Celtic Tiger Ireland and the Politics of Disgust: White Trash in Sebastian Barry's Play *The Pride of Parnell Street* and Leonard Abrahamson's Film *Adam and Paul*

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> Social identity lies in difference, and the difference is asserted against what is closest, which represents the greatest threat. (Bourdieu 479)

In his famous 1943 St. Patrick's Day speech – during World War II, six years after the Irish Constitution had been adopted and fifty years after the foundation of the Gaelic League – Éamon de Valera envisioned an ideal Ireland or "the Ireland that we dreamed of" as

> a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. The home, in short, of a people living the life that God desires that men should live. (qtd. in Lee 334)

Here, Irishness is constructed as an identity based on the rural nature of the envisioned nation. This nation is created along essentialist categories of religion, gender and family as bodily, genetic facts that can be mapped onto Ireland's geography. Its fields, villages, cosy homesteads and hearths become images of Ireland's 'natural', God-given self. This linking of genetics, folk and landscape can be found in almost all national narratives: "The recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity emphasizes the quality of light, the question of social visibility, the power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression" (Bhabha, *Location* 205). Who 'we' are is turned into a natural sight that is "putatively self-evident to the naked eye" (Nishikawa 1725), both in terms of the citizen's body and the nation's geography. National narratives thus invent the nation while simultaneously erasing the signs of their inventedness.

This notion of national communities as genetic or historical facts has been challenged and debated in recent decades. Benedict Anderson has defined nation and nationality as "cultural artefacts of a particular kind" with a very particular, yet "profound emotional legitimacy" (4). For him, nations are imagined communities that need media and narratives to exist and that need constant repetition to go on living in people's minds. In a similar vein, Homi Bhabha states that nations and national identities are the products of narrative and metaphorical processes ("Introduction" 1). A national identity turns into a feeling of 'nationness' "as a form of social and textual affiliation" and as "social and literary narratives". A nation becomes "a narrative strategy" (*Location* 201).

The following analysis of Sebastian Barry's play *The Pride of Parnell Street*, first performed in 2007 at the Tricycle Theatre in London, and of Leonard Abrahamson's film *Adam and Paul*, produced in 2004, will show how the national narrative of Ireland as a bucolic, rural utopia of authentic, native Irishmen and Irishwomen changed in the wake of the Celtic Tiger and its economic success. The play and the film present Ireland's new sense of self as deeply influenced by a globally compatible consumer culture. However, Barry and Abrahamson do not affirm this new narrative of Irishness by celebrating Ireland's new urban way of life with its multiple lifestyle choices. In striking contrast to many films and texts produced around 2000 that presented upbeat stories about handsome young urbanites, they rather question the new nation's self-image by focussing on those who are not able and not allowed to partake in this narrative self-construction. Adam, Paul and Joe are Dubliners, but as junkies and petty criminals whose bodies decay and die they live on the margins of Dublin's and Ireland's new, shiny spaces and find themselves excluded from the new national narrative.

In order to theoretically explain these acts of exclusion I will apply the notion of a politics of disgust that is installed by resorting to ideas of trash, dirt and hygiene.[1] I will then connect this politics of disgust to research on the term 'white trash'. The thesis is that by representing the marginalised lives of people seen as white trash, the play and the film point to the blind spots and potentially dangerous ideological implications of a national narrative that attempts to construct Ireland as a homogeneous nation and culture. This construction is made possible by including those who come up to the new ideal of globally adaptable, successful consumers with multiple lifestyle choices, while it excludes those who are not able to control their lives and bodies due to poverty, illness, addiction and a lack of choices.

This exclusion is justified and naturalised via feelings of disgust. Johann Gottfried Herder sees this as the foundational structure of culture in general: "Everything which is still the *same* as my nature, which can be *assimilated* therein, I envy, strive towards, make my own; *beyond this*, kind nature has armed me with *insensibility*, *coldness* and *blindness*; it can even become *contempt* and *disgust*" (qtd. in Welsch 195, emphasis in the original). Wolfgang Welsch calls this "cultural racism" or "the purity precept" (195). Barry's and Abrahamson's narratives uncover the force of such images of outsiders within the national collective: "[…] *those people* encodes the selective, exclusionary strategy of projecting a delimited form of difference […] that allows a normative center to operate" (Hartigan 3). Although different in content, the new sense of Irishness during the Celtic Tiger therefore shares its basic binary structure and its goal of creating and maintaining boundaries with de Valera's bucolic idyll.

1 The term 'politics of disgust' was put forward by Ange-Marie Hancock in her study *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen* (2004) which deals with ideological justifications for specific welfare policies that restrict the rights of welfare recipients, define their public images and preserve social inequalities.

