

# Introduction to Cultural Studies

## Lecture 7: Visual Culture (2):

### Film

#### 1) Analysing and Interpreting Images

#### 2) Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film

#### 3) *Ernestine and Kit*

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#### 1) Analysing and Interpreting Images

##### Checklist of common-sense questions:

- What is it?
- What is around it?
- Who made it?
- When was it made?
- For whom was it made?
- Who or what is depicted?  
(person/place/object/event/concept)
- What do you think its intended message might be?
- What does the image tell you?

(Cameron 2003)

## **Meaning in Movies:**

Some meaning is consciously intended. [...] Another kind of meaning is not consciously intended and comes instead from the world around a movie. It seeps into the movie without the filmmakers consciously intending to put it there. [...]

In this book, we will be concerned with both kinds of meaning. The first part of the book deals with intended meaning, the second with a variety of meanings that are shaped by such contextual dimensions of film as economics, politics, history, and gender relations.

Let's start with intended meaning. The procedures, devices, and techniques of filmmaking both construct stories and make meaning. By asking 'Why?' of any image or any single use of a cinematic device, procedure, or technique, one begins to unfold the dimensions of levels of meaning implied by it. [...]

(Ryan/Lenos 2012, 1-12, 2/8)

## **Intended Meaning = Film Analysis/Close Reading ('Technique and Meaning')**

### **> Production**

### **> ANALYSING**

Ryan and Lenos:

Composition; Camera Work; Editing; Art Direction; Narration; Metaphor, Structure, Character, Motif; Film Style: Realism and Expressionism

## **'Unintended Meaning' = 'Critical Analysis' of Cultural Meaning**

### **> Reception**

### **> INTERPRETING**

Ryan and Lenos:

Historical Criticism; Structuralist Criticism; Psychological Criticism; Ideological Criticism; Gender Criticism: Ethnic Criticism, Political Criticism; Poststructuralist Criticism; Scientific Criticism: Evolutionary Theory

## **2) Technique and Meaning in Narrative Film**

### **COMPOSITION:**

**The arrangement of elements within the frame of the image (film still).**

FRAME/FRAMING: loose and tight, open and closed

MISE-EN-SCÈNE/POSITIONING: the rule of thirds

BLOCKING: the arrangement of characters on the set and within the frame.

FIELD OF VISION/DEPTH OF FIELD

BACKGROUND/FOREGROUND

VISUAL PLANE: the plane where focus occurs

SPACE: negative/empty, pro-filmic (in front of the camera within the frame)

## **CAMERA WORK (CINEMATOGRAPHY): The art of photographing a film.**

SHOTS: wide/long/medium long/medium/medium close-up/close-up/extreme close-up; aerial, high-angle; arc, crane, dolly, tracking; eye-level, handheld, POV

FOCUS: deep, soft

ZOOM

PANNING

TRACKING

ROLLING/TILTING/CANTING

## **EDITING: The joining together of shots to make a complete film.**

CONTINUITY <> CUTTING (intercutting/crosscutting; match cut, eyeline match; cutaway; jump cut; dissolve/fade; montage)

### **Continuity Style (Hollywood Technique):**

- shots are interrupted/linked by cuts. The continuity style is the one we are familiar with from every Hollywood movie; this style employs a technique called 'an invisible cut' trying to make the flow between shots as smooth as being hardly noticeable
- telling the story without calling attention to the storytelling process
- telling the story in a logical and linear order (e.g. flashback or flashforwards are carefully indicated)
- camera has to be decent and must capture the scene from the right angle
- the achieved emotions have to be evoked at the proper time
- viewers can enjoy the narrative with ease
- opposed to the effect of montage/mise-en-scene films like Sergeij Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* where the audience is made aware of the meaning-making apparatus and where the cinematic structure is given priority and shall be recognized

### **Shot/Reverse-Shot (Reverse Angle Shot):**

- Another technique common in the continuity style
- used for dialogue situations: cinematic set in which the 2<sup>nd</sup> shot shows the field from which 1<sup>st</sup> shot is assumed to be taken (e.g. the person first seen talking)
- tied together with over-the-shoulder-framings: we feel like we are looking over the shoulder of the speaker, there's often just a part of his head and a part of his shoulder showing because the dominance of the frame is given to the person he addresses
- goes together with eyeline matching, ensuring that the eyes of the two people talking are always at the same point of an invisible line to prevent confusion

