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The Quiet Man (Ireland into Film)

Luke Gibbons

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John Ford’s "The Quiet Man" (1952) is the most popular cinematic representation of Ireland, and one of Hollywood's classic romantic comedies. For some viewers and critics the film is a powerful evocation of romantic Ireland and the search for home; for others, it is a showcase for the worst stereotypes of stage-Irishry. Much of Irish cinema since the development of an indigenous film industry in the 1980s has set its face firmly against these mythic images of Ireland, but no film has yet attained the enduring appeal of "The Quiet Man". In this radical reappraisal of Ford’s Oscar-winning film, Luke Gibbons traces its development from Maurice Walsh’s original story (1933) and argues that its romantic excesses are a symptom of much darker undercurrents in the literary text, and the displacement of trauma that often underlies nostalgia. Moreover, Gibbons ably demonstrates how the film, rather than indulging in escapism, actually questions its own romantic illusions and the dream of returning to an Irish paradise lost.

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