Irish Cultural Production during the Celtic Tiger

To contextualise Barry's and Abrahamson's depictions of Dublin and its inhabitants, I will give a short overview of representations of new urban lifestyles during the 1990s and 2000s. Many Irish movies produced around 2000, specifically romantic comedies like *About Adam* (directed by Gerard Stembridge, 2000), *Goldfish Memory* (directed by Elizabeth Gill, 2003), *When Brendan Met Trudy* (directed by Kieron J. Walsh, 2000) or television series like *Bachelor's Walk* (directed by John Carney, Kieran Carney and Tom Hall, 2001-2003, 2006), presented a new and globally adaptable Irishness that was explicitly located in urban surroundings. Cityscape took the place of landscape, and good-looking, cool, hip young people took the place of Valera's comely maidens and the wisdom of serene old age. Such films show a new sense of self and a strong desire for an Irishness that seemed to look to the future instead of the past. This desire to recreate the nation is ironically outlined in Brian O'Byrne's film *The Fifth Province* (1997), a satire on film-making in which aspiring young screenwriter Timmy is told by a 'European expert': "When it comes to the story, I'll tell you what we don't want. We do not want any more stories about … Irish mothers, priests, sexual repressions and the miseries of the rural life. We want stories that are upbeat, that are urban, that have pace and verve and are going somewhere" (qtd. in McLoone, *Irish Film* 169). The national narrative of Celtic Tiger Ireland wanted to leave behind what was increasingly seen as the miseries of rural life instead of a natural, utopian way of life in the countryside.

The new generation of Irish film-makers and novelists seems to support these problematisations by depicting young people's new ways of dealing with issues of sexuality, contraception, homosexuality or single mothers in urban environments that are open to new identities and self-exploration and that reject older notions of morality, family and the body. The result is a new sense and a new narrative of Irishness as being young, urban, free and optimistic. However, this new narrative has blind spots that will be the focus of the following analyses. While films like *Goldfish Memory* or *About Adam* present a new urban Irishness, they repeat the problematic implications of nationalist images by again basing their self-construction on exclusion and the creation of boundaries. Pat Brereton analyses these common denominators of both images as 'nation branding', i.e. the invention of a group identity which "might be regarded as equally suspect as older more stereotypically Arcadian attributes" (31).

While de Valera's image of Ireland was based on an essentialist, 'natural' connection to the land, the New Ireland in the 1990s and up to the financial crisis constructed its sense of self mainly as partaking in a global consumer culture. What all of this amounts to is the status of (perhaps finally) being 'normal', a status that becomes obvious when realising that the films mentioned above could easily be set in any other European or American city. If the young gay and lesbian couples of *Goldfish Memory* met in Barcelona, Berlin or Vienna, or if the romantic mix-ups of the dating twentysomethings in *About Adam* were set in Paris, London or New York, the main

plot and the audience's expectations would not change: "In the recent bid to divest films of signifiers of tradition and parochialism […] there has been a move toward an increasingly generic style of filmmaking, which mobilises ahistoric and location-unspecific signifiers of Irishness that are easily exported to the global marketplace" (Ging 185; also see Brereton).

In the following, the paper will analyse the blind spots of this construction of normality in the recent Irish national narrative. Barry's and Abrahamson's protagonists cannot partake in what McLoone calls valorised conspicuous consumption or "hip hedonism" (*Cityscapes* 38), and they are neither handsome nor successful. It is exactly this exclusion of people seen as white trash that makes a new sense of Irishness as young, successful, cool and urban possible. Only by excluding those who question the homogeneity of the new self can the new Irish narrative of liberation and lifestyle choices be established. After centuries of being seen as inferior non-whites that were likened to apes by the English and American mainstream during colonisation and immigration (cf. Curtis; Dyer 52-57; Ignatiev), and after decades of a self-construction as an isolated and rural peasant society, Ireland had re-invented itself as being 'like all the others': a Western consumer society of affluence and liberated sexuality. In the title of his short story collection, William Vorm called this being "Paddy no more". The analysis of narratives that challenge such visions helps to reveal the desired self-images that Ireland had created for itself as constructions because they focus on those who are *not* allowed to take part. In that sense, films like *Adam and Paul* or a play like *The Pride of Parnell Street* are also narratives about the Irish nation; however, they are what Adam Lowenstein calls "confrontational texts" that challenge a nation's self-image instead of stabilising it as "compensational texts" do (8-9).

