and the ensuing formation of the Irish Free State, Ireland remained within the dominion of the British Commonwealth. Consequently, Irish migrants were considered as British subjects who kept their right

of free entry to Great Britain. The Irish's unrestricted entry was met with anxiety and hostility by British politicians and citizens alike, fearing that the Irish masses would not assimilate. Irish emigrants, therefore, had to face animosity, housing problems and welfare difficulties.

The second wave of large-scale Irish migration took place between the mid-1930s and the 1970s. As no census was taken during those years, indirect estimates based on authority information suggest that there was a stark influx of Irish emigrants from 1935 onwards. During the Second World War, further 100,000 Irish citizens moved to Britain to seek employment. As Delaney points out,

it has been estimated that at least another 100,000 migrated to Britain between 1945 and 1951, reflecting the demand for labour in the war and post-war economy. By 1951 the Irish-born population in Britain numbered over 700,000 people, of whom three-quarters were from the Irish Republic (242).

The Irish, however, remained strongly marginalised until the middle of the twentieth century. Britain's openly racist discourse was conducted by its political leaders and population alike. Irish emigrants who had arrived in Britain seeking accommodation in the 1950s/60s, for instance, often had to read "No blacks, no Irish, no dogs" signs. In the 1950s, Britain underwent an economic advance and expanded as a welfare state. The economic recovery enabled the indigenous population to perform less desirable and lower-paid manual work. This labour was traditionally carried out by Irish migrants who had left their native country due to economic stagnation.

In *The Butcher Boy*, Francie's much admired Uncle Alo has left Ireland and apparently has found a great job in London. Alo is the family's success story and Clone's local celebrity. Even the priest comments on Francie's uncle's prosperous career and claims that the town should be proud of its son. During Alo's homecoming party, however, a drunken Bennie calls him a fake and a liar. He knows that, in reality, Alo works only as a factory security man who has been lying to his family and hometown for years. Bennie denounces him by claiming that his brother is "tipping his cap to his betters in his wee blue porter's suit". Alo represents all those Irish emigrants who were looking for prosperity and wealth yet were denied prestigious and well-paid work abroad in reality. In his essay, historian Walter Bronwen describes, however, that the new arrivals experienced a different situation:

But in reality their own working lives were primarily oriented towards facilitating homebuilding for the English population. Thus Irish men

constructed the new housing estates and Irish women provided paid domestic work and other caring services in health and education, from which English women had been withdrawn to maintain the domestic ideology of private homes. The migrant labour slot exposed Irish people as “not really” part of the “homely” white population. Their allocation to low-paid work, dual-earning parenthood with “latchkey” children, and low priority in housing rights, placed many in the twentieth-century version of the category “underserving” poor (1302).

Many emigrants found their new environment disorientating and encountered hostility. Feelings of alienation and insecurity, in turn, gave rise to nationalistic identities in order to provide a sense of rootedness. As a consequence of discrimination and hostile landlords, many Irish emigrants were forced to live in ghettos or slums in cities. Bronwen claims that there is ample evidence that “anti-Irish attitudes were still widespread in Britain at the end of the twentieth century and that as a group the Irish did not occupy the privileged centre” (1297). Furthermore, the historian argues that “anti-Irish attitudes persist throughout Britain [today], most starkly in the so-called sectarian divisions of the west of Scotland” (1297).

During the Celtic Tiger phase at the beginning of the 1990s, Ireland turned into a country full of ethnic variety. For the first time, Irish people did not leave their native country due for economic reasons anymore. Now Ireland attracted masses of migrants from all over the world due to its economic prosperity. Abrahamson’s protagonists Adam and Paul, however, react to the new arrivals in a rather hostile manner as commented on in a previous chapter. In *Garage*, Josie is thinking of leaving Ireland behind and starting a new life, but decides to stay in the end. When David asks Josie whether he ever wanted to leave town, Josie declines. Josie further explains that he had a job lined up in England to work in a meat factory but decided to stay. His account includes both pride and melancholy. Josie is aware of the fact that his life in this town will not become any more adventurous or exciting. It is not entirely certain, however, whether he has fully accepted his fate or would just not welcome any change in his life.

After falling into recession in 2008, Ireland’s Celtic Tiger died completely. Its economic struggle since the global financial crisis in 2008 has led to a massive rise of emigration once again. With expansion reversing dramatically and unemployment rates rising, many Irish people have had to seek their fortunes abroad. Statistics show that 87,100 people left Ireland in the last financial year, which is two per cent of its entire population. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Walter Bronwen remarks that

people leaving Ireland today is “far larger than in the previous huge outpourings of the 1950s and the late 1980s” (Hyslop).

