

Real Tensions and Pastoral Fantasies in Three Films about the West of Ireland
Paper Presented in May 2010 at ACIS Conference, State College, Pennsylvania

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This essay discusses three films, *The Quiet Man* (1952), *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), and *Into the West* (1992), as accounts of wounded main male characters whose quest for home in the west of Ireland evokes mythical and cultural associations. The challenge of discussing these three films in the context of Irish history and culture is complicated not only by the intertextuality among a number of films in Irish and Irish American cinema but also by the ongoing influence and complex reception of *The Quiet Man*.

Unraveling the multi-layered knot of signifiers referring to Irish myth, history and culture is like trying to find the original image in a house of mirrors. Irish and Irish American culture seems especially susceptible to mythologizing and stereotyping due to the ongoing migration and cultural exchange between Ireland and the Irish Diaspora. These films contrast urban capitalist modernity to a traditional way of life in the west of Ireland, which thus engages with nationalist cultural meanings associated primarily with this region of Ireland.

These three films tell stories of men traumatized by loss or violence, who seek healing and redemption by entering an imaginary west of Ireland space which can satisfy each wounded man's psychological need for nurturing, maternal love. Sean Thornton in *The Quiet Man* is a returning Irish American immigrant. Randolph Doryan in *Ryan's Daughter* is a British Major in the colonial army occupying Ireland. Papa Reilly of *Into the West* is a "Traveler" and therefore an outsider in the Irish Republic defined by middle class identity. While Sean Thornton and John Reilly are both exiles from their original homes in the west, Randolph Doryan is a stranger to the west and a resented member of the British occupying army.

In each of these films, the healing narrative is framed by having the drawing the characters and the audience into an imaginary, even otherworldly, realm, which is evocative of home, mother, and traditional community. This maternal imaginary is embodied by the White O' Morn cottage in *The Quiet Man*, the eroticized landscape in *Ryan's Daughter* and the supernatural white horse as the mother's spirit in *Into the West*. While Sean Thornton's iconic statement in *The Quiet Man*, "Is she real, she can't be," is the prototype of the exile's nostalgia for an imagined homeland, the other two films follow a similar narrative of healing in a feminine, pastoral landscape.

For more than a century, this mythical west of Ireland has been "constructed in terms of an imaginary geography which sets off a materialist, vulgar, modern and mundane 'east' against a dreamy, mystical and timeless 'west'."¹ The white horse in the film *Into the West*, is appropriately named Tir na nÓg (land of eternal youth), the Celtic otherworld on the western

horizon of the Ireland. As Ruth Barton observes, *Into the West* presents a clichéd version of the west coast of Ireland which she defines as a region “annexed by a succession of cultural and political movements in search of a symbolic representation of pure Irishness” from the Celtic Revival to Board Failte.ⁱⁱ For the writers and artists of the Celtic Revival such as Synge and Yeats as well as for Irish nationalists such as Padraig Pearse, the west of Ireland was the authentic Ireland, repository of the Irish language and traditional culture. In his essay on *Into the West*, Joe Cleary proposes that “the mythical Ireland of the Revival did not so much disappear as migrate, moving from the medium of poetry and drama into the more visual medium of cinema”.ⁱⁱⁱ

In these films, the west also references the outlaw culture of the American Wild West and the significance of the west in both Ireland and America as an untamed wilderness beyond the boundaries of civilization. *The Quiet Man* has been described as a “western made in Ireland”.^{iv} Tito and Ossie of *Into the West* watch westerns and ask their father whether the Travelers are cowboys or Indians David Lean, the director of *Ryan’s Daughter*, referred to his film as being made in the “wild west of Ireland.”^v In his article, “John Ford’s Festive Comedy: Ireland Imagined in *The Quiet Man*,” William Dowling suggests that the film is an expression of “the principle of ritualized disorder called misrule or the-world-turned-upside-down, a moment of collective freedom from the rule of an unvarying obedience to authority,”^{vi} which is consistent with Irish and American myths of the west in “their pronounced hostility to law and order, and the forces of centralization.”^{vii}

Following summaries of each movie’s plot and method of constructing an imaginary pastoral space, this essay will examine the wounded male characters; the quest for healing in landscapes imbued with romanticized or eroticized images of the west of Ireland; and the transformative opportunity of challenges to traditional gender roles, morality and institutionalized injustices in the disorderly “wild west” of these films.

The *Quiet Man* was directed by John Ford, best known for his many westerns. Because Ford’s parents had immigrated to America from the western Gaeltacht, he was interested in Maurice Walsh’s stories about Ireland. The film’s plot, which is based on two stories by Walsh, “The Quiet Man” and “The Red Girl”, tells the story of Sean Thornton, an immigrant who returns to Ireland from America in search of peace and quiet after working in a steel mill and the boxing ring. On his arrival in Inisfree, an ironic reference to the idyllic island of Yeats’s poem, “The Lake Isle Of Innisfree,” Sean is immediately attracted to Mary Kate Danaher. Though the attraction is mutual, Mary Kate’s brother “Red” Will Danaher refuses to consent to their courtship because Sean outbid him for the property that Will wanted to buy.