White Trash and the Boundary Work of Disgust

As outlined above, nations are invented and perpetuated by a systematic essentialisation and naturalisation of belonging. This logic not only needs those who are seen as being part of the national family. It also needs a double movement of exclusion that takes recourse to ideas of purity (and therefore also cleansing) that are implied in a notion of nation as family and genetic fate (see e.g. McClintock 89). Externally, the nation's self has to be set off against other races, systems or ideologies which are turned into that nation's others. Internally, this sense of being a nation has to negate a community's internal heterogeneity by severing the genetic link with minorities within who are marked as outsiders in spite of their location on the inside of the nation. Bhabha calls this "the nation split within itself":

> The problem is not simply the 'self-hood' of the nation as opposed to the otherness of other nations. We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population. The barred Nation *It/Self*, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal signifying space that is *internally* marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference. (*Location* 212)

As studies of taboo and transgression have shown, bodily reactions such as disgust or fear of contamination are among the strongest means to create and maintain such boundaries and notions of difference and to reduce the danger of realising that the nation already is (and always has been) a liminal and therefore hybrid space.

Prohibitions and boundaries which are based on a politics of disgust are so powerful because they, like national narratives of familial linkage and genetic fate, seem to be based on something that is inherent in our genetic make-up. Bodily reactions like disgust seem to naturally support the establishment of boundaries towards people or things seen as unclean or unhealthy. Taboo and disgust are therefore inseparably linked to social order, as Mary Douglas has shown in her analysis of dirt as "matter out of place": "Douglas argues that objects are not considered dirty in and of themselves, but because of their status or classification in a system of categories" (Horlacher 8). Disgust is specifically tied to the taboo on excretion, a taboo that can be linked to Kristeva's notion of abjection: "The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*. Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism" (Kristeva 1). The taboo on dirt and excretion therefore establishes a society by marking off areas that do not belong to the social order or that pose the threat of disorder: "[…] all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolise its specially vulnerable points" (Douglas 121). As we will see in the analysis of *Adam and Paul* and *The Pride of Parnell Street*, the fear of behaving like an animal, of being reduced to mere matter and losing the status as a human being is deeply ingrained in the protagonists as well as in our position as the spectators of their behaviour in the theatre or cinema. Taboo, its effects on the human body and its regulation of bodily functions and reactions can thus be regarded as a "symbolic connection between physical purity and social stability" (Gurr 119).

Although interdisciplinary research has repeatedly shown that taboo and disgust are cultural and social constructions and prohibitions which are bound to shifting and historically contingent notions of right and wrong, healthy and unhealthy, pure and impure, the power of disgust cannot be denied and is still at work in today's societies (Douglas 2; Stallybrass and White). Our bodily reactions towards specific smells, tastes or touch seem to come from our inside instead of being a prescription or construction of a discursive outside.[2] What results from these perceptions of disgust as innate and visceral is the invisibility of the acts of classification, naming and labelling

2 As Judith Butler has shown, this naturalising power of discourse to make us believe that bodies are a result of innate qualities and that our personalities evolve from the inside to the outside is one of the most powerful instruments in maintaining a social order and its power structure: "[…] identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (25).

connected to taboo and bodily transgression. The analysis of white trash as both a symbolic and a social boundary shows how effective and dangerous the politics of disgust can be because they "make social boundaries seem natural and unremarkable" (Wray 14). The politics of disgust are of a 'semiotic' nature (see Culler), and they "are embodied and materialized in our collective practices, our shared activities, and our social institutions" (Wray 14).

The label 'white trash' is an example of such boundary work. It is a normative and morally charged name for (mostly) internal others that is connected to dirt, contamination and a threat towards the community's purity. In the process of symbolic boundaries turning into social ones, such degrading labels create a social system that inscribes hierarchies of class, race, gender, sexuality, etc. onto bodies and minds.[3] In his analysis of white trash discourses in America, Hartigan stresses:

> […] white trash is neither just a name nor a distinct social group. Rather, it is a form of objectification developed by a range of social commentators who tapped the cultural perception of pollution to make their fellow citizens recognize a fearful, debased white threat to domestic order in the United States. (106)

