

Brooklyn

(2015, John Crowley, UK/Canada/Ireland)

Component 2: Global Film: Narrative, Representation and Film Style Focus Area: Film Style/Aesthetics

PART 1: Key Sequence(s) and timings and/or links

Sequence 1 - Meeting Georgina on the ship (0:12:00 - 0:16:19)

Sequence 2 - Eilis and Sheila (0:48:00 - 0:51:26)

PART 2: STARTING POINTS - Key Elements of Film Form (Micro Features)

Cinematography (including Lighting)

- Sequence 1: There is a LS of Eilis as the ship to America departs. Her green coat, the only one in her possession, is symbolic of her home in Ireland. She seems to be shrinking inside it, terrified of the future ahead of her, surrounded by strangers (marked out as fellow Irish by red hair, but wearing muted colours so Eilis stands out). Compare this to her posture and costume when she returns to Ireland after building a life in the US (see Aesthetics).
- There are lots of 2-shots of Eilis and Georgina (her newly-adopted mentor): this shows the strong bond between the two women and introduces the idea that Georgina is what Eilis will one day become - foreshadowing the penultimate scene where Eilis advises another Irish girl.
- LS of Eilis and Georgina on the deck: the women stand fairly close together, a wide expanse of sea and sky on either side, framed by other passengers. This empty space means different things to the two women: for Eilis, it suggests isolation and the homesickness to come; to Georgina it represents space and freedom to be herself (this is supported by the dialogue).
- Sequence 2: Two intense one-to-one conversations, using typical but effective uses of MS and CU, allowing the performances'

emotional nuances to shine. POVs also make us feel intimately involved with the characters. During the conversation with Sheila, Eilis is framed by the doorway - symbolising the threshold she is on with settling down with Tony (and America).

Mise-en-scène

- Sequence 1: There is a contrast between Eilis and Georgina's costume, hair and make-up. Eilis is almost make-up free, pale, and innocent. Georgina has glamorous hair and lipstick, an almost movie-star visage (it must seem to Eilis). When she arrives at immigration, there's a slow motion close up of Eilis's 'new face', whilst the darker, muted colours still make her green coat stand out. We can see that her Irish identity is still very strong (and she continues to wear green throughout the New York scenes, showing she will always have this part of her identity) but her make-up shows she has already started to change and become someone new.
- Sequence 2: Juxtaposition between the open, wide streets of Brooklyn as the couple walk home (suggesting the freedom America offers) and the small bathroom interior, that is nonetheless lit in warm colours reminiscent of Eilis's home in Ireland: confining but also safe. This reflects Eilis' mental state as she thinks about her future.

Editing

- Sequence 1: Most of the sequences use straightforward shot-reverse-shot for conversations, which promotes a sense of intimacy between us and the characters (and allows us to see the emotional nuances of the performances). In this sequence, it is also used to emphasise the differences as well as the connection between the two women, contrasting Eilis' 'country girl' look with Georgina's confident and independent glamour.
- Sequence 2: Again, fairly simple, reserved editing is used to create empathy with all the characters and give the performers

space to communicate their sincerity (Tony), indecision (Eilis) and wistfulness (Sheila).

Sound

- Sequence 1: Georgina's dialogue shows her independence and confidence. From being "thrown out of first class", calling their cabin mates "bastards", to her explanation of what life in the US is like. "It's nice to talk to people who don't know your auntie," followed by Eilis' somewhat scared "Is that what it's like?" reflects the competing reactions to the life away from home.
- Sequence 2: Sheila's speech about marriage summarises both immigrant experience and the traditional 'coming-of-age' many young adults feel: torn between the scary new world and the comfortable old life they remember nostalgically. Sheila wants her "own bathroom" but also realises that when that happens she'll be "wishing I was back here with you". This foreshadows Eilis' experience when she returns to Ireland and is torn between her two lives.

PART 3: STARTING POINTS - Contexts

Social:

- Representation of gender: the film has very positive messages about both men and women, especially for the period in which it is set. The men are polite, gentle and sincere - none of them are villainous, and the two rival lovers seem to genuinely want the best for Eilis. The portrayal of women, though there is occasional competitive 'bitchiness', is also one of a supportive 'women's culture'. From Mrs Kehoe to Georgina and even Miss Fortini, there is a sense that the female characters understand Eilis' situation and are keen to assist her in building a new life.

Historical:

- There were two waves of immigration from Ireland to America. One in the 1840s, after the Potato Famine, when immigrants fled starvation to the US. This resulted in a huge Irish immigrant community and supplied cities like New York and Chicago with builders, plumbers, electricians to build the metropolises we know today. This is referenced in the scene in the parish hall on Christmas day, when Father Flood describes the homeless men as the "men who built the bridges and the tunnels." The wave of which Eilis is part began after

the Second World War. Though Ireland wasn't directly involved in the war, it was still cut off and not included in the Marshall Plan for restoring Europe. Over 50,000 young people left Ireland in the 1950s, seeking not only employment but - for young women - a life that wasn't dependent on marriage. Their ability to speak English would enable them to find jobs and economic independence, whilst having the support of an established Irish community.

PART 4: STARTING POINTS - Specialist Focus - Film Style/AESTHETICS

- In any period drama, the visual style has to be historically accurate, but should also reflect the themes and characters. In *Brooklyn*, costume designer Odile Dicks Moreux sourced nearly all the clothes from vintage stores, creating very little from scratch. As Rose and Georgina comment, Eilis' suitcase is small and the amount of clothes she takes with her are limited to one coat, two dresses, a scarf and shoes. As the months progress, she is able to afford new, American clothes - and as her wardrobe grows it symbolises the growth in her confidence. The colours grow more vibrant, mirroring the development of her American identity. When she returns to Ireland, she stands out in striking yellow, blue, or peach - in contrast to her mother's washed-out green outfits.
- The colour green is also important. At the start, the colour symbolises Eilis' Irish heritage and her family (her mother and sister wear similar green coats). As she begins to settle in New York, more green appears in the props and location dressing, the colour now beginning to symbolise wherever Eilis feels at home (especially when Tony takes her to see his family's plot of land, a vivid green field that could easily be in her homeland). At the same time, she begins to wear less green, to reflect how she is changing within.
- Production designer Francois Seguin said it was important to not portray Ireland too negatively - avoiding what he called the 'poverty porn' of films like *Angela's Ashes* (1999). The colour palette is simple in the opening scenes, but when Eilis returns the colour range is more varied. There is also a contrast between the bustle of New York and the open spaces of Ireland, reflecting Eilis' conflicting feelings: excitement at her American life, calm and belonging in Ireland.