Danaher finally agrees to the marriage but then refuses to pay the dowry because the prosperous widow rejects his crude attempt at courtship. After Danaher hits him at the wedding reception, Sean experiences a flashback to the fight when he accidentally killed someone in the boxing ring. Mary Kate is unwilling to consummate the marriage without her dowry and wants Sean to confront her brother but he fears a physical fight because of the boxing incident. When the couple burn the dowry money in front of him, Danaher pays the dowry and, he starts a fist fight, thus forcing Sean to overcome his fear and ultimately bond with his brother-in-law.

John Wayne played Sean Thornton and Maureen O'Hara played Mary Kate Danaher in the film. O'Hara and Barry O'Sullivan, who plays the matchmaker, were both born in Ireland. In a letter to Maureen O'Hara, John Ford refers to their longing to return to Ireland and make the film as "something hereditary from our Irish mother's womb calling to her loved ones far from the land."^{viii} The film frames Sean Thornton entering an imaginary Inisfree when the pony cart driven by Michaleen Oge passes under the bridge on the way from the station to the town of Inisfree. The disappearance and reappearance of the cart passing under the bridge is reminiscent of entering the timeless realm of a fairy mound in traditional Irish folklore.

In her autobiography, *Tis' Herself*, O'Hara comments on the importance of Sean and Mary Kate's first encounter convincing the audience that they experienced love at first sight. Maureen O'Hara quotes this mystical language from Walsh's "Red Girl" story as the inspiration for her performance in this scene.

And there leaning on a wall was the woman. No ghost woman. Flesh and blood or I have no eyes to see. The sun shining on her red hair and her scarf green as grass on her shoulders. . . A woman I never saw before yet a woman strangely familiar.^{ix}

In a Brechtian move at the end of the film, Ford signifies that we are leaving this illusory realm, when the actors perform their curtain calls. Several critics have noted that Ford intended the audience to question boundaries between fiction and reality, which can be blurred in the powerful medium of cinema, by deconstructing the audience's assumptions throughout the film. As Gibbons observes, "Almost every aspect of the film, from Sean's arrival at the station to the final curtain call. . . raises questions over what exactly it is we are seeing, and where reality ends and imagination begins."^x

Like *The Quiet Man*, *Ryan's Daughter* is a love story between a local woman and a stranger to the community. However this is a story of adultery loosely based on Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Rosy Ryan is a romantic young woman and daughter of the pub owner in the remote west Ireland village of Killary. She becomes infatuated with the school teacher Charles Shaughnessy, who seems educated and cosmopolitan as compared with the other villagers. Charles and Rosy marry but he is too reserved to satisfy her sexual or emotional desires.

British Major Randolph Doryan is assigned to the military post near the village during the period of the Easter rebellion. When Doryan experiences an episode of shellshock in Ryan's pub, Rosy comforts him and they quickly develop a passionate relationship. The sexual experience of her first orgasm is portrayed in an extravagantly romantic scene which merges the couple's lovemaking in the woods with the rhythms of nature. Because of the villagers' conventional morality and local sympathy for the rebels, they disapprove of Rosy's sexual transgression with a British soldier. The major commits suicide after Rosy ends their love affair, which has been his only solace. The villagers assume Rosy betrayed the rebels to Major Doryan although her father was the real informer. They mob Rosy, stripping her and shearing her hair, as was done to Irish women who consorted with British soldiers during the period of the 1969 Northern Ireland troubles when the film was made.

For *Ryan's Daughter*, the threshold at which the characters enter and leave the film's interlude of romantic fantasy is signified by Killary bus stop at the standing stone, which is a

reminder of Ireland's pre-Christian folk culture. Charles Shaughnessy returns from his trip to Dublin at this bus stop. Major Randolph Doryan arrives at this stop, framed standing rigidly next to this stone. In the final scene of the film, Rosy and Charles catch the bus for Dublin with an uncertain future and thus exit the boundaries of this imaginary realm marked by the stone.

Into the West is the story of a motherless Traveler family and the father's grief and longing for his deceased wife. Papa Reilly's marginal status in middle class Ireland suggests parallels between the outcast Traveler as the "other" in the Republic of Ireland and the colonized Irish "other" under the British Empire. This film narrative foregrounds storytelling by initiating an otherworld journey with the grandfather's tale of Oisín while countering this fantasy with a documentary style portrayal of the Traveler family's impoverished, inner city life-style. Widower Papa Reilly and his sons Ossie and Tito live in a concrete public housing high-rise in a dystopic Dublin. After Papa's wife Mary died giving birth to Ossie, he lost his confidence as leader of the Travelers and wallows in a fog of grief and alcohol.

Mary's father arrives in his caravan followed by a white horse, which is later revealed to be a magical embodiment of Mary's spirit. Their grandfather tells the boys and the neighbor children the story of Oisín and Tir na nÓg, land of eternal youth. After Ossie develops a rapport with the horse, the boys name her Tir na nÓg and decide to keep her in their apartment. As a result of complaints from neighbors about the horse, a corrupt policeman discovers the horse's amazing jumping ability. He decides to steal the horse and sell her to a dishonest businessman who races horses. Tito and Ossie see Tir na nÓg in a race shown on television and are inspired to rescue her by the American westerns, which they watch on videos.