The position of poor whites on the margins of the white mainstream was explained via biological factors like 'bad blood', incestuous relations or mental defects. The way that white trash is imagined is more often than not linked to "their threatening difference in bodily and behavioral terms rather than as linked to economics" (Hartigan 40). This move makes a change in economic circumstances or activities against social inequality less pressing. At the same time, it objectifies the social scientist's or the politician's view onto urban poverty by focusing on 'how these people *are*' instead of outlining how this image of white trash or the urban poor is created and maintained by multiple boundary work that co-opts class, race, gender and sexuality into mutually reinforcing processes of exclusion, objectification and naturalisation. Hartigan therefore stresses that "we must devise ways to de-essentialize views of the poor as a group apart from society as a whole" (42). His claim is that we can do this "[b]y way of addressing these interpretive stances, and of imagining ways to differently engage audiences – objectifying the relational dynamics of class self-construction instead of producing essentialized portraits of the poor" (Hartigan 42-43). It is exactly this focus on relational dynamics and our sense of self-construction that the play and the film achieve by addressing their audiences' interpretive stances. In the play and the film, we face up to our disgust and fear and thus are made aware of the relational nature of our processes of self-construction as unmarked and normal. This suggests "ways to think more imaginatively about the fusion of racial and classed forms of inequality, particularly how they are produced and maintained in multiple, visceral, overlapping registers simultaneously" (Hartigan 56).

3 On the "embarrassed 'etc.' at the end of the list [of categories of identity]" and the limits or failure to "encompass a situated subject" and its agency in such lists, see Butler 182.

The following interpretations of *The Pride of Parnell Street* and *Adam and Paul* take up this threat that white trash poses to 'normal' society and its self-inventions. The protagonists Adam, Paul and Joe can be characterised as 'white trash' whose deviation from Ireland's national narrative of success, youth and affluence is punished by their exclusion and marginalisation which are justified by a politics of disgust. These acts of abjection, of casting off people who threaten the creation and perpetuation of a homogeneous and homely nation, uncover the hidden fear of people who are foreign yet familiar and who are outsiders within. My interpretation will examine images of dirt and ideals of purity. Here, the analysis will focus on how Adam, Paul and Joe try to resist the politics of disgust and its objectifying gaze at the poor body by reclaiming their subjectivity and humanity. It will also show how the logics of purity have been internalised by the protagonists who desire above all to become 'clean'.

Dublin Junk 1: Images of Dirt and Purity in *The Pride of Parnell Street*

As outlined above, the term 'trash' is clearly linked to a fear of being polluted by an invisible agent or germ, a fear that justifies and maintains symbolic and social boundaries. The term 'junkie' and the connection between trash and junk underline this effect: "The word 'junkie' is a derogatory identity category which has long been associated with drug use, particularly heroin injecting. It is a category that encompasses all the clichéd dirtiness, disease, deviancy, crime, dangerousness, laziness, and absence of will that are so commonly associated with injecting drug use" (Malins 159).[4] These associations with the term 'junkie' can be mapped onto the patterns of behaviour and physicality that have long been connected with white trash (Hartigan 71). Adam, Paul and Joe fit into both schemata: They have a recognisable physique which is the effect of their addiction, they do not work but live off petty crime, Joe is violent, and all three of the junkie protagonists can be assessed as having failed morally and socially. They are unable to fulfil their roles as fathers, husbands or friends because they fail to be reliable, strong-willed and self-controlled. Their death and decay clearly shows that they cannot even take care of themselves.

The effects of using the junkie as a foil to new notions of Ireland become obvious when looking at Barry's text. *The Pride of Parnell Street* is a memory play in which Joe, now a junkie dying of AIDS, and Janet, his wife who separated from him after Joe beat her up, talk about their past experiences. They do this in interweaving monologues, and only at the end of the play do they actually see and interact with each other. The play is set in September 1999, a few months before the millennium, and both Joe and Janet reflect on this decisive date that seems to promise a sea change for Ireland's future that has already started in the 1990s. "I want to see the bleeding

4 It is interesting that in recent years, Irish cinema and literature have appropriated the figure of the junkie and the topic of drug abuse in dramatic as well as comic guises, as examples like John Michael McDonagh's comedy *The Guard* (2011), Darragh Byrne's film *Parked* (2010) or Mia Gallagher's novel *Hellfire* (2006) show.

new millennium that everyone's gassing on about. I want to fucking live" Joe says (Barry 52), and his expectation of a new future for Ireland is corroborated by Janet who says that "it's the new Ireland" which means that there are "[j]obs galore" (55). While Joe still thinks that his oldest son has to go away to England to get a job, Janet tells Joe that his son will help to build "Dublin. The Financial Services Centre. The docklands and all" (58).

