



Ireland on Screen. A View from Spain

ROSA GONZÁLEZ CASADEMONT'
University of Barcelona

ABSTRACT

The essay considers the vast output of existing cinematic representations of Ireland, prior to discussing one of its main strands —the persistent representation of Ireland as a pastoral Arcadia— and its most exemplary piece: John Ford's film *The Quiet Man* (1952). It is argued that despite being credited with fostering an amusing and condescending visual image of stage Irishness Ford gives plenty of clues for viewing his portrayal critically. These have been missed by audiences world-wide but are picked up and elaborated on four decades later by Spanish film director José Guerín in his film *Innisfree* (1990).

KEYWORDS: Ireland; cinematic representation; national stereotyping; emigrant's idealisation of Ireland.

Ireland and the Irish have featured prominently on the screen, as attested to by Kevin Rockett's wide-ranging directory *The Irish Filmography* (1996), which lists some 2,000 Irish-related films made world-wide in the first 100 years of cinema. Given the substantial presence of Irish Americans in American society and in Hollywood in particular, quite predictably a large number of the films have been made in the USA. As Joseph Curran (1989) —the author of the most

* *Address for correspondence:* Departament de Filologia Anglesa i Alemanya, Universitat de Barcelona, Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 585, 08007 Barcelona, Spain, tel: + 34 93 403568516, fax: + 34 93 3171249, e-mail: rosag@fil.ub.es

Some 42 million citizens of the United States currently claim Irish descent. Moreover, since the inception of Hollywood, a large number of Irish Americans worked in the studios as directors, scriptwriters, and actors.

comprehensive survey of the screen portrayal of the Irish Americans up to the mid-eighties —has suggested, it is probably true to say that the Irish **have been** Hollywood's pet ethnic minority, for not only **have** they received more ample treatment than any other immigrant community, but they **have generally been** depicted in a favourable way.

However, upon looking into this cinematic corpus it soon becomes evident that the bountiful size **does** not go hand in hand with a bountiful array of images and stories. On the contrary, Hollywood's screen portrayal of Ireland and the Irish has **been** highly selective and consistently unrealistic, thus contributing to creating, and perpetuating, a series of stereotypes about the country and its inhabitants. British cinema —the second largest producer of Irish-related films — has contributed a similarly limited range of cinematic representations, though in this case the tenor of the portrayals tends to be less flattering than Hollywood's, centring as they do round the figure of 'the fighting Irishman' pray to atavistic violent impulses, whether in the past or in the recent Northern Irish conflict. As to indigenous Irish cinema, its steady development since Jim Sheridan's *My Left Foot* won two Oscars in 1989 is now allowing Irish people to **have** a say in their representation on the screen. A series of docu-dramas, as well as romantic or farcical comedies **have** begun to explore the changed realities of the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' and of Northern Ireland in the post-Agreement period. However, probably **because** Irish productions need to attract international audiences in order to be competitive in the global marketplace, the new batch of Irish-made films often compromise with the long-established conventions.

Indeed, if it weren't for gems like John Huston's *The Dead* (1987) and Neil Jordan's *The Burcher Boy* (1998), and a few other noteworthy examples such as John Ford's *The Informer* (1935), Pat O'Connor's *The Ballroom of Romance* (1982), Thaddeus O'Sullivan's *December Bride* (1990), David Caffrey's *Divorcing Jack* (1998) or Atom Egoyan's *Felicia's Journey* (1999), one would feel tempted to subscribe to film critic Gerry McCarthy's comment that "[w]here Ireland is concerned, even the most talented and tough-minded film-makers succumb to the lure of the whimsical" (2001). McCarthy cites Francis Ford Coppola's and John Sayles's respective "mythological blameys" *Finian's Rainbow* (1968) and *The Secret of Roan Inish* (1993) as the weakest spots in these directors' reputable cinematography, but the list of Irish-themed movies that capitalise on the Irish diaspora's maudlin sentiment about the far-off homeland, or on the current trendiness of things Irish could easily be enlarged with titles such as Ted Nicolaou's *Leapin' Leprechauns* (1994), Mark Joffe's *The Matchmaker* (1997) or Aileen Ritchie's *The Closer You Get* (1999). All of them rely on a sloppy sort of pseudo-Irishism built round a series of circumstantial iconic signs: an idyllic rural setting unsullied by the stresses of modernisation, the characters' heavy drinking and rowdy temper, lots of blarney and a handful of sentimental ballads.