Tir na nÓg leads them on a journey to the west of Ireland with Papa, grandfather, two friends and the police all following them. This journey takes the boys and their father to sites associated with Papa Reilly's former nomadic life and eventually to his wife's grave. When the police attempt to capture the horse on the seashore, she carries Ossie into the otherworld under the ocean. After his father rescues him, Ossie describes an underwater vision of his mother saving him, which finally breaks the spell of grief that has paralyzed Papa Reilly for several years.

The Celtic imaginary appears in the opening scene of *Into the West* with the sounds of otherworldly music playing as the wild white horse prances along the dimly lit seashore. The scene then shifts to the Dublin housing project and the grandfather's arrival with a white horse from the otherworld of Tir na nÓg. The boys and their father enter a supernatural imaginary space during their westward journey to Tir na nÓg. The otherworldly narrative ends when the horse carries Ossie under the waves and Papa emerges from the ocean with Ossie in his arms. In this film, Papa Reilly tried to escape his pain through alcohol but the imaginary encounter with his wife's spirit heals John Reilly by forcing him to grieve his wife and accept responsibility for his sons.

Just as *Into the West* is evocative of the mystical and mythical Celtic Revival west of Ireland, so does *The Quiet Man* suggest the west of Synge and Yeats with scenes of a Celtic cross and ruined abbey amidst the pastoral landscape in which Mary Kate, wearing the traditional red skirt, herds her sheep. As an experienced director, Ford certainly recognized the power of his film to enrapture the audience with this story of the prodigal son, Sean, returning to

a womb-like cottage in an essentialist, pastoral landscape to be healed by the love of a beautiful yet maternal woman. Thus Ford uses the Brechtian framing technique and comic elements to deconstruct this fantasy utopia even as he invokes it.

In his book, *The Quiet Man*, Luke Gibbons uses a quote by Maurice Walsh from Steve Matheson's biography of Walsh, author of the original "Quiet Man" story, to emphasize his analysis of the emotional importance of land to the author. Walsh suggests that "A place acquires an entity of its own, an entity that is the essence of all the life and thoughts and griefs and joys that have gone before."^{xi} All three films evoke this intimate bond between the people and the land they inhabit. The eroticized landscape and stunning scenery of *The Quiet Man* and *Ryan's Daughter*, attracted tourists to Ireland in search of communion with this fetishized landscape and romanticized homeland. While these two films are located primarily in romantic or erotic imaginary spaces, the haunting music, magical white horse and Ossie's underwater vision of *Into the West* are strongly suggestive of the supernatural realm in Irish folk and fairy tales. Joe Cleary's analysis of the film indeed proposes that *Into the West* inhabits the predominantly pre-capitalist world of fairy or folktale in which "the supernatural clings to or infuses the open spaces of the landscape itself."^{xii}

The wounded male characters in each film are exiles or outsiders but through varied experiences of exile. Sean Thornton, the emigrant returning from America, has been wounded by the loss of his homeland, the death of his mother and by painful experiences in America. Local priest Father Lonergan alludes to a family history of Republicanism when he mentions that he knew Sean's grandfather who died in a penal colony in Australia. At the pub in Inisfree, Sean buys a round of drinks and the men respond by singing "Wild Colonial Boy." In the final film version contrary to Walsh's story, Sean's psyche has been traumatized by his accidental murder of his opponent in the boxing ring. Sean is an outsider in Inisfree since he is unfamiliar with local courtship customs but he feels even more alienated from America. His flight to Ireland is motivated by the desire to escape his past but also to escape modern American capitalism's culture of greed and competition which resulted in the death of his boxing opponent.

Even though he is first shown posed alongside the obviously phallic standing stone, Major Doryan, the British colonizer in *Ryan's Daughter* has suffered trauma in World War I which made him weak and vulnerable, qualities usually projected onto the colonized male by the imperialist hegemony. Doryan has a limp so that he uncannily resembles Michael, the village mute who mimics him and whose boot thumping in the pub precipitated the Major's shell-shock flashback. David Lean has the rebel leader Tim O'Leary express his final request to the British soldiers as, "Get out of my country."

The emotionally and physically wounded Major Doryan represents the wounded British Empire, which was being strained by the huge number of injured and dead soldiers in the battles of World War I. In fact the Irish rebels chose to attempt their uprising for an independent Ireland during the war since the double assault of war front and rebellion within the Empire would British military's ability to crush the rebellion. From another perspective, Elizabeth Cullingford views the doppelganger relationship between the crippled Michael and the maimed Major as a reference to British colonialism's damage effects on the Irish. She suggests that "Michael's

frightening ugliness is the portrait in the attic on which the appropriately named Doryan's accumulated historical transgressions are inscribed."^{xiii}

While Papa Reilly of *Into the West* seems emasculated by his grief, he also exemplifies the disempowering effects of colonialism on the Irish male psyche as the post traumatic stress resulting from overwhelming loss and violence. Since Reilly is a marginalized Traveler in postcolonial Ireland, he reenacts the colonial experience by being the outsider in the Irish Republic just as the Irish were outsiders under the British Empire. The magical white horse is pursued by men who represent a flawed and crippled Republic. John Reilly's wife as embodied in the horse draws him back to the western seashore and into the traditional Traveler community so that Papa can resolve his grief and finally release her spirit by burning the caravan.