### **180° rule:**

- is again part of the continuity style and is also always employed in a dialogue situation

- predicated on the assumption that it would be unrealistic if the camera could define a space larger than the eye would normally cover
- scenes are filmed and edited so that all camera angles of subjects are from one side of an imaginary line

### **ART DIRECTION (PRODUCTION DESIGN): Set, lighting/color, sound**

SET: locations, props, costumes

LIGHTING: chiaroscuro (blurring of dark and light/contours of objects); high-key lighting (full illumination, clarity), three-point lighting (realist effect, eliminating shadows: key light, fill light, back light), low-key lighting; filter/exposure

COLOR: saturation/desaturation; realist vs. expressionist

SOUND: synchronous/nonsynchronous; diegetic sound: sound emerging from the film's world (e.g. music at a party, think *American Pie* or *Dirty Dancing*); nondiegetic sound: functional sound; sound that emphasizes the achieved emotions/that structures the narrative (e.g. the soundtrack); internal diegetic sound: sound coming from a character's mind (e.g. inner monologue); music: rhythm of the music often supports the rhythms of the cuts, helps to establish or reinforces the atmosphere of the scene

### **NARRATIVE: Plotting, point of view, tone**

- Exposition, development, climax, resolution; sequences, episodes, scenes
- Auctorial: objective treatment; audience is treated as an observer (e.g. the subject moves, but the camera stays in place)
- POV: subjective treatment; camera is addressed directly or imitates a character's viewpoint (what the character sees and how)
- Ellipsis: time passes with the help of editing techniques (e.g. leaves are green and then begin to turn red and fall to the ground) → there is no change in the shot itself (see *Billy Elliot*)
- Condensation process: time passes as we see different scenes right after the other (e.g. we see someone walk around a park in a t-shirt, when the camera moves back he wears a coat and enters a café, in the next scene he trudges through the snow (e.g. *Citizen Kane*))
- Parallel Montage: editing technique to make it obvious to the audience that two (or more) scenes are happening at the same time (e.g. *Jurassic Park*)

### **STYLE: The particular way of using film technique to represent the world.**

- realist vs. expressionist styles / genres

### **>> Shot-by-Shot Analysis**

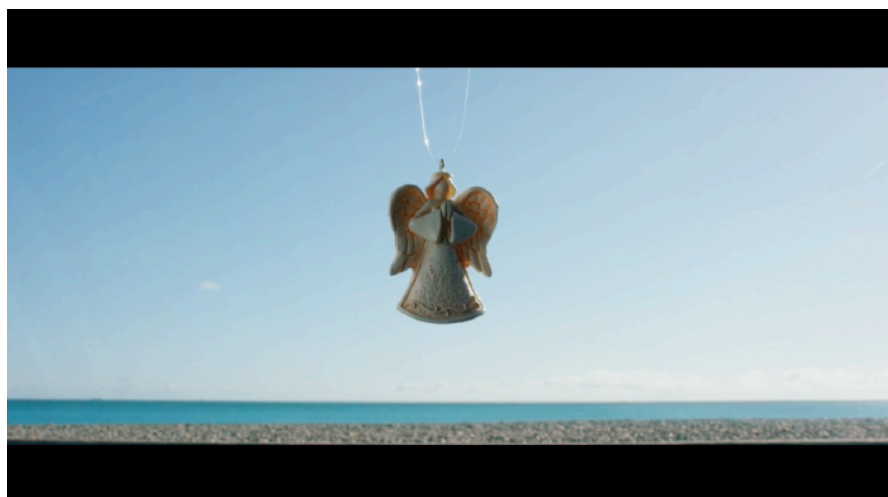
### **3) *Ernestine and Kit***

Short Film (Stigma Films, Black Sheep Productions, Creative England, 2015)

Based on a short story by Irish writer Kevin Barry  
("Ernestine and Kit", first published Barry 2012, 77-89, available online under  
<https://www.graywolfpress.org/sites/default/files/Ernestine%20%26%20Kit.pdf>)

Running time: 10:52

00:01 – 00:08	opening credits
00:09 – 01:33	introductory sequence (beach side parking space)
01:34 – 01:41	title
01:42 – 04:53	episode 1: the castle
04:54 – 05:23	on the road 1 (change of number plates)
05:24 – 05:42	replay intro (at traffic lights)
05:42 – 06:20	episode 2: the supermarket (elliptic)
06:21 – 08:11	on the road 2 (with toddler)
08:12 – 08:57	conclusion: getting rid of the kid
08:58 – 10:18	end credits
10:19 – 10:47	final shot
10:48 – 10:52	blackout/copyright information