However, in spite of his desire to live and to see the new millennium, Joe will not be part of this new national narrative. This failure to belong is embodied in Joe's position on the social margins of Dublin and in his addiction and AIDS infection that clearly show on his skin. At numerous points in the play, Joe describes his body and his addiction with images of dirt, pollution and contagion that activate feelings of disgust. When Janet visits him in the hospital at the end of the play, Joe describes his condition as follows: "And I'm lying there, feeling like shit, like maggots was in me brain, and no doubt, friends, looking like the plague, with rats in me skull and the long dreepy shite coming out me nostrils, a holy show if ever there was one" (56). Here, Joe applies politics of disgust and logics of purity and impurity to himself on several levels. He connects his body with the taboo on excretion and thus turns himself into trash and dirt. Furthermore, he links his body with contagion by saying that he looks like the plague. And finally, even though he is still alive, he presents his body as dead and abject, as infested with maggots and rats, which are both animals generally connected to dead bodies, decay and contagion. Joe even turns himself into a dead animal, taking away both his humanity and his life: "I have more holes in me body than a dead dog that the maggots have been eating" (33).

Such animal metaphors have always been used in order to justify social hierarchies and to perpetuate inequality (cf. Rafter 27; see also Hartigan 79-88). People seen as animalistic white trash and their 'breeding' behaviour are thus presented as endangering the health of society as a whole, a danger that is turned into a biological fact and whose abatement and control becomes a vital imperative. Ideas of cleansing with all their dangerous implications are not far when such dehumanising depictions are presented.

This danger of the politics of disgust becomes evident in the binary opposition of purity and impurity and the idea of cleansing that Joe has internalised. At several points in the play, Joe and Janet refer to Joe's dream of working at the power station in Ringsend. Joe does not want to work there because he needs a steady job but because "he knew the workers there washed the coal off themselves in this river of hot water that came out of the power station, it was after cooling the engines, and they had soap stuck in the walls of the river, and Joe liked all that, he said it was a grand life" (12-13, see also 52, 58). Similarly, Joe talks about "getting yourself cleaned up" when he wants to quit taking drugs (40), and both Joe and Janet refer to going swimming and bathing repeatedly, specifically when they think of happier times and good memories (cf. 12, 41-42, 30, 23). When Joe realises in the final scene that

Janet still loves him, this moment of being redeemed is framed with images of cleansing and regaining purity: “We were swimming then, in the sunshine, it was like we were swimming in the cold water of Dublin Bay, just her and me, when we were young, at the Shelly Banks, and everything washed away” (59). Joe’s past and the mistakes he made are washed away, an act of cleansing which makes him regain his humanity. Nevertheless, this redemption reinstates the mutually exclusive opposition of purity and impurity that excluded Joe from the imagined ‘we’ in the first place and that employs a Manichean hierarchy of whiteness as pure, clean and human vs. blackness as impure, unclean and animalistic (see JanMohamed).

The power of these politics of disgust in defining hierarchical relations and creating stigmatypes also becomes apparent in Joe’s corporeality and its presentation in the play. He is described as “*rough enough*” and “*very thin*” (9). His roughness can visibly be mapped onto his skin which has “*tattoos all over*” and is “*blotchy*” (18), both signs of a visible otherness that has literally taken away Joe’s normality and health. Later on, Joe talks about people like him as “the shite […] of Dublin” that the politicians would like to get rid of in order to create a “nice clean fucking perfect Dublin, so clean and so perfect the fucking salmon will climb up the river walls and walk about, happy as Larry” (19). It is exactly this nice and clean Dublin that forms the backdrop of films like *Goldfish Memory* whose aestheticised camera techniques and heavy focus on postproduction create an eternal summer with warm colours. Joe’s Dublin obviously does not look like this. When he notices a rash on his arm and develops black bruises, he goes to the hospital. The reaction of the doctor mirrors the audience’s intuitive and visceral reaction of disgust and fear of contagion: “So I go to the Accident and Emergency and I swear to Jesus, I see a young coloured doctor – after about two hundred hours, you know – and when he sees me red and black marks, he steps back like I had the fucking plague” (30-31). Due to his illness, which is a consequence of his social position and his past behaviour, Joe’s whiteness is literally ‘marked’ with red and black melanoma. Wray’s term of the stigmatype fits with Joe’s position as white trash and makes clear that he is not part of the “unnamed, unmarked” and therefore ‘normal’ part of society (Wray 23, see also Hartigan 114-115). A seemingly natural hierarchy is turned upside down when Joe, the white Irishman, realises that he has become trash while the coloured doctor is a successful young professional.