The psychological trauma of the male characters in the films recalls the historical and cultural trauma of Ireland's colonial legacy and the forced diaspora, especially during the 1845-47 famine and post-famine era before Ireland gained independence from Britain in the 1920s. Like the primal rupture of birth as a separation from the prenatal bond with the mother's body which can never be restored, the colonial rupture of the widely dispersed Irish Diaspora and Ireland's partition after the treaty can never be restored to its pre-colonial condition except in myth.

According to Catherine Nash in "Looking Commonplace: Gender, modernity and National Identity," the west of Ireland symbolizes both the "connections between landscape, nationhood and the body," specifically the bodies of rural women, and the "national yearning for a coherent pre-colonial culture and modernist nostalgia [which]. . . worked to construct the West as a site of cohesive communities and cultural purity."^{xiv} The impact of the famine deaths and emigration on Ireland resulted in a population loss in the west of Ireland which has never been regained. Because the west was the region where the Irish language and culture had survived, this loss had additional significance for the nationalist construction of Irish identity. The post colonial response to Ireland's tragic history of famine and diaspora inspires the quest for a restored homeland which drives the narrative in all three films.

In her book, *The Irish-American in Popular Culture 1945-2000*, Stephanie Rains claims that the painful separation and exile of the diaspora had an even greater impact on the Irish immigrants who left Ireland than on those who remained.

For the Irish-American diaspora, rather than the Irish in Ireland, there is, in particular, the experience of emigration to consider in examining the motives behind genealogical interest. The trauma of loss and dislocated identity . . . was exacerbated for millions by the disjuncture of exile to the United states before, during and after the Famine. This process, whatever its ultimate material gains for many, was a further removal from a culturally significant narrative of connection between generations as well as their physical localities.^{xv}

Referring to the scene in the film *E.T* when the alien feels nostalgia for his home while watching *The Quiet Man* on television, Gibbons proposes that nostalgia's "identification with the feminine is intrinsically bound up with. . . an evocation of an idealized past, but [also] a very distinctive form of longing: *nostos*, to return home, *algos*, a painful condition-the painful desire

to restore the sense of belonging that is associated with childhood, and the emotional resonance of the maternal.”^{xvi} In an essay on “John Hinde and the New Nostalgia,” Luke Gibbon’s examines the association of nostalgia for home with the feminine imagery of the Hinde’s Ireland postcards. While the alien in *E.T.* can return home, Irish Americans cannot return to the Ireland portrayed in John Hinde’s postcards, which are a “last glimpse of a world that is lost.”^{xvii}

The legacy of *The Quiet Man* has impacted not only Irish American nostalgia for Ireland and hence tourism and but has also produced a sub-genre of ‘therapeutic narratives’ in Irish cinema.^{xviii} Although Luke Gibbon’s analysis of this sub-genre focuses on the influence of Ford’s film on *The Field* and *This is My Father*, the therapeutic narrative model can also apply to *Ryan’s Daughter* and *Into the West*. As a model for subsequent “therapeutic narratives” of loss and nostalgia, *The Quiet Man* will be discussed in some detail in order before examining this therapeutic model in relation to the other two films

There is evidence in biographies of him that John Ford made films influenced by his identification with both his Irish ancestry and his Irish American experience.^{xix} While Ford experienced nostalgia for his parents’ homeland, he also questioned both the American dream and the Irish-American romantic fantasy of Ireland. Ford sympathetically represented Indians and other outsiders in his westerns because he recognized that the oppression of American Indians was similar to the oppression of the Irish by the British Empire. Journalist Philip Jenkinson asked Ford “whether he viewed the systematic destruction of the Indians as a blot on American history,” and Ford responded with this question, “Do you consider the invasion of the Black and Tans in Ireland as a blot on English history?”^{xx}

When Ford suggested to Maureen O’Hara that they were drawn to make the film in Ireland by “something hereditary from our Irish mother’s womb,” he was simultaneously acknowledging his nostalgia for Ireland and ironically gesturing to an Irish American fantasy of Ireland. John Ford had initially planned to make the film in Spiddal, the village which his parents left in 1872 for America.^{xxi} During the 1920s, Ford visited Ireland, arriving on a ferry from Holyhead which also brought Michael Collins back to Dublin from his negotiations in England. When he visited Spiddal, Ford learned that the home of his Thornton relatives had been burned down during the Black and Tan attack on Spiddal as reprisal for an IRA attack.^{xxii}

The director’s experiences in Ireland during the 1920s, combined with his knowledge of the period through Walsh’s stories, stirred Ford’s personal nostalgia for his ancestral land as well as suffusing Sean Thornton’s vision of Ireland seen through his mother’s memory. In the sense that *The Quiet Man* is haunted by Sean’s loss of his mother and homeland and therefore nostalgia for her cottage in Inisfree, this “nostalgia owes its origins to the need for a therapeutic model of the past to alleviate the memory of suffering or oppression.”^{xxiii} Walsh’s stories portray several characters who are “visiting or returned Americans from the frontiers” of the American west as well as characters who have been prizefighters, fighters with the IRA or both.^{xxiv}