00:11



00:25



00:36



01:03



01:34



01:42



01:44



02:08



02:29





02:33



02:46



03:04



03:20



03:56



04:51



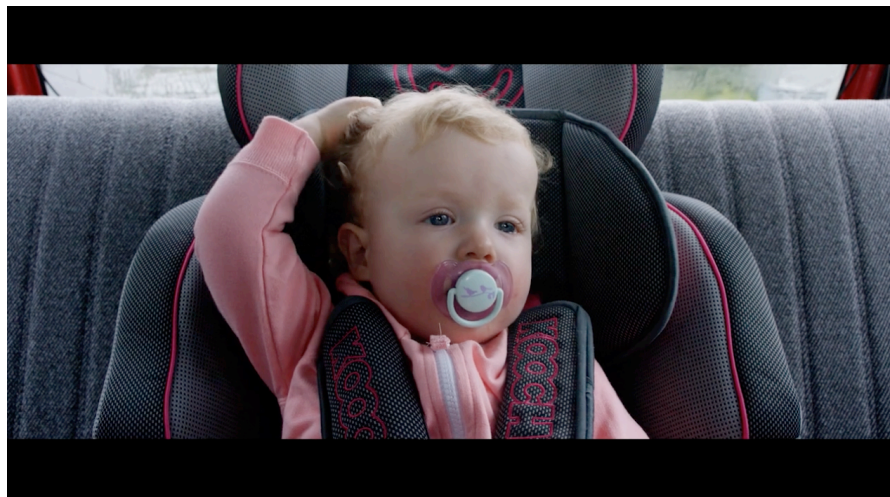
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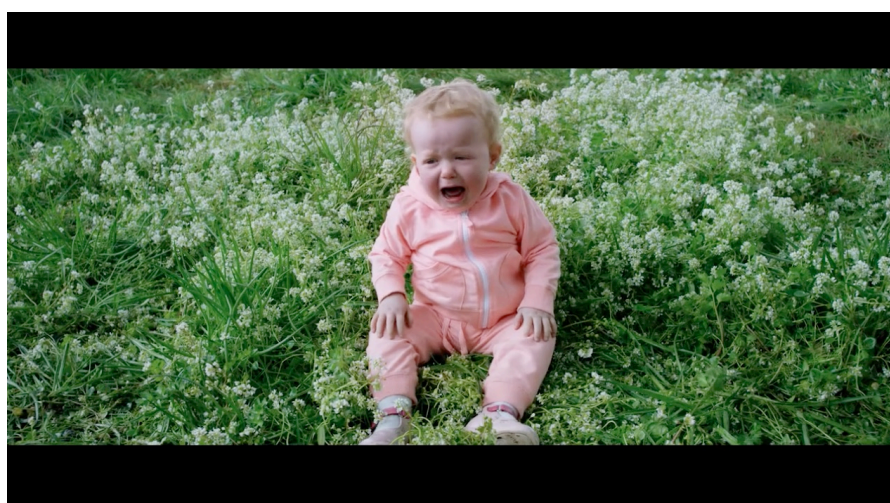
07:51



08:13



08:26



08:37



10:30

### **"Life on the Line" (The Raincoats: *The Raincoats*, 1979)**

A feeling of being followed  
A feeling of being watched  
Isn't easy to define  
So I won't trouble you

She put her life on the line

She kept trying  
Trying to find  
A place to hide  
Somewhere inside  
Somewhere where the air was hot  
And her blood could rush  
But she could not

Her logic was too tangled  
I couldn't untangle it  
How can silence or expression  
Stop or start here for anyone

She kept trying  
Trying to find  
A place to hide  
Somewhere inside  
Somewhere where the air was hot  
And her blood could rush  
But she could not

She's got her back to the wall  
Some are gone but we're still here  
This train is arriving  
Steel wheels  
She wants to feel

She kept trying  
Trying to find  
A place to hide  
Somewhere inside  
Somewhere where the air was hot  
And her blood could rush  
But she could not

But she could not (x13)

**"Baby I'm Yours" (Van McCoy, performed by Barbara Lewis, 1965)**

Baby I'm yours  
And I'll be yours until the stars fall from the sky  
Yours until the rivers all run dry  
In other words, until I die