Here it becomes clear that Irish society has not only changed in terms of economic success but also in terms of its ethnic homogeneity. Janet seems to regret this when she longingly thinks of the days when Ireland was still poor: “In them days was before the Africans came to Parnell Street and it was only ourselves knocking around and drinking in the pubs there” (Barry 11).[5] Joe’s and Janet’s multiple acts of including themselves in the Irish narrative and community are not successful anymore, even

5 This change from a seemingly homogeneous to a multicultural society is discussed at several points of the play (see, for example, 14, 25, 34-35).

though Joe constructs his identity along the biologist lines of nationalism repeatedly. Janet stresses, for example, that "[…] he [Joe] could only be happy breathing the air of Dublin, Joe's blood had Liffey water in it" (49). This logic of belonging via blood is also applied to their first-born: "And the first steps that Billy took was along the Royal Canal, and Joe said he just stepped around all the dog turds like it was in his blood. A real Dubliner, you know?" (30)

The new national narrative of the Celtic Tiger years, however, excludes people like him as it works on the basis of binary oppositions that distinguish between economic losers who are outsiders and winners who are insiders. This exclusive logic ironically reverberates in Janet's formulation "only ourselves" that is reminiscent of the inclusive nationalist slogan "Sinn Féin" which can be translated as "we ourselves" and has also been formulated as "ourselves alone" (cf. Laffan 20).

The play thus shows that logics of exclusion are not only used by the people who reject Joe as white trash or junkie. Joe himself has internalised notions of purity, skin colour and the hierarchies of race and class connected to it. Consequently, he equally discriminates against the coloured doctor or the African shopkeepers as against himself. Joe even addresses the audience and tells us what to think of him: "All right, you're looking at me maybe and thinking this fucker's a dangerous-looking bastard. […] Maybe you think if you sat up close to me, I'd be smelling, not even washed, you know, or give you some fucking disease, or I'd as soon knife you as look at you […]. That I'm some bastard like that" (Barry 24). This is an illustration of the effects of the politics of disgust that Joe and the audience intuitively apply in their daily lives. Joe's smell and his marked skin are interpreted as external signs of an internal degeneration that violate mainstream society's decorum and that may pollute the individual citizen and the city or nation as a whole. Joe is not merely unwashed or dirty; he becomes trash and junk himself. Consequently, his casting off is naturalised by both our bodily reactions and our fear of the very real threat that an illness like AIDS poses.[6]

Joe reflects on this position at the margins of Irish society:

> The fucking inner city they call it, like it was something inside something, something hidden inside, or safe inside, I don't fucking know. But the place where I come from is all raw in the wind, *outside* with fucking knobs on, nothing fucking inner about it, it's as out as you can get, like the North Pole. (18)

Joe's former home has transformed into a space that needs to be cleaned up in order to fit into the ideal of a "nice clean fucking perfect Dublin", and he has literally turned into an outsider, a dehumanised and unwanted specimen.

6 In the course of the play, Joe even admits to having used this threat of infection in order to extort money for drugs (34).

Dublin Junk 2: Images of Dirt and Purity in *Adam and Paul*

Leonard Abrahamson's film *Adam and Paul* opens with a scene that parallels Joe's presentation of Dublin city space as an unhomely outside. In the opening shots of the movie we see close-ups of flowers and grass filmed against the sky and moving in the wind. This calls up the notion of Ireland as a natural landscape and hints at the ideal of an organic way of life that de Valera evokes in his St. Patrick's Day speech. However, Abrahamson's film immediately breaks with these images of Irishness after the opening shots when the camera zooms in onto the protagonists Adam and Paul who have obviously spent the night in the open. Adam lies on an old mattress while Paul lies on the ground. Around them, broken furniture is scattered. This scene is a parody of home which seems to have exploded around the two protagonists (see Monahan 168). As in Joe's feeling of being "raw in the wind", Adam and Paul have no homely space that could protect them. They are vulnerable and literally freezing when Adam has to take off his clothes because his trousers and jacket have been glued to the mattress. Apart from setting the absurd and tragicomic tone of the whole movie, the opening sequence thus externalises the protagonists' positions on the margins of society and the city.[7] Later, when they look out over the city, Adam asks: "Where the fuck are we?" (0:02:57), and neither Adam nor Paul remember how they got to the place where they have just woken up. They are literally misplaced, a misplacement that is an allegory of their position as social misfits. "This opening sequence seems to position the characters outside the city and suggests that the journey back to the city centre will, at the very least, require effort on their part" (Holohan 108). This physical effort of returning to the geographical space of the city is a metaphor for Adam and Paul's attempt at returning to the community and the home they have lost.