Several critics of the *Quiet Man* have remarked on the invisibility of the Irish Civil War in the film although Sean is based on Maurice Walsh’s Paddy Enright character who fought with the IRA after returning from America. In their books on *The Quiet Man*, Luke Gibbons and Des MacHale both mention that Ford’s early script notes show more emphasis on the political context of the Black and Tan War. Ford intended to portray Sean being drawn into the IRA after his

wedding, “thus forsaking his bride for violence in the manner of *High Noon*.”^{xxv} However, Ford decided that the film was “in essence a love story and a comedy, and intense violence and politics sat very uncomfortably on top of these themes.”^{xxvi}

Paddy Enright in Walsh’s story is reluctant to talk about his traumatic experiences in the Black and Tan War.^{xxvii} Gibbons observes that this hidden political trauma is the source of “the silence that lies at the heart of ‘The Quiet Man’ . . . the human equivalent of the ‘false peace’ which lulls the countryside into a deceptive sense of security.”^{xxviii} Betty Caverley, a character in Walsh’s story, “The Red Girl,” explicitly describes Michaleen Oge Flynn as someone who had suffered during “his fight in the Black and Tan and the civil war, his internment, his terrible hunger strike, his escape, his campaign in the hills. But she could never get him to talk of those experiences.”^{xxix}

In the film, Michaleen Oge makes seemingly irrelevant comments about “talking treason” or hoping that the peace won’t last. One explanation for the de-historicized version of the film is that the Irish government and Republic Pictures wanted to avoid overt political references that might limit the film’s popular appeal in “British and Continental European markets where in those days Irish Republican sympathies were pretty thin on the ground.”^{xxx} Therefore these off-hand remarks by the Michaleen Oge character and references by other characters to sedition or the IRA seem oddly irrelevant. Walsh’s story, “The Quiet Man,” does not mention that Paddy Bawn Enright, the original name for the Sean Thornton character, killed an opponent in the boxing ring. This aspect of Sean’s past in the film has replaced the original story’s political context. In fact Maurice Walsh describes Paddy Bawn Enright as a former boxer in New York who retired to Ireland but then joins an “IRA Flying Column” during the Black and Tan War.^{xxxi}

Stephanie Rains observes that after the Second World War, representations of Irish American males, such as Sean Thornton, were associated with more positive images of masculinity such as the heroism of servicemen rather than with violence or criminal behavior. Rains suggests that *The Quiet Man* “fits into the development of post Second World War films which specifically reference the ongoing trauma of war for heroically constructed male characters. . . Hollywood [films] in which a traumatized or at least unfulfilled hero experiences a recuperative visit to Ireland.”^{xxxii}

Sean Thornton has experienced several traumas during his life. He was exiled from his home in Ireland when he went to America with his mother who has since died there. Then Sean experienced the steel furnaces of Pittsburgh, “so hot a man forgets his fear of Hell” and finally he accidentally killed someone in the boxing ring. Luke Gibbons asserts that even though the final version of the film elides the overt political issues mentioned in Maurice Walsh’s stories, “this submerged historical dimension resurfaces in the mise-en-scene of *The Quiet Man*. . . the submerged world of grief and loss manifests itself through image and music.”^{xxxiii}

Because of Sean’s disillusionment with America and longing for his mother’s cottage in Ireland, the entire representation of Ireland in the film is viewed through the lens of is nostalgia for a fantasized pre-modern, community based rural Ireland. As Gibbons states, the “extent to which the Irish countryside as portrayed in the film is filtered through Sean’s romantic-and traumatized-imagination is evident in the scene. . . [when] Sean alights from Michaleen Oge’s pony-trap and is first captivated by the sight of his family cottage, White O’Morn.”^{xxxiv} Sean’s

nostalgic longing for home is first indicated in the film during his journey from the train station when he remembers his mother's voice describing their cottage.

Don't you remember it, Seaneen, and how it was? The road led up past the chapel and it wound and wound. And there was the field where DanTobin's bull chased you. It was a lovely little house Seaneen, and the roses-your father used to tease me about them but he was that fond of them too.^{xxxv}

Thornton attempts to satisfy his longing for home and heal the traumas of grief and loss by restoring the imaginary utopia of his mother's love through his relationship with a surrogate mother and lover, Mary Kate, who can heal his wounded soul. As John Hill notes in his essay, "*The Quiet Man: Ford, Mythology and Ireland*," Mary Kate functioned as the mother in the Danaher home and then becomes the "metamorphosis of Sean's mother."^{xxxvi} According to Hill, the "otherworldly" nature of Sean's first encounter with Mary Kate is conveyed by camera angles that give the impression of Sean and Mary Kate being positioned in relation to each other but somehow "cut off from the real world."^{xxxvii}

The audience sees Mary Kate from Sean's perspective as "ethereal, fantasy-like" and thus the "wish fulfillment of Sean's desire to return to Ireland, at one with nature and embodying the 'spirit of Ireland'."^{xxxviii} Furthermore this encounter between Mary Kate and Sean reinforces the symbolic association of Ireland with the feminine when Sean's memory of his mother's voice signifies his longing for the family cottage, which "may be characterized as a desire to return to the womb."^{xxxix} While Sean can be "redeemed" through the love of Mary Kate, he must do so by once again engaging in a fist fight with Danaher to regain the respect of Mary Kate and the community. Although Sean appears to assert his masculinity by bossing his wife when he brings her brother home after the brawl, it is clear from Mary Kate's facial expressions that she merely tolerates his behavior.