Baby I'm yours  
And I'll be yours until the sun no longer shines  
Yours until the poets run out of rhyme  
In other words, until the end of time

I'm gonna stay right here by your side  
Do my best to keep you satisfied  
Nothing in the world can drive me away  
'Cause every day you'll hear me say

Baby I'm yours  
And I'll be yours until two and two is three  
Yours until the mountain crumbles to the sea  
In other words, until eternity

Baby I'm yours

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## ERNESTINE AND KIT

Two ladies in their sixties made ground through north County Sligo in a neat Japanese car. The sky above Lough Gill was deep blue and the world was fat on the blood of summer. The speed limit was carefully abided and all the turns were slowed for. There was the carnival air of a fine Saturday in June. A vintage car show had drawn a crowd in 1920s boaters and blazers to Kilmore; the old Fords and Triumphs honked cheerfully in the sun, and the ladies as they passed by smiled and waved. There was a lengthy queue for the ferry ride to the lake isle of Inishfree, there were castles to be visited, and way-marked walks to be hotly trailed. All the shaded tables outside the village pubs were full and tinkled with glasses and laughter, and children played unguarded in the cool of the woods.

‘When it gets a good old lick of weather at all,’ Ernestine said, ‘this is one powerful country.’

‘No place to compare,’ Kit sighed, and the summer growth swished heavily against the Toyota’s side windows on a tight bend after Tully.

Ernestine was big, with the high colour of a carnivore, and her haunches strained a little against the capacity of her cream linen trousers in the confined space of the driver’s seat. Her mottled, fleshy arms were held tensely erect as

she steered – she had learned to drive later in life. Kit, slightly the younger, was long-necked, tightly permed, and thin as a cable. She had a darting glance that scanned the country they passed through and by habit she drew her companion's attention to places and people of interest.

'Would they be hair extensions?' she wondered, as they passed a young blonde pushing a pram along the roadside verge.

'You can bet on it,' Ernestine said. 'The way they're streaked with that silvery-looking, kind of . . .'

'Cheap-looking,' Kit said.

'Yes.'

'Gaudy!'

'A young mother,' Ernestine said.

'Got up like a tuppenny whore,' Kit said.

'The skirt's barely down past her modesty, are you watching?'

'I am watching. And that horrible, *horrible* stonewash denim!'

'Where would the whore be headed for, Kit?'

Kit consulted the road map.

'Leckaun is the next place along,' she said. 'Only a stretch up the road from here. Her ladyship is headed into a pub, no doubt.'

'Drinking cider with fellas with earrings and tattoos,' Ernestine said. 'In by a pool table. In a dank old back room. Dank!'

'You can only imagine,' said Kit, and she made the sign of the cross. 'A jukebox and beer barrels and cocaine in the toilets. The misfortunate infant left to its own devices.'

'Would we nearly stall for a while in Leckaun, Kit?'

Kit pondered this a moment.

‘No,’ she decided, ‘we’ll hit on for the castle. There’ll be a nice crowd there for sure.’

Onwards through the county the Toyota mildly sped, and the ladies had the windows buzzed down a little for breeze: it brought the medieval scent of the old-growth woods. They had been on the road since early morning but there was no tiredness yet – the excitement of the outing countered that.

‘A Cornetto would go down a treat,’ Ernestine said.

‘Ice-cream weather most certainly,’ Kit replied.

They turned to smile at each other. They hoped to have the need to buy ice creams soon enough, and more than two.

Castles were good. The car park was almost entirely full. Ernestine manoeuvred – after a couple of chubby attempts that brought sweat to her forehead – into the last available space. As the engine cut the car filled with the sound of anxious birds and the nearby chatter of the castle visitors. For a moment, the ladies pleasantly listened – they did love a summer-afternoon crowd. The lake waters the castle kept guard of sat as heavily as the blue sky above; each was a suspension of the other.

‘Or would we chance a scone, Kit?’

‘It would hardly put us in the ground, Ernestine.’

The coffee shop, housed in a sensitive glass extension to the castle, was beautifully busy. Bored dads and tired mams lolled there over gazpacho soup and expensive sandwiches – there was organic cola and baked treats for the kiddies. Ernestine and Kit took their places in the thick of it all. Often, in the quiet winter months, back in the bungalow, in the midlands, they spoke of how it was they were perceived in the world. What were they taken for, they

wondered, out there amid the light and gatherings of summer? Maiden aunts, they supposed, or a pair of nuns who had left – after some shabby soul-wrenching – their order, or maybe as discreet lesbians just a little too aged for openness. What was certain was they would be taken for gentle, kind souls with their aunt-like smiles to seal the contrivance.