This attempt at reintegration is finally unsuccessful. This is stressed by the emplotment of the narrative: The film's circular movement ends with a shot of Adam and Paul on the same beach on which they woke up at the beginning. The decisive difference is that Adam is dead now and Paul has to face the next day alone. Even the community of the two friends, who are throughout the film collectively addressed as 'Adam and Paul', breaks up at the end.[8] As their friend Matthew's, who is already dead when the plot starts, Adam and Paul's lives go nowhere; they have no future in terms of modernity's focus on linear time as progress and improvement, and they have no place from which to define who they are. Taking up Bhabha's idea of nations and national identities as products of narrative and metaphorical processes, the indi-

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7 For an analysis of the influences of Beckett, vaudeville and the physical comedy of Laurel and Hardy see O'Connell 91-93; and Monahan.

8 Intradiegetically, it even remains unclear who is dead and who is alive. Only after the credits have rolled and only if we know the names of the actors, does it become clear that Paul has – as yet – survived. With acquiring the derogatory identity as junkies, the characters have lost their individuality. The viewer encounters Adam and Paul "*as one*" (O'Connell 96).

vidual self can equally be seen as narratively constructed (see Ricoeur, for an overview see Meuter). But without a place and a past from which they can derive their narrative self-construction, Adam and Paul have no starting point and no origin and therefore only a fragmented personal story without a discernible structure or climax. Even the potentially dramatic moments of finally finding and injecting heroin or waking up next to a dead friend lack any feeling of intensity or goal-directedness. The camera laconically follows Adam and Paul through their day which consists of inconsequential episodes, random meetings and irrelevant dialogue, and then leaves Adam's dead body just as Paul leaves his friend on the next morning.

As a consequence of this seeming lack of narrative control and structure, our connection to the characters is as tenuous and vague as the protagonists' connection to each other, themselves and their past and future. With their "homeplace" (hooks 41) and their individual pasts (symbolised by the loss of their individual names), they have lost a position from which to define who they are instead of being defined by the symbolic and social boundaries around them: "They have no space of refuge from which they can survey these forces [that structure their environment and their lives] and plan a concerted act of resistance or escape" (Holohan 117). If, according to bell hooks, homeplaces are spaces which "act as sources of self-dignity and agency, sites of solidarity in which and from which, resistance can be organized and conceptualized" (qtd. in Holohan 117), then Adam and Paul are in danger of losing their humanity and dignity because with their personal space they have lost their agency. In extension, they have therefore lost both their ability to narrate their own stories and narratively modify the stories that are told about them.

When Adam and Paul move from the beach to the tower blocks of Ballymun and into the inner city, it becomes clear that the city space that they are entering is organised by a grid-like structure of exclusion and surveillance. This structure prescribes where and how Adam and Paul can move, where they can stay and when they have to leave (see Holohan 118). The film visualises this controlling logic of city space by heavily stressing horizontal and vertical lines and by repeatedly placing the two protagonists in front of barred windows, barred or closed doors, high walls, fences or inside concrete corridors. This framing visually underlines the loss of narrative agency because bars, fences, walls and grids control and limit the ways in which Adam and Paul can interact with space as well as the kinds of relationships they can form with their surroundings and their own bodies.

But these limits also work on the level of social interactions which are mainly shaped by the politics of disgust and their naturalisation of boundaries. When Paul is sent into a shop to steal some food he is immediately followed by a shop assistant who asks him what he wants. When Paul stares into the fridge the assistant tells him to "decide fast and fuck off" (0:28). The dirty, sick-looking, badly dressed junkie encroaches on the hygienic and pleasant shopping experience of the consumers who are welcome in this space. The scene opens with an interesting shot that outlines this

boundary between the unwanted and the wanted customers. The camera is positioned on the inside of the shop and we can see Adam and Paul through the shop's sliding glass doors as they stand outside. The viewer takes up the position of the people who are inside and therefore included in this place of consumption, while people like Adam and Paul are not. This exclusion is illustrated by a sign on the door which says "Keep clear" (0:27). This order marginalises the two junkie characters and people like them, for example the homeless man in front of the shop who has already been barred from the premises.

Additionally, the sign follows the logic of cleanliness that becomes even more apparent when Paul enters the shop. After being told to "decide fast and fuck off", Paul aimlessly wanders around the aisles and starts to touch the bread that is on sale. In this scene, both the viewer and the shop assistant are agents of a politics of disgust. Seeing Paul's dirty hands, his scabbed skin, greasy hair and dripping nose, we cringe when he touches the bread, a sentiment that is enforced by the shop assistant's exclamation "Take your fucking hands off the bread, they're filthy" (0:29). Paul is only seen in terms of the dangers of contamination and contagion threatening those customers for whom the bread is on display. He infects the bread which consequently becomes dirt or 'matter out of place'. Because our visceral reaction towards Paul touching the bread is so intuitive it is difficult to question what happens next. Paul is forcibly thrown out of the shop although he protests that he cannot be barred "for feeling bread" (0:29). Carl, the homeless man in front of the shop, uses the commotion to sneak in and steal food. He also picks up the bread that Paul had left on the floor, gives it to Paul and states that it would have been thrown into the bin anyway. Here, Paul is again turned into trash: He is too poor to actually buy the bread, but as the bread is now dirty and infected and therefore trash, Paul can have it. The social boundary that is created by being thrown out of a space of consumption is therefore also a symbolic one. Both Paul and the bread turn into items that have to be abjected to maintain the boundary of health and disease. They are both 'matter out of place' and objects that have to be discarded.