In the final scene, Mary Kate whispers something to Sean and then throws away the stick he was given for beating her. As Maureen O'Hara states in her autobiography, "The audience knows that he only thinks he has tamed me for good."^{xl} Citing Richard Neupert's interpretation of the film's ending, Gibbons refers to the ending as a "disenchantment of Sean's nostalgic vision" so that when Mary Kate throws away the stick and leads him home, Sean accepts a "home divested of romantic illusions."^{xli} Thus the healing of Sean is accomplished not by recovering his homeland and winning Mary Kate's love but rather by her success at drawing him away from his fantasized perceptions of Ireland.

Ryan's Daughter is an abortive therapeutic narrative which mimics some aspects of *The Quiet Man*. While Randolph Doryan is an obviously vulnerable victim of shellshock in this film, Charles Shaughnessy is emotionally and sexually inadequate and the publican Thomas Ryan is a coward and an informer. Only the IRA leader, Tim O'Leary, exhibits a confident masculinity but he is captured and taken away to be executed. Like Mary Kate in *The Quiet Man*, Rosy Ryan is a strong woman capable of choosing to begin the love affair with Major Doryan and later deciding to end it. Although there has been some criticism that Lean's use of grand scale cinematography and his eroticized Irish woman is a colonialist perspective, this film is more complex than it seems on the surface.

David Lean was the British director of *Ryan's Daughter* and the principal characters were played by British actors except for Robert Mitchum. Since the filming occurred during the 1969 renewal of troubles in Northern Ireland, the local people resented the British invasion while they welcomed the money being spent on accommodations, food, taxis and wages to those who constructed the village of Killary.^{xlii} Like Ford who made *Quiet Man* as a 1950's romance, Lean doesn't allow these real world politics to interfere with his 1960s story of love and sexual liberation but audiences in Ireland were certainly aware of the resonance of the 1920s civil war setting of the story with the Northern Ireland conflicts of 1969.

The psychological trauma of Major Doryan is attributed to the effects of shell shock in World War I but undoubtedly encountering the local IRA resistance to Britain's control of Ireland exacerbated his trauma. Wendy Holden's work on shell shock is relevant in the context of *Ryan's Daughter* as well as the displaced trauma at the heart of *The Quiet Man*. According to Holden,

Most of the symptoms witnessed during the First World War have been seen in veterans of every war since. Amnesia, nightmares and flash backs are familiar today as indications of trauma. But faced with these manifestations in previously normal people for the first time, the medical staff of the 1914-1918 war were baffled and, in many cases, overwhelmed.^{xliii}

Doryan's helplessness when he hides under a table in the pub during his flashback to the battlefield appeals to Rosy's sympathy. Her expression of maternal tenderness toward Doryan beings their intense love affair, which satisfies his need for maternal nurturing and her desire for erotic fulfillment.

As with the other two films, *Into the West* is another therapeutic narrative with more complexity than apparent on the surface. Like *The Quiet Man*, *Into the West* posits a mythical view of Ireland and juxtaposes a traditional pre-modern world to a dysfunctional capitalist modern world. An ongoing subtext of the film critiques the racism and corruption of an Irish republic which has not fulfilled the ideal of its nationalist promise. While Sean Thornton seeks reunion with his mother by returning to her cottage in Ireland, John Reilly is unable to let go of his deceased wife Mary. Like Sean, Papa Reilly is also traumatized by the harshness of capitalist modernity which has subjected the Traveler family to discrimination and poverty.

In her article, "Le cheval comme figure de l'utopie," Andrea Grunert describes the journey in the film as a "return to origins" but the journey also signifies an aspiration toward a better life, which is associated with the "dream of a lost paradise."^{xliv} The horse is clearly given more significance in the French title for the film, which is "*Le cheval venu de la mer*." Grunert interprets the horse in the film as representing the ideal of communion between humans, animals and nature, which has been erased in urban Dublin but maintained by the Travelers' nomadic life-style. In Irish folklore dead mothers can return to protect their children, often in the form of an animal. John Reilly's love for his deceased wife Mary Reilly has become an "absence presence which continues to haunt the living."^{xlv} The family's loss is healed only when Ossie is reunited with his mother's spirit in the ocean's depths, thus enacting a symbolic rebirth in the ocean as womblike space.

The healing process in these three films succeeds only in *The Quiet Man* with Sean's return to the maternal cottage and marriage; and in *Into the West* with the family's rebirth through their westward journey with the mythical horse as the mother's spirit. In *Ryan's Daughter*, the healing process of Major Doryan's all-consuming love affair with a mother surrogate is unsuccessful because the Major is ultimately unable to function in the difficult real world of World War I and the Irish rebellion.