They nibbled hungrily as mice at the buttered fruit scones. The tea was left to brew until it was strong as ale. It was poured with satisfaction. They watched carefully the crowd at the cafeteria. They spoke icily of the little darlings who everywhere wobbled between the legs of tables and stumbled over shoulder bags left thoughtlessly on the floor – people just didn't think as to what might trip a child. The scones were about done with when Kit gobbled nervously along the length of her slender neck, and she reached a hand for Ernestine's.

'Look!'

Kit nodded sharply. It was a single hard gesture aimed at a little girl, almost albino-pale. She wore sky-blue shorts of a thin fleece material, silver-buckled sandals patterned with daisies, and a striped, armless French top.

'Oh, an angel, Kit!'

'Hush!'

'Oh, perfection.'

The girl was part of a family of four. The mother was as pale and fair-haired, a weary prettiness persisting into her late thirties. There was a brother, perhaps twice the girl's age, hunched over a hand-held video game – they heard at fifteen yards its *bleeps* and *kapows*. The father was sallow and dark-haired.

'Daddy's a greasy-looking Herbert,' Ernestine said.

'Would he be foreign?'

'Is the child nearly his at all, you'd wonder?'

'If 'tis, his blood is weak.'

'Might have a manner of a . . . Portuguese, have we?'

'And as sour-looking as it's greasy.'

Quiet outrage bubbled in their insides. Oh, the undeserving bastards who were blessed with the presence of angels.

'The mother is a liar,' Kit said.

'Would you read her so, Kit?'

'I would. She has a liar's chin.'

They waited at distance for the family to finish up. They prayed that they had encountered them at the right time, that they were at the start and not the finish of their visit. They were rewarded when the family rose from the table and aimed not for the car park but for the castle's interior. The family went dutifully through the cool hallways, and Ernestine and Kit followed; carefully, they drifted into the melt of visitors, there by the chain mail and the crests of arms and the dark stonewalls.

The parents were not careful with the little girl. She roamed ten and twelve and fifteen feet away from them. And that could be enough, in the labyrinth of a castle, a place of quick turns and sudden twists, and the child was forgotten for a half-minute at a time, and that too could be enough.

Ernestine felt a slow hot flush creep her shoulders and ascend her neck.

Kit tingly in the dry pit of her throat made a cage bird's excited trilling.

The albino sheen of the child's hair was a perfect tracer in the crowd.

‘Are you looking at the backs of her knees?’ Ernestine whispered.

‘How so?’

‘I mean the little folds of flesh there, look? There’s still pup fat on her!’

‘Ah there is. Ah sweetness!’

The family as it moved with the afternoon crowd broke down into a spat. The father shouted at the little boy, who was showing great interest in his video game but none at all in Ireland’s heritage. The lazy blur of the crowd’s movement was watched closely by Kit for the blocking it would afford; Ernestine’s eyes were locked on the girl child. The mother scolded the father for his shouting – an index finger was wielded at his face. The father seethed and snapped a remark. The boy was in the zone only of his game. The tiny girl was for a moment forgotten.

‘Move,’ Kit said.

Ernestine slipped a tube of wine gums from her bag and as she moved her smile was warmed by her desire to have the child’s heat – if briefly – in her life.

‘I think I know your name, sweetie thing?’

The girl was perhaps twenty feet from her parents at this carefully chosen moment – it was as good as a mile – and she repaid Ernestine’s fuzzy smile at once with a gap-toothed grin of her own.

‘My name?’

The mother and father argued yet, their backs still turned, and the boy still lost to his hand-held world.

‘Oh I know your name for certain, I’d say! Would I have a little guess at it?’

The child giggled.

'I'd say your name could be written on one of these . . .'

She showed the sweets and popped one loose.

'Yes, yes,' she was beside the girl now, and she leaned in confidently, and she squinted hard at the wine gum in her hand, as if a name was inscribed there. 'It says here that you're a . . . Bob?'

The child laughed, and tossed her head to show the crooked milk teeth, and the white filmy ooze of babyhood that coated still her gums, and she flicked coquettishly her hair – she was surely no Bob – and, unseen, Kit circled and moved in behind her, paused for a check, and then moved closer.