The images of this discursive construction of Ireland hardly conform to the harsh conditions prevailing in early and mid twentieth-century Ireland or to the industrialised make-up and consumerist ethos of the present-day Celtic Tiger. However, they **have been** so fully

disseminated over different sign systems —whether balladry, Bord Failte's advertising campaigns, or John Hinde's postcards of touched-up photographs of pristine thatched cottages, stone walls, and children with donkeys beneath Connemara's fanciful Mediterranean skies, that any representation of Ireland which is not formulated within these parameters is likely "to be quite literally 'unreadable' to a wide, international audience" (McArthur, 1994: 119). A recent example of the resistance among cinema spectators to recognising or sympathising with any image of Ireland that challenges received views was provided by the lukewarm reception accorded to *The Butcher Boy* —a film where audience expectations of Irish rural imagery are literally shattered on watching a panoramic view of a lake surrounded by green hills disintegrate in a nuclear explosion— as opposed to the box-office success of cliché-ridden *Waking Ned Devine* (1998).²

In the vast output of existing cinematic representations of Ireland the most widely-known film and the one that has become the main purveyor of popular images about Ireland and the Irish abroad is undoubtedly John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952), the amusing account of an Irish-American's arrival in Ireland in search of a simple life he cannot find in the competitive and industrialised USA. Fifty years after it was shot on the west of Ireland, it remains the most popular film ever made about that country.³ Paradoxically, it is also one of the most consistently misread. Indeed, although *The Quiet Man* brims with unabashed sentiment, nostalgia, and rowdy physical comedy, it does not foster the simplistic and uncritical stage Irishness it is usually held responsible for. Underlying its deceptively clichéd surface the film addresses the expatriate's innate mythopoetic impulse to construct Ireland as a pastoral Arcadia of the mind. By doing so, Ford engages with one of the most persistent tropes in Irish culture, its quintessential example being William Butler Yeats's Innisfree.

Innisfree (from the Gaelic *Inis Fraoich*, the heather island) is the name of a tiny island in Lough Gill, to the south-east of Sligo town, which was immortalised by Yeats in one of his best-known poems, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" (*The Rose*, 1893). Written at a time when the poet lived in London with his family, and "felt very homesick" (Kirby, 1977: 46), "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" expresses a nostalgic longing for a simple country life apart from the stresses of urban life that places it within a pastoral tradition. For pastoral, as Marinelli reminds us "is the art of the backward glance, and Arcadia from its creation the product of wistful and melancholy longing" (Marinelli, 1971: 9).

Since pastoral literature springs out of a sense of loss, when an ideal and more innocent

² I have discussed this aspect at length in "The Butcher Boy. The Difficulty of Transcending the Image of Ireland as Modernity's Other" (2000). In Coperías, M. J. (Ed.), *Culture and Power: Challenging Discourses* (pp.199-207). Valencia: Servei de Publicacions Universitat de Valencia.

³ It is still periodically screened on TV around the world —mostly on or around St. Patrick's Day— and it finds its way onto most film hit parades. Thus, it occupies n° 76 on the list of the *American Film Institute Top 100 Most Passionate Films of All Time* announced on June 2002, and n° 87 and n° 217 respectively on the box office list of *Mr. Showbiz 100 Greatest Movies (1931-1994)* and the *Internet Movie Database 250 Top Film* (<http://www.centurybo.com/Century/best-showbiz.htm>, http://us.imdb.com/top_250_films, accessed 21st Aug 2002).

world "is felt to be lost, but not so wholly as to destroy the memory of it" (Marinelli, 1971: 9), it is no wonder that Ireland, with its long experience of emigration and exile, has proved an extremely rich breeding ground for versions of pastoral. The large number of people of Irish ancestry spread all over the world reveals that the return to the homeland has rarely come true, but the journey back to the green native fields is one that has been rehearsed time and again by the Irish imagination, and which has been duly recorded in song, literature and the cinema.