The recent resurgence of the Irish diaspora shows that the emigration culture is a multifarious and tedious process. The Irish diaspora was often viewed as “a single religious entity with a special Irish identity” (Walker 227). That view, however, created a concept of the Irish abroad with a stereotypically Catholic and nationalistic identity. A concept narrow as this excludes other experiences such as that of the Irish Protestants in Australia or that of the Scottish Irish Protestants in America. Irish emigrants came from all parts of Ireland, from a wide range of backgrounds and their different identities. As Enda Delaney suggested, “the Irish diaspora (...) never was and is not now a homogenous unit” (qtd. in Walker 276). In a speech delivered to the Irish houses of parliament in 1995, former President Mary Robinson emphasised the diaspora’s diversity:

If we expect that the mirror held up to us by Irish communities abroad will show a single familiar identity, or a pure strain of Irishness, we will be disappointed. We will overlook the fascinating diversity of culture and choice which looks back at us (Robinson).

5. Conclusion

Irish talents have delivered a range of top-quality films despite not having had an indigenous film industry for most of the twentieth century. Thus, it is only fair to say that Irish cinema is still trying to define itself. The cinematic texts present a variety of Irish truths, may they be tragedies, comedies or urban crime stories.

A decade ago, Irish cinema, or at least what people thought of it, was dominated by two filmmakers, Neil Jordan and Jim Sheridan. The rise of new, talented directors coincided with the re-establishment of the Irish Film Board in 1993, resulting in both parties profiting greatly from each other. Old indigenous Irish cinema used to be considered as either too dark, too regional, or simply too “Irish”. The country’s process of liberalisation and modernisation mirrored itself in the cultural context. Cinema, therefore, also underwent an opening process which made it more appealing to international audiences as well as markets. Cinematic texts including new aesthetics and narratives surfaced. Today, Ireland can boast with a long list of

talented filmmakers, with the likes of Lenny Abrahamson, Martin and John Michael McDonagh, John Carney or Damien O'Donnell as well as brilliant screenwriters such as Mark O'Halloran or Enda Walsh. They and many more have contributed to a rich and varied terrain of contemporary cinema. These creative and resourceful filmmakers have moved Ireland from its margin right into the middle of international film culture. Its growing international reputation and influence can be matched to that of Ireland's long traditions of literature, drama and music.

With the re-establishment of the Irish Film Board, Irish cinema was given the chance to catch up with other national cinemas. New filmmakers sought to distance themselves from cinema's old forms of representation, formally and thematically. Therefore, they presented images of Ireland which redefined people's expectations. Modern Irish cinema has produced works which both affirmed and deconstructed traditional representations of what it means to be Irish. Not only have new directors shown differences to movies from previous decades, but have also disrupted traditional notions of genres. Contemporary Irish cinema, therefore, I argue is contradictory and fragmented.

In contemporary films, there has been a greater emphasis on Irish lives and experiences rather than on national traumas from previous centuries. Moreover, modern filmmakers present a variety of personal stories, of rural dwellers as well as of urban identities. They are authentic and critical and do not shy away from addressing social problems and institutional failure.

Both the Irish Film Board as well as the tax relief targeting at film production have helped the indigenous film business to prosper. Ireland's film scene has moved on with baby steps at the beginning to a confident competitor within the last two decades. Irish movies should not dread international comparison as their success at various film festivals all over the globe has proved.

Despite its new narratives and positive critical response, Irish cinema still cannot compete with the international entertainment industry. Foreign productions are often backed by extensive funding and acquisitive marketing strategies. Despite their remarkable success, Irish productions used to be rarely found on top of box office statistics. In recent years, however, more indigenous movies have been able to boast with national and international track records. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (€3.7m) or *In Bruges* (€3.0m), for instance, highlight Irish cinema's promising future. In 2011, John Michael McDonagh's *The Guard* became the "most successful

independent Irish film in Irish box office history, grossing over €4.13m” (RTÉ *The Guard*).

As Irish expansion and economic growth has disappeared altogether since the financial crisis in 2008, it was also uncertain how this would affect the indigenous film scene. In December 2012, finance minister Michael Noonan announced that the Irish government extended its existing tax relief scheme, Section 481, until 2020. In 2016, however, the scheme will be changed to a tax credit model. A delighted James Morris, chairman of the Irish Film Board, said that the extension “demonstrates the commitment of the Irish government to the future of Ireland’s creative industries. These changes will strengthen the sector as an important contributor to the Irish economy” (Irish Film Board *IFB Welcomes Changes*). Morris explains further, that despite Ireland’s economic difficulties recently, its film business has steadily been growing, “contributing over €150million, in terms of Irish spend on jobs and services, to the Irish economy in 2011” (Irish Film Board *IFB Welcomes Changes*).

Nevertheless, it will be interesting to see how cinema will develop amidst the current financial crisis. With the Celtic Tiger phenomenon having disappeared completely, it will show how robust Ireland’s film scene really is. Additionally, it will be of great interest how Ireland’s filmmakers will artistically deal with their country’s current status.