You might travel the length of Ireland for weeks on end, down all the great yawning of the summer days, and you would never come across the ideal moment. But sometimes the luck came in.

'Can't be! Oh, it can't be a Bob! Maybe you're someone else altogether. Maybe I need to have a closer look now, my darling, and we'll find out what your name is yet.'

Ernestine's fingers trailed the filigree down of the child's bare arm. The slightest of touches was electric, and enough to distract her – her eyes became bloodshot – and Ernestine withdrew from it carefully. She shucked another wine gum free and examined it intently.

'Now it says here, we have a . . . is it a Kathy? An Aoife? Is it a Megan? Is it . . .'

She turned her head close to the child.

'Allie,' the child said.

'Oh baby Allie,' Ernestine said, and a tear came and ran slowly her cheek.

She gave the girl the wine gum. Allie chewed on it. And

Ernestine moved in and tickled her beneath the arm, and whisperingly she sang:

‘Allie’s so pretty, Allie’s so sweet, Allie is the little girl who’s walkin’ down your street . . .’

She raised her head and blinked her eyes rapidly then for her companion.

‘Take her, Kit!’

At precisely this moment, as Kit took the little girl warmly inside a cuddle that was also a lock, with her skinny forearm placed just so over the child’s mouth; as she lifted Allie high and close to her; as Ernestine rose and pressed Kit on the small of the back, and hissed –

‘Go! Go!’

– it was at this moment that Allie’s brother drew her into the row. He gestured in her direction – he knew his sister’s whereabouts by instinct – and he squealed at his parents that Allie was allowed to do as she pleased, that she was never forced to . . .

As he spoke, the family all turned and they saw her, in the distance, in the arms of the lady with the tight perm.

‘Allie!’

The mother’s desperate scream was signal enough for Kit to pinch viciously the pup fat at the back of Allie’s knees, causing the child to shriek and cry. The pinch was Kit’s procedure in such an emergency: upset in the child would justify the ladies’ intrusion.

‘Oh hush, baby, hush! Oh look it, look it . . . is this your mammy now . . . is this mammykins?’

The mother fell drunkenly on her child, and Ernestine took the father’s forearm.

‘Oh thank God!’ she said. ‘She was so upset! We were



going for security! She thought she had ye lost altogether.'

'Oh thank you so much,' said the father.

'Oh Allie, honey, shush!' cried the mother.

'Is that her name, is it Allie, isn't she some beauty?'

'Allie, we were only over there! Sweetheart, what is it?'

'Ah she couldn't see ye and the poor thing get herself all fussed.'

'Ah poor baby Allie.'

In a chorus of cooings the matter was smoothed over, and Ernestine and Kit were gratefully thanked for coming to the aid of a small child in distress. The family was left intact, with Allie still weeping, and the ladies moved on with fond smiles and waves. They turned at once for the car park. They made it only just in time. As the Toyota moved, the father dashed into the sightline of the rearview mirror – the angel had spoken – but he was too late, and if he got the reg it was no matter. The plates were false, having been fixed that morning in the garage attached to the bungalow.

They sped twenty and thirty and forty kilometres beyond the speed limit through Sligo and into Leitrim and then Cavan. It was a useful tactic then to drive into Northern Ireland, a separate jurisdiction – the ladies planned for failure as much as success, failure being the commonplace – and it was not until they had crossed the bridge that marks the border, where Blacklion gives way to Belcoo, that they permitted themselves speech again.

'I'll tell you this much,' Ernestine said. 'I would not like to see a read of my blood pressure right now.'

'It'd be crazy,' Kit scolded.

They drove on, and at length they settled to the miserable fact that the day was done for.

‘As we’re on the road,’ Kit said, ‘we could hit the Asda in Enniskillen and pick up some wine.’

The cheaper wines from north of the border would provide a small consolation when they returned, just the two of them, to the floral-patterned walls of the bungalow. It lay blamelessly behind a windbreak of pines – the trees created about the home an aura of great silence. Birds did not nest in those trees ever.

Quickly, the Toyota was on the outskirts of Enniskillen, and traffic was heavy. Another festival – this time by the Erne – drew crowds to its merries, and the air was thick with barbecue smoke that travelled over the water. The afternoon ascended to its peak; the heat was terrific. They saw a shaven-headed, shirtless man and his long, dark-haired partner as they walked towards the carnival, with a small child between them, a little boy.