The image of the homeland evoked, though, differs substantially: the degree of sentimental idealisation Ireland is subject to increases in geometric proportion to the distance and period of absence the expatriate has been separated from her. Whereas in most emigrant songs "the dear island across the Irish sea" is conceived as a sort of *Tír na nÓg*, the fabled land of youth and plenty, literary accounts of return journeys usually convey a less rosy picture. Thus, whereas speaking from hearsay, the son in "Skibbereen" pictures Ireland as "a lovely land wherein a prince might dwell" and blames Britain for all the country's problems, a long list of writers, from George Moore to Brian Moore, offer a much more realistic —and often critical— view of the cultural and social restrictions of Irish life through the figure of returned Americans. As John Wilson Foster points out in connection with Ulster fiction, the 'returned American' "is a veritable character-type in Bullock, St John Ervine, Friel, Kiely, Brian Moore and Maurice Leitch, so common indeed that it is normally meant to convey instantly either comic pomposity or pathetic disenchantment" (Foster, 1974: 6).

Indeed, the gamut of situations described and the tone in which they are approached vary greatly, ranging from elegiac treatments of the subject to caricaturesque vignettes. Thus, John Montague's attempt to decipher the landscape of his home area, to read its past and "the unhappiness of its historical destiny", in the "Home Again" section of *The Rough Field* (1972), and his bitter realisation that "no Wordswordian dream enchants [him]", contrasts sharply with a burlesque story such as "Homes on the Mountain" in which Benedict Kiely attacks the romanticisation of rural Ireland. An over-idealisation deriving from the emigrant's nostalgic longing for home, but also promoted in Ireland by a persistent political and literary discourse whereby rural Ireland is seen as the only legitimate embodiment of 'true' Irishness. Through the apparently naive perspective of a twelve-year-old boy Kiely pokes fun at a couple of returned Americans who exchange "the comfort of Philadelphia" for "the bleak side of Dooish Mountain" (Kiely, 1977: 76) as well as at the patriotic *Irish Fireside Songs* describing the Emerald Isle as "a little bit of Heaven [that] fell from out the sky one day", the repeated recitation of which earns for the young narrator "a steady downpour of half-crowns" (Kiely, 1977: 88).

Writers from the south have also dealt with the figure of the returned emigrant on many occasions. George Moore's late story "Home Sickness", included in the 1931 edition of *The Untilled Field*, provides an interesting treatment of the theme by highlighting the ambivalent attitude to the homeland which underlines the creation of many versions of Irish pastoral. After spending thirteen years in America, James Bryden returns to his native Mayo where he soon grows disenchanted with the oppressive atmosphere of defeat he observes among the villagers,

and especially with their submissiveness to the dictates of the puritanical and intolerant priest over matters of sexual morality. Although the protagonist's attitude towards Ireland would seem to give support to Moore's own bitter remark in *Hail and Farewell* that "an Irishman must fly from Ireland if he would be himself" (Moore, 1920: 3), the end of the story belies this notion. In his last years Bryden realises that the memory of his native fields is more real to him than his American life. As Avery points out in her book on the Irish short story, even though Moore implies that escape is necessary for economic and emotional survival, "[h]is mind retains compelling memories of the beauty and peace of the landscape and the special traditions of Irish life" (Avery, 1982: 37-8). Even if the return home often turns out to be an anticlimactic or disappointing experience, the emigrant is haunted by the idea of going back to the paradise she or he has conjured up in their mind by an act of the mythopoeic imagination.