This objectification also becomes clear in a later scene in which animal imagery and the fear of dehumanisation are central. After the incident in the shop, Adam and Paul again roam the streets of Dublin, looking for an opportunity to procure money for a fix. When they pass a small alley Paul stops because he has "the cramps" and needs "to have a shite" (0:38). When Adam tells him to do it "behind something" or to go down the end of the lane, Paul retorts "I'm not having a shite down the lane, I'm not a fucking dog." (0:38) However, his helpless condition and his addiction force him to do exactly that, an act that turns Paul into the dog he did not want to be. Looking for paper to clean himself up, Adam offers an empty crisps bag to Paul who is again appalled by this loss of dignity: "I'm not wiping meself with a tayto bag." (0:38) As in the beginning of the film, the loss of human dignity is connected to a loss of privacy and a lack of a homeplace in which 'dirty' actions like excretion can be kept from the public eye. As Joe in *The Pride of Parnell Street*, Adam and Paul become dirty ob-

jects and animals and can therefore be rejected. This rejection is naturalised and justified by feelings of disgust and fears of contagion.

The unfitness of Adam and Paul even to live through a single day without drugs, without resorting to crime and overstepping boundaries of social decorum and taste enforces our sense that *those people* have lost control, rationality and thus their humanity. They are not like *us*. In the final shot of the film, Adam's dead body is left on the beach and remains the last object for the viewer to see. In the most radical sense, he has turned into trash, a dead corpse that Paul again fails to take care of and whose disposal will be left to the same forces that applied the politics of disgust to Adam while he was still alive.

Conclusion: The New Ireland and the Dirty Work of National Narratives

I proposed that by representing the marginalised lives of people seen as white trash, Barry's play and Abrahamson's film point to the blind spots and potentially dangerous ideological implications of a national narrative that attempts to construct Ireland as a homogeneous, successful and globally compatible nation and culture based on consumption. By focussing on the lives and deaths of outsiders within the national collective, audiences are able to focus on their own evaluations of the junkie protagonists' behaviour, bodies and selves. We therefore face up to the effectiveness of the politics of disgust and their naturalisation of social and symbolic boundaries.

It is striking that those seen as the centre of the New Ireland, the young, successful and sexually liberated professionals of films like *Goldfish Memory* or *About Adam*, are not represented in the play and film. Even in *Adam and Paul,* which is set in the streets and shopping districts of Dublin, the middle-class is conspicuously absent while *The Pride of Parnell Street* completely excludes the middle-class majority from its staged world. Joe and Janet are the only characters on stage, and in their narratives the new mainstream of Irish society does not figure. As a consequence of this narrative strategy, the audience is turned into the representative of the omitted mainstream who evaluates and confronts his or her other in the process of watching the film or the play. In this process, we are confronted with our intuitive habits of evaluation and classification. Since the boundary work of disgust is not only embodied by the fictional characters but also viscerally encoded in our reactions to these characters, Adam, Paul and Joe are shown to not only turn themselves into objects or animals; rather, we are also made aware of the logics of exclusion and objectification applied to people seen as white trash and of our own implications in this system.

Belonging is based on being 'normal', a category that is uncovered as a social construction. In the new national narrative of Celtic Tiger Ireland, this normality is demonstrated to be based on money, success and the ability to consume as well as on physical attributes as youth and attractiveness. The junkie characters are keenly aware of their lack of these attributes, as Joe's plan to get a headstone for his son's bare grave emphasises: "The way normal people would, with money to do it" (Barry

39). If nations are “cultural artefacts of a particular kind” with a very particular, yet “profound emotional legitimacy” (Anderson 4), and if this emotional legitimacy is achieved by “a narrative strategy” (Bhabha, *Location* 201), then *The Pride of Parnell Street* and *Adam and Paul* outline that we always have to question these strategies and their naturalising and universalising effects. Therefore, they are powerful comments on the profound emotional legitimacy of national narratives and their dangerous outcomes.

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