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, defining a national cinema is as problematic as defining a national identity itself. Ireland’s national cinema, with all its qualities and characteristics, has been the subject of many studies. Nevertheless, this debate is an on-going discussion far from being concluded. To me, Irish cinema as well as Ireland’s identity appears contradictory and fragmented yet very honest and likeable. If nothing else, this analysis attempted to show why contemporary Irish cinema is worth of our attention, if not even of our admiration.

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Zusammenfassung

Während Irland von ausländischen Filmproduktionsfirmen aufgrund pittoresker Landschaft, mystischer Geschichte und billiger Produktionskosten gerne besucht wurde, war das indigene irische Kino bis in die 1970er Jahre nahezu nicht existent. Vor allem Hollywood war von Irlands traumhafter Kulisse und dessen heroischen Legenden angetan und machte den irischen Film zu dem seinem. John Fords US-Produktion *The Quiet Man* (1952) galt jahrzehntelang als die traditionelle filmische Repräsentation Irlands und dessen typischen Lebensart, nämlich „Irishness“.

Irlands eigenes indigenes Kino erwachte erst in den 1970ern. Die heimischen Filmschaffenden bemühten sich jedoch, mit der traditionellen Repräsentation Irlands zu brechen. Die von Hollywood definierten Stereotypen wurden frech und schonungslos dekonstruiert. Obwohl es nicht an Talent fehlte, musste der irische Film noch Jahrzehnte kämpfen, um sich gegen die kulturelle Dominanz der Literatur durchzusetzen. Des Weiteren erschwerte es Irlands missliche Finanzlage der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts, eine indigene Filmszene aufzubauen. Der irische Staat, gekennzeichnet von Protektionismus, einer ärmlichen Agrarindustrie und repressiven Gesellschaft, befand sich weit abgeschlagen vom Rest des fortschrittlichen Europas. Darüber hinaus waren Irlands Politik und Gesellschaft von der starken Verbindung zwischen Staat und Katholischen Kirche geprägt. Die Kirche übte des Weiteren großen Einfluss auf Kunst und Kultur, wie z.B. durch Zensur, aus. Als in den 1960ern Irlands Politik und Wirtschaft liberaler wurden, erfuhr auch die Gesellschaft einen signifikanten Modernisierungsprozess. Jene Liberalisierung spiegelte sich auch in der Kultur wider und so konnte sich der indigene Film weiter entfalten.

Zwei für den irischen Film signifikante Entwicklungen ereigneten sich in den 1980er Jahren. Zum einen ermöglichte die Gründung des Irish Film Boards die heimische Filmszene auf höherem Niveau auszubilden, als auch finanziell zu fördern. Zum anderen erlaubte das Steuerentlastungsmodell „Section 35“ vergünstigte Produktionsbedingungen für nationale und internationale Filmemacher. Beide Einrichtungen begünstigten die indigene Filmszene ungemein, sodass nun auch finanzielle Erfolge erzielt werden konnten. Der wirtschaftliche Boom während des Zeit des „Celtic Tigers“ spiegelte sich in der Filmindustrie wieder, die sich in den 2000er Jahren neu erfand.

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem modernen irischen Kino und dessen Entwicklungen. Anhand von vier ausgewählten Filmen soll analysiert werden, welche Aspekte bzw. Themen das gegenwärtige irische Kino behandelt. Die ausgewählten Filme, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (Ken Loach; 2006), *The Butcher Boy* (Neil Jordan; 1997), *Adam and Paul* (Lenny Abrahamson; 2004), und *Garage* (Lenny Abrahamson; 2007) werden kontextbezogen auf politische, wirtschaftliche sowie gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen analysiert. Gemeinsamkeiten wie auch Unterschiede der Filme werden angesprochen, um sich an das Konzept von „Irishness“ heranzutasten. Der Schwerpunkt der Filmanalyse basiert auf einer genauen und detaillierten Interpretation verschiedener Teilbereiche, die u.a. zu der irischen Wesensart beitragen sollen. Religion, Landschaft, die Institution der Familie, Irlands problematische Beziehung zu Großbritannien sowie kulturelle Transmitter, wie z.B. die Musik, werden ausführlich anhand ihrer sozialhistorischen Hintergründe behandelt. Werke von kommerziellen als auch von avantgardistischen Regisseuren wurden selektiert, um das facettenreiche und talentierte irische Kino aufzuzeigen.

Obwohl die indigene irische Filmindustrie noch relativ jung ist, entwickelt sie sich rasant weiter, die eine Fülle von Definitionen von „Irishness“ anbietet. Die kommerziell erfolgreichen und von Kritikern gefeierten Produktionen der letzten Jahre, ließen den irischen Film zu einem wichtigen Mitwirkenden in der internationalen Szene avancieren.

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