Yeats's vision of the lake isle of Innisfree partakes of this process of mythopoeic idealisation of the rural west of Ireland. Dissatisfied with his present situation, the poet longs to return to the green pastures linked to an earlier and happier period. But although Yeats imagines Innisfree as a fairly idyllic place, he does not picture it as *Tír na nÓg*, a paradise of pleasurable idleness. On the contrary, the kind of rural myth articulated in the poem conceives of human existence in terms of a life of solitary retirement and productive rural activity, of self-discovery by way of discipline.

Aspiration towards a Horatian *aurea mediocritas* in which happiness is achieved by reconciling human dignity and the moderate ambitions of country existence also informs the short story "The Quiet Man" (1933). Though not a particularly distinguished specimen of the Irish tale about a returned emigrant, "The Quiet Man" has become the paradigmatic example of its kind. Indeed, although its author, the Kerryman Maurice Walsh (1879-1964), is not even mentioned in the nearly 4,000 pages that make up *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (1991), his story has been continuously in print since the Irish-American director John Ford adapted it for the screen twenty years after he had read it in the *Saturday Evening Post*. The film had immediate popular success, not only in Ireland, where it was premiered in May 1952, but in America and elsewhere. When running in Paris it was reputed to have grossed more than the legendary *Gone with the Wind* (Matheson, 1985: 73, 91), and in Spain, where it was first shown in November 1954, it was hailed as the latest wonder in Technicolor, and as Ford's masterpiece (Picas, 1954: 20).

The uninterrupted popularity of Ford's film has led to a situation whereby the term 'The Quiet Man' and the placename 'In[n]isfree' owe their popular currency almost exclusively to the film. And since Ford's *The Quiet Man* departs quite substantially from its literary sources, freely modifying the plot of Walsh's short story and changing the location (and the spelling) of Yeats's Innisfree, the ideas evoked by the two terms, and the notions they have come to embody in most people's mind have moved a long way from the original literary models. Indeed —and this is the strand I want to pursue here— they have even moved a long way from the actual meaning that Ford confers on them.

In fact, Ford's film has greatly contributed to popularising, if not to creating, an amusing and condescending visual image of stage **Irishness** but, as noted above, this is no doubt a most intriguing and paradoxical case of collective misinterpretation. As a series of perceptive critics (Anderson, 1952; McBride, 1974; Campbell, 1978; Gibbons, 1988, 2002; Pettitt, 2000 and McLoone, 2000) have pointed out, once the tensions beneath the dreamlike surface of Ford's film are perceived, it becomes quite apparent that the idealised Ireland of the expatriate myth which *The Quiet Man* is supposed to have fostered is in fact strongly contested through subtle, but quite unequivocal means.

And even if, as I shall argue later on, the film is still open to the charge of romanticising —and trivialising— the reality of Irish life in a rural area, the way Ford mediates the story of the returned American gives plenty of hints to lead the audience to view it critically. That is, from the beginning the film foregrounds its own artificiality, revealing its status as an imaginary fabrication and not as a realistic "slice of life". Thus, the opening scene at the station introduces the theme of the journey —an archetypal motif of a metaphorical quest— and places the action in the springtime —the traditional season for rebirth and renewal (Santaolalla, 1992: 46-7). Significantly, though, no recognisable historical time is mentioned. Consequently, the audience's imagination is driven away into an atemporal, and unlocated, country of the mind. In fact, even though Sean Thornton, the returned American, asks for directions to go to Inisfree (sic), the local people at the railway station cannot agree about how to get there for, as the stationmaster informs Sean, even the signpost bearing the name Inisfree "is pointing the wrong way". Eventually, old Michaelleen comes out of nowhere to escort Sean to Inisfree, to the surprise of the local people who comment: "I wonder now why a man would want to go to Inisfree" as they place themselves behind a wall to peer at the two men vanishing. The fact that they stare at the screen seems to be a way of inviting us to join in their speculations and make up an entertaining story, thus drawing a distinction between fiction and reality.