While each of these films represents the west of Ireland as a place where oneness with nature is possible through the romantic or maternal love of a woman, the dark side of Irish culture is also revealed. In *The Quiet Man* this takes the form of violence and patriarchal attitudes toward women. With Mary Kate serving as her brother's surrogate wife, the film gestures to the incestuous undercurrents of a traditional culture in which marriage was often delayed for economic reasons. In *Ryan's Daughter*, Thomas Ryan the publican is a coward and informer who lets his daughter take the blame for his betrayal of the local rebels. The villagers are insular and intolerant and Rosy's husband is emotionally repressed. *Into the West* portrays a grieving alcoholic father who lives in an urban dystopia with his motherless, neglected sons. The dominant culture is generally racist toward the nomadic traveling population and the businessman and policeman who conspire to steal the boys' horse reveal systemic corruption in the post-colonial Republic.

Although the film was and has remained popular with audiences, being ranked by an *Irish Times* readers poll in 1996 as the best Irish film, there has been ongoing debate over Irish stereotypes and whether the character of Mary Kate challenges the subordination of women in marriage only to re-inscribe this subordination later by allowing Sean to publicly humiliate her. In *Transformations in Irish Culture*, Luke Gibbons defines Ireland as a country with a "Third World memory," and a paradox of "dislocations between periphery and centre, the country and the city, tradition and modernity" which are not necessarily polarities in Irish culture.^{xlvi}

In fact for all three films, the tension between modernity and tradition informs the narrative. Sean and Mary Kate negotiate a compromise between their individual needs and the traditional expectations of the community. Papa Reilly and his sons rejoin their Traveler community even though this lifestyle contributed to Mary Reilly's death in childbirth. Rosy and Charles leave Killary after the community ostracizes Rosy for her affair with Major Doryan. Although the traditional community in *The Quiet Man* and *Into the West* is treated more positively than capitalist modernity, in *Ryan's Daughter*, the traditional rural culture is insular and repressive.

As mentioned, John Ford staged *The Quiet Man* so that the film calls into question the boundary between reality and imagination. If the film's "pastoral vision of Ireland. . .trading on tourist and emigrant fantasies of a golden age in the past, is also a way of coming to terms with trauma, loss and the experience of profound social change in Ireland," this sense of loss and displacement from colonization and immigration generates nostalgia for a golden age and attracts tourists from the widely dispersed Irish Diaspora to Ireland.^{xlvi}

Although *The Quiet Man* was filmed in Connemara, the main location in addition to Cong Village was Ashford Castle which was landscaped with imported English trees and flowers. This filming location is unlike Connemara's natural geography but ironically resembles

a colonial garden. The release of the film coincided with the creation of Bord Failte and for decades the film has attracted tourists to the area around Cong and Ashford Castle gardens to see the sights named for the film such as Quiet Man cottage. *Ryan's Daughter* brought tourism to the Dingle peninsula. Tour guides point out the beach, the fiberglass standing stone and the ruin of the schoolhouse used in the film. The Dingle economy was depressed before the film company came but has thrived since then with a strong tourist business.

In all three films women are associated with the Irish landscape and with Mother Ireland. This problematic idea of Irish womanhood as icon is indebted to “Irish mythology, Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary and the Celtic Twilight”.^{xlviii} Ruth Barton’s analysis of the mother figure in Jim Sheridan’s *My Left Foot* is relevant to the representation of women as lovers or mothers in these three films, in which two of the women are named Mary. According to Barton “The elision of Mary Mother of God with the traditional Irish mother [is] common in much literary, artistic and popular representation. The mother is also Mother Ireland, the earth mother to whom generations of emigrant sons will always return for nurture.”^{xlix} If the female characters in these three films are symbolically associated with Mother Ireland, they represent Ireland at various stage of her history from the racism and exclusion under British colonization to the period of conflict and liberation from British occupation and the ongoing relationship between post-colonial Ireland and the Irish American Diaspora.

Traditional storytelling is prominent in *The Quiet Man* since the entire film is narrated by Father Lonergan’s voice and framed by the entry of Sean and the audience into the imaginary realm in the film’s first scenes. *Into the West* also merges traditional storytelling with cinema’s imaginary since their grandfather’s Oisín story and videos of American westerns inspire the boys’ westward journey with Tir na nÓg. As Andrea Grunert observes, the film presents a socio-cultural space in which the storytelling and the western films they watch co-exist and “play a considerable role for the protagonist children.”¹ Thus the framing of the stories and the cinematography of all three films suggest the continuity between the ability of traditional storytelling and of contemporary cinema to evoke the otherworld of the Irish imaginary.

If these films are in part capable of operating as therapeutic narratives, it is because they have inherited the traditional function of storytelling to heal and reconcile individuals and communities. In particular, these films are all invoking diverse images and myths associated with the feminine and the west of Ireland as utopian spaces which can facilitate rebirth through their appeal to very “archaic areas of our psyches in which the desire of rediscovering paradise” resides.^{li}

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ⁱ Joe Cleary, “Into Which West? Irish Modernity and the Maternal Supernatural,” in *Literature and the Supernatural: Essays for the Maynooth Bicentenary*, ed. Brian Cosgrove, 147-73 (Blackrock, Ireland: The Columba Press, 1995), 155.

ⁱⁱ Ruth Barton, *Jim Sheridan: Framing the Nation* (Dublin: Liffey, 2002), 134.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cleary, 153.

^{iv} Lord Killanin quoted in Gibbons 2002, 15.