‘Are you watching,’ Ernestine said, ‘the creature with the head?’

‘Would have the look of a soldier,’ Kit said. ‘A squaddie.’

The Toyota stalled at traffic lights and the family passed directly in front. The ladies regarded each other dolefully.

‘A fine environment for a child,’ Ernestine said. ‘To be growing up in a house where the father has a pierced nipple.’

‘The look of drink off him as well.’

‘Oh it’s sweating out of his every pore, Kit!’

In truth, they weren’t shy themselves with the New Zealand Cabernet Sauvignon, four pounds sterling the screwtop bottle. They went through it by the crate, with the radio set to Lyric FM, the classical station, and it played

late, always, into the bungalow's night, with Ernestine leafing through her power-tool catalogues, and Kit with her small-hours glaze on, and her occasional trilling.

They went sulkily about the aisles of Asda. They filled a trolley with the wine. They bought frozen mince in five-kilo packages. They bought kitchen towel in the fattest available rolls – they went through such an amount of it. Tiredness caught up and it carried age's taste. The migraine glare of the aisle lights was a trial, and so too was the drone and chill of the refrigeration, and so too the futile cheeps of the piped music. The day was marked by and was heavy with failure, and it was as if their luck might never change but as they neared, by fate, the customer services desk, it did. An announcement was made: a toddler had been found, and its parents should approach at once – the child was panicked.

Boldly, the chance was taken.

'Oh my darling Allie!'

Ernestine at a dash reached the desk, and she flung herself on the child, and Kit was at her back, and she kept watch; she knew they had perhaps a minute, maximum, no matter how vast the Asda.

'Oh thank you so much!' Kit cried. 'Oh thank you.'

'Ah she's upset, she got a wee shock, a wee shock is all . . . .' Ernestine soothed as the toddler continued to scream.

The customer services lady was delighted to have reunited the odd family – 'Allie, is that her name?' she said. 'Pretty.' Delighted to be rid of the screaming child, she waved them along.

Held in a firm lock by Kit's steel-wire arms, it was a monstrously burbling infant they carried at pace across the car park – their trolley abandoned to the air-conditioned

aisle. Quickly they were away, and Ernestine through the busy town gunned the Toyota.

Belcoo.

Blacklion.

Dromahair.

And now they began their descent to the midland plain, and the toddler wailed itself to a state of purple exhaustion, and it was laid on the back seat.

Kit after a time turned and eyed it coldly.

'This is no angel,' she said.

Ernestine consulted the rearview and tightened her lips in agreement.

'Is it not kind of . . . wall-eyed, Kit?'

'It is. And a jaundicey class of a look to it, I'd say. Once the purple clears.'

On a straight stretch, Ernestine turned to give the child a more considered appraisal.

'I wouldn't think we'll be depriving the world of an Einstein,' she said.

'No indeed.'

'Bad blood, Kit.'

'Sure what kind of parents? Can you imagine, Ernie? What kind of parents would lose a child in an Asda?'

'Drunks and drug addicts and prostitutes,' Ernestine said.

'With tattoos on their backsides,' Kit said.

'It smells, Kit.'

'Oh, a smell that would knock you, Ernestine.'

'Look at the Babygro!'

'It's busting out of it.'

'Fattish alright. Being fed on white bread mulched down with milk and cane sugar.'

'Asda-bought the Babygro.'

'Oh, classy.'

'Could it be . . .'

'What, Kit?'

'Could it be an itinerant we have on our hands?'

'Oh Jesus Christ, a tinker child!'

'Ernestine, what I'd say to you now . . .'

'I know, darling.'

'Do you?'

'You're right, darling.'

'I am! The likes of this . . . *thing* isn't worth the effort nor the risk.'

The decision was made. The Toyota pulled into a lay-by. The toddler was lifted by Kit from the back seat. It was taken across a ditch and left beneath hawthorn bushes – a kindness to give it shade from the sun that was hot still. The Toyota with relief departed the lay-by, and headed for home, the bungalow, the windbreak pines planted in the soft give of an earth that hid so efficiently.

Near the lay-by as the evening aged the toddler sat silently beneath the hawthorn; it was stunned. It blinked against the midges that came up from the lake to feast on it but it had no strength left to cry. With interest, the toddler was watched by a pair of hooded crows, who stalked about importantly – like fascist birds, like jackboot gestapo – who waited on its final weakening, and for its sore eyes to sleepily close.