The special character of the narrating voice chosen by Ford to tell the tale of the returned American endorses even further the suggestion that the story belongs to the country's rich oral tradition, and that *The Quiet Man* has become part of the community's lore. In the opening scene of the film, the story is told by an unidentified voice-over narrator, who later on identifies himself as Father Lonergan. However, it soon becomes evident that this narrator provides accounts of events he has not witnessed. Since Lonergan is not a completely reliable narrator, and his is not a first-hand account of the story, the reader should not take it at face value. As Santaolalla remarks "the film as a whole could be considered as one more instance of the many tellings and retellings that the story of Sean Thomson and Mary Kate Danaher has probably met and will surely meet in the course of time" (Santaolalla, 1992: 50).

In order to highlight the artificial character of his film Ford resorts to another metafictional device, when towards the end a crowd of villagers who have been waving to the visiting Protestant bishop, feigning to be his parishioners, start waving directly at the audience. As Luke Gibbons has pointed out, this can be interpreted as a way "to remind us both of the

presence of the camera and the fact that we too are in the position of the bishop, viewing a mere pretence, a *representation* of community" (Gibbons, 1988: 240).

The film provides many more instances of the tension between make-believe and reality, from the inclusion of studio inserts in the exterior sequences —which highlight the artificiality of Sean's vision at key moments such as his first glimpse of the family cottage, while he hears the voice of his dead mother enthusing about how pretty the cottage used to be— to Mrs Playfair's comment, on seeing Sean's reconstructed replica, that it is the most Irish looking cottage around, to Widow Tillane's myth-debunking question to Sean "Are you planning to turn 'White O'Morning' into a national shrine? And perhaps charge twopence a visit for a guided tour through the little thatched cottage where all the Thorntons were born?"

Even though the aspects of *The Quiet Man* that have been stressed so far are those that somehow debunk the stage Irishness with which the film has been traditionally associated, as remarked above, Ford's image of Ireland does not fully escape the romanticising tendency inherent in the expatriate's vision of the homeland. In fact, the film even displays some of the features which according to Kathryn Hume (1984: 62) are typical of pastoral fantasy such as "the freedom from responsibility", as illustrated by the fact that people's material needs seem to be met from no visible economic source, or the fact that although there is action and a certain amount of violence, there are no genuine catastrophes, no villains and no real suspense. Moreover, in line with pastoral's celebration of the simple life and communal traditions apart from the individualism and mercantile ethos which prevails in the modern world, the film provides a strong sense of community. This is reinforced by the pub singing scenes and long shots of crowd scenes, and is given a most extreme example when the dispute over Mary Kate's dowry is settled by means of a public brawl.

The film's emphasis on social cohesion rather than on individual gain is also reinforced by the fact that the story of *The Quiet Man* is embedded in a classical romantic comedy. Therefore, it follows the fixed pattern whereby a young couple must overcome a series of individual and social obstacles before they can finally get married and achieve individual and social reconciliation. The tensions arising from Ireland's troubled colonial history and the consequent complexity of the community's religious composition and political allegiances are not readily apparent. In fact, when Ford touches upon such issues, he does so in a very light-hearted way, as when Will Danaher says he'd rather join the Church of Ireland than shake Sean's hand as Father Lonergan bids him, or when Danaher amusingly asks "Is the IRA in it too?" as he sees Sean approach in a challenging attitude. Significantly, the question of who wins the ensuing mock-heroic fight is not in the least important, and the two rivals end up staggering arm-in-arm in drunken friendship.

This image, together with the quaint courtship scenes with the whole village gazing on in witness, as well as more outlandish episodes such as the old man who jumps up from his deathbed on hearing about the Donnybrook, would seem to be the ones most cherished in Spain, if one is to judge from Spanish press reviews, which invariably single them out for praise. The

emphasis on quaint features, which is also characteristic of other American and British films about Ireland, has contributed to creating a vision of this country as an enclave of traditional values untainted by progress and industrialisation, a country with landscapes of magical beauty, inhabited by people with a romantic view of their heroic past, people who are whimsically unpragmatic, and who show a marked proclivity for violence. And despite the fact that, as John Hill (1988) has argued, some British films have tended to criminalise Irish violence, in general the Spanish conception of Irishness has been more benign and, in line with the Hollywood view, has tended to glorify Irish violence as a heroic form of resistance to colonial power.