^v David Lean, *We’re the Last of the Traveling Circuses* (MGM 1970; Warner 2006)

^{vi} William C. Dowling, “John Ford’s Festive Comedy: Ireland Imagined in *The Quiet Man*,” *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* 36, no. 3-4 (2001): 199.

^{vii} Luke Gibbons, “Synge, Country and Western: the Myth of the West in Irish and American Culture,” in *Culture and Ideology in Ireland*, ed. Chris Curtin, Mary Kelly and Liam O’Dowd, 1-19 (Galway: Galway University Press, 1984), 2.

^{viii} Maureen O’Hara, *Tis’ Herself* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 151.

^{ix} Walsh quoted in O’Hara, 165.

^x Gibbons 2002, 19.

^{xi} Luke Gibbons, *The Quiet Man* (Cork: Cork U Press, 2002), 23.

^{xii} Cleary, 152

^{xiii} Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, *Ireland’s Others: Ethnicity and Gender in Irish Literature and Popular Culture*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2001), 53.

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- ^{xiv} Catherine Nash, "Looking Commonplace: gender, modernity and national identity," *Theory and Critique*, 39 no. 11, (1996): 63; 67.
- ^{xv} Stephanie Rains, *The Irish-American in Popular Culture 1945-2000* (Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 63.
- ^{xvi} Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 39.
- ^{xvii} Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 40.
- ^{xviii} Gibbons 2002, 97.
- ^{xix} See Des MacHale, *The Complete Guide to The Quiet Man*. (Belfast: Appletree Press 2001); and Dan Ford, *Pappy: the Life of John Ford* (New York: De Capo, 1998).
- ^{xx} John Ford quoted in Gibbons 2002, 104.
- ^{xxi} MacHale 2001, 33
- ^{xxii} Dan Ford 1998, 23.
- ^{xxiii} Gibbons 2002, 47.
- ^{xxiv} Walsh 1992, 127-28.
- ^{xxv} Gibbons 2002, 45.
- ^{xxvi} MacHale 2001, 35.
- ^{xxvii} Walsh 1992, 136.
- ^{xxviii} Gibbons 2002, 36.
- ^{xxix} Walsh 1992, 171.
- ^{xxx} MacHale 2001, 37.
- ^{xxxi} Walsh 1992, 128.
- ^{xxxii} Rains 2007, 153.
- ^{xxxiii} Gibbons 2002, 76.
- ^{xxxiv} Gibbons 2002, 79.

^{xxxv} Ford 1952; 2002.

^{xxxvi} John Hill, “The Quiet Man: Ford, Mythology and Ireland,” in *The Quiet Man, and Beyond: Reflections on a Classic Film, John Ford, and Ireland*, ed. S , and Rod Stoneman, 178-199 (Dublin: Liffey Press, 2009), 189.

^{xxxvii} Hill, 188.

^{xxxviii} Ibid.

^{xxxix} Hill, 188-89.

^{xl} O’Hara, 169.

^{xli} Neupert referenced by Gibbons 2002, 88.

^{xlii} Gene D. Phillips, *Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean* (Lexington, Ky. : University Press of Kentucky, 2006)

^{xliii} Holden quoted in Gibbons 2002, 58.

^{xliv} Andrea Grunert, “Le Cheval figure de l’utopie: l’Exemple de *Into the west*,” in *Utopie et Cinema*, ed. Yona Dureau, 89-100 (Conde-sur-Noireau, France: Corlet, 2005), 90.

^{xlv} Grunert, 94.

^{xlvi} Gibbons 1996, 3.

^{xlvii} Gibbons 2002, 9-10.

^{xlviii} Barton, 25.

^{xlix} Barton, 24.

^l Grunert, 98.

^{li} Grunert, 98

Terry Gifford, a prominent literary theorist, defines pastoral in three ways in his critical book *Pastoral*.⁴ This is the first example of literature that has pastoral sentiments and may have begun the pastoral tradition. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is much like the *Works and Days* with the description of ages (golden, silver, brazen, iron and human) but with more ages to discuss and less emphasis on the gods and their punishments.⁴ The setting is a *Locus Amoenus*, or a beautiful place in nature, sometimes connected with images of the Garden of Eden.^[4] An example of the use of the genre is the short poem by the 15th-century Scottish makar Robert Henryson *Robene and Makyne* which also contains the conflicted emotions often present in the genre. is the capital of the West of Ireland. Visit the Galway Cathedral & the Church of St Nicholas, where Columbus. is reputed to have prayed before sailing to America.⁴ Michael O'Cleary, together with three laymen wrote one of the seminal texts of Irish history, *The Annals of the Four Masters*, which has been described as "the most remarkable collection of National tradition in all. Christendom". The town dates back to Viking times when a fortress was at the mouth of the river Eske.⁴ Ireland in the sixth century, St. Molaise (whose death is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* in both 563 and 570. AD), founded a monastery on Devenish Island. The story is told that St. Molaise, resting from his labors *Acis and Galatea* are characters from Classical mythology later associated together in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The episode tells of the love between the mortal *Acis* and the Nereid (sea-nymph) *Galatea*; when the jealous Cyclops *Polyphemus* kills *Acis*, *Galatea* transforms her lover into an immortal river spirit. The episode was made the subject of poems, operas, paintings, and statues in the Renaissance and after.