Indeed, the issue of Ireland's colonial experience is one which many Spaniards view sympathetically, especially those from the peripheral historic regions of Catalonia and the Basque Country, who often draw parallels between the Irish question and their own conflicts with the centralist policy of Madrid. On the other hand, the fact that during the Counter-Reformation Ireland and Spain were closely related on account of their common religion and their common enmity for England, has led to the widespread belief in the existence of a marked affinity of temperament between the peoples of both countries, as expressed in Salvador de Madariaga's contention that the Irish are Spaniards who were stranded by mistake in the north of Europe (cited in O'Donoghue, 1992: 14). Madariaga's reference to the supposed Iberian origin of the mythological Milesians illustrates that perceptions of Ireland in Spain are often guided by instinctual rather than by empirical parameters. This trend has inevitably led to highly unrealistic notions of Ireland and the Irish.

As if to compensate for the fact that deceptive cinematic images, and particularly the misreading of Ford's *The Quiet Man*, are much to blame for this situation, an attempt to redress it was carried out, quite appropriately, through a film that explicitly declares its connection to Ford's. Written and directed by José Luis Guerín, the film is entitled *Innisfree* (1990), a name which carries unequivocal Fordian resonances in Spain for even though Yeats's "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" was first published in 1957 in a small bilingual anthology containing 16 poems, and has been reprinted a few times since, it is with *The Quiet Man* rather than with Yeats's poem that Spanish people associate Innisfree. Indeed, Ford's film has been so influential as a repository of images of Ireland that its setting has almost become a generic term for the country. A notion which has even been endorsed by prestigious Spanish film reviewers like the late José Luis Guarner who, in an uncharacteristic gesture for such a perceptive critic, went as far as providing a spurious etymology of the term Innisfree, explaining that it is the Gaelic word for Ireland, meaning "free island" (Guarner, 1990).

Awareness of the role Hollywood has played in the creation of deceptive notions about Ireland was what mainly prompted Guerín to shoot *Innisfree* for, as this director has explained (Malló, 1990; Flores, 1990), he realised that whenever he asked Spanish people about Ireland they invariably resorted to *The Quiet Man* as their main referent, mentioning the country's beautiful Technicolor scenery and her people's fondness for drink and music, but failing to perceive the repeated hints provided by Ford that give the lie to the emigrant's dream of Ireland.

Following a visit to the village of Cong, Co Mayo, the location Ford had chosen for his film thirty-seven years earlier, Guerin would also realise the potent effect the shooting of *The Quiet Man* had had as "a late colonising wave which changed the economic, social and mental structures of the county" (Malló, 1990). In fact, the inhabitants of the area have almost come to see themselves in the way the film portrayed them. And not only has the place deliberately kept an old-world feel, but it has even appropriated as part of its lore alien elements that were introduced by Ford and his film crew during the shooting of *The Quiet Man* such as the Aran caps they wore, the ballads John Wayne used to sing, or expressions such as Michaeleen's "The horse's more sense than I have."

The currency of *The Quiet Man* as the most popular referent of Ireland within and outside the country serves two purposes for Guerin. On the one hand it allows him to undertake a sociological survey of a small Irish community which serves as a yardstick for the whole island and which contests many stereotypical views. On the other hand it helps to highlight the dialectic between reality and representation which is at the core of art. Guerin's *Innisfree*, which is presented as "Things seen and heard in and around Innisfree between 5th September and 10th October 1988" combines documentary and fictional elements. At a structural level it is like a palimpsest, a rewriting of *The Quiet Man* in which there can still be read many traces of the old version. For, even though the total amount of sequences from Ford's film comes to only four minutes, there are constant visual and verbal references to it: from black and white photos of the shooting of the film framed on walls, to the re-enacting of scenes from *The Quiet Man* like the escape of the courting couple on a bicycle, to reminiscences of local people who had known John Ford or who had actually featured in *The Quiet Man*. Prominent among them is his close friend Lord Killanin who dispels any doubt we might have about Ford's sentimental idealisation of Ireland by telling about his cynical attitude to rich "returned Americans" who on seeing the derelict house of their ancestors, which they had imagined as a castle, decide not to stop but drive on, thus giving rise to the expression "drive-on-cottages".

Whereas in Ford's film the community's sociological complexity is not readily apparent, *Innisfree* provides many insights into the community's past and present circumstances, as well as into the country at large. This is done through various complementary means. Sometimes a voice-over informs directly about such questions as land ownership and the traditional lack of a system of primogeniture, emigration patterns, or key historical events. More subtle and effective are a series of visual images, ranging from those which have a purely documentary function to others which play a highly symbolic role. Brief scenes of the everyday chores of the villagers reveal the gradual modernisation of the place, with shots of men milking, roof-thatching, gathering seaweed, spreading it on the fields, or making a hurling stick from an ashplant, juxtaposed with others showing a TV aerial being set up on top of a thatched roof, a boy travelling across the fields with his schoolbag to catch a school bus, or a pub dance attended by people of all ages in which lively traditional tunes give way to frenetic disco music.

A casual reference to the current Troubles in the North in a pub conversation leads an old

man to reminisce about his revolutionary past and to conclude "we have long memories", a statement which reverberates throughout the film. Guerin conveys the **importance** of the burden of the past in Irish life very **skilfully**. At a thematic level, by presenting people seemingly paralysed by nostalgic memories, whether of historical events or of the shooting of *The Quiet Man* almost forty years earlier, as when a girl picks up a bowler hat that turns up to be the one Sean Thornton had flung in the famous courting scene when he and Mary Kate escape from their chaperone. At a structural level, by evading a diachronic narration Guerin creates the impression of frozen time. Indeed, the first half of the film, which includes many references to Ford's film, has no discernible chronology. Significantly, though, once a group of children finish summarising the plot of *The Quiet Man*, and we see "The End" on the screen, there begins a certain temporality, an intimation of everyday routine in the community.

Another visual image of great evocative impact Guerin resorts to is that of the cottage. On the one hand, the film opens with the derelict cottage of the O'Feeneys, i.e. John Ford's family, who emigrated to the States. Then there is the cottage used in *The Quiet Man*, i.e. the materialisation of an emigrant's dream of home. **And finally**, there is the fake reproduction of the cottage set up by a local publican for the sake of the tourists who flock into the village to buy souvenirs, and who, incidentally, are **shown** a false version of *The Quiet Man*. The ruins of an actual Irish cottage, its idealised image and a commercial forgery illustrate how far representations of Ireland **have strayed** from reality.

The continual misreading of *The Quiet Man* and the fact that Guerin's *Innisfree* has gone largely unnoticed reflect the **recalcitrance** of cinema audiences to acknowledge any discourse which challenges stereotypical views. Although in Spain people's image of Ireland is not coloured by the Irish diaspora's impulse to look back nostalgically on the far-off homeland and invest it with bucolic qualities, in its greenness and remoteness on the edge of Europe the Emerald Isle is still providing the modern western world with an equivalent of the ancient world's Arcadia and a repository of communal values. The recent commercial re-release of *Innisfree*, owing to a rekindling of interest in Guerin's work upon his being awarded the 2001 "Premio Nacional de Cine", and the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the shooting of *The Quiet Man*, provide two excellent occasions to review them, and to **start** reassessing hackneyed views of Ireland.⁴

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⁴ An earlier version of the second part of this essay, entitled "In[n]isfree from Spain Via Hollywood" was presented at the XXV IASAIL Conference held at Hofstra University (USA) in July 1996.

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